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Credal Nationalism in early American labor movements

Introduction

In the United States of America, several social movements in the 19th century began to make frequent use of a constructivist model of national identity and appeal to nationalism. Two of those movements, the abolitionist movement opposing slavery and the women's rights movement, are famous for publicly utilizing in their political rhetoric the language found in the 1776 United States Declaration of Independence primarily authored by Thomas Jefferson (hereafter the Jefferson Declaration). Great focus came to be placed within American national identity on the Declaration's statement that "[w]e hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal"; a phrase often referred to as the American Creed (Jefferson, 1776: 115). Less famous is the use by labor movements to brand themselves as appropriately American and entitled to the equality they claimed was inherent to the American national identity. An ideational construction of the qualities of the American Nation was forged throughout the 19th century within the ideology of some social movements, taking the place of traditional constructions of nation relying on ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, and geographic elements distinct to an imagined community of people.

A Women's Rights convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848, is seen by many as the starting place for the organized American women's rights movements of the 19th century. The widely distributed Declaration of Sentiments that demanded equality for women (including suffrage), primarily authored by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, that the convention passed directly mirrored the Jefferson Declaration, including asserting: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal" (Stanton, 1848: 446). Equal rights for women had been advocated by labor reformers since the 1820s, and women had found a space for activism within the early abolitionist movements, but women had not properly organized effectively and acted politically on their own behalf for women's equality until the 1840s (DuBois, 1987: 839-840). Ide-

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ological support for the principle of equality as inherent to the principles of the American Nation and identity flowed into the women's rights movement from the abolitionist movement. The demand for equality, including in the political space through suffrage, flowed directly from the demand to be considered part of the American Nation characterized through the Creedal expression of the self-evident right of equality for all.

A leading voice of the slavery abolitionist movement, Frederick Douglass, gave a speech in Rochester, New York as part of an Independence Day celebration that was widely distributed as a pamphlet afterwards. Douglass, a former slave and a widely read author/lecturer, argued that slavery being evil was a self-evident truth that required no argument, denouncing the national celebration of the language of the Jefferson Declaration concerning equality and liberty to be "mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy" (Douglass, 1852: 510). Douglass' friend, William Lloyd Garrison had helped form the New England Anti-Slavery Society in 1832. Garrison wrote the organization's Declaration of Sentiments that the "cornerstone" of America was "[t]hat all men are created equal [...] At the sound of their [the Declaration's authors] trumpet-call, three millions of people rose up as from the sleep of death, and rushed to the strife of blood, deeming it more glorious to die instantly as freemen, than desirable to live one hour as slaves" (Garrison, 1833: 476). Garrison's contemporary abolitionist, David Walker, published an influential pamphlet entitled *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World* that called for immediate abolition and exhorted the reader to refer to his Jefferson Declaration, the salient part reprinted in the pamphlet (Kendi, 2016: 165-166).

President Abraham Lincoln described the Jefferson Declaration as containing the American Creed, a sacred principle of action. Throughout the 1850s, Lincoln increasingly referenced the importance of the Jefferson Declaration to his guiding principles (Maier, 1997: 202). He wielded the language of the document by regularly referencing the "self-evident" truth that "all men are created equal". For example, in Lincoln's July 10, 1858 political campaign speech in Chicago to an audience including German immigrants (part of the famous Lincoln-Douglass debates), Lincoln argued that the Declaration contained the father of all moral principles and allowed men of all races and ethnicities to consider themselves part of the American nationality:

[On the 4th of July, Americans look back at the American founders who created the Declaration of Independence.] We find a race of men living in that day whom we claim as our fathers and grandfathers; they were iron men, they fought for the principle that they were contending for [...]. [At these celebrations] we feel more attached the one to the other, and more firmly bound to the country we inhabit. [...]. We have besides these men – descended by blood from our ancestors – among us perhaps half our people who are not descendants at all of these men, they are men who have come from Europe – German, Irish, French and Scandinavian – men that have come from Europe themselves, or whose ancestors have come hither and settled here. [...] If they look back through this history to trace their connection with those days by blood, they find they

have none [...]. But when they look through that old Declaration of Independence they find that those old men say that 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal', and then they feel that moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration and so they are (Lincoln, 1858: 499-500).

The rousing cheers Lincoln received were from citizens claiming the right to the identity of the American Nation. Lincoln made the argument that if some men (slaves and freed slaves) are not to be considered equal parts of the American Nation, then what is to stop the applying of that principle to everyone not descended from the English colonists? To believe in the American Creed, these movements claimed, and President Lincoln reinforced, is to believe in an ideational construction of the American Nation, an ideology of Creedal Nationalism as a basis for nationality, distinct from more traditional varieties.

As historian Pauline Maier has pointed out, the construction of Jefferson's Declaration as a sacred text, surrounding it with sacred language, was used for decades by social movements before President Lincoln arguably solidified it forever in the minds of most Americans with the widely reported *Gettysburg Address*. The June 1, 1865 *Gettysburg Address* given by Lincoln after the Battle of Gettysburg is heavily highlighted in American education and begins with the sentence: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" (Lincoln, 1865). Much ink has been spilled and many schoolchildren taught of the use of the Creed in the ideology of the abolitionist and women's rights movements. Although noted in passing by historians like Maier, far less has been said about the use of Creedal Nationalism in early American labor movements. Plenty has been said about class construction as artisan work turned to industrialization (Wilentz, 1981: 1). This article provides evidence of the use of Creedal Nationalism by early American labor movements as part of their legal and political struggle to achieve better terms and conditions of employment, equality of opportunity, and economic rights.

Labor-oriented newspapers created by Labor associations began flourishing in the late 1820s, coinciding with the expansion of suffrage to all adult (21+) white males (McFarland, Thistlethwaite, 1983: 35). The rhetoric used was filled with claims to equality, drawn from the language of the Jefferson Declaration. As the *Albany Workingman's Advocate* declared, "the farmers, mechanics, and workingmen are assembling [...] to impart to its laws and administration those principles of liberty and equality unfolded in the Declaration of Independence" (McFarland, Thistlethwaite, 1983: 39). After framing the theoretical considerations of the use of a creedal national identity, evidence is provided for the promotion of the ideology through the use of newspapers published by labor associations.

Theoretical considerations

Constructivism in political science asserts that ideas and discourses can alter even successful institutions and that identity can be both cause and consequence of political events. Under this theoretical model, ideological influence on the construction of identity can be a primary causal influence on political outcomes as competing identities shape political events. The struggle of immigrants and the poor to establish themselves as full and equal members of the American Nation is as intense as for any immigrant community, but is particularly widespread in a country where very few people (with the exception of Native Americans) could trace even their recent ancestry to the same continent.

Many common definitions of nation are used throughout the social sciences that reference a community sharing a common geographic homeland. A nation is usually described as a group of people with a common language, culture, religion, shared history, and an ancient homeland that should belong politically to the nation. Traditional conceptions of national identity and who properly belonged within the American Nation had been influencing political events from the beginnings of the first English colonies. Racism within nativist movements based on traditional nationalism opposed immigrants or disreputable poor as being unacceptable to their conception of the American Nation and, hence, undesirable to allow into the country or the political space once present (Robertson, 1980: 92-97).

William Bradford, the great chronicler of the Plymouth Colony in *Of Plymouth Plantation* describes the threat posed by the newcomers settling in Ma-Re-Mount under the leadership of Thomas Morton in 1628 (Bradford, 1628: 154-158). Just eight years after the founding of their own colony, the leader of Plymouth Plantation vented his anger at the despoiling of the purity of his nation by immigrants of a different religion who were mixing with the local Native Americans. He ordered the burning down of the immigrants' colony and their heads placed upon stakes. By 1642, Bradford was bemoaning the ever-growing need for labor in his colony, which required the mixing in of "unsavory" new immigrants from England to do that labor (Bradford, 1642: 165-166). Bradford complained that anyone could immigrate if they could arrange transport to America, "and by this means the country became pestered with many unworthy persons, who, being come over, crept into one place or other" (Bradford, 1642: 166).

As the English colonies got older, the nationalism of the nativist movements only became more popular. Ethnic and religious components of national identity in the face of both slavery from its colonial founding and the increase in immigration during the 19th century were politically salient for parties and movements trying to maintain economic, political, and social separation between classes. The rhetoric was traditional nationalism, language utilizing the imagery of keeping the nation pure, good, and free from negative 'foreign' influences. By the 19th century, American nationalism with a nation conceptu-

alized as prosperous Anglo-Saxon Protestants born in the Colonies/United States was an important ideology within American politics and only grew in importance over time.

For example, by the 1860s the United States had begun passing Anti-Chinese immigration laws. By 1882, a US Senator, James Slater of Oregon (a state on the West Coast of the United States), argued in support of the Chinese Exclusion Act by describing Chinese immigrants as being in such large numbers as to be uncontrollable by ‘Americans’ and a threat to the American Nation:

Again, sir, we are told that in this legislation we are treading backward and forsaking the principles and traditions upon which our fathers one hundred years ago laid the foundations of government, and the Declaration of Independence is invoked as a sufficient argument and showing of this statement. [...] No one will deny the axiomatic and self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence respecting human rights, but that they apply in this case may well be denied. [...] Disguise it as we may, we cannot longer fail to recognize the fact that western civilization has met the eastern upon the shores of the Pacific. The westward march of the Caucasian has there met the same teeming hordes [...] of Asiatics, impossible to pass or overcome. [...] The Chinese are aliens, born in a foreign land, speak a foreign tongue, owe allegiance to a foreign government, are idolaters in religion, have a different civilization from ours, [...] and they are inimical to our laws. [...] They have developed into a race of people of such character and physical qualities as to be able to exist and thrive where and under conditions the white man would perish and die out. [...] They bring with them their filth and frightful and nameless diseases and contagions. [...] Their labor is essentially servile and is demoralizing to every class of white labor with which it comes in competition. [The opponents of the law invite] these hordes of heathens that swarm like rats in a cellar and live in filth and degradation along the sea-coast of China to come and compete with and degrade American labor. [...] the Chinese are neither Caucasian nor American, but are alien to our race, customs, religion, and civilization (Slater, 1882: 781-785).

The debate was followed by anti-Chinese violence and local policies in Western states. The law prohibited all immigration of Chinese laborers and was only repealed in 1943 by a law which allowed 105 Chinese immigrants per year.

Early American labor movements used the rhetoric of Creedal Nationalism in the context of the slow expansion of suffrage to more and more of their members as state governments eliminated barriers to voting amongst poorer male citizens, suffrage in any given elections depending on the office being elected. Many of the upper classes and established politicians naturally perceived the expansion of suffrage under Jacksonian era democracy in the early 19th century as a threat to established power and wealth. Ethnic nationalism rejected foreign ideas and people as being deserving of equal political power and a threat to the well-being of the American Nation. Wealthy slave owners proclaimed the need to keep the American Nation from being dragged down by allowing in the “lesser races” and even sometimes spoke directly against the principle of equality in general (Calhoun, 1838: 513-516; Fitzhugh, 1854: 541).

Opposing the more traditional version of nationalism in America was an ideology based upon a re-interpretation of the language contained in what was, at the time, a simple foreign policy document establishing the status of the English colonies under inter-

national law as new sovereign states. The language used in Jefferson's Declaration was straight from common Enlightenment sources and understood very differently from the way it used to fifty years later. Half a century later, the words contained in the document changed their meaning. Creedal Nationalism in the United States developed out of the patriotic fervor following the War of 1812. 4th of July had long been celebrated as a patriotic day of remembrance of the act of the Continental Congress declaring independence, but little thought was given to the text of the Jefferson Declaration. As interest grew for patriotic symbols after 1815, the text of the Declaration became increasingly distributed and published by 1817. Social movements in the 1820s seized upon the "all men are created equal" phrase, declaring their movements inherently American through reference to Jefferson's Declaration. Creedal Nationalism buttressed the national identity of the working class as increasing class antagonism led to common policy demands seen in the face of industrialization, the same kind of demands grounded in socialist ideology. Socialist arguments do appear in some of the rhetoric from the time, particularly the division between those who make money through their own labor and those who make money through the labor of others. More often, there was simply the assumption of the right to equality from being a part of the American Nation, distinct from the nations of Europe.

The original language used by Thomas Jefferson had nothing to do with individual equality or liberty under the law or as civil rights, but rather an Enlightenment expression of political legitimacy deriving from the consent of the governed and the purpose of government (Wills, 1979: 207-217). It was a common-place expression in the 18th century of the right to rebellion based on the principle that God did not grant Kings the exclusive right to rule (Smith, 2018: 11-12). Further, the unalienable rights were a claim that government forfeited the right to rule when the safety and happiness of the whole civic body was threatened, violating those unalienable community rights (Hutcheson, 1747: 238-239). "All men are created equal" was an assertion of the potential for moral virtue found within all men, no special moral virtue being given to the aristocracy of church or state. As Maier describes the common idea of Enlightenment philosophers and Americans in the 18th century, "with regard to persons, equality meant simply that no one held authority over others by right of birth or as a gift of God" (Maier, 1997: 136).

Nevertheless, social movements fighting for equality and membership in the American nation held up the Declaration as a sacred text expressing an American Creed of equality of individual rights, civic rights, and economic opportunity. The original meaning was certainly not forgotten by many knowledgeable of 18th century political philosophy. Indeed, Abraham Lincoln solidified his reverence for the Creed due to many opposing statesmen and intellectuals pointing out that the language in the Jefferson Declaration did not mean what the social movements seeking equality had been claiming. Resisting their efforts, he made use of it all the more (*ibid*, 202). His use decidedly had a political benefit since working-class voters had been using the re-interpreted call for

the principle of individual equality as residing within the sacred founding of the United States for decades, establishing themselves as equal members of the American Nation.

Historical context

The first real labor unions in America formed after the creation of the US Constitution. During the Revolutionary and Confederation period, labor associations were temporary measures dedicated to a single labor action. Industry was dominated by a custom and retail order work predominated. Massive expansion of the domestic market in the 1790s led to the dominance of wholesale-orders and rabid competition to lower prices as an oversupply of wholesale merchant capitalists competed for retail orders. This necessitated lowering wages for skilled labor and employing cheaper, less skilled labor. At a time of rapid inflation, strikes became more frequent and the need for more permanent organizations became clear. Between 1792 and 1818, many of the large cities saw the formation and collapse of trade organizations that were local and had membership confined to single crafts seeking a minimum wage scale (Rayback, 1966: 55-56). The 1807-1814 depression primarily caused by an economic embargo related to the Napoleonic Wars disrupted markets but often reinforced the need for labor associations. However, the great financial crisis of 1819-1821 shattered these early attempts at permanent labor organizations.

Municipal-wide labor associations started forming in the 1820s. As prosperity returned between 1821 and 1828, merchant capitalists came to dominate northern American industry. Fierce competition between wholesale buyers once again drove down wages and increased use of unskilled labor. Larger factory shops grew over the decade over more and more areas of goods production. The labor movements organized in reaction were larger and more widespread. Stable organizations covering multiple trades in one association appeared. Shop and factory owners fought back, including using the judicial system. For example, New York State used anti-conspiracy laws that defined any formal association found injurious to public morals or to trade and commerce to be illegal. One criminal case from 1836 in New York City in which twenty tailors were found guilty of picketing shops went beyond the heavy fines imposed on the tailors, found guilty of conspiracy. The judge's ruling attacked the idea of labor associations as being anti-American. The court reasoned: "In this favored land of law and liberty, the road to advancement is open to all, and the journeyman may by their skill and industry, and moral worth, soon become flourishing master mechanics. Every American knows [...] that he has no better friend than the laws and that he needs no artificial combination for his protection. They are of foreign origin, and I am led to believe mainly upheld by – Foreigners" (Rayback, 1966: 82). The reasoning that labor associations were inherently un-American created outrage, causing tens of thousands of laborers to demand a return to organized political action.

The courts were used successfully to weaken the labor associations. Although the right to collectively negotiate wages was ruled legal, effective labor action techniques of picketing, sympathetic strikes, and the targeting of scabs for harassment were ruled illegal in case after case (*ibid*: 59). At a time that labor associations were legally and politically under attack and identity as craftsmen was being undermined by increasingly marginal and mechanized production, supporters of labor associations clung to their “self-identification with the American Nation who were inherently entitled to equality”, an imagined community steeped in the mythical and sacred language of the American Creed.

Creedal Nationalism in early 19th century labor rhetoric

The first city-wide union of labor associations was the Philadelphia Mechanics’ Union of Trade Associations founded in 1827 – the first union in the United States to unite across different crafts. Within a year, the organization was fielding candidates for election as the Working Men’s Party. Although the Party and a labor advocacy newspaper lasted only a few years, they were very briefly effective in some local elections and contributed to advocacy for the goals of a wider labor movement. Their political platforms were absorbed by larger political organizations. The union’s associated newspaper, the *Mechanics’ Free Press*, was founded in 1828 by William Heighton, a relatively young immigrant shoemaker from England. It was self-described as A Journal of Practical and Useful Knowledge, edited by a Committee of the Mechanics Library Company of Philadelphia.

The *Mechanics’ Free Press* was steeped in the Creedal Nationalism of its time. To support the various policy goals of the paper, the editors and the workers who wrote letters to the paper made constant assumptions about the inherent equality of citizens of the United States promised to them by their political institutions, a claim whose basis is not to be found in the US Constitution of the time, but was at the heart of what they understood to be the principle expressed in the Jefferson Declaration. Where a newspaper’s motto usually appears, right under the banner name of the paper, the *Mechanics’ Free Press* slightly misquoted the Jefferson Declaration by focusing in on the American Creed: “We hold this truth to be self-evident, that all men are created equal – Declaration of Independence”.

A common policy goal of the labor movement at the time was the public funding of universal education, which was argued to be necessary for people to be free and prosperous. These arguments presented in the newspaper leaned heavily on the principle of equality of all in the American Nation, sometimes explicitly. On the front page of the April 12, 1828 paper was an article from the editors entitled *All Men are Created Equal*. The editors argued that society needed to nurture the inherent equalities of birth, weighed against the varied circumstances that people are born into: “All Men are Created Equal. This is very fashionable doctrine in our country. We find it asserted and maintained by every citizen with great self-complacency, prompted by a view of the happy

government under which he lives. But unlike other general positions, this national motto abounds with exceptions. Some are born to great estates, others to poverty” (*Mechanics’ Free Press*, April 12, 1828: 1). The article goes so far as to point out the humanity of slaves as an example of an ultimate “poverty” to be born into. However, the editors assert that the mental ability, the “powers of the mind”, are also something all are born to in equal amount, but that mental abilities need to be exercised, naturally including the young through the policy demand of universal education. The article ends, stating that “this expression demands a more extensive application, Equal in the possession of liberty and the noble powers of the mind” (*Mechanics’ Free Press*, April 12, 1828: 1). Anonymous letters to the editor items from the October issue of the same paper and year demanded equal rights, including “a general and equal system of Education” (*Mechanics’ Free Press*, October 24, 1829: 2).

Universal male suffrage had only in recent years been achieved and the labor movement was determined to achieve reforms with the new political power. This enabled the formation of various state-level political parties consisting of people from their new enfranchised class, several calling themselves the Working Men’s Party (1828-1832). Despite the aforementioned article stating that all citizens agreed with the ideology of Creedal Nationalism, politicians seeking to represent the workers in the union pointed to the need to elect representatives who believed in the American Creed. A politician’s address of the County Delegates in Philadelphia to their Constituents exhorted them to elect candidates who would believe in the Creed: “Fellow Workmen, fifty-three years have not yet passed away since the Declaration made in this city, of the important and self-evident truth that all men are created equal. This Declaration was not the result of a hasty conclusion, but formed after deepest reflection” (*Mechanics’ Free Press*, September 27, 1828: 1). The article claims the “framers of the Declaration” knew that there would be Americans who opposed the Creed; that people who agreed would have to “contend with men who evinced by their conduct the belief that the great mass of their subjects, the producing class, were not on equal terms with themselves” (*Mechanics’ Free Press*, September 27, 1828: 1). The address references the “framers” as less wealthy people standing up to the rich English aristocracy, but warns of the attempt to create an American aristocracy. The Delegates refer to themselves as politicians who come from the working class who believe the Creed. They are continuing the work “to perfect the glorious undertaking [of the Declaration]” because the working class of America are full and equal members of the American Nation, that they “are in deed [sic] their brethren, and by creation, are equal with them” (*Mechanics’ Free Press*, September 27, 1828: 1).

Rhetoric in the newspapers called for the spreading of the labor movement and for sweeping equality-based policy reforms that went far beyond the standard demands seen by the more temporary pre-industrial labor associations. In Philadelphia, an anonymous letter writer calling himself a Mechanic, called for increased support of the Working Men’s Association of Wilmington, Delaware which was a rapidly industrializing city

close to Philadelphia down the Delaware River. Mechanic argued that they had the right and need for such labor associations, “as Thomas Jefferson says, ‘we are created equal and free,’ and why not maintain that equality and freedom, which naturally belongs to us all?” (*Mechanics’ Free Press*, October 24, 1829: 2). The editors of the *Mechanics’ Free Press* reprinted the article from the *Delaware Register* newspaper entitled *Loose Thoughts* by an anonymous author calling himself Yorick. The article quoted the American Creed in the context of the threat of rising wealth inequality. It argued that inequality was the same “as exists in the limited monarchy of Great Britain or the despotism of Russia” (*Mechanics’ Free Press*, November 7, 1829: 1). The promised equality of the Creed was seen as being under threat from those accumulating wealth. Perhaps the same author, again calling himself Yorick two weeks later, quoted the American Creed again and claimed it as the basis for taxing the rich to provide life-starting money to all children in equal measure and pensions for the old. He further supports this argument by asserting that the purpose of government is the happiness of the governed. He claims the rich have withdrawn from public displays of the 4th of July because it is too “ungenteel”, providing the underlying implication that their growing wealth has them abandoning the principle of equality in the Declaration (*Mechanics’ Free Press*, November 21, 1829: 2).

The *Mechanics’ Free Press* only lasted a few years (1828-1831), despite its relatively large circulation. Other broad-based labor unions of trade associations followed the success of the Philadelphia movement, with journals and newspapers to support them. In New York, the much longer lasting *Working Man’s Advocate* was founded by George H. Evans in 1829 and lasted (on and off as the economy rose and fell) through 1845 with wide readership. The rhetoric of Creedal Nationalism was found in the rather radical political arguments made in the newspaper. In 1829, it published a series of articles as *The Workingmen’s Declaration of Independence*. In an article of the series entitled *Equal Rights*, the author begins with a series of questions: “The words of that great instrument [The Declaration of Independence] have been the boast of all of us; but have we, as a class of men, obtained in common with others, the great inheritance which these words designate? We have changed masters, it is true, but have we changed our condition? We are allowed to vote for a choice of masters, but have we equal rights with them?” (*Working Man’s Advocate*, December 5, 1829: 4).

The use of the rhetoric of equality extended well into the economic realm in the newspaper. For example, a regular theme was the paper’s opposition to ‘chartered monopolies’, which they really meant as any public corporation not founded for the construction of a specific public project intended for the good of the community, such as a road, canal, or railroad. Corporations required a government granted charter and if they only have a purpose of creating profit for a small number of shareholders, such corporations were seen as dangerous to the greater good. (Corporations of the time required chartering by state legislatures and had the habit of gaining political support by handing out shares to politicians and select government officials). Such corporations would be for the

benefit of only a favored few and not something that acts as a means to a legitimate end. Corporations, the newspaper argued, should not exist purely as means, with the ends being only private profit. Private banks and chartered manufacturing companies were seen as a general economic threat to the community, with the labor movement opposing expansion of such corporations as a direct threat to workers and small manufacturing shops. Set alongside socialist ideological arguments about opposing those who generated income without labor were Creedal Nationalist arguments based on the equality inherent to the nation. The country's economy should be structured so as to benefit all Americans equally, a demand for economic equality broadly written and seen as a natural characteristic of the American Nation, which would always be under the threat of falling back into European aristocratic division.

The newspaper reported on politicians representing the labor movement reflecting the rhetoric of Creedal Nationalism. It printed the Resolution of a meeting of the electors of the 8th Ward of New York which stated "We are opposed to all monopolies. Resolved, that we consider all Bank charters and all laws conferring special privileges, with all acts of incorporations for purposes of private gain, to be monopolies; that they are monopolies inasmuch as they are calculated to enhance the power of wealth, to produce inequalities among the people, and to subvert liberty" (*Working Man's Advocate*, March 12, 1835: 3). The editors of the *Working Man's Advocate* argued that "they have said, and its language not to be misunderstood, that no corporation, having for its object the special benefit of the corporators, as distinguished from the rest of the community, could be created without a palpable violation of the first principles of our republican institutions, which declare that all men are born free and equal" (*Working Man's Advocate*, March 21, 1835: 1).

Conclusions

Maier has described the evolution of the Jefferson Declaration as "a collective act that drew on the words and thoughts of many people, dead and alive, who struggled with the same or closely related problems" (Maier, 1997: XX). The meaning of the text traveled from a practical application of the right to rebel due to a lack of the consent of the governed to a revered nation-founding text declaring equality to be at the heart of one construction of American identity and the guiding aspirational principle of the American Nation. Lincoln was certainly the most prominent and influential politician to plant the flag of a Creedal Nationalist re-interpretation of the meaning of the Jefferson Declaration at the center of the American symbols of the nation. However, many social movements had been using the language of the text for decades to assert their particular goals of equality. All national identities have their element of myth, often created out of the use of a national language to create the imagined community of a nation (Anderson, 1991). For the United States of America, the creation of a non-ethnic ver-

sion of nationalism hinged on language, but rather than a nationalist ideology tied closely to the right to use a distinct language in newspapers and education to form community, America built a type of nationalism that re-imagined the meaning of old language found in a document from before the creation of the country.

The ideology of liberalism and its conception of the modern state based on the consent of the governed citizens naturally begs the question of what people should the government represent. What people should properly be citizens of any particular country? In many parts of the world, citizenship and the modern state led to nationalist movements formed over time demanding self-determination or equal cultural rights based on unique language, culture, and the geographic concentration of a perceived homeland. This same kind of nationalism existed in America from the founding of the English colonies, but in the 19th century it was challenged with a new ideational construction of the American Nation. Social movements challenged what it meant to be an American and who had the right to claim a historic connection to the American national identity. The creation of the new version of the American Nation was a collective act that took place over decades, as Maier describes. Early American labor associations and the rhetoric they expressed in their public discourse had an important and early role in this collective act. The manipulation of language to form a new national identity was used to claim economic, political, and social rights for people who did not fit the mold of the more traditional American nationalism. The use of language from the competing ethnic and Creedal versions of American nationalism continues to be influential in American politics today.

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Abstract: In the United States during the late 1820s, the labor movements formed that faced public accusations of being un-American and potentially puppets of European influence. These accusations often came from politicians or organizations sympathetic to ethnic nationalism. Partially in response to these charges, labor movements began to espouse versions of Creedal Nationalism. As a country without a natural nation, the United States has maintained for over two centuries two competing narratives within political ideologies concerning who should be allowed to be members of the American Nation. This paper presents research that continues to refine the history of Creedal Nationalism in the United States, a more precise construction of nation than the more ambiguous concept of civic nationalism. Specifically, the article is part of an effort to refine the usually vague and undocumented claims that social movements beginning in the late 1820s began using Creedal Nationalism to counter ethnic nationalism, using a mistaken or intentionally distorted interpretation of the Jeffersonian Creed of "all men are created equal". While prominent uses by women's and abolitionist movements are often cited (usually the same famous examples), the evidence of the use of Creedal Nationalism in public rhetoric

by early labor associations is less documented. The ideological conflict between Creedal Nationalism and ethnic nationalism remains deeply embedded in American political culture and the political party system. The origins, development, and rhetoric of the category of Creedal Nationalism remain important for the framing of models of American political development and current political conflict.

Keywords: American nationalism, Creedal Nationalism, Labor Unions, American political development

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