

HIS 121- Primary Source Packet #1- American Colonial Culture

The Written Record of the Voyage of 1524 of Giovanni da Verrazano as recorded in a letter to Francis I, King of France, July 8th, 1524

[Adapted from a translation by Susan Tarrow of the Cellere Codex, in Lawrence C. Wroth, ed., The Voyages of Giovanni da Verrazzano, 1524-1528 (Yale, 1970), pp. 133-143]

Giovanni da Verrazano was one of the first European explorers to encounter the Native Americans along the east coast of North America, stretching from modern day North Carolina to Maine. He was an Italian sailing under the sponsorship of King Philip I of France. While Verrazano describes a region thickly populated, that same region would be depleted of peoples by the time the English arrive in the seventeenth century, having died of disease. The description here is from a diary kept by Verrazano and included in a letter sent to this king of France. Consider how he describe the Indians, some as hostile and others as generous. He takes care to describe their appearance as well as their spiritual beliefs. How are these filtered by Verrazano's own assumptions?

... Since the storm that we encountered in the northern regions, Most Serene King, I have not written to tell Your Majesty of what happened to the four ships which you sent over the Ocean to explore new lands, as I thought that you had already been informed of everything--how we were forced by the fury of the winds to return in distress to Brittany with only the Normandy and the Dauphine, and that after undergoing repairs there, began our voyage with these two ships, equipped for war, following the coasts of Spain, Your Most Serene Majesty will have heard; and then according to our new plan, we continued the original voyage with only the Dauphine; now on our return from this voyage I will tell Your Majesty of what we found...

Seeing that the land continued to the south we decided to turn and skirt it toward the north, where we found the land we had sighted earlier. So we anchored off the coast and sent the small boat in to land. We had seen many people coming to the seashore, but they fled when they saw us approaching; several times they stopped and turned around to look at us in great wonderment. We reassured them with various signs, and some of them came up, showing great delight at seeing us and marveling at our clothes, appearance, and our whiteness; they showed us by various signs where we could most easily secure the boat, and offered us some of their food. We were on land, and I shall now tell Your Majesty briefly what we were able to learn of their life and customs.

They go completely naked except that around their loins they wear skins of small animals like martens, with a narrow belt of grass around the body, to which they tie various tails of other animals which hang down to the knees; the rest of the body is bare, and so is the head. Some of them wear garlands of birds' feathers. They

are dark in color, not unlike the Ethiopians, with thick black hair, not very long, tied back behind the head like a small tail. As for the physique of these men, they are well proportioned, of medium height, a little taller than we are. They have broad chests, strong arms, and the legs and other parts of the body are well composed. There is nothing else, except that they tend to be rather broad in the face: but not all, for we saw many with angular faces. They have big black eyes, and an attentive and open look. They are not very strong, but they have a sharp cunning, and are agile and swift runners. From what we could tell from observation, in the last two respects they resemble the Orientals...

We reached another land 15 leagues from the island, where we found an excellent harbor [in *almost certainly Newport in lower Narragansett Bay*]; before entering it, we saw about boats full of people who came around the ship uttering various cries of wonderment. They did not come nearer than fifty paces but stopped to look at the structure of our ship, our persons, and our clothes; then all together they raised a loud cry which meant that they were joyful. We reassured them somewhat by imitating their gestures, and they came near enough for us to throw them a few little bells and mirrors and many trinkets, which they took and looked at, laughing, and then they confidently came on board ship... These people are the most beautiful and have the most civil customs that we have found on this voyage. They are taller than we are; they are a bronze color, some tending more toward whiteness, others to a tawny color; the face is clear-cut; the hair is long and black, and they take great pains to decorate it; the eyes are black and alert, and their manner is sweet and gentle, very like the manner of the ancients...

Their women are just as shapely and beautiful; very gracious, of attractive manner and pleasant appearance; their customs and behavior follow womanly custom as far as befits human nature; they go nude except for stag skin embroidered like the men's, and some wear rich lynx skins on their arms; their bare heads are decorated with various ornaments made of braids of their own hair which hang down over their breasts on either side. Some have other hair arrangements such as the women of Egypt and Syria wear, and these women are older and have been joined in wedlock. Both men and women have various trinkets hanging from their ears as the Orientals do; and we saw that they had many sheets of worked copper which they prize more than gold. They do not value gold because of its color; they think it the most worthless of all, and rate blue and red above all other colors. The things we gave them that they prized the most were little bells, blue crystals, and other trinkets to put in the ear or around the neck. They did not appreciate cloth of silk and gold, nor even of any other kind, nor did they care to have them; the same was true for metals like steel and iron, for many times when we showed them some of our arms, they did not admire them, nor ask for them, but merely examined the workmanship. They did the same with mirrors; they would look at them quickly, and then refuse them, laughing.

They are very generous and give away all they have. We made great friends with them, and one day

before we entered the harbor with the ship, when we were lying at anchor one league out to sea because of unfavorable weather, they came out to the ship with a great number of their boats; they had painted and decorated their faces with various colors, showing us that it was a sign of happiness. They brought us some of their food, and showed us by signs where we should anchor in the port for the ship's safety, and then accompanied us all the way until we dropped anchor...

At a distance of fifty leagues, keeping more to the north, we found high country full of very dense forests, composed of pines, cypresses, and similar trees which grow in cold regions. [*This is likely along the coast of southern Maine.*]

The people were quite different from the others, for while the previous ones had been courteous in manner, these were full of crudity and vices, and were so barbarous that we could never make any communication with them, however many signs we made to them. They were clothed in skins of bear, lynx, sea-wolf and other animals. As far as we could judge from several visits to their houses, we think they live on game, fish, and several fruits which are a species of root which the earth produces itself... We saw no sign of cultivation, nor would the land be suitable for producing any fruit or grain on account of its sterility. If we wanted to trade with them for some of their things, they would come to the seashore on some rocks where the breakers were most violent, while we remained in the little boat, and they sent us what they wanted to give on a rope, continually shouting to us not to approach the land; they gave us the barter quickly, and would take in exchange only knives, hooks for fishing and sharp metal. We found no courtesy in them, and when we had nothing more to exchange and left them, the men made all the signs of scorn and shame that any brute creature would make [GV footnote: such as showing their buttocks and laughing.] Against their wishes, we penetrated two or three leagues inland with 25 armed men, and when we disembarked on the shore, they shot at us with their bows and uttered loud cries before fleeing into the woods...

Due to the lack of [a common] language, we were unable to find out by signs or gestures how much religious faith these people we found possess. We think they have neither religion nor laws, that they do not know of a First Cause or Author, that they do not worship the sky, the stars, the sun, the moon, or other planets, nor do they even practice any kind of idolatry; we do not know whether they offer any sacrifices or other prayers, nor are there any temples or churches of prayer among their peoples. We consider that they have no religion and that they live in absolute freedom, and that everything they do proceeds from Ignorance; for they are very easily persuaded, and they imitated everything that they saw us Christians do with regard to divine worship, with the same fervor and enthusiasm that we had...

“What Can You Get By Warre”: Powhatan Exchanges Views With Captain John Smith, 1608”

(Source: John Smith, *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England & The Summer Isles* (Glasgow, Scotland: James MacLehose and Sons, 1907), Vol. 1: 158–59)

Captain John Smith was a soldier and adventurer in Europe and Asia before he became involved in the Virginia Company’s plan to establish a settlement in North America. He was aboard one of the three ships that reached Virginia in April 1607. The first settlers, ill prepared for life in the harsh environment, had few useful skills but great expectations of easy profits. They suffered from disease, malnutrition, and frequent attacks by Indians in the early years; over one half died the first winter. Smith took over Jamestown’s government amid this chaos and death; he explored the region and traded for desperately needed supplies with the Indians. Smith recognized the need to establish peaceful relations with the powerful Powhatan Indians of the coastal region, and he traded English manufactured goods for much needed Indian corn. Smith recounted this exchange with the Indian leader Powhatan in his 1624 Historyie [Powhatan:]

Captaine Smith, you may understand that I having seene the death of all my people thrice, and not any one living of these three generations but my selfe; I know the difference of Peace and Warre better then any in my Country. But now I am old and ere long must die, my brethren, namely Opitchapam, Opechancanough, and Kekataugh, my two sisters, and their two daughters, are distinctly each others successors. I wish their experience no lesse then mine, and your love to them no lesse then mine to you. But this bruit from Nandsamund, that you are come to destroy my Country, so much affrighteth all my people as they dare not visit you. What will it availe you to take that by force you may quickly have by love, or to destroy them that provide you food. What can you get by warre, when we can hide our provisions and fly to the woods? whereby you must famish by wronging us your friends. And why are you thus jealous of our loves seeing us unarmed, and both doe, and are willing still to feede you, with that you cannot get but by our labours? Thinke you I am so simple, not to know it is better to eate good meate, lye well, and sleepe quietly with my women and children, laugh and be merry with you, have copper, hatchets, or what I want being your friend: then be forced to flie from all, to lie cold in the woods, feede upon Acornes, rootes, and such trash, and be so hunted by you, that I can neither rest, eate, nor sleepe; but my tyred men must watch, and if a twig but breake, every one cryeth there commeth Captaine Smith: then must I fly I know not whether: and thus with miserable feare, end my miserable life, leaving my pleasures to such youths as you, which through your rash unadvisednesse may quickly as miserably end, for want of that, you never know where to finde. Let this therefore assure you of our loves, and every yeare our friendly trade shall furnish you with Corne; and now also, if you would come in friendly manner to see us, and not thus with your guns and swords as to invade your foes. To this subtill discourse, the President thus replied.

Capt. Smiths Reply.

Seeing you will not rightly conceive of our words, we strive to make you know our thoughts by our deeds; the vow I made you of my love, both my selfe and my men have kept. As for your promise I find it every day violated by some of your subjects: yet we finding your love and kindnesse, our custome is so far from being ungratefull, that for your sake onely, we have curbed our thirsting desire of revenge; els had they knowne as well the crueltie we use to our enemies, as our true love and courtesie to our friends. And I thinke your judgement sufficient to conceive, as well by the adventures we have undertaken, as by the advantage we have (by our Armes) of yours: that had we intended you any hurt, long ere this we could have effected it. Your people comming to James Towne are entertained with their Bowes and Arrowes without any exceptions; we esteeming it with you as it is with us, to weare our armes as our apparell. As for the danger of our enemies, in such warres consist our chieftest pleasure: for your riches we have no use: as for the hiding your provision, or by your flying to the woods, we shall not so unadvisedly starve as you conclude, your friendly care in that behalfe is needlesse, for we have a rule to finde beyond your knowledge.

Many other discourses they had, till at last they began to trade. But the King seeing his will would not be admitted as a law, our guard dispersed, nor our men disarmed, he (sighing) breathed his minde once more in this manner.

The Voyages and Explorations of Samuel de Champlain (1604-1616). Narrated by Himself..., vol. 2 **(Describes the Lives of Huron Women and Men in the Great Lakes Region, 1616)**

These people are of a rather merry disposition, although there are many of them who have a gloomy and saturnine expression. They are well-formed and proportioned in body, some of the men being very strong and robust. And there are also women and girls who are very beautiful and attractive in figure, coloring (although it is olive) and in features, all in proportion; and their breasts hang down hardly at all, unless they are old. Some of them are very powerful and of extraordinary height. They have almost all the care of the house and the work; for they till the ground, plant the Indian corn, lay up wood for the winter, beat the hemp and spin it, make fishing-nets from the thread, catch fish, and do other necessary things. They also harvest their corn, store it, prepare it to eat, and attend to their household affairs. Moreover, they follow their husbands from place to place in the fields, where they serve as mules for carrying the baggage.

As to the men, they do nothing but hunt for deer and other animals, catch fish, make cabins and go to war. When they have done these things they go to other tribes, to whom they have access, and whom they know, to trade and exchange what they have for what they have not. When they come back they do not stir from the

feasts and dances which they make for one another, and when these are over they go to sleep, which is the best employment of all.

They have a sort of marriage among them, which is like this: when a girl is 11, 12, 13, 14 or 15 years old, she will have several suitors, according to her good graces, who will woo her and ask the consent of her father and her mother, although often the girls do not accept their consent. Those who are the best and most discreet submit to their wishes. This lover, or suitor, gives the girl some necklaces, chains and bracelets of wampum. If the girl finds the suitor agreeable, she accepts this present. This done, he comes to sleep with her three or four nights without saying a word, when they gather the fruit of their affections.

And it often happens that after having spent a week or a fortnight together, if they cannot agree, she will quit her suitor, who forfeits his necklaces and other gifts made by him. Frustrated in his hope, he will seek another woman, and she another suitor: and thus they continue until a satisfactory union is made. There are many girls who pass their entire youth thus with several husbands, who are not alone in the enjoyment of the creature, married though they are; for, when night comes, the young women run from one cabin to another, as do the young men, on their part, visiting any girls they please. They do so without violence, however, referring the whole matter to the wish of the woman. The husband will do the same thing to a woman neighbor, without there being any jealousy among them on that account, or, in any case, very little; and they incur no ill-repute or insult for it, for it is the custom of the country.

When the women have children, the preceding husbands return to them, to show them the friendship and affection that they had borne them in the past, saying that it is more than that of any other man, and that the child who is to be born is his and of his begetting. Another will tell her the same thing; and so it is at the choice and option of the woman to take and accept him who pleases her most. Having gained by her loves a great deal of wampum, she remains with him without leaving him anymore; or, if she leaves him, it must be for some important reason, other than impotence, for he is on trial. Nevertheless, while she is with this husband she does not cease to indulge herself freely; yet she keeps herself at home and busy always with the household, making a good appearance. The result is that children that they have together cannot be sure of being legitimate. They have a custom, however, which provides against this risk that they may never succeed to their property, by constituting the children of their sisters, whom they know to have been born of them, their heirs and successors....

“Your People Live Only Upon Cod”: An Algonquian Response to European Claims of Cultural Superiority (ca. 1677)

(Source: William F. Ganong, trans. and ed., *New Relation of Gaspesia, with the Customs and Religion of the Gaspesian Indians*, by Chrestien LeClerq (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1910), 103–06.)

From the start of colonization, Indians and Europeans viewed each other across a wide cultural gulf. Sure about the superiority of their civilization, European missionaries and teachers tried to convert Indians to Christianity and the European way of life. Some Indians did adopt new ways after disease and violence had decimated their communities; others rejected the European entreaties and pointed out the arrogance of these claims of cultural superiority. French priest Chrestian LeClerq traveled among the eastern Algonquian people who lived in what are now the Maritime Provinces of Canada. He recorded a Micmac leader's eloquent response to these attempts at "reform" that pointed out how difficult Europeans found it to live in Indian country. If France was such a terrestrial paradise, he asked, why were colonists making their way across the Atlantic to live in the forests of North America?

I am greatly astonished that the French have so little cleverness, as they seem to exhibit in the matter of which thou hast just told me on their behalf, in the effort to persuade us to convert our poles, our barks, and our wigwams into those houses of stone and of wood which are tall and lofty, according to their account, as these trees. Very well! But why now, do men of five to six feet in height need houses which are sixty to eighty? For, in fact, as thou knowest very well thyself, Patriarch—do we not find in our own all the conveniences and the advantages that you have with yours, such as reposing, drinking, sleeping, eating, and amusing ourselves with our friends when we wish? This is not all, my brother, hast thou as much ingenuity and cleverness as the Indians, who carry their houses and their wigwams with them so that they may lodge wheresoever they please, independently of any seignior whatsoever? Thou art not as bold nor as stout as we, because when thou goest on a voyage thou canst not carry upon thy shoulders thy buildings and thy edifices. Therefore it is necessary that thou prepares as many lodgings as thou makest changes of residence, or else thou lodgest in a hired house which does not belong to thee. As for us, we find ourselves secure from all these inconveniences, and we can always say, more truly than thou, that we are at home everywhere, because we set up our wigwams with ease wheresoever we go, and without asking permission of anybody. Thou reproachest us, very inappropriately, that our country is a little hell in contrast with France, which thou comparest to a terrestrial paradise, inasmuch as it yields thee, so thou safest, every kind of provision in abundance. Thou sayest of us also that we are the most miserable and most unhappy of all men, living without religion, without manners, without honour, without social order, and, in a word, without any rules, like the beasts in our woods and our forests, lacking bread, wine, and a thousand other comforts which thou hast in superfluity in Europe. Well, my brother, if thou dost not yet know the real feelings which our Indians have towards thy country and towards all thy nation, it is proper that I inform thee at once. I beg thee now to believe that, all miserable as we seem in thine eyes, we consider ourselves nevertheless much happier than thou in this, that we are very content with the little that we have; and believe also once for all, I pray, that thou deceivest thyself greatly if thou thinkest to persuade us that thy country is better than ours. For if France, as thou sayest, is a little terrestrial paradise, art thou sensible to leave it? And why abandon wives, children, relatives, and friends? Why risk thy life and thy property every year, and

why venture thyself with such risk, in any season whatsoever, to the storms and tempests of the sea in order to come to a strange and barbarous country which thou considerest the poorest and least fortunate of the world? Besides, since we are wholly convinced of the contrary, we scarcely take the trouble to go to France, because we fear, with good reason, lest we find little satisfaction there, seeing, in our own experience, that those who are natives thereof leave it every year in order to enrich themselves on our shores. We believe, further, that you are also incomparably poorer than we, and that you are only simple journeymen, valets, servants, and slaves, all masters and grand captains though you may appear, seeing that you glory in our old rags and in our miserable suits of beaver which can no longer be of use to us, and that you find among us, in the fishery for cod which you make in these parts, the wherewithal to comfort your misery and the poverty which oppresses you. As to us, we find all our riches and all our conveniences among ourselves, without trouble and without exposing our lives to the dangers in which you find yourselves constantly through your long voyages. And, whilst feeling compassion for you in the sweetness of our repose, we wonder at the anxieties and cares which you give yourselves night and day in order to load your ship. We see also that all your people live, as a rule, only upon cod which you catch among us. It is everlastingly nothing but cod—cod in the morning, cod at midday, cod at evening, and always cod, until things come to such a pass that if you wish some good morsels, it is at our expense; and you are obliged to have recourse to the Indians, whom you despise so much, and to beg them to go a-hunting that you may be regaled. Now tell me this one little thing, if thou hast any sense: Which of these two is the wisest and happiest—he who labours without ceasing and only obtains, and that with great trouble, enough to live on, or he who rests in comfort and finds all that he needs in the pleasure of hunting and fishing? It is true, that we have not always had the use of bread and of wine which your France produces; but, in fact, before the arrival of the French in these parts, did not the Gaspeians live much longer than now? And if we have not any longer among us any of those old men of a hundred and thirty to forty years, it is only because we are gradually adopting your manner of living, for experience is making it very plain that those of us live longest who, despising your bread, your wine, and your brandy, are content with their natural food of beaver, of moose, of waterfowl, and fish, in accord with the custom of our ancestors and of all the Gaspeian nation. Learn now, my brother, once for all, because I must open to thee my heart: there is no Indian who does not consider himself infinitely more happy and more powerful than the French.

Anne Bradstreet -Poems

(Source: <https://allpoetry.com/Anne-Bradstreet>)

Her Mother's Epitaph

Here lies

A worthy matron of unspotted life,

A loving mother and obedient wife,

A friendly neighbor, pitiful to poor,
Whom oft she fed, and clothed with her store;
To servants wisely awful, but yet kind,
And as they did, so they reward did find:
A true instructor of her family,
The which she ordered with dexterity,
The public meetings ever did frequent,

And in her closest constant hours she spent;
Religious in all her words and ways,
Preparing still for death, till end of days:
Of all her children, children lived to see,
Then dying, left a blessed memory.

Excerpt from The Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson by Mary Rowlandson

(Source: Mary Rowlandson, "Narrative of the Captivity of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, 1682," in Charles Lincoln, ed., *Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675–1699* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1913), 149–54)

Metacom, or King Philip as he was called by the English, led a confederation of Indian groups in 1675 in a military effort to roll back the encroaching English settlements of southern New England. For several months the Indians led raids and secured victories against the English, who found it difficult to combat the Indian style of warfare. Mary Rowlandson, a minister's wife, was captured along with several of her children in one of those raids on the frontier outpost of Lancaster, Massachusetts. For eleven weeks she traveled with the Wampanoags and Nipmucs in central Massachusetts. Her account provided great insight into the relationship of English and Indian cultures at this critical point. While Rowlandson relied heavily upon her faith to see her through her troubles, she also came to understand some of the workings of Indian society, as in her account of Weetamoo. Mary was ransomed in 1676, the same year that the English, with their greater numbers and the support of their Indian allies, achieved Philip's defeat and the scattering of the region's remaining Indian settlements.

The sovereignty and goodness of GOD, together with the faithfulness of his promises displayed, being a narrative of the captivity and restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson, commended by her, to all that desires to know the Lord's doings to, and dealings with her. Especially to her dear children and relations. The second Addition [sic] Corrected and amended. Written by her own hand for her private use, and now made public at the earnest desire of some friends, and for the benefit of the afflicted. Deut. 32.39. See now that I, even I am he, and there is no god with me, I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal, neither is there any can deliver out of my hand...

Oh the doleful sight that now was to behold at this house! "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he has made in the earth." Of thirtyseven persons who were in this one house, none escaped either present death, or a bitter captivity, save only one, who might say as he, "And I only am escaped alone to tell the

News" (Job 1.15). There were twelve killed, some shot, some stabbed with their spears, some knocked down with their hatchets. When we are in prosperity, Oh the little that we think of such dreadful sights, and to see our dear friends, and relations lie bleeding out their heart-blood upon the ground. There was one who was chopped into the head with a hatchet, and stripped naked, and yet was crawling up and down. It is a solemn sight to see so many Christians lying in their blood, some here, and some there, like a company of sheep torn by wolves, all of them stripped naked by a company of hell-hounds, roaring, singing, ranting, and insulting, as if they would have torn our very hearts out; yet the Lord by His almighty power preserved a number of us from death, for there were twenty-four of us taken alive and carried captive.

I had often before this said that if the Indians should come, I should choose rather to be killed by them than taken alive, but when it came to the trial my mind changed; their glittering weapons so daunted my spirit, that I chose rather to go along with those (as I may say) ravenous beasts, than that moment to end my days; and that I may the better declare what happened to me during that grievous captivity, I shall particularly speak of the several removes we had up and down the wilderness...

THIRD REMOVE

And thus they continued till those that had been upon the expedition were come up to the Sagamore's wigwam; and then, Oh, the hideous insulting and triumphing that there was over some Englishmen's scalps that they had taken (as their manner is) and brought with them. I cannot but take notice of the wonderful mercy of God to me in those afflictions, in sending me a Bible. One of the Indians that came from Medfield fight, had brought some plunder, came to me, and asked me, if I would have a Bible, he had got one in his basket. I was glad of it, and asked him, whether he thought the Indians would let me read? He answered, yes. So I took the Bible, and in that melancholy time, it came into my mind to read first the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, which I did, and when I had read it, my dark heart wrought on this manner: that there was no mercy for me, that the blessings were gone, and the curses come in their room, and that I had lost my opportunity. But the Lord helped me still to go on reading till I came to Chap. 30, the seven first verses, where I found, there was mercy promised again, if we would return to Him by repentance; and though we were scattered from one end of the earth to the other, yet the Lord would gather us together, and turn all those curses upon our enemies. I do not desire to live to forget this Scripture, and what comfort it was to me.

Now the Ind. began to talk of removing from this place, some one way, and some another. There were now besides myself nine English captives in this place (all of them children, except one woman). I got an opportunity to go and take my leave of them. They being to go one way, and I another, I asked them whether they were earnest with God for deliverance. They told me they did as they were able, and it was some comfort

to me, that the Lord stirred up children to look to Him. The woman, viz. goodwife Joslin, told me she should never see me again, and that she could find in her heart to run away. I wished her not to run away by any means, for we were near thirty miles from any English town, and she very big with child, and had but one week to reckon, and another child in her arms, two years old, and bad rivers there were to go over, and we were feeble, with our poor and coarse entertainment. I had my Bible with me, I pulled it out, and asked her whether she would read. We opened the Bible and lighted on Psalm 27, in which Psalm we especially took notice of that, ver. ult., "Wait on the Lord, Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine Heart, wait I say on the Lord."

Cotton Mather's Account of the Witch Trials, 1693

Source: Cotton Mather, *The Wonders of the Invisible world: Being an Account of the Tryals... [witches]*, 1693 (The Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC00264)

The New Englanders are a people of God settled in those, which were once the devil's territories. And it may easily be supposed that he devil was exceedingly disturbed when he perceived such a people here accomplishing the promise of old made unto our Blessed Jesu -- that He should have the utmost parts of the earth for His possession.... The devil is now making one attempt more upon us; an attempt more difficult, more surprising, more snarled with unintelligible circumstances than any that we have hitherto encountered; an attempt so critical, that if we get well through, we shall soon enjoy halcyon days, with all the vultures of hell trodden under our feet. He has wanted his incarnate legions to persecute us, as the people of God have in the other hemisphere been persecuted; he has, therefore, drawn his more spiritual ones to make an attack upon us. We have been advised by some credible Christians yet alive that a malefactor, accused of witchcraft as well as murder, and executed in this place more than forty years ago, did then give notice of a horrible & against the country by witchcraft, and a foundation of witchcraft then laid, which if it were not seasonably discovered would probably blow up and pull down all the churches in the country. And we have now with horror seen the discovery of such a witchcraft! An army of devils is horribly broke in upon the place which is the center, and after a sort, the firstborn of our English settlements. And the houses of the good people there are filled with the doleful shrieks of their children and servants, tormented by invisible hands, with tortures altogether preternatural. After the mischiefs there endeavored, and since in part conquered, the terrible plague of evil angels has made its progress into some other places, where other persons have been in like manner diabolically handled. These our poor afflicted neighbors, quickly, after they become infected and infested with these demons, arrive to a capacity of discerning those which they conceive the shapes of their troublers; and notwithstanding the great and just suspicion that the demons might impose the shapes of innocent persons in their spectral exhibitions upon the sufferers (which may prove no small part of the witch plot in the issue), yet

many of the persons thus represented, being examined, several of them have been convicted of a very damnable witchcraft.. Yea, more than twenty-one have confessed that they have signed unto a book, which the devil showed them, and negated in his hellish design of bewitching and ruining our land....

Now, by these confessions it is agreed that the devil has made a dreadful knot of witches in the country, and by the help of witches has dreadfully increased that knot; that these witches have driven a trade of commissioning their confederate spirits to do all sorts of mischiefs to the neighbors; whereupon there have ensued such mischievous consequences upon the bodies and estates of the neighborhood as could not otherwise be accounted for; yea that at prodigious witch meetings the wretches have proceeded so far as to concert and consult the methods of rooting out the Christian religion from this country, and seeing up instead of it perhaps a more gross diabolism than ever the world saw before. And yet it will be a thing lime short of miracle if, in so spread a business as this, the devil should not get in some of his juggles to confound the discovery of the rest.

THE WONDERS OF THE INVISIBLE WORLD: BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE TRYALS OF SEVERAL WITCHES LATELY EXECUTED IN NEW-ENGLAND.: BY COTTON MATHER, D.D.
(London: John Russell Smith, 1862) (<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/28513/28513-h/28513-h.htm>)

II. THE TRYAL OF BRIDGET BISHOP, ALIAS OLIVER, AT THE COURT OF OYER AND TERMINER, HELD AT SALEM, JUNE 2. 1692.

I. She was Indicted for Bewitching of several Persons in the Neighbourhood, the Indictment being drawn up, according to the *Form* in such Cases usual. And pleading, *Not Guilty*, there were brought in several persons, who had long undergone many kinds of Miseries, which were preternaturally inflicted, and generally ascribed unto an *horrible Witchcraft*. There was little occasion to prove the *Witchcraft*, it being evident and notorious to all be[Pg 130]holders. Now to fix the *Witchcraft* on the Prisoner at the Bar, the first thing used, was the Testimony of the *Bewitched*; whereof several testifi'd, That the *Shape* of the Prisoner did oftentimes very grievously Pinch them, Choak them, Bite them, and Afflict them; urging them to write their Names in a *Book*, which the said Spectre called, *Ours*. One of them did further testifie, that it was the *Shape* of this Prisoner, with another, which one day took her from her Wheel, and carrying her to the Riverside, threatned there to Drown her, if she did not Sign to the *Book* mentioned: which yet she refused. Others of them did also testifie, that the said *Shape* did in her Threats brag to them that she had been the Death of sundry Persons, then by her named; that she had *Ridden* a Man then likewise named. Another testifi'd, the Apparition of *Ghosts* unto the Spectre of

Bishop, crying out, *You Murdered us!* About the Truth whereof, there was in the Matter of Fact but too much suspicion.

II. It was testifi'd, That at the Examination of the Prisoner before the Magistrates, the Bewitched were extreemly tortured. If she did but cast her Eyes on them, they were presently struck down; and this in such a manner as there could be no Collusion in the Business. But upon the Touch of her Hand upon them, when they lay in their Swoons, they would immediately Revive; and not upon the Touch of any ones else. Moreover, Upon some Special Actions of her Body, as the shaking of her Head, or the turning of her Eyes, they presently and painfully fell into the like postures. And many of the like Accidents now fell out, while she was at the Bar. One at the same time[Pg 131] testifying, That she said, *She could not be troubled to see the afflicted thus tormented.*

III. There was Testimony likewise brought in, that a Man striking once at the place, where a bewitched person said, the *Shape* of this *Bishop* stood, the bewitched cried out, *That he had tore her Coat*, in the place then particularly specifi'd; and the Woman's Coat was found to be Torn in that very place.

IV. One *Deliverance Hobbs*, who had confessed her being a Witch, was now tormented by the Spectres, for her Confession. And she now testifi'd, That this *Bishop* tempted her to Sign the *Book* again, and to deny what she had confess'd. She affirm'd, That it was the *Shape* of this Prisoner, which whipped her with Iron Rods, to compel her thereunto. And she affirmed, that this *Bishop* was at a General Meeting of the Witches, in a Field at *Salem-Village*, and there partook of a Diabolical Sacrament in Bread and Wine then administred.

V. To render it further unquestionable, that the Prisoner at the Bar, was the Person truly charged in THIS *Witchcraft*, there were produced many Evidences of OTHER *Witchcrafts*, by her perpetrated. For Instance, *John Cook* testifi'd, That about five or six Years ago, one Morning, about Sun-Rise, he was in his Chamber assaulted by the *Shape* of this Prisoner: which look'd on him, grinn'd at him, and very much hurt him with a Blow on the side of the Head: and that on the same day, about Noon, the same *Shape* walked in the Room where he was, and an Apple strangely flew out of his Hand, into the Lap of his Mother, six or eight Foot from him.[Pg 132]

VI. *Samuel Gray* testifi'd, That about fourteen Years ago, he wak'd on a Night, and saw the Room where he lay full of Light; and that he then saw plainly a Woman between the Cradle, and the Bed-side, which look'd upon him. He rose, and it vanished; tho' he found the Doors all fast. Looking out at the Entry-door, he saw the same Woman, in the same Garb again; and said, *In God's Name, what do you come for?* He went to Bed, and had the same Woman again assaulting him. The Child in the Cradle gave a great Screech, and the Woman disappeared. It was long before the Child could be quieted; and tho' it were a very likely thriving Child, yet from this time it pined away, and, after divers Months, died in a sad Condition. He knew not *Bishop*, nor her Name; but when he

saw her after this, he knew by her Countenance, and Apparel, and all Circumstances, that it was the Apparition of this *Bishop*, which had thus troubled him.

VII. *John Bly* and his Wife testifi'd, That he bought a Sow of *Edward Bishop*, the Husband of the Prisoner; and was to pay the Price agreed, unto another person. This Prisoner being angry that she was thus hindred from fingring the Mony, quarrell'd with *Bly*. Soon after which, the Sow was taken with strange Fits; Jumping, Leaping, and Knocking her Head against the Fence; she seem'd Blind and Deaf, and would neither Eat nor be Suck'd. Whereupon a Neighbour said, she believed the Creature was *Over-looked*; and sundry other Circumstances concurred, which made the Deponents believe that *Bishop* had bewitched it....

XIV. There was one very strange thing more, with which the Court was newly entertained. As this Woman was under a Guard, passing by the great and spacious Meeting-house of *Salem*, she gave a look towards the House: And immediately a *Dæmon* invisibly entring the Meeting-house, tore down a part of it; so that tho' there was no Person to be seen there, yet the People, at the noise, running in, found a Board, which was strongly fastned with several Nails, transported unto another quarter of the House.

ROBERT BEVERLEY, 1705 “Of the Servants and Slaves in Virginia” -Excerpts

Heir Servants, they distinguish by the Names of Slaves for Life, and Servants for a time. Slaves are the Negroes, and their Posterity [children], following the condition of the Mother, according to the Maxim, *partus sequitur ventrem*.¹ They are call'd Slaves, in Respect of the Time of their Servitude, because it is for Life. Servants are those which serve only for a few Years, according to the time of their Indenture or the Custom of the Country. The Custom of the Country takes place upon such as have no Indentures. The Law in this Case is that if such Servants be under nineteen Years of Age, they must be brought into Court to have their Age adjudged; And from the Age they are judg'd to be of, they must serve until they reach four and twenty; But if they be adjudged upwards of nineteen, they are then only to be Servants for the Term of five Years. The Male-Servants, and Slaves of both Sexes, are employed together in tilling and manuring the Ground, in sowing and planting Tobacco, Corn, &c. Some Distinction indeed is made between them in their Clothes and Food, but the Work of both is no other than what the Overseers, the Freemen, and the Planters themselves do. Sufficient Distinction is also made between the Female-Servants, and Slaves; for a white Woman is rarely or never put to work in the Ground, if she be good for any thing else; and to discourage all Planters from using any Women so, their Law imposes Texas upon Female-Servants working in the Ground, while it suffers [allows] all other white Women to be absolutely exempted; Whereas on the other hand, it is a common thing to work a Woman Slave out of Doors; nor does the Law make any Distinction in her Taxes, whether her Work be Abroad [outside] or at

Home. Because I have heard how strangely cruel, and severe the Service of this Country [use of slaves and servants in Virginia] is presented in some Parts of England, I can't forbear affirming that the Work of their Servants and Slaves is no other than what every common Freeman does. Neither is any Servant requir'd to do more in a Day than his Overseer. And I can assure you with great Truth that generally their Slaves are not worked near so hard, nor so many Hours in a Day, as the Husbandmen and Day-laborers in England. An Overseer is a Man that, having served his time, has acquired the Skill and Character of an experienced Planter, and is therefore entrusted with the Direction of the Servants and Slaves...

Be it enacted, by the governor, council, and burgesses, of this present general assembly, and it is hereby enacted, by the authority of the same,

— That all servants brought into this country without indenture, if the said servants be Christians and of Christian parentage, and above nineteen years of age, shall serve but five years; and if under nineteen years of age, 'till they shall become twenty-four years of age, and no longer. . . . — That all servants imported and brought into this country by sea or land, who were not Christians in their native country, (except Turks and Moors in amity with her majesty, and others that can make due proof of their being free in England, or any other Christian country, before they were shipped, in order to transportation hither) shall be accounted and be slaves, and as such be here bought and sold notwithstanding a conversion to Christianity afterwards. . . . — That all masters and owners of servants shall find and provide for their servants wholesome and competent diet, clothing, and lodging, by the discretion of the county court; and shall not, at any time, give immoderate correction [excessive punishment]; neither shall at any time whip a Christian white servant naked without an order from a justice of the peace. . . . — That all servants (not being slaves,) whether imported or become servants of their own accord here, or bound by any court or church-wardens, shall have their complaints received by a justice of the peace, who, if he find cause, shall bind the master over to answer the complaint at court. . . . — That baptism of slaves does not exempt them from bondage; and that all children shall be bond or free, according to the condition of their mothers, and the particular directions of this act.

Petitions Against Slavery (1773 to 1777) From *Voices of A People's History*, edited by Zinn and Arnove

More evidence of resistance to slavery can be found in the various petitions by slaves to state legislatures, seeking release from their bondage. Here are four of them, in part deferential but also impassioned and defiant.

"FELIX" (UNKNOWN) SLAVE PETITION FOR FREEDOM (JANUARY 6, 1773)¹

The humble PETITION of many Slaves, living in the Town of Boston, and other Towns in the Province is this, namely That your Excellency and Honors, and the Honorable the Representatives would be pleased to take their unhappy State and Condition under your wise and just Consideration...

We presume not to dictate to your Excellency and Honors, being willing to rest our Cause on your Humanity and justice; yet would beg Leave to say a Word or two on the Subject. Although some of the Negroes are vicious, (who doubtless may be punished and restrained by the same Laws which are in Force against other of the Kings Subjects) there are many others of a quite different Character, and who, if made free, would soon be able as well as willing to bear a Part in the Public Charges; many of them of good natural Parts, are discreet, sober, honest, and industrious; and may it not be said of many, that they are virtuous and religious, although their Condition is in itself so unfriendly to Religion, and every moral Virtue except Patience. How many of that Number have there been, and now are in this Province, who have had every Day of their Lives embittered with this most intolerable Reflection, That, let their Behaviour be what it will, neither they, nor their Children to all Generations, shall ever be able to do, or to possess and enjoy any Thing, no, not even Life itself, but in a Manner as the Beasts that perish.

PETER BESTES AND OTHER SLAVES PETITION FOR FREEDOM (APRIL 20,1773)²

...WE are willing to submit to such regulations and laws, as may be made relative to us, until we leave the province, which we determine to do as soon as we can from our joynt labours procure money to transport ourselves to some part of the coast of Africa, where we propose a settlement. We are very desirous that you should have instructions relative to us, from your town, therefore we pray you to communicate this letter to them, and ask this favor for us.

"PETITION OF A GREAT NUMBER OF NEGROES" TO THE MASSACHUSETTS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES (JANUARY 13, 1777)⁴

To the Honorable Council and House of Representatives for the State of Massachusetts-Bay in General Court assembled January 13th[,] 1777.

The Petition of a great number of Negroes who are detained in a state of Slavery in the Bowels of a free and Christian Country Humbly Shewing:

That your Petitioners apprehend that they have, in common with all other Men, a natural and unalienable right to that freedom, which the great Parent of the Universe hath bestowed equally on all Mankind, and which they have never forfeited by any compact or agreement whatever—But they were unjustly dragged, by the cruel hand of Power, from their dearest friends, and some of them even torn from the embraces of their tender

Parents, from a populous, pleasant and plentiful Country—and in Violation of the Laws of Nature and of Nation and in defiance of all the tender feelings of humanity, brought hither to be sold like Beasts of Burden, and like them condemned to slavery for Life—Among a People professing the mild Religion of Jesus—A People not insensible of the sweets of rational freedom—Nor without spirit to resent the unjust endeavors of others to reduce them to a State of Bondage and Subjection.

Laws Affecting Blacks in Manhattan

The Dutch Period

1640: Only Europeans were allowed to become skilled tradesmen, like carpenters or bricklayers. (The Dutch passed very few laws to control black people. Custom and unwritten rules mostly determined what blacks could and could not do.)

The British Period

1664: When the British took control of New York, the Duke of York proclaimed that no Christian could be held in slavery. This rule, and the principle behind it, became an issue later, when enslaved blacks wanted to convert to Christianity.

1681-3: In a series of laws, slaves were forbidden to leave their master's house without permission. They could not own weapons. They could not gather in groups larger than four. Whites and free blacks could not entertain slaves in their homes, sell them liquor, or take goods or money from them.

1692: Slaves who made noise in the streets on Sundays could be whipped.

1702: Slaves could not gather in groups larger than three; 40 lashes on the naked back of offenders. Masters were free to punish their slaves for any misdeed however they chose, short of killing them or cutting off their limbs.

1706: To encourage owners to let their slaves become Christians, and to prevent the loss of slaves who had converted, a law ruled that owners did not need to free a baptized slave. The same law ruled that any child born to an enslaved mother was a slave for life.

1707: Newly freed blacks could not own or inherit land.

1708: Any slave who murdered his or her master, or conspired to do so, would face a horrible death.

1712: After the 1712 revolt, the British organized and restated earlier laws to form what was called the Black Code. Among the rules it reaffirmed: Any slave convicted of conspiring to revolt against whites would suffer a horrible death. No slave could ever own a gun or pistol. No black who became free after 1712 could own a house or pass belongings on to children. No slave could be freed without a £200 bond being paid, in case the former slave became a public charge.

1713: No slaves over the age of 14 could be out at night without a lantern by which they could be plainly seen.

1722: Black funerals had to be held during daylight.

1731: Slaves were not permitted to gamble for money. Slaves who rode a horse recklessly or fast within the city could be whipped.

1731: No more than 12 slaves could assemble for a funeral. They would be chosen by the dead slave's master.

1742: Blacks were prohibited from fetching water on Sundays, unless the well was next to their master's home. Every household was required to keep watch for suspicious night-time behavior of slaves.

1773: White residents were required to take any slave found in the streets after dark to be whipped.

Frederick Douglass: Narrative of the Life of An American Slave, 1845 (Excerpts)

Frederick Douglass was born in slavery as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey near Easton in Talbot County, Maryland. He was not sure of the exact year of his birth, but he knew that it was 1817 or 1818. As a young boy he was sent to Baltimore, to be a house servant, where he learned to read and write, with the assistance of his master's wife. In 1838 he escaped from slavery and went to New York City, where he married Anna Murray, a free colored woman whom he had met in Baltimore. Soon thereafter he changed his name to Frederick Douglass. In 1841 he addressed a convention of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society in Nantucket and so greatly impressed the group that they immediately employed him as an agent. He was such an impressive orator that numerous persons doubted if he had ever been a slave, so he wrote NARRATIVE OF THE LIFE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS. During the Civil War he assisted in the recruiting of colored men for the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Regiments and consistently argued for the emancipation of slaves. After the war he was active in securing and protecting the rights of the freemen. In his later years, at different times, he was secretary of the Santo Domingo Commission, marshall and recorder of deeds of the District of Columbia, and United States Minister to Haiti. His other autobiographical works are MY BONDAGE AND MY FREEDOM and LIFE AND TIMES OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS, published in 1855 and 1881 respectively.

He died in 1895.

CHAPTER I

I was born in Tuckahoe, near Hillsborough, and about twelve miles from Easton, in Talbot county, Maryland. I have no accurate knowledge of my age, never having seen any authentic record containing it. By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant. I do not remember to have ever met a slave who could tell of his birthday. They seldom come nearer to it than planting-time, harvesttime, cherry-time, spring-time, or fall-time. A want of information concerning my own was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood. The white children could tell their ages. I could not tell why I ought to be deprived of the same privilege. I was not allowed to make any inquiries of my master concerning it. He deemed all such inquiries on the part of a slave improper and impertinent, and evidence of a restless spirit. The nearest estimate I can give makes me now between twenty-seven and twentyeight years of age. I come to this, from hearing my master say, some time during 1835, I was about seventeen years old.

My mother was named Harriet Bailey. She was the daughter of Isaac and Betsey Bailey, both colored, and quite dark. My mother was of a darker complexion than either my grandmother or grandfather.

My father was a white man. He was admitted to be such by all I ever heard speak of my parentage. The opinion was also whispered that my master was my father; but of the correctness of this opinion, I know nothing; the means of knowing was withheld from me. My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant--before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired out on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labor. For what this separation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder the development of the child's affection toward its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. This is the inevitable result...

I have had two masters. My first master's name was Anthony. I do not remember his first name. He was generally called Captain Anthony--a title which, I presume, he acquired by sailing a craft on the Chesapeake Bay. He was not considered a rich slaveholder. He owned two or three farms, and about thirty slaves. His farms and slaves were under the care of an overseer. The overseer's name was Plummer. Mr. Plummer was a miserable drunkard, a profane swearer, and a savage monster. He always went armed with a cowskin and a heavy cudgel. I have known him to cut and slash the women's heads so horribly, that even master would be

enraged at his cruelty, and would threaten to whip him if he did not mind himself. Master, however, was not a humane slaveholder. It required extraordinary barbarity on the part of an overseer to affect him. He was a cruel man, hardened by a long life of slaveholding. He would at times seem to take great pleasure in whipping a slave. I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back till she was literally covered with blood. No words, no tears, no prayers, from his gory victim, seemed to move his iron heart from its bloody purpose. The louder she screamed, the harder he whipped; and where the blood ran fastest, there he whipped longest. He would whip her to make her scream, and whip her to make her hush; and not until overcome by fatigue, would he cease to swing the blood-clotted cowskin. I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it...

CHAPTER VI

My new mistress proved to be all she appeared when I first met her at the door,--a woman of the kindest heart and finest feelings. She had never had a slave under her control previously to myself, and prior to her marriage she had been dependent upon her own industry for a living. She was by trade a weaver; and by constant application to her business, she had been in a good degree preserved from the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery. I was utterly astonished at her goodness. I scarcely knew how to behave towards her. She was entirely unlike any other white woman I had ever seen. I could not approach her as I was accustomed to approach other white ladies. My early instruction was all out of place. The crouching servility, usually so acceptable a quality in a slave, did not answer when manifested toward her. Her favor was not gained by it; she seemed to be disturbed by it. She did not deem it impudent or unmannerly for a slave to look her in the face. The meanest slave was put fully at ease in her presence, and none left without feeling better for having seen her. Her face was made of heavenly smiles, and her voice of tranquil music.

But, alas! this kind heart had but a short time to remain such. The fatal poison of irresponsible power was already in her hands, and soon commenced its infernal work. That cheerful eye, under the influence of slavery, soon became red with rage; that voice, made all of sweet accord, changed to one of harsh and horrid discord; and that angelic face gave place to that of a demon.

Very soon after I went to live with Mr. and Mrs. Auld, she very kindly commenced to teach me the A, B, C. After I had learned this, she assisted me in learning to spell words of three or four letters. Just at this point of

my progress, Mr. Auld found out what was going on, and at once forbade Mrs. Auld to instruct me further, telling her, among other things, that it was unlawful, as well as unsafe, to teach a slave to read. To use his own words, further, he said, "If you give a nigger an inch, he will take an ell. A nigger should know nothing but to obey his master--to do as he is told to do. Learning would ~spoil~ the best nigger in the world. Now," said he, "if you teach that nigger (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy." These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought. It was a new and special revelation, explaining dark and mysterious things, with which my youthful understanding had struggled, but struggled in vain. I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty--to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man. It was a grand achievement, and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. It was just what I wanted, and I got it at a time when I the least expected it. Whilst I was saddened by the thought of losing the aid of my kind mistress, I was gladdened by the invaluable instruction which, by the merest accident, I had gained from my master. Though conscious of the difficulty of learning without a teacher, I set out with high hope, and a fixed purpose, at whatever cost of trouble, to learn how to read. The very decided manner with which he spoke, and strove to impress his wife with the evil consequences of giving me instruction, served to convince me that he was deeply sensible of the truths he was uttering. It gave me the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which, he said, would flow from teaching me to read. What he most dreaded, that I most desired. What he most loved, that I most hated. That which to him was a great evil, to be carefully shunned, was to me a great good, to be diligently sought; and the argument which he so warmly urged, against my learning to read, only served to inspire me with a desire and determination to learn. In learning to read, I owe almost as much to the bitter opposition of my master, as to the kindly aid of my mistress. I acknowledge the benefit of both...

CHAPTER VII

I lived in Master Hugh's family about seven years. During this time, I succeeded in learning to read and write. In accomplishing this, I was compelled to resort to various stratagems. I had no regular teacher. My mistress, who had kindly commenced to instruct me, had, in compliance with the advice and direction of her husband, not only ceased to instruct, but had set her face against my being instructed by any one else. It is due, however, to my mistress to say of her, that she did not adopt this course of treatment immediately. She at first lacked the depravity indispensable to shutting me up in mental darkness. It was at least necessary for her to have some

training in the exercise of irresponsible power, to make her equal to the task of treating me as though I were a brute.

My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tenderhearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another. In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness. The first step in her downward course was in her ceasing to instruct me. She now commenced to practise her husband's precepts. She finally became even more violent in her opposition than her husband himself. She was not satisfied with simply doing as well as he had commanded; she seemed anxious to do better. Nothing seemed to make her more angry than to see me with a newspaper. She seemed to think that here lay the danger. I have had her rush at me with a face made all up of fury, and snatch from me a newspaper, in a manner that fully revealed her apprehension. She was an apt woman; and a little experience soon demonstrated, to her satisfaction, that education and slavery were incompatible with each other.

From this time I was most narrowly watched. If I was in a separate room any considerable length of time, I was sure to be suspected of having a book, and was at once called to give an account of myself. All this, however, was too late. The first step had been taken. Mistress, in teaching me the alphabet, had given me the ~inch,~ and no precaution could prevent me from taking the ~ell.~

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;--not that it

would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard. I used to talk this matter of slavery over with them. I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, ~but I am a slave for life!~ Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free.

I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of being ~a slave for life~ began to bear heavily upon my heart. Just about this time, I got hold of a book entitled "The Columbian Orator." Every opportunity I got, I used to read this book. Among much of other interesting matter, I found in it a dialogue between a master and his slave. The slave was represented as having run away from his master three times. The dialogue represented the conversation which took place between them, when the slave was retaken the third time. In this dialogue, the whole argument in behalf of slavery was brought forward by the master, all of which was disposed of by the slave. The slave was made to say some very smart as well as impressive things in reply to his master-things which had the desired though unexpected effect; for the conversation resulted in the voluntary emancipation of the slave on the part of the master.

In the same book, I met with one of Sheridan's mighty speeches on and in behalf of Catholic emancipation. These were choice documents to me. I read them over and over again with unabated interest. They gave tongue to interesting thoughts of my own soul, which had frequently flashed through my mind, and died away for want of utterance. The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts, and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery; but while they relieved me of one difficulty, they brought on another even more painful than the one of which I was relieved. The more I read, the more I was led to abhor and detest my enslavers. I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery. I loathed them as being the meanest as well as the most wicked of men. As I read and contemplated the subject, behold! that very discontentment which Master Hugh had predicted would follow my learning to read had already come, to torment and sting my soul to unutterable anguish. As I writhed under it, I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. It had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy. It opened my eyes to the horrible pit, but to no ladder upon which to get out. In moments of agony, I envied my fellow-slaves for their stupidity. I have often wished myself a beast. I preferred the condition of the

meanest reptile to my own. Any thing, no matter what, to get rid of thinking! It was this everlasting thinking of my condition that tormented me. There was no getting rid of it. It was pressed upon me by every object within sight or hearing, animate or inanimate. The silver trump of freedom had roused my soul to eternal wakefulness. Freedom now appeared, to disappear no more forever. It was heard in every sound, and seen in every thing. It was ever present to torment me with a sense of my wretched condition. I saw nothing without seeing it, I heard nothing without hearing it, and felt nothing without feeling it. It looked from every star, it smiled in every calm, breathed in every wind, and moved in every storm.

I often found myself regretting my own existence, and wishing myself dead; and but for the hope of being free, I have no doubt but that I should have killed myself, or done something for which I should have been killed. While in this state of mind, I was eager to hear any one speak of slavery. I was a ready listener. Every little while, I could hear something about the abolitionists. It was some time before I found what the word meant. It was always used in such connections as to make it an interesting word to me. If a slave ran away and succeeded in getting clear, or if a slave killed his master, set fire to a barn, or did any thing very wrong in the mind of a slaveholder, it was spoken of as the fruit of ~abolition.~ Hearing the word in this connection very often, I set about learning what it meant. The dictionary afforded me little or no help. I found it was "the act of abolishing;" but then I did not know what was to be abolished. Here I was perplexed. I did not dare to ask any one about its meaning, for I was satisfied that it was something they wanted me to know very little about. After a patient waiting, I got one of our city papers, containing an account of the number of petitions from the north, praying for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and of the slave trade between the States. From this time I understood the words ~abolition~ and ~abolitionist,~ and always drew near when that word was spoken, expecting to hear something of importance to myself and fellow-slaves. The light broke in upon me by degrees. I went one day down on the wharf of Mr. Waters; and seeing two Irishmen unloading a scow of stone, I went, unasked, and helped them. When we had finished, one of them came to me and asked me if I were a slave. I told him I was. He asked, "Are ye a slave for life?" I told him that I was. The good Irishman seemed to be deeply affected by the statement. He said to the other that it was a pity so fine a little fellow as myself should be a slave for life. He said it was a shame to hold me. They both advised me to run away to the north; that I should find friends there, and that I should be free. I pretended not to be interested in what they said, and treated them as if I did not understand them; for I feared they might be treacherous. White men have been known to encourage slaves to escape, and then, to get the reward, catch them and return them to their masters. I was afraid that these seemingly good men might use me so; but I nevertheless remembered their advice, and from that time I resolved to run away. I looked forward to a time at which it would be safe for me to escape. I was too young to think of doing so immediately; besides, I wished to learn how to write, as I might have occasion to write my

own pass. I consoled myself with the hope that I should one day find a good chance. Meanwhile, I would learn to write.

Laws Affecting Blacks in Manhattan

The Dutch Period

1640: Only Europeans were allowed to become skilled tradesmen, like carpenters or bricklayers. (The Dutch passed very few laws to control black people. Custom and unwritten rules mostly determined what blacks could and could not do.)

The British Period

1664: When the British took control of New York, the Duke of York proclaimed that no Christian could be held in slavery. This rule, and the principle behind it, became an issue later, when enslaved blacks wanted to convert to Christianity.

1681-3: In a series of laws, slaves were forbidden to leave their master's house without permission. They could not own weapons. They could not gather in groups larger than four. Whites and free blacks could not entertain slaves in their homes, sell them liquor, or take goods or money from them.

1692: Slaves who made noise in the streets on Sundays could be whipped.

1702: Slaves could not gather in groups larger than three; 40 lashes on the naked back of offenders. Masters were free to punish their slaves for any misdeed however they chose, short of killing them or cutting off their limbs.

1706: To encourage owners to let their slaves become Christians, and to prevent the loss of slaves who had converted, a law ruled that owners did not need to free a baptized slave. The same law ruled that any child born to an enslaved mother was a slave for life.

1707: Newly freed blacks could not own or inherit land.

1708: Any slave who murdered his or her master, or conspired to do so, would face a horrible death.

1712: After the 1712 revolt, the British organized and restated earlier laws to form what was called the Black Code. Among the rules it reaffirmed: Any slave convicted of conspiring to revolt against whites would suffer a horrible death. No slave could ever own a gun or pistol. No black who became free after 1712 could own a house or pass belongings on to children. No slave could be freed without a £200 bond being paid, in case the former slave became a public charge.

1713: No slaves over the age of 14 could be out at night without a lantern by which they could be plainly seen.

1722: Black funerals had to be held during daylight.

1731: Slaves were not permitted to gamble for money. Slaves who rode a horse recklessly or fast within the city could be whipped.

1731: No more than 12 slaves could assemble for a funeral. They would be chosen by the dead slave's master.

1742: Blacks were prohibited from fetching water on Sundays, unless the well was next to their master's home. Every household was required to keep watch for suspicious night-time behavior of slaves.

1773: White residents were required to take any slave found in the streets after dark to be whipped.