

The Search for Resistance: A Layperson's Reflections on the Historiography of Slavery in the African Atlantic

M. A. Dodge

Buffalo Public Schools

THERE IS A QUESTION hanging over my classroom that everyone's afraid to ask. It's been lurking in the shadows for three days, ever since we started our unit on the "Columbian Exchange." It's the same question that lingers there every year, haunting my students' historical consciousness, threatening to expose their deepest insecurities. In an underperforming urban classroom, populated by a mixture of minorities still suffering from the disabling constructs of systematized racism in the twenty-first century, the topic of slavery is one that cuts straight to every student's soul.

I tried to delay the question this year by sliding into the topic of slavery sideways. The most delicate topic reared its head for the first time in a document about a prisoner exchange during the second crusade. It appeared in class again a few weeks later in Ibn Battuta's magnificent description of Mansa Musa's court, where slaves wore armor of gold and carried poisoned arrows to guard their king. It finally presented itself full-force into my class' consciousness amid descriptions of the tattered bodies of Arawak and Taino captives broken by whip, rod, and stone in Spain's earliest colonies. Bartolomé de Las Casas would fight to save these unfortunate and desparate "lambs" by trying to convince his superiors that African slaves should be used wherever possible in place of Indians, whom he thought were more fragile and susceptible to disease.

But the unspoken question cannot remain silent forever. Eventually, the class will reach the day we talk about numbers—black, red, and green numbers—estimates of the number of Africans sold into slavery, of mortality rates, and of profits and percentages. In the face of this horrific data, the unvoiced question will surely burst out.

Philip Curtin's monograph, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census*, opened up the great numbers debate almost forty years ago. Based on extrapolations of colonial census data and micro studies of a handful of West African slave factories, Curtin estimated that 10 million people had been brought to the Americas from Africa as slaves, and that as many as 10 million more had died en-route on the Middle Passage.¹ Like any groundbreaking work, Curtin's estimates were immediately attacked from all sides—they were too high, too low, too deadly, too benign.

An army of Middle Passage researchers pecked away at Curtin's estimates, most notably, the historians David Eltis, Herbert S. Klein, and David Richardson, whose independent research led directly to their collaboration with numerous other scholars on *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, a digital archive that includes every registered slave voyage that crossed the Atlantic Ocean between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.² The careful counting of each "registered" slave that ever crossed the Atlantic has confirmed that Curtin's original estimates were twenty percent off (the actual number of Africans brought to America was just over 12 million), but also that mortality on the Middle Passage was probably twenty percent lower than Curtin's estimates as well. The fact that some slave carriers have been found to routinely inflate their death rates in order to perpetrate insurance fraud further complicates the issue. Scholars still estimate that between 2.5 and 5 million enslaved Africans died during transit. This is significantly lower than the 5-10 million deaths that earlier researchers had estimated. Among the 35,000 individual slaving missions listed in the *Voyages* database, numerous examples can be found where the mortality rate of the human cargo reached fifty, seventy-five, or even one hundred percent, so estimates based on a small sample will never be reliable. Similarly, the fact that many enslaved people were smuggled into the Americas never having been registered clouds estimates of the human costs of slavery even more.

The green (financial) estimates are the ones I find the most disturbing. After all, the monetization of human beings was one of the most demoralizing characteristics of chattel slavery. The mountain of data that Curtin and his peers use to estimate the value of slavery is immense. Purchase prices, transportation costs, insurance valuations, reproductive return rates, depreciation, average daily labor rates, and inflation are just a few of the factors scholars weigh to determine the economic impact

of slavery. The calculations I have high school students make are much simpler. Multiplying the value of a single slave auctioned in 1840 by the number of slaves brought across the Atlantic and adjusting for inflation, my students estimate the value of Transatlantic slave sales as in the billions dollars in today's currency. But the value of the work done by enslaved Africans is even greater. Multiplying today's average daily wage for unskilled laborers by the number of slaves who labored in the Atlantic and factoring in their average life expectancy, we come up with estimates in the trillions of dollars.³

That's when the hand finally comes up. "If there were so many slaves, and so few owners, why didn't the slaves just get together and kill the owners?" The question has proven extremely difficult for scholars of slavery to answer effectively, perhaps because its historical logic is so self-evident. There have been numerous examples throughout history of the masses rising up to overthrow their oppressors, and creating new social and political systems to replace old regimes. If Atlantic slavery was as oppressive as the documentary record indicates, why didn't slaves unite and overthrow their oppressors as so many other classes of maltreated people have?

The easiest answer (and the one most reviled by my urban students) is that slaves tried but failed. The textbook my district uses mentions Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner in a paragraph each, but leaves readers with the impression that other enslaved people were either unable to rebel or never attempted to at all. Herbert Aptheker's work, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, has documented more than 250 incidents of slave insurrection in the United States, all of which ultimately failed.⁴ Aptheker's desire to document the pervasiveness of slave resistance has led him to include many foiled plots that were never acted upon and perhaps a few that were never more than the paranoid accusations of an owner supported by the paid testimony of a single informant. Still, it proves beyond doubt that there were more than the two lonely uprisings in the history of slavery.

Unfortunately, Aptheker's answer still leaves my students unsatisfied. Even if we accept every one of Aptheker's conspiracies, it averages less than one rebellion per year during the entire period of American slavery. According to Aptheker's data, only one out of every 3,000 slaves ever joined in a conspiracy to overthrow his or her owners. The chance of a slave owner becoming a victim of slave violence was just one in 10,000. None of these revolts ever became widespread revolutions. The largest slave revolt Aptheker documents was the Stono Rebellion in South Carolina, which may have involved 300 slaves, but killed only twenty-one whites. Compared with the 42,000 slaves and 18,000 whites living in South Carolina at the time,⁵ this can hardly be counted as widespread.

Furthermore, half of all plots were uncovered before they were acted upon because enslaved conspirators often turned each other in. When violence did erupt, it was other slaves who defeated the rebel slaves.

Aptheker explains the paucity of slave resistance as the result of intricate control systems slave holders established over time. Every slave revolt in American history resulted in a three-pronged response from slave owners. First, the leaders of the conspiracy were publicly punished in the most terrifying manner imaginable. Executions of leaders by burning, hanging, and torture were followed by the torture and sale of lesser conspirators. Secondly, slaves who helped to defeat the revolt by providing information or fighting against rebel slaves were rewarded greatly. Slaves who helped defeat uprisings received new clothing, money, or even emancipation. Finally, new laws were enacted, restricting slaves in their movements, communications, and occupations in order to restrict slaves' ability to plan and implement future uprisings. Failed slave rebellions led directly to laws limiting slaves' access to travel passes, rights to work for money, learning of reading and math, or even congregation for religious or social functions.

Many scholars confirm that these patterns were mirrored in South American and Caribbean slave societies as well.⁶ Despite the fact that the broader Atlantic hosted several larger and more successful revolts, the rate of violent resistance to slavery seems to be even lower in Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Some scholars have argued that Spanish and Portuguese slave systems, based on Catholic religious values, were somehow more benign than Anglo-American slavery. Most contemporary scholars (as well as my urban students), however, find it distasteful and counter-instructive to talk about “good” and “bad” slavery.⁷

The net impression left on the typical high school student from these studies is that most slaves were either afraid to revolt, or were willing to sell out their companions for their own freedom or a new pair of shoes. In the words of Michael L. Conniff and Thomas J. Davis, “Although it was much idealized, open and organized armed rebellion was neither the primary, nor preferred form of African-American resistance. Nor was it a common form of resistance anywhere in the history of slavery.”⁸

In his book, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History*, Wim Klooster tries to amplify the significance of slave resistance by tying his discussion of two of the Atlantic's largest slave revolts to his analysis of the revolutionary spirit that swept the Atlantic during the eighteenth century. Klooster claims that the forces that led to so many revolutions were the result of “enduring social, political, and ethnic inequities” and a “favorable climate caused by other rebellions.”⁹ Though the idea that popular outrage against slavery was an underlying motive in the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century is poetic, it belies the facts. Klooster

fails to explain why large numbers of free African Americans and slaves fought on each side of the battlefield throughout these conflicts, or why only one of these revolutions resulted in any enduring changes to the system of slavery.

Of the four revolutions Klooster compares in his work, the Haitian Revolution is the one that holds the most promise for my students. The story of a few thousand slaves banding together to defeat the imperial control of one of the most powerful countries in the world is precisely the model of just resistance my students were hoping to find. Klooster's treatment of the Haitian Revolution is necessarily short, given the scope of his work, but a substantial body of new scholarship has emerged over the last decade amid Haiti's bicentennial celebrations.¹⁰

Unfortunately, upon close examination, even the Haitian Revolution falls short of our hopes for a model example of resistance. For one thing, the slaves and free Africans who originally took up arms in Saint-Domingue were not rebels. They were fighting against the French Revolution. Rather than joining the citizens of France to rally around the cry of "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*," the enslaved Africans of Haiti chose to fight in support of Louis XVI. Certainly, many slaves hoped to win their freedom through military service, as was tradition throughout the Atlantic. The fact that many of the free Africans leading these forces were themselves slave owners and that these "revolutionaries" sent most of the slaves they encountered back into forced labor and even sold some of their own forces to purchase supplies indicate that the freedom they were fighting for was not universal.¹¹ After ten years of war, most of the slaves in Saint-Domingue were still working on the same plantations they had been at before the revolution.¹²

Even Toussaint L'Ouverture's actions seem to show that creating a free republic was never part of his plan. L'Ouverture negotiated successive treaties with the Spanish, the Republican French, and even the British, hoping that one of these powers would be able to restore order to Haiti. Each of these agreements proved that L'Ouverture was willing to negotiate the return to a slave society, but every deal he made eventually fell apart because his troops refused to lay down their arms without strict assurances of their personal freedom.¹³

In the end, just weeks after the Republic of France signed a peace treaty with L'Ouverture promising a permanent end to the slave trade, Napoleon's brother-in-law, Charles Leclerc, captured L'Ouverture and deported him to a Parisian prison where he died eighteen months later. The genocidal rampage of Leclerc and the retributive slaughter of white citizens under the leadership of Dessalines and Christophe that followed are tales that can scarcely be spun as an epic-heroic narrative. So many people were

dead throughout the countryside that contemporary observers wondered whether Haiti would ever recover at all.¹⁴

In 1804, Haiti had few economic structures intact, had as many as one-quarter of its people dead or dislocated, and was feared and isolated by most potential trading partners in the Atlantic. While the Haitian Revolution sent a wave of fear through the slave-owning Atlantic, contributing to the demise of the slave trade and the slow expansion of abolition that occurred in the decades that followed,¹⁵ in 1804 and for many years to come, the freedom won by Haitian slaves was one of poverty and perpetual cycles of internecine violence. Haiti was forced to take on a huge national debt in order to pay reparations to French citizens who had lost property (that is, slaves) during the thirteen-year conflict.¹⁶ In the end, Haitians were forced to buy the freedom they had already fought for—not at all the noble uprising my students were hoping for.

While the history of slavery offers only meager examples of insurrection, another form of resistance—running away—has proven much more effective throughout history. Most students are familiar with the Underground Railroad and the efforts of fugitive slaves to escape north into Canada during the nineteenth century, but enslaved Africans were fleeing from bondage throughout the Atlantic for four centuries before the Underground Railroad opened.

The communities created by fugitive African and Indian slaves, called maroons, have been best described by Richard and Sally Price. In 1973, Richard Price published his book, *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas*, detailing a three-hundred-year-old maroon community in Saramaka. Since then, Richard and Sally Price have written dozens of pieces about the history, anthropology, and ethnography of maroons in Saramaka, Surinam, and throughout the Atlantic. Their example has inspired researchers who have located maroon communities in and around every major slave-holding society in North and South America, supporting postulations that marronage was the most widespread and effective form of resistance available to African slaves during this era.

While maroon communities differed greatly depending on the ethnic, geographic, and historical influences that led to their formation, there are some generalities that seem true of most maroon communities. For one thing, maroons were most likely to be formed by African-born slaves.¹⁷ In areas where a maroon community was well-established, it was far less likely for Creole (American-born) slaves to run away and join these communities than for newly imported slaves. Some historians speculate that ethnic elements of maroon societies may have led to the exclusion of Creoles,¹⁸ but most studies have found that maroon communities tended to be very ethnically diverse despite this exclusion.¹⁹

Marronage was a more common form of resistance in the early colonial era, and steadily decreased as time went on. Early colonies were small settlements spread far apart, leaving plenty of room for fugitive slaves to settle and start their own communities. The small size of imperial colonies also meant they lacked the resources (soldiers and equipment) to suppress marronage. But slave-holding powers had an obvious interest in destroying maroon settlements, and as their colonies grew in size and power, slave holders went to great effort to “reduce” maroon communities as soon as possible. It is a sad fact that most of what modern historians know about maroons comes from the records left by the military units sent to destroy them.²⁰

The marronages that survived the longest were those where maroons were able to take possession of strategic geographic areas, with easily defensible positions. In the highlands of Jamaica and Hispaniola and the dense jungles of northern Amazonia and Ecuador, maroons were able to build communities whose natural defenses rendered them invulnerable to colonial attack. In some instances, maroons controlled territory that made them an important military buffer between competing imperial powers. In these areas, colonial powers saw it as advantageous to support maroons to augment their own defenses, and often offered maroons peace treaties.²¹

In one agreement between maroons and Mexican authorities, Mexico formally recognized the freedom of the maroons and their claim to the land they had lived on. Furthermore, Mexico agreed to give the maroons annual gifts of guns, powder, and other wares. In return, the maroons agreed to provide military support during times of war. Maroons also agreed to help capture and return fugitive slaves, for which the maroons would be paid.²² This agreement forced the maroons to interact with the colonial economy through slave-catching, military alliances, and trade. Over time, the marronage was absorbed by Mexico and became the free black town of San Lorenzo.²³

Maroons at Santiago del Principe, maroons in Surinam, and both the leeward and windward maroons of Jamaica all eventually agreed to treaties in which they were granted their freedom and lands in return for military service—and for capturing fugitive slaves. This is where my students cringe in protest. At last, in marronage, there appears a strong example of slave resistance, but the enslaved won their freedom only to turn around and become slave catchers denying the same chance of freedom to others. A dark irony, maroon treaties are hardly the model of slave resistance modern students had hoped to find.

In the end, scholars disagree about the importance of marronage. Some, like Timothy Lockley, hold marronage as the ultimate form of slave resistance in the Atlantic world. They claim that once a group of maroons

had established themselves in an area, “new runaways were drawn moth-like to a successful alternative to plantation life.”²⁴ Others, like Trevor Burnard, are less convinced:

Enslaved persons did not find marronage as attractive an option as we would like them to do....Few enslaved persons became maroons, and maroon communities remained, in the majority of cases, rather small in size and possibly in influence. Moreover, while slave owners were forced in several areas to acknowledge the reality of maroon power, the resistance that maroons showed to European power was not manifest in challenges to the plantation system.²⁵

Even professional historians share my students’ opinion that a few scattered groups of runaway slaves who made their living capturing other runaway slaves and selling them back into slavery is not the model of resistance we were searching for.

Betty Wood, in her 2005 survey of American slavery, *Slavery in Colonial America 1619-1776*, summarizes the reaction that is typical among my students when confronted with paucity of violent resistance to slavery. In a system where “Few slaves avoided the lash for long,” Wood admits that, “However much they might have wanted to and been tempted to, not every slave committed physically violent acts against his or her owners.”²⁶ For Wood, at least every slave wanted to resist slavery, even if he/she did not do so violently.

In the last decade or two, many scholars of slavery have turned to documenting the less dramatic, everyday acts of resistance that were common among slaves throughout the Atlantic. Authors such as Darold D. Wax (“Negro Resistance to the Early American Slave Trade”) and Ira Berlin (*Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*) document incidents of work slow-downs, tool breakages, and “ignorant mistakes” designed to cause unseen economic damage to slave owners.²⁷ Evidence for these acts of passive-aggressive defiance comes mainly from the complaints of slave owners themselves. In their racist justifications of slavery, slave owners nearly unanimously complained about laziness, stupidity, and carelessness of their workers. Some scholars believe this was no coincidence, taking these complaints as an indication that enslaved people provided substandard labor as part of a purposeful and systematic resistance to the establishment. This minor everyday resistance, however, is difficult to quantify. As Peter Kolchin puts it:

Although antisocial behavior often represented either conscious or unconscious acts of defiance, these acts are difficult to analyze because they are virtually impossible to isolate. Day-to-day “resistance” was so ambiguous in nature that it is hard to determine when—and to what—it actually constituted resistance.²⁸

Some historians go so far as to claim that slaves' retention of recognizable traits from their African cultures constituted a form of slave resistance. John Thornton, in several studies of Central African warrior culture, including *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1650*, and Jason Young, in *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religions in the Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery*, make subtle use of the argument that the acculturation of enslaved Africans was so unremitting in its attempts to strip Africans of any sense of heritage or identity, that even the smallest act of cultural preservation was an act of resistance.

Thornton studies Central African military tactics, and has demonstrated capably that African troops in the Americas used command systems, tactics, and even ceremonial war dances similar to those they had practiced in Africa.²⁹ His claim that culture is a form of resistance is at least supported by the strongly violent types of cultural identity he is tracing. Young's resistance was more intellectual in nature, in which shamanistic medicine, animistic religious beliefs, and African music and dance constitute deliberate attempts to refute the core values of the colonial slavocracy.

At the end of their survey of African American history around the Atlantic, Conniff and Davis concluded what most of my students desperately want to hear—"The clearest sign of African Americans' will to control their lives...was the high level of resistance they displayed throughout the hemisphere."³⁰ But their thesis is belied by the facts. Closer to the heart of most modern historians is Eugene Genovese's statement: "The slaves of the Old South should not have to answer for their failure to mount more frequent and effective revolts; they should be honored for having tried at all."³¹

To the modern student, steeped in a two-and-a-half-century tradition of republican constitutionalism, in which freedom of speech, religion, and protection against forced servitude are amongst the most fundamental and universal of human rights, the historiography of Atlantic slavery is almost incomprehensible in its lack of sustained open resistance on the part of the enslaved. While the historical record clearly shows that thousands of enslaved Africans resisted slavery in open rebellion or by running away and joining maroon communities, millions of slaves did not. Even when slaves picked up their torches and rose up in open rebellion, other slaves rose up to stop them. It is impossible to know how many slaves resisted their captivity by working slowly or by defiantly retaining African beliefs, but it is reasonable to conclude that large numbers of enslaved Africans chose, despite obvious albeit limited options of resistance, to continue to live and labor within the system of slavery instead of fighting against it. According to Kolchin, "The majority of slaves reluctantly came to terms

with the system and found their own endurable if less than ideal niche.⁷³² Enslaved Africans themselves recognized and rued their accommodation of slavery. A song often sung among slaves in Surinam laments, “The snake has no arms, no legs, no hands, no feet. How does he rise and we do not?”⁷³³

To John Gabriel Stedman, an English officer charged with reducing maroon communities in Surinam in the early 1700s, the difference between resistance and accommodation was clear. He blamed cruel and inhumane treatment of slaves for their rebellion, and described many plantations where slaves worked dutifully and happily, safe from the misuse of cruel masters.⁷³⁴ The belief that only mistreated slaves revolt is echoed by changes in the laws concerning the treatment of slaves. Spain’s *Código Negro* and France’s *Code Noir* each tried to limit the severity with which owners could punish slaves, and guarantee enslaved people certain rights and privileges to discourage them from revolting. Matt Childs points out that several slave revolts began because a group of slaves believed they were being denied rights that had been granted to them by imperial law. In one case, a renegotiation of slave privileges was all it took to convince slaves to lay down their arms and return to the plantation.⁷³⁵

Conniff and Davis contend that “Contemporary critics and historians have rightly focused on the brutal, and sometimes murderous methods used by slave owners. They do so because the extremes of an institution conveyed the **latent** [emphasis added] possibilities its victims had to live with.”⁷³⁶ By accurately conveying the extremes of slavery without accurately quantifying either the frequency or degree of these abuses, historians have implied that these extremes were the norm. Many historians even ignore evidence to the contrary. Childs, for example, claims that the rarity of suits against slave owners under the *Código Negro* is proof that the laws were generally ignored, but the same data could also mean that few slave owners violated the code. Is it possible that one reason why the record of slave resistance fails to match our level of indignation towards slavery is because our image of slavery treats enslaved persons as the inanimate objects of slavery, rather than as deliberate actors participating in a dynamic, although admittedly unequal, system.

Werner Zips warns historians not to trap themselves into a strict dichotomy of resistance and accommodation, but to recognize instead that resistance involves a wide spectrum of behaviors that range from accommodation at one end to murder, arson, and open rebellion at the other—and that slaves, like any other people, choose where on the spectrum to act based on the specific circumstances they find themselves in at a specific moment in time. Any given person might choose to accept slavery at one moment and yet violently resist it at another, in both cases

for sound reasons that we are unlikely to understand given incomplete information centuries later.³⁷

In recent years, accusations of anachronism have been thrown around so much they have become cliché. A generation ago, the label “revisionist historian” carried similar connotations. Historians forget, however, that for the majority of people who find themselves drawn to history, the ability to live vicariously through the past is one of history’s greatest attractions. Historians warn each other not to interpret past events in terms of modern sensibilities, yet two of the most important reasons to study history are to reassess contemporary values and to empathize with our ancestors. The truth is that no one who chooses to study slavery wants to empathize with people who suffered for hundreds of years without fighting back because they were afraid, or who were willing to sell out their fellow slaves for a three-day furlough and a new hat.

Still, it is possible that modern conceptions of freedom have skewed our interpretations of resistance. If we assume the purpose of resistance was to obtain emancipation, the quantity and quality of resistance we find will always come up lacking. On the other hand, if we view the various levels of violent and passive resistance slaves chose each day as part of a complex set of negotiations between master and slave, slave resistance becomes both more comprehensible to modern minds and more significant in its historical impact.

In his attempt to understand why the Botocudo Indians of Brazil vacillated between periods of intense violence and peaceful accommodation of Portuguese colonists, Hal Langfur suggested that individual acts of violence were used to establish geographic boundaries as well as social parameters. Since eliminating the Portuguese was never the Botocudos’ goal, the “war” they waged was not the failure earlier historians labeled it. In fact, just eighty-six minor skirmishes over a fifty-year period were enough to negotiate the boundaries of trade and land use between indigenous people and Portuguese colonists for two centuries across most of Amazonia.³⁸ Perhaps, in a similar way, it only took a handful of bloody rebellions and the availability of maroon communities to which slaves could flee to ensure sufferable boundaries between enslaved workers and those who claimed to own them. According to Zips, even though few Jamaican slaves ever ran away despite their proximity to very successful maroon communities, the fact that running away was a viable option was enough to make plantation slavery bearable.³⁹ Similarly, many scholars have noted the paranoid fear of slave revolts slave owners often exhibited, yet no one has thoroughly studied the impact this fear had upon the conditions of the enslaved. Is it possible that some owners were afraid to push slaves too hard? Young describes one tragic episode in which

an enslaved woman named Sinda prophesied the end of the world so believably that all work on her plantation came to a stop. Her owner, unable to enforce work with any level of violence, was forced to accept a temporary holiday, after which he summarily executed Sinda when the world didn't come to an end.⁴⁰ While Sinda's selfless act of resistance failed to result in emancipation, it did negotiate a four-day break from the summer heat for an entire plantation.

The scant availability of sources has long led historians to over-emphasize the role of owners, and under-emphasize that of the slaves. Slavery has been depicted as a system constructed by Europeans, and forced upon others whose only choices were to accept servitude or die. But slavery was far from simple. Africans purposefully chose the degree to which they resisted slavery as a means of renegotiating the conditions and the value of their labor within the Atlantic. Historians marvel at examples of slaves negotiating the terms of their labor as individual wage laborers, or even large gangs capable of running entire plantations. I submit that these are not exceptions to the rule, but merely the clearest examples of a system of labor that was always negotiated—usually through varying degrees of violence and threats. If we view these violent acts of resistance as negotiations, then acts of complicity do not take on the same feeling of accommodation that offends our modern hatred of slavery, but rather become an understandable part of a systematic and organized resistance. Accommodation and resistance rise from undesirable options to effective strategies employed by enslaved people to negotiate the best possible terms for their service to a scared but dangerous master class. This is a view in which enslaved people had agency and power, rather than being weak indirect objects of the historic narrative.

Notes

1. Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972).

2. *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, <<http://www.slavevoyages.org>>.

3. These estimates are rudimentary calculations that can be performed by typical high school students. Scholarly estimates of the capital cost of slavery range from as low as five percent of British GDP to as high as \$10 billion per year, not counting the value of labor performed. Samuel H. Williamson and Louis P. Cain, in "Measuring Slavery in \$2009" at <<http://www.measuringworth.com/slavery.php>>, estimate the value of slaves held in the United States in 1860 (one country in one year) at \$4 trillion in 2009 dollars.

While methodological differences make it impossible to know exactly how much the lives and labor of enslaved Africans was worth in modern dollars, these estimates aptly show the magnitude of slavery's economic impact.

4. Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, sixth ed. (New York: International Publishers, 1993).

5. Peter C. Mancall, Joshua L. Rosenbloom, and Thomas Weiss, "Slave Prices and the Economy of South Carolina, 1722-1809" (1999), 5-7, <http://www2.ku.edu/~kuwpaper/Archive/papers/Pre1999/wp1999_11.pdf>. See also, Peter C. Mancall, Joshua L. Rosenbloom, and Thomas Weiss, "Slave Prices and the South Carolina Economy, 1722-1809," *The Journal of Economic History* 61, no. 3 (September 2001): 616-639.

6. Gelien Matthews, *Caribbean Slave Revolts and the British Abolitionist Movement: Antislavery, Abolition, and the Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); Mark M. Smith, *Stono: Documenting and Interpreting a Southern Slave Revolt* (Charleston, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2005); and Matt D. Childs, *The 1812 Aponte Rebellion in Cuba and the Struggle Against Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) are just a few recent examples of histories analyzing specific examples of slave revolts in detail.

7. Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson, eds., *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), vi-xi.

8. Michael L. Conniff and Thomas J. Davis, eds., *Africans in the Americas: A History of the Black Diaspora* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 135.

9. Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 2.

10. Laurent Dubois' *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004) was released in time for Haiti's bicentennial in 2004. David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering's edited volume, *The World of the Haitian Revolution* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), from the Blacks in the Diaspora series, as well as Nick Nesbitt's *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2008) were both conceived at an international conference on the Haitian Revolution held in honor of Haiti's bicentennial, and appeared in print in 2008.

11. Dubois, 63-65, 162-165.

12. Klooster, 104.

13. *Ibid.*, 94-115.

14. Dubois, 302-303; Klooster, 163-164.

15. Robert Alderson, "Charleston's Rumored Slave Revolt of 1793," in *The Impact of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World*, ed. David P. Geggus (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 93-111.

16. Dubois, 304.

17. Timothy James Lockley, ed., *Maroon Communities in South Carolina* (Charlotte, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2009), 3, reads, "Price and Johnson both assert that free-born Africans were more likely to become maroons than creoles."

18. Stuart B. Schwartz, "Cantos y Quilombos: A Hausa Rebellion in Bahia, 1814," in *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 246-265.

19. Jane Landers, "Maroon Women in Colonial Spanish America: Case Studies in the Circum-Caribbean from Sixteenth through the Eighteenth Centuries," in *Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas*, ed. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 3-18.

20. Landers and Robinson, 5.
21. For a wonderful example of how maroons were able to manipulate the balance of power in important regions, see Antonio Sánchez Jiménez, “Raza, Identidad y Rebelión en los Confines del Imperio Hispánico: Los Cimarrones de Santiago del Príncipe y *La Drangontea* (1598) de Lope de Vega,” *Hispanic Review* 75, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 113-133.
22. Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico, Inquisicion 1608, vol. 283, file 26, fol. 186-187, reprinted in *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).
23. Jane G. Landers, “Cimarron and Citizen: African Ethnicity, Corporate Identity, and the Evolution of Free Black Towns in the Spanish Circum-Caribbean,” in *Slaves, Subjects, and Subversives: Blacks in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Jane G. Landers and Barry M. Robinson (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 132.
24. Lockley, 7.
25. Trevor Burnard, review of *Flight to Freedom: African Runaways and Maroons in the Americas*, by Alvin O. Thompson, *American Historical Review* 113, no. 1 (February 2008): 143-144.
26. Betty Wood, *Slavery in Colonial America, 1619-1776* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 66.
27. Many authors have written on this topic. Werner Zips calls these minor acts of defiance “petit marronage,” but perhaps the fullest recent treatment of non-violent slave resistance can be found in Ira Berlin’s *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).
28. Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987), 243-244.
29. For a good overview of John Thornton’s research, *Africa and Africans in the Formation of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
30. Conniff and Davis, 314.
31. Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the New World* (Baton Rouge, LA: University of Louisiana Press, 1979), 12.
32. Kolchin, 269.
33. Schwartz, 256.
34. John Gabriel Stedman, *Stedman’s Surinam: Life in an Eighteenth-Century Slave Society*, ed. Richard Price and Sally Price (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 26-28.
35. Childs, 182-183.
36. Conniff and Davis, 311.
37. Werner Zips, *Black Rebels: African-Caribbean Freedom Fighters in Jamaica*, trans. Shelley L. Frisch (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999), 49-51.
38. Hal Langfur, *The Forbidden Lands: Colonial Identity, Frontier Violence, and the Persistence of Brazil’s Eastern Indians, 1750-1830* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 216.
39. Zips, 47.
40. Jason Young, *Rituals of Resistance: African Atlantic Religion in Kongo and the Lowcountry South in the Era of Slavery* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 135.