

FIENDS WHO BEAR THE SHAPES OF MEN:  
CASE STUDIES ON WHITE MALE AND  
BLACK FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS  
IN THE SOUTH

by

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November 27, 2006

ABSTRACT

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Slave women resisted being sexually dominated by white men, by refusing to accept that their lives were beyond their control. By examining cases of slave women who resisted white sexually assertive men, I will display how women slave women resisted the status of sexual subjugation, and instead used their sexuality to manipulate situations to improve their quality of life. Slave women were not immune to the sexual corruption in the South, but they used their circumstances to provide themselves with a healthier lifestyle.

Based upon a slave woman's response to the sexual advances of whites, one can determine that there are three types of reactions--violent resisters, lifetime resisters, and virtuous resisters. I have characterized and identified the tactics and stages in which slave women followed these types of resistance. Confined by social stigmas and systems that defined southern life, slave women had to execute their behaviors so that they sidestepped the consequences of their deviant behavior while still securing their own desires. Resistant slave women surely impacted slavery and attempted to mold it to suit their needs. The desires of masters may have prevailed--but not without interference and reactions from the slaves. And so we should recognize that slaves who had the foresight to ascribe a value to their physical and mental presentation of self could also extend it to a sexual appraisal of their body.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

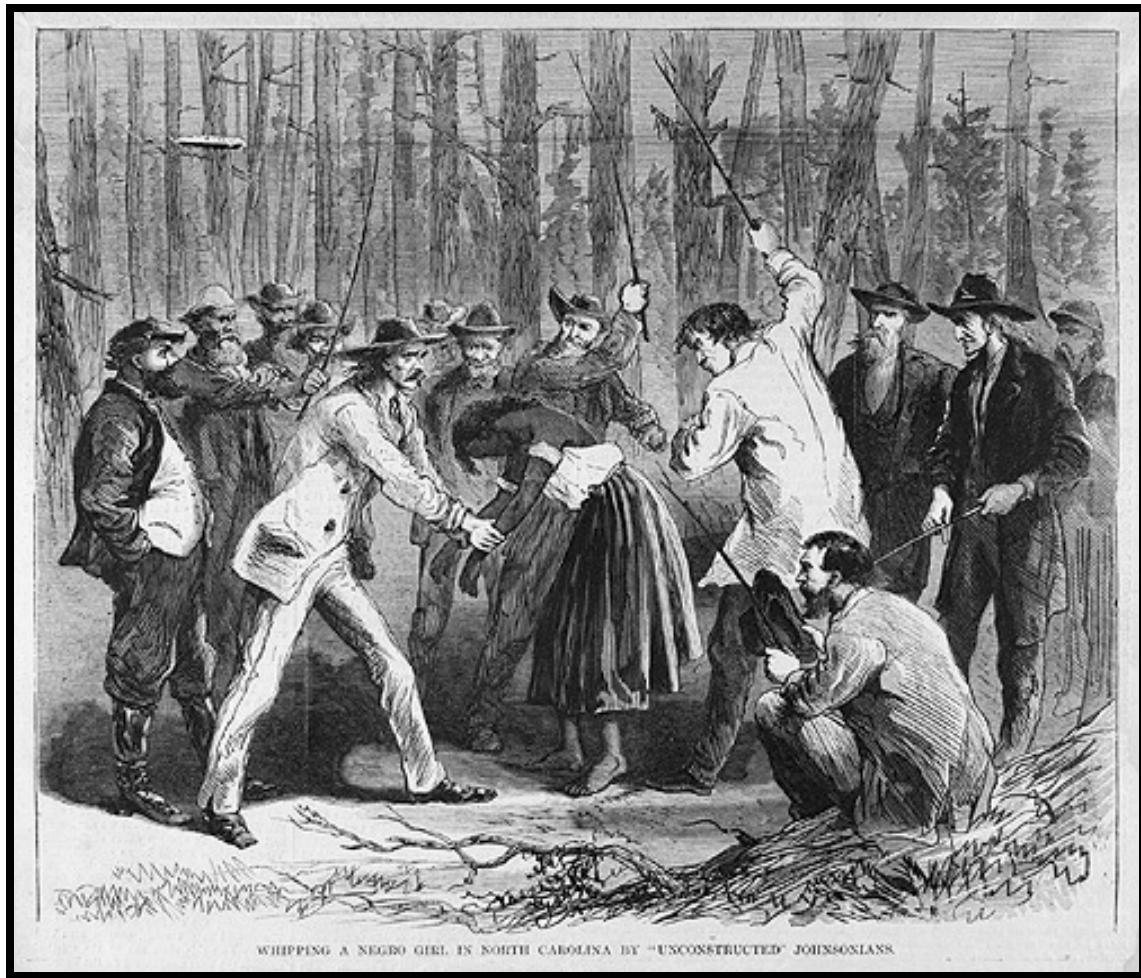


Figure 1.1 Whipping of a Negro Girl, September 14, 1867

*Harper's Weekly, September 14, 1867*

Slavery encompassed life in the South. Its participants each endured various systems of racism and sexism. The diseased way of life infected people in the most personal ways. But slave women presented unique methods of recovery. Faced with the specific problem of white male sexual aggression, slave women found that the cure for

the sickened state of slavery could be solved through the sexual control of their bodies. They fought individually to fight slavery systematically. Slave women resisted being sexually dominated by white men, by refusing to accept that their lives were beyond their control. By examining cases of slave women who resisted white sexually assertive men, I will display how slave women resisted the status of sexual subjugation, and instead used their sexuality to manipulate situations to improve their quality of life. Slave women were not immune to the sexual corruption in the South, but they used their circumstances to provide themselves with a healthier lifestyle.

The fight for sexual security began at an early age. In the 1840's, Ann was a young slave girl in her early teens forced in to a life of confusing contradictions. She recorded her life in slavery in an autobiography in which she recreated situations and conversations to highlight the injustices against slave women. Her father was a white master and her mother was a mulatto slave. Despite knowing she was his daughter, Ann's father disowned her when her mother fell out of his favor. Whatever arrangement the couple had shared no longer existed, and, as a consequence, Ann and her mother were separated and sold when Ann was around ten. Ann's father did leave her one thing that would follow her throughout her life--her skin color. Her hue made her white enough to be lusted after by white men who wanted "fancy girls," and yet, the blood that flowed through her veins held a stigma of darkness that made her dark enough for her to be considered property.<sup>1</sup> Fancy girls were light skinned slave women who were sold to white men for the sole purpose of serving as concubines. Ann's color made her a prime

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<sup>1</sup>Mattie Griffiths, Autobiography of a Female Slave (Detroit: Negro History Press, 1857) 30-35; Deborah Gray White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South (New York: Norton, 1985) 37; John Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 507.

sale at one of these markets. At her new home, she served as a house servant--another result of her fair skin. Upon doing, or being accused of a minor infraction, her mistresses ordered that Ann be beaten, and severely. The mistress angrily ordered Ann away to an overseer. Ann had just entered her early teens, so her mistress' intense annoyance likely stemmed from an awareness of the visual vocabulary, the furtive glances and body language, displaying the lustful thoughts the men in the household carried about Ann's newly budding womanhood, and their power to claim it.

Ann delivered herself to the overseer without hesitation or resistance; she acquiesced to her punishment. But the white overseer had alternate plans than beating the young girl. Upon securing her in a quiet location the lascivious overseer lunged for Ann, and stated "Girl, you've got to yield to me. I'll have you now if its only to show you that I can." As a slave and a woman, Ann's choices of reactions were limited. Yet, here, Ann would not submit. While Ann, could legally be victimized, she refused to remain a victim. Her choices proved her own agency in her life. Victimization did not remove a slave's agency. Instead of succumbing to the fate of a victim, she took a large glass bottle and hit the aggressor over the head, knocking him unconscious. Ann then ran to her master and recounted the story. But instead of sympathizing with her situation, Ann's owners concluded that Ann had too much pride in her and should be sent to jail to be beaten and sold. Sending a slave away to either an overseer or jail was the culturally acceptable means of disciplining slaves; it kept the master in a superior status by maintaining spotless, yet still authoritative hands.

After the incident with the overseer, Ann recounted her mistress' excuse for sending the girl away was that the mistress "always thought she (Ann) was virtuous because she did not want us to increase in property, and was too proud to have her children in bondage."<sup>2</sup> Ann's mistress did not afford her slave the same sexual properties afforded to white women. As Ann saw her plight, to Ann, virtue was her right. She found that her mistress believed it was a characteristic to be scorned for it created a

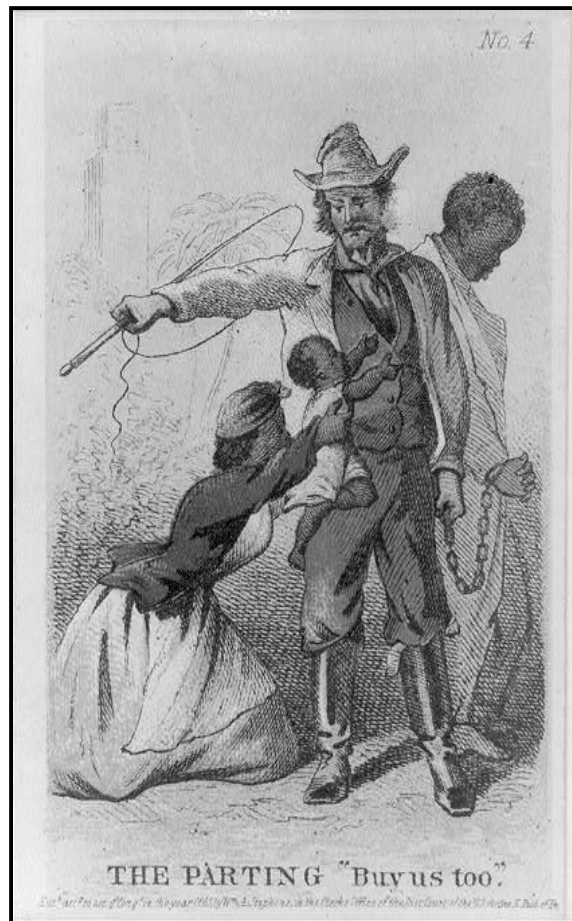


Figure 1.2 The Parting, "Buy us too": Scene of slave woman begging for herself and child to be sold along with her husband instead of being separated as a punishment.

<sup>2</sup> Griffiths, Autobiography of a Female Slave, 286.

deficit in profit and an excess of pride unbecoming of a person of her color. But Ann had learned from early on that she had to fight to preserve her sexual integrity. Earlier in her life, Ann remembered having been previously sought after by other men whose diction dripped with sexual fervor, and she evaded their advances. In one situation, Ann overheard a prospective buyer offering to pay nearly 1200 dollars and she recalled him stating his intent was “for my own use; a sorter private gal like, you knows.”<sup>3</sup> At the time, Ann’s owner decided not to sell.

But Ann’s fate shifted in the months after this incident. Her owner, now further irritated at the attack on the overseer, wanted to exact revenge upon Ann. Her master was tired of what he considered Ann’s arrogance. Instead of being sold, Ann spent time in jail, succumbing to beatings, and awaiting the arrival of the next slave trader to come through town looking for new merchandise. During this time, Ann befriended another black woman, who was previously a slave but now cooked and cared for the prisoners. Unlike Ann, this woman did not have any stays in jail, nor beatings nor attacks. The cook did not choose to defy a licentious white male, and instead traded her virtue for security. Rather than arming herself with a glass bottle to ward off advances, she took the arm of a man who chose her as a mistress. Living in New Orleans, in a home of her own, this woman served as the white man’s mistress. With this choice, she secured protection and stability. Upon this gentleman’s death, the cook was freed and given a small inheritance to ensure her well being for the remainder of her life.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Griffiths, Autobiography of a Female Slave, 282, 286, 175.

<sup>4</sup> Griffiths, Autobiography of a Female Slave, 310.

A careful assessment of many slave accounts suggests that the women in the prior stories represent two of three common types of female slaves' reactions when sexually confronted by white men. Both reactions hold aspects of empowerment, which are infrequently recognized or highlighted, in modern research. Slave women fought reminders of their inequality in their choices about how to respond to relationships with white men. The life of a black mistress generally presented greater benefits and security than that of a slave, but it also demanded a choice that a woman deny her control over her body and then resign herself to fulfilling the wishes of her master/ lover.<sup>5</sup> When a woman did not choose the life of a concubine, her future held little promise, but her integrity remained intact. Though a resistant woman would have the assurance that she had contested the belief in a master's absolute control, a slave, like Ann, could be sold, watch her children sold away from her, be beaten, be forced, or even killed for not relinquishing herself to her master's designs.<sup>6</sup>

A black woman then, when an object of a man's desire, was faced with a difficult choice: should she be like the cook who surrendered herself and ensured some security, or be like Ann who opted for disobedience to secure her virtue, at the risk of endangering her life and even that of others? Black women faced severe repercussions when unwilling to fulfill a master's desires. At a young age, black women were confronted with complicated

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<sup>5</sup> Pauli Murray, Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 43 and Federal Writer's Project, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Savilla Burrell, Ex-slave 83 years," South Carolina Narratives, Vol. 14, Part 1, 2.

<sup>6</sup> State vs. Jones 5 Ala. 666 (1843); State v. Hale. From Cumberland.9 N.C. 582 (1823); Henry Louis Gates, The Classic Slave Narratives: The Life of Oludah Equiano, The History of Mary Prince, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl (New York: Signet Classic, 2002); Stowe, Harriet Beecher, Uncle Tom's Cabin or, Life Among the Lowly (New York: Signet Classic, 1998); Darlene Clark Hine, More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1996), 194.

decisions to make. Engaging in this confrontation, women became agents in their lives' designs by choosing paths of resistance. Even when sexually victimized, slave women did not stay victims. Women found means of self-assertion through interaction with sexually aggressive whites.

Though every enslaved woman's personal experience with white men occurred with a different set of circumstances and behaviors, their response is classifiable. Based upon a slave woman's response to the sexual advances of whites, one can determine that there are three types of reactions--violent resisters, lifetime resisters, and virtuous resisters. The boundaries of these groups are more fluid than rigid and it was possible for a woman to change types within her lifetime, but it does help to understand the three optional paths slave women faced when confronted by white male sexual desire. Each category is briefly defined, but subsequent chapters offer closer examination of these types of women through cases of interracial relationships. In the first chapter, I explain the complications examining sexual relationships in the South, due to the problems in records, the duplicity of record keepers and miscommunications between individuals.

I have selected a variety of cases in the early to mid 1800's with slave women on small southern plantations, usually housing 5-20 slaves. The cases vary by town size, slave population, and proximity to the town, which allows for variety of situations to be revealed. A few cases are removed from the vigilance of white towns, while some cases occur in urban areas as opposed to on the plantation. By closely examining the success of the slave women based upon their nearness to a local town, a connection to a slave woman's locations and likelihood to be sexually assaulted can be made. Urban areas helped protect slave women, and offered them assistance in areas unavailable to women removed from



social supervision. It was also more common for slaves to earn a personal income within urban areas; in such cases masters generally valued slaves more and permitted them their personal time as the masters received a generous portion of this additional income.<sup>7</sup> The cases encompass a variety of southern states, (shown in blue on map below), including but not limited to Missouri, Alabama, Kentucky and Louisiana.

I will examine the influence of, and at times lack of influence of religion on these cases. From the cases I have compiled most women rely more on an internalized moral sense of right and wrong than of a Christian code of good and evil, with the promise of eventual justice in the afterlife. The women did not fret on being condemned by a higher being for their decisions. Instead, they considered the moral implications of their reactions to their situation while they were alive.

The purpose of this paper is to include a broad spectrum of cases, ranging in time and location, to formulate a general understanding of white male and black female sexual relationships in the South. Due to restrictions in records, ranging from lack of legal claims to the illiteracy and silence of slave women, this paper does not represent every instance of relationships, but it does include all the cases I have found within my research. Throughout this paper, I will display how the slave women confronted the institution of slavery through their personal stances on sexual relationships.

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<sup>7</sup> Richard Steckel, "Miscegenation and the American Slaveholders," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. Vol. 11, No. 2 (Autumn 1980), 252, 257.

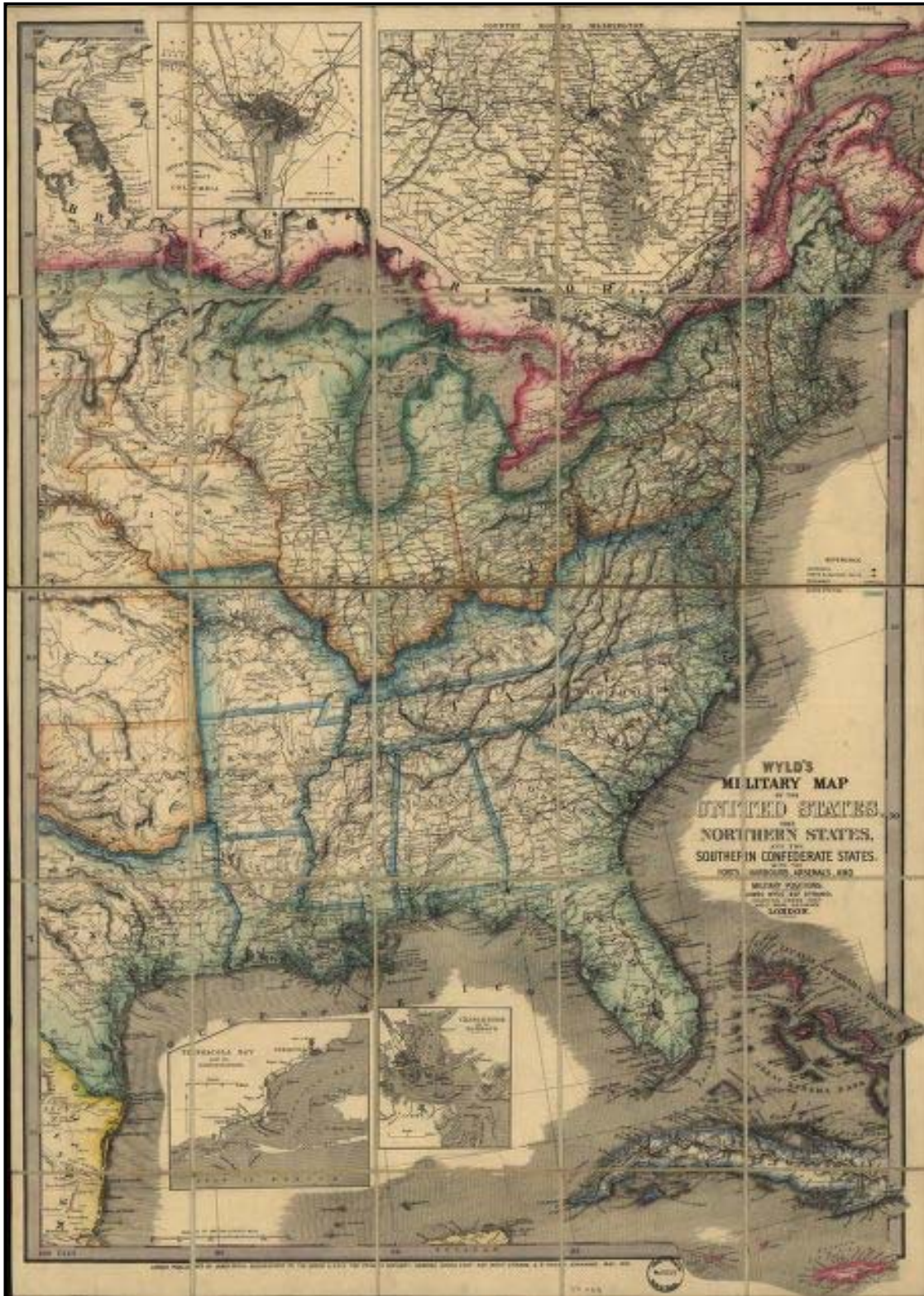


Figure 1.3 Wylde's Military Map of the United States, the northern states, and the southern confederate states, 1861

A violent resistor is the type of black woman who engaged in sexual activity whether consensually or non-consensually. This woman then, for a variety of reasons, from abuse to finding a new lover decided to end the relationship, and did so by exerting a socially disapproved force. This force can range from running away, poisoning, infanticide, and murder. The cook in the earlier account represented another type- the lifetime resistor who resisted by claiming a quality of life denied her, rather than by violence. Lifetime resisters entered and remained in interracial relationships. When a slave woman entered a sexual relationship with a white man and attained economic benefits, such as better housing, food, or clothing, she disproved of the social dogma that slaves were beneath and undeserving of material goods. Lifetime resisters opposed the belief of black women as substandard by demanding improved conditions. These women challenged the boundaries of race, by adapting behaviors usually ascribed only to whites. The last group, the virtuous resisters, are women like Ann, who held their personal virtue in such high esteem, that they could not agree to a sexual relationship in which one partner was innately powerful. They questioned the social standards that placed white men alone in power, by denying white men power over their bodies.

The responses of these women came within an institution that controlled many aspects of their lives. To understand the system that slave women fought against, it is necessary to know southern white social beliefs, which were more complicated than one might expect. Those beliefs made it possible for slave women to fight the system from within; they used the teachings, culture, and practices of white society in order to attempt to reform it. Prior to the Civil War, white southerners relied upon the notions of patriarchy and paternalism to create and enforce social castes. Paternalism, briefly defined, is caring

for and protecting someone who is mentally inferior, as a parent cares for their child out of a sense of duty and inclination. And patriarchy is the belief that a male should be head and lead the household. In slavery, patriarchy extended to dominance over slaves, as when coupled with the idea of paternalism, slaves were considered childlike and irresponsible, and so, in need of guidance. It was believed that slaves needed to be subjugated in order to receive proper care and guidance.<sup>8</sup> This notion especially applied to women. A majority of members in society upheld these beliefs, though those in lower position sought to redefine their position through the system itself.<sup>9</sup> While it may appear that slave women's roles were reforming the institution of slavery, their original intent was simply to resist sexual degradation. Their actions of resistance were the foundations for reformation.

To the slave, paternalism meant that the master could be expected to supply material supports (a slaves' right) in exchange for his or her labor. By considering their food and clothes as an exchange for labor, slaves made themselves vital entities within the plantation structure and less dependent on or controlled by whites. Slaves also demanded that their time off be theirs alone, as it was due to them for their work.<sup>10</sup> The master, however, viewed time off and those materials as part of his patriarchal duties not as reciprocation for work, and in exchange for fulfilling his obligation he demanded gratitude. This gratitude reflected and re-enforced the master's power and right to be in command. It placed the master in a position of benevolence and made the slaves

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<sup>8</sup> William E. Wiethoff, A Peculiar Humanism: The Judicial Advocacy of Slavery in High Courts of the Old South, 1820-1850 (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1996), 58.

<sup>9</sup> Marli Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 88.

<sup>10</sup> Laura Edwards, Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 99.

dependent upon him, asserting that they could not care for themselves.<sup>11</sup> Masters, then, conceived of their relationship as based on charity, while slaves perceived of this relationship as based on the simple exchange of work and “wages.”

Eugene Genovese was the first to identify this elaborate system of compromise, in his work Roll, Jordan Roll. Genovese’s innovative argument stated that the slaves were in fact makers of their own world, by asserting control over certain areas of their lives. Genovese was not the first to assert that slaves had agency. Kenneth Stampp did so in The Peculiar Institution twenty years before. But Genovese stands apart for his definition of the master slave relationship as “a delicate fabric of implicit reciprocal duties.”<sup>12</sup>

Genovese claim is crucial in understanding master slave relationships. Reciprocity is defined as an equal give and take or a mutual exchange, but Genovese’s work clearly states that these relationships were not based upon equality, but interdependency. As the lives of the slave women I discussed above suggests, relationships were not equal--they were not reciprocal. I share in Genovese’s argument, that slaves utilized the systems enforced by their masters, in order to obtain higher benefits. The worst aspect of slavery remained the onerous fact that masters held absolute control, and given such, no relationship under the auspices of slavery could be defined as reciprocal, where an equal give and take existed. While the slaves did fight back, and employed various methods of resistance, slaveholders could restrict a slave’s methods to see whether it fit in the system of slavery. Slaves resisted within the social and economic confines of slavery. A form of exchange did exist, as Genovese suggests,

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<sup>11</sup> Eugene Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 3-7.

<sup>12</sup> Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 72-73.

but the rules of engagement constantly evolved, as both slave and master each strove to improve their position. But slaves were not socially acceptable players in the game for power, while masters not only had written the playbook, but also made themselves the inevitable victors.

It is my argument that black women could play the game of exchange in a manner unavailable to black men, for black women could use sex to work within the system of slavery to push its boundaries. Sex served as power for female slaves. Either in engaging in sex or remaining abstinent, slave women fought the notion of their bodies as property. And they pushed for redefinitions of both sex and race by leading lives that did not adhere to definitions of “black” or “woman”. In Ann’s case her resistance maintained her virtue and self-respect. By examining cases of women, and empowering them instead of victimizing them within history, becomes closer to the truths of the slave experience. Historians, such as Darlene Clark Hine, have called for future historians to incorporate the voices of women in the studies of history in order to stretch the scopes of current understandings.<sup>13</sup> In response to her request historians have reviewed women’s lives, but have done little inspection on reviewing rape as a source of power. While slave women were victimized by rape, they utilized the situation to react against the stigma of being unworthy, and instead ascribed their own value.

But not all types of resistant women received the response they anticipated in their initial tactics. Though their sexuality proved an asset in certain situations, it was the occurrences where their sexuality was nullified that proved their most difficult situations. While a slave woman’s gender could influence her relationship with a white man, her

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<sup>13</sup> Darlene Clark Hine, “Paradigms, Politic and Patriarchy in the making of a Black History: Reflections on From Slavery to Freedom,” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 85, No. 1/2 (Winter- Spring 2000), 18-21.

gender did not evoke the same reaction by white women. Historian Angela Davis acknowledged the ill treatment of slave women by white men and women. White women did not always live up to the image of angel in the household, and oftentimes attacked or framed black women. Recorded in a slave narrative, one slave asserted that “de master of de house was better to us den de mistress.”<sup>14</sup> What provoked these attacks calls attention to interracial relationships. For, white women feared that slave women would entice their husbands or gain his favor.<sup>15</sup>

Yet many slave women never went to the extreme of tantalizing masters away from their wives. Most masters instigated relationships. In her autobiography, Harriet Jacobs wrote, “the mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feelings towards her but those of jealousy and rage.”<sup>16</sup> Slave women suffered both from the mistress and the master. In many cases, the limits in slave women’s abilities to



Figure 1.4 Slave Girl Begging Mistress, 1894

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<sup>14</sup> *Federal Writer’s Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, “Emma was Really Rough: Emma Knight,” Missouri Narratives, Vol. 10, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Murray, *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* originally published in 1861 found in *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York: Signet Classic, 2002), 470.

control the outcome of their resistance has been determined as failure to resist and been slighted through the historical record. By pointing out that black women were raped and brutalized, Davis highlighted a frequently quieted fact. Earlier historians had downplayed the extent of sexual exploitation. But in Davis' exposition that "rape was a weapon of domination, a weapon of repression, whose covert goal was to extinguish slave women's will to resist, and in the process, to demoralize their men," the power of slave women as makers of their own world is revoked.<sup>17</sup> Davis did not speak on the use of sexual powers by female slaves to alleviate their situation; I intend to further her argument by investigating the powers available to black women through their bodies.

Deborah Gray White's Arn't I a Woman did divulge the power of black women within their social network. White's discussion revealed how the formation of familial ties, medical advisors, and fashion designers within the slave network increased the agency of slaves in forming a world of their own within the system of slavery. But sex still was a side equation. White acknowledged interracial relationships and even the willingness of some slaves' entrance into them. Unfortunately for them, as she noted, "if, in order to ease the burdens of slavery, they made themselves available, they only fulfilled the prophecy of their lustfulness, which in turn made it more difficult for other black women to reject the overtures made by black men." White's assertion, then, is that if black women gave in to the pressures of white men for sex, they lost power afforded to them through sex. They not only became the loose women white men defined them as, but they lost defenses against black men as well, as they were not considered worthy or able to make sexual decisions.

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<sup>17</sup> Angela Davis, Women, Race, and Class (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 23-24.



The fulfilled prophecy that White alludes to is that of the black “Jezebel.” Or the “myths...in that both blacks and women are characterized as infantile, irresponsible, submissive, and promiscuous.”<sup>18</sup> The Jezebel theory argued that black women were innate sexual beasts, who seduced white men who did not possess the moral rectitude of white women, and so white males excused their sexual indiscretions by placing the blame on the slave’s alleged sexual prowess. Slave women were the scapegoat for white male’s sexual interests. The Jezebel theory was established to “assuage white guilt” in assaulting women, or permitting assaults to occur.<sup>19</sup> By excusing sexual relationships as due to the black woman’s initiative, white men created an atmosphere of permissiveness that condoned their behaviors. They rationalized that slave women enjoyed sex, and wanted it, so if they were the ones to provide it, it was a harmless act. White society dictated that women should not show they enjoyed sexual activities, so white men ignored refusals and negations as if slave women were merely subscribing to white social beliefs. White men had developed an elaborate system of denial to permit their actions. This led to rape.

But slave women were able to recover from these instances, and simultaneously gain strength and have it removed. Though slave women could not always defend their bodies from white men, they could manipulate the situation to deflect the impact of being sexually assaulted. By asking for improved conditions, slave women expected more from their white masters, even if they could not expect human decency. Deborah White

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<sup>18</sup> White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, 38, 28.

<sup>19</sup> Patricia Morton, ed. Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 211.

conceded the consequences of interracial relationships without recognizing the benefits of such relationships. I am arguing that though black women forfeited some power by entering these relationships, they concurrently challenged barriers of race and sex when the limits of those barriers were forced upon them. Denying the success of black women to use their sexuality, in turn weakens the argument that slaves were agents of their own lives. Being victimized, did not restrict slave women to a position of victims. Black women recovered from sexual aggression, rejected social stigmas of inadequacies, and embraced their own worth.

There has been steady progress in the discussion of interracial relationships and sexual conceptions. Case studies of black men and white women, both in accusations of rape and in consensual long-standing relationships, are emerging as is seen in the work of historians such as Diane Sommerville, Martha Hodes, and Charles Robinson.<sup>20</sup> Many of these case studies focus on the occurrence of white female and black male sexual relationships. As the relationships were not socially condoned acts, researching and revealing the complications systemic from these relationships is complex. Hodes, in particular focuses not on revealing the prevalence of interracial relationships, but on reactions to such cases by society at the time. Women at the time were afforded limited power, yet within the relationships Hodes highlights, poor white women could use their limited racial position to oppress black men, and control their fates. While white women held a low social position, it was still a position above black men. Acknowledging the lower position of white women, both in gender and class, Hodes does not assert the

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<sup>20</sup> Diane Miller Sommerville, Rape and Race in the Nineteenth-Century South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Martha Hodes, White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); and Charles Robinson, Dangerous Liaisons: Sex and Love in the Segregated South (Fayetteville, The University of Arkansas Press, 2003).

probability that given an increase in gender and sexual status, individuals, such as white men, would likely reap a higher proportion of control over their victims. If poor white women could fairly easily influence slave men into sexual relationships, then white men given proportionally higher status, could manipulate at an equally higher level. The caste of sexual control in the South can be seen in its various levels by extending Hodes' conclusions to apply to higher-class white men. But interracial relationships created more than issues of control.

Relationships, especially longer lasting ones, demanded examinations of bastardy, custody, and marital rights. Peter Bardaglio in Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex and the Law in the Nineteenth Century South explores the complications arising from interracial relationships, such as rape, status of children, divorce and inheritance. Bardaglio displays the state's intervention and concern when white patriarchs crossed boundaries of paternalism. But Bardaglio does not explore the reactions and resistance of black women when victims of rape or non-consensual relationships as his purpose was to trace the statutory protections afforded to slaves.<sup>21</sup> His perspective limits a full understanding of the power of slave women when they fought back because it leaves the power of protection to the law alone. Several historians have contributed to collections of essays, which examine rape law, abuse, neglect, and the discrimination against women, black and white, when forced to prove an occurrence of rape.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Bardaglio, Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex and the Law in the Nineteenth Century South (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Hine ed., More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas, Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie ed., The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 129, and Morton ed. Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past.

Looking beyond instances of discrimination against blacks, historians such as Joshua Rothman and Walter Johnson have displayed slaves' utilization of capitalism to forge improved conditions during slavery.<sup>23</sup> Here these historians point to the slave's ability to elevate themselves despite the restraints imposed by whites. Rothman discusses the dynamic of accommodation and disapproval of interracial relationships. Southerners audited laws and behaviors regarding instances of interracial sex, as they recognized the inability to avoid such liaisons. But in interracial relationships, the lines between coercion and consent were not always distinct. Blacks were both pursued and prosecuted in sexual relationships, and had to learn to negotiate for improved circumstances in both situations. Slave women were pursued by white men, and black men were prosecuted by white women. In both cases, slaves were victimized by white stereotypes of sexual relationships, and slaves had to utilize those myths to survive being crushed in either situation. Both Rothman and Johnson reveal the lengths to which slaves went to ensure the best negotiations of their transient status.

As this last scholarship suggests, in commodifying their own bodies, whether as prostitutes or within the slave trade, slaves could establish their own values and then demand specific treatment based upon their worth. Slaves then resisted their positions while working within them, as their behaviors could either detract or attract buyers.<sup>24</sup> During the past fifteen years, the discussion of women's lack of rights has been thoroughly analyzed. Because women had been taken advantage of in the past and

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<sup>23</sup> Joshua Rothman, Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families Across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787-1861 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) and Walter Johnson, Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Hine, More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas, 99, 105.

denied their rightful methods of reproach, historians have compensated by exposing injustice and exonerating blacks from sexual stigmas. However historians have yet to fully explore how slave women worked within the sexual realm to create methods of resistance. While Rothman and Johnson are moving towards the conceptualization of slave's awareness of their market value, little has been associated to a slave woman's evaluation of sex. And so we should recognize that slaves who had the foresight to ascribe a value to their physical and mental presentation of self could also extend it to a sexual appraisal of their body.

The women who did not permit themselves to be sexual victims were empowered by their resistance. A slave woman's denial to become a breeder, prevented a master from absolute control. Identifying these women as engaged in a "gynecological revolt," Jennifer Morgan closely identifies the ability of slave women to use their bodies as a form of resistance.<sup>25</sup> But she limits their resistance to abstinence--those in the virtuous resistor role. While Morgan correctly displays slave women's abilities to resist masters, she does not attribute this skill beyond preventing relationships. Some slave women "revolted" or fought back through physical violence, elusive acts of poisoning, and outright murder. Resistant women pushed the boundaries of slavery by refusing to acquiesce to the absolute power of white males. In taking a stand, these women redefined property rights. Women conceived of their bodies as having inalienable rights, worthy of defense. And this thought process laid the groundwork for later demands of citizenship and suffrage.

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<sup>25</sup> Jennifer Morgan, Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 11.

Both sets of women, the concubines and defiant ones, were able to secure an identity for themselves in a culture that was designed to erase the autonomy and agency of slaves. In entering or preventing a relationship, black women forced white men to see them in a different light. Black women did not passively accept the socially assigned status of property. Despite the lack of legal response or social sympathy, black women found a means of relying on themselves, through controlling access to their bodies, to decide their fate. By examining cases of women who subscribed to both systems of thought, both the mistress and the virtuous woman, I intend to display the lives these women created and the power they afforded themselves in relationships. At the same time, I will reveal the difficulty in evading advances of white men, given that black women were afforded neither rights nor protection.

But women were able to react to white males' advances and restructure the relationship to one that benefited them, though it also required them to forfeit absolute control over their bodies. This bifurcated purpose of a black woman's body to serve as a means of enforcing control while at the same time relinquishing control forged a relationship between white men and black women quite unlike the relationships that were welded out of same race individuals. While white women also could use their sex to manipulate their husbands, their lives were not placed in such a precarious state as black women. If a white woman refused her husband, she would not lose her home or risk the sale of her children. With these threats lingering over the heads of slave women, they had to carefully devise strategies that allowed them power without provoking their white lover. The devices women brandished--to use their body as a tool for rights and a weapon of defense--reveal an otherwise undisclosed possibility of agency within a

slave's life. But these complicated relationships merit scrutiny. In the next chapter, I will broadly examine the effects, classifications, expectations, and reactions regarding interracial southern relationships.

The white master and slave woman were not the only two affected by these relationships. Their spouses (if married) and children had profound influence on the interactions between the two. These groups could use their knowledge to interfere with, complicate, and manipulate these relationships, making either party involved suffer. Guilt and exposure were two weapons families used when they were aware of an interracial relationship within their household. Slave women had to confront a variety of people, each with different backgrounds and motives, when they entered into a relationship with a white male. The demands slave women made and the demands made of slave women did not always coincide and usually varied based on an individual's sex, race, and class. Southerners held specific beliefs about sex and race, which shaped slave women's responses to sexual assaults and methods of assistance.

The debate of rape and consensual sex between slaveholders and slaves began during slavery; it is a topic that still has not been settled. How these relationships were interpreted then and now, legally and socially, reflect the struggles in empowering women and their methods of resistance. In the next chapter, I will display the number of complications arising from studying these relationships. I will also discuss the various views of sexual relationships from the perspectives of those who were involved. Sex was a pillar of miscommunication and misinterpretation in southern society. Yet somehow, through the misguided interpretations, slave women were able to find a voice of resistance. Women molded, as much as they were molded by, "the fiends who bear the

shapes of men.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Gates, The Classic Slave Narratives: The Life of Oludah Equiano, The History of Mary Prince, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl (New York: Signet Classic, 2002). Statement based upon a quote from Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, by Harriet Jacobs, referring to her experience of slave women whom are confronted by a white man’s lust.



## CHAPTER 2

### FORCE: SEX IN THE SOUTH

“Bad as all slaveholders are, we seldom meet one destitute of every element of character commanding respect.” Frederick Douglass, 1845



Figure 2.1 Broadside dated August 4, 1853, announcing a reward for the apprehension and return of a runaway slave named Emily who belonged to Thomas H. Williams.

Defining and understanding sexual relationships during this time is complicated

for a variety of reasons. Each person and system involved had different understandings of sexual relationships, and so, responded to interracial unions with varying opinions. The law, the couple, the couple's spouses, and all peer groups impacted interracial relationships. Each offered distinct reactions. The first complication in studying these relationships was the means by which southerners viewed and construed rape as shown in their laws. How southerners conceived of and created consequences for rape reflected the power of white elite males and also established roles of individuals in the South. This chapter focuses on the different perceptions of interracial relationships by slave women, white men, and white women, to show the varied beliefs on sexual assaults and each group's reactions to such a claim. Specifically, how did each group view and react to interracial rape? How has consent been defined, then and now? What legal systems or social customs were in place to respond to such violations?

The perception of ability to rape for black men and black women revealed two conflicting schools of thought in Southern society. Southerners carefully created a legislative system that assumed the role of an individual based upon their gender and racial identity. White women were considered the victims, black men--the aggressors, white men--the innocents, and black women--the legally undefended. Only one group was consistently placed into its category regardless of situation- black women.<sup>27</sup> Each of the other groups had instances where they did not always fit their ascribed category, for instance, if a white man raped a white woman, he would not be considered innocent. Even black men were absolved of their sexually aggressive title in cases where it was evident that women (including white women) entered into a relationship consensually. But black women were frozen in a position of insignificance.

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<sup>27</sup> Edwards, Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction, 186.

The means by which rape was defined for black women distorts the means of pinpointing cases of sexual abuse. In the South, it was legally impossible to rape a black woman.<sup>28</sup> Black women too were not found capable of raping or molesting others. By southern standards, it was not necessary to make provisions protecting slave women, as they were considered property. Slave women were not protected from being physically abused either. In fact, one court decided in the case of an abused slave that if the “assaulted is a slave... is not protected by the general criminal law of the state.”<sup>29</sup> The courts upheld the system of slavery, and in this task, could not view black women as human, but only as property.<sup>30</sup>

By eliminating legal repercussions of rape, it is difficult to trace occurrences of it. Testimonies were not heard, cases were not filed, and punishments were not enacted. But females were raped, despite the absence of legal recognition. Within the southern states, slaves held a high proportion of the population, at times outnumbering whites in rural areas. Many counties had larger numbers of slaves concentrated on plantations or farms. According to an 1860 census, nearly 78% of Alabama’s free Negroes were mulatto, meaning they were descendants of white and black parents. Louisiana held even higher numbers.<sup>31</sup> Both states had a slave population above 45%; so black women were

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<sup>28</sup> Joel Williamson, After Slavery: The Negro in South Carolina During Reconstruction, 1861-1877 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965) 66; and Martha Hodes, White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South, 141.

<sup>29</sup> State vs. Hale, from Cumberland, Supreme Court of North Carolina, 9 N.C. 582 (1823).

<sup>30</sup> Melton A. McLaurin, Celia, A Slave (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 93.

<sup>31</sup> Gary Mills, “Miscegenation and the Free Negro in Antebellum “Anglo” Alabama: A Reexamination of Southern Race Relations,” *The Journal of American History*. Vol. 68, No. 1 (June 1981), 19.

Table 2.1 Census of 1860: Portion of a map showing the distribution of the slave population of the southern states of the United States.

<i>Census of 1860.</i>						
<i>No.</i>	<i>States.</i>	<i>Free Population.</i>	<i>Slave Population.</i>	<i>Total.</i>	<i>Per-Centage of Slaves.</i>	
1	South Carolina	301,271	402,541	703,812	57.2	
2	Mississippi	354,700	436,696	791,396	55.1	
3	Louisiana	376,280	333,010	709,290	47.0	
4	Alabama	529,164	435,132	964,296	45.1	
5	Florida	78,686	61,753	140,439	43.9	
6	Georgia	595,097	462,232	1,057,329	43.7	
7	North Carolina	661,586	331,081	992,667	33.4	
8	Virginia	1,105,192	490,887	1,596,079	30.7	
9	Texas	421,750	180,682	602,432	30.0	
10	Arkansas	324,323	111,104	435,427	25.5	
11	Tennessee	834,063	275,784	1,109,847	24.8	
12	Kentucky	930,223	225,490	1,155,713	19.5	
13	Maryland	599,846	87,188	687,034	12.7	
14	Missouri	1,067,352	114,965	1,182,317	9.7	
15	Delaware	110,420	1,798	112,218	1.6	
		8,289,953	3,950,343	12,240,296	32.2	

available and accessible.<sup>32</sup> Though slaves were grouped together on farms and worked and lived together, the birth of lighter skinned slaves continued regularly in the Southern states. In fact, between 1850-1860, the mulatto population in the South increased from 19.6% to 66.9%.<sup>33</sup> Mulatto, by definition, is the mixture of white and black blood. It does not necessarily mean that each mulatto was composed of a white and black parent, but that one parent was racially mixed.<sup>34</sup> But the number of lighter pigmented slaves increased with regularity, which indicates that there was a consistent mixing of Caucasian

<sup>32</sup> Theodor Ettl, "Map of the United States of North America, Upper & Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia & British Columbia. Mexico, Cuba, Jamaica, St. Domingo and the Bahama Islands," (Paris: Paniconographie de Gillot, 1861).

<sup>33</sup> Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1980), 62.

<sup>34</sup> The definitions of mulattos changed over time in the South. Within the early years of slavery, mulattos were considered to be born from one white and one black parent. Later, after emancipation, definitions changed to consider mulattos as racially mixed, having just one drop of black blood.

and African blood. The mulatto population does prove that whites and blacks were sexually active; it does not however conclusively prove instances of rape.

The sexual activity alludes to a healthy sexual environment, but the modern definitions of rape must be approached with careful consideration. Here, historians enter in to the defining of rape and sex in the south, by categorizing relationships between consensual and non-consensual. A few historians have assessed that a slave woman's acceptance of what she deemed a lesser fate, such as facing forced sex or sale, as consent. But it is my interpretation and argument that decisions in sexual relationships are never consensual when one party has the authority, social support, and legal sanction to manipulate and overpower the other party.<sup>35</sup> In a social system designed to be not only racially oppressive and sexually discriminatory, female slaves were on a drastically different plane of existence than white southern males. Slavery was a business, and the profit was human reproduction. Slaves recalled that "large families were the aim and pride of a slave owner and he quickly learned which of the slave women were breeders and which were not." Those that were not were sold with the elderly.<sup>36</sup> Slave women were expected to bear the brunt of creating a surplus. An ex-slave, Georgia Giwbs recalled that masters would marry slaves despite their ages or desires to be together--the purpose was to have them breed.<sup>37</sup> Having no choice only furthers the difficulty in

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<sup>35</sup> While southern society had stronger restrictions against black women, I do not presume to state that white women were not forced into relationships, nor that they were not manipulated or discriminated against. White women were not equals in the South, and so were subject to rape within their relationships. As this work focuses on black women and white men, I have not explored the depth to which white women were sexually exploited.

<sup>36</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Isaiah Green: An ex-slave's opinion of slavery," Georgia Narratives, Vol. 4, Part 2, 50.

<sup>37</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Interview of Mrs. Georgia Giwbs, ex-slave," Virginia Narratives, Vol. 17, 15.

defining relationships as consensual simply because a slave woman allowed it to exist or endured it for a time.

As black women had no authority to consent, and sexual assaults occurred frequently, it can be asserted that the numbers of intermixing came from predominately non-consensual relationships. The inability to say no without suffering ramifications meant too that slave women said yes out of fear. Southern law permitted the sexual exploitation of slave women. In examining southern interracial relationships it is crucial to sift through minute details, which unveil the resistance of slave women. This resistance proves an unwavering dislike for nonconsensual relationships. It is not likely that the majority of those mulatto children resulted from relationships sought out by slave women, but rather from interactions initiated by white men who had the power and authority to engage in sexual relationships with blacks without legal action and with little social consequence. Though some consensual relationships were formed, it is more likely that a large number of mulattos were created from relationships in which the woman forfeited her right to refuse a man, in order to prevent from being beaten, abused, or sold.<sup>38</sup> While slave women were not given a legal right to refuse, according to slave communities, she still had a moral right to reject unwanted advances. Without protection from rape, women who conceded to relationships to avoid repercussions may have made different choices if they would have been afforded civil liberties. But for slaves, along with rights, came wrongs.

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<sup>38</sup> Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, 157, 260-26; McLaurin, Celia, A Slave 20, 97; Morton ed. Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 56, 165 and Hine, More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas, 247.

Sexual relationships had distinct meanings for all those involved, and yet, even when viewing the relationships from an outside position, modern researchers try to approach using additional sets of beliefs. When studying or describing these relationships, historians and students struggle to classify groups of women. It is imperative not to try to label these relationships with modern social terms. The social structure of the South was unique in its formation and practice. It may be argued that the women who yielded to white men in order to achieve alleviated conditions were prostitutes. While submitting, this type of woman entered these relationships based upon the dictation of a white male supremacy and a lack of legally sanctioned protection or acknowledgment of black females. They faced a choice between suffering severe consequences or submitting to a situation that improved their lifestyle while forfeiting control over their bodies. The women who engaged in these relationships did seek a profit, or at least compensation, but did initially seek out, entice, or bargain with men for their provisions. These women were the products of the social system the South produced, and out of interest in self preservation they became concubines, and some even held positions like that of white men's wives. These submitting, though not submissive, women capitalized on their situation. While there must have been women who deliberately sought out these relationships in order to attain benefits, a great majority of relationships were instigated by white men. Black women did capitalize on their investment. And when the compensation held no recompense, the women would fight to restructure the relationship.



Figure 2.2 Mulatto Woman: This photo represents the type of mulatto sought by white males to serve as a mistress, circa 1870.

Slave women were not necessarily prepared for relationships with white men, but after becoming involved, they made every effort to ensure a stable and fruitful future. Black women sought improved living conditions, as well as manumission for their children, when they were products of such relationships. And white men had conceptions of mulatto women that blurred the color lines and slave women's understanding of slavery. For a better understanding of this type of distorted relationship, I will move to an actual case. Rose, a slave woman, was purchased by her master for his express purpose of having a concubine. This action occurred so frequently that a trade and market for slave women evolved to accommodate white's sexual desires. Certain locations, such as New Orleans, became the apex of the "fancy trade," or selling of light



skinned mulattos for a man's personal use. Slave traders stole, bartered for, and tricked slave girls and women in order to supply the burgeoning market with concubines.<sup>39</sup>

The reputation of the market in New Orleans was well known by the slaves. One ex-slave, William Oliver stated, "the cruelest treatment I know of in the United States and all other states was done in the southwestern states...New Orleans."<sup>40</sup> New Orleans even held quadron balls where black women could dress up and entertain men, hoping to secure a long-term benefactor in exchange for improved conditions. Relationships forged in this environment could last from a few weeks to a lifetime.<sup>41</sup> Sex was for sale, under the guise of refined dinner conversation, playful music, and ruffled gowns.

Fair-skinned women, like Rose, resembled white women, but were still under white men's proprietary rule. White men controlled these relationships. In Rose's case, she immediately knew her position. Before paying for her, Rose's prospective master took her home and "tried her out." Finding that she suited his needs, he purchased her and had several light skinned mulatto offspring by her. The children were distinct from the other slave children, not only in their skin color, but also in their high quality attire. They were well provided for and admired by the other slaves on the plantation. They were freed upon their father's death. Rose, however, was not.<sup>42</sup> In keeping Rose a slave, the master proved that even in death, he kept her dependent, but was still seen as

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<sup>39</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Francis Black an ex-slave from Mississippi," Texas Narratives, Vol. 16, Part 1, 87.

<sup>40</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Recollections of Uncle William Oliver," South Carolina Narratives, Vol. 14, Part 3, 219.

<sup>41</sup> Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United*, 23.

<sup>42</sup> Blassingame, ed., *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies*, 361-362.

charitable by releasing his children from an oppressive system. If this were a truly loving and equal relationship, the master would not have kept his beloved partner captive.

Slave men confronted different stereotypes and reactions when it came to rape. Black men were afforded the power to rape, but only against white women. Though it was a contradiction in slave law, courts perceived black men of capable of violating, in the same area where black women were inviolable. Black men could rape, but slave women were deemed “unrapeable.” This inconsistency further complicated the understanding of sexual relationships and the position of interracial partners. Giving this power to black men, while concurrently removing protection of black women, only further highlights the contradictions of the South. This additional complication emphasizes the fluid state of southern sexuality. Whites wanted rigid borders intact, yet wanted to manipulate those borders to their advantage. They wanted black women for sex and white women for marriage. Black men were seen as bestial animals incapable of controlling their sexual urges. The treatment of black men only further silenced black women who were confronted with rape, as it enforced their position as “de mule uh de world.”<sup>43</sup>

And this stereotype is further perpetuated throughout history, as white men saw and labeled black men as sexual predators of white women. The film *Birth of a Nation* highlights the Southern obsession with the thought of black men pillaging a young white virgin. After the Civil War, southerners claimed that black men started raping after freedom, a means of asserting the need for white control and paternalism.<sup>44</sup> Even so,

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<sup>43</sup> Zora Neal Hurston, *Their Eyes were Watching God* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1937), 29.

<sup>44</sup> Jeanette Keith, “‘Cry Rape’: Race, Class, and the Law in the Nineteenth Century South,” *Reviews in American History* 33 (June 2005), 191-196.

whites were most concerned about the sanctity of their wives and daughters, and constantly feared black men's attacks on white women. Southern society shifted its pressures of patriarchy from the field to the household. As southerners could no longer control slaves in the field, they became fixated on protecting their families from their worst fears--tainted white women.<sup>45</sup> This theme of the black rapist is approached and repeated throughout Southern culture, so much that as late as the 1980's, sociologists conducted studies to see if black men raped more frequently than whites as a means of reasserting manhood, or reacting against restraints made by white America.<sup>46</sup> Though the growing concern of the black rapist occurred after freedom, whites still were concerned with the act while blacks were enslaved. Evidence of this concern is reflected in the legal system.

Given court cases alone, black men did rape white women, though much less frequently than white men's rape of slave women. Between 1800-1865, out of twelve southern states, there were 250 cases of white women sexually assaulted by black men.<sup>47</sup> The numbers were rather low, and in several cases, the women claimed raped upon the pregnancy or birth of a nonwhite child, which displayed a black father. Rape served as an excuse for a white woman's indiscretions. While these instances highlight the protection available to poorer white women, versus the absence of help to slave women,

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<sup>45</sup> Edwards, "The Disappearance of Susan Daniel and Henderson Cooper; Gender and Narratives of Political Conflict in the Reconstruction-Era U.S. South," *Feminist Studies*. Vol. 22, No. 2 (Summer 1996), 369.

<sup>46</sup> Gary LaFree, "Male Power and Female Victimization: Toward a Theory of Interracial Rape," *The American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 88, No. 2 (Sep. 1982), 311-328.

<sup>47</sup> Sommerville, "The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered," *The Journal of Southern History*. Vol. 61, No. 3 (Aug. 1995), 484, 491.

the cases also display the abuse of slave men in interracial relationships. Black men were scapegoats.<sup>48</sup> And while they were not tried for it, black men could and did rape black women and children.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 2.3 “How Slaves were Flogged before the Civil War, 1861-1862”

When a black man did commit rape against a white woman, or stood accused of rape, his punishment would vary from enduring whippings, castration, or death. Castration was a more common type of punishment, as it allowed the master to maintain his investment, and it removed the threat of a repeat offense. The abuses inflicted on black men when questioned in sexual assaults exceeded normal beatings, and were meant

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<sup>48</sup> Edwards, “The Disappearance of Susan Daniel and Henderson Cooper; Gender and Narratives of Political Conflict in the Reconstruction-Era U.S. South,” *Feminist Studies*, 369.

<sup>49</sup> Sommerville, “‘I Was Very Much Wounded’: Rape Law, Children, and the Antebellum South,” found in *Sex Without Consent: Rape and Sexual Coercion in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 153.

to serve as examples for other slaves.<sup>50</sup> Many times, their freshly cut wounds were cleaned with salt water to exact additional suffering. A freed slave declared that “there are hundreds of slaves that have not the same skin they were born with,” due to the scarring from extreme flogging.<sup>51</sup> In Virginia between 1800-1865, over 150 black males were convicted and sentenced to death in cases of sexual assaults. But nearly half escaped their sentences, for the court’s unwillingness to deprive a master of his property.<sup>52</sup> A white man, in Mississippi or Georgia, convicted of the same crime, would face a most severe punishment of 20 years in jail.<sup>53</sup> And some times, convicted or not, slave men were thrown into jail on a master’s whim.<sup>54</sup> Due to the intensity of punishment, black men rarely raped white women, and instead made black women or black children their prey, as sexually assaulting these victims met with little to no reprimands. At worst, a slave could be met with charges of assault and battery if the black victim struggled and had to be subdued.<sup>55</sup> Black men faced severe repercussions when sexually promiscuous with white women, and as seen in the runaway ad pictured, blacks were physically marked by the abuses rendered unto them. Southern conceptions

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<sup>50</sup> Clinton, and Gillespie ed., The Devil’s Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South, 82; State v. Brady, 28 Tenn. 74 (1848); Doc. Lonas v. State, 50 Tenn. 287 (1871); Thurman v. State, 18 Ala. 276 (1850).

<sup>51</sup> Peter Randolph, Sketches of a Slave Life: or, Illustrations of the ‘Peculiar Institution’, (Boston: Published for the Author, 1855), 21-22.

<sup>52</sup> Sommerville, “The Rape Myth in the Old South Reconsidered,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 484-485.

<sup>53</sup> Bardaglio, Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex and the Law in the Nineteenth Century South, 69.

<sup>54</sup> *Federal Writer’s Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, “Negro Pioneer Teacher of Portsmouth, Virginia: Mary Jane Wilson,” Virginia Narratives, Vol. 17, 1.

<sup>55</sup> Sommerville, “‘I Was Very Much Wounded’: Rape Law, Children, and the Antebellum South,” found in Sex Without Consent: Rape and Sexual Coercion in America, 155.

of rape tried to instigate submission of black men physically, and black women, sexually. In either case, the law did not protect blacks. In fact, violence was legally sanctioned.

Black women and children served as easy targets for both black and white men. So Southern states established laws that not only diminished black women's status, but also placed them in a position to be attacked by white and black men. In refusing to protect black women, white southerners fell short of the true idea of paternalism, in which an owner should comfort and care for all his slaves. Masters instead dismissed ideas of consent and considered relationships as profitable to slaves who were given an increased status and protection--in short, masters excused their relationships as the ideal of paternalism. Southerners used the idea of paternalism to justify owning slaves, but did not extend their beliefs of protection to laws made regarding female slaves. Failing to do so belied notions of genteel masculinity and kept black women in a separate category than white women. And white men frequently took advantage of a black woman's position in order to seek sexual gratification. Understanding how the laws were set up

**\$150 REWARD.**  
**R**ANAWAY from the subscriber, on the night of Monday the 11th July, a negro man named  
**TOM,**  
about 30 years of age, 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high; of dark color; heavy in the chest; several of his jaw teeth out; and upon his body are several old marks of the whip, one of them straight down the back. He took with him a quantity of clothing, and several hats.  
A reward of \$150 will be paid for his apprehension and security, if taken out of the State of Kentucky; \$100 if taken in any county bordering on the Ohio river; \$50 if taken in any of the interior counties except Fayette; or \$20 if taken in the latter county.  
July 12-84-tf B. L. BOSTON.

Figure 2.4 Runaway Slave Ad, July 11

against both black women and black men, reveals how unlikely true willingness existed for both parties interracial relationship. The relationships forged under these set of circumstances were fragile.

When rape of a black woman did occur, it usually afforded no consequence to the perpetrator. Above all, courts protected a master's unlimited authority. This godlike provision for masters only spawned devilish actions, for with the reproduction of slaves, came offspring who served as additional property for the masters.<sup>56</sup> Masters quickly learned they could manipulate the reproductive capacity of a female in order to increase property through birth, and exploitation rapidly ensued. With each new birth, masters obtained an increase in property and a raise in their social status, as owners of a larger number of slaves.<sup>57</sup> Though some masters directly partook in the extension of slave property, many allowed it to occur by turning a blind eye, and most remained silent on the occurrence altogether. But masters did maintain constant surveillance on the reproductive capacity of slaves and the health of the slave children. While away from the plantation, many masters wrote to inquire on the status of pregnant women and newborns.<sup>58</sup> Because of pressure of honor and duty, white men did not openly proclaim their sexual escapades, which were socially inappropriate. As rapes were not documented then, it is difficult to find the total numbers or frequency of rapes on plantations.

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<sup>56</sup> Steckel, "Miscegenation and the American Slaveholders," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 255.

<sup>57</sup> Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, 83.

<sup>58</sup> Robert S. Starobin, ed., *Blacks in Bondage: Letters of American Slaves* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1998), 37, 45, 57, 68, and 90.

White men justified the rape of slave women, by excusing rape as breeding. Masters saw a literal profit for each birth of a new slave child. Sexual relationships were further complicated by the factor of reproduction of “property,” or the slaves’ children. Whether through rape or early arranged marriages, masters sought to ensure that slave women would bear children regularly.<sup>59</sup> Their tactics were successful, for slave women had children earlier and more frequently than white women. On average, black women had their first child at age 19, whereas white women began childbearing at age 21.<sup>60</sup> One slave midwife stated she “couln’ never tell how many baby I bring in dis world, dey come so fast.”<sup>61</sup> The midwife only assisted black women in childbirth, so the reproduction trends she witnessed were of slave families. Some slave women were granted benefits for reproducing, such as time off, extra rations, or new clothes. The birthing process reaped rewards for slave women. But white men ensured that they would sow the greatest rewards.<sup>62</sup> As early as 1662, Virginia statues deemed that mulatto children would follow the condition of their mother. In other words, if born of a slave mother, half white children would be slaves as well. This law only helped to cement the benefits of manipulative relationships in order to secure reproduction, authority, and

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<sup>59</sup> White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, 68; Gates, The Classic Slave Narratives: The Life of Oludah Equiano, The History of Mary Prince, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl, 332, 340; Kathleen Brown, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 320-321; and Murray, Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family, 43.

<sup>60</sup> White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, 97 and Steven Weisenburger, Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 34.

<sup>61</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, “Mom Sarah Brown,” South Carolina Narratives, Volume XIV, Part 1, 1.

<sup>62</sup> Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 417-419.



proceeds.<sup>63</sup> White men encouraged and participated in slave reproduction because it benefited their profit margin, and alleviated their sexual drive. The laws they established on rape and slave's children indicate the efforts made to control slave's lives. But the actions of whites also reveal their efforts to excuse their behavior as beneficial.<sup>64</sup>

Beyond the laws of rape and reproduction lay the beliefs of the southerners themselves. General southern social customs coupled with slaves' African traditions, developed dual and dueling conceptions of work and familial relationships. Masters and slaves each followed doctrines composed of both socially induced and self accepted truths. Slaves felt they earned benefits, masters felt they were generous in fulfilling anything beyond basic needs. These systems of beliefs have already been touched on, and extended from basic activities on the plantations to the private sexual lives of masters and slaves. This dual activity of control and provision continued throughout all aspects of master slave relationships, especially in those involving white men and black women. But this layering of deceit and excused actions further hinders the understanding of a relationship between white men and black women. Each entered relationships under a separate conceptualization of their position with the relationship. The gap between the reality of their feelings and the environment in which they were raised widened when one or both of the participants exerted pressure.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Paul Finkelman, "Crimes of Love, Misdemeanors of Passion: the Regulation of Race and Sex in the Colonial South," in Clinton and Gillespie ed., The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South, 129.

<sup>64</sup> Slave men suffered consequences of these forced reproductive relationships. Many slaves were separated if they failed to yield a child within a year or two of living together. Slave men also witnessed women they had feelings for be given to men of "better stock" in order to produce stronger children. While slave men suffered from these instances as well, I am focusing on the relationships between white men and black women, and so have not provided detailed accounts regarding the mental and physical trauma of black men.

<sup>65</sup> Genovese, Eugene, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 5.

Unlike the need to avoid historian's categorization of consent versus non-consensual relationships, borrowing analyses from historians regarding master slave hierarchical structure and exchange elucidates crucial expectation in relationships. Genovese's argument of the master/ slave compromise and reciprocal exchange can be applied to the sexual relationships between slaves and masters. This exchange was always unequal as Genovese defined it. Slave women sought a compensation for what was taken from them---dignity and respect. It cannot be construed as an even give and take relationship as when a husband provides for his spouse. Examining these cases demands constant attention to the oppressive state of the relationship. When a slave woman became a mistress she ascribed to a system of exchange in keeping with Genovese's argument, for she expected better provisions than the slaves in the fields. In exchange for her service, she wanted material support.<sup>66</sup> But it did not mean that her situation was reciprocal in that there was an equal give and take; entering a relationship as a concubine hardly reflects equal participation. It did reveal a slave woman's sexual drive and humanity. She could use her sexual interest to produce a life she felt was better.

In entering interracial relationships, slave women held specific beliefs about the outcome of the relationships. Their conceptions shaped relationships, and at times left them alone with their anticipated outcomes, and no final results. Slave women sought provisions for themselves and their children when they were involved with a white man. One slave, Lewis Clarke, recalled his master's relationships with black women and the

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<sup>66</sup> McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave*, 24; Ira Berlin, Marc Favreau, and Steven Miller eds. *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk about their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Freedom* (New York: The New Press, 1998), 49.

fact that the master would “dress ‘em up, and make ‘em little presents, and give ‘em more privileges, while the whim lasts.”<sup>67</sup> Black women also sought security for the children that were products of her relationship. Slave women wanted to ensure their children’s safety by keeping them out of field labor, and ideally securing their eventual freedom. A child of an interracial relationship, James Calhart, a South Carolinian slave recalled that his white father promised “mother when I became of age, he was going to free me, and send me north to be educated.” James also pointed out that his clothes, housing, and toys were superior to the other slaves. He was emancipated, attended Howard University and taught school for over 40 years. By all means, his life was a success, and his caveat to obtaining such provisions was largely due to the arrangement made by his mother. His light skinned mother was purchased by Franklin Randolph, when she was 15; by age 22 she had her son.<sup>68</sup>

Within relationships, masters held the expectation that their paternalistic gifts or charitable acts stemmed from their benevolence, and that they should be respected for their generosity. But black women had a different conception and expectation from their relationships with whites. Becoming concubines, to slave women, meant the assurance of certain returns. Analyzing Rose’s experience requires attention to detail, such as her master’s unwillingness to free Rose. The battle for control as shown in Rose’s case is symptomatic of cases in the South that involved white men and black women. Though slave women may not have had the final say within the relationships, the progress they made speaks volumes. Attaining her children’s freedom, Rose compelled her master to

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<sup>67</sup> Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, 157.

<sup>68</sup> *Federal Writer’s Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, “James Calhart, ex-slave,” Maryland Narratives, Vol. 8, 35.

acknowledge his progeny and the need to fulfill his patriarchal duty of caring for them. Using her situation, Rose was able to play on her master's sense of duty to secure a stable future for their children. White Southerners who chose to engage in interracial relationships did not enter the relationship holding similar goals or purposes, and because of this, these relationships revolved around manipulation. Both parties would compel the other to adhere to their set of beliefs. When a white man took a slave woman as his concubine, he took on a set of responsibilities. Some were realized, and some unfolded as the relationship developed.

White men invested time and money into these women, which generally resulted in a bond (of varying degrees) and this connection further complicated the understanding of sexual relationships. This bond preserved the quality of life a concubine enjoyed. Submissive women were allotted provisions by their lovers. White men saw this care taking as gift giving, promises to "make a lady" out of a slave woman, but black women became accustomed to higher standards of living, and so began expecting improvements in their social and economic positions.<sup>69</sup> The confusion between the two intimate parties only reflects the difficulties black women and white men had in defining and accepting their relationships. Most women sought to escape the evils of slavery by participating within the system, but in doing so, they also helped destroy it. For from these relationships, many women obtained freedom for themselves and their progeny, and in doing so, took future slaves out of the hands of slaveholders, thereby weakening the system. By rejecting the notion of black people being property, these slave women were

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<sup>69</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl originally published in 1861 found in The Classic Slave Narratives, 479 and 499.

able to redefine their caste and prove that slaves were human and as such, required freedom.

While both the master and slave impacted the development of relationships, white men maintained the most power when it came to terminating the relationship. Black women responded to rape through retribution. But a slave woman's position as a concubine was precarious. Sexual relationships were not safe in the south. Loss of a master's absolute dominance over his concubine could fracture these delicate relationships and unveil the brutality of slavery. Despite what slave women expected, by societal and legal standpoints, they were not owed anything from their white lovers. Though slave women may have entered relationships demanding further rights and benefits, their requests were not always met. As property, black women, could be treated in whatever manner the master deemed fit. And because it was socially, though perhaps not morally acceptable, white men could keep black women in a constant state of disarray. Slave mistresses could be ignored, abandoned or replaced at any time, so once they attained that status black women usually strove to preserve it. But not all women maintained these relationships. Some emboldened by the luxuries and accommodations they had received tried to break from relationships. These black women felt empowered by their lush treatment and pushed for both civil and women's rights through their individual lifestyle.

But again sex in the South was not so advanced as to allow for clean breaks or easy refusals. Sex was highly regarded and regulated by masters. Stepping out of the condoned behaviors within the master-slave relationship had immediate consequences for

the slave woman, such as beating, selling, torture devices, or extra duties.<sup>70</sup> Slaves did not have the ability to form their own, independent world, because masters were afforded the ultimate power over slaves' lives. Slave women had to manipulate the regulations of sexual relationships with their white masters, in order to push for additional rights and benefits. But a slave woman's efforts were always restricted. They did not have unlimited resources or abilities to manipulate relationships that could be used to their benefits. Confined by social stigmas and systems that defined southern life, slave women had to execute their behaviors so that they sidestepped the consequences of their "deviant" behavior while still securing their own desires. Resistant slave women surely impacted slavery and attempted to mold it to suit their needs. The desires of masters may have prevailed, although not without interference and reactions from the slaves. Slave women could work within the system in order to obtain improved conditions, and this went so far as to consenting to concubine.

Because white men defined sexual relationships as power based, slave women could not easily exit relationships. Those who either rejected the life of a concubine, or later wanted to renege on the agreement confronted numerous obstacles. Ann's admittance of abuse coupled with the responses from other slaves is indicative that Ann was not alone in resisting white's advances. For example, an account written by another slave, Lewis Hayden, recalled the heartbreaking situation of his mother. "She would not consent to live with this {white} man, as he wished; and he sent her to prison, and had her flogged, and punished in various ways, so that at last she began to have crazy turns."

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<sup>70</sup> Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, 49, 155; Berlin, Favreau, and Miller eds. Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk about their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Freedom, 140; State v. Hale, 9 N.C. 582 (1823); and State v. Jones, 5 Ala. 666 (1843).

Her hair, after one month's stay in jail, turned from black to white due to the horrific treatment she endured. Later, on several occasions, she attempted suicide.<sup>71</sup>

Other resistant women resorted to self-inflicted damage. It was easier to commit suicide, infanticide, or abortion than to endure the damage of being the sexual slave to a white master.<sup>72</sup> All of these actions were radical and did not reveal the norm within slave society, but it was an accepted escape among slaves. Slave women usually engaged in less dramatic forms of confrontation, such as voicing their unwillingness or confiding in their mistresses. Violence escalated in response to increased unwanted sexual aggression. Early on, slave girls were taught methods of resistance, usually beginning with non-violent measures but amplified actions were not beyond the scope of resistance to slave women.

Resistance to sexual abuse was not the only reaction by slave women. When confronted with forced sexual relationships, sometimes they allowed for a sexual relationship. At times, the temptation for an easier life was too great. While accepting an interracial relationship did not make slave women immoral, it in many cases meant the sacrifice of love in exchange for comfort. Accepting such a relationship then denied slave women the fulfillment of their emotional needs in exchange for financial and physical security. It was a temptation that many could not afford to refuse. Recalling her mother's experience in a relationship with a white man, one slave woman stated, "my

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<sup>71</sup> Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, 696.

<sup>72</sup> Hine, More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas 204, 208, 252-253; and White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, 88.

mother was a good woman and did the best she could, but she couldn't help herself."<sup>73</sup>

Instances such as these, where slave women gave in to demands of white masters were difficult for slaves and their families to record as it went against antebellum gender sensibilities.

The reactions of slave women to these sexual relationships are indicative of the moral system they adopted from white gentility. Slave women strove to, but could not maintain equal standards of gender as white women. They were not afforded equal protection and recognition, so while slave women could strive to replicate the morals and actions of white women, they could not always maintain white women's principles. A white woman's chastity was demanded to be an acceptable member in society. And virtuous resistant black women strove to maintain that standard by refusing white men's advances. In order for black women to bridge the gap between a white woman's choice in a partner versus a slave's burden to her master meant a delicate construction of perseverance against the wiles of sexually aggressive males. Black women had to prove their resistance prior to their failure to maintain chastity in order to obtain white women's sympathy and understanding. Otherwise, slave women would face the scorn of white women.<sup>74</sup> Women in general were to feign disinterest in sexual activities. But most white women did not face rape and so had a difficult time understanding how a slave woman, if she showed no interest in a white man, could end up in a sexual relationship with him. Slave women bore the stigma of sexual temptresses. According to white sensibilities, black woman should ignore and dismiss sexual overtures as a white woman

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<sup>73</sup> Murray, Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family, 35.

<sup>74</sup> Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880, 128, 130.



did; yet many white women did not take in to consideration the grossly varied positions of white and black women. So when a black woman had to broach the topic of sexual activity to white women, and communicate their experiences in order to expose sexual injustices, they discussed the incidents under restructured terms. Slave women had to prove their innocence, as they were presumed guilty.

While black women wanted to adhere to the social dogmas of white women, they were not given the opportunity to do so. So slave women had to adapt to their situation. Slave women created alternative measures of resisting sexually aggressive white men. And some chose to become partners with whites, despite the sexual sensibilities of southern women. But southern women alone were not the slave woman's only source of reproach. Some women faced unkind comments by other slave women, which likely stemmed in part from misplaced jealousy. Nearly all slave women longed for a better lifestyle, and when one woman was given the chance to alleviate her situation, other women felt slighted and mistreated for not having the opportunity to do so as well. Though the majority of slave women sympathized with those who accepted temptation, there were always a few who shunned their actions. Most slave women entering in to interracial relationships found that the economic benefits were well worth the occasional social critiques from either slave or white women.

Having adopted the sexual beliefs of white womanhood, slave women too sought to obtain rights of protection by confiding in their mistresses in an attempt to bond through gender, if not through race. Sex in the South was not so advanced as to allow for clean breaks or easy refusals. Slave women had to endure sexual misunderstandings beyond mild critiques. Black women never were afforded the right to seek legal justice,

rarely obtained sympathy, and hardly attained interference on their behalf. After a rape occurred, a black woman could not file suit, or give testimony against her aggressor. Silence became her burden.

Some slave victims reported the incidents to their mistresses, seeking understanding, support, and ultimately assistance. But white women could do little, given their required role of submittal to their husbands. The reaction of a mistress was dependent on her relationship with her slave, as well as the alleged perpetrator. Several

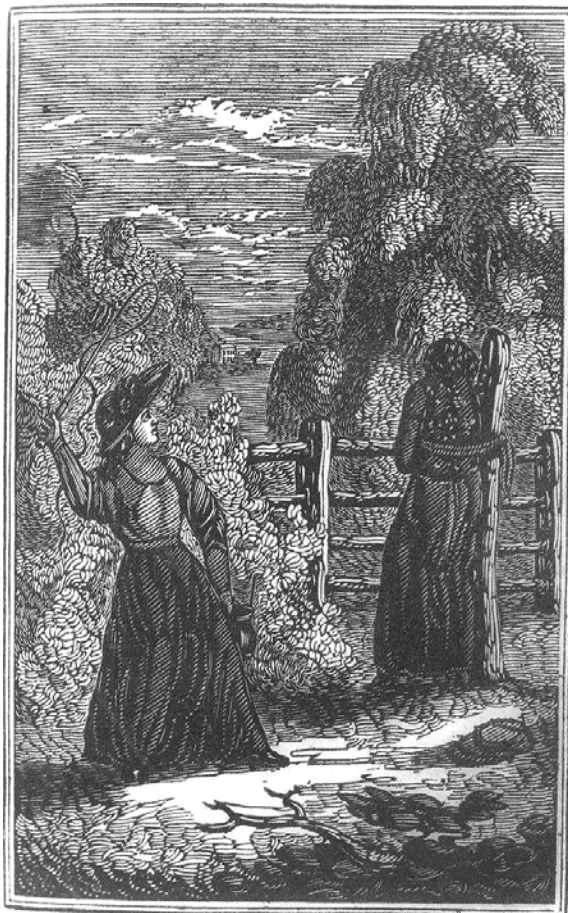


Figure 2.5 Etching of White Lady Whipping a Female Slave

women had strong bonds, and were able to talk about religion, plantation activities, and aging. Those with strong relationships wrote each other while separated and exchanged

direct advice concern various issues about womanhood.<sup>75</sup> When the sexual attention from a white male to a black female was followed with gifts or benefits on the plantation, white women usually were instantly angered despite any level of bond. White women believed that any elevation in the black population would conversely cause the degradation of white society. Fearing the loss of their social and sexual position, white women had less sympathy than jealousy.<sup>76</sup>

The reactions of white mistresses were not always what slave women anticipated, for white women reacted based upon the southern stereotype of the black Jezebel. Even in women's relationships where the two had a strong bond, sex was a far more private topic that was harder to reach across racial barriers. Caught under the auspices of southern sexual expectations, white women had little freedom in their reactions to interracial relationships. White women were to "shine with a reflected light," mirroring the views and decisions of their husbands.<sup>77</sup> But according to an ex-slave account, "the young wife soon learns that the husband in whose hands she has placed her happiness pays no regards to his marriage vows."<sup>78</sup> Powerless to blame her husband, mistresses found a different scapegoat for their crises of infidelity. At times, a mistress/ confidant would become abusive, blaming the slave woman for enticing her husband. It was easier

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<sup>75</sup> Letter to Eliza from Hannah Valentine, November 1, 1837 and letter to Mary Campbell from Hannah Valentine, May 2, 1838. Found in Hannah Valentine and Lethe Jackson, *Slave Letters in the Campbell Family Papers* at the Special Collections Library in Duke University.

<sup>76</sup> Morton ed, Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 101.

<sup>77</sup> Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880, 137.

<sup>78</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl originally published in 1861 found in The Classic Slave Narratives, 479.

for a mistress to bear this image than that of a wayward spouse.<sup>79</sup> So both white males and white females at times blamed black females as the sexual aggressor to serve as a scapegoat for a man's licentiousness.<sup>80</sup> In the order of a slave society, black women held the lowest rung.

But within slave communities, slave women's sexual activities were regarded differently than the expectations held for white women and so, the reactions they received from the slave community were dissimilar than the reactions of their mistresses. While slave women tried to resist a fate of becoming what her mistress already presumed her to be, not all masters were easily deflected. Slave women did not want to become the temptresses that white women already labeled them as. But resistance and patience could only go so far. When these tactics failed, slave communities generally forgave and excused the activities of single slave women.<sup>81</sup> Whether slave women gave in to their masters or chose a lover to ward off a master, slave communities did not stigmatize "bastards" or chastity on equal terms as white society.<sup>82</sup> Submitting to a relationship did not mean social rejection for slave women, unlike the reverse for white women who had relationships with black men. After all, slaves recognized that being with one white man who commits to a slave woman's care is quite different than "having a parcel of low, dirty, swearing, drunk (whites) let loose among 'em like so many hogs. This breaks their

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<sup>79</sup> Morton ed. Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 85, 91, 112, 203, 211, 285 and Murray, Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family, 37.

<sup>80</sup> Hodes, White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South, 65.

<sup>81</sup> Married slave couples also suffered from the interference of white males. When a white man did rape a married slave woman, their husbands were generally outraged while simultaneous powerless. Slave men could not defend their wives, and so, instead of reacting against the master, would at times blame their wife. For these situations, slave women were given few methods of recourse.

<sup>82</sup> White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, 109.

spirits dreadfully, and makes 'em wish they were dead.”<sup>83</sup> Slave society understood the desire for black women to choose rather than be taken. White men protected and provided for their mistresses. So black women usually did not have to fear the threat of other white men, while in a relationship with one.

Most slaves did not look down upon a black woman's entrance into a relationship with a white man. But slave mothers did try and protect their budding daughters from whites, to prevent them from becoming victims. Evasion was a common initial defense of slaves. Resistance became the next move. Some women taught their daughters' actions to take when confronted by white men. One slave woman told her daughter to “fight and if you can't fight, kick; if you can't kick, then bite.”<sup>84</sup> Not all slaves were so brazen or successful in their defiance. When resistant women forbade the forfeit of their bodies without a fight, they rejected the notion of inferiority. Several did not choose to conduct or succeed in physical resistance.

Slaves chose to adapt in individual ways. While slave women followed the three types of resistance, they could pick and chose their tactics as their situation required. Most slave women resisted their master's assertions at first, as youthful inexperience and fear directed them. Women were taught to be chaste and most felt compelled by a sense of morality and familial obligation to protect their chastity. Dodging and ignoring the pressures of white male's sexual authority took ingenuity and perseverance. Slave women exerted numerous efforts to prevent from being raped. Not all succeeded in

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<sup>83</sup> Blassingame, ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, 157-158.

<sup>84</sup> Gerda Lerner ed., Black Women in White America: A Documentary History (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 35.

diverting a male's attention, but many put up elaborate struggles the preventing whites from obtaining absolute authority. These women resisted a position of absolute subjugation and their decisions reveal the belief they had in separating a master's ownership of slave's bodies to slave's work. By taking a stand, these resistant women dictated the structure of slavery to halt exploitative measures and demand a respect for black womanhood. In the following chapter, I will discuss the lives of the virtuous resisters and their methods of dissuading their master's sexual advances.

## CHAPTER 3

### FRICITION: DEFINING TERMS OF ENSLAVEMENT

“Our historical perceptions can only be enriched by accepting the fact that so long as sex and race are used to ascribe to people a different rank, role and status, so long will they have a different historical experience from that of the dominant group.”

Gerda Lerner, Black Women in White America: A Documentary History



Figure 3.1 A Female Slave's Lament:  
Calling for white women to recognize and  
help the plight of slave women

Due to the lack of records of slave women's sexual experiences, it can be difficult to distinguish the manner they went about exercising agency. Some may have begun as virtuous resisters, who fought from the beginning to avoid rape, or others may after some struggle have given in until pushed beyond their breaking point. Because rape of a black woman was not a legally protected right, few slave women had their experiences traced, until they fought back. Even then, their position is only revealed through the eyes of whites. Careful consideration must be placed on tracing relationships whose transparent threads weave delicate stories. Documenting birth of mulatto children, attending to patterns of masters' visits to the plantations, and considering the economic status of slave women helps to shed light on these relationships built in the shadows. In studying these women and their actions when they faced a point within their lives that they were confronted with sexual advances, determines their methods of resistance and the development techniques to ward off whites.

Virtuous resisters deflected their masters' sexual advances and fought to preserve their own integrity. To them, slavery did not merit a surrender of their purity. These slave women saw their bodies as their own, and sought to preserve themselves from violation. Usually their actions could only temporarily prevent a master from accomplishing his goal of sexual dominance. Virtuous resisters had to change their tactics to respond to the master's persistence. The choices slave women made represented the limits in their options for self-protection. Virtuous resisters maintained passive forms of resistance, at first. Trial and error revealed the successful tactics, though not all women were able to employ multiple strategies before being raped. (Many tried various methods of resistance.) Putting up a struggle revealed that slave women



would not accept sexual aggression as an appropriate right of white men, and that men could be denied. Women were forced to choose a life path early on. While they could resist sexual aggression, it usually was temporary. Slave women began by mildly resisting their masters, in manners that would not attract immediate reaction and consequences. Using the methods of a virtuous resistor limited a slave's woman's success based upon the intention and passion of the white perpetrator.

Women, then, were left to forfeit their position as virtuous resisters and instead embrace either the position of violent or a lifetime resisters. The principle of virtue had to shift to a tactic in resistance, when confronted by sexual aggression. Whites did not acknowledge slave's principles, and so slaves had to fight to preserve their moral beliefs. Given inadequate forms of passively or "virtuously" resisting whites, slave women increased their resistance by changing their approach to white men. Violent acts of vengeance and acceptance of a manipulative mistress position became the dominant longer lasting means of reacting to the white masters. Though not all women found their ways to becoming a different type of resistor, many did. Given the evolution of slave women's choices, I will begin by examining them at the first stage of resistance, that of virtuous resisters. At this stage women were confronted with finding the means to successfully ward off white's advances. Women began by engaging in small forms of resistance, and given a master's response increased the intensity of resistance in accordance to the master's pursuit. Women at this point in their lives tried to passively resist without crossing social borders. This was a stage where if their tactics did not prevail, they then decided which action to take: to resist violently or resist by becoming a mistress and fighting the social system from within? What were the spectrums of

conceptions women had about sexual relationships, in what ways did they deflect the sexual advances of white males, and how successful were their actions as virtuous resisters?

Many slave women mimicked white women's gender conceptions, largely because in the antebellum period elites argued gender roles were natural rather than socially constructed. To be a woman, many believed was to be a "true woman." Slaves wanted to be treated with the same respect as white women, and so adopted their dress, speech, activities, and most importantly, sexual expectations.<sup>85</sup> Class and race prevented slave women from attaining parts of the true cult of womanhood, that of being respected and honored. The cult of domesticity expected women to serve as angels in the household that guided their spouses and children to morality through their personal example. To do so, they were not to be lustful, lethargic, slovenly, or any other immoral trait. Upper class white women experienced few threats of sexual violence due to the social beliefs of purity and exceptionalism of white women. Slave women did not have such a belief system guarding them; in fact they had to fight conceptions of slaves as being morally degenerate. So they had to fight for their own preservation so that they could live up to the gender mores of white women. Females were to be virtuous, passive, and submissive according to white attitudes.<sup>86</sup> Some slave women extended the notion of virtue to their own bodies, which in order to preserve, they could not be submissive.

Not all slave women were given the opportunity to fulfill these southern mores. The Southern system was designed to oppress and diminish a slave woman's

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<sup>85</sup> Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880, 114.

<sup>86</sup> White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, 17, 59, 96.

respectability. The epitome of degradation and sexual exchange occurred in the slave markets. There were no limits on the types of white men purchasing slaves. Regardless of their previous treatment or complications with slaves, masters had a right to purchase new products, any age, at any time. And slave markets were accessible. Markets or marts were constructed in most of the major towns. Brokers managed sales and commissions were a common if not standard practice.<sup>87</sup>



Figure 3.2 Old Slave Market:  
Photograph of old slave market in  
Charleston, South Carolina, currently  
a museum. Taken February 2006.

The market was a community of chances. Each entity involved attempted to shape the market to fulfill his or her needs. Slaves communicated advice and offered

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<sup>87</sup> Walter Johnson, Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market, 51, 54.

sympathy to each other as a means of alleviating their condition and increasing the quality of owner. Poor whites who aspired to the planter class could make a purchase of lower valued slaves and enter into the domain of human subjugation and social standing. And the traders reached for the opportunity to profit; they had fictitious stories and skills assigned to the slaves to help increase their value.<sup>88</sup> Wealthy whites could assert their prominence by asserting their power and prestige by buying specialty slaves, whether a physically domineering male or an aesthetically pleasing light skinned female.<sup>89</sup> Slave women were generally stripped of their clothing, and potential buyers could request a private inspection. These inspections occurred behind closed doors, and placed slave women in positions that would be unfathomable for white women. Given the circumstances, slave girls' sanctity was at great risk. They had to choose their devices carefully, to maintain a balance of some composure and virtuosity. Entering the slave mart meant all the players' statuses depended on their roll of the dice. The purchase of a girl approximately fourteen years of age to a man in his sixties would not be questioned or judged.

The market served as culmination of the evils of slavery. Families were torn apart, slaves were stripped and examined, and master plotted their evil design through their visual inspection of the prospective property. The market left a deep impact on those that traveled through it. One former slave, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, captured the experience in a poem:

The sale began--young girls were there,

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<sup>88</sup> Hine, More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas, 99, 105.

<sup>89</sup> White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, 37, 132.

Defenceless in their wretchedness,  
Whose stifled sobs of deep despair  
Reveled their anguish and distress.  
And mothers stood with streaming eyes,  
And saw their children sold;  
Unheeded rose their bitter cries,  
While tyrants battered them for gold.<sup>90</sup>

Though many slaves worked within the market to redirect its effects, the market still epitomized conquest. Ultimately the slave was sold.

While slaves were placed in degrading positions through the slave trade and on the plantations, slave women still strove to preserve notions of respectability. The slave women that did give in to interracial relationships did not forfeit the beliefs of white southern womanhood, in fact in many cases; it heightened their beliefs of true womanhood. Slave women in relationships with white men, elevated their own and their children's education, dress, speech, and diet. In essence, they adopted the cult of womanhood dictated by white women. They replicated the image of angel in the household, and because of this reflection, threatened many elite white women.<sup>91</sup> Slave women deflected the attention surrounding their virtue to their household to prove themselves as ideal "wives" and mothers. Even in these relationships, women could still be seen as virtuous, as they committed themselves to one man. Of course the improved conditions and white male's financing, were the ideals for black mistresses and did not

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<sup>90</sup> Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, "The Slave Auction," in The African American Archive: the History of the Black Experience in Documents (New York: Leventhal Publishers, Inc., 2001 {originally published 1854}) 157-158.

<sup>91</sup> Edwards, Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction, 132, 148.

always culminate to reality. The situation was one for which slave women strove and expected, should they submit to such a relationship. But before they adapted the roles of womanhood, slave women first attempted to prove themselves as virtuous. Fighting against racial assumptions, some slave women pushed for admiration by becoming virtuous resisters.

Embracing the value of sexual respectability, these slave women developed techniques to live up to the white women's image. One such technique was the dodging of white men to thwart white male's advances. Slave women working within the household quickly learned the patterns of the owners. Many slave women avoided their masters to prevent any unwanted flirtations. Slaves' documented their efforts to side step their master's pathways and prevent from being caught alone with their masters. Men usually instigated sexual conversations, stopping slave girls in private hallways and whispering their intentions in a rushed voice. Once this behavior initiated, slave girls arranged their daily activities with every effort to circumvent the master's daily routine.<sup>92</sup> By removing themselves from being alone with their master, girls then protected themselves and also denied a master access to his servant. In doing so, they proclaimed a right to their bodies and deprived masters of total control. Slave girls could create their own scheduling around a master, so they used the slave system to combat it. This type of aggressive modesty and self defense was taught and reinforced by the slave community who sought to protect the young girls from the actions of licentious white males.

Self-conservation became the battle cry for most slave women. The entire community went to the battlefield armed with methods of attack. The best means was

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<sup>92</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl originally published in 1861 found in Early African-American Classics (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 143-145.

avoidance, and another tactic was blending. All women who had time to move into different stages of virtuous resistance made this transition. It was a natural progression, and stemmed from the act of hiding. If slave women could not entirely escape interaction with white men, they could dictate the view of white men. Slave women did not want to attract negative attention from white males, and so at the age of development were cautious about their dress and demeanor so that they would not give off any unintentional signs of interest. In a WPA narrative, Lucy McCullough recalled her mother's devices to protect her daughter from white men. Lucy remembered in slave times, "de gals dey didn't sho' dare laigs lak de do now."<sup>93</sup> Women were deliberately underexposing themselves. It served as a means of deterring white interest, by literally hiding any symbolism of sexuality.

When this boundary was crossed and it was feared that a woman did in fact reveal too much of herself, immediate action was taken in order to preserve a woman's virtue. Lucy stated that "Ah 'members one time my mammy seed me cummin' crost de yahd en she say mah dress too short. She tuk it often me, en rip out de hem, en ravel at de sig'er er little, en den fus' thing I knows, she got dress tail on ter loom, en weave cloff on hit, twel it long enuf, lak she want it."<sup>94</sup> Lucy's mother knew the danger in her daughter's dress being too short. Showing too much skin could awaken sexual interest by white males. She did not want her daughter to be conceived of as provocative, and so to

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<sup>93</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Lucy McCullough. Ex-Slave, age 79," Georgia Narratives, Vol. 4, Part 3.

<sup>94</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Lucy McCullough. Ex-Slave, age 79," Georgia Narratives, Vol. 4, Part 3.

preserve her daughter's innocence; Lucy's mother lowered the hem, lengthening the



Figure 3.3 Young Slave Girls: Young slave girls' dresses were worn below the knee. Hem's lengthened as girls aged and neared puberty.

dress. Lucy proved that she was unaware of her mother's rationale for this action, by her final statement, "lak she want it." The length of the dress did not bother Lucy, like most young girls, her intentions were not to attract or detract men. Lucy accepted her mother's actions without question. She was to be properly covered, because her mother wanted her that way. The hemline to Lucy was merely the end of her dress, not the beginning of sexual awareness. The mother then, instigated the belief of virtuous resistance to her daughter. This lesson would teach her daughter to keep her body hidden and out of reach from her white master.



Sex was a taboo topic within the slave community, girls and boys were sheltered to keep them from becoming involved or enticed into sexual situations with whites (and in some cases other slaves). By keeping slave children unaware, slave communities resisted master's abilities to influence their sexual decisions. Slave families wanted to replicate southern notions of womanhood and wanted their children to uphold concepts of honor. One male slave, W.M. Green recalled of his female companions, "girls acted like de old folks dey did not carry on."<sup>95</sup> Denying youthful expressions of love and sexuality, slave women followed the behaviors of older slave women beyond the age of reproduction. Slave girls did not relish their youth or the opportunities it presented to discuss sexual activities and relationships with men. Their cautious behaviors revealed their efforts to carry out methods of virtuous resistors. Slave women preserved their innocence by keeping young girls ignorant of sexual acts. So slight was some slave girl's sexual knowledge that when taken to court for rape cases, they had to be coaxed in their testimonies to decide if ejaculation or penetration had occurred.<sup>96</sup>

Women acted with the gentility claimed as a "white" attribute and it would be very unlikely that they would seek out sexual relationships with their masters. W.M. Green narrative recounts that slaves were almost "grown befo' we know'd a thing 'bout man and woman."<sup>97</sup> So the discussion of sex and reproduction was usually a quiet topic within the slave community. Slaves respected the need for maturity before

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<sup>95</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "W. M. Green: Stories of Ex-Slaves," South Carolina Narratives, Vol. 14, Part 2.

<sup>96</sup> Sommerville, " 'I Was Very Much Wounded': Rape Law, Children, and the Antebellum South," found in *Sex Without Consent: Rape and Sexual Coercion in America*, 148, 151.

<sup>97</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "W. M. Green: Stories of Ex-Slaves," South Carolina Narratives, Vol. 14, Part 2.

communicating about adult behavior. Raised with a lack of sexual knowledge, slave women likely did not have to pretend to be ignorant of their master's sexual suggestions at first. But as they became aware, they knew to react modestly and create diversions.

Slave communities and the plantation households were not areas devoid of sexual activity. Slave families made every effort of keeping their children ignorant of sex, but once knowledge was obtained, they were more forgiving of sexual activities than whites. Slaves were allowed to have different partners in their lifetimes without marriage.<sup>98</sup> And slave women could experiment with different partners before deciding on long-term relationships. While elite white women of social stature were afforded the same social forgiveness it was only given in cases of widowhood and after proper mourning. In the white community if a white girl sought out multiple partners, she was scorned, unlike that in slave society, and only a limited few could go on to legitimate marriages.

Acceptance of sexual activity revolved dominantly around class structures, the poorer women given the most laxity of sexual indiscretions. Poorer women were not expected to maintain the social standards of elite whites, so their sexual behavior was excused, as due to their inability to be equal to the wealthy elites. This sexual freedom permitted poorer classes to explore wider arenas of sexuality, but also held consequences in that few women were able to ever claim rape due to their sexual awareness. The willingness of sexual experimentation of poorer whites in entering into multiple relationships is proven by the widespread venereal diseases of the lower classes.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, 96-98.

<sup>99</sup> Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 422-423.

But black women did not readily change partners for promiscuity's sake. As marriage between slaves was not legally permitted, slaves at times could not attempt to have a ceremony or make their relationship "unofficially" official.<sup>100 101</sup> Slave auctions and sales many times separated slave couples permanently, preventing them from remaining with a common partner. Separations could happen instantaneously. In one recollection, a slave man was "immediately chained and handcuffed; and thus, without a moment's warning, he was snatched away, and forever surrendered from his family and friends."<sup>102</sup> But even when separated, many slave couples who had been together for a time, made efforts to see each other or clung to the hope of being with each other again.<sup>103</sup> Slaves could be torn apart and forced together. Arranged marriages and pressures to procreate also added to the number of slave partners. Premarital intercourse was acceptable, as marriage between slaves was a legal farce since it was not permissible. This leniency also transcends American culture and is rooted in traditional African beliefs, which permit premarital sex until the event of a pregnancy, in which case, marriage is anticipated.<sup>104</sup> There is little documentation or white accusation reflecting slave women's willingness to commit adultery. Very few slave women had multiple

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<sup>100</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Adele Frost, Ex-Slave 93 years of age," South Carolina Narratives, Vol. 14, Part 2, 3.

<sup>102</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Narratives in the Life of Frederick Douglass*, originally published in 1845 found in *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York: Signet Classic, 2002), 353.

<sup>103</sup> Joyce Ladner, "Racism and Tradition: Black Womanhood in Historical Perspective," in *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 186.

<sup>104</sup> Davis, *Women, Race, and Class*, 15.

partners at one time.<sup>105</sup> Sexual laxity did not seem to be a common trait within slave society, and did not even breach white's comments or critiques of the communities.

This enforces the attempt of slave women approach relationships from the standpoint of a virtuous resistor. Even in slave relationships, slave women wanted to be seen as respectable and committed. Slave women proved they were not victims of an animalistic passion; they had set codes of behavior to which they adhered. Within slave morality then, short-lived sexual relationships were with one committed partner. In long-term relationships, monogamy was steadfast. Only rarely did slave couples cheat, and it was usually influenced by the conditions enforced by their masters.<sup>106</sup> Despite outside forces affecting the number multiple partners and given their flexibility in sexual experimentation prior to commitment; slave women did attempt to attract the slave men of their choice.

Girls did employ measure to entice slave men into relationships. In response to an unromantic serenade consisting of crude sexual enticements, ex-slave Gus Feaster stated that the slave "gals charmed us wid honeysuckle and rose petals his in dere bosoms" as a form of perfume.<sup>107</sup> The girls here were of the age to be aware of the courting process and so took action to secure a beau. A different ex-slave recalled that slave girls would create necklaces out of chestnuts and wear them around their necks and while walking by male slaves would smile at them.<sup>108</sup> Slave women, then, decided when

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<sup>105</sup> Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 459-475.

<sup>106</sup> Starobin ed., Blacks in Bondage: Letters of American Slaves, 91.

<sup>107</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Gus Feaster: Stories of Ex-Slaves," South Carolina Narratives, Vol. 14, Part 2.

<sup>108</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "It Ain't de same: Lucindy Lawrence Jurdon," Alabama Narratives, Vol. 14, Part 2.

and to whom they wanted to be attractive. And many slaves married at a young age, sometimes earlier than well-to-do young white girls. In her journal, Kate Stone, a young white girl recorded that her sister rejected ten marriage proposals at the age of sixteen.<sup>109</sup> But slave's records of enticement and courting were not as public as white courtships. Most of these slave recollections occur in evening hours when slaves were given time to spend away from whites, with their own families. The records show that this was exclusive to the slave community, when dismissed from white supervision. There is no documentation of this type of enticement occurring while a slave woman worked within close proximity to a white male. During these times, their hems were low and their bosoms free of alluring scents.

Lack of sexual experience and modest dress did not end white interest. Moreover not all slave women could resist their masters' aggression by ignoring his sexually driven comments. White men intended on controlling, as well as owning slave women, which was best done through sexual subordination. To combat the virtuous resisters, some whites employed force. As has already been mentioned, Lewis Hayden's mother refused her master's advances and as punishment was sent to prison. The treatment she endured drove her crazy and led to her eventual suicide. In another account, a slave trader raped his purchase, an 18-year-old octoroon, which led to her pregnancy. Knowing her value would decrease at the market if she were in later stages of pregnancy, and in order to preserve her form, he beat her severely, intent on causing a miscarriage. The trader's method was not successful, and the girl fled to preserve her life and that of her unborn

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<sup>109</sup> Sarah Katherine Stone, Brokenburn: The Journal of Katherine Stone, 1861-1868 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), 345.

child. The pregnant teen did not manage to run far and was apprehended. Her owner stripped her and whipped her 50 times in order to force her submittal.<sup>110</sup>

This type of abuse inflicted on female slaves was neither unheard of nor unrecognized in white society. At times, the cruelty was so profound that other white's intervened on the behalf of the slave. In a letter noted as "private and in confidence," J.M. Duffield wrote to a friend, R.C. Ballard. Duffield opened with a brief comment about the security of a slave child he purchased and sent up north to be properly educated. He then immediately transitioned into an account regarding what was presumably the child's mother who was the next slave that draws his concern. Judge Boyd, whose name is only alluded to in the letter, owned Maria, the slave girl's mother. Duffield continued to describe Maria's condition with grave concern. He wrote, "she has been a sufferer of great agony mentally and bodily." In a more coded phrase, he asserted to Ballard, "you will recollect the cruelties which you described to me once in confidence that had been perpetrated, by a certain person in whose power Maria is...and I recollect the horror you expressed of it."<sup>111</sup>

While Duffield's comment may exclusively allude to physical abuse, his covert language is indicative of a Southern gentleman's description of a sexual assault. As sexual acts were improper to mention, it is likely that Duffield trusted his reference of the past conversation between the two men to suffice. Whether Maria was resisting her owners sexual advances, or whether he was raping and beating her, it is apparent that

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<sup>110</sup> Blassingame ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, 696, 507.

<sup>111</sup> Letter from J.M. Duffield to R.C. Ballard on May 29, 1848. Found in the Rice C. Ballard Papers and the Hayes Collection in the Southern Historical Collection in the Wilson Library at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Judge Boyd's obsession with hurting Maria was more personal than business. It is possible that the rescued child was a product of their relationship. Whatever the case, the author of the letter pleads for assistance to rescue Maria, in addition to the child, from her owners' clutches. In concluding his correspondence he reasserted, "I know, your kind, humane heart must revolt at the barbarities she is constantly enduring."<sup>112</sup> Given his reaction, and granted the southern custom of permitting the beating slaves in to submission, it seems evident that Maria's situation was distinct than that of other slaves. Despite her treatment, she maintained her dignity, enough so to be convincing as a woman worth saving. Slave women subjected themselves to intense cruelty to try to prevent from losing their self-respect, in an effort to show that the master could not access every part of a slave woman's body.

Refusal and running away did not always serve as a successful escape for virtuous resisters. When pushed to extreme circumstances, they had to increase their defense. Part of a virtuous resistor's fight developed from her belief in her right to choose. It was not that virtuous resisters never intended on having sexual relationship. They wanted it on their terms, with a man of their choice. And above all, slave women wanted to be perceived as morally just in their behavior. They did not want to participate in behavior that would feed the idea of slaves as loose, immoral creatures.

Understanding the permissiveness in entering and exiting relationship freely is a key component of comprehending the latter difficulties slave women had when trying to leave a white lover. White relationships usually withstood time, as divorce was an

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<sup>112</sup> Letter from J.M. Duffield to R.C. Ballard on May 29, 1848. Found in the Rice C. Ballard Papers and the Hayes Collection in the Southern Historical Collection in the Wilson Library at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

unacceptable escape. Entering an interracial relationship meant each person was equipped with separate conceptions of the length and terms of the relationship.

A master's increased pursuit demanded a further reaction from slave women to resist his grasp. A virtuous resistor than had to decide her course of action. Many slave women resorted to involving another man to help. This demanded sexual activity, and possible critique, for they could not maintain the extreme sense of decency to which they aspired. After failing to successfully evade white men, slave women would find a lover. And white men knew of this tactic, and tried to prevent the slave women they were pursuing from being around other potential white male suitors. As one ex-slave, Jacob Manson observed, his master "liked some of de nigger 'omans to good to have any udder white man playin aroun' em."<sup>113</sup> Taking on a white lover was a threat slave women knew they could use against a sexually persistent master, but they had have access to the other men in order to use this method of resistance. The frequency of slave owners taking slave women as concubines was prevalent, and so virtuous resisters were always tested. Ex-slave, Jacob Manson also mentioned in his narrative that "at dat time it wus a hard job to find a marster dat didn't have women 'mong his slaves. Dat wus a general thing 'mong de slaves owners."<sup>114</sup> To prevent from becoming one of many, some slave women did turn to a man other than their master. In taking a lover, slave women did not loose their sexual respectability, but it did decrease.

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<sup>113</sup> Federal Writer's Project, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Jacob Manson," North Carolina Narratives, Vol. 11, Part 2, 96.

<sup>114</sup> Federal Writer's Project, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Jacob Manson," North Carolina Narratives, Vol. 11, Part 2, 96.



A slave woman could be virtuous and morally appropriate when she entered into a relationship with a man. When a slave woman chose to have sex with another man, at times, the purpose was to lose her innocence and prevent her master from forcing himself upon her. Having sex with another man “tainted” a slave woman according to southern social beliefs. And at times, this alone disgusted white men and stopped their pursuits. If triumphant, then a slave woman maintained her virtue, by being with one man, of her choice, and she usually remained with her savior.<sup>115</sup>

A slave woman’s lover established another barrier, one of interference. With another man involved, the master had an additional person to intimidate and manipulate in order to access his prey, the slave woman. A lover complicated a master’s access to a slave woman and her vulnerability. Theoretically, a slave girl could not be so easily raped if she had another male who might come to her defense. While slave men had no right to attack a white man, their presence did complicate a white man’s pursuit as it added another person to maneuver around in order to accomplish his task. Slave couples whose master pursued the female, oftentimes ran away or caused a scene on a plantation that was an unpleasant episode for a master.<sup>116</sup> Slave men sought to rescue their wives from situations of sexual abuse though did not always have the powers to do so.<sup>117</sup> After entering a relationship, southern social custom generally permitted slaves continuance of such relationships without interference, as long as it did not impede the farm’s productivity. So the master had to fight through both the other lover and social

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<sup>115</sup> Morton ed., Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 282-284.

<sup>116</sup> Wilma King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in the Nineteenth-Century America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 117-118.

<sup>117</sup> Starobin ed., Blacks in Bondage: Letters of American Slaves, 153.

acceptance, to break up the slave partnership. Adding another individual to the equation brought about numerous difficulties for the master and many times, to prevent a struggle, the master lost interest in the slave woman. This was not a fail proof plan however, for at times the master would become enraged and if the other man was a slave, could arrange his sale.

But what if the other man was white? A master knew that it would be socially unacceptable to take what was conceived as another man's claim. Yet if the lover was a white male, a master could prohibit the sale of the female slave to prevent her lover from purchasing her. Though the slave woman's freedom on papers remained stagnant, she had some liberty when it came to her sexual relationships. A lover represented a step away from the virtuous resistor's stance, and a move towards a higher level of resistance. But at least in this act of defiance, taking on a lover was the slave woman's choice, and it reduced the likelihood of a rape. Women, then, resorted to this as a means of at least having a choice in their lover, and thwarting a master's designs on their bodies.

Vocalizing sexual schemes to secure safety demanded lengthy appeals from a slave woman and evidence of continued defiance against a white master. If a slave woman was to expose her situation, she had to prove that seeking a lover was only a last resort after she had tried avoiding, deterring, and denying her master to her body. Slave women had to demonstrate that virtuous resistors' tactics were attempted, unsuccessfully, before moving to more forward approaches of resistance. Even in showing this defiance women had to act within the confines of acceptable gendered and racial conceptions.<sup>118</sup> In order to win over northern women's sentiment, slave women had to confront the

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<sup>118</sup> Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880, 114, 120, 123, and 130.

assumptions about sexual behavior and show that in slavery, women could not uphold their socially ascribed roles as pure and upright. Fighting the notions of socially approved behavior and situationally required methods, slave women chose their words closely in order to not alienate their possible comrades, northern women. So slave women walked a thin line between sympathy and disgust with northern audiences.



Figure 3.4 Photo of Harriet Jacobs: after her autobiography had been published.

One woman, Harriet Jacobs, sought to balance on that line and wrote of her struggles and efforts to subdue a persistent white male, her master. Jacobs wrote a lengthy autobiography, entitled Incidents in The Life of a Slave Girl, about her experiences as a slave in North Carolina. Knowing the finicky readers could review her work in a variety of methods, including rejecting the plight of slave women and instead accepting the Jezebel myth of seductive slave women, Jacobs wrote under a pseudonym. She chose the name Linda Brent. Others' names were altered to prevent her from being found and from others suffering for their kindness and sympathy given to Jacobs during

her journey out of the perils of slavery. Because Jacobs wanted to secure the trust and respect of her readers, she explained the background of her situation, yet did not discuss the lurid details that captivate modern audiences.

Jacobs did not want to be categorized as a seductress, as many slave women had been subjected to such labeling. It was her goal to reveal the virtue and morality of slave girls when approached by white men. She highlighted slave women's resolve, to prevent any mischaracterization of her actions. White society had a long tendency of ascribing to the Jezebel myth, and changing slave's accounts of victimization into examples of sexual promiscuity.<sup>119</sup> Jacobs discussed the life of "Linda" within the social confines of her time, and so carefully and painstakingly told her story and her actions in a method which ensured that she would not repulse any of her readers. Though the names in her autobiography are fictitious, I have chosen to maintain the use of the names she chose for the people she encountered in her life. While her story does reflect the actions of real individuals, the pseudonyms are how she wanted to characterize individuals, and so, as it is how Harriet chose to tell her story, I have used the names as written in her account as well. Slave women's personal testimonies have countlessly been silenced and edited throughout history, but in order to maintain the historical integrity of this crucial document, I have kept Harriet (or Linda's) life in her own words to allow her voice to be heard.

Linda (Harriet Jacobs) was born in 1813 of two light complexioned slaves. Her father was a successful carpenter who sought to purchase his family. Because of his skill and dependability, his family, though enslaved, lived a relaxed lifestyle, only conducting

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<sup>119</sup> Morton ed., Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 31, 37-39.

tedious tasks. Linda's mother died while she was young, and the mistress assured her dying mother that she would care for the remaining children. The mistress held her promise until she too died. In 1825, Linda was sold to the sister of her first mistress to be a nurse to her daughter. The sister was married to Dr. Flint (or Dr. Norcom). After these transitions, Linda was raised by her dutiful grandmother, as her father died nearly a year after she moved onto the Flint plantation in North Carolina. It was a larger plantation in the South housing as many as 50 slaves, and Dr. Flint during peak seasons, hired more enslaved help. Raised under strict guidelines and an assertive grandmother, Linda worked hard, yet knew she should be treated with courtesy and respect. Her strength would be challenged as soon as she began developing in to a woman. Her blossoming figure wilted her grandmother's spirit when trouble began. Linda was unfamiliar with the harsh truths of slavery and under her new owners quickly learned of the sufferings of enslavement. She had been well taken care of in her youth, and was accustomed to a comfortable lifestyle, for a slave.<sup>120</sup> In an early instance of a slave's punishment, Linda remembered that "never before in (her) life, had (she) heard hundreds of blows fall, in succession, on a human being."<sup>121</sup>

Physical abuse was symptomatic of sexual frustrations on the master's behalf. Beating served as a means of physical conquest when sexual conquest was limited or interrupted. Linda witnessed this cruelty first hand. It was near dark when a slave from the plantation was brought in to the workhouse. His arms were tied up to a joist in the room, so that his feet barely scrapped the ground, and he waited until Dr. Flint finished

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<sup>120</sup> *American Beacon*, July 4, 1835, 5.

<sup>121</sup> Jacobs, *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* originally published in 1861 found in *The Classic Slave Narratives*, 456, 454, and 445-452.

drinking a glass of tea. By now, all daylight had faded. Night and darkness had taken over. The screams from the shed were heard all around the plantation. The only noises that disturbed the scream laden air were the rumors dispensing from the slave quarters as to the reasoning for the beating. Many rationales explaining the punishment were presented, but the circumstances that followed best illuminate the cause. The slaves pointed that the man regularly quarreled with his wife. This seems to be an accepted truth, but many of the rumors concealed the precise motive.

On Dr. Flint's plantation, a few months after this beating, the man and his wife were put up for sale, as the tension between them had not quelled. Both had dark complexions, yet the woman's recent child was extremely fair. Linda documented this as the primary cause for the rift between the husband and wife. The fate that befell the couple made an impression upon Linda, which promoted her development as a virtuous resistor. The slave couple fought regarding the paternity of their infant. In the presence of an overseer, her husband accused her master of fathering the child. This act prompted Dr. Flint to sell the pair to a slave trader. Linda does not document the fate of the fair skinned child. Dr. Flint's last comment to the woman was, "you have let your tongue run too far; damn you!" Linda explained this comment as that the slave woman "had forgotten that it was a crime for a slave to tell who was the father of her child."<sup>122</sup> The woman then, had crossed the boundaries of southern custom, and pronounced the paternity of her child outside of wedlock and exposed the master as a rapist.

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<sup>122</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl originally published in 1861 found in The Classic Slave Narratives, 455.

From the obvious marital discord, it does not seem that the child was welcomed or expected. Given the fact that the woman did not originally tell her husband of the master's obvious overtures, it was likely that she had done her best to resist him, and failed. Even her belonging to another man---a slave man---did not limit her master's persistence. Her actions reflect the failed attempts of a virtuous resistor, trying to avoid her master and ignore his advances, which failed. Not even her marriage could save her. Her child revealed the extent of her master's persistence. Yet the mother received no concessions from the alleged white father. In response to bearing a light skinned child and exposing the truth of its conception, the woman's husband was harshly beaten, and then the couple was torn apart and sold. The couple could not even vocalize the trauma their relationship had been put through.

And this was not a singular case. Linda stated that, "my master was, to my knowledge, the father of eleven slaves." The mothers she explained, lay silent for "they knew too well the terrible consequences" of exposing the conditions behind their children's conception.<sup>123</sup> These women had been beaten into submission. Little is known of their initial responses to their master's persistence, but they eventually took on the role of lifetime resistors. They bore children, hoping that it would appease their master, and alleviate their suffering. Without complaints, many of these women did escape beatings and being sold. This was Linda's introduction to gender and racial order on the plantation, and it burned a permanent image in her mind of the dangers of submitting to unwanted sex. Linda knew the precarious nature of her master's temperament and his ease of selling off his previous lovers. Linda also experienced early

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<sup>123</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narratives, 478.

exposure to failed escape routes, such as the light skinned infant's mother attempt to defend herself from the master by marrying a fellow slave. Knowing her master's capabilities and the limits of slaves' reactions, Linda was aware of what could happen to her, if she was placed in a similar situation. But even when armed with knowledge, Linda was far from prepared to confront this fiend. She knew the challenges that lay before her, but she had not yet derived a solution.

Dr. Flint expressed an interest in Linda, one beyond common work relations. At the age of fourteen, Dr. Flint began his pursuit of Linda. He began cornering her, uttering crude statements to her while passing in the household. Linda attempted to stay out of his path and to fulfill her daily duties without being caught alone with him or in a compromising situation. At first, Linda too was ill experienced and unaware of her master's intent. She could hardly avoid him, as he kept a close watch on her. She recalled one morning, "when he told me that I was made for his use, made to obey his command in *every* thing; that I was nothing but a slave, whose will must surrender to his, never before had my puny arm felt half so strong."<sup>124</sup> From this day onward, Linda marked that "the war of my life had begun."<sup>125</sup> Her strength would be tested and her resistant techniques would need to be refined in order to combat Dr. Flint.

Linda acted as a virtuous resistor, maintaining her integrity without out rightly protesting to her master's will. When she was trapped and forced to listen to his verbal assaults, as she stated, "young as I was, I could not remain ignorant of their import."<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narratives, 459.

<sup>125</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narrative, 460.

<sup>126</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narrative, 470.



Her experiences as a slave girl had not introduced her to sexual activity, as slave communities tried to preserve their children's virtue by keeping sexual issues quiet. But when Linda began to understand Dr. Flint's messages, she feigned ignorance, just as others virtuous resistors had done. When Linda found that she could not keep herself from physically encountering Dr. Flint, she utilized the virtuous resistor's method of ignorance to remove herself mentally from him. Doing so protected her from physical attacks, as he wanted her to know what he meant, and intended upon doing. But Dr. Flint quickly challenged Linda's physical and mental withdrawals.

Linda slept on a pallet in her great Aunt's room. When Linda reached sixteen, heated fights arose between Dr. Flint and his wife in regards to Linda. To escape his wife's watchful eye and scrutiny, he announced that he would move in to his daughter's room (then four years old) and sleep there. Dr. Flint arranged for Linda to relocate her bed (or pallet) to his daughter's bedroom, in case the child needed something in the middle of the night. This maneuver frightened Linda, as she had managed to evade Dr. Flint during the morning hours, and now had to confront a situation where she would be alone with him for extended hours with no escape.

Dr. Flint's insistent manner roused suspicion from his wife. His wife married him after the loss of his first wife, and she was several years his junior. Younger and ill experienced in men's ways, Mrs. Flint interrogated Linda's activities and intentions with her husband. The wife maintained an accusatory role, though Linda at all times proclaimed her innocence as well as concern. After the mistress had listened to Linda's testimony that her master had been persistently making vulgar statements and professions

to Linda, she wept. To Linda, the tears were of grief and anger, not sympathy, as the mistress felt her wedding vows betrayed.<sup>127</sup>

But the mistress did prevent the Dr. Flint from carrying out his plot, and she instead moved Linda into her compartment. This did remove Linda away from immediate danger, but Mrs. Flint constantly questioned Linda's purity and even pretended to be Dr. Flint and whisper into Linda's ears at night to see her response. This trial soon shifted into outright accusations from Mrs. Flint to Dr. Flint. Throughout this ordeal, Linda attributed her life and virtue to the fact that she lived near the city and not out on the actual plantation. Here, she said, she was protected by social scrutiny, which kept Dr. Flint at bay.<sup>128</sup>

Linda took evasive action after Dr. Flint became more consistent and vulgar in his actions. After attempting and failing to control the situation herself, Linda went to her grandmother. Her grandmother had been aware of Dr. Flint's obsessive behavior and statements made towards Linda. When in the company of the two, the grandmother served as a mediator. On occasion, she inquired if Dr. Flint's wife was looking for him, or if his family knew what he was doing in the slave cabin. By constantly reminding Dr. Flint of his social position, the grandmother asserted the fact that sexual harassment was inappropriate for a man of his status. Linda's grandmother called upon the notions of paternalism, in which Dr. Flint, according to southern social norms, should care for his slaves as if they were helpless children. He should not have been pursuing them, as

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<sup>127</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl originally published in 1861 found in Early African-American Classics (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 136-139.

<sup>128</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narrative, 475-478.

though they were sexual surrogates. Dr. Flint had hoped to bribe or persuade Brent in becoming his lover and implemented several devices to manipulate her to his side.

At a young age, Linda had fallen in love with a slave man. By her description, he was a “young colored carpenter; a free born man.” After sharing her situation with her grandmother, the slave women felt their best means to petition Dr. Flint was with the assistance of an intermediary. Using a female friend of Dr. Flint, the slave women proposed that Linda’s lover would purchase her, and that they would be married. They would accept any reasonable price. The intermediary related the plot to Dr. Flint. Linda wanted approval of her marriage. Again as slave marriage was not legal, her request was a mere formality, one that Dr. Flint did not condone. Dr. Flint took Linda’s request as a personal insult that Linda would choose a slave over him and forbid the marriage, sale, and relationship.<sup>129</sup> He threatened to send her to jail to receive punishment.<sup>130</sup>

Dr. Flint’s reaction was not customary. Many masters were involved in slave matches, preferring that married slaves lived on the same plantation so that visitation was not an issue. And slaves commonly asked permission to marry, in the same state as Linda, one slave girl recorded that her dad “axed Marse Mack iff he could cou’t mammy.”<sup>131</sup> In this case the master conceded. Most masters approved or directed marriages to encourage reproduction. Some slave married so young that they were unaware of their roles or the expectations of themselves in the marital bed. Unlike these

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<sup>129</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narrative, 482-485.

<sup>130</sup> Morton ed., Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 197. Though jail was a common threat to slaves, slave women only comprised about 15% of the inmates, and usually only staid a few days in order to break them in to submission. Given the numbers, it seems that the threat worked sufficiently in most cases.

<sup>131</sup> *Federal Writer’s Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, “Aunt Laura: Laura Bell,” North Carolina Narratives, Vol. 11, Part 1, 2.

youthful betrothals, Linda's approach to Dr. Flint proved her awareness of marriage and its requirements, so she was of age, and prepared. Linda's action went beyond the usual methods of slaves, which reveals her extreme resistance to Dr. Flint. Traditionally the male slave would ask a master's permission--the bride was outside the arrangement.<sup>132</sup>

Yet despite common practices for slave marriages, Dr. Flint not only disapproved of the marriage, he did everything in his power to drive off Linda's beau. His intense reaction reveals the depths of control he wanted over Linda, and Linda clearly anticipated a different result. Linda lamented having found love and having it taken away. She mourned her separation from her beau. She easily could have developed a clandestine relationship with him, but was aware her master had an interest in her. It is probable that her intentions in telling her master, served as both an affirmation of her disapproval of her master's sexual innuendos as well as an example of respect for herself. According to the terminology that Linda used, it does not seem that she was ever sexually active with this male slave. She was proud of her virtue and wanted a socially recognized ceremony to tie them together. Being denied such a respect, she claimed she entered in to "the atmosphere of hell."<sup>133</sup> She wanted her relationship to be honorable, and to do so she had to ask for her owner's permission and she expected he would respect her wishes.

Here Linda echoes the cases of other virtuous resisters who ignored their master's approaches and instead sought someone in a mutual position. Slave women such as she expected to have a choice over their bodies. Linda, like several other slave women, was

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<sup>132</sup> Hine, More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas, 14, 19, 25. In slave marriages, slave men usually approached the master, so Linda's act of having a woman interfere on her behalf was even more assertive of women's power. Linda went outside the prescribed role of a woman, and actively engaged in the development of her future.

<sup>133</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narrative, 484.

raised with pride and responsibility. When proclamations of innocence and feigned ignorance at approaches failed, slave women had to resort to stronger tactics. Slaves did not necessarily have a stronger morality than whites, but they sought to obtain self-control in areas they deemed outside of a master's control. Linda tried to diffuse Dr. Flint's passion, but instead lit an explosive reaction from Dr. Flint that required her to forfeit her beau and engage in stronger methods of self-defense.

Learning from her experiences with Dr. Flint, Linda decided to maintain her method---but with a few key differences. Linda knew that any interest in a black man could leave her in the same situation. Even though her previous beau was free, he was still a black man, and under the threat of being beaten, or manipulated. Dr. Flint had already indicated his abilities to control slave men, and it would not be much of a stretch for him to reach out his hand against a black man. Dr. Flint knew he could manipulate Linda through a variety of methods, and Linda knew it too. Dr. Flint like many slave owners subscribed to a system of penarchy. "Penarchy identifies a syndrome whereby males of the elite use sexual coercion and force in addition to economic and political oppression to control women in both subordinate and dominant classes, as well as a means to control all other men."<sup>134</sup> The actions against Linda, her lover, and the other slave families are indicative that Dr. Flint utilized this system of control to manage and manipulate his slaves. To further his control, Dr. Flint devised a plan that would remove Linda from any safeguards and place her in a position away from his wife, and under his absolute control. Dr. Flint seemed to think that Linda's mistress was the deterrent for Linda, and so, "in the blandest tones, he told (her) that he was going to build a small

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<sup>134</sup> Gillespie and Clinton ed., Taking Off the White Gloves: Southern Women and Women Historians (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 44.

house for (her), in a secluded place, four miles away from the town.”<sup>135</sup> His proposal forced Linda to increase her defenses; Linda turned her focus away from black men.

Linda had interacted with other white men within the community. One in particular stood out. As gossip regarding Linda’s situation had been spread around town, few were immune to knowledge about her desire to purchase her freedom. Mr. Sands, a “white unmarried gentleman” had frequently seen Linda and was generous and gentle. He talked to Linda’s grandmother and Linda about her situation, and began taking an interest in Linda’s case. He was sympathetic, and wanted to help Linda. Kindness generally receives a more favorable response than vulgarity, and Linda chose to be with him, instead of submitting to force. Mr. Sands was a lawyer, and ironically, the assistance he gave Linda was not legal advice, but a sexual relationship. The latter being the only true hope Linda had. Linda explained, “to be an object of interest to a man who is not married, and who is not her master, is agreeable to the pride and feelings of a slave.” She further stated “there is something akin to freedom in having a lover who has no control over you, except that which he gains by kindness and attachment.”<sup>136</sup> Here, Linda saw the ability to control her body by choosing her lover. Reflecting her position as a virtuous resistor, her decision came with careful consideration, and regret in having to even make such a choice. Linda did not release her views on sexual morality, and so extended her path as a virtuous resistor to a lifetime resistor. She now was engaged in a battle for improved conditions for life, and she fought her war through the use of her

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<sup>135</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narrative, 499.

<sup>136</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narrative, 501.

body, but remained in the realm of morality. She did not give in to Dr. Flint, and so did not surrender to his sexual degradation.

Linda's apologetic text discusses her rationale for accepting her lover. One of her primary reasons was that she was well aware of Dr. Flint's consistent practice of selling off his own children. "He never allowed his offspring by slaves to remain long in sight of himself and his wife." Linda did not want to risk a similar fate for herself and her future children. Submitting to her master entailed no securities for her; in fact, it made her situation as a slave even more precarious, by adding the prospect of children that could be taken from her. Her lover did not have ownership. She selected this unmarried white man, for she "could ask to have my children well supported," and "felt quite sure that they would be made free." Security and freedom were the final points by which Linda made her decisions to dodge Dr. Flint's sexual fantasy. Linda could maintain her integrity and receive financial and social benefits, factors that she knew Dr. Flint would never afford. No traces of romance, passion, or lust can be traced through the passages in which Linda describes her relationship. She even refers to it as a "painful and humiliating memory that will haunt (her) to (her) dying day." At first it may seem that this is a ploy to prevent any white readers from feeling that their race has been infringed upon by the oversexed black race. But her continuous detachment from him does not appear to be a farce. Linda does not speak illy of her match, but her phrasing feels more like a business discussion than lovers' odes. She sees her lover as a means of escape, one that she was forced to take.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narrative, 501- 503.

Linda followed one other practice in this relationship that she had not with her previous beau. She did not seek permission from Dr. Flint. Instead, she took command of her life and had sex in her own time, without approval. Linda kept her relationship a secret and was hesitant to mention it to anyone, in case they were questioned. Her actions here are opposite of her earlier relationship with the free black man. Then, she not only confided in her grandmother, she also let Dr. Flint know before she had become sexually involved. This time she could not risk the luxury of communication, at least not yet.

The change in her approach to handling Dr. Flint's control reveal a transition Linda had unconsciously made. She heightened the defenses of virtuous resisters as she has abandoned the hope of securing love, and instead made due with security. Though her position required actions unusual for a virtuous resistor, she still remained one. She maintained her resistance against her master, and against being abused by men. Her actions were deliberate, she sought solace in another man's arms, but she was not promiscuous. Linda's choice did demarcate a change from a virtuous resistor into a lifetime resistor, as she chose a relationship that would alleviate her condition. Linda forfeited her virginity, by being with a man she neither married, nor told others about.

Here her tactics as a virtuous resistor have evolved. She was not passive in her behavior, but she did not abandon her notions of morality. Becoming involved with another man did not forfeit her position as a virtuous resistor, though it did take her to a different level. She took on the role of a lifetime resistor, by dedicating herself to a white man to improve her situation. And Linda's choice did secure her a comfortable standard of living, replete with a chance of freedom, quality clothes, food and improved living



quarters.<sup>138</sup> Her actions now are less defensive as they are offensive. Though she did not try to harm Dr. Flint physically, she did intend on giving him a psychological and emotional blow by choosing a man in his stead. Linda claimed, “as for Dr. Flint, I had a feeling of satisfaction and triumph in the thought of telling *him*.”<sup>139</sup> She looked forward to stunning him in retaliation. Linda chose to submit to a man, but on her own terms, and did so without violence. Striving to protect herself and her loved ones, Linda maintained a clandestine relationship with this white man until it she was in a position where she could no longer conceal her actions.

Under the threat of Dr. Flint’s continued advances, Linda had to reveal her secret. One afternoon, Dr Flint entered Linda’s grandmother’s cabin and outlined the plans he had with Linda. He had completed a separate home for her to live in, if she would agree to submit to him. Having no desire to yield to this proposal, Linda unveiled her secret weapon. She told Dr. Flint “I will never go there. In a few months I shall be a mother.”<sup>140</sup> Now in the middle of her pregnancy, Linda was hardly showing the growth of her unborn child. It likely would not have been long before she would have announced her pregnancy, knowing this she timed it to best serve as a shield for Dr. Flint’s attacks. Stunned with the news, Dr. Flint went home to question his endless pursuits and failed attempts. At this time, he was still unaware of who the father was. Linda expected to “be happy in (her) triumph over (her)...but now that the truth was out,

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<sup>138</sup> *American Beacon*, July 4, 1835, 5.

<sup>139</sup> Jacobs, *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* originally published in 1861 found in *Early African-American Classics*, 151-152.

<sup>140</sup> Jacobs, *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl* found in *Early African-American Classics*, 152.

and (her) relatives would hear of it.”<sup>141</sup> She was concerned about the reactions of her family, to her degraded situation.

Linda gave birth to a son, Benjamin, in 1829 four years after she arrived on the Flint plantation. Linda was sixteen years old. The birth of the child affected Linda’s grandmother in unforeseen ways. The announcement of Linda’s pregnancy was met with shock and disappointment. Linda’s grandmother did not want her granddaughter to be outside of the social conceptions of womanhood. In the South, most women were married before the birth of their children, if they even were pregnant before marriage. And certainly, the paternal or maternal units were aware of a relationship prior to impregnation. Courting, or dating, was a communally recognized activity, and generally sanctioned by the slave parents.<sup>142</sup> Slave families closely watched and monitored slave children’s work relationship with whites to ensure their children were as best protected as possible.<sup>143</sup> Linda’s grandmother, not only was unaware of Linda’s pregnancy, she did not know of the relationship. Linda had kept it secret fearing the disappointment Linda’s grandmother would feel knowing that Linda had “degraded (herself), like most of the slaves.”<sup>144</sup> Other slaves were sexually active, but what concerned Linda the most was that now her “good character” had been tarnished. Her relationship had been covert. Her family had been excluded from her developing relationship, because of the complex situation, and now Linda felt separated from slave society.

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<sup>141</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in Early African-American Classics, 152-153.

<sup>142</sup> Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll, 464-465.

<sup>143</sup> Edwards, Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction, 104.

<sup>144</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in The Classic Slave Narrative, 503.

Her grandmother's reaction heightened the pain Linda felt regarding her situation. After hearing the news of Linda's pregnancy from the mouth of Dr. Flint, Mrs. Flint had stormed in to Linda's grandmother's cabin, and accused Linda of sleeping with her husband. Under the impression that Linda had had an affair, Linda's grandmother turned to Linda and exclaimed "you are a disgrace to your dead mother."<sup>145</sup> Feeling betrayed and dissatisfied in her own abilities to monitor Linda's development, her grandmother dealt her harsh words when she first received the news. She told her to leave, and that Linda had disgraced the family. At this time her grandmother was under the impression that Linda had had sex with her married master. After a few days, Linda discussed the truth of the situation, and was permitted to return to the house under her grandmother's care and acceptance.<sup>146</sup>

Linda's actions regarding her announcement of her premature sexual activity and her grandmother's explosive reaction are indicative of the expectations within slave society to adhere to specific roles. Under Linda's grandmother's initial understanding, Linda was guilty of having an affair with her master. Such an activity went against the slave community's acceptance. Sexual morality within the slave community did not support adultery, nor was it appropriate for such a young girl to become involved with her master, a significantly older man, married or not. The slave community could not condone such behavior, which is reflected through Linda's grandmother's rejection of Linda's alleged behavior. But Linda did not have sex with her master. Her choice was not one that fell so out of order within the slave community's judgment. Linda's choice

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<sup>145</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in Early African-American Classics, 153.

<sup>146</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in Early African-American Classics, 154-155.

met with more approval than if she had given in to her master, but her actions were not without hesitation.

Linda rationalized her decision to enter a relationship with a white man instead of a black man. She knew that this lover could give her more, and leave her with the impression that being with him was her choice. She had exhausted her options of avoiding her master's advances, and employed every technique she could think of, including contrived ignorance, avoidance, and bringing in another man to dissuade Dr. Flint's interest. All of these tactics failed. Linda could have pressured Dr. Flint to provide for her; he had on his own, built a house for her. Perhaps, she did request it, as a means of buying time.

Dr. Flint had not built such a place for his other mistresses, so why did he now? Was Linda simply more resistant? Knowing Dr. Flint's habits of filtering out slave women, after they bore his children, why would he develop an appearingly permanent location for Linda? Would he have continued in his past action of selling off mistresses after he had been with Linda? Did he build the house as an easier means of accessing his current slave mistress? Did he instigate all the sales of his previous mistresses, or did his wife pressure him to sell them to hid evidence of his infidelity from the neighbors? Would he have kept the slave women if his wife were not so vigilant of his sexual activities? Or did he simply want a secure location to process different mistresses as time wore on?

Answering all of these questions would give a clearer representation of Mrs. Flint's, Dr. Flint's, and Linda's personal motives. But the documents left behind do not unveil the answers. What is left is Harriet Jacob's rendition of her life. In her story, she

detailed the consistent sexual assertions from her master, and her methods of resistance. Her account reveals the depth slave women went to fight sexual aggression, as well as a master's persistence in intimately possessing his slaves. By examining Linda's account, the levels of resistance can be traced. At first, Linda employed basic measures of dodging and ignoring her master. Her initial virtuous resistor stance was insufficient and she had to increase her defenses. Linda advanced in to higher stages of resistance in response to Dr. Flint's boldness. But she never abandoned the virtuous resistors' commitment to self-respect and the steadfast belief of an inherent right to control her body. As her early tactics failed, Linda sought new means of defiance. A lover, to Linda, would interfere in Dr. Flint's pursuit. And her decision made her resistance more permanent, shifting her role into that of a lifetime resistor. While it did complicate her situation, it did not quash Dr. Flint's interest.

After she had two children by her white lover, her encounters with Dr. Flint intensified. (Linda's daughter, Ellen was born in 1831. Linda was now eighteen years old.) Caught in a power struggle, Dr. Flint and Linda now became engaged in power plays, threatening each other with what control they had, with the hopes of conquering one another. Linda remained resolute in her desire to control her body. Not having maintained control over Linda, Dr. Flint moved to a source he could control, her children. Dr. Flint threatened to sell off her children to serve as plantation hands. In response, Linda threatened to run. By removing herself, or by Dr. Flint removing Linda's children, each party could exert the maximum pressure on the other, by taking away their highest prized possessions. Despite Dr. Flint's ever increasing devices, Linda's strength of

character and dedication to her beliefs kept her focused on staying one step ahead. She knew she had to escape, but could not leave her children.

In 1835, marking ten years of life on Dr. Flint's plantation, she decided to take her chances of escape, but not in a traditional manner. Almost at the age of 22, she took steps from disconnecting herself from Dr. Flint. Her son Benjamin was six, and daughter Ellen was four at the time of Linda's decision. Linda arranged her escape with her family. She spent seven years hidden in a small crawlspace above her grandmother and uncle's home in order to stay close to her children, yet still distant from her master. Her white lover had purchased her children, though Dr. Flint still owned her. During this time she could watch her children play through a small crack in the attic wall. Though Dr. Flint pursued her, and devised ways of tricking her friends in to revealing her hiding spot, no one told Linda's secret. In literally denying Dr. Flint access to her body, Linda fought slavery. She would not allow him the pleasure of owning her every being, and tried to detract him on many occasions. When it was safe, Linda ran away to the North in 1842.<sup>147</sup> Dr. Flint's attempts to control Linda failed. Surely Linda had to notice the ironic message purveyed in her runaway ad written by Dr. Flint. The day the article was printed had dual meaning to Linda; it was published July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1835--Independence Day. By running away, Linda had written her own declaration of independence. But even hers fell short of providing freedom, as in order to escape Dr. Flint's sexual advances, she had to remain imprisoned in an attic, unable to move.

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<sup>147</sup> Jacobs, Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl found in Early African-American Classics, 209-210,215-216, 249-250.

As a virtuous resistor, Linda ensured that her body would be under her control. While Dr. Flint could manipulate her work and working conditions, he could not sexually dominate her. Linda preserved her integrity, though by her own account felt she had to

**\$100 REWARD**

**W**ILL be given for the apprehension and delivery of my Servant Girl **HARRIET**. She is a light mulatto, 21 years of age, about 5 feet 4 inches high, of a thick and corpulent habit, having on her head a thick covering of black hair that curls naturally, but which can be easily combed straight. She speaks easily and fluently, and has an agreeable carriage and address. Being a good seamstress, she has been accustomed to dress well, has a variety of very fine clothes, made in the prevailing fashion, and will probably appear, if abroad, tricked out in gay and fashionable finery. As this girl absconded from the plantation of my son without any known cause or provocation, it is probable she designs to transport herself to the North.

The above reward, with all reasonable charges, will be given for apprehending her, or securing her in any prison or jail within the U. States.

All persons are hereby forewarned against harboring or entertaining her, or being in any way instrumental in her escape, under the most rigorous penalties of the law.

**JAMES NORCOM.**  
*Edenton, N. C. June 30*      **ST2W**

Figure 3.5 Runaway Notice in the *American Beacon*, July 4, 1835.

sacrifice her self respect to accept a lesser of two evils. Linda had to choose to become more aggressive in her resistance out of necessity of her master's increased aggression.

Even so, Linda never crossed the boundary of physical retaliation. Something in her dictated to her to respond with wit, not fists. Protected as a child, her few exposures to violence were shocking and always surrounded by consequences. So with those key factors in place, she did not resort to violence. And luckily, Linda's urban environment protected her from enduring physical abuse from her master to bend her will. The city also provided her a network of friends, with whom, she could confide in and gather support from. But not all women live in a city, and so could not be offered such protection.<sup>148</sup>

The intensity of physical abuse present on Dr. Newsom's plantation parallels other slave's recollections. Frederick Douglass remembered being awakened "by the most heart rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom (the master) used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered in blood." The reasoning for such abuse, Douglass notes was that she was unavailable in the evenings, when the master order her stay home, and stay away from a young slave man on another plantation.<sup>149</sup> Here, Douglass's account echoes themes shown in Linda's experiences. It seems that both slaves were caught between their master's sexual intentions. The pecking order of the plantation was an early impression on Linda, especially when it involved relationships between men and women, and the unwelcome interference of whites. Linda learned early on, the extent of her master's control and torture when he was involved in a sexual relationship with his slave.

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<sup>148</sup> Morton ed., Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 190.

<sup>149</sup> Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass originally published in 1845 found in The Classic Slave Narratives, 343-344.



Another virtuous resistor, Mary Reynolds, shares a similar case to Linda Brent's. Mary witnessed great abuses at the hand of her master. Like Linda, Mary watched couples tied up, stripped, and beaten, so severely that the master "cut the flesh most to the bones" on his victims.<sup>150</sup> Mary too, witnessed her master's relationships with several slave women on the plantation. One girl, a "high yaller" was purchased in Baton Rouge to serve as a seamstress. She lived in a cabin in the woods the master built for her. Mary documented that many other slave women were mistresses to their master, but the children they bore still were dark enough to be considered black. The children of the girl from Baton Rouge could easily pass as white, making their parentage more evident. Of her master, Mary claimed "us niggers knowed the doctor took a black woman quick as he did a white and took any on his place he wanted, and he took them often."<sup>151</sup> Mary did not condemn these women, as she does not convey the feeling that they had a choice, but she makes it clear that she resisted being controlled by her master.

On several occasions, she was stripped and beaten. She gave limited reasons as to why, but her most severe beating illuminated the sexual tension on the plantation. After a fellow slave ran-away, he believed her to be involved. Despite her ignorance of the runaway's position, Mary suffered punishment. She was taken in to the woods, her wrists were bound, and then she was stripped completely naked. Her bound wrists were placed on a limb of a tree to keep her body upright. Her bare legs were pulled apart around the trunk of the tree; her ankles bound together holding her to the tree. What occurred out there in the woods leaves little more to the imagination. Mary's does not

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<sup>150</sup> George P. Rawick, "Mary Reynolds; Dallas, Texas," in The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography (Wesport: Greenwood Press, 1972-3), Vol. 5, 240.

<sup>151</sup> Rawick, "Mary Reynolds; Dallas, Texas," Vol. 5, 242.

delve in to many details of her experience; except to say it was the worst pain, and worst experience of her life. She was unconscious during most of it, and awoke in a bed being nursed back to health days after the incident. Whatever did occur in those woods affected Mary for the remainder of her life, both mentally and physically. Immediately after her torture, she was not so delicately told that she was “ruint for breedin' chillun.”<sup>152</sup> The extent of physical damage to her body prevented her from ever having the opportunity to bear children.

Despite the cruelty inflicted upon her, Mary did not become one of her master's many mistresses. She married a slave man, to whom she dedicated the rest of her life. After the Civil War, Mary had a preacher officially marry her and her husband. She wanted to live up to virtuous expectations regardless of what her life allowed. Mary, like Linda, was forced to live on a plantation with a sexual lush. Both women's masters demonstrated patterns of abuse, stalking, promiscuity and inhumanity. Despite the circumstances in which Linda and Mary were placed, neither retaliated through acts of violence.

Other slave women did cross that physical boundary, and willingly fought for the right to protect their bodies. Most slave women began with passive resistance (as did Linda.) But as shown in Linda's account, a master's attentiveness would command new approaches to resistance. Women could begin by feigning ignorance, avoiding or taking another lover, but that did not always cease or deter a master's attention. From then on, they had to consider remaining with their chosen lover (if they had one) for the rest of their lives, thereby becoming lifetime resisters, or to resort to hostile behavior, becoming violent resisters. Tiring of systematic advances made by whites, women had to adapt

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<sup>152</sup> Rawick, “Mary Reynolds; Dallas, Texas,” Vol. 5, 245.

their resistance to the pressures their masters applied. If avoidance and seeking assistance failed, slave women had to change their resistance. In an account in one slave narrative, one slave girl sought out her mistress for assistance as she was being raped by the mistress' husband. The mistress promptly told the young slave "well go on, you belong to him."<sup>153</sup> With no relief in sight, the level of resistance had to shift. The vulnerable position of a virtuous resistor stipulated increased resistance, if white men continued sexual aggression. Depending on the type of woman and aggression of the master, women had to shift out of the stage of virtuous resisters and choose to handle the problem of their masters through the techniques of either the violent resisters or lifetime resisters.

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<sup>153</sup> Federal Writer's Project, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Jacob Manson," North Carolina Narratives, Vol. 11, Part 2, 97.

## CHAPTER 4

### FARCE: THE GUISE OF COMMITMENT



Figure 4.1 “Mother and Child, not pure Negro”:  
Photo taken by workers under the Federal  
Writer’s Project between 1937-1938

Whether a black woman consented to her role as a mistress or if a white man  
“compelled her to enter into criminal relations with him,” black women resisted their

position as second-class citizens.<sup>154</sup> Their resistance skews the notion of a consensual relationship. Giving in to sexual relationships did not mean women gave up. They could shift conceptions of race and sex while still trapped within those realms. Though white men held a position of dominance in Southern society, black women pushed the boundaries inflicted upon them. Women's methods of alleviating their condition varied by individual techniques and needs. Some women, the lifetime resisters, accepted positions as concubines as a means of obtaining improved conditions, and ideally, eventual freedom for themselves and their children. Manumission became a common result of these "forced consensual" relationships. Most women could use their sexual powers over white men to obtain safer and healthier conditions, as men preferred their mistresses to be healthier and more presentable than common slaves.

As revealed with the virtuous resisters, slave women at times took a lover as a means of deflecting unwanted sexual aggression. Not all slave women ignored their masters, some did submit to their master's sexual demands. These women extended or at times forfeited the beliefs of a virtuous resister, by inside choosing to be involved with their master and use the relationship to improve conditions. This choice usually meant the sacrifice of romance in place of security. Virtuous resisters became either lifetime or violent resisters. The choice of methods of resistance had to be made early on in slave women's lives.

Detailed accounts of early resistance or the beginnings of relationships are limited. In addition, the topic was not loudly announced. Few women were willing to proclaim their efforts to find another man just to prevent from being forced to have sex

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<sup>154</sup> Blassingame ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, 507.

with a man they did not choose. Women's sexual activities were questioned and scrutinized to determine her level of morality. In court, the "chasteness of the witness may...become a proper question on an indictment for a rape."<sup>155</sup> An admission of seeking out sex removed a woman from the angel in the household role, where a woman was the center of moral rectitude. It went beyond the scopes of acceptable gendered behaviors, and put women into a questionable promiscuous position. Northern sentimentalism was not forgiving of such un-ladylike behavior.<sup>156</sup>

So lifetime resistors adopted roles as wives. When they did become involved with a white man, they generally chose to remain monogamous. And slave women continued to follow gender notions of a "true woman," by generally removing themselves from hard labor, increasing their quality of life, and securing an education for their children. They epitomized the white ideal for womanhood, and did not allow the darkness of their skin to overshadow the possibilities remit in an interracial relationship. And as slave women could not record their intentions in these relationships, as it would be unladylike, their expectations can only be shown through their actions. Concubines did not leave accounts of their lives with their lovers. But they did leave a rich and detailed history of their aspirations from their relationships. These accounts are found in unlikely sources--those of court appeals seeking inheritance.

The final and highest prize for these women's commitments usually came at the death of their masters. Many white lovers promised their concubines the freedom of their

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<sup>155</sup> United States vs. Vansickle Case No. 16, 609, Circuit court, D. Michigan, 28 F. Cas. 361 (October 1840).

<sup>156</sup> Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880, 75.

children, at times, including the concubine, as well as a share in the assets.<sup>157</sup> The consistency in this action reveals two crucial points: one, that the couple had agreed and expected a certain exchange in part for the relationship, and two, that the white man did not want to confront issue of social stigmas, or risk losing his concubine during his lifetime if he awarded her freedom. So the white lover kept the promise of freedom in his will, as a means of reserving his power over his concubine, and as ensuring his good name during his lifetime, by not openly proclaiming his relationship with a slave. Southern society had a problem with mulatto children being freed, but not as much of a conflict with the existence of such children.<sup>158</sup>

Another complication in willed rights is that the legal system for blacks did not equal legal protections to whites. So a white man's children could contest the will and fight to keep their father's assets, preventing the slave mistress from obtaining her legacy. And this in fact occurred with regularity. But black women fought to prove their relationships and obtain the money left to them by their deceased lovers. In the contestations, black women emerge as powerful warriors willingly to expose their relationships and collect on what was promised to them. Slave women did not allow for an exclusion of their children's inheritance just because they were born illegitimately. While these court cases do not allow slave women to testify, their requests and actions are recorded in the records. Here, their lives and sexual decisions can be traced.

The relationships that unfold within inheritance appeals reveal a distance between the interracial couples. These cases delineate relationships in which the slave women gave in to the master's advances. As one slave woman explained, "we do anything to get

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<sup>157</sup> Hine, More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas, 292.

<sup>158</sup> Williamson, New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States, 65.

our poor flesh some rest from the whip; when he made me follow him into the bush, what use me tell him no? he have strength to make me.”<sup>159</sup> Submitting came with benefits, and to slave women, it helped compensate for their loss of integrity. Again, though the slave woman accepted a sexual role, these are not consensual relationship by modern definitions. Relationships in which one party has absolute power over the life and fate of the other, does not allow for the lesser powered individual to make a decision without fear of retribution. These women fought to obtain what they felt was their due share.

Lifetime resisters went to court and were scrutinized by their communities and neighbors in order to receive the benefits outlined in the will. Remarkably, the courts often upheld the wills, even when contested by legitimate white children. The courts offered slave women some recompense for their decision to live as concubines--where it offered them no protection against sexual assaults; it did uphold their rights as inheritors. While this is a contradiction in social beliefs, as if black women were property and incapable of being violated sexually, then it should naturally extend to financial security. What factors helped slave women win their cases? And where did their positions fail? How beneficial was the stance of a lifetime resister? Finally, what consequences did slave women suffer after they shifted their role from a virtuous resister to a lifetime resister?

While women who chose to become concubines did generally have a choice in their living conditions, they forfeited their right to choose a mate, and excluded themselves from general slave life and became a separate group of individuals in Southern and Northern societies. These women lived between the white and black

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<sup>159</sup> Bardaglio, "Rape and the Law in the Old South: 'Calculated to Excite Indignation in every heart,'" *The Journal of Southern History*. Vol. 60, No. 4 (Nov., 1994), 758.



worlds, never truly belonging to either. Each community black and white, usually excused or at least permitted these relationships but did little to welcome slave mistresses, as neither race knew where mistress' allegiance fell.<sup>160</sup> Would a mistress be committed to her own race, one that lived below her standards, or would she commit to the white race, one that would never fully accept her due to her tainted blood?

Lifetime resisters lived lonely lives. Though they were not completely abandoned, they did not enjoy the strong bonds present in racially distinct groups. By resisting slavery by committing to white men, slave women were able to fight the extension of slavery by securing their children's freedom. But again, this act severed the ties of their children to slave communities. Freed children of black mistresses were oftentimes educated in the North, and so raised in a unique atmosphere of safety and opportunity. White men at times, sent their children North, after having them work the plantation, and found that they were unable to put them in such harsh positions.<sup>161</sup> The mothers of these children often moved North as well, which furthered the disconnect with the institution of slavery. Free black women sought higher education for themselves and their children.<sup>162</sup> So while their actions resisted their personal positions of subjugation, and limited the talons of slavery from piercing their children, they did not directly alter the state of slavery. It was a personal resistance, not an external reformation of the system. Their lives did stand as testimony to other slave women presented with similar situations; the

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<sup>160</sup> Weiner, Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-1880, 130-134.

<sup>161</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Heaps of dem Yaller Gals got sont Norf: Martha Jackson," Alabama Narratives, Volume 1, 2.

<sup>162</sup> Hine, More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas, 292.

success of many slave mistresses, help advertise the benefits for other to become lifetime resistors and push for individual human rights.

The consequences of lifetime resistors were not always less drastic than that of violent resistors. Despite the remarkably different approaches of sexual aggression, their choice could place them within the same circumstances. Lifetime resistors that fell out of the good graces with their masters could be sold, beaten, or killed, just as a violent resistor.<sup>163</sup> Their children were also at risk. Several masters preferred to sell off children of these relationships to hide evidence of infidelity from their wives or family.<sup>164</sup>

Just because a woman committed to her role as a concubine, did not automatically enroll her in a system of benefits. Only with careful planning, deliberate action, and good luck did slave mistresses accomplish their goals of better living and eventual emancipation. Of the women that did suffer the sale of their children, or lower living standards than they would desire, they generally were women who became involved with their masters out of pure physical force, rather than taking a small part in the decision to be intimately involved. Though the women did permit their masters after a time, they did not begin in positions where their permission was solicited, and so they had little enticements to control or manipulate their masters. The cases were purely forced rape, rather than the attempt to swoon or psychologically overpower a woman. But the ideal slave mistress offered a relationship rather than just sex. And it was through sex that they were able to make relationships work, and mold their lovers to provide improved

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<sup>163</sup> Morton ed. Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 49-58. Article references *State v. Hoover*, a case in which a white master beat his female slave to death. His beatings held sexual themes, which display his demented sexual fantasies regarding his slave, Mira.

<sup>164</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Savilla Burrell, Ex-slave 83 years," South Carolina Narratives, 4.

conditions for their offspring. In any case, relationships were still left up to chance and heart and conscience of the master. Just because a slave woman permitted sexual advances, she was not automatically removed from hardship, though it was her goal to lessen it.

Another consequence of the lifetime resisters was time. Women had to constantly monitor their relationship and repeatedly welcome their master. While violent resisters could have explosions of retaliation, a lifetime resister was limited in her reactions, as she walked a careful line. If she tiptoed correctly she reaped great benefits, but one misguided step could ruin years of a stable relationship. Her existence was precarious. But for the women that made it into their master's hearts and wallets, their battle did not end there. Slave women had to fight to uphold their position after their lovers died. After death, they had no supporting testimony, other than their lover's will. This piece of paper held the key to a lifetime resister's entire state of being. And at this stage, she had to summon immense strength and arm herself for a final battle in her life. At this point, lifetime resisters are quite similar to violent resisters. Their entire life's decisions were embodied in their actions in this one brief moment. They had to be assertive and declare their value despite what whites first claimed. But here, their battlefield was the courtroom, and their only weapon was the words left in the will bequeathing an inheritance to them.

I have selected four inheritance cases, which encompass a variety of situations and circumstances to allow for a broad examination of inheritance suits. This is only a sampling of cases, and allows for generalizations of actions within the courts. The cases I have selected occurred in Texas and Louisiana from 1831-1872. There are more cases

in general filed in Louisiana, as New Orleans was a common city housing slave mistresses, and given the social acceptance, slave women were more willing to file for their inheritance. The cases also vary in familial situations. I have tried to determine which cases offer the most diverse dynamics, including cases with and without white wives and children. I have also included cases in which the interracial couple moved from one state to another, so the question of legal marriage varied by state's laws. Each case offers a different perspective on legal and social economic status, in order to provide a wider range of legal considerations.

The earliest case in the sampling took place in Louisiana in 1831, and concerned a mulatto woman named Adelaide and her relationship with John Dupree. Dupree prepared his will on July 6, 1810, and named Jean Cloutier, his half brother, as his heir, who would receive a set sum a of money. After receiving the funds, the remainder of Dupree's property, slaves, and land were to be rewarded to Adelaide and his natural children by her. At some time in 1811, Dupree died, and from that time, his will was contested. The problem first arose when Cloutier's father, Alexis Cloutier denied Adelaide any amount of her inheritance. While the original court set aside funding for Adelaide, A. Cloutier received and kept the funds from the executor in April 1816, upon the sale of Dupree's properties. Adelaide immediately began petitioning the court for her legal inheritance.

Only a small amount of Adelaide and Dupree's relationship can be pieced together from the inheritance trial. The court did request testimony from Adelaide two children, whose names were not listed, attested that their father always recognized them as his children. Adelaide was pregnant with one of the children in 1808, which would

make the child between the age of 2-3 at the time of his/her father's death and between 22-23 at the time of the final trial. Given that the child was so young during the life of his/her father, it seems awkward that the court considered his/her testimony. Regardless, the children's testimony was heard and strongly influenced the determination of the status of the couple's relationship. As Dupree verbally acknowledged his children, to the community, it was found that Adelaide was considered the concubine of Dupree. Dupree did not have a white wife or other children, which made Adelaide's position as wife secure. Since Dupree had no white heir, there was no one to contest his black mistress. Having won her battle to prove their relationship, Adelaide was confronted with another boundary.<sup>165</sup>

What was Adelaide status, free or slave? Adelaide argued that she was owned and freed by her mother who died in 1815, and freed her at that time. Her mother, Mariotte, had been owned and freed by Dupree in 1797. Adelaide argued that if she herself would not be recognized as freed, then her mother should, and Dupree's inheritance should be awarded to her, who was also listed in the will. Her logic then followed that as her mother died, that she should inherit the inheritance of her mother from Dupree. This elaborate argument displays Adelaide deep-rooted belief that she was owed inheritance from her deceased lover. By no means did she question her rights. She defended her position as a concubine and dully appointed inheritor from all positions. The court found that she indeed was considered an inheritor of her mother's assets. But did that extend to her inheritance by Dupree?

Adelaide's appeal in 1831 requested the sum of \$6,686 with the interest of 5% from 1815, when her mother died, and she was due her inheritance. Over the course of

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<sup>165</sup> Valsain et Als. Vs. Cloutier, Supreme Court of Louisiana, Western District, 3 La. 170, (1831).

16 years, that would amount to \$5, 348 in interest alone. The total of her request was \$12,034. Given the immense amount, the original court was reluctant to award the amount to a mulatto woman. But with her persistence, Adelaide won her petition for her inheritance nearly twenty years after the death of her lover. The court amended her request for interest from 1815. Instead, they granted her one year's interest at 5% until the debt is paid and the full sum Dupree listed in his will. The court remanded the original court costs on Cloutier.<sup>166</sup>

Adelaide's battle indicates the factors influencing a court and executor's decision in permitting black women their share of inheritance. First, a lifetime resistor must prove that she did live with a white man, as his wife. This is always a less complicated issue when the man did not have a white wife concurrently. And Adelaide had lived with Dupree for several years. Though their home life is not mentioned or recorded in court records, the people that knew the couple knew they had a relationship together. It is unclear whether they lived within the same household. Despite proof and acknowledgement that a couple was together, the court and executor of the will did not always want to relinquish the money to the concubine. As white men still had proportionally stronger legal bearing and social support, they oftentimes ignored the will and hoped or expected that the concubine would give up. Here white men made a fatal mistake in their case.

As lifetime resistor's primary feat was to wait, then fight, they were not deterred by white men denying them their inheritance. They did not even stop after a court ruled in the executor's favor. Slave women, like Adelaide, were willing to appeal the court's decision, finding that a higher court of law would recognize their rights. Lifetime

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<sup>166</sup> Valsain et Als. Vs. Cloutier, Supreme Court of Louisiana, Western District, 3 La. 170, (1831).

resistors trusted the legal system, and invested large amounts of time and money to vindicate themselves. In cases of inheritance, slave women could at times find the protection they did not receive in cases of sexual assaults. And remarkably, lifetime resistors did not rest at local courts. They took their battles to the Supreme Courts of the state. Despite predominate racist attitudes, judges, by the 1830's did consider slave women as human, as so were willing to consider their requests, as they correlated to white's requests (the slave women's lovers).<sup>167</sup> Lifetime resistor's reliance on a higher court is cleverly connected to their position within local society. As slave mistresses could not find a place in local townships in either black or white societies, they disregarded the critiques of locals in place for their personal opinions. The building of self-reliance helped to boost their willingness in going outside their townships for a higher approval. And at times this persistence paid off.

Adelaide's situation strengthened her request. Louisiana's civic codes voided common law marriages, and classified children of such, as illegitimate. So the courts did not recognize Adelaide's relationship as legal, but her children were still given some rights.<sup>168</sup> Dupree was not in a relationship with a white woman and had no legitimate heirs. Even though he named an heir, the courts did not feel that awarding Adelaide her money would take away from a rightful heir. It would not damage anyone. The courts conceived of illegitimate heirs and bastards from adulterous relationships under different terms. Bastard children infringed upon the inheritance of legitimate children. Illegitimate children did not pose a threat or call into question a father's lost morality for

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<sup>167</sup> Wiethoff, A Peculiar Humanism: The Judicial Advocacy of Slavery in High Courts of the Old South, 1820-1850, 32.

<sup>168</sup> Louisiana: La. Rev. Civ. Code c. 94, (1949).

turning away from his wife. But when wives and children came into play, the courts considered both their position and the request in the will. Judges sought to find a balance between the two and make a decision that best suited the needs of those involved.

A year after the Louisiana court reached its decision regarding Adelaide; it was presented with another appeal from a concubine who had been denied her inheritance. Jung, noted in the court case simply as f.w.c. or female woman of color, petitioned the court for her inheritance and that of her four children from her lover and the children's father, Francis Bernoudy. The children are not named in the court case. F. Doriocourt, Beroundy's legitimate wife, kept Jung's inheritance, and instead divided it between her white children. But Jung did not allow the situation to settle there. She filed suit in 1832 in the district court.

As in Adelaide's case, Jung had to prove herself to be the concubine of Beroundy, and him the father of their children. The case was complicated by Doriocourt's denial of Jung and claim that no black woman could file suit. Doriocourt's attorneys also claimed that the law was "to exclude illegitimate coloured children from any right in their natural father, who has not acknowledged them." So Doriocourt's intent was to prove that her husband never had recognized Jung's children. But Jung was prepared for such a course of action. Jung had saved letters, documents and receipts from Beroundy, which showed he named the children, visited them, and paid for their education. The evidence was indisputable. Beroundy had acknowledged his children. Yet the district court struck the evidence from the record. Baring the documents, and with Doriocourt's denial of knowing Jung and her children, the court decided that Jung's children were not legally recognized



illegitimate heirs and so had no right to claim inheritance. The court denied Jung's petition.<sup>169</sup>

No doubt stung from the court's judgment, Jung gathered strength and filed for an appeal to the Supreme Court. Despite her bad experience at the district level, Jung believed in her rights and fought to secure them. She wasted no time in filing her appeal. Her action was so swift that the widow Doriocourt even complained to the court that she had petitioned too soon after the last court date. The court listened to the case and allowed the evidence provided by Jung. After hearing the evidence the court did determine that the children were Beroundy's. As Jung and her children were listed in the will, despite Doriocourt refusal to acknowledge them, the court ruled against the defendants and found in the plaintiff's favor. In regards to the district court, the Supreme Court noted that its finding "be annulled, avoided and reversed." Jung and her three surviving children were awarded two hundred and eight dollars and thirty-three cents and one third each. Though the overall amount was small, it was a large victory for Jung and her children. The court even remanded court costs to Doriocourt, for both court dates. So other than time, Jung's court battle cost her nothing.<sup>170</sup>

While Jung had to overcome Doriocourt's contestation, she never waived in her fight to obtain her due benefits. Jung trusted the legal system and relied on the higher court to provide her and her children with a secure legacy. Like Adelaide, Jung defended her children's position, and even deliberately stored documents, preparing to confront

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<sup>169</sup> Jung et Al. vs. Doriocourt, Supreme Court of Louisiana, Eastern District 4 La. 175, (1832).

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

any challenge. Jung was not afraid to confront her lover's true wife. Nor did she waiver in her choice to expose Beroundy's additional children.

Even with different familial situations, the court maintained its decision to honor the words of the testator in cases of concubines. Judges generally disregarded women's words, but when supported by the words of the testator, a white man, judges were more considerate of concubine's appeals. Denying a concubine would undermine the last wishes of a white man. But judges still needed additional justification to trust a black woman.<sup>171</sup> Most concubines did not have the support of a white person to testify to their position, and certainly the legitimate wives contested concubines' rights. Other family members also intervened in black mistress' inheritance. Perhaps it was a means of denying the relationships despite proof, in order to maintain a social position, or perhaps it was simply to keep from giving money to someone they felt inferior.

In 1845 the Supreme Court of Louisiana heard another appeal from a concubine denied her inheritance. In this case, like Adelaide, the man, Maurice Prevost, had no white wife or children. Prevost did name his sister, mentioned solely as the widow Majastre, the executor of the will. Here a new complication arises. A white widow was given little options in southern society. She generally had to move back home or find means of caring for herself, relying on charity or local help. Given the widow Majastre's claim to her brother's property, she likely felt that given her situation she was more deserving of the money. Prevost left a "certain portion of his immovable property" to his illegitimate daughter, Florestine Cecile, and "all his moveable estate" to Clarisse. This provision likely included a house equipped with furniture and belongings. It would be enough for the two to have a secured lifestyle and a right to their own land. But

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<sup>171</sup>Edwards, Gendered Strife and Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction, 30.

Florestine presented information that only rendered the court's decision more difficult. She claimed that though her mother did become involved with Prevost and lived as his concubine, she was not his daughter. Florestine named her father as Miguel Constant who freed her when she was still a toddler. While she did deny Prevost's paternity, she still requested that the court honor his will and permit her her inheritance.<sup>172</sup>

As the court could not establish a familial connection between Florestine, and Clarisse did not appear in court to testify for her relationship with Prevost, the court denied the women's appeal. Without evidence of a relationship, the court ruled in keeping with the district court's original answer. What kept Clarisse from the courtroom prevented her from reaping the benefits of her relationship. But apparently, the widow Majastre was well prepared to end the lawsuit. The widow had contacted authorities and must have had some information or simply made up a story about Clarisse, as she was in hiding from the law, avoiding prosecution. In this case, the white woman defeated the black mistress. But the mistress still had secured her daughter's freedom in her relationship with the first white man that freed Florestine when she was young. Perhaps she felt that her maternal duty had been complete, and her daughter was secure enough without the additional inheritance. But despite the internal drama, the court tried to maintain the same principles as found in the earlier cases in Louisiana. The testator must have recognized and acknowledged his progeny in order for the courts to rule in favor of the appellant. But conclusively proving paternity was difficult. In Alabama alone,

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<sup>172</sup> Jacques L. Prevost vs. Pierre Martel, Testamentary Executor of the deceased, and others. Supreme Court of Louisiana, Eastern District, New Orleans, 10 Rob. 512. (1845).

between 1820-1860, only 120 white men were irrefutably found to be the fathers of mulatto infants.<sup>173</sup>

Aside from legal battles on inheritance, were court cases focused on cohabitation lawsuits. In these cases both the white man and black woman are usually alive and facing punishment for their open sexual relationship. These cases are rarer, but do exist. Beginning in 1691, colonies began taking steps to keep white women from marrying blacks.<sup>174</sup> Several states had no such legal restrictions on miscegenation until after the Civil War.<sup>175</sup> South Carolina, for example, became one of the harshest states for slavery, yet held no laws restricting miscegenation prior to the Civil War.<sup>176</sup> But most southern states had restrictions on record. Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana each had restrictions in their codes or constitution prohibiting miscegenation and listing the penalty as a felony.<sup>177</sup> Cohabitation laws were the first step taken in keeping the races separate, and slowly built into a socially accepted force. Marriage between races was not condoned in the South. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, boundaries regarding interracial relationships had become fixed and accepted, whether legally regulated or not.<sup>178</sup> Before the war, the laws

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<sup>173</sup> Mills, "Miscegenation and the Free Negro in Antebellum "Anglo" Alabama: A Reexamination of Southern Race Relations," *The Journal of American History*, 34.

<sup>174</sup> Clinton and Gillespie ed., *The Devil's Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, 130.

<sup>175</sup> Bardaglio, *Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex and the Law in the Nineteenth Century South*, 60, 62.

<sup>176</sup> Williamson, *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States*, 16-17.

<sup>177</sup> James Browning, "Anti-Miscegenation Laws in the United States," *Duke Bar Journal*. Vol. 1, No. 1 (Mar. 1951), 27-28.

<sup>178</sup> Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia*, 211.

restricted cohabitation, and so lawsuits focused on a couple living together without being legally married.

The reduced number of cases may be attributed to the fact that many couples sought to conceal, or keep their illegal activities quite.<sup>179</sup> The punishments for miscegenation and cohabitation varied by state, but could risk whippings, death or expulsion. But the most common reaction was public shunning. With so much at risk, it is clear why couples did not always openly proclaim their relationships. And when these couples were exposed, their peers confronted them first. Vigilante justice could pull couples apart; make relationships difficult, and run couples out of the township. This reaction usually occurred when a black man was involved, as that action upset white southerners' sensibilities far more than a white man being with a slave woman.<sup>180</sup> So while not all miscegenation or cohabitation cases went to court, those that did offer an insight into the lives of the couple, their progeny, and the township in which they resided. The witness' testimonies reveal either support and acceptance or disgust and rejection.

Cases against interracial relationships rise after the Civil War as citizens turned to the courts to uphold the systems of patriarchy and paternalism, to replace the loss of control that existed within slavery. The predominate rise in the cases deal with rape.<sup>181</sup> Only a few of the cases heard try couples involved in long-term relationships. In the years after the Civil War, from 1865- 1899, southern courts heard 18 cases concerning interracial marriage and 6 cases of interracial fornication. As the numbers are quite

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<sup>179</sup> Steckel, "Miscegenation and the American Slaveholders," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. 254-255.

<sup>180</sup> State vs. Brady Supreme Court of Tennessee, Knoxville, 28 Tenn. 74 (1848) and Doc. Lonas vs. The State Supreme Court of Tennessee, Knoxville, 50 Tenn. 287 (1871).

<sup>181</sup> Bardaglio, Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex and the Law in the Nineteenth Century South, 132.

small, it is evident that many couples hid their relationships, had short trysts or townships settled the issue of interracial relationships without bringing it before the court. The couples that were tried represent those that truly fought and tested boundaries of race. They disregarded social stigmas and legal precedents in order to live together. This is displayed by the number of appeals of miscegenation convictions during this period. Of the 24 tried, 20 appealed the court to reverse its decision. Only six had their request granted.<sup>182</sup> These couples fought against the standard to commit to each other. Their actions were not accepted publicly, which is why they were taken to court. Perhaps these couples were too forward in their desire and commitment for one another, a characteristic that frightened the community. Most interracial couples kept their relationships private, or at least quite, and so the communities in which they lived could overlook the social faux pas.<sup>183</sup>

Instead of confronting southern critiques, some couples chose to move north. As longer standing interracial relationships occurred between lighter skinned mulattos and white men, passing became an option. Passing allowed slave women to pretend to be white. In cases where white men did runaway with their lovers, southerners generally shunned their betrayal. For instance, a white plantation owner claimed his son dead to all his friends when he discovered his son had eloped with a slave woman to live up North as man and wife. Such a sin in southern eyes was unforgivable.<sup>184</sup> But to lifetime resisters

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<sup>182</sup> Bardaglio, Reconstructing the Household: Families, Sex and the Law in the Nineteenth Century South, 227.

<sup>183</sup> Rothman, Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families Across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787-1861, 191, 217.

<sup>184</sup> Williamson, New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States, 69.

these relationships offered both the ideal of freedom and the loss of identity, as they had to forfeit their racial status and deny their connections to their families and friends.

Lifetime resisters found themselves living outside traditional racial boundaries, and as such, they were more willing to pursue their legal rights in court. Many had positive experiences both while their lovers were alive, and after they had died. While becoming a lifetime resister did not exclude slave women from experiencing any cruelties in slavery, it did generally reduce their exposure to it. Some slave women that gave in to their master's advances did not reap benefits of freedom or security. Entering into relationships always involved risks. But lifetime resisters would not accept that their position as a lover made them unequal in a relationship or in the courtroom. While lifetime resisters sought relief in court, violent resisters used their fists to express their unwillingness to bend to their master's demands.

## CHAPTER 5

### FIGHT: THE STRUGGLE TO ASSUME POWER

“There is no such thing as happiness. Life bends joy and pain, beauty and ugliness, in such a way that no one may isolate them. No one should want to. Perfect joy, or perfect pain, with no contrasting elements to define them, would mean a monotony of consciousness, would mean death.”

Jean Toomer, Cane, 1923

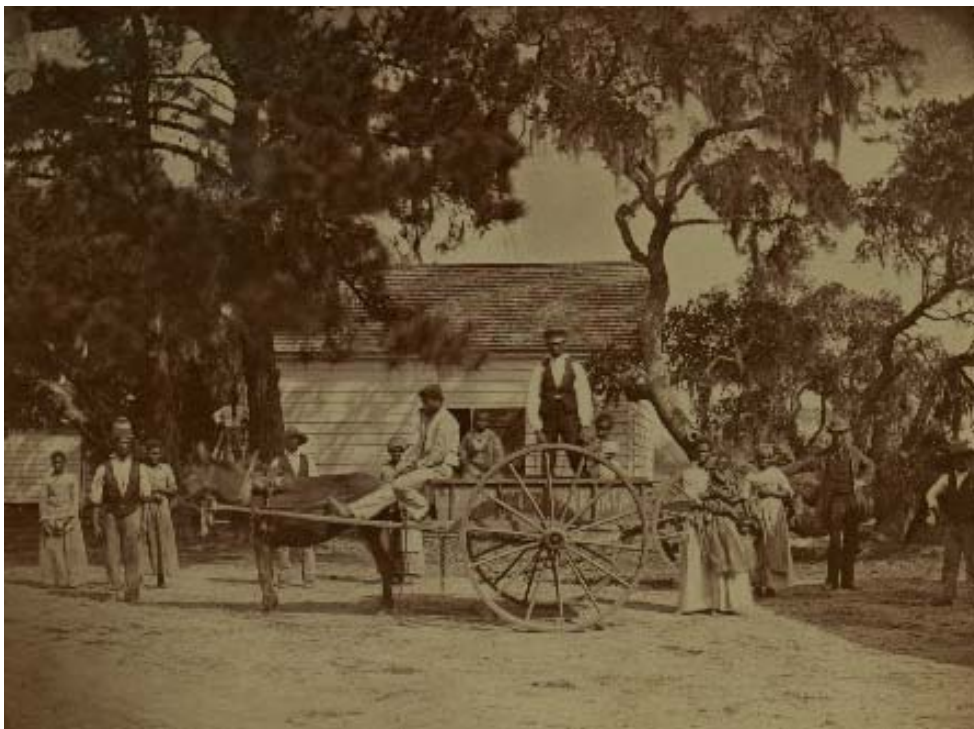


Figure 5.1 James Hopkinson's Plantation: Group going to field

In slavery, white men and black women were forced together. The issue of power became apparent when white men expected sexual control over slave women. How did slave women reclaim power lost as slaves? What measures were slave women forced to



make when their strategies as virtuous resisters failed? When slave women entered into relationships, what did they forfeit and what did they gain? And what if a woman in fact was not able to utilize the methods of virtuous resisters before being sexually assaulted? How were women affected if they had no opportunity of resisting through virtuous means? What pushed women to retaliate? And aside from the most obvious answer of the sexual aggressor, who caused slave women to react to sexual aggression? I will consider these questions in this chapter while examining the actions of violent resisters.

Some virtuous resisters eventually realized that their efforts to sidestep a master's advances merely backed themselves into a corner. A virtuous resistor's methods were limited and forced them to choose a new path. From this position they at times conceded to sexual activity. This concession for some women was seen as a temporal escape, they allowed it to occur until they found new methods of escape; these women were the violent resisters. The violence birthed from these relationships came with the relationship's last breaths.

The problem of interracial relationships came when one of the parties in the relationship wanted to end it. While slave women were the weaker part in the relationships, they were not always relieved when it ended. At times, the end marked the woman's sale or the sale of her children. One scorned slave mistress, Virginia Boyd, wrote a letter to her master's friend to petition him to intervene on her behalf. While at the slave market, Virginia wrote her appeal. She mentioned "all that has transpired between me and the old man," eventually caused her to be taken to the market, while pregnant "to be sold without even having an opportunity of choosing for myself." She was stung by her recent loss of security and claimed "what is still harder for the father of

my children to sell his own offspring.” What transpired in her relationship to cause its sudden end is not listed in her correspondence. But Virginia was sure to include that she “don’t wish to return...and shall never try to get back.” Her relationship had been

**55 PRIME NEGROES,**  
Accustomed to the culture of Rice.  
**By LOUIS D. DeSAUSSURE.**

On Wednesday, 21st January, 1857, at *Ryan Bond Lot*  
*Chalmers Street*  
will be sold in families, at 11 o'clock, A. M., in the city of Charleston,

**An uncommonly prime gang of Rice-Field Negroes.**

CONDITIONS :—One-third Cash. Balance by Bond, payable in two equal annual Instalments, with interest, payable annually from day of sale, to be secured by a mortgage of the property, and approved personal security. Purchasers to pay for papers.

No.	Ages.		No.	Ages.	
1 John	50	trusty driver, full hand.	30 Taggy	40	3-4 hand <i>Boathouse</i>
2 Mary	40	prime	31 Juba	50	1-2 hand, plantation cook
3 June	20	"	32 Tenah	22	prime
4 Paddy	16	3-4 hand, cart boy <i>Knockthune</i>	33 Infant	6 months	
5 Lydia	9	<i>cripple in one leg</i>	34 Jenny	20	prime
6 Love	6		35 Manwell	1	
7 Charity	2		36 Moscs	23	prime <i>4 1/2 m</i>
8 Ben	60	1-2 hand	37 Paul	35	prime, trunk minder <i>250</i>
9 Patty	60	"	38 Jacob	45	full hand, ploughman and wagoner. <i>250</i>
10 George	30	prime	39 Manwell	55	1-2 jobbing carpenter
11 July	28	"			
12 Jacob	26	"			
13 Bacchus	25	"			
14 Flanders	23	"			

Figure 5.2 Slave Sale Advertisement, January 21, 1857: Advertisement showing the sale of slaves listed by ages, displays the constant threat slaves faced of being sold. Here slaves at least were sold in family units.

terminated, and even while in the slave pen awaiting her impending sale, she chose it above being reunited with the man with whom she had been living with as a wife.<sup>185</sup> It

<sup>185</sup> Letter from Virginia Boyd to R.C. Ballard on May 6, 1853 in Houston, Texas. Found in the Rice C. Ballard Papers and the Hayes Collection in the Southern Historical Collection in the Wilson Library at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

usually meant the loss of her higher quality of life—the loss of her better clothes, food, and housing. Interracial relationships usually ensured the apprenticeship of mulatto children from the union and eventual freedom, a much nicer living than that presented by normal circumstances in slavery.<sup>186</sup> Having the freedoms and benefits slave mistresses had come to enjoy, suddenly revoked, oftentimes crushed their spirits and left them weakened and exposed to the cruelties of slavery.<sup>187</sup> So while they escaped sexual manipulation, they lost the sense of security in material items that they had gained.

As entering into these relationship were typically one sided, so too the choice to leave usually was not mutual. Most stories and cases of interracial relationships are exposed at the point of their cessation. During the relationship, the participants generally acted in secrecy. But the arcane details of their relationships are exposed when they decide to part ways. No longer concerned of being caught, usually one or both of the partners behave in the extreme by disregarding the clandestine sexual escapades and taking actions that expose the relationship or the products of it. No longer hiding within the confines of social acceptability, the terminations of interracial relationships were dramatic. When relationships ended, partners acted scornfully, vindictively, and abusively.<sup>188</sup> For the women it meant their removal, and in a few cases, white men were removed as well. United and divided, how did white male and black female couples handle transitions within their relationships?

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<sup>186</sup> Williamson. New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States, 43.

<sup>187</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Savilla Burrell, ex-slave 83 years," South Carolina Narratives, Vol. 14, Part 1, 2. Narrative references the master's selling of his mulatto children.

<sup>188</sup> Morton ed. Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 49-58.

In order to fully understand the extent to which these slave women were pushed, it is necessary to examine the extreme cases of the fight for power between white men and black women. This chapter will examine a few cases that reveal the resistance put forth by the violent resisters--the women who fought back. Though the following cases do not indicate the norms in southern society, they do reveal how following the norms of southern society drove people to extreme behavior. The violent resisters are the group, which utilized violence (or confrontational devices) and manipulation in place of a legal voice.

As often as black women resisted masters, masters would resist being deterred. The balance for power became a tug of war between white men and black women. Did a slave have the right to say when a relationship ended? What were the terms? And what happened to the individuals when the parties did not agree on when to end or initiate a relationship? Resistant women did not always begin their protests in the beginnings of relationships. Feelings changed and faded. It is likely that many women entered or allowed sexual relationships to occur, in the hopes that the relationships would be temporary. At differing points in time in relationships, black women moved to end their liaison. Their decisions were oftentimes ignored. Having already forfeited the fighting tactics of virtuous resisters, these slave women knew that passive, approved forms of resistance would not suffice. When these women had been pushed beyond their boundaries, they reacted. Despite the appropriateness and position that southern social custom dictated, black women fought back in methods further than their status allowed.

Most women employed measures that kept them from suffering the consequences of outright protest. In keeping with the early efforts of virtuous resisters, women

removed themselves from whites' access, but not in the earlier methods of dodging or ignoring men. Women feigned illness, menstruation, and pregnancy to prevent their male counterparts from engaging in sexual relations with them.<sup>189</sup> Now women recognized the desires of whites, and actively denied access to their bodies by announcing various complications. But in order to match the increasing pressure of whites for sex, slave women had to augment their approaches. Instead of using their bodies to show themselves as tainted, they used their bodies to taunt.

Women showed their power through acts which instigated fear and concern. Some women protested discretely by poisoning their masters or children. Poisoning was a discrete act in comparison to an outright physical attack. It also revealed a premeditated act, as opposed to a reaction in the heat of a moment. This plotting is indicative of slave women's disgust for their position and their desperation to end it. Others chose to murder the products of their forced relationships by inducing a miscarriage or committing infanticide.<sup>190</sup> All of these actions reveal that women had input and control in sexual relationships. Their actions, however bold or devious, helped to mold their relationships with white men. In choosing how sex would impact their lives, women passively, and at times aggressively, questioned property rights in the South. But when they did not always conquer a man's sexual drive, some choose extreme measures and these unfold into dark disturbing accounts of violent retribution.

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<sup>189</sup> Catherine Clinton, The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 221.

<sup>190</sup> Hine, More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas 247, 252-254. The number of abortions is a highly contested statistic due to the slave's desire for secrecy in such an action. But as slaves knew of methods and plants that could induce early labor, it is likely that some of the numbers of miscarriages and infant deaths were deliberate acts of insubordination.

The violent resisters, or women who had been involved with white men and later decided to end the relationship, became the types that initiated the most violence and retribution. Virtuous resisters likely employed milder measures of resistance, such as the early account where Anne used a glass bottle to strike a blow to the overseer's head. But examples such as these have little documentation within the historical record. Due to male pride and slave's illiteracy, most of these instances were not recorded or reflected upon. They were considered minor events and were dealt with on the individual plantations and farms. Studying the cases of the violent resisters reveals the extreme extent to which women fought to reclaim their bodies. These women had given in or permitted sexual activity and so had a perceived understanding with their male lover. Clearly from their actions, slave women did not agree with the understanding white men held of their bodies.

In examining literally the worst-case scenario, the positions of these slave women and the thoughts they possessed about reacting to their relationships, whether actuated or rejected, are revealed. Two accounts of slave women at their breaking point highlight why some of the women chose to continue in relationships with white men. The difference in what drove women to retaliate and what kept them in their positions as concubines helps shed light on the oppressive power of paternalism and patriarchy and at the same time reveals vulnerability within the system. A passion for justice flowed through their blood as can only be found in victims, who choose not to be victimized. But before any fight, and any crime, there always lay a story.

The most dramatic offense a slave woman could employ to end the abuse of a sexually aggressive master was the removal of his offspring, by whatever means

necessary. Running away was the first avenue for Margaret Garner. In January of 1856 Margaret fled from her Kentucky plantation and successfully made her way to Ohio. At the time, Margaret had four children, Tom, Sam, Mary, and Cilla with her, accompanied by her mother and father in law, and her husband Robert. Women traditionally ran away less frequently than men, as they generally were not granted permission to leave the plantation as many male skilled laborers were, and so had a weak alibi if caught. And many times when they ran, they had whites that wanted to assist them. Having willing accomplices primarily occurred within urban areas where slave women could befriend whites in opportunities unavailable to them on the inaccessible plantations.<sup>191</sup> Women ran away even less frequently with small children, as there was little excuse for slaves to be traveling with children unaccompanied by a white owner or trader. Children also meant runaways could cover less ground less quickly. When women ran, it generally stemmed from continued sexual violence.<sup>192</sup> So, what made Margaret accept the almost inevitable risk of being caught in order to escape from her life on John Pollard Gaines' plantation?

Margaret Garner was born in Virginia, and at the age of seven brought to Kentucky to serve as a nanny to her new master's one-year old daughter. Here on the 300-acre Maplewood plantation, she would grow in to a woman. "Maplewood was Boone County's thirteenth wealthiest plantation and among its leaders in hog production."<sup>193</sup> John Gaines owned and operated the plantation, using under 20 slaves

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<sup>191</sup> Morton ed., Discovering Women in Slavery: Emancipating Perspectives on the American Past, 187.

<sup>192</sup> King, Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in the Nineteenth-Century America, 118.

<sup>193</sup> Weisenburger, Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South, 19.

several employed seasonally. Margaret remained on the plantation full time. The slave population surrounding Maplewood comprised a significantly high proportion of the total population. And with this concentration of slaves, John Gaines took advantage of the slave trade, buying bondsmen and selling them to traders at a higher cost. Gaines had a large family, consisting of eleven children with his wife Elizabeth. To provide for his family, Gaines not only ran his plantation, he served as a Congressman, which kept him away from his household for months at a time. Numerous men, overseers, and family friends handled the slaves on the Gaines plantation. They felt no consistency or loyalty to their owner due to the infrequency of seeing him. Slaves in their circumstance generally were more cautious, as their masters had no connection to them, and could easily sell them without any tinges of guilt. Their fears were not unfounded.

After accepting an offer for a governorship of Oregon, John Gaines sold his plantation, and slaves to his brother, Archibald Gaines. Previously, there had been offers to buy Margaret to prevent her from running away, because Margaret had shown to be resistant to her position. Running away was a rash course of action that usually resulted from deep-rooted problems on the plantation. At the time that Margaret was sold to Archibald, she was 15, and had recently gotten married to a young slave, Robert Garner. The Garners were expecting their first child. Statistically speaking, Margaret was extremely young for both marriage and child bearing.

Margaret's accountings for her actions are not recorded, but we can speculate. Given that taking a lover and having a child was a common tactic of slave women to ward off white interest, as Linda had done, it would not be unlikely that Margaret had done the same. There is documentation that whites sexually assaulted Margaret's mother,



and her mother before her--Margaret and her mother were both mulattos, with white men as their fathers. It was common for white men to sexually interfere in the lives of slaves, and to encourage reproduction, but even with their sideline interaction, slave women usually conceived between 16-19 years of age. Margaret was on the outside of those numbers, which tends to prove that her circumstances demanded her early sexual development.<sup>194</sup> To increase the instability in Margaret's relationship, her husband, then 15, was hired out and traveled throughout northern Kentucky. He was away for long lengths, and worked for a variety of white men, with no permanent residence.<sup>195</sup>

In 1849 Archibald Gaines took over the Maplewood plantation, listing 12 slaves on the 1850 Census, including Margaret's newborn son, Thomas, then 5 months old (he was listed as black.)<sup>196</sup> Over the next six years, Margaret had three additional children. Her children over those years did not resemble the coloring of her first born. In fact, several people noted the successively lighter colors of her latter children, regarding her last born, Cilla as nearly white. Margaret's pregnancies occurred after Gaines' wife Elizabeth gave birth. Southern society permitted a lying-in period, a time after white women gave birth where they had the option to refuse sexual intimacy with their husbands, to allow them adequate time to recover and adjust to a new child. Margaret

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<sup>194</sup> James Trussell and Richard Steckel, "The Age of Slaves at Menachre and Their First Birth," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. Vol. 8, No. 3 (Winter, 1978), 477-505.

<sup>195</sup> Weisenburger, Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South, 34, 38.

<sup>196</sup> United States of America, Bureau of the Census. *Seventh Census of the United States, 1850*. (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1850).

became pregnant during each of these periods of refusal. During these instances, Gaines was the only adult white male on the plantation.<sup>197</sup>

While there is no absolutely conclusive evidence of Gaines admitting to fathering Margaret children, or DNA retrieval identifying him as the father, it seems rather likely that he was involved with Margaret. Her actions in 1856 only solidify the likelihood of her being sexually abused as a slave. Margaret's escape with her children represented her desperation to remove herself and her children from their lives on the plantation. The flight to Ohio soil, served as temporary relief to the Garner family. Again, traveling with children, nearly always condemned the runaways to capture, as the children could not travel at such lengths, under such harsh conditions, as the parents. The Garners traveled under darkness on a cold, snowing winter night. Strangely it was at night that Gaines noticed Margaret missing. His arrival to her cabin, in the evening, seems suspicious unless he was sexually involved with her.

But for whatever the cause, the Garners' absence was quickly noticed, and a search team was quickly deployed. The U.S. Marshall, H.H. Robinson, swiftly followed the Garners' tracks in the deep snow, and located the Garners' hideout on the grounds of one of the Gaines' acquaintances plantations. The Garners' had piled into a small shack, which seems to be the slaughterhouse for the farm. The room was small, with an earthen floor, and a few sharpened knives and tools hanging from pegs inside the shack.<sup>198</sup>

Confronted by the Marshall, and an armed posse of eleven men, the Garner family had little time to react. The Garners had been traveling for over 12 hours. It was 8:00 in

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<sup>197</sup> Weisenburger, Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South, 44-47.

<sup>198</sup> Weisenburger, Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South, 69.

the morning, and the Garners had just sat down with the Kite family, who assisted in hiding the fugitives. They were exhausted from the weather and whether the Garners anticipated actually escaping, or simply expected having more time, is unclear. But at the point in time where they felt the oppressive state of slavery surrounding them, pushing closer to breaking in to their safe haven, Margaret snapped. She made an instant decision, to end the grasp of slavery by saving her children from its clasps. Margaret failed to save them in her escape attempt, but she still held a fail proof plan to rescue them from Gaines. In a frenzy she began to execute her plan, and began screaming to her husband and mother-in-law to assist her in her crusade.<sup>199</sup>

Margaret's husband and mother-in-law could hardly follow Margaret, as neither had been subjected to the type of consistent trauma and abuse as Margaret had. Margaret's situation pushed her beyond normal behavior. Resisting virtuously made no difference in her situation. Deflecting, ignoring, and running away from her master all fell short from saving Margaret and contemplating the fact that her children would soon befall the same fate led her to react violently. She became a violent resistor. From outside the shack, the posse heard no sounds, and were given no responses when they yelled at the fugitives to come out. Only after they broke through the door, could they begin to process Margaret's actions during those minutes of silence.

The door broke open and the sight inside shocked and horrified the posse. Margaret's daughter, Mary, laid on the floor bleeding profusely, her throat cut from ear to ear nearly decapitating her. Margaret held a coal shovel in her hands and was standing over her other daughter Cilla. Cilla's face was swollen and she was bleeding from her

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<sup>199</sup> *New York Daily Times*, "The Slave Tragedy in Cincinnati," (February 2, 1856), 3. Found in Proquest Historical newspapers (1851-1857).

nose. Tom and Sam were under the bed, their bodies covered with small lacerations. After surveying the room, the men swarmed in and jumped on top of Margaret. In shock, the men did not subdue her before she struck Cilla on the head once more. They boys were carried out of the shack, crying inconsolably.<sup>200</sup>

What is gained from the stories of those inside the shack interviewed after offers little consolation or understanding. Inside the shack with the Garners were the Kites, Sarah and Elijah, the couple assisting the Garners in their escape. After finding themselves surrounded, Margaret quickly grabbed a knife off the wall and slit her

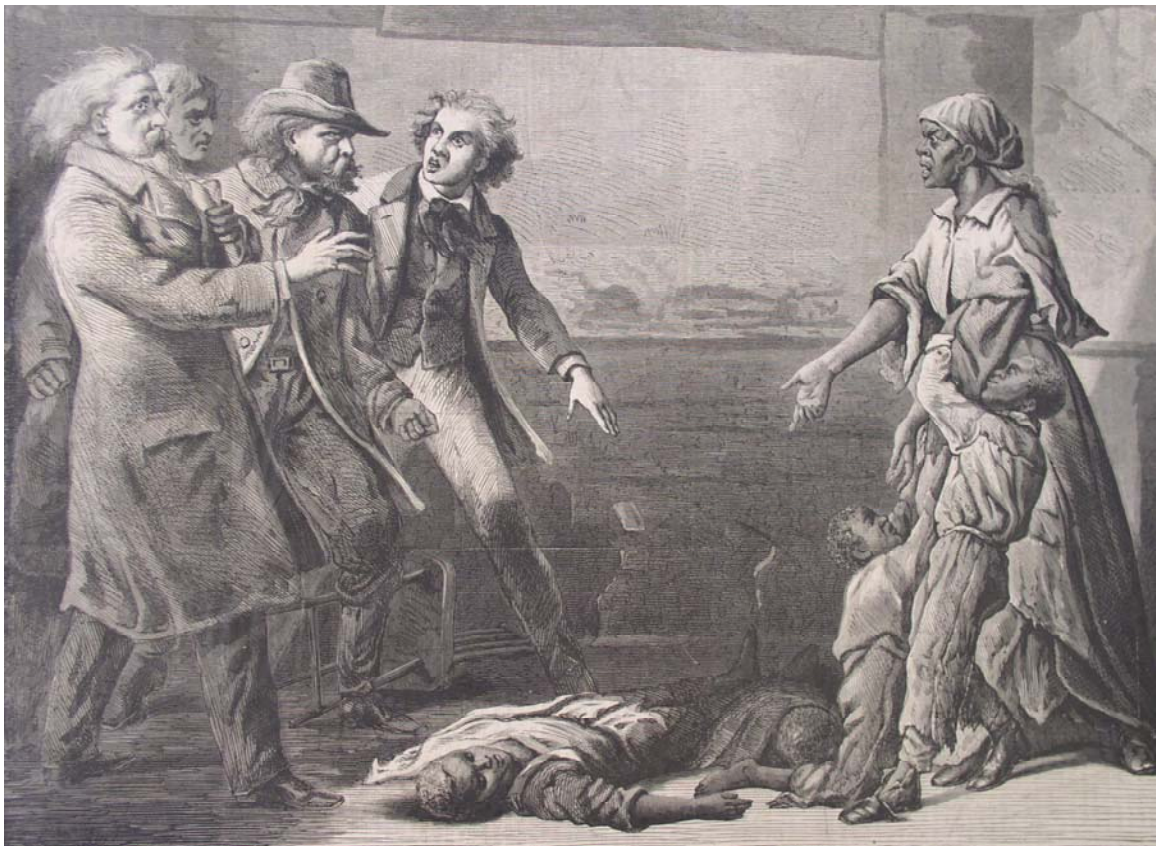


Figure 5.3 “Modern Medea,” Depiction of Margaret Garner after she attacked her children.

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<sup>200</sup> Weisenburger, Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South 73.

daughter's throat in one smooth forceful movement. Robert, Margaret's husband held the little girl until she died. He then paced back and forth holding a gun in his hands in obvious distress. Sarah Kite managed to get the knife from Margaret, but as soon as she turned, Margaret had grabbed a shovel, and begged her mother to help her kill her children. Her mother refused. But her refusal was not accompanied by an intervention.<sup>201</sup> The only slightly comforting material gathered was that Margaret at least knew, after living on a farm and watching sheep slaughtered how to kill with inflicting as little pain as possible. Even that fact, cannot reduce the revulsion of the thought of a mother slaughtering her own child, and rationalizing it as being a better fate than life. Margaret's rash and destructive action was her final resistance. Margaret had followed the typical methods of resistance, by avoiding her master, and taking a husband, she even went further in executing an escape with her and her children. She had done everything in her power to distance herself from her master. But her resistance was only met by his continued advances. In the cabin, on the grounds of freedom, she chose as her battleground. She no longer resisted passively, but took to direct aggressive retaliation against Gaines.

The confrontation between the two bore little resolve. Margaret's rash action was her only means of standing against her master and showing that he could no longer control her life. And Gaines' reaction to Mary's death reflected that his tie to her as more than a master to a slave. Prior to breaking into the shack, Gaines "expressed his anxiety...and especially desired that no harm whatever should be done to the little

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<sup>201</sup> *New York Daily Times*, "The Slave Tragedy in Cincinnati," (February 2, 1856), 3. Found in Proquest Historical newspapers (1851-1857).

children.”<sup>202</sup> Gaines held Mary’s lifeless body and openly sobbed, while clutching the small frame. He let no one approach him, and swore that he would ride back to Kentucky to carry the girl to a proper burial sight. Margaret’s message to Gaines changed both of their lives. The impact of her action affected both, and for the worse. Margaret lost her life and her ability to protect her children. Gaines lost his control, property, and what is assumed to be his own daughter.

But the power struggle between the couple fueled a debated between the North and South. The South feared future attacks or losses of “property” within their own farms. But the North used this tragic event as a platform against slavery due to the conditions in which it places families. The north also criticized the effects of fugitive slave laws, which allowed men to hunt down mothers and infants, and spilling blood on Northern states.<sup>203</sup> Gaines actions caught the public’s attention in the North, as his character and honor were questioned in regards to his relationship with Margaret. He was called a weak man, who disgraced his state, and was willing to sell his honor for a Negro woman. Citizens in the North, found it hard to believe Margaret killed without reason.<sup>204</sup> Despite the Northern support, heralding Margaret as a hero and demanding her release from slavery, it bore no resolution to her fate.<sup>205</sup> Margaret was sold by Gaines, contracted typhoid, and died a long painful death.

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<sup>202</sup> *New York Daily Times*, “The Slave Tragedy in Cincinnati,” (February 2, 1856), 3. Found in Proquest Historical newspapers (1851-1857).

<sup>203</sup> *Liberator*, “Judge Leavitt: From the Free Presbyterian,” (May 23, 1856), Vol. 26, No. 21, 1.

<sup>204</sup> *Liberator*, “The Case of Margaret Garner: From the Cincinnati Gazette,” (May 2, 1856), Vol. 26, No. 18, 70.

<sup>205</sup> *National Era*, “The Criminal Charge against the Negroes,” (March 13, 1856), Vol. 10, No. 480, 42.

Power became the central vortex on which Gaines and Margaret battled. By standing up to Gaines in such a rebellious manner, Margaret's case was well publicized. The detrimental loss that slavery caused--the need for a mother to kill her own children in order to be convinced that they were safe--imprinted a permanent scar on history. Margaret's case revealed the true evil of slavery--the inhumanity. Even when placed in such a degraded state, Margaret sought to protect her children through the only means she believed successful--death. The power exerted over her by Gaines ultimately forced her resistance, and a brutal confrontation. And while Margaret's case displays the epitome of callous actions, her intentions were honorable. She could not bear her children to suffer through the trials of slavery as she had, and so she sought to give them the only source of refuge she could provide. Some defended Margaret's infanticide, claiming that no mother could bear their children be enslaved. Some women excused her act, which at first seems in contradiction to maternal instincts, as a desperate resolution for her situation.<sup>206</sup> It does not seem without foresight that the two children she was most concerned with killing were her daughters. Margaret knew of the fate of slave women.

The Garners family's story of sufferings has been well documented. During Margaret's trial, numerous neighbors attested to the cruel treatment of Margaret by her master, Archibald. But details of such treatment are left unspoken. One account claimed, "Gaines was inhuman to Margaret Garner in ways too horrible to name before the court."<sup>207</sup> But the silence present in the Garners' case in the courtroom did not extend to other arenas. The case was repeated in political debates regarding disunion, and the

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<sup>206</sup> *National Era*, "Ohio Fugitive Slave Case- Eloquent Speech from Lucy Stone," (Feb. 28, 1856), Vol. 10, No. 478, 33.

<sup>207</sup> Weisenburger, Modern Medea: A Family Story of Slavery and Child-Murder from the Old South, 6.

problems of Kansas being admitted as a slave state in the Kansas- Nebraska Act in 1854.<sup>208</sup> The friction between the North and South amplified with the decision rendered in the Dred Scott case in 1857, which permitted slaveholders to travel with their slaves to free states. The judgment occurred only one short year after Margaret's case. Slaves were not free to runaway, and now could be taken into freedom, but still remain enslaved. Northerners continuously pointed to Margaret Garner's case as the disgraceful product of the lack of protection offered by the North. Margaret's story was retold and remembered and instigated great political discourse regarding the tragedy of American slavery. Her actions and commitment to break from subjugation led to the instigation of the Civil War. Her stance as a violent resistor, by refusing to be victimized by sexual abuse started a chain reaction, which would later revolutionize the United States.<sup>209</sup>

Margaret's story is also well known due to Toni Morrison's adaptation of the case, in her novel, *Beloved*. The lives of slave women and the suspicions of abuse are repeated throughout historical accounts. Nothing was done to protect these women, no matter how young. From the date of their sale at the slave market; they became the property of their masters. Margaret had a chance to resist her master, but not all girls could put up a defense before they were attacked.

As a fourteen year old, Celia had begun work as a slave, but had not fully entered into womanhood. Given slave's society attempt to protect young girls from the harsh behaviors induced by slavery, Celia would likely have been a virgin and had little

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<sup>208</sup> *Liberator*, "Letter from Mrs. Lucy N. Coleman: Paramount, Ohio, Oct. 18, 1857," (October 23, 1857) Vol. 27, No. 43, 171.

<sup>209</sup> *Liberator*, "Influence of the Republican Party," by Josephine S. Griffing, (August 3, 1860), Vol. 30, No. 31, 123.



knowledge of sex. Most slaves were introduced to sex on their wedding night, and some did not even understand the implications of the marital bed shortly after marriage.<sup>210</sup> But whatever acknowledgement Celia had of sexual relations, she was not likely prepared for the slave market.

Markets existed in every large city and were generally near waterways for the purpose of transport. Markets were constructed to have the interior hidden from outside eyes. Large brick or wooden walls surrounded the building and slaves generally entered through a rod iron gateway into pens to be held for processing. A white eyewitness described the building stating, “it is surrounded by a wooden paling fourteen or fifteen feet in height, with the posts outside to prevent escape and separated from the building by a space too narrow to admit of a free circulation of air.”<sup>211</sup> Exposure, contamination and malnutrition caused the deaths of slaves awaiting their sale. Some slaves were held there weeks at a time. Slaves would be made to walk around in circles for a time during the day for exercise, which usually just helped the stench to circulate. The crowded deplorable conditions led to the death of many slaves.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> White, Arn't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, 96 and Sommerville, “‘I Was Very Much Wounded’: Rape Law, Children, and the Antebellum South,” found in Sex Without Consent: Rape and Sexual Coercion in America 155.

<sup>211</sup> Abdy, E.S., “Description of a Washington, D.C., Slave Pen,” *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States of North America, from April, 1833, to October, 1834*, Volume 2, London, 1835.

<sup>212</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, “Bred Slaves Like Stock: Hannah Jones,” Missouri Narratives, Vol. 10, 2.

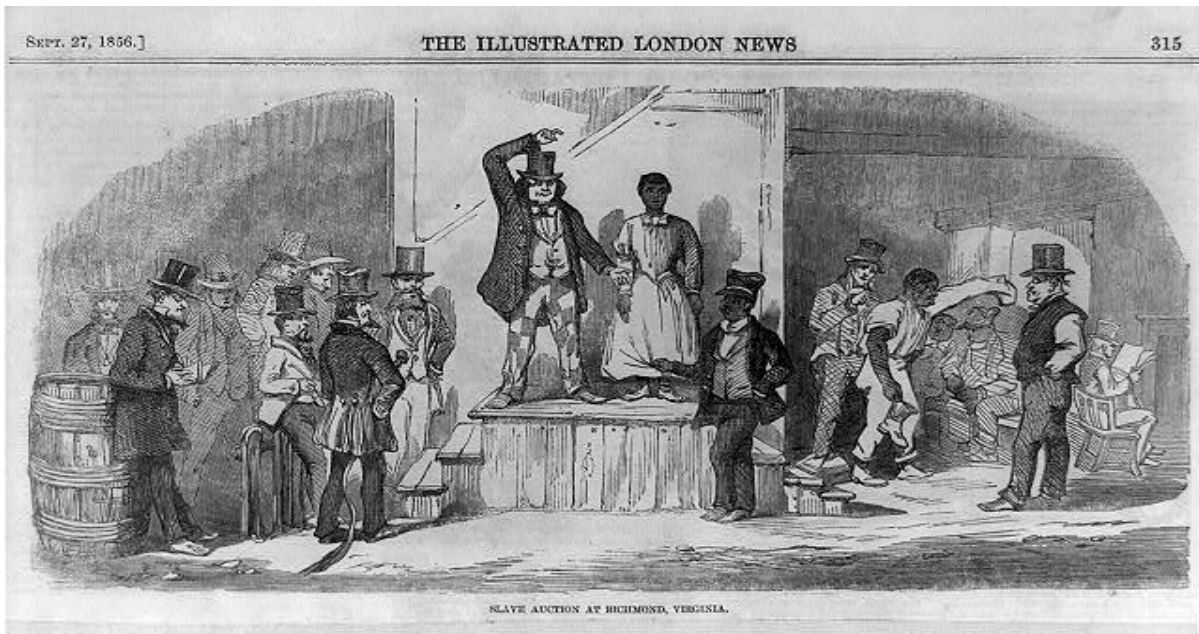


Figure 5.4 “Slave Auction at Richmond, Virginia”

In 1850, Celia would enter the market bound. And after waiting in a sawdust or hay lined crowded stable with other merchandise, would have been prepared for sale. In a large open room, white men and traders would have surrounded a central platform on which the slave stood and at times proclaimed their worth and abilities. An auctioneer would shout out qualities of the slaves trying to raise the price: “Here, gentlemen, is a fine girl for sale: how much for her? Gentlemen, she will be a fortune for any one who buys her that wants to raise niggers. Bid up gentlemen, bid up! Fine girl; very hearty; good health.”<sup>213</sup> Bidding would begin and end in minutes. White masters would examine her body and quickly calculate the estimated products of her labor and her loins if they purchased her. Those few minutes determined Celia’s fate. Celia was purchased to serve as a cook; although there is no evidence her previous owners used or trained her for such a position. Despite the guise of her new position, her owner, Robert Newsom,

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<sup>213</sup> Peter Randolph, *Sketches of a Slave Life: or, Illustrations of the ‘Peculiar Institution,’* (Boston: Published for the Author, 1855), 8. Account recorded by an emancipated slave.

then in his sixties, made it clear to Celia what her position would be. On the way home from the Missouri slave market, Newsom raped Celia.<sup>214</sup>



Figure 5.5 Cell at Slave Market: Photograph of the interior of cells where slaves awaited their sale at the market.

In this one evening, the lives and roles of Celia and Newsom changed. Their relationship would continue in patterns of aggression and acquiescence for years to follow. Though Celia's emotional reaction extends beyond the scopes of research, it can be surmised that she had not expected or welcomed the incident. Given the emotional turmoil Celia had endured during the sale, and the immense age difference between her and Newsom, coupled by the probable lack of sexual knowledge Celia had, Celia was not in a position to resist or succeed. Newsom's farm housed several slaves, as well as his two daughters by his deceased wife. The eldest daughter, in her mid thirties, had also lost

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<sup>214</sup> Testimony of Colonel Jefferson Jones in Defense Cross Examination of Witness #1, "State of Missouri Versus Celia, A Slave," Calloway County Court, October Term, 1855.

her spouse and so moved back to her father's house with her children to serve as the mistress of the household. Newsom's younger daughter was near the age of Celia.<sup>215</sup>

Celia did not reside in the big house or with the other slaves. Celia was kept in a cabin of her own, separate from the slaves, near the woods and a small distance from the main house. Separate cabins were a common practice for men who held slave mistresses. This attempted to conceal the relationship from the white household while simultaneously kept the slave mistress from direct involvement with the slave community. Slave mistresses were to be completely accessible to white masters and inaccessible to others. The intent was to keep slave women alone and dependent.<sup>216</sup> It did not stop them though from interchanges with other slaves, but it did enforce a caste system on the plantation, which made the image of a "slave mistress" appear superior.



Figure 5.6 Slave quarters at Boone Hall Plantation in Charleston, South Carolina, taken February 2006.

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<sup>215</sup> Melton McLaurin has reconstructed the life and events of Celia and Robert Newsom through intense research in his work, Celia, A Slave. I have used portions of this work, in conjunction with other sources, to recreate the details of this case.

<sup>216</sup> Jacobs Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl originally published in 1861 found in The Classic Slave Narratives.

Slave cabins were generally rectangular in shape and made of wood, nicer cabins, for cooks, artisans, and concubines, were built of brick and usually slightly larger in size. (Most of these cabins lasted longer than the shanties built for field slaves, and so an understanding of the quality can be judged on the remains and longevity of both types of housing.) Cabins had a central fireplace and could be formally divided into rooms, or separated by cloth divider or construction of a loft. Slave mistresses generally received cabins far superior to those built for field hands. Celia's cabin would likely have met this description.

Celia was purchased in the late 1840's and by early 1855 she had had two children by Newsom and was pregnant with her third child. Within her stay at Newsom's plantation, she served Newsom as needed, but had developed a relationship with a black bondsman, George, who worked on the plantation. Given Celia's impending birth, George began pressuring her to leave Newsom. If she would not, George warned, he would leave her. This ultimatum gave Celia no viable resolution. George asked Celia to make a decision that she was socially powerless to make, which projects the powerlessness that George too must have felt.

George had been involved with Celia and plausibly considered her his wife.<sup>217</sup> It was unfeasible for him to protect her. He had no social right to dissuade Newsom from having sex with Celia. George's position and frustrations were not unlike other male slaves in slavery. Many male slaves recalled watching their wives being beaten sold, and

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<sup>217</sup> Testimony of Colonel Jefferson Jones: Prosecution Witness #1, "State of Missouri Versus Celia, A Slave," Calloway County Court, October Term, 1855.

worse, without being able to interfere.<sup>218</sup> As property, slaves had no right to self-defense when the master was inflicting what he determined as punishment. Running away was one-action slave women took to resist ill treatment, especially as a reaction against sexual advances.<sup>219</sup> Men were more apt to run.<sup>220</sup> Consequences always followed, and most runaway women failed to get far.<sup>221</sup> Their husbands could give little help. Within the confines of slavery, neither Newsom nor George could establish a system of patriarchy without inflicting damage on the person they claimed to protect--Celia.

The paternity of Celia's unborn child was unknown. George's ultimatum probably came from frustration of their defenselessness. Newsom owned them, and their lives. But Celia was attached to George at it was a relationship that she chose. Celia lived in her situation and dealt with the duplicity of being forced and free until George instigated a change. When threatened at the loss of a relationship based on equality, Celia became empowered to gain control over a relationship in which she was deemed unequal. On June 23, 1855, Celia decided to approach Newsom directly and insist he not come to her cabin anymore. She also approached his daughters, demanding that they keep him away. This act surely resonated as defiance to Newsom who conceived of having the ultimate rights over Celia, as well as ownership of her cabin and possessions. Celia exhausted her opportunities for help. She made her pleas to the authorities that owned her. Now her fate and Newsom's lay in their reactions to Celia's assertion for

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<sup>218</sup> Berlin, Favreau, and Miller eds. Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk about their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Freedom, 139-140 and Blassingame ed., Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies, 49-51, 218.

<sup>219</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Escape from Bondage of Adah Isabelle Suggs in Kentucky," Indiana Narratives, Vol. 5, 1-2.

<sup>220</sup> *Federal Writer's Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, "Psychology of a runaway slave: Uncle Louis," Alabama Narratives, Vol. 1, 3.

control. Both Newsom and Celia reacted by preparing for force. Neither conceded to the other's power--at least not initially. The struggle to assume power began.

Newsom ignored Celia's request and threat to stay away from her. After dinner, he walked about his grounds and eventually made his way to Celia's cabin for a conjugal visit. Even Celia's threat and evident disgust with Newsom did not deter him from behaving how he felt right. Newsom can be considered a power rapist. This psychological term describes the pride and power men feel when overpowering another. Power rapists feel that the victim needed or wanted sexual aggression, and the rapist fulfilled this.<sup>222</sup> Newsom excused his assertion of power by believing it to be Celia's desire to be violated. He felt she needed to be sexually controlled. Newsom was not discouraged by Celia's plea to leave her alone; in fact it may have instigated a reaction from him. Given his history of rape, it is likely that his continued action revealed his belief that the relationship was wanted.

The door to Celia's cabin burst open. Forcing his way in, Newsom advanced on his prey with full vigor. This event may have been regular, since Celia's children were in the adjoining room and did not enter either when they heard their father come in, or with the raising irritated voices between the enraged lovers. Celia had prepared for Newsom's aggressive action. After telling Newsom to bother her no longer, she found a large fallen branch and tucked it alongside the fireplace. It was a precaution, which proved to be a necessary device. No longer willing to serve as a concubine, Celia took her life into her own hands and stepped out of the boundaries of slavery and resisted Newsom with violence.

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<sup>222</sup> Nicholas Groth, Men Who Rape: The Psychology of the Offender, (New York: Plenum Press, 1979), 25-32.

After five years of servitude, Celia demanded recognition of her humanity. She immediately grabbed the large stick she had placed next to the fireplace; in one full swing, she hit Newsom on his head. The blow forced him on the ground. One hit knocked him out. But he moaned slightly. It stunned Celia. Celia grew concerned that he would awaken and strike back. Out of fear, and likely retaliation, she struck again. He made no sound after that. Given time, Celia assessed her situation. Yet Newsom still did not move. With the second blow, Celia had ended his life. Celia had successfully reclaimed her life, by taking Newsom's. In Celia's testimony, she persisted in hitting him only twice, despite questions from accusatory lawyers unbelieving of the strength of a pregnant black woman.<sup>223</sup>

Panic immediately took over. Celia knew that as a slave she had no legal right to defend herself, let alone murder her master in self-defense. She could not prove that he had been raping her, and even if she could the courts would not hear it. And if it was mentioned, they would plausibly find that she must have enjoyed the arrangement as she allowed it to continue for sometime. In her freedom, she was trapped. Celia's next action reveals her desperation and her disregard for her former lover. Celia considered her choices, and then began building a large fire. She took a butchering knife and slowly cut pieces of Newsom's body. Piece by piece she cut and hacked, as meticulously as Newsom had torn apart Celia, she in turn did to him. Each portion was systematically placed in to the fire, to burn it quickly without overwhelming the fire. The heat and stench of burning flesh was intense enough to stir her children, whom she quickly put back to sleep. No other interruptions occurred that evening. She staid awake all evening

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<sup>223</sup> Testimony of William Powell: Prosecution Witness #4 and Defense Cross Examination of Witness #4: Prosecution Witness #1, "State of Missouri Versus Celia, A Slave," Calloway County Court, October Term, 1855.



keeping the fire hot and feeding the flames flesh, bite by bite. By the end of the night, her task was complete. The fire died out and Celia took the remaining bone fragments and smashed the larger pieces with a rock. She scattered the rest in the woods and went about her daily routine surely battling feelings of relief and fear.

The extreme behavior Celia employed only asserts her intense desire to claim her life as her own. Despite forfeiting herself to the life of a mistress, she gained strength with age and initiated a change when she had the encouragement and instigation by someone for which she cared. Celia killed in order to live. She was not given an alternate method of resisting her master, at least not successfully. Celia gave Newsom an opportunity to conceive of her as an individual instead of as his, but his reaction was to assert additional force to break her. They were engaged in a battle for power and because each party demanded absolute control, one of them had to be defeated. Not all slave women would have the encouragement or audacity to physically retaliate. It took Celia years to be eroded to a point of desensitization equal to that of Newsom.

By mid-day, the family noticed Newsom's absence, though he was not missed by everyone. Newsom's absence at breakfast concerned his daughters. Newsom's daughters sent word out to nearby male neighbors to question George. Inquiries ensued.<sup>224</sup> George was implicated as the daughters were aware of his relationship with Celia and feared that George's jealousy could have triggered a reaction against Newsom. At first, George feigned ignorance. Neighbors questioned Celia about George. She insisted knowing nothing. Eventually, when it seemed that George was guilty of the crime, he cracked and revealed the ultimatum he posited to Celia. The white neighbors

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<sup>224</sup> *New York Daily Times*, "Fiendish Murder near Falton, Mo.," (July 2, 1855), 8. The newspaper misprinted the name of Robert Newsom's town, it should read Fulton.

had a difficult time believing that Celia could have done anything unassisted given her condition both as a slave and as a soon to be mother.<sup>225</sup>

Conflicts occurred regularly between slave and master and when it turned to violence, like in Celia's case, the slave usually lost. White men were more apt to fight, defend against, and defeat a black female attacker. Given the severity of the violence, masters at times went on trial for their deeds. But not all received justice.<sup>226</sup> Celia's case was not only unbelievable because she killed Newsom; it was remarkable in her forceful declaration of her rights. The power behind that proclamation terrified slaveholders. Knowing the cruelties inflicted upon slaves, slaveholders feared reactions that could be triggered by slaves. But slaveholders did not always acknowledge the reasons spawning a reaction. To acknowledge the instigating problems would undermine the crux of slavery, which stated that slaves demanded control. Too much control, meant problems. News of Celia's actions quickly spread to other counties. The media described, in detail, Celia's testimony about the murder and concealment of the body, but they removed any mention of her reasoning for murder. There is one article, in the *Liberator*, released over six months after the murder that did record Celia as stating that Newsom came to her cabin "as usual in the night," which is a questionable action, but the writer goes no further than this brief reference. The article is positioned between other articles tracing acts of violence, murder and suicide on plantations. Celia's article only warranted two

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<sup>225</sup> Testimony of Prosecution Witness #5 and #6, "State of Missouri Versus Celia, A Slave," Calloway County Court, October Term, 1855. Testimony entails the opinions of two doctors confirming the remains found in Celia's house and discussing the difficulty in burning an adult male unassisted.

<sup>226</sup> State v. Jones, 5 Ala. 666 (1843) and State v. Hale, 9 N.C. 582 (1823).

lines amidst all the other tragedies.<sup>227</sup> No mention of the sexual relationship, the threat to Newsom, or her struggle to preserve her integrity occurred in the newspaper accounts.<sup>228</sup>

But the story would only spread further and become a public spectacle. Celia's case went to trial in late 1855. Newsom's bones were recovered from Celia's cabin, as a few had fallen in the grate in her fireplace. After the removal, Celia signed a confession to the murder of Robert Newsom. She drew investigators' attention to the ash pile, and the posse claimed they would not have noticed it without her pointing it out to them. The media would claim that she killed without motive. Writers claimed she "murdered without any sufficient reason."<sup>229</sup> John Jameson was assigned the case, and took it willingly. He had extensive courtroom experience, so it cannot be said that Celia was denied proper representation. Jameson met with Celia immediately and began constructing, what he conceived of as a solid case.

During the search, Celia discussed her condition with her interrogators. She pointed out her relationships with Newsom and George and her attempt to escape Newsom's unrelenting control. Celia also claimed that the two swings of the stick were to hurt Newsom. This continued proclamation throughout being questioned and on trial reveals that Celia submitted to the fact that she should not have murdered, yet she resisted approving the notion that her body could be accessible to her master at his will alone. She was aware that murder was morally wrong, yet once Newsom was dead; she knew that she would be punished for protecting herself. Celia also had the moral fortitude not

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<sup>227</sup> *Liberator*, "Southern Crimes and Horrors," (Boston: May 2, 1856), Vol. 2, Issue 18, 72.

<sup>228</sup> *New York Daily Times*, "Hanging a Negress-Celia" (January 16, 1856), 2. As quoted from *Fulton Telegraph* on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1856.

<sup>229</sup> *The Liberator*, "Another Catalogue of Southern Crimes and Horrors," (Boston: October 19, 1855), Vol. 25, Issue 42, 168.

to mislead the search party and implicate George. When the guise of ignorance failed, she admitted to her action. Though she explained her reasons for attacking Newsom, she never said anything regarding her guilt or that she felt her actions were wrong. She did claim “as soon as I struck him, the Devil got into me, and I struck him with the stick until he was dead, and then rolled him in the fire and burnt him up.”<sup>230</sup> Celia acknowledges her actions were devilish, but she dismisses personal responsibility, by asserting the devil controlled her. Her description of the devil’s possession of her is repeated in interviews up until the time of her death.<sup>231</sup> She did not accept her actions, and so did not feel at fault. She was pushed into a corner and reacted. There is no real presence of religiosity in Celia’s case, though she does present a clear understanding of right and wrong in conjunction with an instinct of self-preservation. She did not want to be placed in the position to inflict harm on someone else and she made it clear to the interrogators that she acted only when forced.

The witnesses for the defense were intended to give testimony to the fact that Newsom and Celia were engaged in a non-consensual sexual relationship. Neighbors did testify to the relationship between Newsom and Celia, his rape of her on the first trip to the plantation and to Celia’s previous expressions of discontent regarding Newsom’s advances. Members of the search party echoed Celia’s claim that she had not meant to kill Newsom, but only to stun him and prevent him from raping her yet again. Celia’s attorney, Jameson focused on proclaiming Celia’s actions as self-defense for as of 1845, Missouri law declared it illegal to “take any woman unlawfully against her will and by

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<sup>230</sup> *New York Daily Times*, “Hanging a Negress-Celia” (January 16, 1856), 2. As quoted from *Fulton Telegraph* on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1856.

<sup>231</sup> *Liberator*, “Southern Crimes and Horrors,” (Boston: May 2, 1856), Vol. 2, Issue 18, 72.

force, menace or duress, compel her to be defiled.”<sup>232</sup> Proving that Celia had acted in self-defense against a forceful act of rape meant her innocence.

Despite the testimony in her defense, for each mention of rape the prosecution objected. And in every instance the Judge, William Augustus Hall, ruled to have the testimony stricken from the record. Southern Judges, sought to preserve the power of slavery as a means of self-protection. They could not be found ruling against the favor of a master, as it would overrule a master’s absolute power.<sup>233</sup> Any documentation or testimony proving Celia’s reaction was founded could disrupt the southern social system. The sexual relationship between Celia and Newsom would not be permitted to enter as evidence. So the jury was not permitted to weigh Celia’s reaction based upon Newsom’s actions. Even Celia’s claim that she only raised the stick to hit Newsom after he caught his hand up to catch her was prevented from the record. No mention of Celia defending herself against Newsom’s aggression pierced the heartstrings of the judge.

But the judge allowed evidence proving Celia committed murder and did so without assistance. Judge Hall also interpreted the Missouri statues differently than Jameson. Asserting that as slaves were considered property, they had no right to self-defense even in cases of rape, and so even if Celia had in fact acted in self-defense, she still was wrong in attacking her master. Judge Hall ensured that Celia would die in order to uphold the structure of slavery. Permitting Celia the power over her body she had demanded would mitigate the claim masters held of absolute access to their property. This problematic conflict could not be resolved without questioning the entire system of

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<sup>232</sup> *Missouri Statutes*, 1845, art. 2, sec. 4, 180.

<sup>233</sup> Wiethoff, *A Peculiar Humanism: The Judicial Advocacy of Slavery in High Courts of the Old South, 1820-1850*, 152.

slavery. So in an act of self preservation (not unlike Celia's reaction) Judge Hall ensured his way of life would be uninterrupted by the actions of another. Based upon the evidence, the jury convicted Celia of murder on October 10, 1855, and sentenced her to be hanged to death the next month. After a denied appeal to the Supreme Court, Celia was killed on Friday, December 21, 1855 at 2:30 in the afternoon. She was interrogated up until the day of her hanging, and her story did not change.<sup>234</sup> Her two surviving daughters were sold for \$495 in August 1856. No record was made of the purchaser.

This case reveals that slave women were not the only southern entities resisting their position. Celia's attorney and the defense witness reveal that citizens aware of the sexual abuses in the South, and did not intervene yet, when brought to court they admitted knowledge and sided with Celia. Citizens resisted the pull into the private lives of their neighbors, but when it disrupted life, they readily condemned the behaviors of sexually aggressive masters. Unfortunately the support came too little too late, but it does demarcate a change in Southern social obligation. This mentality would eventually push towards women's rights and abolition. Here it is seen in its infancy. Another resistant group this case illuminates is the political system. Local politicians, judges, and even the Supreme Court did not want to disturb the deep waters of slavery fearing an adverse reaction. Had they sided with Celia, they would have admitted to the contradictions of slavery and opened the floodgates for countless other cases of self-defense.<sup>235</sup> The constituents would have been outraged, and the politicians would have

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<sup>234</sup> Melton McLaurin, Celia, A Slave, 104-106, 113 and *New York Daily Times*, "Hanging a Negress-Celia" (January 16, 1856), 2. As quoted from *Fulton Telegraph* on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1856.

<sup>235</sup> Wiethoff, A Peculiar Humanism: The Judicial Advocacy of Slavery in High Courts of the Old South, 1820-1850, 155, 163.

lost the prestige of their social position. “Coercion thus permeated master-slave relations, offering a graphically violent showcase for planter authority and state power.”<sup>236</sup> Cruel treatment allowed for the physical enforcement of white authority, both on the plantation, and in the courtroom. The rigidity of the system only unveils its weakness. The pressures slave women exerted started fractures, which ran deep into the core of slavery. Resistance meant friction. And as in Celia’s case, violent resisters found the means of asserting the most direct friction in slave society, which questioned it at its foundations and had its members choose sides for a battle of humanity that would later ensue.

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<sup>236</sup> Brown, Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia, 321.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION:

FORGE: THE MAKING OF A NEW LIFESTYLE

“Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another.”

Toni Morrison, Beloved



Figure 6.1 Ex-Slave Women who moved North after their freedom



Slave women sought and found means of redefining property right during slavery. Their methods of resistance varied in technique but were unified in theme. There were limits to what whites could access, and for slave women, they drew the line at forced sexual relationships. By denying white masters absolute control, slave women reinforced the notion of black women as humans, as opposed to property. In their unwillingness to fulfill their masters' sexual desires, slave women took a stand against the institution of slavery and began a later series of questions regarding the humanity of slaves. Once slave women asserted themselves as humans, those around them slowly considered it as fact and eventually altered their systems of thought to reinforce notions of black women as women worthy of protection instead of women instigating violation. Each of the three positions slave women took to secure their integrity left white society with a different image of slave women.

Virtuous resisters sought to avoid their masters and disregard sexual aggression. It was their hope to dissuade their master through disinterestedness, without causing conflict or overstepping the boundaries of racial expectations. By resisting virtuously, slave women actively preserved their identity and dictated the need for willing participants in sexual relationships. Slave communities sought to reinforce these guidelines, by raising their children to dress and behave modestly while in front of whites. They also limited the level of their children's knowledge about sexual activities to keep them from responding to white advances. Being unaware of a master's sexual requests, permitted them to be excused from reacting. Ignorance helped enforce purity. Slave communities taught their children to uphold the thoughts and beliefs of virtuous resisters. Slave women did not want to fall victim to licentious acts. Having a social

system in place that supported resistance and deplored masters sexually exploiting their young, secured slave women's resistance as appropriate and acceptable. Though slaves were not supposed to deny their masters requests, slave women redefined the expectations in slavery and limited the access of white men to slave girls.

Maintaining virtue at times demanded further action on behalf of a slave girl. In order to maintain respectability, she would at times be forced to defend herself, runaway or take a lover to detract a master's persistent demands. While taking a lover did forfeit her virginity, it did not end a slave woman's virtue, as she was still responsible for choosing a relationship, and her involvement was long term. These pressured relationships were not usually short trysts or unemotional flings. When a slave woman chose a lover to escape a master, it was meant as a long-term relationship.

But when masters intensified their pursuit, slave women had to choose between two alternate paths of resistance. They could either become involved with a white man and live as a concubine, as a lifetime resistor, or retaliate against sexual advances with physical attacks as a violent resistor. So, virtuous resisters became either lifetime or violent resisters when their tactics failed to end their master's advances. They increased their tactics to confront a masters' sexual pursuit.

Lifetime resisters entered relationships with few alternative choices, but once in the relationship sought advantages from it. As a black lover, lifetime resisters were outside of both white and black societies. They were anomalies. As such, they were able to pull thoughts and practices from both racial groups and forge new expectations for their lives. Lifetime resisters found themselves seeking improved conditions and ultimately manumission. Becoming a concubine allowed slave women to obtain these

benefits and live a life with the promise of security. As a black citizen, concubines were accustomed to delicately manipulating whites. Their actions in relationships were guided and cautious. But as they witnessed from white society, widows were due inheritance. And while lifetime resistors were not official wives of their white lovers, they sought spousal benefits at the death of their lover. Filing suit against an executor of a will became a second nature to these women. They had to fight to receive their reward. Despite the level of opposition, slave women pushed for their individual rights. This push became stronger as years went on, and it became a more common petition from southern black women. Lifetime resistors exposed their relationships and demanded to be treated equally under the law. To respect the deceased male's will, judges recognized slave women's position, which in turn enforced the rights of slaves as humans, not simply property. Lifetime resistor's push for freedom redefined the legal system's definitions and approaches to rights of slave women.

Courts were oftentimes involved in the lives of violent resistors but from a different prospective. Violent resistors were unwilling to concede to sexual relationships with their masters. While they employed passive methods of resistance at the beginning of their battles, they generally ended fighting to death. Whose death, was always the question at hand. Taking aggressive action against a master, permitted masters to retaliate in self-defense. According to southern laws, no slave had a right to physically attack a master, while masters could discipline slaves for disobedience. By not allowing a master sexual access, violent resistors were at risk for disciplinary action. But because slave women's values taught them to respect their bodies and choose their mate, they oftentimes would not concede even under the threat or action of abuse. Many of these

women had already been raped before they retaliated. Perhaps they had hoped that the sexual violence would be temporary. But it usually did not end after a few episodes. When rape continued, slave women came to a breaking point. At this point they re-declared their value and denied masters' sexual dominance. Their resistance took form in poisoning, murder, infanticide, and abortion. Each of these reactions were instigated to dramatically and forcefully display their unwillingness. But these actions were also intended to emotionally disturb their masters in a way, which reflected their own pain.

Each method of resistance held limits. A virtuous resistor could only act passively in the hopes that her unwillingness would deter her master. She was left with limited tactics. A lifetime resistor had to trust in her lover to prepare a will, or provide her with superior living conditions in comparison to other slaves. Not all lovers felt a commitment or duty to their mistresses, and would even sell any offspring resulting from such relationships. The violent resistors were relied on their cunning to find means of inflicting pain upon their masters. Their acts of retaliation generally brought them to court to face punishment. Courts were usually unsympathetic, finding that women had allowed relationships to occur, and so must have prompted or permitted it.<sup>237</sup>

The prevalence of forced sexual unions between masters and slaves engulfed the south. In one account, a slave recalled that masters held it as a custom to father son or daughter from each slave virgin on his plantation. Seen as his right, slave girls were victimized before they had reached their teens. Many slave mothers sought to stop these

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<sup>237</sup> Josephine (a slave) v. The State, 39 Miss. 613 (1861).

sexual assaults by teaching their daughters methods of resistance. Otherwise, as the slave stated, “girls were forced into maternity at puberty.”<sup>238</sup>

Slave women were not the singular reactionary force in southern society against these relationships. Courts began radically changing laws after hearing case after case regarding sexual assaults, retaliations, and inheritance suits. While laws were against miscegenation, and still did not protect slave women against being raped, the courts sought to mentally combat white southerners from taking a slave girl as a lover. Making interracial relationships illegal, told society that it was an unacceptable act. Condemning such relationships, courts intended to prevent white men from entering into them so willingly. Knowing they would be judged, white men were more cautious about their relationships. Though the legal system did not directly protect slave women through cohabitation and miscegenation laws, it stigmatized such relationships as immoral, illegal and unacceptable. With such social and legal pressure emitted, white men rethought the frequency in which they took advantage of black women.

Courts also began denouncing the rise of mulatto children. By proclaiming that amalgamation of the races, tainted and reduced the purity of the white race by making lesser creatures, courts and society reinforced the disgust against interracial relationships. Though these protestations did little to cease racism, it did cause whites to reevaluate their choices in interracial relationships. Under the logic of southern culture, if interracial relationships truly did degrade the white race, then it was a detrimental action that would lead to the race’s eventual demise. While such thoughts of degradation are a stretch to

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<sup>238</sup> *Federal Writer’s Project*, WPA Slave Narratives, 1936-1938, “Escape from Bondage of Adah Isabelle Suggs in Kentucky,” Indiana Narratives, Vol. 5.

most modern citizens, the southerners did consider it a threat, and one that could be ended with thorough preaching and social stigmas.

Because of the negative backlash, while resistant women pushed for rights as humans, they were still seen as different than whites. Their resistance did elevate them from breeding animals to humans with families and moral sensibilities; their position in society was still distanced and lesser than whites. Resistant slave women sought to change their personal positions, but did not extend their experiences to elevate all slaves. Their fight was individual, but their experience became an icon for social change.

But with each protest and resistance, slave women began building a reformation that would grow in later years after the Civil War. The faith that lifetime resisters put in the courtroom extended to slave men after freedom. After petitions, pleas, and testimonies, the fourteenth amendment passed in 1868, which declared any native born person a citizen, and gave blacks equal protection under the law. The security of citizenship and protection was another step forward in black history that forced southerners to consider blacks as humans. Because black women had been so willing to test the boundaries in court and continually push for legal and moral protections, black society had a model to replicate when it began demanding recognition beyond individual masters to that of all white society.

In only a few years after the Civil War, ex-slaves began entering into local and state politics with a mind to change the legal system to radically alter rights and protections afforded to blacks. They were fueled with the experience and encouragement of slave women who had used the courts for their personal battles, and succeeded. After black women tested the courts and worked within the legal system, they had become

advisors and consolers to other blacks seeking to make changes. And though these black resistors at first sought to improve their condition, whether through virtuous, lifetime, or violent resistance, other blacks borrowed from their experience and took it further. By 1870, black men obtained the vote with the ratification of the fifteenth amendment. Seen now, on paper at least, as equals to whites' citizenship, black society could directly influence change that affected large groups of African Americans, as opposed to individual cases.

The plight of slave women improved the conditions of African Americans in ways that they did not anticipate. By proclaiming themselves as worthy of choosing sexual partners, slave women re-evaluated boundaries of slavery. In slavery, black women had secured their sexual freedom. They then raised their children to believe in sexual integrity and fought to preserve the sanctity of their bodies. For those women who chose to be with white men, their proclamation of freedom came in their petitions to the courts for inheritance suits. Resistant slave women were able to find means of freeing themselves from sexual abuse, and claimed their sexual integrity as theirs alone. Enslaved or not, these women would not become the pawns of their masters. The opposition these women gave, limited the institution of slavery and forged a new system of sexual recognition and respect whether through personal relationships, or violent actions, slave women would resist white men and claim ownership of their bodies' freedom.

Slave women's sexual resistance has not been adequately recognized in history. Historians have become more aware of sexual relationships, and especially slaves' agency in plantation life, but the tie between the two components has not been

successfully made. Slave women were aware of their sexual powers, and used their sexuality to promote masters' awareness of the rights and expectations slave women had over their bodies. Resistant women would not be broken by their masters. Rape and abuse did not stop slave women from demanding fair treatment. In using sex to define themselves, slave women sought to change their masters' desires and influence their masters' actions. Becoming so involved and entrenched into white men's activities took an acute awareness of their own bodies in correlation the white's desires. Slave women were aware of their actions, and did not allow incidents to render them victims. Resistance women were empowered by their experiences and directed that strength to alter their situation for better conditions.

Historians need to reevaluate these relationships, and reconsider the factors influencing them. While paternalism and patriarchy permitted dominance of the master, it also held beliefs of protection and moral behavior that slave women pointed to during their resistance. To slave women, the claim for protection overran the requirement to be submissive. By recognizing the slave women's abilities to control the instigation or termination of sexual relationships, historians can better attribute power to slave women, who have historically been rendered victims. In all of the cases I have studied, slave women had been victimized, but none of them can be considered victims. Slave women fought for their respect, for their lives, and for their rights. They demanded recognition then, and should be given it now.



APPENDIX A

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

*Liberator*, "Another Catalogue of Southern Crimes and Horrors,"  
(Boston: October 19, 1855), Vol. 25, Issue 42, 168.

*Fiendish Murder. — Fulton, Missouri, Monday, June 25.*—A most violent act was committed on the person of Robert Newsom, of this county, on Saturday night last, 23d inst., at his residence, eight miles south of this. He was murdered by one of his own slaves, a negro woman, in the kitchen—supposed some time during the night—and his body entirely consumed by fire in the kitchen fire-place, and the ashes taken up next morning and deposited in the back yard. His body appears, so far as discovery can be made, to have been entirely consumed, except a few small bones, found in the pile of ashes, including a part of his skull and the extremities of some of his fingers. The murder was committed without any sufficient cause, so far as I can hear. Mr. Newsom was an old citizen of the county, about sixty years of age, and very active and energetic in his business. He possessed a valuable farm, and had accumulated a very handsome estate. The woman confessed to the murder on Sunday (yesterday) evening and is in the hands of the law.

*Later.*—Mr. Newsom, when the family retired, was left at his table, reading a newspaper. None of the family heard any disturbance during the night, although the kitchen was within a few feet of the dwelling. He was absent at breakfast on Sunday morning, (yesterday) and the family, for the first time, became alarmed, and called in the neighbors, who continued to look for him until the afternoon, when suspicion fell on the woman, who confessed, and showed the ash pile, where the remnant of bones were found. The ash pile had not before been noticed, and would not have been, if she had not directed attention to it.

*Liberator*, "Southern Crimes and Horrors," (Boston: May 2, 1856),  
Vol. 2, Issue 18, 72.

**Celia**, a negress, was executed at Fulton, Mo  
4th inst., for the murder of her master in October las  
She confessed the crime, and stated that when her mas  
ter came to her cabin, *as usual in the night*, the dev  
got into her, and she struck him with a stick till he wa  
dead.

### **Fiendish Murder near Fulton, Mo.**

A correspondent of the *Missouri Republican*, writing from Fulton on the 25th of June, says :

A most violent act was committed on the person of ROBERT NEWSOM, of this County, on Saturday night last, 23d inst., at his residence, eight miles south of this. He was murdered by one of his own slaves, a negro woman, in the kitchen—supposed some time during the night—and his body entirely consumed by fire in the kitchen fire-place, and the ashes taken up next morning and deposited in the back yard. His body appears, so far as discovery can be made, to have been entirely consumed, except a few small bones, found in the pile of ashes, including a part of his skull bone and the extremities of some of his fingers. The murder was committed without any sufficient cause, so far as I can hear. Mr. NEWSOM was an old citizen of the County, about sixty years of age, and very active and energetic in his business. He possessed a valuable farm, and had accumulated a very handsome estate. The woman confessed to the murder on Sunday (yesterday,) evening, and is in the hands of the law.

LATER.—Mr. NEWSOM, when the family retired, was left at his table reading a newspaper. None of the family heard any disturbance during the night, although the kitchen was within a few feet of the dwelling. He was absent at breakfast on Sunday morning, (yesterday,) and the family, for the first time, became alarmed, and called in the neighbors, who continued to look for him until the afternoon, when suspicion fell on the woman, who confessed, and showed the ash pile, where the remnant of bones were found. The ash pile had not before been noticed, and would not have been, if she had not directed attention to it.



*Liberator*, "Letter from Mrs. Lucy N. Coleman: Paramount, Ohio, Oct. 18, 1857,"  
(October 23, 1857) Vol. 27, No. 43, 171.

LETTER FROM MRS. LUCY N. COLMAN.

FAIRMOUNT, Ohio, Oct. 10, 1857.

DEAR MR. MAY:

Your kind letter has just reached me, for which you have my sincere thanks. Words of sympathy are ever pleasant, but when we are far from home, in the midst of strangers, contending with the pro-slavery spirit, which, having become desperate, breaks out into the vilest personal abuse, answering arguments for freedom with stones and eggs,—at such times, words of sympathy and encouragement are particularly grateful.

Our meetings, up to this time, have been well attended. Mr. Foss discussed the pro-slavery character of the Constitution, a few days since, with a Mr. McGaw, a Wesleyan minister. He (Mr. McGaw) had taken great pains to circulate, through Harrison and Carrol counties, the boast that he would annihilate any Garrisonian who should dare to meet him in discussion. Mr. Foss was referred to, and met the boaster. He proved himself a very poor opponent, having no argument of his own, and consequently consumed most of his time in reading from Goodell, stopping sometimes to make an assertion in favor of the author whose words he was presenting. I think the discussion was well, as friend Foss made a very clear statement of the character of the Constitution, and an argument which it seemed to me could not be gainsaid. It certainly was not met by Mr. McGaw. It seems to me very inconsistent and dishonest that such persons, who strongly contend that there is no law sustaining slavery, should be electioneering for the Republican party, contending loudly for the anti-slavery character of Salmon P. Chase, and urging his reelection. But as Mr. Prynne has set the example, it may not be a marvel that smaller men, like Mr. Foss's opponent, should follow in his wake.

You have probably seen a report of the meeting of Progressive Friends, held in Salem, commencing the third of the present month. It was, upon the whole, a very good meeting; but I was far from satisfied with its anti-slavery work. Mr. Foss presented a resolution to the Business Committee, in substance, that slavery is a crime, and consequently, that all connection with it, ecclesiastical or political, involved criminality; but it was considered too strong to be offered to the meeting, by the majority of that Committee, and hence, though it was approved and strongly urged by the Chairman, it was ruled objectionable and thrown aside, and in its stead resolutions were offered deprecating the Dred Scott decision, and the admission of Kansas as a slave State. Mr. Foss made an earnest, but short speech, lamenting that the meeting was not willing to discuss the Disunion question, and stating why he considered *that* the important point to be discussed. He was followed by Joshua R. Giddings, in what I have no doubt he meant should be an anti-slavery speech, but really what seemed to me an earnest appeal to the voters of Salem and vicinity to remember to do anti-slavery work, by using the ballot-box to re-elect Salmon P. Chase as Governor of Ohio. Ah me! I wonder if the news of the triumph of the Republican party in the State of Ohio would carry one throb of joy to the heart of poor Margaret Garner! Would she, in view of such a fact, again attempt to make her escape from the hands of those who so wickedly enslave her? Would there be any probability that her liberty would be secured? I think not. A State government that can offer nothing better than the giving up of those who have done so much to obtain their freedom, is not worthy the name of even a sovereign government, much less an anti-slavery government.

Yours, for the slave,

LUCY N. COLMAN.



From the Free Presbyterian.

**JUDGE LEAVITT.**

This gentleman has added two feathers to his cap recently: He has released the U. S. Marshal for Southern Ohio from the jail to which he was consigned by Judge Burgoyne for contempt of court; and he has been appointed a *Commissioner of the Old School General Assembly*. The U. S. Marshal, H. H. Robinson, has won an infamous notoriety by his alacrity in hunting down the heroic Margaret Garner and her children and husband. In prosecution of this dirty work, he trampled on law and decency to such an extent that his Kentucky masters, amid the drunken orgies with which they celebrated the sacrifice of the victims, congratulated him with having 'done more than his duty.' So congenial to his taste is the work of hunting women and babies—work which all honorable Southerners hold in the deepest contempt—that he went even beyond the requirements of the atrocious Fugitive Act. He gave to Shylock not only the pound of flesh, but the hearts' blood of the victims besides. For his contemptuously trampling down of the laws of Ohio, he was justly fined and imprisoned by Judge Burgoyne. But Judge Leavitt promptly released him, on the ground that he was only doing his duty as an officer of the United States, in executing what the honorable Judge ('they are all honorable men!') calls a constitutional law. So the official kidnapper walks at large, the laws and sovereignty of Ohio lie bleeding in the dust, and the poor slaves are sent off to the 'rico swamps dank and lone.' At least one of them is represented as having been for more than twenty years a consistent professor of the Christian religion. She is therefore dear to the heart of the Savior. He identifies himself with her, and says, 'Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these, ye did it unto me.' The agonies of her soul are borne in the compassionate heart of the 'man of sorrows.' In her soul his own is 'crucified afresh, and put to an open shame.'

In the transaction of this matchless cruelty and wickedness, Judge Leavitt has borne a conspicuous part. He has been prompt in deciding every point brought before him in favor of the women-hunters, and in violation of the eternal justice and law of God. He has bound in the thongs of unconstitutional and unrighteous decisions the poor slaves, 'on the side of whose oppressors there is power, and who have no comforter,' and has laid them crushed and broken-hearted on the altar of the great American Moloch.

Yet Judge Leavitt is the chosen lay delegate of the Presbytery of Cincinnati, to the next General Assembly of the Old School Presbyterian Church. He will take his seat among the Rabbis of their Sanhedrim. He will counsel and vote on questions affecting the progress of Christ's kingdom and the glory of God. He will probably assist in dispensing the bread and wine at the communion table. With his hands all red and reeking with the souls' blood of his victims, he will pollute the emblems that show forth the death of the Divine Savior, whose tender and beautiful sympathy gashed out in overflowing streams towards the poor man oppressed. And perhaps in the very hour when he and others as bad are engaging in this solemn service, some of those whom he has sent back to the smoking hell of slavery may be writhing under the lash of some Southern Legree. Perhaps the same wind on which will arise the psalm of praise from around that communion board, may bear up the shrieks of that poor old Christian woman under the torturing scourge, and the hoarse blasphemies of her tormentor. Yet Judge Leavitt, like a nameless actor described by Solomon, 'will eat, and wipe his mouth, and say, I have done no wickedness.'

We know well the apology that will be offered in his behalf. The law, the *law* must be obeyed and executed. He is *sicorn* as a Judge to execute the laws of the Congress of the United States. This apology for transcendant wickedness is not new. The men who cast Daniel to the lions, and his companions to the flames, were only executing the laws. Doubtless they were as great sticklers for law as Judge Leavitt and his apologists. It was in accordance with law that the Apostles were stoned, imprisoned, scourged, tortured and killed. 'We have a *law*, and by our *law* he ought to die,' said the Scribes and Pharisees, who demanded the blood of Jesus. So said priests of old, and so they say now: We have a law, and by our law, Christian women ought to be given up to the foul embraces of lustful overseers, and mothers ought to be driven to the desperation of killing their infants. And that is the law Judge Leavitt has shown so much alacrity in executing. He is rather more law-abiding than even Pontius Pilate, for the latter unwillingly condemned his victim, while Judge Leavitt has shown no such unwillingness.

We write with no feelings of personal hostility against Judge Leavitt. We do not suppose he is worse than the majority of professing Christians of this country. We take him because his conduct in this case is a fair exhibition of the proslavery religion of the largest American churches, and in the hope that many true Christians in these churches may be brought to see the wickedness of their position, and come out from it.



#### **INFLUENCE OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.**

Were it not that society is by nature immortal, and its death ever a new birth, the most clear-sighted among us (seeing that the Philosophy of Reform is ever so gradual, sometimes imperceptible) would in this unhappy day believe it to be in its last agonies. All woodmen tell us that rich manure is the ruin of the oak, and that the thinner and wilder the soil, the tougher and more iron-textured the timber, though, unhappily, the smaller. So it is said that the spirits of men become purer from their errors, by suffering for them; that he who does battle fiercely will be found stronger than he who can stay away from the battle, or even not unwatchfully 'abide by the stuff.' A hard saying is this, but if true, it throws light on the picture for us.

You have undoubtedly observed of late the paralyzing influence of the Chicago platform upon the anti-slavery sentiment of the country; most sad and disastrous upon the young men among us, on whom are built the hopes of the future, and who have not yet learned, from their own experience and research, or from their religious teaching, that bound up within themselves are the oracles of truth, and that their highest authority for action and safest monitor of duty are found in their irrepressible sympathy and their stern sense of justice. In this pliant condition, the creed of this platform appeals to the ardor and zeal of these young men, in behalf of freedom in the Territories of the United States, and of the maintenance, 'inviolable,' of 'the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions, according to its own judgment exclusively'; which 'institution' is understood to mean slavery, as essential to the balance of power and the preservation of the Union. The Republican platform denounces 'the lawless invasion, by armed force, of the soil of any State or Territory,'—thereby pronouncing the Free-State men, in the invasion of the soil of Kansas, as well as John Brown of the soil of Virginia, guilty of 'the greatest of crimes,' and equally deserving the dungeon and gallows.

I happened, a few days since, to attend a meeting where the question was discussed 'Whether or not the Republican party is the greatest political obstacle to the abolition of slavery?' I was not a little surprised at the *intelligible* and vigorous defence of Republicanism, and the heartless and even malignant attack upon Abolitionism, made by those young men—the best of the neighborhood—with enough of the spirit and genius of freedom to dare all law in defence of the fugitive, and, under favorable circumstances, to defy the Constitution in defence of John Brown. I question whether such proficiency in discipline and deference to the demands of party can be exemplified by the pulpit or the play-house; and certain it is, that with all the appliances of the schools for improving the mind and elevating the morals, the relation of man to his fellow-man remains an *inquiry*, a *doubt*, in the creed of the Republican party.

To compare this demoralization of public sentiment in the North with the extra-judicial procedure of the Democratic party, in the extension of slavery into the Territories, as an obstacle to the abolition of slavery, is an absurdity.

Those who labored in the cause of Abolition in 1860-54, remember how the hatred of slavery created by the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law, the legitimate result of which would have repealed that law, was woefully perverted and compromised by the Free Soil party, for private ends and ignoble purposes. When Margaret Garner had escaped from Slavery and Democracy in Kentucky, and asked protection from the Free State of Ohio and the Free Soil party, (then the dominant power,) the spirit of our State Constitution and the sentiment of the people welcomed her upon the soil, and, with the glorious unction of Samuel Adams, of Revolutionary fame, declared that no slave should cross the threshold of Ohio—Margaret Garner and her little ones were free! But when the master demanded his victim, and she appealed to the Governor to save her from a fate more dreadful than death, the manhood of the party begged to be excused. She only asked the simple right to her person and the babes that God had given her. Governor Chase said that the violation of the Fugitive Slave Law was revolutionary—a vindication of the Higher Law, not necessary to his own or his party's success; and he sacrificed that heroic woman and her posterity for ever, together with the sacred right of the State against invasion on her own soil, to save the party and the emoluments of office. Go see! there lies the bloody holocaust upon the altar of a barbarous faith! It was a hangman's work, and well might tempt the sword of a Christian from its scabbard to see a brave woman and all her lineage murdered thus, like sheep in butcher's shambles. Miserable cowards were we all, and well deserved just what we got—the sum total of the problem—the *Dred Scott* decision.

' Alas ! alas !

This hurts most—this—that, after all, we are paid  
'The worth of our work.'

No sooner had the indignation for the Fugitive Slave Law been allayed, than the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and the attempt to force upon an unwilling people a pro-slavery Constitution, kindled again the fires of freedom, and lashed the public sentiment into frenzy. In this aggression on the soil of Kansas, constitutional rights were violated, and might be constitutionally opposed; and therefore when John Brown led out his hosts to battle against slavery there, the unrestrained support and sympathy of all the North went with him, and the Higher Law was there appropriated, with the relish of a famished tiger for his prey. There was no party to be saved, no office lost. But when John Brown crossed over into Virginia to defend the black man's right to *leave* the soil, the Republican party shut their eyes and ears, and said, 'Let him be hung, but give us Garibaldi!' So they have smothered the deep sympathy of living hearts to gain the poor 'half loaf,' which, to the four millions now enslaved is, after all, 'a stone.'

JOSEPHINE S. GRIFFING.

Salem, (Ohio,) July 24th, 1860.

**OHIO FUGITIVE SLAVE CASE—ELOQUENT  
SPEECH FROM LUCY STONE.**

**The Duty of a Mother to Protect her Children  
from Slavery with the Knife.**

In the course of the trial of the slave Margaret, on the 13th inst., Col. Chambers, counsel for the slave-owners, said, among other things:

"The gentlemen on the defence say that they never saw her (Margaret) before the deed was done, and I suppose they did not; but I have had, this morning, a matter presented to me, to which I now call the attention of the Court, that it may protect her life and the lives of her children. A lady in this Court, last evening, wanted one of the officers to permit her to give Margaret Garner, the author of the death of one of her children, a knife, *that she might kill the rest of her little ones, and then put an end to her own life!* The lady was Lucy Stone Blackwell, the officer was Deputy Marshal Brown."

After the adjournment of the Court, the members and audience resolved themselves into a public assembly, says the *Cincinnati Columbian*, with Mr. R. Pullen as chairman, and the lady mounted the Judge's desk. She was dressed in a black silk gown, had a brown merino mantle over her shoulders, a bonnet of the same material on her head, and a green veil. She spoke in an easy, assured manner, without excitement or violence, never so much as raising her voice beyond the low, penetrating tones peculiar to her. She said:

"I have been informed that Mr. Chambers has spoken this morning of my having offered to the poor woman now under examination a knife. I wish to explain in the right place, where the matter has been spoken of, what I said, and the motives that led me to say what I did.



"I did not ask of Deputy Marshal Brown the privilege of giving a knife. If Mr. Brown were here, he would acknowledge as much. I have been out of town ever since the commencement of this examination, until yesterday, or I should have been here every day, doing what I could to show my sympathy with my afflicted sister.

"As I spoke to her of liberty, her eye beamed with the dull light of despair, the tear of anguish trickled down her cheek; her lip quivered in silent agony, as I took her hand and expressed my sympathy. I thought, as I looked upon her unexpressed grief, that if ever there was a time when it was a good deed to give a weapon to those who fought the battle of liberty on Bunker's Hill—if those patriots had the right to use the arms supplied to them—she who had said, "Let us go to God rather than go back to Slavery," had the same right. Impelled by my feelings, I turned to Mr. Brown, and expressed my wish that she could have a knife to deliver herself, dreading, as she did, Slavery to such an extent, that she had taken the life of her dear child rather than return to it.

"Who that knows the depth of a mother's love does not estimate the sacrifice she had made? If she had a right to deliver her child, she had a right to deliver herself. So help me Heaven! I would tear from myself my life with my teeth, before I would be a slave!

"I asked no privilege of the Marshal—I beg my rights of none. I had a right to put a dagger in the woman's hand—the same right that those had who seized their weapons to fight about a paltry tax on tea!

"I hoped to see her liberty rendered her—I hope it still. I do not know the Commissioner

of this court, but I doubt not he is accessible to the cry of the oppressed. He should act true to his conscience, true to right, true to Heaven, and deliver this victim from the hands of oppression.

"I make no apology to this court, or to any one, for wishing to give this woman a dagger. I apologize to nobody; I exercised the same right as those who distributed weapons to the combatants on Bunker's Hill.

"God gave this woman a love of liberty, and she has a soul worthy of the gift; if she prefers liberty with God, to oppression with man, if she desires for her children the guardianship of angels rather than the scorn and lash of Slavery, let her have them, and find in immortality a refuge from wrong and insult.

"I told him who claims her, I do not say her owner, for God has made no man the owner of another—I told him that this was a historic period: that the deeds now doing would employ the pen of genius, and be handed down to future generations; that his name would be connected with the events now occurring—with execration, if he continued to enslave one capable of such deeds as this woman, but with honor, if he gave her the freedom that was her right.

"As I looked into his kindly face, his mildly beaming eye, I thought he had a generous heart, and so it proved. He kindly said, when he had her back in Kentucky, under his own care, he would render her liberty. I hope he will fulfill his promise.

"I give all notice here, and say it in the hearing of my sisters who are present, that whenever and wherever I have an opportunity of offering opposition to the Fugitive Slave Law, and thwarting its operation, whatever may be the consequences, *I will do it!*"

Mr. Chambers desired to say, on behalf of Mr. Gaines, that he had made no such promise as had been spoken of; that he had agreed to consider what the lady said, when he returned to Kentucky.

Mrs. Lucy Stone Blackwell said: "He promised me he would make her free."

Mr. Chambers: "I do not care how it is; I speak to a point of law, to prevent a claim."

As the lady concluded her address, which was listened to in uninterrupted silence, there was considerable applause, mingled with hisses, the applause predominating.

him time to inform himself as to his duty. Under the circumstance, that the defendants were now without the jurisdiction of the State, the Court would suggest to the Prosecuting Attorney that he had better get a requisition from the Governor of Ohio.

Mr. Cox said he had sent to the Governor a statement of the facts, with a copy of the indictment, that he might take such action as he thought proper.

Judge Hoadley, in relation to the remark of the Court upon the subject of another *capias*, said that he had applied to Judge Leavitt to receive a supplemental return, setting up the fact, that after the original return was filed, the Commissioner had proceeded to decide the case, and grant his certificate, and that the claimants had received it. In the application to receive the amended return, it was shown an affidavit had been made to the Marshal under the ninth section of the Fugitive Slave Law, and he urged to the United States Judge that this changed the state of facts, and rendered it a controversy between the private right of the master and the right of the State; but Judge Leavitt refused to receive the supplemental return, though his decision covered the proposition therein. If a new *capias*, therefore, had been issued, it would have been followed by another order of the same kind. Here the subject ended.

We learn from our exchanges that Governor Chase has since made requisition on the Governor of Kentucky, for the said colored persons, as fugitives from justice.

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As a result of her service and academics, Amanda was one of ten students named Outstanding Student Leader at UT Arlington for 2005-2006. She also was a recipient of the nationally recognized Who's Who award in 2005-2006. In the form of scholarships,

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Amanda now works fulltime at UT Arlington in the Office of Graduate Studies as a Graduate Recruiter. She feels it is the ultimate achievement to continue both her service at the University and her relationships with the world renowned faculty and staff.