Old Age, Resistance, and Surviving Slavery in the US South.

Solomon Northup, a free black man from New York state, was lured to Washington, D.C. by two white men in 1841 on the pretence of a job. Instead, they drugged him and when he awoke, he was in the pen of the notorious slave trader, William H. Williams.[1] Northup was beaten into accepting a new name and a new life as the enslaved man "Platt," eventually ending up in Louisiana on the plantation of Edwin Epps. Northup sought escape by writing a letter to his friends in the North, trusting a local white man to deliver a letter explaining his condition and seeking their aid. He was betrayed, and only avoided punishment by exploiting his enslaver's paranoia that this "poor" white man was attempting to trick him.[2] Despite avoiding a whipping, Northup was left devastated at this turn of events. His dream of escape ended, Northup recalled how hope which 'sprang up in my heart' was thus 'crushed and blighted.' After this failure, Northup feared that he would remain enslaved until death: 'The summer of my life was passing away; I felt I was growing prematurely old; that a few years more, and toil, and grief, and the poisonous miasma of the swamps would accomplish their work on me—would consign me to the grave's embrace, to moulder and be forgotten.'[3]

In describing his fears of remaining enslaved forever, Northup applied a language of ageing and embodied time. He noted how the harsh conditions of slavery would see him pass prematurely through the "seasons" of life and send him resignedly to the grave. The use of ageing in the context of such concerns allows us to complicate the dominant historical position relating to the perceptions of elders in slave communities as well as to consider the complex intergenerational negotiations between, and tensions among, enslaved people as they navigated a life in the slave South.[4] They allow us to think about how ideas on age and agency were constructed in a comparative and contextual fashion. Northup's anguish at the thought of living and dying enslaved revealed his fear, but perhaps also a sense of pity at the

thought of growing old in slavery. His depiction of old age as a remorseless period of decline, moreover, was not just applied metaphorically. Northup noted how he lived on the Bayou Boeuf plantation with two older slaves named Phebe and Abram. Phebe was a 'sly old creature' who navigated the system in a cunning fashion. 'Old' Abram, while recognised as 'a sort of patriarch among us,' cut a more forlorn figure.[5]

The language of "patriarch" which Northup used to describe Abram perhaps spoke to wider expectations of reverence for elders that historians have typically emphasised when discussing enslaved community norms. Frederick Douglass's statement that 'there is not to be found, among any people, a more rigid enforcement of the law of respect to elders' is commonly repeated, and reflected upon, in historical work on age and slavery.[6] In the only full-length monograph on elderly slaves in the US, for example, Stacey Close argued that 'old male slaves earned enormous respect from younger slaves for their contributions to the slave community through childcare, oratorical skills, health care, procurement of food, provision of luxuries, and by religious and social leadership.'[7] More recently, Daina Ramey Berry has shown how enslaved elders – women and men – were revered by their fellow slaves on account of their 'soul values.'[8] Enslavers may have neglected or devalued older slaves, but the slave community did not.

Despite recognising the significance of such scholarship, enslaved elders held more problematic positions in slave communities. Intergenerational tension could shape networks of solidarity and personal relationships among the enslaved; younger slaves could look to their elders and view them as people who had survived, but had also failed to successfully resist their enslavement. A dichotomy of resistance/survival is problematic, to be sure, but these comparative assessments were applied by contemporaries and affected personal and political relationships in and out of slavery. Fugitive authors who utilised the pitiful figure of the aged enslaved to press for immediate action against slavery made implicit or explicit

judgments about the actions and identities of those who lived and died enslaved. The complex life stories of the aged were subsumed within a teleological narrative bound by the celebration of fight and flight; the inherent subjectivity of the narratives as a source meant the aged rarely spoke for themselves. Instead, enslaved elders were employed as foil characters whose suffering served to move the protagonist to action. Northup, for example, clearly believed the ravages of time had impacted upon Abram and sought to avoid his fate. There was a firm emphasis on decline and loss: Abram 'had been athletic, and more keen and powerful than the generality of his race, but now his eye had become dim, and his natural force abated.' Abram was weakened by a life in chains, and he suffered accordingly:

> He would forget where he left his hat, or his hoe, or his basket; and then would the old man be laughed at, if Epps was absent, and whipped if he was present… So was he perplexed continually, and sighed to think that he was growing aged and going to decay.[9]

Northup cared about and valued Abram. However, the overwhelming image was of a man to be pitied and a fate to be avoided. When Northup wrote of his concerns of growing old and dying in slavery, it is hard not to imagine he was looking at Abram and fearing a similar end. Northup, famously, did escape his bondage. He acknowledged, however, that he left a community behind, notably naming Patsey and his elders, Phebe and 'old' Abram. They were hidden 'from [Northup's] eyes forever.' They were likewise hidden from ours.[10]

Northup's vision of age-related decline, his horror at the thought of growing old in bondage, and his depiction of Abram as decaying before his eyes suggests that enslaved elders – and the idea of growing old in slavery – could be viewed with a mixture of pity and fear from within the quarters. Black activists could look to older slaves and see people whose

paths were to be avoided rather than as people to be emulated. A close examination of how elders were portrayed in the context of resistance, focusing particularly on fight or flight, underlines the contingent nature of solidarity in slavery and shows the fractures and fissures that developed among people navigating an oppressive environment.[11] It reveals how the strategies of resistance most commonly identified and celebrated by fugitive authors and their allies were depicted and understood as being shaped by age and time spent in slavery and suggests the implications of this at a personal and political level.

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Rather than focus on chronology and numerical values when assessing age, this article instead shows how the ageing process served as a metaphor and symbol for enslaved people, and that "old age" was commonly understood in functional and comparative terms.[12] There was a fluidity to contemporaries' use of terms such as old or elder that is reflected in this article, underscoring the extent to which these descriptors and identities were understood to be shaped by context and could become a site of contest. Indeed, the hardships of slavery were commonly said to have sped up the effects of ageing, detaching old age as a concept from a consistent chronological mooring. Fugitive author Jourden Banks, for example, noted how upon his arrival on a cotton plantation in Alabama, he saw 'some young men who were not more than nineteen or twenty who looked like men forty or fifty years old.'[13] Josiah Henson made similar observations. Henson recounted how on his journey to New Orleans where he faced sale, they stopped off at a Vicksburg plantation. This was where 'some of [his] old companions' were now living and Henson was devastated by what he saw: 'It was the saddest visit I ever made. Four years in an unhealthy climate and under a hard master had done the ordinary work of twenty. Their cheeks were literally caved in with starvation and disease… they said they looked forward to death as their only deliverance.'[14]

Contemporaries thus commonly described the ageing process in a relational and functional context as opposed to following a consistent chronology. Alongside descriptions of people who had reached a certain age, others were said to have 'looked' or acted old, as in Banks' description: enslaved people were commonly depicted as being 'worn out' or 'prematurely aged,' to use Henson's phrasing. These people may not have been old in chronological years, but their functional and comparative age was a point of concern in relation to body, health, and self.[15] Henson, in fact, became convinced of the need to escape having observed the premature ageing of his former companions:

> If this is to be my lot, I cannot survive it long. I am not so young as those whose wretched condition I have but just seen, and if it has brought them to such a condition, it will soon kill me. I am to be taken to a place and a condition where my life is to be shortened, as well as made more wretched.[16]

This article focuses, then, on how and why contemporaries applied a language of age and embodied time in slavery to explain and frame people's actions and behaviours. The intention is to reveal the intergenerational fractures and disputes that developed in slave communities and stress the impact of these in relation to our understandings of resistance, solidarity, and survival.

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Statistics from the colonial era through to the 1860s reveal that long-term flight in the American South was overwhelmingly the preserve of 'young men in their teens and twenties.' In their quantitative analysis of 2,000 runaway adverts between 1790-1816 and 1838-1860, John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger recorded that 78 percent of runaways in the first period were boys and men between the ages of 13 and 29, with only a

small drop to 74 percent in the later period. Those 40 and older only made up 5 percent in the early period and 6 percent in the later period. Similar demographic trends were evident in the breakdown of enslaved women who fled, as fugitives in their teens and twenties 'represented more than two-thirds of the women in both periods.'[17] Older slaves – men and women – might absent themselves for short periods of time and engage in truancy, but long-term flight was clearly affected by age.[18] The age and gendered dynamics of long-term flight were clearly recognised by antislavery contemporaries, with Samuel Ringgold Ward who escaped from Maryland, succinctly noting: 'fugitives coming to Canada are, the majority of them, young, single men. Many more young than old, many more male than female, come.'[19] Scholars have long addressed these gendered dimensions to resistance. This article, however, emphasises the need to foreground age as a category of analysis and to explore how these distinctions were understood and framed by contemporaries, with age operating alongside, but also occasionally superseding, gendered ideals and expectations.

These demographic trends can possibly be explained by the shifting responsibilities of enslaved people as they grew older and had families, but also by the practical difficulties and physical hardships which both long-term flight and truancy occasioned on the body and mind.[20] Fugitive authors like Andrew Jackson stressed the fortitude – physical and mental – needed to endure flight, asking his reader to:

> Imagine yourself on the road, flying for liberty among your enemies, alone, unarmed, trembling at every step with the greatest anxiety and with fear. Sleeping during the day alone in the wilderness, exposed to wild beasts and serpents; hungry, lame, and almost spirit broken--starting up from a disturbed sleep, with frightful dreams of arrest and torture. Hunted and chased during the day by men of no heart, and with

> ferocious dogs, trained to the pursuit--the faint gleams of freedom now shooting up, and then lost in darkness--hope and despair constantly filling your heart.[21]

Successful flight required stamina and strength, and these were qualities antebellum Americans, black and white, associated with youth. In contrast, bodily powers were expected to decline as people aged. In *Exum v. Canty,* 1857, the Mississippi Court of Appeals and Errors accepted that 'feebleness and infirmity are the natural consequences of age,' while another antebellum writer described ageing as a process of 'sinking under the decays of nature.'[22] Black Americans commonly spoke to and through the same discourse, with William Walker positioning the ageing process as a return to the dependency of infancy: 'Life begins and ends in dreams, from the sleeping smile in the cradle to the babbling over the death bed as worn out nature sinks into the last sleep of all.'[23] A loss of bodily strength and stamina associated with ageing – whether premature or "normal" – could have serious repercussions for people hoping to flee bondage.

Whether evading patrollers and hunting dogs, avoiding the wildlife of the swamps and bayous, or attempting to survive on limited food, water, or in the face of bad weather, fight or flight was taxing on all those who attempted it. As a result, it was commonly associated with the physical strength, endurance, and even the optimism of youth. When Lula Jackson of Kentucky recalled an 'old man what the n[***]r dogs chased and et the legs near off,' she explicitly compared this with her mother's success and relative power while in the prime of life: 'She said she was chased by them bloody hounds and she jus' picked up a club and laid they skull open.'[24] This inversion of the commonly masculinized narrative of fight and flight suggests that enslaved people understood age was a vector of power that could upend cultural scripts of gendered resistance. Some enslaved people who recalled bondage clearly believed the reduced endurance associated with old age limited the chance of success. Archy Moore

explained how he only survived the brutal punishment meted out after a failed runaway effort – and had the desire to try again – on account of this energy: 'My youth and the vigor of my constitution had carried me through it.'[25] Ambrose Douglas likewise explained to his WPA interviewer that his plans for escape centred around his youthful idealism: '"I was a young man," he continue[d], "and didn't see why I should be anybody's slave."' The inverse of this statement, and the clear inference, was that time and accumulated suffering risked leading to resignation instead. Douglas, in fact, described how he was 'so scared' of his next enslaver that he 'didn't ever run away from his place.' Thankfully, however, 'the war was near over then' and Douglas 'was as free as I am now.'[26]

Moving to episodes of direct violence, fugitive slave narratives and abolitionist accounts frequently associated physical resistance with youth and manhood in particular.[27] Indeed, a significant number of enslaved men's narratives portray violence against their oppressors as a transitional gendered moment in their lives: a moment where the protagonist recognised he was no longer a slave or a boy but a man instead. Frederick Douglass famously used violence to demonstrate 'how a slave was made a man,' but he was not alone.[28] Jourden Banks likewise established that resistance proved masculine identity and strength as well as a concomitant emasculation of his enemies. In his recollections of heroically beating his overseer and enslaver, he described how he left them 'literally crawling about on the ground like a pair of ricketty boys.' Banks further established the gendered ramifications of resistance by telling the shocked crowd of enslaved men around him: 'Farewell, men. I have done my work. I am going to leave. Look out for yourselves. If you undertake to do anything, do it like men. If I am brought back, it will be when I am dead.'[29] The discursive framing of his actions as proof of manhood, while his assailants were instead reduced to "boys," speaks further to the connections drawn between age, identity, and resistance.

If historians have generally agreed about the connection of youth or "prime" adulthood with both fight and flight, they have been less direct in assessing how enslaved elders could be held up negatively by those who conducted such activities and constructed resistant identities. Scholars have generally argued that, while less likely to flee themselves, elders served as guides in planning, offered advice and encouragement – both moral and practical – and generally strengthened the solidarity of the slave community.[30] Such examples are clearly visible in contemporary recollections. Moses Roper, for example, described how after he fled from his plantation, he found 'an old slave hut' where he met an 'old man' of around 70 or 80. He informed this man that he 'had a very bad master, from whom I had run away; and asked him, if he could give me something to eat.' This man 'cheerfully' gave him the only food he had.[31] David Holmes, interviewed in England after his escape, noted how two older slaves cared for him after his separation from natal kin. Their love and compassion extended to aiding him in flight:

> The old woman began to get me ready for a start. She gave me a big corn-loaf she had just got baked, and a little rum and tobacco, and when all was quite still she and the old man set me outside, and told me to run for it. We cried a good deal, but we couldn't stop long about it.[32]

Occasionally, such assistance extended beyond food and moral support. William Robinson noted how an 'old woman eighty years old' showed him the best route to avoid the prowling overseers and provided guidance as to 'how to decoy the blood hounds' by rubbing 'onions on the bottoms of my feet and run, and after running a certain distance to stop and apply the onions again, then when I came to a large bushy tree, to rub the trunk as high up as I could reach, then climb the tree.'[33] In the narrative of Jamie Parker's flight from bondage,

the author likewise emphasised how ‘a white-headed old man’ was instrumental to the success of the young runaways. ‘Old Archy’ took them in, clothed and fed them, before guiding them to a safe passage.[34] Archy even used the expectations that old age equated with infirmity to trick a band of suspicious patrollers, who simply couldn’t envision an elderly man as a potential rebel.[35] When one of their party was captured, Archy stressed a willingness to sacrifice his own safety to ensure the young runaways had the chance of freedom. This was a chance he no longer perceived as viable for himself:

> “I must take your place, for I am an old man, and never expect to get free. If you stay here until you follow the star again, you may be free, but if you turn back”--the old man concluded the sentence by an ominous shake of the head.[36]

Archy recognised he was unable to escape himself on account of his age and wider responsibilities, but his assistance was vital to the runaways from beginning to end. The heroic framing of such actions in the narrative spoke to broader abolitionist messages relating to the necessity of collective resistance in the face of oppression.

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Notwithstanding these accounts of support, respect, and even the personal heroism of enslaved elders, older slaves could be portrayed as a hindrance when planning escape – whether through fear, resignation, or weakness – and be positioned as people who had to be left behind in the quest for freedom. In the course of planning the failed Camden uprising in South Carolina, 1816, ‘old Jack’ expressed doubts about the rebel’s chances of success but was informed his opinion barely mattered: ‘they did not want old people to take any part in it.’[37] The reports of an abortive insurrection in North Carolina took such disregard further:

'they were to kill the White men & old negro women & take the white women for Wives & the young negro Girls.'[38] We must, of course, recognise that courtroom testimony was recorded under duress, and that such information more often than not corresponds with what the torturer wants to hear.[39] While remaining cautious as to the truth of such claims, the fact they were recorded as *plausible* speaks to a perception of elders as unlikely rebels among both enslaver and enslaved. Charlie Davenport witnessed the consequences of intergenerational insurrectionary disputes, describing to his WPA interviewer how a planned uprising in Natchez failed after encountering resistance from plantation elders. Jupiter, the leader, 'harangued de ole folks but dey wouldn't budge,' and he was forced to flee after an overseer saw them arguing. He did not get far: 'My granny tole me next day dat dey kotch him hidin in a bayou en hung him on a limb.'[40] The risks of rebellion were starkly revealed here; Davenport's recollections reinforce the rationale behind the exclusion of individuals like "Old Jack" but also validate his scepticism of success. Such examples suggest further how resistance and survival could be framed by enslaved people as separate and even – for those with long memories of failed uprisings – mutually exclusive.

Abolitionist narrators, fugitive slaves, and occasionally the elders themselves asserted that advancing age had diminished people's will or capacity to resist. John Passmore Edwards recorded that an 'old slave' who still 'had a shadow of the man in him' bravely fought back against his enslaver's abuse.[41] This shadow, however, was not enough to prevail in the contest. In James Redpath's account of his travels in the South, he spoke to men who claimed they were unable to escape due to their age. One man in North Carolina noted that he had always hoped to be free, but that it was impossible now: 'Well, massa, you's a funny man – dat am a fact. I's *would* like to be free; but it's no use, massa – it's no use. I's a slave, and I's been one sixty years, and I 'specs to die in bondage.' Another man, aged 37, explained to Redpath that he no longer even contemplated escape, utilising a language of embodied time

to explain his reluctance: ‘I wouldn’t run the risk now of trying to escape. It’s hardly so much an object, sir, when a man’s turned the hill. Besides, my family. I might be sold away from them, which I won’t be, if I don’t try to run away – leastways till I’m old.’ This man clearly recognised that he was not chronologically “old.” However, the language of having ‘turned the hill’ denotes a sense of inexorable decline associated with ageing.[42] To return to Northup’s phrasing, the “summer” of this man’s life had passed away and – in his mind – the possibilities of escape had gone with it.

A degree of fatalism, even resignation to enslavement, could thus be understood and articulated through a binary discourse of youth/old age. Frances Kemble recounted how on her ex-husband’s rice plantation in Georgia, a ‘young’ woman attempted flight but was captured and beaten. The woman longed for escape, albeit only temporarily, but her grandmother’s long memories invoked a degree of fatalism: ‘“taint no use – what use n[***]r run away? – de swamp all round; dey get in dar, an’ dey starve to def, or de snakes eat ‘em up – massas’s n[***]r, dey don’t neber run away.”’[43] Such fatalism was not always received sympathetically by those who yet hoped for freedom. Jermain Loguen, who escaped slavery from Tennessee in his early twenties, continually stressed the need for outright resistance in his fugitive account. He also bluntly recorded his resentment at the inaction of the elders he found himself travelling with before sale. Lougen clearly equated “old” here with acquiescence: ‘the older slaves were habituated to their imprisonment and severe exercise under the lash of the driver, and had looked their wrongs and prospects so long in the face, that they were drilled into a state of sad contentment.’[44] Loguen, however, was still capable of flight and after escaping bondage marshalled his own experiences into the forceful promotion of direct action in the fight against slavery. Fugitive slaves, himself included, ‘present[ed] a sample of a strong and hardy and bold race--whose manly qualities the severest tyranny cannot subdue,’ with the clear steer that these were the people to applaud and elevate

over those who had been 'drilled into a state of sad contentment.' According to Lougen, 'slavery can endure no longer than its victims are submissive and servile.'[45] In this framing, enslaved people had a personal and collective responsibility to resist rather than "submit" to oppression. They had to do so, moreover, before the march of time robbed them of the vigour required for resistance.

Former slaves who had not personally escaped bondage also connected resistance with the energy of youth. Others stressed the laudable nature of resistance as compared to accommodation and articulated these as comparative strategies marked by age and experience. Minta Maria Miller described how she responded with fury to the abuse she received on the auction block. When explaining why she – unlike those sold alongside her – was willing to take such a risk, she recalled: 'I felt mad. You see I was young then, too young to know better.'[46] Miller intimated that she grew to acknowledge the power imbalance that limited the space for resistance, but others were less generous in their assessments of others. Ryer Emmanuel of South Carolina remembered being scornful about her mother's seeming passivity: 'I remember, we chillum used to set down en ax Ma all bout dis end at. Say, "Ma, yunnah couldn' do nothin?" She say, "No, white people had us in slavery time."' Emmanuel confidently asserted that she would not have accepted her mother's fate and instead would have taken the rebel's route in adulthood: 'if I had been big enough to get whip in slavery time, I know I would have been dead cause I would have been obliged to fight dem back en dey would kill folks for dat in dem days.'[47] Lucretia Alexander, another WPA interviewee, however, revealed how such an attitude might be worn down over time. Alexander's father 'wouldn't take nothin' from his oppressors while in his prime but he could not fight forever. His final overseer – 'Bad man' Phipps – took advantage of his declining powers as he aged: 'My father was an old man when Phipps was an overseer and wasn't able to fight much

then.'[48] Alexander understood the impossibility of fighting against time itself and underscored how age and embodied time shaped resistant actions and identities in bondage.

Fugitive authors and ex-slaves could, therefore, associate the effects of ageing in slavery with fatalism and use this to explain – but also cast judgment on – any seeming rejection of resistance from their older peers. After Frederick Douglass and his 'band of brothers' were captured following their escape attempt, he was accosted by the elderly mother of one of his group. She did not applaud him in his efforts:

> The lady made the following parting address to me, looking and pointing her bony finger at me. "You devil! you yellow devil! It was you that put it into the heads of Henry and John to run away. But for you, you long legged yellow devil, Henry and John would never have thought of running away."

This woman's desire to protect her son speaks to the complex co-existence of different networks of support within slave communities. To keep a family together – albeit subject to the capricious will of enslavers – might necessitate rejecting fight or flight. This woman clearly felt the runaways made the wrong choice and her response suggests an understanding of the incompatibility of some elements of resistance with survival, whether at a personal, familial, or communal level. Douglass, however, gave her short shrift: 'I gave the lady a look, which called forth a scream of mingled wrath and terror, as she slammed the kitchen door, and went in, leaving me, with the rest, in hands as harsh as her own broken voice.' The references to 'bony finger' and 'broken voice' speak to common signifiers of old age; the earlier framing of Douglass's resistant group as being made up of 'five young men, guilty of no crime, save that of preferring liberty to a life of bondage,' suggests the connections

contemporaries drew between age, resistance, and survival in slavery as well as a sense of whose actions need be applauded and acted upon.[49]

A lack of support – perceived or real – might cause tension in the community. More problematic, however, were those occasions when enslaved elders were considered by their peers as having so resigned themselves to their condition that they would betray rebels and resistors. George, a runaway from Mississippi, dealt harshly with a man who caught him returning to the plantation for supplies, with his animus suggesting a fear of treachery. George beat 'Old Frank… so severely that tis thought he can't live.' Their enslaver was forced to take '5 pieces of bone out of his head,' and such an assault had lasting impact. A month later, Eliza Magruder wrote how 'poor Old Uncle Frank seems to be rather desponding [sic].'[50] One former slave interviewed by the WPA in the 1930s explained how he and his brother sought escape during the Civil War but that an 'an old slave man… tried to dissuade us from running away.' This man had seemingly accommodated himself to his condition, telling the brothers 'that Mars' Bill was our friend and that we never had to want for anything.' The runaways rejected his arguments and continued on their way, but they clearly feared his acquiescence extended beyond words. "Charlie," in fact, recommended they pick up the pace in case the 'old man… would tell them which way we went.' Charlie did not explain his reasoning to his brother because he feared such betrayal would lead to retribution: 'I didn't let on that I was thinking this until we left because Jeff was mighty fiery and he might have got suspicious of the old man and done him dirt with his axe.'[51]

Occasionally, runaways and rebels were correct in viewing elders as a danger. In 1792, Toney, an enslaved man 'advanced in years,' informed on a conspiracy of slaves to run away.[52] Local whites sought to reward Toney with manumission. When Jordan attempted to steal meat from his enslaver's smokehouse in Isle of Wight County, Virginia, it was 'the old negro woman' who oversaw the site that first alerted the enslaver, leading to his capture and

punishment.[53] Elders were, in fact, sometimes deliberately tasked with such surveillance by their enslavers, with an expectation that a separation from the main body of workers – whether real or imagined – might encourage a lack of solidarity. Others believed trusted elders were better able to convince (or coerce) their fellow slaves to remain on the plantation. Sometimes these trustees were praised for their actions by family members. Robert Prout, enslaved in Alabama and Texas, noted that 'Daddy was a ole man, and Mawster Barton made him a sort of leader among de slaves,' while Lindsey Faucette of North Carolina explained that her enslaver made 'Uncle Whitted de overseer kase he wuz one of de oldest slaves he had an' a good n[***]r.'[54] While subject to the caprice of their enslavers, some enslaved elders likely believed holding disciplinary roles provided a degree of security and that this was a safer option to outright resistance.[55]

This strategy for survival, however, was rarely celebrated by rebels and runaways who encountered aged trustees. Charles Ball recorded his annoyance at how, after being recaptured following his escape, he was 'put under the charge of an old African negro, who was instructed to give immediate information, if I attempted to leave the field.'[56] Peter Smith, who escaped slavery from Tennessee, initially believed that 'young slaves were not to be trusted – that they were more apt to betray the wanderer' and thus deliberately 'chose the older ones for favors.' His views were likely altered after betrayal by 'an old colored man' whom he had asked for food. This was likely not the first time the older man had deceived runaways, as his enslaver trusted him to guard Smith overnight. It was only by exploiting this old man's inability to keep awake at his post that Smith was able to escape.[57] The positive depiction of Smith's vigour and strength compared with the image of an elderly man falling asleep at his station indicates how age was understood by contemporaries as shaping the dynamics of resistance to slavery.

In a similar fashion, William Grimes noted how his efforts to escape slavery in Virginia were frustrated by older slaves in trustee roles. He was – as in the case of Smith – able to escape on account of their relative debility. When making his plans, Grimes confided in 'old George' that he was planning on escaping. Rather than applaud his endeavours, George 'immediately repaired to the house of the overseer and informed him of my intention to run away in the morning.' Grimes was then guarded overnight by 'old Daniel.' The fact his enslaver's overseer was known as 'old Voluntine' suggests a deliberate use of older slaves in trustee roles and a sense they could be relied upon to enforce orders on the plantation. Throughout his night in captivity, Grimes pleaded with 'Old Daniel' to set him free. He refused, but when Grimes saw an opportunity, he seized it: 'I gave a jump, and Daniel after me, but my step was as light as the snow flake.' Grimes was young and fleet of foot, but the old man was not: 'the last glimpse I had of Daniel showed him prostrate over a log.'[58] As in Smith's account, the serious promotion of resistance over accommodation in the narrative was accompanied with a tragi-comical image of youth triumphing over age. Both accounts suggest that intergenerational tension – and a lack of support from elders – was a factor that enslaved people considered when planning fight or flight.

Enslaved fugitives commonly noted, in fact, how they identified allies and established plans for escape in small groups. On occasion, fugitive authors made direct reference to older slaves who refused to leave, bemoaning their choices or using them as cautionary tales. In his preface to Jourden Bank's fugitive narrative, James Pennington explicitly compared Bank's actions in flight to those of his parents and established a clear hierarchy between having survived slavery and actively fighting it:

> This young man loved his parents; but at an early age his spirit revolted at the idea of ending his days in the condition of his mother, or in slavery. This aversion to the

> condition of slavery grew with his growth and strengthened with his strength, until like a giant he broke his chains, and sought and found his way to a free country.[59]

Banks undoubtedly loved his parents. He refused, however, to share their fate and grow old in chains, and this choice was applauded by his abolitionist allies. Harriet Tubman, the famed rebel and leader of runaway bands *into* the South, eventually rescued her parents from this same outcome. Her initial flight was similarly occasioned by the fear that she would grow to accept bondage as her parents had: 'She saw the hopeless grief of the poor old mother and the silent despair of the aged father, and already she began to revolve in her mind the question, "Why should such things be?" "Is there no deliverance for my people?"' Tubman took flight before it was too late and left without informing her parents out of fear their distress would hinder her escape: 'the old woman was of a most impulsive disposition, and her cries and lamentations would have made known to all within hearing Harriet's intended escape.'[60] In both instances the aged parents were cast as the foil to the hopeful young rebel. Such depictions suggest again the necessity of integrating age alongside gender when exploring resistance and enslaved family dynamics.

An emphasis on comparative vigour – even courage – as the province of the young was evident in William O' Neal's representation of his attempted flight from Louisiana. O' Neal explained how, aged only 15, to be 'free was the ambition of [his] life.' He believed, however, that as 'he was only a boy,' he needed an experienced guide: 'he must have a confederate older than himself.' O' Neal thought he had identified the ideal co-conspirator in Russ, a 'tall and square-shouldered' man of 32. Despite initially thinking he needed the wisdom of an older confederate, O' Neal took the lead and clearly envisioned himself as the leader. He directly connected his confidence here to his relative youth:

> No thought of failure had entered his mind. Does not the poet say: "In the bright lexicon of youth, which Fate reserves for a brighter manhood, there is no such word as fail." He believed that the thought of freedom was as sweet to Russ as it was to him, and never doubted that Saturday night would find him ready to go. Having indomitable courage himself, he was ready to judge Russ by the same standard.

Russ, however, failed to show up the first night they had planned to escape. He repeated this until O' Neal lost confidence in him entirely, with Russ's "failure" to accept the risks of fight and flight occasioning no sympathy from O' Neal: 'The last interview was a most stormy one, and ended by William telling Russ that he had played the craven, and that he could have no further confidence in such a man… With this comment we will drop Russ into that oblivion which his cowardice so richly deserves.'[61] The word "fail" was, apparently, understood by the older man and O' Neal condemned him for it.

Ex-slaves who detailed how elders counselled patience or submission thus crafted a comparative assessment of enslaved peoples' actions in navigating their oppression. James Curry managed to escape from slavery in North Carolina, but, when later explaining his actions in the antislavery paper *The Liberator*, noted that others in his neighbourhood had consciously rejected this path. Curry recalled how the enslaved people and the wider community had heard via the "grapevine" that Martin Van Buren, if elected President, would 'give all the slaves their freedom,' and that this led to 'great rejoicing.' One elderly slave declared that freedom would now be granted: 'One old man, who was a Christian, came and told us, that now, all we had got to do, was, as Moses commanded the children of Israel on the shore of the Red Sea, "to stand still and see the salvation of God."' Curry was unconvinced by this passive stance and was proven right in his suspicions: 'Mr. Van Buren was elected, but he gave no freedom to the slaves.' Curry was unwilling to wait for freedom

granted and stressed the need for agency and activism instead. He expected his readers to understand and applaud his choices: 'I firmly resolved that I would no longer be a slave. I would now escape or die in the attempt. They might shoot me down if they chose, but I would not live a slave.'[62] In making resistance a choice, and in elevating his own actions in taking flight, Curry applied a hierarchal assessment of enslaved people's responses to bondage. Curry did not explicitly bemoan the old man's belief in waiting for freedom, but he clearly did not view such a path as being likely to succeed and instead positioned overt resistance as the active choice worthy of applause.

In some fugitive narratives, the authors directly explained that the consequences of growing old in slavery served as a warning to younger enslaved people about their own possible fates, and in this way precipitated their plans to escape. James Adams escaped from Virginia at age 17. Despite claiming to have not been treated badly *yet*, Adams 'had seen older men treated worse than a horse or a hog ought to be treated; so, seeing what I was coming to, I wished to get away.'[63] In such accounts, enslaved elders served not only as real examples of suffering and pain, but also as part of people's subjective self-fashioning in the context of resistance and in the broader political calculus for abolitionists. The suffering elder was regarded with sympathy but was ultimately left behind. Jourden Banks, for example, noted how his new overseer in Alabama deliberately used 'two of the old hands' to demonstrate his power. Banks noted with pity but perhaps also a degree of disdain, that they did not even need restraining before abuse: 'These men were so completely cowed, that they did not need to be tied at all when flogged.' The men's powerlessness was both personal and political: by using their ill-treatment as the precursor to his own triumphant fight and flight, Banks was suggesting to his readers that this fate could, and perhaps should, be avoided by those who would 'act like men.'[64]

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Personal and political tensions relating to resistance were thus sometimes framed as generational conflict in slave communities. Some fugitives recalled that elders had explicitly counselled against resistance by offering their knowledge of punishment, betrayal, and defeat for fugitives and rebels. The aim was to convince their loved ones to avoid such a dangerous path, and such arguments were often tragically accurate. The language used by the protagonists, however, frequently implied regret, even shame, over such counsel and elevated resistance over accommodation by associating the former with courage and vigour and the latter with weakness and infirmity.

These negative depictions cut across lines of gender and suggest that enslaved people understood the process of ageing as something that would unsettle and undercut gendered identities, values, and even family dynamics. Andrew Jackson, who escaped from Kentucky, clearly loved and valued his grandfather. However, he also explained how his elder (unsuccessfully) counselled Jackson to accept bondage, telling his grandson: '"you cannot better yourself; you will be taken and killed or sold; you are now in good standing in the church, and to runaway and be taken will ruin you."' Jackson acknowledged the brute force of slavery in shaping such a belief, but he utterly rejected his grandfather's view and revealed the pity, rather than respect, he held for his elder: 'This is the nature of slavery… Yea, all self-respect must be thrown away.'[65] In the abolitionist narrative describing the attempts of an enslaved woman named Dinah to avoid the sale of her child, the author applauded this woman's spirited resistance in comparison to her elders. Her grandmother, however, was not so firm and assisted the enslaver in separating mother from child. In the eyes of the author, such submission was accounted for by her long memories of slavery, the 'chilling effects of age,' and her attendant resignation:

> But the grandmother, who had felt keenly her own sorrows early in life, through the chilling effects of age in part, but still more from long experience of the hopelessness of all resistance, was able now, without having a muscle of her face disturbed, or shedding a single tear, with her withered hands to deck for the auction-block the child who, for ten years, had been like a dancing sunbeam in that lowly household.[66]

In the eyes of these narrators, both ex-slave and abolitionist, the window for successful resistance, already limited by the brute force of enslavers, only narrowed further as the sands of time ran out. The aged had lost their chance, in these renditions, and nothing could turn back time. The personal tragedy of their submission, moreover, was compounded by a refusal or inability to support others in their resistance. In these depictions enslaved elders – claims of respect notwithstanding – were held up as objects of pity and people whose fates could, and even should, be avoided.

The role Harriet Jacobs's grandmother, Molly Horniblow, played in supporting and protecting Jacobs from abuse is well known by historians of slavery. Horniblow had, in fact, gained notoriety by having 'once chased a white gentleman with a loaded pistol, because he insulted one of her daughters.'[67] She was also depicted by her family members as someone who had reconciled herself to slavery existing and imparting such a message to the children. John Jacobs, for example, noted Horniblow's 'meekness,' while Harriet Jacobs recalled her overall message of resignation: 'Most earnestly did she strive to make us feel that it was the will of God: that He had seen fit to place us under such circumstances; and though it seemed hard, we ought to pray for contentment.' Harriet and John acknowledged their grandmother's beliefs were determined by a 'beautiful faith, coming from a mother who could not call her children her own.' However, they were personally unwilling to accept this fate and ultimately 'condemned it.'[68] When it came to more specific plans for flight, Jacobs's grandmother

likewise served as a foil to resistance. Horniblow's memories of her youngest son Benjamin's failed runaway attempt left scars that shaped her repudiation of resistance, notwithstanding his eventual escape from bondage:

> she was strongly opposed to her children's undertaking any such project, and counselled against it… She had not forgotten poor Benjamin's sufferings, and she was afraid that if another child tried to escape, he would have a similar or a worse fate.

While Jacobs could not think of anything 'more dreadful than my present life,' her grandmother frequently counselled patience and submission to bondage, if not to specific abuses from enslavers.[69]

Memories of older family members actively counselling against resistance were also recounted by former slaves interviewed by the WPA. Molly Reynolds of Louisiana noted how the older slaves on the plantation looked only to death on account of their sufferings. Rather than attempt flight, 'some the old ones say we have to bear all, 'cause that all we can do. Some say they was glad to the time they's dead, 'cause they'd rather rot in the ground than have the beatin's.'[70] Austin Grant revealed that his elderly grandfather's advice was not to runaway but, instead to 'work, work and work hard. You know how you hate to be whipped, so work hard!'[71] Martin Jackson of Texas recalled how his father went beyond advising acquiescence, and applied moral pressure to keep him from escaping enslavement: 'I spent most of my time planning and thinking of running away. I could done it easy, but my old father used to say, "No use running from bad to worse, hunting better."' Jackson explained how such advice ultimately worked on him: 'I think I really was afraid to run away, because I thought my conscience would haunt me. My father knew I felt this way and he'd rub my fears in deeper.'[72]

In some instances, enslaved men and women who attempted escape believed their responsibilities to older family members or the wider community were too great to escape, noting their fears that to leave would be to abandon them to misery or death. Such claims belie the proslavery refrain that enslaved people received care from "cradle-to-grave." Historians commonly note how childcare and parental responsibilities hindered fight or flight, particularly for enslaved women, or stress how elders played important roles in providing for and protecting children. It is commonplace, for example, to see Horniblow's admonition to Jacobs – 'Nobody respects a mother who forsakes her child' – in work on gender and enslaved resistance.[73] Comparatively less attention, however, has been paid to how elders might use their own advanced age to pressure people into remaining enslaved and the intergenerational tension this might occasion. Jacobs recalled her grandmother's sustained efforts here:

> Linda, do you want to kill your old grandmother? Do you mean to leave your little, helpless children? I am old now, and cannot do for your babies as I once did for you.… If you go, you will make me miserable the short time I have to live. You would be taken and brought back, and your sufferings would be dreadful. Remember poor Benjamin. Do give it up, Linda. Try to bear a little longer. Things may turn out better than we expect.

Such pleadings worked, for some time. Jacobs noted how her 'courage failed,' on account 'of the sorrow I should bring on that faithful, loving old heart. I promised that I would try longer, and that I would take nothing out of her house without her knowledge.'[74]

Pressure was even applied on Horniblow's behalf by some of her friends in the community. A 'faithful friend' informed Jacobs: 'Don't run away, Linda. Your grandmother

is all bowed down wid trouble now.' The reference to 'bowed down' spoke to familiar metaphors of ageing and bodily decay. Her grandmother 'had an intense sympathy for runaways', but 'she had known too much of the cruelties inflicted on those who were captured' and felt unwilling to support such actions. After seven years hiding in an attic, however, Jacobs eventually realised her window for permanent escape was closing and fled with the support of the community. She finally received the reluctant blessing of her grandmother, but her final message nonetheless contained a warning about Jacobs's likely dire fate. Horniblow provided Jacobs with money, insisting, 'while her tears were falling fast, that I should take the whole. "You may be sick among strangers," she said, "and they would send you to the poorhouse to die."' This final message underscored Horniblow's love for Jacobs and reinforced her status as a respected elder. The language also suggests, however, that Jacobs saw the older woman's negative response as inevitable given her age and position: 'Ah, that good grandmother!'[75]

Conclusion

Historians have done important work in highlighting the solidarity of enslaved people in the face of tremendous violence as well as in extending our understandings of what constituted resistance considering the overwhelming power of enslavers. There remains a risk, however, that in expanding our definitions to incorporate diverse, even conflicting responses to slavery, we underestimate the tensions and disagreements enslaved people had over how to respond to oppression. In neglecting to explore the judgments enslaved people made about one another's actions and choices when navigating a life in bondage – both positive and negative – we flatten the necessarily complex relationships forged in slavery. We also minimise the significance of the dynamic and overlapping identities enslaved people constructed and understate the competing values that could complicate social dynamics in slave communities.

Whether stressing the harsh punishments that awaited potential rebels, recalling the tragic fates of previous runaways and resistors, or actively counselling against violence or escape, enslaved elders could be viewed as realistic truth-tellers of the horrors of slavery. They could, however, be portrayed by their peers who pushed for fight or flight in a negative light and be employed as symbols of resignation and defeat. These were people who had *survived* slavery but were not seen to have successfully escaped it. This distinction mattered for contemporaries: age operated as a vector of power in slave communities and in the broader politics and cultures of resistance.

Many of the representations discussed here clearly served a rhetorical purpose for fugitives and antislavery activists. Behind such representations – and rarely granted the opportunity to speak directly – were real people whose pain serves as a stark reminder of the horrors of slavery. Notwithstanding the sympathy embedded in this discourse, the personal trauma of the aged became a necessary tool of antislavery activists pressing for direct action. The aged had lost their chance and could not turn back time, but it was not too late for others who should do all they could to avoid such a fate. The negative depictions and recollections of elders in the context of resistance speak to the complex and contingent relationships enslaved people developed in slavery but also to very real suffering and pain. Enslaved people who were viewed as being unable or unwilling to resist after a lifetime of exploitation could be represented by their peers with a mixture of sadness, support, shame, fear, and even disdain. Rather than view elders as people to follow, respect, or revere, enslaved and formerly enslaved people sometimes understood and interacted with them as people whose choices and paths were to be avoided at all costs. Enslaved elders might be portrayed by their peers as people who deserved support and respect on account of their age, but this respect could be predicated on pity, not parity.

[1] Further information on Williams can be found in: Jeff Forret, *William's Gang: A Notorious Slave Trader and his Cargo of Black Convicts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

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[2] On class and slavery, see: Timothy J. Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001); Jeff Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins: Slaves and Poor Whites in the Antebellum Southern Countryside* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006); Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[3] Solomon Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853* (Auburn: Derby & Miller, 1853), 234-5. All slave narratives were sourced from: *Documenting the American South: North American Slave Narratives*, https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/texts.html.

[4] The literature on solidarity is broad, but significant examples include: John Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972); Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976). Important revisions include: Brenda Stevenson, *Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Anthony Kaye, *Joining Places: Slave*

Neighborhoods in the Old South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Jeff Forret, *Slave Against Slave: Plantation Violence in the Old South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015). Influential work which foregrounds collective resistance in a nuanced fashion includes: Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Sergio Lussana, *My Brother Slaves: Friendship, Masculinity, and Resistance in the Antebellum South* (University Press of Kentucky, 2016); Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved from Womb to Grave in the Building of the Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017).

[5] Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 186-87.

[6] Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom: Part I.—Life as a Slave. Part II—Life as Freeman* (New York: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 69.

[7] Stacey Close, *Elderly Slaves of the Plantation South* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 26.

[8] Berry, *The Price for their Pound of Flesh*, 131, 147. Material cited in note 4 generally emphasises respect for elders, with Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, containing a short sub-chapter on the topic (519-23). More specific work on the aged enslaved includes: Leslie Pollard, "Aging and Slavery: A Gerontological Perspective," *Journal of Negro History*, 66.3 (1981), 228–234; Herbert C. Covey and Paul T. Lockman Jr., 'Narrative References to Older African Americans Living in Slavery,' *Social Science Journal*, 33.1 (1996), 23-37; Dorothy Smith Ruiz, *Amazing Grace: African American Grandmothers as Caregivers and Conveyors of Traditional Values* (Westport CT: Praeger 2004), 1–13; Berry, *Price for their Pound of Flesh*.

[9] Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 187.

[10] Northup, *Twelve Years a Slave*, 308.

[11] While recognising the significance of more subtle acts of dissidence and cultural survival, fight and flight were clearly understood by contemporaries as resistance, with attendant legal, political, social, and cultural significance. As the Georgia Supreme Court ruled when justifying the murder of a runaway who fought back against his pursuer: 'This slave was in a state of revolt, as every slave is when in open and forcible resistance to lawful authority.' *Hart v. Powell,* 18, Ga. 635 (1855), at 641. On debates over what constitutes resistance, as well as the politics of such depictions, see: James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Camp, *Closer to Freedom*; William Dusinberre, *Strategies for Survival: Recollections of Bondage in Antebellum Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011); Lussana, *My Brother Slaves*; Kellie Carter Jackson, *Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020).

[12] Outstanding work on the demographic violence of slavery can be found in Berry, *Price for their Pound of Flesh*. While white Americans might position "old age" at between 50-60, Berry argues that age 40 was considered "old" for enslaved people. Census information from 1840 to 1860 shows approximately 85 percent of the US slave population were under the age of 40. For a breakdown of this data, see: David Doddington, '"Old Fellows": Age, Identity, and Solidarity in Slave Communities of the Antebellum South,' *Journal of Global Slavery* 3.3 (2018), 286-312.

[13] James W. C. Pennington, *A Narrative of Events of the Life of J.H. Banks, an Escaped Slave, from the Cotton State, Alabama, in America* (Liverpool: M. Rourke, 1861), 49.

[14] Josiah Henson, *"Uncle Tom's Story of His Life." An Autobiography of the Rev. Josiah Henson (Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom")…* (London: Christian Age Office, 1876), 67.

[15] On chronological functional, and relational readings of old age, see: Paul Johnson and Pat Thane (Eds.), *Old Age: From Antiquity to Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1998); Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Steven Mintz, 'Reflections on Age as a Category of Analysis,' *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth*, 1.1 (Winter, 2008), 90-94; David G. Troyansky, *Aging in World History* (New York; London: Routledge, 2016); Corinne T. Field and Nicholas L. Syrett (Eds.), 'Chronological Age: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,' (Roundtable) *American Historical Review*, 125.2 (2020), essays from 371-459.

[16] Henson, *"Uncle Tom's Story of His Life,"* 69-70.

[17] John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), statistics at 209-213.

[18] On truancy, see: Camp, *Closer to Freedom*.

[19] Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-Slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England* (London: John Snow, 35, Paternoster Row, 1855), 151.

[20] See: Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 210-13. On the gendered pressures enslaved women faced, see: Wilma King, '"Suffer with them till death": Slave Women and their Children in Nineteenth-Century America,' in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Eds.), *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 147-169; Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women:*

Reproduction and Labor in New World Slavery (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 166-196; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 35-60.

[21] Andrew Jackson, *Narrative and Writings of Andrew Jackson, of Kentucky; Containing an Account of His Birth, and Twenty-Six Years of His Life While a Slave…* (Syracuse: Daily and Weekly Star Office, 1847), 12-13.

[22] *Exum v. Canty*, 34 Miss. 533 (1857), at 548; Nathaniel Emmons, *The Works of Nathanael Emmons, D.D., Late Pastor of the Church in Franklin, Mass., with a Memoir of His Life*, Vol. II (Boston: Crocker & Brewster, 1842), 497. Histories of aging in America include: W.A. Achenbaum, *Old Age in the New Land: The American Experience since 1790* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Thomas Cole, *The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Ageing in America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Susan Ottoway, L. Botelho, K. Kittredge, *Power and Poverty: Old Age in the Pre-Industrial Past* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press,, 2002); Corinne T. Field, *The Struggle for Equal Adulthood: Gender, Race, Age, and the Fight for Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

[23] William Walker, *Buried Alive (Behind Prison Walls) for a Quarter of a Century: Life of William Walker* (Saginaw, Mich.: Friedman & Hynan, 1892), 36.

[24] George P. Rawick (Ed.), *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, 5.4 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1972), 191.

[25] Richard Hildreth, *The Slave: or Memoirs of Archy Moore. Vol. I* (Boston: John H. Eastburn, 1836), 89.

[26] Rawick (Ed.), *American Slave*, 17, 102.

[27] On historiographical tensions relating to the gendering of violence, see: Deborah Gray White, *Arn't I A Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W.W. Norton

& Company, 1999 [1985]), 62-91; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*; Sarah Roth, *Gender and Race in Antebellum Popular Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[28] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself* (Boston: Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), 65–66.

[29] Pennington, *A Narrative of Events of the Life of J.H. Banks*, 63.

[30] Franklin and Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves*, 67-71; Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 47-50; Close, *Elderly Slaves*, 34-36, 99-101; Covey and Lockman, 'Narrative References to Older African Americans,' 31-32; Berry, *Price for their Pound of Flesh*, 147; Lussana, *My Brother Slaves*, 35, 136, 142-3.

[31] Moses Roper, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper, from American Slavery* (Philadelphia, 1838), 65.

[32] John Blassingame (Ed.), *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977), 297-8.

[33] William H. Robinson, *From Log Cabin to the Pulpit, or, Fifteen Years in Slavery* (Eau Clair, Wis.: James H. Tifft, 1913), 60-61.

[34] Emily Catharine Pierson, *Jamie Parker, the Fugitive* (Hartford: Brockett, Fuller and Co., 1851), 107-11, 108.

[35] Pierson, *Jamie Parker, the Fugitive*, 152-57.

[36] Pierson, *Jamie Parker, the Fugitive*, 135.

[37] Court of Magistrates and Freeholders, Trial Papers, #20, L28225, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina. On the conspiracy, see: Lacy Ford, *Deliver Us From Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 174-179.

[38] Slavery Papers, Conspiracy, 1802, Private Collections: 1629 – Slave Collection, 1748-1856, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina (NCDAH).

[39] On insurrectionary testimony, see, for example: Michael P. Johnson, 'Denmark Vesey and His Co-Conspirators,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58.4 (October 2001), 915-976; 'Forum: The Making of a Slave Conspiracy, Part 2,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 59.1 (January 2002), 135-202.

[40] George P. Rawick (Ed.), *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Supplement, Series 1*, 7.2 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 569-570.

[41] John Passmore Edwards, *Uncle Tom's Companions: Or, Facts Stranger Than Fiction. A Supplement to Uncle Tom's Cabin: Being Startling Incidents in the Lives of Celebrated Fugitive Slaves* (London: Edwards and Co., 1852), 57.

[42] James Redpath, *The Roving Editor: Or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1859), 46, 40-41.

[43] Frances Ann Kemble, *Journal of A Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984 [New York, 1863]), 175.

[44] Jermain Wesley Loguen, *The Rev. J. W. Loguen, as a Slave and as a Freeman. A Narrative of Real Life* (Syracuse, N. Y.: J. G. K. Truair & Co., 1859), 73.

[45] Loguen, *The Rev. J. W. Loguen*, 122, 241-2.

[46] Rawick (Ed.), *American Slave*, 5.3, 86.

[47] Rawick (Ed.), *American Slave*, 2.2, 25.

[48] Rawick (Ed.), *American Slave*, 8.1, 37-8.

[49] Douglass, *My Bondage, My Freedom*, 294-5.

[50] June 3, 1857 and June 4, 1857, Eliza L. Magruder Diary, Typescript, 233-44, 248, Mss. 654, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, La.

[51] Rawick (Ed.), *American Slave, Ser. 2, 11*, 115.

[52] Pasquotank County, Records of Slaves and Free Persons of Color, 1733-1866, 1892, Bonds and Petitions to free slaves, 1778, 1792,1793-1800, NCDAH.

[53] November 2, 1819, Auditor of Public Accounts, Condemned Blacks Executed or Transported Records, Condemned Slaves, Court Orders, and Valuations, 1810-1822, Misc., Reel 2551, Frame 919, Richmond, Library of Virginia.

[54] George P. Rawick (Ed.), *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Supplement, Series 2*, 8.7 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 3193-4; Rawick (Ed,), *American Slave,* 14.1, 303.

[55] Further information on the complex choices made by trustees can be found in: David Stefan Doddington, *Contesting Slave Masculinity in the American South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), ch. 2. See, also: Kaye, *Joining Places*, 143-4; William Dusinberre, 'Power and Agency in Antebellum Slavery,' *American Nineteenth Century History*, 12.2 (2011), 139-48, 144; Caitlin Rosenthal, *Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018), 36.

[56] Charles Ball, *Slavery in the United States. A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, a Black Man…* (New York: John S. Taylor, 1837), 491.

[57] Blassingame (Ed.), *Slave Testimony*, 247-8.

[58] William Grimes, *Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave, Written by Himself* (New York: W. Grimes, 1825), 10-12.

[59] Pennington, *A Narrative of Events of the Life of J.H. Banks*, 6.

[60] Sarah H. Bradford, *Harriet, the Moses of Her People* (New York: Geo. R. Lockwood and Son, 1886), 15-16, 29.

[61] William O' Neal, *Life and History of William O'Neal, or, The Man Who Sold His Wife* (St. Louis, Mo.: A.R. Fleming, 1896), 19-26.

[62] James Curry, 'Narrative of James Curry, A Fugitive Slave,' *The Liberator*, 10 January 1840.

[63] Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves…* (Boston: J. P. Jewett and Company, 1856), 19.

[64] Pennington, *A Narrative of Events of the Life of J.H. Banks*, 58-9.

[65] Jackson, *Narrative and Writings*, 40.

[66] John Hawkins Simpson, *Horrors of the Virginian Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations. The True Story of Dinah, an Escaped Virginian Slave…* (London: A.W. Bennett, 1863), 34.

[67] Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself* (Boston: Published for the Author, 1861), 47.

[68] John S. Jacobs, 'A True Tale of Slavery,' *The Leisure Hour: A Family Journal of Instruction and Recreation* No. 476 (February 7, 1861), 85; Jacobs, *Incidents*, 28.

[69] Jacobs, *Incidents*, 66. On Benjamin's tortures, see: 35-8.

[70] Rawick (Ed.), *American Slave*, 5.3, 241.

[71] Rawick (Ed.), *American Slave*, 4.2, 84.

[72] Rawick (Ed.), *American Slave*, 4.2, 189-90.

[73] White, *Arn't I A Woman?* 74; King, '"Suffer with them till death"; Wilma King, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth Century America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 119-20; Julia W. Berner, '"Never be free without trustin' some person":

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[74] Jacobs, *Incidents*, 139-40.

[75] Jacobs, *Incidents*, 146, 225, 235.