

# African American Slave Narratives



**An American History Reader**

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*  
*Harriet Jacobs, 1860*

*Born into slavery, Harriet Jacobs lived as a slave until she managed to escape her master, hiding for several years in the crawlspace of her grandmother's home. After seven years of hiding, Jacobs escaped to the North where she became a prominent abolitionist writer.*

I was born a slave; but I never knew it till six years of happy childhood had passed away. My father was a carpenter, and considered so intelligent and skilful in his trade, that, when buildings out of the common line were to be erected, he was sent for from long distances, to be head workman. On condition of paying his mistress two hundred dollars a year, and supporting himself, he was allowed to work at his trade, and manage his own affairs. His strongest wish was to purchase his children; but, though he several times offered his hard earnings for that purpose, he never succeeded. In complexion my parents were a light shade of brownish yellow, and were termed mulattoes. They lived together in a comfortable home; and, though we were all slaves, I was so fondly shielded that I never dreamed I was a piece of merchandise, trusted to them for safe keeping, and liable to be demanded of them at any moment. I had one brother, William, who was two years younger than myself—a bright, affectionate child. I had also a great treasure in my maternal grandmother, who was a remarkable woman in many respects. She was the daughter of a planter in South Carolina, who, at his death, left her mother and his three children free, with money to go to St. Augustine, where they had relatives. It was during the Revolutionary War; and they were captured on their passage, carried back, and sold to different purchasers. Such was the story my grandmother used to tell me; but I do not remember all the particulars. She was a little girl when she was captured and sold to the keeper of a large hotel. I have often heard her tell how hard she fared during childhood. But as she grew older she evinced so much intelligence, and was so faithful, that her master and mistress could not help seeing it was for their interest to take care of such a valuable piece of property. She became an indispensable personage in the household, officiating in all capacities, from cook and wet nurse to seamstress. She was much praised for her cooking; and her nice crackers became so famous in the neighborhood that many people were desirous of obtaining them. In consequence of numerous requests of this kind, she asked permission of her mistress to bake crackers at night, after all the household work was done; and she obtained leave to do it, provided she would clothe herself and her children from the profits. Upon these terms, after working hard all day for her mistress, she began her midnight bakings, assisted by her two oldest children. The business proved profitable; and each year she laid by a little, which was saved for a fund to purchase her children. Her master died, and the property was divided among his heirs. The widow had her dower in the hotel, which she continued to keep open. My grandmother remained in her service as a slave; but her children were divided among her master's children. As she had five, Benjamin, the youngest one, was sold, in order that each heir might have an equal portion of dollars and cents. There was so little difference in our ages that he seemed more like my brother than my uncle. He was a bright, handsome lad, nearly white; for he inherited the complexion my grandmother had derived from Anglo-Saxon ancestors. Though only ten years old, seven hundred and twenty dollars were paid for him. His sale was a terrible blow to my grandmother; but she was naturally hopeful, and she went to work with renewed energy, trusting in time to be able to purchase some of her children. She had laid up three hundred dollars, which her mistress one day begged as

a loan, promising to pay her soon. The reader probably knows that no promise or writing given to a slave is legally binding; for, according to Southern laws, a slave, being property, can hold no property. When my grandmother lent her hard earnings to her mistress, she trusted solely to her honor. The honor of a slaveholder to a slave!

To this good grandmother I was indebted for many comforts. My brother Willie and I often received portions of the crackers, cakes, and preserves, she made to sell; and after we ceased to be children we were indebted to her for many more important services.

Such were the unusually fortunate circumstances of my early childhood. When I was six years old, my mother died; and then, for the first time, I learned, by the talk around me, that I was a slave. My mother's mistress was the daughter of my grandmother's mistress. She was the foster sister of my mother; they were both nourished at my grandmother's breast. In fact, my mother had been weaned at three months old, that the babe of the mistress might obtain sufficient food. They played together as children; and, when they became women, my mother was a most faithful servant to her whiter foster sister. On her death-bed her mistress promised that her children should never suffer for any thing; and during her lifetime she kept her word. They all spoke kindly of my dead mother, who had been a slave merely in name, but in nature was noble and womanly. I grieved for her, and my young mind was troubled with the thought who would now take care of me and my little brother. I was told that my home was now to be with her mistress; and I found it a happy one. No toilsome or disagreeable duties were imposed upon me. My mistress was so kind to me that I was always glad to do her bidding, and proud to labor for her as much as my young years would permit. I would sit by her side for hours, sewing diligently, with a heart as free from care as that of any free-born white child. When she thought I was tired, she would send me out to run and jump; and away I bounded, to gather berries or flowers to decorate her room. Those were happy days—too happy to last. The slave child had no thought for the morrow; but there came that blight, which too surely waits on every human being born to be a chattel.

When I was nearly twelve years old, my kind mistress sickened and died. As I saw the cheek grow paler, and the eye more glassy, how earnestly I prayed in my heart that she might live! I loved her; for she had been almost like a mother to me. My prayers were not answered. She died, and they buried her in the little churchyard, where, day after day, my tears fell upon her grave.

I was sent to spend a week with my grandmother. I was now old enough to begin to think of the future; and again and again I asked myself what they would do with me. I felt sure I should never find another mistress so kind as the one who was gone. She had promised my dying mother that her children should never suffer for any thing; and when I remembered that, and recalled her many proofs of attachment to me, I could not help having some hopes that she had left me free. My friends were almost certain it would be so. They thought she would be sure to do it, on account of my mother's love and faithful service. But, alas! we all know that the memory of a faithful slave does not avail much to save her children from the auction block.

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***Twelve Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northrup, a Citizen of New-York,  
Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841, and Rescued in 1853***

*Solomon Northrup was a free black New Yorker who was kidnapped in Washington, DC, and sold into slavery. In his narrative, Northrup describes his experiences as a slave in Louisiana, and in the following excerpt, he describes the tribulations of a fellow slave named Patsey, who was caught between the sexual advances of her master and the jealousies of her mistress.*

She had a genial and pleasant temper, and was faithful and obedient. Naturally, she was a joyous creature, a laughing, light-hearted girl, rejoicing in the mere sense of existence. Yet Patsey wept oftener, and suffered more, than any of her companions. She had been literally excoriated. Her back bore the scars of a thousand stripes; not because she was backward in her work, nor because she was of an unmindful and rebellious spirit, but because it had fallen to her lot to be the slave of a licentious master and a jealous mistress. She shrank before the lustful eye of the one, and was in danger even of her life at the hands of the other, and between the two, she was indeed accursed... If she uttered a word in opposition to her master's will, the lash was resorted to at once, to bring her to subjection; if she was not watchful when about her cabin, or when walking in the yard, a billet of wood, or a broken bottle perhaps, hurled from her mistress' hand, would smite her unexpectedly in the face. The enslaved victim of lust and hate, Patsey had no comfort of her life.

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It has been seen that the jealousy and hatred of Mistress Epps made the daily life of her young and agile slave completely miserable. I am happy in the belief that on numerous occasions I was the means of averting punishment from the inoffensive girl. In Epps' absence the mistress often ordered me to whip her without the remotest provocation. I would refuse, saying that I feared my master's displeasure, and several times ventured to remonstrate with her against the treatment Patsey received. I endeavored to impress her with the truth that the latter was not responsible for the acts of which she complained, but that she being a slave, and subject entirely to her master's will, he alone was answerable.

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... turning to me, he ordered four stakes to be driven into the ground, pointing with the toe of his boot to the places where he wanted them. When the stakes were driven down, he ordered her to be stripped of every article of dress. Ropes were then brought, and the naked girl was laid upon her face, her wrists and feet each tied firmly to a stake. Stepping to the piazza, he took down a heavy whip, and placing it in my hands, commanded me to lash her. Unpleasant as it was, I was compelled to obey him. Nowhere that day, on the face of the whole earth, I venture to say, was there such a demoniac exhibition witnessed as then ensued.

Mistress Epps stood on the piazza among her children, gazing on the scene with an air of heartless satisfaction. The slaves were huddled together at a little distance, their countenances indicating the sorrow of their hearts. Poor Patsey prayed piteously for mercy, but her prayers were vain. [Maste] Epps ground his teeth, and stamped upon the ground, screaming at me, like a mad fiend, to strike harder.

"Strike harder, or your turn will come next, you scoundrel," he yelled.

"Oh, mercy, massa! - oh! have mercy, do. Oh, God! pity me," Patsey exclaimed continually, struggling fruitlessly, and the flesh quivering at every stroke.

When I had struck her as many as thirty times, I stopped, and turned round toward Epps, hoping he was satisfied; but with bitter oaths and threats, he ordered me to continue. I

inflicted ten or fifteen blows more. By this time her back was covered with long welts, intersecting each other like net work. Epps was yet furious and savage as ever, demanding if she would like to go to Shaw's again, and swearing he would flog her until she wished she was in h--l. Throwing down the whip, I declared I could punish her no more. He ordered me to go on, threatening me with a severer flogging than she had received, in case of refusal. My heart revolted at the inhuman scene, and risking the consequences, I absolutely refused to raise the whip. He then seized it himself, and applied it with ten-fold greater force than I had. The painful cries and shrieks of the tortured Patsey, mingling with the loud and angry curses of Epps, loaded the air. She was terribly lacerated - I may say, without exaggeration, literally flayed. The lash was wet with blood, which flowed down her sides and dropped upon the ground. At length she ceased struggling. Her head sank listlessly on the ground. Her screams and supplications gradually decreased and died away into a low moan. She no longer writhed and shrank beneath the lash when it bit out small pieces of her flesh. I thought that she was dying!

It was the Sabbath of the Lord. The fields smiled in the warm sunlight - the birds chirped merrily amidst the foliage of the trees - peace and happiness seemed to reign everywhere, save in the bosoms of Epps and his panting victim and the silent witnesses around him. The tempestuous emotions that were raging there were little in harmony with the calm and quiet beauty of the day. I could look on Epps only with unutterable loathing and abhorrence, and thought within myself - "Thou devil, sooner or later, somewhere in the course of eternal justice, thou shalt answer for this sin!"

Finally, he ceased whipping from mere exhaustion, and ordered Phebe to bring a bucket of salt and water. After washing her thoroughly with this, I was told to take her to her cabin. Untying the ropes, I raised her in my arms. She was unable to stand, and as her head rested on my shoulder, she repeated many times, in a faint voice scarcely perceptible, "Oh, Platt - oh, Platt!" but nothing further. Her dress was replaced, but it clung to her back, and was soon stiff with blood. We laid her on some boards in the hut, where she remained a long time, with eyes closed and groaning in agony. At night Phebe applied melted tallow to her wounds, and so far as we were able, all endeavored to assist and console her. Day after day she lay in her cabin upon her face, the sores preventing her resting in any other position.

A blessed thing it would have been for her - days and weeks and months of misery it would have saved her - had she never lifted up her head in life again. Indeed, from that time forward she was not what she had been. The burden of a deep melancholy weighed heavily on her spirits. She no longer moved with that buoyant and elastic step - there was not that mirthful sparkle in her eyes that formerly distinguished her. The bounding vigor - the sprightly, laughter-loving spirit of her youth, were gone. She fell into a mournful and desponding mood, and often times would start up in her sleep, and with raised hands, plead for mercy. She became more silent than she was, toiling all day in our midst, not uttering a word. A care-worn, pitiful expression settled on her face, and it was her humor now to weep, rather than rejoice. If ever there was a broken heart - one crushed and blighted by the rude grasp of suffering misfortune - it was Patsey's.

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*Horrors of the Virginia Slave Trade and of the Slave-Rearing Plantations, the True Story of Dinah, an Escaped Slave by John Hawkins Simpson, 1863*

*John Hawkins Simpson, a British abolitionist, documented the story of Dinah, a young slave woman on a Virginia plantation. Dinah eventually escaped from slavery with the help of northern abolitionists.*

One fine evening in summer, when Priscilla was ten years old, Di was getting ready her husband's tea, her baby (the only child she then had except Priscilla) was playing before the door, when a female servant came from the house, and told Di to clean the child, and make it look smart, and take it up to her master.

Priscilla had been all the afternoon at the big house playing with Mr. Hope's younger children. Di was afraid her child had broken something, or done some childish mischief for which she was now about to receive punishment. On her way with the child she asked the cook, whom she met, just to call and tell Jem that she would be down again directly to give him his tea. She went to the ground-floor parlour, knocked at the door, and led in her child. Mr. Hope and his eldest son Edward were talking to two strangers, a slave dealer and his assistant. The dealer was a tall stout man, with broad shoulders, very light fierce-looking eyes, and sandy-coloured hair and whiskers. Whisky and brandy decanters were on the table, and several boxes of cigars.

'Come here Di,' said the dealer, 'let me see how you can dance,' and he began to whistle a lively tune. The mother said, 'Sir, her name is not Di; she does not know who you are talking to.'

'It makes no odds what her name is,' replied the dealer, again whistling.

But nothing could induce the girl to leave her mother's side; she fixed her eyes steadily on those of the dealer, and clung to the skirts of her mother's dress. Mr. Hope then tried to get the child to dance to his whistling, but Priscilla would not listen to him either, though he tried and coaxed her as much as he could.

'What have you been saying to the child?' asked Mr. Hope.

Di, still unsuspecting, answered, 'I said nothing at all to the child, for I did not know we should find any strangers here.'

The dealer began to praise the child's teeth, and said he thought she was a healthy looking girl, and he might just as well buy the mother at the same time. Mr. Hope told him he could not spare the mother yet; then turning to Di, he bade her leave the room, and take the child to its tea.

Poor Di's heart had sad misgivings now; but still she did not think it possible that her master would sell the playmate of his own children, who had been nursed at her breast. Her husband was waiting for her, and was hungry; but all his appetite fled when he saw his wife crying bitterly as she led in the child--for he immediately feared the child must have done something for which it was about to be flogged. Di told him all that had happened, and said she did not after all know if Priscilla was or was not to be sold. Jem Browne, who had often seen such partings, asked if she thought the men would take away their darling at once; all she could say was, 'I don't know.'

When the child had taken its supper, and was in bed, the same servant called again and told Di to go up to the house, as she was wanted to wait at table. She left her husband and went. She found the same party still drinking in the same room. Her master told her to be quick and lay the tea things in the drawing-room. She did as she was told. All the family was now seated round the tea-table, ladies and gentlemen. The youngest children only were not there, for they had been in bed long ago. Di made tea at a side-table, and handed it round, together with cakes, bread, and jam.

When she handed a cup to her master he said, 'Di, your child is going, do you know? That gentleman is to take her.' The mother's heart sank; she felt choked, and could hardly get out the words 'No, sir, I did not know.' She cried bitterly, and was told to go into the next room, where she remained crouching on the floor till the parlour bell rang for her to take away the tea things; this she did, sobbing and blinded with tears, and was then told to go to her shanty, but to 'mind and be up again to wait at supper.'

Husband and wife sat, hand clasped in hand, looking at the sleeping girl. They could not talk, they could only weep; but they stifled their sobs, lest they should wake the child. They wished to strain her to their bosoms as they never wished before, but they would not do so, because she would wake and see how wretched they were. Between ten and eleven Di went up to wait at supper. When that was over, ladies and gentlemen drank pretty freely of wine and spirits, whilst smoking, gambling, swearing, and dominoes were carried on fast and noisily. Di had to see that all the bed-rooms were ready, and at last her day's work was done.

No sleep that night closed the eyes of the wretched parents.

Early next morning poor Di was told that there was a bill posted on the entrance-gate, containing the names of the negroes, old and young, who were to be sold that day in Petersburg, by public auction. Priscilla's name was among those of Mr. Hope's slaves, thirteen in number, who have destined for the Southern market.

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### ***Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself***

***Frederick Douglass is perhaps the most important slave to write his narrative of slavery. His was one of the earliest and most powerful indictments of the institution written from an African American perspective. The excerpt below describes his battle with Mr. Covey, a man known as a slave "breaker" for his ability to bring difficult slaves around.***

Long before daylight I was called to go and rub, curry, and feed, the horses. I obeyed, and was glad to obey. But whilst thus engaged, whilst in the act of throwing down some blades from the loft, Mr. Covey entered the stable with a long rope; and just as I was half out of the loft, he caught hold of my legs, and was about tying me. As soon as I found what he was up to, I gave a sudden spring, and as I did so, he holding to my legs, I was brought sprawling on the stable floor. Mr. Covey seemed now to think he had me, and could do what he pleased; but at this moment--from whence came the spirit I don't know--I resolved to fight; and, suiting my action to the resolution, I seized Covey hard by the

throat; and, as I did so, I rose. He held onto me, and I to him. My resistance was so entirely unexpected, that Covey seemed taken all aback. He trembled like a leaf. This gave me assurance, and I held him uneasy, causing the blood to run where I touched him with the ends of my fingers. Mr. Covey soon called out to Hughes for help. Hughes came, and, while Covey held me, attempted to tie my right hand. While he was in the act of doing so, I watched my chance, and gave him a heavy kick close under the ribs. This kick fairly sickened Hughes, so that he left me in the hands of Mr. Covey. This kick had the effect of not only weakening Hughes, but Covey also. When he saw Hughes bending over with pain, his courage quailed. He asked me if I meant to persist in my resistance. I told him I did, come what might; that he had used me like a brute for six months, and that I was determined to be used so no longer. With that, he strove to drag me to a stick that was lying just out of the stable door. He meant to knock me down. But just as he was leaning over to get the stick, I seized him with both hands by his collar, and brought him by a sudden snatch to the ground. By this time, Bill came. Covey called upon him for assistance. Bill wanted to know what he could do. Covey said, "Take hold of him, take hold of him!" Bill said his master hired him out to work, and not to help to whip me; so he left Covey and myself to fight our own battle out. We were at it for nearly two hours. Covey at length let me go, puffing and blowing at a great rate, saying that if I had not resisted, he would not have whipped me half so much. The truth was, that he had not whipped me at all. I considered him as getting entirely the worst end of the bargain; for he had drawn no blood from me, but I had from him. The whole six months afterwards, that I spent with Mr. Covey, he never laid the weight of his finger upon me in anger. He would occasionally say, he didn't want to get hold of me again. "No," thought I, "you need not; for you will come off worse than you did before."

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with a determination to be free. The gratification afforded by the triumph was a full compensation for whatever else might follow, even death itself. He only can understand the deep satisfaction which I experienced, who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery. I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery, to the heaven of freedom. My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. I did not hesitate to let it be known of me, that the white man who expected to succeed in whipping, must also succeed in killing me.

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### ***Interesting Account of Thomas Anderson, a Slave, Taken from His Own Lips***

***Thomas Anderson was born into slavery in Virginia in 1785. The excerpt below follows his conversion to Christianity and the impact that this event had on his dealings with his master.***

... But when I give all up to serve the Lord, He promise He help whenever I need Him. And soon after, He try my faith very strong. My master who owned me at that time having no knowledge of God or godliness, supposed my religion was all a fancy, and said he could and would whip it out of me. He took me up and tie me, and scourged me until feeling of flesh was almost gone. At length I fall I before him and lift up my cries to heaven, and ask my great Creator "What have I done?" My master cursed me, and said: "Will you preach to



me?" But I now feel glad that I could suffer patiently for my new Master. And my manner at that time take master's strength away; and before he left me he untie me and let me off. But in about three hours he come again, and threaten me with fresh scourging. And though I was very weak from the beating I got, the Lord make me feel very strong, and this prepare me to answer: "You have whipped out all fear, and I am not afraid of you no more." You can take a gun and shoot me or kill me, as you please, and all for nothing; and that is all you can do: for I know I have a life you cannot touch, and the fear of you will not keep me from doing anything my new Master tells me to do. And if He let you take this poor bruised body of flesh, I feel it ain't worth much;" and I feel strength to say something like this: "Thy will, O God! be done, and not mine!" After this my old master was conquered, and never whip me again, and left me in the hands of Jehovah.

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### *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself, 1847.*

*William Wells Brown grew up in slavery, serving masters in Kentucky and Missouri, ultimately escaping to New York city with the help of Quaker abolitionists in 1834*

My mother was hired out in the city, and I was also hired out there to Major Freeland, who kept a public house. He was formerly from Virginia, and was a horse-racer, cock-fighter, gambler, and withal an inveterate drunkard. There were ten or twelve servants in the house, and when he was present, it was cut and slash--knock down and drag out. In his fits of anger, he would take up a chair, and throw it at a servant; and in his more rational moments, when he wished to chastise one, he would tie them up in the smoke-house, and whip them; after which, he would cause a fire to be made of obacco stems, and smoke them. This he called "Virginia play."

I complained to my master of the treatment which I received from Major Freeland; but it made no difference. He cared nothing about it, so long as he received the money for my labor. After living with Major Freeland five or six months, I ran away, and went into the woods back of the city; and when night came on, I made my way to my master's farm, but was afraid to be seen, knowing that if Mr. Haskell, the overseer, should discover me, I should be again carried back to Major Freeland; so I kept in the woods. One day, while in the woods, I heard the barking and howling of dogs, and in a short time they came so near, that I knew them to be the bloodhounds of Major Benjamin O'Fallon. He kept five or six, to hunt runaway slaves with.

As soon as I was convinced that it was them, I knew there was no chance of escape. I took refuge in the top of a tree, and the hounds were soon at its base, and there remained until the hunters came up in a half or three quarters of an hour afterwards. There were two men with the dogs, who, as soon as they came up, ordered me to descend. I came down, was tied, and taken to St. Louis jail. Major Freeland soon made his appearance, and took me out, and ordered me to follow him, which I did. After we returned home, I was tied up in the smoke-house, and was very severely whipped. After the Major had flogged me to his satisfaction, he sent out his son Robert, a young man eighteen or twenty years of age, to see that I was well smoked. He made a fire of tobacco stems, which soon set me to coughing and sneezing. This, Robert told me, was the way his father used to do to his slaves in Virginia. After giving me what they conceived to be a decent smoking, I was untied and again set to work.

## *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin (1898)*

*Levi Coffin was a northern abolitionist in Indiana. He is viewed by many as one of the most important "conductors" of the Underground Railroad.*

"SHE WOULD KILL HERSELF...BEFORE SHE WOULD RETURN TO BONDAGE"

Margaret Garner, a fugitive slave from Kentucky, killed one of her children rather than permit her to be returned to slavery. She drowned in a shipwreck as she was being brought back to slavery.

Perhaps no case that came under my notice, while engaged in aiding fugitive slaves, attracted more attention and aroused deeper interest and sympathy than the case of Margaret Garner, the slave mother who killed her child rather than see it taken back to slavery. This happened in the latter part of January, 1856. The Ohio River was frozen over at the time, and the opportunity thus offered for escaping to a free State was embraced by a number of slaves living in Kentucky, several miles back from the river. A party of seventeen, belonging to different masters in the same neighborhood, made arrangements to escape together. There was snow on the ground and the roads were smooth, so the plan of going to the river on a sled naturally suggested itself. The time fixed for their flight was Sabbath night, and having managed to get a large sled and two good horses, belonging to one of their masters, the party of seventeen crowded into the sled and started on their hazardous journey in the latter part of the night. They drove the horses at full speed, and at daylight reached the River below Covington, opposite Wester Row. They left the sled and horses here, and as quickly as possible crossed the river on foot. It was now broad daylight, and people were beginning to pass about the streets and the fugitives divided their company that they might not attract so much notice.

An old slave named Simon and his wife Mary, together with their son Robert and his wife Margaret Garner and four children, made their way to the house of a colored man named Kite, who had formerly lived in their neighborhood and had been purchased from slavery by his father, Joe Kite. They had to make several inquiries in order to find Kite's house, which was below Mill Creek, in the lower part of the city. This afterward led to their discovery; they had been seen by a number of persons on their way to Kite's, and were easily traced by pursuers. The other nine fugitives were more fortunate. They made their way up town and found friends who conducted them to safe hiding- places, where they remained until night. They were put on the Underground Railroad, and went safely through to Canada....

In a few minutes...[Kite's] house was surrounded by pursuers- - the masters of the fugitives, with officers and a posse of men. The door and windows were barred, and those inside refused to give admittance. The fugitives were determined to fight, and to die, rather than to be taken back to slavery. Margaret, the mother of the four children, declared that she would kill herself and her children before she would return to bondage. The slave men were armed and fought bravely. The window was first battered down with a stick of wood, and one of the deputy marshals attempted to enter, but a pistol shot from within made a flesh wound on his arm and caused him to abandon the attempt. The pursuers then battered down the door with some timber and rushed in. The husband of Margaret fired several shots, and wounded one of the officers, but was soon overpowered and dragged out of the house. At this moment, Margaret Garner, seeing that their hopes of freedom were in vain, seized a butcher knife that lay on the table, and with one stroke cut the throat of her

little daughter, whom she probably loved the best. She then attempted to take the life of the other children and to kill herself, but she was overpowered and hampered before she could complete her desperate work. The whole party was then arrested and lodged in jail.

The trial lasted two weeks, drawing crowds to the courtroom every day....The counsel for the defense brought witnesses to prove that the fugitives had been permitted to visit the city at various times previously. It was claimed that Margaret Garner had been brought here by her owners a number of years before, to act as nurse girl, and according to the law which liberated slaves who were brought into free States by the consent of their masters, she had been free from that time, and her children, all of whom had been born since then- - following the condition of the mother- - were likewise free.

The Commissioner decided that a voluntary return to slavery, after a visit to a free State, re- attached the conditions of slavery, and that the fugitives were legally slaves at the time of their escape...But in spite of touching appeals, of eloquent pleadings, the Commissioner remanded the fugitives back to slavery. He said that it was not a question of feeling to be decided by the chance current of his sympathies; the law of Kentucky and the United States made it a question of property.

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