Cities of refuge : slave flight and illegal freedom in the American urban South, 1800-1860
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Cities of Refuge

Slave Flight and Illegal Freedom in the American Urban South, 1800-1860

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Abbreviations

BCA	Baltimore City Archives, Baltimore, MD.
CCPL	Charleston County Public Library, Charleston, SC.
EKL	Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA.
HML	Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.
JFK	Library of the John F. Kennedy Institute, Free University Berlin.
LaRC	Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
LOC	Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
LVA	Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.
MHS	Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, MD.
MSA	Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD.
NOPL	New Orleans Public Library, New Orleans, LA.
SCDAH	South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, SC.
SCHS	South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC.
SCLC	South Caroliniana Library Columbia, SC.
VHS	Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.
VSA	Virginia State Archives, Richmond, VA.

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Introduction

Freedom in the Midst of Slavery

"You establish a spot within the slaveholding States which would be

a city of refuge for runaway slaves."

In 1836, James Buchanan, then Senator from Pennsylvania, delivered a speech in which he outlined his views on the question of whether slavery and the slave trade should be abolished in the District of Columbia. As a Democrat, Buchanan sided with the political interests of southern slaveholders, and he predictably favored rejecting the proposal outright. Interestingly, one of his main concerns was that the abolition of slavery in Washington would turn the District into a "city of refuge for runaway slaves."[1] Was Buchanan not aware that D.C. and other southern cities already provided shelter and camouflage for thousands of runaways from slavery—despite their lying within slaveholding territory? To be sure, what would have changed in the case of abolition would have been the legal status of the federal district. Abolishing slavery would have turned D.C. into "free soil" territory, where no person could be enslaved. It would have undoubtedly exacerbated the local runaway issue, but it certainly would not have created it.

Buchanan's opposition to transforming a city within the slaveholding South into free soil for fear that it would unleash a runaway slave crisis was connected to the most heated political debates of the antebellum period (c. 1800-1860)—ones that placed slave flight at the center of national and international discussions and conflicts, but that also failed to appreciate the diverse and complicated geography of freedom for enslaved people living in the US South. Southerners themselves tended to obsess more over the dangers of sharing their borders with free soil territories than the dangers of internal runaways within the South itself. Throughout the nineteenth century, the southern states, and their representatives in Washington, continuously exercised pressure on places like Spanish Florida, Mexico, and especially the northern US because of their relatively open acceptance of slave refugees from the South. This

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[1] Buchanan reacted to a memorial by the Society for the Abolition of Slavery in Pennsylvania, which had originally been presented to Congress in 1790. James Buchanan, "Speech on the Slavery Question" (1836), in *Life of James Buchanan, Fifteenth President of the United States.* Vol. I, ed. George Ticknor Curtis (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883), 317-319.

resulted in harsh tensions, some of which led to drastic political events, including the annexation of Florida in 1821 and of Texas in 1845; the Mexican-American War of 1843-1845; the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850; and the American Civil War of 1861-1865. Far-reaching and well-documented political measures, wars, and diplomatic crises that came out of (or were related to) disagreements over escaped slaves produced reams of written evidence and entire archives for historians to pour through. Partly because of their archival visibility, people who fled enslavement to free soil regions not only dominated contemporary discussions of the "fugitive slave issue," but also subsequent historical scholarship. This is striking considering the vast numbers of runaway slaves who remained within the slaveholding South—not just as "absentees" or scattered "maroons," but as permanent freedom seekers in urban areas, where runaways illegally attempted to pass themselves off as free.

Sites of freedom in the urban South have indeed generally eluded the attention of scholars. Most historical literature on slave flight tends to center around three main "types" of flight: short-term absenteeism, marronage, and slave flight across national borders or to the US northern states. The three strategies of flight were quite different in their goals and outcomes. Short-term absenteeism (also called truancy) was not employed to permanently exit slavery. It was a relief from plantation work, an outlet for swelled emotions, a tool for negotiations, and a way to visit family and friends. Maroons sought to escape bondage permanently and created communities that were largely independent from slaveholding society. Refugees from slavery who crossed into free soil territories (or sought asylum in wartime situations), used the political landscape to (more or less) legally exit bondage. The scholarly overemphasis on this latter group has long distracted historians from recognizing a fourth "type" of slave flight: permanent freedom seekers who sought refuge in towns and cities *within* the slaveholding South.
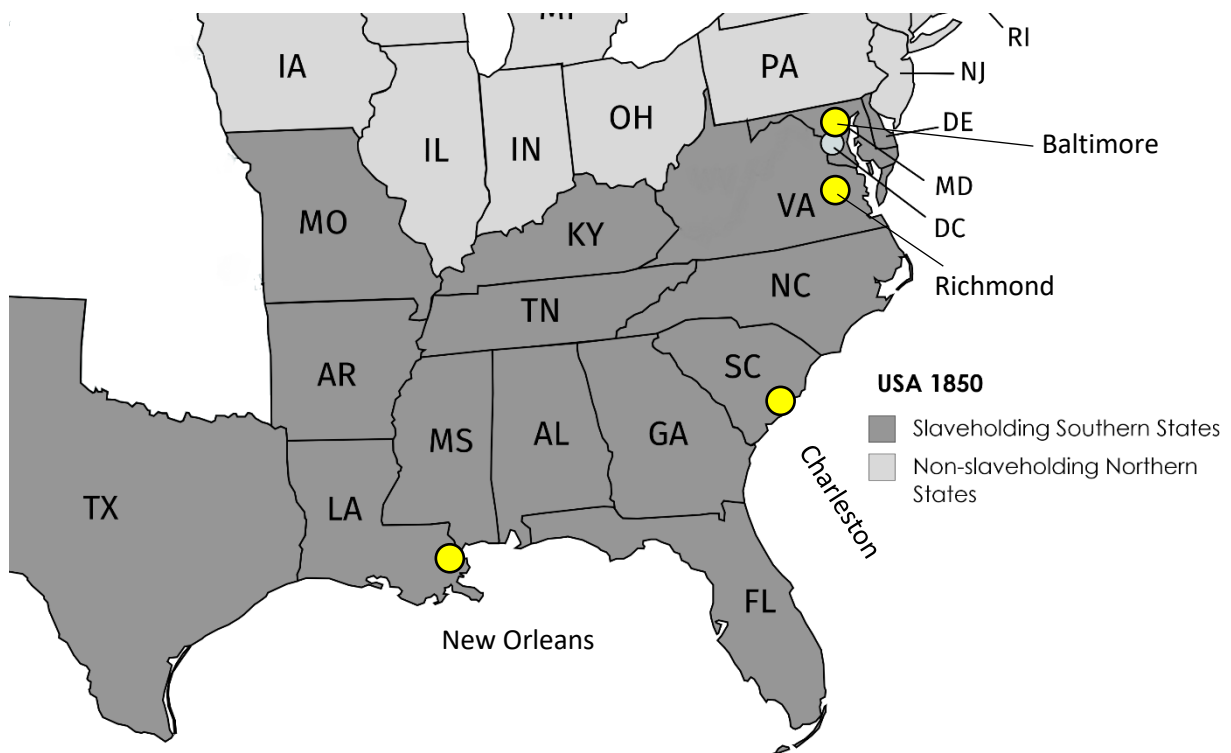

Figure 1: Map with Selected Cities

This study aims to fill that gap. It combines this new spatial approach with another understudied topic, namely southern cities. On the basis of four major cities as case studies, this dissertation evolves around the central question of how and why spaces of freedom arose in the antebellum urban South, and how refugees from slavery navigated those spaces. Drawing from material from Baltimore (Maryland), Richmond (Virginia), Charleston (South Carolina), and New Orleans (Louisiana) as representatives of the largest urban areas, it analyzes social, cultural, political, and economic processes that made this possible. Inspired by methods of migration studies, the size of the urban free black populations, degrees of urbanization, and work opportunities will receive particular attention. The possibilities of refugees to make use of these spaces depended on age, ability, skills, and sex. Showing that the dimensions of southern-internal slave flight were substantial, this study will argue that southern cities constituted indeed cities of refuge for permanent freedom seekers.

Resistance and Slave Flight

Studying resistance is important to understanding the relationship between oppressed people and systems of power. As Stephanie Camp has claimed, it was precisely the shift of historians' attention towards resistance that helped push the field of American slavery outside the plantation nostalgia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[2] After the 1960s, common scholarly opinion on American slavery had finally gotten to the point as to acknowledge that slavery was a cruel system which held people in bondage and fear, denied them their rights as human beings, and degraded them to property. Much of the contributions dealt with the economic side of slavery and social histories almost exclusively tended to be top-down, stressing the structural conditions of the system. Well into the 1970s, slavery was regarded as a unilaterally defined relation between master and slave, and agency by enslaved women and men was constantly downplayed or neglected. John Blassingame, Eugene Genovese, and Herbert Gutman were amongst the first revisionists to argue that people in bondage possessed considerable agency and shifted the attention from masters to slaves as protagonists of their narratives.[3] The focus of inquiry was the plantation as the central *locale* of slavery until the 1980s. Plantation slavery in America, however, although absorbing the overwhelming majority of enslaved people, was never a universal experience. Particularly during the nineteenth century, when intensifying globalization processes structurally altered the American economy, new doors opened about how and where to employ enslaved workers. This granted the slave population a higher mobility, accompanied by urbanization and migration patterns.[4] Today, the growing relevance of slavery studies is not only mirrored by the uncountable publications in the field but also by repeatedly renewed approaches to tackle newly emerging questions.

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[2] Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 1.

[3] John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll. The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 598, originally published 1972; and Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage, 1976).

[4] On the changing economy and slavery, see Dale W. Tomich, *Through the Prism of Slavery. Labor, Capital, and World Economy* (Lantham: Bowman & Littlefield, 2004).

The attention slavery received from the 1980s onwards as a key part of American history was intensified by a general interest in resistance and agency of oppressed people. Although Herbert Aptheker had laid the cornerstone in 1943 with *American Negro Slave Revolts*,[5] the field of American slavery depended on the contributions of the interdisciplinary currents of postcolonial studies, history from below, and subaltern theory to incorporate resistance as an integral element. The background was that active insurgency by enslaved people in the United States had been relatively rare compared to the more extensive and percussive revolts which had taken place in the Caribbean. However, scholarship increasingly came to understand that resistance did not necessarily take the form of open violence but could occur in numerous different ways. Ever since, slave flight as a form of resistance has received considerable attention from a growing number of historians. In the 1970s, John Blassingame and Gerald Mullin pioneered this trend when they recognized the relevance of running away as a powerful tool to resist slavery.[6] Scholars of slaveries in other times and parts of the world also increasingly turn their attention to this way of seeking freedom, thereby placing the act of running away within a broader framework of resistance.[7] Theft, inefficient work, shirking, temporary absconding, simulating sickness, breaking tools, arson, murder, infanticide, suicide, and open revolt were all now seen as forms of resistance.[8] What distinguished slave flight was that it was highly visible and—more importantly—targeted freedom.

But what counts as running away? Enslaved people who absconded from bondage had varying ideas about geography, as well as the duration and final purpose of their actions. As already mentioned, there are three important groups of runaway slaves that have received ample attention by scholars and that this dissertation therefore does *not* consider. One group left their legal owners temporarily, usually with the intention of returning within a couple of days, weeks, or even months. John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger identified them as "temporary sojourners" or truants. They could be hiding with relatives or acquaintances on other plantations, in the countryside, or in cities. The motivations to abscond on a short-term basis were manifold. Truants took a break from forced work (often during harvest times), expressed their resistance towards a mistreatment, visited loved ones, left after a punishment or in order to avoid punishment, or simply ran to test out their boundaries.[9] This disqualifies them for this dissertation whose focus lies on permanent escape from slavery.

The second group intended to leave slavery on a permanent basis but did not seek integration into dominant society. These people are often referred to as maroons. The concept

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[5] Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

[6] Blassingame, *Slave Community*; and Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[7] For a short selection, see Gwyn Campbell and Edward A. Alpers, "Introduction: Slavery, Forced Labour and Resistance in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia," *Slavery & Abolition* 25:2 (2004): ix-xxvii; Edward A. Alpers, "Flight to Freedom: Escape from Slavery among Bonded Africans in the Indian Ocean World, c. 1750-1962," in *Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia*, ed. Gwyn Campbell (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2004), 52-69; and Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[8] Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 598. On resisting one's own enslavement see Keith Bradley, "Resisting Slavery," in *Slavery and Society at Rome*, ed. idem (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 107-131; Michael Craton, *Testing the Chains: Resistance to Slavery in the British West Indies* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982); and Gary Y. Okihiro (ed.), *Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986).

[9] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, ch. 2.

of marronage does not only speak to an individual fleeing slavery but looks at the receiving society as a whole, the maroon community. Although the presence of American maroons was significantly less ostentatious than in Brazil, Jamaica, or Suriname, Herbert Aptheker calculated that within the present limits of the United States, there existed at least 50 maroon communities from the late seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century.[10] In the last years, historians have applied the concept of marronage to diverse groups in wildly different contexts. This necessitates some terminological clarification to explain why the focus of this study does not include maroons.

Whereas earlier works mostly focused on the geographical isolation of maroons, revisionist historians have emphasized societal exclusion as a more useful tool to understand marronage.[11] New scholarship has pointed out that maroon communities often not only lived in close proximity to dominant society but were also in constant contact with white people on basis of work agreements and trade. Especially in the nineteenth century, the grade of isolation was not as high as has hitherto been assumed.[12] Much literature also kept the concept so broad as to make it applicable to different contexts throughout the Americas. João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, for instance, have suggested that marronage is "flight that led to the formation of groups of fugitive slaves with whom other social persons frequently associated, [and which] took place in the Americas where slavery flourished."[13] This definition pays tribute to the variety among the numerous maroon communities and emphasizes flight, community, and the constant arrival of newcomers.

These broader definitions are also a result of language. In Latin American contexts, the distinction between marronage and slave flight without marronage complicates itself further because all runaway slaves were usually called *cimarrones* (maroons). Also, jails and depots that received captured runaway slaves were *depósitos de cimarrones*, with the word "maroon" used as a substitute for runaway slave. Several historians, amongst whom Latin Americanists

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[10] Herbert Aptheker, "Maroons within the Present Limit of the United States," in *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, ed. Richard Price (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 151-152, originally in *Journal of Negro History* 24:2 (1939): 167-184.

[11] Geographical isolation referred in many cases to flight to wilderness areas. The most well-known maroon communities of the Americas were in Jamaica, Brazil, and Suriname because they caused a threat to colonial authority and consequently left a variety of traces in the archives. This holds particularly true for maroon communities that engaged in warfare or other violent confrontations with the authorities. This is the conventional concept that prevails within Latin American and Caribbean slavery studies. See, for instance, Richard Price (ed.), *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Alvin O. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas* (Kingston: University of West Indies Press, 2006); and Glenn Alan Cheney, *Quilombo dos Palmares: Brazil's Lost Nation of Fugitive Slaves* (Hanover: New London Librarium, 2014).

[12] Sylviane A. Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles: The Story of the American Maroons* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014). For maroons working for whites, also see Ted Maris-Wolf, "Hidden in Plain Sight: Maroon Life and Labor in Virginia's Dismal Swamp," *Slavery & Abolition* 34:3 (2013): 446-464; and Maria Helena Pereira Toledo Machado, "From Slave Rebels to Strikebreakers: The Quilombo of Jabaquara and the Problem of Citizenship in Late-Nineteenth-Century Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86:2 (2006): 247-274. For Brazil, historians already claimed in the 1990s that there had always been a certain interaction and even cooperation between maroons and slave society. For very contradictory insights into Brazilian *quilombos* (the Portuguese term for maroon settlement) over centuries, see João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes (eds.), *Liberdade por um fio: História dos quilombos no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996).

[13] João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes, "Introdução: Uma História da Liberdade," in *Liberdade por um fio: História dos quilombos no Brasil*, ed. Idem (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996), 10. Likewise, Alvin O. Thompson claimed that marronage "involved both flight from slavery and the establishment of free communities. Thompson, *Flight to Freedom*, 1.

feature most prominently, have described slave flight to urban areas, as a form of "urban marronage."[14] The same holds true for francophone settings where runaway slaves in cities are often claimed to have committed *marronnage urbain*.[15] Within the United State, Louisiana presents a special case where until the mid-nineteenth century, jail ledgers were partly kept in French and in which the terms "runaway slave" and "marron" were used interchangeably.[16]

The opening of the concept and its adaption to areas with differing semantic traditions did not come without problems.[17] On the one hand, the focus on geographical demarcation was taken away, which allowed for a higher inclusion of various forms of marronage. On the other hand, the concept has too readily been applied to a diverse multitude of contexts. However, when approaching runaway slaves as maroons, the relation between them and their receiving societies on the one side, and slaveholding society on the other side requires particular attention. Of special interest for this dissertation are the considerations by Steven Hahn, who has examined African American communities in the northern states along demographics, migration patterns, residency, and social and political organization. Not explicitly calling them maroons, Hahn pointed to their internal coherence, social experiences, autonomous institutions, and legal backgrounds as factors that might qualify them for marronage.[18] These elements also apply to refugees in southern cities, yet the interpretations of their political ideas and attitudes distinguish this study from Hahn's view. Hahn recognized that black communities in the North were "under siege." Racism, racial discrimination, and hostility by dominant society—all organized by the overarching existence of slavery—determined this siege. And although he rightly concluded that societal exclusion featured prominently, Hahn misses to see that this

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[14] Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux labelled runaway slaves hiding in Havana *cimarrones urbanos* (urban maroons) and the city an immense *palenque urbano* (urban maroon settlement). Pedro Deschamps Chapeaux, "Cimarrones urbanos," *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba José Martí* 11:2 (1969): 147, 162, originally published as *Los cimarrones urbanos* (La Habana: Editorial de las Ciencias Sociales, 1983). Eduardo Saguier has used the same term for Buenos Aires. Eduardo R. Saguier, "La Crisis Social. La fuga esclava como resistencia rutinaria y cotidiana," *Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales* 1:2 (1995): 125. Brazilian historians have produced a number of accounts on urban slave flight, some of them using the terminology of marronage. For example, José Maia Bezerra Neto, "Histórias urbanas de liberdade: escravos em fuga na cidade de Belém, 1860-1888," *Afro-Ásia* 28 (2002): 221-250.

[15] See Jean-Germain Gros, *State Failure, Underdevelopment, and Foreign Intervention in Haiti* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 72; Aline Helg, *Plus jamais esclaves!: de l'insoumission à la révolte, le grand récit d'une émancipation (1492-1838)* (Paris: Éditions La Découverte, 2016), 64; and Anne Pérotin-Dumon, *La ville aux Iles, la ville dans l'île: Basse-Terre et Pointe-à-Pitre Guadeloupe, 1650-1820* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2000), 665. Moreover, francophone scholarship on slave flight has long evolved around the concepts of *petit marronage* and *grand marronage*. They correspond to what is here approached as temporary and permanent slave flight. Marjolein Kars, "Maroons and Marronage," *Oxford Bibliographies* (August 30, 2016), DOI: 10.1093/obo/9780199730414-0229, accessed June 15, 2017.

[16] Police Jail Daily Reports, 1820-1840, New Orleans (La.) Police Jail/Parish Prison, NOPL.

[17] Whereas scholarly contributions in Spanish, Portuguese, and French base their terminology on primary sources, publications in the English language often neglect to illuminate the reader about their use of terminology. See, for instance, Michel S. Laguerre, *Vodoo and Politics in Haiti* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989), 72; Shauna J. Sweeney, "Market Marronage: Fugitive Women and the Internal Marketing System in Jamaica, 1781-1834," *William & Mary Quarterly* 76:2 (2019): 197-222; and the English translation of Helg's *Plus jamais esclaves*: Aline Helg, *Slave No More: Self-Liberation before Abolitionism in the Americas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

[18] Steven Hahn, *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2009), 29, 32. Hahn has followed up on Ira Berlin's thought experiment of whether the entire black population of the antebellum northern states of the United States was a maroon community. Ira Berlin, "North of Slavery: Black People in a Slaveholding Republic," *Yale, New Haven and American Slavery Conference* (September 26-27, 2002), URL: http://www.virginia.edu/woodson/courses/aas-hius366a/berlin.pdf, accessed June 16, 2017.

exclusion emanated from white society only.[19] It is imperative, however, to note that black northerners, although their exclusion created spaces to craft new black politics, sought integration into American society and racial integration.[20] Southern urban slave refugees, as will be shown, likewise aspired to inclusion.[21] This is why they cannot be conceptualized as maroons. Although they liberated themselves by breaking the law, in all other aspects their intention was to play by the rules imposed by dominant society. They were not out-laws.

The last group of runaway slaves were composed of men and women who freed themselves by crossing political borders and stepping on free soil. The most common denominations for these people are fugitive slaves. Understanding them as escapees from slavery "who had no intention of returning to their masters," Damian Pargas has recently offered a conceptualization of different spaces of freedom in North America that opened up and continued to evolve in the nineteenth century. He distinguishes between migrations that led enslaved people into sites of *formal*, *semi-formal*, and *informal* freedom. Formal freedom was to be found in places where slavery was abolished, and slaves who entered them were considered legally free and safe from rendition. This followed the principle of "free soil." In sites of semi-formal freedom, state and federal legislation collided, creating grey zones in which the freedom of individuals could be contested although they found themselves on soil where slavery had been abolished (such as the northern US). Sites of informal freedom, lastly, were located within slaveholding territory.[22] There, fugitives from slavery tried to live *as if they were free*, even if they had no legal claims to freedom.

As mentioned above, the bulk of historical scholarship has focused on men and women who freed themselves by setting foot on free soil. The American literature is heavily dominated by studies that examine slave flight from the southern to the northern states and British Canada via the Underground Railroad (a network of abolitionists and escape agents).[23] In recent years scholars have also turned their attention to other border regions such as Spanish Florida and,

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[19] Hahn, *Political Worlds*, 34.

[20] Idem, 43; Patrick Rael, *Black Identity and Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and Stephen D. Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom: Fighting for Black Citizenship in a White Republic, 1829-1889* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 28-29. It should be added that in order to qualify as maroons, the mentioned exclusion had to also stem from the communities that absorbed runaway slaves. In this regard it is imperative to take a closer look at black people's relation to slaveholding society.

[21] This interpretation is based on Monica Schuler' conceptualization that maroons separated *themselves* from slaveholding society. Schuler followed the older definition by Leslie Manigat who has claimed that the aspiration of a maroon was "to live, actually free, but as an outlaw, in areas (generally in the woods or in the mountains) where he [or she] could escape the control of the colonial power and the plantocratic establishment." Monica Schuler, "Maroons (Cimarrones)," in *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture* (2008), URL: http://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/maroons-cimarrones, accessed November 7, 2017; and Leslie F. Manigat, "The Relationship between Marronage and Slave Revolts and Revolution in St. Domingue-Haiti," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 292 (1977): 421-422.

[22] Damian Alan Pargas, "Introduction: Spaces of Freedom in North America," in *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America*, ed. Idem (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 3-6. For a conceptual discussion of the principle of free soil, see Sue Peabody and Keila Grinberg (eds.), *Free Soil in the Atlantic World* (New York and London: Routledge, 2015), originally published as a special issue of *Slavery & Abolition* 32:3 (2011).

[23] A selection of contributions include Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Daniel G. Hill, *Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada* (Toronto: Stodaart, 1992); Larry Gara, *The Liberty Line: The Legend of the Underground Railroad* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996); Gordon Barker, *Fugitive Slaves and the Unfinished American Revolution: Eight Cases, 1848-1856* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2013); and Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2015).

increasingly, Mexico.[24] Permanent and long-term refugees from slavery, who by intent and by outcome never migrated out of the slaveholding South, have barely been the focal point of historical studies. This is surprising given that contemporaries did not conceal their awareness of them. Northern US journalist Frederick Law Olmsted, for one, found that "throughout the South slaves are accustomed to 'run away.'"[25] Although Olmsted's main argument rested on temporary flight, it was well known that runaway slaves were often absent for months, years, and for good. After all, the innumerous notices in newspapers furnished long-term slave flight with a high visibility.

The absence of permanent freedom seekers within the South in the historical literature is striking. After all, it constituted the greatest slave flight in American history. This does not mean that leading experts in slavery studies have not noticed this phenomenon at all. For example, Peter Kolchin has observed that an "even larger number" of bondspeople than those who fled north stayed in the slaveholding states, "making their way to cities and merging with the free black population." Leonard Curry has claimed that "an unknown number of persons classified as free persons of color in the cities were probably fugitive slaves and their offspring." And according to Ira Berlin, "runaways were a continuing problem for Southern municipalities."[26] Betty Wood has provided the most information on urban runaways when claiming that expanding family networks and the prospect of selling their labor power attracted female and male escapees from slavery to Savannah, Georgia.[27]

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[24] Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Rosalie Schwartz, *Across de Rio to Freedom: US Negroes in Mexico* (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1975); and Sean Kelley, "Mexico in His Head: Slavery and the Texas-Mexican Border, 1810-1860," *Journal of Social History* 37:3 (2004): 709-723. A number of contributions stress the frailty of formal freedom. For instance, Sarah E. Cornell, "Citizens of Nowhere: Fugitive Slaves and Free African Americans in Mexico, 1833-1857," *Journal of American History* 100:2 (2013): 351-374; James David Nichols, "Freedom Interrupted: Runaway Slaves and Insecure Borders in the Mexican Northeast," in *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America*, ed. Damian Alan Pargas (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 251-274; and Thomas Mareite, "Conditional Freedom: Free Soil and Fugitive Slaves from the US South to Mexico's Northeast, 1803-1861" (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 2019). Additionally, some scholars have looked at runaway slaves who joined native American groups. See Barbara Krauthamer, "Kinship and Freedom: Fugitive Slave Women's Incorporation into Creek Society," in *New Studies in the History of American Slavery*, ed. Edward E. Baptist and Stephanie Camp, 148-165 (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2006); and Roy E. Finkenbine, "The Underground Railroad in 'Indian Country': Northwest Ohio, 1795-1843," in *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America*, ed. Damian Alan Pargas (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 70-92.

[25] Frederick Law Olmsted, *Our Slave States.* Vol. III: A Journey in the Back Country (New York: Mason Brothers, 1860), 476.

[26] Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery 1619-1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 158; Leonard P. Curry, *The Free Black in Urban America, 1800-1850: The Shadow of the Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 4; Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 42. Michael Zeuske has identified *huida urbana* (urban flight) in the black neighborhoods of large Atlantic cities like Havana, Matanzas, New Orleans, and Santiago. Michael Zeuske, *Sklavereien, Emanzipationen und atlantische Weltgeschichte: Essays über Mikrogeschichten, Sklaven, Globalisierungen und Rassismus* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002), 146. Historians who specialize in antebellum cities have, additionally, been able to provide some more contextual information on urban slave flight. See William A. Link, *Roots of Secession. Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 106; Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 35; and Christopher Phillips, *Freedom's Port: The African American Community of Baltimore, 1790-1860* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 67.

[27] Wood is one of very few scholars who have devoted several pages in their books to urban runaways. Betty Wood, *Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Slave Economies of Lowcountry Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press 1995), 111-118.

It is no coincidence that these scholars all mentioned the presence of runaway slaves in southern *cities*. The strategy to achieve and maintain freedom was to camouflage oneself among the existing free black populations. Black people were in the antebellum period most numerous in urban areas. Nevertheless, most of the historical studies on runaways in southern cities have approached them as temporary absconders or have merely mentioned their presence in the urban South. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a thorough investigation on their numbers, profile, lived experiences, and the context of their endeavors.[28] Due to the growth of the urban free black population in the post-revolutionary era, it became possible for refugees to find shelter, and to live permanently in the midst of slavery. Departing from these observations, this dissertation sets out to put permanent urban runaway slaves at the center of analysis. Since these men and women stayed *within* slaveholding territory, running away had no basis in law, and people who went down this path had to reckon with never being legally free because the freedom they aspired to had no basis in law. Drawing from Pargas' conceptualization of spaces of freedom, this contribution will add the dimension of *illegal* freedom in the urban South to our understanding of the runaway landscape between 1800 and 1860.

Cities of Refuge

Throughout the antebellum period and even before, the vast majority of southern newspapers daily published advertisements in which slaveholders asked readers to look out for their escaped human property. A great many enslaved men, women, and children were assumed to be at some place outside the slaveholding South but even more were thought to be hiding *within* the South, particularly in cities. Apart from runaway slave ads, there were countless announcements by jails, workhouses, and other detention centers for slaves and black people that prove the presence of escaped slaves in the cities. In May 1838, a black man "calling himself Sam, who has for some time passed in the City, as a free Negro," was apprehended and "Lodged in the Work House" in Charleston. The workhouse clerk, who hoped to find Sam's legal owner through the "Committed to Jail"-advertisement, also "believes there are several runaways in the same situation in this place" and recommended to "let the officers look to it!"[29] The assessment of the situation by an employee of the workhouse shows that the issue of runaway slaves was a perceptible one but it can certainly not tell about the quantitative dimension of the phenomenon. Yet, jail ledgers and police records provide fragmented ground for estimates.

According to jail records, during the early 1830s there was one black person jailed for being suspected to be a runaway slave in Baltimore every one and a half days on average.[30] This study assumes that in the first decades of the antebellum period, dozens of slave refugees

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[28] Until now, the contributions by Damian Pargas on the American South and the author on Richmond, Virginia, are the only ones to make the experiences of permanent urban runaway slaves the focus of the research. Damian Alan Pargas, "Urban Refugees: Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Informal Freedom in the American South, 1800-1860," *Journal of Early American History* 7:3 (2017): 262-284; and Viola F. Müller, "Illegal but Tolerated: Slave Refugees in Richmond, Virginia, 1800-1860," in *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America*, ed. Damian Alan Pargas (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 137-167. They are, however, not the only ones outside the United States. For Brazilian contributions, see Bezerra, "Histórias urbanas de liberdade;" and Flávio Gomes, "Africans and Petit Marronage in Rio de Janeiro, ca. 1800-1840," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 47:2 (2010): 74-99.

[29] *Charleston Mercury*, May 11, 1838.

[30] Baltimore City Jail (Runaway Docket), 1836-1850, MSA.

gravitated to the city annually. In later decades, due to the rapid growth of the city, the possibilities to find work, and the extending personal networks of the enslaved, it must have been hundreds. For New Orleans, with its size and long tradition struggling with runaway slaves, similar numbers are estimated. For instance, during 15 months in 1858 and 1859, 913 people were arrested as runaway slaves there.[31] Louisiana even established a centralized state depot for runaway slaves in 1857.[32] In Charleston, residents of African descent formed the majority until the 1850s and the city also had the highest percentage of slaves of all American cities. In general, large slaveholding decreased in the urban South between 1800 and 1860.

Richmond was the exception. With its massive use of enslaved workers in tobacco manufacturing and iron production Richmond ranked first in combining slavery and industrialization.[33]

In Charleston and Richmond, slightly fewer escaped bondspeople might have sought refuge than in Baltimore and New Orleans. For Charleston, incarceration statistics from December 1858 to October 1860 show that on average 14 people were jailed as runaway slaves every month.[34] In earlier times, these numbers were smaller because in 1838 and 1839, 115 runaway slaves were arrested. [35] For Richmond, police records reveal that during a ten-year period between 1834 and 1844, the Richmond Police was tasked to look out for 935 runaway slaves who were believed by their owners to be in the city. 74 were reported to have been caught, 14 returned to their enslavers voluntarily, and 847 remained unaccounted for.[36] In addition, from 1841 to 1846, the city jailed 215 black

Figure 2: Runaway Slave Ads in *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, July 7, 1821.

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[31] G. Stith, *Message of the Mayor to the Common Council*, October 11, 1859, in Richard C. Wade, *Slavery in the Cities: The South 1820-1860* (London, Oxford, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 219.

[32] *Annual Report of the State Engineer to the Legislature of the State of Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: J. M. Taylor, 1859), 24.

[33] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 21-22; Midori Takagi, '*Rearing Wolves to Our Own Destruction': Slavery in Richmond, Virginia, 1782–1865* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999); Claudia Dale Goldin, *Urban Slavery in the American South, 1820–1860: A Quantitative History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); and Ronald L. Lewis, "Slavery in the Chesapeake Iron Industry, 1716-1865" (Ph.D. diss., University of Akron, 1974).

[34] Proceedings of the City Council of Charleston, S. C., 1859 I; and Charleston (S. C.) City Council, Proceedings of Council, POC-002 M: 1859-1870, CCPL.

[35] Bernard Edward Powers, Jr., "Black Charleston: A Social History, 1822-1885" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1982), 27.

[36] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, 1834-1844, Alderman Library, Special Collections, UVA, transcribed in Leni Ashmore Sorensen, "Absconded: Fugitive Slaves in the Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, 1834-1844" (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 2005).

people suspected of having escaped from slavery.[37]

In all undocumented migrations, the numbers are unclear. It is nevertheless possible to make estimates based on the size of the black populations, the growth of the respective cities, possible work opportunities, and the number of newspaper announcements. Most relevant for a numerical assessment are jail statistics. Splitting the antebellum era into two parts, New Orleans was the most likely destination of the four cities in the period 1800 to 1830. Probably 70 to 90 refugees arrived there each year. Baltimore and Charleston followed with about 40 to 60 freedom seekers. And Richmond had the lowest numbers: no more than 30 refugees per year in the first decades. In the second part of the antebellum period, urbanization, industrialization, and demographics changed the picture. Baltimore clearly became the most promising city of refuge. It might have received 150 to 200 people each year. Between 100 and 150 arrived in New Orleans, the only large city in the entire Deep South. Richmond offered from 1830 on more jobs for black people and could have absorbed 100 to 120 slave refugees. The lowest numbers doubtlessly went to Charleston: maximum 80.[38] While taking into account that considerable numbers of urban freedom seekers did not succeed in their endeavors and were arrested and brought or sold back into bondage, towards the end of the antebellum period, the numbers of runaway slaves in Baltimore and New Orleans must have amounted into the thousands, and in Richmond and Charleston into the hundreds. For the entire urban South, these numbers might have accumulated into the tens of thousands, enlivened by the constant influx of newcomers.

Since the freedom for runaway slaves in southern cities was illegal, it entailed an illegal status for those who attempted to seize it. This brings them close to the twentieth-century categorization of undocumented migrants, which implies that they were living somewhere without the authority to do so.[39] This also applied to other people referred to in this study as illegal or undocumented, who either had no permission to live where they were living, had no documentation, or false documentation. Being "undocumented" was not an official status in the antebellum era; the concept will be applied here, however, to explain a liminal status between free and unfree and to stress the migration experiences of these men and women. And indeed, scanning them through the lens of migration theory unearths parallels that enable us to better understand the social experiences of the freedom seekers as migrants and newcomers in receiving societies.

Fleeing slavery was a decision. Not everybody was able to take this decision and not everybody who took this decision succeeded or acted the same way. After all, then and now, individuals weigh the costs (in this context, risks and consequences) and benefits of migration. Migration historians often argue that usually, people prefer to stay home but are, for a variety of reasons, compelled to leave in order to, for instance, escape political persecution, improve their material conditions, or create a better future for their children.[40] Although all of this can

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[37] Richmond (Va.), City Sergeant, Mss 3R415661, Section 1, Register 1841-1846, VHS.

[38] These estimates refer to the freedom seekers within the city limits. Suburbs, which were not officially part of a given city, and towns nearby also absorbed refugees, of whom many went to the cities during the day to work. The importance of suburbs will return later in this study.

[39] Alice Bloch and Sonia McKay, *Living on the Margins. Undocumented Migrants in a Global City* (Bristol and Chicago: Policy Press, 2016), 5.

[40] Jan Kok, "The Family Factor in Migration Decisions," in *Migration History in World History. Multidisciplinary Approaches*, ed. Jan Lucassen, Leo Lucassen, and Patrick Manning (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 215-216; and Massimo Livi Bacci, *A Short History of Migration* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 55.

also be an additional factor for slave migrants, the fact that these people were legally chattel and property, and "home" referred to the place where they were forced to live with their enslaver, does change the picture. American slavery, one of the most absolute, oppressing, and restricting labor regimes in history, adds a context in which migration decisions (and in fact all decisions enslaved people took) cannot be analyzed without taking the specific environment into consideration.

For example, contrary to other refugees in history, slave refugees broke the law by fleeing. In the legal logic of the antebellum United States, they stole a body that belonged to another person—they legally stole themselves. Furthermore, they forfeited loss of money and future work power for their owners. In a society where enslavement was justified on basis of law, thousands of enslaved people could only reach freedom *against the law*.[41] When slaves fled and took material things with them, they not only resumed ownership of their own bodies but also of possessions that they considered theirs by nature. By extension, people who broke free from bondage had an idea that what they did was right.[42] And although their actions were illegal in the eyes of those enacting the laws, for those oppressed they seemed licit and fully justifiable.[43] Nevertheless, it also holds true for refugees from slavery that migrating in the sense of fleeing implied a rupture and necessitated a total reorganization of one's familiar life.[44]

Applying a great many methods of migration studies, this study follows in the footsteps of recent contributions on American slave flight that have shifted the terminology from fugitives to refugees.[45] It hopes to detect factors that allowed enslaved people to flee and that helped them integrate into urban communities. Although these people did not self-identify as refugees, there are a number of arguments why this terminology is not only useful but indeed appropriate. The labelling of people who escaped from slavery as refugees demarcates them from the judicially charged term "fugitives" which contains the connotation of desertion and

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[41] "Freedom against the law" follows Christopher Hill's observation of seventeenth-century English law not as an instrument of justice but of oppression. Christopher Hill, *Liberty Against the Law: Some Seventeenth-Century Controversies* (London: Allen Lane, 1996).

[42] Contemporary testimonies like slave narratives and interviews clearly express the view of enslaved people that slavery was morally wrong. See, for example, Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845); Harriet Ann Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*, ed. Lydia Maria Child (Boston: 1861), 55; and Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: Or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves, with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Company; Cleveland: Jewett, Proctor, and Worthington; New York: Sheldon, Lamport, and Blakeman; and London: Trübner & Co., 1856). Abolitionist organizations also publicly declared that slaves had "a right to flee from bondage." Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*, 83. For a selection of anti-slavery writings by black and white contemporaries, see C. Bradley Thompson (ed.), *Anti-Slavery Political Writings, 1833-1860. A Reader* (Armonk and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2004).

[43] These were two conflicting understandings of what was legitimate. For the legitimation of illegal migration, see Marlou Schrover, Joanne van der Leun, Leo Lucassen, and Chris Quispel, "Introduction," in *Illegal Migration and Gender in a Global and Historical Perspective*, ed. Idem (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 10.

[44] Kok, "Family Factor," 216.

[45] Harvey Amani Whitfield, *Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America, 1815-1860* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2006); Chandra Manning, *Troubled Refuge: Struggling for Freedom in the Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016); Amy Murrell Taylor, *Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018); and Oran Kennedy, "'The Strong Cords of Affection': Enslaved African American Families and Escape to the U.S. North and Canada, 1800-1861," in *The African American Experience: From Slavery to Liberation*, ed. Joshua Farrington and Gwen Graham (Richmond: Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, forthcoming).

criminalization, and reflects the perspective of the slaveowners.[46] "Refugees" points to their desire to literally "seek refuge" from slavery by escaping to nearby urban areas. It also underscores the urgency of their escape from an oppressive condition and shifts the focus to their experiences as migrants.[47] Those who escaped slavery and left the South, had little hope of ever going back. Contemporary northern anti-slavery activists saw them as refugees in need of asylum.[48] Following up, some scholars have begun to approach flight from antebellum slavery as one of the "first major refugee crises" in US history.[49]

Those who stayed within the South may not have caused diplomatic crises but their sheer numbers were at least equally potent. Simon Newman has emphasized that when running away turned into an act of resisting slavery with explicit consequences for the larger community, it took on a political dimension.[50] Hence, tracing slave refugees in southern cities has the potential to unearth their and their helpers' attitudes vis-à-vis the system they were fleeing from and the society they were fleeing to. Because they broke the law by running away and because they deprived their owners of their legal property, which they "hid" in the cities, slave refugees must have had a considerable impact on state and municipal politics. Departing from the assumption that urban spaces of freedom were not stable, it will in this context be examined how the presence of refugees and their growing numbers influenced, among others, the regulation of self-hiring of slaves, police surveillance, and prison infrastructure. Moreover, it will chart how their impact on legislation led to increasing oppression of free people of African descent. This is an important element when further scrutinizing why and how urban black residents supported runaways. In short, approaching runaway slaves as refugees enables a close inspection of the relation between them and the society they fled to, which is paramount to understanding the creation of cities of refuge.

Southern cities housed the largest concentrations of free African Americans. Apart from that, studying cities provides promising insights due to the intense interplay between different groups, the relative density of court and police records, and the specific nature of the urban labor markets. According to Charles Tilly, they traditionally have a special place in academic studies, particularly when concerning migrants, because the essence of cities cannot be disconnected from the collision between those already there and the newcomers. This interaction is much stronger than in non-urban settings.[51] Historians have stated that, when writing urban history, fundamental issues include governance, planning, segregation, injustice,

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[46] Other terms that will be applied in this dissertation include freedom seekers, escapees from slavery, absconders from slavery, and runaway slaves. The notion of self-emancipators will be dismissed because emancipation implies a legal dimension, which is missing here.

[47] For a critique of rigid separations between different categorizations of migrants, for example, refugee, labor, and family migration, see Marlou Schrover, "Labour Migration," in *Handbook Global History of Work*, ed. Marcel van der Linden and Karin Hofmeester (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2017), 443-478.

[48] Drew, *North-Side View.*

[49] David Blight, "Frederick Douglass, Refugee," *The Atlantic* (February 7, 2017), URL: https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/02/frederick-douglass-refugee/515853/, accessed June 5, 2019; and Damian Alan Pargas, "Promised Lands: Seeking Freedom in the Age of American Slavery," Inaugural Lecture, Leiden University (May 25, 2018), URL: https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/62349/Oratie_D.A._Pargas.pdf?sequence=1, accessed June 5, 2019.

[50] Simon P. Newman, "Rethinking Runaways in the British Atlantic World: Britain, the Caribbean, West Africa and North America," *Slavery & Abolition* 38:1 (2017): 50.

[51] Charles Tilly, "Cities and Migration," *Center for Research on Social Organization* (CSRO) Working Paper #147 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1976), 1.

and criminality.[52] These dynamics, which run through this study, created contested and shifting spaces.

Space becomes relevant for this study to stress not only *when* but also *where* illegal freedom became achievable, and explains why refugees from slavery sought it. Cities as localities of refuge are thereby only the first—and most obvious—part of the answer. Connecting to the understandings that the concept of the "spatial turn" has brought up, space is not only of physical nature but also a social and cultural construct that results out of social relations. In this light, further insights will be generated by shifting the perspective to perceptions of different urban groups, usage and appropriation of physical places, and relations of power.[53] African American communities, indispensable to this narrative, play a particular role. In the antebellum American South, space was structured along gender, race, and, increasingly as the nineteenth century moved on, class. Access to public space depended on these factors and varied over time and according to the time of the day. Slave refugees in southern cities had to navigate these spaces within cities and within the social worlds they were fleeing to. Urban spaces of freedom absorbed thousands of them. In this light, Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans truly were cities of refuge.

Today's concept of US-American sanctuary cities is about the relation between a city's policies regarding undocumented residents and undocumented immigration. It emphasizes the discrepancy between different levels of legislation and the local execution thereof. Whereas in the nineteenth century, American cities did not intentionally turn into spaces of freedom, this research investigates whether southern cities could *by outcome* function similarly to sanctuary cities in the sense that large numbers of escaped slaves could live there *relatively* undisturbed. Following the definition of current-day American sanctuary cities that "don't fully cooperate with federal efforts to find and deport unauthorized immigrants," this will be explored for the case of freedom seekers in the South.[54] The experiences of slave refugees surely touched the social, economic, legal, and political realms. Asking how slave refugees navigated urban spaces of freedom relates in this context also to how they managed to live "under the radar." How did they avoid confrontation with local authorities when they had to find jobs and housing? How vulnerable were they to a—possibly—arbitrary treatment by employers and co-workers? Under what circumstances did refugees manage to successfully blend in in a given city so that their presence would not be too obvious?[55]

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[52] Nicolas Kenny and Rebecca Madgin, "'Every Time I Describe a City': Urban History as Comparative and Transnational Practice," in *Cities Beyond Borders: Comparative and Transnational Approaches to Urban History*, ed. Idem (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 4.

[53] Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London and New York: Verso, 1989); and Doris Bachmann-Medick, "Spatial Turn," in *Metzler Lexikon Literatur- und Kulturtheorie. Ansätze—Personen—Grundbegriffe*. Fourth Edition, ed. Ansgar Nünning (Stuttgart and Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2008), 664. Space as a construct was introduced in Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974). On space and its relation to community formation, see Marlou Schrover and Jelle van Lottum, "Spatial Concentrations and Communities of Immigrants in the Netherlands, 1800-1900," *Continuity and Change* 22:2 (2007): 215-252.

[54] Dara Lind, "Sanctuary Cities, Explained. The Stereotype and the Reality," *Vox* (March 8, 2018), URL: https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/3/8/17091984/sanctuary-cities-city-state-illegal-immigration-sessions, accessed September 3, 2018.

[55] Tal Kopan, "What are Sanctuary Cities, and Can They be Defunded?," *CNN Politics* (March 26, 2018), URL: https://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/25/politics/sanctuary-cities-explained/index.html, accessed September 3, 2018; and Halimah Abdullah and Alexandra Jaffe, "Trump Signs Executive Orders Aimed at Cracking Down on Illegal

Sanctuary cities in the US are often driven by the idea of refraining from reporting undocumented residents. In a way, the idea of their proponents is to render the city a safer space for their heterogeneous population.[56] For the nineteenth-century US South, it is unlikely that any hospitality for the undocumented was driven by comparable humanitarian concerns. Slavery was universally accepted by southern policy makers as the foundation of the social order. If a city decided not to actively chase runaway slaves, it ostensibly disregarded this credo. One might therefore expect that it was a matter of economic interest or legal responsibility (and the expenses that came with it) when cities did not actively tackle the problem of slave refugees. If these theses hold true, the interests of city authorities must have stood in sharp contrast to those of slaveholders for whom slave flight constituted a financial loss. Whether this was actually the case, however, are questions that will be answered in this dissertation. In this context, this study also discusses the influence undocumented residents had on such issues regarding urban politics and economy.

A Chaotic Choir

This dissertation combines slavery studies with migration history. It speaks to basic questions of the study of migration, including who the migrants were, why migration occurred, the experiences of migrants in their receiving societies, and the economic, social, and political consequences.[57] Applying a spatial and demographic approach, *Cities of Refuge* is a thoroughly social history. It will help paint a more nuanced picture of slave flight in the antebellum United States. First, this study will contribute to the academic literature by reconceptualizing and providing a more complete understanding of the geography of freedom in North America. Second, it will advance an alternative view of runaway slaves within the South as permanent freedom seekers, much like their counterparts in the rest of the continent. But it also does more. Following these people reveals a political agenda and social dynamics that maneuvered people into a *de facto* illegal status long before the process of illegalization of migration took place.[58]

Although it has been pointed out that slave flight within the southern states was a phenomenon known to contemporaries, individual southern refugees from slavery could only be successful in their endeavors when they managed to stay invisible to the authorities (and to people who might betray them). Writing a history about them is challenging because fleeing and hiding people have left few traces in the archives. Political and societal discussions that explicitly addressed slave refugees in southern cities were rare, which has led historians to hitherto largely ignore them. This seems at first sight contradictory to the claim that they put themselves on the political agenda. It is important, therefore, to keep in mind that southern political leaders had reasons not to frequently emphasize this issue. One example is the legal

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Immigration," *NBC* (January 25, 2017), URL: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/trump-signs-executive-orders-aimed-cracking-down-illegal-immigration-n712096, accessed September 3, 2018.

[56] Lind, "Sanctuary Cities, Explained."

[57] Barbara Schmitter Heisler, "The Sociology of Immigration. From Assimilation to Segmented Integration, from the American Experience to the Global Arena," in *Migration Theory. Talking Across Disciplines*, ed. Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield (New York and London: Routledge, 2000), 77.

[58] On the construction of migrant illegality, see Marlou Schrover, Joanne van der Leun, Leo Lucassen, and Chris Quispel (eds.), *Illegal Migration and Gender in a Global and Historical Perspective* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008).

liability to protect the property of slaveholders. This was because property rights over slaves had to be enforced like other property rights. Another example are the diplomatic disputes with the northern states, that were based on accusations of facilitating slave flight. And when it came to slaveholders themselves, there was a common understanding that it was their own responsibility to retrieve their runaway slaves if they were still in the same jurisdiction. Despite these complexities, there are a variety of sources that confirm slave refugees' presence in southern cities and shed light on their experiences. Based on a clear majority of widely known sources and a—surprising, yet small—part of lesser known sources, this dissertation aims to place people who have thus far not been the protagonists of a historical study at center stage.

To begin with, there are records produced by slaveholders. Runaway slave advertisements demand a careful approach because they reflect the opinions and speculations of slaveowners rather than the actual trajectories of slaves fleeing. Yet, a good number also reveal facts, most importantly, about when escaped slaves were seen after their flight. Michael Mullin has stressed that these newspaper notices (that also included "Committed"-ads by jailers) are fairly objective sources when compared to other sources. The subscribers of the announcements neither defended slavery nor justified their involvement in it.[59] They also constitute the most detailed description of enslaved people in the Americas and offer revealing insight into their treatment, professional skills, family networks, and life courses. Slaveholders furthermore compiled plantation management books, diaries, and private correspondence, and were involved in the composing of petitions and court documents.

Secondly, there are sources that represent the views of those held as slaves. Court records, although produced by the slaveholding class, are sources that—in a few instances—let us perceive the voices of slave refugees themselves. Yet, they were, as Michael Zeuske reminds us, already constructed and reflected by other people at the time that they were created. Official forms of legal statements shaped the words of attestants, defendants, and plaintiffs in predetermined ways. Court recorders reproduced testimonies in legal, standardized language. For this reason, these voices are distorted.[60] Less distorted are autobiographies and interviews. Unlike runaway slave narratives written by (mostly) men who fled to the North, there are no equivalents that would cover southern-internal flight. Yet, some of the autobiographies by formerly enslaved people deal with experiences in the South that can be instrumented to understand the endeavors of southern refugees. Together with a few interviews conducted by the Federal Writers' Project in the 1930s under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration, they are the most important sources in which the voices of the slave refugees themselves can be heard.[61]

The critique of these autobiographies as historical documents is widely known, as John Ernest has discussed. Their authenticity has in great parts been challenged on ground of the involvement of white editors serving the abolitionist course. Therefore, historians have for a

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[59] Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion*, 39-40.

[60] Michael Zeuske, "Die Nicht-Geschichte von Versklavten als Archiv-Geschichte von ,Stimmen' und Körpern," in *Jahrbuch für Europäische Überseegeschichte* 16 (2016): 79.

[61] The Federal Writers' Project (FWP) was a program by the Works Progress Administration. Between 1936 and 1938, FWP employees interviewed over 2,300 formerly enslaved Americans, which resulted in the publication of a 17-volume-set in 1941 entitled *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*. The digitized collection "Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1836-1838" is accessible at LOC, URL: https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/about-this-collection/, accessed August 15, 2019.

long time dismissed the testimonies of enslaved people as unreliable.[62] They are, however, no less reliable than sources produced by slaveholders. Moreover, the fact that few narratives were challenged by contemporary southerners by the time they were published adds to their credibility, as John Blassingame has remarked. In his critique, Blassingame was rather concerned with their representability. With the bulk of accounts stemming from the Upper South and more than one third written by refugees, the average slave had no voice in them, he argued.[63] Since this study does not claim to present an account of the institution of slavery, and neither the average slave on the plantation, but precisely runaway slaves who are disproportionately represented as authors of narratives, their autobiographies offer a justified and helpful tool to bring into play the voices of the people under analysis.

Lastly, a variety of sources stem from people who were neither slaveholders nor enslaved people. Jail and police records of different sorts give insight into numbers and, occasionally, the responses of those taken up. Despite being fragmentary because many have not been preserved, they are of special importance because they are *explicit* qualitative and quantitative sources about slave refugees. Apart from that, there is a variety of *implicit* evidence. By taking the context into account, it is possible to read between the lines and detect the presence of refugees in southern cities and in the labor markets. Therefore, this dissertation draws on newspaper articles, legal petitions, legislative ordinances, political speeches, travel accounts, federal and local census returns, church registers, municipal reports, and city directories.

The employment of a particularly broad array of source material provides perspectives from as many angles as possible. By consulting and combining diverse evidence, the attempt of this study is to counterbalance the silence about slave refugees in the historical archives. This silence is a result of the uneven distribution of power in the archives. Stephan Palmié has stressed that the documentary traces historians find are usually left by the "winners" and are always highly biased. Palmié has applied the French term *sans papiers* to refer to the "victims of violent and inhumane pasts that never 'made the record'" as "undocumented migrants from the past."[64] Slave refugees in the light of this study are, hence, doubly undocumented: They are undocumented migrants within the southern states as well as having left few traces in the archives. At the same time, the fact that they are hard to find in the archives testifies to their success as people whose strategy was not to be visible.

Despite all these obstacles, this study will show that it is possible to write their history, even with scarce sources. Stephanie Camp, in an attempt to stress the importance of studying slave resistance, has addressed the question *how*. "Assuming that few new sources will come to light," she reasoned, "we need innovative ways to read our existing ones."[65] Following her

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[62] John Ernest, "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. Idem (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.

[63] John W. Blassingame, "Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems," in *The Slave's Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 80-84. The "problem" of slave autobiographies was rather that they were painful. According to Ernest, slave narratives are "difficult in the attempt to tell a deeply intimate story of violation, and difficult in the means by which that story is related and received." For the same reason, the WPA interviews were long ignored. Additional critique rested on that they were conducted by white people, that the narrative was pressed into a static format, and that the interviewees had been children at the time of their enslavement, which had impacted their memory. Ernest, "Introduction," 8-9.

[64] Stephan Palmié, "The Trouble with History," *Small Axe* 17:42 (2013): 195-196, 201.

[65] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 2.

call, this dissertation draws many "reverse conclusions," for example, from people who failed (and ended up imprisoned) to shed light on those who succeeded. Asking negative questions like why these people are not in the archives and why they did not cause large political discussions are starting points for comprehension. About *how to write* the history of slave refugees, this study converges with Michael Zeuske's claim that it is not possible to reconstruct the entire life history of not even one enslaved person based on archival material. A prosopographical approach, however, leads the fragmentary voices in the archives to form a choir. Beautifully formulated by Zeuske, this will be a "chaotic choir," with many contradictions, and solo parts will be rare. Yet, it will be a choir capable of carrying and transmitting a narrative.[66]

In order to stress the perspective of those who were not in the position to leave the bulk of the evidence we now use to write about them, this dissertation takes some semantic considerations. Many enslaved people who later became refugees took surnames or completely changed their names before they made their first attempts towards freedom. By doing so, they rejected the authority of their masters over anything else than their labor and stressed their own humanity, thereby mentally preparing themselves for a life after slavery. It was one of the most visible acts of self-determination. Others changed their names afterwards for protection. In order to pay deference to this self-determination and to the lives they chose for themselves, this dissertation will, wherever possible, emphasize the names of enslaved people, freedom seekers, and those who helped them over the names of slaveholders. It will use the last names and the names enslaved people gave themselves before using the names imposed on them by those holding them as property. Terms like African Americans, people of African descent and black people will be used interchangeably. Enslaved or black Americans will likewise be applied, knowing that they were legally no Americans due to the lack of citizenship. These people, however, as various historians have shown, saw themselves as Americans, because they were born on American soil and because it was they who had built the country.[67]

Based on case studies of the cities Baltimore (Maryland) and Richmond (Virginia) in the Upper South, and Charleston (South Carolina) and New Orleans (Louisiana) in the Lower South, this research focuses on the integration of slave refugees.[68] These places have been selected because they were among the largest southern cities in the antebellum era and contained the largest numbers of urban African Americans residents, both free and enslaved.[69] As port cities and centers of commerce, they provide dynamic settings for long-term research.

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[66] Zeuske, "Nicht-Geschichte," 76, 79.

[67] Martha S. Jones, *Birthright Citizens: A History of Race and Rights in Antebellum America* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); and Mariana L. R. Dantas, *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in the Eighteenth-Century Americas* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[68] The Upper South encompasses Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Missouri. The Lower South encompasses South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. References to the Deep South include Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

[69] Washington, D.C., as federal district and a city with large numbers of free African Americans, was also a central spot for runaway slaves, slaveholders, slave traders, and very importantly, political debates about slave flight to the northern states. Due to the high presence of northerners, politicians, and abolitionists in D.C., the dynamics regarding slavery were different than in other southern places. D.C. is not included in this study for the benefit of Baltimore. Other large enough cities which could have been chosen are Savannah (Georgia), Norfolk (Virginia), and St. Louis (Missouri). Savannah and Norfolk have been dismissed for the inclusion of Charleston and Richmond, respectively. St. Louis, by contrast, functioned as a gateway to freedom in the North rather than a place of integration for large numbers of refugees.

Their geographical dispersion takes into account the regional distinctions of slavery, uneven economic developments, and the unique race relations that came to evolve differently due to social and cultural factors. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that the black populations—although in all four cities large enough to absorb large numbers of refugees from slavery—had varying social experiences that extended to freedom seekers as newcomers in their communities. Studying them closely, *Cities of Refuge* complicates the conventional historical view that sees the free black population as a legally homogeneous mass. Although historians have noted the undefined status that resulted from achieving freedom contrary to law, this study is one of the first to analyze the implications for this population. Following slave refugees into southern cities provides a venture to contribute to additional fields like urban history and urban slavery.[70] This approach allows us, furthermore, to put the experiences of black Americans into the spotlight, which have not nearly sufficiently been accredited in the urban context.

The layout responds to fundamentally different political and social developments in the Upper and Lower South throughout the antebellum era. Whilst the ratio of the enslaved to the white population was highest in Virginia, a relatively growing free black population can be observed in the Upper South in contrast to a shrinking one in the Deep South. Labor and production were of different nature in different regions. The most prominent commodities produced varied from tobacco and wheat in the Upper South to rice and cotton in the Lower South, and cotton and sugar in the Deep South. The structure of work and the relevance of urban slavery in a variety of domains likewise varied.[71] Each of the four cities under analysis has a rich and unique history of its own. Comparative sections will unearth variations and differences, both in literature and primary sources. The reader will notice that in different parts of this dissertation, the four cities will be differently weighed. This is due to literary and style considerations but also due to an imbalance of sources. As a whole, however, this dissertation aims to illuminate the urban dimension of slave flight across the South. This representative picture will paint continuities in more obvious colors than differences and stress the conditions and dynamics that help explain the phenomenon of urban slave refugees in general.[72]

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[70] City and town slaves are of special interest because they formed a deviation from the average plantation slaves. The very nature of labor, the construction of the social environment, and the mechanisms of control were fundamentally different in the context of urban than of rural-agricultural slavery. Urban slavery has certainly received less attention than plantation slavery, and southern cities have received less attention than northern cities. For a selection of literature, consult Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*; T. Stephen Whitman, *The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997); Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*; Thomas N. Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon in Early New Orleans: The First Slave Society in the Deep South, 1718–1819* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999); Daniel E. Walker, *No More, No More: Slavery and Cultural Resistance in Havana and New Orleans* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); James M. Campbell, *Slavery on Trial: Race, Class, and Criminal Justice in Antebellum Richmond, Virginia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); Dantas, *Black Townsmen*; Leslie Harris and Daina Ramey Berry (eds.), *Slavery and Freedom in Savannah* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2014); and Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg, *Slavery in the City: Architecture and Landscapes of Urban Slavery in North America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017).

[71] Furthermore, the southern slave population was not homogeneous and neither were the settings and tasks they performed. Every state and every city had their particular dynamics with regard to slavery and its development. Depending on place and time, bondspeople worked on small or large plantations, with overseers or in contact with their owners, with absentee or resident masters, in gang or task systems. In South Carolina and Louisiana, they could even have free black or Native American owners.

[72] The account begins with the growth of the free African American population and stops shortly before the American Civil War, an event which dramatically changed the course of history. There are a number of topics that are not included or not put to the forefront, like the experiences of slave refugees during war times. This is because

Chapter Synopsis

Evolving around the main question how and why spaces of freedom arose in southern cities, and how slave refugees navigated those spaces, this study will investigate different themes per chapter. These themes include larger societal, economic, and political processes, like the changing conditions of a life in slavery that enabled certain enslaved people to escape, their integration into (free) African American communities, their strategies to earn a living, and the political attitudes towards them by white city dwellers. Most of these processes worked in favor of slave refugees while some of them also worked to their disadvantage.

Chapter one, "The Changing Landscape of Freedom," provides the background to the period under analysis and the context of American slavery. It will discuss several developments that came together in the antebellum era and led to an increase in slave flight, with particular attention for the rapid growth of the free black population. Scrutinizing the increasingly tight legal restrictions imposed on free African Americans, which were also a consequence of their contribution to craft spaces of freedom, the chapter proposes that the concept of illegality is crucial to understanding the conditions of large parts of the population into which refugees sought to integrate. This finding will run through the rest of the dissertation.

While slavery was expanding, it became more feasible for a small group of enslaved people to make a successful flight attempt. Introducing the concept of the mobile slave elite, chapter two, "A Mobile Elite: Profiling Southern Refugees," presents a profile of urban freedom seekers. Answering the questions who these refugees were and why and how they could escape, this chapter highlights mobility, gender, age, and professional skills as factors that were relevant to southern slave flight. It includes sections that scrutinize the slave-hiring system as a possible facilitator of flight, the bolsters and obstacles refugees encountered during their escapes, and the practicalities of passing as free. Furthermore, this chapter links the decisions of runaways to stay in the midst of a region of legalized slavery to family ties, support networks, and their sense of belonging.

The following two chapters address the integration experiences of slave refugees in the cities which help explain why it was possible for them to stay free. Chapter three, "Finding Refuge," deals with the social and spatial integration in the cities of Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans. With emphasis on the urban black populations as receiving societies, it scrutinizes the interplay of spatial segregation, societal exclusion, and criminalization of African Americans in rapidly urbanizing contexts as both supportive and limiting elements for the creation of spaces of freedom. Chapter four, "From Slavery to Poverty," examines the integration into the urban labor markets. Departing from the hypothesis that refugees had to be able to know the landscape of labor, they had to take the racial coding of work, different regulatory regimes in the cities, and demographic developments into account in order to successfully navigate these spaces.

Chapters two through four evolve around slave refugees and their receiving societies and take, when necessary, the perspective of other societal players into account. Chapter five, "Illegal but Tolerated," shifts the focus to include the different interest groups in the cities, whose interplay helps explain the phenomenon of refugees in the urban South. The emphasis is

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the aim of this study is to draw a representative account of the processes that made slave flight possible in every-day conditions.

on the political economy in relation to black labor. It attempts to unearth the contradictions behind the refugee population whose presence was largely condoned. Because some people—with increasing economic and political power—gained from the presence of slave refugees, they contributed to the creation of spaces of freedom. Of special relevance were the enactment of laws, their non-execution, and the diverging interests of different players at different political levels. Together with chapter two and four, gender plays a particular part in this chapter because it infused the possibilities of escape, the labor markets, and the politics of retrieval.

Students of slave resistance are often criticized for downplaying the power of slaveholders.[73] However, the American abolitionist and author of *Twelve Years a Slave*, Solomon Northup, for instance, tried innumerable times to get out of slavery but did not succeed to escape for twelve years. Being born a free man in New York, he was kidnapped in 1841 in Washington D.C. and sold down to Louisiana where he was forced to work on a cotton plantation.[74] It is important to keep in mind that Northup was the rule rather than the exception. It was not the lack of power of volition nor physical fitness that impeded Northup from breaking free. As will be shown, only a small part of the enslaved population was able to escape bondage. For them, the mechanisms of control were weaker than is often assumed. Putting the experiences of these people center stage, this study will demonstrate that the dimensions of southern-internal slave flight were drastic, and argue that southern cities constituted cities of refuge.

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[73] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 2.

[74] Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New-York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853, from a Cotton Plantation near the Red River in Louisiana* (Auburn: Derby and Miller; Buffalo: Derby, Orton and Mulligan; and London: Sampson Low, Son & Company, 1853).

Chapter One

The Changing Landscape of Freedom

Many slave narratives, written by formerly enslaved people after they achieved freedom, give insight into how black Americans felt when they first realized that they were enslaved, and all of them explicitly deal with the longing for freedom. Louis Hughes, author of *Thirty Years a Slave*, recalled that within his enslaved family, "It had been talked of (this freedom) from generation to generation."[75] Lunsford Lane, who later bought freedom for himself and his family, accounted that "When I began to work, I discovered the difference between myself and my master's white children." Early on, Lane also recognized the realistic fear of being sold south which "seemed infinitely worse than the terrors of death. To know, also, that I was never to consult my own will, but was, while I lived, to be entirely under the control of another, was another state of mind hard for me to bear."[76] The longing for freedom was not informed by material conditions. Frederick Douglass made that clear when he stated: "whenever my condition was improved, instead of its increasing my contentment, it only increased my desire to be free."[77]

Enslaved people at all times and in all places wanted to be free. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the geography of slavery in the Americas was radically transformed in such way as to greatly enhance opportunities to escape slavery. This transformation paradoxically entailed the destruction of slavery in some parts of the hemisphere, and its expansion and entrenchment in others. Whereas the institution came to be abolished in the US northern states and a number of countries and regions like British Canada, Mexico, Central America, and several places in the Caribbean, from the beginning of the nineteenth century onwards, it grew in the southern US. During the antebellum period, the United States of America constituted the largest slaveholding republic in the world. By 1860, shortly before the legal abolition of the institution of slavery, they held nearly four million men, women, and children in bondage. These people were trapped in a system that commodified their

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[75] Louis Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave. From Bondage to Freedom. The Institution of Slavery as Seen on the Plantation and in the Home of the Planter. Autobiography of Louis Hughes* (Milwaukee: South Side Printing Company, 1897), 78-79.

[76] Lunsford Lane, *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane, Formerly of Raleigh, N.C. Embracing an Account of His Early Life, the Redemption by Purchase of Himself and Family from Slavery, and His Banishment from the Place of His Birth for the Crime of Wearing a Colored Skin* (Boston: J. G. Torrey, 1842), 7-8.

[77] Douglass, *Narrative*, 99.

bodies, reduced them to chattel, rendered them legal property, and put them to forced labor as a natural state of servitude.

As observed in the introductory chapter, the same period also witnessed significant increases in escapes of enslaved people. Why? In order to answer this question, this chapter will discuss the four factors that precipitated slave flight—diminishing opportunities to legally exit bondage, the expansion of slavery, the intensification of the domestic slave trade, and the growth of the free black population. Since the free black populations as receiving society feature prominently in this account of slave flight, they will be given particular attention in this chapter. Why did they have an interest in helping slave refugees and, hence, in carving spaces of freedom? What was their legal status and how did it shape the freedom refugees were able to find in southern cities? It will be shown that running away was neither the only nor the best way out of bondage, yet for thousands of enslaved people it was a tangible option.

Manumissions: A Closing Door

With the settlement in the Chesapeake Bay, Englishmen laid in the first decade of the seventeenth century the cornerstone for a process of colonization, exploitation, and expropriation that would eventually culminate in the founding of the first republic in the Americas. In the course of the American Revolutionary War, which lasted from 1775 to 1783, the United States of America proclaimed independence from Great Britain. The colonies, and later the country, whose economy was built upon coerced labor, had introduced the first enslaved people from the western coast of Africa in 1619. In the almost 250 years to follow until the institution was finally abolished in 1865, slavery continuously evolved, as did the experiences of the people held captive.[78]

In the Age of Revolutions (c. 1774-1849), Enlightenment ideals, most visible in the American, French and Haitian Revolutions, had major impacts on the institution of slavery. According to historian David Brion Davis, the shift of moral consciousness that took place at this time led many people in Europe and in the Americas to regard slavery as a symbol of "all the forces that threatened the true destiny of man." Religious convictions among certain groups were a large component of these changes in morality. Apart from some minor sects who began to try and live their lives free from sin (which also included the sinfulness of slavery), the Quakers were the one religious group who gradually developed sophisticated and realistic opposition towards slavery and achieved sufficient economic and political power to make their claims heard.[79]

The reassessment of the legitimate treatment of the poor, the weak, and the different led, among other changes, to challenging the physical treatment of slaves, which came to constitute

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[78] Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 13, 29. A selection of literature on the American Revolutionary War includes Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution 1763–1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); and Richard Middleton, *The War of American Independence, 1775–1783* (London: Pearson, 2012).

[79] David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41-48.

a step towards a critique of slavery itself.[80] A mix of ideological change paired with the pressing for freedom by black people and an economic loss not too painful for slaveholders ultimately led to the prohibition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1807 and the abolition of slavery as an institution in various states, nations, and countries throughout the Americas. These included the American northern states, all of which had either abolished slavery or introduced gradual abolition schemes by 1804.[81] The Age of Revolutions also had a profound impact on slavery in the southern states, although with a different outcome. Instead of emancipating all enslaved people by formally ending slavery, manumission and self-purchase schemes were facilitated, which liberated thousands, even as bondage remained intact. Enslaved people themselves played an active role in this process. The Revolutionary era was a turbulent time that furnished African Americans with new opportunities to contest their bondage. Many slaves took the chance to flee from slavery or to exchange military service for their freedom. Others actively pressed their owners for manumission or used the possibility to purchase their own or family members' freedom.[82]

In the southern states, moral concerns regarding slavery during this time coincided with a weakening tobacco production, which had been the backbone of slavery in Virginia, the largest and oldest slave society of the new country. Although historian Manisha Sinha has underlined that it was mainly thanks to abolitionist mobilization, revolutionary ideology, and slave resistance that spurred individual manumissions, decreasingly fertile soils in the Upper South made tobacco-based slavery seem doomed after the Revolution. In 1782, Virginia enacted an ordinance to ease former legal constraints on manumissions. Between that year and 1806, ten thousand bondspeople benefitted from this legal relaxation.[83]

Manumissions, whereby slaves were officially and legally set free, had always been a part of the system of slavery. Historians have explained that the possibility to manumit was in many aspects in the interest of masters. It offered a motivation for their bondspeople "to behave well," provided the slaveowners with a reward mechanism, and, in the case of self-purchase, allowed them to negotiate with their slaves higher prices than the market prices.[84] Consequently, the prospects of manumission for a few could be used to maintain the subjection of the masses. The reasons why slaveowners set their bondspeople free or allowed them to "purchase" their own freedom varied from a cash-payment over satisfaction of what was perceived good and loyal service to religion, ideology, or a self-understanding of a "benevolent" slaveholder.[85] Thanks to religious and ideological considerations, which in the Age of

[80] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 65-66.
[81] On gradual abolition in the North, see, for instance, Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); and James J. Gigantino II, *The Ragged Road to Abolition: Slavery and Freedom in New Jersey, 1775-1865* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014).
[82] Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 219-224.
[83] Manisha Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 66, 85-86.
[84] Robin Blackburn, "Introduction," in *Paths to Freedom: Manumission in the Atlantic World*, ed. Rosemary Brana-Shute and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 3-5. For the same argument from an economic perspective, see Ronald Findlay, "Slavery, Incentives, and Manumission: A Theoretical Model," *Journal of Political Economy* 83:5 (1975): 923-934.
[85] David Ryden, "Manumission," *Oxford Bibliographies* (September 30, 2013), URL: https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199730414/obo-9780199730414-0194.xml, accessed July 19, 2019.

Revolutions for the first time had a palpable impact on larger demographic developments, manumissions skyrocketed. The free black population became the demographic group with the fastest growth rates. By 1810, ten percent of people of African descent in the Upper South were free. And although the number of manumissions was much smaller in the Lower South than in the Upper South, between 1790 and 1810, the number of free black people in South Carolina and Georgia almost tripled.[86] Slavery in the United States appeared to be on the retract.

Antislavery sentiments between the American Revolution and approximately 1810 led to spikes in manumissions in the South, and formal abolition became so tangible that it was discussed on state level in Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. The latter two states even established abolitionist societies.[87] Yet, before support for such plans ever reached a critical mass, support for slavery suddenly rose again. The main factor was cotton. The invention of the cotton gin in the 1790s, a machine that allowed to separate the cotton fibers from the seeds with unknown efficiency, increased the demand in this raw material. Suddenly, investments in cotton caught the attention of people with money, and the future of slavery seemed profitable again. American planters saw opportunities to make money in the global economy, and old and new southern slaveholders began to curtail manumissions. This was dramatic for bondspeople because manumission and self-purchase were legal ways out of slavery. The advantage of a legal procedure was that freedom was certified and former slaves turned into rightful residents of the societies in which they lived. Yet, manumissions in the US South sharply declined after the first decade of the nineteenth century, by which time they also became legally more complicated to enact. Manumission practices varied in different places and tightening legislation hit people in different states at different times. Yet the overall developments were rather similar: they became increasingly stricter. Virginia was the first state to enact a law in 1806 that stipulated that manumitted bondspeople had to leave the state. Consequently, manumission rates in Virginia decreased dramatically.[88]

Legislatures had to balance the right of slaveholders to set their own slaves free against the demands of larger society, which called for public safety. Therefore, at least in the early decades of the nineteenth century, the practice was not abolished but rather so much complicated that it was drastically reduced. For example, manumissions in New Orleans were severely curtailed over time and some of the legislation went far beyond the strictness of other southern states. In 1830, slaveholders who wanted to emancipate their slaves, were required to post a bond of $1,000 to make sure that the emancipated person left Louisiana. From 1852 onwards, the law required manumitters to pay $150 shipping costs for the transportation of the

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[86] Under the French, Louisiana's free black population grew comparably slowly, yet under Spanish rule, manumission was encouraged. Between 1769 and 1779, 320 deeds of manumission were issued in New Orleans. Additionally, enslaved women and men began to buy themselves out of bondage in the largest numbers on the North American continent. Ira Berlin, *Generations of Captivity: A History of African American Slaves* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 43, 93, 95, 119, 135.

[87] Eva Sheppard Wolf, *Race and Liberty in the New Nation: Emancipation in Virginia from the Revolution to Ned Turner's Revolt* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 6, 72; and Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 92.

[88] General Assembly, "An ACT to amend the several laws concerning slaves" (1806), transcr. from *The Statutes at Large of Virginia, from October Session 1792, to December Session 1806*, ed. Samuel Shepherd (Richmond: Samuel Shepherd, 1836), 252, in *Encyclopedia Virginia* (July 31, 2012), URL: http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/_An_ACT_to_amend_the_several_laws_concerning_slaves_1806, accessed October 26, 2016; and Wolf, *Race and Liberty*, 125.

manumittee to Africa, and five years later, the practice was prohibited altogether.[89] By the mid-1830s, emancipators officially needed judicial or legislative consent in most states. Over time, the doors to a legal path to freedom closed almost entirely. In the last years before the Civil War, only Delaware, Missouri, and Arkansas granted the right of manumission to slaveholders.[90]

Significant for the Upper South were "delayed manumissions." T. Stephen Whitman has analyzed these patterns unique for Maryland and concluded that delayed manumissions were an important tool for slave control in the city of Baltimore. After 1815, future emancipation decreased but still constituted for one third of individual manumissions. People immediately manumitted were on average older than those who would achieve their freedom at some point in the future. Whitman calculated that the modal age for both men and women released without deferment was 40, an age at which slaveholders could not expect high profitability any more. Enslaved women typically had already given birth to children who were born the property of their mothers' owners.[91] Younger people were hardly targeted by this mechanism, and runaway slave advertisements and petitions testify to the escapes of term slaves.[92]

Further hampering legal avenues to freedom, self-purchase became more expensive, and it was not unusual that slaveholders in American Louisiana charged up to 20 percent above the market price.[93] Bondspeople who wanted to purchase their own freedom faced almost insurmountable obstacles unless they made their own money as hired slaves. Strategies to achieve this included for plantation slaves to work in their free time in their own gardens and sell the surplus produce in the markets, or for hired slaves to work additional hours or spend less on lodging and food. Even when they against all odds managed to save enough of their wages (which almost always implied living a very arduous life), they had no legal security and depended on the word of their owners. Slave narratives contain accounts of (mostly) men who worked tirelessly to make and save enough money to buy themselves or loved ones out of slavery and were betrayed by people with more power. Moses Grandy, for example, was defrauded by two masters, who decided to take the sum agreed upon and additionally make the same sum by selling Grandy. The third attempt to buy his freedom was successful. Yet instead of the original $600, Grandy paid $1,850.[94] Theoretically, the possibility of purchasing one's own (or a loved one's) freedom remained but due to the rising slave prices and the curtailing of manumissions, bondspeople collectively understood that their chances of becoming free in a

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[89] Laurence J. Kotlikoff and Anton Rupert, "The Manumission of Slaves in New Orleans, 1827-1846," *Southern Studies* 19:2 (1980): 173-174; and Michael Taylor, "Free People of Color in Louisiana. Revealing an Unknown Past," *LSU Libraries. A Collaborative Digital Collection*, URL: https://www.lib.lsu.edu/sites/all/files/sc/fpoc/history.html#historyintro, accessed November 29, 2018.

[90] And only in these places were manumittees allowed to remain in the state. Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 138.

[91] "Term slavery" was an official, legal agreement between slaveowners and slaves. Whitman, *Price of Freedom*, 93-94, 96, 101; and Idem, "Diverse Good Causes: Manumission and the Transformation of Urban Slavery," *Social Science History* 19:3 (1995): 333-370.

[92] When term slaves were apprehended, the court often prolonged the duration of servitude. See, for example, John Miller v. Negro Richard, August 3, 1847, Anne Arundel County Register of Will, Orders and Petitions 1840-1851, 201-202, MSA; and Howard District Register of Wills (Petitions), Petition of Charles G. Haslap, February 9, 1847, Schweninger Collection, MSA.

[93] Shawn Cole, "Capitalism and Freedom: Manumissions and the Slave Market in Louisiana, 1725-1820," *Journal of Economic History* 65:4 (2005): 1021-1023.

[94] Moses Grandy, *Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy; Late a Slave in the United States of America* (London: C. Gilpin, 1843), iv, 17-18, 21-22, 34, 40. Grandy later in life became an author and active abolitionist who travelled to London to campaign against slavery.

legal way were rapidly shrinking. Many decided to take matters into their own hands and seek freedom by flight.

The Second Slavery

For those still in bondage after 1810 an age began which Dale Tomich has labelled the "second slavery." During this time, slavery not only became compatible with industrial production, it was also increasingly integrated into global capitalist markets.[95] With the beginning Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, the demand for cotton rose seemingly boundlessly. Tons of raw cotton were shipped over the southern rivers to the port cities and transported on big vessels to Manchester in England. Slavery, opposed by the British public, was a by-product which was shrugged off by businessmen and the government in order to fuel the ever-hungry textile manufacture and the southern states became the main supplier for cotton to Europe.[96]

To be able to respond to the massive demand for cotton, plantation slavery in the United States intensified and expanded geographically. The quick soil extinction and the growing demand from cotton manufacture sites in Europe drove cotton and slavery more and more west and southwards. The country expropriated Indian groups and tribal nations and subdued their native lands for the cultivation of sugar and cotton. When the United States purchased the Territory of Louisiana from France in 1803, it doubled its size overnight. Enslaved workers produced monocultural staple on mass plantations in the new commodity frontiers. During the "first slavery," colonialism and slavery were interdependent and the latter only took place at the margins of the empire. Now it moved to the core of society.[97] This was when southerners recommitted to slavery. Before that, the end of slavery someday in the near future had seemed plausible. But now, slave-based plantation work and investments in enslaved human beings became as profitable as never before.[98]

Sven Beckert has underlined that the uniqueness of American cotton-growing lay in the planters' control of and access to extensive supplies of land, workforce, and capital, and that the expansion of this business sector rested on the physical and psychological violence of mass slavery.[99] Cotton had the power to generate fortunes for those who were able to command labor power. In contrast to the Chesapeake region (eastern Virginia and Maryland), where slavery had been self-maintaining since the 1720s and planters were not entirely dependent on the constant influx of new laborers, in the opening regions and territories of the Deep South, slavery swallowed many more lives. The sizes of the production units grew. By 1860, 11 percent of

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[95] Tomich, *Prism of Slavery*, 57-61; and Idem, "The Second Slavery and World Capitalism: A Perspective for Historical Inquiry," *International Review of Social History* 63:3 (2018): 481-482. Anthony Kaye has furthermore remarked that writing American history between 1800 and 1860 in the light of the second slavery "requires breaking out of the confines of 'antebellum slavery,' which point the field headlong to the Civil War." Anthony E. Kaye, "The Second Slavery: Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century South and the Atlantic World," *Journal of Southern History* 75:3 (2009): 628. For more on the second slavery, also see Dale W. Tomich and Michael Zeuske, "Introduction, The Second Slavery, Mass Slavery, World Economy, and Comparative Microhistories," *Review (Ferdinand Braudel Center)* 31:2 (2008): 91-100.

[96] Ephraim Douglass Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* (New York: Diversion Books, 2014), 13.

[97] Tomich, *Prism of Slavery*, 57-61.

[98] Edward E. Baptist, *The Half has Never Been Told: The Slave Migration that Shaped African America, the United States, and the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 25, 44-45.

[99] Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 105, 110.

people enslaved in the Upper South toiled on plantations with 50 to 199 slaves, in the Lower South, it was 30 percent. Massive cotton plantations in the Deep South propelled the economy, with Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Georgia producing almost 80 percent of the country's cotton in 1859.[100]

Those fleeing from Deep South plantations tried to escape the discipline of a labor system which was more than the Upper South system built around drill, violence, and fear. Slave labor on the sugar and cotton plantations was constructed around the gang system with set working hours and a fixed quantity of cotton to be picked or cane to be cut each day.[101] Most slaves were employed in cotton. In the early years of the nineteenth century, 11 percent of enslaved Americans lived on cotton plantations; on the eve of the Civil War it was 64 percent.[102] The amount of cotton these people picked increased yearly. As Edward Baptist has shown, while in 1790, 1.2 million pounds were produced in the American South, this number rose to 2.1 billion in 1859. The most astonishing detail about this is not that cotton production grew not only because slavery as an institution expanded simultaneously. Rather, according to Baptist, enslaved workers on the eve of the Civil War picked cotton at rates four to six times faster than 60 years earlier.[103] Other historians have claimed that it was biological and technological inventions that increased cotton productivity.[104] According to Richard Follett's calculations, due to the gang system, southern slave-based agriculture was 35 percent more efficient than northern agriculture and 28 percent more efficient than free farms in the South. Enslaved men, women, and children paid the price. Sugar plantations, foremost located in southern Louisiana, had the lowest birthrates and extraordinarily high death rates.[105] It was a relentless labor regime that devastated the lives of hundreds of thousands.

Remaking and exacerbating human bondage revealed the contradictions in the context of Atlantic revolutions and abolitions. Specifically, it forced southerners to defend racial slavery—long justified on the basis of a perceived mental and physical "inferiority" of black people—in the wake of revolutionary ideals that underscored liberty and equality.[106] While the racial basis for chattel slavery had been provided ever since the late seventeenth century, it obtained a new quality in the nineteenth century. Black people came to be seen as not only suitable for slavery but indeed *un*suitable for freedom.[107] In order to justify the maintenance of

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[100] Michael Mullin, *Africa in America: Slave Acculturation and Resistance in the American South and the British Caribbean, 1736-1831* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 88; and Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 96, 243.

[101] The task system, by contrast, was used in rice production. Historians have pointed to the greater flexibility of the task system, in which the workday was finished when the assignments were completed. Charles Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 43, 51.

[102] Damian Alan Pargas, *Slavery and Forced Migration in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 22.

[103] Baptist, *Half has Never Been Told*, 69, 270, 286.

[104] Alan Olmstead and Paul Rhode state that it was mostly the development of new kinds of cotton that led to a fourfold increase (2.3 percent per year) of the daily cotton-picking rate between 1801 and 1862. Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode, "Biological Innovation and Productivity Growth in the Antebellum Cotton Economy," *Journal of Economic History* 68:4 (2008): 1123, 1165.

[105] Richard Follett, *The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World, 1820-1860* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 50, 95

[106] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 192-193.

[107] Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," in *The Oxford Book of the American South. Testimony, Memory, and Fiction*, ed. Edward L. Ayers and Bradley C. Mittendorf (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 13.

their captivity at a time of humanitarian liberalism and to exclude people of African descent from the claims of the Declaration of Independence, southern slaveholders created the idea of dependent, needy slaves who were grateful to their masters for guidance and care. Slavery, earlier seen as a "necessary evil," became an ideology in the southern states at the same time that it was extinguished in the majority of the surrounding areas.[108]

The consequences were a stronger politicizing of slavery and its candy-coating through an alleged paternalism. Until the end of the eighteenth century, a patriarchal master-slave relation was pervasive, which demanded absolute obedience from the subordinate and accented the authority of the master through quickly enforced violence. Slave control was based on physical immobility and coercion. Around the turn of the century, the nature of that slavery changed. In contrast to other places where humanitarian trends led to the abolition of slavery, southern slaveholders answered with what in their views was a "more humane" form of slavery. The shift from patriarchy to paternalism provided the master in his view with an aura of generosity, solicitude, and benevolence. The forbidding patriarchal slaveholder became a loving father who cared about his dependents and in return expected gratitude and affection.[109] These developments were strongly influenced by religion. A Christian man felt, as head of his household, responsible for all his dependents: wife, children, and slaves.[110]

When the South saw slavery vanish from almost all countries and regions around them, slaveholders needed the support of other white people to defend the institution against all the attacks it was exposed to during the second slavery.[111] Defenders of slavery constructed, expanded, and refueled supremacy as a tool to unite all white people—who should be free—against all black people—whom they considered to be destined to be enslaved. Besides cultural superiority, white supremacy promised socio-economic advancement and promoted slaveowning as an important milestone. The number of small slaveholders increased dramatically after the Revolution as a result of the decline of primogeniture. Distributing property, including slave property, to a number of heirs instead of only the first-born son enlarged this social class whilst reducing the absolute wealth of every one of them. The result was a slaveholding middle class who suddenly shared the planters' efforts to keep the institution of slavery in place and to defend it against slave flight—and for small slaveholders, the loss of a slave constituted a much larger loss. Securing slavery for the future was best done by increasing the range of people benefiting from it.[112]

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[108] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 60, 94; and Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 526.

[109] See Philip Morgan, "Three Planters and Their Slaves: Perspectives on Slavery in Virginia, South Carolina, and Jamaica, 1750-1790," in *Race and Family in the Colonial South*, ed. Winthrop D. Jordan and Sheila L. Skemp (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), 40-41. Eugene Genovese has provided a definition of paternalism which emphasizes a social order. It is hierarchical, not negotiable, with fixed positions for those who rule and those who are ruled. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, 4-6.

[110] Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 177-178.

[111] Kenneth Stampp has claimed that by 1860, three quarters of white southerners were neither directly (through ownership) nor indirectly (through the ownership of family members) linked to slavery. In earlier decades, at least one third of white families owned slaves. Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956), 28-30. These numbers forfeit part of their power when considering that a great many whites aspired slaveownership, both as an economic advantage and as cultural prestige.

[112] The broader middle class also broke up enslaved families more often. Alan Taylor, *The Internal Enemy: Slavery and War in Virginia, 1772-1832* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 6.

As Barbara Fields has importantly reminded us, the goal for planters was always to produce cotton (and, by extension, sugar, tobacco, indigo, rice, and wheat) and get rich from it. White supremacy was a necessary by-product.[113] It was, however, not waterproof and while more white people were joining the slaveholding classes during the antebellum period, non-slaveholding whites never held a uniform view vis-à-vis African Americans. Nevertheless, as a group, they were characterized by resentment towards black people and endorsement of slavery.[114] The Democratic Party was the one institution slaveholders relied on for their endeavors to corroborate slavery. To justify and defend it in the nineteenth century, they depended on a broader base of support, yet the majority of white people did not own slaves. Under the banner of white supremacy, Democrats advocated racial privilege and managed to construct solidarity and unity among slaveholding and non-slaveholding whites and whites in the South and in the North.[115] It was the most dominant political party in the South for most parts of the antebellum era.

Table 1: Enslaved Population, 1790-1860[116]

	1790	1830	1860
United States	698,000	2,009,000	3,954,000
Maryland	103,000	103,000	87,000
Virginia	294,000	470,000	491,000
South Carolina	107,000	315,000	402,000
Louisiana*	-	110,000	332,000

*Louisiana was not part of the US until 1803.

While mono-agricultural slavery entered the next round, slavery in the cities developed differently. In the early century, it still denoted growth rates. From the mid-antebellum era onwards, the trend drastically declined. Charleston and New Orleans, where urban slavery started to decrease after 1830 and 1840, respectively, are representative. Baltimore's slavery, which was never very strong, dropped already after the first decade. Richmond was an exception. There, the number of bondspeople grew continuously until the Civil War. The focus and obsession of southerners, however, was always on plantation slavery. Its high profitability paired with the political power of planters did away with most of the criticism of the institution. Revolutionary talks about abolition retrograded, and retracted from the South. By the 1830s,

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[113] Barbara J. Fields, "Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America," *New Left Review* 181 (1990): 111.

[114] Scholarship has also contributed to complicating the claim that all white men in the antebellum South felt united. See David Brown, "A Vagabond's Tale: Poor Whites, Herrenvolk Democracy, and the Value of Whiteness in the Late Antebellum South," *Journal of Southern History* 79:4 (2013): 800-801.

[115] The Whig Party, by contrast, represented industrial capital. Lance Selfa, *The Democrats: A Critical History* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 43.

[116] *Return of the Whole Number of Persons within the Several Districts of the United States, According to "An Act Providing for the Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the United States"* (Philadelphia: Childs and Swaine, 1791), 3; Department of Commerce and Labor Bureau of the Census, *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States in the Year 1790: South Carolina* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1908), 8, URL: https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1907/dec/heads-of-families.html, accessed April 16, 2019; Joseph C. G. Kennedy (ed.), *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census under the Secretary of the Interior* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 193, 214, 452, 513; and Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 396-397.

formal abolition was farther away than ever before. The large demand for slaves swelled the ranks of those in bondage and the enslaved population skyrocketed from 700,000 in 1790 to 1.2 million 20 years later, and culminated in nearly four million on the eve of the Civil War. (See table 1.) Enlivened by the rise of cotton and the fear of slave revolts, the growing institution put increasing pressure on enslaved people.

Broken Families

The expansion and intensification of slavery, paired with shrinking opportunities to exit the system in a legal way, stimulated enslaved people to consider flight. A third factor was the breaking-up of enslaved families caused by an intense increase in the volume of slave sales. Sale had always been inherent to slavery but during the second slavery it became much more common. Besides the physical displacement, the destruction of family and kin networks was the most traumatizing and dramatic experience brought upon by the internal slave trade. As the United States expanded further west and southwards, it took its racialized system of slavery with it. Not only were the new regions and lands and their former inhabitants transformed, the old Chesapeake region and the low country on the eastern Atlantic shores also experienced drastic changes. The labor-intensive tobacco production was largely replaced by the cultivation of grains and other aliments which allowed Upper South planters to dispose surplus members of their enslaved labor force.[117]

Contrary to the numerous manumissions which had taken place during the Age of Revolutions, from the early nineteenth century on, slaveholders rarely even considered manumission for any of their slaves but identified another opportunity to generate profit: they sold their slaves into the new regions, where arduous work, an unfamiliar, harsh climate, and the separation from family and friends were to mark their future lives. The higher death rates and the growing numbers of plantations increased the demand for enslaved laborers in the new cotton and sugar regions of the Deep South. Slaves ceased to be mere labor force and turned into a capitalist investment which could at discretion be bought, sold, and speculated with.[118] Scholars agree that between 1790 and 1860, the internal slave trade displaced approximately one million enslaved people from Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas to Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas.[119] (See figure 3.) An additional two million were displaced within the same states.[120]

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[117] Pargas, *Slavery and Forced Migration*, 26.

[118] James Steer from Louisiana, for example, recognized the promising economic prospect of investing in slaves in 1818: "For a young man, just commencing life, the best stock in which he can invest Capital, is, I think, negro Stock. […] negroes will yield a much larger income than any Bank dividend." James Steer to John Minor, February 23, 1818, William J. Minor and Family Papers, HML, in Leslie Howard Owens, *This Species of Property: Slave Life and Culture in the Old South* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 16. See also James Oakes, *The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982).

[119] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 96. Leading publications on the internal slave trade include Frederic Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1959), originally published 1931; Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999); Robert Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce: The Transformation of the Interstate Slave Trade* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003); Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*; and Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[120] For the displaced this could mean that they were separated from their loved ones although they were not removed far. Pargas, *Slavery and Forced Migration*, 2.

Families in slavery provided emotional support and were oftentimes the only resort to bare the back-breaking work and humiliating existence as the property of somebody else. Enslaved women gave birth to an average of seven children. Some historians have claimed that the nuclear family was in the antebellum South as common among slaves as for Western Europeans, while others have remarked that the realities of slavery did not allow for this.[121] What is certain is that forced migration broke up thousands of families, separating children from mothers, husbands from wives, and sisters from brothers. Estimates suggest that during the time of the Second Middle Passage (compared to the First Middle Passage, the trans-Atlantic slave trade), every third marriage in the Upper South was destroyed because one of the spouses was transported away. An equal percentage of children were pulled apart from at least one parent.[122] Sale was also used as a punishment for truancy. William Grimes, a refugee to the North, claimed in his autobiography that "It is generally known that when a man sells a servant, he intends by that means to punish him, and endeavors to sell him where he shall never see him again."[123]

Damian Pargas has found that enslaved people, on many occasions, anticipated an upcoming sale or a move, and usually regarded this information as devastating.[124] Archival evidence indeed shows that sale was a very realistic and constant fear of all enslaved people. Being "sold south" or "down the river" was a nightmare the majority of enslaved people in the Upper South worried about for either themselves or their loved ones. For enslaved Lincy, for instance, being sold was such a traumatic experience that the purchaser demanded to return her because he thought she was ill: "she is taken entirely senseless & struggles very hard," he wrote to the seller. She "will tear her clothes and bite her self & would hurt her self if she were not held & it takes four strong persons to hold her."[125] John Brown, who was walked south across

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[121] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 139; and Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1996). Families bound within the institution of slavery are a large research topic on their own. Older scholarship has portrayed slave families largely as failures while more recent contributions have not only nuanced but eventually revised this interpretation. The older depictions also led to the prevailing of the image of allegedly broken black families into post-slavery times and well into the twentieth century. This has had severe consequences for the societal perception of African American families—and particularly men—by American society. For scholarship, which fed into by then prevailing racist stereotypes, see U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery. A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Régime* (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1918). For an overview on the historiographical developments, see Damian Alan Pargas, "Weathering Different Storms. Regional Agriculture and Slave Families in the Non-Cotton South, 1800-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 2009), "Introduction: Agency, Diversity, and Slave Families." Moreover, many slaveholders indeed favored strong family ties among their bondspeople because it had positive side effects on reproduction and compliance.

[122] Michael Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 70-72. The term of the Second Middle Passage was coined by Ira Berlin to stress the similarities to the first Middle Passage, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, including death rates, physical and psychological suffering, and separation of families. Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 173.

[123] William Grimes, *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave*, ed. William L. Andrews and Regina E. Mason (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 70, originally published as *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave, Brought Down to the Present Time. Written by Himself* (New Haven: Published by the Author, 1855).

[124] Pargas, *Slavery and Forced Migration*, 57-59.

[125] Samuel G. Lipey [?] to Jonathan Jordan, June 18, 1842, Jordan and Twiggs Family Papers, SCLC.

the country to be sold, reported about a fellow slave, a woman named Critty, who died of grief on the route.[126]

Some planters moved south together with their slaves, or pioneered the founding of a new plantation taking a selection of their slaves with them before summoning the rest of their households.[127] Most enslaved people, however, were ripped from their familiar environment and torn apart from loved ones. The forced migrations from mainly Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina to the Deep South assumed proportions so high in the era of the second slavery that Ira Berlin coined the term "migration generations" for those African American slaves who lived between the American Revolution and the Civil War. And even this term does not nearly capture the dimensions of this harsh reality. Planters who sought to establish themselves in the new western and southern regions favored young slaves between 14 and 25 years of both sexes, yet in the process of pioneering, more young men were demanded to do the physically hard work of cutting trees, draining swamps, and constructing paths, in short, to build a "Cotton Empire" out of the wilderness.[128]
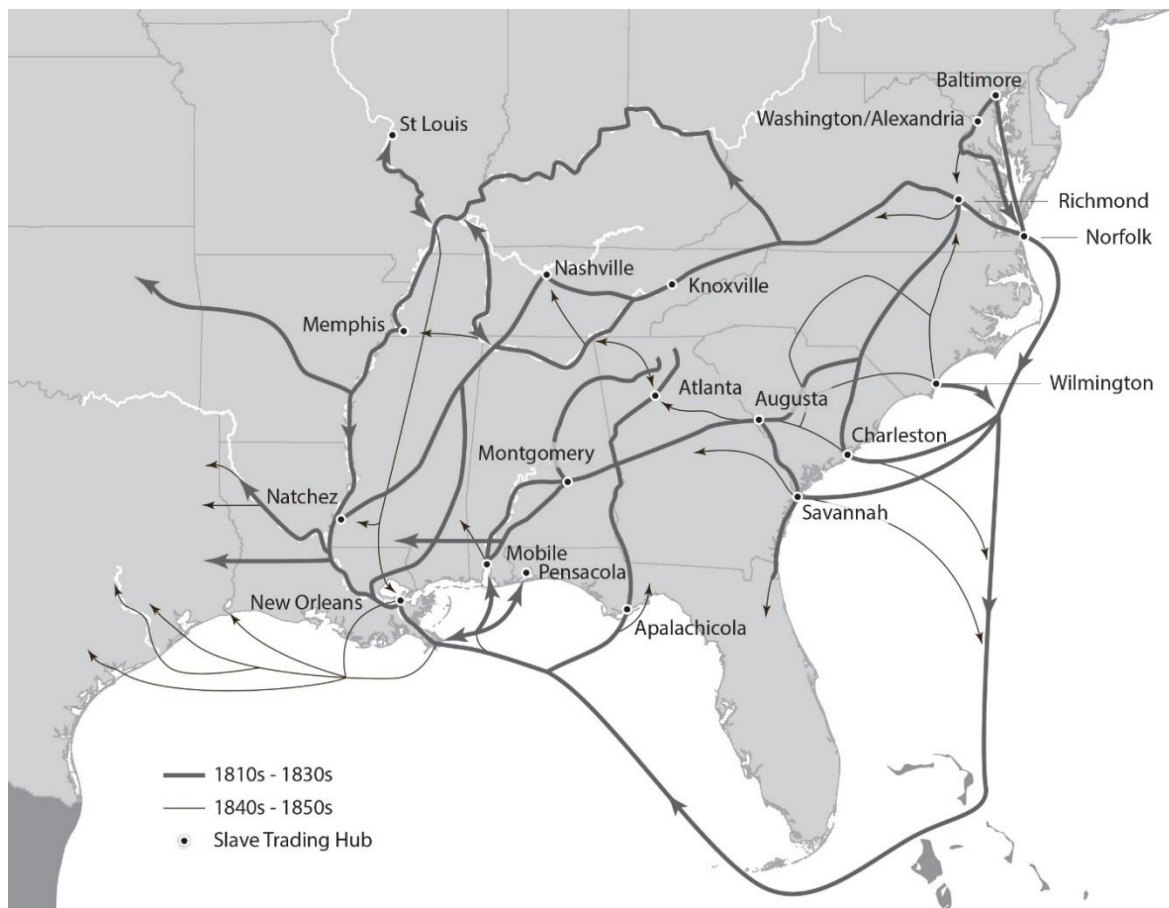
Figure 3: The Directions of the Domestic Slave Trade[129]

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[126] According to Brown, Critty was sold by her owner because she did not become pregnant. John Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia: A Narrative of the Life, Sufferings, and Escape of John Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Now in England*, ed. L. A. Chamerovzow (London: W. M. Watts, 1855), 17.

[127] For more on planters moving together with their bondspeople, see Richard S. Dunn, *A Tale of Two Plantations: Slave Life and Labor in Jamaica and Virginia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), ch. 7.

[128] Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 169, ch. 4. Between 1820 and 1860, 70 percent of bondspeople brought into New Orleans were men. Follett, *Sugar Masters*, 51-52.

[129] "Routes of the U.S. Domestic Slave Trade," in Calvin Schermerhorn, *The Business of Slavery and the Rise of American Capitalism, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 14, URL:

Enslaved people, when anticipating sale, often saw running away as the only option to keep their families together. In instances that they did not see sale coming or could not prevent it, there was often no other way to reunite. Especially in the latter case, the odds to a shared future were small. Slave narratives and interviews with former bondspeople are full of accounts by people who mourn the loss of loved ones years after they achieved freedom and even after the abolition of slavery. Carol Anna Randall, for instance, lost her sister in the slave trade:

> It was de saddes' thing dat ever happen to me. Ma's Marsa tole my sister, Marie Robinson, 'Git yo' things together, I'm goin' to take you to Richmond today. I'm goin' to sell you. Ben offered a good price.' Lawd, chile, I cried. Mother an' sister cried too, but dat didn't help. Ole Marsa Robinson carry her 'way f'om dere. […] I ain't never seen dat pretty sister of mine no more since de day she was sol'. Chile, it nearly broke my heart too, 'cause I love dat sister mo'n any of de others.[130]

Matilda Carter, who also experienced the sale of her sister, testified to the perpetual pain this inflicted upon her mother: "Mother never did git over dis ack of sellin' her baby to dem slave drivers down New Orleans."[131] Whereas the intensification of slavery was a development that affected all people who lived in bondage, the internal slave trade targeted primarily young people.

Contemporary observers not accustomed to the cruel realities of slavery were often shocked the see what sale did to enslaved families. In the 1830s, English philosopher John Stuart witnessed a farewell scene on the wharf in Charleston:

> A slave ship from New Orleans was lying in the steam, and the poor negroes, handcuffed and pinioned, were hurried off in boats, eight at a time. Here I witnessed the last farewell,—thee heart-rending separation of every earthly tie. The mute and agonizing embrace of the husband and wife, and the convulsive grasp of the mother and the child, were alike torn asunder—for ever! It was a living death,—they never see or hear of each other more.[132]

With a largely intact family on the plantation who would collectively suffer with the loss of one working member, escape could loom very selfish and harmful. When the family was broken up already, potential freedom seekers and their kin had less to lose.[133] Broken families, because

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http://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-business-of-slavery-and-the-rise-of-american-capitalism-1815-1860/media/Slave-Routes%2013%2012%2023.jpg, accessed February 18, 2019.

[130] Randall further stated that her sister "Marie was pretty, dat's why he took her to Richmond to sell her. You see, you could git a powerful lot of money in dose days for a pretty gal. Dey took her to de Carolinas." Carol Anna Randall (b. ca. 1855), Newport News, Va., Interviewer unknown (n. d.), in Virginia Writers' Program, *The Negro in Virginia* (New York: Hastings House, 1940), 171, in *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves*, ed. Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 236, originally published 1976. On forced prostitution and the slave trade, see Edward E. Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-Eyed Men': Rape, Commodification, and the Domestic Slave Trade," *American Historical Review* 106:5 (2001): 1619-1650.

[131] Matilda Carter (b. 1959), Hampton, Va., Interviewer Claude W. Anderson (January 4, 1937), Virginia State Library, in *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves*, ed. Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 68, originally published 1976.

[132] John Stuart, Esq., "Three Years in North America," *Westminster Review* 18:36 (1833): 347.

[133] Although there is no background information, it is reported that 14 of the 935 slaves that the Richmond Police listed as hiding in the city returned to bondage "voluntarily." Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, UVA. There is no way of knowing with certainty but one possible explanation is that these people never intended to stay away. The urban dynamics allowed them to lay out for some time in order to *negotiate* with their masters and—possibly—improve their conditions, not to *change* their masters. More so, in the light of the sharp decline in

they made life in slavery even more unbearable, were a factor that exacerbated the urgency of running away.

Receiving Society

Besides the curtailment of manumissions, the expansion of slavery, and the expansion of the domestic slave trade, which were severe setbacks for enslaved southerners, one development inured to the benefit of those who sought to escape bondage. To be able to stay within the South they needed cover. In the cities, the strategy of runaway slaves was to blend in with the free black population. This is the fourth factor to explain the increase of slave flight. Within the South, the free black population grew substantially since the American Revolution because of the high manumission rates before 1810. Free Americans of African descent not only constituted a visible contradiction to the justification of slavery, around the turn of the nineteenth century, this class was for the first time in American history "large enough and dark enough to camouflage large numbers of runaways," in the words of Ira Berlin.[134]

This held more than anything else true for southern cities. Manumitted slaves and free black Americans in general were pulled to urban centers disproportionately compared to other ethnic groups. The main reason for this internal black migration was that black people usually had less access to land than whites. This was due to money and politics.[135] The city authorities of Petersburg, Virginia, raised alarm as early as 1805 warning that "Large numbers of free blacks flock from the country to the Towns." In a petition, they sought the General Assembly to restrict "the residence of free blacks, if practicable, to the Counties or places in which they were born or liberated."[136] Apparently, it was not practicable because the numbers of black urban residents further swelled. In the Upper South, one third of free African Americans came to live in the urban areas while in the Lower South, over half of the free black population lived in cities.[137]

At the opening of the new century, there existed already a modest, self-preserving free black population. When manumissions were curtailed, the free African American population of the United States had increased sufficiently as to ensure their future autonomous growth. In fact, it drastically multiplied itself in the decades to come. In 1810, 108,300 free black people lived in the southern states. In the decades to follow, this population grew substantially whereas the Upper South always counted a considerably higher number than the Lower South. In 1820, 134,200 southern free African Americans were divided into 114,000 living in the Upper South and 20,200 living in the Lower South. 30 years later, in 1850, numbers had increased to 238,200 in the whole South with 203,700 populating the Upper South and 34,500 the Lower South. (See

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manumissions and the increasing prices that impeded many bondspeople from being able to purchasing their own or a loved one's freedom, running away could also be instrumented as negotiation.

[134] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 41.

[135] Curry, *Free Black*, 2-3. In Louisiana, for instance, the new land that was acquired from the French and/or forcefully taken from the Indians after the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in 1814 was distributed in favor of large planters. Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 164.

[136] William Prentis, William Moore, Robert Bolling, Jack Hammon, and Nathaniell Harris to the Honble The Genl. Assembly of Virginia, December 1805, Accession #11680507, Legislative Petitions, VSA, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 1, Legislative Petitions, LOC.

[137] Ira Berlin, "The Structure of the Free Negro Caste in the Antebellum United States," *Journal of Social History* 9:3 (1976): 305, 311.

table 2.) The ever-growing free black populations in the cities were helpful for reducing the visibility and detection of slave refugees.

The best motivation for enslaved African Americans to flee was to see other people who looked like them and were free. White Americans recognized this, too, and drew their conclusion. In 1860, a Tennessee lawmaker warned: "Their mere presence [of free black people], the simple act of walking our streets, and traveling our highways by the farms of the countryside is sufficient to incite insurrection in the slaves, for the desire for freedom is innate in the human breast."[138] With the growth of this free population, one of the most basic justifications of American slavery—the claim that free blacks were not capable of living in freedom—weakened.

Table 2: Free People of African Descent, 1790-1860[139]

	1790	*1830*	*1860*
United States	59,500	319,600	488,100
Northern states	27,100	137,500	226,200
Southern states	32,400	182,100	261,900
Upper South	30,200	151,900	225,000
Lower South	2,200	30,200	37,000

The free black population, however, did not exactly look like the enslaved population. They were not a homogeneous mass throughout the South. Influenced by societies less marked by strict color lines, cultural factors had come to shape a more nuanced picture in the Lower South. This was foremost the case for New Orleans, which was its most populous and vibrant city. In fact, New Orleans' social composition was more akin to Caribbean societies than to American places and would remain so over the course of the antebellum period.[140] Interracial relations between white men and black women dated back to French times and in the nineteenth century, "mulattos" (people of mixed race) were strongly represented among Louisiana's free non-white population. They were lighter-skinned than the population held in bondage, and this remained true after the US took over.[141] What emerged in New Orleans and in other parts of the Lower

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[138] *Nashville Union and American*, November 19, 1860, in Berlin, "Free Negro Caste," 307.

[139] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 46, 136. These are official numbers.

[140] Spanish and French slavery followed Roman law, which stated that freedom was a condition unrelated to race. This enhanced the situation of free black people in Louisiana. Junius P. Rodriguez, "Ripe for Revolt: Louisiana and the Tradition of Slave Insurrection, 1803-1865" (Ph.D. diss., Auburn University, 1992), 47-48. See also Kimberly S. Hanger, *Bounded Lives, Bounded Places. Free Black Society in Colonial New Orleans, 1769-1803* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997).

[141] Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue: A Comparative Portrait of Two Three-Caste Slave Societies," *Journal of Social History* 3:4 (1970): 408. Social practices lifted slaves with lighter skin color up to perform skilled jobs and domestic service more often than field work, which, in turn, brought them into closer contact with their masters and, hence, closer to manumission. Interracial sexual relations between white men and women of color became institutionalized under the French as extramarital unions, called *plaçage*. The man committed to providing for his *plaçée* and their children while at the same time not sharing his public life with them. Foner, "Free People of Color," 411. In the British colonies of what would in 1776 become the United States, by contrast, miscegenation had been outlawed and regarded as shameful from earliest times on. See Jennifer Brown and Theresa Schenk, "Métis, Mestizo, and Mixed-Blood," in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2007), 329. After the Haitian Revolution, many planters migrated from the Caribbean to South Carolina and Louisiana. They were more flexible when it came to interracial sexual contact. Wilma King, *The Essence of Liberty. Free Black Women During the Slave Era* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 27.

South was a society based on three ethnic groups: white, mulatto, and black, in the order of their social standing. The intermediate level of light-skinned black people was also to be found in Charleston. The Charleston free black community was small. It had grown in the eighteenth century to become color-segregated within itself with a strong tendency to favor lighter-skinned people over darker skinned "negroes." The former called themselves "brown" in order to explicitly demarcate themselves from the enslaved population, which was considerably darker.[142]

The overwhelming majority of free people of African descent, however, did not belong to the mulatto elite. Distancing themselves from the enslaved became increasingly difficult in the time of racial slavery—despite the obvious interest of slaveholders to countervail intermingling between free and enslaved African Americans. The reason was that the free and unfree black populations were tightly interconnected, a phenomenon which varied per place. In all places, this closeness was aggravated by kin ties extending over both slavery and freedom. This was a disadvantage for free black people and at the same time an important support for slave refugees. Newspaper announcements about runaway slaves supposed to be harbored by free family members are countless throughout the antebellum era. In 1805, Jack Ash ran away and thanks to his wide network, his master William Rose was unsure about where to look for him. With upwards 50 years, Ash was considerably older than the average runaway. Rose advertised that

> He is well known in and about the city of Richmond, Amthell, in the County of Chesterfield, where he has a number of free connections, and in the neighbourhood of Williamsburg—[I]Tis very certain that he is lurking about one of the above places, most likely Richmond, where he has a free woman for a wife.[143]

In 1832, Nelly was believed to be harbored by her husband in Charleston.[144] And in 1840, $100 were set on catching Ellick, 18 years of age. He called himself Alexander Brown and absconded from Jefferson County, Virginia. His mother lived near Baltimore and his sister in Baltimore, and so his owner believed that he had gone there.[145]

Network-mediated slave flight worked particularly well in the Upper South. As comprehensively explained by Calvin Schermerhorn, the Chesapeake Bay, home to the city of Baltimore on its north-western shores, had been one of the pilot projects of African American slavery. Therefore, by the antebellum period, 200 years after the first enslaved Africans put

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[142] Robert Olwell, "Becoming Free: Manumission and the Genesis of a Free Black Community in South Carolina, 1740-90," in *Against the Odds: Free Blacks in the Slave Societies of the Americas*, ed. Jane G. Landers (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 1. The Brown Fellowship Society was a self-aid society exclusive to wealthy mulattos in the city. They excluded slaves and dark-skinned people of color from their ranks. This club as well as the Society of the Free Dark Man illustrate that tensions existed among free black people based on skin color. Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), 212; Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 140; and King, *Essence of Liberty*, 27.

[143] *Enquirer*, June 7, 1805.

[144] *Charleston Mercury*, May 8, 1832.

[145] *Sun*, August 6, 1840. Brown's strategy corresponded to what Charles Tilly has labeled chain migration. It is characterized by that those who are about to migrate already know others at the destination and know that they will be helped upon arrival. In fact, those at the destination offer information and encouragement. A more adequate term is, following Tamar Wilson, network-mediated migration. Tilly, "Migration in Early Modern European History," 5-6, 8; and Tamar Diana Wilson, "What Determines Where Transnational Labor Migrants Go?," *Human Organization* 53:3 (1994): 269-278.

their feet on soil that would later become the United States, many enslaved families were rooted in this region of the country for several generations. family networks were firm and extended over rural and urban areas. As enslaved families were increasingly broken up and a significant number of slaves experienced a higher mobility and more varied employments, these kin networks expanded even more.[146] They constituted convenient preconditions for men and women who decided to escape slavery.
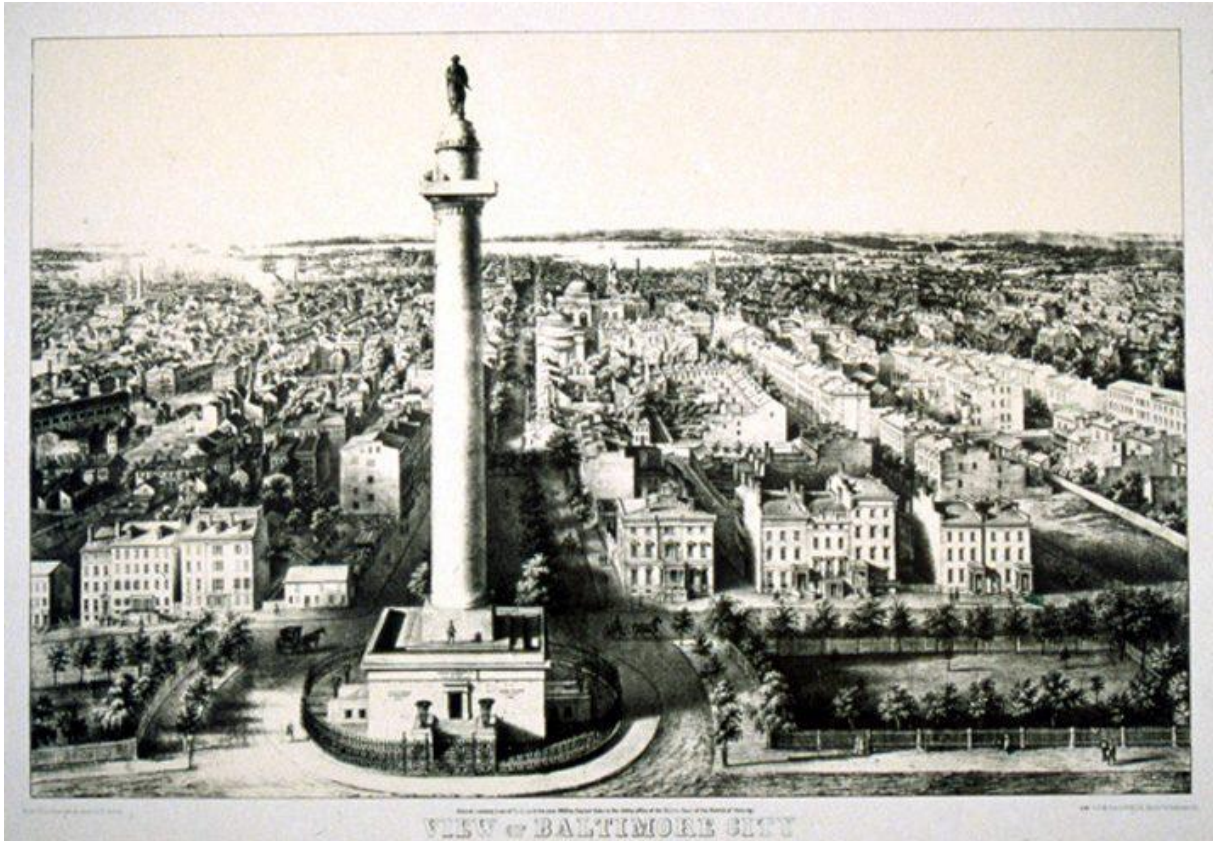
Figure 4: Baltimore 1850[147]

The willingness to help runaway slaves was especially high in Baltimore's African American community, as a view behind the curtains shows. One of the reasons was that in the Upper South, upward social mobility was almost unachievable for any person of visual African descent, which led to the strengthening of horizontal solidarities and a degree of "racial unity."[148] This unity extended over slavery and freedom because both free and enslaved African Americans came to be treated very much alike. As a result of the rule of whiteness, which was visually coded, laws were designed that stressed the similar treatment of slaves and free blacks

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[146] Calvin Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery, Family over Freedom. Slavery in the Antebellum Upper South* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 10. By mid-century, these people were almost exclusively born in the state. Leonard P. Curry, "Free Blacks in the Urban South, 1800-1850," *Southern Quarterly* 43:2 (2006): 36.

[147] Edward Sachse, Baltimore, Maryland, 1850, Reproduction of Lithography, *Historic Urban Plans*, URL: https://historicurbanplans.com/catalog-list-only/baltimore-1850/, accessed July 2, 2019.

[148] This is the reverse interpretation of Sidney Chalhoub's claim that slavery in nineteenth-century Brazil allowed for some degrees of social advancement through competition, which had negative effects on the horizontal solidarity amongst the enslaved. Sidney Chalhoub, "The Precariousness of Freedom in a Slave Society (Brazil in the Nineteenth Century)," *International Review of Social History* 56:3 (2011): 409. Ira Berlin speaks of racial unity of the black society of the Upper South in comparison to the Lower South. Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 140.

in punishment, and demarcated whites from blacks, regardless of the latter's legal status. Slave codes became black codes and black people who had gained their legal freedom were increasingly forced to endure the same treatment that white society had formerly reserved for slaves.[149]

The great majority of southern states enacted codes in the antebellum period which declared all persons of African descent slaves unless proven otherwise.[150] One exception occurred in Maryland in 1817. Legislation reveals that due to the high numbers of its free black population, the state relieved black people of the burden of proof to verify their legal liberty and instead assumed all of them to be free unless proven otherwise.[151] Nevertheless, the lives of free African Americans did not improve. Instead of "upgrading" slaves in their perception to the group of free blacks, whites threw both groups together on the lowest level of society. Furthermore, this legislative change was not accompanied by a mental shift in white people's heads and legally free black Americans who were believed to be runaways, continued to be cramped into the state's jails, as already shown. The fact that they were not charged with paying the jail fees anymore, was a great improvement, yet it did not do away with the humiliation and the social stigma.

Another blow to the black community was the domestic trade of slaves out of Baltimore, which was a main cause for the decline of slavery in the city. As the threat of sale became one of the most frequent causes for slave flight, relatives and friends became active supporters of runaways. It might have motivated them to cling more to each other and to see family as an important safety net, both in economic and psychological aspects. Christopher Phillips has noted that there was of course a social stratification within Baltimore's black community, but they were less divided than in other cities and also less divided than Baltimore's white society.[152] Attributing more horizontal solidarity to the Upper South cities than to the Lower South cities is not an absolute claim. Countless court cases on intra-racial violence, theft, deceit, and other offences bear witness to a variety of social frictions within the African American community.[153]

When involved with people they did not know, runaways became "deeply suspicious figures," as stressed by historian Anthony Kaye. They were suspicious of other slaves and objects of suspicion themselves. In the countryside, it was no exception that slaves captured runaways that were strangers to them. Kaye therefore argues that solidarity was unreliable,

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[149] Baltimore, Ordinances, in Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 249. In Virginia, the division between white and black punishment was particularly strong. Virginia's black code of 1859 was the most comprehensive and systematic attempt to regulate the conduct of black people. Moreover, Richmond's courts were increasingly preoccupied with offenses that involved the crossing of the color line. In Maryland, free blacks could be sold for crimes after 1858. Morris, *Southern Slavery*; Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 45; Barbara J. Fields, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground. Maryland during the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 79; and Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 19.

[150] These laws remained in force except in Maryland and Delaware. Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 158.

[151] Laws of Maryland, 1817, ch. 112, Early State Records Online, MSA,
URL: http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/003183/html/m3183-0375.html, accessed May 23, 2017. This law, furthermore, met with great opposition before being passed. Legacy of Slavery in Maryland, "History of Runaways," MSA, URL: http://slavery.msa.maryland.gov/html/research/histlaw.html, accessed January 25, 2019.

[152] Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 145-146. This is not to say that there was harmony within the black community.

[153] See Race & Slavery Petitions Project, Series 2, County Court Petitions, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, URL: https://library.uncg.edu/slavery/petitions/, accessed March 27, 2017; and Governor and Council (Pardon Papers), S1061, 1775-1836, MSA. I would like to thank Seth Rockman for sharing these sources with me.

especially outside one's own neighborhood, and many runaways employed the strategy of avoiding any contact with strangers.[154] It is important to keep in mind that Kaye's observations refer to wilderness maroons and fleeing slaves on the run who intruded the habitats of other vulnerable people. Those planning a flight to a city, and especially after arrival at their destination, were taken into a solidarity network of kin and acquaintances. This did not mean that urban refugees were never betrayed by black people, whether free or enslaved. It surely also happened but evidence is rare. Mary, a runaway from South Carolina, after being sold out of Charleston returned there in 1824. In Charleston, she lived with a white woman and was reported to authorities by a black woman.[155] Likewise, Lucy or Lucy Bee lived at least seven weeks as a runaway, a time during which she "has frequently been seen by her acquaintance" who also must have reported her to her mistress.[156] Outside New Orleans, a light-skinned black man called Bambou was passing for free and cutting wood together with some maroons. Alexis Bougny, a free black man, denounced them to the authorities and Bambou was taken up and jailed.[157]

More often, however, refugees could rely on solidarity and their own networks. Even people with weak personal networks had the opportunity to group with others that were in a similar situation. Slave refugee Charles Ball, for one, experienced the solidarity of a stranger who furnished him with valuable information to escape just because they were both from the same region in Virginia. Their common birthplace and sufferings as displaced slaves united them.[158] And Willis Hodge, a black man born free in Virginia, accounted that he would have protected a runaway slave at gun point: "I had been taught by my parents that it was far more honorable to suffer death than to betray one that had run away from the slave-holders, be the runaway bond or free man."[159] Despite the fact that the free black population did not form a homogeneous group, its experiences made it a desperately needed community for refugees to join and runaway slaves gravitated to southern cities because of the possibility for attaining anonymity.

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[154] Anthony E. Kaye, "Neighborhoods and Solidarity in the Natchez District of Mississippi: Rethinking the Antebellum Slave Community," *Slavery & Abolition* 23:1 (2002): 12.

[155] *Charleston Courier*, August 30, 1824; May 9, 1825. Mary's case will reappear in the section on sex workers in chapter four.

[156] Idem, January 16, [?].

[157] Testimonies to this case reveal that Louis de Noir, who was also cutting wood with Bambou, and Marsat, a relative of Bambou, then went to Bougny's house in the *faubourg* to confront him, in which course it came to a scene and a fight. Bougny stated that he obtained the information [that Bambou was a runaway?] from another maroon. De Noir and Marsat warned Bougny to go to the police. French Statements of Alexis Bougny and Celestín Villemont, April 23, 1810, General Manuscripts, January 18, 1808 – December 21, 1811, John Minor Wisdom Collection, LaRC.

[158] Charles Ball, *Slavery in the United States. A Narrative of the Life and the Adventurers of Charles Ball, a Black Man, Who Lived Forty Years in Maryland, South Carolina and Georgia, as a Slave Under Various Masters, and was One Year in the Navy with Commodore Barney, During the Late War. Containing an Account of the Manners and Usages of the Planters and Slaveholders of the South—a Description of the Condition and Treatment of the Slaves, with Observations upon the State of Morals amongst the Cotton Planters, and the Perils and Sufferings of a Fugitive Slave, Who Twice Escaped from the Cotton Country* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1837), 130-131.

[159] Willis Augustus Hodge, "The Autobiography of Willis Augustus Hodge, a Free Man of Color. Excerpts," *National Humanities Center* (2008), 5, URL: http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai/identity/text3/hodgesfreeman.pdf, accessed March 12, 2019, referring to Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., (ed.), *Free Man of Color: The Autobiography of Willis Augustus Hodge* (Knoxville, TE: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), written 1848-1849, originally published 1896.

An Illegal Population

Anonymity and invisibility were foremost based on a group of people that was larger than that of the refugee population and to which refugees could visibly assimilate. Census data show the increase of the free black populations. Baltimore was a thriving commercial city situated on the northern border of the southern states. In 1800, it had a population of 26,900. It grew to be the second largest American city in 1830, 1840, and 1850, and became the fourth largest by 1860 with 212,000 inhabitants. It had the most spectacular growth of all southern cities with free African American residents increasing in number from 2,700 in 1800 to 25,700 in 1860. Including slaves, Baltimore counted 28,000 people of African descent.[160] Richmond, also in the Upper South, was considerably smaller with an enslaved population that markedly outstripped the free black population at all times. By the eve of the Civil War, Richmond had 38,000 inhabitants of which 14,400 were African Americans. In most urban places in the Upper South, the free black population was significantly larger than their enslaved counterparts, with Richmond being the great exception.

Further south the picture looked different. Although Lower South cities were also rapidly growing, the institution of slavery was much more firmly entrenched and manumissions, which around the turn of the century had laid the cornerstone for an autonomously increasing free African American population in the Upper South, occurred much more selectively and sparsely. Consequently, regions further south had relatively smaller free black populations and more enslaved city dwellers. By 1860, Charleston counted 40,500 inhabitants of which 17,100 were African Americans. 168,700 people lived in New Orleans at the same time of which 25,400 were of African descent (10,700 were free).[161] (See table 3.)

By the eve of the Civil War, southern urban black populations were so large that they were often remarked upon by visitors. Take Richmond as an example. Journalist Frederick Law Olmsted recounted that "Among the people you see in the streets, full half, I should think, are more or less of negro blood, and a very decent, civil people these seem, in general, to be."[162] Likewise, contemporary European travelers were astonished by the large numbers of black people they saw in the streets in other cities of the South. The Swedish writer and feminist reformer Fredrika Bremer observed in 1850 that in Charleston, "Negroes swarm the streets.

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[160] The number of free black people in the state of Maryland increased from 8,000 in 1790 to 84,000 in 1860 rendering Maryland the state with the absolute highest number of free African Americans. They were only slightly outstripped by the enslaved (87,000).

[161] The high rise of free black residents of New Orleans corresponds to the transformation of the formerly French territory of Louisiana for American cotton production. From the 1830s on, the increase of free black urban residents was slowed except in New Orleans where free African Americans from other states were still allowed to enter and settle. Regarding the general growth of the free black population, the markedly steep surge of the numbers in the first decade of the nineteenth century can be explained by high manumission rates, with stronger repercussions in the two cities of the Upper South, Baltimore and Richmond, than in Charleston and New Orleans. Increasingly tightening laws and rising slave prices as further incentives not to manumit slaves help explain the low variations in the 1850s. The percent trends from 1850 to 1860, however, should not be overestimated since there is considerable doubt about the accurateness of the 1850 census. Still, it remains remarkable that the growth rates of the free black populations decelerated (and even turned negative) in the last decade before the Civil War before skyrocketing after the abolition of slavery.

[162] Frederick Law Olmsted, *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States*; *With Remarks on Their Economy* (London: Sampson, Low, Son & Co.; and New York: Dix and Edwards, 1856), 51. See also Robert Russell, *North America, Its Agriculture and Climate, Containing Observations on the Agriculture and Climate of Canada, the United States, and the Island of Cuba* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1857), 151.

Two-thirds of the people whom one sees in town are negroes or mulattoes. They are ugly, but appear for the most part cheerful and well fed. In particular one sees fat negro and mulatto women […]." And in 1842, Traugott Bromme, a German author of guidebooks seeking to increase German migration to the US, warned in his racist handbook of an insurgence by free blacks because "their number outstrips in some cities that of the whites."[163]

Historians have often downplayed such observations by claiming that African Americans were simply more visible than whites in public urban spaces because of the distinct nature of their work, which was often performed on the streets and in public places.[164] Yet it should be noted that throughout the antebellum period, the black populations of the major southern cities were large by any standard, and indeed they were certainly even greater than census data allowed for. Municipal authorities themselves were often far from certain how many African Americans lived in the city, let alone what their exact status was. As early as 1820, Virginia Governor Randolph admitted in a speech to the House of Delegates that "the actual relation of numbers between the free citizens of the state, and that distinct and inferior race so unfortunately intermingled with them, must necessarily remain somewhat longer undetermined."[165]

The background of this confusion was a series of laws passed in different southern states at different times. Once free African Americans had grown so visible that whites could no longer pretend to ignore their existence, free black people increasingly faced racial discrimination and hostile demeanor. In a society which defined freedom through slavery and justified slavery with race, free people with a black skin were a visible contradiction to southern notions of race and freedom. Free black women and men were considered persons by law, not property like the majority of the members of their racial group. Legally not enslaved, free African Americans were socially seen as members of a low caste, a circumstance which limited their societal, political, and economical chances drastically.[166] Legislative restrictions varied from state to state and emphasized political and judicial exclusion. In most states, persons of color were not allowed to vote, to testify in court or to sit in juries. They were not allowed to freely travel or assemble nor could they marry whites.[167]

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[163] Adolph Benson, Fredrika Bremer, and Carrie Catt (eds.), *America of the Fifties. Letters of Fredrika Bremer. Selected and Edited by Adolph B. Benson* (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation; and London: Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press, 1924), 96-97; and Traugott Bromme, *Gemälde von Nord-Amerika in allen Beziehungen von der Entdeckung an bis auf die neuste Zeit. Eine pittoreske Geographie für Alle, welche unterhaltende Belehrung suchen und ein Umfassendes Reise-Handbuch für Jene, welche in diesem Land wandern wollen. Zweiter Band* (Stuttgart: J. Scheible's Buchhandlung, 1842), 243, JFK.

[164] See, for instance, Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 16-17.

[165] Executive Communications, The Speaker of the House of Delegates, December 4, 1820, LVA.

[166] Arnold A. Sio, "Interpretations of Slavery: The Slave Status in the Americas," in *Slavery in the New World. A Reader in Comparative History*, ed. Laura Foner and Eugene D. Genovese (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 103, originally published in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 7:3 (1965): 289-308.

[167] A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color: Race and the American Legal Process. The Colonial Period* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 206; and Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 17, 82-84.

Table 3: Free African American, Enslaved, and Total Urban Populations, 1800-1860[168]

		1800	*1810*	*1820*	*1830*	*1840*	*1850*	*1860*
Baltimore	total	26,500	46,600	62,700	80,600	102,300	169,100	212,400
	free black	**2,700**	**5,700**	**10,300**	**14,800**	**18,000**	**25,400**	**25,700**
	enslaved	2,800	4,700	4,400	4,100	3,200	2,900	2,200
Richmond	total	5,700	9,700	12,100	16,100	20,200	27,600	37,900
	free black	**600**	**1,200**	**1,200**	**2,000**	**1,900**	**2,400**	**2,600**
	enslaved	2,300	3,700	4,400	6,300	7,500	9,900	11,700
Charleston*	total	20,500	24,700	24,800	30,300	29,300	43,000	40,500
	free black	**1,000**	**1,500**	**1,500**	**2,100**	**1,600**	**3,400**	**3,200**
	enslaved	9,800	11,700	12,700	15,400	14,700	19,500	13,900
New Orleans°	total		17,200	27,200	46,100	102,300	116,400	168,700
	free black		**5,000**	**6,200**	**11,900**	**19,200**	**10,000**	**10,900**
	enslaved		6,000	7,400	9,400	23,400	17,000	13,400

*since 1850 including Charleston Neck
°since 1852 including Lafayette

The official legal status of free people of African descent, however, was unclear. As Martha Jones has remarked, former bondspeople and their descendants were neither slaves nor aliens nor free white people (the only classifications public jurisprudence allowed for), and their status essentially presented a "juridical puzzle" to contemporaries. The American constitution

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[168] U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in The United States: 1790 to 1990, URL: https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/1998/demo/POP-twps0027.html, accessed January 8, 2019; Population of Virginia – 1810, URL: http://www.virginiaplaces.org/population/pop1810numbers.html, accessed January 8, 2019; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Aggregate Number of Persons within the United States in the Year 1810* (Washington, D.C., 1811); Population schedules for the Territory of Orleans of the Third Census of the United States, 1810, 468-470, and for Louisiana of the Fourth Census, 1820, II, 193, in Paul Lachance, "New Orleans in the Era of Revolution: A Demographic Profile," Paper for Symposium *Revolution et Contre-Revolution a la Nouvelle-Orleans et dans le Monde Creole*, Sponsored by the Services Culturels Français de la Nouvelle-Orleans, Ambassade de France, 20th Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (April 1, 1989), 3, URL: https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/34115/1/Profile%20NO%201989.pdf, accessed January 8, 2019; Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860*, 191; J. D. B. DeBow (ed.), *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850. Embracing a Statistical View of Each of the States and Territories, Arranged by Counties, Towns, etc., Under the Following Divisions…* (Washington, D.C.: Robert Armstrong, 1853), 221, 339; U.S. 8th Census, 1860, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 214; and J. L. Dawson and Henry William DeSaussure (eds.), *Census of the City of Charleston, South Carolina, for the Year 1848, Exhibiting the Condition and Prospects of the City, Illustrated by Many Statistical Details, Prepared under the Authority of the City Council* (Charleston: J. B. Nixon, 1849), 10. Although the 1848 census is cited for Charleston, only the numbers of previous censuses are used, given the serious doubts about the accuracy of the 1848 Charleston census. See Herbert G. Gutman, *Slavery and the Number Game. A Critique of Time on the Cross*. Introduction by Bruce Levine (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 52. Both the 1840 and 1850 censuses for Charleston are to be approached with care because the catastrophic fire of 1838 destroyed about 1,000 houses in the third and fourth wards, which led free Charlestonians of African descent move to the suburb Charleston Neck. Neck was incorporated in 1850. Curry, *Free Black*, 7.

obscured the status of free black people by simply not mentioning them.[169] The legal fuzziness was a mirror of societal confusion: Free black people should not even *be* in the United States. The American Colonization Society (ACS) was the institutionalized form of this desire. Formed in 1817, it dedicated itself to sending African Americans to the west coast of Africa. Whites who supported colonization were driven by the wish to expel them and the idea that they were better off in Africa.[170]

The anomaly of their existence was in the word. "Free people of color" or "free negroes," as nineteenth-century Americans classified freeborn and manumitted black people in census records, tax registers, administrative documents, and public communication, were terms to describe the exceptional condition of persons of African descent who were *not slaves*. Legal texts addressing slaves as "Negros and other slaves,"[171] implied that all black people were slaves. White southerners came to see free black people as a threat, both to the institution of slavery and the social order. Additionally, urban free black communities were constantly accused of enticing slaves to abscond and aiding, sheltering and harboring them. Their lives, as consequence, became harder.

Hoping to curtail the free African American population, southern state legislatures passed a series of laws. In 1806, Virginia was the first state to require all newly emancipated slaves to leave the state within twelve months.[172] The law remained virtually unenforceable since many, if not most, emancipated slaves simply refused to leave.[173] It could be argued that the ordinance was thus a dead letter. However, the meager execution rather meant that its impact was felt on a different level. Instead of reducing the free black population, it criminalized all newly manumitted slaves. In the 60 years to come, the ordinance created a significant illegal population of free black people throughout the state—legally emancipated but illegally residing in Virginia. The numbers of these illegal free African Americans reached well into the thousands and must have stood in considerable contrast to the official census data.

The undefined legal status of free people of African descent in the country and the *de facto* liminal status large parts of the black population had, informed how freedom looked for

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[169] The constitution distinguished between free people, enslaved people, and Indians. Some northern states did extend citizenship to black people, yet they were far from safe when traveling out of the state. When arrested in the South, the threat of sale into slavery was ever-present. Jones, *Birthright Citizens*, 4-5, 19, 24.

[170] The founding of the colony of Liberia in 1822, which declared independence in 1847, was the destination of black emigrants. "Colonization," *The African-American Mosaic*, LOC, URL: https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/afam002.html, accessed July 19, 2019.

[171] William Waller Hening (ed.), *The Statutes at Large; Being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia, From the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619*. Vol. IV (Richmond: W. W: Gray, 1820), Ch. IV, 128. The American Colonization Society stated that "the position of every 'free person of color' in the United States" was that of a "'slave without a master.'" American Colonization Society (ed.), *The African Repository, and Colonial Journal* 14:1 (1838): 99.

[172] General Assembly, "An ACT to amend the several laws concerning slaves" (1806). In this context, manumissions may have aggravated the separation of family members, as observed by Damian Pargas. State laws which demanded the removal of emancipated African Americans gave many manumissions a very negative by-taste. Pargas, "Weathering Different Storms," 212, 215. The purchase of family members, a method many black people applied to keep their loved one's from being sold away, was prohibited in Virginia in 1832, with the exception of one's spouse or children. John H. Russell, *The Free Negro in Virginia, 1619-1865* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1913), 94.

[173] Some, however, did leave. Leonard Curry has shown that Virginia-born men and women had a share of around 40 percent of all out-of-state born black residents in Baltimore, Buffalo, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Pittsburgh, and St. Louis. In Louisville, it was even 65 percent. Black people born in Maryland constituted over 20 percent of these segments in Albany, Philadelphia, and Providence, and over 40 percent in Pittsburgh. This numbers are based on the 1850 Census. Curry, *Free Black*, 5.

them. As pointed out by Barbara Fields, slavery, by casting its everlasting shadows, defined the very essence of freedom.[174] Given the plural society of the antebellum United States, liberty took on very different meanings for different societal groups. As Eric Foner expansively elaborated upon, freedom adopted a "distinctive aura" for black Americans due to their experiences with racial slavery. It was a goal they had to achieve, contrary to white Americans for whom liberty was a birthright. After the Revolution had already "revealed the contradiction," the Declaration of Independence of 1776 formulated freedom as a universal right, a rhetoric that did not pass by enslaved ears without noticing either. According to Foner, enslaved people considered themselves as individuals deprived of the very right of personal liberty and self-determination. More concretely, what bondspeople desired as freedom was a life free from the whip and sexual abuse, control of their own family affairs, maintenance of kin ties, access to education, and the ability to keep the fruits of their own labor.[175]

Could the free black population, to which slave refugees assimilated, count on this freedom? They were not under the control of an individual master but heavily restricted by public law and surveillance. Although a legal basis officially protected them to certain extent, violence towards their bodies by white people was only in exceptional cases sanctioned. Black children were barred from public education and teaching black southerners to read and write was in many states prohibited. In other states, they were frequently the target of attacks by angry white mobs. Yet, a great many African Americans received education in Sunday schools organized by church congregations. Even in states that did not allow for this, they often took place in secret.[176] Importantly, black people did keep their wages and earnings, and so did slave refugees who succeeded at breaking free from enslavement.

However, free people of African descent with an undocumented status had to act much more carefully. If they could not prove that they were not slaves, they had to avoid police control at any cost, could not seek legal ways to protect themselves from injustice and abuse, and were exposed to reenslavement. Hundreds of legal petitions to the Virginia governor asked for exceptions from the law of 1806 with the intent to legalize their residency. Because cases like these were unwinnable without the support of white acquaintances willing to pledge for them, those who dared to submit a petition presented only a small fraction of illegal free blacks; granted petitions were the exception.[177] Autobiographer Lunsford Lane was one of these people trapped in the paradox of emancipation. After saving up a considerable amount of money, he was in 1835 able to purchase his own freedom. Five years later, while making plans to also buy his wife and six children out of slavery, Lane received notice that following the statutes of North Carolina, he was in the state contrary to law and had to leave within 20 days in order to avoid prosecution. With the help of white friends and employees who vouched for his good character, Lane decided to petition to remain in the state. His wish was not granted and he had to depart

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[174] Fields, *Middle Ground*, xi.

[175] Eric Foner, "African Americans and the Story of American Freedom," *Souls* 1:1 (1999): 16-19; and Idem, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 33-34.

[176] On Sunday schools, see Janet Duitsman Cornelius, *Slave Missions and the Black Church in the Antebellum South* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 132-134.

[177] See Legislative Petitions, LVA.

from Raleigh and his family in 1841. Aptly expressed, his autobiography includes the sub-title *His Banishment from the Place of His Birth for the Crime of Wearing a Colored Skin.*[178]

Maryland's free black population also became legally divided. Illegalization occurred on various levels. From 1824 onwards, manumitted slaves were required to pay a $1-fee to receive a certificate of freedom by the clerk of the court.[179] Those who could not afford the dollar, had a problem and could not prove their freedom without major efforts. In 1832, another law was enacted that required slaves manumitted from this year on to leave Maryland.[180] Being a copy of the Virginia law of 1806, legislators knew that the law would not work. It was nevertheless enacted for the side effect of creating a large population of undocumented people who were stripped of any legal rights. Louisiana passed a similar statute in 1830.[181] In the case of Louisiana, the chaos was even intensified because the Federal Government had, firstly, no idea about the population volume of the Territory of Orleans when they purchased it in 1803: "it is impossible to tell with any exactness the number of free Males from 18 to 45 in the different Settlements," was the official announcement from Washington.[182] Secondly, during the immigration wave of black and white Caribbean immigrants in the early nineteenth century, New Orleans' government was incapable of impeding or controlling black persons from coming to the city.[183] In 1805, the mayor helplessly recognized his impotence to control and even to distinguish between their status as free or unfree persons: "Many worthless free people of colour or persons calling themselves free arrive here daily without our being able to prevent it, or to drive them away after they have come."[184]

Contrary to the official census data that divided the black population into merely two categories, free and enslaved, these observations call for a more nuanced picture including additional classifications. (See table 4.) Based on the concept of illegality, there were, first, persons of African descent who were born free or legally manumitted, who were registered with the authorities as such, and possessed certificates to prove their freedom, and were therefore *de jure* and *de facto* free. Most historians throw all *de facto* free black people together in this category because this is how they appear in contemporary sources. However, there were more scenarios how people could be *de facto* free without being legally backed up. Hence, second, there were many free-born African Americans who for a variety of reasons did not possess free papers (for instance because they could not effort the fee, did not renew them, or had lost them)

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[178] Lunsford Lane, *The Narrative of Lunsford Lane, Formerly of Raleigh, N.C. Embracing an Account of His Early Life, the Redemption by Purchase of Himself and Family from Slavery, and His Banishment from the Place of His Birth for the Crime of Wearing a Colored Skin* (Boston: J. G. Torrey, 1842), 21, 24-25, 32.

[179] Laws of Maryland, 1824, ch. 85, Vol. 141, 807, in *Absconders, Runaways and Other Fugitives in the Baltimore City and County Jail*, ed. Jerry M. Hynson (Westminster: Willow Bend Books, 2004), 59.

[180] In Maryland, it exempted those who were able to convince a "respectable" white person to testify each year that they deserved to remain. Laws of Maryland, 1831, ch. 281, in Fields, *Middle Ground*, 36-37.

[181] Tom Landsford, "Manumission," in *Encyclopedia of Emancipation and Abolition in the Transatlantic World*, ed. Junius Rodriguez (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 357.

[182] Clarence E. Carter (ed.), *The Territorial Papers of the United States. Compiled and Edited by Clarence Edwin Carter.* Vol. IX: The Territory of New Orleans 1803-1812 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), 34, HML.

[183] In two months of the summer 1809 alone, 34 ships brought almost 2,000 free black people and the same number of slaves from Cuba to New Orleans. See Donald E. Everett, "Emigres and Militiamen: Free Persons of Color in New Orleans, 1803-1815," *Journal of Negro History* 38: 4 (1953): 384.

[184] John Watkins to Secretary Graham, September 6, 1805, in *The Territorial Papers of the United States. Compiled and Edited by Clarence Edwin Carter.* Vol. IX: The Territory of New Orleans 1803-1812, ed. Clarence E. Carter (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), 503, HML.

or were not registered. These people were legally free but had trouble proving their status, for instance when mistaken for runaway slaves. Third, there were those who were manumitted in conformity with the law but resided in the state illegally, as mentioned above. In 1838, citizens of Berkeley County (now West Virginia) realized exactly this and called attention to the deficiency of the code since sister states had likewise enacted laws to prevent free blacks from immigrating.[185]

Many southern states banned African Americans who were not enslaved from entering since the early nineteenth century. These policies, too, largely failed. South Carolina introduced this legislation in 1800, Maryland followed in 1808.[186] Louisiana enacted a similar code in 1807, but because it was neglected, it was reintroduced in 1830 requiring the expulsion of "free negroes of other States from its territory who had entered after 1825." From 1838 onwards, it was "modified so as to allow all free blacks in the State" under the precondition that they registered themselves and posted a bond but also this law remained "rarely enforced." And so, free black people grew oblivious about it, as the press summarized.[187] These people constituted a fourth group of illegal free African Americans.

A fifth group of illegal free black residents was created by complicating or even prohibiting manumission.[188] In South Carolina, for example, manumission was only allowed with the permission of both the House of Representatives and the State Senate after 1820,[189] which was that high an obstacle that practically no slaveholder went this way. Instead, they continued to manumit their human property without legal approbation. The extent of illegal emancipations becomes clear with the help of the fact that in the year 1850 only two bondspeople were officially manumitted in the entire state of South Carolina, as observed by Bernard Powers.[190] Two years prior, Judge O'Neall wrote that the prohibition of manumissions of 1820 had "caused evasions without numbers,"[191] reflecting the ignorance of the state regarding the dimensions of the phenomenon. Historian Larry Koger therefore speaks of growing numbers of *de facto* free blacks who seldom possessed freedom papers. Many of them were seized as runaways or under the suspicion of being runaways.[192] An example is William

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[185] Petition by Citizens from Berkeley County, January 16, 1838, Legislative Petitions, LVA.

[186] James M. Wright, *The Free Negro in Maryland 1634-1860* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co.; and London: P.S. King & Son, Ltd., 1921), 114; and Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 92.

[187] *Daily Picayune*, September 4, 1859.

[188] In Suriname in the late eighteenth century, enslaved people who were not formally manumitted but treated by their owners as free and lived in nominal freedom, had an own denomination. They were called *piki-nyan*. According to Karwan Fatah-Black, this became such common place that it was widely believed that they had an official status. In 1823, *piki-nyan* was officially abolished, by which act the authorities recognized that it had existed before. Karwan Fatah-Black, *Eigendomstrijd. De geschiedenis van slavernij en emancipatie in Suriname* (Amsterdam: Ambo|Anthos, 2018), 131-132. Georgia authorities were likewise aware of this group of people. They presumed that there were hundreds of "nominal slaves" in the state. Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 148-149.

[189] Juliet E. K. Walker, *The History of Black Business in America: Capitalism, Race, and Entrepreneurship* (New York: Macmillan Library Reference, 1998), 60; and Amrita Chakrabarti Myers, *Forging Freedom: Black Women and the Pursuit of Liberty in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 61.

[190] Powers, "Black Charleston," 42.

[191] William Ellison to Henry Ellison, March 26, 1857, Ellison Family Papers, SCLC.

[192] Larry Koger, *Black Slaveowners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860* (Jefferson and London: McFarland, 2014), 77-78. For a summary on legislation creating *de facto* illegal residents, see Henry Walcott Farnam, *Chapters in the History of Social Legislation in the United States to 1860* (Union: Lawbook Exchange: 2000), 198-200. Throughout the South, it was the legal obligation of black people to proof that they were not slaves and non-proof could lead to enslavement and sale. The only exemption that levied the burden of

Stebbins from New Orleans. Although a free black man, Stebbins was arrested in December 1858 for "having no evidence of freedom, and supposed to be a runaway." Stebbins "proved his freedom, but at the same time showed that he is in the State in contravention of law, and was discharged, with a due notification to leave the State within 60 days."[193]

Table 4: Composition of the Free African American Population

1. Born free or legally manumitted, with proper registration and freedom papers	
2. Born free or legally manumitted, without proper registration and/or papers	
3. Legally manumitted, illegally in the state residing	
4. Illegally immigrated	
5. Illegally manumitted	
6. Slave refugees	

de facto free, yet undocumented/illegal

With the absolute numbers of enslaved Americans who decided to escape bondage continuously rising over time, there can be no doubt that the black urban populations were considerably higher than the official data reveals. The capacities of the four cities Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans to attract and absorb large numbers of runaway slaves from rural districts and unregistered free blacks (who resided in the city illegally) meant that their black populations were undoubtedly much higher than the official census numbers. Four-digit numbers have to be added to each city for the later years before the Civil War to get a more accurate picture of the black populations.[194] The illegal status of thousands of black southerners made all of them vulnerable and constituted a constant threat to their freedom. This was where slave refugees assimilated to and this marked the freedom they could find in the South. Consequently, the lives of free illegals and illegal freedom seekers did not diverge that much. Freedom was unreliable and fragile.

Conclusion

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, economic considerations paired with new justifications of racial difference reconstructed American slavery and affected the possibilities of enslaved people to achieve freedom. The "second slavery" absorbed more people into its merciless mills than ever before and all hope for formal abolition in the South came to vanish. But slavery did not only grow tighter, it also grew more intolerable as enslaved families, who constituted the cornerstone of social life and mutual emotional support, were increasingly threatened with destruction. As this chapter has argued, slave sales and the internal slave trade

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proof on the accuser instead of on the defendant happened in Maryland in 1817. Laws of Maryland, 1817, ch. 112, MSA.

[193] *Daily Picayune*, December 24, 1858.

[194] Besides dark figures emanating from the illegalization of certain groups of persons of African descent, there is a general awareness among many historians that the US censuses and city directories have to be used with care since black and non-white people were structurally underrepresented. George C. Wright, *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1930* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 44, FN 1.

triggered the flight of bondspeople who otherwise might have accepted their enslavement alongside their families for a little longer.

The curtailment of manumissions, expansion of slavery, and sale rendered flight an increasingly urgent enterprise. At the same time, for those who attempted to stay in the South, finding refuge would not have been possible without the growing free black population that offered a receiving society. In fact, their mere presence in the cities was the main force to carve out spaces of freedom for refugees. The interconnectedness of free and enslaved African Americans impacted both groups. While it offered opportunities for freedom seekers, it negatively impacted the conditions of those legally free. The increasingly restrictive legislative situation free blacks faced was partly also a result of their willingness to aid and shelter slave refugees. Conversely, their conditions influenced, and eventually restricted, the aspirations of refugees, and the spaces of freedom they jointly created were of inferior quality compared to free soil.

Because southern urban slave refugees did not seek free soil, the freedom they found was illegal and, hence, fragile. Joining a population who to large extent likewise had an illegal status, they could not hope to achieve legalization by assimilating to them. Not only were they liable to retrieval and reenslavement on basis of the rule of slavery in the South, becoming part of the free black population did not automatically entail that refugees were seen and treated as nominally free people. In the legal system of the time, they were illegals who sought illegal freedom among other illegal people. Knowing the reasons for their escape and the nature of illegal freedom creates the basis for understanding who these people were and how they fled to southern cities. This will be the topic of the following chapter.

Chapter Two

A Mobile Elite: Profiling Southern Refugees

In December 1856, Frances, or, as she called herself, Fanny, about 26 years of age, decided to abscond from the man who held her as his legal slave. It took William Taber, the slaveowner, ten months before he placed an advertisement in *The Charleston Mercury* to find his human property. In order to describe her, he stated that Fanny was

> of a good height, brown complexion, rather sharp features; her upper front teeth gone, (but she may have false teeth to replace them, as she declared she would if she ran off,) talks like the North Carolina negros, where she was raised, but latterly has lived in Florida, has a pleasant expression, speaks slowly and deliberately, and altogether is a very likely girl.

Taber informed the newspaper's readership that Fanny "has been seen about town, until within the last three or four months," and he believed that she was "harbored by some white person in the City [of Charleston]." In the text, the slaveholder set a bounty of $100 on Fanny and an additional $50 "on proof to conviction of any responsible person who may have harbored her." This was a considerable amount of money suggesting that Fanny was a valuable bondswoman to Taber. In January 1859, Taber had still not been able to get her back although Fanny "has been seen often about the city" and the award had been risen to $300.[195]

As discussed in chapter one, over the course of the second slavery, the number of enslaved Americans who sought freedom by running away increased. Who were the men and women that took these decisions and actions? Taber's short ad on Fanny contains a great deal of valuable information to the backgrounds, all of which will return throughout this study. It includes the length of Fanny's absence, the color of her skin, her past, her owner's perception of her attitude, the involvement of third parties in her flight, and very importantly, her mobility. This ad helps formulate key questions concerning the profile of permanent slave refugees to urban cities. To what extent were some people more disposed to escape their owners than others? What were the necessary preconditions or skills to make a successful flight attempt? How did runaways escape and which strategies did they employ to secure their freedom? This chapter will analyze the profile of people who fled to southern cities as a small group of men and women. It will draw the journeys and methods of those who were able to make use of the opening spaces of freedom.

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[195] The headline of the ad, presumably to attract more attention, stated "$500 REWARD." *Charleston Mercury*, November 3, 1857; January 12, 1859.

Gender and Mobility

Runaway slave advertisements and jail statistics make clear that there was a gender imbalance within the runaway slave population of the American South. Previous studies have underscored this. John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger evaluated over 2,000 runaway slave ads for the periods 1790-1816 and 1838-1860 and concluded that the share of women was remarkably stable, namely 19 percent for both periods. Yet, there were some interesting regional differences between the five states they analyzed. In the early period, the percentage of women was with 23 highest in South Carolina while in Louisiana they constituted some 11 percent. In the later period, Louisiana had the highest percentage of female runaways (29 percent), and Virginia the lowest (nine percent).[196] Leni Ashmore Sorensen's analysis of the Daybook of the Richmond Police shows that women made up 24.7 percent of runaways suspected of being in that city between 1834 and 1844.[197] Judith Kelleher Schafer's statistics on runaway slaves in New Orleans in the year 1850 indicate that 31.7 percent were women.[198]

The two studies on Richmond and New Orleans are of particular relevance because the analyses relate specifically to urban areas. In these cities, women constituted roughly one fourth to one third of slave refugees. These gender imbalances are remarkable but the share of women was still large enough as to concede them a significant role in southern urban slave flight. The claim that the archetypal runaway slave was a man is still correct, yet when looking at southern-internal flight, the presence of men loomed less prominent compared to escapes to other areas. Those who fled to the North were comprised of over 80 percent men. Among refugees to Mexico were even more men, namely almost 90 percent.[199] In order to understand the gendered dimensions, we have to contextualize gender in slave flight.

Explanations for the generally lower number of women who escaped slavery have usually been attributed to their social role in the community. Various historians have claimed that as daughters, wives, and especially mothers, enslaved women held more responsibilities at home and were therefore more reluctant to leave their families behind.[200] This line of reasoning holds normative implications that enslaved men were less likely to make sacrifices for their

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[196] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 210-212.

[197] Leni Ashmore Sorensen, "Absconded: Fugitive Slaves in the Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, 1834-1844" (Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 2005), 15.

[198] Judith Kelleher Schafer, "New Orleans Slavery in 1850 as Seen in Advertisements," *Journal of Southern History* 47:1 (1981): 43. Note that these numbers vary significantly from studies on runaway slaves in the eighteenth century, which place the share of women around ten percent. Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 202. One explanation might lay in the generally lower numbers of enslaved African women brought to the North American colonies. For statistics on sex and age ratios in the trans-Atlantic slave trade, see David Eltis and Stanley L. Engerman, "Was the Slave Trade Dominated by Men?," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23:2 (1992): 237-257. For discussions on the backgrounds and fluctuations over time and space, see David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 100-104; and Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 57-61.

[199] Andrew Delbanco, *The War Before the War. Fugitive Slaves and the Struggle for America's Soul from the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2018), 107; and Mareite, "Conditional Freedom," 58. The picture of men as the only protagonists of slave flight was further engraved in historians' minds due to the fact that almost nine out of ten slave narratives were written by men. David Stefan Doddington, *Contesting Slave Masculinity in the American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 26, FN 22.

[200] Deborah White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1987), 70-71; and Freddie L. Parker, *Running for Freedom: Slave Runaways in North Carolina, 1775-1840* (New York: Garland, 1993), 71. Older works include Blassingame, *Slave Community*, 198.

families and children and portrays women as more caring and more engaged in their communities. Some enslaved women surely felt this sort of social pressure. Runaway slave ads which indicate that a mother fled and left her children behind are indeed rare. "Motherhood was central to enslaved women's concept of womanhood, their experience in slavery, and their resistance efforts," as pointed out by Amani Marshall.[201]

Contrary to these arguments that attempt to explain the lower numbers of women escaping, it could also be argued that bondswomen had even stronger incentives to flee. Women were given no preferential treatment in slavery, yet sexual violence in slavery was an additional danger to their physical and mental health, including in the domestic slave trade. Formerly enslaved John Brown gave the account of a several days-long sexual abuse of an enslaved women by slave traders during the journey.[202] One of the reasons Harriet Jacobs, autobiographer of the only known runaway slave narrative written by a woman, decided to flee, or better said, to simulate her escape, were the constant sexual harassments by her master, who had, to her knowledge, already fathered 11 children by enslaved mothers.[203] Elizabeth Keckley, who later became an author, activist, and modiste to the First Lady Mary Lincoln, hardly went into more detail when she mentioned the continual rape by a white man: "I was regarded as fair-looking for one of my race, and for four years a white man—I spare the world his name—had base designs upon me. I do not care to dwell upon this subject, for it is one that is fraught with pain." After an abuse over years, Keckley became pregnant from him.[204] Nell Irvin Painter has laid out that rape of enslaved women is often hidden between the lines. In the case of Sojourner Truth, Painter speculates that she decided to keep parts of her story secreted out of concern about her credibility. Truth feared that readers would not believe her because it was "so unaccountable, so unreasonable, and what is usually called so unnatural."[205]

Flight from slavery, in contrast to families being separated, was an active choice and it cannot just be assumed that fathers had less desire to be with their families than mothers. Recent contributions by historians support this claim showing how important and indeed prioritized

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[201] Amani Marshall found only one woman out of 559 in South Carolina who was said to have absconded leaving her child behind. Amani Marshall, "Enslaved Women Runaways in South Carolina, 1820-1865" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2007), 87, 97. Leslie Schwalm has claimed that enslaved women much more frequently absconded for short periods of time rather than longer periods. In anticipation they arranged with friends or kin to look over their personal affairs. Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight for We. Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 41.

[202] Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia*, 17-19.

[203] Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, 55. Jacob simulated her escape to the northern states while she lived for seven years in her grandmother's attic.

[204] Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes, or, Thirty Years a Slave, and Four Years in the White House* (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1868), 38-39. Accounts of rape of and sexual encroachment on women can also be found in the narratives of men. George Teamoh, for instance, reported that his wife and youngest daughter were sold to a white man who abused them both. F. N. Boney, Richard L. Hume, and Rafia Zafar, *God Made Man, Man Made the Slave. The Autobiography of George Teamoh* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1990), 94-95. Teamoh completed his autobiography in 1874 but it was not published before 1990. "Preface," in Idem, ix-x.

[205] Sojourner Truth was sold to different owners who probably all abused her. Later, she was forcedly married to a fellow slave. Nell Irvin Painter, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, a Symbol* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 16. For a study on rape in slavery, see Thelma Jennings, "'Us Colored Women Had to Go Through a Plenty': Sexual Exploitation of African-American Slave Women," *Journal of Women's History* 1:3 (1990): 45-74. On the much less often occurring but nonetheless existing sexual abuse of enslaved men, see Thomas A. Foster, "The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20:3 (2011): 445-464.

kinship ties, families, and monogamous love was for enslaved women *and* men.[206] Yet, in the lives of enslaved people there were many factors that lay outside their area of influence, most dramatic of which was being sold away from loved ones. A number of slave narratives display the pain of enslaved men of being separated from their families, among them the one by Charles Ball. He was separated from his wife Judah when he was sold from Maryland first to South Carolina and subsequently to Georgia. In the moment of hearing about his fate, "the thoughts of my wife and children rushed across my mind, and my heart died away within me." Ball constantly referred to his family throughout his narrative expressing the sufferings of forced separation. After the death of his most recent master, he concluded that "my heart yearned for my wife and children, from whom I had now been separated more than four years." He broke free and returned to them.[207]

Without looking closely at the different situations men and women found themselves in, it seems too one-sided to claim that men saw it as less problematic to be separated from their loved ones.[208] At the same time, the majority of women did indeed not have very good preconditions to escape. Men in the nineteenth-century United States enjoyed greater mobility than women. This held true for all men and women but had even more severe consequences for African Americans, particularly those in bondage. Higher mobility was in the majority of cases due to the tasks and professions enslaved people performed, according to Susan O'Donovan. The division of tasks was based on gender assumptions, which contributed to different experiences women had in slavery.[209] Plantation workers, women and men, constituted the bulk of American slaves in the nineteenth century.[210] They were mostly bound to their plantations and the nearby surroundings. Yet, looking at those employed in other sectors, it becomes apparent that enslaved African Americans possessed a series of different professional skills which furnished them with varying degrees of mobility and leeway, which in some cases even came close to nominal freedom. Rather than gendered family roles, mobility was the most important attribute responsible for the gender imbalances in slave flight.

This speaks to differences between average field hands and a small group of more privileged slaves. Like Solomon Northup, who unsuccessfully tried to escape for 12 years, the vast majority of enslaved African Americans had virtually no chance to free themselves by running away. Those who did have a chance, fulfilled certain criteria. To understand them, we will first turn to Ira Berlin before modifying his concept of the slave elite and applying it to this study. Berlin has found that the runaway slave population was largely not comprised of average field hands. Rather, he has labeled them the "slave elite" and claims that they were "more skilled, sophisticated, and aggressive than the mass of slaves." They were made up of mechanics, artisans, domestics, and drivers.[211] At first sight, runaway slave advertisements

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[206] Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*; Emily West, *Chains of Love: Slave Couples in Antebellum South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Idem, *Family or Freedom: Free People of Color in the Antebellum South* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2012); and Doddington, *Slave Masculinities*.

[207] Ball, *Slavery in the United States*, 36, 287.

[208] This claim contradicts Dorothy Roberts who stated that "most slave women formed maternal bonds so strong that they renounced the quest for freedom for the sake of their children." Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage Books, 2017), 44, originally published 1997.

[209] Susan E. O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), 2.

[210] For a breakdown of slave workers by plantation unit and numbers, see Stampp, *Peculiar Institution*, 31-32.

[211] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 160. This contradicts the claim of Franklin and Schweninger only at first sight. They suggested that the largest group of runaways were young, strong, male field slaves. Franklin and

back up Berlin's claim about the slave elite, as well as the very high bounties that enslavers set on many escapees. It was worth $200 to Dick's owner to get him back after Dick absconded in 1836. Since "Dick is a brick moulder by trade," he was of high value as a slave.[212] It was precisely slaves' capacities as human beings that gave them so much value.[213] A professional training, mobility, mental capacities, and autonomy turned enslaved African Americans into valuable property whilst at the same time increasing their chances of successful permanent escape. Contemporary observers understood this. The English traveler Marianne Finch found that "those whom good treatment has rendered most fit for freedom, are the most desired as slaves."[214]

Finch's argumentation seems to especially fit enslaved people whose skills made them extremely valuable, like Isaac Wallace. Sometimes calling himself Ezekiel, Wallace ran away near Baltimore in September 1817. "He is a shoemaker by trade, and carried with him all his tools," stated his master and offered $100 for getting him back. And further, "He is a very good ploughman, and excellent with the axe, scythe and cradle."[215] Shoemakers and brick molders were common in runaway slave advertisements, as well as blacksmiths, sawyers, carpenters, caulkers, and waiters. Indeed, oftentimes not only their skills were mentioned but also the quality of their work, hinting at the monetary value these people presented to their owners. Sam Howard, for instance, was an "excellent wood cutter," Julis was described as a "good sawyer, rough carpenter, and can work pretty well at the coopers trade," and Bennett Taylor's master thought of him as an "excellent black smith and gun-smith."[216] Because these "elite" slaves were so valuable, we must assume that masters invested in runaway slave advertisements much more frequently than for bondspeople of less monetary value. In this light, it is altogether possible that the share of women among the refugee population was higher than it appears.

Although Berlin is right in that the slave elite was well positioned for flight, professional skills were not the main factor that furnished enslaved people with mobility. His slave elite is close to the artisans of traditional studies of the working class,[217] yet he does not analyze the broad array of occupations that could create mobility, including skilled *and* unskilled work. To adapt this concept to this study, a broad horizon counted more than professional skills when it came to forging ties and making plans to escape. Drivers, errand boys, and vendors of all sorts worked in jobs for which no special formation was needed. However, an unskilled errand boy or an enslaved huckster could capitalize on their mobility to get to the nearest city or to forge important contacts. This held likewise true for women. More often than being field workers,

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Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 209-210. It is important to keep in mind that Franklin and Schweninger pinpointed *temporary* absenteeism as the most common form of slave flight and made this the focus of their study. When looking at absconders who intended to stay out of slavery on a *permanent* basis, however, the profile of runaways slightly changes. Within truancy, hiding around and near plantations was the dominant feature, which was mostly undertaken by plantation workers.

[212] *Daily National Intelligencer*, October 1836.

[213] Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams. Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 66.

[214] Marianne Finch, *An Englishwoman's Experience in America* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 144, originally published London: Richard Bentley, 1853.

[215] *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, November 4, 1817.

[216] *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, October 29, 1816; and *Enquirer*, August 1, 1806; October 4, 1808.

[217] See E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1963), ch. 8. See also Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975); and Herbert G. Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America. Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

women who ran away were washerwomen, seamstresses, cooks, or servants, like Beckey, "an excellent seamstress," who also "understands keeping a cake shop."[218] Although not skilled in the actual meaning of the word, bondswoman specialized in certain areas of hand- or craftwork and some acquired high expertise in their professions.[219] Women and men with expertise often worked under less supervision and were regularly send or rented out to other places. This increased their mobility, their circle of acquaintances, and their knowledge of the close-by and distant world.

Runaway slave ads speak volumes about the mobility of the absconded without reference to skills. For example, Nelson Duncan, a slave who fled from Richmond in 1837, had been a carriage driver and frequently drove his master's carriage from Petersburg, where they resided, to Richmond. Thereby, Duncan acquired knowledge about routes and made contacts. Catherine, an enslaved woman from Manchester, Virginia, was employed at carrying milk to Richmond. She ran away in 1838.[220] Not in all cases, moreover, was it mandatory that the persons fleeing possessed this knowledge and experience themselves. Through kin networks and exchange of information, prospective refugees could benefit from the mobility of others. This inherited mobility capital worked especially for those with large personal networks.[221] When bondspeople lived close to roads, rivers, or towns, they could not only physically escape more easily, they were also in a better position to meet people who could provide them with information.

Mobility was clearly related to jobs and tasks but it could also be achieved outside the realms of work. Moving for non-work-related reasons likewise enlarged people's orientation in the outside world. Yet, it was again mostly men who officially as well as clandestinely visited spouses, lovers, and family members at different plantations, just like it was mostly men who drove carriages and delivered messages. Enslaved women on the roads were therefore less common and more suspicious.[222] Through travelling between plantations, commuting from countryside to town, and moving within cities, many enslaved men—but also women—covered physical distances, which allowed them to expand their horizon in a quite literal way. This allowed, for instance, plantation workers to also run away, and at times they were likewise considered very valuable by their owners.

Jarrett, "an excellent hand on a farm," for one, absconded slavery in 1817 and found a bounty of $100 on himself.[223] An insightful source are plantation books in which masters or overseers recorded the daily work of each enslaved laborer and which show the absence of those who had run away. For example, on Exeter Plantation, South Carolina, temporary absconders

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[218] *Augusta Chronicle*, May 20, 1826.

[219] The problem of the categorization of skilled and unskilled labor is that it derives from work certified by craft guilds that could vouch for high quality. It therefore excludes women's work who often learned at home or elsewhere where training was not linked to a certificate. Dirk Hoerder, "Transcultural Approaches to Gendered Labour Migration: From the Nineteenth-Century Proletarian to Twenty-First Century Caregiver Mass Migrations," in *Proletarian and Gendered Mass Migrations. A Global Perspective on Continuities and Discontinuities from the 19th to the 21st Centuries*, ed. Dirk Hoerder and Amarijt Kaur (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 25. The way "skilled" is used here refers to occupations that included a time of apprenticeship or professional formation.

[220] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, February 2, 1837; January 11, 1838, UVA.

[221] The concept of inherited mobility capital derives from David Cairns, *Youth Transitions, International Student Mobility and Spatial Reflexivity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 43.

[222] Sylviane A. Diouf, "Borderland Maroons," in *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America*, ed. Damian Alan Pargas (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 184.

[223] *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, September 4, 1817.

were listed with the date of their escape and the date they came back (or were brought back). Enslaved people who did not return eventually disappeared from the listings of the record books, like Silvey. She was reported absent over the entire period of one record book, from January 10 to December 24, 1854. In the next preserved ledger from 1856, she was absent from the very beginning, January 7, and it can be assumed that she was also not found in the interim of the year 1855. On March 24, she then stopped being listed in the work book.[224] Silvey was not retrieved. These examples testify to the permanent flight of enslaved plantation workers.

Figure 5: Mobile Occupations Broadened the Networks of Black People[225]

Based on Silvey's sex, it is statistically more likely that she sought freedom in an urban center in the South than leave the slaveholding states. Indeed, compared to the gender divisions of slave flight to the North and Mexico, women were much more present in southern-internal escapes than to other regions.[226] Southern cities, in comparison to other destinations, presented a particular opportunity for women who sought to free themselves by running away.[227]

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[224] Motte Plantation Record Book, Record Book, July – December 1854; and Motte Plantation Record Book, Plantation Exeter, Work Book, January 1856, Dr. J. B. Motte, SCLC.

[225] NARA, Freedpeople Working at the James Hopkinson Plantation at Edisto Island, South Carolina, Postbellum, in Carole Emberton, "A Hungry Belly and Freedom," *We're History* (November 25, 2014), URL: http://werehistory.org/hungry-belly-and-freedom/, accessed July 2, 2019.

[226] Exemptions were flights during war time. The turnover of "normal" conditions often enabled enslaved people to escape in groups, sometimes entire families. For the Civil War, see Delbanco, *War Before the War*, 3-60; and Marion B. Lucas, *A History of Blacks in Kentucky from Slavery to Segregation, 1760-1891* (Frankfort: Kentucky Historical Society, 2003), 158, originally published 1992. For escapes during the Revolutionary War, see Matthew Spooner, "Freedom, Reenslavement, and Movement in the Revolutionary South," in *Race and Nation in the Age of Emancipations*, ed. Whitney Nell Stewart and John Garrison Marks (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), 16.

[227] Women were furthermore in other ways essentially involved in flights, namely by supporting the ones escaping (as well as aiding them after arrival, as shall be shown). Most runaways of course had allies. They shared their

Freedom-based migration, regardless of gender, was mostly the outcome of preexisting mobility. This was the most important precondition.

In line with the age range of the most valuable bondspeople, the majority of slave refugees were between their late teens and late thirties.[228] Reckoning with their physical fitness to wage an escape attempt, their mental abilities to assimilate to the free population, their chances to find a job and make money for themselves, and the hope to have a family and see their children grow up in freedom, provided them with a window of about 20 years. Bondspeople who were already older could shy away from risking their lives or putting their lives upside down by running away. When northern journalist James Redpath asked an enslaved man "if he did not think of escaping before" he was an old man, the man abnegated. "I wouldn't run the risk now of trying to escape. It's hardly so much an object, sir, when a man's turned the hill."[229] The youngest enslaved child fleeing alone, who has been found in this study, was Marvin, eight years old. He disappeared in New Orleans in 1853.[230]

In the decades before the Civil War, an enslaved American who was born and died under the same master was almost an exception. Arthur, 25 to 30 years old, was advertised as a runaway slave in 1821. Besides describing his physical features including marks of the whip, wounds and mutilations, slaveholder Robert Martin from North Carolina included a history of sales: Arthur

> was born in Maryland, and when about fourteen years of age, was sold to John or James M'Gill, in Wilmington, N.C.—by M'Gill to Blue—by Blue to Wm. Thomas, on Pedee, S.C.—runaway from Thomas and got back to Wilmington and passed as a free man for some time; at last was apprehended and put in goal, sold by order of Thomas in Wilmington goal to John M'Daniel of South-Carolina—by M'Daniel to Night—by Night to Alexander Bell—by Bell to me. Said negro may have obtained a free pass, or have been taken off by some evil disposed person […].[231]

Manifold sales were devastating for the lives of enslaved people who saw themselves again and again ripped apart from the people and environments the had gotten used to. But new owners, new places, and the experiences of being removed also expanded one's networks and geographical knowledge. Very tellingly, in the cases in which this information is included in the newspaper announcements, 41 percent of female and 30 percent of male runaway slaves had multiple owners, as calculated by Amani Marshall for South Carolina.[232] It must be

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plans before departure with friends and family members, always carefully judging whom they could trust. Consult the account of Mary, which reveals how the suspicion of members of a slaveholding family was slowly raised when several of their bondspeople, all linked to one family, escaped one after another. Adele Petigru Allston to Colonel Francis Heriot, July 1864, Allston Family Letters, in *The South Carolina Rice Plantations as Revealed in the Papers of Robert F. W. Allston*, ed. J. H. Easterby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 199-200.

[228] This also applied to other times and regions. See Daniel E. Meaders, "South Carolina Fugitives as Viewed Through Local Colonial Newspapers with Emphasis on Runaway Notices 1732-1801," *Journal of Negro History* 60:2 (1975): 292; and Michael P. Johnson, "Runaway Slaves and the Slave Communities in South Carolina, 1799 to 1830," *William & Mary Quarterly* 38:3 (1981): 418.

[229] James Redpath, *The Roving Editor: or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1859), 40-41.

[230] *Daily Picayune*, December 16, 1853. In Richmond, a ten-year-old girl with the name Nancy and a boy called Henry of eight or nine years were believed to be hiding in the city. Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, October 17, 1836; November 8, 1840, UVA. The Richmond Daybook, moreover, features a number of entries on children and young adults from 11 to 19.

[231] *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, September 3, 1821.

[232] Marshall, "Enslaved Women," 103.

assumed that the instances in which previous ownership was not mentioned, was considerably higher.

The mobility of so many bondspeople, as Cory James Young recently remarked, forces us to think about other forms of dominance and repression than the whip.[233] Keeping enslaved people immobilized on a plantation (like in the case of Solomon Northup) was one way to secure an enslaved workforce. This observation corresponds to the one made by Stephanie Camp, who has noted that captivity as the essence of slavery did not end when the nineteenth century dawned. Enslaved people kept on being severely restricted in their physical and social mobility.[234] At the same time, as just demonstrated, a significant part of the enslaved population came to possess high mobility and leeway. This mobility contradicts Orlando Patterson' theory. Patterson contributed a great deal to understanding the essence of slavery and his approach to defining slavery as social death provoked numerous scholarly debates. He emphasized the loss of identity and absolute isolation, which produced total powerlessness on the side of bondspeople.[235] As shown here, however, his theory is more useful for the moment of capture and enslaving, rather than in the context of the second slavery.[236] After generations of captivity in the Americas, the majority of bondspeople were born into social communities. These dynamics were strengthened by that American-born bondspeople outnumbered those born in Africa already before the Revolutionary War.[237] Enslaved people in the Unites States and particularly the mobile slave elite, protagonists of this study, were far from isolated, passive, and immobile, and oftentimes not even tied to a specific plantation or a single master. These people were not controlled by the whip.[238]

In the 1960s, human rights activist Malcolm X famously claimed that there was a distinction between field and house slaves. The house slaves had accommodated themselves in slavery because they realized that they were better off than the plantation hands. "He ate better, dress[ed] better, and he lived in a better house," the activist claimed, for which the house slave would not run away.[239] Although used by Malcolm X as a parable to describe the contrasting attitudes of black Americans towards their oppression by white society in the twentieth century, his statement offers intersections to discuss why people would want to flee slavery while others

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[233] Cory James Young, "'Jim, (alias James Boyd;)': Enslaved Migrant Laborers in the American North," *Activist History Review* (April 15, 2019), URL: https://activisthistory.com/2019/04/15/jim-alias-james-boyd-enslaved-migrant-laborers-in-the-american-north/, accessed April 25, 2019.

[234] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 12.

[235] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death. A Comparative Study* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[236] Joseph Miller has likewise remarked that defining enslaved people as socially dead might have been a utopian vision of slaveholders. Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History. A Global Approach* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 32.

[237] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 22-23. The one scenario that comes closest to Patterson's social death hypothesis were bondspeople who were sold alone to distant places. Damian Pargas has shown that these people not seldom faced problems of acculturation. This could be two-sided. Some newcomers were essentially strangers and foreigners and were not able to grow used to other forms of working and social life. In other occasions, those already there refused to accept the newcomers and complicated their integration processes. Pargas, *Slavery and Forced Migration*, 84.

[238] It is important not to forget that slave control did not only take place on individual plantations. Formal and customary law used to supervise traveling widely impacted the leeway and mobility of enslaved people.

[239] Malcom X, "Message to the Grass Roots," in *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 10-11.

were hesitant.[240] Turning his argument around, it was precisely enslaved men and women with superior occupations and tasks than field slaves who were *able* to escape. What kept them under control was the same element that triggered their flight when taken away from them: family. Family and kinship could be both a motivation for and a discouragement from escape, and the persistent threat of sale into the domestic slave trade made the preservation of family ties a more pressing concern than the struggle for freedom. This has also been demonstrated by Calvin Schermerhorn, who has concluded that most enslaved people would choose family over freedom when they had the chance to choose.[241] Occasional newspaper announcements confirm Schermerhorn's interpretation. For example, 18-year-old John Simmons or John Pickling from South Carolina markedly decided against freedom and in favor of his family when he executed a successful flight attempt but later returned for his mother who was held enslaved by the same man as Pickling.[242]

The Hiring System as Springboard

Many of the jobs that implied a high mobility were related to slave hiring. Connected to urbanization and industrialization processes, the hiring out of slaves to cities and towns grew exponentially and indeed became a central feature of urban slavery. Bondspeople, mostly men, who worked as hirelings, and more so those with professional skills, became highly mobile. Slave hiring could take two templates: There were bondspeople whose owners arranged for their hire, and there were enslaved men and women who sought jobs for themselves. The latter were so-called self-hired slaves. Historians have shown that slave hiring had existed during colonial times, too, but the dimensions it assumed in the decades before the Civil War in towns and cities were striking: In the antebellum period, between five and 15 percent of the enslaved population were on hire, with an increase towards the Civil War. In later decades, one third to one half of enslaved people were hired at some point in their lives, at least in parts of the Upper South. In the Lower South, fewer slaves were hired, usually below 15 percent, due to the lack of large-scale enterprises and the dominance of mass plantations.[243]

Going further into detail, Claudia Goldin has calculated that by 1860, 62 percent of enslaved men in Richmond were hired. Corrected for bondspeople who were too young or too old to work, this corresponded to 71 percent of the actual enslaved labor force. For women the respective shares were 38 and 46 percent.[244] Richmond was the South's most important industrial city and enslaved labor was used in the manufactories. Although it was mostly men

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[240] In migration studies, the reasons why people would *not* migrate are the focus of much interest. As Ton van Naerssen and Martin van der Velde have emphasized, these decisions cannot be understood without including family relations and social networks. Ton van Naerssen and Martin van der Velde, "The Thresholds to Mobility Disentangled," in *Mobility and Migration Choices. Thresholds to Crossing Borders*, ed. Idem (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 4.

[241] Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 20.

[242] *Charleston Mercury*, February 15, 1856.

[243] John J. Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire: Renting Enslaved Laborers in Antebellum Virginia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012), 11-14; Thomas D. Morris, *Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 132; Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 136; and David R. Goldfield, "Black Life in Old South Cities," in *Before Freedom Came: African-American Life in the Antebellum South*, ed. Edward Campbell, Jr., and Kym Rice (Richmond: Museum of the Confederacy, 1991), 130.

[244] Goldin, *Urban Slavery*, 36.

who were forcedly employed in these sites, smaller numbers of women labored there, too, particularly during one period in the 1850s. Observing wage developments and changing demographics in the factories, Midori Takagi has claimed that when hiring prices for male slaves increased rapidly in the countryside, they were pushed out of the cities. Enslaved women who in their majority labored in households, were as a reaction pulled into the tobacco and cotton factories. Although this was just a brief period, Takagi attributed a liberating effect for women to these new working conditions. Even more "liberating" than working remotely from one's owner was living apart from him or her, and separate housing of bondspeople likewise increased over the decades and grew to be ubiquitous.[245] These experiences let enslaved women partake in the horizon-broadening world of factory work where they expanded their networks, learned about news, and augmented the chances to become freedom seekers or to support other freedom seekers in their endeavors.

Judging from runaway ads, over time, more and more runaways appeared to prefer hiding out with free blacks, enslaved acquaintances, or other more distant knots in their networks rather than with family members. Masters knew about the family situations of their slaves, as often did white business partners and neighbors. They had information about their slaves' family ties into slavery and freedom, knew the names of relatives, and often even places and street names where runaways might try to hide. Precisely for this reason, the closest relatives were not always the best choice to seek permanent refuge with, because masters would know where to look. James, whose owner knew that his mother lived at the cotton factory on the canal in Richmond, believed him to be there in 1840, and he was caught two weeks later.[246]

Professional networks became more relevant and may over time even have outstripped the importance of kinship ties in providing refuge. These contacts clearly benefitted from the hiring system. Industrialization needed a great deal of flexible labor which led to a high fluctuation of workers in the manufactories. The result was a common intermingling amongst many laborers of various statuses, free and unfree, with the latter having an important role in the early industrialization phases. The owner of Lilytand, who ran away in Richmond in 1839, believed him to have "acquaintances working at almost every Tobacco factory in the place."[247] Other bondspeople turned the tables on this strategy. An anonymous bondsman was hired out in Richmond in 1854, and while working as a hired slave "actually pretended that he was a free man and made a contract as such with some man of Richmond County to hire himself to him for a few month" the year after.[248] This man made provisions for a future escape attempt pretending to be free. His long-term planning shows how difficult such an endeavor could be and how thoroughly he prepared for it.

The Christmas break and early-January, a phase in which many of the hiring contracts for the coming year were negotiated, offered windows both for urban slaves deciding to flee and for newcomers to arrive without causing attention, to get lost in the crowd, and to start finding work right away. Refugee John Andrew Johnson also chose Christmas as a convenient

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[245] The downside was that evidently, many factory slaves were underfed and only possessed the most basic clothing. Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 35, 43, 94. John Zaborney has analyzed the slave-hiring system in Virginia and found that the experience of hirelings varied from virtual freedom to the severest oppression, depending on sex, location, occupation, the economy, skills, and individual masters and hirers. Zaborney, *Slaves for Hire*.

[246] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, 1834-1844, April 30, 1840, UVA.

[247] Idem, April 22, 1839, UVA.

[248] County Court Chancery Papers, February 19, 1855, LVA, in Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 2, County Court Petitions, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

time for his escape from a South Carolina plantation as well as his arrival in Charleston: "We all had three days' holiday at Christmas, and I, therefore, fixed upon that time as most appropriate for m[y] escape," Johnson claimed later in his autobiography before blending in with the city's day laborers.[249] Evidence that this was the strategy of many is plenty. For example, in Richmond, Lewis ran off on December 25, 1805 from the Washington Tavern.[250] John Simmons absconded in South Carolina on Christmas day 1855. He went to Graniteville on the Railroad to seek employment.[251] John and his wife Mahala also left on December 28, 1859, and Fanny from the opening paragraph likewise absconded in December.[252]

Urban slavery was linked to the hiring system but there were many enslaved city dwellers who worked for and lived with the person who owned them. These urban bondspeople could likewise enjoy great autonomy and mobility. House servants worked closely with the families they served and independently took to the streets to run errands, shop groceries, and manage the house keeping. Enslaved people working as personal servants traveled with their masters, thereby adding to their mobility further interregional, interstate, and sometimes even international contacts. Enslaved Charlotte from New Orleans, for example, made such an experience when she traveled with her master Pierre Blancq to Bordeaux, France, in 1820.[253]

Besides bondspeople who were rented out by their owners, there were self-hired slaves who, spread all over the South, hired out their own time. These men and women usually lived off the supervision of their legal owners, arranged for their own occupations, decided autonomously on the place and duration of their work, and negotiated the payment. It is difficult to estimate the numbers of bondspeople who hired themselves out without the involvement of their owners because the practice of self-hire came to be prohibited in all southern places at varying times. In the nineteenth century, it was generally illegal.[254] Attempting to provide an approximate number, historian Loren Schweninger has estimated that ten percent of all hired slaves were self-hired in Virginia in 1860, but he remarked that these are very conservative estimations.[255] Petitions and newspaper coverage show that legal codes that forbade self-hire were hardly ever followed. For example, in Charleston, where the law to curtail the self-hire of slaves was passed by both houses without division in 1850, a couple of months later, a local newspaper lamented that "it has completely failed. Not one slave less hires his time than before."[256]

Self-hiring furnished bondspeople with remarkable autonomy. Based on his observations, contemporary Robert Russell gave the accounts of one man whose owner had furnished him with a piece of paper stipulating the—apparently non-negotiable—price of $140

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[249] John Andrew Johnson, *The Experience of a Slave in South Carolina* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1862), 24.

[250] *Enquirer*, February 4, 1806.

[251] *Charleston Mercury*, February 15, 1856.

[252] Idem, January 12, 1859.

[253] In Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis. Unfree Labor in New Orleans During the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 1-2, ch. 2.

[254] Virginia forbade the self-hire of slaves in 1782 and again in 1819, Maryland in 1787, and Louisiana in 1806. South Carolina passed respective laws in 1712, 1740, and 1783. Jonathan D. Martin, *Divided Mastery: Slave Hiring in the American South* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 165.

[255] Loren Schweninger, "The Underside of Slavery: The Internal Economy, Self-Hire, and Quasi-Freedom in Virginia, 1780-1865," *Slavery & Abolition* 12:2 (1991): 1-22.

[256] *Charleston Courier*, September 12, 1850. Petitions by whites to ask for a better execution of the law as well as newspaper articles testifying to the failure of it are plentiful.

per year and of one young female domestic servant. She also had a fixed price set by her master, which was accepted by the prospective hirer, yet they were negotiating other terms of the contract. The woman refused to work in the garden (the hirer was a market gardener) and was furthermore pleading for other privileges—"her friends and favourites" had to be allowed to visit her. Apparently eventually agreeing on this point, the gardener and the enslaved woman went to "visit her proposed home and see how things looked."[257] This woman seemed to be only limited by the hiring rate and independent in all other aspects of the work relation. Equally autonomous was George Ingram. In 1824, reads a runaway slave advertisement, "a Negro Man, who calls his name GEORGE INGRAM […] very black and likely," in his late twenties, "RUNAWAY From the Eagle Tavern." The subscriber, Fields Kennedy from Augusta, found it "probable he may endeavor to get to Savannah or Charleston. Has a written pass to hunt for a master, signed John D. Walker, with reference to the subscriber, and the price for him mentioned in it."[258]

Ingram and the anonymous woman were not exceptional. Slaves who hired themselves out escaped the constant surveillance of their masters. Many white people who believed that this rendered their lived experiences too close to those of free people, resented this system. Petitions of white city dwellers worrying that this practice decreased the value of slaves and befouled their character were plentiful. *The Charleston Courier* lamented the "unwillingness it produces in the slave, to return to the regular life and domestic control of the master."[259] Elizabeth Ann Yates, who resided in Philadelphia but had her business run by executors, had several slaves hired out in Charleston. At least two of them successfully camouflaged themselves amidst the African American population. In 1824, her son David wrote to Yates that "your servants Emma & Sally have not paid any wages for a long time I am trying to find out where they stay that I may make them pay wages."[260] Perhaps, the two women had already made the step over the—for self-hired slaves very thin—line between bondage and autonomy. Beneficial for them was that slave hiring, in Jonathan Martin's words, divided mastery and hence weakened the absolute domination of the master-slave relation.[261]

Scholars have debated to what extent self-hired bondspeople experienced living and work conditions resembling freedom. Twentieth-century historians have employed terms like "semi-freedom," "'twilight zone' between bondage and freedom," "quasi-freedom," and "virtual freedom" to describe the situation of self-hired slaves.[262] They thereby downplayed the severity of being a slave, regardless of the often improved working conditions in comparison to bondspeople who were more restricted. Turning to Frederick Douglass, the best-known hired slave and refugee, offers a comparison. Being skilled in the trade of caulking, Douglass lived largely unsupervised in Baltimore. He called this arrangement with his owner a "privilege" and

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[257] Russell, *North America*, 151.
[258] *Charleston Courier*, May 9, 1825.
[259] Idem, September 12, 1850.
[260] David Yates to Mother, July 30, 1824, Yates Family Papers, SCHS.
[261] Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 4.
[262] Bancroft, *Slave Trading in the Old South*, 162-163; Robert S. Starobin, *Industrial Slavery in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 135, both in Jonathan D. Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 162; Schweninger, "Underside of Slavery;" and John Hope Franklin, "Slaves Virtually Free in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," *Journal of Negro History* 28:3 (1943): 285.

used the word "liberty" to describe how he felt.[263] The paragraphs on his hire, however, read like he meant autonomy or leeway rather than actual freedom. Hired slaves were very aware of the fact that they made good money because of their skills—and could be making the same money for themselves. This claim is in line with runaway slave and autobiographer Charles Ball. Ball recounted that he once visited Savannah with his owner where he observed self-hired bondsmen:

> In Savannah I saw many black men, who were slaves, and who yet acted as freemen so far, that they went out to work, where and with whom they pleased, received their own wages, and provided their own subsistence; but were obliged to pay a certain sum at the end of each week to their masters.[264]

Historian Jonathan Martin agrees. Not only because of their earnings self-hired slaves had to cede to their masters he advises caution suggesting that these people still knew and felt that they were enslaved.[265] Thousands of self-hired slaves who escaped prove him right.

Enslaved people with the broadest geographical mobility range were watermen and others working on board of vessels and boats. Washington, a bondsman from Richmond, "had been a waterman on James river for several years" before he escaped in 1837. It was worth $250 to his master to get him back. Black people dominated the steamboat economy. At any time in the 1850s, up to 3,000 enslaved and 1,500 free blacks worked on Mississippi riverboats.[266] For example, John, who was born in New Orleans, ran away from the steamer he worked on—probably on the Mississippi river. And there were many more like him: A "large Negro Man," whose name is unknown, "with one hand cut off close to the wrist, speaks French and English," fled his slaveholder. "He has been running on steamboats on the Red river, but is supposed to be loitering about the city [of New Orleans]."[267] The dimensions of the water business were immense. David Cecelski has claimed that almost all enslaved men who lived on the coast engaged in water-related jobs at some point in their lives. Next to a great many who rafted timber or went fishing, the traffic in the Tidewater (coastal region of North Carolina and Virginia), for instance, was organized by enslaved ferrymen.[268]

Water-related jobs indeed held special importance for men, and African Americans were present in every niche of American maritime life. Enslaved and free, they worked on sailboats, and later steamships, on schooners, and rafts as pilots, clerks, firemen (coal shufflers/stokers),

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[263] Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass. Written by Himself. His Early Life as a Slave, his Escape from Bondage, and his Complete History to the Present Time* (Hartford: Park Publishing Co., 1881), 190.

[264] Ball, *Slavery in the United States*, 368.

[265] Self-hired slaves are also visible in the historical records when it comes to other forms of resistance. As noted by Jonathan Martin, two of the largest slave conspiracies in American history were led by self-hired slaves. Martin, *Divided Mastery*, 162, 178. These were Gabriel Prosser's attempt to march enslaved co-conspirators into Richmond in 1800, and Denmark Vesey's planned revolt in the city of Charleston in 1822. Together with Nat Turner's rebellion in 1831, they symbolize the most important insurrections by enslaved people in the United States.

[266] Thomas C. Buchanan, *Black Life on the Mississippi. Slaves, Free Blacks, and the Western Steamboat World* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 10.

[267] *Richmond Enquirer*, February 16, 1837; and *Daily Picayune*, April 24, 1853; August 27, 1852. For a very graphic study on how to imagine the physical and social world of the Mississippi, see Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, ch. 5.

[268] David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman's Song. Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), xiii, 31.

and servants.[269] These kinds of voyages obviously furnished them with a broad horizon and many enslaved water workers enjoyed large autonomy. Such was the case with John Scott. After he escaped and his owner sued the captain of the steamboat on which Scott had been employed, a witness stated that he generally did not act as an enslaved man. "I had seen him I was in the Dewitt Clinton last season & Knew him there. he was cook on board the Dewitt Clinton, he seemed to have no master he acted as he pleased & let himself on board any boat he chose," testified Solomon Lynethart, a free black man.[270] Scott's account corresponds to Cecelski's claim that maritime and water life, due to its cosmopolitan nature and linkages to other black Atlantic communities, was much less preoccupied with the legal status of men, of whom a great many were of African descent. Hardly restricted, seamen were able to make enslaved and free acquaintances over long distances.[271] People like Clinton, who acted as free men despite being enslaved, did not cause much attention. This was related to the fact that close supervision of enslaved watermen was not feasible.

Figure 6: Black Oystermen in the Chesapeake[272]

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[269] W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). See also Paul A. Gilje, *Liberty on the Waterfront: American Maritime Culture in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

[270] McMaster v. Beckwith, April 1831, Docket #2017, Historical Archives of the Supreme Court of Louisiana, EKL.

[271] Cecelski, *Waterman's Song*, xvi.

[272] "Mine Oyster-Dredging-boats in the Chesapeake," 1872, Medium Print Collection, MSA, in Ki'Amber Thompson, "A Brief History of Black People and the Chesapeake Bay," *Ocean Conservancy* (February 4, 2019), URL: https://oceanconservancy.org/blog/2019/02/04/brief-history-black-people-chesapeake-bay/, accessed July 2, 2019.

Thanks to their autonomy, which was admittedly tainted by severe curtailments, hired and self-hired slaves had clear advantages when it came to flight. They basically could just walk away or not return the next day. If they were at sea, they could stay abroad.[273] Depending on the agreements with their owners, self-hired slaves could benefit from a lead of some days, weeks, or even months. Slaves hired out to urban areas had an additional advantage because, apart from living and working under much less supervision, they lived in the cosmopolitan, vibrant environment of cities where domestic and international news, progressive ideas, and cultural offers abounded. Amani Marshall has found that in South Carolina, 30 percent of women and 19 percent of men who were said to be runaways passing 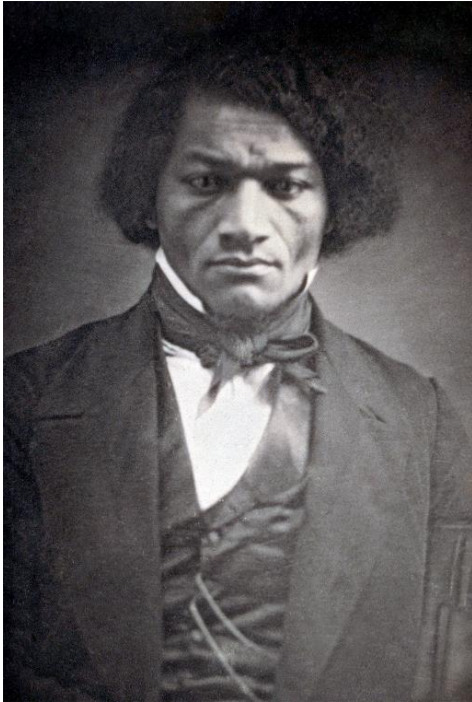for free, had lived in cities or towns before.[274] Frederick Douglass, who was sent from a plantation on Maryland's Eastern shore to Baltimore, recalled that "Going to live at Baltimore laid the foundation, and opened the gateway, to all my subsequent prosperity."[275]

Despite larger autonomy, slave hiring had a flipside. Kinship ties and social networks in general could suffer through dislocation. This was especially bitter when slaves were hired out to distant places. Urban slaves could therefore end up working in the countryside in mines or on coal fields, or building canals. Some enslaved Virginians were even hired out to Florida where they were forced to build the railroads.[276] How slave hire could disrupt family bands is portrayed by the case of Harriet "Rit" Ross from Caroline County, Maryland. Rit had nine children of which two were sold and many others were hired out, amongst them Harriet Tubman, who would later become one of the most prominent activists of the Underground Railroad. The ones hired out stayed as much out of sight of their mother as the ones sold.[278]

Figure 7: Frederick Douglass, c. 1850 [277]

Escapes of hired bondspeople were common, and these accounts often read remarkably banal. Evidence of how careless slaveowners behaved and how ignorant they sometimes were when it came to the opportunities a hire situation opened up for their slaves is plentiful. In 1808, Timothy was committed to jail in Richmond. He had run away from John Jefferson in Virginia

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[273] Enslaved coastal seamen were not only pilots but also captains. Thousands of black seamen emigrated sailing to Haiti between 1790 and 1830. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 139-145.

[274] Amani Marshall, "'They Will Endeavor to Pass for Free': Enslaved Runaways' Performances of Freedom in Antebellum South Carolina," *Slavery & Abolition* 31:2 (2010): 166.

[275] Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 31.

[276] Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 107, 165.

[277] Frederick Douglass, c. 1850, Public Domain Image, in BlackPast, "(1845) Frederick Douglass, 'My Slave Experience in Maryland'" (January 24, 2007), URL: https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1845-frederick-douglass-my-slave-experience-maryland/, accessed August 29, 2019.

[278] "Harriet 'Rit' Ross, Caroline County," Biographical Series, MSA, URL:
https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5400/sc5496/008400/008444/html/008444bio.html, accessed September 21, 2018.

to whom he was hired.[279] James Lusk of New Orleans hired his bondsman Dennis out in 1847 as a cabin waiter to John Swon, captain of a steamboat. At the end of the steamboat season, Swon did not return Dennis to New Orleans but dismissed him in St. Louis. Dennis was never seen again.[280] J. L. Marciaq's bondsman Jacko "was a runaway and had escaped from his master on several occasions." Yet, Marciaq still hired him out to work on boats on the Mississippi river, a task that included "running errands in towns while the boat was anchored." Unsurprisingly, Jacko made his escape.[281]

Some masters were aware that hiring and lodging out meant separation from loved ones. In 1830, William Cox informed his boss, Virginia slaveholder William Cobbs, that he had hired out Stephen together with his wife. The background of hiring out a couple was that "under these circumstances there is no danger of his going of."[282] Furthermore, a high number of people wanted in runaway slave advertisements had worked as hirelings at some point in their lives. Laban, a shoe and bootmaker, fled enslavement in 1807. He had "followed the aforesaid business in Richmond for several years, and is well known there" because he had been hired in the city during the previous two years.[283] Diana, who called herself Diana Todd, was "well known in the City [of Charleston], having attended at the parties with Camilla Johnson, from whom she was lately purchased." Sometime before her flight, Todd had hired herself on board a steamboat.[284]

In a petition, Mary Spence summarized the risks inherent of hiring out one's slaves. When her husband died in the 1820s, the widow asked the Baltimore County Court for permission "to dispose of all these slaves at private sale" to avoid "the extreme inconveniency and loss she would sustain by being compelled to keep them." Besides the fact that Spence stated that she did not need the full number of 39 enslaved workers on her farm in Maryland, she was aware that slave hire could lead to considerable disagreement among the parties involved. Additionally, she saw a danger "if they are hired out and dislike their master [hirer], of their absconding from service altogether."[285] Some runaway advertisements, indeed, shed light on slaveowners losing control over their hired-out bondspeople. George Cox from Charleston was such a slaveholder. In 1830, he offered a $5-bounty on Maria:

> She had a ticket from me, authorizing her to engage in a place to work, which she told me she was previously promised. This is to give notice, that she is using that ticket as an imposition; and if she is engaged, or offers her services to any one, that she be taken to the Work House, as a runaway.[286]

Mobile jobs and slave hiring were phenomena much more present in the lives of men than women. Since both were important preconditions to increase the success rate of escape,

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[279] *Enquirer*, June 17, 1808.

[280] Lusk v. Swon, June 1854, Docket #2852, Historical Archives of the Supreme Court of Louisiana, EKL.

[281] Eventually, Jacko was found on board the steamer H. M. Wright and Marciaq sued the steamer, its captain, and owners. Marciaq v. H. M. Wright, May 1857, January 1858, Docket #4645, Historical Archives of the Supreme Court of Louisiana, EKL.

[282] William R. Cox to William Cobbs, January 27, 1830, William Cobbs Letters, LVA.

[283] *Enquirer*, February 6, 1807.

[284] *Charleston Mercury*, November 26, 1833.

[285] Mary C. Spence Petition, Baltimore County, Maryland, November 15, 1826, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 2, County Court Petitions, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Schweninger Collection, MSA.

[286] *Charleston Courier*, October 8, 1830.

enslaved men both tried and managed to flee in larger numbers. Coming back to Ira Berlin's concept of the slave elite, those belonging to this upper echelon were indeed much more present in the refugee population. Or, in other words, the slave elite was better equipped to make an bid for freedom by running away.

Towards a City

Slave refugees who gravitated to southern cities to secure their freedom were either rural or urban slaves. Urban slaves who absconded, most times went to a nearby city or they just stayed in the same city. In the latter case, they decided simply not to report to their owners anymore.[287] Based on their experienced mobility and their corresponding horizons, freedom seekers in southern cities were overwhelmingly from the counties that constituted urban hinterlands. Police records demonstrate that escaped slaves whose owners thought them to be in Richmond and for whom the police was asked to be on the lookout between 1834 and 1844, were in their majority from nearby Virginia counties and from Richmond itself.[288] Between 1841 and 1846, most runaways who found themselves detained in the city jail, had ran off from the close-by counties of Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, King William, Goochland, Caroline, and the city of Petersburg. (See figure 8, which highlights the most common places of departure.)[289] Most slave refugees to Baltimore were similarly from counties in proximity to the city, while some came from the city itself or from northern Virginia.[290] Short-distance migration was a way to live a life outside the reach of one's master while at the same time maintaining ties to kin and staying in the place considered home.[291] Charleston and New Orleans, more often than Richmond and Baltimore, attracted refugees from a larger range of distances. New Orleans was the by far largest city in the Deep South and it seems like freedom seekers were drawn to this place from more widespread geographical locations.

It is important to keep in mind that slave flight was for some people not a one-time act and that destinations were not fixed end-points of a short migration experience. There were a number of scenarios flight from slavery could take on, always dependent on the individual circumstances and the reasons for the escape. Pauladore, a "Negro Man" of about 50 years, for instance, ran away but had to be continuously on the move in order to balance his family, jobs, and illegal freedom. In December 1853, Pauladore, "commonly called Paul," was already gone for 14 months. Thomas Davis, who wrote the newspaper announcement, informed that Paul "has lost the first joint of one of his big toes, moves slow when walking." Since he "was brought

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[287] These people were not runaway slaves in the original meaning of the term since they did not run. Flight is in this sense to be understood in the broader sense of escape from their owners' reach.

[288] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, UVA.

[289] Richmond (Va.), City Sergeant, Mss 3R415661, Section 1, Register 1841-1846, VHS.

[290] Diverse runaway slave advertisements, mostly *Sun*.

[291] Short-distance migration and the upholding of ties with home is one of Charles Tilly's classifications of migration. *Local migration* occurs over short distances and the migrants continue relations with their place of origin. Often, local migrants are already familiar with their destination. Charles Tilly, "Migration in Early Modern European History," *Center for Research on Social Organization* (CSRO) Working Paper #145 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1976), 5-6, 8. Speaking to the other side of the same coin, Herbert Gutman has stressed how heartbreaking flight to the North often was when refugees had to leave their loved ones behind. Gutman, *Black Family*, 265-266.

up in the coasting business between this City [Charleston] and Georgetown, between which places he has been sailing for the last 30 years," Paul was "well known." Davis went on that

> Gen. R. Y. Hayne has purchased his Wife and Children from H. L. Pinckney, Esq. and has them now on his Plantation at Goose Creek, where, no doubt, the Fellow is frequently lurking, and may be much of his time in the City [Charleston], or sometimes in the neighborhood of Georgetown.[292]

Pauladore escaped slavery but sought to remain in contact with his family. Like him, many had the hope to be able to visit loved ones on the plantations where they lived or meet them in the cities and towns. Therefore, they often stayed close. Others who had escaped once also remained restless—by choice or by compulsion. There are a few sources that indicate that (mostly) male runaways were moving back and forth between two or several cities and towns. John, for one, fled enslavement in 1826. Although "he was seen on a raft upon the Savannah River, going towards Savannah," his owner additionally suspected that he might be in Augusta and Hamburg.[293]

Figure 8: Origins of Refugees in Richmond

Those states that did not form part of the original Thirteen Colonies and those areas that were far off the East coast, counted much less inhabitants per square mile. City hopping in Mississippi, for one, where settlements were rather isolated,[294] was much more complicated

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[292] *Charleston Courier*, December 9, 1835.

[293] *Augusta Chronicle*, 1826.

[294] David Libby, *Slavery and Frontier Mississippi, 1720-1835* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), 52. Note that nevertheless, Mobile, Natchez, and Vicksburg were expanding urban marketplaces. Daniel H. Usner,

than in the Chesapeake because Virginia was in the antebellum period the only southern state with a system of cities.[295] South Carolina was relatively less populated than the Upper South but had more urbanized areas than the Gulf states. Enslaved people lived in different regions surrounding them with different geographies which either facilitated or hampered flight to an urban center. Additionally, in the Upper South it was less challenging to gravitate towards the cities because the enslaved population of the states was relatively smaller and black people who traveled on the roads and river raised less suspicion. In the Deep South, around half of the population was enslaved, in the Upper South it was one fifth to one third.[296]

Infrastructure mattered, too. The Mississippi river and the riverine landscape facilitated the journey of escapees from the upper counties of Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Missouri. The part water and technology played in the forced migration and subsequent freedom-based migration of enslaved Americans is illustrated by the account of Tom. According to a Committed-ad, he was brought "to the jail of the city of Norfolk as a runaway" in 1848, and described as "a negro man who says his name is TOM or THOMAS." Tom was about 30 years old, "a light bacon color, stoutly made, full face, bushy hair, has a very slight stoppage in his speech, and has been badly whipped." The story Tom recounted to the jailer George Miller reads as follows: "he was born in Middleburg, and sold in the city of Richmond, Va., to a trader and carried to New Orleans [on board of a schooner] some 20 years ago." There he lived with his owner, Mr. Necho, a Frenchman, "six or seven years, and thence escaped to Boston, where he has been following the water ever since until arrested here [in Norfolk] and confined in jail."[297] Assuming that Tom's account was true, he was first displaced 1,800 miles down the East coast and into the Gulf of Mexico (the distance between Richmond and New Orleans is about 1,000 miles airline). Later, he put 1,700 miles behind him by making his way from New Orleans to Boston. There is no information on how he traveled but it is likely that he covered a considerable part of the journey by steamboat over the Mississippi river.[298]

During the 1830s, transportation to the Southwest by ship became increasingly common. Coast ships connected Virginia to New Orleans, river steamboats to Natchez, Mississippi.[299] Before the age of steam—yet still during later times—it was common to walk slaves in coffles to the places where they were to be sold. Eyewitnesses to these coffles stated that trafficked people were mostly chained in pairs, including at night during their rests.[300] While some displaced people tried to run away at the destinations of their forced migrations, others did not

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Jr., "Frontier Exchange and Cotton Production: The Slave Economy in Mississippi, 1798-1936," *Slavery & Abolition* 20:1 (1999): 32.

[295] Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 39.

[296] In the latter region, the enslaved share of the population was declining and Delaware became a virtual free state by the mid-century; Maryland was following. Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 82, 99-100.

[297] *Daily Picayune*, March 13, 1849.

[298] There is also no background provided on why Tom returned to slaveholding territory, again making 700 miles after having achieved legal freedom on the free soil of Massachusetts. Given that he was originally from Norfolk and eventually returned there, conjectures that his family was the reason.

[299] Libby, *Slavery and Frontier*, 64.

[300] Ethan A. Andrews, *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States. In a Series of Letters Addressed to the Executive Committee of the American Union for the Relief and Improvement of the Colored Race* (Boston: Light & Stearns, 1836), 142-143; and Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia*, 16.

wait and stroke for freedom on the way.[301] Slave traders apparently reckoned that the people they coercively removed from their loved ones would make attempts to get back home. As Charles Ball recalled, one of them, when entering South Carolina, "addressed us all, and told us we might now give up all hope of ever returning to the places of our nativity; as it would be impossible for us to pass through the States of North Carolina and Virginia, without being taken up and sent back."[302]

Virginia as part of the Upper South was at the latest since the 1820s very much affected by the westward expansion of the United States in a way that many slaves ran the risk of being sold and deported into the Deep South, where new sugar and cotton plantations were springing up like mushrooms. Crop market prices and the geography of supply and demand for enslaved laborers shipped hundreds of thousands of enslaved men, women, and children off to uncertain futures. In Richmond, one of the most important centers for slave sale and distribution, slave auctions took place six days a week during the 1840s.[303] By the end of the antebellum period, they were open between nine o'clock in the morning and noon, and between one and five o'clock in the afternoon—every day, as narrated by freedom seeker William H. Robinson.[304]

An example of enslaved people stemming from the departing regions of the internal slave trade were Violet, 32 years old, and her daughter Mary, ten years old. Their mistress Mary Shirer from Charleston claimed that "They are Virginia negroes, whither it supposed they will try to return. They took with them all their clothing."[305] If Shirer was right in her guess, the case of Violet and her daughter was one of the extremely rare ones in which a mother together with her child attempted to return over large distances back to the Upper South. Connected to the gender division within the runaway slave population is the observation by historians that in the antebellum South, when the parents lived on two different plantations, children born into slavery usually lived with their mothers. In case of sale, infants also stayed with their mothers or were sold separately rather than forming a unit of sale with their fathers. Reinforced by the usually higher mobility of men, it is logical that it was mostly the husbands and fathers who tried to reunite their families by running away.[306]

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[301] Damian Pargas has presented a selection of men and women who ran away while in transit of the internal slave trade. Women, interestingly, were not always chained, a fact that might have facilitated their flight while at the same time indicating that women attempted to escape less often. Pargas, *Slavery and Forced Migration*, 119-122.

[302] Charles Ball, *Fifty Years in Chains; or, The Life of an American Slave* (New York: H. Dayton, and Indianapolis: Asher & Company, 1859), 36.

[303] Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 135.

[304] William H. Robinson, *From Log Cabin to the Pulpit, or, Fifteen Years in Slavery.* Third Edition (Eau Clair: James H. Tifft, 1913), 46.

[305] *Charleston Mercury*, February 14, 1844.

[306] Stevenson, *Life in Black and White*, 209-210; Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 357; and Andrew McMichael, *Atlantic Loyalties: Americans in Spanish West Florida, 1785-1810* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 51. Louisiana, despite its repressive slave system, insisted on legal codes stemming from the Spanish era which illegalized the separate sale of mothers and their children. Infants up to the age of ten were only to be sold alongside their mothers and, according to Damian Pargas, Louisiana slaveholders largely respected this law. (Children whose mother died were sold off regardless of ties to other family members as were children above ten years.) Pargas, *Slavery and Forced Migration*, 71.
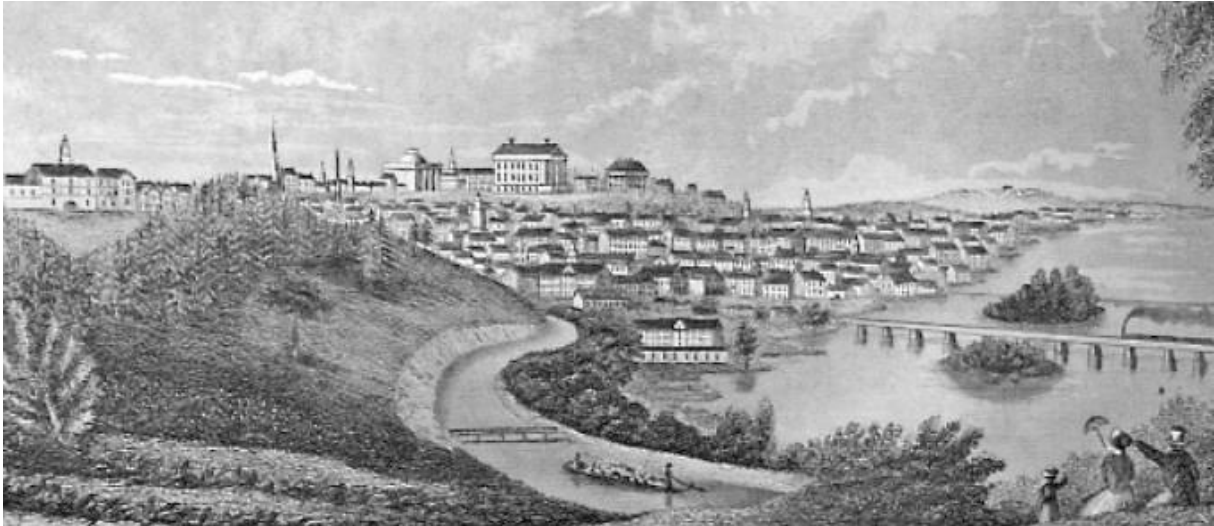
Figure 9: Richmond around 1850[307]

A number of people, who waged an attempt, were caught in transit places on the way and appear in jail dockets and Committed-ads.[308] In 1821, Peter was committed to the jail of Marlborough District in South Carolina. He said that he belonged to Mr. Samuel Stark near Camden and was on his way to North Carolina where he was bought. Together with Peter, Matt was taken up. He evidenced that "it was his intention to go to Norfolk, Va. from [where] he was bought when he was about 10 years."[309] Long-distant migrants were numerically much fewer than short-distance migrants, and the route was almost always from the Lower South back to the Upper South, meaning the reverse direction of the Second Middle Passage. In very few cases, an enslaved person would also flee south- and westwards in pursuit of loved ones; examples of this have only been found for men. Jim was one of them. Calling himself Jim Mason, he ran away from Alexandria, Virginia, in 1809. "A few days before his elopement, his wife (who was the property of a neighbor) was sold to a negro purchaser from the neighborhood of Nashville, Tennessee." His owner James Blake offered $100 to get hold of Mason again and "conjectured that Jim either pursued her [his wife] or that he went off by water and is now in one of the sea-port towns of the United States."[310] Likewise, Dick's wife was sold in 1838. After Dick's escape, his owner assumed that he had run from Kentucky to New Orleans, where she was living then, and tried to pass as a free man.[311]

The destination of migrants was never random, and neither was the route. Gaining geographical knowledge about the landscape of displacement was imperative. Some enslaved migrants succeeded at this, while others did not. John Brown, displaced from Virginia to Georgia, did "not recollect the names of all the places we passed through," yet he did recall the

[307] Henry Howe, "Richmond in 1850s," in *Historical Collections of Virginia* (Charleston, William R. Babcock, 1851), 304, in *flickr* (2012), URL: https://www.flickr.com/photos/jimsurkamp/6737010773, accessed June 20, 2019.
[308] "Baltimore City and County Jail Runaway and Accommodations Dockets, 1831-1864," in *Absconders, Runaways and Other Fugitives in the Baltimore City and County Jail*, ed. Jerry M. Hynson (Westminster: Willow Bend Books, 2004); and Committed ads in various newspapers.
[309] *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, December 21, 1821.
[310] *National Intelligencer and Washington Advertiser*, July 21, 1809.
[311] *Lexington Intelligencer*, July 7, 1838, in Damian Alan Pargas, "Seeking Freedom in the Midst of Slavery: Fugitive Slaves in the Antebellum South," in *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America*, ed. Idem (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 123.

names of the major points of orientation like Roanoke river, Halifax, and Raleigh, North Carolina.[312] Charles Ball revealed in his autobiography how he fought his way back to the Upper South learning about the landscape and using the stars as orientation. He walked from Georgia to reunite with his enslaved family in Maryland, an undertaking that took him one entire year.[313] Architectural historian Rebecca Ginsburg has in this regard directed our attention to the "black landscape," stressing the different geographies and knowledge used by black people. Essentially approaching the black landscape as a counter-geography, she has argued that whites knew surprisingly little about this other world.[314] Enslaved people who escaped, by contrast, had to be familiar with secluded routes and rat runs and greatly benefitted from information about possible supporters. And the geography of the South was changing, both physically and with regards to spaces of freedom.[315]

On their journey to freedom, refugees had to reckon with the intervention of their owners for whom their absconding could mean a real monetary loss. Frank Ball, a formerly enslaved man from Virginia, stated that bondspeople were perfectly aware of the financial consequences of escapes: "Cost a lot of money, it did, when you go git a runaway slave. 'Hue and Cry' dey called it, you got to put notice in de papers, an' you got to pay a reward to whoever catches the runaway."[316] The amount of the bounty was an indication of both how wealthy a slaveowner was and how appreciated or financially beneficial the runaway was deemed. Advertisements which offered small awards like $5 or $10 must in this light not be read as a relative indifference on the part of the slaveholders to find their runaways but rather as a mirror of their limited financial means.[317] In relative perspective, the reward offered indicated that slaveholders were wealthier in the Upper South or at least more willing to offer high rewards than in the Lower South. In Maryland, bounties of up to $400 for male runaways were not rare in the 1850s.[318]

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[312] Brown, *Slave Life in Georgia*, 17-19.

[313] Ball, *Slavery in the United States*, 399.

[314] Rebecca Ginsburg, "Escaping through a Black Landscape," in *Cabin, Quarter, Plantation: Architecture and Landscapes of North American Slavery*, ed. Clifton Ellis and Rebecca Ginsburg (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), 51-66.

[315] On the spatial dimensions of enslaved women's resistance in the antebellum South, see Camp, *Closer to Freedom*.

[316] Frank Bell (b. 1834), Vienna, Va., Interviewer Claude W. Anderson (n. d.), Virginia State Library, in *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves*, ed. Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 26-27, originally published 1976.

[317] According to Kenneth Stampp's calculations, 88 percent of slaveholders held less than 20 people in bondage, 50 percent held less than five. Families who owned more than 100 slaves numbered no more than 3,000 by 1860. At the same time, more than half of all enslaved people lived and worked on plantations with more than 20 slaves, one quarter with at least 50. Human property was disproportionally concentrated in the hands of the extremely rich, more so in the Lower than in the Upper South. In Louisiana, five sixth of slaves lived on units with at least ten slaves. In absolute numbers, most enslaved people lived in Virginia, in relative perspective, they were dominant in South Carolina. In total, there were 400,000 southerners claiming legal ownership of almost four million people. Most strikingly, less than four percent of adult white men owned the majority of all slaves. Stampp, *Peculiar Institution*, 28-31; and Oakes, *Ruling Race*, xv, 38, 40.

[318] For instance, *Sun*, August 31; October 15; November 24, 1852. Slaves were also more valuable to rural owners than to owners living in the city. This has been observed by Judith Kelleher Schafer for New Orleans. Schafer, "New Orleans Slavery," 33. Moreover, rewards roughly reflected the fluctuation of slave prices in the republic, which peaked in the 1830s and 1850s. Economic historians have made calculations about the value of antebellum slaves. In the mid-1850s, "prime field hands" cost $1,200 and upwards. Prices were at a peak for male slaves in their mid-to-late twenties because then their productivity was highest. Men were on average more valuable, (women of 27 years of age were priced at 80 percent of men of the same age) and professional skills likewise drove the price up. Jeffrey Rogers Hummel, *Emancipating Slaves, Enslaving Free Men: A History of the American*

Rewards in newspaper notices furthermore tell us about the difficulties to retrieve a runaway and the attitude of the slaveholders towards slave flight. Bounties often varied for different possible places and increased if the wanted person was found outside the state or when retrieved from the North. When George Stewart, 20 years old, ran away from Baltimore County in 1852, the reward for him being taken in Maryland was $50. If "taken out of this State, and lodged in jail," the subscriber was willing to pay double the amount.[319]

Paying rewards and placing ads in newspapers was both a time and money-intensive undertaking, especially when the ad was operated over a long period of time and in several papers. The Baton Rouge *Daily Advocate*, for instance, charged the following advertising rates in 1857: one square cost $5 for one month, $7 for two months, $9 for three months, and $20 for twelve months. For two squares, the charge rose up to $9, $12, $14, and $30, respectively.[320] These were not the only expenditures. In late April 1854, Lewis, a refugee from Tensas Parish, Louisiana, was jailed in Port Gibson, on the other side of the Mississippi river. His master, Dugald McCall noted in his plantation journal that "It cost me jail fees and other expenses $13.43," to get Lewis back.[321] Around the same time that Lewis was retrieved, Willis was likewise pursued by McCall. Because Willis could not be caught, McCall decided to place an ad: "I sent an advertisement to Vicksburg about Willis to be put in the papers there and at Jackson," he wrote. A month later, McCall got a reaction: "I got a letter from the tailor [jailor] in Vicksburg saying that he had a Negro of mine in jaile, and for me to come after him." Because Willis was in Vicksburg, McCall had to travel there by boat the following day to retrieve Willis from jail. The expenditures of this trip included $10 for the passage, $20 reward, and $10 jail fees adding up to $40.[322] Slave flight was an effective weapon to fight against slavery because it was a matter of expense for those owning slaves.

Freedom seekers could be actively engaged in making it as difficult as possible for their slaveholders to get them back. Many did not surrender to their fate without fighting. Some even went on fighting when all odds seemed to be against them. Pressly from Athens, Georgia, ran away in March 1852 and, as his legal owner stated, "although advertised in papers of Georgia and in one of the papers of the State of South Carolina and a reward of Fifty Dollars offered for his apprehension, no information was ever received." That same year, he "was arrested in the City of Charleston and lodged in the work House as a fugitive." Because he gave his name as Joe Brown, however, he was not claimed and consequently "sold pursuant to the requirements of the Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston."[323] Pressly took the decision to rather be sold into the unknown than returning to his master in Georgia. He was able to do that because

Civil War (Chicago: Open Court, 2014), 38-39, originally published 1996; and Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 68, 70.

[319] *Sun*, September 17, 1852. Based on a perusal of 63 newspaper notices between 1840 and 1860, Jeremiah Dittmar and Suresh Naidu have pointed to remarkable differences in reward money. The lowest amount was found for Mississippi, where bounties on slave refugees averaged at $32. The highest median amount was with $125 offered in Maryland; Virginia followed with $110. South Carolina slaveholders placed on average $47 and Louisianans $37. Jeremiah Dittmar and Suresh Naidu, "Contested Property: Fugitive Slaves in the Antebellum U.S. South," Version 0.1, 6-7, URL: http://eh.net/eha/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Dittmar.pdf, accessed May 29, 2019.

[320] *Daily Advocate*, September 24, 1857.

[321] Journal of Dugald McCall, 918 Box 1, Cross Keys Plantation, April 29, May 1, 1854, LaRC.

[322] Idem, May 11, June 5, 6, 7, 8, 1854, LaRC.

[323] Petition by Edward R. Ware, Physician, Resident of Athens, Clark County, GA, November 28, 1855, SCDAH. For more information on the workhouse, see chapter five.

jailers had to rely on the statements of people committed as runaways in order to find out about their owners. Surely, there was room to fact-check parts of the stories they told but eventually, it was up to the refugee whether they decided to reveal their actual origin.

John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger have claimed that there existed a pattern most slaveholders followed from the moment a slave fled to the placement of an advertisement in a newspaper. The first instinct was to wait for a day or a couple of days to see whether the person would return voluntarily. The second step was to try to retrieve the runaway while they were still presumed to be close to home. At the same time, neighbors were notified and the slaveowners would start to pay attention to the capture notices in local newspapers. When an escaped person was not found in time, slaveholders often engaged professional slave catchers with specially trained bloodhounds. If they were unsuccessful, too, a slaveholder would take the step to publish a runaway slave ad, yet because it was expensive and annoying, one third of slaveholders waited with the announcement until one month had passed after the escape of a slave. One in ten waited four months or more to place one.[324]

Public announcements had consequences. A runaway slave ad meant a public mortification in the logics of southern culture. George Washington, out of embarrassment, stopped advertising for his runaway slaves in his own name when he became President of the United States.[325] Bertram Wyatt-Brown has argued that a man who was not able to maintain control over his family and property weakened the social order and lost credit within society.[326] When significant amounts of money were at stake, however, economic considerations usually trumped ideology. Dealing with runaways was, hence, a combination of personal honour with profit.[327]

The reluctance to place newspaper announcements suggests that slaveowners did not regard newspaper notices as very efficient, which gave refugees over longer distances a substantial lead. Kyle Ainsworth has speculated that with a two-week start ahead, a refugee who did not intent to return and therefore did not stay close to the home plantation, could be within a radius of 60 to 80 miles—if they were walking.[328] It is more likely, however, that escapees moved faster. With freedom on the line, it is reasonable that a person would at least make ten miles a day, even if they just walked during the night. That would make a radius of 140 miles after two weeks.

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[324] These calculations refer to the 1840s and 1850s. Besides newspaper announcements, slaveholders also had handbills written or printed to be distributed in courthouses, taverns, and post offices. Franklin and Schweninger, 170, 238-239, 282; and Kyle Ainsworth, "Advertising Maranda: Runaway Slaves in Texas, 1835-1865," in *Fugitive Slaves and Spaces of Freedom in North America*, ed. Damian Alan Pargas (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018), 201-202. For a slaveholder hunting his own and his neighbors' runaway slaves, see Norwood (Abel John) Diary and Account Book. Cotton Plantation Record and Account Book, No. 1, Suitable for a Force of 40 Hands, or under, by Thomas Affleck. Eighth Edition, Revised and Improved (New Orleans: Thomas Affleck, 1859), HML. Walter Johnson has written about the struggles of runaway slaves while on the run including vivid descriptions of the geography of escape and of the traumatic and dangerous experiences with slave hunters, their horses and bloodhounds. Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 222, 234-240. See also Sally E. Hadden, *Slave Patrols. Law and Violence in Virginia and the Carolinas* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[325] Don E. Fehrenbacher, *The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government's Relations to Slavery*, ed. Ward M. McAfee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 205.
[326] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 370-371.
[327] Fields, *Middle Ground*, 6; and Ariela Gross, "Like Master, Like Man: Constructing Whiteness in the Commercial Law of Slavery, 1800-1861," *Cardozo Law Review* 18:2 (1996): 264-265.
[328] Ainsworth, "Advertising Maranda," 207.

Moreover, some were able to go aboard boats or ships, and the railroad was since the mid-century a significant tool to travel fast and widely. From the 1820s onwards, railroad projects revolutionized transportation and travel throughout the country. Slave refugees could sometimes benefit from this technology. In his autobiographical essays, William Matthews told that after being severely whipped while working in railroad construction, he escaped and climbed into a railroad car where he hid between cotton bales and went to Charleston.[329] In 1858, an enslaved man was found dead trying to get away on a train: "A negro fellow belonging to Jno. N. Cummings was killed by the carrs at 41 station on saturday night last, It is supposed he was stealing a ride on the carrs going up and fell off." The train ran over him.[330] Although slave flight was expensive for slaveowners, only those fleeing risked paying the ultimate price: their lives.

Given the contextual background of runaway slave announcements and the reasons for slaveholders not to use them or to place them at a much later point in time, those runaways who were advertised for in newspapers were consequentially the least likely to be found—this is why they were publicly wanted in the first place. To back up this observation, a perusal of names of people listed as runaway slaves in the Police Jail of the Third Municipality of New Orleans from February 1839 to March 1840 delivered no matches with electronically searched newspaper announcements during the same period. [331] Consequently, runaway slave advertisements represent only a fraction of men and women who escaped bondage.

Inefficient mechanisms to retrieve refugees were preceded by inefficient mechanisms of surveillance. The paternalistic view of slaveholders was not only a legitimization of the institution, many had actually internalized it. Without this changing attitude the hire and self-hire of thousands of enslaved men and women would not have been possible. Both practices offered bondspeople opportunities to escape and to stay free. Because slave flight was not compatible with the paternalistic understanding of the master-slave relation, slaveowners who considered themselves benevolent providers were often personally offended when their slaves absconded. They considered this act as a deal breaker of the arrangements they made with enslaved people, which was—in their view—a mutually beneficial exchange of labor for protection and care. Refugees could make use of this trust, a fact we can detect in runaway slave ads, in which owners expressed their grievance about slaves who "betrayed" them.

An example was "Jack or Jack Ash, a gardener by profession [who] was sold to a gentleman residing in Amherst county." The subscriber lamented that the "gentleman […] permitted him to come down [to Richmond] last May, for the purpose of visiting his wife and relations, with a promise that his visits should be repeated frequently." In the mindset of slaveholding southerners, this was a major concession that should be rewarded with

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[329] Anonymous, *Recollections of Slavery by a Runaway Slave* (A slave narrative serialized in *The Emancipator* in 1838), October 21, 1838. Originally published as a series with five installments, *Recollections of Slavery* appeared in *Emancipator*, the newspaper of the American Anti-Slavery Society from August to October 1838. Zachary Hutchins, "No Author, Recollections of Slavery by a Runaway Slave," *Documenting the American South*, URL: https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/runaway/summary.html, accessed March 12, 2019. New evidence from the twenty-first century points to James Matthews as the author. Susanna Ashton, "Re-collecting Jim. Discovering a Name and Slave Narrative's Continuing Truth," *Common-Place* 15:1 (2014), URL: http://www.common-place-archives.org/vol-15/no-01/tales/#.XH0rieQ1uUl, accessed March 4, 2019.

[330] David Gavin Diary, March 24, 1858, SCHS. Gavin also noted that now, a trip from Charleston to Mississippi took two to three days by train; 25 years earlier it was about 20 days.

[331] New Orleans (La.) Police Jail of the Third Municipality, Daily Reports, 1838-1840 (February 1, 1838 – April 30, 1839), TX205, 1838-1840, NOPL.

unparalleled gratitude. But Ash ran away, thereby harming the generosity of the man who held him captive: He "thought proper to abuse this indulgence by not returning to his master."[332] In the master's worldview, Ash had taken advantage of an unusually generous treatment.

More often, southerners who published runaway slave ads could not make sense of the flight of their slaves. Slaveholders perceived people belonging to the slave elite to be privileged in comparison to "field niggers," and were particularly surprised when they disappeared. It almost seems like they were not aware of the dynamics that accompanied slave flight at all. Advertisements which mentioned that an enslaved person went off for no reason were more than common: Billy, for one, "absconded himself […] without any known cause" from his enslaver in South Carolina.[333] The bondsmen Cyrus and Absolum, 22 and 27 years old, ran off in 1814 "for some cause unknown" to their owner who had hired them in Long Island, South Carolina.[334] The private conversation between the Virginians Lewis Stiff and William Gray in May 1842 speaks volumes about the two different worlds slaves and those holding them enslaved lived in: When Gray's slave Emanuel did not go back to Gray after leaving Stiff's house, Stiff wrote to Gray that he could not think of any reason why Emanuel should not return since he appeared to be so "pleased with his situation and so nice Satisfied with you as a master."[335] For a great many southern slaveholders, betrayal by their slaves was so unthinkable that they stressed the faithfulness and good characters of runaways even in the newspaper ads—after they had run away.[336]

Catching their masters by surprise was an advantage but it did not guarantee a flight without obstacles. In order to protect their property and their slaveholding way of life, planters organized patrols to supervise rural areas and prevent slaves from absconding. Runaway slave Solomon Bayley recounted how, by the end of the eighteenth century, he escaped from a slave wagon whilst on his way to be sold: "When night came and I walked out of the bushes, I felt very awful. I set off to walk homewards, but soon was chased by dogs, at the same house where the man told the waggoner he had taken up a runaway three days before. […] I got down to Richmond; but had liked to have been twice taken, for twice I was pursued by dogs."[337] Slave patrols constituted a constant threat to runaways but planters had little interest in patrolling the roads themselves. Sally Hadden has remarked that men of higher social standing did occasionally participate in the patrols, yet decreasingly so the more the antebellum period went on. Hadden has stressed that patrols loom remarkably absent from autobiographies of formerly enslaved people and that the repeatedly enacted laws rather reflected the wishes of policy

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[332] *Enquirer*, January 11, 1806.

[333] *Charleston Courier*, May 15, 1826. Likewise, Hamilton, who was a term slave in Maryland, ran away two or three times up until the year 1845 without that his owner Claude understood it. Dennis Claude, Jr., v. Negro Boy Hamilton, October 29, 1847, Anne Arundel County Register of Will, Orders and Petitions 1840-1851, 210-211, MSA.

[334] He later filed a petition for compensation because they joined a gang of runaways and were killed by the slave patrol. Petition by Edward Brailsford, November 26, 1816, Legislative Petitions, SCDAH.

[335] Lewis L. Stiff to William Gray, May 25, 1842, Gray Papers, VHS. Franklin and Schweninger have reminded us that black slaveholders also had trouble with runaway slaves. Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 201.

[336] "Hyacinthe, commonly called John Labatitt" ran away in 1822. He was described by his owner J. Menude as a "faithful and much valued servant." *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, July 18, 1822.

[337] Solomon Bayley, *A Narrative of Some Remarkable Incidents in the Life of Solomon Bayley, Formerly a Slave in the State of Delaware, North America; Written by Himself, and Published for His Benefit; to Which Are Prefixed, a Few Remarks by Robert Hurnard* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1825), 4.

makers about how patrollers *should* behave than how they actually behaved. [338] These observations add further explanations of how so many freedom-based slave migrations to cities could be successful.

Passing for Free

Slave refugees in cities had to look unsuspicious. If they escaped from a plantation, they could not wear the uniform outfit of field hands that clearly identified their status and occupation.[339] For these people it was fundamental to change the visible markers of slavery once they ran away and decided not to come back. Runaway slave ads were full of assumptions and observations that escaped bondspeople had changed their clothes, taken apparel with them, or stolen attire of higher quality. For instance, Jules, who was arrested as a runaway slave in New Orleans in 1855, had a variety of clothing with him, suspected to be stolen.[340] Urban slaves had an advantage since access to additional clothing was less restricted there. [341] The social dynamics in the cities were very different from the countryside and urban slaveholders, in order to stress their paternalistic self-image and to hide potential financial shortcoming, usually dressed and fed their bondspeople well. Dennis and Lewis from Richmond, both in their late twenties, were "employed in a tobacco factory for the last fifteen years, in consequence of which their finger nails are much worn from stemming and twisting tobacco." They ran away in August 1831. Both were described as generally dressing well and as having "carried away sundry clothing."[342] John, of a brown color and with bushy hair, absconded six years later and took three suits of clothes with him.[343]

Marks that could not that easily be changed were the visible signs of physical and/or psychological violence. Like in the case of Fanny from the opening paragraph of this chapter, who had lost her upper front teeth, slaveholders instrumented corporal peculiarities and marks like scars, limps, missing body parts, or brandings to increase the chances that somebody might recognize their human property and detain them.[344] Since most permanent refugees attempted to pass for free, they tried to adapt their looks to those of free people of African descent.[345] This was easier achievable for house servants, hired-out slaves and those generally working in superior occupations who often did not look like stereotypical slaves anyways. Essau from Charleston, for one, was said to be "usually genteelly dressed […] and frequently wears colored

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[338] Besides being an uncomfortable job mostly carried out at night, slave patrols were a confession that slavery was vulnerable because patrols presented a visible debunking of the lie that enslaved people were happy and submissive. Hadden, *Slave Patrols*, 74, 105-106, 139-140.

[339] On slave clothing, see Shane White and Graham White, "Slave Clothing and African-American Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Past & Present* 148:1 (1995): 166; and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 181.

[340] *Daily Picayune*, October 16, 1855.

[341] White and White, "Slave Clothing," 160.

[342] *Richmond Enquirer*, August 19, 1831.

[343] Idem, September 26, 1837.

[344] The branding of slaves in the face with the initials of the owner was a practice which was hardly existent during the antebellum era. By the beginning of the century, there were occasionally some slaves afflicted in this way to be found. More common, but still not that widely spread, was an "R" in the face to demarcate notorious runaways and to prevent them from further attempts to abscond.

[345] Shane White and Graham White argued that there was a distinct African American aesthetic expressed in clothing that included varied material and patterns and vivid colors. White and White, "Slave Clothing," 169.

cloth garters."[346] Likewise, Dave or David, 23 years old, stole a gold watch and three pairs of new boots before he ran away and was shot in the left hand. Jesse Hart, his owner, claimed that "This boy has been my house servant for 18 months, and is always well dressed."[347] Carrying off clothes was also an obvious sign to slaveholders that their bondspeople did not intent to return to them.

According to Shane White and Graham White, the main distinction in clothing of enslaved Americans, however, was not alongside slave hierarchies but between the workday and the Sunday clothes.[348] A Sunday dress or suit would hence be a helpful tool to back up one's new identity as a free person. Seaborn, "good looking and well made," of 18 years, "took with him plenty of good clothes, blanket, a full Sunday suit, with silk hat, and patent leather shoes."[349] Andrew was dressed like a free man when he escaped enslavement in 1820. He wore a "drab colored coatee and gray cassimere pantaloons, but may change his dress as he took all his clothes away with him." It is questionable whether this description was helpful to recover him since the announcement was published three months after his departure and no information was provided about Andrew himself.[350] Dresses reflected social standing and it must have been repelling to white Charlestonians to read an article in the city paper in 1850 that evoked the horrors of the wealthy. The author drew the scenario that "one of these very slaves will flaunt by the ladies in King-street more extravagantly dressed than they," referring to a bondswoman who absconded from the reach of her owner.[351]

Enslaved people who did not look like slaves still faced the challenge to act as if they were free. Besides clothing, they had to speak and move like free black Americans (or whites if they were trying to pass as such) and show the right attitude. Mary Jane, 20 years of age, could have been one of those who attempted to pass themselves off as white persons since she was "remarkably white for a slave." The problem, however, was that she did not sound like a white woman, according to her slaveholder who claimed that she, "when spoken to has the accent of a negress."[352] To be included into the black urban communities it was imperative to distance oneself from enslaved plantation workers.

Joseph Holt Ingraham, an author from Maine, watched such a scene in Natchez, Mississippi. He accounted that on Sundays, black men gathered in small groups "imitating the manners, bearing, and language of their masters." According to Ingraham, they were "astounding their gaping auditors 'ob de field nigger class,' who cannot boast such enviable accomplishments."[353] Acting was everything. In 1833, Penny aka Henny, from 110 Church street in Charleston, decided to move out of bondage. "She is a good looking woman, and so plausible as to deceive most persons unacquainted with her," stated the newspaper notice. A black person received Henny's clothing before she disappeared, and she was thought to be harbored in the city.[354] More information about *how* clandestine freedom seekers deceived other people is available in William Grimes's autobiography. When Grimes lived as a slave in

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[346] *Charleston Mercury*, April 12, 1859.
[347] *Daily Picayune*, June 24, 1845.
[348] White and White, "Slave Clothing," 174.
[349] *Daily Picayune*, December 7, 1848.
[350] *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, March 10, 1820.
[351] *Charleston Courier*, September 12, 1850.
[352] *Daily Picayune*, April 11, 1839.
[353] Joseph Holt Ingraham, *The South-West. By a Yankee.* Vol. II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835), 56.
[354] *Charleston Mercury*, November 6, 1833.

Savannah, Georgia, between 1811 and 1815, he frequently attended meetings that often went so late that he reached his master's house at 10 o'clock at night or later and broke the curfew. According to him, "the guard never attempted to meddle with me—they always took me to be a *white man*." The richness of his account is striking:

> I have frequently walked the streets of Savannah in an evening, and being pretty well dressed, (generally having on a good decent suit of clothes,) and having a light complexion, (being at least three parts white,) on meeting the guard, I would walk as bold as I knew how, and as much like a gentleman; they would always give me the wall.

Once, Grimes encountered two or three watchmen together. "I was afraid but summoned all my resolution; and marched directly on towards them." When, while walking past, he accidently brushed one of them, "they immediately turned off the walk; one of them spoke and said we ask your pardon sir."[355] Walking like a free person, wearing adequate clothing, and retaining one's composure in delicate situations were essential capabilities.

Since there were slave patrols in the countryside, night watches, and, later, police forces in the cities, slave refugees who did not look like slaves had better chances to make it to their envisaged destinations and to remain unmolested there. Fanny, whose story runs through this chapter, was reported to be of "brown complexion." In Charleston, with its large middle-caste of free black people, most of them with a lighter skin tone than the enslaved, she had relatively good chances to pass for free. In the Upper South, it mattered much less than in the Lower South if a runaway slave was darker or lighter skinned. Their chances for blending in were more or less the same. Due to manumission schemes that were less discriminatory in gender, skin tone, and status than in the Lower South, the free black population in the Upper South was considerably darker in physical appearance. Courts in Virginia and Maryland did not distinguish between blacks and mulattoes and law dictated that everybody with at least one eights of African descent was a "negro."[356]

Regardless of the place, even more advantageous was a skin that allowed one to pass as white.[357] The court case Spalding v. "Missouri" offers valuable clues on how passing for a white person worked. In the 1840s, Durham Spalding sued captain George Taylor, clerk Mr. Twitchell, and other owners of the steamboat *Missouri* for $1,500 for carrying his slave Felix from New Orleans to St. Louis, where he disappeared. The defendants alleged "that a man did work his passage on board of the Missouri bearing name Felix but that he was a white man, or at least passed for such." They went on stating that everybody would have taken him for free man. Felix

> might have some Indian blood or be of Spanish descent, but no one could suppose he had any African blood; he would pass any where for a white man, and a great many white creoles have a darker complexion that he has. He was dressed like a gentleman, nor was there any thing in his manner or appearance, that indicated him to be a slave. There was no attempt to conceal

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[355] Grimes, *Life of William Grimes*, 71.

[356] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 34, 97. For the legal construction of whiteness in the United States, see Ian Haney Lopez, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), ch. 5, originally published 1996.

[357] For a comprehensive account on passing as white beyond the antebellum period, see Allyson Hobbs, *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2014).

himself. […] Witness has seen a great many slaves, but has never seen one whose appearance was any thing like that of *Felix*.

Also his previous owner testified that Felix "is a very white person for a slave; that he has blue eyes and straight hair; is well made and of good size, and likely to pass for a white person wherever he is not known."[358]

In general, lighter skin facilitated moving unmolested. After generations of racial mixing, the American South counted many men and women who were enslaved while their African heritage was not visible anymore.[359] Those slaves who had just been imported from Africa had hardly a chance to integrate into urban communities. Their significantly darker skin color, the unfamiliarity with American culture, and language barriers impeded the success of such an endeavor. Nevertheless, African and African American slaves without prospects of passing for free also ran away—but their strategies varied. As a matter of course, African-born enslaved people not assimilated to American culture rarely sought to run to cities and other places where they were highly visibility and exposed to the proximity with whites. Africans rather ran to wilderness areas where they aimed to hide and live an autarkic life. They turned into true maroons.[360] These patterns lived on when Africans continued to be enslaved and brought to the American continents illegally. Likewise, illegal importation of people who already worked as slaves in the Caribbean, for instance Cuba, continued in lower numbers up to the Civil War. It is unclear how many people were affected by these forced migrations, and it is unlikely that those who managed to escape integrated into urban communities. New Orleans might have been the only city where French and Spanish speaking freedom seekers had a chance.

How difficult it was for illegal freedom seekers to take on a new identity is up for discussion. Fleeing was one of the most expressive forms of resistance, yet, as James Scott has outlined, role play by the subordinates did not only occur in acts of resisting but all the time.[361] People who lived as slaves had to wear masks at almost every encounter with white people. The surprised reactions of slaveholders when they learned that their bondspeople had run away "without any reason" speak volumes. An anonymous bondsman, probably by the name of James Matthews, born around 1816, narrated in his autobiography the day-to-day acting enslaved

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[358] Spalding sued for compensation after Felix did not return to him. Ironically, Felix sought refuge in St. Louis, where both his present and his former owner lived. "His former master, *Chouteau*, saw him almost daily in the streets; but the plaintiff was determined not to see him." After the case was reopened in the Louisiana Supreme Court, the new verdict stated "We […] are satisfied that, on account of his color and of his vices, the slave was of very little value at any time. After he had been suffered by the plaintiff to live and act like a freeman, and to go and remain as long as he pleased in States where slavery is prohibited, he must have been utterly worthless." Spalding v. Taylor et al., June 1846, in *Louisiana Annual Reports, Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Louisiana.* Vol. I: From the Reorganization of the Court under the Constitution of 1845, to the 31st of December, 1846, ed. Merritt M. Robinson (New Orleans: Thomas Bea, 1847), 195-197.

[359] White Americans often felt uncomfortable when seeing enslaved people who looked like them. John Simmon's master, for instance, had difficulties to find a buyer for him because he had blue eyes and "a complexion so fair as to pass for white." *Mercury*, February 15, 1856.

[360] See introductory chapter. See also Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*, 59. Also here there were exceptions: 25-year-old Tennant, who ran away in South Carolina in 1822, was African but "from his manner of speaking would not be supposed to be an African: he can read and write, and may forge a pass for himself and his wife," as he had done before. His wife Sussey was 20 years of age and of a "yellow complexion." Informants claimed that "they have made for Charleston or southerly." *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, December 23, 1822.

[361] James C. Scott, *Dominance and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 2.

people displayed: "If we hated master ever so much, we did not dare to show it, but we must always look pleased when he saw us, and we were afraid to speak what we thought, because some would tell master."[362]

Acting became a step more challenging when refugees chose not to pass as free but as self-hired slaves. This was, as will be explained in detail in chapter four, often the best option in Charleston. Although the daily lives of enslaved and free black people bore many resemblances, passing as free and passing as a self-hired bondsperson were different experiences. In Baltimore, where African Americans were *prima facie* considered free, settling down, starting a family, and building a life worked relatively well. Passing as slaves required much more organizational effort. When renting a room or an apartment, the owner could ask for a written permit; when questioned about one's master, a convincible story had to be constructed—and remembered; and when having children, a way had to be been found to keep them away from enslavement. Especially the written documents required for slaves had to be constantly renewed and surely some freedom seekers passing themselves off as hired slaves dared not to remain in their living and working spaces for very long. In short, passing for a slave might have required an even more sophisticated planning and support network than passing for free, at least in the long run.

Besides clothing and acting, possessing a pass or freedom papers was instrumental. A perusal of 200 runaway slave advertisements in North Carolina newspapers between 1820 and 1829 showed that 67 people were suspected to be "lurking" with relatives and 48 to be passing as free persons.[363] In line with this research, historians have stated that over the course of the antebellum period, southern states enacted a variety of laws to calm the white population who was concerned about the spread of revolutionary ideas from the Caribbean and the growing free black population. Free blacks were compelled to carry freedom papers and to register their status, a measure that was designed to prevent slaves the possibility of passing as free. Legally, any white man could at any time and place check the identity of any non-white persons he encountered.[364] If the latter could not identify themselves, they would be beaten up, or they could be brought to jail where further investigation about their persona took place.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, African Americans had already become severely restricted in their movement. In the summer of 1800, Gabriel Prosser, an enslaved blacksmith, had planned to stage a slave rebellion in Richmond. The plan was leaked and Prosser and 25 others were hanged. One alleged co-conspirators was witnessed to have complained that he could not visit his wife since it was very difficult for a black man to travel, because "the white people had turned so comical, a man can't go out of his house now but he is taken up to be hanged."[365] After the failed rebellion, the situation for black people predictably worsened. Actually, tightening of laws frequently occurred in times when whites felt especially threatened by black people. The Haitian Revolution was seen as a most dramatic incident, and southerners evoked its horrors over decades to come to strengthen their demands for more

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[362] Anonymous [Matthews], *Recollections of Slavery*, October 11, 1838.

[363] North Carolina Runaway Slave Advertisements, UNCG Digital Collections, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, URL: http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/, accessed March 15, 2016.

[364] Berlin, *Slaves without Masters*, 93-94; and Stampp, *Peculiar Institution*, 153.

[365] H. W. Flournoy (ed.), *House of Delegates, Senate & Virginia State Papers, Calendar of Virginia State Papers and Other Manuscripts from January 1, 1799, to December 31, 1807, Preserved in the Capitol, at Richmond.* Vol. IX (Richmond, 1890), October 1800, 162, LVA.

repression against free and enslaved African Americans. [366] Documentation was, hence, increasingly important.

There were several ways to obtain a piece of paper that would allow one to travel freely or to pass as a free person. Helping refugees to navigate spaces of freedom, passes were usually written by a slaveholder to grant enslaved persons the right to visit somebody, run an errand, hire themselves out, or live on their own. They could be restricted to a few hours, days, months, or even a year. An example of a slave pass from Charleston reads: "My Boy Mack has my permission to sleep in a house in Brown [?] Alley, hired by his Mother. This ticket is good for two months from this date. Sarah H. Savage. Sep[ber] 19th, 1843." [367] (See figure 11.) Watchmen were instructed to arrest black people who were on the streets without passes but even without possessing one, it was possible to get away. George Teamoh was

Figure 10: George Teamoh [368]

in Norfolk stopped by a constable, as he accounted, who demanded to see his pass. When Teamoh told him that he had lost it, the watchman said "you must go to jail." In a maneuver to keep himself from being arrested, Teamoh pretended to be "afflicted with small-pox" and the constable shied away from touching him.[369]
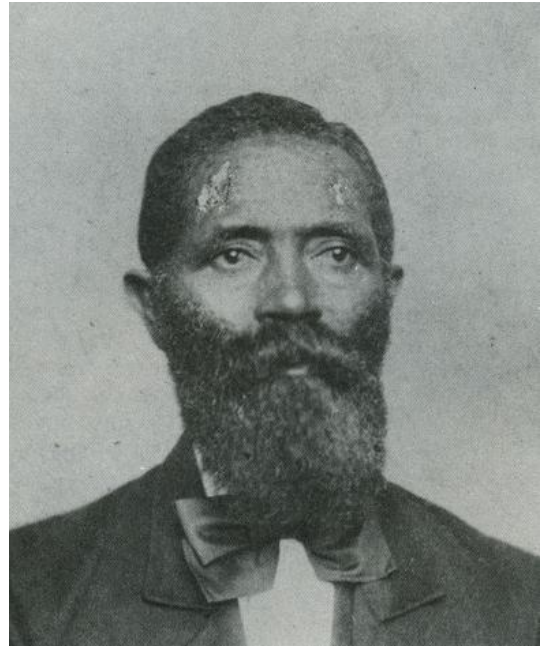
Freedom papers were documents African Americans could obtain if they were born free, manumitted, or otherwise released from slavery in conformity with the law. Usually, they had to register their status with the municipal or county authorities and were handed out a copy of said register. This document included the name, (approximate) date and place of birth, and a physical description. It was affixed with the seal of the respective court and included the signature of the clerk or a high-ranking person in charge. (See figure 12.) From the historical sources it is not always that clear whether the reference is to passes or free papers. When Pompey Jackson absconded from his enslaver in 1840, the public was informed that Jackson "can read and likely may get forged papers to travel with."[370] To travel short distances, he only needed the written permission of his owner, to permanently pass as free, official freedom papers

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[366] For a history of the Haitian Revolution, see David Patrick Geggus, *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001); Robin Blackburn, "Haiti, Slavery, and the Age of the Democratic Revolution," *William & Mary Quarterly* 63:4 (2006): 643-674; and the classic, C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London: Secker & Warburg; and New York: The Dial Press, 1938).

[367] Sarah Savage, Slave Pass, 1843, *Lowcountry Digital Library*, URL:

http://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/lcdl/catalog/lcdl:5531, accessed December 5, 2018.

[368] George Teamoh, n.d. (after 1865), LOC, URL:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Teamoh#/media/File:George_Teamoh_Libary_of_Congress.jpg, accessed August 28, 2019.

[369] Teamoh, *God Made Man*, 74. Teamoh later in life escaped slavery and became an author and community leader.

[370] *Daily National Intelligencer*, 1832.

were helpful, yet from this short ad it remains unclear which of the two Jackson acquired. The former were relatively easy to forge while the latter required some more sophisticated efforts.
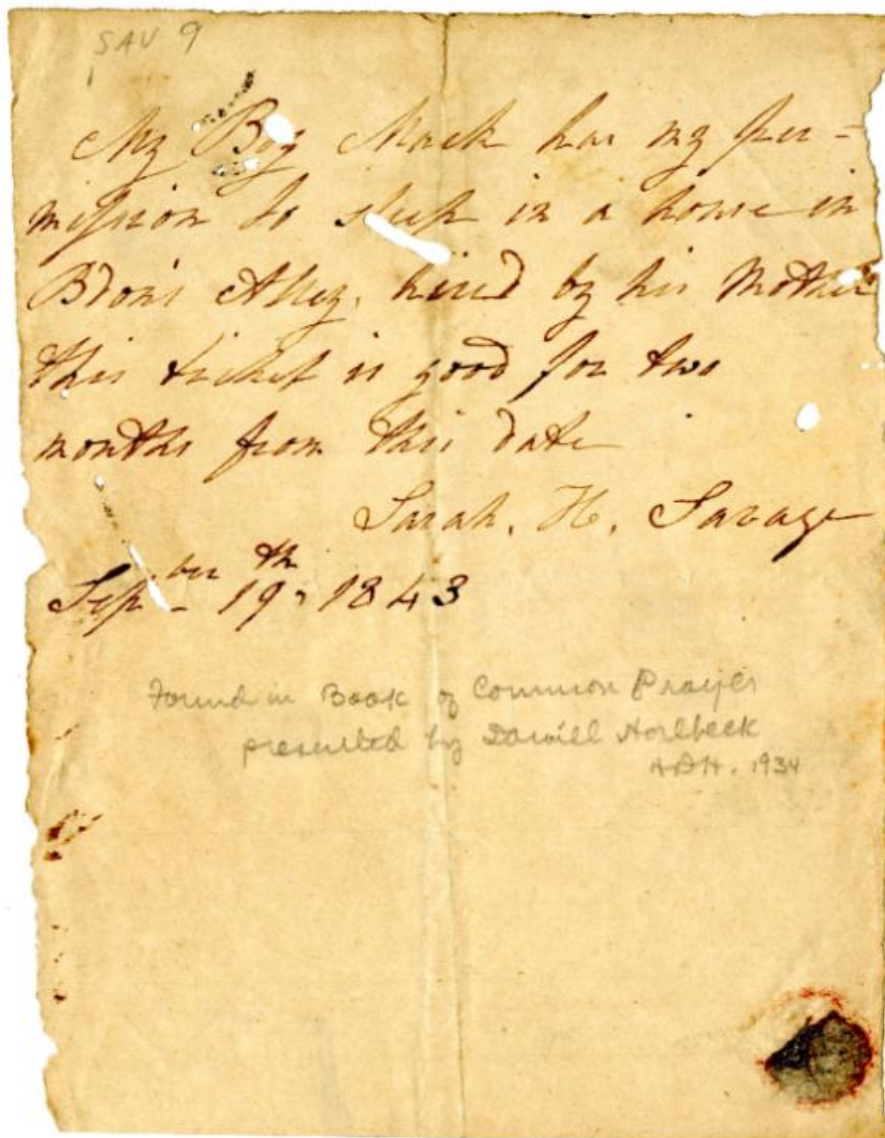
Figure 11: Slave Pass, Charleston, 1843

Attitudes of slaveholders towards people involved in the disappearing of slaves grew more hostile over time. A furious slaveholder set the enormous bounty of $1,000 "for the apprehension and conviction of him who gave my servant boy GEORGE Free Papers, and induced him to quit my service." Making use of his own network, George's owner inquired about "gentlemen" who were on the same train from Columbia, South Carolina, to Aiken, in which George had traveled with a white man who gave his name as John Tyne. George, now 18 years old, "had been waiting on the table in Clark's Hotel the last ten years" and was seen in Charleston only a few days after he left Columbia. He was suspected to go to New York or Boston but "a boy answering his description has been seen in Mobile."[371]

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[371] The slaveholder was so committed to get George back that he also placed the ad in the New York *Journal of Commerce*, the *Augusta Chronicle*, the Mobile *Mercantile Advertiser*, and the Boston *Commercial Gazette*. *Charleston Mercury*, June 23, 1835.
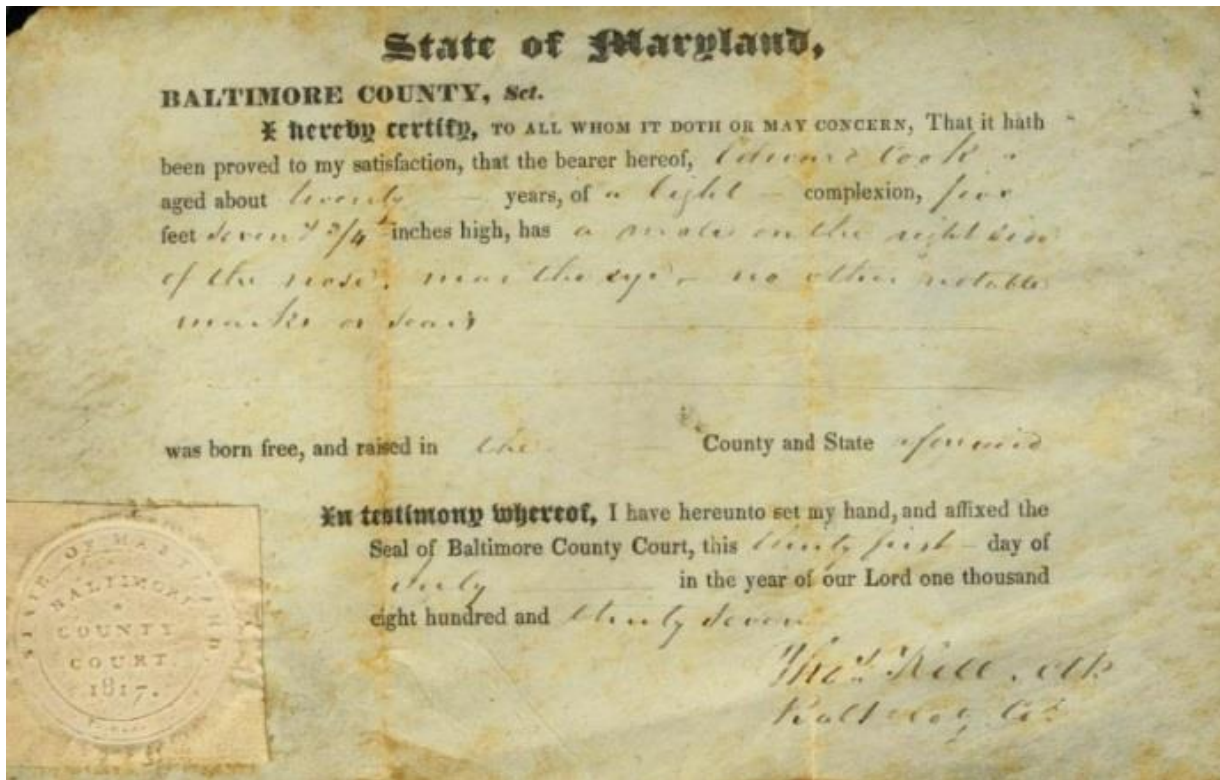
Figure 12: Freedom Papers, Maryland, 1837[372]

Evidence is plentiful that men and women of all legal statuses and skin colors falsified passes for enslaved Americans to run away. Moreover, many black city dwellers could read and write, and reports have survived of urban slaves reading the newspaper.[373] Essentially, everybody who was able to write could use their skills to forge a pass, yet it was important to be able to imitate the writ, style, and language of a slaveholder. Frederick Douglass had always felt motivated to become literate so that he could one day write his own pass. He "continued to do this until I could write a hand very similar to that of Master Thomas."[374] John Thompson, also an author of a slave narrative, mentioned that he himself was once suspected of having written passes for three fellow slaves who escaped because he "could write a tolerable hand."[375] Louis Hughes lived on a plantation where none of the slaves ever got a pass from their master "but the slaves did visit in the neighborhood, notwithstanding, and would sometimes slip into town at night." A fellow bondsman, Tom, who was planning his escape, "had in this way seen the pass of a neighboring slave to hire out; and it was from this he learned the form from which he wrote his, and which opened his way to freedom."[376]

Official freedom papers were forged less often, yet it was nevertheless possible. Joe Sutherland, an enslaved coachman, accompanied his master to the county court house where his son worked as a clerk. Sutherland secretly became literate and wrote passes for other

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[372] Freedom Papers of Edward Cook, Baltimore County Court, Maryland, 1837, URL: http://yeswerise.blogspot.com/2014/12/freedom-for-everyone.html, accessed December 6, 2018.
[373] Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 119; and Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 150-151.
[374] Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 44.
[375] John Thompson, *The Life of John Thompson, a Fugitive Slave: Containing His History of 25 Years in Bondage, and His Providential Escape* (Worcester: C. Hamilton, 1856), 78.
[376] Hughes, *Thirty Years a Slave*, 104-105.

bondspeople. By "going around the court everyday Joe forged the country seal on these passes," as his fellow William Johnson remembered.[377] An enslaved man named Ben, who ran away from D.C. in 1825, could "write a pretty good hand, and no doubt has copied the papers of some free man," the newspaper ad read. His master even had "reason to believe he stole the Stafford County seal and attached the impression of it to his papers."[378] This way, Ben could furnish counterfeit papers with official seals. In a curious case, slave refugee Dennis, who lived disguised as a free man with the name William Mayo, was tried for helping three slaves abscond. The freedom papers under which he passed for free, were apparently so convincing that the Court of Fredericksburg applied the sentence for free persons and sentenced Mayo to ten years in the penitentiary.[379] When freedom papers were forged, it was often difficult for those involved to judge their authenticity.

More often, people passed the originals on to others who used them to get out of bondage. Newspapers frequently published advertisements by free black residents claiming to have lost their freedom papers.[380] Many must have given them to slaves. A bondsman named Tom was believed to use the papers of a dead man, James Lucas, to pass himself as the deceased.[381] Slaveholder Henry Burns advertised for his escaped slave George in 1852 in New Orleans after having received a hint that George might have arrived "9 miles below the city, on Wednesday morning last, from steamship Ben Franklin." Burns claimed that George was in possession of "what purported to be free papers, dated some 17 years since, made in another State, and corresponding nearly with his appearance."[382] A classification of illegal migration into four common forms identifies entry without authorization (in this case exit from slavery without authorization), entry on basis of fraud (for instance through false papers), visa overstaying, and violation of the conditions of a stay (the equivalent of an expired slave pass and not returning after a set period of time). All four criteria were employed by runaway slaves, rendering them undocumented as a consequence.[383]

Sometimes, freedom seekers also stole the papers of other African Americans. William Jackson, a free black man, was brought to court in Charleston in 1858 for "aiding & abetting negro Stealing." Jackson claimed that he had lost his freedom papers in November of the previous year and had learned from the press that a slave called John had used papers in his name to escape and was captured in Richmond. Although there is no way to know with certainty whether Jackson spoke the truth, the evidence in the court case points to his innocence.

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[377] William I. Johnson, Jr., (b. 1840), Richmond, Va., Interviewer Milton L. Randolph (May 28, 1937), Virginia State Library, in *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves*, ed. Charles L. Perdue, Thomas E. Barden, and Robert K. Phillips (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 166-167, originally published 1976.

[378] *Daily National Intelligencer*, July 4, 1825. Thanks to Damian Pargas for sharing this source with me.

[379] The representatives of the legal owner then came forward to claim Mayo as their property and demanded his release from prison. The penalty for slaves for aiding runaways was whipping, not imprisonment. To the Virginia General Assembly, 1848, Petition by Ely Ball and Henry Satterwhite, Petition 11684607, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

[380] For example, "Lost – On Friday last, my FREE PAPERS, (they were in a tin box,) somewhere near the old Fair Grounds. [...] Jas. Brown, A free man of color." *Richmond Dispatch*, January 16, 1861.

[381] Unknown newspaper, February 1840.

[382] *Daily Picayune*, August 27, 1852.

[383] Demetrios G. Papademetriou, "The Global Struggle with Illegal Migration: No End in Sight," *Migration Information Source* (September 1, 2005), URL: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/global-struggle-illegal-migration-no-end-in-sight, accessed February 2, 2019.

Eventually, John's owner testified against Jackson and he was found guilty.[384] In 1796, Maryland introduced a law which proposed a fine of $300 for free African Americans convicted of handing freedom papers to slaves. In 1818, free people who enticed a slave to run away or assisted or harbored them on the run, faced up to six years in prison and could be convicted to pay a financial recompense to the respective owner. In 1849, this law was sharpened stipulating at least six and a maximum of 15 years for the same offense.[385] Other southern states passed similar ordinances.

In many cases, it was entirely unclear whether a black person was born free or in slavery. Rivan Mayo, for one, was in 1855 registered as a "free man of color" in Chesterfield County, Virginia. This was confirmed by the clerk of the court. His mother appeared to be freeborn, as the correspondence between a slaveholder and his agent reveals. Yet, Mayo was claimed as a slave in Kentucky.[386] Mayo could have been freeborn indeed, or he was a slave refugee from another state. Given that he did not enter the Negro Register before he was 23 years old, both scenarios are plausible. With the growing free black population, white Americans were concerned about how to keep them supervised beyond the master-slave relationship. They designed guardianship laws, like in South Carolina, that foresaw that black people needed white sponsors to vouch for their character. Michael Johnson and James Roark investigated these laws for Charleston stating that they were legally binding for all free black men above 15 years of age. In theory, the guardianship was extensive. It stipulated the written attest to the "good character and correct habits" as well as a registration of the guardianship with the city clerk. No white men would have ever accepted this official relation with somebody they did not know.[387]

Yet, what sounded like an insuperable burden with the attempt to freeze race relations and white authority to the standards of slavery was in practice a very short-lived letter. Enforced in 1822, the law grew to be more and more neglected until many free African Americans were not even aware of its existence anymore.[388] After all, personal acquaintance with whites was a much more secure back-up to proof one's freedom than a piece of paper. This was also true for slave refugees. The longer they remained in one place and the better they were known, the smaller the chances that somebody suspected them to be slaves. The balancing act was to get to that point.

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[384] According to his testimony, after losing his papers, Jackson contacted Abram Jones, another free black man, and "begged him to enquire about them." When Jackson saw the newspaper article about John, he went to speak to his white employer Simon Lucas and together they went to Charleston to get legal counsel at the firm Simons & Simons. He "has ever held himself in readiness to answer any enquiries." Although Lucas "certifies his good character," Jackson was found guilty in June 1858. Francis Weston, the owner of the escaped slave, "being duly sworn says that he has reason to believe that William Jackson, a free person of color has been enticing, and harboring" John. The State v. Wm Jackson F.P.C. Offence Aiding & Abetting Negro Stealing, Enticing a Slave to Run Away, Simons & Simons, SCHS.

[385] Laws of Maryland, 1796, ch. 67, XVIII, in Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly, 1796, Vol. 105, 253; Laws of Maryland, 1818, ch. 157, 615; and Session Laws, 1849, ch. 296, 373-374.

[386] Extract from the Negro Register, Chesterfield County Court, January 8, 1855, Gray Papers; and Richard West Flournoy to William Gray, October 10, 1855, Gray Papers, VHS.

[387] Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 43, 45. When they spoke of character, they actually meant reputation. Gross, "Like Master, Like Man," 264.

[388] Johnson and Roark, *Black* Masters, 45.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a profile of urban slave refugees. Their escapes took place at a time when American slavery was becoming tighter and more repressive. Mobility and its extensions (geographical knowledge, social networks, and beneficial environments) were the most crucial features for successful flight. In this context, this chapter has modified Ira Berlin's concept of the slave elite to include—besides skilled bondsmen and those in higher-ranking occupations—enslaved people who enjoyed a higher mobility than the majority of slaves.

These considerations especially take women into account who, either through unskilled yet mobile tasks or thanks to the slave hiring system, were likewise able to expand their knowledge and personal webs of acquaintances. Fanny from the opening paragraph, for instance, was raised in North Carolina, had lived in Florida for some time, and escaped from South Carolina. Her geographical knowledge and life experience extended over at least three southern states. Despite the fact that the vast majority of southern urban refugees were men, women played a much more significant part in this type of slave flight compared to those who escaped out of the slaveholding South. They were better equipped to navigate these internal spaces of freedom.

Although the countermeasures taken by slaveholders must not be underestimated, they were not effective enough to prevent slave flight entirely. Without downplaying the risks and dangers involved in slave flight, it has become apparent that the geography of freedom in the South was growing. The people who deliberately or unconsciously contributed to this growth were of all sexes, racial backgrounds, and legal statuses. A helper could be a fellow slave or a white acquaintance who forged a pass, or a neglectful slaveowner who hired his light-skinned bondspeople out on steamboats. In the urban space, it was likewise the combination of various factors that turned them into cities of refuge. Chapter three will make this the focus of analysis.

Chapter Three

Finding Refuge: Social and Spatial Integration

In 1900, almost four decades after the formal abolition of slavery in the United States, Rosetta Douglass Sprague, daughter of the famous self-emancipator Frederick Douglass, recollected her mother, Anna Murray Douglass. Reproducing an oral memory, Sprague gave an account of black life in a southern city that speaks to the separation and simultaneous intermingling of free and enslaved African Americans, and the related attitudes of the slaveholding class: "The free people of Baltimore had their own circles from which the slaves were excluded, [yet] the ruling of them out of their society resulted more from the desire of the slaveholder than from any great wish of the free people themselves," Sprague claimed. Thereby, she testified to the social division between those legally enslaved and their free counterparts of the same skin color. Yet, she also acknowledged that the chasm could be overcome: "If a slave would dare to hazard all danger and enter among the free people he would be received."[389]

Not all refugees who aspired illegal freedom in southern cities were successful in their endeavors: hundreds were apprehended and jailed for running away each year. These were, however, only a small fraction of all runaways. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the runaway population who aimed at staying in American cities within the slaveholding territory of the South, featured certain demographic characteristics that gave prospective freedom seekers both an advantage for successful flight and for a future life in southern cities. This chapter follows the statement by Rosetta Douglass Sprague and explicitly extends it from slaves to refugees as persons who "dare to hazard all danger and enter among the free people." Under the umbrella theme of integration, it will examine how freedom seekers managed to integrate into the free black populations of southern cities. Important is the observation from chapter one that they joined urban communities that were in large parts of an undocumented status—just like slave refugees.

Emphasizing their experiences in urban spaces, central questions include where refugees lived, where they socialized, and how they interacted with the free black populations. Equally important to understanding how illegal spaces of freedom were shaped are the societal exclusion and hostilities African Americans experienced from the side of white society. As will be discussed, Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans both overlapped and differed in their social dynamics framing the experiences of the illegal newcomers.

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[389] Rosetta Douglass Sprague, *Anna Murray Douglass, My Mother As I Recall Her* (1900), Manuscript/Mixed Material, LOC, URL: https://www.loc.gov/item/mfd.02007/, accessed January 26, 2017.

Urbanization

A considerable number of slave refugees gravitated to urban spaces which were proper cities by the definition of the time. In the southern states, the rate of urbanization was significantly lower and slower than in the northern states but towns were nevertheless steadily growing. From 1830 onwards, American cities expanded dramatically, in absolute size, in relation to the overall population, and in number. Baltimore and Charleston were historically embedded in a network of East Coast seaport cities that depended on commerce while fueling their respective hinterlands through marketing and distribution. New Orleans was the largest city in Louisiana, which was admitted to the Union as a slave state in 1812. Because New Orleans did not become American before 1803, its blossoming phase began later than these of Baltimore and Charleston, along with other urban centers on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.[390] Richmond, with its large manufacturing and factories, developed into the South's most important industrial site.[391] All four places were major cities in their respective regions as well as in the South as a whole.

Cities were modern and exciting. For many urban slaves, it was unimaginable to move anywhere else. An advertisement from Charleston from February 1835 informed about Bella, 35 to 40 years of age. She "absconded herself in November last, under the pretence that she did not wish to go to the country." Bella was "well known about the city; it is supposed she is harboured by a fellow named Joe, a Baker."[392] For slave refugees from the countryside, cities offered never before seen impressions. Mid-February was "the week of the Charleston Races, a season of much dissipation," wrote slaveholder William to his brother Jacob Read in 1800. Suspecting his brother's runaway slave Hercules to be drawn to the spectacle of the horse races, William informed that "I have got some persons looking out for your Hercules, as I think he is in or about this City, + that would be a very probable place to meet with such villains."[393] The same spectacle, horse races, might have attracted Lewis from Chesterfield, Virginia. When he absconded in 1806, his owner thought Lewis would "attempt passing as a free man, and will attempt to make his escape to Norfolk by water," yet the owner also informed that "he was seen in Richmond during the Broad Rock Races, dressed in black" and added that "it is probable that he is still lurking about there."[394]

Southern cities had cultural activities for non-white people unimaginable even in the North. Various scholars have remarked on this: In Richmond, black people went to amusements alongside whites. There were dances and theaters and on Sundays, they gathered to game and drink.[395] The probably most exciting city for visitors and foreigners was New Orleans. It offered cabarets for free and unfree black people and they could join the yearly celebrations of All

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[390] Raymond A Mohl, "The Industrial Town and City. Introduction," in *The Making of Urban America*, ed. Idem (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1988), 6.

[391] John Ashworth, *Slavery, Capitalism, and Politics in the Antebellum Republic.* Vol. 1: Commerce and Compromise, 1820-1850 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 108.

[392] *Charleston Mercury*, February 26, 1835.

[393] William Read to Jacob Read, February 14, 1800, Read Family Papers, SCHS. Horse racing was documented in Charleston from 1786 on. Dolly Nasby, *Images of America: Charles Town* (Charleston, Chicago, Portsmouth, and San Francisco: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 14.

[394] *Richmond Enquirer*, August 1, 1806.

[395] Kimball, *American City*, 38-39; and Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 101.

Soul's Day, Christmas, New Year's Eve, the Twelfth Night, and Mardi Gras.[396] Its cultural diversity and ethnic heterogeneity filled daily live with incomparable emotions. Whether it was the unique composition of its inhabitants, "White men and women, and of all hues of brown, and of all classes of faces, from round Yankees to grizzly and lean Spaniards, black negroes and negresses, filthy Indians half naked, mulattoes curly and straight-haired, quadroons of all shades, long haired and frizzled," as Benjamin Latrobe summarized in 1819, or the rich supply of exotic food, New Orleans was extraordinary.[397]

Black Americans were overrepresented in southern cities, especially among the working population. The nature of urban slave work, with its strong bias towards domestic and related services, dictated these developments. The share of enslaved women was in all places higher than that of men; Richmond was the exception. There, the sex ratio among the enslaved was more balanced, with almost equal numbers in 1820 and 1860. The free black population counted more women, though, roughly 60 percent.[398] From the 1830s on, European immigrants diversified the urban populations. Historians have stressed that, although in their majority driven to the northern states, those who did migrate south generally went to cities, too. These dynamics made the social composition of the urban populations grow more varied in ethnic and religious terms. In 1850, Charleston counted a white majority for the first time in its existence, with about 20 percent of its residents being born outside of the United States. In New Orleans, foreign-born residents had a share of around 40 percent of the city's population.[399]

Evidence of white men and women supporting runaway slaves is plentiful enough to give them a space in this narrative of networking and courage. Some of these accounts suggest that sexual relations formed the basis for aid. When Mary ran off in 1822, the newspaper announcement described her as "very neat in her person." The subscriber claimed to "have lately been informed that Mary is harboured by a white man residing near Rantoles Bridge [South Carolina]."[400] Rarer were relations between white women and enslaved men. *The Charleston Mercury* published one of these stories in 1860. Officers in Charleston arrested a white woman by the name of Ann Catherine Moore and a "negro boy" called William

> who arrived that day [Friday] by the Savannah Railroad from Savannah. They were lodging at a private boarding house in Queen-street. On communicating with Savannah, it was ascertained that the boy had been a runaway for the last five years from his mistress, Mrs. N. RAHN, residing about thirty-five miles from Savannah.

Attesting to the much more beneficial contexts and opportunities for interracial couples in New Orleans, the editor informed that "It is supposed that the pair were travelling to 'Dixie's Land,'

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[396] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 85, 158; and Gilbert C. Din, *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves. The Spanish Regulation of Slavery in Louisiana, 1763-1803* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 20.

[397] Benjamin Henry Boneval Latrobe, *The Journal of Latrobe. Being the Notes and Sketches of an Architect, Naturalist and Traveler in the United States from 1796 to 1820*. With an Introduction by J. H. B. Latrobe (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 162-163, originally 1876. Latrobe, born in England, was an architect from Baltimore and kept a diary during his residence in New Orleans.

[398] Marianne Buroff Sheldon, "Black-White Relations in Richmond, Virginia," *Journal of Southern History* 45:1 (1979): 28. For more on the gender imbalance of the urban free black population, see chapter four.

[399] Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum American South," *American Historical Review* 88:5 (1983): 1178; and Mohl, "Industrial Town and City," 9.

[400] *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, July 29, 1822.

where they could live with less liability to interruption than at Savannah."[401] Also in New Orleans, but less likely related to a romantic liaison, "Juan Mascarenas was taken up in the market at six o'clock yesterday morning, by Officer Boullosu, for forging a pass for the runaway slave Henry, belonging to Mr. Jacobs," wrote a local paper in 1850.[402] When Lucy absconded, her slaveholder offered a reward of $50 "on proof of her having been harboured by a responsible person."[403] "Responsible person" meant a white or free black person who could be held accountable by law. Clearly, it was more severe when a white person aided runaway slaves than when a free black person did the same. Prince, who "from an indolent habit usually wears a beard upon the upper lip, and a point of the chin," went off in January 1832. In August of the same year, an announcement promised $25 if he was apprehended and taken to the workhouse in Charleston, $50 if harbored by a black person, and $100 if proven that it was a white person.[404]

Despite hardening color lines and the construction of white supremacy, people of low social-economic standing often mixed. "I am struck with the close cohabitation and association of black and white—negro women are carrying black and white babies together in their arms; black and white children are playing together," reported an astonished Frederick Law Olmsted from Richmond.[405] The urban space facilitated contact even more than a rural setting. A white man called William Nelson was arrested in Charleston, "Drunk and Rioting with Negroes in Calhoun Street."[406] The interdependence of the lower classes became obvious to many at a young age. A teenage Frederick Douglass traded bread with hungry white children for teaching him to read. As Douglass claimed, they would then console him when he shared his sadness about being a slave, which "used to trouble them."[407]

While slaveholding society was more sensitive to white helpers of refugees, enslaved people were much more often supported by people of African descent. Sometimes, interracial

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[401] *Charleston Mercury*, June 25, 1860. Trying to live "with less liability to interruption" was seemingly also the idea of "A runaway negro and a white woman" in New Orleans in December 1852. They "were last night arrested by the police of the Third District, being found together under the Port Market." The paper reporting this case tried to calm its surely excited readership by asserting that "Such occurrences are very rare." *Daily Picayune*, December 20, 1852. In 1855, media covered the account of two white women who lived "in unlawful connection with a negro Wm. Jackson, who claims to be free but who is believed to be a runaway." *Daily Picayune*, January 19, 1855, in Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Becoming Free, Remaining Free: Manumission and Enslavement in New Orleans, 1846–1862* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 2003), 106-107.

[402] *Daily Picayune*, April 5, 1850.

[403] *Charleston Mercury*, May 8, 1832.

[404] Idem, August 21, 1832.

[405] Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom: A Traveller's Observations on Cotton and Slavery in the American Slave States. Based Upon Three Former Volumes of Journeys and Investigations by the Same Author*. Vol. 1 (New York: Mason Brothers; and London: Sampson Low, Son, & Co., 1862), 39.

[406] Because the police could not really believe that a white man would assembly with black people in this way, his case was "Turned over to [the] Magistrate for investigation as to whether Nelson is a white man or not." Records of the Charleston Police Department, Arrest Records and Morning Reports, Lower Ward 1855-1856, January 19, 1856, CCPL.

[407] Frederick Douglass, likewise, reported of two Irishmen trying to encourage him to flee to the North when he was working in Baltimore. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 38-39, 42. Since black women were more numerous than men in most southern cities and European immigrants arrived with a strong inclination towards male overrepresentation, it only makes sense that white men and black women intermingled in the integrated neighborhoods. Traugott Bromme, a German traveler, wrote that poor German immigrants lived disorderly lives in New Orleans and often "fell already in their first summer victim to their own debaucheries." They lived "outside of marriage, or keep negresses of which many have four to five children." Traugott Bromme, *Reisen durch die Vereinigten Staaten und Ober-Canada.* Dritter Band (Baltimore: T. Scheid & Co.; Dresden: Walthersche Hofbuchhandlung, 1834), 156, JFK.

networks were in operation. In the case of Betsy and the four-months-pregnant Fanny, both 20 years old, who escaped with two "very fine children," it looked like they were aided by a white man. Yet, the runaways were also "suspected to be accompanied by a very tall black Woman, sometimes called Nancy, and sometimes Mary," and her husband Isaac or Henry. Fanny and Betsy were "well known in Charleston. […] Nancy and her husband are believed to be old runaways."[408] White people could support refugees in ways different than black people could because they could pass them off as their servants. They were able to help them flee, could support them on the run, traffic them, and harbor and employ them at their destinations. However, they could not provide a receiving society for them as a whole. Here, the African American populations were of particular importance.

An important factor of urban life, particularly in commercial and growing cities, was that the streets were always swamped with new people. Benjamin Moore Norman considered New Orleans such a thriving destination for business and travels that he compiled a guidebook to the city in 1845. He speculated that around 20,000 businessmen were in New Orleans during business season alone. Besides them, 300 river boatmen streamed into the city monthly during half the year.[409] Joseph Holt Ingraham witnessed that plantation slaves were allowed to visit Natchez, Mississippi, on Sundays adding to the presence of black people in the streets.[410] Antebellum cities were messy and chaotic and overwhelmed by a constant influx of newcomers. This was a welcome environment for slave refugees and others who, according to the laws of the time, should not have been there.

Next to those who planned on staying there, many more used southern cities as a springboard for their migration north and remained a couple of weeks or months. All cities under analysis were port cities with important ties to the Atlantic world. William Anderson, for one, who also helped other enslaved people escape, tried to use New Orleans as a point of departure for his escape to the North: "My plan at this time was to write myself a pass down to New Orleans, and when I got there, to take a ship to New York or Boston."[411] Caroline Hammond, later interviewed by the Federal Writers' Project, was, together with her mother and father, first harbored by a white family in Baltimore "who were ardent supporters of the Underground Railroad," before being smuggled into Pennsylvania.[412] The disarray, anonymity, and dynamism of growing cities constituted ideal conditions for newcomers to dive into. In

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[408] Since they took with them clothes and had a high visibility due to the children, it seems plausible that they used Charleston as a way out of the slaveholding South. Whether Nancy and Isaac were their escape agents aiding the runaways to seek shelter in a southern city, or attempted to leave with them is unclear. *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, March 30, 1813.

[409] Benjamin Moore Norman, *Norman's New Orleans and Environs: Containing a Brief Historical Sketch of the Territory and State of Louisiana, and the City of New Orleans, from the Earliest Period to the Present Time: Presenting a Complete Guide to all Subjects of General Interest in the Southern Metropolis; With a Correct and Improved Plan of the City, Pictorial Illustrations of Public Buildings, Etc.* (New Orleans: B. M. Norman, 1845), 74-76.

[410] Ingraham, *South-West*, 54-55.

[411] William J. Anderson, *Life and Narrative of William J. Anderson, Twenty-Four Years a Slave; Sold Eight Times! In Jail Sixty Times!! Whipped Three Hundred Times!!! Or The Dark Deeds of American Slavery Revealed. Containing Scriptural Views of the Origin of the Black and of the White man. Also, a Simple and Easy Plan to Abolish Slavery in the United States. Together with an Account of the Services of Colored Men in the Revolutionary War—Day and Date, and Interesting Facts* (Chicago: Daily Tribune, 1857), 20.

[412] Caroline Hammond (A Fugitive), Interview, 1938, in *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project.* Vol. 8: Maryland (Washington, 1941), Manuscript/Mixed Material, LOC, URL: https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn080/, accessed February 20, 2019.

1844, Armstead Meckins, slave of A. B. Sheldon, ran away in Richmond "on friday night last [and] he has been seen every day since."[413] Even when slaveholders were sure that their runaways had gone to a particular city, they often failed to catch them.

Different from rural areas, where privately organized patrols remained the norm, in urban spaces, city governments held the claim to maintain law, order, and tidiness.[414] Some of these considerations stemmed from actual necessities to avert dangers like the spread of diseases, others were designed to make life more comfortable for those in power. In New Orleans, the diverse cultural, ethnic, and political composition brought upon administrative challenges that at some point became seemingly insuperable. On the one side stood the Francophone community consisting of New Orleans Creoles and foreign French originating from France, Haiti and other Francophone places, as well as immigrants from the Caribbean and Latin America. Being united by their Catholic Faith, they formed the majority of New Orleans until mid-century. Anglophone Americans stood on the other side. Mostly drawn to Louisiana by business endeavors and in their majority Protestants, they were the dominating commercial force.[415] In 1836, responding to ongoing ethnic disputes, the city was divided into three separate parts, "granting to the three municipalities the exclusive privilege to pass or have executed all the public laws or regulations within their respective limits."[416]

The question arises whether undocumented persons had a harder time because it was easier to efficiently control a smaller, limited space than an entire city, or whether it was beneficial because they could versatilely slip from one municipality over the demarcation line into the next where the watch of the former did not feel responsible. By the early nineteenth century, city guards rather resembled militias, as emphasized by criminal historians, who, in cities with high shares of enslaved residents, were agents of slave control. In the following decades, policing in the United State developed from an informal and communal watch system to a police force system. Yet, due to the division of the city, it still did not have a united organization in New Orleans.[417]

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[413] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, February 15, 1844, UVA.

[414] In the countryside, police organization developed out of the slave patrol, from the earliest beginnings disposed to hunt down runaway slaves. In the postbellum era, these vigilances went over to controlling freed slaves and to enforce Jim Crow segregation laws. Gary Potter, "The History of Policing in the United States," *EKU Online*, URL: https://plsonline.eku.edu/sites/plsonline.eku.edu/files/the-history-of-policing-in-us.pdf, accessed January 24, 2019.

[415] Richard Campanella, "Culture Wars Led to New Orleans's Most Peculiar Experiment in City Management," *NOLA.com* (March 7, 2016), URL:
https://www.nola.com/homegarden/index.ssf/2016/03/relics_remain_of_new_orleans_m.html, accessed January 27, 2019. Large parts of refugees from St. Domingue also settled in Baltimore. *Gens de couleur* and their slaves might have added 30 percent to the existing black population of Baltimore. They increased the share of non-white people in skilled crafts and of the Catholic religion. Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore: The Building of an American City* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 30, originally published 1980.

[416] *Journal of the First Municipality of the City of New Orleans, Containing the Seatings, Reports, Ordinances and Resolutions, From the 10th August 1836 to the 19 November 1836* (New Orleans: J. Bayon, 1836), October 19, 1836, LaRC. The three municipalities were divided into wards that elected a number of eldermen who, in turn, formed three Councils of Aldermen together constituting the General Council and answering to a single mayor. Campanella, "Culture Wars."

[417] Dennis C. Rousey, *Policing the Southern City: New Orleans, 1805-1889* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 4-6; and Stephen Spitzer, "The Rationalization of Crime Control in Capitalist Society," *Contemporary Crises* 3:1 (1979): 200.
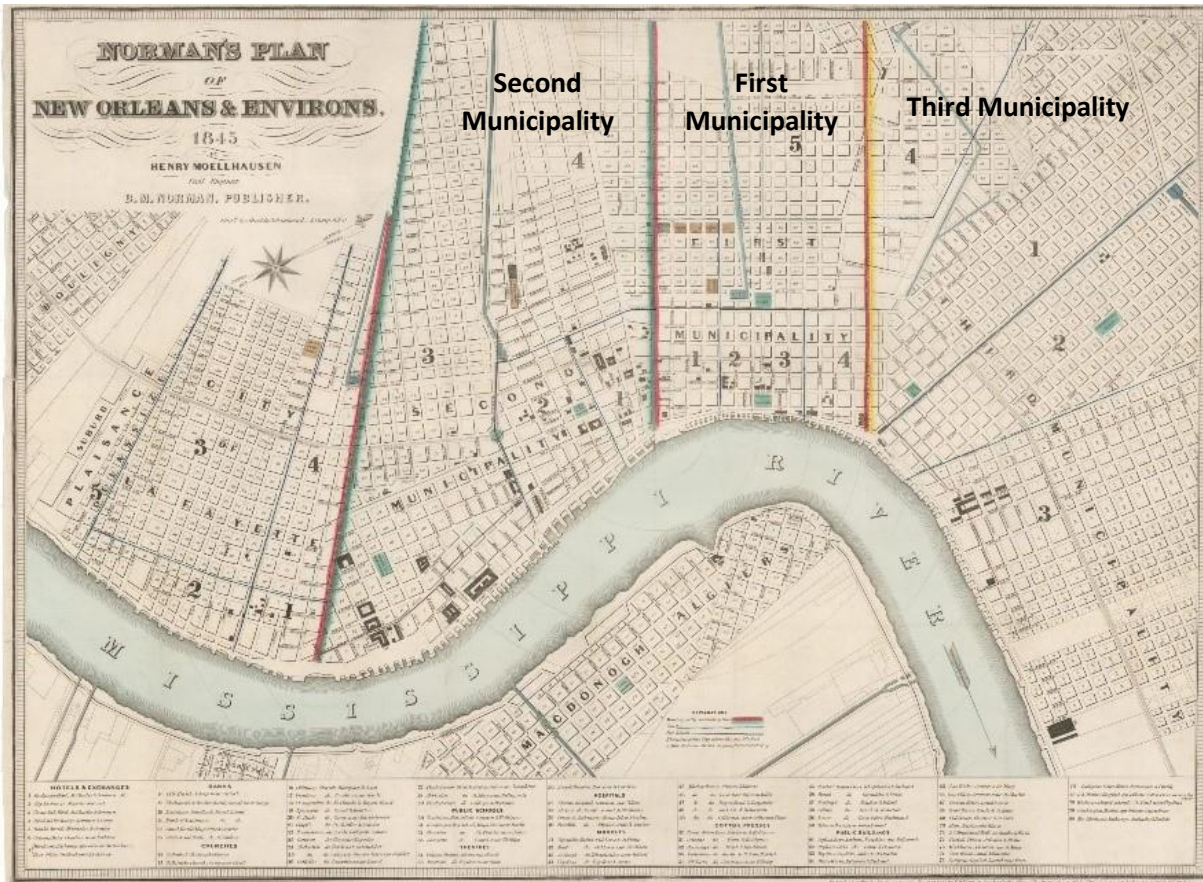
Figure 13: Map of New Orleans with Three Municipalities, 1845 [418]

City legislature reveals that in 1840, the First Municipality reorganized its police and designed a distribution plan according to which the night watch was to patrol the streets of the sector and the suburb Trémé. Figure 13 shows the First Municipality, located between the Second Municipality on the left and the Third Municipality on the right. Left, next to the Second Municipality, lies the City of Lafayette which was incorporated in 1852. Zooming into the First Municipality (figure 14) shows the patrolling plan of the night watch (in yellow). With 34 privates, the First Municipality up to Rampart street (highlighted in orange) (corresponding with today's French Quarter) seemed to be a rather well-supervised area. In the suburb Trémé, north of Rampart street, the vigilance was more relaxed, with patrolling only taking place along the vertical streets and ending on Villeré or Robertson streets (in one case further up on Roman street). In Trémé, 13 watchmen were on duty during the night. The daytime police consisted of ten men for the First Municipality and three for Trémé of which one remained at the fort and two "scour the suburb."[419]

This was a well-drafted plan to secure order and to detect possible agitators and in general people who breached the nocturnal curfew—at least on paper. What the watchmen really did during their shift, varied. That they were often asleep becomes clear by the fine of $1

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[418] Henry Moellhausen, Engraved by Shields & Hammond, Norman's Plan of New Orleans & Environs (New Orleans: B. M. Norman, 1845), URL: https://bostonraremaps.com/inventory/1845-henry-moellhausen-new-orleans/, accessed January 25, 2019.

[419] *Journal of the First Municipality of New Orleans*, July 27, 1840, LaRC.

that was set to be paid when found in that state.[420] As historian Dennis Rousey has likewise remarked, reports on the inefficiency of the watchmen are passed down from all American cities. Police work was exhausting. In New Orleans, the shifts usually lasted 12 hours for seven days a week. From 1836 onwards, the constables were hardly supervised by a higher-ranking officer during their shifts. Men who worked as police for longer than a year were an exception, many did not show up or neglected their duties.[421] Based on the ineffectiveness of the patrol system, the lacking commitment of watchmen, and the split responsibilities over the city, it was for refugees and other black people possible to move about New Orleans at day and night.
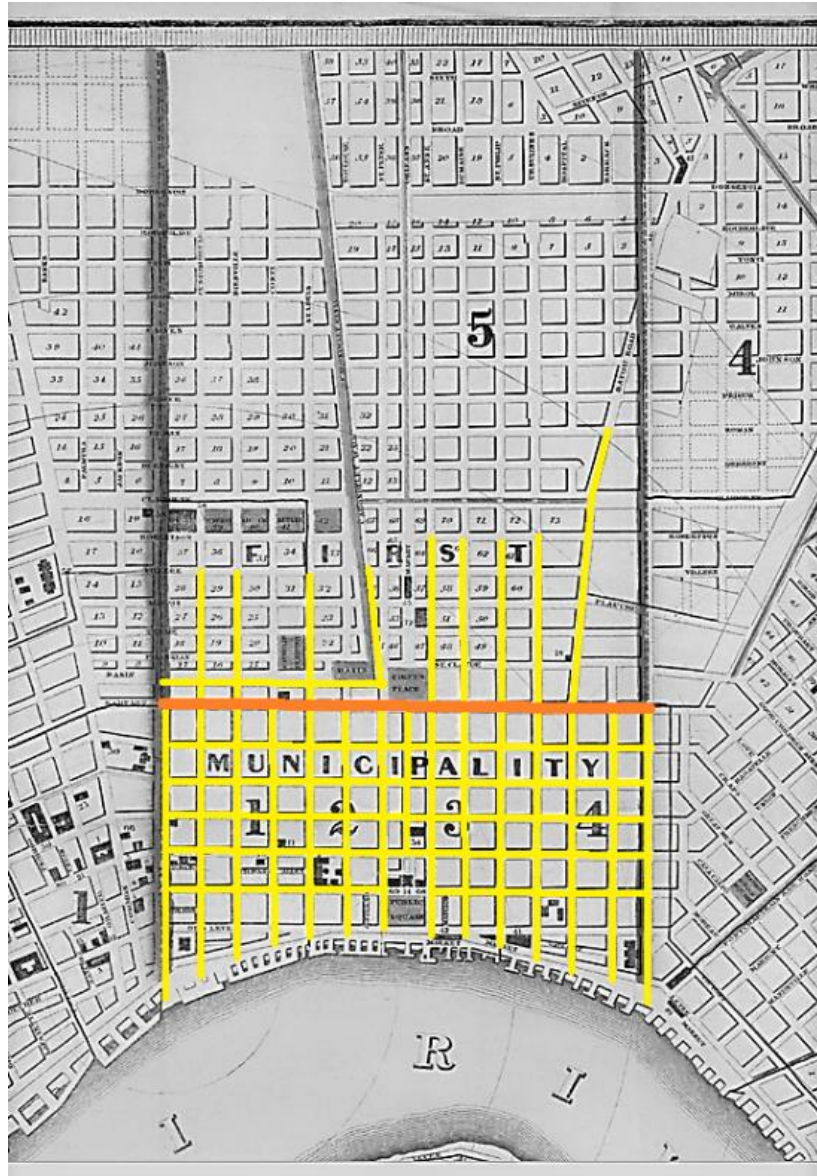

Figure 14: First Municipality and Trémé, with Patrolling Plan of Night Watch in Yellow, 1840

In 1852, the three municipalities were again consolidated into one city, and Lafayette was incorporated, too. The Anglo-American continent had allied up with German and Irish

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[420] Idem.

[421] Dennis C. Rousey, "'Hibernian Leatherheads': Irish Cops in New Orleans, 1830-1880," *Journal of Urban History* 10:1 (1983): 63, 69.

immigrants and was now dominating politics.[422] Slave refugees remained an integral element of the usual crime patterns of the city, whether divided or not. The police report of New Orleans on a normal December morning informed that the Recorder Genois' Court was that day occupied with 17 cases of vagrancy, disorderly conduct, runaway negroes, etc., "which were hustled up by the police last evening." Routinized, *The Daily Picayune* wrote that "None of them were of sufficient interest to be worth narrating."[423] Even as late as in 1855, a local paper reported that one could walk "at night two miles through the most thickly populated portions of New Orleans without encountering a single watchman, and more especially that this can be done night after night at different hours."[424]

With Charleston establishing its police force in 1852, New Orleans a year later, and Baltimore in 1857, the overwhelming time period under analysis meant for refugees (and all other persons living in these cities) that there were no centralized municipal police departments. Richmond opened a formal law enforcement agency in 1807, but the organization, with few watchmen, did not even come close to the tight control in, for instance, Charleston.[425] Various scholars have added that under the watch system, with constables at day time and night watches at night, policing institutions were only partly financed by the public and semi-bureaucratic at best. Policemen were in most of the cases either volunteers, fee retainers, or part-time employees without economic security. Over time, the informal watches and constable systems were no longer sufficient to control disorder in the rapidly expanding cities—foremost drunkenness and prostitution, which became uncomfortably visible in the urban public spaces.[426]

Moreover, slave refugees were only one issue municipal authorities had to deal with. White residents were often more tumultuous than slaves and free blacks due to riots, gangs, incendiaries, and uproar on election days. City governments were weak and inefficient and failed to regulate their heterogeneous citizenry throughout the country.[427] Because of their lack of distinction from other black residents and the general disorder in the streets of antebellum cities, any random African American that one encountered on the streets of southern cities could theoretically be a legal resident (slave or free), a runaway slave, or a free black residing illegally in the city. At first glance it was usually impossible to tell.

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[422] With the consolidation came name changes. The First Municipality became the Second Municipal District, and the Second Municipality became the First Municipal District. Richard Campanella, "The Turbulent History behind the Seven New Orleans Municipal Districts," *NOLA.com* (October 9, 2013), URL: https://www.nola.com/entertainment_life/home_garden/article_931737d6-c922-5bd9-9062-80a7f5959d51.html, accessed July 15, 2019.

[423] *Daily Picayune*, December 2, 1852.

[424] *Picayune*, 1855, in Judith Kelleher Schafer, *Brothels, Depravity, and Abandoned Women: Illegal Sex in Antebellum New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

[425] Records of the Charleston Police Department, 1855-1991, CCPL; Sidney Harring, *Policing in a Class Society: The Experience of American Cities, 1865-1915* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983, and "History of the Richmond Police Department," Richmond, Virginia, URL: http://www.ci.richmond.va.us/Police/HistoryPoliceDepartment.aspx, accessed July 5, 2019.

[426] Robert J. Lundman, *Police and Policing: An Introduction* (New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston, 1980), 31; Potter, "History of Policing." See also Samuel Walker, *The Police in America: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996).

[427] Fields, *Middle Ground*, 53; and Mohl, "Industrial Town and City," 8.

Spatial Segregation

Despite not being easily recognizable, urban refugees typically tried to avoid whites. Their endeavors were facilitated by the social and physical developments of nineteenth-century cities. Most scholarship does not recognize racial segregation as a phenomenon of the antebellum period. Largely agreeing that a full-blown, top-down spatial segregation was an occurrence of the twentieth century, the debate centers around its origins. Some historians have claimed that segregation on the basis of race began in the South the years immediately following the Civil War, and few case studies have asserted that it did not take off before the 1880s.[428] Following the living patterns of slave refugees, however, suggests that spatial segregation was indeed a perceivable development before the Civil War. Other than being purely race-based, it was a class-based segregation. Yet, in many instances, black people also lived in streets, blocks, or smaller neighborhoods that were almost entirely segregated along race.

This claim holds especially true for Richmond and Baltimore. Runaway slave advertisements offer windows into where African Americans lived. They reveal that as the nineteenth century progressed, more and more enslaved people had relatives who lived in Baltimore. In the late eighteenth century, by contrast, few of these ads had mentioned the family relations of the runaways.[429] Increasingly, masters began to give information about the personal contacts of the absconder and, in numerous cases, also on presumed employment. Charles A. Pye, the legal owner of 20-year-old "rather handsome" Watt, who left him in March 1816, announced a reward of $100. "He has some relations at Mr. Foxall's, in Georgetown, and a free brother in Baltimore, where he will probably endeavor to reach. It is likely he will have a pass, as some of his relations read and write."[430] This and other comparable sources reveal important insight into the social networks of African Americans. With the number of black city dwellers increasing and urban slavery in Baltimore shrinking, city contacts were often free people. As early as the 1830s, free black inhabitants outnumbered the city's enslaved residents by over 10,000, which meant they had more possibilities to shelter and aid runaways.

In the early nineteenth century, free and enslaved black people generally lived scattered over the city. For this period, it is correct to say that residential segregation was not very coined. As the antebellum decades passed, as David Goldfield has also confirmed, more and more visitors observed not only the poor living conditions of African Americans, but increasingly also the spatial division between black and white.[431] By mid-century, housing patterns in Baltimore and Richmond were slowly reorganized as whites who could afford new homes that met the new, modernized urban standards flocked together in certain areas. For Baltimore, this included the western part of the city or uptown. New luxury houses emerged around the cathedral, on Charles Street, Madison Avenue, Bolton, Hoffman, Preston streets, and on

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[428] Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond," *Journal of Urban History* 21:3 (1995): 302; Howard N. Rabinowitz, *Race Relations in the Urban South, 1865-1890*. Forward by George M. Fredrickson (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1996), ch. 5, originally published New York: Oxford University Press, 1978; Wright, *Life Behind a Veil*, ch. 4; and Andrew Marvin Ambrose, "Redrawing the Color Line: The History and Patterns of Black Housing in Atlanta, 1940-1973" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1992), 61.

[429] Robert L. Hall, "Slave Resistance in Baltimore City and County, 1747-1790," *Maryland Historical Magazine* 84:4 (1989): 306.

[430] *Baltimore Patriot*, September 12, 1816.

[431] Goldfield, "Black Life," 124, 140.

Lexington Street near Pearl. Mount Vernon and Bolton Hill were home to the upper classes and their servants (the latter often lived in alleys close by). White native-born mill workers and industrial workers dwelled close to the mills or wharves to the east (Canton), the mostly white construction workers of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad company lived on Mount Clare in the southwest. Skilled workers had houses in Oldtown, along the James Fall, Gay Street, Penn Avenue, or on Frederick Road. Black people often came to live amongst themselves or in precarious neighborhoods, which also absorbed the recently arrived (mostly Irish and German) immigrants, like Fells Point, the industrial area of Spring Garden, the middle ring, or the parameter wards. Prior to mid-century, a black concentration could be found in several of the narrow streets that ran north to south, like Happy or Star Alley.[432] (See figure 15.)
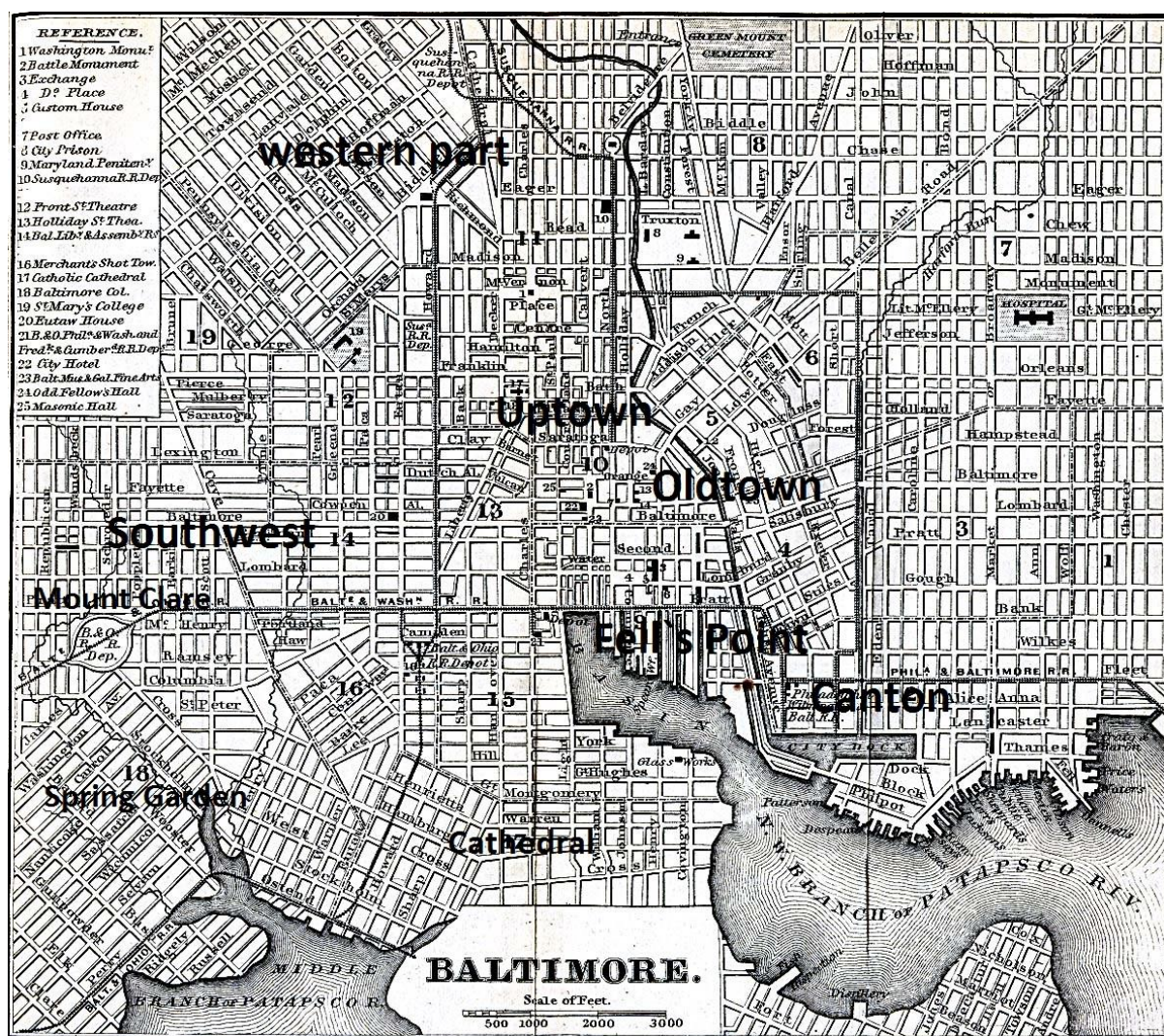

Figure 15: Map of Baltimore, 1848[433]

Buildings were constructed in a way that their residents were protected from outsiders' views. When cholera broke out in Baltimore in 1849, its origins were traced back to "some free

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[432] Olson, *Baltimore*; and "Sanitary Report of Baltimore," *Ordinances of the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore* (1850), 208-209, in Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 258.
[433] Map of Baltimore, Maryland, 1848, in *Appletons' Hand-Book of American Travel* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1869). Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, University of Texas at Austin.

negroes, whose houses were only accessible by narrow alleys running into St. Paul street."[434] Slave refugees were often believed to be in poor areas with numerous African American inhabitants. 19-year-old runaway James Harris, with a "very large mouth [and] thick African lips," could have used his private and work-related network to conceal himself in Fells Point, where he had lived prior to his sale. His new owner therefore believed him to be "lurking about that part of the city" in 1842.[435]

Richmond had an inner section occupied by industry and commerce. The James Falls to the southwest of the city powered the iron works and flourmills while tobacco manufacturers settled in the southeastern part.[436] White people who could afford it moved away from the riverbank (and the iron industry) and up the hills into higher-lying neighborhoods. From the 1840s on, enslaved and free black city dwellers increasingly crowded together in the northwest and in Shockoe Creek near the docks, tobacco factories, foundries, and train depots. They were not alone; poor workers of all races and backgrounds housed there.[437] Other lower-class neighborhoods were Oregon Hill, right above the Tredegar Iron Works, the dock area of Rocketts, Fulton, Port Mayo, Mount Erin, and Butchertown (a neighborhood of Shockoe Valley). People there lived in brick dwellings. Enslaved tobacco workers who were permitted (or forced) to secure their own boarding lived, for instance, in the African American neighborhood of Shockoe Bottom. Free black people owned or rented shacks in narrow back alleys, for example, in Bacon Bottom and Jackson Ward.[438] Estimates suggest that by 1860, almost half of all Richmond slaves were hired out, the majority of whom also resided separate from their masters.[439]

Thomas Hanchett has explained that wealthy people moving outside of the city center marked the reverse trend of old-established patterns. Earlier, they had lived within the inner ring while less well-off residents occupied the periphery. With innovations in transportation, these schemes were turned upside town. By mid-century, carriages became widely accessible and city dwellers with money could afford to take the new streetcars and omnibuses pulled by horses; the middle classes went with hack drivers. But it was not only changes in transportation that propelled these new residential dynamics. The industrialization of cities, which included craft shops and residences fading from the highly visible main streets, was an even stronger force.[440] Employees and workers had to follow their work sites out of the center because they depended on living in walking-distance from them. Since white people moved away from poor and black people more often than the other way around, the segregational patterns that emerged in the late antebellum decades were foremost a white product.

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[434] Thomas H. Buckler, *History of Epidemic Cholera, as it Appeared at the Baltimore City and County Alms-House, in the Summer of 1849, With Some Remarks on the Medical Topography and Diseases of this Region* (Baltimore: James Lucas, 1851), 31.

[435] *Sun*, January 18, 1842.

[436] Sorensen, "Absconded," 20; and Brown and Kimball, "Mapping the Terrain," 297.

[437] Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 97.

[438] Kimball, *American City*, 74-75; and Marie Tyler-McGraw and Gregg D. Kimball, Exhibit catalogue *In Bondage and Freedom: Antebellum Black Life in Richmond, Virginia* (Richmond: Valentine Museum, 1988), 12.

[439] Tracey M. Weis, "Negotiating Freedom: Domestic Service and the Landscape of Labor and Household Relations in Richmond, Virginia, 1850-1880" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1994), 38, 40.

[440] Thomas W. Hanchett, *Sorting Out the New South City. Race, Class, and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875-1975* (University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 9-10; and Graham Russell Gao Hodges, *Taxi! A Social History of the New York City Cabdriver* (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 12.

Upon arrival in a city, runaway slaves seem to have had clear ideas about where to go. In a city that was continuously changing and attracting new residents, visitors, commuters, and suppliers, it was relatively easy to hide, and slave refugees made use of their (often) extensive networks to do so. The neighborhoods of the lower classes, and consequently of African Americans, counted many grog shops where refugees could find sympathizers. In Charleston, for example, these were the Neck and the northern edge of the city; in New Orleans the second district just beyond Canal street.[441] Besides the areas where free and enslaved black people clustered, there were further places of refuge throughout the cities. Punctual locations like taverns were meeting places where refugees did not necessarily sleep or live but where they could arrive after their refuge from outside the cities or simply socialize. Examples in Richmond include the Bell Tavern and the Court House Tavern, the Washington Hotel (where slaves could dwell), the Eagle Hotel, the theater, and the Union Hotel.[442]

Taverns and grog shops were places where networks were affirmed and new connections laid. In these places, runaways were either seen or slaveowners suspected that they could be found there. They were not only a meeting point for men but also constituted places of networking for women. In November 1843, the Richmond police was looking for "Rebeca belonging to Jns Smith[,] Gingerbread Colour[,] tall and slim." She had "been in the habit of washing in the back of the Bell Tavern"[443] and it is very likely that she established ties there that helped her escape bondage. The police and slaveholders would look at these places for runaways. And so John Robertson was caught at the same Bell Tavern where Rebeca would later work before her escape.[444] Although the effectiveness was limited, police at times complied with the requests of slaveowners to look out for their runaways.

The highest risk of discovery, however, was to be incidentally recognized by a familiar white person. This happened to Elihu who legally belonged to William Cochrone from Natchez. When Cochrone's father died of cholera while being on a trip with Elihu to Albany, the bondsman "availed himself of the opportunity to gain his freedom. About four months since he shipped on board the Adrian as a cook, since which time he has been sailing to this port [Natchez], where, through a friend of his master, he was discovered and caused to be arrested."[445] Charles Ball, again, was in 1830, while living in the neighborhood of Baltimore in illegal freedom, recognized by his former mistress's younger brother and recaptured.[446] The information in countless runaway slave advertisements that a slave had been seen somewhere, relied mostly on the slaveholders' networks, too. These networks included family members, neighbors, and business partners, who would not know every field hand but were familiar with those bondspeople who formed part of the mobile slave elite. For absconders from slavery it was therefore easier to blend in with African American communities that lived rather isolated from whites. It provided them with additional anonymity and made detection by coincidence less likely, a condition that favored the building of social structures.

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[441] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 150-151.
[442] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, UVA.
[443] Idem, November 10, 1843, UVA.
[444] Robinson was originally committed to jail in 1823 for want of his freedom papers. The Henrico County Court then decided that he was a runaway slave. Petition by Ruben Burton, Henrico County, December 21, 1825, Legislative Petitions, LVA.
[445] *Daily Picayune*, September 8, 1850.
[446] Ball, *Slavery in the United States*, 480-482.

These findings suggest the beginnings of residential segregation—not of street blocks and neighborhoods but of smaller sections of a neighborhood or single streets which were integrated in terms of wealth, race, ethnicity, and nativity of their inhabitants. Researchers from The Charleston Museum support this claim. They have found that free black people in Charleston were concentrated on streets like Nassau, Henrietta, America, and Line streets. North of Calhoun (the division between Charleston and Neck), they clustered along Coming and east of Meeting street.[447] Free black people much less often lived south of Calhoun street, but sometimes enslaved people racially dominated a street block. To name just one example, in Clifford's Alley, west of King street between Queen and Clifford, 66 slaves and one white person lived in wooden houses.[448]

In 1856, segregated housing had become so extreme that the Grant Jury of Charleston dedicated a report to it. The jury criticized that in what previously had been Neck, there were

> rows of buildings constructed expressly for and rented to slaves and persons of color; in these negro rows as many as fifty to one hundred negros, or persons of color, are sometimes residing, shut out from the public street by a gate, all the buildings having but one common yard, and not a single white person on the premises.

This living situation basically violated the prohibition of assembly at all times, the jury complaint.[449] Moreover, the distribution of residents throughout the city along race was also in the early decades not even. Table 4 shows the population of Charleston's wards divided according to race and legal status in 1824. In ward four, for example, 6.9 percent of the residents were free blacks, compared to 2.6 percent in ward one. Refugees in ward four, hence, blended in with a free population that was in relative numbers 2.7 times larger than in ward one. Given the observation that freedom seekers were strongly pulled into free black communities, where they added to their numbers, the chances in ward four might even have been better for them to succeed.

Table 5: Population of Charleston Wards, 1824[450]

Wards	Whites	Slaves	"Free Colored"	Total
1	2,322	2,598	**133**	5,053
2	2,157	3,379	303	5,839
3	3,517	3,394	522	7,433
4	4,361	4,481	**650**	9,492

Charleston, additionally, was rather small. This was due to the natural limitations of the peninsula it was built on. Boundary Street (in 1850 changed to Calhoun street) was the city's demarcation to Charleston Neck. Apart from city directories that reveal where officially registered Charlestonians lived, there are other indices that hint to the non-integration of certain parts of the city. In 1838, an ordinance was passed to prevent the erection of wooden buildings

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[447] "Where Free Blacks Lived," *SCIWAY* (2019), URL: https://www.sciway.net/hist/chicora/freepersons-3.html, accessed June 11, 2019.
[448] Also, Grove street counted two white and 48 enslaved residents, and in Hester street, 29 slaves lived without any white neighbors. Powers, "Black Charleston," 22. Both these streets were located further up in the North.
[449] Presentment of Grant Jury of Charleston District, March 1856, Legislative Petitions, SCDAH.
[450] *Charleston Courier*, August 7, 1824.

in the city. In order to prevent fire, it stipulated that only brick or stone was allowed to be used and the walls had to be of a minimum thickness. Violation of this ordinance called for fees between 500 and 1,000 dollars.[451] As a consequence, people from the lower social-economic level could not afford to build or buy houses in the city anymore. In 1857, this ordinance was partly loosened. Given the residents the opportunity to erect buildings within the coming 20 days, structures were exempted if they were located "south of Calhoun street, and east of that portion of East Bay street lying north of Market street, or to the west of Legare, Savage, Franklin, or Wilson streets, or of that portion of Smith street from Beaufain to Calhoun streets."[452] Figure 16 shows the areas on the margins of the city where the erection of wooden buildings remained permitted (surrounded by yellow). These were streets were the lower classes lived (Calhoun street is marked in orange). It is striking how small the remaining areas are, amounting to the neighborhoods where the upper middle and upper classes resided, and which city authorities and police had most stake in patrolling and supervising.

Neck, not an incorporated part of Charleston City until 1850, was a historical hiding place for escaped slaves. This was widely known already in the late eighteenth century. "Charleston Neck, by its vicinity to the city, is rendered so extremely convenient a place of refuge for runaway negroes, &c. to commit thefts and robberies both in and out of the city," lamented a local newspaper in 1788.[453] In the nineteenth century, things did not improve for Charlestonians concerned about the less regulated neighboring town.[454] In October 1822, enslaved Ben, Glasgow, and Peter ran away from a plantation on Wateree River in central South Carolina. Two month later, "They were since seen in Charleston Neck, and are supposed to be lurking about the Plantations, 12 to 14 miles on Ashley River, Dorchester Road, Charleston Neck or Charleston."[455] In 1845, a resident of Neck called for more police regulation in his home place because Charleston City's effective police was pushing out criminals from the city and into Neck. He lamented that Neck was "situated in the immediate juxtaposition with a city where an active and vigilant police is ever in operation, and from which all suspicious and mischievous characters are speedily routed out." The problem for white Neck residents was that they did have a night watch but there was no guard house to store offenders. And so, patrollers usually "immediately punished and discharged" black people they encountered.[456] For refugees who were possibly taken up, this had no long-term consequences.

The importance of suburbs in absorbing slave refugees can hardly be overestimated. Along the ongoing antebellum era, black people moved further outside of the cities' limits. Charleston Neck is one example where security and supervision regulations were weaker than in Charleston City. Richmond's western and eastern suburbs were not official parts of the city and it is unlikely that the night watch ever went there. And so these neighborhoods, too, attracted large numbers of refugees. Other southern cities faced similar dynamics, like New

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[451] *Charleston Mercury*, October 9, 1844. A similar ordinance is reported from New Orleans prohibiting the construction of wooden buildings "within what are denominated the fire limits." Norman, *New Orleans and Environs*, 69.

[452] *Charleston Mercury*, August 24, 1857.

[453] *City Gazette or the Daily Advertiser*, June 13, 1788.

[454] In a public meeting of citizens of Charleston Neck in 1840 on whether or not to get incorporated into Charleston City, the concern was raised that Neck had a "defective organization of our police" and it was resolved "to form, if possible a new and efficient system of police […]." *Southern Patriot*, November 2, 1840.

[455] *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, December 16, 1822.

[456] *Charleston Courier*, September 20; September 23, 1845.

Orleans with its *faubourgs* (suburbs outside the city limits). New Orleans' *Daily Picayune* moreover reported in June 1845 that "The suburbs of Mobile are said to be infested by large numbers of runaway negroes." The exact same wording was used a month later to refer to the situation around Natchez.[457]
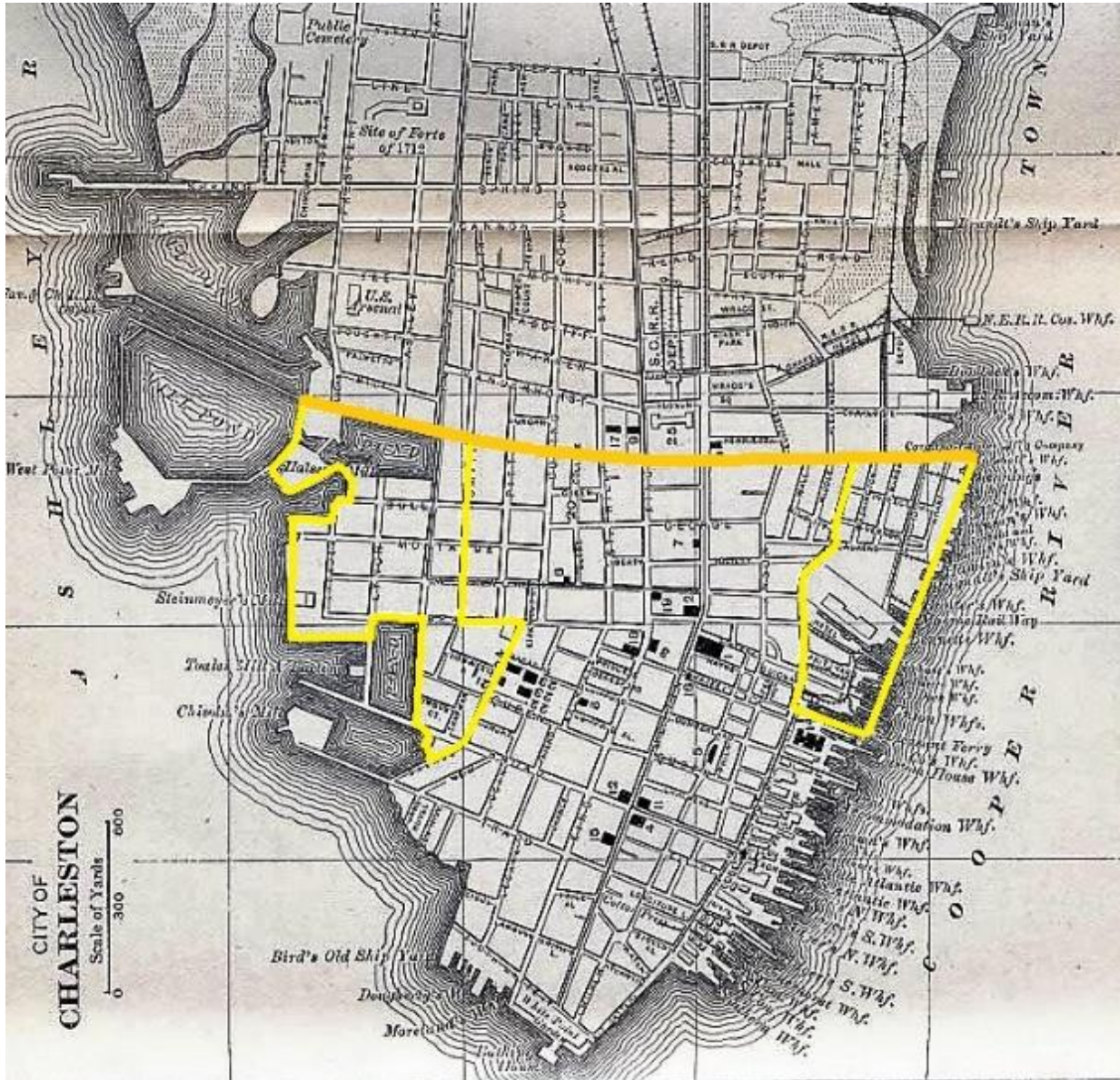
Figure 16: Charleston According to the Exemptions to the Prohibition to Erect Wooden Buildings, 1857

Nominally free African Americans were not the only ones to benefit from spatial segregation. Enslaved city dwellers did, too. It was not only the hireling system that rendered the daily lives of some bondspeople very close to those of free people but also the fact that some were able to live on their own. This was prohibited by law but it was a common practice throughout the urban South. Sylvia, with 55 years clearly above the average age of slave refugees, had enjoyed great autonomy before she was sold. In Charleston, she had been working and living alone, and

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[457] *Daily Picayune*, June 13; July 23, 1845.
[458] Map of Charleston 1885, URL: http://www.carolana.com/SC/Towns/charleston_1885_map.html, accessed January 28, 2019.

being forced to change her life and to comply with the close supervision of a new owner could have been the reason for her escape in 1840. The ad read: "She has been in the habit for several years of selling about the streets and lately has been living in the yard No. 9 George street, where she hired a room."[459]

Many enslaved women in New Orleans likewise had rooms or houses to themselves. This enabled them to help people who needed protection. At times things went wrong, for instance for "Mary Williams, slave of John G. Cocks." Mary was in October 1853 "arraigned before Recorder Winter, on the charge of having for some time past, secreted and harbored the runaway slave Harrick, the property of C. V Burterbire, at her house in St. Paul street, between Gravier and Perdido streets." In the same city, enslaved Albert, who was owned by a Mr. Moore, was fined $25 in 1857 "for renting rooms to other slaves." Martha, originally from Richmond, absconded within Charleston three months after having been sold to a new owner. "She was seen the night after she went away in a house occupied by negroes, on Boyce & Co's wharf."[460]

Living-out patterns, together with the hiring system and widespread personal networks were a combination which created spaces that absorbed hundreds of freedom seekers. The New Orleans *Daily Picayune* summarized this phenomenon in 1859:

> The practice, so general in this city, of giving monthly passes to slaves, has proved injurious to the character and habits not only of those indulged, but to all those over whom they have influence. These passes make the slaves, for the time being, virtually free [and] furnish the means of concealment to any one who, to escape an irksome restraint, finally becomes an habitual runaway.

Testifying to the knowledge of New Orleans slaveholders about their slaves turning into runaways within the same place, the newspaper claimed to be "assured by those who have temporarily lost servants in this city, that without going more than a few squares from the residences of their masters, they have, in many instances, found security in the lodging places furnished by those who live under the protection of passes, for months." The editor concluded that "a perfect system for mutual protection exists here among this class of population, rendering New Orleans one of the safest of hiding places for runaway slaves."[461]

Many different players were involved in this. Following up on the argument of the *Daily Picayune* editor, it was the negligence of slaveholders, the solidarity of black people, and the dynamics of urban development that created spaces of freedom. Cities hosted a variety of people who—advertently or inadvertently—contributed to creating cities of refuge.

Autonomy and Exclusion

New Orleans was far from showing the same level of segregation as Richmond. With slavery playing an important role and the intermingling of whites and mulattoes being stronger than anywhere else in the United States, emphasis was put on social distance rather than physical separation from dark-skinned free blacks and slaves. As the antebellum era moved on, whites increasingly tried to demarcate themselves and the spaces they inhabited from blacks.

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[459] *Charleston Mercury*, July 9, 1840.
[460] *Daily Picayune*, October 4, 1853; August 27, 1857; and *Charleston Mercury*, February 9, 1844.
[461] *Daily Picayune*, October 22, 1859.

Interaction between the two races was socially acceptable only on a master-servant basis, and otherwise they essentially occupied different worlds. The nineteenth century marked the advent of city planning, which resulted in more structural exclusion of people who planners sought to keep out of sight.
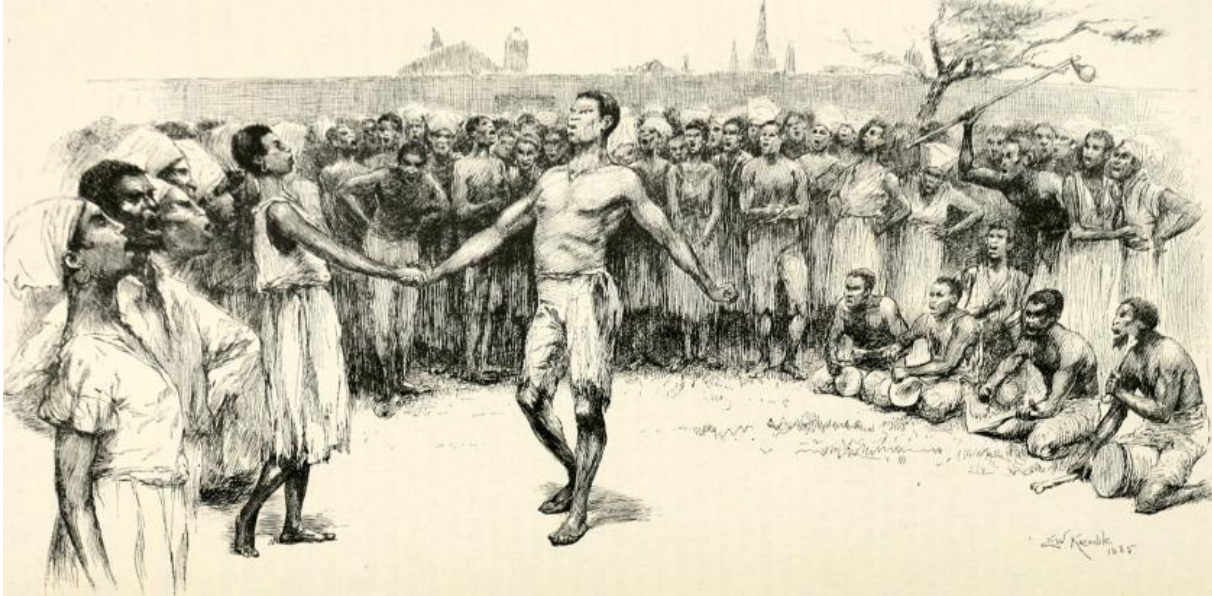

Figure 17: Dancing in Congo Square (depiction from 1886)[462]

New Orleans had a special meeting place for black people; a comparable spot in other southern cities did not exist. It was the so-called Congo Square, located just outside the original city walls, as contemporaries reported.[463] Since 1812, it was a public space constituting a centralized congregation place for slaves. Before, urban slaves assembled throughout the city. The Sunday afternoon gatherings focused on dancing, singing, and musical performances and had social, cultural, economic, and religious meanings to those who participated.[464] (See figure 17.) *The Daily Picayune* recommended Congo Square to visitors to the city: It had the appeal of a tourist attraction yet stood out for its exoticness rather than for being part of American culture. An editor wrote:

> The scene is novel, interesting, and highly amusing. In various parts of the square a number of male and female negroes assemble, dressed in their holiday clothes, with the very gayest bandana handkerchiefs upon the heads of the females, and, accompanied by the thumping of a banjo or drum, or the squealing of a greasy cremona, perform the most grotesque African dances.

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[462] Edward Winsor Kemble, "Dancing in Congo Square," 1886, in "New Orleans' Landscape Legacy," The Cultural Landscape Foundation, URL: https://tclf.org/places/view-city-and-regional-guides/new-orleans/new-orleans-landscape-legacy, accessed August 13, 2019.

[463] It was "below Rampart street, with St. Claude on the rear, and St. Ann and St. Peter streets on its sides." Norman, *New Orleans and Environs*, 182.

[464] Congo Square was also known as Circus Square and was renamed Place d'Armes in 1851. Gary A. Donaldson, "A Window on Slave Culture: Dances at Congo Square in New Orleans, 1800-1862," *Journal of Negro History* 69:2 (1984): 63-64. Consult the account of Benjamin Latrobe as one of the most insightful contemporary information on African and African American cultural expressions in the nineteenth century. Latrobe, *Journal of Latrobe*, 180-182.

Being attracted to and simultaneously repelled by what they perceived as African aesthetics, the editor described the most distinguished person at Congo Square, as of a "particularly killing appearance. […] the very *beau ideal* of a master of ceremonies."[465]

The city also allowed free black people to "give a ball or any other party." When more than ten people attended, "they shall apply to the judge of the Parish [for] his permission." Enslaved people were also allowed to join, under the condition that they obtained a written permit from their owners.[466] With these practices and allowances, New Orleans was the most liberal place for people of African descent. In the other cities, the efforts to keep enslaved and free black Americans separated were higher, as accounted for by Anna Murray Douglass in the opening of this chapter. The more room there was to mingle, the easier it was for runaway slaves to join.

While the social worlds of black people grew together, the new obsession with race and the stark hierarchies within slavery intensified the social distance between African Americans and whites. If wealthy whites had to live in the same cities as black people and poor whites, they reasoned, at least they should demarcate their living and leisure areas from their undesired neighbors. In this light, Richard Wade has shown that black people, free and enslaved, were excluded from taverns, restaurants, hotels, and also hospitals and cemeteries. The Richmond Negro Code, for one, determined physical locations like the Capitol where "slaves not to Walk or be in."[467] Hand in hand with welcoming the spending of public money on exclusive areas and recreation sites like parks and cemeteries came an unwillingness to support those parts of the city not of interest to the managers of tax money. The unequal division of resources between poorer and wealthier streets, neighborhoods, or wards worsened the situation for the lower classes. For those who profited from city planning, it was a small step to link the disastrous sanitary conditions in certain parts of the city to the character of the people living there.[468]

When the spaces of whites and blacks overlapped, it was up to the black person to move aside. Frederick Law Olmsted gave account of this when he observed black Richmonders literally giving way to whites.[469] To minimize interracial contact between the lower classes, it was in 1846 even suggested to remove black people from the penitentiaries in Virginia. Four years later, the city jail in Richmond followed these recommendations, announcing that "separate apartments ought to be provided for keeping the black + white prisoners + that they should not be kept together as present."[470] Many whites did not even want to share their houses with their slaves, unless they were domestic servants. Bondspeople accommodating themselves

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[465] *Daily Picayune*, March 22, ca. 1846. The Congo Square was such an emblematic cultural cornerstone that a New Orleans newspaper still remembered it in 1879. *Time Picayune*, October 12, 1879.

[466] Transcriptions of Parish Records of Louisiana, Prepared by The Historical Records Survey Division of Professional and Service Projects, Works Project Administration, No. 26 Jefferson Parish (Gretna), Series I, Police Jury Minutes, Vol. I: 1834-1843 (New Orleans: Police Jury, Parish of Jefferson, June 1939), HML.

[467] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 266-267.

[468] Moreover, basic services like portable water, water for fire extinction, and infrastructure for health improvement were provided by private companies that cared less about the meager revenues from lower social strata. Stanley K. Schultz and Clay McShane, "To Engineer the Metropolis: Sewers, Sanitation, and City Planning in Late Nineteenth-Century America," in *The Making of Urban America*, ed. Raymond A. Mohl (Wilmington: SR Books, 1988), 83.

[469] Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 37.

[470] House of Delegates, Senate & Virginia State Papers, Annual Messages, *Journal of the House of Delegates of Virginia. Session 1846-1847* (Richmond: Manuel Shepherd, 1846), Speech by W. M. Smith, LVA; Hustings Court Suit Papers, Ended Causes, City Jail – Report Concerning, August 15, 1850, LVA.

became such a big issue in southern cities that it was outlawed. Since it was, however, never really sanctioned, the phenomenon prevailed and intensified.[471]

Social distance between the races extended into the spiritual sphere. In New Orleans, the place of this study with the highest share of Catholics, free and enslaved men and women of this faith worshipped together, yet the communities grew more racially segregated from 1803 on, when Louisiana became American. A contemporary estimated that around half of black people claiming affiliation to a faith were Catholics.[472] The city even had, besides schools and seminaries for blacks, a school and convent for the education of free black girls, located on St. Claude street. The Catholic church and black Americans had a distinct relationship, with more possibilities for non-whites than in other denominations. Perhaps most interestingly, New Orleans' Catholic church was strongly feminized. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, women of African descent led propagation and missionary efforts and it was through matrilineages that Catholic faith was passed down over generations.[473]

Particular for the Catholic denomination were relations of godparentship in which people other than the parents took roles of spiritual and worldly guidance. Often extending godparentship to other enslaved people, attending church and furnishing one's children with godparents meant an enlargement beyond their own legal status and beyond one's own race or nativity. Catholics essentially expanded their family to include other people who had a steak in the well-being of the child.[474] This was a combination of what Gwendolyn Midlo Hall has labelled "biological and fictive kin."[475] Besides New Orleans, Baltimore had a noteworthy Catholic community and, to lesser extent, Charleston.[476] One the one hand, the Catholic church might have extended the fictive kin network and, hence, the support networks for people escaping slavery. On the other hand, as historians researching the relation between churches and slavery have noted, it was allied with pro-slavery apologists. Comparably, the Methodist church, had moved away from its anti-slavery disposition in the late eighteenth century.[477] Both congregations were therefore probably much more reluctant to help individuals exit bondage. The Methodist and other churches, however, played a part in the increasing autonomy of black Americans, which eventually was related to the topic of slave flight.

Being systematically excluded from white society, African Americans organized themselves independently, through ideology, religion, schools, benevolent societies, and social spaces.[478] Scholars have shown that Baltimore's black community established its own religious

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[471] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 63; and Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 96.

[472] Mary Jones to Charles Colcock Jones, November 26, 1829, C. C. Jones Family Papers, Tulane University Library, in Cornelius, *Slave Missions*, 111; and Rodriguez, "Ripe for Revolt," 47.

[473] Emily Clark and Virginia Meacham Gould, "The Feminine Face of Afro-Catholicism in New Orleans, 1727-1852," *William & Mary Quarterly* 59:2 (2002): 409-410, 412-413; and Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec, "The Formation of a Peculiar Afro-Catholic Slave Community in Antebellum Louisiana," Database Project Slave Baptisms, 1800-1802, St. Louis Cathedral (unpublished), in Sylvia R. Frey, "The Visible Church: Historiography of African Americans Religion since Raboteau," *Slavery & Abolition* 29:1 (2008): 96.

[474] Dale Edwyna Smith, *African American Lives in St. Louis, 1763-1865: Slavery, Freedom and the West* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2017), 34; and Ingersoll, *Mammon and Manon*, 207.

[475] Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Africans in Colonial Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 294.

[476] See Cornelius, *Slave Missions*, 111-113; and Suzanne Krebsbach, "Black Catholics in Antebellum Charleston," *South Carolina Historical Magazine* 108:2 (2007): 143-159.

[477] W. Jason Wallace, *Catholics, Slaveholders, and the Dilemma of American Evangelicalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 1-2; and Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 25-26.

[478] On benevolent societies, see Wright, *Free Negro in Maryland*, 250-252.

institutions quite early. Free African Americans in Baltimore had their own official places of worship since the early nineteenth century. The African Methodist Bethel Society was founded in 1815, and by 1860, there were 16 black churches and missions in Baltimore with at least 6,400 registered members who worshipped in their own fashion. Unlike in rural areas, churches in towns and cities organized their members in a formal way. This relative autonomy allowed preachers the liberty to interpret the Bible in a way that did justice to black people's experiences. Segregation, moreover, extended into death. Since 1807, black people in Baltimore were buried in the African Burial Ground. Through churches, black communities in different places interacted with each other. The African Methodist Episcopal Church of Baltimore, established in 1816, was connected to the ones in Philadelphia, Charleston, and New Orleans.[479] Yet, independent organization of black life did not mean that they were left in peace. Churches operated autonomously, but whites viewed their religious services with suspicion.

Suspicion translated into panic when black people occasionally decided to stand up against repression. In 1822, the Denmark Vesey conspiracy took place in South Carolina. Vesey was a carpenter in Charleston who bought his freedom. He was accused of planning a revolt which would involve thousands of slaves.[480] Together with another wirepuller called Gullah Jack, Vesey was a member of the African Congregation, which was formed in Charleston and their church built in Hampstead, a suburb to the city. The meetings of the church were not attended by white people.[481] Historiography of the late nineteenth century lamented the suppression of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston after the discovery of the Denmark Vesey's conspiracy because "Being an independent ecclesiastical organization, it gave the idea and produced the sentiment of personal freedom and responsibility in the Negro."[482] African American churches indeed offered a separate space for black people to follow their own agendas and to create a black counterculture. The labelling of new institutions as "African" gave black people, regardless of their legal status, a feeling of unity, as Gregg Kimball has argued.[483]

In August 1831, Nat Turner organized a rebellion in Virginia, in which course slaves killed close to 60 whites. Although the rebellion was put down after a few days, white Virginians became panicky.[484] Motivated by that Turner had been a preacher, they passed a law

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[479] Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 133, 140-142; Kami Fletcher, "The History of African American Undertakers," *Black Perspectives*, URL: http://www.aaihs.org/the-history-of-african-american-undertakers-in-baltimore/, accessed July 11, 2017; and Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 204. Numerous scholarly contributions have stressed the interracial nature of southern worshipping, particularly in the rural South. See John B. Boles (ed.), *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord. Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988).

[480] Vesey and 34 others were executed before a revolt happened. James O'Neil Spady, "Power and Confession: On the Credibility of the Earliest Reports of the Denmark Vesey Slave Conspiracy," *William & Mary Quarterly* 68:2 (2011): 287.

[481] Lionel H. Kennedy and Thomas Parker, *An Official Report of the Trials of Sundry Negroes, Charged with an Attempt to Raise an Insurrection in the State of South-Carolina: Preceded by an Introduction and Narrative; and in an Appendix, a Report of the Trials of Four White Persons, on Indictments for Attempting to Excite the Slaves to Insurrection* (Charleston: James R. Schenk, 1822), 22-23, LOC. See also Cornelius, *Slave Missions*, ch. 4.

[482] Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, ed. C. S. Smith (Nashville: Publishing House of the A. M. E. Sunday-School Union, 1891), 45, HML.

[483] Kimball, *American City*, 143.

[484] Local authorities apprehended or killed most of the rebels, and white mobs and militias additionally killed more than one hundred enslaved and free black people in the aftermath of the rebellion. Turner himself was hanged.

in 1832 prohibiting "slaves, free negroes and mulattoes […] from preaching, exhorting, conducting or holding any assembly or meeting for religious or other purposes." Black Richmonders reported two years later that, as a consequence, "many coloured human beings are interd like brutes, their relatives and friends being unable to procure white Ministers to perform the usual ceremony in the burial of the dead." Capitalizing on the opportunity that was opening up, the petitioners asked for authorizing "free persons of colour, as well as slaves, to perform the ceremony usual on such occasions by white ministers, provided they obtain a License for that purpose from the Pastor of the Church to which [they] respectively belong."[485] Some 20 years later, Frederick Law Olmsted observed a "negro funeral procession" in the city with six hackney coaches, six well-dressed men on horses, and twenty or thirty men and women. "Among all there was not a white person."[486]

Figure 18: Free African Americans in Richmond, 1865[487]

Like Turner, black people who fought against suppression were often affiliated with the church. In the northern states, independent African American churches and societies took a leading role in fighting for black rights. Their institution building was the cornerstone of black abolitionism, as stressed by historian Manisha Sinha. According to her, a distinct "black public sphere" gave birth to alternative discourses.[488] Unlike in the North, these alternative currents could hardly have been exhibited publicly in the South. The question whether black churches and independent denominations nevertheless helped enslaved southerners in their escapes is difficult. What we know is that class leaders (of small groups of church members) of the black

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"Nat Turner's Rebellion, 1831," Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, URL: https://www.gilderlehrman.org/content/nat-turner%E2%80%99s-rebellion-1831, accessed August 28, 2019.

[485] Gilbert Hunt, William B. Ballandine, Isham Ellis, Harison Dendridge, and James Greenhow to the Honorable the Legislature of Virginia, December 1834, Richmond City, Virginia, Accession #11683411, Legislative Petitions, VSA, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 1, Legislative Petitions, LOC.

[486] Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 24.

[487] Free Blacks in Richmond in June 1865, Alexander Gardner/The Library of Congress Prints and Photo Division, in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Free Blacks Lived in the North, Right?," *The Root* (July 8, 2013), URL: https://www.theroot.com/free-blacks-lived-in-the-north-right-1790897180, accessed July 5, 2019.

[488] Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 130, 134-136.

Methodists and Baptists in Charleston used church funds to purchase and manumit enslaved people. This has been claimed by Bernard Powers, stating that these practices were discovered in 1815 and the churches were put under white surveillance.[489] We also know that in the northern states, black activists were mostly church members. This points towards a relation between black congregations and abolitionism whose extensions also reached into the slaveholding South. *Walker's Appeal*, for example, a pamphlet distributed throughout the American North and South calling for black resistance, was, when imported south, handed over to black preachers in port cities.[490]

This suggests a possible involvement of church members with slave flight but this question cannot definitely be answered on the basis of archival sources. The silence of the archives is only logical when remembering that these institutions and organizations dealt with great mistrust. Supporting slave flight, harboring a slave, or using contacts in church networks for the person fleeing would have depended on the individuals involved in a certain place at a certain time. Under no circumstances would information on these illegal activities have appeared in minutes or other records. Black churches had to act carefully in order to avoid interference by whites.

Whether leniency or strictness was the chief attitude of white people towards black organizations greatly varied within the South. In Richmond, the First African Baptist Church (FABC) was founded in 1841 as an African American branch of the mixed First Baptist Church, from which they were increasingly excluded by white congregationalists.[491] It was part of a variety of societies and organizations that African Americans in Richmond formed to give structure to their community separate from the white community.[492] It is striking that whites first forced blacks out and then came to see them as threats because they lost supervision over their activities. The minute book of the church reveals that the FABC took on the function of social control and replaced official jurisdiction when the matter was about minor offenses. Robert Johnson, for instance, was summoned to answer a charge on gambling, Peter Robinson and Ned Harris were excluded for adultery, and two men who disagreed about a money transaction found a mediator in the church.[493] The FABC provided a form of social security, for instance with regards to poor relief, and also provided a vehicle to growing intra-racial solidarity, autonomy, and eventually freedom as a number of black men took on leadership positions. The church was also a venue for concerts, entertainment, and political events.

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[489] Powers, "Black Charleston," 15-16.

[490] Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom*, 21, 29; and David Walker, *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America, Written in Boston, State of Massachusetts, September 28, 1829* (Boston: David Walker, 1830).

[491] See the narrative of William Anderson on his "conclusion to withdraw from the Methodist Episcopal Society of whites, and join what is now the African Methodist Episcopal Church." As a Methodist preacher, he also helped slaves escape from Indiana, where he lived. Anderson, *Life and Narrative*, 40, ch. IX, X, XII.

[492] The Episcopal Church in Richmond also held separate services for blacks and whites. Reverend William Meade, for instance, "At Stony Point, he officiated in a Tobacco Factory, in the morning to the whites, and in the afternoon to the colored people." *Spirit of Missions*, September 1, 1848, 305, LOC.

[493] First African Baptist Church (Richmond, Virginia), Minute Books, 1841-1930, May 6, December 28, 1848; [?] 1853, LVA. Many thanks to Gregg Kimball for making these sources known to me.

Expressing the sharp reality of exclusion, it was located across Broad street from Capitol Square, from where black Richmonders were banned.[494]

The division into a white and a black branch had reverberations for black people that increased their self-confidence. Since the Bible taught them that God was omnipotent and omnipresent, as stressed by Midori Takagi, black Baptists could address God directly without the mediation of whites.[495] Over time, black Americans grew more assertive and autonomous. In 1852, as church minutes reveal, black Baptists stood up and left the church building during a lecture by a white man which displeased them. Judge Oneal of South Carolina was lecturing them on temperance. He apparently "gave offence, by sundry expressions, to the congregation, as was painfully evident by their murmurs, + by their leaving the house in large numbers!!"[496]

The increasingly segregated spheres of blacks and whites might have been desirable for whites but they were even more beneficial for blacks. It allowed them to form their own parallel society, even with organizations and institutions that replaced official jurisdiction and likely provided safety nets for slave refugees. The membership of the FABC in Richmond grew from 2,100 in 1843 to 3,300 in 1860, and the construction of second, third, and forth African Baptist churches soon followed.[497] The members of the First African Baptist Church consisted of both legally and illegally free women and men, slaves, and very likely also runaways. In the minute book of the church, several names appear of persons whose legal status seemed to have been unknown to the institution. In 1848, William Jackson passed away, reported as a free man with a question mark next to the word "free," suggesting that he was passing for free but had no papers to prove it, or that the church otherwise had cause to doubt that he was really free. In the following year, the legal status column next to Maria Frances Myers' name, who was baptized that year, was simply left blank—church elders either did not ask about her legal status, or they did not wish to record this information in their register.[498] The incomplete information in the church register is more than telling. The boundaries between freedom and bondage were so blurry that not even an institution of trust, whose very existence stood for black resistance and community, knew about the legal status of many of its members. How, then, would city authorities know which black people they found on the streets were free and which were runaway slaves?

Criminalization

Spatial segregation and societal exclusion created physical and social spaces where black Americans were among themselves and where illegal residents could move freely. These niches attracted escapees from slavery. The dangers inherent in urban flight for refugees was that they hid among people who were the targets of social control themselves. Although it has been

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[494] Kimball, *American City*, 28, 126; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 197; Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 547; and Kimball, *American City*, 8, 45. Despite the remarkable autonomy, it was not until 1866 that the FABC was led by a black pastor.

[495] Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 58.

[496] First African Baptist Church (Richmond, Virginia), Minute Books, 1841-1930, June 6, 1852, LVA.

[497] Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, 197.

[498] In the row behind the name, the church clerk would note whether a member was a free or, when a member was enslaved, write down the name of the owner. In surprisingly many cases, the row behind the name was either left blank or doubts were made visible by a question mark. First African Baptist Church (Richmond, Virginia), Minute Books, 1841-1930, July 2, 1848; May 12, 1849, LVA.

outlined that they were largely able to move within their own spaces, the fear white Americans had of the growing free black population led to plentiful restrictions on the social lives of free African Americans, the receiving society of freedom seekers.

Men, and to lesser extent women, of African descent were often arrested for offenses like disturbing the peace or vagrancy. Black Americans became criminalized for actions which did not qualify as offenses for white people. This phenomenon is called "status offense" referring to crimes that could only be committed by persons of a certain legal status, for instance slaves or people of African descent.[499] The state of Virginia designed over 70 capital crimes only black people could commit. Besides the legislations that allowed for the enslavement of black people who moved into a state or returned from a trip outside the state, free African Americans could be sold into slavery for crimes for which whites were punished significantly less harshly. Very common was the crime of insolence towards white people that only people of African descent could commit.[500]

One of the most mortifying things was the randomness of black punishment. Whereas white Americans in most cases knew what to expect for a certain offense, African Americans were punished depending on the mood of the individual in charge. In Charleston, for instance, municipal ordinances stipulated that whites breaching the peace after curfew (10 PM in summer and 9 PM in winter) were to pay $25. Black persons, by contrast, "shall be tried by the Guard Committee of Wardens, and suffer such fine or personal chastisement, as they in their discretion may award."[501] Causing attention, like being out at night, could lead to discovery. In 1856, Charles, a slave to Mr. Barker, was arrested in Charleston at nearly midnight. Another bondsman, Moses, was found "Drunk on East bay & Tradd Street." He must have raised attention since he was taken up half an hour before curfew.[502] Those illegally free had to keep their heads down and live an unsuspicious life.

Additionally, individual supervision of an enslaved person by their respective master gave way to the collective control of the whole black population. Whereas in the countryside, "the security of the whites" depended "upon the constant, habitual, and instinctive surveillance and authority of all white people over all black," as Frederick Law Olmsted observed,[503] in the urban context, the authorities took on the matter of social control. Richard Wade has claimed that the increasing centralized organization was also related to the practice of slave hiring which created a vacuum of responsibility filled by a public system.[504]

The first step in social control was to define the group to be targeted. Those in power implied that crime and disorderly conduct were the outcomes of a "biologically criminal, riotous, and intemperate group of persons located at the base of society," with alcohol

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[499] Diana Paton, "Punishment, Crime, and the Bodies of Slaves in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica," *Journal of Social History* 34:4 (2001): 923.

[500] Laws of Maryland Vol. 141, 1068; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 79; Daniel J. Flanigan, "Criminal Procedure in Slave Trials in the Antebellum South," *Journal of Southern History* 40:4 (1974): 543; and Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 320.

[501] George B. Eckhard (ed.), *A Digest of the Ordinances of the City Council of Charleston, from the year 1783 to Oct. 1844. To which are annexed the Acts of the Legislature which relate exclusively to the City of Charleston* (Charleston: Walker & Burke, 1844), section "Disorderly Houses," CCPL.

[502] Records of the Charleston Police Department, Arrest Records and Morning Reports, Lower Ward 1855-1856, January 7, and January 13, 1856, CCPL. A great many runaways were taken up either early in the morning or at night close to curfew.

[503] Olmsted, *Our Slave States*, 444.

[504] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 40.

consumption being the trigger of these troublesome conducts, according to Robert Lundman. This "dangerous class" referred to was made up of lower-class whites, European immigrants, and free African Americans, and was therefore easy to identify.[505] Liquor was of particular interest because most places enacted codes to prevent free African Americans from selling it, and enslaved people from buying it. Exceptions relieving free black people from these restrictions were, at least before 1850, Baltimore and New Orleans.[506] In the antebellum South, there were no legal constraints on selling alcohol to free persons but authorities reacted rather sensitive when slaves were involved.

One of the worst-case scenarios was to have "white men, free men of color and slaves to play together at cards, or at any other game." This got punished draconically in New Orleans, as municipal records show.[507] Under no circumstances did slaveholders and defenders of slavery want to create the impression that slaves could be part of the drunk and ill-tempered underclass that threatened the public order in the cities. At the same time, it was not that easy to distinguish the "dangerous classes" from slaves, whose presence in the cities slaveowners explicitly defended. Given that urban bondspeople and free blacks moved within the same social, economic, spiritual, and residential spaces—which were segregated along race, legal status, sex, and class—, identification was quite a challenge. Drinking runaway slaves on the streets, like in Milledgeville, Georgia, as reported by the press, could not be accepted.[508]

At the same time, drinking runaways were very exceptional. Under normal circumstances, they held a strong interest in maintaining low profiles and sought to avoid police. So did many other African Americans. The hostility of white law and the undocumented status of many made them cautious when being in the streets. Refugees could always end up as by-catch, even when they were not explicitly targeted.[509] In this context, a northern visitor in Natchez claimed that "Though negroes are proverbially lovers of whiskey, but few are to be found among them who get drunk, unless on Christmas holidays," implying a higher alcohol consumption of working-class whites.[510] While runaways did everything they could to remain undetected, the Charleston police was busy picking drunken white men up from the streets, as arrest records show—among these arrests were more drunken slaves than sober runaways.[511]

For reasons of camouflage, refugees joined black people who were driven out of the white public space and into illegality. Clandestine life occurred in back alleys, shops, and taverns, often at night. Alcohol was consumed and illegal card games like Faro were played, mixing members of the lower classes of all ethnicities and legal statuses, including slave refugees.[512] In Charleston, "Six negros were arrested in a house on Savage-street on Saturday night, while engaged in gambling. Two of the negros were recognized as runaways, who have

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[505] Lundman, *Police and Policing*, 28-30.

[506] Curry, *Free Black*, 16.

[507] *Journal of the First Municipality of the City of New Orleans*, December 31, 1838, LaRC.

[508] *Southern Recorder*, August 6, 1822, in Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 150.

[509] See, for instance, Records of Prisoners Committed to the Parish Prison, 1852 – 1862, June 18, 1852 – May 10, 1862, TX420, NOPL.

[510] Ingraham, *South-West*, 56.

[511] Records of the Charleston Police Department, Arrest Records and Morning Reports, Lower Ward 1855-1856, CCPL.

[512] Faro was a card game that enjoyed a comparable popularity as Poker today. Including a dealer and several players, it is close to being a mixture of Poker and Black Jack. John R. Sanders, "Faro: Favorite Gambling Game of the Frontier," *HistoryNet* (December 12, 2006), URL: https://www.historynet.com/faro-favorite-gambling-game-of-the-frontier.htm, accessed January 30, 2019, originally published in *Wild West* (October 1996).

been absent from their master's service for several weeks."[513] Reports like these were common in southern urban newspapers pointing to both the interconnectedness of legally and illegally free black people and the fact that refugees were often discovered by engaging in activities black people (but not white people) were criminalized for.

Enslaved people officially needed an authorization from their owners to purchase practically everything, and also this statute was extended to free people; they had to secure permits from the municipality. Free black Baltimoreans were criminalized when they bought firearms, dogs, or liquor without a license.[514] Meeting points where these activities occurred, were usually located in alleys or were hidden venues altogether and included brothels. Slaveowners were often clueless about the secret activities of their bondspeople. Some, however, were aware of their clandestine lives, as one slaveholder wrote in a Charleston newspaper:

> How many of us retire on a night under the impression that all our servants are on the premises, and will continue there till the morning. And how often is it quite the reverse, especially with our men servants, who are wandering to and fro all night, or are quietly esconced in some dark retreat of villany, exposed to all sorts of vices and temptations, alike destructive of their morals and their usefulness. It is thus that some of our best servants become *cast-aways*.[515]

That these meeting places were an open secret to those who wanted to know becomes clear when reading that even Frederick Law Olmsted knew about them when he was just visiting Richmond for a short time. He wrote: "A great many low eating, and, I should think, drinking shops are frequented chiefly by the negroes. Dancing and other amusements are carried on in these at night."[516] William and Wellington Hawkins, members of the First African Baptist Church, were charged with visiting a "low house when dancing was going on," as were two other male members in December 1857.[517]

The criminalization of black Americans and illegal residents had the ironic dimension that they committed less crimes than whites. This corresponds to research on other times and places, which has confirmed that undocumented immigrants have lower levels of criminal involvement.[518] For the antebellum period, it is not at first sight recognizable from the court records that African Americans adhered to the law more than whites because they were more often arrested for minor offenses, unlawful acts that counted only for black people, and they were more readily found guilty. James Campbell has demonstrated that in Richmond, slaves were taken into custody more than twice as often as whites, and free blacks twice as often as slaves in the 1850s.[519] Court cases allow extending his conclusions onto other places. In Baltimore, a free black man was convicted to being sold to a Georgia trader for theft. Following the argumentation in the case records, it is likely that he did not commit the theft. His legal counsel described the situation: "we know [...] that some men are so prejudiced ag[ain]st people

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[513] *Charleston Courier*, April 9, 1860.

[514] Fields, *Middle Ground*, 35.

[515] *Charleston Courier*, September 23, 1845.

[516] Law Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 52.

[517] First African Baptist Church (Richmond, Virginia), Minute Books, 1841-1930, December 1857, LVA.

[518] Rubén G. Rumbaut, Katie Dingeman, and Anthony Robles, "Immigration and Crime and the Criminalization of Immigration," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies*, ed. Steven J. Gold and Stephanie J. Nawyn (Routledge: forthcoming), 2.

[519] Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 22.

of colour so that they are ready to lay hold of the <u>slightest</u> evidence ag[ain]st them and convict when outhg not to be convicted."[520]

In very few cases, it turned out during the trial that free black culprits had in reality a different legal status than assumed and were, for instance, runaways or undocumented residents. The rarity of these incidents supports the prevalent pattern that vulnerable people were less prone to criminal involvement. Hetty, for example, was such an exception. She escaped from Philip Fiddeman around the turn of the nineteenth century, went to Baltimore, passed as free, and committed theft, for which she was sent to the workhouse for 18 months. Another case was Maria Dickson aka Charity Riggs. In 1821, she was tried and convicted as a free black woman for stealing bedding, china, and muslin, and sent to the penitentiary of Maryland. Three years later, her owner John Chambers proved with the help of a witness that Dickson was his absconded bondswoman.[521] Although there is no way to state with certainty that Hetty and Riggs committed the crimes they stood accused of, it can be assumed that the bulk of refugees did not jeopardize their freedom by stealing.

One of the most dramatic criminalized practices regarded education. In the 1820s, what some historians label the "reading revolution" was taking ground. Thanks to the spread of common schools, literacy rose significantly in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. In the South as well as in the North, public education was made possible by public funds. Schools were the most essential means of elevation, and black Americans recognized this. In the South, they were not only excluded from public education but schooling was even prohibited for people of African descent. In Baltimore, institutions such as black schools and benevolent societies had to operate clandestinely and were frequently shut down. It was a similar situation in Charleston but sometimes, schools were allowed under close regulation.[522] In Norfolk, close to Richmond, a white woman faced jail time for teaching black children to read and write.[523] Recognizing the close connection between a barred access to education and the maintenance of inequality, Virginia was particularly hostile to black education and African Americans in Richmond had to study in secret places.[524]

Free African Americans were legally discriminated against and criminalized for a variety of behaviors and activities. Being a visible contradiction to the justification of slavery as well as a constant—active and passive—enticement for bondspeople to emancipate themselves, they found themselves the targets of continuous refusal and suspicion. Black people were not completely defenseless, however. Although they were justly and unjustly accused and

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[520] Governor and Council (Pardon Papers), s1061, 1826 26-73, MSA.

[521] Idem, 1826 7-63; 1824 24-44, MSA.

[522] Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett. The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 188; Kantrowitz, *More than Freedom*, 124; Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 76; and Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 4;

[523] Margaret Douglass, *The Personal Narrative of Mrs. Margaret Douglass, A Southern Woman, Who was Imprisoned for One Month in the Common Jail of Norfolk, under the Laws of Virginia, for the Crime of Teaching Free Colored Children to Read* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., and Cleveland: Jewett, Proctor & Worthington, 1854), 51, Educational Laws of Virginia, VHS.

[524] Kimball, *American City*, 69. Here is another reason why the black churches that developed in the nineteenth century were key for the formation of black advancement. It was not only that they supported and brought forward autonomy, self-assurance, and protective segregation to the urban black communities. African American congregations also supported literacy because the members were keen on reading God's word. George Teamoh recalled that, in order to learn about literacy and general education, he "took every opportunity to visit churches, political gatherings, theatres &c. with the hope that something might 'leak out.'" Teamoh, *God Made Man*, 70.

trialed for aiding slave refugees, it did not come to convictions that often. A Maryland free black woman called Rose Brown aka Barnes, for one, was brought to court for harboring enslaved Peter. She declared that she was ignorant of the law and did not try to conceal Peter but rather only fed him and washed his clothes. Testifying to Brown's having "always borne a good character," 60 signers supported her request for *nolle prosequi*, and the judge agreed. In 1821, Samuel Reilly was indeed convicted of assisting a slave to run away. As the court case reads, however, the testimony of the slave was extremely porous and Reilly was seemingly only committed because he had no money and no friends to collect a testimony. His sentence of 18 months was comparably very short and he was furthermore pardoned after 14 months.[525]

Discriminatory treatment was the result of a wide-spread belief among white people that black people only had a place in the country when they were slaves. The further south, the more lenient these attitudes became. The observation that the American Colonization Society and its state branches were much more active and successful in the Upper South than in the Lower South speaks volumes.[526] In the late 1830s or early 1840s, also the dances at Congo Square ended or, at least, became strictly regulated. In 1845, a visitor described the Congo Square as "the place where the negroes, in olden times, were accustomed to meet to while away the cares of servitude,"[527] implying that these events belonged to the past. A newspaper article of the same year, however, reported that "thousands of negroes" congregated there the previous Sunday because a couple of weeks prior "an ordinance was passed restoring to them their ancient privilege of resorting thither, and thither they now repair in countless throngs."[528] Gary Donaldson claimed that the Sunday activities were probably continued with irregular frequency until 1862. Then, however, under the supervision of police.[529]

Conclusion

Slave refugees sought shelter in all those places where black people were living and moved within all the spaces where black people were moving. They lived within their communities, formed social ties, and went to church. They also married in black churches and were buried in black cemeteries. Thanks to the increasing spatial and social segregation, thousands of illegal city dwellers could remain in their own circles with basic services provided by the lower classes. There, they could live without being detected. In fact, discovery on the open street was extremely rare if not related to work. (See chapter four.) Of the four cities under analysis, the opportunities for black people to become invisible were largest in Baltimore and New Orleans. In Baltimore, the free black population was simply so numerous that refugees could move about without the suspicion of police. In New Orleans, residents of African descent had historically enjoyed leeway and social mobility unseen in other American places. The lighter-skinned people were, the easier it was, while in Baltimore tones of black did not really matter to white people.

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[525] Governor and Council (Pardon Papers), s1061, 1828 29-60; 1822 22-120, MSA.
[526] Hugh Davis, "American Colonization Society," in *Abolition and Antislavery. A Historical Encyclopedia of the American Mosaic*, ed. Peter Hinks and John McKivigan (Santa Barbara and Denver: Greenwood, 2015), 14.
[527] Norman, *New Orleans and Environs*, 182.
[528] *Daily Picayune*, June 24, 1845.
[529] Donaldson, "Window on Slave Culture," 67.

Over time, the legislative framework as well as the supervision in cities grew tighter. In 1859, the pastor of the FABC in Richmond "complained that often of late the deacons were absent from the public worship + it was told that in consequence of increased stringency in police regulations it was dangerous to attend to any business of the church at night."[530] After every real or perceived threat to white dominance, legislation became stricter. It mostly affected the assembly of black southerners, including their worship, burials, and social activities. Ironically, more control from above translated into less control from within as white people increasingly retrenched from black people. Especially important for African Americans to move freely were the early morning hours, the time between the beginning of work and curfew, and Sundays. These were times when the streets of Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans were, even more than usually, swarmed with people heading home, to work, to church, and to visit friends, and slave refugees hoped to impalpably go with the flow. During these times, spaces of freedom were large.

The observation that thousands of them managed to find refuge and build up a new life in southern cities points to the successful integration into the urban black communities. White desire to segregate themselves from black people drove free and enslaved people together. This shows that it was not only people of African descent who consciously crafted spaces of freedom, but that also whites inadvertently contributed to this. The limitations the free black communities and everybody who joined them faced, however, were a severe setback with regards to the freedom runaway slaves were looking for, and the degree of freedom refugees and other undocumented received, depended to large parts on the freedom of their receiving societies. Collective control, illegalization, and criminalization, though, gave cities of refuge a bitter by-taste and diluted the quality of freedom.

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[530] First African Baptist Church (Richmond, Virginia), Minute Books, 1841-1930, January 1859, LVA.

Chapter Four

From Slavery to Poverty: Integration in the Urban Labor Markets

In May 1850, Jackson, William, and Terrence "were taken into custody" in the city of New Orleans "for working by the day on the levee without badges." Whilst Jackson and William were in all likelihood hired-out enslaved men, Terrence was "supposed to be a runaway." Terrence legally belonged to Mr. Duplantier, a tobacco inspector, who resided on 33 Dauphine street in New Orleans.[531] Although there is no information about the occupations Terrance performed when he was still forcedly employed by Duplantier, the hint that he was working on the levee around New Orleans, points to his integration in the urban labor market as a common laborer.

The previous chapter has outlined where slave refugees lived and socialized in Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans. The lives of these men and women, however, did not only take place in clandestine social gatherings, segregated churches, and in the evening hours. Spaces of freedom were not fully useful if they could not provide access to work. Integrating into a segment of the population structurally and legally discriminated against, nobody could afford not to contribute to their own survival by finding work. All refugees worked at the places they chose for their lives outside the reach of their owners. To shed light on this aspect of economic integration, this chapter broaches the issue of the prospects for economic integration of urban runaways—whereby the question is not *if* they worked but rather *what* they did—and sets out an array of opportunities and vulnerabilities they encountered in the cities.

Freedom seekers, as we have seen in chapter two, had occupations before leaving slavery and a majority were skilled and highly mobile. The best-case scenario for men and women would have been to be able to capitalize on their skills acquired under slavery. This strategy, and the possibilities for social mobility, will be discussed in the first part. However, in antebellum cities, finding a job which was tied to the specific occupational skills of slave refugees was only in very exceptional cases feasible. Therefore, the consecutive parts will be devoted to the impediments to finding a job that corresponded to their capacities. With racial slavery and whiteness marking not only the social realities of people but also their experiences

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[531] *Daily Picayune*, May 12, 1850; and *Cohen's New Orleans & Lafayette Directory for 1851* (New Orleans, 1851), Louisiana Division, NOPL, URL: http://files.usgwarchives.net/la/orleans/history/directory/1851cdcd.txt, accessed March 8, 2018.

in the labor markets, how did the racial codes of labor determine which jobs were plausible for black people? To what extent did urban regulations impact the economic integration of refugees? How did the developing demography of southern cities affect this process?

While answering these questions, gender differences and the undocumented status of large parts of the urban black workers will be taken into consideration. Was there a possible relation between illegality and their situation over the antebellum period? Being active in the labor markets was both a fundamentally important element to securing one's survival and at the same time an additional risk that increased the visibility, and, hence, the odds of apprehension of runaways. Still, the changes in the urban economy created spaces where slave refugees could find work and secure their survival. Their economic integration was, together with their social integration, the most pivotal element to explaining how they navigated spaces of freedom.

Best-Case Scenario

The freedom seekers profiled in chapter two all had occupations before escaping the control of those holding them in bondage. In fact, it was the human capacities of their bodies and minds that made them valuable to their owners. Many of the professional skills enslaved people possessed were in high demand in the cities and some evidence hints at a possible integration of freedom seekers in sectors with a relatively high income. In Richmond, skills in construction, shoemaking, carpentering, plastering, and barbering were in high demand.[532] A runaway trained in one or more of these trades who could convincingly pass as a free man could find a decent job in this city. Correspondingly, the Richmond police was informed that "Mr Benjamin Wallers man Humphry runaway from Mr Thomas Mayberry of Rockbridge County whom he was hired to this year [1836]." Humphry, besides being a hired slave and a "good coarse Shoe maker" also had ties into freedom: "his wifes father lives in Richmond[,] a free man of colour name[d] Jonathan."[533] Humphry possessed the skills to find employment, the experience of mobility as a hired slave, and personal contacts to seek support.

In many sectors labor was so high in demand that employers did not seem to care where it came from or what the status of their workers was. In ironmaking, a large industrial sector in Richmond, blacksmiths were constantly needed, for example.[534] Enslaved Billy must have had good chances to find employment when he escaped from his owner Jeremiah Hoopers from King William County in 1835. Having "a Scar on the Side of his neck produced by the cut of an ax & [being] a good Blacksmith by trade said man is Suspected to be about Richmond."[535] The fact that subscribers felt the need to include this information in the search notice demonstrates that they reckoned with the possibility that refugees would indeed try to apply their skills. If Billy found employment, he was able to make a decent living as a blacksmith. Other jobs which paid well included the full array of craftsmen and mechanics.

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[532] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 238.
[533] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, August 16, 1836, UVA.
[534] S. Sidney Bradford, "The Negro Ironworker in Ante Bellum Virginia," in *The Making of Black America.* Vol. I: The Origins of Black Americans, ed. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick (New York: Atheneum, 1971), 139, originally published in *Journal of Southern History* 25:2 (1959): 194-206.
[535] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, January 28, 1835, UVA.

Urban labor markets were gendered spaces. In southern cities, black women worked as laundresses, cooks, domestic servants, housekeepers, and peddlers.[536] Yet, in Baltimore nearly all black women were listed as washerwomen. In 1831, 500 African American women were registered as head of households. 249 were listed as washers or laundresses; of 219, no information about their occupations was provided; and 15 were registered as hucksters.[537] In Charleston, they were also market women, seamstresses, and to lesser extent bakers, pastry cooks, and midwives.[538] Enslaved women were lower skilled than men but a few possessed skills or found work which could yield an acceptable income.

Despite the limited opportunities for women to make money, at times female runaways were able to work in a "good" sector. In Charleston, for instance, Amelia or Anne, 24 years of age, succeeded at following a promising occupation after she left her owner. Amelia was a mantua maker (a mantua was a fancy overgown worn by women) by trade and her owner knew that she was engaged in that capacity after her escape: "She works for respectable families about the city, and says she is free," the ad informed. "She has been absent about two years, and was seen in King street last week."[539] That she frequented the upper classes of Charleston points to very high skills, and Amelia no doubt attracted attention. Also the escape of Linda, "a tall thin mustee, well looking," was advertised in Charleston in 1859: "When last heard of she was acting as a stewardess on board of a steamer from this place. She has been out about three years, and passes herself for free."[540] Linda's example was very rare for female runaways; most waterworkers were men.

Significantly smaller numbers of female runaway slaves appear in the official jail records of the city, which reflects the overall trend of more men fleeing slavery and fewer women being apprehended. In line with the general demographic trends of the runaway population, women gravitated to the cities in lower numbers and the chances to economic mobility were beforehand heavily curtailed. Besides exceptions like Amelia and Linda, many refugee women tried to find work as domestic servants. It was not a profession tied to specific skills but it did require experience. Domestic slaves mostly worked in private households but also, for example, in boarding houses.[541] Seth Rockman has noted that the nature of domestic work was oppressive, with long hours, but the wages were usually constant and the work did not fluctuate seasonally.[542] Domestic work was almost the only option for women to have a decent income. In Charleston, they earned around $8 per week, yet children were an obstacle

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[536] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 221; and Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 43

[537] Much smaller numbers included the remaining, among which three were cooks, two were nurses, doctresses, and mantua makers, respectively, and one was each a grocer, an old clothes dealer, a milk seller, a shop keeper, an oyster woman, a barber, a carpet weaver, and a cook shop owner. *Matchett's Baltimore Director, Corrected up to June 1831. Containing (With, or Without) A Plan of the City; With Reference to the Public Buildings* (Baltimore, 1831), MSA.

[538] Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 92; and Rockman, *Scraping By*, 127.

[539] *Charleston Mercury*, February 16, 1860. Until the 1830s, seamstresses led the top of free black female occupations in Charleston. For the second half of the antebellum period, it was then mantua makers who were most often listed in the city directories. In contrast to seamstressing, mantua making required skills. Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 92.

[540] *Charleston Mercury*, April 12, 1859.

[541] For enslaved women hired to boarding houses, see Weis, "Negotiating Freedom," 133.

[542] Rockman, *Scraping By*, 140.

to take on such work. [543] Therefore, mothers engaged in this occupation had to make arrangements like hiring a nanny to be able to keep their jobs.

George, for instance, presumably a child himself, was in 1832 hired out to a "negro woman" who belonged to a slaveholder in King street, Charleston, "to mind a child." This cost the woman $2, an additional expenditure that had to be deducted from her total wage. [544] If she had been a free domestic laborer, she would have had to spend a fourth of her weekly income in order to be able to work. Hiring a caretaker like George for her child allowed the anonymous enslaved woman to continue working. Many black women in the cities could not afford such a help and had to leave the house to earn a living. In Suffolk, Virginia, a free black woman left her three small children in her "small frame tenement" when she went to work, as a newspaper reported. Because she "left the children with a fire in the hearth," the house caught fire and one of her children died. [545]

Domestic servants were more exposed to the risk of being detected due to their physical closeness to their usually white employers. This happened to Milly, who was "Supposed to be in Richmond," according to a newspaper, where she had been hired in the household of one Fleming Griffiths. She fled and was suspected of hiring herself to another employer as a free woman. [546] However, the private sphere they worked in also provided refugees with a certain degree of protection, since their work was performed mostly behind closed doors rather than out in public spaces, and their employers were unlikely to turn them over to the authorities. In 1850, an editor of *The Charleston Courier* lamented the shortage of domestic slaves for families: "Nothing is more difficult than getting any servant, and nothing is more impossible than getting *a good one*." [547] Once a family found a trustworthy servant to work and live in their midst, they would not let her go if she could not prove her freedom. Since many such jobs were moreover mediated through other reliable persons, vouching furnished refugees with additional protection. Besides, employing a runaway slave gave employers more power in an already uneven relation. Complicating the employment of runaways in domestic service was the arrangement in which domestic servants were placed by a slave-hire agent who functioned as a mediator between rural slaveholders and urban employers. This was frequent in Richmond, as research by Tracey Weis has shown. [548]

Due to the architecture of urban slavery, with a great many domestic servants not living in the same houses as their employers or owners but in shacks behind them, it was even possible to shelter runaways. Lucy, "commonly known by the name of *Lucy Bee*," about 40 years old, absconded in Charleston from her mistress who lived in 76 Broad street. The mistress believed her to be "accommodated or secreted by the domestics in some family, or probably may be harbored by free persons of color." Although Lucy was described as looking noticeable ("fat and stout, with broad shoulders, short neck, small hands and feet"), was well known in the city, and "has frequently been seen by her acquaintance," she was already out for seven weeks when

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[543] John E. Murray, "Poor Mothers, Stepmothers, and Foster Mothers in Early Republic and Antebellum Charleston," *Journal of the Early Republic* 32:3 (2012): 483-484.
[544] Ford Family Papers, 1809-1968, Manuscripts P, SCLC.
[545] *Daily Dispatch*, December 6, 1860.
[546] *Charleston Courier*, January 4, 1830.
[547] Idem, September 12, 1850.
[548] Weis, "Negotiating Freedom," 133.

the advertisement was published.[549] People like Humphry, Billy, Amelia, Linda, and Milly, who probably found reasonable employment in southern cities, might have had the aspiration to over time assimilate into the free African American population and eventually live in a way approximating legal freedom.

One of the most promising aspects of legal freedom was the hope for socio-economic mobility. People of African descent with the highest economic standing were to be found in Louisiana. Essentially, New Orleans was the only American soil which provided economic opportunities for people of African descent. Relying on historian Leonard Curry, five percent of men of African descent engaged in professional, managerial, artistic, clerical, or scientific occupations in New Orleans—more than anywhere else in the country. Eight percent worked as entrepreneurs, an occupational group which included peddlers, traders, hucksters, market men, dealers, and oystermen. These were not professions that promised considerable social mobility but New Orleans furthermore counted one-digit and low two-digit numbers of black merchants, brokers, builders, landlords, stable operators, coffee house owners, and grocery and retail store operators. Like in Charleston, roughly two thirds of black men in both cities worked as artisans by mid-century.[550]

In Charleston, additional large numbers of free black men worked as painters, barbers, butchers, bricklayers, shoemakers, and blacksmiths.[551] In South Carolina in general, free black people were very urban with a focus on artisanal occupations.[552] It is unlikely, though, that high-skilled runaway slaves in Charleston attempted to find employment as barbers, blacksmiths, or carpenters. People working in these trades often operated their own workshops and depended on white customers. Charleston's free black community was so small and the number of those in skilled jobs was even smaller so that every newcomer trying to integrate there would have attracted attention—although the grade of the risk depended on the distance from one's master and the reach of the latter's network.

Historians have claimed that in Charleston and New Orleans, where relatively many black men worked in skilled jobs, white slaveholders had monopolized with their human property large parts of the more sophisticated job market. Training their bondspeople during slavery and before the nineteenth century, craftsmen were often men who had been manumitted or were still enslaved. Disproportionately successful, urban free blacks often held special relationships of protection or vouching with whites. Personal or professional ties to employers or former masters could serve as legal security or economic advantage, for instance, when it was about vouching for good behavior or lending money. In New Orleans, where many free blacks with white fathers obtained financial support or an apprenticeship to learn a trade, one third of all free black households were property-holders in 1830. In Richmond and Baltimore, it looked very different. One of the reasons was that in the Upper South manumissions had occurred comparably indiscriminately and people were released from slavery without personal linkages that could ease the transition to an independent life. The masses of slaves hardly possessed skills or followed trades and continued this pattern when released into freedom. In

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[549] Lucy had been purchased some 15 months prior from a black woman living in Amen street. Being "of a complexion approaching rather a yellowish cast" herself, Lucy was also an example of an enslaved woman with a lighter skin than her owner. *Charleston Courier*, January 16, [?].

[550] Curry, *Free Black*, 22, 26, 30.

[551] Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 185.

[552] Olwell, "Becoming Free," 1.

the Lower South, by contrast, personal motives to emancipate bondspeople led slaveholders to support their manumittees, who were in many cases already skilled, in opening a shop or finding work.[553] Another reason that should be added was the distinct cultural environment with less stark color lines, more amalgamation, and a white society accustomed to artisans of African descent.

For these reasons, Charleston offered more security for black property owners. A South Carolina senate meeting from 1859 voiced the opinion "that the free negro had as much right to have his property protected, as he had to hold property." The House of Representatives agreed that "Although it is an anomalous class, and though it may be that gentlemen will say that we are not to know free negros, we, as legislators, find free negros, and we are bound to protect them."[554] These considerations reflect the status of the intermediate caste of "free people of color" and the interest of slaveholders to keep them as allies against slaves and poor blacks. Despite the fact that free blacks were often accused of enticing slaves to abscond, wealthy whites in the Lower South often recognized their strategic value. Alfred Huger from a slavocratic family in Charleston, stated in 1858 that there was "no better intermediate class in the world than the free colour'd people in this city." Free black people were "our natural allies, tho they can never be our Equals." "They work faithfully and more economically than those [white men] who would supplant them […], are easily managed and controul'd," Huger claimed, and added that they "are disenfranchised forever… yet paying their taxes with punctuality and humility."[555]

The understanding of white southerner like Huger was that free black people who enjoyed an extent of wealth were grateful for their position in a racist society and were less problematic than whites because they did not make political demands. Furthermore, by allying with white slaveholders, they split the black population, which prevented insurrections. However, since they received a minimum of legal rights in return, at times this even resulted in an advantage for those hiding and those who helped them because police could not always enter premises of free African Americans freely. In at least two occasions found by James Campbell, police first had to issue search warrants before the entered the house of a free black women in 1837 and a free black man in 1838, who were under the suspicion of harboring runaways.[556]

[553] Berlin and Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants," 1192; Goldfield, "Black Life," 124, 133; and Berlin, "Free Negro Caste," 306.

[554] *Charleston Daily Courier*, December 15, 1859. Amrita Chakrabarti Myers has argued that women of color in Charleston actively engaged to better their condition. They filed petitions to mitigate the heavy tax burdens, tried to evade licensing and claim status as *feme sole* to get the upper hand over their means. Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 79. This was notably only possible for people with a relatively high social standing whose freedom did not rely on their invisibility before authorities.

[555] Alfred Huger to Henry D. Lesesne, December 8, 1858, Alfred Huger Letterpress Books, 1853-1863, William R. Perkins Library, Special Collections, Duke University, Durham, in Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 192-193.

[556] Mayor's Court Docket Book, March 30, 1837; March 13, 1838, Valentine Museum, Richmond, in Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 31. Evidence of earlier search warrants date from Charleston. In 1801, John Francis Delormes claimed that "two of his Negro girls" were "enticed away from him." After offering a reward of $50, he "received information that they were harboured, concealed & locked up in one of the out-houses of George Reid" in Charleston. Delormes "then made application to a Magistrate of the said city who delivered a Search warrant to an Officer to Search the Premises of Said G. Reid in which my property was found locked up in a Room & concealed under a bed." They were harbored "for nearly two months." John Francis Delorme Petition, 1801, Petitions to the General Assembly, S165015, SCDAH.

Free black people furthermore were numerically important slaveholders in New Orleans and Charleston. In 1830, census data listed 262 black slaveowners in Charleston and 141 in Neck. Those in Neck held on average more slaves than their neighbors in the city.[557] New Orleans counted 753 free black slaveowners, of whom 25 owned ten bondspeople or more and 116 owned five to nine. Some of these were family members unable to be legally manumitted. Loren Schweninger has shown that these "elite people of color" in the Lower South remained among themselves, linked their families through intermarriages, and pursued their businesses like white people, including their treatment of slaves.[558] The family networks of the black elite did usually not include slaves. Given that these linkages were the most important connections for freedom seekers to gravitate to a certain place, wealthy free black were hardly connected to runaways.

Many jobs for free black people that promised a decent income or even some wealth provided a valuable service to whites. White Americans needed the services of barbers, butchers, merchants, tailors, carpenters, coopers, builders, masons, cigarmakers, and bootmakers. A mutual benefit, many of these black tradesmen and mechanics knew that their social-economic standing was secured as long as they did not form a threat to the institution of slavery.[559] Perhaps more important than personal connections, free black artisans, especially in a community as small as the one in Charleston, would have resented an intrusion by newcomers who would compete with their vested jobs. This does not mean that free black Charlestonians would not hire slave refugees, thereby profiting from cheap labor. A petition by members of the Agricultural Society of St. Paul's Parish in South Carolina from 1854 gives insight into three cases of rural slaveholders who found their escaped bondspeople in Charleston hired by free people of African descent. One enslaved man who ran away from a plantation was gone for two months. He was then discovered together with a runaway carpenter belonging to a different owner. Both were employed by the same free black man. A woman and her two children, who had escaped three years prior, were captured by two police officers "whilst in the yard + employment of a free Mulatto woman." Next to these incidents, as the petition claimed, runaways were also hired to load vessels at night.[560]

Life was hard in the cities, yet it also offered hope to black people. Through hard work and saving it was possible for some to acquire modest forms of property, which was the foundation for upwards mobility in the nineteenth century. Poverty rendered people vulnerable, while owning land, real estate, commodities, or other human beings partly relieved property holders from the negative effects of racial and gender discrimination. Black southerners attempted to purchase real estate whenever they could, as argued by historian Amrita Chakrabarti Myers. In 1860, 371 free Charlestonians of African descent owned taxable property, of whom 309 owned real estate.[561] (Taxable property included real estate, slaves, and

[557] Carter W. Woodson (ed.), *Free Negro Owners of Slaves in the United States in 1830. Together with Absentee Ownership of Slaves in the United States in 1830* (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1924), 27-31.
[558] Loren Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks in the South, 1790-1880," *American Historical Review* 95:1 (1990): 36-38.
[559] Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks," 40.
[560] To the Honb Senate & Representatives of the State of South Carolina, Colleton Parish/District, South Carolina, Petition by I. Raven Mathews Sr. et al., December 7, 1854, Accession #11385404, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 1, Legislative Petitions.
[561] Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 114, 118-119.

horses.) As research on other places shows, people of African descent in New Orleans bought houses until the 1830s when the dynamics changed beginning with the crisis of 1837. Richmond denoted a reverse trend and the number of black real property holders increased fourfold from 1830 to 1860. By 1860, over 200 free blacks had purchased lots in Richmond. The initial situation of emancipated bondspeople looked much bleaker in the Upper South than in the Lower South and it makes sense to assume that free blacks needed a generation to make up for it. In general, over the course of the antebellum era, the property value of free African Americans decreased, as did the proportion of free black property owners. Baltimore closed the list. In 1850, free black inhabitants who owned property constituted a mere 0.06 percent of the city's inhabitants.[562] Remarkably, this was still too much for some white Marylanders. In 1860, the spokesman of the Baltimore convention asked to legally bar black people from purchasing houses or leasing them for more than a year.[563]

As Loren Schweninger has shown, there were also bondspeople, most of them self-hired, who purchased property and a few who opened their own businesses.[564] Although in the cases he found, things went well and they could keep what they achieved, what they owned was never legally theirs, and their success, wealth, and belongings always depended on the good will of their masters. To determine whether it was possible and feasible for runaways to buy real estate, we have to shift the view to other undocumented residents. Legislative petitions are helpful. Elvira Jones was a self-emancipator in Richmond who obtained her freedom by working hard and saving enough money to purchase herself and her two children from their master Samuel Carlisle. Jones did not only acquire the means to buy three persons out of slavery, her earnings also allowed her to become the owner of a small house in the suburbs of Richmond. Moving up and achieving modest property was possible for emancipated slaves and Jones was furthermore an example of a manumitted woman staying in the state of Virginia illegally since was emancipated after 1806. She had—importantly—a personal relation to a white man called Samuel Harris who managed the receipt of the money for her emancipation and the conveyance of the house she purchased.[565] Another example of a man called Billy Brown likewise points to a link to a white person. He bought his own freedom and purchased some property although he remained in the state of Virginia against the law. When asked to leave with his family, Brown decided to become the nominal slave of a white man.[566] Telling from these cases, it was possible for undocumented residents to acquire taxable property which showed up in official lists. Yet, it was significantly more difficult for men and women without protective relationships with whites.

That they could still succeed is demonstrated by the example of Joseph Elwig from Charleston, discovered by historian Larry Koger. Born the son of Peter Elwig, his father bought him and his two brothers in 1823. Because it was after 1820, his father was not able to manumit

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[562] Schafer, *Becoming Free*, 162; Berlin, "Free Negro Caste," 308; Tommy Bogger, *Free Blacks in Norfolk, Virginia, 1790-1860: The Darker Side of Freedom* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 60; Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 121; and Phillips, *Freedom's Port*, 98-100, 155.

[563] *Planter's Advocate*, February 22, 1860, in Fields, *Middle Ground*, 79.

[564] Schweninger, "Prosperous Blacks."

[565] How exactly Harris was involved in Jones's finances or personal life is unknown. Elvira Jones to the Honorable the Speakers and Members of both Houses of the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Virginia, December 5, 1823, Richmond City, Virginia, Accession #11682304, Legislative Petitions, VSA, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 1, Legislative Petitions, LOC.

[566] Schweninger, "Underside of Slavery."

his sons and so they grew up in illegal freedom. Like his father, Joseph became a carpenter and started operating a shop in the city when he was 26 years old. He paid "free Negro capitation taxes," city taxes, and married a free black woman. Joseph Elwig led the life of a regularly free black man but in times of rupture, his situation ran the risk of turning dire. When his father Peter became ill, he sold Joseph to Joseph's wife Rebecca to protect him from *de facto* enslavement. There were more cases like Elwig's. In 1843, George Lucas, a free black resident of Charleston Neck, purchased his three daughters. Also in Neck, Nelson Richardson bought his wife Ann in 1849. And in 1853, Georgianna Alston from Charleston City purchased her husband Thomas. In the last three examples, the nominally free managed after a couple of years to convince the tax collectors and census takers of their free status. In the case of Nelson and Ann Richardson, this strategy also worked for the children they had in the aftermath.[567] With persistence, patience, and luck it was possible for undocumented people to slowly join the official ranks of the free black population. This bottom-up process of legalization contrasted the top-town illegalization practices. (See chapter one.) Yet, the extent of the former was much smaller.

We can only speculate about how likely this was for refugees and their offspring. It must be assumed that a great many runaways, the majority of whom were in their fertile years, had children at later times. Did, for instance, Cicily Page succeed at passing her children off as free persons? The "first rate seamstress" was advertised to the police by her owners from Williamsburg seven years after she had left them. She had successfully blended in with the free African American community in Richmond and was assumed to have two children.[568] But what about the above mentioned woman and her two children who were discovered in Charleston working for a free black woman? Was her strategy to secure the freedom of her children similar to Page's? Between 1800 and 1820, nearly 600 African Americans applied to the courts in Baltimore for legal certificates of freedom.[569] It can be assumed that a number of them were illegal residents who dared an attempt to legalize the status of themselves and of their children.

In Richmond, many black people claimed to be the offspring of free-born mothers when they asked for registration. In reality, many of them were children of former slaves who were emancipated after 1806 and remained in the state contrary to law.[570] For example, Monroe Jordon, about 17 years old, did not possess a register. The Hustings Court decided that he was the son of a woman who was emancipated after 1806. He was to be hired to pay his jail fees, afterwards registered, and had no right to remain in the Commonwealth. Unlike in the case of Jordan, this was an unproblematic move if undocumented residents had a white person to vouch for them. In 1852, Charlotte Coleman had such a relation with a white woman who testified to her freedom and Coleman was included in the registry as a free person: "It appearing to the Court, by the testimony of Tabitha B. Peterson, that Charlotte Coleman, a woman of colour, was born free in Chesterfield County, it is ordered that she is registered in the office of this court." In a different case, Clement White testified the same for Mary Ann King.[571] If a respectable white person witnessed a black person's freedom, they could succeed.

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[567] Koger, *Black Slaveowners*, 69-71.
[568] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, May 22, 1838, UVA.
[569] Rockman, *Scraping By*, 27.
[570] Hustings Court Minutes, September 17, 1852, LVA.
[571] Idem, September 14, 17, 1852, LVA.

For the overwhelming majority of southern urban freedom seekers, however, it was not possible to acquire real property, live openly as free, and include their children into the ranks of those legally free. To take a step back, most did not make enough money to even get to the point to buy real estate. The precarious situation of black people in the urban labor markets prevented this. Runaways were aware of this even before they decided to make a bid for freedom. Thanks to their mobility and their broad social networks, they were informed about the conditions in the cities. Many of those who later fled to Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans, had already been there or were from the same or a different city. Why could they in most cases not make use of their often high skills and what kind of work could they really hope for?

The Racial Coding of Labor

The volume of the runaway population depended on the relative and absolute size of the free and unfree black population (their receiving societies) and the opportunities the labor market offered. Since the majority of escapees attempted to pass as free persons in the South, they aimed to find work in those occupational sectors in which free African Americans were represented. In a pioneering work, Leonard Curry has scrutinized the sectors enslaved and free blacks worked in. Generally speaking, employment prospects for free black men were better in the Upper South than in the northern states, and superior in the Lower South to the Upper South.[572] These findings refer to the variety of jobs African Americans could take on with regards to artisan skills and white and immigrant competition.

From place to place, race organized labor differently. Whether an occupation was coded white or black (or enslaved or free) depended on many factors, including demography and customs. In most southern cities, the lives of free black people was interwoven with urban slavery. This overlap occurred on social, economic, and professional levels since black people shared certain jobs and professions that—varying from place to place as well as over time—were regarded as suitable only for them. Commonly labelled "nigger work," many of these jobs were carried out by both free and enslaved African Americans. Most of them comprised menial, servile, dirty, or distasteful occupations and black people on average received less salary than whites; barbering and butchering were examples.[573] Ira Berlin has argued that the stigma of "nigger work" was not a mere disadvantage, it also offered protection, especially in those regions where slavery was strongest because it discouraged white people from competing with black people. And so, the differences between skilled workers of African descent between the Upper South, where slavery was less strong, and the Lower South, where it was stronger, were remarkable. One third of Richmond's free black men were skilled in 1860, compared to almost 80 percent in Charleston, where they comprised a fourth of the city's carpenters, 40 percent of its tailors, and three quarters of millwrights.[574]

Within occupational categories, qualitative differences distinguished the two areas. In Charleston, labor was all about the port. The city funneled the produce of the hinterland

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[572] Curry, *Free Black*, 30.

[573] Goldfield, "Black Life," 134-135.

[574] Berlin, "Free Negro Caste," 311; and J. William Harris, *The Making of the American South: A Short History, 1500-1877* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 104.

plantations—mostly cotton—out of the country and nourished itself with the output of slave agriculture. Looking at black men working in the transportation sector with relation to the wharves, three quarters worked as carters (cartmen), draymen, carmen, hackmen, or carriage drivers in Charleston whereas in Baltimore more than a fourth were porters, following Curry.[575] Given that porters transported goods with their bodies only while the other jobs required investments in carts, carriages, or trolleys reveals the disadvantaged position in which black Baltimoreans started their working lives as well as the bleak prospects for upwards mobility.

Due to the different geography of black occupations, economic integration depended on the place. Tailoring, for instance, was a black occupation in Charleston, but not in Richmond.[576] Seamstressing was a job for black women in Charleston but not in Baltimore.[577] With this kind of information, it is possible to understand the racial coding of certain jobs. In the majority of cases, however, the subtleties about *how* to find work are lost because they do not show up in historical records. Seth Rockman, in an attempt to reconstruct hiring processes in Baltimore, has speculated that information was obtained through observation and informal communication. Although many jobs were coded black, due to the large share of white laborers, manual and menial occupations were in reality not limited to people of a specific racial group. In fact, most of these jobs were carried out by whites, simply because they came to be more numerous in many cities.[578] The challenge for refugees was to read the landscape of labor to decode the particular permutations of race and legal status in a given city.

Free black men in Baltimore were the most unskilled. In 1830, they overwhelmingly worked as laborers, drivers of carts, stable hands, and wood sawyers. Fewer were seamen, barbers, waiters, blacksmiths, musicians, shoemakers, and caulkers.[579] Wood cutting also appeared in a number of runaway slave advertisements in which escapees were believed to work in that capacity. As early as 1800, George William who, in his owner's perception, "walks upright, is smooth spoken, but a great liar," escaped in Maryland and "took an axe and wedges with him: I expect he will go to cut wood, and pretend he is free," the slaveholder announced. He believed that he would go to the eastern shore of Maryland or to Baltimore to continue from there to Pennsylvania. Williams fled with another black man whose name was Joshua Joice. He was "a free man, but he confesses to some of my people he was a slave and sold from the eastern shore to Georgia; and ran away from there to this country."[580] Joice was an example of a runaway slave passing for free and working alongside slaves. If he shared his knowledge with his enslaved co-workers about how to escape, get to a city, find work, and possibly forge a pass, they could use this information for their own freedom missions.

Freedom seekers like Joice who worked in sectors in which black people were overrepresented had an easier time fitting in after their escape. Those who used to engage in occupations in which their skin color was exceptional might have been better advised to switch jobs. For instance, if an enslaved tailor from Charleston decided to start a life of illegal freedom in Richmond, he should rather consider to seek employment as a factory worker than engaging

[575] Curry, *Free Black*, 26. Carmen and porters were also common terms for lower dockworkers; draymen were workers who brought goods to the wharves. Michael D. Thompson, *Working on the Dock of the Bay. Labor and Emancipation in an Antebellum Southern Port* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2015), 30.
[576] Goldfield, "Black Life," 133.
[577] *Matchett's Baltimore Director*, MSA.
[578] Rockman, *Scraping By*, 45-46, 73.
[579] Olson, *Baltimore*, 90.
[580] *Baltimore Gazette*, April 3, 1800.

in his original occupation. Refugees had to strategically reflect upon the liabilities of pursuing a particular job, and tradeoffs affected remuneration, visibility, and mobility. This likewise applied to Seabourn who spoke French and English. His owner H. Stackhouse from Tchoupitoulas street, New Orleans, offered $100 for his arrest in 1848 and announced that "He is supposed to be across the Lake or in the vicinity of Pass Manchac cutting wood." Believing to know the behavior of his slave, Stackhouse informed the readers of the paper that Seabourn "is somewhat of a circus actor, and when a little tired of work will no doubt attempt to pass himself off as a circus performer." Apparently, the slaveholder was wrong and Seabourn resisted the temptation of earning quick money by performing for an audience. Five years later, Seabourn was still advertised for: "He is somewhat of a circus actor," claimed the ad sticking to the same strategy to find him, "by which he may easily be detected as he is always showing his gymnastic qualifications."[581]

It is difficult to get a statistical profile about the exact professions of refugees before their flight; runaway slave ads only offer a small window. Furthermore, as has been argued, the people appearing in these announcements were the least likely to be found. What is obvious is that in the labor markets they joined free black city dwellers. The problem that arises is that statistics on free black occupations are necessarily based on official census records and city directories. For instance, the Baltimore city directory of 1831 listed 417 black male heads of households as laborers.[582] There is reason to believe that these data do not account for large parts of the nominally free African American population. Most of them worked in precarious conditions, were day laborers, washerwomen, providers of menial services, and had to avoid registration to protect their freedom and to avoid tax payments. Moreover, runaway slaves and other undocumented groups depended on certain jobs which did not imply a too close relationship with whites who could question their identity. The informal economy was therefore for most runaways the most obvious choice. This is hardly surprising given that, for instance, almost all black women worked in the informal sector anyways.[583]

The majority of runaway slaves depended on low-profile jobs with a ready payment. A great many were therefore automatically drawn to the informal and casual sectors. The jobs that were open to them, however, did not correspond to the profile of the mobile slave elite. (See chapter two.) Runaway slaves migrating to southern cities were aware of the opportunities the labor market offered and it seems that poorly paid jobs were almost always to be found, especially in port cities and especially from the 1820s onwards. From that time on, road, canal, house, and ship building as well as dock work grew extensively due to increasing commercial and trading activities.[584] With high urbanization rates and a decline in the relative demand for skilled work, the demand for menial and unskilled labor soared. The new urban residents needed houses to live, clothes to wear, and food to readily consume. Streets had to be cleaned and maintained, dikes repaired, new canals were to be dug, and rail tracks to be placed. Flexible,

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[581] *Daily Advocate*, December 7, 1848; November 3, 1852. Seabourn [Seaborn] has already been mentioned in chapter two.

[582] *Matchett's Baltimore Director*, MSA.

[583] The informal sectors refer to self-employment in contrast to wage work. The informal sector as understood today did not exist under nineteenth-century capitalism. See Alejandro Portes, "The Informal Sector: Definition, Controversy, and Relation to National Development," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 7:1 (1983): 151-174.

[584] See David M. Gordon, Richard Edwards, and Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers. The Historical Transformation of Labor in the United States* (Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 55-56, originally published 1982.

dilative labor allowed employers to hire and fire workers on short notice, according to their every-day needs. Dock workers and those loading and unloading ships, for instance, could be hired the minute a vessel got into the port.

Figure 19: Dock Work in New Orleans, 1853[585]

Tobacconists in Richmond, railroaders in Baltimore, and other industrialists and employers in Charleston and New Orleans were first and foremost businessmen. Their concern was to gather enough workers to make their businesses run and to pay them as little as possible to gain the highest profits. They knowingly employed illegal black residents and they did not pay attention whether some of their employees were actually runaway slaves. It is likely that some might have taken advantage of the vulnerable situation of their illegal employees to exploit them even more. Others simply did not want to know. Turning a blind eye was the most common and helpful support for them.

Outside the cities, the coal pits (from where many slaves absconded) and railroad and canal construction provided an opportunity for runaway slaves and other illegals to find employment by the mid-century. For the construction companies it was more efficient to employ free black and white workers, because in the event of accidental death they did not have to reimburse any owners for loss of property. In Virginia, the press reported about a black man "bearing the classic name of Quintus, to which had been added the appellation Terry […] who has lived here for four years without a register, stated that he was employed by the Central

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[585] Hippolyte Victor Valentin Sebron, "Bateaux A Vapeur Geants," 1853, Tulane University of Louisiana, URL: http://steamboattimes.com/images/artwork/giantsteamboats_hippolytesebron1600x1100.jpg, accessed May 23, 2019.

Railroad Company."[586] Whether Quintus was an illegally in the state residing free black or a runaway is unclear, but his case illustrates that it was perfectly possible for any group of illegals to find work even without showing any sort of register or freedom papers.

At the railroad constructions sites, living and working conditions were disastrous. William Matthews, who was as a slave hired out to the Hamburg and Charleston Rail Road, testified to the brutal work regime: "Every hour in the day we could hear the whip going. They did not use brine there. After we were whipped, we had to go straight back to our work. They did not care whether we got well or not, because we were other people's niggers." A dangerous occupation with a relatively high death toll, numerous slaveholders were discouraged from hiring their slaves out to the railroads, which were desperate for labor. "It was very dangereus business," Matthews went on, "There was hardly a day that some of the slaves did not get crippled or killed. There were more killed there than at any other place I ever worked at. On the State road a great many died, but nothing near so many as there."[587] Work sites that were too dangerous for slaves were an option for runaways.

When looking for work, refugees had to be careful to avoid detection. A convincing story and other people to back it up were fundamental prerequisites. The limited evidence that exists suggests that most men attempted to integrate into the local urban labor market as common laborers. George Teamoh, an enslaved man from Norfolk, Virginia, wrote in his autobiography that in 1853, his wife Sallie was brought to Richmond together with their youngest child and stored in the slave pen in order to be sold. Teamoh went to visit them. Since he intended to "remain a few weeks," he had to find a job, which apparently was not a problem: "I sought, and found employment during a few days," Teamoh wrote and added that he started working at a dock yard at the Richmond Basin as a common laborer.[588]

Apart from local variations in different productive and commercial specializations, all four cities denoted growth rates large enough to be in constant need of workers in the construction and transport sectors. When Stepney, "of a smiling countenance," ran away from Columbia, South Carolina, his owner started a runaway slave ad in June 1820 believing he was in Charleston because he had been raised there. Being a bricklayer by trade, Stepney might have found employment in this city and was still not found eight months later.[589] Brick makers were also high in demand in other places. The 1850 census registered 1,400 of them in Baltimore City and County, most of them of African descent. Baltimore, the fastest growing city of this research, had approximately 600 houses built per year in the 1830s; in 1851, 2,000 were built.[590]

Other large infrastructural projects included canals and later railroads, as well as water engineering. In New Orleans, for one, the levee was a construction project that needed maintenance all year long and the demand for laborers never snapped. Enslaved Jim, 28 years

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[586] *Daily Dispatch*, November 28, 1860.

[587] Anonymous [Matthews], *Recollections of Slavery*, October 11, 1838. To Matthews's account, the editor added: "This part of the narrative was corroborated incidentally, in conversation with a gentleman who had travelled extensively in the southern states. He remarked that the place where he had seen slaves treated the worst, was on the Rail Road from Charleston to Hamburg. He saw women nearly naked wheeling loads of dirt up on to the road from pits by the road side, on planks about a foot and a half wide. If they lost their balance, they would fall from ten to twenty feet."

[588] Unfortunately, he did not include information on how he got to Richmond but stated that he wrote his own pass. Teamoh, *God Made Man*, 90-91.

[589] *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, December 15, 1820.

[590] Olson, *Baltimore*, 103.

of age, "stout and muscular, with sullen expression of countenance," was in October 1855 absent from his owner (which was a firm) in New Orleans for already four months. "The negro was seen in the lower parts of the city on Saturday and Sunday last, and is no doubt lurking about the city," read the advertisement, and that he "has been seen twice on the Levee during the last month."[591] People like Jim, who escaped their owners and stayed in the same city could make use of their existing networks and judge the labor market based on their own first-hand experiences. For those escaping from a rural setting this was more difficult, also because the urban environment added a variety of jobs for black men that were not available in the countryside.

For most people, work was not steady and self-hired slaves, free blacks, and undocumented men and women passing as one or the other had to stay alert and flexible to make ends meet and to adapt their strategies to the changing surroundings. When laboring as a slave in the shipyards of Norfolk as a caulker, there was not always work for George Teamoh and he took on a variety of other jobs aside: "When not in their [the shipyard owners'] service, I was found at the common labor of carrying grain, lading and unlading ships freighting Rail Road iron, and, perhaps there is no species of labor, such as may be reckoned in the catalogue of Norfolk's history but I have been engaged at."[592] Historian Walter Johnson supports the observation that employers made use of flexible workers regardless of their background. He has stated that it was common for captains to send out mates or stewards to fill their crews with men laboring on the New Orleans levee, among them many runaways.[593] Following every opportunity that opened up could mean the difference between being able to pay the rent or not.

Important in this regard was the seasonal job market in the Lower South, with hundreds of white laborers who migrated south for the winter months and left again in spring. This was important knowledge for refugees since, for example, the white exodus during seasons of sickness in New Orleans created spaces for black labor. Also Richmond knew a factory season when Virginia slaveholders hired their bondspeople out to Richmond and other cities to work in the industries in the fall and spring, as stressed by Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie.[594] Reversely, this also meant that in some months of the year, competition was particularly dire. Economic fluctuations contributed their part. Especially after the crisis of 1857, the migration of unemployed workers from the North to the South soared, according to other historians.[595] This made life harder for the lower classes.

Like their male counterparts, female runaways matched their expectations and strategies to what expected them at their destinations. They knew that most jobs were wageless except domestic and related services like cooking, and that they most likely would stay below subsistence level with what they earned. When a slaveholder expressed his suspicion that a runaway woman was following a particular occupation at the place of her arrival, it was usually one of the jobs which were aplenty to be found in cities. With regards to quantity, much work was open to black women but there was not much choosing because the heavily gendered labor

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[591] *Daily Picayune*, October 25, 1855.
[592] Teamoh, *God Made Man*, 87.
[593] Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams*, 143.
[594] Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, *Freedpeople in the Tobacco South, Virginia 1860-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 18-19.
[595] Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 177, 179; and Rodriguez, "Ripe for Revolt," 44.

markets did not leave much variety.[596] Runaway slave ads conjecturing female escapees to be engaged as washerwomen or seamstresses were a case in point. That explains why seamstresses had a high share amongst runaways hiding in Charleston, as observed by Amani Marshall.[597] The case of Martha is indicative. In 1844, she was 28 years old and was sold from Richmond to Charleston. After working for her new owner for three months, Martha went off. Since she was a washer, ironer, and cook, she was believed to "seek employment in that capacity." Strikingly, it only took the newcomer Martha a couple of months to forge ties to people willing to aid her in her escape and concealment: "She was seen the night after she went away in a house occupied by negroes, on Boyce & Co's wharf," the announcement claimed.[598]

Figure 20: Woman Carrying Bundle—Possibly Laundry—in Back Alley[599]

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[596] Amrita Chakrabarti Myers has likewise come to this conclusion in her study on Charleston. Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 90. Seth Rockman has concluded that having a job did not mean keeping it nor making enough money to survive. Rockman, *Scraping By*, 159.

[597] Marshall, "Endeavor to Pass For Free," 170.

[598] *Charleston Mercury*, February 9, 1844.

[599] J. Wells Chamney, "Woman Carrying Bundle, Savannah, Georgia, 1873-74," in Edward King, *The Great South* (Hartford: American Pub., 1875), 364, Special Collections, UVA, *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora*,

Washing clothes could be performed at home for piece rates or, increasingly in the late antebellum period, in a laundry for wage payment. Most large institutions like hospitals had their own laundries where they employed women.[600] Being one of the main occupations of black women, it was unobtrusive, which is why it was an acceptable job for runaway slaves. Although physically arduous, it did not require special skills and could be performed by women and girls of all ages. The largest benefit was that they could work in their own homes, thereby being less exposed than market women and peddlers and less dependent than domestic servants who directly worked for their employees. Also when women took to the streets to pick up or deliver clothes and linen, they were much more discreet than, for example, a group of dock or construction workers. (See figure 20.)

Besides domestic service, laundry, and sewing, sex work was a plausible option for many black women, including refugees. In the nineteenth century, sex work was in a grey zone between illegality and tolerance. Historian Patricia Cline Cohen claimed that in New York of the 1830s, prostitutes enjoyed relative protection by the police. From the 1840s on, tolerance by the authorities lessened, which also effected the social standing of women and girls working in that occupation. They forfeited, for instance, their credibility in legal proceedings. By mid-century, the silent condoning of sex services came to an end. Many sex workers were left more vulnerable and sought the liaison with male pimps for protection.[601] James Campbell has dated the suppression in Richmond a little earlier. He claims that restrictions against prostitution began in the 1830s when authorities sought to outsource this practice to less reputable areas of the city.[602]

The bulk of people taken up for prostitution dated, fitting Cohen's timeline, from the 1850s. Newspaper coverage shows that in New Orleans, Catharine Murphy, Bridget Fagan, and Nancy Davis, the latter one being of African descent, were arrested in a brothel in Girod street in 1852 "as lewd and abandoned women and vagrants."[603] Note than women were not actually taken up for *working* as prostitutes but for *being* "loose women," highlighting the aspect of social control.[604] The two white women "were required to furnish vouchers or go to the Work-House. Nancy was sent to the Work-House for six months."[605] New Orleans and Charleston are places for which evidence suggests that mixed-race brothels were common. In 1849, a 13-year-old white girl named Mary Ann Warren was recovered "from a house of ill fame kept by a negro woman on Phillipa street" in New Orleans. In 1850, "Margaret Doherty, *f.w.c.* [free woman of color], and Margaret Gregg were last night locked up in the Second Municipality,

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URL: http://slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/2894, accessed November 23, 2019.

[600] It is difficult to find information about wages. In a Philadelphia hospital, laundresses earned $3 per week in 1817, which was reduced to $2 in 1822. United States Department of Labor and Bureau of Labor Statistics, "History of Wages in the United States from Colonial Times to 1928," *Bulletin of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics* 604 (1934): 135. For an insight into nineteenth-century laundry, see Patricia E. Malcolmson, *English Laundresses: A Social History, 1850-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

[601] Until the 1850s, it was a business dominated by women. Cohen, *Murder of Helen Jewett*, 85.

[602] The numbers of white women and men charged with keeping a brothel grew in the 1850s. Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 65.

[603] *Daily Picayune*, August 27, 1852.

[604] For a discussion between the alleged character traits and the actual labor of sex workers, see Marion Pluskota, "'We Use Our Bodies to Work Hard, So We Need to Get Legitimate Workers' Rights': Labour Relations in Prostitution, 1600-2010," in *Selling Sex in the City. A Global History of Prostitution, 1600s-2000s*, ed. Magaly Rodríguez García, Lex Heerma van Voss, and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 655-656.

[605] *Daily Picayune*, August 27, 1852.

being charged with keeping a brothel."[606] The last notice did not only reveal that black and white women worked alongside as prostitutes but also that a white woman and a black woman ran a business together.

Historian Seth Rockman has noted that sex work could generate more income in a couple of hours than in several weeks seaming shirts. Many women did not follow this work as a main occupation but rather as an on-and-off by-occupation or to get through a difficult period. Transient men who entered the port cities through the docks provided ample demand.[607] In this light, prostitution was a viable and effective work choice which followed the logics of a free market, as historians of other places have also claimed.[608] Consequently, the prostitution business grew with the cities and the traffic therein. Charleston authorities complained about the volume of this phenomenon in 1820 and acted against the expansion of "public Dancing Room[s]" within the limits of the city.[609]

Next to absorbing refugees, brothels were generally places where illegal activities took place. Newspapers wrote that some sold alcohol without licenses, others were involved in human trafficking.[610] Brothels also served enslaved men. In a New Orleans case involving the white brothel keeper Alice D'Arthenny alias Constance La Farbe, "Recorder Bright found that the charges of keeping a disorderly house or brothel, and of offending against public decency by consorting with the slave Sam, were fully made out."[611] And also in Charleston, involvement of enslaved men in "disorderly houses" were at least so common that in 1821 the City Council ordained that free black persons and slaves were not allowed any longer to act as musicians in "public Dancing Room[s]."[612] Although white society and authorities conceived interracial sexual contact with horrors, the top-down measures to move brothels and prostitution to less well-off parts of the cities worked in the opposite direction. It is hardly imaginable, for example, that the four women who were charged with running "houses of ill fame" in Shockoe Bottom,[613] a dominantly African American neighborhood in Richmond, did not serve black customers when they paid them.

Two cases have been found which point to the occupation of illegal freedom seekers as sex workers. The first involves Eliza Harris. A hearing at the First District Court dealt with a dispute over a different issue than prostitution but in which course Harris, a black woman, was mentioned. A witness testified that Harris "formerly lived in Natchez, and was then reputed to

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[606] Idem, April 9, 1849; August 17, 1850.

[607] Rockman, *Scraping By*, 129.

[608] Pluskota, "'We Use Our Bodies," 653, also referring to Richard Posner, *Sex and Reason* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Marjolein van der Veen, "Rethinking Commodification and Prostitution: An Effort at Peacemaking in the Battles over Prostitution," *Rethinking Marxism* 13:2 (2001): 30-51.

[609] Presentment of Grant Jury of Charleston District, October 1820, SCDAH; and Eckhard, *Digest of the Ordinances*, "Disorderly Houses," CCPL. "Public dancing," "disorderly houses," and "loose women" point to the vague legal definition of who qualified as prostitutes. In the nineteenth century, the understanding of prostitution was marked by the interplay of other concepts like class, race, and gender. See Thaddeus Blanchette and Cristiana Schettini, "Sex Work in Rio de Janeiro: Police Management without Regulation," in *Selling Sex in the City. A Global History of Prostitution, 1600s-2000s*, ed. Magaly Rodríguez García, Lex Heerma van Voss, and Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 492.

[610] *Daily Picayune*, May 25, 1853; August 4, 1855. In 1854, Emilie Leon, a white girl of 14 years, was, according to a New Orleans newspaper, abducted by Ben T. Haughton "who secreted her in a brothel in Gravier street, kept by a colored woman named Davis." *Daily Picayune*, April 29, 1854.

[611] Idem, August 4, 1855.

[612] Eckhard, *Digest of the Ordinances*, "Disorderly Houses," CCPL.

[613] *Daily Dispatch*, August 27, 1853, in Kimball, *American City*, 48.

be a slave. Her son had been offered to witness for sale. Since that time, she has lived in a brothel in New Orleans."[614] Being mid-century, it was too late for Harris to be manumitted legally. Hence, she was either a slave refugee or an undocumented person. Interesting is that the sale of her son seemed to be connected to her departure from Natchez. The second involves Mary. In 1824, she ran away from Robert Howren in Georgetown, South Carolina. After two months, he advertised for her describing her as of "yellow complexion, large black eyes, an uncommon handsome set of white teeth, lips very red and speaks remarkably drawling—small statue." Howren had purchased Mary some years prior at auction in Charleston, where she apparently went back to because "She has been seen by a black woman in Charleston, within a few weeks. She has changed her name to JANE, and says she lives with a white woman who keeps a house of ill fame." A whole year after Mary's escape, she was still advertised for in the newspaper.[615]

Male and female refugees depended on the distribution of black-coded jobs along the occupational spheres. It was possible for them to find work on the lower levels of the labor market and in informal and disdained sectors.

Regulatory Regimes

It was desirable for runaway slaves to integrate into the *free* black population. Yet race was not the only code that permeated the labor market; local regulations also had to be reckoned with. A great many of these restrictions were not only based on race but also on legal status. Very often, the two were related. Varying from location to location, black people had to apply for special permits to carry out certain works. This has been shown by Barbara Fields. In Baltimore, for one, peddlers were required to acquire licenses, vendors had to get permission to sell certain goods, and boatmen needed to register to operate their businesses on the Chesapeake Bay and the rivers.[616] For people with an undocumented status, this was not an option. As chapter one has shown, from the mid-antebellum era onwards, the legislative situation of free African Americans grew tighter. The provisions on prohibitions of assembly and curfews not only affected their social lives but also their jobs. Since black people still had to make money somehow and respond to human needs, they were driven into semi-clandestine or illegal economic and social activities, which means into the underground. They settled at the margins of mainstream economy.

Being at the margins did not mean being independent from the economy, and economic fluctuations always hit these people hard, including the crises of 1837 and 1857. Since black people were reduced to the lowest-paying jobs, black people had to work more to make ends meet. Yet, working longer hours could be risky for black people, for there was a curfew whose violation could end with a night in the workhouse, or a painful fine. These "disciplinary measures" compelled poor laborers to work even harder in order to make up for the lost money or time. Between September 1836 and September 1837, 573 slaves were convicted in

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[614] The case involved the burning of a ship. The captain, Captain Wilson, apparently stayed in a house (presumably a brothel) kept by several people, where also Eliza Harris came into play. A number of witnesses "testified as to the general bad character of Eliza Harris, and would not believe her oath." *Daily Picayune*, March 15, 1850.

[615] *Charleston Courier*, August 30, 1824; May 9, 1825.

[616] Fields, *Middle Ground*, 79.

Charleston for being on the streets after curfew without a pass.[617] When a black person was detected at night and no identification was produced—because the person was a runaway, an illegally free person, or a legally free person without documents—they could be sold into slavery if worst came to worst. In Richmond, Curetta and her daughter Betty were charged with going at large and hiring themselves out. The two women, who belonged to Helen Briggs, lived on their own on 9th street. Working as washerwomen, they would "sometimes be employed in carrying home clothes to or later an hour as 9 at night," the court record reads.[618] In Baltimore, black people petitioned or had white people petition the mayor for passes that allowed them to be on the streets after curfew.[619] Breaking the curfew could pose a problem for black people while at the same time they were forced to seize the working day as soundly as they could.

Due to the overrepresentation of enslaved workers in certain areas, it was better for some runaways to pass as hired slaves. Depending on the context, this could work in the manufactories in Richmond, at the wharves in Charleston, and on the levee in New Orleans. In theory, this was exactly the same situation they had just escaped from, but in practice, the daily lives of self-hired slaves were much more akin to those of free blacks than to those of most slaves. In Baltimore, where urban slavery was never abundant and where it had almost died out by the eve of the Civil War, this option would not have crossed the minds of many. In the other three cities, however, passing as a slave could be a promising strategy. For New Orleans, authorities were aware of this phenomenon from the earliest days of American rule on. The Réglement de Police of 1804 evidenced that there was an interest "to prevent Negroes […] from hiring themselves, when they are runaways."[620] In spite of the different developments of urban slavery in Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans, by 1860 the number of slaves were comparable. (The size of urban enslaved populations, however, varied greatly; see table 6.)

Table 6: Urban Enslaved Populations, 1800-1860[621]

	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860
Baltimore	2,800	4,700	4,400	4,100	3,200	2,900	2,200
Richmond	2,300	3,100	4,400	6,300	7,500	9,900	**11,700**
Charleston	9,800	11,700	12,700	15,400	14,700	19,500	**13,900**
New Orleans		6,000	7,400	9,400	23,400	17,000	**13,400**

Richmond was an especially remarkable case. In 1860, 40 to 50 percent of urban slaves found themselves in hired labor conditions. This made up 4,700 to 5,900 people.[622] Black Americans held in bondage were an integral part of the city's industry, which was mostly centered around tobacco. Tobacco was a very labor-intense business which relied on a variety of workers with

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[617] Powers, "Black Charleston," 19.

[618] Commonwealth v. Helen A. E. Briggs, July 12, 1862, Suit Papers, Hustings Court Suit Papers, LVA.

[619] For instance, Petition of Jeremiah Willis for a Pass, February 4, 1839; and Petition by A. Williams, To the Honorable S. C. Leakin Mayor, n. d., Mayor's Correspondence, BRG 9-2, BCA.

[620] Minutes of the Conseil do Ville, May 19, 1804, in Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec, "Slave Migrations and Slave Control in Spanish and Early American New Orleans," in *Empires of the Imagination. Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase*, ed. Peter J. Kastor and François Weil (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 223.

[621] For sources, see table 3.

[622] Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 147.

differing skills.[623] In the last two decades of the antebellum period, 80 percent of people working in tobacco were enslaved men.[624] In the 1820s, 15 to 20 tobacco manufacturers employed 370 to 480 enslaved workers. Two decades later, some 600 to 700 slaves worked in 30 factories. The second important raw material for Richmond was wheat, and flour mills sprang up from the ground accordingly. Moreover, the coal mines in Chesterfield, just next to Richmond, made use of 700 to 800 enslaved men in 1835.[625]

Illegals, other than runaways, also passed themselves off as slaves. Free black people entered Louisiana with forged passes describing them as slaves in order to circumvent the contravention laws. These activities were reported by the Attorney General in 1857. Phoebe Black, a free black sex worker, was charged with passing off as a slave a woman named Sarah Lucas who was originally from Louisville, Kentucky. In 1849, Black had, according to Lucas's testimony, lured her into New Orleans with the promise to procure her a job as a chambermaid.[626] Chambermaids or sex workers, women with an illegal status had better chances than men to avoid detection. Men more often worked outside, on the streets, on markets, on harbors, and in groups, which could jeopardize their cover. Runaway ads inform that they were seen in the cities, often on the docks or the levee. "Phil a mulatto man," whose owner was Mrs. Wickhams on James River "has been seen on the Basin [in Richmond] and at the new market in the course of the week." In 1837 in New Orleans, runaway Reason, 18 years old, with "high cheek bones, with very white teeth, long flat feet, and stoops when walking," was seen on the levee and "on board of steam boats." In 1850, "A colored man belonging to Mr. Wurchurt, and calling himself Henry, was arrested on the levee as a runaway and sent to the lock-up."[627] This contributed to explaining the much higher numbers of male runaways in jails.

In most southern cities, African American women outnumbered men; Richmond was the great exception. Its economic focus on production and manufacturing attracted large numbers of free and enslaved men to the booming city. Half of the black male work force worked in factories such as tobacco manufactories, paper mills, iron works, and flour production on the eve of the Civil War.[628] Although tobacco slaves—since the 1840s mostly men—found themselves under constant surveillance in the factories, they were only regulated by the official slave laws before and after working time.[629] For refugees passing as self-hired

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[623] Besides tobacco factories, there were numerous warehouses in which tobacco was lodged before the export. Takagi, *Rearing Wolves,* 3, 10-11, 24.

[624] Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 71. Claudia Goldin's calculations revealed that in 1860, 62 percent of enslaved men were hired in Richmond, which corresponded to 71 percent of the actual enslaved labor force. For women, the respective shares were 88 and 46 percent. Goldin, *Urban Slavery*, 36.

[625] The numbers on tobacco workers are from Schermerhorn. Takagi's numbers are higher since he calculated both free and enslaved: In 1820, 760 people worked in 20 tobacco manufactories; in 1850, 1,400 people were employed in 19 factories. In during the 1850s, both the manufactories and the workers rose nearly threefold in numbers. Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 147, 166; and Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 11.

[626] To avoid persecution, Lucas left the state of Louisiana. Schafer, *Becoming Free*, 117-118.

[627] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, February 15, 1844, UVA; *Picayune*, July 19, 1837; and *Daily Picayune*, April 5, 1850.

[628] For an account of the experiences of an industrial slave in Richmond, see Charles B. Dew, "Sam Williams, Forgeman: The Life of an Industrial Slave in the Old South," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction. Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press), 199-240.

[629] Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 219; Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 11, 26; and Suzanne Gehring Schnittman, "Slavery in Virginia's Urban Tobacco Industry – 1840-1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1986), v.

slaves, the working conditions might have resembled slavery but after the work was done, they lived *de facto* free in the city.

Urban slavery had many faces. For runaways passing as slaves, it offered many possible scenarios. Bondswomen in cities cooked, cleaned, washed, made and repaired cloths, took care of very young and very old people, and simply did everything their masters and mistresses demanded. Most worked from five o'clock in the morning until curfew hit the city. Men also worked as domestics, for example as valets, gardeners, table servants, or took care of horses, carriages, and ran errands. Even children, usually under the age of ten, were used as household servants, errand boys, and child-minders.[630] The life course of a young runaway could have been linked to someone like Catharine Rieley. A New Orleans paper informed its readership that the white woman, "who lives opposite to the Orleans theatre, was yesterday arrested on charge of harboring a runaway slave boy and claiming him as her property."[631] Passing a refugee off as one's property could both be a method to aid a freedom seeker or a strategy to obtain ownership of a slave by fraud.

When refugees hired themselves out to employers over a longer period of time, they could cross paths with census takers. It appears that some of them were even included in the records. Similar to the listings of the First African Baptist Church in which the status of certain people was left blank or where the space for the owners of enslaved members was filled in with a question mark (which pointed to the integration of runaways and other illegals presented in chapter three), Loren Schweninger has observed that census enumerators could at times not identify the owners of alleged slaves. In the space provided for the name of the slaveholder, census takers then wrote "hired," "owner Unknown," simply "unknown," "Owners names not known," or that the slave belonged to "an estate." Schweninger concluded that the employers of these slaves did not know of whom they were hiring their hirelings.[632] Under the light of this research, however, it is very likely that employers either knew that they had runaways in their employ or that they simply did not look into the background of their employees.

When it was about common laborers, New Orleans and Charleston set clear rules regarding the hiring of unskilled slaves, including places where they could gather to get hired by the day, the daily lengths of the service, and sometimes the wages.[633] In Baltimore and Richmond, by contrast, slave hire was less regulated by city authorities, and rather occurred through private negotiations, also involving brokers.[634] Historian Gregg Kimball has provided context: Early January was usually the time when self-hired bondspeople, men and women, roamed the streets of southern cities looking for contracts for the new year. Around Christmas and well into January, manufacturers closed businesses, and free and enslaved workers were increasingly to be found on the streets, both celebrating their days off and negotiating their

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[630] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 28-32; and Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 38

[631] *Daily Picayune*, November 19, 1855.

[632] Schweninger made these observations for Richmond and a number of other cities in Virginia. United States Manuscript Slave Census, Richmond, 1st Ward, 1860, 1-2, 6; 2nd Ward, 56-57, in Schweninger, "Underside of Slavery."

[633] In Charleston, the "fixed proper stands," where porters were to offer their hired work, were announced in 1803. All of them were located near the waterfront where the wharves were. *Charleston Times*, November 11, 1803, in Thompson, *Working on the Dock*, 44.

[634] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 41-42.

terms for the following year.[635] This was a welcome opportunity for freedom seekers to blend in with the black community and to establish important business connections. Robert Russell, a British visitor, observed this in the mid-1850s stating that "Richmond was at this time literally swarming with negroes, who were standing in crowds at the corners of the streets in different parts of the town."[636]

Figure 21: Self-hired Bondswomen Selling Sweet Potatoes in Charleston[637]

Because self-hire was prohibited, those who engaged in it were already familiar with an illegal activity before the escape. Passing as self-hired or free was easier for them. It took great boldness, courage, and—in the best case—the experience of having worked as a self-hired slave to successfully pretend to be a self-hired slave. Passing as such was for male runaways a way to engage in the skilled work they had been trained for in slavery. This way, they were able to make more money than they would if working below their skills. At the same time, all hopes of someday joining the free population were up front in tatters. Yet, because it was assumed that self-hired slaves had owners, police were cautious to go too hard on them. (See chapter five.) Even in those places were respective laws were passed, political will to enforce the codes was weak. Robert Lacy, for instance, an enslaved man who was tried in 1839 in Richmond for

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[635] In Richmond, the famous Tredegar Iron Works was not an option in this context because enterpriser Joseph Anderson meticulously monitored his staff. Even in times when he experimented with enslaved employees, Anderson opposed boarding out. Kimball, *American City*, 29-30, 165.

[636] Russell, *North America*, 151.

[637] "Selling Sweet Potatoes, Charleston, South Carolina, 1861," in *Illustrated London News* 38 (1861): 94, *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in Early African Diaspora*, URL: http://slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/763, accessed November 23, 2019. The article accompanying the engraving states that the women were slaves who had to hand over a part of their profits to their owners.

"going at large and hiring himself out," was discharged and his case dismissed.[638] A customary hands-off approach created spaces for runaway slaves. They, in turn, proved with their willingness to pass as slaves their awareness of the realities of the urban labor markets in a slaveholding society.

Self-hire constituted as much a springboard to escape slavery (see chapter two) as a strategy to make a living afterwards. The case of Charlotte is striking because the information in a runaway ad about her speaks to both scenarios. She "CAME to Charleston from Beaufort, some time since, by permission of her Mistress." Charlotte never returned to Beaufort "but hired herself out, and taken in washing, ever since, in Charleston." Since she was "from the windward coast of Africa [and] has her country marks on her face," Charlotte would not have stood a good chance passing as a free woman. Yet, the subscriber found it relevant to add that "She has neither badge nor ticket to work out." [639] A similar account is the one of Jim, a tailor by trade. His owner Alexander England knew that "Jim has a ticket to work out, that he got from me, dated in February last" and suspected that "he may show that and hire himself to a Taylor." Jim absconded in June 1821. By June 1822, he was still not found. A couple of years prior, Jim had already passed himself off as a fisherman, revealing the flexibility and adaptability of many freedom seekers.[640]

Tickets were, comparable to slave passes introduced in chapter two, slips of paper written by slaveowners to give permission to their slaves to hire themselves out, and were as easily forged. Mary's owner knew in 1829 that she was passing herself off as a self-hired washerwoman. Calling herself Mary M'Lean, she ran away from 101 East Bay but stayed in Charleston. "She has been repeatedly seen on the Green, washing clothes—and not having a Badge, is supposed to have got some person to write a ticket for her."[641] Everybody who was able to write "a tolerable hand" could furnish slaves who sought to detach themselves from the control of their owners with such papers. These informal licenses were not only a way to control the enslaved population, they also furnished those who used them with a certain protection, both from harassing watchmen and whites who could be spoiling for a fight. Some slaveowners wrote tickets for a specific time range or occupational task, others furnished their bondspeople with vaguely phrased papers. Newspaper notices demonstrate the spaces these tickets opened for hired slaves. Richard, on the one hand, had "a weekly working pass which is expired," to work on the wharves.[642] Dinah, on the other hand, "having a great many free relations," had with her a "nolimited ticket, to look for a master, which she has taken advantage of."[643] Police were aware that tickets could and were easily forged and sometimes apprehended slaves for having "no ticket," a "bad ticket," or a "doubtful ticket."[644] Since these apprehensions also happened late at night, slave tickets cannot be approached as something profoundly different from slave passes, and the boundaries were very blurry.

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[638] Hustings Court Suit Papers, Ended Causes, March – October 1839, Commonwealth v. Robert Lacy, a Slave, September 12, 1839, LVA.

[639] *Charleston Courier*, May 19, 1820.

[640] *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, July 7, 1821; June 1, 1822.

[641] *Charleston Courier*, May 7, 1829.

[642] *City Gazette*, February 19, 1793, in Thomas Brown and Leah Sims, *Fugitive Slave Advertisements in* The City Gazette*, Charleston, South Carolina, 1787-1797* (London: Lexington Books, 2015), xi.

[643] *Charleston Courier*, March 26, 1822.

[644] Records of the Charleston Police Department, Arrest Records and Morning Reports, Lower Ward 1855-1856, January 7, 12; February 25, 1856, CCPL.

Figure 22: Slave Badge of a Servant, 1817 [645]

Figure 23: Slave Badge of a Mechanic, 1842 [646]

Figure 24: Slave Badge of a Fisher, 1814 [647]

In theory, tickets for hired slaves were not a sufficient identification in Charleston. Municipal ordinances inform that slaveowners were from 1800 onwards required by law to purchase badges given out by the treasurer of the city, who kept a register of all the slaves who obtained badges. Legislation was rather strict stipulating slaves to wear these badges on visible parts of the body and employers had the duty to demand to see them. If an employer was caught hiring a slave who did not possess a badge, he had to pay a $5 fine plus the wages he had agreed upon with the slave's owner.[648] The feasibility of this ordinance was questionable from the very

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[645] Slave Badge, Charleston Museum, URL: https://www.charlestonmuseum.org/research/collection/slave-badge/9FB883C5-944D-4AF2-9FA9-526679644172, accessed March 7, 2019. Servants did not have to wear the badges on their clothes, they just had to carry them with them. Greene, Hutchins, and Hutchins, *Slave Badges*, 7.

[646] Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, URL: https://mesda.org/item/collections/slave-badge/21118/, accessed March 7, 2019.

[647] RelicRecords, URL: https://relicrecord.com/blog/charleston-slave-badges/, accessed March 7, 2019.

[648] Eckhard, *Digest of the Ordinances*, "Badges," CCPL. If no badge could be produced, the hirer was to carry the slave to the wardens who would commit him or her to the workhouse. Every case was to be heard before the court of wardens where the owner had to appear. The punishment for the slave was whipping. *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, July 21, 1800. Greene, Hutchins, and Hutchins found out that earliest legislation regarding slave badges was passed in the 1780s. The oldest physical slave badge that was found dates from 1800.

beginning. The impracticalities were plenty. To just name one, before the incorporation of Neck, both Charleston City and Neck required separate badges for slaves. As a consequence, hired slaves who crossed Boundary street during their work, had to have two badges. It is hard to imagine that this was controlled. Besides great inconvenience, procuring badges was a costly expenditure next to the taxes on slaves that had to be paid regardless.[649]

Harlan Greene, Harry Hutchins, Jr., and Brian Hutchins have claimed that the badges were numbered consecutively within various categories.[650] (See figures 22-24.) Intended to put a cap on the number of hired slaves as well as to prevent runaways from passing as hired slaves, obtaining a badge could also facilitate the endeavors of freedom seekers in need of employment. In 1812, Pompey absconded. "He is a Painter by trade, and has constantly been employed working out, being furnished with a badge." Pompey could easily find work by showing his badge. The owners of Delia and Clarinda were aware of this. In 1833, an ad informed that Delia, an 18-year-old wet nurse, carried a badge with the number 1234 with her and warned all persons against hiring her. Clarinda, 17 years old, "round face, good set of teeth," was described as "very talkative, and well known in the city." Having "many relatives here," the subscriber J. W. Schmidt assumed that she "resorts certain houses in the city and suburbs." He also added her badge number 176 to the announcement. Most ads, however, stated that runaways did not have badges and presumed that they would try to hire themselves out nevertheless: When March, "well known about the city," was advertised for, the announcement claimed that "he will, no doubt, say he has permission to work out, but has neither ticket nor badge."[651]

The production of slave badges gives insight into the numbers of hired slaves in Charleston. As calculated by Harlan Greene, in 1808 and 1809, between 300 and 400 badges were issued contrasting a number of more than 5,000 badges in 1860. This number covered around 25 to 30 percent of Charleston's urban bondspeople.[652] The actual volume of hired slaves was much higher, given that a great many slaveholders disregarded the ordinances, and slaveholders from outside Charleston sent their people into the city. Additionally, the tag counts did not include large numbers of self-hired slaves and nominally free African Americans who mingled with the enslaved hired population.

There are narratives that explicitly deal with the topic of passing as self-hired slaves. After fleeing enslavement, William Matthews went to Charleston. Having worked as a carriage driver before, he "went to the tavern where I used to stop, when I carried eggs and peaches and other things to market." In the following days, Matthews "slept on some hay under a shed in the tavern yard." Being able to read the racial and regulatory landscape of labor in Charleston, he included detailed information on how finding work as an enslaved laborer worked:

Harlan Greene, Harry S. Hutchins, Jr., and Brian E. Hutchins, *Slave Badges and the Slave-Hire System in Charleston, South Carolina, 1783-1865* (Jefferson and London: McFarland, 2008), 15.

[649] *Charleston Courier*, January 29, 1848. For the legislation and its ongoing exceptions, see Eckhard, *Digest of the Ordinances*, "Negroes," CCPL.

[650] Greene, Hutchins, and Hutchins, *Slave Badges*, depictions between pages 66 and 67.

[651] *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, September 1, 1812; *Charleston Mercury*, July 31, 1833; *Charleston Courier*, April 11, 1822; and *Charleston Mercury*, May 29, 1832.

[652] Harlan Greene, "Slave Badges," in *World of a Slave. Encyclopedia of the Material Life of Slaves in the United States.* Vol. 1: A-I, ed. Martha B. Katz-Hyman and Kym S. Rice (Santa Barbara, Denver, and Oxford: Greenwood, 2010), 437. Comparing Green's numbers with the official census data (table 6), the share of urban slaves with badges would be 36 percent. It is conceivable that also slaves who (officially) resided outside the city limits, worked with badges in Charleston.

> I went down to the stevedore's stand and waited there with the rest of the hands to get work. By and by a stevedore came along and asked if I wanted work. I told him yes. He said come along, and I followed him on to the wharf, and worked with a good many others in stowing away cotton in a vessel.

Pretending to have a master to whom he answered, Matthews told his co-workers than he had to hand over his entire wages to his owner.[653] Like Matthews, John Andrew Johnson first fled to Charleston before leaving for the North on a vessel. His account on laboring in the city is similar: "I joined a gang of negroes working on the wharfs, and received a dollar-and-a-quarter per day, without arousing any suspicion," Johnson wrote. Yet, he also testified to the slave tags and how this ordinance could keep people from working: "One morning, as I was going to join a gang of negroes working on board a vessel, one of them asked me if I had my badge? […] When I heard that, I was so frightened that I hid myself […]."[654] Johnson's ignoranc regarding the local regulations for self-hired slaves nearly cost him his freedom. Others who were not as lucky as he were arrested and lodged in the workhouse.

Badges for hired-out slaves were also required for New Orleans, as the account of Terrance, Jackson, and William from the opening of this chapter shows. This newspaper article further testifies that controls occurred at least occasionally. The New Orleans ordinances regarding slave badges largely followed those of Charleston. Amendments in the ordinances establishing the fines for people forging these tags furthermore show that this happened to an extent worrisome to the authorities. Free persons "who shall have counterfeited one or more of such badges" were to be fined $50 "with expenses and costs, for every such offense." Slaves were to receive 25 lashes at the police jail, and "every slave wearing a badge not specially obtained for him from the Mayor of this city, shall receive fifteen lashes" unless their master redeemed them by paying $2.[655] In New Orleans, slave badge laws were regularly neglected, and employers did not ask for licenses or identification. In Richmond, no such badges existed and illegally free men and women could pass as self-hired slaves in large numbers. In Baltimore it was not necessary to pass as a slave.

The existence of the slave badge law and the fact that a great many slaveholders obeyed it, reveals a distinct atmosphere in Charleston. It was the only place where these ordinances were executed, which shows the feasibility in the light of political will. Runaways often knew about the regulatory regimes in general although their distinct local implementations and executions were important information that could decide about freedom and slavery.

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[653] Anonymous [Matthews], *Recollections of Slavery*, October 21, 1838.

[654] Johnson, *Experience of a Slave*, 25.

[655] Augustin, *General Digest*, 139, 141. Badges were also forged in Charleston. See, for instance, *Charleston Mercury*, November 8, 1827, in Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 230. Research on badges in places other than Charleston, however, is complicated. Greene, Hutchins, and Hutchins have claimed that Charleston was the only place which seemed to issue tags and not only restricted itself to legislature on paper. Greene, Hutchins, and Hutchins, *Slave Badges*, 6. Vitoria Dawson has argued that Charleston was indeed the "only city known to have implemented a rigid and formal regulatory system." She offered the possible explanation that only in Charleston were badges issued of copper. In the other cities, including New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, and Norfolk, it is imaginable that tags were of paper or another impermanent material. Victoria Dawson, "Copper Neck Tags Evoke the Experience of American Slaves Hired Out as Part-Time Laborers," *Smithsonian Magazine* (February 2003), URL: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/copper-neck-tags-evoke-experience-american-slaves-hired-out-part-time-laborers-76039831/, accessed June 27, 2019. Legal ordinances of New Orleans, however, stipulated them to be of brass. D. Augustin, Esq. (ed.), *A General Digest of the Ordinances and Resolutions of the Corporation of New-Orleans* (New Orleans: Jerome Bayon, 1831), 139. Why they did not survive until this day, remains unclear.

A Changing Demography

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the urban marketplace grew to be a central element of the national economic growth. Work became more specialized and reliant on the division of labor, and small shops gave way to factories and heavy machinery.[656] Industrialization and mechanization increasingly reduced skilled to unskilled labor. For most enslaved people this did not necessarily mean that they lost their skills in case they managed to achieve freedom. Rather, the mass of manumitted slaves never possessed skills.[657] This was clearly even more of an issue in the Upper South, where manumissions were less selective and a class of enslaved artisans never existed to an extent comparable with Charleston. Laundry, seamstressing, day labor, cartering, and factory work—the occupations the majority of nominally free and enslaved black Americans followed offered no future.

Both male and female refugees assimilated to black-coded jobs. The coding of labor, however, was not static, and there were lower-class whites who were as desperate to make a living in the cities as black people. With significant effects on the racial landscape, this urban demography has to be taken into consideration when further pursuing the question of where runaways worked in the cities. Two contradictory forces were at work in the antebellum era that had a lasting impact on the economic position of people of African descent. First, according to Eric Foner, indentured servitude had, with a few exceptions, vanished from the United States and apprenticeships were sharply declining. These trends pulled white people out of unfree labor relations and underscored the opposition between slavery and freedom.[658] Second, following the theory of the second slavery, slavery managed to adapt to modern work relations, industrialization and capitalist labor markets, with an increasing flexibility of enslaved labor to the changing needs of the labor market. Calvin Schermerhorn has emphasized that free and unfree labor was not easily distinguishable anymore with hundreds of self-hired slaves in the cities. Therefore, occupations became segregated as a whole, as did work places.[659]

The strategy of training slaves initially left white people behind and the new republic essentially failed to produce an independent class of white mechanics, as historian David Roediger has argued.[660] This backward position clashed with the promises of capitalism, which claims that in theory every individual free laborer can escape their fate by means of upward mobility. This upward mobility led many whites of the upcoming middle class to become obsessed with material advancement, Michael Schudson has written.[661] Although whites

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[656] Mohl, "Industrial Town and City," 6, 8-9. Not that markets were not the center of economic exchange before, but now, in the words of Zakim and Kornblith, "did these societies with markets become market societies. Michael Zakim and Gary J. Kornblith, "Introduction: An American Revolutionary Tradition," in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Idem (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 4.

[657] This trend wore on after the official abolition of slavery, which likewise produced large numbers of freedpeople without any professional training. Berlin and Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants," 1194.

[658] Foner, *Story of American Freedom*, 19.

[659] Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 169; and Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 30. See also the legislation to formally equate free black with enslaved people (chapter one).

[660] David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 67-68. Training one's bondspeople in a craft or trade increased their monetary value, both with regards to hiring rates and sales prices. Rockman, *Scraping By*, 50.

[661] Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 134; and Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World. Essays Toward a Global Labor History* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 33. The classifications "working classes" and "working class" came up in the American

always enjoyed a higher social status, on an economic level, white workers competed on a daily basis with enslaved and free black workers for jobs and wages. For them, economic advancement might have seemed as far away as for blacks. From the 1830s on, when cities were becoming whiter, blacks were driven out of some jobs while they were able to hold their niches in others.

The blurring of the free/unfree labor divide fed into capitalism, which was never meant to make an end to unfree labor. Nor was it intended to reach everybody alike. Seth Rockman has neatly summarized that "historians must define capitalism through the power relations that channel the fruits of economic development towards those who coordinate capital to generate additional capital, who own property rather than rent it, and who compel labor rather than perform it." The control of other people's labor power, in other words, was key to social-economic mobility. People performing physical labor, however, had little say in their labor relations.[662] One of the few ways to improve things was for working-class whites consequently to demarcate themselves from those at the very bottom of society.

Although the numbers of African Americans in southern cities grew continuously, the numbers of white residents grew faster. This was foremost related to the influx of Europeans, among which the Irish were the most numerous. Looking at Louisiana, Germans often settled in rural parishes. The bulk of impoverished Irish immigrants, by contrast, who fled from the potato blight, came to live in American cities. Pre-famine migration had existed but it did not even come close to the numbers who arrived in the 1840s and early 1850s. Although most European immigrants did not stay in New Orleans but moved further west, the city constituted the second largest entry port after New York during the middle of the century. Besides New Orleans, 130,000 immigrants arrived in Baltimore between 1820 and 1850, but the city was likewise not the final destination for most. These high numbers should not distract the view from other cities. Also in Richmond, the Irish made up 46 percent of male unskilled laborers in 1860. Free blacks constituted 30 percent, according to the official census.[663]

White laborers visibly changed the faces of southern cities. Northern visitor John DeForest wrote in 1855 surprised to his brother that "the crowd of porters & coachmen that met us on the dock [of Charleston] presented not above half a dozen black faces. Instead I saw the familiar Irish & German visages whom I could have met on a dock at Boston or New York."[664] These poor newcomers integrated into the lowest segments of the labor markets where they encountered unskilled African Americans, among whom many runaway slaves. In particular, Irish newcomers were rivals to them because large numbers of them were unskilled, too, and

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North for the first time in the 1820s. Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 242.

[662] Seth Rockman, "Unfree Origins of American Capitalism," in *The Economy of Early America. Historical Perspectives and New Directions*, ed. Cathy Matson (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 345.

[663] Nina Möllers, *Kreolische Identität: Eine Amerikanische 'Rassengeschichte' zwischen Schwarz und Weiß. Die Free People of Color in New Orleans* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008), 100; Philip Bagenal, *The American Irish and their Influence on Irish Politics* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1882), 12-13; Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 5; Frederick Nau, *The German People of New Orleans, 1850-1900* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1958), 9; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 44; and Carey Latimore IV, "A Step Closer to Slavery? Free African Americans, Industrialization, Social Control and Residency in Richmond City, 1850-1860," *Slavery & Abolition* 33:1 (2011): 123.

[664] John William DeForest to Andrew DeForest, November 9, 1855, John William DeForest Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Room, Yale University, in Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 178.

increasingly so from the mid-antebellum era onwards.[665] Due to the extension of suffrage rights to non-property-holding white men, the opposition of white the working classes to the competition of slaves and free African Americas became more strongly politicized.[666]

This phenomenon of sharpening color lines, which had a strong political and cultural side, translated into the economic sphere and affected the way in which white Americans saw black labor. Slaves were destined to work for the benefit of white men, and blacks and whites working together was, for most whites, unthinkable. To reserve the better paying jobs for white Americans, blacks were pushed out of certain skilled and semi-skilled occupations and into more menial sorts of work over the course of the antebellum era. Leonard Curry has recognized that urban occupations with most promising future prospects were artisan trades and although free black men eagerly aspired to them, these were exactly the ones black Americans were most likely to be barred from.[667] Opportunities for quality work further decayed relative to the respective place and African Americans found themselves in general even more allotted to underclass work.

Labor exclusion of black Americans worked in a variety of ways. Native whites had come to refuse working with slaves and, in many places, with black people in general. Contemporary observer Frederick Law Olmsted saw in New Orleans that "employers could get no white men to work with their slaves, except from Irish and Germans."[668] In places where both blacks and whites worked, they often were still segregated according to their tasks. Olmsted noted, for instance, that in his hotel in Richmond, the chamber servants were all black whilst the dining-room servants were Irish.[669] In occasions in which a white man accepted work alongside black men, it could happen that other white foreigner turned against him and forced him out.[670] Besides striking, white workers at times formed loose or more organized consolidations to push their competitors out, often using strong rhetoric or physical means to achieve their goals. In the mid-1850s, *The Daily Journal* of Indiana conveniently summarized these dynamics for three of the four places under analysis here: In New Orleans,

> rival white labor has driven or frightened black labor, a great measure, from its chief employment as draymen, long shore man and mechanics. […] In the Carolinas the white mechanics recently formed a combination to drive the slaves from their branches of labor. In Baltimore, last week, the white caulkers formed a combination and resolved that no black man,

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[665] In 1821, 21 percent of Irish immigrants were classified as unskilled laborers; in 1836, it was 60 percent. The famine immigrants after 1845 were the most impoverished, destitute, unskilled group ever to arrive in the United States. 80 to 90 percent of them were unskilled, 90 percent were Catholic, and one third spoke only Gaelic. Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*, 6-7.

[666] Michael Douglas Naragon, "Ballots, Bullets, and Blood: The Political Transformation of Richmond, Virginia, 1850-1874" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1996), 4.

[667] Curry, *Free Black*, 25.

[668] Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 231. Keri Leigh Merritt has added that this also had to do with the forced relocation of about one million enslaved people from the Upper to the Lower South, where they posed a competition to lower-class whites. Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.

[669] Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 41, 233. Hotel work was a good option for runaways in Baltimore. In 1853, when Henry Camp was already off for five months, his owner advertised: "He is an excellent waiter, and is supposed to be at some large Hotel acting in that capacity." *Sun*, November 24, 1853.

[670] Consult the account narrated by Olmsted about an English coalminer who worked with enslaved miners until "*twenty or thirty men called on him, and told him that they would allow him fifteen minutes to get out of sight, and if they ever saw him in those parts again, they would 'give him hell.' They were all armed, and there was nothing for the young fellow to do but to move 'right off.'*" Olmsted, *Seaboard Slave States*, 48.

free or slave should be allowed to work at their business. […] Consequently every negro caulker was driven from the ship yard by force. It seems the white association had power to arrest all business […].[671]

Black people, due to the prohibition of assembly, could not organize themselves in the same manner. The participation of runaways in southern cities in the labor force was very high and an organized labor movement was weakened through the presence of undocumented workers and the general vulnerability of the black population. Instead of complaining or rioting, they presented themselves as law abiding and respectable. Assaults by black workers on white workers were extremely rare and mostly no more than spontaneous acts by individuals.

Another way to achieve exclusion was petitioning. This was the established tool of the lower-middle and upcoming middle classes. Working-class whites also used petitions to achieve political goals, yet more so towards the end of the antebellum period. The appeals were often in favor of white trades and skilled occupations. A petition from Virginia in 1831 complained about skilled slaves present in trades such as blacksmithing, stone masonry, bricklaying, milling, carpentering, coopering, tanning, carrying, shoe and boot making, distilling, "and in fine handicrafts of all kinds." Proposing a law to prohibit the apprenticeship of all people of African descent, the petitioners argued that white mechanics were driven out of employment and from the state entirely "to find in the west an asylum where he [they] will be appreciated according to his Honesty, industry and ingenuity."[672]

What these petitioners made sound like a devastating disadvantage for white mechanics was in reality the pointing to an alternative to city life which black people were likewise barred from. The lands in the West, violently taken from native communities by the United States government, were foreseen to be exclusively sold or granted to whites. However, according to Keri Leigh Merritt, by the 1830s, the stolen land became too expensive in the older slave states for poor and lower-middle class whites. So, they were likewise stuck in the competitive urban labor markets.[673] In 1837 in Baltimore, white petitioners asked to expulse them of any artisan trade, and in 1844, they aimed at putting paid to black carpenters and at levying additional taxes on all other black artisans.[674]

Through heavy competition, whites of the lower-middle and working classes aggravated the precarious situation of free blacks. They used legislative petitions, the power of customary law, persuasion, intimidation, and violence to take advantage. The animosities against black workers were not only spontaneous acts by white Americans (and later immigrants) but indeed a well-planned strategy involving formal and informal organizations and associations. At times, these measures were supported by the legislature. In a move that targeted both legally free and

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[671] *Daily Journal*, July 20, 1856 [?]. Caulking was an occupation fiercely contested between black and white in the 1850s in Baltimore. On coverage see *Sun*, May 14, 18, 21, 25; June 28, 29; July 8; November 4, 1858; June 3,4, 7, 29, 1859; *Baltimore American*, February 12; July 8; October 11, 1858; and *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, July 8, 1858. Note that this was only one part of the story. Native and foreign-born whites did move against black workers but native whites likewise acted against foreigners, for instance, by forming violent gangs. Berlin and Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants," 1197.

[672] William Walden, John Peyton, Churchill Berry, John R. Tanesly, and Charles E. Dodge to the General Assembly of Virginia, December 9, 1831, Culpeper County, Virginia, Legislative Petitions, VSA, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 1, Legislative Petitions, LOC.

[673] Merritt, *Masterless Men*, 3.

[674] Curry, *Free Black*, 17. Also see multiple petitions in Legislative Petitions, SCDAH; and Race and Slavery Petitions Project, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, URL: https://library.uncg.edu/slavery/petitions/index.aspx?s=1, accessed March 8, 2019.

undocumented African Americans, Charleston made clear that it was white society's prerogative to make use of black labor as they pleased. In 1848, a law was formulated to target black employees but not whites if they hired slaves without proper identification. These black persons "may be taken up and committed to the Work House, and there detained until a fine of twenty dollars, and the expenses of the Work House, shall have been fully paid […]."[675] In case of non-payment they would be punished to labor in the workhouse.

This was an incentive to reserve black labor for white employers, and African Americans were largely powerless against these assaults. The legislative framework rendered their status extremely unfavorable, which left them with nearly no civil and legal rights. In any confrontation with employers, co-workers, competitors, or even free black people who could prove their own freedom, the undocumented got the short end of the stick. Slavery was a powerful tool to keep free black people in their illegitimate limbo. With large parts of the black population being illegal, and slavery threatening the nominal freedom of its members, African Americans as a group were vulnerable and extremely exploited in the labor market. Despite the hardship, most people of African descent tried their best to play along. For them, the deck was stacked differently than for all other groups who were taken in under the auspices of whiteness. Through legislative arrangements which degraded free black people to the status of slaves, and political projects which excluded them from the idea of nationhood, they were essentially blocked from access to social and economic mobility.

And in fact, as historian Jim Cullen has argued, the first five decades of the nineteenth century were the best time to be a white man in terms of upward mobility.[676] They refused to work at eye level with black people while black people ferociously tried to fight the idea of being equated with slaves. It was an unequal struggle. And it was not only white Americans who noticed this change. Black laborers felt the pressure every day and black leaders loudly articulated their warnings from the 1830s onwards.[677] Although the precariousness of black Americans in the urban labor markets grew, an ever-increasing number of runaway slaves joined them in the cities. Their absorption was facilitated by the growing segregation of work places.

Black Americans often tried to actively counteract the racial coding and the extent of white competition. This becomes apparent by white petitions written as a reaction to their actions. White mechanics in Charleston complained about the power of enslaved domestic workers to hand jobs to mechanics and craftsmen on behalf of their owners: "many of the most opulent Inhabitants of Charleston, when they have any work to be done, do not send it themselves, but leave it to their Domestics to employ what Workmen they please," the white mechanics claimed. And to point to one of the reasons why it was difficult for them to find enough work, they added that "it universally happens that those Domestics prefer Men of their own Color and condition, and as to a greatness of business thus continually passing through their hands, the Black Mechanics enjoy as complete a monopoly as if it were secured to them

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[675] Quoted in Greene, Hutchins, and Hutchins, *Slave Badges*, 51-52.

[676] Jim Cullen, *American Dream. A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 69.

[677] Jay Rubin, "Black Nativism: The European Immigrant in Negro Thought, 1830-1860," *Phylon* 39:3 (1978): 198-199.

by Law."[678] Far from having a monopoly, the extent to which black people could hand each other work was limited.

The dynamics of expelling black Americans increased through the competition of poor European newcomers, yet it did not affect all places in a similar manner.[679] Newspaper announcements show job openings and reveal racial preferences for certain occupations. In Baltimore, for instance, white washerwomen were preferred over blacks: Wanted immediately "At the Baltimore Laundry, a few more WASHERWOMEN (white). Colored women need not apply—Irish or German preferred."[680] Charleston maintained a variety of jobs with and without preferences of skin color. On a single day in 1859, job ads asked for a black wet nurse; a "YOUNG MULATTO FELLOW, as a Porter in some store;" a "competent WAITING MAN" to be hired "from his owner [ergo, a slave]; a "BOY TO ATTEND THE House and Drive a Rockaway [implicitly black]; four times "A COMPETENT HOUSE SERVANT and one "GOOD HOUSE SERVANT" [no color preference]; a white or black cook for a family; four boot makers [no color preference]; a good cook, washer and ironer [no color preference]; a "NEGRO MAN TO DRIVE a carriage and take care of horses;" and a black boy as a waiter.[681]

In Baltimore, white American women monopolized seamstressing and when Europeans began to join the labor market, they competed with black women in their occupation as laundresses. Striking is the preference of white Americans for either black, white, or European laborers in certain jobs. Because self-identification with people who look different is complicated, as Dirk Hoerder has claimed, it is easier for employers to exploit them. This is why certain ethnic groups can dominate a sector, for instance, domestic service. Moreover, it covers the unequal power relations which would usually be visible within these labor relations.[682] Some sectors, as a consequence, were dominated by particular ethnicities. Their blackness allowed slave refugees and undocumented residents to enter certain segments of the labor market while at the same time ensuring their exploitation in these segments. The employment of free black women as domestic workers was therefore also a continuation of white/black-master/slave relations explicit in slavery.

This occupation brought with it a very personal relationship between the employers and the employees. Many were perhaps reluctant to let Irish women into their homes, who were of a new, suspicious group. Black women, by contrast, had been under the dominance of white people for a long time, a thought that might have been reassuring. Thomas Pinckney, Charleston's former governor, confirmed the reluctance to hire white domestics: "the habits of our inhabitants render them averse to employing such [white] domestics; having seen these offices constantly occupied by slaves, they would, with reluctance, exact similar services from those whom nature, as well as the law, have made their equals."[683] Consistent with this

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[678] To the Honorable the President and Members of the Senate of S. Carolina, Petition of Sundry Mechanics of the City of Charleston, n. d., S165015, Petitions to the General Assembly, SCDAH.

[679] Initially, black Americans had the hope to convince the Irish immigrants to join them in their struggle for equal rights and the abolition of slavery. Frederick Douglass even travelled to Ireland in 1845 and attempted to influence the Irish to speak out against slavery. Alan Rice, "Transatlantic Portrayals of Frederick Douglass and his Liberating Sojourn in Music and Visual Arts 1845-2015," in *Pictures and Power: Imaging and Imagining Frederick Douglass 1818-2018*, ed. Celeste-Marie Bernier and Bill E. Lawson (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017).

[680] *Sun*, May 18, 1853.

[681] *Charleston Daily Courier*, December 15, 1859.

[682] Hoerder, "Gendered Labour Migration," 40.

[683] Thomas Pinckney, *Reflections Occasioned by the Late Disturbances in Charleston. By Achates* (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1822), 18.

interpretation, by 1860, 4,500 enslaved women labored as domestics in Richmond.[684] The closer to the Civil War, the more accustomed white employers grew to the idea of employing white before black workers.[685] When the wage difference between whites and blacks was narrow, Michael Thompson has claimed for Charleston, they often preferred whites. Corresponding to these trends, growing numbers of native and immigrant whites took over carpentry in Charleston.[686]

The developments were visible. Frederick Olmsted observed in Richmond that immigrants drove black people out of lower-class jobs. In the 1850s, most cartmen, coachmen, porters, railroad workers, waiters, and day laborers but also skilled mechanics were white, according to his observations. Black people working in these jobs were mostly free.[687] This was a significant difference to Charleston and New Orleans. In Baltimore, almost all job ads for domestics referred to black women in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, as found by Stephanie Cole. Afterwards, white women pushed into this sector.[688] And so, African Americans lost many professions but largely managed to maintain their presence in water-related work, for example as oystermen and seamen, and as hucksters and brickmakers. Also, both men and women were still present in service jobs by the mid-century. These included barbers, cooks, waiters, laundresses, domestic servants, and porters.[689] In general, black people's position on an increasingly competitive labor market became more than tenuous. Yet, there was work, if not work that would feed a family or provide a steady income.

Accepted Exploitation

Runaways gravitating to southern cities were aware of the limited employment opportunities and the economic shortcomings but preferred a life in poverty over a life in bondage. The popularity of cities had an ambiguous side to it given the generally lower life expectancy compared to rural areas. Scholars have stressed that the larger the city was, the higher the mortality risk in nineteenth-century America. Pollution, unpaved streets, garbage, horse droppings, dust and waste from manufactories, and emissions from ever more factories harmed the health of urban residents.[690]

In the proximity of the factories, slave housing ranged from "nearly uninhabitable to tolerable, at best," Midori Takagi has stated.[691] However, free black and white laborers sometimes lived in worse conditions. Slaveholders wanted to make their slaves and society believe that black people were worse off in freedom than in slavery, but reports on the housing situation of free black people were often gloomy indeed. Physician Thomas Buckler reported that in Baltimore, families crowded themselves into insufficient tenements infested with

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[684] Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 88.

[685] This is a general tendency and variations in worksite and geography must not be neglected.

[686] Thompson, *Working on the Dock*, 115; and Powers, "Black Charleston," 53-54.

[687] Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 231, 233.

[688] Stephanie Cole, "Servants and Slaves: Domestic Service in the Border Cities, 1800-1850" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1994), 62; and Rockman, *Scraping By*, 115.

[689] Olson, *Baltimore*, 120.

[690] Louis Cain and Sok Chul Hong, "Survival in 19th Century Cities: The Larger the City, the Smaller Your Chances," *Explorations in Economic History* 46:4 (2009): 450-463.

[691] Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 45, 97.

vermin. Frederick Law Olmsted noted that "very dirty German Jews […] are thickly set in the narrowest, meanest streets, which seem to be otherwise inhabited mainly by negroes" in Richmond.[692] Public boards of health were formed in American cities to control epidemics like cholera, typhoid, and diphtheria. Yellow fever and cholera plagues are reported from all places but New Orleans was struck hardest. It suffered a number of yellow fever epidemics, notably in the 1820s, 1832, 1847, and the most destructive one in 1852 leaving thousands of people dead. Although yellow fever, in contrast to cholera, hit white city dwellers more severely than blacks, the life expectancy of the latter was in general lower. Additionally, the percentage of urban African American children was markedly lower than of their white counterparts.[693]

The dissimilarities in birthrates can be explained by generally lower living standards of black people as well as by the fact that thousands of them did not register themselves or their children. Poor people usually lived close to their working places, in the case of Richmond, for example, in the neighborhoods of industrial production. Olmsted observed during his travels in the South that the city was compactly built between "some considerable hills" and lying amongst "a dull of cloud of bituminous smoke."[694] The higher death rates were equally a consequence of precarious housing and health-threatening work as well as of a numerical discrepancy between deaths, that were registered, and living residents, who often were not.

The large numbers of refugees and undocumented African Americans in southern cities certainly impacted the labor markets. Capitalist labor markets were supportive for runaways to integrate because they did not rely on personal acquaintance but rather on flexibility and adaptability. Because they were even more vulnerable than legally free African Americans, it is likely that their presence in the labor markets partly contributed to the low wage situation. The heavy competition and the disadvantages for people of African descent that resulted from this became a tangible reality every time wages were paid. Seth Rockman has shown that until the 1830s, hired slaves, free African Americans, immigrant and native whites received the same remuneration for the same work in Baltimore.[695] When in 1838, 150 laborers were needed for the Baltimore and Ohio Canal, the subscriber offered $1.25 per day without mentioning a preference for race.[696] Yet, looking at the entire antebellum period and at all southern places, black people received on average less remuneration for their work than whites. Black people, to defend themselves against the dynamics of exclusion, were forced to offer their labor power cheaper and, hence, kept the overall wages low. George Teamoh, for instance, stated that wages for black men at a Norfolk Dry-Dock ranged from $1.50 to $1.62 per day in the 1840s. White workers received $2 or more.[697] Historian Midori Takagi has likewise observed that by 1837, two thirds of canal constructers in Virginia were white. This trend was due to the arrival of Irish and Scottish workers in the late 1830s who infused the urban areas with thousands of unskilled

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[692] Buckler, *Epidemic Cholera*, 5; and Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 42, 48.
[693] Schultz and McShane, "Engineer the Metropolis," 82; Daphne Spain, "Race Relations and Residential Segregation in New Orleans: Two Centuries of Paradox," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 441 (1979): 87; and Curry, *Free Black*, 11-12. For an account on the relationship of yellow fever with the city of New Orleans, see Urmi Engineer Willoughby, *Yellow Fever, Race, and Ecology in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017).
[694] Olmsted, *Cotton Kingdom*, 32-33.
[695] Rockman, *Scraping By*, 47.
[696] *Sun*, August 11, 1838. Although white and black men largely executed the same tasks, there were physically kept apart from each other. Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 168.
[697] Teamoh, *God Made Man*, 82.

laborers. Nevertheless, companies were far from satisfied with the stability of the labor supply.[698]

Especially in the 1850s, the constant complaints by employers about labor shortages made dissatisfaction visible. This did not necessarily mean that there were not sufficient workers, as Barbara Fields and Seth Rockman agree, but rather that the wages were considered to be too high, the term of service too short, or that employers could not afford to hire and fire people at will. In essence, it meant that employees retained limited power to bargain about working conditions.[699] The complaints about them show that workers in the sense of free capitalist markets were not desired at most times. Rather, employers had an intrinsic interest in commanding a work force confined in power. Racism among the lower classes was a welcome tool to keep the competition going and even Irish and German laborers were at times pitted against each other. As a result, for example, wages fell from $1.25 to 87.5 cents a day at the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal in 1839.[700]

Figure 25: Laborers at a Wharf in Virginia, 1863[701]

It was usually up to the employers to set the wages but at times there were also attempts to formalize exploitation. The City Council of Charleston tried to freeze the daily wages of black day laborers and porters at $1 in 1837: "For a full day's labor, which is to be from sun rise till twilight in the evening, (allowing one hour for breakfast and one hour for dinner) one dollar—

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[698] Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 32-33.

[699] Rockman, *Scraping By*, 4; and Fields, *Middle Ground*, 67. Tom Brass has argued that "labor shortage" implied that workers held certain leeway to offer and withdraw their labor power. Tom Brass, "Some Observations on Unfree Labour, Capitalist Restructuring, and Deproletarianization," in *Free and Unfree Labour. The Debate Continues*, ed. Tom Brass and Marcel van der Linden (Berne: Peter Lang, 1997), 73.

[700] Olson, *Baltimore*, 119.

[701] Andrew Joseph Russell, "Laborers at Quartermaster's Wharf, Alexandria, Virginia, 1863," Metropolitan Museum of Arts, Wikimedia Commons, URL: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Laborers_at_Quartermaster%27s_Wharf,_Alexandria,_Virginia_MET _DP274790.jpg, accessed July 20, 2019.

and for less than a day's labor, at the rate of twelve and a half cents for an hour."[702] In New Orleans, enslaved day laborers were equally not permitted to earn more than $1 a day.[703] When wages or transport rates were fixed by municipal governments, black people had to go under these rates.[704] Those paid by the day had to work harder to prove their worthiness and those being paid by piece, for instance seamstresses, had to produce more in order to make up for the pay gap.

On average, day laborers earned $1 per day in the first decades of the antebellum era and $1.25 to $1.50 towards the Civil War. Frederick Douglass earned $1.50 in 1838 when he "was able to command the highest wages given to the most experienced calkers." [705] Remuneration for free and enslaved black people did not really differ. Wages for who were seen as "free" workers probably even derived from the hiring prices of slaves, as claimed by Eulália Lobo and Eduardo Stotz.[706] Other historians have claimed that the high supply on the labor markets, caused by the competition of African Americans, low-class white Americans, and European immigrants led to an anomaly in the 1850s when economic growth and declining wages for unskilled and semi-skilled workers coincided.[707] For instance, when George Teamoh started working at a dock yard at the Richmond Basin in 1853, he earned $1.25 per day as a common laborer.[708] This was less than he had made as a hired slave a couple of years ago and the same salary unskilled construction workers had received 15 years prior.

The average yearly price to hire an enslaved woman in Richmond was $34 during the first four decades of the nineteenth century; for men it was $70.[709] Private bookkeeping shows that a slaveholder named Ford, who made a business out of training and hiring out his bondspeople in Charleston, received in the 1820s a monthly pay of between $2.50 and $3.50. In his diary we see that Ford regularly raised the hire of his slaves receiving between $5 and $7 by the late 1820s and 1830s. Individual slaves with special skills brought more money. Ned, for example, was hired as a sawyer in 1817 and made $10 per month for Ford; the same amount was paid for Samuel in 1840.[710] Immigrant and native whites, although in some segments of the labor market glued to the same or similar wages as black people, had—in theory—a greater variety of occupations to choose from. To name just one example, Philip Whitlock was a Polish-Jewish immigrant in Butchertown, Richmond. Although he started off with a very low income

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[702] Eckhard, *Digest of the Ordinances*, "Negroes," CCPL. This was actually a raise from 81 cents set in 1817.

[703] Augustin, *General Digest*, 141. People, in order to survive with an infrequent income of maximum $1 per day, depended on their inclusion in households. This has comprehensively been laid out by Seth Rockman. Rockman, *Scraping By*, 160-173.

[704] White draymen petitioned the City Council of Charleston in 1854 to ask for an increase in rates that had been established by law in 1837. Their petition was rejected. Thompson, *Working on the Dock*, 115.

[705] Douglass, *Narrative of the Life*, 98.

[706] Eulália L. Lobo and Eduardo N. Stotz, "Formação do operariado e movimento operário no Rio de Janeiro, 1870-1894," *Estudos Econômicos* 15 (1985): 57, in Marcelo Badaró Mattos, *Laborers and Enslaved Workers. Experiences in Common in the Making of Rio de Janeiro's Working Class, 1850-1920* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2017), 22.

[707] Goldfield, "Black Life," 134-135.

[708] Teamoh, *God Made Man*, 90-91.

[709] Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 23.

[710] Ford strategically placed young slaves to learn how to cook, wash, and sew, and to get apprenticed in the trades of carpenter, tailor and pastry cook. Ford Family Papers, 1809-1968, Manuscripts P, SCLC.

of $2.50 per week for his first job, he quickly rose up making $6 to $7 as a tailor. This was a job coded white and Whitlock was taken in by his own ethnic network.[711]

Besides the actual lower wages black people often received, white men benefitted from what W. E. B. Du Bois has called "psychological wage" and David Roediger "wages of whiteness." These concepts refer to a compensation of low wages by the social and political privileges white men possessed.[712] Societal rules, for instance, a fair relation between the work done and the wages received, eventually were not evenly applied to all players of the game. Racism, white supremacy, nativism, and sexism saw to it that numerous social groups remained outside the spectrum of opportunities while the window simultaneously opened to include a few others. Women, foreigners, and all men by the standards of the time considered non-white faced structural and ad-hoc discrimination.

If times were hard for black men, there were even harder for black women, especially when they were single. Being in a relationship with a man did not mean for American women to live a life of ease but being single almost always included drudgery and poverty. This is recognizable on basis of the wages; Amrita Chakrabarti Myers has claimed the same with the help of property ownership. In Charleston, where the share of black women was higher than that of black men, men nevertheless owned more taxable property than women.[713] In all cities, black women were confronted with major hardships just to make ends meet. The racial division of the labor market was for them further aggravated by gender hierarchies that placed them in a doubly disadvantaged situation. This was a time when white Richmonders and Baltimoreans expressed grave concerns about the working and living conditions of poor *white* women, many of whom could barely make a living as seamstresses or laundresses, as confirmed by Seth Rockman and Michael Douglas Naragon.[714] If white women had such a difficult time then one can only imagine the struggles that African American women—especially those who lived in the city illegally—faced. It was an arduous life. A mother without the financial support of a husband had to literally work round the clock to make ends meet for her family, and overwork took its toll on many women.

This weighs even heavier when considering that they strongly outnumbered men in the South and even more so in the cities.[715] Since the income of a black men sufficed to feed a family in much less cases than that of a white man, black women who stayed at home were

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[711] Whitlock spent between $3 and $3.50 on board and rent and was, hence, able to save money and start his own business. Philip Whitlock Memoirs, Mss 5: IW5905: I, 67, 71, 74-75, VHS.

[712] Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*. Roediger built upon W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. Introduction by David Levering Lewis (New York, London, Toronto, and Sydney: Free Press, 1992), 700-701, originally published 1935. A related approach has been made by Cedric Robinson who argued that the issue of race had long been yoked to commodity labor. "Racial capitalism" helps understand how whiteness functions to discipline people into split labor markets. Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism. The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Foreword by Robin D. G. Kelley. With a New Preface by the Author (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 2, originally published London: Zed Press, 1983; and Keelyn Bradley, "Working-Class Politics and the Carceral State," *Black Perspectives* (February 6, 2019), URL: https://www.aaihs.org/working-class-politics-and-the-carceral-state/, accessed March 15, 2019.

[713] Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 115, 119.

[714] Rockman, *Scraping By*, 140; and Naragon, "Ballots, Bullets, and Blood," 48.

[715] The background was women's overrepresentation as urban slaves, the discriminatory manumission patterns, and the higher mobility of men which allowed many of them to migrate to the North. (In the northern border states, black men outnumbered women.) Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 177.

rare.[716] Competition by immigrant women was, by the later antebellum decade, furthermore not the only challenge black female workers had to face. In some cases, competition did not come from other demographic groups but through technological advancement. The commercialization of laundry in Baltimore, for example, aggravated the situation of black washerwomen. Instead of washing on their own account at home, they increasingly worked in large-scale laundries.[717]

Those who followed more stable occupations also faced disadvantages. Scholars have argued that service professions and jobs that required customers were more lucrative if the clientele had means to spend. Even those occupations which looked good on paper usually did not pave the way for economic advancement. White customers, due to their higher purchasing power, were important to black service providers but often the latter were stuck with a clientele belonging to the lowest classes themselves. Black people with a very dark skin had additional disadvantages since whites preferred to do business with mulattos. Things looked bleak. In 1860, 94 percent of free blacks in South Carolina lived in extreme poverty. At the most, they had some clothes, a number of things used in the household, maybe some tools, and even less often a mule or cow. Some had little amount of money but they desperately depended on wages.[718]

This initial situation did not differ much from the few things Irish immigrants and slave refugees brought with them. Germans, by contrast, often came with tools because they were farmers and were planning to seek a future in this occupation.[719] There were indeed a great many things, real and imagined, material and ideological, that connected the lower classes of all races, nativities, and sexes, yet no group was in such a long-lasting precarious situation as people of African descent. Widespread discussions about the rapid integration of Irish Catholic immigrants in the nineteenth century and the relative success story of their moving up and acquiring "whiteness" often focus on the racist climate in society. Less often they account for the actual and very real, legal barriers that kept African Americans from advancing. For example, tax payments for black people were higher than for whites.

For runaway slaves and other undocumented residents, being able to produce tax receipts over a couple of years could serve as a way to legitimize their nominal freedom in case of emergency. Johnson and Roark have insinuated that black people could just make these payments, but in reality it was not that easy.[720] There was a constant danger that, after the death of their legal owner, they could be exposed or they could be seized for possible debts. For most illegals, and especially refugees, it was safer to keep a low profile. It seems that the venture always depended on the context. On the one hand, if people did not have white benefactors to vouch for them, many probably would not have dared to expose themselves by registering

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[716] Black women and men furthermore had to work in order to avoid to be arrested under the local vagrancy laws. Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 78.

[717] Newspaper articles testifying to the precarious situation of free black city dwellers are numerous. Susan Bradford, for instance, "residing in the rear Half-moon alley" in Baltimore attempted suicide in 1838 "because she had not sufficient shelter from the cold." *Sun*, February 22, 1838.

[718] Curry, *Free Black*, 23; Berlin, "Free Negro Caste," 308; and Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 60-61.

[719] Ernst Brauns, *Ideen über die Auswanderung nach Amerika; nebst Beiträgen zur genaueren Kenntnis seiner Bewohner und seines gegenwärtigen Zustandes. Nach eignen Ansichten und den neuesten Quellen und Hülfsmitteln* (Göttingen: Bandenhoed and Ruprecht: 1827), 564, JFK. Travel reports were sold in Germany which featured sections with recommendations on certain occupations and assessments of the competition with free black Americans. Bromme, *Reisen durch die Vereinigten Staaten*, 148-152, 155-156, JFK.

[720] Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 44.

property. On the other hands, southern states enacted capitation taxes that were severe. The non-payment of taxes, and hence an undocumented status, could be beneficial for a person or a family because they saved money which could be invested in favor of their social upwards mobility—or because they simply could not afford to pay it. This was also why white people did not pay poll taxes when they could not afford it. However, these requirements were much lower for white than for black people, in most states significantly less than $1 per year. When a white person could not meet these expenses, they would be listed as insolvent.[721] By contrary, black people could be jailed and non-payment of the jail fees could send them back to forced labor or slavery.

The head taxes, which were much higher for men than for women, might have been the reason for the dramatic sex imbalance within the urban free black population. Leonard Curry has offered as an explanation the higher death rates of free African American men,[722] yet the city tax returns of Charleston suggest that African American men disappeared from the tax lists once they turned 21. In Charleston, free women of African descent between 18 and 50 were required to pay $5 per year. If they were between 14 and 18, the fee was reduced to $3. Meanwhile, men between 16 and 21 years of age had to pay $5. Afterwards they were charged $10 until they turned 60.[723] Immigrants, by contrast, did often not pay taxes, as observed by a free black inhabitant of Charleston. This was why they got rich soon, he claimed.[724] Whereas the ratio male-female was nearly even when they were young, the relation shifted to almost two to one when full capitation taxes were due: The lower wards of Charleston counted 68 women between 14 and 18 and an equal number of men between 16 and 21 in 1858. In the same year, 341 women above 18 paid head taxes in comparison to only 181 men older than 21. In the upper wards and in the following year, the numbers were similar.[725] The suggestion is close that the annual tax of $10 constituted a serious obstacle to making a living and it seems that a great many free black men tried to avoid paying it. Not paying taxes could maneuver legally free people into a situation in which freedom became threatened. This brought them closer to the undocumented population.

Unequal taxes, discouragement to register, and risks of legal protest were different forms of vulnerability explicitly aimed at people of African descent. People passing themselves off as self-hired slaves had no voice at all. Robert Steinfeld and Stanley Engerman have argued that taxation and immigration can serve "to lower incomes and change the amount and/or nature of work free workers were 'willing' to do."[726] These strategies maneuvered black people into

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[721] Merritt, *Masterless Men*, 169.

[722] As Leonard Curry has noted, the prioritization of female slaves for manumission does not suffice to explain the differentials. Additionally, the national free black population was likewise predominately female. Yet, he also allows for the possibility that "census enumerators may also have failed to report significant numbers of free black male urban residents" who were absent from the city due to seasonal jobs in the summer when censuses were taken. Curry, *Free Black*, 9-10, FN 16.

[723] The city of Charleston earned around $10,000 with this legislation in 1859. Statement of the Finances of Charleston for Fiscal Year Ending August 31, 1859, in *Charleston Courier*, October 4, 1859. This was actually an additional burden for black people because the state of South Carolina also required them to pay an annual capitation tax of $2. Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 80.

[724] *American Christian Expositor*, November 1, 1832. Maryland did introduce a head tax of $1.50 for immigrants in 1831. *Niles' Register*, April 23, 1831, in Olson, *Baltimore*, 91.

[725] "City Tax Returns," in *Charleston Courier*, October 4, 1859.

[726] Robert J. Steinfeld and Stanley L. Engerman, "Labor—Free and Coerced? A Historical Reassessment of Differences and Similarities," in *Free and Unfree Labour. The Debate Continues*, ed. Tom Brass and Marcel van der Linden (Berne: Peter Lang, 1997), 109-110.

conditions where they were forced to engage in qualitatively lower and quantitatively higher work. This outcome connects the observation already made. Consequently, extreme precariousness disproportionately hit black people. In a society that self-identified as a white man's nation, the majority of policy makers, employers, and citizens saw no problem with this state of affair. David Brion Davis's term "accepted exploitation" encompasses these dynamics well.[727]

Conclusion

Antebellum urban labor markets were coded along race and legal status. This had consequences for slave refugees, who—being black and undocumented—felt the effects of both codes. These codes were dynamic and developed over time, generally to the disadvantage of people of African descent. The refugees' presence in the labor markets, although facilitated by the solidarity of and possibility to camouflage among them, worked to the disadvantage of free black people. This was not as clearly visible as, for instance, the legal restrictions that were precipitated by their actively harboring refugees. But free African Americans forfeited even more of their already severely restricted leeway by counting among their group large parts of illegal and, hence, powerless workers. Through a combination of economic and extra-economic forces (formal and customary law), black people were driven to the bottom of the economic system.[728]

Slave refugees, in order to navigate the spaces that the labor markets offered, had to be able to decipher the coded working areas and worksite. Especially male runaways who, according to their profile, were often trained in skilled and semi-skilled occupations, integrated into the economy below their capacities. Those who were familiar with the place or had networks which fed them with the corresponding information, usually succeeded at finding work. Slave refugees integrated into the labor markets of southern cities by passing as free black people or self-hired slaves. Due to the restrictions, black workers had to work harder and, in competition with lower-class whites and European immigrants, accept lower remuneration. This kept the overall wages low and provided capitalist employers with the cheap work force they wanted.

Strikingly, capitalist development, which relied on flexibility and low labor costs, created conditions that were beneficial for the undocumented. Because undocumented black Americans were willing to offer very cheap labor, they contributed to the economic success of their cities. In turn, growing industries and all sectors that grew with them, demanded more labor, which was again met by the pliant group of powerless workers. Finally, the absorptive labor markets created spaces for more refugees and other undocumented people, and the number of illegal freedom seekers in southern cities grew correspondingly. The following chapter, lastly, will discuss how these processes were in the interests of those who presided over the local economy.

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[727] David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 144. Davis used this formulation to point out that after the American Revolution, slavery came to be a form of exploitation which was not accepted by many Americans anymore.
[728] For economic v. extra-economic factors, see Brass, "Some Observations," 59.

Chapter Five

Illegal but Tolerated: Urban Politics and Black Labor

Between February 1850 and December 1860, the First District Court, which covered the Orleans Parish, Louisiana, handled 27 cases of men and women who stood accused of either harboring, stealing, or hiding runaway slaves. For a similar period, between 1852 and 1860, the Records of Prisoners Committed to the Parish Prison document 4,602 entries of arrests, of which only 11 were related to slave flight.[729] These numbers appear surprisingly low given the monetary value of men and women belonging to the mobile slave elite, and the emotional involvement of many slaveholders in their escape. They are all the more surprising in comparison to earlier times, when slave flight-related arrests and convictions were significantly lower, revealing that the 1850s were a decade in which legislative measures against refugees and those who helped them were most strictly executed. If slave flight in southern cities was such a large issue, why did the authorities, judging from this source, not take more rigorous steps to apprehend runaways?

This chapter approaches southern cities as spaces where political and economic interests were negotiated in distinct ways. The emphasis lies on how the urban space was politically understood and claimed in relation to labor. Growing increasingly complex, the interplay of different social groups, whose power and leeway evolved over time, impacted the political climate in Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans. Economic development, democratization, and foreign immigration brought about a restructuring of civic power and economic visions. The diversification of the political voice, which had hitherto rested almost exclusively with the dominant plantocracy, entailed different responses towards the presence of refugees, undocumented residents, and free African Americans.

How did slaveholders originally craft the urban spaces? Keeping in mind the social and economic integration of slave refugees, how did slaveowners envision to design it vis-à-vis enslaved and black people? Despite their prominent position in most southern cities, slaveholders were not a homogeneous group and they had to reckon with diverging interests among themselves and with other urban groups. Given that the emerging middle and white working classes placed themselves differently in relation to urban black people and slavery than to slaveholders, how did the lives of black city dwellers change when they became more

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[729] Louisiana, First District Court (Orleans Parish), General Dockets, 1846-1880, v. 2 (February 7, 1850 – December 24, 1856), #4666 – 12588; v. 3 (January 1, 1857 – January 6, 1865), #12589 – 16369, VSA350, NOPL; and Records of Prisoners Committed to the Parish Prison, 1852 – 1862, June 18, 1852 – May 10, 1862, TX420, NOPL.

dominant in the political arena? What happened with slave refugees who were caught and how did this fit in with the broader understanding of labor and the restructuring of the economy? Lastly, did the growth of the white population in the cities impact the dealing with undocumented African Americans including refugees? Looking at these positions switches the level of analysis to the political economy. This allows us to pinpoint how frictions between economic interests opened up spaces of freedom for slave refugees while also threatening their endeavors.

A Slaveholders' World

Southern cities were strongly influenced by the presence of slaveholders. This was most visible in Charleston, the place with the highest density of large-scale, wealthy planters. Contrary to Virginia, where they often lived on the plantations and frequented the capital for pleasure and business, in South Carolina, they were mostly absentee masters. Living in massive town houses around the waterfront of Charleston, they had their agricultural business and the management of their enslaved workforce run by agents and overseers.[730] Comparable to New Orleans, Charleston had a variety of light industries, yet the most essential work was performed on the waterfronts by enslaved workers. After around 1820, the importance of the port of Charleston declined, yet it was a relative downturn, and export output as well as the demand for labor increased in absolute terms. Many wharf owners were additionally plantation owners and they often employed their own bondspeople in the city alongside additional hired workers, as Michael Thompson has found.[731]

The concentration of wealth that characterized Charleston was not restricted to the planter class. The middle ranks of society were also often slaveholders. In 1830, 87% of white households in Charleston held slaves.[732] This number is very high and reveals that large shares of lower-class whites could not afford to live within the physically limited city, despite working there. Slaveholders, including those who were not wealthy planters, as well as hirers of slaves had an interest in a tight environment of social control and correctional measures taken against the enslaved population. Their numbers grew in the antebellum period as did their representation in municipal politics. The core city was, hence, dominated by slaveholders—and its regulation was worth a great deal of money to them. In 1859, Charleston expected expenditures of $100,000 for the City Guard.[733] Due to its small size and geography, the city of Charleston, was indeed one of the few places which could be successfully surveilled.

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[730] Kolchin, *American Slavery*, 35.

[731] Thompson's detailed study on Charleston shows that the city faced severe difficulties around 1819-1822 and onwards when the cotton prices fell. Events like the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the Denmark Vesey insurrection, and its total dependence on cotton brought insecurities. The end of the Age of Sail took away the necessity for ships to stop at Charleston and the harbor was not deep enough to allow large vessels to dock at the city's wharves. Planters from the hinterland migrated west into the new Cotton Kingdom. Moreover, New York emerged as an intermediary between Charleston and Europe, which reduced the profit margins for Charleston's merchants. Thompson, *Working on the Dock*, 4, 6, 37, 61.

[732] Ira Rosenwaike, *On the Edge of Greatness: A Portrait of American Jewry in the Early National Period* (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1985), 68.

[733] Proceedings of the City Council of Charleston, S. C., 1859 I, Thirty-First Regular Meeting, Council Chamber, January 4, 1859, reprint in *Daily Courier*, January 6, 1859, CCPL. By that time, the police force was composed of one chief, two captains, six lieutenants, four orderly sergeants, and 150 privates. In 1836, the City Guard had been

Figure 26: Charleston 1855 (depicting the wealthy waterfront in the front and the wharves on the right)[734]

The dominance of slaveowners is clearly recognizable by the fact that Charleston's municipal laws were infused with their interests. These laws, for instance, stipulated that if a person gave a ticket to a slave thereby facilitating their staying out at night "after the beating of the tattoo [curfew] without the knowledge of the owner or employer," this person should pay $20 to the owner or employer. Those people actually benefitting from enslaved labor, namely the owner of the slave or the person hiring them, were acquitted from any responsibilities in the matter. Or, if a slave was taken up at night, the warden was either to fine the slave, or "at the request of the owner to order the said slave to be corrected, with no less than five or more than nineteen lashes in the Work House, without subjecting the owner of said slave to any expense or charge at the said Work House." In other words, the master of the workhouse was not allowed to reject incoming slaves nor to charge slaveowners for his "services."[735] In both cases, the costs of racial control were levied on third parties.

The slave badge laws, which visibly identified enslaved men and women working for other people than their owners, were of all places most sophisticated in Charleston. (See chapter four.) Besides, racial control was made visible by the location of the workhouse. Also called the sugar house, it was located on the corner of Magazine and Mazyck (now Logan) streets. Before the incorporation of Charleston Neck in 1850, which enlarged the city to the North, the workhouse was right in the middle of the city. Workhouses functioned both as centers of punishment and as "storages" for enslaved people. In both perspectives, they offered a service

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limited to one captain, three lieutenants, two orderly sergeants, eight corporals, 90 privates, two drummers, and two fifers. Records of the Charleston Police Department, Police Department Historic Files, 1855-1991, CCPL.

[734] John W. Hill, "Panorama of Charleston," 1855, New York Public Library, in Lawrence T. McDonnell, *Performing Disunion: The Coming of the Civil War in Charleston, South Carolina* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), URL: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/performing-disunion/context/7943D74410B1639AC54A11AD2B11CF68/core-reader, accessed May, 13, 2019.

[735] Eckhard, *Digest of the Ordinances*, "Guard (City)," CCPL.

for slaveholders. Bondspeople were envisioned to be punished for disobedience but more important was their correction so that they could afterwards return to their owners with an increased value. The long-term understanding of correction houses was to produce adequate workers for the future. This was a general trend and not restricted to the United States, as scholars of other regions have shown.[736] In Charleston, the centrality of the workhouse worked both symbolically (as a reminder for black people of their supervision) and strategically. With an architecture that reminded of a fortress, it was accessible from all parts of the city in walking distance, and slaveholders, hirers, and police could commit and take out their victims at any time.
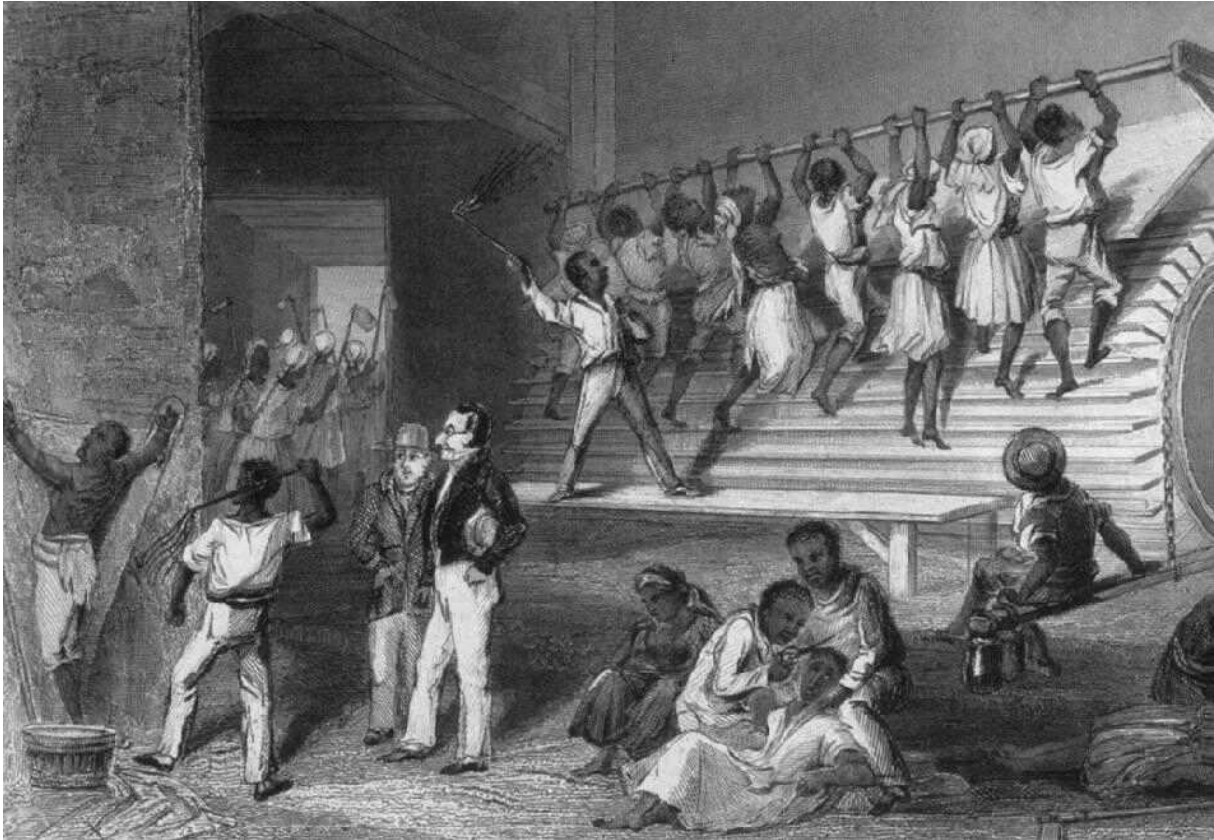
Figure 27: Treadmill[737]

Angelika Grimké, white abolitionist and fighter for women's rights, gave the account of a wealthy female slaveholder in Charleston who regularly sent her slaves to the workhouse: "One poor girl, whom she sent there to be flogged, and who was accordingly stripped *naked* and whipped, showed me the deep gashes on her back—I might have laid my whole finger in them—*large pieces of flesh had actually been cut out by the torturing lash.*" Next to the most brutal whippings, Grimké also mentioned the treadmill, a work mechanism to exhaust and

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[736] Ian Miller, "Feeding the Workhouse: The Institutional and Ideological Functions of Food in Britain, ca. 1834-70," *Journal of British Studies* 52 (2013): 9. See also Diana Paton, *No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780-1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[737] This engraving shows a treadmill in a Jamaican House of Correction during the so-called Apprenticeship Period (1834-1838) that succeeded the abolition of slavery. Anonymous, "An Interior View of a Jamaica House of Correction (ca. 1834-1838), National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Michael Graham-Stewart Slavery Collection, URL: https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/254651.html, accessed July 19, 2019.

torture enslaved men and women. It was a wooden cylinder-shaped wheel with steps that was moved by stepping from one step to the next. (See figure 27.) Grimké reported that

> She [the same slaveholder] sent another female slave there, to be imprisoned and worked on the tread-mill. This girl was confined several days, and forced to work the mill while in a state of suffering from another cause. For ten days or two weeks after her return, she was lame, from the violent exertion necessary to enable her to keep the step on the machine.[738]

It was a Sisyphus work because the grinding of corn was subordinated to the torturing of people, which was deemed more important than productivity. Historian Maurie McInnis has confirmed that while the treadmill did indeed grind corn, this measure was mostly applied for reasons of punishment.[739]

Unlike Grimké, James Matthews did not visit the workhouse as an observer. He was incarcerated there for three months as a penalty for running away. He described the cells as "little narrow rooms about five feet wide, with a little hole up high to let in air." After a most brutal initial whipping, Matthews

> was kept in the cell till next day, when they put me on the tread mill, and kept me there three days, and then back in the cell for three days. And then I was whipped and put on the tread mill again, and they did so with me for a fortnight, just as Cohen [his master] had directed. He told them to whip me twice a week till they had given me two hundred lashes. My back, when they went to whip me, would be full of scabs, and they whipped them off till I bled so that my clothes were all wet. Many a night I have laid up there in the Sugar House and scratched them off by the handful.[740]

These accounts expose the naked cruelty of what it took to keep enslaved people under control in the urban environment.

Correction in the workhouse was not free of charge. Although the clerk of the workhouse was generally "subject to owner's order," as the police recorded, slaveholders had to pay fees for the accommodation and disciplining of their property.[741] Workhouses saw a high frequency of enslaved people passing through and spending days or weeks there. In Charleston, it also functioned as the first receiving station for slave refugees throughout the entire antebellum period. In 1800, it was made known that "if any negro or other slave taken up as aforesaid [working out without ticket or badge], should prove to be a run-away from any person residing without the limits of this city, the master of the work-house shall, in such case, proceed as is directed by the law respecting runaway slaves."[742] This quote also reveals that runaways from within and without the city were approached differently. When a person was suspected of having escaped from an owner in Charleston, no advertisement was placed in the paper, an additional measure that saved slaveholders expenditures.

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[738] Testimony of Angelika Grimké Weld (April 6, 1839), in *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*, ed. Theodore Dwight Weld (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), 53-54.

[739] Maurie D. McInnis, *The Politics of Taste in Antebellum Charleston* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 226.

[740] Anonymous [Matthews], *Recollections of Slavery*, September 13, 1838.

[741] Records of the Charleston Police Department, Arrest Records and Morning Reports, Lower Ward 1855-1856, CCPL.

[742] *City Gazette and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, July 21, 1800.

Besides slaveowners who sent their slaves to the workhouse, the police committed black people every month but those numbers were never high enough to constitute the majority of the inmates. For the 18 months for which information is available in 1859 and 1860, Charleston law enforcement sent between zero and 118 people to the workhouse, including apprehended refugees.[743] The total number of inmates was on average 211. As table 6 shows, the number of inmates peaked in January months. The structure of the labor market for slave hire and the more numerous slave flights around Christmas suggest that many slaveholders committed their bondspeople to the workhouse for safekeeping around that time. It shows the awareness of slaveholders about possible escapes of their slaves and reminds us that they took individual actions for prevention.

Table 7: Black People Jailed in the Charleston Workhouse, 1856-1860 [744]
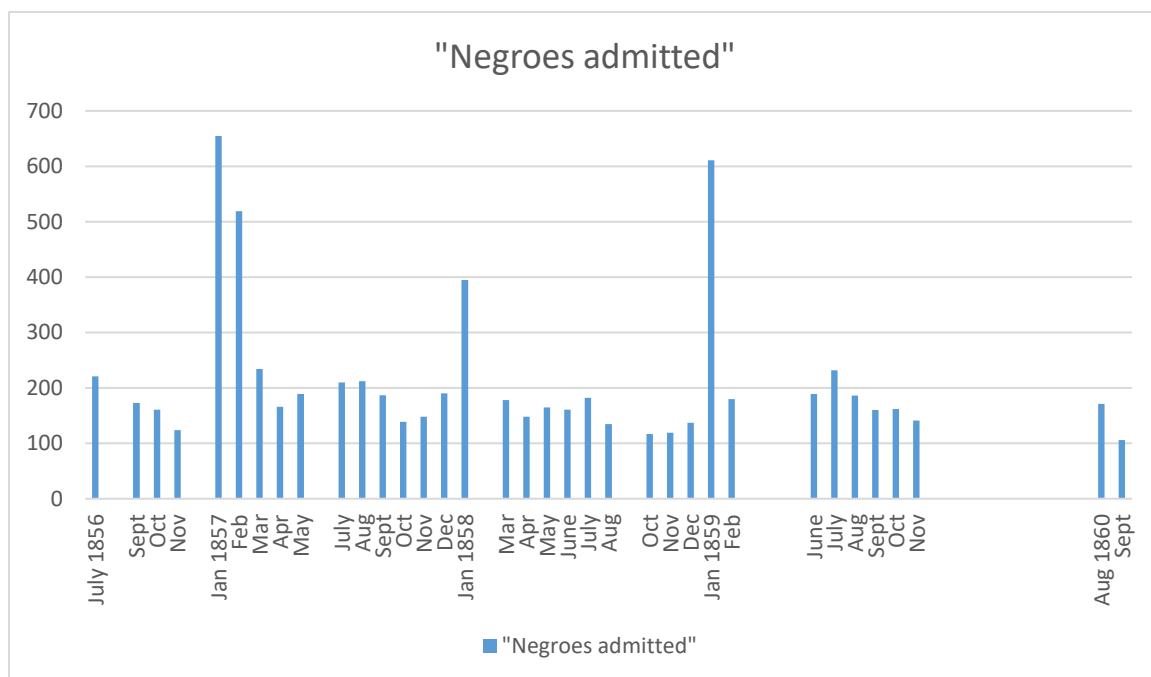
According to historian Larry Koger, runaways usually were incarcerated in the workhouse between five and 30 days.[745] During this time, they were in contact with slaves who were committed by their owners, either for having run away, too, or for entirely different reasons. Keeping slaves to be corrected and slaves who visibly expressed their desire for freedom at the same place was ironic because it brought them into contact with each other. Due to the large numbers of slave refugees who mingled at any time with the enslaved, the workhouse was essentially a place that politically contradicted the interests of slaveowners as well as local authorities. After all, it was a place where free and enslaved black people met. Arrest records

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[743] Proceedings of the City Council of Charleston, S. C., 1859 I; and Charleston (S. C.) City Council, Proceedings of Council, POC-002 M: 1859-1870, CCPL.

[744] City of Charleston Council Minutes, January 1856 to December 1858, CLCM-014; Proceedings of the City Council of Charleston, S.C., 1859 I; and Charleston (S. C.) City Council, Proceedings of Council, POC-002 M: 1859-1870, CCPL.

[745] Koger, *Black Slaveowners*, 92.

show that when Julia, a free black woman, was arrested for not having a ticket half an hour after curfew hit Charleston, she was lodged in the workhouse for one day.[746]

Moreover, authorities were aware that free people and local slaves were often committed as runaways. These numbers were high because, as demonstrated, owners of slaves were neglectful in procuring badges or furnishing them with passes and tickets. In 1821, the City Council of Charleston, in a move to distinguish enslaved from free inmates, "Resolved that a Committee be appointed to enquire what Persons of Color are now confined in the Work House as Fugitives, and whether any Certificate or Evidence to the contrary can be produced […] so as to authorize their discharge."[747] This resolution was intended to avoid that free African Americans were jailed for a too long time, which often implied that they were unable to pay the jail fees. In these cases, the workhouse clerk would be left alone with the costs of accommodation.

Similar dynamics with regard to urban racial control occurred in other southern cities where enslaved and free black people were regularly disciplined. Depending on economic and cultural factors, however, they played out differently. The city of New Orleans had a jail exclusively for black people, the so-called calaboose. Resembling the workhouse in Charleston, the calaboose of New Orleans was, citing autobiographer William Anderson, "hell on earth."[748] Yet, it was just one of several places to assert control over lower-class people of African descent. New Orleans' geography of control also included the whipping house (which corresponded to the police jail), located behind the administrative buildings at Jackson Square on Chartres and St. Peter's streets. Free black people were sent there after curfew to prove their freedom. Besides, there was the parish prison, the police jail of the Third Municipality, and the workhouses of the First and Third Municipalities.[749] In one of these prisons, Fredrika Bremer, a famous Swedish traveler, feminist and novelist, encountered two enslaved women who had been incarcerated for two years because their owner had stored them there.[750]

Those who ruled New Orleans were highly invested in slavery, yet the diverse social composition allowed for a much more dynamic picture than in Charleston. Older inhabitants from the French and Spanish eras, refugees from St. Domingue, and American migrants concurred in transforming the former semi-productive territory into a "second St. Domingue." New Orleans came to flourish as the commercial hub of the Deep South. Unlike Charleston, it not only had a deep enough maritime harbor but through the Mississippi River also connected its trade with the upcountry and the northern states. A great many American planters who settled in Louisiana originated from Upper South regions, South Carolina, and Georgia. To understand the social environment, we must understand their origins.

According to a number of historians, these migrants fundamentally differed from most migrants in history in that they owned both land and slaves. They departed their homes with the enterprise to continue their families' economic success built on enslaved labor, and consequently were for the most part exclusively focused on the plantation enterprise. The

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[746] Records of the Charleston Police Department, Arrest Records and Morning Reports, Lower Ward 1855-1856, February 25, 1856, CCPL.

[747] Charleston (S. C.), City Council, Proceedings of Council POC-001 M: 18 21-2, CCPL.

[748] Anderson, *Life and Narrative*, 20-22.

[749] Walker, *No More, No More*, 28-30.

[750] Fredrika Bremer, *The Homes of the New World; Impressions of America*. Translated by Mary Howitt. Vol. II (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1853), 211. Slaves who were stored in jail for two years were exceptional. It must have been either an extreme case of punishment or the sales prices were not acceptably high enough for the owner.

expansion of slavery did not mean that its social structures were simply transplanted. Migrating planters did dream of building a mythological version of Virginia, yet they were confronted with the very different social realities and physical environments of a frontier area. In the new lands, these plantation heirs met with pioneers who did not stem from established slavocratic families. The planter group became more diversified. Smaller plantation owners produced significant shares of cotton yet they seldom rose up into the ranks of large planters. Those who made it were included in the political elite. Although planter migrants were from diverse backgrounds, with the time passing, they melted into a rather cohesive class.[751]

Being strongly geared towards investing in a lucrative future, American slaveholders slingshot New Orleans through an intense phase of modernization during the first half of the antebellum era. The city had no industrialized center but came to develop some smaller industries, including sawmills, cotton mills, sugar refineries, and distilleries. In the 1820s, modern technologies brought a steam-powered cotton-mill, yet the principal economic sectors were trade and exchange. Parallel to Charleston's decline, New Orleans came to be the second most important American port after New York, and this port was the second largest employer after the government.[752] The merchants, who ran the port, were tied to the planters of the hinterland because they were responsible for shipping their cotton and sugar abroad. Due to the slaveholders' unity with regard to their business endeavors, New Orleans' demographic diversity was unknown to its economy.

Louisiana planters lived in New Orleans in much lower numbers than their counterparts in South Carolina, and legislation, debates in the vernacular press, and the physical environment let assume that they were less obsessed with racial control in the city. As discussed in chapter three, cultural differences within New Orleans' ruling circles split the city into three municipalities. This division of governance implied a division of supervision. Planters, who made state politics in the capital Baton Rouge and mostly gravitated to New Orleans for business and amusement, took urban social control much less seriously than elsewhere. This opened up niches for refugees. Equally beneficial for urban freedom seekers was that they were often not the main preoccupation of city authorities. When taking over Louisiana, the Americans not only inherited an ethnically diverse population but also a maroon problem.[753] Spread all around New Orleans, lingering about near plantations where they stole food, and occasionally entering the city's suburbs, Louisiana's maroons were usually armed and did not demure when encountering people who minded their presence. Newspapers made sure that New

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[751] Large planters maintained the strongest position, however, as they managed to secure the best lands with the best access to waterways. Nevertheless, smallholders had a share of one third of the cotton production and owned almost 40 percent of the enslaved workforce. Berlin, *Generations of Captivity*, 165; Edward E. Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's plantation frontier before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and James David Miller, *South By Southwest: Planter Emigration and Identity in the Slave South* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 5, 8, 11.

[752] Nathalie Dessens, "New Orleans, LA, 1790-1828," in *Cities in American Political History*, ed. Richard Dilworth (Los Angeles and London: SAGE, 2011), 106-107.

[753] One of the reasons why the maroons became so numerous in the first place was that under Spanish rule, there were more pressing concerns than slavery. Spain had to ward off American, British, and French invasions and unwanted American immigrants, and colonial authorities and settlers paid little attention to the slave laws. Din, *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves*, 34, 195.

Orleans residents were aware of them.[754] Compared to maroons, who were a constant threat to the valuable plantation economy, urban runaways appeared much less harmful because they presented a one-time loss for their owners.

Claiming the urban space for themselves—in Charleston, New Orleans, and Richmond much more than in Baltimore—slaveholders had reasons to keep urban slavery alive. Slavery was everywhere. It infused southern economy, politics, religion, and social relations.[755] On a macro level, the entire commercial and financial structure of cotton production was infused by the reliance on enslaved bodies, as Edward Baptist has made clear, "both on the ability of enslavers to extract cotton from them and on the ability of enslavers (or bankruptcy courts) to sell them to someone else who wanted to extract cotton."[756] Being at the same time a body with a monetary value, a commodity, an investment, the ultimate hedge, and a political support instrument, enslaved men, women, and children in the antebellum period were much more than cheap laborers.[757]

To ensure their interests in important urban centers, planters always cultivated their relations with merchants, slave traders, family members, and policy makers in the cities.[758] On special occasions, however, it became apparent that they placed the well-being of the institution of slavery over the well-being of the economy. The most obvious measure was the enactment of the Seamen Acts by various southern states. Introduced in 1822 in South Carolina, it postulated the incarceration of sailors and seamen of African descent during the time a ship lied anchor in a port. Enacted right after the Denmark Vesey plot, it was meant to appease the fear of insurrections.[759] The Seamen Act manifested the diverging interests of different societal groups.

For instance, proprietors in New Orleans warned the authorities that they would redirect the steamers to Lafayette. Lafayette, before 1852 not part of New Orleans, did not partake in the Seamen Act. Even more strikingly, while the city was divided into three municipalities, merchants in each district approached the police in an attempt to convince them to ignore the law that required prosecution of free black people from outside the state, who were not legally allowed to be in Louisiana.[760] The act not only harmed merchandising, but sailors usually spent

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[754] New Orleans authorities faced the phenomenon of both urban runaways within the city and "conventional" maroons in its surroundings. See newspaper coverage, for example, *Picayune*, July 19, 1837. See also Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*, 108-109.

[755] Seven of the first eleven American presidents were slaveowners, representing the nationwide support of the institution. For a discussion on the involvement of the northern states in slavery, see Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*.

[756] Edward E. Baptist, "Toxic Debts, Liar Loans, Collateralized and Securitized Human Beings, and the Panic of 1837," in *Capitalism Takes Command: The Social Transformation of Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Michael Zakim and Gary J. Kornblith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 78.

[757] Slaves were a political support instrument because of the Three-Fifth-Compromise of 1787, which established the American states' numbers of seats in the House of Representatives. Whereas every free person counted as one person, enslaved people counted as three fifth of a person. This gave slaveholding states significant influence in federal politics. "What was the Three-Fifth-Compromise?," *Laws*, URL: https://constitution.laws.com/three-fifths-compromise, accessed May 30, 2019.

[758] Goldfield, "Black Life," 126.

[759] In total, Seamen Acts were passed in South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. Michael Schoeppner, "Peculiar Quarantines: The Seamen Acts and the Regulatory Authority in the Antebellum South," *Laws & History Review* 31:3 (2013): 559. W. Jeffrey Bolster has provided the number of 10,000 sailors who felt the direct effects of this legislation. Bolster, *Black Jacks*, 206.

[760] Richard Tansey, "Out-of-State Free Blacks in Late Antebellum New Orleans," *Louisiana History* 22 (1981): 571. Michael Thompson has summarized that those who ruled Charleston were known to be contentious. In

a great deal of time in the cities and money on the local economies during the days and weeks they were on shore. Michael Schoeppner, confronting these contradictions, has claimed that while state legislatures and white laborers demanded the incarceration of foreign seamen, local merchants, ship captains, and free African Americans pressed against it.[761] In general terms, wealthy slaveholders were the most powerful group during much of the second slavery. Yet, their power was not limitless and cities proved to be particularly challenging for them.

Cities of Capitalists

Nineteenth-century cities were concentrations of commerce, transport, administration, a number of other services, and, to varying degrees, industry.[762] These sectors brought together a very diverse crowd of people with different business interests and different ideas about how to make use of the urban space. While the planter elite maintained a firm hold on most of the slaveholding states, a few places developed a business elite with decreasing stakes in slavery. Industrialists, merchants, and financiers formulated demands on their employees that deviated from those of slaveholders. Throughout the antebellum period, those players grew stronger and more important to urban economies. Although never as dominant as in the North, the new southern middle and upper classes came to play significant roles in their arenas. As owners of capital, these men shaped the economic change and the transformation of society.[763]

This was most visible in Baltimore, which was an important trading hub, milling center, and place of production. During the second slavery, Maryland slaveholders were less powerful than their neighbors in Virginia. Those whose businesses still evolved around plantations with a large enslaved work force partook in the state politics in the capital Annapolis where they clung to their conservative, slavocratic world views.[764] Robert Fogel has confirmed the claim that Baltimore, meanwhile, offered an opening space for progressive, daring, and modern business endeavors similar to those taking place in Philadelphia and New York.[765] These metropolitan entrepreneurs were more inclined to follow the economic restructurings around wage labor they saw happening in the North.

Economic historians have provided the background to understanding these developments. The growth and success of Baltimore, which had been a small town at the turn of the nineteenth century, was related to the wheat business; not to tobacco and, hence, enslaved labor. In the city itself, the merchant community had little overlap with the slaveholding elite and its members were often newcomers themselves (migrants from Pennsylvania and

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attempts to place the importance of slavery above everything else, they passed the first Negro Seamen Act, fought on the forefront for nullification, a co-prompted the constitutional crisis of 1832-1833. South Carolinians were the first southern state to secede from the Union and the place where the American Civil War began. Thompson, *Working on the Dock*, 6-7, 14-15. For the Seamen Acts as destructive to South Carolina's economy, see page 68.

[761] Schoeppner, "Peculiar Quarantines," 571.

[762] Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital*, 210-211.

[763] The bourgeoisie of New York, enriched through trade, production, and finance, came to be the most powerful economic elite. These developments took off from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. They were the first elite not to rely on birth rights and privilege. Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis. New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850–1896* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3-4.

[764] Fields, *Middle Ground*, 41-42.

[765] The development of southern industries was, moreover, not backward as often claimed. Fogel has remarked that it was more prosperous than in France, Germany, and Denmark. Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, 87.

immigrants from Germany and Ireland). Equally important was the commercial nature of Baltimore's industrialists. Many capitalist leaders considered production as a means to improve the infrastructure of their mercantile businesses. Therefore, Baltimore, unlike other places, saw a political unity between commerce and production relatively early, which rendered the institution of slavery even less strong. Heavy industry concentrated capital which had the power to execute considerable control over the government and to command large labor forces.[766]

In short, industry in Baltimore was able to grow so dominantly because slaveholders had never been very present in this city. The absence of slaveholders influenced labor relations in Baltimore. As historian Barbara Fields has explained, with commerce being the main driver of the economy and the textile industry being the main employer in the city, market relations came to replace relations of household paternalism. In other words, with regards to labor, market relations worked better for the nature of Baltimore's economy than slavery. Because urban employers demanded to a great extent seasonal and very casual workers, the market for labor power was more dominant than the market for owning laborers.[767]

In general, urban slavery was always less relevant than agricultural slavery and after a slight growth between roughly 1830 and 1850 it declined in almost all places.[768] In the cities, the advent of a broad white middle class swelled the ranks of those who sought the possession of one or more slaves as household support or simply for reputation, according to historian Calvin Schermerhorn. Upward mobility for whites meant "scrambling up the social ladder on the back of a slave," as he has claimed. This trend was clearly observable for Baltimore, where by 1860 most slaveholders owned but a single slave.[769] Simultaneously, the relative share of whites in slaveholding declined. In Baltimore, urban slavery evolved from a mechanical, proto-industrial labor force to a largely domestic labor force for those who could afford it.[770] Despite its decline, slavery remained a cultural element—and obviously was still widespread in rural Maryland.

Richmond, by contrast, was the great exception with regard to urban slavery. Slavery there showed constant growth rates up until its abolition. It was likewise an important industrial center while, at the same time, it differed from Baltimore in its heavy reliance on enslaved labor. This is striking. To set the city in its regional context, Virginia counted the absolute highest number of enslaved people at any time during the antebellum period. This was despite the expanding Cotton Empire and the high prices Virginia slaveholders could yield by selling their bondspeople south. By 1860, there were nearly half a million bondspeople, turning eastern

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[766] Baltimore's capitalists were not as economically well positioned as their counterparts in Boston or New York, and the city had a relatively smaller bank capital than other cities. As Sherry Olson has claimed, for capitalists, they were conservative. Olson, *Baltimore*, 108-109; Fields, *Middle Ground*, 41-42; and Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital*, 213-214.

[767] Fields, *Middle Ground*, 43, 48.

[768] These are general trends that exclude Richmond, Mobile, and Savannah. Baltimore is an obvious case where slavery had always been marginal and where it was decreasing from 1830 onwards.

[769] Schermerhorn, *Money over Mastery*, 104; and Fields, *Middle Ground*, 47.

[770] Edward L. Ayers et al., *American Passages: A History of the United States*. Fourth Edition (Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, 2010), 148; and Whitman, *Price of Freedom*. Domestic service thrives in contexts of absence of basic services in the city and high economic inequality, which were features of nineteenth-century American cities, too. The predominance of women as household laborers and their high numbers point to an expanding middle class able to afford these services. Elizabeth Anne Kuznesof, "Domestic Service and Urbanization in Latin America from the Nineteenth-Century to the Present," in *Proletarian and Gendered Mass Migrations. A Global Perspective on Continuities and Discontinuities from the 19th to the 21st Centuries*, ed. Dirk Hoerder and Amarijt Kaur (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 85-86.

Virginia into the highest concentration of enslaved workers, slaveholders, and planters, as observed by Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie. Agreeing with Lynda Morgan, he has claimed that this was partly due to tobacco production. Although it was dramatically forfeiting its importance in comparison to other agricultural slave products, tobacco production in Virginia increased in the late antebellum period and the Piedmont remained the country's largest tobacco region. Besides tobacco, which was very labor-intensive, Virginia also produced wheat, which only demanded seasonal attention. The Tidewater wheat plantations turned into a "labor reserve" for commercial and industrial demands (as well as hirelings for urban households) when planters hired plantation hands out to urban industries during off-season.[771] To this should be added that Tidewater planters, by using their enslaved laborers flexibly and season-oriented, secured slavery in the industries of Richmond and other cities and counteracted its replacement by wage labor, as it was happening in other places. (See chapter four.)

Figure 28: Warehouse in Richmond[772]

As the poster child of the second slavery, Richmond became more and more integrated in a net of improving infrastructure, logistics, transportation, production, and services. On the eve of the Civil War, the James River, the Kanawha Canal, and five railroads connected the city to its hinterland, the northern states, the deeper South, and affirmed its position as a hub in the Atlantic-world economy. But, as Michael Douglas Naragon has shown, infrastructure demanded high investments, maintenance, and constant improvement of the city as a magnet

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[771] In 1859, production reached record levels yielding about $7 million in market sales. Enslaved laborers were also engaged in wheat production and its output in the same year reached $15 million. Most of it was distributed domestically, surplus was shipped to Brazil. The profits were mostly invested in financing and manufacturing in the North. Kerr-Ritchie, *Tobacco South*, 14, 18-19; and Lynda J. Morgan, *Emancipation in Virginia's Tobacco Belt, 1850-1870* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 24, 57-58.
[772] One of 14 warehouses built around 1850 between 18th and 21st streets, in Gibson Worsham, "Urban Palimpsests," *Urban Scape Richmond* (March 29, 2010), URL: http://urbanscalerichmondvirginia.blogspot.com/2010/03/, accessed July 2, 2019.

for investors and businessmen. Public debt grew.[773] Money for public works, like gas and water works and street building, was never sufficient and the tax revenue was too scarce to finance important innovations. As the changing attitudes towards black people reveal, labor, including that performed by slave refugees, which could be recruited from the private sector, became more and more relevant.

Apart from the benefits of cheap, powerless labor, it would be a mistake to see the interests of industrialists sharply divided from those of planters and to make clear-cut distinction between the two groups. Plantation owners likewise had a stake in transporting their cotton to ports and sell tobacco, wheat, and sugar to the manufactories and refineries. *Vice versa*, merchants and industrialists often owned or employed enslaved laborers. In 1860, 80 percent of Richmond's adult male slaves were either owned or hired by urban leaders. A decade earlier, 80 percent of urban leaders were slaveholders although the city's political class did by that time not represent Virginia's planters anymore.[774] This corresponds to Steven Hoffman's findings. He has claimed that in order to secure their business endeavors in cities, capitalists assumed positions in local politics. Between 1840 and 1860, professionals, merchants, lawyers, and other businessmen made up around three quarters of Richmond's city council. They ruled over the city's civic affairs as well as the policies concerning city building. They were also able to direct tax money into private industries. Some of them were invested in internal improvement works and were in constant need of cheap, disposable workers to dig the canals and mount the railroads in the state, and to pave the streets in the city.[775] Thereby, they provided the infrastructure for the growth of their own sectors.

By using enslaved labor in industry and production, Richmond was the most obvious example of a strong planter class that at the same time was flexible enough to accommodate their own interests of slaveholding with the progressive economic promises of capitalist production.[776] On the one hand, they proved the compatibility of slavery and industrial production. On the other hand, following the reasoning of Seth Rockman, the profitability of industrial slavery was tied to wages, board money, and self-accommodation, which turned slaves into semi-wage workers.[777]

The decline, yet not demise, of urban slavery was, next to mass plantation slavery, an important characteristic of the second slavery. Dale Tomich has claimed that the concept of second slavery not only serves to analyze the capitalist world-system. Rather, it likewise shifts the attention to the interplay of slavery, wage labor, coerced labor, subsistence labor, and industrial production.[778] This observation sheds a different light on urban slavery as a form of labor system not only slaveholders were benefitting from. Rather, capitalist employers had a strong interest in creating a workforce as diverse as possible and combining laborers who were

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[773] Naragon, "Ballots, Bullets, and Blood," 16.

[774] Berlin and Gutman, "Urban Workingmen," 1184; and Jonathan Daniel Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 168.

[775] The James River and Kanawha Canal was one of the largest projects in Virginia. Steven J. Hoffman, *Race, Class, and Power in the Building of Richmond, 1870-1920* (Jefferson and London McFarland & Company, 2004), 18.

[776] There is little research by labor historians but sociologist Alan Dahl has come to similar conclusions. Alan Lewis Dahl, "The North of the South: Planters and the Transition to Capitalism in the Central Virginia Piedmont" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kentucky, 2010).

[777] Rockman, "Unfree Origins," 360.

[778] Tomich, "Second Slavery and World Capitalism," 483.

in different conditions. This strategy prevented laborers from allying with one another and kept them replaceable.[779] The creation of an undocumented working population was an additional advantage.

In the nineteenth century, the advantages of an illegal part of the population were obvious to city and state authorities. They executed willingly the menial works in the cities but did not live at common expenses in times of unproductiveness because they had no claim to poor relief. In some places, as Charleston's ordinances show, black men and women were accepted into poor houses but always in much lower numbers than white residents.[780] Mostly, African Americans organized themselves independently to provide for the needy and to guarantee mutual benefit.[781] The downside for cities was that they did not receive taxes from persons who were not registered.

The benefit of a vulnerable work force for employers was even clearer. In a time when flexibility was one of the most highly demanded qualities of unskilled labor, owning enslaved workers impeded flexible and short-term employment.[782] Additionally, bondspeople had to be clothed, fed, housed, and taken care of in old age. This spoke in many economic sectors against owning an enslaved work force. The great difference between free and unfree labor was that free laborers could partially bargain about the conditions of their employment (although this was even minimally the case within slavery). The less powerful workers were in terms of legal protection, the more employers geared space to follow their economic interests.[783] Employers benefitted from a diverse work force that was partly undocumented and policy makers failed to take preventative measures. They were aware of the implications, and authorities in their functions as representatives of the general public good took conscious decisions not to intervene. For both groups, people with a liminal status between slavery and freedom were a good solution to avoid the external costs inherent to cheap labor.

The attitudes to tackling the issue of illegal freedom seekers in the cities were as incomprehensible and complex as the general position towards black people, and were moreover constantly changing. Despite fugitive slave laws on the state level, the execution of legislation on the local level remained lax at best. In southern cities, there was never any discussion about enacting a law that would have forbidden the employment of somebody else's slave without their consent.[784] In 1854, petitioners in South Carolina claimed that slaveholders found their runaway slaves hired by free black people in Charleston. Being from rural St. Paul's

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[779] Maria Helena Pereira Toledo Machado has shown how former slaves who had joined urban maroon communities in Santos, Brazil, were after the abolition of slavery used to combat the labor movements of white workers by replacing them. Pereira, "From Slave Rebels to Strikebreakers."

[780] J. R. Horse (ed.), *Ordinances of the City of Charleston, from the 14th of September 1854, to the 1st of December 1859; and the Acts of the General Assembly Relating to the City Council of Charleston, and the City of Charleston, During the Same Period* (Charleston, 1854).

[781] Kimball, *American City*, 38. See particularly the organization of churches for black poor relief, for instance, in Raboteau, *Slave Religion*; and Elna C. Green, *This Business of Relief. Confronting Poverty in a Southern City, 1740-1940* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2003).

[782] "Labor flexibility is," according to Christian de Vito et al., "the result of employers' and policymakers' efforts to coordinate the availability of what they perceive as the most appropriate workforce with their productive and political needs." Christian de Vito, Juliane Schiel, and Matthias van Rossum, "From Bondage to Precariousness? New Perspectives on Labor and Social History," *Journal of Social History* (forthcoming).

[783] Seth Rockman has argued that employers in Baltimore and Richmond knew that citizenship weakened the productivity of workers. Rockman, "Unfree Origins," 360.

[784] Exceptions are the disputes about runaway slaves being harbored and employed on board of ships and vessels. This reflects the concern about slaves attempting to flee to the northern states.

Parish, they stressed that employing runaways in the city was "antagonistic to the Agricultural interests of the State." The judge, however, declared that it could not be proven "that the person hiring was aware that his slaves were runaway."[785] Another example for such a case is from Missouri where in 1852, Henke & Henke—engaged in railroad construction—were indicted for hiring a slave "to maul rails" without the consent of his master, owner, or overseer. They were not found guilty because the law only prohibited the dealing or trading of slaves, not their employing. The Supreme Court found that the law "does not include the manual labor of the slave, however wrong it may be to hire or induce a slave to work or labor for a person without the master or owner's knowledge and permission."[786]

Industrial production was less visible in Charleston and New Orleans than in Richmond. The manufacturing value per capita in New Orleans was less than one third of that in Richmond. Charleston's output, in turn, was slightly higher than one fourth of New Orleans'.[787] As already demonstrated, a larger proportion of planters resided in these places and held a tight grip on urban policy making. The economy in South Carolina and Louisiana (and practically the entire Deep South) was strongly geared towards plantation production and export, and planters had no reason to foresee that their business model would not deliver the long-term profits they were used to—a fate that had hit their predecessors in the Upper South. There, the power of the industrialists became very apparent in 1850, when Virginia's General Assembly ordered that it was henceforth the duty of the owner, not the hirer, to pay for the recovery costs of runaway slaves.[788] Slave refugees were tolerated. It would have been impossible and undesirable to round up all of the illegal black residents of the city. Not only were their numbers too large but, more importantly, the urban economy profited from black labor, and if black people who resided illegally in the cities—free or slave—were to be eliminated then the industries would have suffered a great deal. This concerned the heavy industries as well as lighter industries like flour mills and cotton and tobacco manufactories. The 1850s were the decade when these developments became most visible. In Richmond, the business elite was by that time "clearly in control" of the municipal government, as Steven Hoffman confirms.[789]

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[785] To the Honb Senate & Representatives of the State of South Carolina, Colleton Parish/District, South Carolina, Petition by I. Raven Mathews Sr. et al., December 7, 1854, Accession #11385404, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 1, Legislative Petitions. This case is also in chapter four.

[786] Missouri, Supreme Court, St. Louis: State v. Henke and Henke, October 1853, Missouri State Archives, in *Reports of Cases Argued and Decided in the Supreme Court of Missouri.* Vol. 19: 1853-1854, ed. Samuel A. Bennett (Saint Louis: Chambers & Knapp, 1855), 226-227. Interestingly, the same happened in the northern states some decades earlier. In 1801, Representative of Maryland Joseph Nicholson presented a bill as an amendment to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793. It was envisioned to impose painful fines on people hiring a black person without demanding to see their freedom papers. His suggestion was rejected by 46 to 43 votes by his northern colleagues. Fehrenbacher, *Slaveholding Republic*, 213.

[787] Fred Bateman and Thomas Weiss, *A Deplorable Scarcity: The Failure of Industrialization in the Slave Economy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 22. According to John Boles, most industries in the South were of extractive nature and therefore located somewhat away from the cities. This made it even more challenging to satisfy the high labor demands. The largest southern industry was lumbering with 16,000—mostly enslaved—laborers in 1860. The bulk of these people worked in the Great Dismal Swamp between Virginia and North Carolina, and in the swamps of Louisiana. Besides, there were slaves in gold mines in Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia, and in salt industries. (The Great Kanawha Valley in western Virginia forcefully employed more than 1,000 slaves in 1850.) John B. Boles, *Black Southerners, 1619-1869* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 118-119, 121. See also *Charleston Courier*, July 10, 1828. According to Robert Starobin, the majority of bondspeople forcedly employed in industries, labored in rural areas including plantations. Robert S. Starobin, "The Economics of Industrial Slavery in the Old South," *Business History Review* 44:2 (1970): 132.

[788] In Kimball, *American City*, 113-114.

[789] Hoffman, *Race, Class, and Power*, 18.

In other places, too, legislation suggests that running away was somewhat tolerated if the labor power was not lost to the state's economy. In Maryland, a new law of 1831 prohibited the hire, employment, or harboring of illegal free black immigrants to the state, but no mention was made of runaway slaves *from* Maryland. And although a reward of $6 for persons apprehending runaway slaves was made mandatory in 1806 and increased to $30 in 1832, by 1860 the reward was retracted if the runaways did not remove themselves a sufficient distance: "no reward shall be paid under this section for taking up any slave in the county in which said slave is hired, or in which his owner resides."[790] Additionally, from 1860 on, the commitment of an assumed runaway slave to jail was only to be announced in the Baltimore city paper. Earlier, it was also to be made public in the surrounding areas and in Washington, D.C.[791] Slave flight from Baltimore City or County did not entail a mandatory bounty that would have encouraged uninvolved persons to be on the lookout for the absconder.

This is remarkable, especially because jail records indicate that by the early 1850s, a growing number of runaways taken up in Baltimore were from the city itself.[792] It is furthermore likely that escapes of slaves from Maryland increased generally.[793] Already in 1849, slaveholders from Maryland's Eastern Shore complained that their bondspeople were fleeing in large numbers: "If something is not done, and that speedily too, there will be but few slaves remaining on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in a few years. They are running off almost daily," lamented a local master in the press. In 1856 alone, 60 slaves allegedly absconded, and another wave of escapes took place in 1858.[794] A great many of them went to the northern states, while many others went to Baltimore.

Given that businessmen were increasingly involved in municipal politics and had largely taken over local governments in some places, they also got a hold on the police as an institution of law enforcement—or non-enforcement. As chapter three has shown, the ineffectiveness and lack of commitment by police contributed to creating spaces for slave refugees to navigate. Law enforcement, to be clear, was not an autonomously operating entity. Criminal historians have claimed that the extension of public authority and public law went hand in hand with the centralization and management of the production process. The working classes came to be treated in different ways than before. The emergence of modern police in the nineteenth century was thus connected to the economic interests of the upcoming commercial elites, who saw fighting disorderly conduct as more important than crime. The definition of social and public order is not universal but imposed by those with the power to do so. In nineteenth-century American cities, these were the mercantile interests, historians have emphasized. Stressing social control before crime control, the police contributed to ensuring "a stable and orderly work force [and] a stable and orderly environment for the conduct of business […]." Policemen were therefore not foremost instructed to go after crime or criminal behavior but to surveille

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[790] Laws of Maryland, 1806, ch. 81, Vol. 192, 693; 1831, ch. 323. Vol. 141, 1068, 1115; and 1860, Art. 66, Vol. 145, 450-453, in *Absconders, Runaways and Other Fugitives in the Baltimore City and County Jail*, ed. Jerry M. Hynson (Westminster: Willow Bend Books, 2004), 51-52, 61, 67, 72.

[791] Laws of Maryland, 1860, Art. 66, Vol. 145, 450-453.

[792] Baltimore City Jail (Runaway Docket), 1836-1850, MSA.

[793] Fields, *Middle Ground*, 66-67.

[794] *Sun*, October 16, 1849; and *Cecil Whig*, July 24, 1858, in James L. Bowers (b. 1810 – d. 1882), Accomplice to Slave Flight, Kent County, Maryland, 1858, SC 5496-8991, MSA.

the working classes. By doing so, these elites also reverted the costs of protecting their businesses to the public.[795]

Having investigated the politics of slave control in Charleston, it seems like the finding that mercantile interests dominated the social order was not universal. In the urban South, the interests of slaveowners and other economic players were constantly in negotiation. Nevertheless, merchants and industrialists slowly gained the upper hand in many places, including the say over law enforcement. Answering to local politicians temporarily in charge rather than having a self-maintaining system of quality insurance, police in early America were blatantly brutal and corrupt. Many drank while on duty.[796] These conditions impacted the experiences of undocumented people. Corruption and lack of regulation could work in favor of those who were supposed to be targeted. In 1858, when New Orleans was in her sixth year with a modernized police force, the local press reprinted voices that runaway slaves were "becoming a source of very considerable trouble now." The police, however, did not regard slave refugees as part of the official tasks they were paid to perform and stated: "The police authorities contend that it is not part of their regular duty to hunt after runaway negroes." Not entirely wanting to let this source of extra income slip by, they added that "if they [the watchmen] do ferret them out, it must be done outside of their regular business, and with a view of liberal consideration."[797]

Since a bounty could motivate the police to find runaways, slaveholders constantly turned to the police to have them on the lookout for their missing slaves. And although some were apprehended, this happened on a much smaller scale than one might expect. Yet, official complaints by slaveholders were rare. Occasionally, a master would lose his patience, like A. B. Shelton, whose runaway slave Armstead Meckins was not taken up in Richmond although "he has been seen every day since" he ran off in February 1844. To incentivize the police, Shelton offered a reward of ten dollars only if Meckins would be brought back within the remaining two weeks of the month. Otherwise, he would only pay the legal fees.[798] Policemen, who were often comprised of non-slaveholding white men and, towards the later antebellum period, increasingly Irishmen, did not feel any commitment to catching other people's slaves.[799] Moreover, getting involved in slave flight could bring problems, for example, when interference occurred against the will of the slaveholder.

A court case reveals that in Richmond, Billy, a slave of Thomas Massie, was taken up for not having a pass and, according to the police, resisted his arrest and caused a disturbance on the streets. Siding with his bondsman rather than with the police, "Massie said he would sooner believe his man, than the watchmen, who were a set of worthless lazy fellows, who

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[795] Spitzer, "Rationalization of Crime Control," 190; Stephen Spitzer and Andrew Scull, "Privatization and Capitalist Development: The Case of the Private Police," *Social Problems* 25:1 (1977): 20, 23; and Potter, "History of Policing." This understanding of the police wore on into the late nineteenth century: The police "shall strictly watch the conduct of all persons of known bad character, and in such manner that it will be evident to said persons that they are watched," was the order for the Charleston police in the 1880s. *Rules and Regulations for the General Government of the Police Department of the City of Charleston* (Charleston: Walker & Evans, 1884), 29, CCPL.
[796] Potter, "History of Policing".
[797] *Daily Picayune*, October 27, 1858.
[798] Daybook of the Richmond Police Guard, February 15, 1844, UVA.
[799] Large numbers of the police force of New Orleans, as well as of other American cities, were comprised of Irishmen. The first Irish policeman started working in New Orleans around 1830. 20 years later, the Irish were the dominant group within in the department. Rousey, "Hibernian Leatherheads," 63, 69.

would take up occasionally inoffensive servants, merely to show they did something."[800] Compared to other accounts, this was harmless. Charles Torrey, a Massachusetts minister who did prison time in Baltimore for aiding slaves escape, witnessed severe corruption among the city's police. Torrey informed in a letter that he had learned that black men worked as snitches for the constables who obtained by fraud the award money for runaway slaves from their owners: "Their business is to inveigle slaves to run away, hide them up, and betray them." After the slaveholder paid, "they are ready, of course, to hand over the poor victim of their arts, and pocket the reward, besides getting praise as *very vigilant officers!*"[801]

Through corruption, disregard, and lax orders, the police contributed to the tolerance of runaway slaves in southern cities depending on who was in charge of giving the orders. They generally failed to effectively enforce laws passed on state level meant to keep free blacks and slaves separate, and to make slaves more visible to the authorities by enforcing the laws that required all black people to carry passes or free papers at all times. Non-enforcement went in this context hand in hand with ignoring the issue and it is altogether possible urban authorities essentially tolerated the presence of runaway slaves in their cities.

Labor Control and Coerced Labor

Despite the successful maneuvers of a great many freedom seekers to become invisible in the urban disorder, smaller numbers, too, did not make it and were apprehended by slave patrols, civilians, or watchmen. While black people without documentation, whose presence in the cities was overlooked, contributed to diversifying the work force, those caught were used to feed the labor regime in a different way. The rise of industries and the increasing dominance of capitalist employers changed the ways in which labor was recruited. When prices for slaves increased manifold, the individual worker became more valuable—this had an impact on runaway slaves as well as on the black population as a whole.

Court documents about slaves accused of a crime between the 1830s and the 1850s prove to be insightful regarding the perception of the profit of workers. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, bondspeople who were convicted offenders, saw their death penalties carried out in higher numbers than in later times. Enslaved people were in the early nineteenth century hung in specific places, for instance, on Penitentiary Hill outside Richmond.[802] In the 1830s, many enslaved men and women, who were in a first instance found guilty of a severe crime and condemned to be executed, had their sentence commuted by the governor to sale and transportation out of the United States.[803] With this, policymakers aimed at getting rid of slaves

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[800] Mayor's Court Docket Book, May 21, 1838, Valentine Museum, Richmond, in Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 30.

[801] Charles T. Torrey, "Letter to Mr. Alden," in J. C. Lovejoy, *Memoir of Rev. Charles T. Torrey, Who Died in the Penitentiary of Maryland Where He was Confined for Showing Mercy to the Poor* (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., 1847), 167.

[802] Executive Papers, Governor Randolph Executive Papers, Box 2, July 3, 1820, LVA. Executions of slaves were generally rare. In Virginia, there were only five slaves hanged between 1830 and 1860, and a total of 28 executed between 1804 and 1865. 377 were sold and transported from 1816 to 1842. Numbers are from Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 113; and Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 11.

[803] Slaveholders sometimes took the initiative to petition the governor to apologize for the crimes committed by their bondspeople and to commute their death penalties. So did John Macrae to prevent the execution of his slave Dick. Executive Papers, James Barbour Executive Papers, Box 3, June 25, 1796, LVA. Before transportation, the slaves were valued by an independent observer and their owners were reimbursed for the lost investment. This

deemed dangerous to public safety without forfeiting the investment in them. Exceptions were made for slaves who committed especially severe crimes.[804] Towards the late 1830s, also enslaved offenders who committed murder could be reprieved for sale and transportation. This even applied to a convicted murderer of a white man. These developments mirrored the rising prices for enslaved workers after the crisis of 1837. Since the State of Virginia officially purchased sentenced criminals from their owners, large financial loss was avoided by re-selling or forcibly employing them. In the early 1840s, George Mosby's death sentence for stealing money from his owner was reprieved for 12 months in prison and he was conveyed to the penitentiary. The governor realized that Mosby's labor force was something the state could capitalize on.[805]

In the 1850s, finally, the death penalty was hardly used and slaves were rather sentenced for sale and transportation which, in turn, was often commuted to life-long work on the public works. Slaves were by that time so valuable that the state often had to dig deep into its pockets to reimburse the owners. Pompey, sentenced to sale and transportation for killing the free black woman Elisha, received a commutation by the governor to "labour on the Public works" in the Virginia penitentiary. Several parties determined Pompey's value between $1,000 and $1,200 and his price was eventually fixed at $1,060. This amount was transferred to the son of his legal owner Patrick Roney.[806] The placement of slaves and free blacks in work camps both reflects the changing ideology behind punishments and the increasing value of black bodies.

"Internal improvement" and chain gangs were also one of the main sectors in which apprehended runaway slaves were coerced to labor. Slave refugees, who were caught but not reclaimed, and men and women suspected to be of that group were especially singled out by the growing numbers of penitentiaries and workhouses and put to work for the benefit of the state household. [807] Jail ledgers and "Committed"-advertisements give an approximate impression of this dimension. (See figure 29.) Those who were not delivered back to their owners were forced to integrate into the economic system according to the ideas of those in power.

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happened with Dandridge, Edmund, both valued at $500, and Harriet Smith, worth $300, all in 1833. Condemned Blacks Executed or Transported, January 19; April 8; August 9, 1833, LVA.

[804] This concerned, for instance, Ally. She was found guilty of causing her own child's death, sentenced to be hung, and her penalty was not commuted. Condemned Blacks Executed or Transported, February 18, 1833, LVA. Besides Ally, there were a couple of others whose sentences were not commuted for crimes including first-degree murder and grand larceny. Condemned Blacks Executed or Transported, December 2, 1833; March 28, 1835; February 16, 1836, LVA.

[805] Severe crimes, however, could still end in a death sentence, like the case of John who in 1841 was condemned to die upon being charged of attempted rape of a white woman. Condemned Blacks Executed or Transported, July 29; June 8, 1839; July 11, 1842; November 14, 1841, LVA.

[806] Condemned Blacks Executed or Transported, September 7, 1859, LVA. The same punishment expected Charles, Miles, Alberta, and Nareissa, all valued between $1,100 and $1,300. Condemned Blacks Executed or Transported, September 22; November 15, 23, 1859; April 25, 1860, LVA.

[807] Stephanie Camp has made the same observation for Mississippi. Mississippi forced them to labor on streets and public highways from 1829 on. Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 16. The chain gang was one of increasingly fewer integrated work sites in Richmond. In New Orleans, by contrast, it was all-black since 1829. Discussions about the management of convict institutions reveal that it was usually desired to maintain racially segregated facilities, yet this standard was only fulfilled when it did not render the work of the captives less efficient. In the 1850s, the Louisiana Penitentiary was for efficiency reasons leased out to a private company. Black and white convicts were officially required to work separately from one another "but the Lessees deem it impracticable by the present arrangement of work shops and yards," reported the Board of Directors. And so this practice was condoned. Walker, *No More, No More*, 29; and *Report of the Board of Directors of the Louisiana Penitentiary*, HML.

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Figure 29: Runaways Committed to the State Depot, in *The Daily Advocate*, April 18, 1959.

Testifying to the involvement of slave refugees in the New Orleans chain gang, visitor Alfred Wilkinson from New York stated:

> I stayed in New Orleans three weeks: during that time there used to pass by where I stayed a number of slaves, each with an iron band around his ankle, a chain attached to it, and an eighteen pound ball at the end. They were employed in wheeling dirt with a wheelbarrow; they would put the ball into the barrow when they moved.—I recollect one day, that I counted nineteen of them, sometimes there were not as many; they were driven by a slave, with a long lash, as if they were beasts. These, I learned, were runaway slaves from the plantations above New Orleans."[808]

In order to guard against possible claims of slaveowners whose property absconded while working for the city, the First Municipality added in 1838: "Resolved, That when slaves detained in the police jail, are employed in any of the works of the Municipality [...], the owner or owners of said slaves, shall not in any instance have the right to complaint against this Municipality on account of running away."[809]

Louisiana was the state that capitalized most visibly on the capture of freedom seekers. In 1857, a runaway slave depot was opened in the capital of Baton Rouge with the purpose of storing all captured refugees in a centralized spot.[810] The official rhetoric advocated through

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[808] Theodore Dwight Weld (ed.), *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), 75.

[809] *Journal of the First Municipality of the City of New Orleans*, August 6, 1838, LaRC. In Louisiana, it was already under Spanish rule that captured runaway slaves whose owners were unknown became the property of the Royal Treasury. Din, *Spaniards, Planters, and Slaves*, 199.

[810] *Annual Report of the State Engineer to the Legislature of the State of Louisiana*, 24. Prior to 1857, the Police jail of Baton Rouge already functioned as a centralized prison for runaways. All slave refugees detained in county jails throughout the state were to be delivered to Baton Rouge if not claimed by their owners after two months.

the legislature to make life easier for slaveholders who now did not have to scan all county jails separately in search for their property. Yet behind this stood a massive apparatus of distributing extremely cheap labor to state-sponsored and state-owned projects. If unclaimed, these people became property of the state after 12 months and were mostly used for construction projects and internal improvement.[811] Already in 1817, the City Council of New Orleans had issued an ordinance stating that "all such male slaves as have been brought to the police jail, and have not been claimed within three days" were to be put in the chain gang. Indeed, all runaways were foreseen to labor on the public works unless indicated otherwise. In 1840, also female slaves who were not claimed within five days, and "who are capable to work, shall be employed at the works of the city."[812] These observations connect to historian Rashauna Johnson's argument that the New Orleans penal system served "to remove from the urban landscape those persons who threatened the interests of the local planter and merchant elite and to use their labor to build local infrastructure."[813]

The employment of refugees in public works and the protection against legal claims of the owners sound as if city and state authorities had an incentive to catch as many escapees from slavery as they could. Yet, the system was far from being optimized and they faced a number of obstacles in exploiting the labor power of black people. An important issue was that authorities faced major administrative challenges in dealing with runaways. They had to be careful not to infringe the legal ownership of slaveholders because the legal system was liable to protect private ownership. The responsibility to pay the jail fees was a constant nuisance between private slaveholders, jailers, and authorities; the involvement of jailers and sheriffs had to be administered; and jails and penitentiaries regularly struggled with financial issues, which raised doubts about their effectiveness and efficiency.

Petitions and court cases provide insight. It often occurred that runaway slaves were apprehended and advertised, but not claimed by anyone. In a number of cases, they stayed in jail so long that the costs for their confinement exceeded the sum they were sold for. In the 1820s, after remaining confined for 402 days in the county jail of Caroline County, Virginia, the fees for Sam amounted to $124. Since Sam was, according to the jailer, "infirm & crippled," he was sold for $78.40.[814] The jailer of Abbeville District, South Carolina, was in 1856 "bound to receive" a senior enslaved woman called Daffney [Daphney] who was committed as a runaway. After being jailed for twelve months, advertised, and offered for sale, it turned out that nobody took an interest in purchasing her since she was, according to the jailer, "very old + utterly worthless." The expenses of the jailer piled up to $131.62, including $10 for the year-

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Meinrad Greiner (ed.), *The Louisiana Digest, Embracing the Laws of the Legislature of a General Nature, Enacted from the Year 1804 to 1841, Inclusive, and in Force at this Last Period. Also, an Abstract of the Decisions of the Supreme Court of Louisiana on the Statutory Law, Arranged under the Appropriate Articles in the Digest.* Vol. I (New Orleans: Benjamin Levy, 1841), 518.

[811] *The Daily Advocate,* October 18, 1855; and *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana.* First Session – Twelfth Legislature, March 27, 1835, HML.

[812] *Journal of the First Municipality of the City of New Orleans*, June 22; August 24, 1840, LaRC. The death rates on the public works were immense. "Fellow Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives," Speech by A. Mouton, January 1, 1844, *Official Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana*. Second Session – Sixteenth Legislature, Journals House of Representatives Louisiana, HML.

[813] Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis*, 127.

[814] John T. Rawlins to the Honorable Members of the Legislature of Virginia, January 6, 1824, Caroline County, Virginia, Accession #11682405, Legislative Petitions, VSA, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 1, Legislative Petitions, LOC.

long "Committed"-ad in the paper to which he was legally obligated.[815] It also happened frequently that the owners of jailed refugees could not be located. When in 1818 runaway Jim died in jail after 170 days, the jailer of Kershaw Parish, South Carolina, sought reimbursement for the expenditures for lodging, medicine, and the burial.[816]

Expenses that outran the returns of imprisonment of failed freedom seekers were also an issue in Louisiana. In the 1840s, the keeper of the runaway slave depot in Baton Rouge, Benjamin Bryan, faced the problem that "five runaway slaves belonging to five different individuals whose names are given and who reside in the State, died in the jail of which he is the keeper, without having been claimed by their owners." Since the respective slaveowners did not pay "any part of their expense," he petitioned to the House of Representatives "to remunerate him for the outlay to which he has been subjected on account of the said negroes: wherefore the petitioner claims from the state the sum of $544 85 cts., as per account, for keeping, feeding, clothing and burying said negroes, as well as for the Doctor's bill." This appeared to happen frequently and a committee was convened to look into the matter. Citing the sum of $869.19 which had been paid in the past four years in the context of similar claims, the committee came to the conclusion to recommend the House not to comply with Bryan's or future requests: "If the State indulged in the liberality of paying" for the accommodation of slaves in jails, "merely because the owners of the slaves are unknown, or, if known, refuse to acknowledge the claims presented to them, your committee are of [the] opinion that such a system of appropriation and remunerations would require all the resources of an inexhaustible treasury."[817]

The treasuries of Maryland confronted additional expenditures. Unlike in other states, if black persons was jailed as a runaway, but later believed to be free, they were to be released and the expenses were levied on the county. This act was passed in 1817. In 1824, the General Assembly complained "that Baltimore county is subjected to great annual expense on account of negroes being committed to the jail of that county, on suspicion of being runaway slaves."[818] The law, however, remained unchanged until the Civil War. On the one hand, it made sense in combination with another law of the same year which declared the burden of proving that a black person was a slave to be on the side of the accuser.[819] In almost all other southern states, it was up to the alleged runaways to prove that they were free. On the other hand, both 1817 laws are surprising giving that they dramatically increased the public expenditures of the counties. The logical consequence was that Baltimore police reduced the frequency of the apprehension of people they assumed to be escapees from slavery.

The decline of slavery in Maryland did not catch those in power by surprise. When the attitudes towards black work began to shift, they found their own ways to secure cheap labor. In Baltimore, legislation stipulated that black people who did not work in the service of white

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[815] Petition by Benjamin J. Cochran, Jailer of Abbeville District, Petition and Supporting Papers Asking Compensation for Tending to Daphney, a Runaway Slave, Whose Master Has Not Claimed Her, and Who Could Not Be Sold Due to Old Age, 1857, SCDAH.

[816] To the Honorable the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives of the Said State, Kershaw Parish/District, South Carolina, Petition by William Love, November 1820, Accession #11382001, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 1, Legislative Petitions.

[817] *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana.* First Session – Seventeenth Legislature, February 3, 1845, HML.

[818] Ch. 171, Laws of 1824, in Runaway Docket, Baltimore City and County, Guide to Government Records, MSA.

[819] Laws of Maryland, 1817, ch. 112, MSA.

economic interests could be apprehended and forced to work and their children could be bound out as apprentices. Moreover, the Maryland penitentiary routinely raised its minimum terms for free African Americans. In 1817, it was one year, in 1825 two years, and in 1839 18 months.[820] Penitentiaries were opened in 1800 in Richmond, in 1811 in Baltimore, and in 1835 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. South Carolina did not have such a correctional institution before the Civil War. In Maryland, the inmates engaged in the manufacture of cotton and woolen goods, boot and shoemaking, carpet weaving, and stone cutting. They also lend their labor to commercial manufacturers.[821] Reports and business insights show that the efficiency of these punitive institutions varied from place to place. With an average return of $53.48 per inmate beyond the expenses of maintenance in 1842, the Maryland penitentiary yielded substantial profits.[822] By contrast, policy makers in Louisiana struggled over decades to render its prison cost-efficient, a project that continued to fail even after the later privatization of the institution.[823]

The coerced integration of runaway slaves and other illegal black Americans cannot be interpreted detached from the developments of the prisons, penitentiaries, and workhouses in the nineteenth century. Although the first penitentiaries were established in the northern states, southerners found inspiration and promising prospects in them and were quick to follow. The background to this "revolution in social practice," as David Rothman has called this development, was the idea not to punish criminals but rather to rehabilitate them, educate them accordingly, and subsequently return them to society.[824] Analyzing the advent of the American penitentiary in the context of slavery, Adam Hirsch pointed out striking similarities between the two, including the subordination of the subjects to overseers, a lack of political rights, a top-down daily routine, dependence of the subjects on food and shelter, isolation from the outside world, and coerced work. Visible markers were furthermore a distinct garb and chains.[825]

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[820] Laws of Maryland, 1831, ch. 323, Vol. 141, 1068, in *Absconders, Runaways and Other Fugitives in the Baltimore City and County Jail*, ed. Jerry M. Hynson (Westminster: Willow Bend Books, 2004), 61; and Wright, *Free Negro in Maryland*, 133. In theory, the idea of apprenticeships was to teach children a trade or professional skills. African American children, however, were almost always misused as *de facto* slaves. Latimore, "Closer to Slavery," 120.

[821] Virginia Department of Corrections, Brief History, URL: https://vadoc.virginia.gov/about/history.shtm, accessed March 21, 2019; Maryland State Penitentiary, MSA SC 5496-30976, Jail, Baltimore City, Maryland, MSA,
URL: https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5400/sc5496/030900/030976/html/030976bio.html, accessed March 21, 2019; *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Louisiana*. First Session – Twelfth Legislature, January 5, 1835, *Journals House of Representatives Louisiana*, HML; and *The Constitution of South Carolina, Adopted April 16, 1868, and the Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly, Passed at the Special Session of 1868, Together with the Military Orders Therein Re-Enacted* (Columbia: John W. Denny, 1868), 92-93.

[822] The surplus was reached despite the decrease of the number of inmates from 395 in 1836 to 306 in 1841. Daniel H. Craig, *Craig's Business Directory and Baltimore Almanac; for 1842.* Published Annually (Baltimore: J. Robinson, 1842), 91, MSA.

[823] Those in charge asked for advice from other penitentiaries which seemed to work more efficiently. "Fellow Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives," Speech by A. Mouton, January 1, 1844, HML.

[824] David J. Rothman, *Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1971), xiii, xviii-xix.

[825] Adam J. Hirsch, *The Rise of the Penitentiary. Prisons and Punishment in Early America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), 71-73. Convict labor became even more important after the abolition of slavery. In the South, every state practiced convict leasing, a system in which private employers could rent prisoners. Talitha LeFlouria, *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). A central reference for the penal systems in the Western world is Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

Penitentiaries were a systematic attempt to extract labor from people who were considered exploitable. These included refugees, who essentially were slaves without owners. Yet, also free black people were by some white southerners considered slaves without owners. (See chapter one.) Consequently, those who were found without documentation, or apprehended for committing a crime, were held and worked in state penitentiaries and on the public works. Their targeting was legally and politically less complicated because authorities did not clash with slaveholders' prerogative to make exclusive use of their bondspeople's physical labor power. Comprehensive legal restrictions rendered people without documentation particularly vulnerable. The extreme criminalization of free African Americans and the discriminatory social and economic conditions they faced facilitated their imprisonment.[826]

At times, white citizens articulated their understanding of the penitentiaries' labor as being foreseen for the "common good." In 1825, "The Memorial of the Richmond & Manchester auxilliary Society for Colonizing in Africa," a branch of the American Colonization Society, suggested to the Virginia General Assembly "to furnish the emigrants with a few articles of coarse clothing, with farming utensils, and with such other articles manufactured in the State Penitentiary."[827] The petitioners' position was largely in line with that of employers who regarded the labor power of poor people as the property of society as a whole, another ideology that disadvantaged black people.[828] In a more extreme case, African American children were sold for the "common good." Based on the reports of the Louisiana Penitentiary, the penitentiary sold black children who were held as inmates. In 1853, for example, they sold the "Negro boy Joseph," who had arrived at the penitentiary when he was ten years old. Joseph "brought the price of eight hundred dollars," money which was handed over to the treasurer. The same happened to a girl named Angeline, who was sold as a slave. Tellingly, the returns of the sale of black children were to be placed in the school fund to benefit white children.[829]

A growing obsession with the commodification of labor and the demand for very cheap workers spurred the widespread belief that persons who withdrew their labor power damaged society at large.[830] Wealthy planters and their wives were naturally excluded from this maxim. And so, even inmates in poorhouses, in essence intended to relieve people not capable of working (anymore), were expected to execute certain tasks like cracking stones to make macadam, spinning and weaving, and building coffins. In Charleston, the records of the poorhouse reveal that between 1834 and 1840, it sometimes admitted enslaved and free black

[826] Barbara Fields, in this context, has noted that the control of the free black population equaled the control of the work force. Fields, *Middle Ground*, 71. Contemporary politicians also voiced that black people ended up disproportionally in prisons and penitentiaries. Speech by W. M. Smith, *Journal of the House of Delegates of Virginia. Session 1846-1847* (Richmond: Manuel Shepherd, 1846), 10, LVA. In the North, the number of black people contained in penitentiaries was likewise disproportionate to their numbers in society. Hirsch, *Rise of the Penitentiary*, 74.

[827] John G. Gamble to the Delegates and Senators of the Legislature of Virginia, in General Assembly Convened, January 1825, Richmond City, Virginia, Richmond City, Virginia, Accession #11682502, Legislative Petitions, VSA, Race and Slavery Petitions Project, Series 1, Legislative Petitions, LOC.

[828] Rockman, "Unfree Origins," 354.

[829] *Report of the Board of Directors of the Louisiana Penitentiary* (New Orleans: Emile La Sere, 1854), Report for the year 1853, HML.

[830] The South must not be viewed as closed container. The late antebellum measures against the poor had a national, and even international, context. Edward Ayers has made up urban southern leaders as very cosmopolitan actors and stressed their cultural ties to northern reformers. Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice. Crime and Punishment in the 19th-Century American South* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 55.

persons when the workhouse had no capacities for them.[831] Thus, it sheltered besides needy whites a smaller number of black women (and seldom men), and all inmates were expected to work unless they were incapacitated.

Local and state governments coerced refugees from slavery and criminalized people to labor, they rented slaves from private owners, and they held their own enslaved laborers, who they also hired out. The federal government, too, made use of this form of labor. George Teamoh worked as a young man at the Navy Yard in Norfolk as a "water bearer and common laborer." When he was older, he was again hired as a caulker. Testifying to the involvement of the US Government in southern slavery, Teamoh stated that "above hundred, if not thousands of slaves [were] employed on the government works" in and around Norfolk in the 1840s.[832] The city government of Richmond employed slaves to pave the streets, clean and maintain the Capitol grounds, remove trash, and as sanitarian laborers (especially during epidemics.)[833] These tasks were the lowest, dirtiest, and most dangerous.

Although plantation slavery was a most brutal work regime, it would be too simple to claim that enslaved people had little to lose and that, if caught, the labor on the public works, in the chain gangs, or penitentiaries and workhouses was not much worse than working in bondage. As we have seen, most freedom seekers in southern cities were not plantation hands, they were carriage drivers, hucksters, washerwomen, tradesmen, or caulkers. Although in the cities the majority must have worked under the never-ending pressure of making enough money to make ends meet, the highly repressive, physically dangerous, and isolated work regime of the correction houses was at least as unbearable as the most violent plantations. The labor power of a slave refugee was in no event lost to white society. When they succeeded at blending in with the urban black populations, they deliberately integrated in the lower sectors of the labor markets. In the fewer cases that they were caught, they were either sent back to labor for their owners or forcefully employed by the state or local governments. In any case, the changing attitudes towards black labor culminated in the late 1850s in a situation that for the first time negatively impacted southern cities of refuge.

The Power of Democracy

Those caught and forcibly employed were, as we know, only a small part of the refugee population. Because urban antebellum employers implicitly accommodated runaway slaves by employing them without asking questions and government institutions capitalized on their labor, municipal authorities felt increasing pressure from the state and surrounding counties to tackle the runaway slave "problem." Yet, they were generally incapable and unwilling to locate or round up the vast majority of refugees. Especially for small slaveholders, who ran farms with just a handful of slaves, or urban masters with only one or two enslaved servants, the loss of a slave meant a significant financial reversal. As the class of small slaveholders grew, they gained a louder voice in legislative bodies and demanded that slave flight be tackled. Parallel to that,

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[831] Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, "Social Structure and the Potential for Urban Change: Boston and Charleston in the 1830s," *Journal of Urban History* 8 (1982): 185; and Charleston Poor House Commissioners, *Report on the Free Colored Poor* (Charleston, 1842), 3-12, in Idem," 194, FN 41.
[832] Teamoh, *God Made Man*, 82-83.
[833] Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 79.

non-slaveholding whites grew more assertive in their resistance towards black competition in the labor markets.

White mechanics wrote countless petitions to state and city authorities to ask for actions be taken against the competition with enslaved and free African Americans. The Maryland legislature was swamped with petitions by white residents which had the aim of driving black people out of certain occupations. None of them was granted but one from 1827, which demanded to exclude people of African descent from the transportation sector, was of special interest, because it provoked Baltimore merchants to file a counterpetition, as stated by Leonard Curry.[834] The reason was that employers insisted on their right to choose their workers based on their own calculations. Even the city government at times preferred cheaper black over more expensive white labor. After the crisis of 1837, for instance, Charleston mayor Henry L. Pinckney recommended such money-saving measures for the public works.[835] In a similar fashion, mechanics in Charleston, "suffering under the distress incident to the situation of those who have to live by their labor," petitioned to be relieved from the "competition of Negro and Colored Workmen, whether Bond or Free." Claiming that their situation had become direr in the previous years and that they struggled to provide for their families, these men asked to more forcefully execute the laws prohibiting the self-hiring of slaves. *Nota bene*, this was not the first time they asked, and they reminded the Senate that they already had been "disappointed in their hopes."[836]

The disappointment that resonated in this petition was not exceptional nor confined to Charleston. Scholars have likewise pointed to inefficient execution of laws in other places. In Virginia, there were only 124 cases of free African Americans residing illegally in the state between 1830 and 1860. Measures like compelling hired-out slaves to wear badges were not enforced, like in New Orleans. Slave patrols, police guards, and night watches were usually understaffed and underpaid, showing that it was not considered a priority.[837] The vast majority of the countless petitions to state and municipal legislatures remained fruitless. More interesting than the numerous petitions by white mechanics is the fact that legislatures for most part of the antebellum era did not positively respond to these motions; the majority was neglected. This made runaway slaves and other undocumented African Americans beneficiaries of the illegal labor market since it secured their employment, and hence survival, and safeguarded their anonymity.

These diverging interests were less visible in earlier times when slaveholding was more concentrated in the hands of a few families. The planter class and the upcoming capitalist middle class were those with most economic and political power albeit their respective strengths varied, as introduced above, over time and space. In order to understand the struggles for and the clashes of power, it is useful to look at the different attitudes towards black and white labor, enslaved labor, free black people, and undocumented people. In Charleston, for example, planters defended the institution of slavery rigorously and unrelentingly and did not shy away

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[834] Curry, *Free Black*, 17.

[835] Thompson, *Working on the Dock*, 96.

[836] Besides lamenting their own situation, the petitioners also warned that the heavy competition with slaves scared off "those who would be willing to become Tradesmen." To the Honorable the President and Members of the Senate of S. Carolina, Petition of Sundry Mechanics of the City of Charleston, n. d., S165015, Petitions to the General Assembly, SCDAH.

[837] Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 156; and Le Glaunec, "Slave Migrations," 223-225.

from acting destructively to their own economy. Due to the backward technology at Charleston's wharves, enslaved labor power was in higher demand than it would have been otherwise. It seemed like the insistence on urban slavery conflicted with the introduction of efficient innovations and underlined the power of slaveholders over merchants. Slaveholders were further supported by artisans of which many owned slaves, too.[838] Nevertheless, urban slavery was never as strong as agricultural slavery and throughout the South, attitudes fluctuated towards who should constitute the laboring classes.

In the 1820s, former South Carolina Governor Thomas Pinckney supported free white workers in their fight against enslaved competitors. This was surprising given that Pinckney was a planter and slaveholder himself. Yet, he spoke out against the omnipresence of enslaved labor in Charleston. If employers hired white labor instead, they "would not have to maintain the superannuated, the infirm, or the indolent, who are now so heavy a tax on the proprietor," he claimed. Rather, they would "contract for efficient service" and pick a specific worker with the specific skills he needed on a specific day. And, "if the person employed, should be incapable or unwilling to perform, he would be discharged, and a more suitable subject engaged."[839] Pinckney's argument, in a nutshell, was that wage work was more efficient because hirers did not have to pay for the externalities of labor. Eventually, he did not manage to convince sufficient supporters.[840] This is hardly surprising in the light of Manisha Sinha's research. She has shown that South Carolina was very exceptional in its relation with the institution of slavery. South Carolina planters crafted the most anti-democratic society of all American states and fiercely insisted on slavery as a way of life. Immigrants and free African American posed a threat, an "internal free-labor challenge to slavery," as Sinha puts it.[841] Even more striking, Pinckney's idea to restrict slave labor to rural areas, however, showed his realistic assessment of the urban environment, which did not have to depend on slavery.[842]

His pioneering arguments were taken up again later when southern cities became more populated with white residents and the share of slaveholders among the southern population fell. Historians have argued that in the 1850s, the national economy grew more complex and local politics had to correspond more to regional and national concerns. At the same time, cities

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[838] Berlin and Gutman, "Urban Workingmen," 1185. Jennifer Goloboy has added that the image of Charleston merchants was rather negative. The War of 1812 had a bad impact on merchants because international commerce suffered. Some branches and even the image of the merchant carried away lasting damages. Jennifer Goloboy, *Charleston and the Emergence of Middle-Class Culture in the Revolutionary Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016), 93, 96. It should be added that this assessment is not a black-and-white picture. Mercantile companies also owned or hired slaves.

[839] Pinckney, *Reflections*, 19.

[840] Thompson, *Working on the Dock*, 99-100.

[841] South Carolina planters went so far as to fight for the reopening of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the 1850s. Manisha Sinha, *The Counterrevolution of Slavery: Politics and Ideology in Antebellum South Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 1-2, 135.

[842] A few examples point to reverse developments of white labor taking over. In Richmond, the great exception of this study, tobacco manufacturers employed free black men, white women, enslaved women and men, and children during the first half of the antebellum period. By 1840, enslaved men comprised the majority of tobacco factory workers, in some places there constituted the exclusive work force. However, tobacco did not constitute for the entire economy of the city and, similar to other places, the numbers of foreign-born laborers grew by 166 percent from 1850 to 1860. Gregg Kimball has claimed that Joseph Anderson, for instance, owner of the Tredegar Iron Works, experienced difficulties in controlling a white labor force, yet by 1860, he commanded more than 700 white workers together with 80 slaves. Still, he held a disdain for foreigners. Takagi, *Rearing Wolves*, 26, 86; and Kimball, *American City*, xxi, 19, 167. Accounts like these complicate our understanding of dominant society's attitude towards the laboring classes.

became more powerful and local leaders formed associations to present their interests on state level.[843] Yet, political speeches show that the question of who was to form the laboring classes in southern cities was complicated by the fact that throughout the South, different voices spoke in favor and against either black or white labor at different times. In the 1850s, Colonel C. W. Jacobs, member of the House of Delegates in Maryland, who strongly opposed "free negroism" and evoked the terrors of Haiti, claimed in 1859 that there were "in all our large cities and towns, enough poor and needy whites to perform the little handy jobs that free negroes monopolise." Jacobs' view of black people was that "*Some of them* are industrious, but the vast majority are so much dead weight upon the State and her resources."[844] In the same year, the Convention of Maryland Slaveholders

> came to the conclusion that it was highly inexpedient to undertake any measure for the general removal of our free black population from the State. […] Their removal from the State would deduct nearly 50 per cent from the household and agricultural labor furnished by people of this color, […] would produce great discomfort and inconvenience to the great body of householders, would break up the business and destroy the property of large numbers of land-owners and land-renters.

Showing no interest in removing free African Americans from the state anymore, the committee concluded that it would be better to "make these people orderly, industrious and productive."[845] Thomas H. Hicks, governor of Maryland from 1858 to 1862, also made clear that free blacks who worked were not the problem, especially not "in her populous city [Baltimore], and in the more thickly settled portions of the State." Being a unionist as well as an anti-abolitionist, Hicks, voicing his opinion against immigrants in the fashion of the Know-Nothing party, chose to divide the foreign and native working classes.[846] The American, or Know-Nothing, Party, was outspokenly nativist, anti-Catholic, and geared against immigration. In a nutshell, it was the party of commerce and the fear of slaveholders was that the Know-Nothing would at same point be able to mobilize a white majority that did not share their involvement in the institution of slavery.[847]

The 1850s were indeed a period in which lower-class whites were politically very active, in cities much more strongly than in rural areas. Even recently arrived immigrants were mobilized by political parties. White poverty in this decade was increasing in a great many southern cities. Counting thousands of wage laborers, immigrants often constituted the majority of white adult men. Parallel to the dominance of capitalist interests, especially in Baltimore and Richmond, lower-class whites discovered the political power of the masses and did their best to influence politics to their own advantage. Historian Michael Thompson confirms these claims for Charleston, where stevedores first became increasingly white and then increasingly active in political, economic, and labor debates. Also other white workingman gained access to

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[843] Hoffman, *Race, Class, and Power*, 21-22; and Sinha, *Counterrevolution*, 135.

[844] Col. C. W. Jacobs, *The Free Negro Question in Maryland* (Baltimore: John W. Woods, 1859), 12-13, 15, MSA.

[845] *Sun*, 10 June 1859.

[846] The Inaugural Address of Thomas H. Hicks, Governor of Maryland, delivered in the Senate Chamber, at Annapolis, Wednesday, January 13, 1858, MSA; and Frank F. White, Jr., *The Governors of Maryland 1777-1970* (Annapolis: Hall of Records Commission, 1970), 153-157.

[847] Fields, *Middle Ground*, 58-59. On the Know-Nothing Party, see Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery*.

local and, later, state institutions.[848] Politically, European immigrants became relatively strong because they knew how to organize themselves—and were allowed to. On a social level, they relied a lot on their inter-ethnic networks. German residents in Richmond had their own German-language newspaper and formed their own singing societies. The Irish founded fraternal organizations. By doing so, they established forums for political discussion which aimed at benefitting their own kind. Importantly, a major interest which German and Irish newcomers shared was a keenness to become Americans.[849]

As historians have noted, contrary to other places where class struggles encompassed issues of power, exploitation, and justice, in the United States all of these themes ranked second below the dominant topic of race. Immigrants realized this upon arrival, yet being white did not prevent one from drudgery. As a newcomer in this society, it was important to position oneself on the right side of the racial divide.[850] Independent of whether they ever came to endorse slavery on a personal level, the political priority for immigrants was to broadcast their potential to be good American citizens. Their political awareness was channeled through participation by voting. Although visitors like Alexis de Tocqueville were struck by the "equality of conditions" they observed in the United States,[851] democratization of the political and the civil spheres did not improve the material conditions of the lower classes.

Lower-class whites were left behind and, as Frank Towers has argued, cities like New Orleans and Baltimore posed a threat to white unity precisely because the condition of white wage earners in a society dominated by slavery was unique. Especially the contradictions between democracy and the hierarchies produced by racial slavery loomed large. From the point of view of traditional pro-slavery nationalists, the largest cities of the South housed their political enemies.[852] The involvement of working-class and lower middle-class whites is key to understanding the moves against black city dwellers. Unlike capitalist employers, they saw a social nuisance and an actual economic problem in free and enslaved people of African heritage. By a certain point, their concerns could no longer be ignored by the authorities.

Nineteenth-century democracy was, according to Eric Hobsbawm, "the growing role of the common man in the affairs of state." Yet "from the point of view of ruling classes the important thing was not what 'the masses' believed, but that their beliefs now counted in politics."[853] As a consequence, white society became more heterogeneous and every group had to be given the impression that their political voice was taken into account. Especially the middle classes, who insisted on representative governments, and the lower classes, whose mobilization promised vast numbers, had to be accommodated.[854] Slave refugees were an

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[848] Members of the lower classes did not succeed at accessing all levels of the government. Grand juries, for instance, remained dominated by slaveholders. Thompson, *Working on the Dock*, 21, 119. See also FN 125.

[849] Naragon, "Ballots, Bullets, and Blood," 17.

[850] Barbara J. Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction. Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*, ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 143; and Rockman, *Scraping By*, 14.

[851] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. Translated by Henry Reeve, Esq. With an Original Preface and Notes by John C. Spencer. Fourth Edition Vol. II (New York: J. & H. G. Langley; Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwaite, & Co.; and Boston: C. C. Little & J. Brown, 1841), 1.

[852] Frank Towers, *The Urban South and the Coming of the Civil War* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 1, 4; and Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 48.

[853] Hobsbawm, *Age of Capital*, 98.

[854] Idem, 99, 104.

obvious target because they presented a reason of resentment for large parts of the voting society.

However, refugees were hard to locate because they often successfully assimilated to the urban African American populations. For those in power in the cities, it was more practical to go after undocumented residents in general. Their numbers were much larger and they legally did not belong to individual whites. In 1853, Joseph Mayo was the first popularly-elected mayor of Richmond. Under his administration, illegal free black residents were systematically arrested, imprisoned, and forced to work, as shown above. In his logic, this was only consistent. On taking office, Mayo promised to intensify control over black Richmonders and to "make Negroes and mulattos know their places and obey the law."[855] Besides providing cheap labor for private employers, these moves also demonstrated to the public that the mayor was acting against the large illegal free black population that constituted an economic threat to practically every social group that had the right to vote, except for the industrialist—who largely corresponded to the city's political elite.

Next to the concentration on runaways and "criminals," the targeting of free black people and the diversification of the forced labor force was also a reaction to the self-sustained growth of the free African American population and the number of people trying to free themselves contrary to law. Different groups came up with different ideas to counteract these processes. Citizens from Buckingham County, Virginia, communicated their fear of black people in 1831 and at the same time presented a plan to continuously be able to exploit their labor. Following an idea that dated back to Thomas Jefferson, they petitioned to put newborns to industrious occupation until they came of proper age, and then deport them out of the country.[856] Those in power, however, had a subtler plan. In a revealing study, Carey Latimore analyzed how legally manumitted but illegally in the state residing free African Americans and their offspring in Richmond were systematically tracked in times of labor shortage, jailed, and hired out for exceptionally low wages in order to pay off their jail fees.[857]

In earlier decades, people without documentation were also occasionally taken up. The records of the Richmond City Sergeant show that black people were apprehended for "going at large and want of free papers." Most were able to pay off the jail fees for the time they were being held captive. John Tale, for example, jailed on April 6, 1841, was able to prove his freedom, and was released on April 14 after paying $3.79. Anderson Freeman was captured by warrant of Francis Wicker. Freeman was sent to the city jail on April 22 and did not succeed at getting out until May 17. By then, his jail fees had risen to $10.17. In an extreme case, Sarah Ann Farro remained captive for 226 days. In the end she (or somebody else) paid the costs of $85.39. Others defaulted. Lucy Briggs, apprehended on November 22, 1841, proved her free status on April 19 of the following year. Six days later she nevertheless was hired out at the Old Market at public auction; probably because her jail fees were not paid. Ellen Banister was hired out for two years and eight months, and Jim Finney for the period of ten years. The reason for which these durations of forced labor were so long was that the Richmond City Hustings Court accepted daily hiring rates of as little as ten cents. Black people unable to prove their freedom

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[855] *Richmond Dispatch*, September 3, October 11, December 3, 1853, in Campbell, *Slavery on Trial*, 28.
[856] Petition by Citizens from Buckingham County, December 13, 1831, Legislative Petitions, LVA.
[857] Latimore, "Closer to Slavery."

were sold.[858] In these events, escapees from slavery sometimes ended up in the police's net as "by-catch."

The criminalization of African Americans rendered their subsequent incarceration and forced labor easier and more acceptable. The Society of Friends observed these procedures in 1844. It warned that free black Richmonders without papers were regularly apprehended, jailed, and sold, and their children held in perpetual service. The Society claimed that the punishment was disproportionate to the offence committed.[859] These political measures benefitted the social group of small-scale slaveholders, small merchants, and middle-class craftsmen who could either not afford to buy or hire slaves, or were disproportionally affected by slave flight, as well as other employers who sought to decrease their labor costs. Latimore, counting about 600 such cases between 1850 and 1860 in Richmond, has identified tobacco processors (partly from wealthy families) and artisans among those hiring discount workers. He has stressed that "this kind of labor relation reduced the willingness of the nominal masters to assume any responsibilities for the hirelings' well-being. Not being white, they could not sue against abuse, not being enslaved, they did not present a long-term investment. Conversely, those renting criminalized coerced workers from the municipality, "had every incentive to push [them] to the limit to extract as much labour as possible."[860]

An observation which backs up these conclusions is that during phases of a strong economy with high demand for unskilled labor, the arrest and forced hiring-out of undocumented black Richmonders was frequent. After the Panic of 1857, which negatively affected the manufacturing business, police also arrested fewer African Americans for lack of identification. In 1858, 29 criminalized blacks were hired out, a year later, it was only 22, and in 1860, 11. Such measures may have constituted a legal assault on the free black population of Richmond but in practice, from the 1840s on, efforts by the city authorities to genuinely try to keep black people out of Richmond proved half-hearted at best, as also Latimore has concluded.[861] While the labor demands of urban employers could render the lives of those caught in the trap unbearable, for many more the unofficial tolerance of black immigrants, undocumented residents, and slave refugees likewise offered opportunities.

Throughout the South, hitherto sporadic measures against the undocumented became systemic in the last decade before the Civil War. Especially the spikes of arrests of the years 1857 to 1860 corresponded with acute fear and frustration among white residents due to economic crises and too crowded labor markets. Mayors, even if not affiliated with the Democratic Party, saw themselves responsible for pleasing their non-traditional base. Municipal authorities in other cities likewise undertook steps that served the double purpose to alarm the African American communities and to signal lower middle- and lower-class whites that something was being done to target people who they saw as thorn in the eye. For example, in Charleston, despite the many slaveholders who purchased badges and filled the trove of the city treasurer, significant numbers did not. In 1859, after decades of white tradesmen and laborers complaining about the issue, the mayor decided to set an example. Lamenting that "the procuring of badges for slaves is a matter very much neglected by parties having servants to

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[858] Richmond (Va.), City Sergeant, Mss 3R415661, Section 1, Register 1841-1846, VHS; and Latimore, "Closer to Slavery," 119.

[859] Petition by Society of Friends, December 31, 1844, Legislative Petitions, LVA.

[860] Latimore, "Closer to Slavery," 120-121, 124, 127.

[861] Idem.

hire," the city authorities started to fill the dead letter with life and instructed the police "to rigidly enforce the ordinance."[862]

Table 8: Selected Arrests in Charleston, 1858-1860[863]

	Runaways		Slaves without pass		Improper ticket		Working without badge		Non-payment capitation tax	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Dec. 1858	9	2	10		4		1			
Feb. 1859	12	1	16	2	3	1				
March	6		16	3	2	1	13	3	2	1
April	14	2			5		7	8	1	3
June	15	2	8	1	4	1	5	1	4	7
July	10	5	14	3	12				2	
August	13	6			10	1		3		
September	15	2	10		2	1				
October	13	3	11		7	2				
November	10		**20**		11	2	11	3	4	3
December	5	3	**21**	8	8		8	2	**12**	**20**
Jan. 1860	*		**15**	6	*				*	
February	11	2	**19**	1	5	1			°	
March	9	2	**21**	2	10	2				
April	9	3	**20**	8	13	2	**14**	**13**	3	
May	~	4	**23**	3	7		**17**	**28**	8	17
June	16	4	**18**	5			**12**	**20**	9	16
July	17	4	7	4	7		**9**	**31**	6	14
August	9	3	12	4	4		**39**	**54**	5	10
September	9	1	**19**	5				2		
October	7	5	**20**	4	9	1	6			

*illegible one-digit number
°illegible
~illegible two-digit number

As table 8 shows, higher numbers of arrests of people who worked without badges in November and December underlined the—surely unexpected—commitment to enforce the law. This enforcement affected bondspeople, slaveowners, and those without official documentation. An article in a local paper informed in December that "Scarcely a day passes that some owner has not to pay the penalty incurred for this neglect." The penalty referred to was indeed delicate: "The fine imposed for one omission would pay for a badge for five or ten years."[864] These two months in 1859 probably came right in time to have slaveowners invest money in the tags for the following year, and afterwards the arrests paused for three entire months. After beginning

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[862] *Charleston Mercury*, December 10, 1859.
[863] Proceedings of the City Council of Charleston, S. C., 1859 I; and Charleston (S. C.) City Council, Proceedings of Council, POC-002 M: 1859-1870, CCPL.
[864] Idem.

anew around April 1860, the arrests of black people for "working without badge" soared in the following summer months. This period represented the only time in the 60 years under analysis in which slave badge laws were *actually* enforced. Slaveholders gravitated to the city treasurer in large numbers to make up leeway and to prevent even higher financial cuts. In the summer of the following year, *The Charleston Courier* testified to the new situation:

> It is estimated that in the last two or three days as many as three or four hundred badges have been sold by the City Treasurer. Some sixty or seventy negros have been brought up by the Police before the Mayor for working out without a badge. Most of them were those who were under the mistaken notion that they were free and did not require it.

The mayor then announced that these people were not free.[865]

It is remarkable that women were overrepresented among those arrests. Although black women outnumbered black men three to two in 1860, they were during work usually less exposed than men, worked more indoors, and caused less attention.[866] The arrest patterns prior to the summer of 1860 furthermore show that their targeting constituted an exception. Women were for all selected offenses (being a runaway slave, having no pass (usually after curfew), working without a badge, and non-payment of annual capitation taxes) less often arrested than men. Carey Latimore has argued that illegal black residents in Richmond were taken up at their homes. He claimed that the police knew where certain people lived and, in times of labor need, dropped by to apprehend them.[867] The sources collected for this study rather point towards that the enforcement of the slave badge law occurred through crack-downs at the work sites. The high arrest rates of women suggest that in these four months from May to August 1860, the police targeted market places, where women were overrepresented, and spared the wharves and manufactories. This had the effect of causing maximum publicity while avoiding the resentment of merchants and manufacturers. Gender, hence, not only shaped slave flight but also the politics of retrieval, as also observed by Shauna Sweeney.[868]

These crackdowns were not only directed at slaves working without badges. In late 1859 and throughout the year 1860, racial control after curfew was also tightened, as the arrests of enslaved men without passes show. December 1859 furthermore denoted the absolute highest persecutions for non-payment of capitation taxes. (See also table 8.) The generally precarious economic conditions of the lower classes in the 1850s, the ideology of white supremacy, and the expansion of the suffrage led people to demand more concessions. Likewise, also whites of the lower classes, who had mostly refrained from petitions as a political tool, discovered this channel. In 1859, Charleston stevedores asked for the complete exclusion of enslaved co-workers from their business. The men signing this petition were from diverse origins, including English, Spanish, northern, southern, and Canadian men, yet they felt united in their cause as free white workers. Decision makers, however, were cautious. Stevedores did not own slaves, Michael Thompson has argued, a circumstance which made them suspicious. Because they did not want to lose their slaves working on the wharves nor forfeit the strength of slavery in all possible branches, the petitioned was rejected. The stevedores then joined the white artisans

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[865] *Charleston Courier*, August 9, 1860.
[866] Myers, *Forging Freedom*, 83.
[867] Latimore, "Closer to Slavery," 128.
[868] Sweeney, "Market Marronage," 214.

and redirected their efforts at a less effective but more easily winnable fight. They started to attack free black workers.[869]

The Democratic mayor Charles Macbeth gave in to the pressure. It was easier for him to grant to white workingmen this smaller concession and silence them for a while in their attacks on enslaved competitors. In August 1860, the newspapers informed that the manumission laws of 1820 and 1822 would from now on be executed without mercy, which would have meant enslavement for a great many people living in *de facto* freedom. For many free black people, this went too far. According to Johnson and Roark, about 1,000 free African Americans, many of them with high professional skills, fled Charleston in late 1860 and early 1861. Most of them went to northern cities.[870]

There is evidence that also in New Orleans, political actions against illegals were taken which could be understood as raids. 913 runaway slaves were arrested in New Orleans during 15 months in 1858 and 1859. The mayor tightened the sentence for passing as free and for aiding refugees.[871] Additionally, authorities announced rewards of $10 for policemen and civilians who arrested black people who were in the state in contravention to the law.[872] Prior to this, this offense had only been a problem when people committed other crimes, for which they were arrested. The accompanying news coverage was massive and people flogged to the mayor's office for registration. Most people accused of contravention were handled by the recorder who gave them a warning. If they did not leave and were taken up again, their cases could end at the First District Court. Judith Kelleher Schafer has noted that many people did not appear at the hearings before the criminal court and concluded that they must have emigrated before the trial date.[873] Yet, it is more likely that they just disappeared in the crowd. Of those people who were committed to the Parish Prison for being in Louisiana in contravention of the law, not one was a woman, as the prison records reveal.[874] The assumption is close that, contrary to Charleston, the controls occurred mostly on the docks where men worked.

The poorest segments of Richmond's free black population were likewise threatened by an order to have the Sheriff arrest "delinquent free negroes" who did not pay their taxes for the year 1857.[875] Those who lived in Virginia illegally, saw themselves more under the pressure to petition for an official permit. Whereas in the entire decade of the 1830s, only six petitions were handed in (of which all were permitted to stay in Richmond), in the year 1860 alone, there were 41 cases. 19 were allowed to stay, 17 had to leave.[876] For Baltimore, no indication has been found that runaway slaves and other undocumented were systematically rounded up by government forces. The negligible presence of slavery in the city and the sheer numbers of

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[869] Thompson, *Working on the Dock*, 119-120, 123.
[870] Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 236-237, 274-275.
[871] Wade, *Slavery in the Cities*, 218-219.
[872] An Act Relative to Free Persons of Color Entering This State from Other States or Foreign Countries, March 15, 1959, Louisiana Acts 1859, 70-72, in Schafer, *Becoming Free*, 140.
[873] Schafer, *Becoming Free*, 134, 137-138, 141-142.
[874] Records of Prisoners Committed to the Parish Prison, 1852 – 1862, June 18, 1852 – May 10, 1862, TX420, NOPL.
[875] *Richmond Enquirer*, November 16, 1858.
[876] Numbers taken from Rodney D. Green, "Black Tobacco Factory Workers and Social Conflict in Antebellum Richmond: Were Slavery and Urban Industry Really Compatible?," *Slavery & Abolition* 8:2 (1987): 195-196.

legally free people protected the masses.[877] Although the sudden execution of laws against runaways and illegal African Americans provoked panic among the urban black populations, as private correspondence shows,[878] these attacks should foremost be seen as an assertion of control by white society over black people. The intention here is not to downplay the effects of the raids and crackdowns of the late 1850s on the free black, undocumented, and refugee populations in southern cities. Rather, the focus should lie on the short-term, sporadic nature of these measures.

To complete the picture, in the last decade before the Civil War, laws that foresaw the punishment of helpers of slave flight were re-introduced, strengthened and, for the first time, executed with visible effects. Virginia tightened a code "to more effectually prevent the escape of slaves" in 1856. A year later, John McKinney was sentenced to six years in jail for "being engaged in carrying off a slave named Ann, the property of Joel Ruffner." Thomas Dunn came to feel the new reach of the law, too. He was sentenced to five years in the penitentiary for the same offense. The same went for Edward Lee the following year.[879] Those who were caught forging papers for prospective refugees likewise ran more risk of having their lives destroyed. Whereas Thomas W. Stubbs got off fairly lightly for writing a paper testifying to the freedom of a slave in 1839, for those daring the same 15 years later, things looked more dire.[880]

It was clear that these acts were not adequate to accommodate the desire of most white Americans in the Upper South, which was to get rid of the entire free black population. The brief revival of the American Colonization Society in the 1850s (after a gradual decline in the 1830s) reflected this. Suddenly, deporting all African Americans in the country turned into a solution that seemed desirable to many whites. The way they saw the world, slavery could not be abolished because black people remained inferior, posed, when free, a threat to the racial order, and only worked under pressure.[881] The most visible and literal exclusion of black people from American society was the infamous Dred Scott ruling of 1857. The Supreme Court ruled in its landmark decision Dred Scott v. Sandford that no person of African descent could claim citizenship in the United States.[882] Nevertheless, it was not possible to force black people out and it was likewise not possible to incarcerate them all. What municipal governments could do, however, was to aggravate their lives, spread fear among the urban communities, and simultaneously give the white residents the feeling that they were being supported.

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[877] Seth Rockman has even claimed that in Baltimore, there was less racist coverage in the media than elsewhere because black people were too pivotal in the labor market. Rockman, *Scraping By*, 13.

[878] This is testified to, for instance, in the private conversations of a member of the Charleston free black elite. Johnsen to Dear Henry, August 29, 1860, Ellison Family Papers, SCLC.

[879] Auditor of Public Acts Fugitive Slave Fund Claims, Luther B. Kurtz, June 17, 1857, November 25, 1857; Edward Lee, April 15, July 6, 1858, LVA.

[880] In the case of Stubbs, the prosecution even produced the paper written for the enslaved man called Richard Cooper, yet Stubbs was discharged. Hustings Court Suit Papers, Ended Causes, March – October 1839, Commonwealth v. Thomas W. Stubbs, August 15, 1839; and Commonwealth v. Eliza Ann Johnson, May 16, 1861, Suit Papers, Hustings Court Suit Papers, LVA.

[881] Matthew Spooner, "'I Know This Scheme is From God': Toward a Reconsideration of the Origins of the American Colonization Society," *Slavery & Abolition* 35:4 (2014): 559-560. In a revisiting approach, Spooner has dated the origins of the ACS further back in time than the actual founding of the society and argued that not the idea to expel free black people changed in the nineteenth century but rather the social context. Also Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 85-86.

[882] Dred Scott v. Sandford, Primary Documents in American History, LOC (April 25, 2017), URL: http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/DredScott.html, accessed October 18, 2017.

Conclusion

The attitudes towards slave refugees in urban spaces depended on how political power was negotiated and divided between different groups. These groups had partly converging, but, more importantly, partly diverging understandings towards and interests in black labor. Slaveholders were responsible for legislation regarding racial control in the cities, and Charleston was decidedly the city where their power was most marked. Their affairs dominated the economy in South Carolina with the effect that the emergence of an industrial middle class was significantly slower than elsewhere. When compared to other places, Charleston's political structure provided fewer niches and therefore fewer freedom spaces for people who were ought not to be there. Yet, for planters who constituted the highest political authorities in the southern states, merely ruling in their own favor became increasingly challenging in combination with the second slavery.

The upcoming classes of financiers, merchants, and industrialists grew stronger and came to fill in important political positions on local level. Their businesses depended on a plentiful and cheap labor force. The more powerful this capitalist middle class became with regards to politic measures and the labor markets, the more absorptive the respective city grew vis-à-vis slave refugees. Employers benefitted most from the tolerance of undocumented black residents, and the presence of runaway slaves. In Baltimore and Richmond, these dynamics were strongest due to the industrial focus of the urban economies. When it came to runaways, those in power had to recognize the right of slaveholders to their property, which is why states enacted legislation to countervail possible loss and damage. But they also made sure that the economy was filled with a supply of wage workers willing to work for the lowest possible wages. This was achieved by illegalizing large parts of the African American population in the South—and refugees and illegals came to be an integral part of the laboring population. Ultimately, this turned southern cities into cities of refuge for escapees from slavery.

Demand for labor, both by private and public entities, also led to instrumenting the labor power of those who were discovered. In fact, the illegalization and criminalization of significant shares of the African American population made sure that the upcoming penitentiaries were filled and that workhouses and jails contributed to the enlargement of the group of people forced to work. These institutions created future labor outside of slavery which (directly and indirectly) benefitted the white middle classes. Although political players did not purposely create cities of refuge, the diverging interests with regard to the tackling of black people of a variety of legal statuses opened spaces that came to have a similar outcome.

Towards the end of the antebellum era, the lower and the lower-middle classes achieved a stronger political voice. Primarily driven by resistance to economic competition by black people, they demanded what white supremacy had promised them. Political leadership, now increasingly divided between planters and industrialists, tried to stall action for as long as possible. Yet, in the last years of the 1850s, democracy had provided lower-class whites with enough power and legislators began to go after free people of African descent, especially the undocumented. This had negative impact on illegal spaces of freedom and increased the discovery of slave refugees.

Conclusion

The Ambiguities of Illegal Freedom

Thousands of enslaved people found permanent but illegal freedom in US antebellum southern cities. This dissertation, by placing these people at the center of analysis, is the first study to investigate the nature of internal slave flight, how spaces of freedom in the urban South were created and how refugees from slavery navigated them. Based on the analyzed material, it is possible to portray the emblematic urban refugee. In most cases it was a fit man in his twenties who escaped to a city. He had had several owners, had seen close family members be sold away, and had worked in a profession which provided him with mobility. He had a large network of acquaintances in the city he fled to, had been there before, and was integrated into the black community of a lower-class neighborhood. He worked as a day laborer on the docks, tirelessly trying to make a living. He tried to behave and act like a free man in order to avoid attention, dodged the watchmen, steered away from crimes, and was eventually buried in an all-black cemetery.

This emblematic refugee and thousands of men and women whose experiences resembled his, were able to live as if they were free because mobility allowed them to make preparations, the (free) black population was large enough to absorb them, spatial segregation and social exclusion of black people provided a space in which they could live unnoticed, and the economic restructuring of the urban labor markets demanded workers of any legal background in large numbers. State and local authorities could have prevented the flight and integration of hundreds of slave refugees in the cities, but diverging interests led them to largely tolerate their presence. These aspects combined created *de facto* cities of refuge in the midst of slavery.

Placing slave refugees in the context of their social environment has produced an account full of ambiguities. In the era of the second slavery, expansion and intensification rendered the institution tighter. The number of those caught in bondage grew, and the possibilities to exit slavery decreased. A gigantic domestic slave trade and the curtailing of manumission practices turned the lives of enslaved men and women in the American South into an impasse. Things looked dire for millions of them. At the same time, the changing nature of slavery produced scenarios which turned out to be beneficial for freedom seekers. The slave hiring system was of particular importance because it created an enslaved population that experienced autonomy. Enslaved people used this opportunity to broaden their horizons, enlarge their networks, forge new contacts, and practice for passing as free or as self-hired

slaves. Ironically, slave hiring also contributed to keeping slavery alive in cities and led to job competition for the free lower classes.

With experiences as hired slaves or not, there were many factors that influenced slave flight, and only a few people had the right preconditions to combine breaking free, migrating to a city, and living and working there. These few people foremost belonged to the mobile slave elite, a group of bondspeople that enjoyed a high mobility and oftentimes had contacts into near urban areas. Growing urbanization speeded these developments up, and slaveholders who came to understand themselves as paternalist benefactors contributed their part to furnishing selected bondspeople with sufficient leeway which they could use as a springboard to escape. In this context, this study has provided estimates about the numbers of slave refugees in four different cities according to their absorptive power. In the period between 1800 and 1860, New Orleans was at the beginning the place that received most slave refugees. The restructuring of the administrative apparatus after the inclusion into the American republic, the disunity of city authorities along ethnic lines, and the cultural variety of the population created a constellation in which refugees did not attract attention. Baltimore, the city with the highest growth rates, surpassed New Orleans and became in the second half of the antebellum era the dominant city of refuge. Charleston must have received more freedom seekers than Richmond in the first decades but in later times, the situation changed. Due to Richmond's development into an industrial center, it came to absorb slave refugees who both passed as free and as self-hired slaves. In Charleston, most escapees tried to pass as self-hired slaves, yet the presence of slaveholders produced the tightest geography of control of all four cities and with it the least chances for refugees.

Each of the cities housed thousands of free African Americans. To understand the lives of slave refugees, we first had to understand the dynamics of free black populations that functioned as receiving societies. The mere growth of the free African American population was the most relevant reason to explain the increase in slave flight. And also here, we have seen a great many ambiguities. For individual free black men and women, the legal and social situation deteriorated because white Americans culturally and economically resented black people, pushed them closer to enslaved people, and legislature grew increasingly tight around them. Exclusion from white American society worsened over time. Conversely, social exclusion paired with spatial segregation in cities provided unique spaces where free, enslaved, and runaway people of African descent lived beyond the constant control of dominant society. Mostly negative developments for free black Americans, hence, had positive sides for slave refugees. A white society, for whom segregation from black people was eventually more important than control over them, proved to be a helpful factor in crafting cities of refuge. In this context, it has been shown that class-based residential segregation existed (on a smaller scale than in later times) before the Civil War. Although the conditions of free black people as a whole worsened over the decades, a growing number of freedom seekers joined them in southern cities.

The reason why this was possible for so many refugees was also that the free black population was much more heterogenous than historians have hitherto assumed. This study has revealed that there were more groups of undocumented free African Americans, who lived in *de facto* freedom but in violation of state legislation. Systematically tracing these undocumented people has shown that analogous to the slave refugees who sought illegal

freedom in the southern states, parts of their receiving society likewise had an illegal status. These people were either manumitted or lived in a place against the law. Like refugees, they had no documentation to prove their freedom or legal residence. This process of illegalization went into two directions. Firstly, undocumented people struggled with similar scenarios as refugees, including tax payments, registration of property, asserting themselves against employers and contractors, hiding from watchmen, and, most importantly, possessing a very fragile freedom that could at any time be questioned and contested. This brought them closer together. Secondly, the fact that an illegal black population existed in the American urban South made them relatively easy targets of police surveillance and legal executive measures. Runaway slaves could fall victim to these measures even if they were not explicitly targeted, and the occasional arrests of undocumented people aggravated the risk for refugees. However, they were never extensive enough to curtail slave flight.

Social experiences varied from place to place depending on legal frameworks, economic factors, and social developments. Economically thriving and demographically growing urban centers formed the most promising cities of refuge. The era of the second slavery was so beneficial because it produced highly mobile bondspeople and, simultaneously, large demand for a diverse labor force in the cities. Economic developments called for highly flexible, malleable, and powerless workers. Because the economy offered anonymity and non-commitment in return, it provided acceptable places for people who constantly had to be on the watch. Labor demand was an important element in crafting cities of refuge and capitalism had a positive side for slave refugees. With the right information, they integrated into those sectors of the economy where black people were overrepresented and, due to their vulnerable situation, acquiesced to the exploitative conditions. Thereby, they continued fueling the urban economy with cheap laborer. Although in the short run, this worked out to the advantage of refugees and other undocumented people, in the long run, it harmed the social-economic position of all black workers.

By extension, this also impacted the larger working classes. White people of the lower and lower middle classes were the ones whose economic and cultural resentment of black people eventually caused the only recorded measures that were taken with noticeable impact. At the end of the antebellum era, whites were politically strong enough to demand concessions from the authorities. For reasons of practicality, executive actions were directed at the undocumented black population, which—because refugees were part of it—also affected the latter. As a consequence, dozens of African American men and women were arrested.

The application of these measures, however, remained sporadic and symbolic, and urban slave refugees remained an integral part of southern cities. Large in number, they influenced local communities, the labor markets, and municipal politics, but political discussions about their presence in southern cities were extremely limited. This topic was complex and conflict-loaded, and southern city leaders were cautious to stretch it out to their regular political agendas. In this context, this study has shown a plethora of opportunities slave refugees could draw on but has also showcased the limitations of seeking freedom. People who aimed at freeing themselves against the law were apprehended on the way towards a city or in the cities where control by slaveholders had been replaced by a public system of control. Those who were caught were jailed, sent back to their owners, sold, or forced to work for the benefit of the municipality, the state, and white society at large.

In the cities, authorities' tolerance was determined by the influence of the local elites whose composition changed over the course of the antebellum period and strongly depended on the particular place. For example, the firm position of the slaveholders in Charleston, as they made sure that the laws on racial control were enforced, was the reason why the chances for slave refugees were much smaller there than in other places. Baltimore, governed by industrialists, who did not care where their flexible labor force came from, stood on the other end of the spectrum. Richmond was the place where slaveholders and industrialists were most symbiotic, thereby combining capitalist and slavocratic interests, and New Orleans, with a mix of planters, merchants, and (limited influence of) industrialists took on a middle position between Charleston and Richmond.

All these findings demonstrate that spaces of freedom in southern cities arose through an interplay of different actors: freedom seekers and their receiving societies crafted them deliberately. Slaveholders were unable to prevent flight. State authorities produced a large population of illegal people that camouflaged refugees. Local authorities did not attribute sufficient importance to the topic because it did not hold high priority, and urban employers benefitted from it. The growing white middle classes, driven by racism and the desire to distinguish themselves from poor people, constructed physical places that supported the invisibility of people who should not be there. The paradox of the time was that many of the developments that benefitted refugees and created spaces of freedom were not nearly as beneficial for legally free black Americans. Many of these developments indeed limited their freedom. For slave refugees, a life in illegal freedom was preferable to a life in slavery. At least, refugees had control over their own lives, largely escaped the threat of sale, could freely chose whom they married, and succeeded at exiting the amoral system of slavery. Refugees possessed the right preconditions like passes, freedom papers, information about the urban environment, and access to shelter, and knew how to navigate spaces of freedom. By either passing as free or as hired slaves, they demonstrated knowledge about the local contexts and sophisticated acting skills. When they were not passing as slaves, acting and forged documentation were also a step to initiate a process of legalization, and a few managed to slowly join the ranks of those *de facto* and *de jure* free.

Whether these people managed to legalize their residency or pass their illegal status on to their children, they all resisted the system of slavery. This contestation occurred in the case of the freedom seekers who sought refuge in the South in a way too invisible and clandestine as to put them on the same page with abolitionists who lived their activism on public stage. In the North and abroad, an impressive number of formerly enslaved people who had achieved their freedom by running away, were on the forefront in the fight the abolition, including Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and Ellen and William Craft. Those who stayed in the South, however, also contributed to the fight against slavery, yet in a different manner. Stressing its racially integrated nature, Manisha Sinha has lately shown the variety of different actors and methods involved in the movements that eventually led to the abolition of slavery and argued that "slave resistance, not bourgeois liberalism, laid at the heart of the abolition movement."[883]

Despite silently disappearing, those who ran away or resisted slavery otherwise spoke with a very loud and very public voice that they did no longer accept their situation. Hundreds of southern newspapers with up to a dozen runaway slave advertisements daily were the best

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[883] Sinha, *Slave's Cause*, 1.

proof. Although amounting into the tens of thousands over the course of the antebellum era, the numbers of refugees were not large enough to jeopardize the stability of southern plantation slavery. Yet, their presence in the cities contributed to the decline of urban slavery. By integrating into an urban population segment that offered its labor power cheap and flexibly, they sufficiently diversified the laboring classes and provided employers with the desired labor.

It is important to remember that the endeavors of slave refugees were clandestine, that these people freed themselves contrary to law, and that they consciously remained in the midst of slavery. They even pretended to be slaves to remain free. These men and women fled from the most powerful groups in southern society, were supported by less powerful groups, but essentially depended on those with the least power—free blacks of various legal statuses. Setting themselves free against the law, they knew that they were continuously threatened with detection, recapture, and reenslavement. Why, then, did they not escape from the slaveholding South where only illegal freedom was achievable? Why did they not try to migrate to places of free soil where they could be legally free? Regions that had abolished slavery were springing up all around the United States after 1820 and included Canada, Mexico, Central America, and parts of South America and the Caribbean.

The answers to these questions have been given throughout this dissertation. Although family separation was often the trigger to flee, by becoming short-distance migrants, refugees could stay close to home, networks, kin and loved ones. Reversely, the lack of social contacts in more remote places impeded long-distance flight of many freedom seekers. After all, only a small share of all refugees to the northern states, for instance, were aided by informal organizations like the Underground Railroad. Although freedom in the South remained illegal and refugees could not expect to ever be legally free, the consequences were not that drastic when remembering that their lives did not differ much from the lives of other free African Americans. The fact that there was work did not imply that they could get out of poverty. Racism, economic discrimination, social exclusion, and the negation of political rights were realities black Americans in the northern states likewise experienced every day. This closes the circle leading back to maroons who, regardless of their physical proximity to whites and the degree of hostility between them and slaveholding society, always lived as outlaws. Slave refugees, conversely, lived in severe poverty, but they did not attempt to elude the legal reach of society, which drastically discriminated against them. The African American communities they joined considered themselves Americans and the places they grew up in, home. Their common desire was racial integration. The longing for citizenship and inclusion motivated them to subordinate themselves to the rules and laws of white society.

At this point, this research feeds into the findings of other historians like Mariana Dantas, Patrick Rael, and Martha Jones, who systematically interpreted the attitudes and behaviors of black Americans vis-à-vis the country they lived in. They have shown that black people were conscious that it was they who built the country. They knew that they were not only part of American society but actively shaped it. "Americanness" that identified the country, was not something black Americans took on, they contributed constructing it. Therefore, black struggle was ultimately always dominated by the fight for citizenship.[884] Contrary to their aspirations, the exclusion from American society led black people to close

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[884] Dantas, *Black Townsmen*; Rael, *Black Identity*, 282; Jones, *Birthright Citizens*; and Cullen, *American Dream*, 64, 82.

ranks and to channel their focus towards autonomous organization.[885] In the cities, where they clustered, they thereby created spaces where newcomers and people who, according to white law, should be enslaved, could integrate and become invisible before the authorities.

The factors that made urban slave flight possible and the ways they interplayed were not restricted to antebellum American cities. Placing Baltimore, Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans at the center of analysis, this study has identified situations and events that carved out opportunities which could offer enslaved people spaces of freedom. There is no reason to assume that combinations of similar factors did not apply to other cities, which makes it possible to expand the findings of this dissertation outside of the United States. In all urban centers within slaveholding territory, where free black populations lived, escapees from slavery must have been able to blend in with them. Runaway slaves surely lived in smaller cities and towns throughout the South as well as in urban centers in Cuba and Brazil, the other main locations of the second slavery.

Permanent freedom without a basis in law has been neglected in historical studies on slavery. Alongside literature on temporary absconders in the South, maroons in wilderness areas, and refugees to territories of free soil, this study complements the field of research on slave flight on the North American continent.[886] It has highlighted how the era of the second slavery changed the geographies of slavery, slave control, and ultimately, freedom. It has demonstrated that refugees from slavery were a hardly discernable yet important segment of the populations in the cities. Freedom from slavery in the South was possible.

When slavery was abolished in 1865, the phenomenon of slave refugees disappeared with it. However, many of the other events that have played a part in this narrative, did not. Societal exclusion of black Americans wore on. Spatial segregation aggravated. Criminalization of black people became routinized and the forced labor of convicts institutionalized. Writing a social history of any group of the antebellum United States other than the white elite means not only to acknowledge their existence and their share in society. It also provides an important tool to understand today's social attitudes regarding race relations. As Ira Berlin has pointed out, academic engagement with slavery was strongest in those times when race relations in the United States found themselves hitting rock bottom.[887] Inevitably, coming to terms with racial conflicts heavily depends on the engagement with social conditions that have their origin in times of slavery. The repeated resurgence of scholarly work on slavery echoes the public demand for answers and shows that there are still a great many areas that have remained in the dark and now need to be more thoroughly lit. Social historical approaches like the one of this dissertation provide a key element to paint a whole picture of a society that was built upon slavery and continues to bear the scars of it.

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[885] Because independent institutional organization is an element which would qualify communities of former slaves and their descendants as maroons, it is important to note that also these organizations followed the rules of white society. Martha Jones has remarked that the very incorporation of the church, the symbolic and literal center of most black communities, occurred according to official law. Land had to be formally purchased, the church officially registered, an enslaved minister perhaps manumitted. In this process, they got involved with white attorneys, justices of the peace, and clerks. Jones, *Birthright Citizens*, 18.

[886] The main works include Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*; Diouf, *Slavery's Exiles*; Foner, *Gateway to Freedom*; and Pargas' collective volume, *Spaces of Freedom*.

[887] Ira Berlin, "American Slavery in History and Memory and the Search for Social Justice," *Journal of American History* 90:4 (2004): 1251.

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Summary in English

In the nineteenth century, tens of thousands of enslaved people escaped slavery in the US South. The bulk of historiography has hitherto focused on those who left the slaveholding states in their endeavors to reach freedom. In reality, however, the majority of slave refugees stayed within the South. *Cities of Refuge: Slave Flight and Illegal Freedom in the American Urban South, 1800-1860* is the first study to put permanent southern-internal slave flight center stage. Internal refugees tried to camouflage themselves among the (free) African American population. This population had been growing since the Revolutionary era, especially in urban areas, which made it possible for refugees to find shelter and to live permanently in the midst of slaveholding territory. **This dissertation investigates how and why urban spaces of freedom arose, and how refugees from slavery navigated them.**

The freedom these people found was of an illegal nature because it had no basis in law. This focus on illegality significantly contributes to the historiography on runaway slaves, which has been very much concentrated on legal forms of freedom. Refugees who fled across international borders or to the US northern states—finding legal freedom on so-called "free soil"—were often the subject of heated political discussions. This produced reams of written sources for historians to poor through. The success of illegal freedom seekers, by contrast, depended to large extent on their capability to stay invisible before the authorities, and they are, as a consequence, largely absent from the historical records.

A variety of "explicit" and "implicit" sources nevertheless illuminates the urban dynamics of illegal freedom between 1800 and 1860, the so-called antebellum era. Slaveholders placed runaway slave advertisements in newspapers, wrote about absconded slaves in plantation managements books, and discussed their lost "property" in private correspondence, petitions, and court documents. Another bulk of evidence stems from people who were neither slaveowners nor slaves, for example, jail and police records. Legal testimonies, autobiographies, and interviews are sources that represent the voices of enslaved people. "Implicit" sources include newspaper articles, legal petitions, legislative ordinances, political speeches, travel accounts, population censuses, church registers, municipal reports, and city directories. By consulting and combining diverse evidence, this study attempts to counterbalance the silence about southern slave refugees in the historical archives and in historiography.

Based on four major cities as case studies, this dissertation analyzes social, cultural, political, and economic processes that made illegal freedom possible. Drawing from material from Baltimore (Maryland), Richmond (Virginia), Charleston (South Carolina), and New Orleans (Louisiana), the size of the urban free black populations, degrees of urbanization, and work opportunities receive particular attention. *Cities of Refuge* is one of few studies that put

the focus on the experiences of runaways *after* they ran away. It detects and discusses factors that helped enslaved people integrate into urban communities. Precisely because of this, it is of foremost importance to scrutinize the black communities as well.

The emphasis on the refugees' experiences and the dynamics of the free black population as receiving societies is also reflected in the chapter synapsis. **Chapter One**, "The Changing Landscape of Freedom," identifies and discusses the four factors that precipitated slave flight in the antebellum period: (1) diminishing opportunities to legally exit bondage; (2) the expansion of slavery; (3) the intensification of the domestic slave trade; and (4) the rapid growth of the free black population. The analysis of the last point reveals that free African Americans increasingly faced tight legal restrictions and that many possessed an illegal status, too. The concept of illegality is therefore crucial to understanding the conditions of large parts of the free black population—and, by extension, of the runaway slaves who joined them. This finding will run through the rest of the dissertation. This chapter, hence, complicates the conventional historical view that sees the free black population as a legally homogeneous mass.

While slavery was expanding, it became more feasible for a small group of enslaved people to make a successful flight attempt. And although escaping remained extremely risky, the geography of freedom in the South was growing. **Chapter Two**, "A Mobile Elite: Profiling Southern Refugees," introduces the concept of the "mobile slave elite" and presents a profile of urban freedom seekers. Answering the question who these refugees were and why and how they could escape, this chapter highlights mobility, gender, age, and professional skills as factors that were relevant to southern slave flight. It includes, among others, sections that scrutinize the slave-hiring system as a facilitator of flight, the bolsters and obstacles refugees encountered during their escapes, and the practicalities of passing as free. Furthermore, this chapter links the decisions of runaways to stay in the midst of a region of legalized slavery to family ties, support networks, and their sense of a regional belonging. Another finding is that women, although numerically still less represented than men, played a much more significant part in this type of slave flight compared to flights out of the slaveholding South.

The next two chapters address the integration experiences of slave refugees in the cities that help explain why it was possible for them to stay free. **Chapter Three**, "Finding Refuge," deals with the social and spatial integration. Important is the observation from chapter one that slave refugees joined urban black communities that were in large parts of an undocumented status. With emphasis on these receiving societies, this chapter scrutinizes the interplay of spatial segregation, societal exclusion, and criminalization of African Americans in rapidly urbanizing contexts. It shows that these different elements were both supportive and limiting for the creation of spaces of freedom. Higher segregation led thousands of illegal city dwellers be able to remain in their own circles. At the same time, the legislative framework as well as the supervision in all cities grew tighter. Ironically, more control from above translated into less social control from within as white people increasingly retrenched from black people. This shows that it was not only people of African descent who consciously constructed spaces of freedom, but that also white people inadvertently contributed to this. The limitations that the free black communities and everybody who joined them faced, however, were a severe setback concerning the freedom runaway slaves were looking for, as the degree of freedom refugees and other undocumented received depended to large parts on the freedom of their receiving societies. This gave cities of refuge a bitter by-taste and diluted the quality of freedom.

Chapter Four, "From Slavery to Poverty," sets out an array of opportunities and difficulties that illegal freedom seekers encountered in their integration in the urban labor markets. Refugees from slavery became part of the working classes in southern cities by either passing as free black people or self-hired slaves. The best-case scenario for men and women would have been to capitalize on the skills and expertise they acquired under slavery. Yet, antebellum urban labor markets were coded along race and legal status. This had consequences for slave refugees, who felt the effects of both codes. In order to navigate the spaces that the labor markets offered, they had to be able to decipher the coded working areas and worksites. Especially male runaways who, according to their profile, were often trained in skilled and semi-skilled occupations, integrated into the economy below their capacities. In order not to raise attention, they depended on a low profile and a ready payment.

The mentioned codes were dynamic and developed over time, generally to the disadvantage of people of African descent. In this light, the chapter also discusses the repercussions that the integration of refugees had on the societies that received them. The latter forfeited even more of their already severely restricted leeway by counting among their group large parts of illegal and, hence, powerless workers. It was a combination of economic and extra-economic (formal and customary law) forces that drove black people to the bottom of the economic system. Strikingly, capitalist development, by relying on flexibility and low labor costs, created conditions that were beneficial for the undocumented.

Building upon these insights, **Chapter Five**, "Illegal but Tolerated," shifts the focus, which has been on the refugees themselves, to include different interest groups. Slave refugees had a truly paradoxical position in the political economy of the four cities. Although they could not count on much sympathy on the part of the white population, their presence was largely condoned. This chapter shows that economic developments, democratization, and foreign immigration brought about a restructuring of civic power and visions around black labor. Slaveholders were traditionally responsible for legislation regarding racial control in the cities. Over time, however, financiers, merchants, and industrialists grew stronger and came to fill in important political positions on local level. The more powerful this capitalist middle class became, the more absorptive the respective city grew vis-à-vis slave refugees as easily exploitable wage workers. This was, however, not a linear development. Towards the end of the antebellum era, the lower and the lower-middle classes achieved a stronger political voice. Because they were confronted with black labor as a direct competition, their political emancipation had negative impact on illegal spaces of freedom, which increased the discovery of slave refugees.

Social experiences varied from place to place depending on legal frameworks, economic factors, and social developments. Economically thriving and demographically growing urban centers formed the most promising cities of refuge. In the period under analysis, New Orleans was at the beginning the place that received most slave refugees. The restructuring of the administrative apparatus after the inclusion of Louisiana into the American republic, the division of the city into Franco- and Anglophone office holders, and the cultural variety of the population created a constellation in which refugees did not attract much attention. Baltimore, the city with the highest growth rates and governed by industrialists, surpassed New Orleans and became in the second half of the antebellum era the dominant city of refuge. Charleston must have received more freedom seekers than Richmond in the first decades, of which most

refugees tried to pass as self-hired slaves. Yet, the high presence of slaveholders produced the tightest geography of control of all four cities. Due to Richmond's development into an industrial center, it became over time a more attractive city of refuge than Charleston. As a place in which slaveholders and industrialists were most symbiotic, Richmond came to absorb slave refugees who both passed as free and as self-hired slaves.

The chapters illustrate that the similarities between the case studies are more striking than the differences. Large in number, slave refugees influenced local communities, the labor markets, and municipal politics, but political discussions about their presence were extremely limited. All these findings demonstrate that spaces of freedom in southern cities arose through an interplay of different actors: Freedom seekers and their helpers constructed them deliberately. State authorities produced a large population of illegal people that camouflaged refugees. Local authorities did not attribute sufficient importance to the topic because it did not hold high priority, a fact from which urban employers benefitted. The growing white middle classes, driven by the desire to distinguish themselves from poor people, constructed physical places that supported the invisibility of illegals. Slaveholders could not prevent flight under these circumstances. The paradox of the time was that many of the developments that benefitted refugees and created spaces of freedom were not nearly as beneficial for legally free black Americans.

In a nutshell, *Cities of Refuge* paints a nuanced picture of slavery, slave control, and freedom within the changing social geography of the American South. Furthermore, this dissertation shows that the process of illegalization has a longer history than migration studies argue. It therefore sheds new light on freedom, inequality, race, resistance, citizenship, democracy, and capitalism as large themes that continue to engage American society until this day.

Samenvatting in het Nederlands

In de negentiende eeuw ontvluchtten tienduizenden tot slaaf gemaakte mensen de slavernij in de Zuidelijke Verenigde Staten. Tot nu toe hebben historici zich voornamelijk gericht op vluchtelingen die in hun zoektocht naar vrijheid de slavenstaten verlieten. Bij uitstek de meeste vluchtelingen bleven echter in het zuiden. *Cities of Refuge: Slave Flight and Illegal Freedom in the American Urban South, 1800-1860* stelt als eerste studie de interne vlucht naar steden in de zuidelijke staten centraal. Interne vluchtelingen probeerden op te gaan in de (vrije) Afro-Amerikaanse gemeenschap. Doordat deze bevolkingsgroep sinds het revolutietijdperk vooral in de steden sterk toenam, bood zij vluchtelingen genoeg beschutting om *permanent* binnen een slavenstaat te kunnen leven. **Het proefschrift onderzoekt hoe en waarom deze ruimte voor vrijheid ontstond en hoe vluchtelingen zich in deze omgeving een weg baanden.**

De vrijheid die deze mensen vonden was illegaal omdat zij tegen de wetten van de zuidelijke staten inging. Deze focus op illegaliteit levert een fundamentele bijdrage aan de historiografie rondom ontsnapte slaven (*runaway slaves*), die tot nog toe sterk gericht is op legale vormen van vrijheid. Mensen die over internationale grenzen of naar de noordelijke staten vluchtten—en op zogenaamde "free soil" legale vrijheid vonden—genereerden doorgaans veel politieke aandacht, en creëerden zodoende boekenkasten aan bronnenmateriaal waaruit historici hebben kunnen putten. Mensen die de illegaliteit in vluchtten poogden daarentegen koste wat het kost onder de radar van de autoriteiten te blijven; hun succes vertaalde zich in hun relatieve afwezigheid in de archieven.

Een divers scala aan "expliciete" en "impliciete" bronnen geven desalniettemin inzicht in de stedelijke dynamiek van illegale vrijheid tussen 1800 en 1860, het zogenoemde antebellum. Slavenhouders plaatsten advertenties over weggevluchte slaven in kranten, schreven over hen in boeken over plantage-management, en bespraken hun verloren "bezit" in persoonlijke correspondentie, petities en processtukken. Een grote hoeveelheid bewijs komt ook van mensen die slaaf noch slavenhouder waren, zoals politie- en gevangenisregisters. Getuigenverklaringen, autobiografieën en interviews geven daarbij een stem aan tot slaaf gemaakte mensen. "Impliciete" bronnen omvatten krantenartikelen, uitvaardiging van wetten, politieke redes, reisverslagen, volkstellingen, kerkregisters, gemeentelijke rapporten en stedelijke naam- en beroepsregisters—documenten waarin vluchtelingen zijdelings terug te vinden zijn. Door deze verschillende bronnen te raadplegen en te combineren probeert deze studie tegengewicht te bieden aan de stilte rondom gevluchte slaven in de archieven en in de historiografie.

Aan de hand van vier stedelijke casussen analyseert dit proefschrift de politieke, culturele, sociale en economische processen die illegale vrijheid mogelijk maakten. Bouwend op materiaal uit Baltimore (Maryland), Richmond (Virginia), Charleston (South Carolina) en

New Orleans (Louisiana) wordt er in het bijzonder aandacht besteed aan de grootte van de stedelijke vrije zwarte populatie, de mate van verstedelijking en arbeidskansen. *Cities of Refuge* onderzoekt zodoende als een van de eerste studies de ervaring van slaven *na* hun vlucht, en analyseert de factoren die het voor slaven mogelijk maakten te integreren in stedelijke gemeenschappen. Om het succes van stedelijke vluchtelingen te begrijpen is het bestuderen van de vrije zwarte gemeenschap dan ook cruciaal.

De focus op de ervaring van vluchtelingen en de dynamiek van de vrije zwarte gemeenschap als "host community" vormen de leidraad in de hoofdstukken. **Hoofdstuk 1** "The Changing Landscape of Freedom" identificeert en analyseert vier factoren die ontsnapping uit de slavernij bevorderden in de beschreven periode: (1) afnemende mogelijkheden om op legale wijze vrij te worden; (2) uitbreiding van de slavernij; (3) de intensivering van de binnenlandse slavenhandel; (4) en de snelle groei van de vrije zwarte gemeenschap. Uit de analyse van deze laatste factor blijkt dat Afro-Amerikanen onder steeds strengere wettelijke restricties gebukt gingen en steeds vaker ook een illegale status hadden. Het concept van illegaliteit is dus cruciaal om de omstandigheden van grote delen van de vrije zwarte bevolking te begrijpen—en daarmee van de vluchtelingen die in deze groep opgingen. Hoofdstuk 1 herziet daarmee de conventionele benadering van de vrije zwarte gemeenschap als een juridisch homogene massa. Welke effecten de legale diversiteit van deze groep had op de integratie van vluchtelingen wordt in de rest van het proefschrift verder onderzocht.

Terwijl de slavernij zich uitbreidde, werd het voor een kleine groep slaven steeds makkelijker om een vluchtpoging te ondernemen. En hoewel vluchten extreem risicovol bleef, ontstonden er meer mogelijkheden om in het zuiden in vrijheid te leven. **Hoofdstuk 2** "A Mobile Elite: Profiling Southern Refugees" introduceert het concept van een "mobiele slavenelite" en schetst een profiel van stedelijke vluchtelingen. Wie waren zij en hoe konden ze ontsnappen? Om deze vragen te beantwoorden wordt er gekeken naar mobiliteit, gender, leeftijd en beroepsvaardigheden als doorslaggevende factoren. Zo onderzoekt het hoofdstuk onder andere hoe het "huurslavensysteem" (*slave-hiring system*) ontsnapping faciliteerde, wat voor ondersteuning en obstakels vluchtelingen konden verwachten, en hoe vluchtelingen zich als vrije personen probeerden uit te geven. Dit hoofdstuk laat ook zien dat de keuze om in de slavenstaten te blijven vaak werd gevoed door familiebanden, ondersteuningsnetwerken en een gevoel van verbondenheid met de regio van herkomst. Een andere bevinding is dat vrouwen— hoewel nog steeds in de minderheid—een veel groter aandeel hadden in deze interne dan in grensoverschrijdende vluchtelingenstromen.

De volgende twee hoofdstukken beschrijven hoe vluchtelingen in de steden integreerden en hoe het mogelijk was om permanent in vrijheid te leven. **Hoofdstuk 3** "Finding Refuge" bespreekt de sociale en ruimtelijke integratie. Zoals besproken in Hoofdstuk 1 gingen vluchtelingen op in de stedelijke zwarte gemeenschappen, waaronder zich veel ongedocumenteerden bevonden. Toegespitst op deze ontvangende gemeenschappen analyseert dit hoofdstuk het samenspel van ruimtelijke segregatie, maatschappelijke uitsluiting en de criminalisering van Afro-Amerikanen in een tijd van snelle verstedelijking. Het laat zien dat deze verschillende elementen vrijheid zowel mogelijk maakten als beperkten. Sterkere segregatie leidde ertoe dat duizenden illegale stedelingen zich binnen hun eigen kringen konden begeven. Tegelijkertijd was er een toename aan wettelijke restricties en werd er meer toezicht gehouden. De ironie wil echter dat meer controle van boven gepaard ging met minder sociale

controle, aangezien witte mensen zich steeds meer volledig van zwarte mensen probeerden af te schermen. Dit laat zien dat niet alleen zwarte Amerikanen ruimte voor vrijheid creëerden, maar dat ook witte Amerikanen hier onopzettelijk aan bijdroegen. De beperkingen waarmee de vrije zwarte gemeenschap dagelijks werd geconfronteerd vormden desalniettemin een ernstige weerslag op de vrijheid die gevluchte slaven zochten. Toevluchtssteden kregen daarmee een wrange bijsmaak; de vrijheid die ze schonken bleef uitermate beperkt.

Hoofdstuk 4 "From Slavery to Poverty" onderzoekt de kansen en obstakels voor vluchtelingen met betrekking tot hun integratie in de stedelijke arbeidsmarkt. Mannen en vrouwen werden deel van de arbeidersklasse in zuidelijke steden door zich ófwel voor te doen als vrije zwarte mensen, ófwel als slaven die door hun eigenaars erop uit waren gezonden om zelfstandig arbeid aan te bieden (*self-hired slaves*). In het beste geval hadden ze de kans om van hun vaardigheden en ambacht—die zij tijdens de slavernij hadden geleerd—te profiteren. De arbeidsmarkt van het antebellum was echter opgedeeld op basis van ras en legale status; vluchtelingen gingen zodoende gebukt onder twee soorten restricties. Nieuwkomers moesten dit soort scheidslijnen herkennen om hun weg te vinden in de arbeidsmarkt. Vooral mannelijke vluchtelingen, die als slaven relatief vaak geschoold werk hadden gedaan, waren doorgaans gedwongen om beneden hun vaardigheden te werken. Bovendien waren ze om niet op te vallen meestal afhankelijk van directe betaling.

De genoemde scheidslijnen op de arbeidsmarkt waren dynamisch en ontwikkelden zich door de tijd heen, grosso modo ten nadele van mensen met een Afrikaanse achtergrond. In dit licht bezien thematiseert dit hoofdstuk ook het effect van vluchtelingen op de gemeenschap die hen herbergde. Door significante aantallen illegale—en daarmee machteloze—mensen op te nemen verloren vrije zwarten gaandeweg steeds meer van hun toch al beperkte bewegingsvrijheid. Zowel economische als sociale factoren zorgden er dus voor dat zwarte mensen steeds verder naar de bodem van het economische systeem werden gedrukt. Daarbij moet opgemerkt worden dat kapitalistische ontwikkelingen van flexibiliteit en lage lonen relatief gunstige omstandigheden voor ongedocumenteerden creëerden.

Voortbouwend op deze inzichten verschuift **Hoofdstuk 5** "Illegal but Tolerated" het perspectief van de vluchtelingen zelf naar de verschillende belangengroepen die zich tot hen verhielden. Vluchtelingen hadden een bij uitstek paradoxale positie in de politieke economie van de vier steden; hoewel ze op weinig sympathie konden rekenen van de witte bevolking werd hun aanwezigheid uit economische overwegingen vaak door de vingers gezien. Economische ontwikkelingen, democratisering en buitenlandse immigratie zorgden voor een verschuiving in de stedelijke machtsverhoudingen en genereerden nieuwe ideeën rondom de waarde van zwarte arbeiders. Slavenhouders waren traditioneel gezien verantwoordelijk voor de wetgeving omtrent raciale controle in de steden. Na verloop van tijd gingen echter ook bankiers, groothandelaars en industriëlen belangrijke lokale politieke ambten vullen. Hoe machtiger deze kapitalistische hogere middenklasse in een stad werd, des te meer ruimte ontstond er voor vluchtelingen als makkelijk uit te buiten illegale loonarbeiders. Dit was echter geen lineaire ontwikkeling. Tegen het eind van het antebellum verkregen de arbeidersklasse en de lagere middenklasse een sterkere politieke stem. Omdat zij directe competitie ervoeren van zwarte arbeiders had hun politieke emancipatie een negatieve impact op de vrijheid van vluchtelingen; ze werden actiever opgespoord en vaker gepakt.

De dagelijkse realiteit van vluchtelingen werd gevormd door lokale wetten, de economische infrastructuur en maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen, en verschilde dus van plek tot plek. Groeiende steden die het economisch voor de wind ging waren de meest veelbelovende toevluchtsoorden. Binnen het onderzochte tijdsframe was New Orleans aanvankelijk de stad die de meeste vluchtelingen opnam. De herstructurering van het bestuurlijk apparaat na opname van Louisiana in de Verenigde Staten, de verdeelheid tussen de Frans- en Engelstalige ambtsdragers en de culture diversiteit van de bevolking creëerden een politiek landschap waarin vluchtelingen nauwelijks opvielen. Baltimore, de stad die het snelst groeide en werd geleid door industriëlen, haalde New Orleans gaandeweg in en herbergde aan de vooravond van de Amerikaanse Burgeroorlog de meeste vluchtelingen. Charleston trok aan het begin van de negentiende eeuw meer vluchtelingen aan dan Richmond, waarvan de meeste zich uitgaven als *self-hired slaves*. Door de hoge concentratie slavenhouders was Charleston echter ook de stad met het strengste toezicht. Richmond ontwikkelde zich in de onderzochte periode tot een industrieel centrum en werd daarmee na verloop van tijd een aantrekkelijker toevluchtsoord dan Charleston. In een stad waar slavenhouders en fabrikanten samen de dienst uitmaakten konden vluchtelingen hier immers kiezen of ze zich als vrije personen of als *self-hired slaves* uitgaven.

Dit neemt niet weg dat de overeenkomsten tussen de casussen opvallender zijn dan de verschillen. In alle vier de steden hadden vluchtelingen door hun hoge aantallen een significante invloed op de lokale gemeenschap, de arbeidsmarkt en de gemeentelijke politiek. Eveneens waren ze overal opvallend weinig onderwerp van politieke discussie. Dit laat echter des te meer zien dat ruimte voor vrijheid gecreëerd werd door een samenspel van verschillende sociale groepen: Vluchtelingen en hun helpers schiepen ze bewust; op staatsniveau creëerden de autoriteiten een klasse van illegale zwarte mensen waarbij vluchtelingen zich konden aansluiten; voor de lokale autoriteiten had het opsporen van vluchtelingen geen prioriteit, ten voordele van werkgevers in de steden; de groeiende witte middenklasse probeerde zich op zijn beurt volledig van zwarte mensen af te schermen en creëerde daarmee fysiek ruimtes waarin vluchtelingen onopgemerkt konden blijven. Slavenhouders waren niet tegen dit samenspel opgewassen. Het paradoxale van deze periode was dat de stedelijke ontwikkelingen die schadelijk waren voor legaal vrije Afro-Amerikanen vaak nuttig bleken voor vluchtelingen.

Samengevat schept *Cities of Refuge* een genuanceerd beeld van slavernij, controle en vrijheid in het veranderende sociale landschap van de Zuidelijke Verenigde Staten. Bovendien toont deze studie aan dat het illegaliseren van mensen in de Verenigde Staten een langere geschiedenis kent dan migratiestudies doen vermoeden. Het werpt daarmee een nieuwe blik op de geschiedenis van vrijheid, ongelijkheid, *race*, weerstand, burgerschap, democratie en kapitalisme, thema's die de Amerikaanse samenleving vandaag de dag meer dan ooit lijkt te willen herzien.

Zusammenfassung auf Deutsch

Im neunzehnten Jahrhundert flohen zehntausende versklavter Menschen aus der Sklaverei der US-amerikanischen Südstaaten. Der Großteil der Geschichtsschreibung konzentrierte sich bisher auf diejenigen, die die Sklavenstaaten auf der Suche nach Freiheit verließen. In Wahrheit jedoch blieben die meisten Flüchtenden innerhalb des Südens. *Cities of Refuge: Slave Flight and Illegal Freedom in the American Urban South, 1800-1860* ist die erste Studie, die dauerhafte interne Sklavenflucht in den Städten der Südstaaten zentral behandelt und erforscht. Binnenflüchtlinge versuchten, in der Masse der (freien) schwarzen Bevölkerung unter-zutauchen. Weil diese Bevölkerungsgruppe seit der Amerikanischen Revolution vor allem in Städten stark anstieg, bot sie entflohenen Sklaven genug Schutz um permanent innerhalb eines Sklavenstaates leben zu können. **Diese Dissertation untersucht, wie und warum urbane Räume der Freiheit entstanden und wie Flüchtlinge aus der Sklaverei sich in diesen Räumen bewegten.**

Die Freiheit, die diese Menschen fanden, war illegal, weil sie keine gesetzliche Grundlage hatte. Dieser Fokus auf Illegalität leistet einen fundamentalen Beitrag zur Historiographie rundum entflohene Sklaven (*runaway slaves*), die bisher noch stark auf legale Formen von Freiheit gerichtet ist. Menschen, die über internationale Grenzen oder in die amerikanischen Nordstaaten flüchteten – und auf sogenanntem „freien Grund" („*free soil*") legale Freiheit fanden – waren häufig Thema erhitzter politischer Diskussionen, aus denen ganze Bände schriftlichen Materials entstanden. Daraus können Historiker schöpfen. Im Gegensatz dazu waren die Erfolgsaussichten illegaler Freiheitssuchender in großem Maße davon abhängig, vor den Behörden unsichtbar zu bleiben. Daher sind diese Menschen in den historischen Aufzeichnungen auch weitgehend unerwähnt.

Eine Vielzahl „expliziter" und „impliziter" Quellen geben nichtsdestotrotz Einblick in die urbanen Dynamiken illegaler Freiheit zwischen 1800 und 1860, der sogenannten Vorkriegsperiode. Sklavenhalter gaben Zeitungsannoncen auf um entflohene Sklaven zu finden, schrieben über sie in Plantagenmanagement-Büchern und besprachen den Verlust ihres „Besitzes" in privaten Korrespondenzen, Petitionen und Gerichtsdokumenten. Eine weitere Anzahl von Belegen stammt von Menschen, die weder Sklaven besaßen noch welche waren, zum Beispiel Gefängnis- und Polizeiakten. Quellen, die die Stimmen versklavter Menschen wiedergeben, beinhalten Gerichtsaussagen, Autobiographien und Interviews. „Implizite" Quellen umfassen Zeitungsartikel, Petitionen, Gesetzeserlassungen, politische Reden, Reiseberichte, Bevölkerungszählungen, Kirchenregister, Kommunalberichte und städtische Namens- und Berufsverzeichnisse – Dokumente, in denen Sklavenflüchtlinge indirekt vorkommen. Indem sie eine Vielfalt von Belegen konsultiert und kombiniert, versucht diese

Studie, dem Schweigen, das in den Archiven und in der Historiographie über südliche entflohene Sklaven herrscht, entgegenzuwirken.

Anhand von Fallbeispielen vier großer Städte analysiert die vorliegende Dissertation die sozialen, kulturellen, politischen und wirtschaftlichen Prozesse, die ein Leben in illegaler Freiheit ermöglichten. Dafür verwendet sie Material aus Baltimore (Maryland), Richmond (Virginia), Charleston (South Carolin) und New Orleans (Louisiana). Besondere Aufmerksamkeit wird der Größe der städtischen freien schwarzen Bevölkerung, dem Urbanisierungsgrad und den Arbeitsmöglichkeiten geschenkt. *Cities of Refuge* handelt sich in diesem Sinne um eine von wenigen Studien, die den Schwerpunkt auf die Erfahrungen der Flüchtigen legt, *nachdem* sie geflohen waren, und ermittelt die Faktoren, die es ihnen ermöglichten in urbane Gemeinschaften zu integrieren. Um den Erfolg tausender städtischer Flüchtlinge zu verstehen, ist die Untersuchung der freien schwarzen Bevölkerung ausschlaggebend.

Der Schwerpunkt auf den Erfahrungen der Geflüchteten und den Dynamiken der freien afroamerikanischen Bevölkerung als „Aufnahmegemeinschaft" bilden den roten Faden durch die Dissertation hinweg. **Kapital 1** „The Changing Landscape of Freedom" identifiziert und diskutiert die vier Faktoren, die Flucht aus der Sklaverei in der erforschten Zeitspanne förderten: 1. schwindende Möglichkeiten der Sklaverei auf legalem Weg zu entkommen, 2. Ausweitung der Sklaverei, 3. Intensivierung des Binnensklavenhandels, und 4. rapider Anstieg der freien schwarzen Bevölkerung. Aus der Analyse des letzten Punkts geht hervor, dass Afroamerikaner sich in einer zunehmend einengenden gesetzlichen Lage befanden und immer häufiger ebenfalls einen illegalen Status besaßen. Das Konzept der Illegalität ist daher ausschlaggebend um die Situation großer Anteile der freien schwarzen Bevölkerung zu verstehen und – erweiternd dazu – die der geflüchteten Sklaven, die sich ihnen anschlossen. Diese Erkenntnis zieht sich durch den Rest der Dissertation. In diesem Zusammenhang kompliziert *Cities of Refuge* den konventionellen Standpunkt, der die freie schwarze Bevölkerung als legal homogene Masse betrachtet.

Während sich die Sklaverei ausbreitete, wurde erfolgreiche Flucht für eine kleine Gruppe versklavter Menschen realisierbarer als zuvor. Und obwohl Flüchten extrem risikobehaftet blieb, entstanden mehr Möglichkeiten um innerhalb des Südens in Freiheit zu leben. **Kapitel 2** „A Mobile Elite: Profiling Southern Refugees" führt das Konzept der „mobilen Sklavenelite" ein und zeichnet ein Porträt urbaner Freiheitssuchender. Hier wird beantwortet, wer diese Flüchtlinge waren und warum und wie sie entkommen konnten. Dabei hebt es Mobilität, Gender, Alter und berufliche Fertigkeiten als Faktoren hervor, die im Kontext südlicher Flucht relevant waren. Das Kapitel beinhaltet Abschnitte wie das „Leihsklaven-System" (*slave-hiring system*), das für die Flucht vorteilhaft wirkte, die Hilfen und Herausforderung, denen Flüchtlinge auf ihrem Weg begegneten, und die praktischen Schritte, um sich als freie Menschen auszugeben (*passing for free*). Daneben setzt es die Entscheidungen entflohener Sklaven, inmitten einer Region legaler Sklaverei zu bleiben, in den Zusammenhang von familiären Beziehungen, Unterstützernetzwerken und einem Gefühl regionaler Zugehörigkeit. Eine weitere Erkenntnis ist, dass Frauen – obwohl sie Männern immer noch zahlenmäßig unterlegen waren – an dieser Art von Sklavenflucht einen größeren Anteil hatten als bei Migrationen aus den Südstaaten heraus.

Die nachfolgenden zwei Kapitel beschäftigen sich mit den Integrationserfahrungen der Sklavenflüchtlinge in den Städten und tragen dazu bei, zu erklären, warum es für sie möglich war, ihre Freiheit zu erhalten. **Kapitel 3** „Finding Refuge" widmet sich der gesellschaftlichen und räumlichen Integration. Hierbei ist die nähere Betrachtung von Kapitel 1 wichtig, dass Sklavenflüchtlinge sich urbanen schwarzen Gemeinschaften anschlossen, die selbst zu großem Anteil einen undokumentierten Status besaßen. Mit besonderer Betonung auf diesen Aufnahmegemeinschaften wird das Zusammenspiel von räumlicher Segregation, gesellschaftlicher Exklusion und der Kriminalisierung von Afroamerikanern in einem Kontext rapider Verstädterung untersucht und aufgezeigt, dass diese Elemente bei der Erschaffung von Räumen der Freiheit unterstützend wie auch limitierend wirkten. Stärkere Segregation führte dazu, dass tausende illegale Stadtbewohner innerhalb ihrer eigenen Kreise verweilen konnten. Jedoch wurden die gesetzlichen Rahmenbedingungen und die Überwachung in den Städten mit der Zeit strenger. Ironischerweise führte ein Mehr an Kontrolle von oben zu einem Weniger an Kontrolle aus der Mitte der Gesellschaft, denn weiße Menschen versuchten vermehrt, sich von schwarzen Menschen abzugrenzen. Das zeigt, dass es nicht nur Menschen afrikanischer Abstammung waren, die bewusst Räume der Freiheit schufen, sondern dass auch weiße Amerikaner unbeabsichtigt dazu beitrugen. Die Einschränkungen, denen sich die freie schwarze Bevölkerung und jeder, der Teil von ihnen wurde, ausgesetzt sahen, waren allerdings ein schwerer Rückschlag in Bezug auf die Freiheit, die entflohene Sklaven suchten. Dies verpasste Städten der Zuflucht einen bitteren Beigeschmack und verwässerte die Qualität der Freiheit.

Kapitel 4 „From Slavery to Poverty" führt ein Spektrum von Möglichkeiten und Schwierigkeiten auf, die illegale Freiheitssuchende bei ihrer Integration in die städtischen Arbeitsmärkte antrafen. Männer und Frauen wurden Teil der Arbeiterklasse südlicher Städte, indem sie sich entweder als freie schwarze Menschen ausgaben oder als Sklaven, die von ihren Besitzern geschickt wurden, um selbstständig ihre Arbeit anzubieten (*self-hired slaves*). In den besten Fällen waren sie in der Lage, aus den Fähigkeiten und der Fachkompetenz, die sie sich in der Sklaverei angeeignet hatten, Nutzen zu ziehen. Vorkriegszeitliche städtische Arbeitsmärkte waren allerdings nach *race* und legalem Status unterteilt, was Auswirkungen auf Sklavenflüchtlinge hatte, die die Effekte beider Beschränkungen spürten. Um die Räume, die die Arbeitsmärkte anboten, navigieren zu können, mussten sie die Trennlinien erkennen. Besonders entflohene Männer, die laut ihres Profils oft in hoch- und höher qualifizierten Berufen ausgebildet waren, integrierten in den Arbeitsmarkt unter ihren Fähigkeiten. Um keine Aufmerksamkeit zu erregen, mussten sie sich bedeckt halten und waren auf direkte Bezahlung angewiesen.

Die erwähnten Unterteilungen waren dynamisch und entwickelten sich mit der Zeit; im Allgemeinen zum Nachteil von Menschen afrikanischer Abstammung. In diesem Licht diskutiert dieses Kapitel auch die Auswirkungen, die die Integration von Flüchtlingen auf die Gemeinschaften hatte, die sie aufnahmen. Letztere büßten immer mehr ihrer bereits eingeschränkten Bewegungsfreiheit ein, indem sie eine bedeutende Anzahl illegaler – und daher machtloser – Arbeiter zu ihrer Gruppe zählten. Durch eine Kombination ökonomischer und extra-ökonomischer Kräfte wurden schwarze Menschen an das untere Ende des Wirtschaftssystems gedrückt. Bemerkenswerterweise schufen kapitalistische Entwicklungen,

die auf Flexibilität und niedrige Arbeitskosten angewiesen waren, Bedingungen, die undokumentierten Arbeitern zu Gute kamen.

Auf diesen Einsichten aufbauend verschiebt **Kapitel 5** „Illegal but Tolerated" den Schwerpunkt, der bisher auf den Geflüchteten selbst lag, um verschiedene Interessensgruppen mit einzubeziehen. Sklavenflüchtlinge hatten wahrhaftig eine paradoxe Position in der Wirtschaftspolitik der vier Städte. Obwohl sie auf wenig Sympathie der weißen Bevölkerung hoffen konnten, wurde ihre Anwesenheit größtenteils toleriert. Dieses Kapitel zeigt, dass wirtschaftliche Entwicklungen, Demokratisierung und ausländische Immigration zu einer Umstrukturierung von bürgerlicher Macht und Vorstellungen rundum schwarze Arbeiter führten. Sklavenhalter waren traditionell für die Gesetzeslage zur „Rassenkontrolle" in den Städten zuständig. Mit der Zeit wurden jedoch Bankiers, Großkaufleute und Industrielle dominanter und sie begannen, wichtige politische Ämter auf lokaler Ebene zu besetzen. Je mächtiger diese kapitalistische höhere Mittelschicht wurde, umso mehr Sklavenflüchtlinge absorbierten die jeweiligen Städte als leicht auszubeutende Lohnarbeiter. Dies war allerdings keine lineare Entwicklung. Gegen Ende der Vorkriegsperiode erlangten die unteren Schichten und die unteren Mittelschichten eine stärkere politische Stimme. Weil sie die Arbeit schwarzer Menschen als direkte Konkurrenz wahrnahmen, hatte ihre politische Emanzipation einen negativen Einfluss auf illegale Räume der Freiheit und es kam zu vermehrten Festnahmen von Sklavenflüchtlingen.

Die sozialen Erfahrungen variierten von Ort zu Ort und waren von gesetzlichen Rahmenbedingungen, wirtschaftlichen Faktoren und gesellschaftlichen Entwicklungen abhängig. Wirtschaftlich prosperierende und demographisch wachsende urbane Zentren waren die vielversprechendsten Zufluchtsstädte. Während der untersuchten Zeitspanne war New Orleans zu Beginn der Ort, welcher die meisten Sklavenflüchtlinge aufnahm. Die Umstrukturierung des Behördenapparats nach der Aufnahme Louisianas in die Amerikanische Republik, die Unterteilung der Stadt nach franco- und anglophonen Amtsträgern und die kulturelle Vielfältigkeit der Bevölkerung erschufen eine Konstellation, in der Flüchtlinge kaum Aufmerksamkeit auf sich zogen. Baltimore, die Stadt mit den höchsten Wachstumsraten und geleitet von Industriellen, überholte New Orleans und wurde in der zweiten Hälfte der Vorkriegszeit die größte Zufluchtsstadt. Charleston muss in den ersten Jahrzehnten mehr Freiheitssuchende empfangen haben als Richmond, wovon die meisten Geflüchteten versuchten als *self-hired slaves* Arbeit zu finden. Jedoch erzeugte die hohe Anwesenheit der Sklavenhalter die striktesten Kontrollen aller vier Städte. Aufgrund Richmonds Entwicklung zu einem Industriezentrum wurde es als Zufluchtsstadt mit der Zeit attraktiver als Charleston. Als eine Stadt, in der Sklavenhalter und Industrielle größtenteils symbiotisch waren, war Richmond ein Ort für Sklavenflüchtlinge um sich sowohl als freie Menschen als auch als *self-hired slaves* auszugeben.

Aus den Kapiteln wird deutlich, dass die Parallelen zwischen den Fallbeispielen auffallender sind als die Unterschiede. Durch ihre hohe Anzahl beeinflussten Flüchtlinge die lokalen Gemeinschaften, die Arbeitsmärkte und die kommunale Politik. Gleichermaßen waren die politischen Diskussionen bezüglich ihrer Anwesenheit überall limitiert. Alle diese Erkenntnisse zeigen, dass Räume der Freiheit in den südlichen Städten durch ein Zusammenspiel von verschiedenen Personengruppen erschaffen wurden: Freiheitssuchende und ihre Helfer erzeugten sie bewusst und willentlich. Die staatlichen Behörden produzierten

einen großen Bevölkerungsanteil illegaler Menschen, die Flüchtlingen Deckung boten. Lokale Behörden maßen dem Thema nicht genügend Wichtigkeit bei, da es keine hohe Priorität besaß, wovon städtische Arbeitgeber profitierten. Die wachsenden weißen Mittelschichten, getrieben von dem Wunsch sich von armen schwarzen Menschen abzugrenzen, konstruierten physische Räume, die es Illegalen ermöglichten, unbemerkt zu bleiben. Sklavenhalter waren diesem Zusammenspiel nicht gewachsen. Das Paradox der Zeit war, dass viele dieser Entwicklungen, die Flüchtlingen von Nutzen waren und die Räume der Freiheit schufen, nicht annähernd so günstig für legal freie Afroamerikaner waren.

Zusammenfassend zeichnet *Cities of Refuge* ein nuanciertes Bild von Sklaverei, Sklavenkontrolle und Freiheit in der sich verändernden sozialen Landschaft der amerikanischen Südstaaten. Außerdem zeigt diese Dissertation, dass der Prozess von Illegalisierung eine längere Geschichte hat als Migrationsstudien argumentieren. Es wird daher ein neuer Blick auf Freiheit, Ungleichheit, *race*, Widerstand, Staatsbürgerschaft, Demokratie und Kapitalismus geworfen als große Themen, die die Gesellschaft in den Vereinigten Staaten bis zum heutigen Tag beschäftigen.

Curriculum Vitae

Viola Franziska Müller was born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, on July 1st, 1987. She received her BA in Area Studies Latin America and Economics in 2012 from Universität zu Köln. Her thesis, under the supervision of Prof. Michael Zeuske, dealt with maroons in Suriname. During her bachelor studies, Viola also studied at Universitat de Barcelona in the semester of 2009/2010. In 2015, Viola graduated *cum laude* from Universiteit Leiden with a MA (research) in History. Within the program Migration and Global Interdependence, she wrote a thesis on the Afro-Colombian music *champeta*, which was supervised by Prof. Marlou Schrover.

In the same year, Viola Müller started her PhD at Universiteit Leiden under the supervision of Prof. Damian Pargas and the co-supervision of Prof. Marlou Schrover. In 2019, Viola spent time at Brown University as a short-term fellow. Her research, which led to a PhD dissertation entitled "Cities of Refuge: Slave Flight and Illegal Freedom in the American Urban South, 1800-1860," was part of the NWO-funded VIDI project *Beacons of Freedom: Slave Refugees in North America, 1800-1860*. Currently, Viola works as a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute in Fiesole.