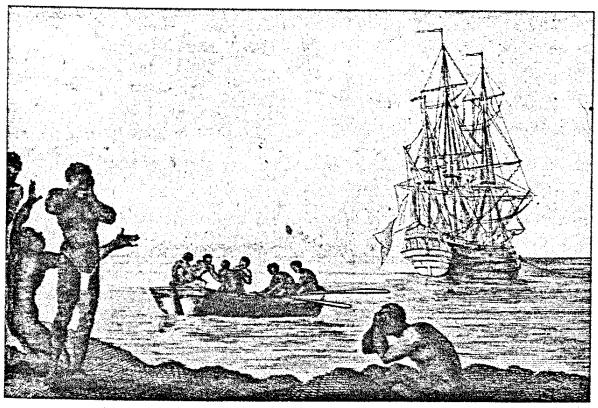
PROLOGUE

SLAVERY AND FREEDOM



No one knew slavery better than the slave, and few had thought harder about what freedom could mean. In January 1865 General William Tecumseh Sherman and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton met in Savannah to query an assemblage of former slaves and free people of color on just these subjects. The response of Garrison Frazier, a 67-year-old Baptist minister who served as spokesman for the group, offers about as good a working definition of chattel bondage as any, and as clear an understanding of the aspirations of black people as can be found. "Slavery," declared Frazier, "is receiving by the *irresistible power* the work of another man, and not by his *consent*." While freedom, Frazier continued, "is taking us from the yoke of bondage, and placing us where we could reap the fruits of our own labor, take care of ourselves and assist the Government in maintaining our freedom."[1]

Frazier's last remark—calculated to reassure the general and the secretary—spoke to the minister's appreciation of the political realities of the moment. But his definition of slavery—irresistible power to arrogate another's labor—drew on some three hundred years of experience in bond-

age on mainland North America. Slavery, of necessity, rested on force. It could be sustained only when slaveowners—who, with reason, preferred the title "master"—enjoyed a monopoly on violence, backed by the power of the state. Without irresistible power, slavery quickly collapsed—an event well understood by all those who came together at that historic meeting in Savannah.

Frazier also correctly emphasized the centrality of labor to the enslavement of himself and his people. Plantation slavery did not have its origins in a conspiracy to dishonor, shame, brutalize, or otherwise reduce black people's standing on some perverse scale of humanity—although it did all of those at one time or another. Slavery's moral stench cannot mask the design of American captivity: to commandeer the labor of the many to make a few rich and powerful. Slavery thus made class as it made race, and in entwining the two processes it mystified both.

No history of slavery can avoid these themes: violence, power, and labor, hence the formation and reformation of classes and races. The study of slavery on mainland North America is first the study of enormous, hideous violence that a few powerful men wielded to extort the labor of others and thereby attain a place atop American society. The history of slavery, as Thomas Jefferson observed, was "a perpetual exercise of the most boisterous passions, the most unremitting despotism."[2] Violence, as Jefferson also understood, begat more violence as slaves refused to surrender what they believed was rightfully theirs. Born of a violent usurpation, slavery would—and perhaps could only—die in the same bloody warfare.

The contest between master and slave proceeded on uneven terrain. By definition, relations between masters and slaves were profoundly asymmetrical, with slaveowners holding a disproportion of power and slaves having hardly any. For three centuries, slave masters mobilized enormous resources that stretched across continents and oceans and employed them with great ferocity in an effort to subdue their human property. Slaves, for their part, had little to depend upon but themselves. Yet even when their power was reduced to a mere trifle, slaves still had enough to threaten their owners—a last card, which, as their owners well understood, they might play at any time.

Despite the uneven nature of the contest, slave masters never quite carried the day. While slaveowners won nearly all the great battles, slaves won their share of skirmishes, frustrating the masters' grand design. Although denied the right to marry, they made families; denied the right to an independent religious life, they established churches; denied the right to hold property, they owned many things. Defined as property and condemned as little more than beasts, they refused to surrender their humanity. Their small successes and occasional victories, moreover, positioned them to win the last battle. In the end, it was they—not their owners—who sat at the table with the conquering general and triumphant secretary of war. Yet, even then—as Garrison Frazier and the others understood—the contest had not ended, for freedom, like slavery, was not made but constantly remade.

Generations of Captivity tells the story of the making and remaking of slavery over the course of nearly three centuries in the portion of North America that became the United States. The emphasis is on the slave. Although slavery was a relationship—hence understanding its working requires an appreciation of slaveowners (large and small), white nonslaveholders, free people of color, and Native Americans—the slave was central to drama. The emphasis is also on change. For too long, scholars have taken the slaves' legal status as chattel property and their social standing at the extreme of subordination as evidence that slaves stood outside history. Depicted as socially dead, they became "absolute aliens," "genealogical isolates," "deracinated outsiders," "prepolitical," or unreflective "sambos" who were known for who they were rather than what they did.[3] Appreciating the ongoing struggle between slaves and slaveowners gives the lie to such assumptions. Knowing that a person was a slave does not tell everything about him or her. Put another way, slaveholders severely circumscribed the lives of enslaved people, but they never fully defined them. The slaves' history—like all human history—was made not only by what was done to them but also by what they did for themselves.

All of which is to say that slavery, though originally imposed and maintained by violence, was negotiated. Although disfranchised, slaves were not politically inert, and their politics—even absent an independent institutional basis—was as active as any. The ongoing contest forced slaveowners and slaves, even as they confronted one another as deadly enemies, to concede a degree of legitimacy to their opponent. No matter how reluctantly given—or, more likely, extracted—such concessions were difficult for either party to acknowledge. Masters presumed their own absolute sovereignty, and slaves never relinquished the right to control their own destiny. But no matter how adamant the denials, nearly every interaction of master and slave forced such recognition, for the web of interconnections necessitated a coexistence that fostered grudging cooperation as well as open contestation. The refusal of either party to concede the realities of master-slave relations only added to slavery's instability. No bargain could last for very long, for as power slipped from master to slave and back, the terms of slavery were negotiated and then renegotiated.

Central to those negotiations was the labor slaves performed, for when, where, and especially how slaves worked determined, in large measure, the course of their lives. But if the study of slavery is first a branch of labor history, it is also more. Slaves, no less than any other workers, did not live on bread alone. Family, language, and spirituality infused the patches of tobacco and the fields of rice and indigo, just as exploitation and compensation informed the spiritual language of brush-arbor sermons and the vernacular of field chants. The weight of time alone—whether calculated as a portion of a day, a year, or a lifetime—does not automatically elevate labor in the field or workshop over any of the other manifestations of human existence emanating from the quarter, household, and church. It is precisely in connecting the quarter, household, and church to the field and the workshop that the slaves' experience can be made comprehensible. Study of the workplace offers only a practical point of entry to their social organization, domestic arrangements, religious beliefs, and medical practices, along with their music, cuisine, linguistic and sartorial style, and much else.

Over time, slaves transformed their experience—drawn from, among other things, work habits, musical style, and religious beliefs—into a culture that joined them together as a class and distinguished them from their owners. The slave experience provided the basis of institutions that

had no standing in law but a powerful presence in life. It enfranchised leaders who articulated aspirations that reached beyond life's daily trials. It became the foundation of collective action, for it entailed both responsibilities and obligations. It nourished the hope that there would be something better—if not for the present then for the future.

The history of slavery in the United States—the republic and the colonies that preceded it—can be divided into five parts, here generously denominated as "generations." It began with the charter generations, cosmopolitan men and women of African descent who arrived in mainland North America almost simultaneously with the first European adventurers. Their knowledge of the larger Atlantic world, the fluidity with which they moved in it, and their chameleonlike ability to alter their identity moderated the force of chattel bondage, allowing a considerable proportion of these initial arrivals to gain their freedom and enjoy a modest prosperity.

Those who followed—the plantation generations—were not nearly as fortunate. Stripped of family and kin, these peoples of the African interior faced the full force of the plantation revolution. Their catastrophic confrontation with large-scale staple production—tobacco in the Chesapeake at the end of the seventeenth century and rice in lowcountry South Carolina and Georgia at the beginning of the eighteenth century—debased African and African-American life. Members of the plantation generations worked harder, died earlier, and escaped slavery less frequently than their predecessors. Whether measured by the many who died or the few who survived, the plantation generations' history was one of impoverishment, degradation, and loss. Yet, in equal measure, it is also the story of survival, resistance, and cultural reconstruction amid the imposition of planter dominance.

Hope was restored at the end of the eighteenth century as a series of egalitarian revolutions spread through the Atlantic. But while thousands of members of the revolutionary generations secured their freedom, reconstituted their families, remade their religious life, and attained a modicum of prosperity, many more were condemned to yet another century of captivity.

The division between the enslaved many and the free few increased during the nineteenth century as members of the migration generations were propelled from the southern seaboard across the continent. Their divided history—as tens of thousands went south to construct a new slave society in the southern interior and hundreds fled north to create a free one—set the stage for the Great Jubilee and the emergence of the freedom generations.

Tracing the generations of African and African-American captivity across the centuries requires sensitivity to place as well as time. The geography of slave life changed with its history. Whereas the charter generations' history can be understood by viewing slavery from Dutch New Netherland, English Chesapeake, French Louisiana, and Spanish Florida, changes in American society—mostly in the eighteenth century—require that the plantation and revolutionary generations be viewed on a larger canvas: the North, the Chesapeake, lowcountry South Carolina and Georgia, and the lower Mississippi Valley. The westward expansion of the United States in the nineteenth century necessitates yet another geography of slavery. The migration generations are divided not merely north and south but between the old seaboard South and the new southern interior. As with many other aspects of American life, the Civil War created—perhaps for the first time—a common African-American experience.

Each chapter of *Generations of Captivity* begins with the region that best exemplifies the generational experience. Thus, "Charter Generations" (chapter 1) starts with black life in Dutch New Netherland (present-day New York), not because of any chronological primacy in the history of European and African settlement in mainland North America but because the character of the charter generations was most fully evident in seventeenth-century New Netherland. For like reasons, "Plantation Generations" (chapter 2) begins with the tobacco revolution in the Chesapeake, "Revolutionary Generations" (chapter 3) with emancipations in the northern states, and "Migration Generations" (chapter 4) with the cotton and sugar revolutions in the southern interior. By beginning where change was most evident and then inspecting various permutations, each chapter elaborates how the very same processes—initial settlement, the advent of

staple production, social revolution, forced migration, and civil war—followed a different course in different places; hence the use of the plural when discussing the various "generations" of people of African descent.

This complex matrix of space and time suggests that the idea of "generation" might be both too precise and too diffuse, as generations overlap in ways that militate against sharp boundaries. Slave children could no more escape the experience of their parents than they could deny that of their own children. Thus, the lives of the charter generations impinged on those of the plantation generations, just as the memories of the plantation generations echoed in the revolutionary generations, or the ideas of the migration generations invaded those of the freedom generations. But exploring these connections—the instinctive imitations, conscious reproductions, or determined repudiations—has some advantages. Such generational linkages expose the crooked path whereby slave life changed over the course of nearly three centuries. Slaves were different people in 1650 than they would be in 1750 or 1850, but they always carried something of their forebears into the future. Like all history, the generational experiences could be recalled, reformulated, or reconstructed to suit contemporary needs. In the 1770s, members of the revolutionary generations instituted freedom suits on the basis of the charter generations' mixed ancestry. Members of the freedom generation recalled the promises made during the revolutionary years. No understanding of slavery can ignore the force of change or the ability of men and women to reconstruct the past in their own image.

Two theoretical distinctions undergird slavery's ever-changing history and geography. The first, drawn from the study of slavery in antiquity, distinguishes between societies with slaves and slave societies.[4] Societies with slaves were not societies in which, as one apologist for slavery in the North observed, "even the darkest aspect of slavery was softened by a smile."[5] Superficially, slavery in such societies might appear milder, as slaveowners—not driven by the great wealth sugar, tobacco, rice, or cotton could produce—had less reason to press their slaves. Moreover, slaveholdings in societies with slaves were generally small, and the line between slave and free could be remarkably fluid, with manumission often possible

and sometimes encouraged. But neither mildness nor openness defined societies with slaves. Slaveholders in such societies could act with extraordinary brutality precisely because their slaves were extraneous to their main business. They could limit their slaves' access to freedom expressly because they desired to set themselves apart from their slaves.

What distinguished societies with slaves was the fact that slaves were marginal to the central productive processes. In societies with slaves, slavery was just one form of labor among many. Slaveowners treated their slaves with extreme callousness and cruelty at times, because this was the way they treated all subordinates, be they indentured servants, debtors, prisoners of war, pawns, peasants, or perhaps simply poor folks. In societies with slaves, no one presumed the master-slave relationship to be the exemplar.

In slave societies, by contrast, slavery stood at the center of economic production, and the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations: husband and wife, parent and child, employer and employee. From the most intimate connections between men and women to the most public ones between ruler and ruled, all relationships mimicked those of slavery. As Frank Tannenbaum observed, "Nothing escaped, nothing, and no one."[6] Whereas in societies with slaves slaveholders were just one portion of a propertied elite, in slave societies they were the ruling class. In slave societies, nearly everyone—free and slave—aspired to enter the slaveholding class, and upon occasion some former slaves rose into the slaveholders' ranks. Their acceptance was grudging, as they carried the stigma of bondage in their lineage and, in the case of American slavery, color in their skin. But the right to enter the slaveholding class was rarely denied, because slaveownership was open to all irrespective of family, nationality, color, or ancestry.

Historians have outlined the process by which societies with slaves in the Americas became slave societies.[7] The transformation generally turned upon the discovery of some commodity—gold being the ideal, sugar being a close second—that could command an international market. In pursuit of that market, slaveholders capitalized production and monopolized resources, muscled other classes to the periphery, and consolidated their

political power. The number of slaves increased sharply, generally by direct importation from Africa, and enslaved people of African descent became the majority of the laboring class, sometimes the majority of the population. Other forms of labor—family labor, indentured servitude, wage labor—declined, as slaveholders drove small farmers and wage workers to the margins. These men and women sometimes resisted violently, in the North American mainland most famously in Bacon's rebellion.[8] But mostly they voted with their feet and migrated from slave societies, much as the "redlegs" deserted Barbados in the wake of the sugar revolution of the mid-seventeenth century, the small planters and drovers fled lowcountry Carolina in the wake of the rice revolution of the early eighteenth century, and the yeomanry abandoned the blackbelt for the hill country of the southern interior and the flatlands of the Midwest in the wake of the cotton revolution of the early nineteenth century.

In the absence of competitors, slaveholders solidified their rule. Through their control of the state, they enacted—or reinvigorated—comprehensive slave codes in which they vested themselves with near-complete sovereignty over their slaves, often extending to an absolute right over the slave's life. The new laws sharply reduced the latitude slaves previously enjoyed and extended the deference slaves must show to their owners at all times, without question. The prerogatives that slaves once openly maintained—to travel, to meet among themselves, to hold property, and to trade at market—were also severely circumscribed or abolished, although they survived at the pleasure of individual slaveowners. That done, slaveholders narrowed the slaves' access to freedom, so that the previously permeable boundaries between bondage and liberty became impenetrable barriers.

Finally, slaveholders elaborated the ideology of subordination, generally finding the sources of their own domination in some rule of nature or law of God. Since slavery in the New World became exclusively identified with people of African descent, the slaveholders' explanation of their own domination generally took the form of racial ideologies. But African descent and the pigmocracy that accompanied it was only one manifestation

of the slaves' subordination. Even where slaveowner and slave admittedly shared the same origins, masters construed domination in "racial" terms.[9]

Whereas elements of the process by which societies with slaves were transformed into slave societies were everywhere the same, the process was always different, except for its inherent brutality. Some societies with slaves passed rapidly into slave societies, so that the earlier experience left hardly a mark. Others moved slowly and imperfectly through the transformation, backtracking several times, so that the process was more circular than linear. Yet other societies with slaves never completed the transition, and some hardly began it. Moreover, slave societies did not always stay slave societies. The development of slavery did not necessarily run in one direction; slave societies also became societies with slaves as often as the opposite.

As one marker of slavery's history, the transformation of societies with slaves to slave societies provides a clue to yet another. A second marker in the evolution of slavery—the arrival of freedom—had an effect that was as powerful as the first. Freedom came to American slaves in two great revolutionary climacterics. The first—the democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century—hit slavery hard. The Declaration of Independence in the American colonies, the Declaration of the Rights of Man in France, and the emergence of an independent Haitian Republic on Hispaniola undermined the ideological foundation upon which slavery rested, and the wars that accompanied these ideological upheavals provided slaves with new leverage to contest their owners' power.[10] Some slaves secured their liberty, and portions of the new United States became identified with freedom. But slavery was nothing if not resilient. It not only survived the egalitarian forces unleashed in the Age of Revolution but also grew strong on them. It would take another revolution—what Charles Beard called in another context the Second American Revolution—to finally bring slavery down.

The history of freedom, like the history of slavery, was never the same from time to time and place to place. Geography, demography, and economy informed the process of emancipation just as they tempered the

course of enslavement. Free societies were as different as the slave societies they replaced. But as with the transition from societies with slaves to slave societies, historians have identified general processes by which freedom supplants slavery.

Whether in Vermont or Barbados, Jamaica or Brazil, emancipation followed the same course. Evidence of slavery's weakening grip—in whispers of distant abolition or rumblings of military mobilization—emboldened slaves and panicked slaveowners. The conflict between slave and master intensified, as each bolstered the ideological foundations of its claim—freedom for slaves, mastership for owners. Seemingly harmonious relations between slaves and owners turned factious and violent. The patina of rationalizations that sustained the slave regime fell away. Complacent slaves became insolent, and benevolent masters turned vicious, as the irreconcilable differences that underlay slavery became manifest. Both declared themselves betrayed, charging the other with ingratitude.

With the arrival of freedom, former slaves seized the moment to remake their lives. They took new names, found new residences, reconstituted their families and churches, established new institutions like schools and benevolent associations, strove for material independence, and created the political organizations to protect and advance that independence. Against the onrushing tide of change, former masters hastened to reconstruct the old regime on new ground, sometimes conceding what they could not resist, sometimes asserting their old power in novel ways, and sometimes redefining the terms of conflict by creating new mechanisms of domination. Among the latter was a redefinition of the terms of superordination and subordination. In the color-coded slave societies of the Americas, these inevitably included new definitions of race. Without slavery to order society, blackness and whiteness gained in importance.

Meanwhile, the people caught between the former slaves and former masters hurriedly repaired to safe ground, trying to preserve what they once had even as they searched for ways to seize the moment. Former free people of color—adrift in a world that promised equality but stripped of their former privileged status—hedged between their old allegiance and the new possibilities that accompanied universal freedom. While some

moved into positions of leadership among the newly freed, others retreated to anonymity, waiting for the storm to subside. Similarly, white nonslaveholders—bereft of the special status their white skin once provided—watched the changes carefully, some seeing advantages in the defeat of the old planter class (scalawags in the American context) and some becoming the shock troops of revanchist masters (klansmen).[11]

In the United States, the two emancipations—the partial liberation of the Revolution and the total liquidation of the Civil War—unleashed the latent egalitarian impulses in American society. But while the process by which slave societies were transformed into free ones followed the same course during these two uprisings, they were never precisely the same from place to place. After the American Revolution, freedom—and slavery—took different forms in the North, Chesapeake, lowcountry, and lower Mississippi Valley. After the Civil War, freedom—following slavery's final demise—took a different shape in the former free states and the former slave states. Indeed, within each of these vast domains, freedom gained new meanings dependent upon the demographic balance of white and black, the resilience of the old class structures, the nature of the crop, and the course of the military conflict by which freedom arrived. No less than slavery, freedom had a history that changed with time and place.

The coincidence of slavery's destruction with the revolutions that made the American Republic in 1776 and then remade it in 1861 reveals the extent to which slavery was woven into the fabric of American life. For most of its history, the American colonies and then the United States was a society of slaves and slaveholders. From the first, slavery shaped the American economy, its politics, its culture, and its most deeply held beliefs. The American economy was founded upon the production of slave-grown crops, the great staples of tobacco, rice, sugar, and finally cotton that were sold on the international market and made some men extraordinarily wealthy. That great wealth allowed slaveholding planters a large place in the establishment of the new federal government in 1787, as planters were quick to translate their economic power into political power. Between the founding of the Republic and the Civil War, the majority of presidents—from Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and Jackson through

Tyler, Polk, and Taylor—were themselves slaveholders, and generally substantial slaveholders. The same was true for the Supreme Court, where two slaveholding Chief Justices—John Marshall and Roger Taney—ruled over a slaveholding majority. And so too with the Congress—indeed, politics during the antebellum period revolved around the struggle between North and South for control of Congress.

The power of the slaveholder class, represented by the predominance of slaveholders in the nation's leadership, gave it a large hand in shaping American culture and the values associated with American society. It was no accident that a slaveholder penned the founding statement of American nationality and that freedom became the nation's transcendent marker. Men and women who drove slaves understood the meaning of chattel bondage—as did the men and women who were in fact chattel bondsmen and bondswomen. Just as it was no accident that Thomas Jefferson wrote "all men are created equal," it is most certainly no accident that the greatest spokesmen for the realization of that ideal—from Richard Allen through Frederick Douglass, W. E. B. DuBois to Martin Luther King, Jr.—were former slaves and the descendants of slaves. Only by understanding the generations of Americans who spent their lives in captivity can we fully appreciate the generations of Americans who struggled for freedom.

The historicization of slavery—and freedom—reveals how the critical changes in the nature of slavery have been employed to make history. Whether it is recalling the promises of the Revolution ("all men are created equal") or the Civil War ("forty acres and a mule") or remembering the Middle Passage from Africa or the Second Middle Passage from Virginia, the history of slavery has itself been used to make slavery's history. For some three hundred years, Americans have situated their own history in terms of the struggle between freedom and slavery—and freedom's triumph. It thus should not be surprising that even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, one hundred and thirty plus years after slavery's legal demise, slavery continues to play a part in American life, as Americans discover that their national buildings were constructed by slaves, their great cities are underlaid with the bones of slaves, and their greatest heroes

and heroines were slaveowners and slaves. Coming to terms with slavery's complex history is no easier in the twenty-first century than it was in centuries past.

In presenting a history of slavery in mainland North America from its ill-defined beginnings to its fiery demise, *Generations of Captivity* reprises and extends my earlier study, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America.* The short five years since the publication of *Many Thousands Gone* have witnessed a vast outpouring of new research in this field.[12] To take only the crudest of measures, more than two hundred books have been submitted for the Gilder Lehrman Institute's Frederick Douglass Award for the best study on slavery. The journal *Slavery and Abolition*'s annual bibliography of scholarly articles and conference papers regularly runs over thirty tightly packed pages. *Generations of Captivity* draws on this new scholarship to deepen understanding of the charter, plantation, and revolutionary generations.

Generations of Captivity also addresses the large, and largely unanswered, question posed by recent studies of slavery in colonial and revolutionary North America, including my own. At the beginning of the nineteenth century (the point at which *Many Thousands Gone* concludes), the markers that are most closely identified with slavery's history in the United States—cotton cultivation, residence in the blackbelt, and African-Christian spirituality—hardly existed. In 1800 few American slaves grew cotton, few resided in the Deep South, and most did not identify with Christianity—no matter how latitudinous the definition of Christian belief. Yet in 1865, when with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution black people completed their wartime exodus from slavery, all of these elements were in place. Most slaves grew cotton, resided in the Deep South, and professed Christianity.

Little in the vast literature of nineteenth-century slavery in the United States explains the plantation revolutions that transformed tobacco and rice growers into cultivators of cotton and sugar, the Second Middle Passage that forcibly transferred nearly one million men and women from the seaboard to the interior, and the sudden willingness of men and women whose ancestors resisted Christianity for more than two centuries to em-

brace it and make it their own. Although there is a rich and growing monographic literature on each of these subjects—upon which much of this book rests—none of the great studies of nineteenth-century slavery make these rapid and often traumatic changes in black life the central element in slavery's history between the Revolution and the Civil War.

"The rigid and static nature of ante-bellum slavery, 1830–1860," wrote Kenneth M. Stampp nearly fifty years ago in his classic study *The Peculiar Institution,* "makes it possible to examine it institutionally with only slight regard for chronology." Eugene D. Genovese in his *Roll, Jordan, Roll,* another foundational text, and almost all other scholars—even those critical of Stampp and Genovese—have followed Stampp's lead. These seminal works—now more than a generation old, eons on the revisionist clock—have been elaborated and critiqued by a host of specialized studies of agricultural practice, domestic relations, manumission, material culture, plantation architecture, religious conventions, slave hire, underclass resistance, westward migration, and dozens of like subjects. While they are premised on a society in flux, the full force of these accumulated changes on slave society has yet to be measured. As a result, even the best recent overviews of antebellum slavery also remain riveted to the relationship between master and slave. Indeed, it was precisely such an attachment that sent scholars who were interested in slavery's evolution, including myself, to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, years in which free people were enslaved and Africans became African Americans. It now appears that the period of slavery's most rapid change in mainland North America was not its first two hundred years but the half century preceding the Civil War.[13]

Many Thousands Gone connected the evolution of slave life in mainland North America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to slavery's long transit from the eastern end of the Mediterranean across the Atlantic to the Americas. It viewed the charter generations as an outgrowth of the historic meeting of Africa, Europe, and the Americas. It considered the plantation generations to be an extension of the imposition of staple production first in the Mediterranean, then the Atlantic islands, Brazilian mainland, and the Windward and Leeward islands of the Caribbean. It understood the revolutionary generations as a product of the massive social upheavals that turned the Atlantic world upside down at the end of the eighteenth century.

Viewing the lives of nineteenth-century American slaves through this same Atlantic lens emphasizes how antebellum slavery remained part of slavery's long history and continued its Atlantic connections. For more than a millennium, the creation of new slave societies transformed old ones. The growth of plantation slavery in Madeira and the Canary Islands transformed slavery in the Mediterranean, just as the expansion of plantation production to São Tomé and Principé altered slave life in Madeira and the Canaries. Likewise, the rise of plantation slavery in seventeenth-century Barbados remade the lives of masters and slaves in Pernambuco, and its growth in Jamaica reconfigured slavery in Barbados.[14]

From this perspective, the lightning-like expansion of plantation slavery in the southern interior of the United States caused a thunderclap in the older slave-exporting seaboard states, north as well as south. It changed them in the same ways that the process of plantation succession had earlier transformed slavery in the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Slaveholders transferred slaves to areas of greater profitability, which became slave societies par excellence. Older, less productive areas reverted to societies with slaves. As the level of exploitation increased in the former, labor discipline intensified, and slave mortality and morbidity increased. Manumission became increasingly selective and rare. Something of the opposite happened in the older areas, where labor discipline grew flaccid, the slaves' material circumstances improved, and the possibilities of manumission and even emancipation grew. Everywhere, slaves and slaveholders reformulated their lives, as both created new ideologies to deal with the trauma of change. And everywhere, as always, new definitions of race arose.

Incorporating the nineteenth-century United States into the history of Atlantic slavery also clarifies many of the issues central to the study of antebellum America. It provides a fuller understanding of the divisions within American slave society, especially the east-west division between the expansive southern interior and the declining seaboard South. It casts new light on everything from the transformation of slave law to the evolution of slave music. Most importantly, it illuminates how the struggle be-

tween master and slave moved onto new ground—articulated in the language of domesticity—during the nineteenth century. In short, it places the vexed matter of paternalism—or what Eugene D. Genovese and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese called "seigneuralism"—in the context not only of the historic affinity of traditional elites for familial metaphors but also in the context of the massive forced migration which informed every aspect of black life during the middle years of the nineteenth century.[15] The Second Middle Passage shredded the planters' paternalist pretenses in the eyes of black people and prodded slaves and free people of color to create a host of oppositional ideologies and institutions that better accounted for the realities of the endless deportations, expulsions, and flights that continually remade their world. The historicization of the study of antebellum slavery, like the historicization of its colonial and revolutionary antecedents, clarifies one of the great controversies of slave historiography, in seeing planters' defense of slavery (and the slaves' counter) as a product not of slavery itself but of a particular moment in slavery's history.

In writing about antebellum slavery, I have also taken the opportunity to join the debate over slavery and freedom in the free states. New studies make it evident that the nineteenth-century North remained part of what Don Fehrenbacher called a "slaveholding republic" long after the region made a commitment to slavery's liquidation. Indeed, after reviewing the evidence, I think it remains an open question when, prior to January 1, 1863, the North became a free society. For that reason, slavery is just as essential to understanding the history of the antebellum North as it is to understanding the history of the colonial and revolutionary North. By including the North in *Generations of Captivity,* I wish to suggest that the antebellum United States might be better understood not as a nation sharply divided between slavery and freedom but as a nation of slaves and slaveholders, one portion of which was undergoing a slow transformation to freedom. Although the triumph of free labor and its underpenning ideologies was critical to the transformation of northern society and the struggle between North and South, the slowness of its development reveals how deeply the "free states" were enmeshed in the slaveholding republic.[16]

Generations of Captivity concludes with a short reprise of the destruction of slavery and the emergence of the freedom generation amid the Civil War. While this epilogue hardly does justice to the complicated history of slavery's end and the reconstruction of African-American life in the first years of freedom, it connects the expectations black people carried from three hundred years of slavery to the revolutionary possibilities presented by wartime emancipation. It demonstrates that former slaves had no desire to deny or escape their slave past but to use it to construct a better life for themselves and their posterity. That lesson, above all others, is the legacy of the generations of captivity.

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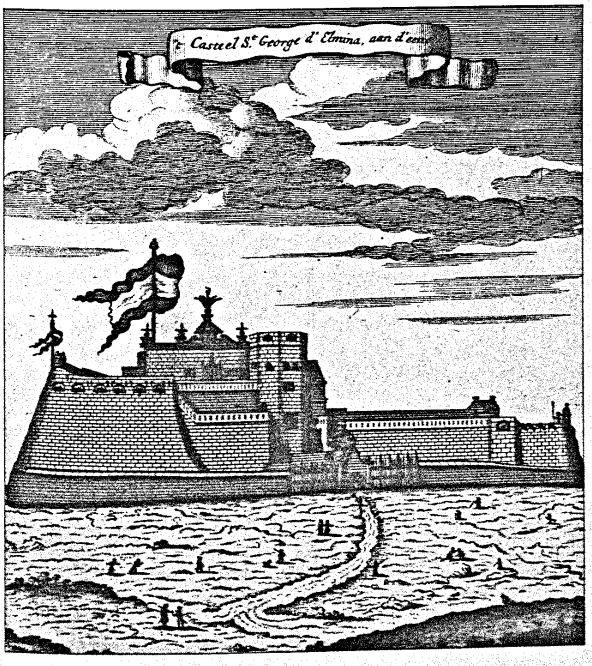
CHARTER GENERATIONS



BLACK LIFE on mainland North America originated not in Africa or America but in the nether world between the two continents. Along the periphery of the Atlantic—first in Africa, then Europe, and finally in the Americas—it was a product of the momentous meeting of Africans and Europeans and then their equally fateful rendezvous with the peoples of the New World. Although the countenances of these "Atlantic creoles" might bear the features of Africa, Europe, or the Americas in whole or part, their beginnings, strictly speaking, were in none of those places.[1] Instead, by their experience and sometimes by their person, they had become part of the three worlds that came together in the Atlantic littoral. Familiar with the commerce of the Atlantic, fluent in its new languages, and intimate with its trade and cultures, they were cosmopolitan in the fullest sense.

Atlantic creoles traced their beginnings to the historic encounter of Europeans and Africans on the west coast of Africa. Many served as intermediaries, employing their linguistic skills and their familiarity with the Atlantic's diverse commercial practices, cultural conventions, and diplomatic etiquette to mediate between the African merchants and European sea

captains. In so doing, some Atlantic creoles identified with their ancestral homeland (or a portion of it)—be it African or European—and served as its representatives in negotiations. Other Atlantic creoles had been won over by the power and largess of one party or another, so that Africans entered the employ of European trading companies, and Europeans traded with African potentates. Yet others played fast and loose with their mixed heritage, employing whichever identity paid best. Whatever strategy they adopted, Atlantic creoles began the process of integrating the icons and beliefs of the Atlantic world into a new way of life.[2]

The emergence of the Atlantic creoles was only a tiny outcropping in the massive social upheaval that joined the peoples of the eastern and western hemispheres. But it was representative of the small beginnings that initiated the monumental transformations, as the new people of the Atlantic soon made their presence felt. Some traveled broadly as blue-water sailors, supercargoes, interpreters, and shipboard servants. Others were carried to foreign places as exotic trophies to be displayed before curious publics eager for a glimpse of the lands beyond the sea. Some were even sent to distant shores with commissions to master the ways of the newly discovered "other" and retrieve the secrets of their knowledge and wealth. A few entered as honored guests, took their place in royal courts as esteemed councilors, and married into the best families.[3]

Atlantic creoles first emerged around the trading factories or *feitorias* established along the coast of Africa in the fifteenth century by European expansionists. Finding trade more lucrative than pillage, the Portuguese Crown began sending agents to oversee its interests in Africa. These official representatives were succeeded in turn by private entrepreneurs, or *lançados,* who, with the aid of African potentates, established themselves sometimes in competition with the Crown's emissaries. Portuguese competitors were soon joined by other European nations, and the coastal factories became a commercial rendezvous for all manner of transatlantic traders. What was true of the nominally Portuguese enclaves also held for those later established or seized by the Dutch (Fort Nassaw and Elmina), Danes (Fredriksborg and Christianborg), Swedes (Carlsborg), French (St. Louis), and English (Fort Kormantse).[4]

The growth of the small fishing villages along Africa's Gold Coast dur-

ing the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries suggests something of the change that followed the arrival of European traders. Between 1550 and 1618, Mouri (where the Dutch constructed Fort Nassaw in 1612) grew from a village of 200 people to 1,500 and then to an estimated 5,000 to 6,000 at the end of the eighteenth century. In 1555, Cape Coast counted only twenty houses; by 1680 it had 500 or more. Axim, which had 500 inhabitants in 1631, expanded to between 2,000 and 3,000 by 1690. Among the African fishermen, craftsmen, village-based peasants, and laborers attached to these villages were an increasing number of Europeans. Although the mortality and transiency rates in these enclaves were extraordinarily high even by the standards of early modern port cities, permanent European settlements developed from the corporate employees, merchants and factors, stateless sailors and soldiers, skilled craftsmen, occasional missionaries, and sundry transcontinental drifters.[5]

Established in 1482 by the Portuguese and captured by the Dutch in 1637, Elmina was one of the first of these factories and a model for those that followed. A meeting place for African and European commercial ambitions, Elmina—the Castle São Jorge da Mina and the town that surrounded it—became headquarters of the Portuguese and later Dutch mercantile activities on the Gold Coast and, with a population of 15,000 to 20,000 in 1682, the largest of some three dozen European outposts in the region.[6]

The peoples of the enclaves—long-term residents and wayfarers alike—soon joined together, geographically and genetically. European men took wives and mistresses among African women, and before long the children born of these unions helped people the enclave. Elmina sprouted a substantial cadre of Euro-Africans (most of them Luso-Africans), men and women of African birth but shared African and European parentage, whose swarthy skin, European dress and deportment, acquaintance with local norms, and multilingualism gave them an insider's knowledge of both African and European ways but denied them full acceptance in either culture. By the eighteenth century, they numbered several hundred in Elmina. Along the Angolan coast they may have been even more numerous.[7]

People of mixed ancestry and tawny complexion composed but a small

fraction of the population of the coastal factories, but few observers failed to note their existence—which itself gave their presence a disproportionate significance. Africans and Europeans alike sneered at the creoles' mixed lineage and condemned them as haughty, proud, and overbearing. When they adopted African ways, wore African dress and amulets, or underwent circumcision and scarification, Europeans declared them outcasts (*tangosmaos* or *reneges* to the Portuguese). When they adopted European ways, wore European clothing and crucifixes, employed European names or titles, and comported themselves in the manner of "white men," Africans denied them the right to hold land, marry, and inherit property. Although the *tangosmaos* faced reproach and proscription, all parties conceded that the creoles were shrewd traders. Their reputation attested to their mastery of the fine points of intercultural negotiations and the advantage in dealing with these knowledgeable entrepreneurs. Despite their defamers, some rose to positions of wealth and power, compensating for their lack of lineage with knowledge, skill, and entrepreneurial derring-do.[8]

Not all *tangosmaos* were of mixed ancestry, and not all people of mixed ancestry were *tangosmaos*. Color was only one marker of this culture-in-the-making, and generally the least significant one.[9] From common experience, conventions of personal behavior, and cultural sensibilities compounded by shared ostracism, Atlantic creoles acquired interests of their own, apart from those of their European and African antecedents. Of necessity, they spoke a variety of African and European languages, weighted strongly toward Portuguese. But from the seeming babble emerged a pidgin lingua franca that enabled Atlantic creoles to communicate with all. In time, their pidgin evolved into a creole, borrowing its vocabulary from all parties and creating a grammar unique unto itself. Derisively called *fala de Guine* or *fala de negros*—literally "Guinea speech" or "Negro Speech"—by the Portuguese and black Portuguese by others, this creole lingua franca became the language of the Atlantic.[10]

Although jaded observers condemned the culture of the enclaves as nothing more than "whoring, drinking, gambling, swearing, fighting, and shouting," Atlantic creoles attended church (usually Roman Catholic),

married according to the sacraments, raised children conversant with European norms, and drew a livelihood from their knowledge of the Atlantic commercial economy. In short, they created societies of their own, *of* but not always *in* the societies of the Africans who dominated the interior trade and the Europeans who controlled the commerce of the Atlantic. By the mid-nineteenth century, they would station themselves on all corners of the Atlantic world, establishing branches of their families in Europe and the Americas so their children felt as comfortable in Bahia as in Birmingham, Lisbon as in Lagos. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, their world centered on the Atlantic itself.

Operating under European protection, always at African sufferance, the enclaves developed governments with a politics as diverse and complicated as the peoples who populated them. Their presence created political havoc, enabling new men and women of commerce to gain prominence and threatening older, often hereditary hierarchies. Intermarriage with established peoples allowed creoles to fabricate lineages that gained them full membership in local elites, something that creoles eagerly embraced. The resultant political turmoil promoted state formation along with new class relations and ideologies.[11]

New religious forms emerged and then disappeared in much the same manner, as Europeans and Africans brought to the enclaves not only their commercial and political aspirations but all the trappings of their cultures as well. Priests and ministers sent to tend European souls made African converts, some of whom saw Christianity as a way to both ingratiate themselves with their trading partners and gain a new truth. Missionaries sped the process of Christianization and occasionally scored striking successes. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the royal house of Kongo converted to Christianity. Catholicism, in various syncretic forms, infiltrated the posts along the Angolan coast and spread northward. Islam filtered in from the north.

Whatever the sources of the new religions, most converts saw little cause to surrender their own deities. They incorporated Christianity and Islam to serve their own needs and gave Jesus and Mohammed a place in their spiritual pantheon. New religious practices, polities, and theologies

emerged from the mixing of Christianity, Islam, and polytheism. Similar syncretic formations influenced the agricultural practices, architectural forms, and sartorial styles as well as the cuisine, music, art, and technology of the enclaves. Like the stone fortifications that greeted visitors, these cultural innovations announced the presence of something new to those arriving on the African coast, whether they traveled by caravan from the interior or sailed by caravel from the Atlantic.[12]

The business of the creole communities was trade—brokering the movement of goods through the Atlantic world. Although island settlements such as Cape Verde, Principé, and São Tomé developed indigenous agricultural and sometimes plantation economies, the comings and goings of African and European merchants dominated life even in the largest of the creole communities, which served as both field headquarters for great European mercantile companies and collection points for trade between the African interior and the Atlantic littoral. Depending on the location, the exchange involved European textiles, metalware, guns, liquor, and beads for African gold, ivory, hides, pepper, beeswax, and dyewoods. The coastal trade or cabotage added to the mix. Everywhere, slaves were bought and sold, and over time the importance of commerce-in-persons grew.

As societies engaged in the trade in slaves, the coastal enclaves became societies with slaves. African slavery in its various forms—from pawnage to chattel bondage—was practiced in these towns. Both Europeans and Africans held slaves, imported and exported them, hired them, used them as collateral, and traded them. At Elmina, the Dutch West India Company owned some 300 slaves in the late seventeenth century, and individual Europeans and Africans held others. Along with slaves appeared the inevitable trappings of that particular form of domination—overseers to supervise slave labor, slave catchers to retrieve runaways, soldiers to keep order and guard against insurrections, and officials to adjudicate and punish transgressions beyond a master's reach. Freedmen and freedwomen, who had somehow escaped bondage, also enjoyed a considerable presence. Former slaves mixed Africa and Europe culturally and sometimes physically.[13]

Mirroring developments on the coast of Africa, a cadre of Atlantic creoles emerged in Europe. By the mid-sixteenth century, some ten thousand black people lived in Lisbon, where they composed about 10 percent of the population. Seville had a slave population of 6,000 (including a minority of Moors and Moriscos). As the centers of the Iberian slave trade, these cities distributed African slaves throughout Europe. Many found their way to the most distant corners of the continent. By the end of the sixteenth century, they were numerous enough in England for Elizabeth to order their expulsion from the kingdom.[14]

Whether they resided in Europe or Africa, it was knowledge and experience far more than color that set the Atlantic creoles apart from the Africans who brought slaves from the interior and the Europeans who carried them across the Atlantic, on one hand, and the hapless men and women upon whose commodification the slave trade rested, on the other. Maintaining a secure place in such a volatile social order was not easy. The Atlantic creoles' liminality, particularly their lack of identity with any one group, posed numerous dangers. While their intermediate position made them valuable to African and European traders alike, it also made them vulnerable: they could be ostracized, scapegoated, and on occasion enslaved. Maintaining independence amid the shifting alliances between and among Europeans and Africans was always difficult. Inevitably, some failed.

Debt, crime, heresy, immorality, official disfavor, or bad luck could mean enslavement—if not for the great traders, at least for those on the fringes of the creole community.[15] Placed in captivity, Atlantic creoles might be exiled anywhere around the Atlantic—the islands along the coast, the European metropoles, or the plantations of the New World. In the seventeenth century and the early part of the eighteenth, most slaves exported from Africa went to the sugar plantations of the Atlantic islands and the Americas. Enslaved Atlantic creoles might be shipped to Pernambuco, Barbados, or Martinique and later Jamaica and Saint Domingue—all expanding centers of New World staple production. But transporting them to these hubs of the plantation economy posed dangers, which American planters well understood. The distinguishing characteristics of

Atlantic creoles—their linguistic dexterity, cultural plasticity, and social agility—were precisely those qualities that the sugar planters of the New World feared the most. For their labor force, planters desired youth and strength, not experience and wisdom. Too much knowledge might be subversive to the good order of the plantation.

Simply put, men and women who understood the operations of the Atlantic system, including the slave trade, were too dangerous to be trusted in the human tinderboxes created by the sugar revolution. Rejected by the most prosperous New World regimes, Atlantic creoles were frequently exiled to marginal slave societies where would-be slaveowners, unable to compete with plantation magnates, snapped up those whom the grandees had disparaged as "refuse" for reasons of age, illness, or criminality. And in the seventeenth century, few New World slave societies were more marginal than those of mainland North America.[16] Atlantic creoles were among the first Africans transported to the mainland. They became black America's charter generations.

Atlantic creoles began arriving in the Americas in the sixteenth century. Some accompanied the conquistadors, marching with Balboa, Cortés, De Soto, and Pizarro. Others traveled on their own, as sailors and interpreters in both the transatlantic and African trades. Yet others crisscrossed the ocean several times, as did Jerónimo, a Wolof slave, who was sold from Lisbon to Cartagena and from Cartagena to Murica, where he was purchased by a churchman who sent him to Valencia. A "*mulâtress*" wife and her three slaves followed her French husband, a gunsmith in the employ of the French Compagnie des Indes, from Gorée to Louisiana, when he was deported for criminal activities.[17] Wherever they went, Atlantic creoles employed their distinctive language, planted their unique institutions of the creole community, and propagated their special outlook. Within the Portuguese and Spanish empires, they created an intercontinental web of *cofradias*, so that by the seventeenth century the network of black religious brotherhoods stretched from Lisbon to São Tomé, Angola, and Brazil.[18] Although no comparable institutional linkages existed in the Anglo- and Franco-American worlds, there were numerous informal connections between black people in New England and Virginia, Louisiana,

and Saint Domingue. Like their African counterparts, Atlantic creoles of European, South American, and Caribbean origins also became part of black America's charter generations.

New Netherland

The Dutch were the main conduit for carrying such men and women to the North American mainland in the early seventeenth century. Juan (Jan, in some accounts) Rodrigues, a sailor of mixed racial ancestry who had shipped from Hispaniola in 1613 on the *Jonge Tobias*, offers a case in point. The ship, one of several Dutch merchant vessels vying for the North American fur trade before the founding of the Dutch West India Company, anchored on the Hudson River sometime in 1612 and deposited Rodrigues either as an independent trader or, more likely, as ship's agent. When a rival Dutch ship arrived the following year, Rodrigues promptly shifted his allegiance, informing its captain that, despite his color, "he was a free man." He served his new employer as translator and agent, collecting furs from the native population. When the captain of the *Jonge Tobias* returned to the Hudson River, Rodrigues changed his allegiance yet again, only to be denounced as a turncoat and "that black rascal." Barely escaping with his life, he took up residence with some friendly Indians.[19]

Other people of color followed Juan Rodrigues to Dutch America, especially to the small settlement on the Hudson. Some of these Atlantic creoles arrived as slaves, particularly following the Dutch victories over the Portuguese on the west coast of Africa in the 1640s, the subsequent wars, then civil strife, and finally Portuguese restoration.[20] While such slaves might be sent anywhere in the Dutch empire between New Netherland and Pernambuco, officers of the West India Company in New Amsterdam made known their preference for such creoles—deeming "Negroes who had been 12 or 13 years in the West Indies" to be "a better sort of Negroes."[21] A perusal of the names scattered through archival remains of New Netherland reveals something of the nature of this transatlantic transfer: Paulo d'Angola and Anthony Portuguese, Pedro Negretto and Francisco Negro, Simon Congo and Jan Guinea, Van St. Thomas and

Francisco Cartagena, Claes de Neger and Assento Angola, and—perhaps most telling—Carla Criole, Jan Creoli, and Christoffel Crioell.[22]

These names trace the tumultuous experience that propelled their bearers across the Atlantic and into slavery in the New World. They suggest that whatever tragedy befell them, Atlantic creoles did not arrive in the New World as deracinated chattels stripped of their past and without resources to meet the future. Unlike those who followed them into slavery in succeeding generations, transplanted creoles were not designated by diminutives, or derisively named after ancient notables or classical deities, or burdened with tags more appropriate to barnyard animals than to human beings. Instead, their names provided concrete evidence that they carried a good deal more than their dignity to the Americas.

To such men and women, New Amsterdam—a fortified port controlled by the Dutch West India Company—was not radically different from Elmina or Luanda, save for its smaller size and colder climate. Its population was a farrago of petty traders, artisans, merchants, soldiers, and corporate functionaries, all scrambling for status in a frontier milieu that demanded intercultural exchange. On the tip of Manhattan Island, Atlantic creoles rubbed elbows with sailors of various nationalities, Native Americans with diverse tribal allegiances, and pirates and privateers who professed neither nationality nor allegiance. In the absence of a staple crop, their work—building fortifications, hunting and trapping, tending fields and domestic animals, and transporting merchandise of all sorts—did not set them apart from workers of European descent, who often labored alongside them. Such encounters made a working knowledge of the creole tongue as valuable on the North American coast as in Africa. Whereas a later generation of transplanted Africans would be linguistically isolated and de-skilled by the process of enslavement, Atlantic creoles found themselves very much at home in their new environment. Rather than losing their skills, they discovered that the value of their gift for intercultural negotiation appreciated. The transatlantic journey did not break creole communities; it only transported them to other sites.

Along the edges of the North American continent, creoles found that their cultural and social marginality was an asset. Slaveholders learned

that the ability of creoles to negotiate with the diverse populace of seventeenth-century North America was as valuable as their labor, perhaps more so. While their owners employed creoles' skills on their own behalf, creoles did the same for themselves, trading their knowledge for a place in the still undefined social order. In 1665, when Jan Angola, accused of stealing wood, could not address the New Amsterdam court in Dutch, he was ordered to return the following day with "Domingo the Negro as interpreter," an act familiar to Atlantic creoles in Elmina, Lisbon, San Salvador, or Cap Français.[23]

To be sure, slavery bore heavily on Atlantic creoles in the New World. As in Africa and Europe, it was a system of exploitation, subservience, and debasement that rested on force. Yet Atlantic creoles were familiar with servitude in forms ranging from unbridled exploitation to corporate familialism. They had known free people to be enslaved, and they had known slaves to be liberated; the boundary between slavery and freedom on the African coast was permeable. Servitude generally did not prevent men and women from marrying, acquiring property (slaves included), enjoying a modest prosperity, and eventually being incorporated into the host society. Creoles transported across the Atlantic had no reason to suspect they could not do the same in the New World. If the stigma of servitude, physical labor, uncertain lineage, and alien religion branded them as outsiders, there were many others in North America—men and women of unblemished European pedigree prominent among them—who shared those taints. That black people could and occasionally did hold slaves and servants and employ white people suggested that race—like lineage and religion—was just one of many markers in the social order.

The experience of Atlantic creoles provided strategies for containing the abuse and degradation of slavery and even winning freedom. Although the routes to social advancement were many, they generally involved reattachment to a community through the agency of an influential patron or, better yet, an established institution that could broker a slave's incorporation into the larger society.[24] Freedom was measured by the degree of communal integration, not by ability to secure individual autonomy. Along the coast of Africa, Atlantic creoles often identified with the ap-

pendages of European or African power—whether international mercantile corporations or local chieftains—in hopes of relieving the stigma of otherness, be it enslavement, bastard birth, paganism, or race. They employed this strategy repeatedly in mainland North America, as they tried to clear the hurdles of social and cultural difference and establish a place for themselves. By linking themselves to the most important edifices of the nascent European-American societies, Atlantic creoles struggled to become part of a social order where exclusion or otherness—not subordination—could threaten all other gains. To be inferior within the sharply stratified world of the seventeenth-century Atlantic was a common and therefore understandable experience; to be the "other" and excluded posed unparalleled dangers.

The black men and women who entered New Netherland between 1626 and the English conquest in 1664 exemplified the ability of people of African descent to integrate themselves into mainland society during the first century of settlement, despite their status as slaves and the contempt of the colony's rulers. Far more than any other mainland colony during the first half of the seventeenth century, New Netherland rested on slave labor. The prosperity of the Dutch metropole and the opportunities presented to ambitious men and women in the far-flung Dutch empire denied New Netherland its share of free Dutch immigrants and limited its access to indentured servants. To populate the colony, the West India Company scoured the Atlantic basin for settlers, recruiting German Lutherans, French Huguenots, and Sephardic Jews. But these newcomers did little to satisfy the colony's need for laborers. As a result, by 1640 about one hundred blacks were living in New Amsterdam, composing roughly 30 percent of the port's population and a still larger portion of the labor force. Their proportion diminished over the course of the seventeenth century but remained substantial. At the time of the English conquest, some three hundred slaves made up one fifth of the population of New Amsterdam, giving New Netherland the largest urban slave population on mainland North America.[25]

The diverse needs of the Dutch mercantile economy strengthened the hand of Atlantic creoles in New Netherland during the initial period of

settlement. Caring only for short-term profits, the company, the largest slaveholder in the colony, allowed its slaves to live independently and work on their own in return for a stipulated amount of labor and an annual tribute. Company slaves thus enjoyed a large measure of independence, which they used to master the Dutch language, trade freely, accumulate property, identify with Dutch Reformed Christianity, and—most important—establish families. During the first generation, some twenty-five couples took their vows in the Dutch Reformed Church in New Amsterdam. When children arrived, their parents baptized them as well. Participation in the religious life of New Netherland provides but one indicator of how quickly Atlantic creoles mastered the social intricacies of the new continent. In 1635, less than ten years after the arrival of the first black people, black New Netherlanders understood enough about the organization of the colony and the operation of the company to travel to the company's headquarters in Holland and petition for wages.[26]

Many slaves gained their freedom. This was not easy in New Netherland, although there was no legal proscription on manumission. Indeed, gaining freedom was nearly impossible for slaves owned privately and difficult even for those owned by the West India Company. The company valued its slaves and was willing to liberate only the elderly, whom it viewed as a liability. Even when manumitting such slaves, the company exacted an annual tribute from adults and retained ownership of their children. The latter practice elicited protests from both blacks and whites in New Amsterdam. To the West India Company's former slaves, who were unable to pass their new status on to their children, this "half-freedom" appeared to be no freedom at all.[27]

Manumission in New Netherland was calculated to benefit slave owners, not slaves. Its purposes were to spur slaves to greater exertion and to relieve slaveowners of the cost of supporting the elderly, whose infirmities rendered them more burden than asset. Yet, however compromised the attainment of freedom, slaves did what was necessary to secure it. They accepted the company's terms and agreed to pay its corporate tribute. But they bridled at the fact that their children's status would not follow their own. Half-free blacks pressed the West India Company to make their sta-

tus hereditary. Hearing rumors that baptism would assure freedom to their children, they pressed their claims to church membership. A Dutch prelate complained of the "worldly and perverse aims" of black people who "wanted nothing else than to deliver their children from bodily slavery, without striving for piety and Christian virtues."[28] Although conversion never guaranteed freedom in New Netherland, many half-free blacks achieved their goal. By the time of the English conquest, about one black person in five had achieved freedom in New Amsterdam.[29] Some free people of African descent prospered, and building on small gifts of land that the West India Company provided as freedom dues, a few entered the landholding class.[30]

By the middle of the seventeenth century, black people participated in almost every aspect of life in New Netherland. In addition to marrying and baptizing their children in the Dutch Reformed Church, they sued and were sued in Dutch courts and fought alongside Dutch militiamen against the colony's enemies. Black men and women—slave as well as free—traded independently and accumulated property. Black people also began to develop a variety of institutions that reflected their unique experience and served their special needs. They stood as godparents to one another's children, suggesting close family ties, and they rarely called on white people—owners or not—to serve in this capacity. At times, established black families legally adopted orphaned black children, further knitting the black community together in a web of constructed kinship.[31] The patterns of residence, marriage, church membership, and godparentage speak not only to the material success of Atlantic creoles but also to their ability to create a community among themselves.

The Chesapeake

If the likes of Paulo d'Angola and Anthony Portuguese, Pedro Negretto and Francisco Cartagena made their presence felt in the Dutch port of New Amsterdam, they also could be found in the colonies to the south where the English ruled and the population was overwhelmingly rural.

The story of Anthony Johnson, sold to the English at Jamestown in

1621 as Antonio a Negro, reveals something of the history of Atlantic creoles in the Chesapeake region. During the dozen years following his arrival, Antonio labored on the Bennett family's plantation on Virginia's middle peninsula, where he was among the few who survived the 1622 Indian raid that all but destroyed the colony, and where he later earned an official commendation for his "hard labor and known service." His loyalty and industry also won the favor of the Bennetts, who became Antonio's patron as well as his owner, perhaps because worthies like Antonio were hard to find among the rough, hard-bitten, often sickly men who comprised the mass of servants and slaves in the region. Whatever the source of the Bennetts' largesse, they allowed Antonio to farm independently while still a slave, marry, and baptize his children. Eventually, he and his family exited bondage. Once free, Antonio a Negro anglicized his name to Anthony Johnson, which was so familiar to English speakers that no one could doubt his identification with the colony's rulers.[32]

Johnson, his wife Mary, and their children—who numbered four by 1640—followed their benefactor to the eastern shore of Virginia, where the Bennett clan had established itself as a leading family and where the Johnson family began to farm on its own. In 1651 Anthony Johnson earned a 250-acre headright, a substantial estate for any Virginian, let alone a former slave. Johnson's son John did even better than his father, receiving a patent for 550 acres, and another son, Richard, owned a 100-acre estate. When Anthony Johnson's plantation burned to the ground in 1653, he petitioned the county court for relief. Reminding authorities that he and his wife were long-time residents of the eastern shore and that "their hard labors and knowne services for obtayneing their livelihood were well known," he requested and was granted a special abatement of his taxes.

Like other men of substance, Johnson and his sons farmed independently, held slaves, and left their heirs sizable estates. As established members of their community, they enjoyed rights in common with other free men and frequently employed the law to protect themselves and advance their interests. Still, when Anthony Johnson's slave, a black man named John Casar (sometimes Casor, Cassaugh, or Cazara), claimed his freedom

and gained sanctuary with Robert and George Parker, two neighboring white planters, Johnson did not immediately attempt to retrieve his property. The Parkers had already exhibited considerable animus toward the Johnson family, accusing John Johnson of "fornication and other enormities." Antagonizing rancorous white men of the planter class was a hazardous business, even if Johnson could prove they had conspired to lure John Casar from his household. At length, however, Anthony Johnson decided to act. He took the Parkers to court and won Casar's return, along with damages against the Parkers.[33]

Johnson and the Parkers wrestled over Casar because labor—whether European, Native American, or African in origin—was the key to success on the mainland, as ambitious men scrambled for status, land, and yet more labor. In their rush to seize the main chance, planters might trample their workers, but they made little distinction among their subordinates by age, sex, nation, or race. While the advantages of this peculiar brand of equality may have been lost on its beneficiaries, it was precisely the shared labor regimen of African, European, and Native American that allowed some black men like Anthony Johnson to escape bondage and join the scramble that characterized life in the seventeenth-century Chesapeake.[34]

The Johnsons were not unique in the region. Creoles like John Francisco, Bashaw Ferdinando (or Farnando), Emanuel Driggus (sometimes Drighouse; probably Rodriggus), Anthony Longo (perhaps Loango), and Francisco a Negroe (soon to become Francis, then Frank, Payne and finally Paine) could be found throughout the region and most especially on the eastern shore. The number remained tiny. In 1665 the free black population of Virginia's Northampton and Accomack counties amounted to less than twenty adults and perhaps an equal number of children. But as the black population of the region was itself small, totaling no more than 300 on the eastern shore and perhaps 1,700 in all of Maryland and Virginia, the proportion of black people enjoying freedom was substantial. And, perhaps more importantly, it was growing. In Northampton County, free people of African descent made up about one fifth of the black population at mid-century, rising to nearly 30 percent in 1668, not radically different from New Amsterdam.[35]

As elsewhere, Atlantic creoles in the Chesapeake ascended the social order and exhibited a sure-handed understanding of the local hierarchy and the complex dynamics of patron-client relations. Although still in bondage, they began to acquire the property, skills, and personal connections that became their mark throughout the Atlantic world. They worked provision grounds, kept livestock, traded independently, and married white women as often as they married black.[36] More important, they found advocates among the propertied classes—often their owners—and identified themselves with the colony's most important institutions, registering their marriages, baptisms, and children's godparents in the Anglican Church and their property in the county courthouse. They sued and were sued in local courts, and they petitioned the colonial legislatures and governors.[37]

The experience of Atlantic creoles in the Dutch colony of New Netherland and the English colonies of Virginia and Maryland was repeated across mainland North America prior to the advent of the plantation. But it was never repeated in quite the same way, so that while the story of the charter generations had one melody, it was played in many different keys.

In places as different as Canada and lowcountry South Carolina, Atlantic creoles hardly had a chance to make an imprint. Mathieu Da Costa, a man of African descent sometimes in the employ of the Dutch and sometimes the French, may have alighted in Port Royal on the St. Lawrence River in the first years of the eighteenth century. But his visit was so brief that historians are still searching for evidence of his presence.[38] The charter generation had a more substantial presence in pioneer Carolina, but the rapid advent of large-scale rice production truncated its development there; Atlantic creoles had hardly a chance to leave their mark on the lowcountry.

The Lower Mississippi Valley

In the lower Mississippi Valley, however, the failure of the plantation revolution extended the charter generation's life to nearly a century. Atlantic creoles entered the great valley much as they entered the seaboard colonies, irregularly, with none of the system that characterized the interna-

tional trade. Perrine, a black cook, arrived with other *engagés* from Lorient in 1720. Raphael Bernard, the black manservant of a wealthy French emigré, followed his master from France for 200 francs and the promise of a new suit. When his owner failed to respect the bargain and abused him to boot, he sued and recovered his back wages. John Mingo, a fugitive from South Carolina, traveled half a continent to Louisiana, where a patron assisted him in securing legal freedom, a small plot of land, and the right to purchase a slave woman whom he had taken for his wife. When Mingo quarreled with his erstwhile benefactor over the terms of the arrangement, he also sued, and, although his larger claim was disallowed, Mingo won the right to purchase his wife. Louis Congo, a slave whose name suggests his origins, gained his freedom playing upon the colony's need for an executioner. In return for assuming that gruesome task, his employer freed Louis Congo and allowed him to live with his wife (although she was not liberated, as he had demanded) on land of his own choosing.[39]

Perhaps the best known of these Atlantic creoles was Samba, a Bambara.[40] Working for the Compagnie des Indes as an interpreter (*maître de langue*) at Galam, upstream from St. Louis on the Senegal River during the 1720s, Samba Bambara—as he appears in the records—traveled freely along the river between St. Louis, Galam, and Fort d'Arguin. By 1722 he received permission from the compagnie for his family to reside in St. Louis. When his wife dishonored him, Samba Bambara called on his corporate employer to exile her from St. Louis and thereby bring order to his domestic life. But despite his reliance on the company, Samba Bambara allegedly joined with African captives in a revolt at Fort d'Arguin, and, when the revolt was quelled, he was enslaved and deported. Significantly, he was not sold to the emerging plantation colony of Saint Domingue, where the sugar revolution stimulated a nearly insatiable demand for slaves. Instead, French officials at St. Louis exiled Samba Bambara to Louisiana, a marginal military outpost far outside the major transatlantic sea lanes and with no staple agricultural economy.

Just as the port of New Amsterdam shared much with Elmina, the port of New Orleans on the Mississippi mirrored St. Louis on the Senegal in

the 1720s. As the headquarters of the Compagnie des Indes in mainland North America, the town housed a familiar collection of corporate functionaries, traders, and craftsmen, along with growing numbers of French *engagés* and African slaves. New Orleans was frequented by Indians, whose canoes supplied it much as African canoemen supplied St. Louis. Its taverns and back-alley retreats were meeting places for sailors of various nationalities, Canadian *courreurs de bois,* and soldiers—the latter no more pleased to be stationed on the North American frontier than their counterparts welcomed assignment to an African factory. Indeed, the soldiers' status in this rough frontier community differed little from that on the coast of Africa.[41]

Suggesting something of the symmetry of the Atlantic world, New Orleans was no alien terrain to Samba Bambara, save for the flora and fauna. Despite the long transatlantic journey, once in the New World, he recovered much of what he had lost in the Old, although he never escaped slavery. Like the Atlantic creoles who alighted in New Netherland and Jamestown, Samba Bambara employed skills on the coast of North America that he had learned on the coast of Africa. Drawing on his knowledge of French, various African languages, and the ubiquitous creole tongue, the rebel regained his position with his old patron, the Compagnie des Indes, this time as an interpreter swearing on the Christian Bible to translate faithfully before Louisiana's Superior Council. Later, he became an overseer on the largest "concession" in the colony, the company's massive plantation across the river from New Orleans.[42]

Like his counterparts in New Amsterdam, Samba Bambara succeeded in a rugged frontier slave society by following the familiar lines of patronage to the doorstep of his corporate employer. Although the constraints of slavery eventually turned him against the company on the Mississippi, just as he had turned against it on the Senegal River, his ability to transfer his knowledge and skills from the Old World to the New, despite the weight of enslavement, suggests that the history of Atlantic creoles in New Amsterdam—their ability to escape slavery, form families, secure property, and claim a degree of independence—was no anomaly.

Much like their counterparts on the seaboard, Samba Bambara, Louis

Congo, John Mingo, Raphael Bernard, and Perrine understood their rights, and—given their familiarity with the Atlantic world, its languages, religions, and legal codes—they did not hesitate to exercise them. In this the French *Code Noir* provided a small assist. This compilation of laws and regulations was first promulgated in 1685, ostensibly to protect black slaves in French colonies from abuse, and was reissued in 1724 to cover Louisiana. The Louisiana *Code* was weighted against manumission and discouraged self-purchase. It required manumitted slaves to defer to their former owners, punished free black people more severely than white ones, and barred interracial marriage. Still, free people of African descent enjoyed many of the same legal rights as other free people, including the right to petition. People of color—like Raphael Bernard and John Mingo—employed those rights to advance their interests, much as their counterparts in Dutch New Netherland and English Virginia did. Occasionally they used the law to improve their collective status. During the 1720s, they successfully petitioned for the removal of a special head tax on free blacks and sued individual white colonists for transgressions of various sorts.[43]

The presence of Atlantic creoles, eager for freedom and knowledgeable in the ways of the law, frustrated Louisiana planters, impatient to launch their own plantation revolution. During the 1720s, after more than two decades of failure, they had at last succeeded in muscling Indians off some of the best land. Having imported some five thousand slaves directly from Africa and established new discipline on the estates, their most fervent aspiration was near realization. But an alliance of Natchez Indians and African slaves smashed the nascent plantation complex. The staple economy based on tobacco and indigo collapsed, the slave trade was closed, the Compagnie des Indes surrendered its charter, and Louisiana resumed its position of marginality in the Atlantic world.

The Natchez rebellion and the subsequent failure of the plantation revolution did not overthrow slavery, but it breathed new life into the charter generation in Louisiana. As the market economy foundered, the slaves' economy expanded, along with the subsidiary rights to travel freely, trade independently, hire their own time, and hold property—rights with no

foundation in law but universally accepted in practice. Through the middle years of the eighteenth century, the slaves' independent production played a larger and larger role in the economic life of the colony. Before long, black people began to exit slavery, often taking up the role of soldiers in defense of the white minority. The free black population grew slowly under the French, who remained fearful of black freedom. But after the Spanish took control of Louisiana in 1763, the slaves' access to freedom via manumission and self-purchase expanded, and the charter generation found themselves on more secure, if still shaky, ground.

Not until the great rebellion in Saint Domingue eliminated the world's largest sugar producer and allowed Louisiana planters to transform themselves into plantation moguls was the charter generation dismantled. Though a mere blink in the history of Canada and South Carolina, the charter generation had lasted nearly a century in the lower Mississippi Valley.

Florida

Whereas the history of Louisiana documents the longevity of the charter generations, the history of Florida suggests something of their resilience. The very changes that truncated the charter generation in South Carolina and compressed its history into a few decades at the end of the seventeenth century assured its survival—even its prosperity—in Florida.

The rapid expansion of the English settlement in South Carolina deepened the fears of Spanish officials in Florida. In their search for allies against the growing menace to the north, they could find only one reliable group of friends—their own slaves and those of the Carolinians. Atlantic creoles, appreciative of the fine differences between European Protestants in South Carolina and European Catholics in Florida, were also quick to recognize that the enemy of their enemy could be a friend. An alliance was sealed which spurred the growth of creole society in Florida.

Spanish raiders took the first steps toward that alliance in 1686 when, in assaulting Edisto Island, they carried off some dozen slaves. The governor of South Carolina demanded their return, along with those "who run

dayly into your towns," but Spanish officials peremptorily refused. Instead, they put the fugitives to work for wages, instructed them in the tenets of Catholicism, and allowed them to marry—in short, providing runaways with all the accoutrements of freedom except its legal title.[44]

That was quick in coming. In 1693 the Spanish Crown offered freedom to all fugitives—men as well as women—who converted to Catholicism. Thereafter, Spanish officials in Florida provided "Liberty and Protection" to all slaves who reached St. Augustine, and they consistently refused to return runaways who took refuge in their colony.[45]

The broad promise of liberty was not always kept, however. Some fugitives were sold in St. Augustine to local planters and others were shipped to Havana. Nonetheless, the promise itself transformed Florida into a magnet for Carolina slaves. As the news spread, fugitives fled to Florida, often requesting baptism into the "True Faith." Spanish officials delighted in the former slaves' choice of religion, smugly observing that they "want to be Christians and that their masters did not want to let them learn the doctrine nor be Catholics."[46]

But much as they might celebrate the runaways' desire for the true religion, Spanish officials did not allow their enthusiasm to blind them to the special skills these Atlantic creoles carried. Their knowledge of the countryside, linguistic facility, and ability to negotiate between the lowland's warring factions in a manner their forebears had made famous throughout the Atlantic littoral made the fugitives ideal allies against the English enemy. Former Carolina slaves no sooner arrived in Florida than they were enlisted in the militia and sent to raid the plantations of their old owners, assisting black men and women—many of them friends and sometimes family—in escaping bondage. When these periodic raids boiled over into outright warfare, the runaways were incorporated into the black militia, fighting against the English in the Yamasee War and defending St. Augustine against an English assault in which the invaders almost reached the walls of the city.[47]

The stream of fugitives grew with the expansion of slavery in South Carolina during the first decades of the eighteenth century.[48] Armed with

the profits of rice production, South Carolina slaveholders entered the international slave market, purchasing laborers by the boatload. Charles Town became the largest mainland slave market, as Africans disembarked on its wharves by the thousands. Generally deemed "Angolans," most were drawn from deep in the interior of central Africa. But some were Atlantic Creoles, with experience in the coastal towns of Cabinda, Loango, and Mpinda. Many spoke Portuguese, which, as one Carolinian noted, was "as near Spanish as Scotch is to English," and some were practicing Catholics.

At the end of the fifteenth century, when the royal house of Kongo converted to Christianity, Catholicism in various syncretic forms entered broadly into the life of the Kingdom of the Kongo. During the next two centuries it spread through the efforts of Portuguese missionaries and, later, an indigenous Kongolese priesthood. Leaders of the Kongolese church corresponded with Rome and traveled to Europe to receive the endorsement of Christ's vicar. Seeing no reason to surrender their own native deities, converts incorporated them into the Christian belief system, giving Kongolese Catholicism its unique character.[49]

Despite these embellishments, the Kongolese were knowledgeable believers who knew their catechism, the pantheon of saints, and the symbols and rituals of the Cross. The arrival of these children of Christ in Charles Town had little effect on South Carolina slaveholders, who doubtless would have disapproved of their brand of Christianity if they noticed it at all. But if planters paid little attention to the beliefs of saltwater slaves as they put them to work in the rice fields, the presence of a Catholic sanctuary less than three hundred miles south of Charles Town did not escape the slaves' notice.

No doubt the Church's presence in Florida made Spanish St. Augustine even more attractive to enslaved Catholics. During the 1720s and 1730s, they and other slaves—many newly arrived in South Carolina—defected in increasing numbers. In 1733 Spanish authorities reiterated their offer of freedom, prohibiting the sale of fugitives and commending black militiamen for their service in the struggle against the British. Five years later,

the governor requested that the fugitives previously sold to Havana be returned to Florida and freed. Word of the new edicts may have enticed others to flee the Carolinas.[50]

In 1739 a group of African slaves initiated a mass exodus, slaying several dozen whites who stood in their path. Pursued by South Carolina militiamen, the defectors confronted their owners' soldiers in pitched battles at Stono, only fifty miles from the Florida line.[51] Although most of the Stono rebels were captured or killed, others successfully escaped to Florida. Once they arrived, it became difficult for their owners to retrieve them, as Spanish officials would not surrender their co-religionists. The escapees, who had already been baptized and knew their catechism, were quickly integrated into black life in St. Augustine, although they prayed, as one Miguel Domingo told a Spanish priest, in Kikongo.[52]

The former Carolina slaves did more than pray. As their numbers grew, black militiamen took an ever more active role in the border warfare against their former owners. The former slaves' presence and the Spaniards' promise of freedom, military commissions, and even "A Coat Faced with Velvet," augmented the small but steady stream of runaways to Florida. Among those enlisted in the militia was one Francisco Menéndez, a former slave who may have adopted the name of one of St. Augustine's most powerful magistrates. Menéndez's heroics in repelling an English attack on St. Augustine in 1728 had won a special commendation from the Spanish Crown, along with the promise of freedom. When he was not freed, Menéndez and many of his fellow militiamen petitioned the governor of Florida and then the Bishop of Cuba for their liberty, which they eventually received.[53]

To better protect St. Augustine, the governor of Florida established a black settlement to the north of the city. Gracia Real de Santa Teresa de Mose, a walled fort surrounding some ramshackle huts, was both a barrier against another English incursion and an agricultural settlement. The governor assigned a priest to instruct the newly arrived slaves and resident free blacks. Although the Spanish military supervised the town, the governor placed Menéndez in charge. Whatever their agricultural objectives and religious aspirations, the black men and women stationed at Mose

understood that their future was tied to the strategic mission of the settlement. They pledged to "shed their last drop of blood in defense of the Great Crown of Spain and the Holy Faith."[54]

Under Captain Menéndez, Mose became the center of black life in colonial Florida, as well as a base from which former slaves—sometimes joined by Indians—raided South Carolina. The settlement of some one hundred free black men and women was also the last line of defense against English assaults on St. Augustine, which came with a vengeance following the Stono rebellion. A bloody struggle at Mose eventually forced the black population to evacuate, and Spanish forces would not recapture the fort until reinforcements arrived from Cuba. However devastating to the fort itself, the militia's extraordinary bravery won Menéndez yet another commendation, this one from the governor of Florida, who declared that the black captain "had distinguished himself in the establishment, and cultivation of Mose."[55]

Menéndez was quick to capitalize on his fame. Writing in the language of patronage, he reminded the king that his "sole object was to defend the Holy Evangel and sovereignty of the Crown" and requested remuneration for the "loyalty, zeal and love I have always demonstrated in the royal service." In his petition to the king, Menéndez requested a stipend worthy of a militia captain.[56] To secure his royal reward, Menéndez took to the sea as a privateer, hoping eventually to reach Spain and collect his due.

Instead, a British ship captured the famous "Signior Capitano Francisco." Although his captors stretched him out on a cannon and threatened him with emasculation for alleged atrocities during the siege of Mose, Menéndez had become too valuable to mutilate. The British sailors gave him two hundred lashes, soaked his wounds in brine, and commended him to a doctor "to take care of his Sore A-se." Menéndez was then carried before a British admiralty court on New Providence Island, where "this Francisco that Cursed Seed of Cain" was ordered sold into slavery. Yet even this misadventure could not undo the irrepressible Menéndez. By 1752, perhaps ransomed out of bondage, he was back at his familiar post in Mose.[57]

While Menéndez sought his fortune at sea, black men and women,

joined by new arrivals—many of them Atlantic creoles from Spain, Cuba, and Africa—entered more fully into the life of St. Augustine. Free blacks continued to work for the Crown as trackers, soldiers, sailors, and privateers. Others worked independently as artisans, laborers, and domestics. They purchased property and, upon occasion, assisted others out of bondage, steadily increasing the proportion of black people who enjoyed freedom.[58]

Within St. Augustine, Florida's charter generation expanded in new directions. The disproportionately male former fugitives intermarried with the Native American population and newly arriving slaves from Mexico, Cuba, and Spain. As their Atlantic connections grew, old hands and new arrivals created a tight community whose lives revolved around the militia and the church. In 1746 black people composed about one quarter of St. Augustine's population of 1,500. Like the charter generations in the Chesapeake and New Netherland, they sanctified their marriages and baptized their children in the established church, choosing godparents from among both the white and black congregants. That the church was Catholic rather than Anglican or Dutch Reformed was less important than that membership knit black people together in bonds of kinship and certified incorporation into the larger community. Militia membership—with its uniforms, flags, and martial rituals—served a similar purpose by amplifying communication between black people and the colonial state. Much like Atlantic creoles elsewhere on the mainland, Florida's charter generation became skilled in pulling the lever of patronage, in this case royal authority. Declaring themselves "vassals of the King and deserving of royal protection," they continually put themselves in the forefront of service to the Spanish Crown with the expectations that the Crown would reciprocate.[59]

Hoped-for rewards were not always forthcoming, as all "vassals of the King" were not equally favored. Beginning in 1749, a new governor of Florida forced black people in St. Augustine to return to Mose, much against their will, as they had enjoyed the cosmopolitan life of the city, where their ability to converse in several European, Indian, and African languages gave them credentials as cultural brokers in a multicultural society.[60] Although protests about the primitive conditions at Mose and pleas for permission to return to St. Augustine went unanswered, Spanish officials did not forget the colony's black defenders—at least as long as the English threat in South Carolina and later Georgia (established in 1732) loomed over Florida and the Spanish-controlled islands to the south. In 1763, when the English wrested control of Florida from Spain, black colonists retreated to Cuba with His Majesty's subjects, where the Crown granted them land, tools, a small subsidy, and a slave for each of the colony's leaders.[61] The evacuation shattered the achievement of creole culture in Spanish Florida, however. Far more than their counterparts in the Chesapeake or the northern colonies, Florida's charter generations had been incorporated as full—if yet unequal—participants in the life of mainland society. With the English occupation, South Carolina planters moved south en masse, bringing with them the social order of the plantation and obliterating the century-old history of the society that Atlantic creoles had created in Spanish Florida.

Atlantic creoles' ability to trade freely, profess Christianity, gain access to the law, secure freedom, and enjoy a modest prosperity shaped popular understanding of black life in the era prior to the plantation. But the possibilities of large-scale commodity production threatened the open, porous slave system that developed in the early years of European and African settlement. It would soon sweep the charter generations away, leaving only fragments of their history upon which future Americans might ponder a world that once was.