Comparative Perspectives on the Urban Black Atlantic on the Eve of Abolition

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ABSTRACT: By investigating the place of enslaved Africans and their descendants in the cities of the Atlantic world, this article explores many of the themes of this Special Issue across empires, with an emphasis on the Americas in the late eighteenth century, the eve of abolition. The article finds that, in nearly every manual occupation, slaves were integrated with free laborers and, not infrequently, slaves who had reached the level of journeyman or master directed the work of free apprentices. The limited number of slave insurrections in cities may be explained by the fact that they often worked semi-independently, earning money to supplement the livelihood provided by the master, or sometimes almost entirely on their own. To them, city life offered advantages that would have been inconceivable for their rural counterparts, especially the scope of autonomy they enjoyed and the possibilities to secure manumission.

SLAVERY AND PORT CITIES IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD

What are cities? One historian has called them "concentrations of wealth and power".[1] Another has written that a city is a place "where people do different things, and the more different things they do, the more the place is a city".[2] Cities are sites of specialized activity, variegated employment opportunities, exchange of information, and intermingling of people. Cities in the Atlantic world were in many ways the counterparts of the relatively self-contained rural plantations or haciendas. They were indeed concentrations of wealth and power, as the seat of regional or supra-regional institutions and the preferred dwelling places of absentee planters who craved company and conspicuous consumption. Atlantic cities were also marketplaces, information

1. Marjolein 't Hart, "The Glorious City: Monumentalism and Public Space in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam", in Patrick O'Brien *et al.* (eds), *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe: Golden Ages in Antwerp, Amsterdam and London* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 128–150, 128.
2. Philip D. Curtin, "Preface", in Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (eds), *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650–1850* (Knoxville, TN, 1991), p. x.

centers, and venues for discrete activity, in each respect differing from the countryside. That was especially true for *port* cities, which came to display features that distinguished them from ports not located on the Atlantic rim. In this article, which synthesizes much of the recent literature, I investigate the place of enslaved Africans and their descendants in these cities. In which types of work were they involved and how did they contribute to the functioning of port cities? The focus will be on the Americas in the late eighteenth century, the eve of abolition.

What were the main ports in the Atlantic world? There was, of course, plenty of change in the composition of the largest ports by population, but it is possible to get a reliable snapshot for the late eighteenth century. What is striking is that the largest ports in the three continents – Europe, the Americas, and Africa – belonged to different categories of size. The European ports were by far the largest, dwarfing the ports in other parts of the Atlantic world. Even a port like Bordeaux, by no means a European giant, had a population between twice and three times as large as that of the most populous port in the New World, Havana. Similarly, New World ports tended to be quite a bit larger than those in Atlantic Africa. Only two African ports would appear on a joint top-ten list of Africa and the Americas, while the largest African port of Bonny was still smaller than the seven largest New World ports.

Some scholars have argued that applying the concept of "port" to Africa in the days before European colonialism makes little sense. Infrastructural investment was almost entirely absent, while the ports were often not even directly located on the Atlantic. Many towns that have received the label "port" in the Bight of Benin, which was so prominent in the Atlantic slave trade, were situated on an inland lagoon that runs parallel to the coast. Slaves destined for export were taken across the lagoon and then overland to the seashore.[3] I will nevertheless include Africa in my discussion here, despite the lack of port facilities in most areas. The actual distance to the Atlantic does not appear to me to be problematic. Although one of the premier ports in the world, Amsterdam was situated far from the sea. Large seafaring ships could not make it to the town, whose maritime front, marked by shallowness and a gradual silting up, was regularly dredged from the seventeenth century onwards. If Amsterdam can count as an Atlantic port, so can those in western Africa.

Atlantic port cities, from Amsterdam to Luanda, grew in fits and starts over the course of the early modern period and often at a rapid pace in the nineteenth century (Figure 1). By the late eighteenth century, the four largest ports of Atlantic America were Havana, the two Brazilian ports of Rio de

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3. Robin Law and Silke Strickrodt, "Introduction", in Robin Law and Silke Strickrodt (eds), *Ports of the Slave Trade (Bights of Benin and Biafra): Papers from a Conference of the Centre of Commonwealth Studies, University of Stirling, June 1998* (Stirling, 1999), pp. 1–11, 3.

Figure 1. Port cities of the Atlantic.

Janeiro and Salvador, and New York, all with populations over 30,000. Ten ports, including Boston, but also little-known Saint-Pierre in Martinique, had a population between 15,000 and 30,000 (Table 1). Only one port on the Atlantic side of Africa had a population that would have qualified it for a place in the top ten New World port cities: Bonny on the coast of Benin with 25,000 inhabitants. The next ports in size were Elmina on the Gold Coast, which boasted 12,000–15,000 people, Luanda with 9,755, Porto

Table 1. *The Twenty Largest Port Cities of Atlantic America, c.1790.*

Port	Enslaved Africans	Enslaved %	Free People of Color	Whites	Total Population	Year
Havana[4]	10,849	24.5	9,751	23,737	44,337	1791
Rio de Janeiro	14,986	34.5	8,812	19,578	43,376	1789
Salvador	14,695	43.7	7,943[5]	10,997	33,635[6]	1775
New York	2,389	7.2	1,101	29,661	33,131	1790
Buenos Aires	2,250*	7.5			29,920*	1778
Philadelphia	210	0.7	1,420	26,892	28,522	1790
Kingston	16,659	62.9	3,280	6,539	26,478	1788
Saint-Pierre (Martinique)	3,720	18.6			20,000*	1788
Boston	0[7]	0.0	766	17,554	18,320	1790
Recife					18,207	1776
Campeche			3,000*[8]		18,000*	1766
Charleston	7,684	47.0	586	8,089	16,359	1790
Cap Français	10,000*	66.7	1,400*	3,600*	15,000*	1789
Santiago de Cuba					15,000*[9]	1792
Bridgetown (Barbados)					14,000*	1773
Cartagena de Indias	2,584	18.9	6,745	4,273[10]	13,690	1777
Baltimore	1,255	9.3	323	11,925	13,503	1790
Paramaribo	8,000*	68.0	1,760*	2,000*	11,760*	1791
Willemstad (Curaçao)	5,419	46.9	2,617	3,507	11,543	1789
Santo Domingo					10,702	1782–3

4. The numbers for Havana are substantially lower than in the 1774 census, which lists 21,281 slaves (28.1 per cent), 10,881 free people of color, and 43,392 whites for a total population of 75,554. Ynaê Lopes dos Santos, "La Habana Bourbônica: Reforma ilustrada e escravidão em Havana (1763–1790)", *Revista de Indias*, 75:269 (2017), pp. 81–113, 99.

5. One historian's numbers add up to 7,837 free people of color: João José Reis, "Slave Resistance in Brazil: Bahia, 1807–1835", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 25:1 (1988), pp. 111–144, 114.

6. In 1780, 39,209 people were counted.

7. Although slavery was on its way out in Boston, a few slaves remained. They did not end up in the first census of the United States because the whites who owned slaves chose not to stand out. George H. Moore, *Notes on the History of Slavery in Massachusetts* (New York, 1866), p. 247.

8. The total number of enslaved people and free people of color.

9. The city's *district* had 20,761 inhabitants in 1792, including 6,037 enslaved Africans (29.1 per cent) and 6,512 free people of color. Adriana Chira, "Uneasy Intimacies: Race, Family, and Property in Santiago de Cuba, 1803–1868" (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 2016), p. 309.

10. Includes 239 clergy. In addition, the city had eighty-eight indigenous inhabitants.

Note: The population figures with an asterisk are estimates.

Sources: Havana: Alejandro de Humboldt, *Ensayo político sobre la isla de Cuba* (Caracas, 2005), p. 44; Rio de Janeiro: Mary C. Karasch, *Slave Life in Rio de Janeiro, 1808–1850* (Princeton, NJ, 1987), p. 62; Salvador: A.J.R. Russell-Wood, "Ports of Colonial Brazil", in Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (eds), *Atlantic Port Cities: Economy, Culture, and Society in the Atlantic World, 1650–1850* (Baltimore, MD, 1991), pp. 196–239, 222; New York: US Bureau of the Census, *Heads of Family at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: New York* (Washington, DC, 1908), p. 9; Buenos Aires: Susan M. Socolow, "Buenos Aires: Atlantic Port and Hinterland in the Eighteenth Century", in Knight and Liss, *Atlantic Port Cities*, pp. 240–261, 250. Lyman L. Johnson, "Estimaciones de la población de Buenos Aires en 1744, 1778 y 1810", *Desarrollo Económico*, 19:73 (1979), pp. 107–119; Philadelphia: US Bureau of the Census, *Heads of Family at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Pennsylvania* (Washington, DC, 1908), p. 10; Kingston: Trevor Burnard, "Kingston, Jamaica: Crucible of Modernity", in Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury (eds), *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013), pp. 122–144, 127; Saint-Pierre: Léo Elisabeth, *La société martiniquaise aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles 1664–1789* (Paris, 2003), p. 101; Frédéric Régent, *La France et ses esclaves. De la colonization aux abolitions (1620–1848)* (Paris, 2007), p. 120; Boston: US Bureau of the Census, *Heads of Family at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Massachusetts* (Washington, DC, 1908), p. 10; Recife: Jacob M. Price, "Summation: The American Panorama of Atlantic Port Cities", in Knight and Liss, *Atlantic Port Cities*, pp. 262–276, 263; Campeche: Adriana Delfina Rocher Salas, "Religiosidad e identidad en San Francisco de Campeche. Siglos XVI y XVII", *Anuario de estudios Americanos*, 63:2 (2006), pp. 27–47, p. 44, n. 39; Charleston: US Bureau of the Census, *Heads of Family at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: South Carolina* (Washington, DC, 1908), p. 9; Cap Français: David Geggus, "The Major Port Towns of Saint Domingue in the Later Eighteenth Century", in Knight and Liss, *Atlantic Port Cities*, pp. 87–116, 108; Santiago de Cuba: Leví Marrero, *Cuba; economía y Sociedad. Azúcar, Ilustración y conciencia (1763–1788)* (Madrid, 1983), p. 147; Bridgetown: Pedro L.V. Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados, 1680–1834* (Kingston [etc.], 2003), p. 53; Cartagena de Indias: María Aguilera Díaz and Adolfo Meisel Roca, *Tres siglos de historia demográfica de Cartagena de Indias* (Cartagena, 2009), p. 22; Baltimore: US Bureau of the Census, *Heads of Family at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Maryland* (Washington, DC, 1908), p. 9; Paramaribo: Cornelis Ch. Goslinga, *The Dutch in the Caribbean and in the Guianas 1680–1791* (Assen [etc.], 1985), p. 519; Willemstad: NAN, Raad van Coloniën 120, "Generaal rapport over Curaçao en onderhorige eylanden", Bijlage no. 16: Opgave der huizen van particulieren [Appendix 16: Indication of private homes]; Santo Domingo: María Rosario Sevilla Soler, *Santo Domingo Tierra de Frontera (1750–1800)* (Seville, 1980), p. 35.

Novo with 7,000–10,000, and Ouidah with 6,000–7,000.[11] However, the largest "African port", arguably, was London, home to 40,000 people of African birth or descent in the late eighteenth century.[12] The story of Africans and their lives in early modern Europe is not well-known. After the Portuguese started to trade in Africans in the mid-fifteenth century, they soon shipped some of their captives to the metropolis. As blacks continued to arrive, they made up around ten percent of Lisbon's population by the mid-sixteenth century, according to a semi-official census.[13] Enslaved blacks were also sold from Lisbon across the Spanish border to Seville, the port town that in the sixteenth century was one of Europe's largest cities, smaller only than Paris and Naples. By 1565, one in fourteen residents of the city was a slave, and most slaves were of African birth or descent. Nor were African slaves a new sight in sixteenth-century Seville, which had received its first black immigrants in the late fourteenth century by way of the trans-Saharan slave trade. Since Seville had become Spain's designated port for trade with and navigation to the Americas, the first slaves to enter the Americas came actually from Seville and not Africa. King Ferdinand, for instance, gave permission in 1510 for 200 slaves to be transported from Seville to the settlers of Hispaniola.[14]

It seems certain that the first blacks to arrive in the Holy Roman Empire and the Dutch Republic also came off Portuguese ships. Blacks living in Amsterdam in the early seventeenth century worked as servants or slaves for Portuguese New Christians and Jews, many of whom must have been unaware of the local ban on slavery.[15] The existence of black slaves has also been documented for the contemporary Jewish communities of Antwerp and Hamburg.[16] In Amsterdam, it is clear, slaves disappeared in the course of the seventeenth century. A Spaniard who had resided in town for twenty-five years could write to a friend in 1685: "Slavery is not allowed

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11. Paul E. Lovejoy, "The Urban Background of Enslaved Muslims in the Americas", *Slavery & Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, 26 (2005), pp. 349–376, 353.
12. Lovejoy, "Urban Background", p. 366.
13. A.C. de C.M. Saunders, *A Social History of Black Slaves and Freedmen in Portugal 1441–1555* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 87.
14. Ruth Pike, *Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY [etc.], 1972), pp. 172–175.
15. As in other European cities, the distinction between slavery and domestic service by free people was not always well defined. Cf. Giulia Bonazza, *Abolitionism and the Persistence of Slavery in Italian States, 1750–1850* (Cham, 2019), p. 108.
16. Jan Denucé, *Afrika in de XVIde eeuw en de handel van Antwerpen* (Antwerp, 1937), p. 49; Hans Pohl, *Die Portugiesen in Antwerpen (1567–1648). Zur Geschichte einer Minderheit* (Wiesbaden, 1977), p. 324; Michael Studemund-Halévy, *Biographisches Lexikon der Hamburger Sefarden: Die Grabinschriften des Portugiesenfriedhofs an der Königstrasse in Hamburg-Altona* (Hamburg, 2000), pp. 664–665.

Figure 2. Caribbean ports.

here. Arriving slaves are immediately freed. The many blacks hailing from Brazil and other areas all work for a salary".[17]

The main profession of black slaves in northern European ports was that of servant. Merchants on slaving voyages frequently brought back teenage boys to French ports to serve as household servants. Teenage blacks from Africa served in virtually every household of resident slave traders in such ports, but rarely elsewhere.[18] Although domestic servants were also among the enslaved population of Bordeaux, most blacks residing there were trained in a few crafts in order to serve in specific capacities in the French West Indies. These included cooks, wigmakers, coopers, carpenters, locksmiths, blacksmiths, potters, saddlers, tailors, and seamstresses.[19]

If African slavery in European port cities would always remain a minor phenomenon, African ports involved in the Atlantic slave trade saw a phenomenal rise of their enslaved populations. More than half of Luanda's residents were

17. B.N. Teensma, "Abraham Idaña's beschrijving van Amsterdam, 1685", *Amstelodamum*, 83 (1991), pp. 113–138, 131.
18. Perry Viles, "The Slaving Interest in the Atlantic Ports, 1763–1792", *French Historical Studies* 7 (1972), pp. 529–543, 539–540. About half of all blacks residing in French ports hailed from the French Caribbean: Erick Noël, "Noirs et gens de couleur dans les villes de l'ouest de la France au XVIIIe siècle", in Guy Saupin (ed.), *Villes atlantiques dans l'Europe occidentale du Moyen Âge au XXe siècle* (Rennes, 2015), pp. 217–226, 220.
19. Éric Saugera, *Bordeaux port négrier. Chronologie, économie, idéologie XVIIe–XIXe siècles* (Biarritz [etc.], 1995), p. 296.

enslaved in the 1780s and 1790s, two thirds of the inhabitants of the French slaving port of Gorée in Senegal were slaves in 1767,[20] while slaves in Portuguese-controlled Benguela, one of the main slave-sending ports in Africa, represented three quarters of the population by the late eighteenth century. Crew members of arriving ships saw as soon as they docked in Benguela that "slaves unloaded the ships and carried passengers to the decks".[21] Enslaved labor also featured prominently in Ouidah, another major slaving port in Atlantic Africa on the coast of Benin. It was, writes Africanist Robin Law, "predominantly a community of slaves. In addition to the African personnel of the European forts, the households of indigenous officials and merchants also included many slaves".[22] These resident slaves were distinct from those sold into export, since local law prohibited the sale overseas of anyone born in Dahomey. That applied even to slaves held by the European forts in Ouidah.[23]

In Lagos in present-day Nigeria, the growth of the Atlantic slave trade in the late eighteenth century "led to a dramatic expansion of local slavery as a means of acquiring people and increased in significance relative to these other types of dependency. This change occurred in part as a consequence of the sheer growth in the supply of slaves on the coast and of incomes with which to buy them".[24] By the 1850s, European visitors believed the majority of the population were slaves.

Likewise, ports in the Americas involved in the slave trade came to house large enslaved populations. In some towns, the introduction of slaves rapidly transformed the urban landscape, as it did in Buenos Aires, where blacks and colored people represented more than a quarter of the population by the early nineteenth century after a marked rise of slave imports in the previous quarter-century.[25] In other ports, slaves were present from the outset, their numbers growing along with the general population. Beginning in the closing decades of the sixteenth century, for example, the port of Cartagena de Indias on the

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20. Luanda's enslaved accounted for 57.2 per cent of the population in 1781 and an average of 55.3 per cent in 1796–99: José C. Curto and Raymond R. Gervais, "A dinâmica demográfica de Luanda no contexto do tráfico de escravos do Atlântico Sul, 1781–1844", *Topoi* 3:4 (2002), pp. 85–138, 120. The percentage of the enslaved in Gorée (1767) was 68.8: Boubacar Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 76.
21. Mariana P. Candido, *An African Slaving Port and the Atlantic World: Benguela and Its Hinterland* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 113, 116.
22. Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving 'Port', 1727–1892* (Athens, OH, 2004), p. 77.
23. Law, *Ouidah*, p. 78.
24. Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760–1900* (Bloomington, IN, 2007), p. 72.
25. Lyman L. Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution: Plebeian Buenos Aires and the Atlantic World, 1776–1810* (Durham, NC [etc.], 2011), p. 37.

coast of present-day Colombia already had a black majority.[26] Slave majorities were not exceptional in ports of Atlantic America. In Kingston and the two port cities of Saint Croix, an island belonging to Denmark, slaves accounted for more than sixty per cent of the population, while in Cap Français (Saint-Domingue) and Paramaribo (Suriname), they made up two thirds of the residents.[27] The enslaved share was even eighty-one per cent in Saint-Domingue's port of Les Cayes.[28]

SLAVE OCCUPATIONS IN ATLANTIC PORT CITIES

People of African birth and descent throughout the Atlantic world distinguished themselves in military service, playing a key role, for example, in Havana's almost successful defense against British invasion in 1762, for which the 3,000 enslaved defenders did not receive the recognition they deserved – quite the opposite. In 1807, thousands of slaves joined the free population of Buenos Aires to repel another British invasion. While they failed in regular warfare, their urban guerrilla led to victory.[29] In peaceful years, domestic service was a common profession for New World slaves.[30] Domestic work could denote many different activities, such as spinning yarn, weaving cloth, preparing food, making and mending clothes, making candles, tending livestock, and taking care of children.[31] In some Atlantic port cities, and perhaps the majority, female domestics predominated, as in Cartagena de Indias, where they made up sixty per cent of the enslaved domestic workforce.[32] But whether male or female, domestic slave lives tended to be incorporated in the families of white masters and mistresses. Some enslaved women working in Anglican houses in New York City attended schools, were well fed, and wore clothing as expensive as that of their masters and mistresses.[33] As Charles Foy has observed: "For

26. Antonino Vidal Ortega, *Cartagena de Indias y la región histórica del Caribe, 1580–1640* (Seville, 2002), p. 271.
27. Neville A.T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix*, ed. B.W. Higman (Baltimore, MD [etc.], 1992), p. 87. See also Table 1.
28. Jean Saint-Vil, "Villes et bourgs de Saint-Domingue au XVIIIᵉ siècle (Essai de géographie historique)", *Les cahiers d'outre-mer*, 31 (1978), pp. 251–270, 263.
29. Elena A. Schneider, *The Occupation of Havana: War Trade, and Slavery in the Atlantic World* (Williamsburg, VA [etc.], 2018), pp. 117–120. Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution*, pp. 249–271.
30. Domestic servants in Lima made up over eighty per cent of the enslaved population by the late eighteenth century: Alberto Flores Galindo S., *Aristocracia y plebe. Lima, 1760–1830: Estructura de clases y sociedad colonial* (Lima, 1984), p. 121.
31. Jared Ross Hardesty, *Unfreedom: Slavery and Dependence in Eighteenth-Century Boston* (New York [etc.], 2016), p. 113.
32. Pablo Rodríguez, *Sentimientos y vida familiar en el Nuevo Reino de Granada. Siglo XVIII* (Santa Fe de Bogotá, 1997), p. 47.
33. Graham Russell Hodges, *Root and Branch: African Americans in New York and East Jersey, 1613–1863* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1999), p. 111.

elites […] house slaves dressed in silk shirts, powdered wigs, white silk stockings, tailored trousers, and shoes with silver buckles, reinforced the elite status of their gentlemen masters".[34] Many a slave would have welcomed this display of refinement – enslaved North American barbers took the initiative themselves to wear fine European-style clothing and to powder their hair like their owners.[35] At the same time, we should be careful not to romanticize the paternalism expressed by white owners vis-à-vis the slaves they considered part of their extended family.[36] Moreover, female enslaved domestic servants were obviously vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In other ways, too, their lives were tenuous. In Bridgetown, Barbados, for example, they were sold or passed on among slave owners' relatives multiple times.[37]

Nor should we ignore the world the slaves made themselves. In Spanish and Portuguese America, they offset the difficulty of starting a family in an environment where fellow blacks were relatively few in number and where slaveholdings were small by joining lay brotherhoods, which served as mutual-aid societies. Black brotherhoods were numerous in Brazil, where they were based on ethnicity or provenience, at least in Rio de Janeiro.[38] In Buenos Aires, brotherhoods provided credit to their members, dowries for those planning to get married or entering a convent, pensions, and even indulgences.[39] Catholic Church services in Willemstad, Curaçao, allowed the resident population of African birth and descent to socialize and forms bonds.[40] Even the small numbers of blacks and people of color in European ports found ways to carve out their own autonomous sphere. In Nantes, epicenter of the

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34. Charles R. Foy, "Ports of Slavery, Ports of Freedom: How Slaves Used Northern Seaports' Maritime Industry to Escape and Create Trans-Atlantic Identities" (Ph.D., Rutgers University, 2008), p. 66. See also Mariana L.R. Dantas, *Black Townsmen: Urban Slavery and Freedom in the Eighteenth-Century Americas* (New York, 2008), p. 78.

35. Douglas Walter Bristol, Jr, *Knights of the Razor: Black Barbers in Slavery and Freedom* (Baltimore, MD, 2009), pp. 15–16.

36. Cf. Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca, NY, 2009), p. 268.

37. Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia, PA, 2016), p. 93.

38. Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, pp. 201–206. Matt D. Childs, "Re-creating African Ethnic Identities in Cuba", in Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, Matt D. Childs, and James Sidbury (eds), *The Black Urban Atlantic in the Age of the Slave Trade* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013), pp. 85–100, 90. Mariza de Carvalho Soares, *Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Durham, NC, 2011), pp. 173–174.

39. Miguel A. Rosal, "La religiosidad católica de los afrodescendientes de Buenos Aires (siglos XVIII–XIX)", *Hispania Sacra* 60:122 (2008), pp. 597–633, 601. In Cuba, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires, the activities of these confraternities declined as African nations emerged. Alex Borucki, *From Shipmates to Soldiers: Emerging Black Identities in the Rio de la Plata* (Albuquerque, NM, 2015), p. 87.

40. Wim Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud: Curaçao's Free Blacks and Mulattoes in the Eighteenth Century", *New West Indian Guide / Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* (*NWIG*), 68 (1994), pp. 283–300, 291–293.

French slave trade, they mourned and rejoiced together, and acted as godparents for each other's children. And when they socialized together outside the purview of religious or secular authorities, they caused alarm, just as they did in Cap Français when they held their own church meetings, preaching and catechizing and naming church wardens.[41]

Urban slave insurrections almost never occurred prior to the Age of Revolutions, and even then, they were rare.[42] One explanation may lie in the relative freedom slaves enjoyed, a common trait of Atlantic port cities. Slaves often worked semi-independently, earning money to supplement the livelihood provided by the master, or sometimes almost entirely on their own. Historian Pedro Welch has observed for Bridgetown that "[t]he rhythm of urban occupational life was removed from the regimentation characteristic of the rural field slaves. Skilled slaves, domestic slaves and those involved in self-hire and marketing/selling, all found an ambience which offered 'room to manoeuvre' options".[43] Many a master allowed his or her slave to work on their own, returning to their masters at regular intervals to bring back a share of the income they had earned.[44] We can trace this custom to Greco-Roman times, although the New World practice was rooted in late medieval Spain and Portugal, where masters employed their slaves not only in their own business, but hired them out to others, and let them carry out their own trade, provided the master received part of the slave's income. Not only did many slaveholders thus recuperate the costs of the slave in a short time, the slave's earnings could actually be the only source of income for the master.[45] In Spanish American cities, this phenomenon was observed from the first years of the Spanish conquest onwards.[46]

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41. Dwain C. Pruitt, "*Nantes Noir*: Living Race in the City of Slavers" (Ph.D., Emory University, 2005), pp. 224–226, 234–235. David Geggus, "The Slaves and Free People of Color of Cap Français", in Cañizares-Esguerra, Childs, and Sidbury, *Black Urban Atlantic*, pp. 101–121, 118.
42. One conspicuous exception is the revolt in Salvador of 1835: João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil: The Muslim Uprising of 1835 in Bahia* (Baltimore, MD, 1993).
43. Pedro L.V. Welch, *Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680–1834* (Kingston [etc.], 2003), p. 157.
44. Cf. John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400–1680* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 178; L. Virginia Gould, "Urban Slavery-Urban Freedom: The Manumission of Jacqueline Lemelle", in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (eds), *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington, IN [etc.], 1996), pp. 298–314, 300, 302. On ethnic interaction in Curaçao, see Linda M. Rupert, "Trading Globally, Speaking Locally: Curaçao's Sephardim in the Making of a Caribbean Creole", in David Cesarani and Gemma Romain (eds), *Jews and Port Cities, 1550–1990: Commerce, Community, and Cosmopolitanism* (London, 2005), pp. 109–122.
45. Deborah Kamen, "Manumission and Slave-Allowances in Classical Athens", *Historia* 65 (2016), pp. 413–426, 421–422. Spain and Portugal: Saunders, *Social History*, pp. 67–68; William D. Phillips, Jr, *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Philadelphia, PA, 2014), pp. 109–110.
46. Carmen Bernand, *Negros esclavos y libres en las ciudades hispanoamericanas* (Madrid, 2001), p. 38. Some towns were reputedly more convenient for self-hire than others. For that reason, one slaveholder in Córdoba in the Río de la Plata let her slave work 700 kilometers away in Buenos

It could also be found in other parts of the Americas, as in New York City, where the practice became so common that by 1711, the city's government designated the Meal Market on Wall Street as the authorized place to hire slaves.[47] In Danish Saint Croix, many persons, the island council commented in 1792, had no other property than a few slaves and nothing to live on apart from what these slaves brought in. "Skilled craftsmen, particularly carpenters, and other skilled slaves like seamen, were as important as itinerant vendors as 'sole means of support' for some of the town's whites and freedmen."[48] And in New Orleans, one traveler reported in the early nineteenth century that slave owners encouraged their female slaves "to use their free time in prostitution and to report back each day the amount they have taken".[49]

Hiring out was one of several arrangements slave owners made to guarantee their own income. "Slave-owners who were not self-employed, such as seamen, labourers or stone-masons, sometimes persuaded their employer to take on their slaves as well, so that master and man worked side by side in the same or different capacities."[50] In general, as Emma Hart has noted for Charleston, South Carolina, "[t]he flexibility of slave labor allowed firms to weather difficult economic times and continue their development, where those in an entirely free labor system may have failed".[51] Large numbers of slaves thus made a living. David Geggus has estimated that 2,000 "jobbers" could be found in late colonial Cap Français.[52] Hiring out, or jobbing, also existed in the ports of Atlantic Africa, such as Luanda, where almost half of all slaves of one neighborhood in the 1820s were tailors, seamstresses, barbers, carpenters, and laundresses. Many female slaves were street vendors who hawked dried fish, palm oil, china, and Indian textiles.[53]

Throughout the Atlantic world, then, as jobbers or regular bondspeople, slaves worked in port cities in a variety of occupations. Increasingly, port

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Aires in the early years of the nineteenth century: María Verónica Secreto, "Os escravos de Buenos Aires. Do terceiro pátio à rua: a busca do tolerável (1776–1814)", *Tempo* 18:33 (2012), pp. 23–49, 45.

47. Foy, "Ports of Slavery, Ports of Freedom", p. 67.

48. Hall, *Slave Society*, p. 91.

49. C.C. Robin, cited in Rashauna Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis: Unfree Labor in New Orleans During the Age of Revolutions* (New York, 2016), p. 109.

50. Saunders, *Social History*, p. 75.

51. Emma Hart, *Building Charleston: Town and Society in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World* (Charlottesville, VA [etc.], 2010), p. 111.

52. Geggus, "Slaves and Free People of Color", 115. Whereas slave owners initially hired out their slaves, at least in Guadeloupe's ports it became more common for slaves to find work themselves. Anne Pérotin-Dumon, *La ville aux Iles, la ville dans l'île. Basse-Terre et Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, 1650–1820* (Paris, 2000), p. 660.

53. Roquinaldo Ferreira, "Slavery and the Social and Cultural Landscapes of Luanda", in Cañizares-Esguerra, Childs, and Sidbury, *Black Urban Atlantic*, pp. 185–206, 190, 192. See also Roquinaldo Ferreira, *Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Atlantic World: Angola and Brazil during the Era of the Slave Trade* (New York, 2012), pp. 130–135.

city slaves became indispensable in the maritime economy. In Willemstad, black and colored sailors, fishermen, caulkers, dockhands, warehouse workers, and sail makers were all needed to keep the port afloat. Members of Curaçao's ruling council estimated as early as 1741 that two thirds of the sailors were either slaves, or free people of color, a share that only increased in subsequent decades.[54] What set Curaçao apart from most other colonies was its large number of slave fishermen and sailors.[55] These slaves earned a salary on board private vessels and those of the West India Company. The muster of one Curaçaoan vessel included a white (Irish) captain, a white locally born quartermaster, five creole white sailors, and seventeen slave sailors, of whom twelve had been born on the island itself and five in West Africa. Each sailor, irrespective of his legal status, earned ten pesos per month.[56] Of all possible professions, that of sailor undoubtedly lent slaves the most freedom of movement. This life seemed so attractive to some Africans that they borrowed letters of freedom from other sailors, which allowed them to sail on one of the merchant vessels leaving Willemstad every day. This practice was outlawed more than once by a regulation that only allowed free people of color to be recruited with the permission of their masters. Some slave sailors abused this freedom by running away; sailors constituted one sixth of runaways in the eighteenth century.[57] On the other hand, sailors from across the Americas ran a risk if they were free, as some of them found out upon arrival in New Orleans. If they could not produce evidence of their freedom, imprisonment or enslavement may be their fate.[58]

Slaves engaged in a wide range of port-related jobs. One Kingston shipwright owned fifty-two slaves, including twelve shipwrights, ten caulkers, four joiners, three laborers, two blacksmiths, two block-makers, a turner, a pitch boiler, a bellows blower, a lath-wheel turner, a sailor, and a store-and-water man.[59] In Bridgetown, slaves were employed as shipwrights, caulkers, sail makers, ship carpenters, sailors, and boatmen.[60] So many slaves were active as sailors that the island's governor complained in 1786 that "the Numbers of Negro Slaves employed in navigating the Trading Vessels in these Seas […] seem to me to increase so much as to require the attention of the British Legislature, as it

54. Nationaal Archief, The Netherlands (NAN), Nieuwe West-Indische Compagnie (NWIC) 588, fol. 890, information provided by delegates of the Council of Curaçao, J.G. Pax, Johannes Stuijlingh, and Jan van Schagen, 18 June 1741.
55. Archivo General de Indias (Seville), Santo Domingo 781, examination of Samuel Levi Maduro, Puerto Cabello, 6 September 1730.
56. NAN, NWIC 601, fol. 953.
57. Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud", p. 285.
58. Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis*, pp. 59–60.
59. B.W. Higman, *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807–1834* (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 37–38.
60. Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, p. 82.

throws so many English Seamen out of employment".[61] It was not uncommon for skilled maritime slaves to be bought by Caribbean masters from North American slave owners, who could earn good money from the sale of slave coopers, caulkers, riggers, and sail makers.[62]

Enslaved artisans were also ubiquitous in South American ports. In Havana, they dominated crafts such as blacksmithing, shoemaking, and painting, while in Buenos Aires in 1800, slaves "were present in nearly every artisan trade and were crucial to small retail, managing the stalls in the city's markets and peddling everything from thread to bread and milk door to door".[63] Having bought a newly arriving slave, owners placed him or her with an artisan, where they would be apprenticed for widely varying periods – as short as a few weeks and as long as six years – depending on the skill level sought. In nearly every manual occupation, slaves were integrated with free laborers, and not infrequently did slaves who had reached the level of journeyman or master direct the work of free apprentices.[64] From North America to Brazil, slaves were hired to labor in public works, repairing and paving streets, erecting bridges, and assisting in the construction or maintenance of public buildings.[65] In Charleston, enslaved black and white skilled workers worked side by side in the city's building industry, where they were trained as carpenters, bricklayers, painters, and plasterers.[66] In the Spanish American societies where white honor was of fundamental importance, the mingling of white and black created misgivings among "lowly" whites, who either abandoned their trade, or never engaged in manual labor in the first place. More than a few immigrants from Spain thus lived in abject poverty in Cartagena de Indias.[67] But whites in French New Orleans also refused to engage in heavy and degrading labor, which they associated with slaves.[68]

Much less exerting than public works was the practice of hawking. In Saint Croix,

> [w]hite townsfolk, poor and better-off alike, had their slaves take to the streets hawking a variety of goods. These slaves, mostly women, armed with their passes and trays on their heads [...] were a constant feature of the landscape in

61. Julius Sherrard Scott III, "The Common Wind: Currents of Afro-American Communication in the Era of the Haitian Revolution" (Ph.D., Duke University, 1986), p. 106.
62. Foy, "Ports of Slavery, Ports of Freedom", p. 84.
63. Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution*, p. 38.
64. Schneider, *Occupation of Havana*, pp. 76–77. Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution*, pp. 38–42.
65. Dantas, *Black Townsmen*, p. 88.
66. Hart, *Building Charleston*, p. 79.
67. Luis Felipe Pellicer, *La vivencia del honor en la provincial de Venezuela, 1774–1809. Estudio de casos* (Caracas, 1996), pp. 26, 28, 33, 35–38. Loredana Giolitto, "Esclavitud y libertad en Cartagena de Indias. Reflexiones en torno a un caso de manumisión a finales del periodo colonial", *Fronteras de la historia*, 8 (2003), pp. 65–91, 80.
68. Cécile Vidal, *Caribbean New Orleans: Empire, Race, and the Making of a Slave Society* (Williamsburg, VA [etc.], 2019), pp. 310–311.

town and country. The stock in trade consisted of such items as bread, butter, coffee beans, fruit, meat, vegetables, candles, cushions and haberdashery notions. Plying their trade on behalf of their masters and mistresses, they were the lifeline of an internal marketing system, complementing the Sunday market of the country slaves.[69]

Such activities offered the slave a measure of autonomy in the workplace. In Boston, Jared Hardesty has argued, slaves carved out "a space in which they could protect the interests of themselves, their families, and their communities. […] Slavery in this context was not a totalizing system of oppression but a structure that slaves learned to navigate and manipulate to their advantage".[70] Availing themselves of the opportunities offered to them, some slaves in Spanish American ports acquired so much wealth that they became richer than their owners.[71]

Despite the many differences between city and countryside, between port and plantation, these two worlds were highly interconnected.[72] Slaves constantly crossed this divide, most of them forced by their owners who wanted them to perform labor or go on errands, but some of their own volition. Little is still known about rural flight to the cities, although this was by no means a minor phenomenon. One historian has even argued that late eighteenth-century Buenos Aires was turned into "an immense urban *palenque*" (maroon settlement).[73] In the more anonymous urban environments, runaways presented themselves as free men and women – and in many cases, they actually may have been, as their owners did not keep their end of the bargain.[74] Passing for freedmen was not easy, given the scars that were a perpetual reminder of the maroon's slave past.[75] Blending in also meant adopting the material culture of the resident black population.[76]

69. Hall, *Slave Society*, pp. 90–91.
70. Hardesty, *Unfreedom*, pp. 3, 104. See also Johnson, *Slavery's Metropolis*, p. 71.
71. Bernand, *Negros esclavos y libres*, p. 39.
72. Pepijn Brandon, "Between the Plantation and the Port: Racialization and Social Control in Eighteenth-Century Paramaribo", *International Review of Social History*, 64 (2019), pp. 95–124, 99–100.
73. Eduardo Saguier, "La fuga esclava como resistencia rutinaria y cotidiana en el Buenos Aires del siglo XVIII", *Revista de humanidades y ciencias sociales* (Bolivia), 1:2 (1995), pp. 115–184, 134.
74. 285 runaway advertisements in the Saint-Domingue newspaper *Affiches Américaines* in the years 1766–1791 refer to maroons *se disant libre*: "Le marronnage dans le monde atlantique. Sources et trajectoires de vie". Available at: http://www.marronnage.info/fr/corpus.php; last accessed 29 October 2019. Cf. the insistence of one runaway in New York on his freedom in Shane White, *Somewhat More Independent: The End of Slavery in New York City, 1770–1810* (Athens, GA [etc.], 1991), pp. 117–119.
75. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*, p. 19.
76. Vidal, *Caribbean New Orleans*, 125. Pérotin-Dumon, *La ville aux Iles*, p. 665.

We may assume that what may have attracted some of the male maroons was to work on one of the many vessels involved in inter-American trade.[77] Julius Scott has argued that "[l]ife aboard one of the modest vessels which plied the coasts or engaged in small-scale intercolonial commerce presented an attractive alternative to the life of regimental hierarchy to be found aboard a larger ship or ashore on a standard sugar plantation".[78] The future black abolitionist Olaudah Equiano jumped at the chance to serve on a ship in Montserrat in the 1760s, since his new profession enabled him to see other islands, meet new people, earn money, and, as Scott put it, most importantly, look his owner in the eye and demand respect.[79]

Although blacks working in the maritime economy often did not work under the close supervision of their masters, they still longed for more autonomy. Similar to disadvantaged men in Europe who sought a way to abandon their lives, the maritime economy of port cities helped New World blacks escape slavery. Stealing a boat and rowing to a nearby Spanish colony was the main route to freedom, especially since slaves were declared free upon arrival if they announced their willingness to convert to Catholicism. Some black sailors, like the ones from Curaçao, simply absconded during trading voyages.[80] Nor was there a lack of slaves who used employment aboard colonial vessels as a launchpad to freedom. Bondsmen would routinely visit taverns, which served as sites of sociability for white sailors and enslaved workers alike. These were centers of entertainment and celebration, where crime was plotted, but they also served as places of refuge and markets for seamen. Ship captains were usually not interested in a crew member's legal status, but in his skills. Many a runaway slave in North America's Thirteen Colonies thus obtained berths on whaling ships, oyster ships, and merchant vessels.[81]

77. Cf. Flávio Gomes, "Africans and Petit Marronage in Rio de Janeiro, ca.1800–1840", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, 47:2 (2010), pp. 74–99, 75. In Bridgetown, runaways also gathered in the vicinity of a garrison, for which they performed various tasks: Jerome S. Handler, "Escaping Slavery in a Caribbean Plantation Society: Marronage in Barbados, 1650s–1830s", *NWIG*, 71 (1997), pp. 183–225, 195.
78. Scott, "Common Wind", p. 106.
79. Scott, "Common Wind", p. 107.
80. Linda M. Rupert, "Marronage, Manumission and Maritime Trade in the Early Modern Caribbean", *Slavery & Abolition* 30 (2009), pp. 361–382, 364.
81. Foy, "Ports of Slavery, Ports of Freedom", pp. 72–73, 136–137, 142. Gregory E. O'Malley has suggested another motive for some recently arrived Africans to flee from the Carolina Lowcountry to Charleston: they wanted to retrace their steps and perhaps return by ship to their native soil. Gregory E. O'Malley, "Slavery's Converging Ground: Charleston's Slave Trade as the Black Heart of the Lowcountry", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 74 (2017), pp. 271–302, 298–299.

Like slaves with port-related occupations, enslaved musicians were often not satisfied with the relatively large amount of autonomy they must have possessed, making every effort to become free.[82] Musicians attempted to shed their slave status in various American port cities. Thirty-four men listed in Saint-Domingue runaway advertisements in the last quarter-century before the Haitian Revolution played the violin.[83] One in every four skilled runaway slaves from New York City was listed as possessing musical talents: fiddlers, drummers, fifers, singers, and a French horn player.[84] The fugitive slaves who departed from Willemstad, the port of Curaçao, included violinists and one French horn player.[85] Likewise, manumission letters from that island refer to several violinists, an oboist, and – once again – a French horn player.[86] Throughout the Atlantic world, slaves of all backgrounds did indeed seek to obtain freedom through manumission. The most convenient way for slaves to work their way toward obtaining freedom in this way was the Spanish American system of *coartación*, in which slaves could pay the required sum in installments.[87] Field hands in particular had a small chance of becoming free by this process, as has been abundantly shown. Urban slaves, by contrast, stood a better chance, although even for the majority of them, becoming free by such means was no realistic prospect. Even men and women who had saved the right amount of money to secure manumission sometimes faced opposition from their masters and could not induce civil authorities to intervene.[88]

82. The friar of a convent in Mendoza in the Río de la Plata – admittedly not a port – did not hide his surprise about the request for manumission in 1810 of a slave in charge of the monastery's organ and violin. In so many ways, the friar argued, the man was already free, having even been granted the right to teach students outside the convent. The musician in question, Fernando Guzmán, had a different perspective, rooted in natural law: "I have always been convinced that the only thing that can satisfy the slave in his servitude and dark dejection, is the hope to obtain his freedom. Nature resents to see her laws broken by a cruel arbitrariness founded on a tyrannical despotism." Silvia C. Mallo, "La libertad en el discurso del Estado, de amos y esclavos, 1780–1830", *Revista de historia de América*, 112 (1991), pp. 121–146, 132, 136.
83. "Le marronnage dans le monde atlantique". Five different advertisements were published regarding one violinist, a native of Curaçao. I have counted him once. Out of 130 known men who may have participated in concerts in Saint-Domingue, no fewer than 70 were slaves, 60 of them violinists: Bernard Camier, "Les concerts dans les capitales de Saint-Domingue à la fin du XVIIIe siècle", *Revue de Musicologie*, 93 (2007), pp. 75–98, 80.
84. Hodges, *Root and Branch*, p. 115.
85. Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud", p. 285.
86. T. van der Lee, *Curaçaose vrijbrieven 1722–1863. Met indices op namen van vrijgelatenen en hun voormalige eigenaren* (The Hague, 1998), pp. 291 (21 June 1799), 282 (1 June 1798), and 214 (21 February 1783).
87. Manuel Lucena Salmoral, "El derecho de coartación del esclavo en la América española", *Revista de Indias*, 59:216 (1999), pp. 357–374.
88. Lyman L. Johnson, "Manumission in Colonial Buenos Aires, 1776–1810", *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 59 (1979), pp. 258–279, 261.

TRANSITIONS TO FREEDOM

For those who were manumitted, one historian has suggested, the transition from an enslaved to a free existence may not have been dramatic: "There is every sort of evidence that slaves in the categories most often freed (e.g., domestic servants, soldiers, skilled workers, mistresses), were treated more like free people, even before they were freed."[89] A significant number of slaves in Saint-Domingue even enjoyed de facto freedom, precarious as it was because their owners could withdraw it without notice.[90] Nor was there a vast difference between the jobs of free people and the tasks they had performed as slaves. Free women in Guadeloupe, for example, usually worked as seamstress or laundress, professions however that did not allow them to escape from poverty.[91] Some enterprising men and women began to engage in new activities. In the slave trading center of Cartagena de Indias, this point was already reached by the early seventeenth century, when many of men and women with slave backgrounds ran small inns or businesses renting out houses.[92] In other ports, free people of color did not branch out into such occupations until the second half of the eighteenth century. In Bridgetown, they were merchants, haberdashers, tavern and innkeepers, hucksters, tailors, shoemakers, and jewelers.[93] In Paramaribo, economic prominence of free men of color had to wait until white emigration set in in the 1770s in the wake of an economic crisis. Then, free colored males began to fill positions that had traditionally been occupied by the white population: those of blacksmith, carpenter, tailor, and shoemaker.[94] Most free women of color in Paramaribo worked as seamstresses or housekeepers, while free black women were employed as laundresses and market vendors.[95]

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89. Arthur L. Stinchcombe, "Freedom and Oppression of Slaves in the Eighteenth-Century Caribbean", *American Sociological Review*, 59 (1994), pp. 911–929, 914.

90. Jennifer L. Palmer, *Intimate Bonds: Family and Slavery in the French Atlantic* (Philadelphia, PA, 2016), pp. 37, 170.

91. Frédéric Régent, *Esclavage, métissage, liberté. La Révolution française en Guadeloupe, 1789–1802* (Paris, 2004), pp. 167, 181.

92. Antonino Vidal Ortega, *Cartagena de Indias y la región histórica del Caribe, 1580–1640* (Seville, 2002), p. 264. See also Jane Landers, "The African Landscape of Seventeenth-Century Cartagena and Its Hinterlands", in Cañizares-Esguerra, Childs, and Sidbury, *Black Urban Atlantic*, pp. 147–162.

93. Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, p. 166.

94. Rosemarijn Hoefte and Jean Jacques Vrij, "Free Black and Colored Women in Early-Nineteenth-Century Paramaribo, Suriname", in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (eds), *Beyond Bondage: Free Women of Color in the Americas* (Urbana, IL [etc.], 2004), pp. 145–168, 152. Albert von Sack, *A Narrative of a Voyage to Surinam: Of a Residence there during 1805, 1806, and 1807; and of the Author's Return to Europe by way of North America* (London, 1810), p. 114.

95. Hoefte and Vrij, "Free Black and Colored Women", p. 160.

This trend was not visible in most of North America, where manumission was a rare occurrence.[96] Nor was it easy for freed men and women to find employment. The authorities in Savannah, Georgia, banned free people of African descent from owning or working in liquor stores, doing public work, skilled trades, owning real estate, and teaching.[97] In Brazil and the Caribbean, by contrast, free men and women of color grew in numbers as well as economic power, and as they did, they rose in prominence as slave owners. By the early nineteenth century, freedmen in the Danish West Indies owned some two thirds of all urban slaves. In Kingston, Jamaica, no less than eighty-seven percent of the free people of color owned slaves, a percentage higher than that of local whites.[98] Slave origins did not prevent ambitious men and women from buying and owning slaves. One Bahian ex-slave, who trained his own slaves as barbers and musicians, did free ten of them, but obliged each of them in his will to pay for the recitation of fifty masses for his sold. Twelve other slaves he never set free.[99]

That recently manumitted men and women had no qualms about buying slaves themselves is exemplified by the case of a Curaçaoan woman named Rijna Isabella, unearthed by historian Han Jordaan. When she bought a newly arrived enslaved African woman, it transpired that Rijna Isabella had not yet paid the full amount due for her own manumission, which had been arranged two years earlier. Out of the total sum of 350 pesos, she had only put up 102. When her master died, she signed an IOU, for which two slaves whom she had bought served as collateral. Rijna Isabella thus seems to have preferred having her own slaves earn money by hiring themselves out over

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96. In New York and New Jersey, for example, there were only a handful of manumissions before the American Revolution: Hodges, *Root and Branch*, p. 102.

97. Whittington B. Johnson, "Free Blacks in Antebellum Savannah: An Economic Profile", *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, 64:4 (1980), pp. 418–31, 419.

98. Hall, *Slave Society*, p. 143. Trevor Burnard: "Kingston, Jamaica: Crucible of Modernity", in Cañizares-Esguerra, Childs, and Sidbury, *Black Urban Atlantic*, pp. 122–144, 141. Out of fifty-eight free blacks and people of color in Willemstad who signed a mortgage in the period 1737–1754, thirty-four (58.6 per cent) owned slaves. They put most of their slaves to work on plots of land outside the city. Bernard R. Buddingh', *Otrobanda. 'Aen de Oversijde van deese haven': De geschiedenis van Otrobanda, stadsdeel van Willemstad, Curaçao van 1696 tot 1755* (Curaçao, 2006), pp. 251–253.

99. Hendrik Kraay, "The Politics of Race in Independence-Era Bahia: The Black Militia Officers of Salvador, 1790-1840", in Hendrik Kraay (ed.), *Afro-Brazilian Culture and Politics: Bahia, 1790s to 1990s* (Abingdon [etc.], 1998), pp. 30–56, 34. On the prominence of people of African descent – free and enslaved – among barbers in Brazil, see Beatriz Catão Cruz Santos, "Irmandades, oficias mecânicos e cidadania no Rio de Janeiro do século XVIII", *Varia historia*, 26:43 (2010), pp. 131–153, 140. Mariza de Carvalho Soares, "African Barbeiros in Brazilian Slave Ports", in Cañizares-Esguerra, Childs, and Sidbury, *Black Urban Atlantic*, pp. 207–230. Enslaved barbers were also common in seventeenth-century Livorno. Guillaume Calafat and Cesare Santus, "Les avatars du 'Turc'. Esclaves et commerçants musulmans à Livourne (1600–1750)", in Jocelyne Dakhlia and Bernard Vincent (eds), *Les Musulmans dans l'histoire de l'Europe*, vol. I. *Une intégration invisible* (Paris, 2011), pp. 471–522, 488–489.

paying off her debt, indeed using the money thus made toward her own self-purchase.[100] Outside of Curaçao, a few cases have surfaced of slaves buying other slaves. In 1786, for example, the cook Francisco, slave of a brigadier in Buenos Aires, bought the slave Luis for the amount of 400 pesos.[101]

In Saint-Domingue, free women of color not only owned slaves, but were actively involved in the slave trade, purchasing Africans directly from arriving ships in port, while others attended slave auctions.[102] Similarly, in New Orleans, free black women owned slaves for service and speculation and in higher numbers than did free black men, although not in the same proportion and in the same numbers as their white counterparts.[103] Colored women in Saint-Domingue's port cities also owned an appreciable amount of non-human property, including real estate. The same applied to Bridgetown, where colored women kept small shops, taverns, and "hotels".[104]

As perhaps the world's wealthiest colony by the late eighteenth century, Saint-Domingue was visited by thousands of sailors. According to one contemporary estimate, more than 2,500 sailors found themselves in the busiest port of Cap Français at any given time, outnumbering the resident white and free colored populations.[105] This created a demand for prostitution, a common phenomenon in port cities around the Atlantic world and a profession into which enslaved women were not infrequently forced by their (male and female) owners.[106] The numerous bordellos in Cap Français were filled with free women of color, perhaps as many as 3,000 in all by 1777. Other female *gens de couleur* worked as so-called *ménagères* or housekeepers/concubines. These women received high salaries for the combination of household and sexual services they supplied to their employers, who were invariably

100. Han Jordaan, *Slavernij en vrijheid op Curaçao. De dynamiek van een achttiende-eeuws Atlantisch handelsknooppunt* (Zutphen, 2013), p. 68. An alternative explanation would be that legal freedom was not Rijna Isabella's first priority, which would mirror the mindset of some slaves in Buenos Aires who preferred to use the money they earned to buy real estate instead of their own liberty. Miguel A. Rosal, "Negros y pardos propietarios de bienes raíces y de esclavos en el Buenos Aires de fines del período hispánico", *Anuario de estudios Americanos*, 58:2 (2001), pp. 495–512, 500.
101. Rosal, "Negros y pardos propietarios", p. 509.
102. Susan M. Socolow, "Economic Roles of the Free Women of Color of Cap Français", in David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (eds), *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas* (Bloomington, IN, 1996), pp. 279–297, 286–288.
103. Kimberly S. Hanger, "Landlords, Shopkeepers, Farmers, and Slave-Owners: Free Black Female Property Owners in Colonial New Orleans", in Gaspar and Hine, *Beyond Bondage*, pp. 219–236, 221, 225.
104. Welch, *Slave Society in the City*, p. 172.
105. Scott, "Common Wind", p. 61.
106. Roquinaldo Ferreira, "Slavery and the Social and Cultural Landscapes of Luanda", in Cañizares-Esguerra, Childs, and Sidbury, *Black Urban Atlantic*, pp. 185–206, 191.

members of the economic elite.[107] It was in this capacity that many women of color amassed the capital that allowed them to start their own business. Like poor black women in Buenos Aires, they must have taken pride in the fruits of their labor.[108]

The achievements of free people of color in Caribbean ports did not go unchallenged. Racist ordinances circumscribed the freedoms of the free black and colored population of Willemstad, Curaçao. Playing loud music was forbidden, as was carrying a stick, or walking the streets after dark. Any white was permitted to punish nonwhite behavior considered impertinent with a cane. Besides, the legal testimony of black or colored witnesses lacked judicial force. Specific legislation discriminating against free nonwhites did not exist, with one important exception. After complaints from less affluent whites, a prohibition was introduced in 1749 for blacks and coloreds to keep a shop in town, although they could continue their commercial dealings in their homes and take merchandise to town during the daytime.[109] Free non-whites of color also faced various legal disabilities in Suriname, where their footwear distinguished them from both the slaves and the whites. Different from slaves, manumitted blacks and colored men and women were allowed to wear shoes, albeit still with no socks. Only the freeborn enjoyed that privilege.[110]

In Spanish American cities, free blacks and people of color were not allowed to live on their own, could not become clergymen, scribes or notaries, and were forbidden from having Indian servants. In Venezuela, females were forbidden from wearing gold, silk or pearls, and males did not have the right to walk side by side with whites in the streets, nor were they to be given a chair in white houses.[111] In order to preserve their honor, white guild members of Buenos Aires' shoemaker guild barred non-white master shoemakers who had the same tasks and obligations as their white colleagues from voting in guild elections in Buenos Aires.[112] In Saint-Domingue, the separate legal

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107. Dominique Rogers and Stewart King, "Housekeepers, Merchants, Rentières: Free Women of Color in the Port Cities of Colonial Saint-Domingue, 1750–1790", in Douglas Catterall and Jody Campbell (eds), *Women in Port: Gendering Communities, Economies, and Social Networks in Atlantic Port Cities, 1500–1800* (Leiden [etc.], 2012), pp. 357–397, 361–363.
108. Carmen Bernand, "La plèbe ou le peuple? Buenos Aires, fin XVIIIe-début XIXe siècle", *Caravelle. Cahiers du monde hispanique et luso-brésilien*, 84 (2005), pp. 147–168, 162.
109. Klooster, "Subordinate but Proud", p. 289; Han Jordaan, "Free Blacks and Coloreds and the Administration of Justice in Eighteenth-Century Curaçao", *NWIG*, 84 (2010), pp. 63–86, 82.
110. J.D. Kuniss, *Surinam und seine Bewohner oder Nachrichten über die geographischen, physischen, statistischen, moralischen und politischen Verhältnisse dieses Landes während eines zwanzigjährigen Aufenthalts daselbst* (Erfurt, 1805), pp. 73–74.
111. Marianela Ponce, *El ordenamiento jurídico y el ejercicio del derecho de libertad de los esclavos en la Provincia de Venezuela 1730–1768* (Caracas, 1994), pp. 38–39; Pellicer, *Vivencia del honor*, pp. 42, 116–117. Discrimination of free people of color went back to the early days of Spanish American colonization. In 1577, they were already forced to live with their employers in Peru: Frederick P. Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru 1524–1650* (Stanford, CA, 1974), p. 303.
112. Secreto, "Escravos de Buenos Aires", pp. 37–38.

status of free blacks and *gens de couleur* was not stressed until the 1760s and 1770s, when they could no longer be surgeons or midwives, ride in coaches, have certain types of household furniture, or adopt the dress or hairstyles of whites.[113] These regulations underscore that whites not only resented economic competition from their non-white neighbors, but they also resented the freedom of free people of color to behave in ways similar to whites. Small wonder, therefore, that they objected vehemently to attempts of these adversaries to whiten themselves in Spanish America after the adoption of a formal royal decree – the *gracias al sacar* – that made it possible to purchase whiteness in the late eighteenth century. Thus, two African-descended families in Caracas faced a storm of indignation when they sought permission to be considered white and to have one of their sons enter the priesthood. Their strategy had been to intermarry with each other generation after generation, which was typical of white families that belonged to the colonial elite.[114] In other ways, too, many free people of color made the upper-class white mentality their own. In Caracas, they deliberately used the caste system to exclude those deemed inferior, just as they themselves were shut out from white elite society, as a certain Juan Bautista Arias found out in 1774. This *caraqueño* failed to meet the racial criteria of the *pardo* (mulatto) militia, which concluded from his genealogy that the man was partly Indian, unlike the militia members who were "growing closer each time more to the whites, while they were distancing themselves from the blacks".[115]

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we can discern that the increasing rhythm of the Atlantic slave trade did more than simply guarantee a steady supply of enslaved workers to the New World's plantations. In some places earlier than others, but almost universally as the eighteenth century advanced, the urban landscape changed along with the dramatic industrialization of the countryside. In a way, the urban Atlantic and, more specifically, the Atlantic ports on either side of the ocean, internalized slavery. Professions typical for cities that had once been monopolized by Europeans began to be filled by men and women who were formally enslaved. To them, city life offered advantages that would have been inconceivable for their rural counterparts, especially the scope of

113. Gabriel Debien, *Études antillaises (XVIIIe Siècle)* (Paris, 1956), p. 75. Yvan Debbasch, *Couleur et liberté. Le jeu de critère ethnique dans un ordre juridique esclavagiste* (Paris, 1967), pp. 38–39, 53–54, 74–75. John D. Garrigus, *Before Haiti. Race and Citizenship in French Saint-Domingue* (New York, 2006), p. 95.
114. Ann Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness. Pardos, Mulattos, and the Quest for Social Mobility in the Spanish Indies* (Stanford, CA, 2015), pp. 145–147.
115. Twinam, *Purchasing Whiteness*, pp. 207–208.

autonomy they enjoyed and the possibilities to secure manumission. Consequently, free people of color became a feature of Atlantic ports, often continuing the jobs they had mastered as urban slaves.