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"Favorite of Heaven"

The Impact of Skin Color on Atlantic Ethnic Africans in the Eighteenth Century

(TITLE)

BY

Kimberly V. Jones

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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"Favorite of Heaven": The Impact of Skin color on Atlantic Ethnic Africans in the Eighteenth Century

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Introduction

Historians have long agreed that race is a social construct; that is race and its correlations to identity and culture were created by design.[1] To construct a cohesive narrative of identity that incorporates a multitude of voices is a daunting endeavor. There has never been a singular identity for the peoples of ethnic African descent in the Atlantic.[2] And although individuals of African heritage adorning a wide variety of skin colors have united under a banner of shared oppression and African ancestry, at times these ties of identity have proven shallow with some resenting the confines of such identity and seeking to escape those strictures. In the eighteenth century binary the severity of the black/white racial identification provided both opportunities and uncertainty for ethnic Africans of lighter complexion.

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[1] The emphasis on social history following the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s shifted the paradigm in historical analysis of racial groups. Researchers began to study human identity as a process that develops through social and historical events rather than a biological determinant. As a result, historians have subsequently focused on race as a social manifestation of hierarchical and economic roles in society. For more in the historiography of racial construction see: Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, (London: Routledge, 1995); David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*, (New York: Verso, 1999); George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*,(Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1987); Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York: Grove Press, 1967); and Barbara J Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History", in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward*. ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

[2] I use the term ethnic African to denote individuals of African descent across the Atlantic since the category black seemingly encompasses only a portion of the people. I use the term black in conjunction with light skin and dark skin to distinguish between two groups of peoples with different opportunities and expectations in the eighteenth century.

People designated as non-whites were categorized as animalistic creatures without souls or humanity.[3] Light skinned ethnic Africans could and sometimes did flee this category. Individuals who could escape constraining identities left behind friends and family when they discarded an ethnic African identity in favor of white identity and privilege. Light skinned blacks who held onto their African identity were often deemed the best and brightest of the group. Even in a group of individuals enduring the persecution caused by their darker skin color, discrimination was not unheard of. Within black and ethnic African communities skin color could divide as well as unite. This was clear from the first European encounters with Africans. It is this question, the extent that skin color divided as well as united the black community in British North America during the eighteenth century that is the subject of this thesis.

In the seventeenth century, European naturalists explored foreign continents and encountered people who disrupted their preconceived knowledge of the world. To explain the presence of the non-Christian indigenous peoples, Europeans came into contact with scientific organizations such as the Royal Society of England, used skin color to refer to innate differences between population groups, and sorted people into racial groups with specific characteristics based upon their skin color.[4] Sir Robert Boyle was, as were many other travelers in the Royal Society, fascinated by the varying shades of humanity. He revealed this fascination in his experiments

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[3] David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 53-59.
[4] Cristina Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color in the Early Royal Society*, (New York: Ashgate, 2013).

on the skin and hair of Africans in 1664.[5] Boyle rejected both climate theory and biblical origins of skin color. Instead he found the blackness of Africans' skin an anomaly of nature, a scientific mystery that required further study.[6] Other Royal Society fellows were influenced by Boyle and followed his theories. One anonymous explorer in 1695 argued that the colour of Africans was not solely based on the heat of the land.[7] Dark skin color thus became deemed passive as outside what God had intended and thus unnatural. The eighteenth century scientific community's inability to incorporate Africans into the biblical view led to an ideology which condemned dark-skinned peoples to the unnatural world.

Scientists purposefully created an 'other,' a group of people perpetually on the outside. Although they were men of science, members of the society were also men of business. They had interests in colonial endeavors that clouded their pursuit of scientific truth. The Royal African Company ("RAC") had a monopoly on the slave trade between Africa and English Caribbean and North American colonies from 1672 to 1698.[8] Among RAC's investors were men from the Royal Society. In their travel narratives and society meetings, these men laid the foundation for the construction of a white race and a black race.

Historians of eighteenth-century racial relations have placed much emphasis on how whites constructed "blackness" to justify the enslavement of those of African

[5] Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color*, 31-32.
[6] Ibid., 33-34.
[7] Ibid., 89, "Tis plain their colour and wool are innate, or seminal from their beginning and seems to be a specific character, which neither sun nor any curse from Cham could imprint on them."
[8] Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color*, 5. Malcolmson contends that by 1684 the Royal Society invested heavily in the slave trade resulting in a collusion between science and industry that kept skin color in the public view and imagination.

ancestry.[9] In 1968 Winthrop Jordan argued in *White over Black* that the negative meanings white Englishmen gave to the color black pre-dated their contact with Africans and was a central component in how blacks and whites in the English-speaking world related to each other. Thus, Jordan did not claim that slavery caused English racism but rather that slavery worked in concert with pre-existing prejudices.[10] Jordan's arguments have been frequently repeated by scholars of African American history so that the historiography of colorism largely reflects a focus on how skin color shaped black-white relations.[11]

Although appropriate and highly informative, much of the scholarship on race in colonial North America focuses on the creation of race from the perspective of whites.[12] How blacks created identity for themselves is barely accounted for in most histories of eighteenth-century race. Just as skin color became central to whites' delineations of race, it became important to blacks' relationships with each other and within black communities. This thesis aims to show how skin color served both to unify and divide the black community in North America through the discourse that blacks themselves created. Historian Harry Reed's sites or elements

[9] Although mutable and imprecise, black became the preeminent characteristic to describe those of African descent. In this paper blackness refers to the identity of peoples of African descent and their supposed inherent abilities and characteristics as represented by their dark skin color.
[10] Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).
[11] Annette Gordon-Read, "Reading *White over Black,*" *William & Mary Quarterly* ("*WMQ*"), 69, no. 4 (Oct. 2012), 853-854.
[12] Annette Gordon-Read, *Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemmings: An American Controversy* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1997) is a notable exception.

that Reed sees as constituting the foundation of the black community will serve as a framework to illustrate places where community cohesion was strained.[13]

Where political identity asserted itself, divergent agendas among ethnic Africans revealed that skin color served to divide peoples. The debate over emigration of American blacks to Africa could be heard from the pulpit and was fought out in nineteenth-century black newspapers.[14] Church debates concerned issues of leadership for institutions as well as the correct path toward gaining liberty for Africans in America. Lighter skinned and darker skinned blacks opposed one another on these issues.

Similar conversations/discourse oxygenated both eighteenth-century slave narratives and images of blacks. Black men and women across the Anglo-American Atlantic experienced responses to their "blackness," however skin color differences within their race also influenced individual blacks' experiences and relationships. Similarly, images of ethnic Africans from the eighteenth century provide an essential component to uncover how skin color allowed for both connections and disunity. These images create a visual record of how identities connected to power and the ways that power was derived from color within black communities.

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[13] Harry Reed, *Platform for Change: The Foundations of the Northern Free Black Community, 1775-1865,* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994). In *Platform for Change* Reed argues that black institutions—particularly churches and newspapers—laid the platform for the creation of African American communities. As much as the church united, it also faced ruptures in its early history. Those that stayed in the original church or followed the black ministers in creating black churches did so for many reasons. I propose to examine the nature of these schisms and the people involved. In doing so, I will show the role skin color played in the decisions and interactions of black churches and their congregants.
[14] Although discourse between blacks about blacks would be helpful to understanding the dynamics of colorism in the eighteenth century, the phenomenon of black newspapers dominated the nineteenth century much of which is out of the scope of this thesis.

Analysis of written documents concerning ethnic African communities, ideology regarding emigration, and the formation of independent black churches when examined within the discourse of slave narratives, offer new avenues to examine America's early history on race. Similarly, narratives written by eighteenth-century blacks offer insights into how blacks of the era engaged with colorism. The conversation connecting identity to skin color could not exist without the imagery of the eighteenth century black faces. Thus portraits and portraiture of the era contain an important discourse between blacks concerning their own identity and how these identities furthered their agendas.

Oladuah Equiano, Phyllis Wheatley, Mary Prince, James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, John Marrant, Ottobah Gugoano, and John Jea wrote of their lives as ethnic Africans.[15] They considered their previous condition of enslavement and the nature of their freedom. All shared the eighteenth century stage but differed in their views about the nature of African American existence, identity and the meaning of their skin color. On the surface, they maintained a shared responsibility for the progress of their race but without question had contrasting opinions as to the best

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[15] Mary Prince, "The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave" (London: F Westley and A H Davis, 1831); Oladuah Equiano, "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African" (London: Printed for and sold by the Author, No. 10, Union-Street, Middlesex Hospital, 1789) in *The Classic Slave Narratives* ed. by Henry Louis Gates Jr., (New York: Penguin Books, 2002); James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, "A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince" (Bath: W GYE, 1770); John Marrant, "Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black" (London: Gilbert and Plummer, 1785); Ottobah Cugoano, "Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Humbly Submitted to the Inhabitants of Great Britain", by Ottobah Cugoano, a Native of Africa (London, n.p, 1788); John Jea, "The Life, History, and Unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, the African Preacher", (Portsea: n.p, 1811) in *Pioneers of the Black Atlantic: Five Slave Narratives from the Enlightenment, 1772-1815* ed. By Henry Louis Gates Jr and William L Andrews (Washington D.C: Ciivitas Counterpoint, 1998); and Phillis Wheatley, *Phillis Wheatley, Complete Writings* ed. by Vincent Carretta, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2001).

policy for securing their rights and freedoms. Harry Reed's analysis of how, why and where African Americans established communities offers an opportunity to explore community formation and divisions among blacks in the eighteenth century. By realigning the areas where black unity was initiated to focus on those places where skin color was important and contested among blacks offers a more complete understanding of race in the early American experience. Images of the era, set out in the Appendix and discussed herein, aid in revealing the stratagems of people intent to create identity for themselves and their people.

Over six chapters, I will argue for a reexamination of the early black experience that accounts for differences in how skin color created and shaped black communities in North America. Doing so I will demonstrate a greater complexity in the development of black identity during the eighteenth century than has been here-to-for acknowledged. In Chapter One I examine how Africans viewed themselves decoupled from European influence. Skin color was not unnoticed by different ethnic groups in Africa and will be shown to have already played a part in individual blacks' sense of identity prior to Africans' forced migration to North America. Equiano's observations as well as travelogues that discuss interactions between Africans will be used to unpack how Africans viewed peoples of different skin colors.

Chapter Two will discuss the formation of African identity through the eyes of Europeans. In contextualizing the imposition of identity and blacks' reaction, it is necessary to understand the foundation of racial theory. Men of science were important in creating a hierarchy of races that emphasized skin color. The influence

of theories crept into the belief system of those of influence. These ideas cast blacks as beasts in the garden.

In the third chapter slave codes are used to analyze the use of legal apparatus that set racial categories that kept some ethnic Africans out of the public discourse and in bondage. The legal system and legal codes of the eighteenth century also used skin color to define and classify. Laws not only skewed toward whites but also provided more favorable treatment of mulattoes and other lighter skinned blacks.[16] I argue that legal codes were responsible for presuming a white/not-white categorization of race. Ethnic Africans did not complicity accept the presumptions of their identity. Through legal processes some lighter skinned ethnic Africans forced new provisional identities into society. These allowed for a status above that of darker skinned ethnic Africans. Such elevated status for light skinned Africans strained the attempts to create a cohesive community in the ethnic African community.

Chapter Four will move the complexion debate toward community and proposes to re-consider how skin color shaped interactions among blacks. The debate over emigration to Africa, and the creation and splintering of black church congregations are historically visible occurrences that can be examined by historians. Institutions have been of great importance in solidifying a common purpose and identity. Although the Black Church allowed for ethnic Africans in the British Atlantic to express a sense of self and connection with one another it also

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[16] Although mulattoes themselves were of varying skin color, in this paper I use mulatto to refer to individuals of mixed race who were lighter skinned.

fostered ideas of differences by determining the worthiness of leaders based on skin color.

Images of the eighteenth-century men who led the early African community and their individual backgrounds are important to understanding how their skin color influenced their success and the resentment their successes created within the black community. The complexion gap postulates that just as the "talented tenth" of the early twentieth century tended to be light skinned blacks, in the eighteenth-century it was African Americans of lighter complexions who had greater success, in large part due to how both blacks and whites viewed and treated lighter-skinned blacks. Colorism in the eighteenth century divided people even as acknowledgement of a shared identity united them.[17]

The next chapter moves to Sierra Leone. The colony of Sierra Leone was established amid great debate. Colorism as an idea of skin color hierarchy was not expressed only in North America. Men and women's identity across the British Atlantic was irrevocably linked to their skin color in relation to others, regardless of a shared race. Early black leaders in Sierra Leone split over the perceived intentions behind organizing a movement of ethnic Africans to a new colony on the Dark Continent. Men such as Olaudah Equiano supported the colony in hopes of giving the London Poor a place where they could gain economic independence and social and cultural freedom from whites in England. Other blacks, James Forten among them, viewed the colony as a trap for ethnic Africans that placed them in the

[17] "Colorism" refers to a form of prejudice and discrimination based on skin color. This type of discrimination is intra-racial or based inside an ethnic group. It is based on a preference for the lightest pigmented people within the group.

backyard of slave traders for the purpose of ridding them from the white gaze. In essence the colony began as a struggle for identity that continued as new groups of ethnic Africans with varying skin colors clashed and established new hierarchies based on skin color.

In Chapter Six, the narratives and portraiture of eighteenth-century blacks will be employed to complicate ideas of community among eighteenth-century blacks. Individuals such as Equiano and Phillis Wheatley were on the outside in both black and white communities. Yet they were insiders to aspects of the identity in each group. Equiano and other blacks' resistance to full acceptance of an African American or African British community is referenced in debates surrounding Reed's planks in the platform or "sites of community."[18] The images produced on black figures also serve to aid in unpacking concepts of racial identity and skin color. These images do not reflect a passive endeavor. Equiano and the Jamaican teacher Francis Williams crafted their images to suit their purposes and stake a claim to an identity beyond that which European eyes bestowed upon them. As women, Wheatley and Rachel Pringle had less control, but their images still reflected the particularities of how skin color shaped identity. Intra-racial conflict was predicated on differences that could and did create divergent cultural, economic and social expectations. Images and portraiture identified these expectations. The portraiture of Equiano, Wheatley, Pringle and Williams suggests eighteenth-century ethnic Africans struggled with blackness.

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[18] Reed uses the term planks to refer to the separate aspects that created an African American community. I refer to these as sites where community developed and devolved.

Identity is contingent. During the eighteenth century as abolitionism began to take hold, and offered opportunities for increasing numbers of free blacks, an independent African American community took shape.[19] Based on shared oppression and physical appearance, communal bonds among blacks were however incomplete and often fragile, subject to individual desires for freedom that sometimes overrode community ties. When attempting to escape slavery practicality sometimes became more important than family, kinship or friendship, leading some blacks to abandon others. Families were separated through enslaved peoples running away or being sold. For example, Ona Judge, the former enslaved African of George and Martha Washington fled rather than remained shackled to a harsh mistress. Ona worked in the Philadelphia home of the first United States President. In her time with George and Martha, she witnessed the freedom granted to free blacks in the city while her own liberty was circumvented.[20] Ona's skill and promise meant that Martha Washington viewed her as an appropriate and much needed wedding gift for her newlywed granddaughter, Eleanor Parke Curtis. A move from the Washington household would mean certain and permanent separation from Ona's children and siblings, while running away created the same separation for Ona but at her own initiative. In either instance she faced uncertainty

[19] For more works on abolition in the eighteenth century see; Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery 1776-1848*, (London: verso, 1988), Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2006).

[20] The Pennsylvania Gradual Emancipation Act placed the Washingtons in a predicament. They continued to desire to use of enslaved Africans but the 1780 Act prohibited importation of slaves into the state and assigned the status of indenture to children borne of slave mothers. The law demanded residents of the state to register their slaves within six months of residency. Washington and his wife attempted to subvert the Pennsylvania law by transporting slaves back and forth to Virginia and Pennsylvania despite Pennsylvania law prohibiting such rotations in the residency of enslaved peoples.

and anxiety. Her choice was to seize her future and leave the Washington household. In Ona's absence her sister became the wedding gift for Nelly, granddaughter of the Washington's.[21]

Within black communities the actions of others could negatively affect the group, as in Nat Turner's Rebellion where the culprits were identified by other blacks. The focus on the communality of ethnic Africans facing the rigidity of the binary black/white identity in Anglo-American North America obscures conflicts within African communities that resulted from a divergence of political and economic possibilities. Although many ethnic Africans shared a common place and identity according to the white gaze, they were arrayed in a variety of skin colors that shaped how they viewed themselves. In the eighteenth century ethnic African communities possessed multiple identities based on skin color. As this thesis will demonstrate, skin color acted within the ethnic African communities to divide, as well as unite. Blacks' skin color shaped how they viewed and interacted with each other and with the larger Atlantic world.

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[21] Gail Underwood Parker, *Remarkable Women of New Hampshire*, (New York: Globe Pequot, 2009), 13-15; Gary B Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 59-64.

Chapter One: African Roots of identity

As much as ethnic Africans in British North American colonies and the United States of the eighteenth century comprised a single group, with shared experience, language, culture and expectations, the relationship between identity, privilege and skin color often strained these shared values. Gender, age and governance influenced interactions within families and between individuals and communities, yet how blacks viewed their own skin color in relation to other members of their community deserves equal attention. Colorism was not simply a phenomenon born of conditions under the slave system. While skin color bias and prejudice evolved within African American communities, it in fact pre-dated the migration of Africans to the New World. Intra-racial prejudice based on complexion was not only premised on image expectations from outside the racial group but shaped African identities and was thus used by Africans for their own purposes. Africans were aware of their complexion differences and attached meaning to these visual cues. The conditions under slavery served to reinforce preconceived African notions of skin color.

Ethnic Africans' conflict concerning skin color was rooted in the African continental experience. Covering more than eleven million square miles Africa is a large continent with enormous diversity among its peoples. Yet Early American and Atlantic historians often have described the origin of African peoples without deeply understanding how the varied experiences of Africans prior to their coercive

transportation to the Americas shaped their world-views.[1] Although Atlantic historians' focus has been on connections between the continents of the Atlantic basin there remains limited information beyond the slave trade connecting Africans' experience in Africa and their lives as enslaved peoples in the Americas during the eighteenth century.[2] Connections between enslaved experiences in the British Atlantic and experiences on the continent of Africa can help broaden and deepen our understanding of how skin color bias became part of human understanding of identities.

Slavery itself was not unknown to most African communities. Slaves in Africa came from a wide variety of sources, Muslim, Christian or tribal.[3] Slavery was borne of tradition and necessity rather than an ideological perception of the appropriateness of enforced labor. African societies supplied and demanded slaves. In the West African nation of Kano, the state owned slaves who labored in fields and for the royal family. Slaves came to Kano through raids sponsored by the state. An individual's enslaved condition continued through inheritance, donation, and

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[1] For examples of historians who emphasize the diversity of Africans' experiences see: Joseph C Miller, *Way of Death: Merchant Capitalism and the Angolan Slave Trade, 1730-1830,* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); and Randy J. Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters: An African Port in the Era of the Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014). For examples of historians that do not complicate ideas of homogeneity see: Marcus Reidiker, *Slave Ship: A Human History*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2008) and Edmund S Morgan, *American Slavery American Freedom*, (New York: WW Norton Press, 2003).

[2] The scarcity of primary sources concerning ethnic African descent within the Atlantic lives make narrating their histories difficult. Works such as Randy J Sparks, *Two Princes of Calabar: An Eighteenth Century Atlantic Odyseey* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2004) remains one of the few examples of such histories. For an example of one of the few surviving contemporaneous writings by eighteenth century blacks regarding their lives in the Atlantic see Charles R. Foy, "Incorporating Atlantic History into World and U.S. History," http://www.eiu.edu/socsci/swapshop2014.php (accessed March 28, 2016).

[3] John Hunwick, "Black Africans in the Mediterranean World: Introduction to a Neglected Aspect of the African Diaspora", in *The Human Commodity: Perspectives on the Trans-Saharan Slave Trade,* ed., Elizabeth Savage, (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 5-31.

breeding of their bodies.[4] Later slaves were used to establish economic and political authority over European traders. Fante leaders in the West African town of Anomabu negotiated with Europeans to retain political autonomy and fostered economic success based on the trade in slaves from other parts of Africa.[5]

Traders exported slaves from Africa along the same trade routes as goods such as gold and salt, and slaves were similarly widely dispersed across the globe. Before the European Age of Exploration enslaved Africans could be found in the Middle East and as far away as China. Africans such as Ethiopian-born Malik Ambarheld held prominent governmental positions in India.[6] Most enslavers guarded their property making manumission difficult except for a select few. Masters in Africa used manumission to gain public acclaim, but social mobility for those enslaved was limited.[7] The economic incentives to treat peoples as commodities overrode many considerations about humanity. With European expansion, considerable numbers of enslaved Africans could be found in Lisbon, Venice and other Mediterranean ports.[8]

Enslaved peoples in Africa searching for social mobility, particularly in the Mediterranean Islamic World of North Africa, had few opportunities. When achieved, social advancement came with steep costs. The men that rose to prominence often retained symbols of their previous condition. They bore marks of

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[4] Mohammed Bashir Salau, *The West African Slave Plantation: A Case Study* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 50, 66, 119.
[5] Sparks, *Where the Negroes are Masters, 5.*
[6] Shanti Sadiq Ali,*The African Dispersal in the Deccan: From Medieval to Modern Times,* (Pradesh: Orient BlackSwan, 1996), 104
[7] Salau, *The West African Slave Plantation*, 105-110.
[8] Philip D. Morgan, "Introduction, Maritime Slavery," *Slavery and Abolition,* 31, no. 3 (Sept. 2010), 320.

enslavement through masters' brands and/or the limitations of their reproductive and sexual relations through castration.[9] As Africanist John Hunwick has noted, black Africans were among the most poorly treated slaves.[10] Their avenues to escape enslavement were limited and treacherous. Even if not emasculated, men often found it difficult to find partners.[11]

Although not all African slaves' experiences were so harsh as disfigurement and sterilization, political rights and economic advancements were often denied to them. Most European travelers to Africa had limited experience understanding the plight of enslaved. Their direct knowledge of the continent and its people came from their African guides and the African traders they encountered. John Atkins, a surgeon and early opponent of the slave trade, recounts the tale of Africanus and Moulee. In his narrative *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil and West-Indies, in H.M. Ships the Swallow and Weymouth,* Atkins finds the fiction that a man would rid himself of his only love and her child upon discovery that her child was not his own due to the difference in their complexions.[12] Atkins recounts this tragedy swiftly but it impresses upon the reader the influence that complexion had on African relationships.

After the initial forays of European slave traders to the African coast Africa continued to inspire exploration and studies across academic disciplines. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century Egyptologists debated the ethnicity of the

[9] Hunwick, "Black Africans", 12-13, 21.
[10] Ibid., 21.
[11] Ibid., 12-13.
[12] John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil and West-Indies, in H.M. Ships the Swallow and Weymouth*, (London: Ward and Chandler,1737), 140.

preeminent Egyptian culture and peoples. This debate over the race of ancient Egyptians intensified during the height of scientific slavery.[13] Some Egyptians had physical characteristics resembling that of black Africans. Although actual accounts and documentation from peoples at the time of the pharaohs remain limited, art that decorated dwellings from a millennium ago provide clues as to how skin color transformed relationships. As the circa-1380 BCE image of Nubian cattle herders (Appendix, Figure One) reflects, the darkest people were those who appear to have been in service.[14] This pattern of darker-skinned Africans serving lighter-skinned Africans was repeated in European-created eighteenth century images. Examples of such images include that by Italian painter Agostino Brunias (Appendix, Figure Two) in which West Indian creole women are depicted accompanied by their dark-skinned African servants.[15]

African culture did not end on the beaches of West Africa. As John Blassingame has demonstrated, folk tales told by North American slaves were

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[13] Egyptologists have mostly avoided the Egyptian race debate. The debate began in the nineteenth century by explorers and continues into today among sociologists. For examples see Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization*, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974); and Mary Lefkowitz, *Not Out of Africa: How Afrocentricsm became an Excuse to teach Myth as History*, (New York: New Republic Books, 1997). For more extensive discussion of European use of science to create racial classifications and its impact on black identity see Chapter Two.

[14] Agostino Brunias, *Free Women of Color with their Children in a Landscape*, 1730-1796. Oil on canvas. 20 x 26 1/8 in., Brooklyn Museum, New York, https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/197252/Free_Women_of_Color_with_Their_Children_and_Servants_in_a_Landscape (accessed March 28, 2016).

[15] Unknown, *Nubian Procession,* circa 14th century. Oriental Institute Museum, Chicago. It should also be noted that Classicist Frank M. Snowden Jr. has argued that ancient Egyptians and their dark skinned neighbors the Nubians lived in a relatively harmonious exchange of people and ideas and did not attach negative or subservient roles onto those of darker complexions. Frank M. Snowdern Jr, *Bernal's 'Blacks' and the Afrocentrists in Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 1996), 122. However more recent researchers argue that colorism is endemic to the human experience and influenced relations in Egypt and across other world civilizations. Carlos Moore, "Mankind Against itself" (Keynote address presented at Global Perspectives on Colorism Conference, Saint Louis, Missouri April 2 2015).1:30-2:30, http://mediasite.law.wustl.edu/Mediasite/Play/5598706654f14a4192494775ad5a20db1d

rooted in Ghana and Senegal oral culture.[16] The New York African Burial Ground ("ABG") provides strong evidence of the transmission to and retention of African culture in North America. Over four hundred human remains have been found at the ABG. Analysis of the remains by Howard University archeologists shows that some were wrapped in African dress, donned in beads and accompanied with various artifacts that indicating they had "retained their "native superstitions and burial customs."[17] African culture was a lived experience. It shaped more than burial rituals. Historian John Thornton argues that the martial culture of Kongloese slaves shaped and defined the Stono Rebellion in 1739.[18] In 1739 near the Stono River in South Carolina, a group of enslaved Africans marched toward the freer land of Spanish Florida. They and their leader Jeremy were intent on escaping and exacting revenge on those who held them in bondage. Jeremy had deep ties to Congolese culture and Catholicism, resulting in many white North American seeing African-born individuals with ties to Catholicism as instigators of rebellion.

Similarly, in 1712 recently transported Africans bolstered the New York slave insurrection. Thirty enslaved Africans Papa or PawPaw slaves colluded in an

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[16] John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 32, 114-130.
[17] Stephanie R. Allen, *The Osteobiography of four individuals from the New York African Burial Ground: discovering the life of a slave* (Amherst, MA: Hampshire College, 2003); Andrea E. Frohne, "Reclaiming Space: The African Burial Ground in New York City," in *We Shall Independent Be": African American Place Making and the Struggle to Claim Space in the United States*, ed. Angel David Nieves and Leslie M. Alexander (Boulder, Colo., 2008), 489-510; "The New York African Burial Ground: Unearthing the African Presence in Colonial New York," http://www.gsa.gov/largedocs/Vol5_GenAud_NYABG_2.pdf (accessed March 28, 2016); and David T. Valentine, *Manual of the Corporation of New York* (1841/2), 567. Eric Seaman contends that the vast majority of Africans buried in New York were interned in a manner "identical to those of white New Yorkers." Eric R. Seeman, "Reassessing the "*Sankofa* Symbol" in New York's African Burial Ground," *WMQ* 67, no. 1 (Jan. 2010), 108.
[18] John Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," *American Historical Review* ("*AHR*") 96 (1991): 1101-13.

attempt to end white authority in colonial New York. Ethnic Africans composed fifteen percent of the population of Manhattan. Their numbers added to the nervous paranoia of white settlers. The influx of foreign, dark, Catholics in a time of imperial conflict between England and Catholic empires added to colonists' concerns. In an act against "some hard usage they apprehended to have received from their masters," they set fire to property and, when confronted, attacked and killed the white settlers that attempted to intervene. [19] Africans resisted bondage both passively with slow and incompetent laboring as well as by armed acts.[20]

African newcomers to New York led the 1712 revolt, and Africans were at the heart of the Stono Rebellion, creating a connection in the minds of white settlers between non-creolized Africans and insurrection.[21] The white settlers' responses to such acts were swift and brutal. Any connection by other blacks to people that seemed marked for trouble also drew suspicion. Dark skin became the physical manifestation of resistance and enslavement. Lighter skinned ethnic Africans found a measure of freedom in this way. Relationships between those who bore dark skin and those who did not would be increasingly troubled. The continuum of freedom was also a continuum of color.

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[19] A Letter from Governor Robert Hunter, June 23 1712, in E.B. Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial State of New York.* Vol. 5 (Albany: Weed, Parsons, 1885)., 341-342.
[20] Kenneth Scott, "The Slave Insurrection in New York in 1712," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly*, 45 (Jan. 1961): 43-74; and Thelma Wills Foote's "Some Hard Usage": The New York City Slave Revolt of 1712," *New York Folklore,* Vol. XVIII, No. 1-4: 147-159.
[21] The use of 'non-creolized' is meant to evoke that Africans new to American styled slavery were viewed with trepidation by some white settlers. Non-creolized suggests that some ethnic Africans had differing views about enslavement that were in contrast with the realities found in the North Americas.

Dark skin's association with enslavement not only supported a black-white relation but also a black-light relation. Many of the ethnic Africans in the eighteenth century who owned slaves were described as mulatto.[22] In Africa the mixed race children of white and Africans could serve as Atlantic Creoles and moved easily in either world and facilitated the sale of darker skinned ethnic Africans.[23] The color of the enslaved was not only a marker for those in chains but for manumission. Despite their designation as commodities, enslaved ethnic Africans could and were manumitted. The most common characteristic of freed blacks was gender, with skin color second. Skin color in manumission was often linked to familial ties. Miscegenation facilitated, and often was the key factor in some women of ethnic African origins obtaining their freedom.[24]

In South Carolina it was common for deathbed requests to include manumissions of female slaves and their mixed race children.[25] In this colony the relationship between freedom and skin color was so strong that over a "third of all recorded colonial manumission were mulatto children and three fourths of all adult manumissions were females."[26] Clearly not all females in relationships with masters

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[22] T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes, *Myne Owne Ground: Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 15, 34-37; and Larry Koger, *Black Slaveowners, Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860*, (Jefferson: University of South Carolina Press, 1985), 4-7.
[23] Sparks, *Where the Negroes are Masters*, 207-209.
[24] Robert Olwell, "Becoming Free: Manumission and the Genesis of a Free Black Community in South Carolina, 1740-90" in *Against the Odds, Free Blacks in the Slave Societies of the Americas* ed. by Jane Landers (New York: Routledge, 2013) 4. Parentage was not the sole condition needed for black freedom. Often enslaved Africans who performed service for their masters or fought in military campaigns won their freedom. Paul Lachance, "The Limits of Privilege: Where Free Persons of Colour Stood in the Hierarchy of Wealth in Antebellum New Orleans" in *Against the Odds*, 75; Rosemarihn Hoefte, " Free Blacks and Coloured in Plantation Suriname" in *Against the Odds* 123-125.
[25] Koger, *Black Slave Owners*, 31.
[26] Koger, *Black Slave Owners*, 32.

benefited. They did however have a greater chance of securing a future for their children. Although mulattos were provided an escape an opportunity for freedom the beginning origins of most ethic Africans was the same.

The middle passage from Africa to British North America connected the world that many Africans left to the one they were forced to inhabit. Slave ships came to be sites of identity transformation and places where there were opportunities to identify oneself based upon skin color.[27] The men and women who experienced this transformation where often left to grapple with the meaning of these new identities.

Probably the most famous African coercively transported to America was Olaudah Equiano. Equiano was both African and English. He began his life as an Igbo with no knowledge of the larger world. His first experience with Europeans proved traumatic. The Europeans were different from him in color. Their light skin was offensive to African standards of beauty. Africans with light complexions appeared disgusting according to Equiano.[28] Although Igbos spanned a range of color, according to Equiano, they prized dark skin. In a community where an

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[27] Rediker, *Slave Ship, 13.*

[28] Although there is some dispute whether Equiano was born in Africa or not his views are useful to express one possibility of the African experience. Whether his account of his African past is real or manufactured does not remove its relevancy. It could be just as likely that Equiano as a man active in abolition read other accounts from those that visited Africa to supplement his early memories. Equiano claims in his own narrative to be a child of Africa and descendant from the Igbo peoples. He recounts a tale of kidnap and cultural exposure that has been challenged by scholars such as Vincent Carretta in "Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa? New Light on Eighteenth-Century Question of Identity,"" Slavery and Abolition, Vol 20, (1999), 96-105; that the eighteenth-century author might have been born in South Carolina rather than in Africa. However, other scholars, particularly Africanists, contend that Equiano's narrative conforms to Ibo cultural practices and therefore is in fact supportive of claims Equiano was born in present-day Nigeria. See e.g., Paul Lovejoy, "Autobiography and Memory: Gustavus Vassa, alias Olaudah Equiano, the African," Slavery & Abolition, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2006): 317-347.Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 56 in in *Slave Narratives,* edited by William L Andrews and Henry Louis Gates Jr, (New York: The Library of America, 2000).

unchangeable characteristic engendered negative emotions discord within the community was an unavoidable consequence. Although no overt conflict occurred between African nations based on skin color prejudice, the acknowledged shaded distinctions could place some members of the community on the fringes and expose them to greater danger. In pre-colonial Congo infant children born with lighter pigment faces were subjected to extreme sun exposure as parents left them in the heat to alter their complexions.[29]

European travelers recoiled at the preference shown by Africans to those of darker skin. White navigators often warned white explorers that "Black Nations ...think so much otherwise of their own condition that they paint the devil white."[30] When Equiano wrote of his early experiences with complexion he echoed the same memories of other captured Africans, and in his words it is evident that there were divisions between African peoples. In fact, they were not 'African' people but people who lived in Africa. As separate as the nations in Europe, residents of Africa fought, married and enslaved one another. Equiano recognized a continued division between himself and other ethnic Africans in London. He was key in garnering support for the Sierra Leone colonial project. The project from the first was an uneasy union between philanthropists who sought to alleviate the burden to the London Poor and the burdens upon the parishes and abolitionists they relied upon for support. Equiano, ever the intermediary, attempted to serve the interests of both sides. The project endured hardship before wind could speak to stern and bow

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[29] Kimberly Jade Norwood, *Color Matters: Skin Tone Bias and the Myth of Post Racial America*, (London: Routledge, 2013), 13-14.
[30] Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color*, 28.

and as the Black Poor were gathered in anticipation of sailing they were cold and starving aboard anchored vessels. Equiano spoke against such ill treatment but for his efforts was maligned and thrown off the transport before it left Britain.[31] On slave ships, the confines of sea travel and the oppression of the quarters stripped away previous distinctions so that those from all over Africa began to form a common African identity during the Middle Passage even as they highlighted distinctions between dark and light skinned men and women ever more sharply.[32] Unity however proved ephemeral. Once Africans reached the first leg of their destination, the sense of uniform identity developed on the ship fractured. Historian Stephanie Smallwood views the slave ship as a place of dark unity. Many strangers came together in "anomalous intimacy" that was tainted by the brutality of their experience. This extreme situation caused people to cling tighter as well as find any means to alleviate some measure of their enslavement.[33] Shipmates formed bonds that held on land and at times they sought each other's company when setting roots or fleeing bondage. The initial desire for familiar companions however did not always last.

When Africans experienced the overwhelming labor expectations of British America some fled. This decision to leave was most often not of a moment of passion but premeditated. The act of running away required planning. Many times slaves fled with members of their African ethnicity rather than other fellow slaves.

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[31] Vincent Caretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 365.
[32] Rediker, *Slave Ship, 283*-285.
[33] Stephanie Smallwood, *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from Africa to American Diaspora*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 101.

Although slaves formed community and shared identity through their experiences on slave ships, it rarely solidified. This communal spirit created among the first generations of transported Africans to North America did not continue among the next generations of enslaved Africans in North America. The community would fracture due to differences in skin color that determined access to the public sphere.

The geography of the American colonies shaped the labor needs of planters. In the northern colonies, without the need for many slaves for laborious agriculture, the type of slavery and work associated with slaves was different than the hard work expected of men and women in the South. The Pennsylvania Abolition Act created a refuge for southern slaves fleeing the confines of slavery in the south.[34] Many came to the Afro-centric Philadelphia neighborhoods where a large population of free blacks resided. In the City of Brotherly Love, as elsewhere, the increased black population found that relationships between free and enslaved remained an obstacle to a cohesive African American community.

Runaway slaves from the south brought trouble with them. Blacks in North America remained vigilant to keep their freedom. The stream of southern slaves brought slave catchers to Philadelphia. The prominent Philadelphia minister, Richard Allen, had to prove his right to freedom, when a slave catcher arrived at his door. Fortunately for the black minister, he was known by Alderman Alexander Todd who could help Allen refute claims that the preacher was a runaway.[35] No

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[34] Richard Newman, Richard S. Newman, "'The Lucky to be born in Pennsylvania': Free Soil, Fugitive Slaves and the Making of Pennsylvania' Anti-Slavery Borderland," *Slavery & Abolition*, 32, no. 3 (2011): 414-415.

[34] Patricia Ann Reid, "Between Slavery and Freedom" (PhD diss., University of Iowa, 2006), 180-181.

black was safe in liberty. The increasing numbers of runaway African slaves to Philadelphia made liberty ever more precarious.

Recently escaped enslaved people made homes next to free blacks of Philadelphia. The community of ethnic Africans made efforts to help runaways assimilate into their section of freedom. The Pennsylvania Abolition Society made up of large numbers of Quakers formed committees to help ease the transition to freedom. Richard Allen and Absalom Jones founded the Free African Society ("FAS") as a non-denomination mutual aid society for the betterment of the African peoples. The FAS assisted Philadelphia's poor blacks by gifting money, when the "necessity not brought upon them by their own imprudence."[36] The behavior of other blacks in the community greatly concerned members of the FAS. The position of free blacks was precarious and any assault to their character could be detrimental. When in 1793 a yellow fever epidemic broke out in Philadelphia, the FAS attempted to use the erroneous belief in black resistance to the disease to advance their standing in society. Many members entered households of whites to help care for the sick unknowingly at risk of their own lives. However, after the outbreak one citizen accused the society of theft. It was an accusation to which Jones and Allen quickly responded. In order to maintain the image of propriety and advance the position of blacks Philadelphian institutions demanded sobriety, literacy and propriety of ethnic Africans in the city. Often recent runaways could not conform to these expectations. They possessed neither the knowledge nor the look of success.

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[35] Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies*, (Duke University Press, 2002), 43-45.

Individuals in the southern plantation fields were often darker skinned. Dark skin and hard labor seemed to whites a perfect combination for enslaved laborers, particularly in tropical climates. In both the British West Indies and West Africa, white Europeans' susceptibility to disease and vulnerability to the tropical sun led them to seek ways to avoid hard labor, and seemingly dark skinned people could withstand the elements making them ideal for work in the sun.[37] Jennifer L. Morgan contends whites' travel narratives are key to understanding the view of dark skin and acceptable expectations of work load. African women's child births seemed less intense, and women returned to work sooner in Africa than in Europe, leaving the illusion of an absent femininity for ethnic African women, thus making them seem more appropriate for demanding work.[38] The early colonists' attempts to use Native Americans for hard labor ended in failure as Indians died under the conditions of slavery while darker skinned ethnic Africans seemed to abide the condition more readily and were as such viewed as appropriate for slavery.[39]

The climate of the southern colonies mimicked regions of Africa more closely than that of northern colonies. The summers were long and humid, and the type of intensive labor and thus demands of slaves were similar such that the Low Country was more a part of the Caribbean and West Indies culture than a part of the

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[36] Catherine Cocks, *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 25-26; Joshua Newton, "Slavery, Sea Power and the State: The Royal Navy and the British West African Settlements, 1748-1756," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 2 (2013), 179-80.
[37] Malcolmson, *Studies in Skin Color*, 205.
[38] Barbara Krauthamer, *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 23.

continental colonies.[40] And for enslaved individuals transported to southern ports their West African roots tended to be deeper. The great influx of peoples from west Africa to the southern ports meant that ethnic Africans were in constant contact with their past whereas in the North such ancestral ties were more quickly diluted with each passing year.[41] The community was further fractured where labor separated those who worked in the fields and house servants. Slave masters believed that lighter skinned ethnic Africans were more delicate and unsuitable for field labor.[42] Philip Morgan suggests that creoles were more malleable to the society with slaves and slave society than other ethnic Africans. These Atlantic creoles were often children of mixed parentage with separate identities from blacks of more direct African ancestry. Thus blacks faced a crisis of identity in which where one was born was often important in determining allegiances.

Exploration created opportunities for men to pursue enlightenment on the world. When challenged by peoples and cultures that failed to submit to their common beliefs these same scientists propelled people of color toward a categorization that remained for hundreds of years. Africans bodies were different.

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[39] Peter A. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920 (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 20; Trevor Burnard and Emma Hart, "Kingston, Jamaica, and Charleston, South Carolina: A New Look at Comparative Urbanization in Plantation Colonial British America", *Journal of Urban History (2013)*, 39, no. 2 pp 214-234.

[40] James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic: Race and Nation in the Early Black Atlantic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 61-62; Philip Morgan, "British Encounters with Africans and African-Americans" in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire circa 1600-1780* edited by Bernard Bailyn and Philip Morgan, (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 1991).

[41] Colleen A. Vasconcellos, *Slavery, Childhood, and Abolition in Jamaica, 1788-1838*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015), 50.

Chapter Two: *Newton in the Body of a Negro*; European construction of race

Science and Race in the Eighteenth-Century

Race is an idea. Most theorists and researchers agree that race is a cultural construct predicated on society's valued interpretation of biological factors such as skin color. Although scholars of Latin American history challenge the intellectual origins of scientific racism, the scholarly consensus adheres to the Enlightenment as germinating racialized thought.[1] The formalization of science as an enlightenment discourse began with the expansion of empires. Natural societies, such as the Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge (1660), The Royal Academy of Sciences (1666), Akademie der Wissenschaften in Berlin (1700), Academia Scientiarum Imperialis in St. Petersburg (1724), and others formed to explore the parameters of knowledge. They categorized information regarding previously unknown lands and peoples and created forums to discuss the natural world.[2]

As science and colonialism intensified so too did the need to categorize people. Skin color became the major marker of classification and thus the ultimate signifier of race. More recent scholarship on science and race reflects changing attitudes about race with a biological uncoupling of race as a measurable characteristic of humans. As Robert Sussman demonstrated, the concept of race as biology comes from the eighteenth-century debates on slavery, colonialism and

[1] Jorge Canizares-Esguerra contends that the foundations for modern racialized categorization began in the Spanish American colonies in the seventeenth-century under the hand of scholars articulating their own place in the world. Jorge Canizares-Esguerra. "Patriotic Astrology and the Invention of Indian and Creole Bodies in Colonial Spanish America, 1600-1650," *AHR*, Vol. 104, no. 1 (1999), 33-68.
1 (1999), 33-68.

citizenship[3] Race and science were creations of a discourse that narrated the rise and fall of national promise and success.[4] The more closely linked a nation's people were to biological superiority the more they could extract from those they deemed inferior.

The long-standing debate among historians as to the origins of racism in the Americas, and whether it derived from economic imperatives of slavery or existed external to the slave system provides more questions than answers.[5] What is apparent is that imperialist agendas during the Age of Exploration meant that encounters with new societies were fraught with tensions as European explorers assessed the potential profits, as well as threats, that could be derived from newly encountered peoples. To explain how these heretofore-unknown peoples fit into the world order, societies looked to naturalists. Naturalists study the ecology of earth and attempt to classify plants animals and humans. These men explored and classified. As men of science traveled, their sense of themselves and their place in God's world developed.[6] According to literary scholar Cristina Malcolmson, the Royal Society turned blackness into a curiosity to be discovered and accounted for.[7] Made up of leading figures in British society, the Royal Society was important in

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[4] Bancel, *et al*, *The Invention of Race,* 1-13, 48-59.

[5] Ira Berlin has made distinctions between slave societies and societies with slaves to evidence that slavery was the driving force toward racism in opposition to earlier scholars, such as Winthrop Jordan, who argued that racism was part of the British cultural imperative due to their isolation from different people. Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro*, 1550-1820, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1968).

[6] However, these men were not merely interested in science endeavors. The Royal Society invested in the Royal African Company ("RAC") from 1682-1696. RAC cargoes included African slaves. In fact, enslaved Africans soon became the largest source of profit for the RAC and thus indirectly funded Royal Society scientific endeavors.

[7] Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color,* 24.

legitimizing scientific theories. The Society used the skin color debate to grab the public's attention and promote the group's understanding how world societies operate.[8] Humans became classified based on development in arts and sciences, and the level of individuals' development was attributed to many factors, but most prominently geographical location and skin color.

Royal Society patrons were fascinated by peoples' varying complexions. As Winthrop Jordon has noted, the appearance of Africans was jolting to British travelers.[9] Origin stories in the Bible seemed absent of such people and men of science being servants of God scrambled to place Africans in proper biblical order. Francis Moore did not know where Africans fit into the familiar narrative and proposed tests to determine their nature.[10] In the seventeenth-century members of the Royal Society made several tentative assertions as to the origins of black Africans. They argued the possibilities of black blood, climate, and texture of skin as resulting in the variances of skin color.[11] Debates in the Royal Society on the importance of skin color did not settle these issues, and debate continued into the next century.[12]

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[8] *Ibid.*, 35.
[9] Jordan, *White over Black*, 243-246.
[10] "[Negroes are] a Race of people who appear to be different from the rest Mankind; their hair being wooly, and their colour black; their noses flat, and their lips large; but whether these are an original race, or whether the difference arises from the climate...is not determined." Francis Moore, "Letter to the Publisher" in *Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa* (London: Edward Cave, 1738), xi-xii.
[11] Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color,* 3.
[12] The Society's interests in the slave trade and their scientific expectations did not always result in a coherent conception of race. Robert Boyle an advocate of slavery dismissed the polygenesis theories espoused by other Royal Society members. Boyle disagreed with the theory of multiple races and instead supported monogenesis. This opposed the biological inferiority theory at the core of polygenesis that was used to justify slavery. Other scholars in the Society supported the Climate theory, which held that skin color was not a product of racial but geographical differences. Malcolmson, *Studies of Skin Color*, 15, 20, 36, 97, 113.

In the eighteenth century Johann Friedrich Blumenbach divided humans into five races.[13] Such groupings prevailed in scientific understanding of human categories even as they were unclenched from the hierarchy that Blumenbach espoused. In Blumenbach's analysis the Caucasian race stood at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the Mongoloid, Malay, and Negroid races, and lastly the American race. Blumenbach expanded on the earlier work of Carl Linnaeus. Linnaeus concentrated his efforts on producing a hierarchy of classifications based on individuals' continent of residence and skin color.[14] His work was seen as highly credible due to its grounding in travel and observation; thus it was seen in this era of Enlightenment as 'objective' and 'scientific'. Linnaeus divided humanity into Americanus, Asiaticus, Africanus, and Europeaeus. His ideas were followed by French naturalist Georges Leclerc, Comte de Buffon. Buffon supported the view that Europeans were the 'genuine color of mankind' and those not exhibiting European physical characteristics were unnatural.

In 1493, Pope Alexander VI issued a papal bull dividing the world's unexplored territory between the Catholic nations of Spain and Portugal. Spain interpreted the "command ... in virtue of holy obedience that, employing all due diligence in the premises, as you also promise ... should appoint to the aforesaid mainlands and islands worthy, God-fearing, learned, skilled, and experienced men, in order to instruct the aforesaid inhabitants and residents in the Catholic faith and train them in good morals," as an expansive directive to assert political authority

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[13] William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in American, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 10-11.
[14] Carl Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae* (Charleston: Nabu Press, 1735), 24.

over indigenous peoples.[15] To European naturalists, Africans' ignorance of God and Jesus gave ethnic Africans an outsider status as much as their dark skin. Authors creating fictional encounters for European readers endeavored to breathe life into these ideas. For example, Shakespeare's Othello, despite his wealth and intelligence, is depicted as falling prey to the baseness of his Moor ancestry.[16]

Explicit in this narrative was the idea that Africans were uncivilized and inherently dangerous. This view is exemplified by Lavater's eight-character eighteenth century image (Appendix, Figure Four) of the physiognomy of the world's races. The expanding British Empire led men of science to search for ways to differentiate British people from peoples encountered in conquered overseas territories. In the figure from Lavater, the most prominent and higher being is first while the African is placed last. Like Native Americans, Africans were of concern but deemed ultimately in the course of human existence to be of little importance. The information derived from use of physiognomy was hardly accurate, yet it was utilized as a way to suggest African inferiority using facial angles that made Africans appear more ape-like than man-like.[17]

Although Africans were not unknown throughout Europe, Enlightenment scientists searched for ways to deny the abilities of higher reasoning and art in peoples that did not resemble themselves. They chose to depict African people as more savage than Europeans. Albert Eckhout's seventeenth-century image

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[15] Peter O. Koch, *To the Ends of the Earth: The Age of European Explorers* (New York: McFarland, 2003), 115-117.

[16] William Shakespeare, "The Tragedy of Othello: the Moor of Venice" in *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, edited by Stanley Wells (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[17] Lucy Hartley, *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70-71.

(Appendix, Figure Three) depicts emissaries to the Netherlands with the goods of their kingdom. The image suggests Europeans expected Africans to be subservient and perpetuated this in visual images, but this not in fact a true represntation of European-African relations of the period (Appendix, Figure Five).[18]

European expectations of African bodies were based on speculative performance. African slavery itself was a type of racialized performance. Katrina D. Thompson argues that white Europeans dilenated the roles of ethnic Africans as one of servitude and the form was entertainment. Although European audience members consumed the art they also derided the performers. Artistic expression in dance and song performed and created by black artitists evoked a negative response.[19] A white vision of blacks was imprinted on the black body through legal manuevers that sought to keep blacks in a marked subservient role. Such legal limits included sumptury laws restricting free blacks from wearing the clothing of the more affluent whites and slave codes which defined the type of materials enslaved ethnic Africans could don. In London enslaved servants were expected to wear livery that displayed their ownership and Africanness, while in the Americas coarse ozenbrig cloth became a demarcation of a bondsman.[20] The costumes of slavery were unfashionable, poorly and cheaply made. In this way blackness was a type of

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[18] Randy J. Sparks, in *Where the Negroes are Masters*, discusses the complicated interactions between Africans on Africa's west coast and other African peoples and the competitive advantage West Africans enjoyed over Europeans due to their connections with other nations in Africa.
[19] Katrina D. Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 19, 194.
[20] Gretchen Gerzina, *Black London: Life Before Emancipation*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 13; Andrea Feeser, *Red, White, and Black Make Blue: Indigo in the Fabric of Colonial South Carolina Life*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 32; and Charles R. Foy, "Seeking Freedom in the Atlantic, 1713-1783," *Early American Studies* 4, no. 1 (Spring, 2006), 59.

performance conducted through labor and culture of ethnic Africans. In the nineteenth century coerced black musical performance was used by whites to justify slavery. As Entman and Rojecki demonstrate in *Black Image in the White Mind,* this implied hierachy of races in which blacks are subservient to whites continues into the present.[21] The genesis of such views can be seen in the eighteenth century when slave owners objectified black bodies, employing the auction block as a method to reinforce racial classifications.[22] Eighteenth-century abolitionists reversed this theatrical spectacale of race as a means to critique the slave trade. Thus, when Alexander Falconridge, an eighteenth century slave ship surgeon, wrote a narrative of his time aboard slaving vessels, abolitionists used his harrowing tales to support their early efforts to end the slave trade. Falconridge described the scramble of the sale of slaves as mimicking markets for pigs and cattle. "Brutal purchasers rushed upon and seized them" from their families.[23] In the eighteenth century this stage was propped by military and sexual performance.

In military and sexual spectacles, the skin color of slaves greatly influenced the perceived suitability for particular roles in society. In military and war endeavours the black body symbolized a propensity for agressiveness that could be utilized and harnessed to defend Europan settlements from Native American

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[21] Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki, *The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
[22] Contemporary artists such as Nona Faustine have engaged in performance art that vividly demonstrates the role of the auction block as a tool of reinforcing racial hierarchies. Jonathan Jones, "The Scars of America: why an artist is taking a stand at slavery sites," *Guardian*, http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2015/aug/05/the-scars-of-america-nude-artist-slavery-sites-nona-faustine (accessed March 28, 2016).
[23] Alexander Falconridge, *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (London: J Phillips, 1788), 35.

invasion. As previously noted, slave insurrections often relied upon newly arrived ethnic Africans for the core of the resistance. Many of these men of arms had little contact with white Europeans beyond the middle passage and their arrival on colonial shores. They were likely darker skinned. This signified a perceived compatibility with equating dark skin with combative propensity.[24] African peoples from nations such as the Coromantees of the Gold Coast gained a reputation as warlike through involvement in slave uprisings. The reverred leader of the First Jamaican Maroon War, Cudjoe, claimed Coromantee ancestry.[25] He did not rely on Europeans classification and instead linked his military success with a heritage of fierce warriors.

European naturalists sought to categorize people into immovable categories of race based on skin color. However nature was not willing to submit. Explorers did not only 'discover' those of darker skin but also albinos and Africans with skin conditions, such as vitiligo. The discovery of these peoples complicated the theories of origins, mongenoism and polygenesis.[26] Africans that were effectively 'turning white' posed problems to efforts of classification and were often remarked upon by white commentators.[27] In 1752 when the slave of Colonel Mason gave birth to twins

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[24] The sexualized spectacle will be fully discussed in Chapter Three.

[25] Mildred M Chang, "The Jamaican Accompong Maroons: Continuities and Transformations," (Ph. d diss., State University of New York at Albany, 2007), 37.

[26] Monogenesis is the theory that human origin is singular while polygenesis posits that there are multiple origins.

[27] Even in the twenty-first century peoples with albinism are persecuted in Tanzania and other parts of Africa. Children and adults are subjected to violent attacks for their body parts. Their flesh is then used by witchdoctors to perform rituals for luck and medicine. Benjamin Radford, "Albino Toddler in Africa killed for Witchcraft," *Discovery Magazine* (March 2, 2015) accessed March 28, 2016, http://news.discovery.com/human/psychology/albino-toddler-in-africa-killed-for-witchcraft-150302.htm; Lindsey Bever, "Where albino body parts fetch big money albinos still butchered," *Washington Post*, (March 13, 2015), http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-

in Virginia her master was amazed and astounded that the children born of one mother differed so much in appearance that an observer detailed a "most satisfactory account.. mention[ed] with wonder."[28] That a woman slave of African descent could give life to a white child was beyond the comprehension of many whites. Whites' struggle with understanding the appropriate place of mixed race children was not limited to British settlers of North America. Twins born with different racial markers were hardly the only case that bewildered eighteenth-century contemporaries. Britons in the West Indies as well as in the British Isles also struggled to arrive at a satisfactory answer to how to treat individuals such as Amela Newsham, a light-skinned "Negress," who grew to adulthood as a curiosity in white society and separate from blacks.[29] Newsham's searing spotlight would be more intense than that placed upon the Mason slave twins. The twin children born to Colonel Mason's slave would similarly be viewed by whites with curiosity. Their lives unlike Newsham would be lived in the everyday ordinary. By appearing to be of one world but forced to inhabit another, their relationship with society, family and they would be shaped by their mixed-race heritage and their skin color.

When the two skin colors, black and white, were presented on one body scientists felt compelled to search for answers to explain such ocurrences (Appendix, Figure Six) . German naturalists Johann Friedrich Blumenbach

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mix/wp/2015/03/13/how-tanzanias-upcoming-election-could-put-albinos-at-risk-for-attack/ (accessed March 28, 2016).

[28] Mercer, "From the Gentleman's Magazine, for June, 1752, A Letter from Virginia", *New York Gazette*, page 1.

[29] *The White Negro Girl, Published London ca. 1762*, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. Although not historically accurate in all its aspects, the movie *Belle* (2013), about the mixed-race niece of Lord Mansfield, does depict well the ambiguous state of a mixed-race individual in eighteenth-century white elite British society.

hypothesized that skin color resulted from geography and nutrition. Thus pigment was environmental and could be reversed.[30] Ethnic Africans with vitiligo or albinism seemed to buttress such theories. Scientific fascination turned to public fascination feeding a desire to 'uncover' these people. They were allowed very little modesty, as shown by the toddler and her mother in the image of Madeline of Martinique, where the child is depicted largely uncovered to show the extent of vitiligo he suffered from (Appendix, Image 6). In an age in which Britons clung to conventions of purity this further barbarized Africans and placed them in positions on the fringes of British Atlantic society.[31]

Science categorized people of the world and influenced how Europeans viewed themselves in relation to others. The emerging philosophy of European superioity did not remain unchallenged. When David Hume, wrote "I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all other species of men to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was any civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent in action or speculation," he expressed thoughts debated by other scholars. The German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder responded to Hume and Buffon that whiteness is not the natural condition for humanity.[32] Herder's views did not become the common scientific reasoning until centuries later. Hume and his intellectual brethren assigned an otherness to

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[30] William Ragan Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific attitudes toward race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 29.
[31] Unlike the male child in a similar image the young child pictured with her mother displays her body completely. Her genitals are exposed. She displays at a very early age her availability for sexual transgressions.
[32] Hans Alder, "Johann Gottfried Herder's Concept of Humanity," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* Vol. 23 (1994), 55-74.

black bodies. They did so not only because of their unfamiliarity with darker skinned peoples but also because of an intellectual need to simplify humanity. The presence of ethnic Africans and Native Americans complicated the past history of the world for Europeans as well (particularly for Englishmen) as making the future more uncertain. Thus in their present they sought to diminish the role of 'others' by suggesting that they did not have the intellectual capacity to contribute to the advancement of civilization and needed not be included in the past, present, or future.

Ideas of racial intellectual inferiority did not go unchallenged. American abolitionists used the accomplishments of inventor Benjamin Banneker to disprove Hume. James McHenry, signer of the American constitution, wrote of Benjamin Banneker that; "I consider this negro as a fresh proof that the powers of the mind are disconnected with the colour of the skin, or, in other words, a striking contradiction to Mr. Hume's doctrine that 'the negroes are naturally inferior to whites, and unsusceptible of attainments in the arts and sciences'."[33] Benjamin Banneker (1731-1805) was a free black in Maryland. He is noted for his contributions to science, surveying the original District of Columbia, as well as for

[33] James C McHenry to Messrs Goddard and Angel, Baltimore: August 20, 1791. "A letter from Mr. James McHenry, to messrs. Goddard and Angel, containing particulars respecting Benjamin Banneker, a free negro" in *The American Museum, or Universal Magazine (September 1792)* (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey): 185–187. The relationship between Jefferson and Banneker was highly fractious. Jefferson adhered to the ideology of black inferiority despite being faced with the highly intelligent and articulate Banneker. Jefferson seemed a likely ally but despite his relationship on his plantation with women of color he could not bring himself to acknowledge Banneker's abilities.

his correspondence with Thomas Jefferson. Banneker published political discourse against slavery in his Almanac that also contained the works of Phillis Wheatley.[34]

Despite dissenters such as McHenry, race became the primary mode of human classification employed by scientists and darkness of skin became a mark of intellectual inferiority. The science of race continued to capture the discourse on knowledge of individuals and groups. Human desire created challenges to these classifications. At the end of the eighteenth-century miscegenation and skin conditions remained unsettled racial categories. Ethnic Africans also responded to these classifications by the means at their disposal.

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[34] Jefferson's relationship with Banneker was highly contentious and illustrative of the president's unwillingness, like many slave owners, to accept the humanity and intellectual abilities of enslaved Africans. Of course, as Annette Gordon-Read has demonstrated, Jefferson's hostility towards assertions of blacks' intellectual capabilities did not keep the Virginian from having a long-term intimate relationship with one of his slaves, Sally Hemmings.

Chapter Three: Slave Codes And Identity

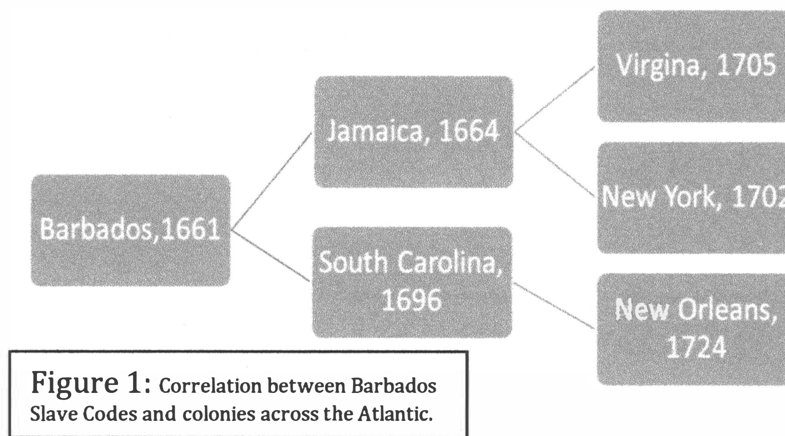

Figure 1: Correlation between Barbados Slave Codes and colonies across the Atlantic.

Science and British culture conspired against ethnic Africans to hinder their access to full liberty in the Atlantic. Colonizers considered slavery necessary for the successful establishment and maintenance of Atlantic empires.[35] Although British settlers first utilized the labor of Native Americans or European indentured servants, ultimately they found enslaved Africans more practical as a source of needed labor. To maintain a labor source, race construction was used; through denying equal humanity to dark skinned people, Europeans insured that their labor supply was sustained.

The construction of race by Britons may have derived from scientific and cultural sources, but the law and courts were instrumental in creating boundaries for blacks and whites. Legal codes were not only responsible for constructing race, they also caused splinters in the platform of communal development by bestowing

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[35] Christopher Leslie Brown, "Empire Without Slaves: British Concepts of Emancipation in the Age of the American Revolution," *WMQ*, 3rd Series, LVI, no. 2 (1999), 273-306.

rights and privileges to some in the black community based on skin color. This created a separate 'race' and limited the bonds within the African diaspora community, as some members faced increasing restrictions to liberty while others utilized connections to white society via skin color to develop a less restrictive space or to escape the ethnic African community completely. In court testimony, manumission regulations, and marriage decisions, skin color hampered some ethnic Africans more than others.[36] Characterizations of race incentivized black creation of alternate identities. The continued reliance on black labor challenged the rapidly forming ideas about race, skin color and identity.

Over time the need for labor intensified the reliance on slaves in the British colonies in the Americas. The settlement of Barbados illustrates this well. Historian Richard Dunn notes that the sugar production was a back-breaking endeavor that poorer whites avoided.[37] Although some poor whites arrived to work as overseers for planter elites, the population changed and by 1660 the numbers of ethnic Africans and whites were nearly equal in Barbados.[38] It is no coincidence that in 1661 Barbados established provisions for the "protection of [slaves] as we do men's other goods and Chattels." Characterizing Africans as "brutish," the Barbadian slave code provided that the enslaved

> "Deserve not, for the baseness of their condition, to be tried by the legal trial of twelve men of their peers, as the subjects of England are. And it is further

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[36] Linda Sturtz, "Mary Rose: White African Jamaican Woman?," in *Gendering the African Diaspora:. Women, Culture, and Historical Change in the Caribbean and Nigerian Hinterland*, edited by Judith Ann Marie Byfield, LaRay Denzer and Anthea Morrison (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 59-88.
[37] Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University North Carolina Press, 1972), 55.
[38] *Ibid.*

enacted and ordained that if any Negro or other slave under punishment by his master unfortunately shall suffer in life or member, which seldom happens, no person whatsoever shall be liable to any fine."[39]

Enslaved ethnic Africans became little more than instruments for planter wealth. The Barbados slave code denoted a distinction between Negro and other slaves and in doing so demonstrates a clear privileging in the British mindset of lighter skinned individuals over black Africans who were viewed as somehow 'lesser.' Freedmen in Barbados policed the same color line to which slave codes alluded. To avoid the legal ramifications of their African ancestry, some ethnic Africans with lighter complexion in Barbados and across the Atlantic self-isolated themselves from others of African ancestry.[40]

Free ethnic Africans gained rights and privileges above those of African slaves, but these liberties were considerably less substantial than those of whites. The ambiguity of light skinned free blacks' racial status complicated their social status. Historian Jerome Handler has demonstrated that Barbadian freedmen were part of a political collective intent on avoiding association with enslaved Africans.[41] Freedmen petitioned for privileges in courts.[42] Their drive for civil rights were not concerned with the liberties of all ethnic Africans but only for that of freedmen. The same distinctions of class that planter elites used to separate themselves from poor blacks were employed by free blacks in separating themselves from African slaves.

[39] "An Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes," Barbados 1661 (The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom, CO 30/2/16–26), 25–8, 32–3, cited in *Slavery*, ed. By Stanley Engerman, Seymour Drescher, and Robert Paquette (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 105-113.
[40] Emily Clark, *The Strange History of the American Quadroon: Free Women of Color in the Revolutionary Atlantic World* (Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 51, 102,128.
[41] Jerome Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* (University of the West Indies Press, 2009), 107, 217.
[42] *Ibid.*

Gradations of skin color made distinguishing between free blacks and other ethnic Africans more precise and at the same time undermined communal cohesion among blacks.

The Barbados slave code provided a model for black/white relations across the Atlantic. Starting with Jamaica a number of other British colonies adapted the regulations when implementing their own slave codes (Figure 1).[43] Jamaica however did not have the same demographic problems as Barbados. There was no parity between black and white inhabitants of Jamaica and a special 'as if white status' was bestowed upon ethnic Africans petitioning courts for privileges not available to other blacks.[44] A designation of 'as if white' predicated on the social connections of free blacks. In "Mary Rose: White African Jamaican Woman?," Linda Sturtz considered the role of skin color in the Atlantic as pushing the line between whiteness and blackness. Sturtz demonstrates that ethnic Africans negotiated different degrees of whiteness and thus blackness. Black identity through African ancestry did not in some derail class privilege. Racial identity was created and contested through the legal process. This avenue toward more expansive opportunities was only available to those who could appear 'as if white' in behavior, associations, and skin color. Within black communities and due to the diminishing numbers of whites in Jamaican society, some lighter skinned free ethnic Africans

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[43] Christopher Tomlins, *Freedom Bound: Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 430.
[44] Linda Sturtz, "Mary Rose: White African Jamaican Woman?," *64.*

were able to own land, operate businesses and participate in political and economic roles denied to blacks.[45]

Jamaica's whites' diminishing numbers led them to grant liberties to enslaved blacks not available elsewhere in the British colonies. In contrast, demographics shifted in southern colonies of British North America to reveal a more Afrocentric environment. The threat to their authority and underlining challenges to safety caused southern whites to continue limiting liberties for ethnic Africans. In 1696 South Carolina enacted a set of legal mandates similar to and based upon Barbados slave codes. Slaves were defined as property, under the control of their masters. By 1710 South Carolina faced a demographic shift to a more Afrocentric colony and the arming of slaves to defend the colony from Native Americans threatened white planter elites. After the Stono Rebellion in 1739, the need to control enslaved Africans became of greater urgency and a new 'Act for the Better ordering and governing of Negroes and other Slaves in this Province' was enacted the following year.

Although this act extended to 'negroes Indians, mulatos, or mestizos,' it still left other racially ambiguous peoples room to extract privileges typically denied to blacks. South Carolinian children of white fathers and enslaved mothers had complex relationships with other blacks as well as with whites. Children of these unions were manumitted more frequently. Once freed, they would often rely upon their connections to whites to secure their place in society. This new 'colored' class excluded other free blacks based on skin color and in doing so separated themselves

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[45] Ibid.

from the larger black community. Darker skinned blacks lived outside this new ethnic African power elite. The lighter skinned blacks could own slaves and identified economically and politically more closely with white elites, leaving darker skinned ethnic Africans in the role of perpetual underlings.[46]

When free blacks owned slaves, they were viewed as testimonials to the necessity and righteousness of slavery. Free blacks were both reviled and at the same time appreciated by colonial whites. For example, Charlestonian Edwin C. Holland viewed mulattoes in the city who owned slaves as watchers of and keepers of the institution of slavery.[47] Slave ownership by mulattoes was thought to align the interests of these ethnic Africans more closely with whites in regards to the enslaved. To reinforce this alignment, Black slave masters who undermined slavery by aiding fugitive slaves were subject to property confiscation. With many black masters purchasing family members, overt condemnation of slavery by them was unlikely.[48] Mulattoes' ownership of other ethnic Africans made clear the distinction between free and enslaved colored. This distinction remained right up to the abolition of slavery as mulattoes continued to claim ownership of darker skinned ethnic Africans.

At the apex of the Civil War, William Ellison, a free ethnic African in South Carolina with a sprawling family, owned several enslaved Africans.[49] Ellison firmly supported the Confederate cause. He raised crops to feed soldiers and encouraged

[46] Larry Koger, *Black Slave-owners: Free Black Slave Masters in South Carolina, 1790-1860* (Jefferson: University Carolina Press, 1985), 168, 171.
[47] Koger, *Black Slave-owners*,3
[48] Koger, *Black Slave-owners*, 3
[49] Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York: W W Norton Press, 1986), 113-114.

his sons, turned away due to their color, to fight and die for the South.[50] The Ellison family interests held other ethnic Africans as property. In doing so the family sought to maintain their wealth and status. Where one group of individuals could lay claim to privileges that excluded others, resentment was not unheard of.

The fracturing between groups that had similar political and economic interests can be clearly seen in Bacon's Rebellion (1676) in Virginia. When Nathaniel Bacon formed a coalition of men, he drew from the population of enslaved Africans and poor whites who experienced degradation and economic alienation at the hands of white planter elites. These men pooled their collective anger to challenge the authority of wealthy men. However, after the rebellion, white poor were convinced their interests more closely resembled white elites, and that race, and not economic issues, instilled their loyalty. Even though their commonalties were more adapted to the poor underclass, they more closely identified themselves as white.[51]

Planters created and more actively enforced slave codes in the aftermath of Bacon's Rebellion. White elites' insistence that poor whites shared more commonalities with them than with poor ethnic Africans further separated whites and blacks on all levels of socio-economic status. This discord was not limited to black/white relations. Slave codes also created disunity between ethnic Africans. The slave codes gave masters absolute control over the lives of enslaved Africans. Masters and their overseers were allowed to discipline their African slaves with

[50] Koger, Black Slave-owners, 189-191.
[51] Morgan, *American Freedom, American Slavery*, 130, 314-315.

little oversight by judicial authorities to punish them as they saw fit.[52] The racial demographics of Jamaica made whites uncomfortable and anxious. This resulted in overseers, such as Thomas Thistlewood, and many a master, to engage in brutal acts of oppression such as extensive whippings, mutilation and in extreme cases, murder.[53] In a circular fashion, whites adopted a regime of extreme brutality to exert authority over enslaved Africans that reinforced their anxieties about blacks and led to further violence against them.

Thomas Thistlewood's abuses against the enslaved under his authority were, even in his time, considered excessive. His diary chronicles nearly four thousand acts of sexual coercion with black slaves.[54] In Jamaica enslaved ethnic Africans fled the control of abusive masters like Thistlewood and formed communities in the wilds often coming in conflict with their former masters. The fracturing within the black community in Jamaica and other British colonies was heightened by the role of such maroons. Maroons lived separately from enslaved Africans and managed to develop a vibrant community. They launched successful guerilla attacks against the colonial authority. Despite this for decades they remained on the margins of the larger black communities.[55]

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[52] Esther Copley, *A History of Slavery and its Abolition,*(New York: Houlston & Stoneman, 1839), 35.
[53] Even though masters could claim absolute authority over the lives of the enslaved, they could not always freely end their lives. In some colonies slaves had limited powers to challenge masters' authority to harm them. Although Louisiana's 1724 Code Noir allowed masters to place enslaved Africans in irons and beat them with rods or ropes it also directed criminal prosecutions against masters who killed or mutilated their property and punished them according to the atrocity of the crime. Alice Moore Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana" in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color* (Louisiana State University, 200), 3-41.
[54] Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in Anglo-Jamaican World* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 28, 156.
[55] Richard Price, Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1996), 18, 146.

Runaway slaves who fled to maroon communities in search of liberty did not always obtain freedom. In 1735 a maroon community refused entry to a group of runaways. The leader feared the conduct of the newcomers might have provoked whites in the area and that the drama of the runaways' escape posed a threat to his authority. Although Jamaican maroon communities were a symbol of what freedom could mean, the threat of re-enslavement was two-way. Maroon communities welcoming runaways remained aware of the possibility of spies among the refugees. Some white planters had enslaved Africans pose as fugitives to spy on maroons. The individuals involved in signing the Treaty in 1739-40 that marked the end of the First Maroon War maintained their freedom at the expense of those who remained enslaved. As part of the treaty maroons were expected to help catch runaways, and some participated in the slave trade itself.[56] Thus, while maroons in appearance were of the similar origins to other ethnic Africans on the island, their close ties with the distribution, utilization, and exploitation of the Jamaica's slave system made maroons a separate and different community.

Before the Treaty, as the war and conflict raged, maroons strove to maintain their anonymity in fear of retaliation for the loved ones left on plantations.[57] Concealment may have facilitated their survival, but it also ensured that their interactions with other ethnic Africans would be fraught with anxieties on both sides.[58] British colonial authorities viewed maroons as a threat to the social order,

[56] Richard Price, *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Baltimore: John Hopkijns University JHU Press, 1996), 22.
[57] Richard Price, *Maroon Societies*, 282.
[58] Richard Price, *Maroon Societies*, 5-6.

and some free blacks such as Francis Williams and his father John would likely have viewed the maroons in the same manner. The anxiety that plagued slave societies led to restrictive legislation which that sought to curtail the unsupervised interaction of ethnic Africans. At the same time maroons' agitation, and freedmen's assertion of freedom made interactions between the two groups difficult and infrequent.

Maroons were connected to free Jamaican blacks by virtue of a shared African ancestry. Their presence and resistance, however, created an atmosphere of anxiety in a time already fraught with instability for free blacks. After the first Maroon War and subsequent treaty, maroons were expected to settle amongst the community of free blacks, but separate culture and identities prevented a cohesive community from flourishing.[59] As free ethnic Africans faced their own disagreements with local authority maroons' conflicts seemed more often to culminate in violent clashes. Land disputes between the Jamaican government and maroon communities led to the Second Maroon War in 1795-1796.[60] These conflicts between enslaved ethnic Africans and white masters impacted the freedoms of free ethnic Africans.

The increasingly imbalanced demographics in plantation slave societies during the eighteenth century led to anxiety among whites about the intentions of

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[59] Mildred M Chang, "The Jamaican Accompong Maroons: Continuities and Transformations," Ph. d. diss., State University of New York at Albany, 2007, 75.
[60] Chang, "The Jamaican Accompong Maroons," 75.

ethnic Africans under slave regimes.[61] Free blacks posed a threat to white planters' expectations of black servitude. As planters fended off the demands of maroons and balance their relations with free blacks, the threat of further slave uprisings harshened their dealings with maroons and freemen and women. In Jamaica whites expected maroons and enslaved to inform on one another for profit and privileges, something that was directly incorporated in treaties with maroons.[62] This kept ethnic Africans divided into separate communities. Similar divisions occurred in other British colonies. In South Carolina after the Stono Rebellion of 1739, colonial authorities enacted regulations to limit the numbers of free blacks. An 1806 law demanded that all emancipated ethnic Africans leave the colony.[63] Across the Atlantic, slave codes targeted free blacks.

Slave codes designed to limit black access to public spaces were regularly enacted in British colonies. Virginia was the first British North American colony to enact a comprehensive slave code. Its 1705 regulations prevented enslaved Africans from bearing arms without a directive from their master and provided for pardons for any master who murdered a slave in the process of correcting their behavior. The codes also included provisions to entice the capture of runaway slaves

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[61] Darold D Wax, "'The Great Risque We Run': The Aftermath of Slave Rebellion at Stono, South Carolina, 1739-1745," *Journal of Negro History*, 67. no 2(1982)136-147, 137.
[62] Olivia W de Groot, "A Comparison between the History of Maroon Communities in Suriname and Jamaica" in *Out of the House of Bondage: Runaways, Resistance and Marronage in Africa and the New World*, ed., Gad Heuman (New York, Routledge, 2013), 178.
[63] James Oliver Horton and Lois E Horton, *Slavery and the Making of America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 91. Other colonies in southern North America enacted similar statutes.

by providing rewards. Most importantly, these laws provided that slavery was a condition inherited through the mother.[64]

Slave codes created and reinforced a position of inferiority for most ethnic Africans. In northern colonies, eighteenth-century slave codes were quite harsh and contained provisions in which African-born enslaved peoples were assumed to be more likely to engage in violent acts of resistance. To give just one example, New York had a long history with slavery. In the eighteenth century New York City slaves comprised almost twenty percent of the city's population. This sizable black population resulted in slave codes that were first enacted in 1702, with more expansive regulations after the New York Slave Revolt of 1712 and the alleged Slave Insurrection of 1741. A 1737 regulation provided that no "Negro, Mullato or Indian Slave, shall appear in the Streets of this City, above an hour after Sun-set without a candle and Lanthorn, on penalty of being Whipt at the Publick Whipping Post."[65] While Dutch slave laws in the seventeenth century regulated the treatment of slaves by their masters, under British control the life of the enslaved in New York became increasingly harsher. The New York Common Council passed laws prohibiting the sale of strong liquors to ethnic Africans, the assemblage of blacks, and denied them certain employment in favor of the white poor.[66]

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[64] William Waller Hening, "Virginia Slave Codes Regulating Slavery and Servitude (1642-1705)" in *American Perspectives Readings in American History, Volume 1*, (New York: Pearson Publishing, 2008), 108-129, 112. Virginia subsequently took steps to both limit free blacks' rights and to expel them from the state. Eva Shepard Wolf, *Almost Free: A Story About Family and Race in Antebellum Virginia* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 53-77.

[65] *Law and Ordinances of the Mayor, Recorder, Alderman, and Commonalty of the City of Albany* (Albany: Alexander and James Robertson, 1773), 37.

[66] *Ibid.*, 52.

By 1702 slave laws in New York resembled that of the West Indies. Slaves could not gather in groups over three on threat of the lash, and masters could punish slaves for what so ever infraction they deemed and met out punishment.[67] New York contained the largest concentrations of enslaved Africans in the north in the mid-eighteenth century.[68] Similar to Virginia prior to Bacon's Rebellion, free blacks, enslaved Africans and poor whites mingled in the city and their interactions sparked anxiety among white elites. Following the 1712 slave insurrection, New York whites were on edge about the propensity of African-born slaves to revolt. In 1712 "An Act for the suppressing and punishing the conspiracy and insurrection of Negroes and other Slaves" labeled blacks as "an idle slothfull people" and prohibited them from owning real property. In addition, the cost of freedom increased for masters. Manumissions required the posting of a £200 bond for each freed slave.[69] In 1730 additional acts made it illegal for three or more enslaved individuals to meet at any time that was not in completion of their duties and the enslaved were also prohibited from being in the streets after dark.[70] These regulations were intended to halt any uprising of ethnic Africans in the city, but such restrictions did not curtail anxiety in the white community.

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[67] An Act for the Regulating of Slaves, Statute, (1702), New York in *The Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution, v. 1.*, pp. 519-521, E.B. O'Callaghan, ed. (1851*)*; and *The Documentary History of the State of New-York. Albany,* (New York: Charles Van Benthysen), 146.
[68] Leslie M Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 29.
[69]Provincial Assembly, "An Act for the suppressing and punishing the conspiracy and insurrection of Negroes and other Slaves (New York, 1712) in *New York Slave Laws: Colonial Period,* http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/negroplot/slavelaws.html (accessed March 28, 2016).
[70] Provincial Assembly, "An Act for the more effectual preventing and punishing the conspiracy and insurrection of negro and other slaves and for better regulating them" ["Montgomerie's Act"] (New York, 1730) in New York Slave Laws: Colonial Period, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/negroplot/slavelaws.html (accessed March 28, 2016). 5, 2015).http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/negroplot/slavelaws.html.

In 1741, free blacks, poor whites and slaves were accused of plotting to murder whites and take control of the colony.[71] The accused co-conspirators were painted with the darkest intentions and character. One of the first enslaved Africans arrested in the New York Conspiracy of 1741 was Ceaser who shared lodging with a "Newfoundland Irish beauty, a young woman about one or two and twenty…she was a person of infamous character, a notorious prostitute, and also of the worst sort a prostitute to negroes," Peggy Kerry.[72] Such mingling of the poorer classes were blamed for the uprising.[73]

Despite the fear of black-white unions in New York, free blacks gravitated toward northern cities. The organizations and communities they formed laid foundation for African American community and disunity whether northern or southern based. In late eighteenth-century South Carolina, there existed a *de facto* intra-racial color line between free mulattos and free blacks.[74] Freedoms, security and economic prosperity were connected to a spectrum of skin color. And men formed separate institutions meant to create opportunities for members of their own communities. Leading men were often lighter skinned. The Charleston Brown Fellowship Society, made up of free mulatto men, excluded darker members of the

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[71] Leslie M Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*. 24, 43.
[72] Daniel Horsmanden, *The New York Conspiracy, Or A History of the Negro Plot, with the Journal of the Proceedings Against the Conspirators at New York in the Years 1741-2. Together with Several Interesting Tables, Containing the Names of the White and Black Persons Arrested on Account of the Conspiracy, the Times of Their Trials, Their Sentences, Their Executions by Burning and Hanging, Names of Those Transported, and Those Discharged. With a Variety of Other Useful and Highly Interesting Matter* (New York: Southwick & Pelsue, 1810), 16.
[73] Jill Lepore, *New York Burning: Liberty, Slavery and Conspiracy in Eighteenth Century Manhattan* (New York: Vantage, 2006), xvi, 13.
[74] Michael P. Johnson, James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), 212.

community.[75] Many were likely connected to benefactors from white society by birth or were bestowed authority through their connections to white society, suggesting that skin color was not only a means to distinguish white from black but worked on a continuum of authority.

The Virginian slave codes of 1705 transformed the connection between labor and identity for ethnic Africans. They once could move from indentured servitude to being free people of color, under the new laws the legal definition of their labor was forever linked to their skin color. Labor without pay was no longer temporary for ethnic Africans. The act mimicked the Barbadian and other colonial slave codes in its expansion of cruelty toward enslaved Africans. Masters were allowed to beat and brand or kill slaves without repercussions.[76] Although a 1691 statute banned intermarriage between a whites and ethnic Africans for which offenders were banished from the colony, in Barbados, children were in fact born to mixed race parents. Similarly, in 1785, The Virginia General Assembly enacted legislation defining Negro and mulatto. All persons "whose grandfathers or grandmothers anyone is or shall have been a Negro, although all his other progenitors, except that descending from the Negro shall have been white persons, shall be deemed a mulatto, and so every person who shall have one-fourth or more Negro blood shall

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[75] Johnson and Roark, *Black Masters*, 212. The Charleston Brown Fellowship Society organized in 1790 to provide aid to peoples often denied benefits by white society. The Charleston society core ideology held an elitist view of lighter skin and actively policed the line between light skinned mulattoes that comprised their society and other ethnic Africans of darker complexions. See, Cynthia M Kennedy, *Braided Relations, Entwined Lives: The Women of Charleston's Urban Slave Society*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 92; Michael P. Johnson and James L. Roark, *Black Masters: A Free Family of Color in the Old South*, (New York: WW Norton Press, 1986), 212.
[76] An Act Concerning Servants and Slaves (1705), in *Statues at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619, Vol. 3, (Philadelphia: Thomas Desilver, 1823)* ed. William Waller Henning, 447-62.

in like manner be deemed a mulatto."[77] As in many other British colonies Virginian free blacks, despite their generally lighter skin color, were viewed as alien and undesirable. Although they secured a quasi-freedom, they could not find the same toehold that other racially ambiguous ethnic Africans found.[78] Free blacks in Virginia were viewed as disruptive to the social order and any rights or privileges bestowed upon them might chip away at the contained illusion of white superiority. As Eve Sheppard Wolf demonstrates, some free Virginian blacks went to extraordinary lengths to maintain their economic status while remaining non-threatening to whites in their sphere. Some ignored the plight of enslaved blacks and actively sought to limit their access to liberty.[79]

The tension centered on skin color created through legal positioning was particularly visible in New Orleans. In 1724 under the *Code Noir*, enslaved Africans' legal position was officially suppressed in French North American colonies. The provisions specified the place and privileges of manumitted slaves and enslaved Africans but made no mention of free persons of color.[80] In this manner the *Code Noir* defined separate categories for ethnic Africans and allowed free blacks, gens de colour, to shape their own identities. *Gens de colour* emphatically announced a divide between themselves and other ethnic Africans. They translated their lighter

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[77] Chapter LXXVIII, Virginia General Assembly, (1785), *Black Laws of Virginia in Friends of the Thomas Balch Library*, http://www.balchfriends.org/Glimpse/BlackLawsofVA.htm (accessed March 28, 2016).
[78] George M Fredrickson, *Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 32.
[79] Eva Sheppard Wolf, *Almost Free: A Story about Family and Race in Antebellum Virginia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 49-54.
[80] Louisiana Code Noir (1724), *Black Past*, Primary Documents, www.blackpast.org/primary/louisianas-code-noir-1724 (accessed March 28, 2016).

complexions to societal privileges through the legal process. As Ian F. Haney Lopez has noted, race is a social system constructed through the legal system and that "whiteness [was] contingent changeable partial inconstant and ultimately social."[81] Blackness as well fell into the same processes. The connection between complexions and social status of lighter skin color made it more apparent that blackness was not only a visible condition but an experience dependent upon culture and political aspirations.[82]

The offspring of interracial unions, who possessed lighter skin, complicated slave codes. As a result, this group of new people often secured a fluid identity that allowed members to move in white society or create a separate creole society. *Making Race in the Courtroom* by Kenneth R Aslakson examines the legal process of *gen de couleur libre* in New Orleans, Louisiana.[83] Aslakson finds that free blacks of New Orleans kept a special status by creating a category of race for themselves that was distinctly above that of 'Negroes,' whether enslaved or recently manumitted.

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[81] Ian F. Haney Lopez, *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: NYU Press, 2006), xxi and 12.

[82] Although, Lopez focuses on constructs of whiteness, he concluded that naturalization and immigration was imperative to racial creation but these laws comprised only a portion of legislation determining racial categorization. The most important legislation according to Lopez was anti-miscegenation. In the eighteenth century white planters and slave owners began to intensify the social distinctions between the shades of humanity. The first of their efforts involved defining firmly who could become a slave and removing avenues to freedom for ethnic Africans. The legal history of New Orleans free people of color is rich and deserves more attention than given here. For additional information see Ariela Julie Gross, *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 304, 236, 246. Gross examines legal history and argues that despite the courts purported neutrality on race, by inaction judges shape race. Gross combines reading of freedom suits, naturalization disputes, disputes over freedmen, and contestations against segregation to discuss the creation of race. Like Lopez and Pascoe, Gross argues that the 'common sense' intuition of judicial authority defined race by inclusion and exclusion of citizenship. Courts' subjectivity allowed for fluidity in concepts of race as new exclusions extended or retracted based on new groups entering America. Through the courts the dominant white power authority was maintained as people of color were relegated to a separate identity based on their legal status. Lopez, *White by Law*, 163-164.

[83] Kenneth R Aslakson, *Making Race in the Courtroom: The Legal Construction of Three Races in Early New Orleans* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 5.

Aslakson suggests that the creation of this 'third race' in New Orleans was unintentional. However, he assumes a political and social unawareness on the part of the *gens de couleur* that given their concentrated and communal efforts seems unlikely.[84] The Louisiana Purchase and waves of immigrants escaping San Domingue after the Haitian Revolution pushed free people of color in New Orleans to defend their racial position.[85] In order to insure the protection for their rights they felt a need to distance themselves from other ethnic Africans and this process was focused and direct. They were neither black, Negro nor white, and their separation from the binary divisions of race crystallized other racialized categories.

Legal authority could reinforce the relatively privileged position of light skinned Africans. As the Louisiana Supreme Court Justice George Rogers King noted, "people of colour in New Orleans ... [are] ... so far from being in that degraded state that renders them unworthy of belief."[86] In Louisiana courts, their testimony held equal weight to that of white citizens. Similarly, in Tennessee a special status of ethnic Africans that had limited liberties could give testimony against whites in court.[87] This meant that in cases against other ethnic Africans the word of these special status Africans, often lighter skinned, outweighed the word of darker ethnic Africans.

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[84] In acting to secure their own rights, freedoms and privileges the "unintended consequences of their behavior ... was a recognition in the laws of racial distinction between 'Negroes' and 'people of color'., Aslakson, *Making Race in the Courtroom,* 2.
[85] *Ibid.*, 130, 151.
[86] *Ibid*, 1.
[87] In Tennessee the group was made of mulattos with white mothers. Carter Godwin Woodson and Rayford Whittingham Logan, "The Legal Status of Negros in Tennessee," *The Journal of Negro History* Volume 4 (January 1919), 254-272, 271.

As historian Frank Sweet has noted, children of mixed parentage were particularly important in establishing notions of race. In *The Legal History of the Color Line*, Sweet argues that despite the personal opinions of individual judicial authority, the role of the court remained the discovery of the 'true' racial identity of defendants.[88] Lighter skin color complicated these findings. The one-drop rule simplified categorization in courts and helped define and reinforce racial categories. Sweet does little to account for people such as the *gens de colure* and mixed-race Tennesseans with white mothers. The maintenance of the color was important to control in slave society. As a result, prohibitions against miscegenation peppered slave codes across the Atlantic.[89]

Miscegenation laws were attempts to maintain racial order by limiting racially ambiguous offspring and controlling blacks' sexual relations.[90] White women who maintained sexual or marriage relationships with ethnic Africans were often ostracized, and men who formed relationships with ethnic African women could face the same consequences. This did not limit the number of children that pushed binary racial categories. Legal attempts at criminalizing this type of sexual relationship failed as lighter skinned ethnic Africans in places such as New Orleans

[88] Frank Sweet, *The Legal History of the Color Line: Rise and Triumph of the One Drop Rule* (Medford: Backintyme, 2006), 168.
[89] Colonial legislators became concerned with the status of children borne of enslaved African women and white men in the colonies. In order to resolve this dilemma, they defined slavery as a condition inherited by mothers and attempted to eliminated worry over the sustained appearance of mixed race children. In 1662 Virginia fornication between "any Christian [and] a negro man or woman" was strictly forbidden and by 1691 marriage between whites and negroes was also prohibited. Several other colonies, including Massachusetts in 1705 North Carolina in 1715 Pennsylvania in 1726 and Louisiana in 1724 passed similar regulations. Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation, Law and Making Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 21.
[90] Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 130.

gained political authority through their social connections. The treatment and opportunities afforded the racially ambiguous differed by geography. In the South Carolinian Lowcountry enslaved Africans and white planters lived further away, and miscegenation was viewed with more amusement and bewilderment rather than the open fear and disgust associated with inter-racial relationships in the Chesapeake.[91]

Along the Gold Coast of Africa, white men with mixed race children often requested advanced positions for their children. These special requests insured the futures of their children. Robert Collins, a former Company of Merchants Trading to Africa employee, educated his mulatto son in England and subsequently attempted to use his influence to appoint him as commander of an African fort.[92] These opportunities resulted more often than not from coerced relations between ethnic African women and the white males in their communities. In spaces where few white women could be enticed to migrate, relations between black and white were surreptitiously encouraged.

Jamaican planters faced few recriminations for their sexual activity with ethnic African women. It was the expected norm as very few white women were available. Ethnic African women held exotic appeal for men such as Thomas Thistlewood, the notoriously abusive plantation overseer.[93] To men such as

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[91] Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black culture in the eighteenth-century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 405-7. In this way, the Low Country can be seen as more culturally aligned with the Caribbean slave societies then with the Chesapeake.

[92] Sparks, *Where the Negroes Are Masters*, 86.

[93]Trevor Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire: Thomas Thistlewood and His Slaves in the Anglo-Jamaican World* (Raleigh: University North Carolina Press, 2009), 5.

Thistlewood, Jamaica was a place of unrestrained passion and seventeenth-century explorers described African women as beasts with great attention to their exposed bodies.[94] Under the lascivious authority of white men, enslaved African women bodies were continually exposed if not unclothed in the minds of white men.

Black women's diminished authority over their bodies did not mean they were without power. Women forced to endure the forced passions of men around them were compensated both monetarily and with non-monetary benefits. Thistlewood paid his concubines in money gifts and lighter tasks.[95] Other women transferred white dominion into black freedom through children borne from white planters.[96] In Philadelphia, ethnic Africans who worked closely with whites as barbers were creolized and more likely to have lighter complexion than other ethnic Africans.[97] They thus had a higher economic status maintained through marriage to other ethnic Africans of lighter complexion. When the legal system failed to secure a status for lighter skinned ethnic Africans, they escaped to other colonies or hid in white society. Rather than accepting a shared cultural and ethnic connection with all peoples of color lighter skinned peoples of African descent often distanced themselves from other ethnic Africans. The distinctions blacks in mainland and British colonies made based on occupation and skin color resulted in different opportunities for obtaining economic power among blacks.

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[94] Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 131.
[95] Douglas Hall, *In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood in Jamaica, 1750-86* (St Augustine: University of the West Indies Press, 1999), 50, 185.
[96] Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny, and Desire*, 266-7.
[97] Elise Lemire, *Miscegenation: Making Race in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), xix, 98-100.

A strategy that used lighter skin to obtain social and legal advantages which caused resentment in the black community was the practice of passing. Social, political and economic restrictions on skin color led some to pass from one race to another. Miscegenation laws limited the pool of individuals who were able to pass into white society and maintained racial purity on the surface, but it could not prevent all ethnic Africans who sought to completely remove themselves from black society from doing so.

Racial passing denotes the clandestine movement of a member of one racial group to another racial group. Passing in America occurred due to white privilege; being perceived as a member of the white race offered black individuals greater opportunities. Race was and is visual. It relies on image of self and others, and as a result race molded motivations and actions. Passing gave racially ambiguous individuals access to resources and freedom denied when one was seen as black; although passing restricted the identity of those who passed it removed obstacles to success.[98] Racial passing was a direct response by some light skinned individuals to the hypocrisy of racial categorization fostered by miscegenation laws.

Passing was a way to reassert power by entering the racial group of those who held power, i.e., passing offered a light skinned black the opportunity to experience white privilege. For ethnic Africans in the eighteenth century, passing was often a temporary measure, one utilized to obtain freedom. Groups of fugitive slaves often contained one member could pass as white. In one case in 1747, a

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[98] "Racially ambiguous' refers to individuals of lighter complexion. See, Allyson Hobbs. *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

runaway who passed posed as the master of the others and in doing so used his/her light skin to open the door to freedom for darker Africans.[99] Such a tool of resistance developed as different groups of enslaved Africans were transported to the Americans and sufficient time passed to alter the population dynamics in the colonies creating more skin complexions among the population.

In advertisements for runaway slaves and indentures placed in the *Virginia Gazette* 1736-1746 approximately sixty percent of runaways fled with others. Approximately ten percent of these groups had members described as mulatto or yellow. More than half of enslaved peoples who ran way were described as mulatto or yellow. Those described as "Negro" generally also were characterized as having a skill or ability they possessed or their newness to the colony. In subsequent years these numbers changed, with seventy percent of groups of runaways containing individuals of varying shades. Whether the runaway slaves attempted to rejoin their families or join a more favorable community their escape was premeditated to insure the greater success by including lighter skinned persons. Lighter complexion could mean inclusion in plans to escape, and once liberty was obtained these former slaves could then craft a new life with more freedoms that the legal apparatus offered light skinned individuals.

Slave codes were collective responses that sought to limit undesirable black interaction with whites. Most colonies included codes to limit the marriage and

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[99] Lathan Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements: A Documentary History from 1730-1790* Volume 2 Maryland (London: Greenwood Press, 1983). Utilizing Windley's slave advertisements, I have created a database that illustrates how decisions about fleeing bondage and the skin color of companions intersected.

sexual cohabitation between black and white. The Louisiana Code Noir of 1724 forbade intermarriage between whites and non-whites, with penalties against the bride and groom and any who would marry or sanction the union. There were further sanctions against parents of children produced between a union of whites and blacks and regulations against concubinage between master and slave. These rules applied to relations between black and white but gave leeway to sexual interaction between black slave masters and their black slaves.[100] Despite the extensive restrictions on black-white interaction, enforcement against these forbidden relations were difficult and sporadic. In locales, such as New Orleans, where blacks and whites lived in close contact, inter-racial relationships were often clandestine, with minimal interference from authorities.[101]

The Code Noir as passed in 1685 regulated the conditions of slavery in the French colonial empire. British colonies had no such central imperial regulation regarding the rights of slaves and masters. In the British colonies, ethnic Africans restrictions on relationships and identity maintained racial categorization for

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[100] The Louisiana Code Noir stated that "... white subjects, of both sexes, to marry with the blacks, under the penalty of being fined and subjected to some other arbitrary punishment. We forbid all curates, priests, or missionaries of our secular or regular clergy, and even our chaplains in our navy to sanction such marriages. We also forbid all our white subjects, and even the manumitted or free-born blacks, to live in a state of concubinage with blacks. Should there be any issue from this kind of intercourse, it is our will that the person so offending, and the master of the slave, should pay each a fine of three hundred livres. Should said issue be the result of the concubinage of the master with his slave, said master shall not only pay the fine, but be deprived of the slave and of the children, who shall be adjudged to the hospital of the locality, and said slaves shall be forever incapable of being set free. But should this illicit intercourse have existed between a free black and his slave, when said free black had no legitimate wife, and should said black marry said slave according to the forms prescribed by the church, said slave shall be thereby set free, and the children shall also become free and legitimate; and in such a case, there shall be no application of the penalties mentioned in the present article" in *Historical Collections of Louisiana, Volume 3* (New York: D Appleton and Company, 1851), 89-91.

[101] Alaskson, *Making Race in the Courtroom*, 58.

centuries. Courts in eighteenth-century British colonies were particularly instrumental in the racialization process. Part of maintaining racial order was a change in the social order to include poor whites above all ethnic Africans. The nature of this order varied by geography, demographics and distance between blacks and whites of the colony. The slave codes in Barbados served as a model, and each colony refined the regulations based on their own perceived needs.

Slave societies in the Americas were by the eighteenth century predicated upon the availability of large numbers of coerced laborers. With white Britons declining to work in the tobacco, rice and sugar fields the population of many British colonies became overwhelming black. This demographic imbalance provided enslaved ethnic Africans some opportunities. Slave societies needed slaves, yet enslaved ethnic Africans gain freedom through service, wills providing emancipation, family ties and by purchasing it for themselves. Manumissions were thus of great importance to both the enslaved and the colonial governments. The authority to issue manumissions in Jamaica was restricted by the island's legislature as 1774, and 1775 legislation limited wills and slave owners from setting enslaved people free.[102] Slaves were part of the property of an estate, and, as such, the rights to them were regulated. These rules for black freedom extended across the British Atlantic. There were also groups outside of the courts acting to insure slave manumission. The New York Manumission Society was organized in 1785 to

[102] John Henry Howard, *The laws of the British colonies, in the West Indies and other parts of America, concerning real and personal property, and manumission of slaves; with a view of the constitution of each colony* (London: William Henry Bond, 1827), 67.

promote the abolition of slavery in the Empire State.[103] Even though manumission was permitted in New York, concerns that owners would free elderly slaves unable to support themselves led New York, and many other colonies, to require slave owners to post bonds often in excess of the typical purchase price of a slave. The result was that manumission was difficult, and in the pre-Revolutionary era few were granted to northern blacks; there were only sixteen known cases of New York City slaves being manumitted before the Revolution.[104]

Manumission itself conformed to the prevailing ideas about freedom and slavery; slavery was a condition for those of dark complexions and freedom was held exclusive for those of lighter complexions. Those that were manumitted often had personal connections to masters. They were the lovers and children of white planters. This made freedom increasingly a shade based idea in which skin color insured access to freedom.

For lighter skinned ethnic Africans to obtain freedom often meant leaving behind the ethic African community. Their connection to African ancestry made them inhumane, objects for commercial exchange, in the British Atlantic. The figure at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the connection between the idea of ethnic Africans as property and not people. Where each colony overlaps at the recorded dates is when they codified slaves as chattel and the absolute authority of masters over the lives and deaths of the enslaved. The trajectory of Slave Codes moved from

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[103] Harris, *In the Shadow of Slavery*, 61.

[104] *Colonial Laws of New York from the Year of 1664 to the Revolution*, 5 vols. (Albany, NY, 1894-96); Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England, 1620-1776* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 280-298; and Harry B. Yosphe, "Record of Slave Manumissions in New York During the Colonial and Early National Periods," *Journal of Negro History*, 26 (Jan. 1941), 82.

Caribbean islands to North American colonies, but the biggest impact on its arrival was the demography of a particular colony. When a colony became more Afrocentric, whites' reaction was to restrict opportunities for ethnic Africans to integrate into white society as they became more anxious about slave uprisings.[105] Lighter complexion gave some ethnic Africans stronger connections to freedom. Court and legal codes recognized these people as contingent members in society and these individuals distanced themselves from other ethnic Africans by choosing marriage partners closer to their own complexions.

Ethnic Africans in British North America looked toward freedom as the antidote to the harshness of slavery as operated by whites in the colonies. And yet freedom could be a trap for those who did not exhibit the color of liberty. Black codes were designed to limit not only possibility of insurrection but also to undermine blacks' ability to create and maintain deep communal attachments. Legal regulations limited blacks' access to property ownership but lighter skinned ethnic Africans were able to circumvent these restrictions through special status and special privileges only available to them via complexion. Darker skinned ethnic Africans lived with uncertainty because of their complexion and these circumstances kept the two peoples in a wary partnership without a strong cohesive singular identity.

[105] Philip D. Morgan, "Conspiracy Scares," *WMQ*, Vol. 59, no. 1 (Jan. 2002), 159-166.

Chapter Four: Black Church and Institutions of Color

A significant component of eighteenth-century Atlantic culture was the religiosity of its migrants. The elementary school American core curriculum is rooted in understanding the plight of the Pilgrim as both pioneer and steward of the gospel. Religion however did not serve all colonial peoples in the same manner. For Native Americans and Ethnic Africans, their ignorance of Christian doctrine marked them as peoples for exploitation. Religion, despite its use by white elites to subdue and control enslaved Africans, became an avenue to ameliorate the inhumanity of bondage and form connections with other ethnic Africans, free and unfree. The first churches for African Americans sought to educate and entertain in coded messages that also communicated paths to freedom. At the same time black churches also became sites of contestation between blacks premised upon skin color.

Founding of Black Church

The African Methodist Episcopal Church was formed in Philadelphia through the consolidation of a number of religion institutions. This movement toward a uniform religious experience and message was complicated by the divergent social and life status of potential members. Differences were easily identified through skin color. The religious experience of enslaved ethnic Africans in the South was largely controlled by their white masters. In the northern colonies and states, ethnic Africans' experience was constricted in church due to their segregation in balconies of white churches such as St. George Church. Ethnic Africans in Philadelphia composed the largest group of free blacks in the eighteenth century and thus offer

an opportunity to explore the impact on skin color in the early ethnic African community.[1] The role of the early black church was not political reform. Instead the church moved to displaying and proving black equality with whites through the creation of institutions of high purpose filled with faithful servants of God. Their institutions resembled that of their white counterparts.[2] Blacks' semi-autonomous religiosity was tolerated because of the continued association with traditional church leadership. Even when they separated, they could not completely break from the influence of white society.

Prior to the development of black churches Black members of congregations always worshipped separately from whites. Blacks' religious existence was tolerated and encouraged but remained separate due to issues of complexion. The first separate congregations dedicated to the service of ethnic Africans began in 1756 South Carolina.[3] Southern congregations administered mainly to enslaved blacks. Thus their decision about inclusion would not have been based on skin color. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the founding black Philadelphia churches; it was here that black institutions began under the direction of free blacks who controlled the denomination and ultimately the nature of the parishioners in their flock.

The black church in Philadelphia began after ethnic Africans attending St George's Methodist Church in 1787 were forcefully interrupted in their prayers.

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[1] Matthew S Hopper, "From Refuge to Strength: The Rise of the African American Church in Philadelphia, 1787-1949," *Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia* (1998), http://www.preservationalliance.com/files/aachurches.pdf, (accessed March 28, 2016), 5.
[2] Hopper, "From Refuge to Strength,"1.
[3] Ibid, 4.

This clash resulted from blacks refusing to comply with a church rule that they not stand on the main floor but rather confine themselves to worship in the balconies. In protest, black attendees left the church and formed their own institutions.[4] The decisions about the direction of a separate church for ethnic African worshippers embroiled the Free African Society. The FAS was established "without regard to religious tenets, [to provide the persons live an orderly and sober life], in order to support one another in sickness, and for the benefit of their widows and fatherless children."[5] In the society meetings the exact direction of church denomination was contested and as a result two separate institutions arose from the FAS, St. Thomas Episcopal, which later became the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas under the direction of Absalom Jones, and the Bethel Church under the Methodist minister Richard Allen.

Membership in the black church served to aid escape from the confines of slavery in the South and the strictures of unfreedom in the North. Although the history and structure of the black church in the South is rich and essential to understanding the culture and course of black identity, the northern black church had deep impact as well. It was in the North that ethnic Africans relied upon and then rejected white instruction on divinity in favor of a religious counsel that made attempts to ameliorate the damage of slavery and racism. In the North ethnic Africans solidified a political identity under religious leadership that would slowly

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[4] *Ibid.*, 4. Not all members of St. Georges remained away from the church as some black parishioners rejoined the institution.

[5] "Preamble of the Free African Society (Philadelphia, 1787)" in *African America Religious Thought an Anthology*, ed. by Cornel West and Eddie S Glaude (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 345.

begin to disintegrate along skin color lines. Race did not preclude deep and lasting connections between peoples. It designated a shared past. However, this past could be so distant as to hold little meaning for those in the lived experience of racial interactions.

Church Leadership

The church provided opportunity for ethnic African ministers to voice their concerns to a receptive and attentive audience. In sermons men of faith condemned the institution of slavery and cast slave owners in direct opposition to the interest of blacks. The separate and organized proclamations of the black faithful unsettled some white churchgoers, who viewed black faith as a threat to the traditional white-black hierarchy. In the evangelical faith, parishioners proclaimed familial connections to one another regardless of skin color. In appeals to potential black members, evangelical churches emphasized that they provided a site for black institutional life outside the confines of the household or plantation.[6] They created a familiarity among peoples with incentive to fragment themselves. The need to form a unity of religion speaks to the need to smooth objections to close associations with other ethnic Africans.

The first black church in the North began under the direction of Richard Allen.[7] Allen gathered support for his foray into church organization, still he was

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[6] Janet Moore Lindman, *Bodies of Belief: Baptist Community in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 146.

[7] The first church founded for the purpose of communicating religion to blacks exclusively was established in the southern state of Georgia. However, this work will focus on the northern church of Richard Allen because of the more accessible documents and sources as well as Allen's public break from the white church due to racial discrimination.

second choice for bishop of The African Methodist Episcopal Church. The church extended offers for the inaugural bishop position to Daniel Coker. Both Coker and Allen epitomized the idealized version of black leadership. They were men who could bridge ethnic African intent and white early American expectations. They were educated and of lighter complexions. Images of both men showed them as distinguished men of God (Appendix, Figures 18 and 19).[8]

Although houses of worship that tailored a Christly message to ethnic African were established across the America, they became increasingly popular during the Second Great Awakening. Missionaries spread the gospel of the lord to those who had been ignorant of Christian religion and searching for alleviation from the spiritual isolation imposed under the oppression of slavery. In order to cement the role of religion across America, these men of God helped ethnic Africans in the North establish churches under their directorship. Some members of the newly independent congregation desired close association with African roots through a leader who was darker and some members believed that a church leader of fairer complexion would benefit the church.[9] Thus, while black churches provided shelter from the religious subjugation based on their darker skin that blacks experienced in

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[8] The painting of Daniel Coker included in the Appendix is believed to be the creation of African American artist Joshua Johnson. Johnson is presumed to be the son of George Johnson and his slave. In the *Baltimore Intelligencer* he made claims as "a self-taught genius, deriving from nature and industry his knowledge of the Art; and having experienced many insuperable obstacles in the pursuit of his studies," these likely alludes to both the limitations of his skin color and his authority to claim ingeniousness in spite of the negative view of his color and his lack of proper education. For more on Johnson see, Carolyn Weekley, *Joshua Johnson: Freeman and Early American Painter* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1988); and J. Susan Isaacs, "Joshua Johnson" in *African American Lives,* ed. by Henry Louis Gates and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 459-460.

[9] Gordon J Melton, *A Will to Choose: The Origins of African American Methodism* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 86; and Gary B Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 232.

mainstream Christian churches, they posed choices for individual blacks as to how to separate amongst themselves by skin color. Ultimately these decisions caused further fractures in the church and the ethnic African community.[10]

The Episcopal denomination attracted the more affluent members of the black community while Methodists' membership often drew from for those of more modest means.[11] Both Jones and Allen initially wanted to establish a Methodist congregation, but the potential parishioners demanded an Episcopal affiliation and wanted Allen to service to them. When he declined, they extended an offer to Jones leaving Allen to establish a separate church.[12] Whether by proclaiming black equality or directing the congregation to freedom ministers served as community leaders. Church leaders and bishops made up the most educated, well spoken, and connected members of the Afro-American community.

These leaders had ties to the larger white community as well, and these connections, visible through the color of their skin, contributed to ministers' authority and the divisions that occurred in the black church. In Philadelphia the more affluent ethnic Africans were often of lighter complexion. These men served Philadelphians through their skills as barbers and were often financed by their familial ties to whites in the city. Absalom Jones with his darker complexion would have been more foreign to these men and women than Richard Allen's less sun kissed hue (Appendix, Figures 17 and 18).

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[10] Recent scholarship emphasizes blacks' use of legal strategies in the development of and divisions within black churches. Sarah Barringer Gordon, "The African Supplement: Religion, Race, and Corporate Law in Early National America," *WMQ,* 72, no. 3 (Jul. 2015): 385-422.
[11] Hopper, "From Refuge to Strength", 12.
[12] *Ibid.*, 6.

Jones and Allen, although directing separate flocks, worked together to advance the condition of ethnic Africans in Philadelphia. In 1793 a yellow fever epidemic swept over the city causing more wealthy citizens to flee to rural healthy environs and leaving the urban poor to die without aid. Jones and Allen worked with medical professionals in the city to alleviate the suffering. They believed the false understanding of physician Benjamin Rush that blacks were immune to the fever.[13] However the exception to this scientifically inaccurate truism were the mulattoes. Fair skinned men, women and children were deemed as less hardy than darker skinned ethnic Africans and thus common intuition meant that reports of blacks dying from the epidemic likely meant mulattoes.[14] Ethnic Africans perished as frequently as whites if not more so but their deaths were ignored.[15]

Black churches created a space, however circumscribed, for the coalescence of a 'black' racial identity among free and enslaved people of African-descent. Race was a way to recognize the ties between free and enslaved blacks, a means for pooling economic resources and a possible means to re-create some aspects of African religious practices. Some blacks, slave and free, were able to find spiritual and material freedom. Black evangelicals did not confront slavery as an institution directly. They used race in a sense to "dissolve the real and meaningful differences

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[13] Benjamin Rush, *An account of the Bilious remitting yellow Fever of Philadelphia 1793*, (Philadelphia: Thomas Hobson, 1794), 92.

[14] For more on mulattoes and Yellow Fever see: Jabez Thomas Sunderland, *Preadamites; or a Demonstration of the Existence of Men Before Adam; Together with A Study of their Condition, Antiquity, Racial affinities, and Progressive Dispersion over the Earth* (Chicago: SC Griggs and Company, 1880), 180; Whittington B Johnson, *Black Savannah, 1788-1864,* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 111; and Kenneth F Kiple, Virginia Himmelsteib King, *Another Dimension to the Black diaspora: Diet, Disease and Racism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 44.

[15] Hopper, "From Refuge to Strength," 6.

between slave and free."[16] The Baptist institutions in the Southern colonies focused necessarily on the relations between master and slave. In 1796 the issue of the lawfulness of slavery was raised at the Kehukee Baptist Association meeting and later the same association challenged the treatment of slave masters toward slaves.[17] The Methodist denomination in contrast held "the deepest abhorrence, [for] the practice of slavery: and [sought] to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means."[18]

Religion held great importance in the eighteenth century. Ethnic Africans compelled to include religion in their lives joined any church that would accept them and endured racial discrimination in order to worship. When Richard Allen and his brethren left the white dominated St. George's Church, the men chosen as leaders of the new black church could help the congregation maintain ties to white religious leaders whom they relied upon to help support their early efforts to organize. Ethnic African men who straddled between St George's and the early black church often matriculated from educated and multiracial backgrounds. Due to their familiarity with whites and their appearance, they often were chosen as church leaders over other qualified darker skinned parishioners. The church was one of the

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[16] Charlotte A. Haller, "And Made Us to be a Kingdom": Race, Antislavery, and Black Evangelicals in North Carolina's Early Republic," *The North Carolina Historical Review* Volume LXXX, No. 2 (2003), 126.
[17] *Ibid.*,128-29.
[18] *Ibid.*,130. Both denominations took a stand against slavery to varying degrees in the eighteenth century. It was not until the nineteenth century with the tensions leading to the American Civil War did deep fissures appear in the denominations. For more on this see: Steven E Woodworth, *Manifest Destinies: America's Westward Expansion and the Road to the Civil War* (New York: Knopf Press, 2011), 52-54; Graham Russel Hodges, *Slavery, Freedom and Culture Among Early American Workers* (New York: ME Sharp, 1998), 60-64; Donald G Matthews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965); and Noel Leon Erskine, *Plantation Church: How African American Religion Was Born in Caribbean Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

first and most important community institutions for ethnic Africans. It provided a model for organization outside of the church where skin color created a breach between cohesive black communities.

Emigration Debate

Freedmen across the United States looked to newspapers and other printed materials to follow the development of how the colonies and then the new American nation would treat them. Reports on persecution they faced in America, blacks' journey toward fugitive slave communities in Canada, or support for the establishment of colonies for freed slaves in Africa, and a number of other issues important to free blacks were the subjects of a good deal of printed discourse in the middle and late eighteenth-century. Following the American Revolution, many whites supported the creation of a benevolent colony exclusively for ethnic Africans. They proposed this colony be placed in West Africa in order to return blacks to their natural homeland and offer them opportunity for liberties denied them in the United States.[19] The Free African Society was a part of this debate. Some members were agreeable and suggested "a number of men from among [free blacks] ... be sent to Africa to see if they can obtain, by gift or purchase lands sufficient to settle upon."[20]

Other blacks, such as James Forten, viewed the suggestion of the colony as skirting the issue of racial equality and ridding the Americas of ethnic Africans in a

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[19] James Sidbury, *Becoming African in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 121.
[20] Anthony Taylor, "Anthony Taylor, Newport, Rhode Island, Fundraising Letter, January 1787" in *Speak Out in Thunder Tones: Letters and Other Writings by Black Northerners, 1787-1865*, ed by Dorothy Sterling, (New York: De Capo Press, 1977), 7-8.

manner that benefited whites only.[21] Forten wrote in a letter to friend and supporter of the British colony for freed slaves in Sierra Leone, that "at the Rev. R. Allen's church the other evening. Three thousand at least attended, and there was not one soul that was in favor of going to Africa. They think that the slaveholders wants to get rid of them so as to make their property more secure."[22] Forten also expressed his dismay that members of his own church were more in favor of the move, and not necessarily for themselves but for recently freed slaves. As were white residents of Philadelphia, light skinned black Philadelphians were discomfited by the presence of men and women of a darker complexion they encountered in increasing numbers on the streets of their city.[23] Support from prominent members of ethnic African communities was essential to the success of the colonies.

In England the London Poor were convinced to migrate to Sierra Leone in 1792 with the help of Olaudah Equiano. Equiano supported the emigration of poor blacks in London as an alternative to the severe poverty many faced begging on the streets of London. Equiano himself remained in England as the poor blacks sailed to Africa. Like Equiano, Paul Cuffee supported both the Sierra Leone colony and

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[21] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color,* 199.

[22] Rosalind Cobb Wiggins, "James Forten, Letter To Paul Cuffe, 25 January 1817" in *Captain Paul Cuffe's Logs and Letters, 1808-1817: A Black Quaker's "voice from Within the Veil* (Washington D.C: Howard University Press, 1996), 503.

[23] Here I use complexion to suggest skin color, as previously discussed that the hue of runaway and freed slaves varied form freedmen of color residing in more affluent professions in the city, and behavior; since some viewed new members of the community as likely drunkards and degenerates. Since Forten himself supported a change in church leadership that would give a man of Jamaican, and likely mixed parentage a position of authority over other members of the church yet did not support emigration and viewed those that did as ignorant who "will never become a people [as they remained] amongst the white people," suggests the complicated balance between identity and ambition. Forten desired to remain amongst the white people even as he condemned his fellows for their desire to align themselves to white men's goals. James Forten, "James Forten, Letter To Paul Cuffe, 25 January 1817," in *Captain Paul Cuffe's Logs and Letters 1808-1817*, ed by Rosalind Cobb Wiggins, (Washington D.C: Howard University Press, 1996), 503.

Liberian colony, traveling to Sierra Leone in 1815. He convinced thirty free blacks to settle in the colony. Although Cuffee was supportive of the colony, he did not intend to live there.[24]

In the midst of the debate over the African colonization movement, the black leadership in the colonies faced considerable interference from whites. In Sierra Leone ethnic Africans had little control over the actual management of the colony. This caused conflicts with the white overseers in the colony. But leadership by ethnic Africans in Sierra Leone was debated as well. Ministers who from outside the colony to administer to the colonists were placed under the strictest of scrutiny and often rejected if their education did not meet the expectations.[25]

Color Crisis: Major Color Problems & Disintegration in the Church

FAS bylaws, from which major black church institutions in Philadelphia flowed, expressly held that those of poor moral character and believed to engage in excessive drinking were to be denied entrance to church membership.[26] Poor blacks, whether enslaved or free, were similarly viewed as undesirables. These urban poor were often recently manumitted or runaways from the southern

[24] Falechiondro Karcheik Sims-Alvarado, "The African-American Emigration Movement in Georgia during Reconstruction," Ph. D. Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2011. http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/history_diss/29, 25 (accessed March 28, 2016).
[25] Education was a Janus faced precept that excluded some ethnic Africans based on their complexion.
[26] Richard S Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers,* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 122, 135, 204. Newman analyzes the Free African Society Preamble to the Free African Society from which the first discussions of the black churches of Philadelphia would spring. The FAS was the first institution founded and sustained by the energy of ethnic Africans in Northern states and thus a model for the churches that would follow it.

colonies. They were often less educated and thus less likely to rise in church leadership.

Conflicts within black churches over the appropriate role of darker skinned blacks highlights the division between Philadelphia's light and dark skinned blacks. One major conflict occurred in 1810 in the St Thomas Episcopal Church. That year, church members secretly attempted to secure a new minster. When Alexander Cook Summers, their selection, arrived to take up his position, he found that none was available. The Jamaican was rebuffed by the church vestrymen who believed his appointment to be a 'wicked attempt to create a division in the church.'[27] James Forten was among the supporters of Summers. Forten, a successful sail maker, who reportedly was one of Philadelphia's wealthiest free blacks, had much power within the church but he could not garner enough acceptance for Summers' appointment.[28] Although Forten and the other supporters of Summers proclaimed that they wished to ease the burden of then minister Absalom Jones, the more expansive education and Jamaican heritage of Summers makes it likely that the opposition to his possible appointment was based on the preacher's skin color.

In the early nineteenth century the numbers of ethnic Africans in Philadelphia increased considerably.[29] This influx of peoples of color alarmed white citizens, and they attempted to close borders to ethnic Africans and limit the ten thousand free peoples of color and possible four thousand 'runaway Negroes' said to

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[27] Hopper, "From Refuge to Strength," 11; and Julie Winch, *A Gentleman of Color : The Life of James Forten: The Life of James Forten* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 167.
[28] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color,* 168.
[29] Gary Nash estimates that the black population in Philadelphia doubled in the ten years between 1790 and 1800. Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 137.

have migrated to the city.[30] Philadelphia had a reputation as a place where blacks maintained their dignity with aid of the thriving abolitionism.[31] As a state with close proximity to slave plantations, it became a beacon for runaway slaves.[32] The city proposed to levy taxes on free blacks in the city as well as limit their freedoms to meet and establish community institutions.[33] James Forten authored "Letters from a Man of Colour" to address these injustices and inject levity into the debate. He spoke of equality between all men whether, Red, White or Black. Even so Forten understood the position of ethnic Africans in society. He recognized that they were the designated underclass with little power beyond the pen and Forten looked to "white men... [to act] as our protectors."[34]

Forten sought to protect his property, but runaway slaves and immigrant ethnic Africans impeded his attempts to fully connect with his white neighbors. In Julie Winch's biography of Forten she asserts that he "never sought to act white" but only to gain "respect for himself, his family and his community."[35] He was a man focused on creating a space in society where ethnic Africans could prosper and participate and this by necessity meant that some of their number needed to be excluded. These were men who were not and could not rise toward talented tenth designation that W. E. B. Dubois would proclaim existed in the twentieth century. Men of color who were educated and able to lead were sought for inclusion.

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[30] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*,169.
[31] Nash, *Forging Freedom*, 137; Newman, "'The Lucky to be born in Pennsylvania,"
[32] *Ibid*; Newman, "'The Lucky to be born in Pennsylvania'," 414.
[33] Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 169.
[34] *Ibid*., 171.
[35]Winch, *A Gentleman of Color*, 233.

In 1818 when Absalom Jones succumbed to the finality of life, his church's vestry struggled to replace him, with at least one candidate rejected because his lack of formal education.[36] Education often acted as a pathway to greater opportunity. Those who graduated from university often claimed a mixed race parentage with the marker of lighter skin. Thus, a freed black described as a mulatto was able to attend a university and pursue a law practice.[37] Many of the early church leaders, if not possessed of a formalized education, spoke and carried themselves with refinement that bespoke the stamp of higher education.[38] Early American newspapers showed conflict with the portrayal of the ethnic African across the Atlantic. They brought news of unrest and revolts from across the continent and Atlantic.

During the Haitian Revolution newspaper reports on the actions of the enslaved echoed whites' bewilderment that mulattoes sided with and often led revolt against the French most probably accustomed to acquiescence on the part of mulattoes. A Connecticut newspaper was filled with racial anxiety regarding the events in Haiti. The French were depicted as facing aggressive mulattoes rather than darker ethnic Africans. "The whites were in daily expectation of a universal revolt of the slaves...many houses were burnt...by mulattoes; and they had murdered the greater part of the inhabitants...committing unheard of cruelties upon all the whites

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[36] Hopper, "From Refuge to Strength," 11.
[37] Aslakson, *Making Race in the Courtroom*, 214
[38] Newman, *Freedom's Prophet*, 222, Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing Publishing and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 208.

that fell into their hands."[39] Further accounts of the Revolution mention the French army as "composed of Mulattoes and free Negroes, with a great number of slaves."[40] When considering the bewildering actions of mulattoes, newspaper men wielded their pens to place greater culpability upon blacks and minimized mulattoes' role in the uprising, as is evident from this news article: "they were fired on by the Negroes and Mulattoes on which an engaged commenced…during which the Negroes spared neither men, women nor children."[41] Where the actions of mulattoes were discussed they appear more benevolent in print: "The mulattoes have imprisoned such of the whites as escaped the massacre of the 18th of July; but have agreed to liberate them on condition that they should immediately depart."[42] The leaders of the action seemed removed from actual battle, since mulatto generals were said to have armed the slaves against their masters who then committed atrocities against whites.[43] In Baltimore the concern over the disruptive possibilities of French enslaved and mulattoes led the mayor to make a decree of intention to arrest any found in the city.[44] And in Massachusetts citizens called for emigration to be denied to all *free Negros or mulattos*.[45]

[39] "From the New London Pape of last Week, March 8", *The Middlesex Gazette*, March 17, 1792, Volume 7, Issue 330, 2.
[40] "Narrative; Proceedings; French Ship America Port Au Prince Events National Commissary", *Dunlap's American Daily Advertiser,* May 17, 1793, Issue 4465, 3.
[41] "Distressing Accounts from Cape Francois", *Bartgis's Maryland Gazette and Frederick Town Weekly Advertiser*, July 11, 1793, Issue 90, 2.
[42] "Capt. White, Schooner Regulator Norfolk Auz Cayes Jamaica Letter," *Columbian Gazetteer*, September 30, 1793, Volume 1, Issue 12, 3.
[43] Ibid.
[44] "No Headline", *Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, January 17, 1798, Volume 8, Issue 1306, 3.
[45] "Miscellanies", *Independent Gazetteer,* January 6, 1801, Volume 2 Issue 53, 1.

Newspaper articles on the Haitian Revolution convey the expectations of white Frenchmen and American citizens that mulattoes, seemingly by virtue of their fair skin, would side against darker ethnic Africans. This conclusion was likely the result of experience in the Americas that bore witness to such biased behaviors and a belief in a hierarchy of skin color. Instead the Revolution consolidated a focus on American slavery and engendered a shared black identity among ethnic Africans in America. As is illustrated in the debate surrounding the emigration of ethnic Africans to Sierra Leone and later Liberia, this shared identity did not mean a shared conclusion about the proper course to gain more liberty and prosperity for ethnic Africans.

Chapter Five: Complexion of Community: The Sierra Leone Colony

The migration of individuals of African ancestry from British territory to Africa during the eighteenth century, a reverse diaspora, provides an example of colorism in a space where ethnic Africans maintained a good deal of visibility within the larger community. The conflicts that arose under migration were repeated in emigration. Four groups in the British colony of Sierra Leone, Black Poor, Nova Scotians, Jamaican maroons, and Liberated Africans, competed for prestige. The inability of early Sierra Leone settlers to intertwine separate experiences demonstrates the considerable force of complexion within black communities across the Atlantic. Colorism emerged in decisions of association required to obtain position. Whether surrounded by whites or Africans, black people remained fractured by skin associations.

In the abolitionist colony of Sierra Leone the dynamic of complexion felt both familiar and alien to black colonists. They were accustomed to judgments based on skin color. However rather than a light elite by the mid-nineteenth century, Sierra Leonean privileged ethnic Africans consisted mostly of people of darker complexions. Over time the conflict between groups of ethnic Africans and white officials changed the complexion of prestige in the colony.

The establishment of the Sierra Leone colony was intended to be a solution to the problem of a metropolis whose streets teemed with formerly employed and

poor blacks who despite their maritime skills were unable to find work in London.[1] The streets of London bulged with those looking for employment and shelter in the eighteenth century. In suggesting a removal of the black poor to Africa, white abolitionists aligned their interests in humanitarian endeavors with racist imperatives seeing the new West African colony as an opportunity for London's Poor Blacks to become self-sufficient and in doing so whiting the complexion of Great Britain.

William Wilberforce, Henry Clarkson and Granville Sharp, members of the Committee for Relief of the Black Poor that organized the colony, supported the desire of ethnic Africans in London to gain fuller freedoms.[2] These men agitated for alleviation of forced labor and its atrocities. They believed it could develop more easily outside of England and away from the critical eye of many white Londoners. Blacks in London did not have the best of reputations. Despite Ignatius Sancho and Equiano standing as productive members of society, the overall image of blacks in London was of beggars that disrupted the city (See, e.g., Appendix, Figure 14). Political satirists of the British society reminded the public in print and stage of the lazy and disruptive black beggar that stained the cobblestones of London. The

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[1] Charles R Foy, "Ports Of Slavery, Ports Of Freedom: How Slaves Used Northern Seaports' Maritime Industry To Escape And Create Trans-Atlantic Identities, 1713-1783", (Phd., diss, Rutgers University, 2008), 12, 17, 258; W Jeffery Bolster, *Black Jacks: African American Seamen in the Age Sail*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 182, 205.

[2] The Committee formed in 1786 to offer a means of sustenance for the impoverished blacks begging in the London streets, whom many whites considered a nuisance. Images of poor black begging on the streets of London include Joseph Johnson with the ship *Nelson* on his head, by John Thomas Smith, 1815. From *Vagabondiana, or Ancedotes of Mendicant Wanders through the Streets of London* (London, 1817), Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

joviality depicted in the art does not exemplify an accurate history of the lives of Black Londoners.

Blacks struggled in London. Seemingly their plight would improve after 1772. A ruling by Justice Mansfield that year in the *Somerset* case loosened their chains. The *Somerset* Case hailed as a triumph of abolition, however, resulted in the loss of employment and security for ethnic Africans accustomed to a life as highly prized servants. *Somerset* did not clarify the legal status of African slaves in Britain and its colonies, yet the wording, "no master ever was allowed here (in England) to take a slave by force to be sold abroad because he deserted from his service...therefore the man must be discharged," was celebrated as a resolve for English abolition.[3] England's free and enslaved blacks took comfort in a quasi-freedom that allowed more labor autonomy. However, many blacks faced greater competition with poor whites with the removal of their position as status signals.

By the 1780s London blacks, many of whom wore fine livery and labored for the "ostentation than any laudable use," lived as free blacks.[4] These were the people who would come to settle the first forays into Africa, a considerable number of whom served in the British military during the American Revolution with little experience performing agricultural labor under the hot sun.[5] Although their military service was appreciated and recognized by military officials as important, they found little gratitude or support from the British populace when they arrived in

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[3] Patricia Bradley, *Slavery, Propaganda, and the American Revolution*, (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998), 68.
[4] Stephen J. Braidwood, *Black Poor and White Philanthropists: London's Blacks and the Foundation of the Sierra Leone Settlement, 1786-1791* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 22.
[5] Ibid, 24.

England. British officials remained skeptical of most black applicants for pensions, resulting in very few receiving assistance from His Majesty's government.[6] The result was that many resorted to being street buskers.[7] Despite blacks' desperate conditions in London leading to not only begging on the street but crime, and support for the colony by major ethnic Africans in England, such as Olaudah Equiano, not all blacks viewed emigration favorably. [8] As with debates in the early black Church, the emigration debate also split along color lines (Appendix, Figure 19). Most men favoring emigration were born of mixed parentage, with Equiano being the obvious exception. Paul Cuffee, Prince Hall and Daniel Coker supported ethnic African resettlement in Africa. Paul Cuffee claimed both African and Native American ancestry, after his family's manumission he made several forays as a seaman until finally finding success. At the time of his death in 1817, his estate totaled over twenty thousand dollars ($330,000 in 2015 currency).[9] Cuffee was among the first ethnic Africans to express an interest in African resettlement. He reasoned that American blacks needed to participate in state matters as equal

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[6] Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (1961); Sylvia Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (1991): Mary Beth Norton, "The Fate of Some Black Loyalists," *Journal of Negro History* 58 (1973), 407-09; and Charles R. Foy, "Royal Navy Employment of Black Mariners and Maritime Workers, 1754-1783," *International Journal of Maritime History*, 28, no. 1 (Feb. 2016), 17..

[7] See, e.g., Joseph Johnson with the ship *Nelson* on his head, by John Thomas Smith, 1815. From *Vagabondiana, or Ancedotes of Mendicant Wanders through the Streets of London* (London, 1817), Guildhall Library, Corporation of London.

[8] John Moseley, Trial on Charges of Deception and Fraud, April 21, 1784, T17840421-7, The Proceedings of Old Bailey Online, http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t17840421-17-defend288&div=t17840421-17&terms=John%20Moseley#highlight (accessed March 28, 2016).

[9] John Cullen Gruesser, *Black on Black: Twentieth-Century African American Writing about Africa* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 71.

citizens and Sierra Leone would allow ethnic Africans a space to gain political and economic authority.[10]

Prince Hall, founder of the first masonic lodge for African Americans, supported the resettlement plan as well. Like Cuffee, Hall came from mixed parentage. His father was reported to be a white planter and mother a mulatto in his household.[11] He straddled many identities from West Indian slave to free New England black. Hall connected with the plight of ethnic Africans across the Atlantic. In his 1797, "A Charge to African Masons," he reminded his listeners of the shared commonalities with Africans and the ability to protest abhorrent treatment.[12]

Another early supporter of the emigration movement was Daniel Coker, former Bishop of the Philadelphia AME Church. Coker's parentage was also mixed. As the son of a white servant and enslaved black man, who ran from slavery into the free black community of New York, Coker did not have the strong commercial incentive of Cuffee, Hall, and Equiano, who desired a pathway to freer independent trade with Africa.[13] Instead his motivations seem solely based on religious transformation. He spent his final years in Sierra Leone as a missionary converting the Liberated Africans arriving in the colony.[14]

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[10] Lamin Sanneh, *Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 90-93.
[11]Columbia University Faculty of Political Science, *Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law*, 494-495 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 315.
[12] Prince Hall, "A Charge Delivered to the African Lodge, June 24 1797," in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature*, ed by Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Philip Lapsanky, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 47.
[13] Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 122.
[14] John W. Pulis, *Moving On: Black Loyalists in the Afro-Atlantic World* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 162.

Despite lofty debates concerning blacks' place in Great Britain, poverty and lack of options for economic independence in England led some less affluent blacks to agree to migrate to the new colony. Once they arrived in Sierra Leone, black migrants faced a very considerable hurdle to their dreams of economic and social independence; the land English abolitionists contemplated as the foundation for this new colonial venture was firmly under the control of the Koya Temne people. Although the Temme's ruler King Tom sold the land and relinquished control for the use of first London's Poor, then Nova Scotians, Jamaican maroons, and finally Africans freed from slave ships after 1807, when Britain had banned the slave trade, he and other Temme people disputed the black migrants' ownership and control of the land, leading to several bloody confrontations.[15] The commonality of African ethnicity among the migrant groups did not make for a cohesive community. The different backgrounds and experiences in the Atlantic among these peoples made for conflict, and skin color acted to exacerbate problems between the colonies' residents.

Sierra Leone was not the refuge that ethnic Africans expected. Colonists remained removed from the actual running of the colony, constrained by the belief that "there are no ruins that can be pointed out as telling of some bygone events in their history—nothing by which their progress can be registered," and therefore

[15] Liberated Africans were ethnic Africans that were sold into slavery and then recaptured/rescued from slave ships after Britain abolished the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807. The nature and details of the confrontations between black colonists and the Temne are described by Cassandra Pybus,in *Epic Voyages Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 114, 140, 174, 181, 196, 209.

they possessed no ability for progressing a society.[16] The land was not prepared for planting, causing significant difficulties for the first settlers who had very little agriculture experience. They arrived in the rainy season and seeds could not take root.[17] When seeds arrived the next season they were stale leaving the British black settlers dependent upon both their white English sponsors and local Africans. The relationship between the black Britons and the indigenous Africans was exploitative.[18] The local Africans often took advantage of the settlers, particularly in commercial exchanges. Lacking agricultural products that they grew themselves, these unsuitable settlers were forced to trade on unequal terms with the indigenous peoples.[19]

The image of Temne traders in their homespun clothes must have presented a stark image against the metropolitan wear of London's blacks.[20] The un-English attire of the African natives juxtaposed against men and women accustomed to livery and brick roads unsettled the settlers' expectations in Africa. (Appendix, Figure 15). On the other side of the cultural interaction, Temne people who would come to trade would often gape in wonderment at the oddity of the British blacks in

[16] E.G. Ingham, *Sierra Leone: After A Hundred Years* (London: Seeley and Co, 1894), 261.
[17] Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom*, 139.
[18] Ibid.,139-140.
[19] Reports on the early colonists were accusatory. London's black poor were viewed as "worthless, lawless, vicious, drunken set of people." Pybus, *Epic Voyages,* 119.
[20] London's Blacks were the first to arrive in Sierra Leone. They were not only those that were turned away by British masters but many were Black Loyalists of the American Revolution. Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom,* 109-111.

their midst.[21] Yet in Sierra Leone it was those that Europeans and Americans deemed 'unsophisticated' who had the power.

The colony's sponsors, the Sierra Leone Company, expected the new African settlers to rely on supplies shipped from London rather than local goods and commodities. The black settlers were meant to be traders for England rather than gain self-sufficiency. The reputation of the London Poor followed them to Sierra Leone, as reports to England claimed that they "left to themselves [they] will not lift a finger except to procure food and shelter."[22] The settlers relied on the Temne for provisions in the rainy season that washed away the seed of their own progress in Africa. Through trading away material goods, they relinquished their claims to British gentility. The tea-pots and metals among the meager possessions of this first group of settlers had made them seem more prosperous. With trade they transferred their wealth to the Temne and in doing so became dependent upon the indigenous population. Whatever expectations London blacks had of Sierra Leone as a refuge from the harsh existence in London fell away as the climate embittered them and predators stalked them. Apes and big cats threatened the early settlers at night, and the Temne's drums served as a reminder of the foreignness of Africa and the fragility of the settlers' existence.[23]

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[21] James W. St G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 170.
[22] Ingham, *Sierra Leone: After A Hundred Years*, 262.
[23] *Ibid.*

Despite blacks' shared origins, London's black poor were mainly men turned from their household employment positions after the *Somerset* case.[24] English slave masters typically sought dark skinned servants.[25] Ownership acted as a symbol of English superiority and individual ability to civilize. African servants stood in stark contrast to other servants and a visible symbol of an Englishman's worldly adventures and monetary possessions. England's black poor would likely have similar complexions to the Temne. Yet in West Africa they were outsiders in the relations established between the Sierra Leone Company administrators and the Chief of the Temne tribe. Unexpectedly the racial hierarchy that London blacks were accustomed to did not exist on the west coast of Africa.

In London blacks were closer to whites through their positions within the household. This social status was lost when these servants migrated to Sierra Leone. Instead the London poor found themselves accused of "laziness and drunkenness."[26] Local expectations of complexion may have placed whites as outsiders. However, in the Sierra Leone colony, the true outsiders were the Black Poor of London. Most communities on the West Coast of Africa grew accustomed to economic interactions with whites, but their experience with black outsiders who cloaked themselves in Englishness was limited. When John Clarkson succeeded in enticing black Nova Scotians from the failed attempt at American liberty to come to West Africa, he unwittingly set in motion a set of new racial relationships in Sierra Leone.

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[24] Pybus, *Epic Journeys, 82* and Walker, *Black Loyalists,* 95-96.
[25] Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, *Black London: Life Before Emancipation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 15.
[26] *Ibid.*

If the Nova Scotians arrived in Sierra Leone with expectations of men of their color, they would be surprised by the wives of the Black Poor, some of whom were white.[27] The romantic relationships between blacks and whites were troubling to many. Daniel Coker responded to fears that emancipation would increase miscegenation by pointing to slavery as the catalyst for such relationships that caused men or women of color who found partners of a different race to be "despised by their own kind."[28] The white wives of the London Poor were viewed with animosity and disgust in England and deemed to be women who were plied with drink as enticement to bind themselves to black men.[29] In England these women were maligned. "Decrepit with disease," they had few opportunities for marriage according to well-bred women in England.[30] As wives of black men, they clung to some measure of respectability. When they arrived at a colony founded on a goal of providing liberty, the harshness of the land surprised them. Their plight was used to garner sympathy for the woefully unprepared colonists, and thus it was their progress that was of primary concern to investors and white supporters of the colony.[31] Although these few women in a mass of single men were incidental to the creation of the colony, seemingly their well-being was essential to its success.

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[27] "Passenger List, Belisarius," file:///Users/charlesfoy/Dropbox/Sierra%20Leone%20Research/Passenger%20List%20Belisarius,%201787.webarchive (accessed March 28, 2016). "Passenger List, Belisarius," file:///Users/charlesfoy/Dropbox/Sierra%20Leone%20Research/Passenger%20List%20Belisarius,%201787.webarchive (accessed March 28, 2016).

[28] Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 123-124.

[29] John Joseph Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone, Western Africa: With Maps and Appendices* (London: Browne and Nolan, 1903), 29-31.

[30] Crooks, *A History of the Colony of Sierra Leone*, 29.

[31] *Ibid.* The wife of doctor Alexander Falconbridge, reminded her audience that these women were out of place in Africa and as fellow countrywomen they should be elevated to represent England feminine virtue.

In contrast, Nova Scotians who arrived in Sierra Leone in 1783 mostly consisted of families.[32] These families had left Nova Scotia not to escape economic hardship but to find liberty, security and equality. They expected to own land as they had been promised in Canada.[33] When they arrived in Sierra Leone they did not find the life of *black liberty* they had envisioned. This new strange life included having lost the community they had had in the Americas. Although many owned land they were still not part of the communities they resided in and faced harsh discrimination and animosity from their white neighbors.[34] In Sierra Leone they found themselves unwelcomed by their neighbors, the Temne, who in 1789 attacked the settlers and burnt their town to the ground.

Land was of great importance to black Nova Scotians' decision to emigrate to Sierra Leone. In Nova Scotia they waited years to obtain land that was never forthcoming. They looked upon migration to Sierra Leone as an opportunity to obtain for them in Africa what had been denied in North America. Upon arrival in the colony, promised plots of land again appeared to be a mirage. The Sierra Leone Company promised allotments of land allocations, and when the Nova Scotian migrants did receive allocations, they were smaller than anticipated and often of lots considered "worthless."[35] Neither had all the lots been laid out nor was legal title to land secure.[36] Temne leader King Jimmy also considered land of great importance. Thus ownership and use of land became the central issue in the settlers' relations

[32] Pybus, *Epic Journeys, 86.*
[33] Pybus, *Epic Journeys,* 148 and Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 125.
[34] Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 28, 32.
[35] Pybus, *Epic Journeys*, 145, 148-49.
[36] Sidbury, *Becoming African in America*, 67, 70, 77.

between the Temne, and it served as a long-standing source of animosity between the two groups. The watering place, an area of great significance to the Temne, was inside the lands King Jimmy had ceded to the colonists. King Jimmy found himself taunted by other tribes for having relinquishing Temme ancestral land. Fearing being seen as weak, King Jimmy demanded tributes from the settlers for their use of the watering hole.[37] The settlers resisted. The elected representatives of the colony appealed to a ship captain, Henry Savage, who conducted a bombardment of the Temne village and then promptly left the area. King Jimmy retaliated and served notice of an impending raid. All but four of the settlers gained safety with local slave traders. The four unlucky settlers who did not escape were sold back into slavery.[38] Black Nova Scotians were accustomed to a predatory relationship between themselves and whites now found themselves subject to exploitive behavior of both whites and local blacks.

The new dynamics of Temne leadership and proximity to African slave traders at Bance Island added to the troubles for security in the colony, as well as the rich irony of black North American migrants being re-enslaved in their African ancestral homelands. The settlers' uncertainty festered in their sanctuary, condemning them to inescapable racial disunity and without the communal harmony they hoped to find in Sierra Leone. The intertwined and complex relationship between the Nova Scotian settlers and the Temne was hardly limited to

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[37] Ibid., 104.

[38] These re-enslaved individuals were likely sought after. They were seasoned to the slave experience and labor demands. They were also aware of paths to freedom so their path is complicated and difficult to uncover.

disputes over land ownership and use. Not only did the Temme use conflict and brutality to recapture blacks for enslavement. They were also the town's neighbors and landlords.[39] Disputes were resolved by capturing black settlers to be sold for enslavement and an agreement allowed for the Africans to send their children to schools in Sierra Leone and to live in homes within the community. The close connections forming between native-born Temme and Nova Scotian settlers led newest members to the community to actively attempt to distinguish themselves from other black settlers. Maroons, liberated Africans and Nova Scotians adopted different carriage, dress, and language. Most Nova Scotians were enslaved men and women who fled America under the promise of freedom during the American Revolution. Their carriage if not their complexions, helped distinguish them in this increasingly multi-racial society.[40]

The structure of leadership of the colony reminded the settlers of their lack of liberty in Nova Scotia. Despite the exuberance of a new venture allowing for black autonomy and economic freedom, this experiment quickly turned sour under the reality of the continued control of overseers and overlords over black labor. The Sierra Leone Company funded the excursion to Africa after failed attempts by Granville Sharp under the St. George Bay Company, a corporate body organized after the Sierra Leone Act. This body of investors established the new African colonies in the same fashion as most English colonies, headed by whites with minor help from ethnic Africans. The London directors of Sierra Leone encouraged its abolitionist

[39] Pybus, *Epic Journeys* 140.
[40] Walker, *The Black Loyalists,* xxii.

supporters to continue to believe in a possible utopia and that the only path to success meant continued trade with African slavers rather than supporting colonial self-sufficiency and political autonomy.[41] The higher leadership closed to ethnic Africans meant that any opportunity for authority incited bitterness and competition.

In order to distinguish themselves from the other black settlers the Nova Scotians insured that they had different carriage, dress, and language and could be easily recognized by complexion.[42] Nova Scotians envisioned their position above that of other black settlers and the Temne. They saw themselves as equal to the colony's whites and strived to insure this equality. Their vision was not shared by the organizers of Sierra Leone, and they clashed with Nova Scotians who believed themselves to be free and equal subjects of England.[43] Nova Scotians did not see themselves as similar to London's blacks who they viewed as needy children suckling at the energy of the kingdom. They held equal contempt for the leader of the colonies and wrote letters to London equating colonial rule with that of slave masters.[44]

By 1800 matters in the colony had reached a fever pitch that propelled the colonial leaders to send for reinforcements.[45] Rather than have British soldiers sent to the colony, Jamaican maroons known for the ferocity of their fighting were

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[41] Walker, *The Black Loyalist*, 148.
[42] Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, xxii.
[43] Pybus, *Epic Journeys* 105, 151.
[44] Pybus, *Epic Journeys* 140.
[45] Walker, *The Black Loyalists*, 234; and Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists: Fighting for Emancipation in the War for Independence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 241.

deployed to Sierra Leone.[46] These maroons began to occupy the clerk positions previously enjoyed by black Nova Scotians.[47] White authority from within the colony orchestrated the transition. These whites remained vengeful about the Nova Scotians' demands for liberty. In 1799, the Nova Scotians' displeasure and disillusionment about the colony culminated in an armed attempt to assert their authority over the colony to acquire the liberty they expected. Instead they were beaten back by the experienced maroons of Jamaica, who had recently fought their own war for liberation (Appendix, Figure 16).

The Second Maroon War (1795-96) ended in defeat and transportation off the island for many black Jamaicans. Ironically, when Jamaican maroons found themselves in Sierra Leone, they had a more amicable relationship with the whites in authority they did with other migrant blacks. However, the maroons were not trusting of the British either; they had been removed from Trelawney Town, Jamaica following the Maroon Wars in the 1790s.[48] Maroons came "from an intermixture of several white and black races."[49] Rather than look towards the Black Poor or newly literate members of the Koya Kemne to undermine the position of Nova Scotians, Sierra Leone Company officials looked toward the maroons. The outsider status of the maroons made them a more comfortable ally. Thus the political and economic positon of black Nova Scotians diminished. Resentment against the maroons was high stemming from Nova Scotians' loss of position as well as the daunting

[46] Ibid.
[47] Walker, *The Black Loyalists,* 271.
[48] Walker, *The Black Loyalists,* 8-10.
[49] Henry Sedall, *The Missionary History of Sierra Leone* (Dublin: Trinity College, 1874), 11.

appearance of armed maroons (Appendix, Figure 16). The maroons' intermixture with Europeans alludes to lighter complexions closer to that of those in charge of the colony. This reinforced the animosity between light and darker skinned ethnic Africans and demonstrated the limits of community based on native African origins within the colony.

The maroons who spoke English had previously felt betrayed by the British and fought against them. In Sierra Leone maroons were given authority by British officials, but they found themselves in an unfamiliar and hostile world. Surrounded by people with whom they shared a superficial connection but who feared the maroons' authority, communal bonds between the two groups of blacks were fragile, at best. In short, maroon authority meant displacement of Nova Scotians and London poor. The maroons did not integrate_into either the Nova Scotian or Kemne societies. The communities of the maroons and Nova Scotians remained distinct for decades with very little intermarriage or intimate contact between them.[50] They maintained a separate culture from other ethnic Africans, with separate houses of worship and separate neighborhoods.

After the British outlawing of the slave trade in 1807, slave vessels along the coast of Africa became targets of Royal Navy's efforts to ensure Africans did not endure the horrors of the middle passage.[51] They raided these vessels and

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[50] Walker, *The Black Loyalists,* 382.

[51] *Ibid.*, 156. The implication of the end of the slave trade for Sierra Leone and its influence on attitudes of skin color was that it loosened some of their anxiety about the proximity of slave traders. It also changed the relationship with the Temne. The Temne were aggressively hostile in trade relationships with the native Africans of Sierra Leone. After the abolition of the slave trade some of the heat left their threats because the fear of Temne capture for Atlantic slave trade was not as fierce. This did not mean that threat of re-enslavement did not exist, only that the anxiety about re-

transferred recaptured Africans to Sierra Leone. Many of the Liberated Africans were unfamiliar with this area of Africa. They spoke different languages, were often illiterate, and were of different dress and complexion.[52] They did not mix well with the ethnic Afro-Europeans from Jamaica and Nova Scotia. The liberated men and women were prey for the Temne and this impacted their ability to create common ground with Nova Scotians against the Sierra Leone Company officials. Liberated Africans were initially incorporated in the colony as servants with the Nova Scotians acting as their apprentices and thus were forced to occupy the lowest of the colony's social strata.[53] Seeking to find their way in this new strange society the Liberated Africans made the Nova Scotians their models and began to emulate their dress and language.[54] The Nova Scotians were skilled laborers, preachers and teachers, were educated and moved more easily amongst colonial officials.[55]

The Nova Scotians were the most prominent ethnic African group in the colony until the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 brought an influx of ethnic Africans whose ideals divulged from their own. Liberated Africans learned trades and were offered shelter for one-year terms. Europeans and Nova Scotians believed that they offered more than shelter. "Civilizing" the Liberated Africans was also on the minds of the colonists. As the Secretary of Navy noted, "For they must perceive it is not color alone that gives preponderance but civilization and the blessings of

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enslavement would have likely diminished and did not uniformly effect ethnic Africans the same. Abolition of the slave trade meant an influx of ethnic Africans with darker complexion, who would have greater connection to their rescuers.

[52] *Ibid.*, 368.
[53] *Ibid.*, 276.
[54] *Ibid.*, 322.
[55] Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 148-50.

religion."[56] Although there were whites in the colony of Sierra Leone, the secretary of the Navy's quote in an 1828 letter from Sierra Leone more likely speaks to the hierarchy of complexion in the colony. Who was closest to the political authority was based on familiarity with the British culture and this familiarity was derived from, in part, ethnic African connection/mixed parentage. Maroons' fierceness in combat made them more valuable to the European leaders and suspicious towards the Nova Scotians.

There was long standing animosity and conflict between the maroons and Nova Scotians. It was not solely that the maroons provided the Sierra Leone Company with manpower to forcibly put down the Nova Scotians' attempt to create a free colony. The maroons also sought to usurp black Nova Scotians' positions in the colony. While the maroons could not manage this, the Liberated Africans were able to do so.[57] They adopted the Nova Scotians' culture and eventually usurped the black Nova Scotians' positions. In this the maroons were greatly assisted by the Sierra Leone Company rejecting Nova Scotians for employment. Although in the Americas skin color hierarchy placed lighter skin as superior to darker skin, in Sierra Leone, lighter skin marked colonists, not as a lesser brethren to British

[56] 20th Congress 1st Session, Doc, No. 193, "United States, Samuel L. Southard, and J. Ashmun. 1828. Recaptured Africans. Letter From letter from the Secretary of the Navy," transmitting the information required by a resolution of the House of Representatives, of the 5th instant, in relation to the present condition and probable annual expense, of the United States' Agency for Recaptured Africans on the coast of Africa, &c. &c. : March 12, 1828 (Washington:, D.C.: Gales & Seaton), 15.
[57] Walker, *The Black Loyalists,* 271, 276, 368.

authority but as threats to white authority and thus lighter complexion of Nova Scotians and maroons were ousted from the inner circle of Sierra Leone.[58]

The political and economic stations of the ethnic African settlers of Sierra Leone by the mid-nineteenth century deemphasized the European hierarchy of skin color. In later histories of the colony produced by religious scholars, this pattern was repeated. Officials articulated this through comments on the industriousness of the liberated Africans compared to the lack of this characteristic in both maroons and Nova Scotians.[59]

In Sierra Leone black Nova Scotians gained a limited political and economic liberty that they attempted to expand to full liberty. However, they found that freedom remained precarious. Others, including the Koya Temne, slave traders, and white officials of the Sierra Leone Company, acted to limit the autonomy of ethnic Africans in the colony. When Nova Scotian settlers violently responded to such attempts they found their position in the colony weakened and eventually they found themselves replaced by maroon settlers. The maroons' rise was due in part to their fearlessness in serving to facilitate trade into the interior of Africa.[60] Although the maroons had fought against white British authority in Jamaica the maroons' desire for liberty did not transfer to sympathy for the Nova Scotians. Instead they acted to prevent a free black state. Yet at the same time the maroons

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[58] These ideas deserve further elaboration. The official documents and accounts of the colony provided by white officials such as Clarkson could serve to further support these arguments on how different groups of blacks were viewed. The primary documents concerning these different views came years later from men of the cloth explaining the inability of European Christianity to take root in the colony. Other documents concern the slave trade rather than the peoples of Sierra Leone.
[59] Sedall, *The Missionary History of Sierra Leone*, 11.
[60] Bronwen Everill, *Abolition and Empire in Sierra Leone and Liberia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 37-39.

were also not trusted by company officials and by 1829 the liberated Africans gained higher station in the colony. For supporters of the colony, commerce was an important factor. Ethnic Africans such as Paul Cuffee, Equiano, and Prince Hall believed that by virtue of a shared African ancestry, colonists would smooth trade into the interior of Africa. However Africans' state of undress shocked Daniel Coker and his inability to communicate with respect to Africans made relations with villagers difficult.[61] Coker needed support from other repatriated ethnic Africans for assurance of his own African roots.[62] The Liberated Africans' closer ties to the continent were thus thought to make them ideal for agents of trade despite the conflicts doing so caused.

One observer of the political atmosphere of Sierra Leone observed, "The administration of African affairs is ever passing into new hands in the old country."[63] Decades passed in the colony without maroons, Nova Scotians, London Poor and Liberated Africans becoming Sierra Leoneans. Shared ethnic African roots did not result in a "sense of fellow citizenship, but [instead] mutual distrust reigned supreme."[64] The continued conflict with Nova Scotians, Jamaican maroons' previous conflicts with English settlers and the London Black Poor's lackluster start allowed the Liberated Africans space to assume a greater authority within the colony. Their self-separation from the colony's other blacks was distinct. The recaptured Africans attended school and church as they embraced Christianity and British culture.

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[61] Reed, *Platform for Change*, 193.
[62] *Ibid.*
[63] Ingham, *Sierra Leone: After A Hundred Years*, 206.
[64] *Ibid.* 263.

Sierra Leone's ethnic Africans conducted color relations by choosing to limit their contact with one another. When possible they shielded themselves from other shades of peoples. Although the London Poor, Nova Scotians, Jamaican maroons and liberated Africans possessed a multitude of complexions, their own similarities in color united them first. Seemingly the issue of connection stems from national affiliation rather than color. However, even as time shifted allegiance from places west of Africa, these peoples clung to their older identities in order to separate themselves from other blacks. Each shared common experiences in relationships with the white culture. What differed was color more than creed.

Chapter Six: Images of Colorism

The largest divide in the eighteenth century was neither racial nor national. It was not created by class position or geographical location. While the eighteenth-century Atlantic world was made of those who were free and enslaved, across the British Atlantic the primary marker of identity was skin color. It served as one of the primary demarcations of status among blacks. Simply stated for blacks identity was framed by complexion. Whether free or enslaved blacks were seen to occupy similar positions. Across national, cultural and political identities they shared a physical identity. For many, blacks skin color was the primary if not the only shared connection between them and certain other blacks. Most eighteenth-century peoples experienced a world framed to contain a set identity. Images informed the larger world that such persons of varying shades existed and reminded ethnic Africans of both possibilities and limitations of their skin color. Through an analysis of eighteenth-century black portraiture a more nuanced understanding of the role of skin color can be obtained, including how portraiture performed for a white audience while serving ethnic African interests and objectives.[1]

The images of free eighteenth-century ethnic Africans in art and portraiture offer insights into the nature of black personal identity and its place in the British Atlantic. Olaudah Equiano, Francis Williams, Phillis Wheatley and Rachel Pringle accepted an African reality but differed on what that connection meant. They

[1] The portraits that this analysis is based upon are set out in the Appendix.

straddled a world furnished of others of similar complexions and the people that confined them. Their images provide insight into the indirect discourse on the nature of blackness in the eighteenth century.

Ira Berlin's popular invocation of Atlantic Creoles informs this discussion. Berlin argued that Atlantic Creoles were intermediaries "who by experience or choice, as well as by birth" served as bridges between cultures and societies in the Atlantic, facilitating exchanges between Africa, Europe and at times the Caribbean.[2] The children of mixed parentage who favored their European complexion often facilitated cultural and economic exchange. Skin color designated group position within the large Atlantic world. It also defined position internal to ethnic African communities. Equiano, Francis Williams, Rachel Pringle and Phillis Wheatley were members of a discourse on identity and part of this discourse was based on skin color. The meanings placed on skin color in this discourse was often localized and highly contingent on place.

As the slave trade coercively transported ever-increasing numbers to the Americas, discussions regarding colorism occurred across the Atlantic with debates on blackness continuing into the present. While Berlin classifies individuals of African ancestry who served as cultural mediators as "Atlantic creoles," whites of the time labeled them universally 'African' as fear overrode acknowledgment of ethnic differences. The 'African' title was evocative of negative connotations. To be African was to be ill mannered, uncivilized and socially unimportant. It meant a

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[2] Ira Berlin, "From Creole to African: Atlantic Creoles and the Origins of African-American Society in Mainland North America," *WMQ* 53, no. 2 (Apr. 1996), 254; and Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 17-26.

lack of standing in western society and a lack of intelligence. Most significantly, it meant the potentiality to be enslaved[3]. Thus the use of the identity of 'African' by Phillis Wheatley and Olaudah Equiano was in part ironic. They adopted the title of African to remind the Atlantic world of their foreignness and create expectations of their skin color that they could then deny. Africa in this sense was a badge of hardship used to inspire admiration. Wheatley and Equiano endured and survived and thrived. The discourse Wheatley and Equiano presented was intended to overturn the acts that transformed the slave body into a dehumanized system of value.

Paintings and other visual images of ethnic Africans articulated the invisibility of the African presence even with the obvious difficulty of underplaying the stark differences between black and white skin. Visual depictions of Africans such the portraits of Equiano and Francis Williams served as foils to white English purity, civility and modernity.[4] It was men of white European descent who most often created visual representations of people of ethnic African descent. These men constructed a visage based more on expectations than actuality. The image of Rachel Pringle (Appendix, Figure 11) makes this most evident. Rachel is depicted as a voluptuous and amble bosomed woman with a ready smile and an invitation in her eyes. Her personality is tangible and direct. The image almost works as a sales advertisement for what could be bought in Barbados. Thus Rachel's image was

[3] Charles R. Foy, "Eighteenth-Century Prize Negroes: From Britain to America," *Slavery and Abolition* 31:3 (Sept. 2010): 379-393

[4] "Francis Williams: A Portrait of an Early Black Writer," Victoria and Albert Museum, http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/f/francis-williams-a-portrait-of-an-early-black-writer/ (accessed March 28, 2016).

constructed for the white eye. The portraits of Equiano and Williams as well exuded a consciousness and awareness of preconceptions of their dark skin (Appendix, Figures 9 & 10). In seeking to deny European perceptions of black people, they needed to acknowledge the erroneous assumptions of their civility/humanity and intelligence. The creation of their portraits was filtered through the white imagination of the artists. In their representations, the men appear stoic in Equiano's case and contracted in Williams'.

The Francis Williams image overwhelms the viewer with symbols of wealth, prosperity, civility, and Britishness that Williams needed to integrate himself as a free man within the larger British Atlantic. However, the artist seems to enthusiastically paint him with imperfections as he believed that Williams' vision could only move within certain bounds that reminded the viewer that he was not British. Williams' skin color stands in stark contrast against the whiteness of his wig, while his are limbs elongated and disproportional to his body and to the wealth and intellect displayed in the painting. The paintings suggest black men's places in the larger world as viewed through the eyes of white artists. In the image of Phillis Wheatley (Appendix, Figure 12), the subject appears more mobile than the men. But rather than invite viewers to sexual adventure as Pringle's portrait does, Wheatley's portrait invites intellectual stimulation. Her hand resting on her face in contemplation, she gazes into a distance only visible through imaginings of the viewer. The artist of her visage is thought to be of ethnic African descent. This calls in question the way white Europeans represented people of ethnic African descent as opposed to images created by other blacks. It would seem that Wheatley's image

is both a critique of negative assumptions of black intellectual prowess as well as a symbol for black progress and ingenuity for other ethnic Africans.

In these images it is apparent that blackness and black identity were contingent. They were constructed through gender as the domination of male centered discourse meant that women's voices were often structured as a game of telephone. The artist reinterpreted Rachel's image from pose and posture and superimposed a sexualized intent onto her body. Whether as advertisement for her brothel services or memorabilia of time spent on the island, Rachel's image transferred from its meaning in Barbados to a new meaning in England and across the British Atlantic. This image, like countless reports from European explorers enticed and bewildered by the scarceness of clothes of African women, misinterpreted the nature of ethnic African women.[5] Women were objects of white men's past experiences with little effort placed in understanding the necessity or traditions behind the women's appearance. These perceptions of black women were also honed through geography.

Equiano and Wheatley made claims of being that Williams could not. And black identity, as depicted in these images, was changing and shifting. Race articulated ideas and experiences. Skin color shaped what conversations people could take part in. Simply put, the eighteenth century was important as it was the era when racial ideology and identities became for most whites fixed. For Equiano 'African' was a political identity but not a community. No community existed of

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[5] For example, Thomas Thistlewood assumed that black Jamaican women were sexually available no matter their marital state.

Africans that had distinct needs. Black poor were a people who were black in Africa. They were together but had no shared economic or social status with Equiano. He advocated for them as a symbol of black accomplishment with freedom. He represented the possibilities of freedom for white philanthropists and for ethnic Africans. However, Equiano's intentions were for equality in England, and as altruistic as securing a place of opportunity for poor blacks in England seems, in staying in England after their removal to Sierra Leone, Equiano remained a central ethnic African figure in England and removed the taint of the black poor from the image of black accomplishment. Without the constant reminder of Africans' failings the free blacks remaining in the city could remain unfettered by the negative associations with poorer blacks. His mission to aid ethnic Africans was then two pronged and divided by economic class. When Equiano spoke of his time in Africa he connected himself firmly to his past community: "we live in a country where nature is prodigal ... we have few manusactures... we had a saying amongst us", and so forth.[6] When Equiano refers to his black brethren in Africa he separates himself from them. They are the "poor oppressed Negro" or simply "the black poor."[7] He advocated for them, but his place in white England was secure.

Even while acknowledging both biology and cultural associations as a marker for shared experience, complexion was limited. In the eighteenth century, men and women crossed the color line moving from one racial group to another. Although

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[6] Olaudah Equiano , "The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African" in *Pioneers of the Black Atlantic ed.* Gates and Andrews (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 197-365, 6, 7,14.

[7] Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative,* 340-42, 346.

most often it was ethnic Africans that exposed the porosity of racial classifications some whites did so as well.[8] For most of the seventeenth century the bottom of the social and economic order was shared by poor whites, ethnic Africans and indentured servants. White indentured servants faced the auction block sale for services and although laws restricted their masters' abuse of them often times they were isolated and enforcement against masters for their abuse was, at best, infrequent.[9] Their mistreatment sparked flights to freedom. In Philadelphia early penal reform created a Vagrancy Docket. Men and women outside the prescribed social cultural order were identified and recorded after arrest.[10] However not all men and women's ethnic affiliation was recorded. In the 1796-97 Prison Sentence and Vagrancy Docket, prisoners went unknown allowing them to move from one racial category to another.[11] If an offender was accused of running away from a master or mistress, their enslaved condition was unmentioned.[12] White indentured servants could then claim identity as free whites or free blacks in order to grab hold of freedom.

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[8] Whites continued to pass as whites into the nineteenth century. This practice continues into the present. Martha Sandweiss, *Passing Strange: A Gilded Age Tale of Love Across the Color Line* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 280-283; and Richard Pérez-Peña, "Black or White? A Woman's Story Stirs up a Furor," *New York Times,* June 12, 2015.

[9] Horton and Horton, *In Hope of Liberty,* 41.

[10] G.S Rowe and Billy G Smith, "Prisoners: The Prisoners for Trial Docket and the Vagrancy Docket" in Life in *Early Philadelphia: Documents from the Revolutionary and Early National Periods* ed. Billy Smith, (Philadelphia: Penn State Press, 2010), 58-59.

[11] Simon P. Newman, *Embodied History: The Lives of the Poor in Early Philadelphia,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 46. Newman provides a table that shows the relationship between gender, color and arrest. This table also suggests an opportunity to escape either enslavement or indenture.

[12] Susan Branson, "St. Domingan Refugees in the Philadelphia Community in the 1790s" in *Amerindians Africans Americans: Amerindios Africanos Americanos: Three Papers in Caribbean History,* ed. by Gerald Lafleur (Kingston: University of the West Indies, 1996), 21-35, 28-30.

In the eighteenth century, the realities of black lives were hidden from most European and colonial peoples. Art, more than language, brought new understanding and helped disseminate stereotypes of black bodies. Images both created a movement for black freedom and further entrapped ethnic Africans in bodies of exploitation. The eighteenth-century abolition movement used images to bring the public closer to the savagery of the transatlantic slave. Among the first images used for such purpose was that of the slave ship *Brookes* (Appendix, Figure Seven). The depiction of cramped quarters below deck coupled with testimony from slave ship seamen and narratives from men enshackled aboard these vessels ushered in an abolitionist era that produced empathetic imagery and art such as Josiah Wedgewood's famous "Am I not a Man and Brother" (Appendix, Figure Eight). These images acted as catalysts for reform. Abolitionists did not limit themselves to garnering empathy; they also wanted to engender awe at ethnic Africans' capacity for achievement. Narratives served as a political and societal introduction as well as a record of *bona fides*. The lives and works of Equiano, Banneker, Gronniosaw, and John Marrant along with Wheatley, Rachel Pringle, Ottobah Cugoano and John Jea served as emblems of black achievement for abolition societies.

Former and present enslaved individuals produced narratives in an effort to confront the developing ideology of African biological inferiority. Phillis Wheatley, owned by John and Susanna Wheatley until her masters' death, was a prominent enslaved author. She wrote volumes of poetry that impressed society on both sides of the Atlantic. Her masters accepted invitations to dine with aristocrats on her behalf. She gave responses to major events upon the request of newspapers and

political figures. Wheatley began her life as a slave in Boston, and under the tutelage of the progressive Wheatleys, received instruction in classical studies. In her works she writes of her deliverance from Africa, a "pagan land," and her pursuit of Christ. Literary scholar Vincent Carretta argues that Wheatley was far from accommodating slave society and was not a passive participant in the creation of her African American identity. Instead he suggests that she self-selected an Ethiopian identity in order to claim piety and respect in the British Atlantic.[13] Carretta sees Wheatley as a woman on a sharp edge. Her talents remained cloaked in religious sentiment while her body and skill served abolition arguments but her words continued to paint ethnic Africans as grateful for their enslavement as it brought them the word of God.[14] In the eighteenth century the close association with the color black with sin and evil made references to blackness and skin color evocative of heathen evil. Yet Wheatley's blackness was undeniable. Her every introduction referenced her as a Negress, an African, and an ex-slave. When Wheatley invoked Africa, she did so purposefully, as a reminder of the humanity of all people regardless of skin color. Although among the literate, her voice was the most limited of the four blacks whose images are the subject of this chapter. Unlike Pringle, brashness was not employed by Wheatley as an indorsement of her ability; she lived out of the necessity of demureness. Carretta argues for deeper interrogation of her work for coded meanings of displeasure with the institution of slavery and the general treatment of ethnic Africans. Wheatley's gender constricted

[13] Vincent Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press,2014), 57.
[14] Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley,* 62-63.

her as much as her skin color and caged any deeper public considerations on her relationship to other ethnic Africans and how their identities intersected.

As did Phillis Wheatley, John Jea also engaged literary endeavors to construct and assert black identity. He wrote of his life of enslavement and subsequent liberation. Jea also spoke of black marriage prospects. His narrative reveals the importance of skin color in the black community. Jea's life as a man of God was punctuated by poverty and horrors. He writes of his bewilderment with the murderous insanity displayed by his wife that ended in the death of his child. In John Jea's recollection Elizabeth Jea was extremely pious and melancholy. We link her melancholy to her enslavement. Elizabeth was not free to dispense her labor solely in her husband's household. She was a slave, and rather than work she preferred to spend time praying to the point that her "mistress had been trying to persuade her not to be so religious, for she would make herself melancholy to be so much in the house of God".[15]

Jea laments upon discovering the actions of his wife but visits her frequently after her incarceration in concern for her immortal soul. Elizabeth "was of the Indian color," in contrast to Jea's second wife who he does not describe and his third wife whom we know only had been a resident of Ireland before her marriage to Jea.[16] By making these statements, Jea asks the reader to connect his wife's pious goodness to her skin color and her fall from grace to slavery.

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[15] John Jea, "The Life History and Unparalleled sufferings of John Jea, the African Preacher" in *Pioneers of the Black Atlantic: Five Slave Narratives from the Enlightenment 1772-1815*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and William L Andrews (Washington, D.C: Civitas Counterpoint, 1998), 369-439, 399.
[16] *Ibid.*

Whether the desirability of a mulatto mate was based on clear preference for the individual is not clear from Jea's narrative. In T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes' *Myne Owne Ground*, free blacks are shown as participants in Virginian society with slaves until Bacon's Rebellion. *Myne Owne Ground* makes note that marriage of ethnic Africans was linked to the skin color of their partner. Mulattos, likely ethnic Africans with white European ancestry, were popular partners for free blacks.[17] In white society the benefits of light skin involved legal and social opportunities. Designated mulattoes were placed above darker skinned ethnic Africans. Blacks themselves reinforced the desirability of lighter skin in their marriage choices. Narrative accounts were not the sole representations of the black body and spirit. Eighteenth-century art was peppered with black figures. Most were silent representations of their white owners' wealth (Appendix, Figure 13); visages that hundreds of years later have no name but inspire more speculation than the white faces they were meant to pictorially support. In W. Hogarth's artistic depiction of life of naval men, a lone black figure stands in silent servitude to the jovial interactions of white seamen.[18] His presence reminds the viewer that blacks in this era were both conspicuous and absent. They are resurrected from obscurity despite their intended anonymity. In other portraits, the objective was not to conceal the importance of ethnic Africans.

Equiano represented himself as a British African. His portrait tells that story.

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[17] T.H. Breen and Stephen Innes, *"Myne Owne Ground": Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640-1676* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 83.
[18] W. Hogarth, "Captain Lord G. Graham, 1745" in *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World,* edited by Agnes Lugo-Ortiz, Angela Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 175.

The picture's background lacks the framing devices typically used in an eighteenth-century British portrait; no plantations or ships to indicate the sitter's wealth and status. Instead, the absent of such backgrounds draws the eye to Equiano's two claims of identity. Equiano built his life around proving his equality and insuring space for blacks. In 1786 Equiano became commissary of the Sierra Leone resettlement. The Sierra Leone project for the London Poor was not a success. The sight of ships in harbor awaiting a full load before carrying the souls of Africa away from home was reminiscent of slave traders' ships ushering men women and children into a torturous existence. Even the experience aboard mimicked the Middle Passage.

The conditions aboard the ships taking the London Poor to Sierra Leone were squalid and plagued with famine. Equiano accused the government of misconduct in the treatment of the London Poor.[19] For him the memory of the Middle Passage sustained his credibility as an agitator for abolition. His "Interesting Narrative" places the Middle Passage as a shock to his innocence and trust in the world. Equiano's censure against the treatment of the black poor held a credibility that his opponents attempted to neutralize by reminding the public about his close association with blackness/nefarious character.[20] An admonishment toward Equiano appeared in the *London Gazette*: "Let us hear no more of those black reports . . . they are continued . . . of the dark transactions of a Black will be brought

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[19] Equiano , *The Interesting Narrative*, 348.
[20] Vincent Carretta, *Equiano: Biography of a Self-made Man* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 232.

to light."[21] In this manner his detractors wielded the tools of his *bona fides,* his blackness, to paint him as both ignorant and of suspicious character. His skin color became a weapon against his words. For continued success, he needed to distance himself from this blackness. Instead in his defense he emphasized his image as a British patriot, who was black.[22] In response to the efforts at defaming him and causing a loss to his once pristine reputation, Equiano countered by reinforcing the hardships of the black poor while distancing himself from them as people.

The existence of free blacks in slave holding societies relied upon maintaining the appearance of assimilation while constantly vigilant against appearing to believe themselves the complete equal to whites.[23] Equiano's construction of an authoritative voice against the slave trade was reduced by his more active involvement in black/white relations. For Equiano there was no hiding his blackness, he took aims to mitigate his skin colors negative reactions in more firmly aligning himself with white society. He remained in England and married an Englishwoman, with whom he bore two children. He was tied to Britain more closely than ever and under the world's gaze his loyalties shifted. Other free ethnic Africans living in slave societies needed to give visible allegiance to white society.

In Jamaica, Francis Williams, a black tutor, aimed to create an image of wisdom and worldliness. In the painting he stands selling his knowledge to potential students. His 1745 portrait (Appendix, Figure Ten) depicts his full body

[21] Carretta, *Equiano,* 233.
[22] Ibid., 323.
[23] Sumptuary laws, as discussed earlier in this paper, worked to limit the assimilation of free blacks by insuring they were visibly distinguished form other white citizens.

garbed in the clothes of the European world. Williams displays his authority and connections of the Atlantic world to people in Jamaica. The globe and open window draws viewers beyond Williams, suggesting this educator could open doors beyond the Jamaican world. Unlike Equiano Williams did not produce a written narrative to establish his authority. His authority instead resided in his body. Williams was born free in a world where ethnic Africans overwhelmingly occupied the ranks of the enslaved. Williams' creation of this image of a knowledgeable and prosperous black contrasts sharply with the expected spectacle of black performance or the more numerous images of blacks typically depicted as inarticulate and/or uneducated.[24]

For both Williams and Equiano, African identity was troubling. Equiano claimed the title of African. His narrative's title, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself,* invokes Equiano's claim to literacy and his African ancestry. As a man of literacy he presents himself as an authority offering information to those without knowledge of letters. He is above other ethnic Africans in that regard, yet he makes no denial of his origins. He includes three names, three titles, three identities. His narrative and inclusion of *the African* places his Africa roots as central to his identity.[25] However Equiano maintains his names from the European world. He states that he is both and resides at all times in both spheres. The darkness of his complexion legitimizes

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[24] See, e.g., Anonymous, "Captain Sir Robert Lawrie's servant, Tom" c. 1745, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, United Kingdom, PAH4939, http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/144886.html (accessed March 28, 2016).
[25] See, Chapter One Footnote 28.

his role as an African and abolitionist. His visage marked him as someone who understands the plight of slaves intimately and his carriage and articulation separated him from other Africans. Equiano's attire, of wig and coat, stood in contrast to his skin color but was necessary to bestow credibility within the British Empire to his words and position. Francis Williams disrupts common assumptions regarding English attire in his painting as well. He intentionally opposes restrictions on his identity by appearing the complete English gentleman. Williams's position in Jamaica depended on his separation from African identity. His body did not serve to legitimize his claim for intellectual authority. Instead, dark complexion was seen by many as invalidating Williams' claim to civilized society. Williams needed props to assert his connection to a European and non-African world, while Equiano made the African world the core of his identity.

Their assertions about themselves as English men with undeniable African origins challenged the expectations of an ethnic Africans' relationship with the empire. They were men who could make the masses uncomfortable. However, position in white society relied upon an image of one as a British gentlemen. For the public viewing them as men of intellect, their color distinguished them from other promising and exceptional men of the era. Williams' and Equiano's darkness of color was necessary to illuminate their abilities. Even as they recognized the need to maintain an image that reflected the culture of their oppressors, they could not move into this sphere that demanded absolute distinctions in class. Their people who shared their racial descent were silenced by their complexion, and through Williams and Equiano's their voices are recovered.

Both Equiano and Williams were Atlanticists, and each were symbols for others as well as engaging in a second level of discourse based on their own self-perceptions. They produced the work needed to mitigate the negatives of their skin color. Women engaging in Atlantic economic exchange were also aware of their African image. The image of Rachel Pringle makes clear that for black women the exchange was often sexual. Pringle was a well-known brothel madam in Barbados. Her story is retold in the nineteenth-century novel, *Creoleana*.[26] Rachel Pringle spent her life being exploited by European men, beginning with her father. In the 1796 image of Rachel as an older woman, she invites with a smirk the viewer to look past her to the sale of a beautiful younger and lighter woman. In this way she reminded viewers that exploited women were likely the daughters or sisters of the men that visited the brothel. Lighter skin could allow for avenue to economic and political power or it could be a mark of sexual debasement.

In the separate culture that white men created on the far off islands of the British Empire, white women were scarce. Fair skinned ethnic African women provided an outlet for sexual desire that was more visually familiar to the world men left behind; they were visually more similar in appearance despite their hair and physiognomy but without the virtue that restricted more open sexual alliance in England. Brothel owners exploited the need for familiarity and an exotic adventure. In island hotels and restaurants, the services of women of fair color were preferred

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[26] J. W. Orderson, *Creoleana, Or, Social and Domestic Scenes and Incidents in Barbados in Days of Yore: And The Fair Barbadian and Faithful Black, Or, a Cure for the Gout* (New York: Macmillan Classics, 1842); and Marisa J Fuentes, "Power and Historical Figuring: Rachael Pringle Polgreen's Troubled Archive," *Gender & History,* Vol. 22, No. 3 (November 2010): 564–584.

over their darker skinned contemporaries.[27] Rachel Pringle understood this world she inhabited and the desires of men. Like other owners of service establishments, she favored lighter skinned women. Rachel Pringle recognized the potential to exploit women of lighter complexions. Rachel as a former slave and aging madam gained a limited degree of agency at the expense of other women. As a woman in Barbados, she would be aware of women in need of employment and men seeking female sexual companions. Undeniably in Barbados, men sought the company of women of fairer complexions. As a woman of darker complexion she was the face of the business. Her face reminded customers of the exoticism of Barbados, while the women in the brothel showed a closer connection to white customers' familiar European world. Rachel commanded both men and women. As an Atlantic Creole she controlled the exchange in a world where darker skin usually placed a person as the object rather than the entrepreneur. The creole mulatto woman in the image was also not without some measure of power. In the choice of her partners, she determined those that would yield the greatest profits. As a woman who is desired for her complexion – both white men in the picture ogle her and not Rachel -- she had the opportunity to command more for her body than most dark-skinned prostitutes.

Pringle had little control over the image of her body; there is no evidence that she commissioned this picture or had any say in how she was portrayed. In contrast, Phillis Wheatley likely had some idea of how her image should represent both her

[27] Hillary Beckles, *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 143-144.

own interests and those of abolitionists. Although, as was Rachel Pringle, she is shown seated, and Phillis does not acknowledge the viewer and instead focuses on her inner contemplations. In her 1773 portrait Wheatley replaces sexual enticement with intellectual stimulation as the central focus of how she was portrayed. Wheatley's engraving came into being at the suggestion of her patron, the Countess of Huntingdon.[28] Like the images circulating of Equiano, it was intended to give *bona fides* to her words and invoke amazement of her genius—this contrasting starkly in whites' minds with her skin color. The task of creating Wheatley's image fell to a young ethnic African artist of Boston, Scipio Moorhead. Moorhead, was a slave who was lauded for his artistic genius. Phillis Wheatley, herself had written a poem in praise of his skills.[29] In his creation of her identity, Phillis is depicted as a pious and contemplative young woman of considerable intellect and insight. Their connection was not discussed in the press marketing her works. It seems today an oversight that could have yielded greater sales. However, Scipio's background gives a clue to the possible exclusion. Moorhead was claimed for the household of John Moorhead a wealthy Bostonian, while still a child.[30] His mother likely faced sexual exploitation during the Middle Passage, and he bore features too fair for inclusion in the abolition rhetoric for freedom for black Africans. Wheatley was a woman of much darker complexion than the women who lived in brothels in Barbados. This directed her further away from a sexualized black image. Narratives and images

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[28] Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley,* 45.
[29] Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley,* 45, 100.
[30] Slauter, "Looking for Scipio Moorhead: An *African Painter* in Revolutionary North America" in *Slave Portraiture in the Atlantic World,* ed by Agnes Lugo-Ortiz and Angela Rosenthal, 89-116, 91.

may have been used to counter negative image of blacks, but they still acknowledged exceptions based on skin color which served to both elevate their subjects and divide the ethnic African community.

Conclusion

Identity complicated racial classifications in the eighteenth century as ethnic Africans moved throughout the Atlantic world. In Africa, skin color shaped relationships; often lighter skinned Africans were viewed with suspicion but the classifications were static. People were contained by geography and recognized their positions. As ethnic Africans were coercively transported out of Africa the meaning of their skin color came to be defined based upon European beliefs. In order to claim an identity of their own, they distorted European views of their skin. Legal codes and black institutions allowed space for ethic Africans to assert their own view of the color hierarchy. The decision of who to include and exclude impacted which slaves ran away, how black churches were organized, marriage of blacks, and was often defined by skin shades.

The search for individual place in an ever changing space bounded by sometimes static or slow moving intellectual changes is at the core of human existence. Why are we here, what should we do, who am I? These are questions at the heart of every great narrative. In historical analysis they direct personal attachments to the past. The attention to a gendered history that incorporates the LGBT experience, the histories that acknowledge women's role in the world and the attention to subaltern histories that remind that events happen at all levels and for many people in varying ways are now part of the common arguments in scholarly debates. In African-American history the drive to rediscover peoples long denied the freedom of visibility and make their "who am I's" resoundingly answered, create a varied and refreshing historiography. The eighteenth-century monologues build

upon the Civil Rights' Movement mission to grant liberty to formerly powerless. But just as the movement is largely remembered as a southern experience, the ethnic African experience is thought of as a singular communion of identities only divergent in geographical space. Yet the space that ethnic Africans occupied differed beyond age and gender. Complexion warped perceptions and opportunities.

Skin color complicates that which is at the core of human bonding. The ability to recognize some piece, however small, of oneself in another knits people together. The inability to connect shaped ethnic relations for centuries. Complexion altered relations within ethnic groups as well. The skin-color paradigm as a tool to explore identity and relations in history is gaining traction in the academic discourse. Recently, the economist Marcos A. Rangel posited that skin color effects parent child relations. He is not alone in identifying skin color as force capable of unknitting community and familial ties. Martin and Margo Wilson's *The Truth About Cinderella* finds that perceived differences between parent and child can predict likelihood of child abuse.[1] Most common researchers study the correlation between skin color and economic mobility. According to Timothy Diette in "Skin Shade Stratification," black women in the United States experience unemployment and discrimination more deeply when they are of darker complexion.[2] Complexion also

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[1] Martin Daly and Margo Wilson, *The Truth About Cinderella: A Darwinian View of Parental Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
[2] Timothy Diette, Arthur Goldsmith, Darrick Hamilton and William Darity, "Skin Shade Stratification and the Psychological Cost of Unemployment: Is there a Gradient for Black Females?," *The Review of Black Political Economy,* Vol. 42 (Jan. 2014), 155-177.

influences punishment. Jill Viglione and others suggest that skin tone is an important determinant for prison time of African American females.[3]

Investigating the intricacies and politics of complexion within an ethnic group allows for a deeper and expansive narrative of the past. Although black and African American are used interchangeably in many points in history they can be considered separate groups that overlap. These complex identities engage individuals in a process or racial categorizations not just from black to white but black to black and as a result some ethnic Africans excluded from blackness.

Under the slave system, some masters instituted polices of control that placed lighter skinned ethnic Africans in positions above those who were darker. The complexities of skin tone bias permeates literary works on the nineteenth and twentieth century. Zora Neal Hurston, Nella Larsen, Dael Orlandersmith, and W. E. B. Dubois, to name a few, challenged common notions of identity by making connections between skin color and disunity in the black community.[4] This system is largely analyzed for the nineteenth century but ignores the experience of ethnic Africans before America became what Ira Berlin calls a slave society. In a society with slaves what accounts for the effective complexion caste is the bias of ethnic Africans themselves. These were determined in the absence of white influence. Africans in Africa, experienced road blocks to identity based on skin color. Colorism

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[3] Jill Viglione, Lance Hannon, and Robert DeFina, "The impact of light skin on prison time for black female offenders", *Social Science Journal,* Jan 2011 Vol. 4, 250-258.

[4] Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (New York: JB Lippincott, 1937); Nella Larsen, *Passing* (New York: Knopf, 1929); *Yellowman* by Dael Orlandersmith, McCarter Theatre Princeton New Jersey , 2002; and W.E.B. Dubois, *Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: AC McClurg, 1903).

existed in India, Asia, and Africa before European colonialism.[5] Colonialism reinforced existing ideas about skin color, it did not create them. Ethnic Africans across the British Atlantic continued to use them. Even in forming community expectations of leaders came from those of lighter complexion.

Colorism as a concept is examined more from social than historical dimension. Sociologists look at the impact on psyche of ethnic Africans in the twentieth and twenty- first centuries. Recent documentaries by filmmakers Bill Duke and D. Channsin Berry explore bias against darker skin within the American black community and examine conflicts and experiences of lighter skinned ethnic Africans.[6] Decades before filmmaker Spike Lee brought issues of skin color bias and the reality of intra-racial prejudice into the popular discourse.[7] Still this discourse has been ahistorical and often demonstrated a biological perspective (as if biology is separate from history). These people write on colorism as a present experience from the perspective of cultural community without fully investigating the past creation and dissemination of ideas of the skin color rhetoric. Most accept the premise that slave masters and white planter elites forced previously connected peoples to fracture by the shades of their skin.

The focus of such present day cultural discourse is largely on twentieth century events and makes only cursory interrogation of how colorism today might

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[5] For examples on colorism predating colonialism in India and Asia see: Joanne L. Rondilla and Paul R. Spickard, *Is Lighter Better?: Skin-tone Discrimination Among Asian Americans* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 9; and Kimberly Jade Norwood, *Color Matters: Skin Tone Bias and the Myth of a Postracial America* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 11.
[6] *Dark Girls*, DVD, directed by Bill Duke and D. Channsin Berry (2011; USA); and *Light Girls*, OWN Network, February 19 2012, directed by Bill Duke, www.oprah.com/app/light-girls.html (accessed March 28, 2016).
[7] *School Daze*, DVD, directed by Spike Lee, (USA: Columbia Pictures, 1988).

relate to that of previous centuries. Yet it was in the eighteenth century that racial categories were formalized. References to America as a post-racial society opens the avenue to explore identity unity and disunity beyond racial categorization. It is in this atmosphere that research of skin color offers new avenues for exploration.

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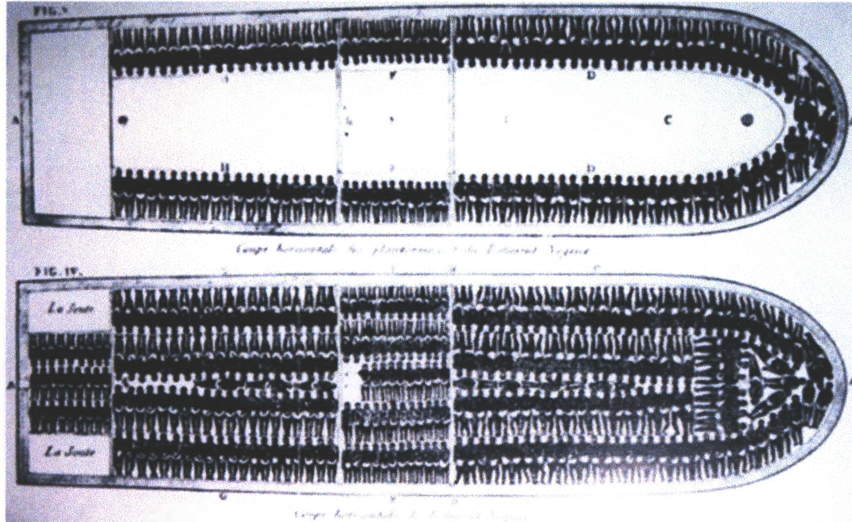

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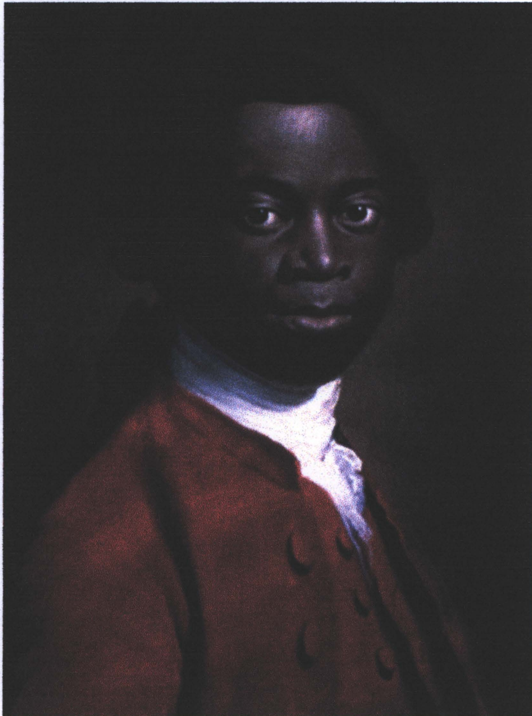

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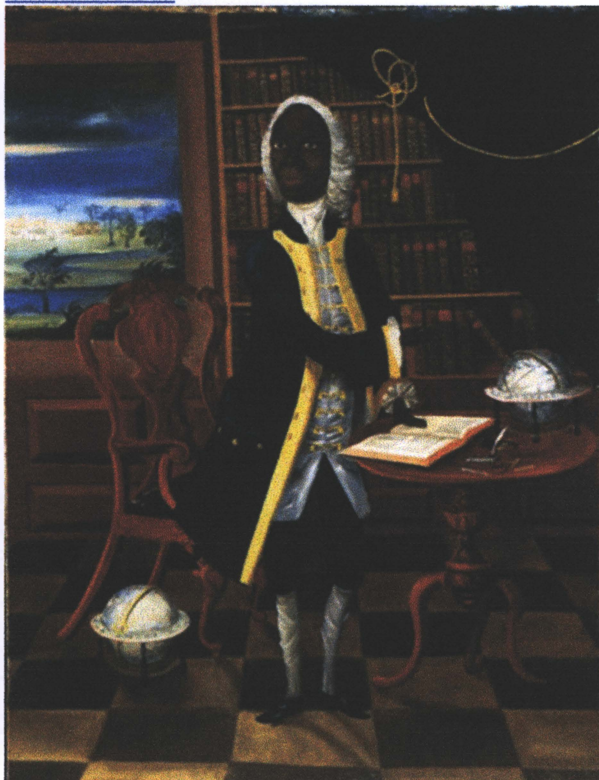

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