Resisting in Their Own Way: Black Women and Resistance in the British Caribbean

Thesis

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The history of the British Caribbean is many times relayed through the lens of slavery because enslaved Africans were the workforce that sustained the economy of the islands. The men and women of African descent who labored in bondage each have stories of life and resistance that historians have tried to capture and scholars have been particularly interested in the latter. Unfortunately, these studies have tended to overlook the more obscure methods of resistance and label them as accommodation. This has often led to a misunderstanding of the ways in which women of African descent resisted their exploitation. Enslaved women, many times, occupied unique spaces in slave societies, where they were able to strategically gain certain freedoms for themselves and, sometimes, their families.

The purpose of this research is to illuminate some of these methods of resistance through the lives of three specific women. Rachel Pringle, Old Doll, and Queen Nanny were all enslaved in the British Caribbean from the late eighteenth century through the early nineteenth century, and each woman engaged in acts of resistance that could be ignored as accommodation, however, through a close reading of their stories, this work highlights the more obscure ways of resistance available to slave women. These women secured their manumission or a quasi-free status that was through business ownership, literacy, strategic relationships with Whites and the use of folklore.
Dedication

To my Granny and Gido who both transitioned to the realm of the ancestors while I was in Ohio. They both always supported me and believed that I could do everything.
Vita

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Table 1. Manumission Figures for Bridgetown Barbados
All slaves want to be free-to be free is to be sweet. I will say the truth to English people who may read this history that my good friend Ms. S---, is now writing down for me. I have been a slave myself. I know what slaves feel. I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me. The man that says that slaves be quite happy in slavery—that they don’t want to be free—that man is either ignorant or a lying person. I have never heard a slave say so, I have never heard a Buckra man say so, til I heard of it in England. Such people ought to be ashamed of themselves.

Mary Prince

Introduction

The institution of slavery in the late eighteenth-century British Caribbean was brutal; marked by a consistent belief among the slaveowning class that it was more economical to purchase new slaves rather than take care of the existing enslaved population. With very limited avenues to freedom, all struggled for their very survival in a region, albeit in very different ways. Women, especially, resisted their bondage in particularly gendered ways. Rather than overtly violent resistance, women were very likely to participate in resistance activities that some scholars have understood as accommodation; such as entrepreneurship, literacy, strategic relationships with White men and women, as well as the utilization of folklore to obtain freedoms. This project specifically looks at the lives of Rachel Pringle, Old Doll, and Nanny to illustrate a range of Black women’s resistance in the British Caribbean, but one must understand them as a part of larger trends.

Among the many enslaved women living in the British Caribbean was Mary Prince, who served as a domestic slave for several decades of her life. Prince was born in

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Bermuda in 1788 and was moved between Bermuda, Grand Turks and Antigua during her time of enslavement. Lacking the ability to engage in more immediate or violent forms of resistance, she was able to maneuver through and out of enslavement by effectively utilizing her knowledge of the law. In the year 1828 Prince made her way to England to be manumitted. She knew of a recent ruling in which a court determined that once enslaved persons were brought to England, they would be declared free. Prince’s story reflects a much larger phenomenon, which expands how scholars should understand slavery in the Western Hemisphere and the active role of women of color as they sought to carve out independent spaces in the midst of human bondage and constant degradation.

Slave resistance has been a popular topic of inquiry over the past century, however the study of Caribbean slavery began with the economic development of the institution, effectively ignoring slaves as human chattel. It was not until the 1980s that scholars widened the range of analytical approaches to the field. As a result, this project borrows from the historiography of the United States to strengthen the discussion.

U.B. Phillips published the first major work on slavery, *American Negro Slavery* in 1918, where he contends that Africans could never truly resist their enslavement, because it was against their very nature. In the particular case of Phillips—a Georgia-born grandson of slave owners—he claimed that Africans supposed docility would prevent them from consciously engaging in resistive acts. He reduces “resistance” to criminality and focuses a great deal of attention on the alleged abuse of white women by enslaved men.²

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In 1943, Herbert Aptheker directly counters Phillips’ work with *American Negro Slave Revolts*. In his study, Aptheker denies the idea of innate docility by showing evidence of approximately 250 slave revolts that had either been plotted or attempted proving that the enslaved population was not content. Aptheker moves away from physical violence as the sole form of resistance, by allowing for the possibility of day-to-day and individual acts of resistance, even though he believes them to have been less important than revolts. Although he introduces multiple forms of individual resistance he does not elaborate on how frequently the enslaved population participated in them, or how they played into white fears of Black violence, nor does he consider how gender might play a role in resistance.

In fact, slavery continued to be a contentious topic. For instance, in 1959 Stanley Elkins argued that the enslaved became a group of “Sambos” who were reduced to childlike dependency on their “owners.” To do this, Elkins effectively ignores Aptheker or Kenneth Stampp, for instance, and their very different conclusions about slave agency. However, what one can understand as a dominant trends in all of these studies is the tendency to obscure slave women as active agents of resistance. The women who toiled in the fields next to their male counterparts—receiving the same brutal punishments, subjected to sexual exploitation, and serving as foundations of slave communities throughout the Americas—were omitted from the historical record.

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The introduction of Black women into the historiography has meant a reconceptualization of slavery as an institution. In 1985, Deborah Gray White’s *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* explicitly shows how enslaved women have been absent in the discussion of slavery and resistance in North America. In her work, White details examples of gynecological resistance; the creation of female networks, which allowed for inter-plantation communication and collaborations; and the maintenance of familiar family structures as signs of a distinct mode of cultural resistance. “We know that the plantation was akin to a psychological battleground where slaves vied with whites in a neverending clash of wits, and that slaves did not—could not—regard the development of crafty and subtle survival strategies as solely a male affair.”5 She also states that women could only rely on themselves for protection against sexual violence from white men, illustrating that some forms of resistance were only available to Black women.6 Even though her book is based on the U.S. plantation South, White’s conclusions can be extrapolated to include the realities evident in Caribbean slavery.

Studies based on women and slavery in the British Caribbean are relatively new. The earliest works on slavery in this area dealt with the economics of slavery and the structure of sugar plantations. Hilary McD. Beckles’ *Natural Rebels: A Social History of Enslaved Black Women in Barbados* is one of the first works to focus exclusively on women in a specific British Caribbean colony. While much of his 1989 work deals with

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6 Ibid.
the multiple dimensions of women’s lives in Barbados, Beckles does discuss modes of women’s resistance. According to Beckles, “The objectives of females’ resistance and the forms deployed varied over time and in accordance with their position within the structure of social relations.” He goes on to state that because slavery was so degrading to women and womanhood, women’s resistance efforts were forced to assume specific forms. Also, some of these unique methods of resistance could present as acts of accommodation, rather than overt resistance.

That these supposed acts of accommodation could mask a resistive activity at first examination, has been understood as a central tenet of women’s resistance. Stephanie Camp’s *Closer To Freedom* developed a groundbreaking thesis, which posited that an enslaved person could simultaneously participate in both resistance and accommodation. She went on to explore how the politics of geography either aided in or hindered enslaved women’s resistance efforts. In identifying the spaces in which women were confined, she concluded that there were times that women had to accommodate their oppressors in order to gain specific kinds of liberties. For example, Camp describes how Black women developed friendship relationships with white women and then steal their clothing to wear to night gatherings, which she calls, “reclaiming the property of her labor.” This conundrum makes understanding the difference between intentional resistance and accommodation as a means of survival difficult to say the least and scholarly

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8 Ibid, 153.

examinations have generally overlooked as selfish acts of accommodation, the more common forms of women’s resistance.

**Redefining Resistance**

Defining what constitutes resistance can be difficult for historians because most available sources were written not written by the enslaved, and thus do not focus on the intentions of slaves actions. Historians must piece together scraps of information and extrapolate from there in the attempt to properly represent the lives of their subjects. It is evident that women were essential to the operation of slave systems. Thus, women as agents of resistance should generate a great deal of scholarly inquiry. However, the general historiographic tendency has been to focus on well-publicized acts of group resistance, which has meant that the much more subtle and individual actions by women are either ignored or marginalized. By focusing exclusively on women’s resistance this project seeks to expand and complicate the meaning of resistance in ways that have not been widely advanced previously.

Women throughout the Caribbean were not only participating in the same resistance efforts as men--armed resistance, maroonage, work stoppage, feigning illness--they also had a unique space defined by their gender and sexual identities from which to operate. Because early historians saw women as ancillary to the creation of history, they did not see women’s resistance as unique, if they saw it at all. Therefore, the primary sources that have been used to piece together the history of Africans in the Caribbean, need to be re-examined to illuminate the resistance efforts of black women.

More recently, there has been a move to distinguish between the categories of accommodation and resistance. Typically accommodation, in relation to slavery,
categorizes an enslaved person’s attempt to reduce the incidence of conflict between themselves and their “owner.” In other words, the enslaved may follow orders simply to avoid the harsh consequences of doing otherwise. Resistance, on the other hand is understood as the refusal to complete a task or live/work in an expected manner no matter what the consequences. Therefore, resisting slavery could create a conflict whereas an act of accommodation might avoid it. The actions of the enslaved have typically been forced into one of these two categories because the scholarship has denied the possibility that a person could do both, possibly simultaneously. However, Stephanie Camp offers another possibility. “Enslaved people were many things at once, and they were many things at different moments and in various places…they were both agents and subjects, persons and property, and people who resisted and who accommodated—sometimes in one and the same act.”10 I would argue that many times women, possibly more often than men, fit into this paradigm and sought to maintain peace with their “owners” while creating a space for action without raising suspicions. Women were often in closer contact with white men and women, where they could forge “friendships” (accommodation) to gain privileges, or in some cases freedom (resistance). Although, this is not to say that every “friendship” was an act of resistance, but sometimes it clearly was.

Resistance has been redefined over the decades to encompass a plethora of action in which enslaved people participated. Most recently, in Rituals of Resistance Jason Young defines resistance to slavery as, “any tactic that slaves undertook to disrupt [the] forced extraction [of labor].”11 Young adds that acts such as work slow downs,

10 Ibid.

pretending to be sick, destruction of work tools and rebellion could all be considered resistance.\textsuperscript{12} Although his definition does include specific types of resistance he is careful not to make it an all-inclusive definition. And in \textit{Women and Slavery in the French Antilles}, Bernard Moitt agrees. What might appear to be docility can often be very subtle, calculated, and conscious forms of resistance.\textsuperscript{13} Raymond and Alice Bauer describe day-to-day resistance as a multi-faceted category that encompasses many different acts.\textsuperscript{14} “Our investigation has made it apparent that the Negroes not only were very discontented, but that they developed effective protest techniques in the form of indirect retaliation for their enslavement.”\textsuperscript{15} Therefore, a wide variety of actions can fit into these categories, but when and how a slave chose to resist was directed by many different factors.

Gender, age, location and access to materials all influenced the ways in which enslaved persons resisted slavery. Barbara Bush states, “Women have been described as more readily and firmly attached to the alien society of the whites’ through concubinage, meriting special treatment as slaves and in turn accommodating far more readily to the slave system than men,” and their resistance has been ignored because of this incomplete understanding.\textsuperscript{16} Women utilized their gender and sex, at times in concert, to challenge

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their enslavement and attempt to achieve freedom. Beckles states, “[Black] women were socially differentiated within the gender discourses of slave-based societies,” and this differentiation allowed for them to occupy unique spaces in slave communities. 17 In More than Chattel Gaspar and Hine state, “Gendered relations and expectations within the slave societies of the Americas constituted a powerful force that shaped the lives of slaves in such a way that slave women experienced slavery quite differently from slave men.”18 This opened a space for women to utilize their gendered roles to create obscure means to resist their enslavement. In addition to utilizing their gender, women could assert agency over their own sexuality by choosing to abort their pregnancies or refusing to reproduce.

In characterizing resistance among women of African descent, scholars look to group women into very specific types of resistance such as armed resistance, maroonage and day-to-day resistance efforts, including poisoning and work stoppage. These larger groupings, at times, leave out those individual acts, in which women participated. General trends such as infanticide, work slowdowns, poisonings and feigning illness do not leave room for the woman who used her body to gain her freedom. It also does not allow for women who attempted to “whiten” their dependents so that eventually they would be light enough to be mistaken for “white” and attain their freedom. Additionally those women who became entrepreneurs in order to purchase their own freedom did so


because they did not want to be enslaved, not because they were accommodating to their “owners”.

Scholars now need to focus on specific activities where women were able to assert their agency. Researchers must look at the lives of female entrepreneurs, hucksters and business owners, along with the resistive efforts in which they participated. The women who were able to become business owners, for instance, played a vital role in the future of black women in the Caribbean. They used the public spaces of their businesses to assert their agency and resist the dehumanizing effects of slavery, building relationships (with white men) to facilitate the growth of their businesses, using these elements to obtain, and maintain, their freedom.19

Beckles, has produced a great deal of the scholarship on issues relating to gender and slavery in the Caribbean. In Afro-Caribbean Women & Resistance to Slavery in Barbados, Beckles contends that the parameters of female resistance need to be widened to include areas such as gynecological practices and the manipulation of socio-sexual relations with empowered whites.20 These “socio-sexual relations” that black women engaged in with white men played a large role in their resistance.21 He adds that attention also needs to be given to the “autonomous economic activities of slave women in their

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19 Women of African descent participated in similar roles asserting the same agency that they had in West Africa while running the marketplaces in North America and the Caribbean. Harvey Amari Whitfield, Blacks on the Border: The Black Refugees in British North America 1815-1860 (Burlington: University of Vermont, 2006), 73.


21 Ibid.
roles as proto-peasants and hucksters (higglers).” Black women, free and enslaved, were the bulk of hucksters and they created a path of resistance to slavery, in which black female entrepreneurs could operate.

Moitt’s work attempts to navigate the terrain of slave women’s resistance by considering the diversity of their methods, such as maroonage, armed resistance, gynecological resistance and some forms of day-to-day resistance. Moitt constructs a continuum of resistance efforts that moves from “armed rebellion to acts of accommodation” asserting that “the most prevalent forms of resistance were not necessarily the most effective nor the most important.” The articles in Gaspar and Hine’s More Than Chattel and Beyond Bondage concur with Moitt’s intervention. The authors reposition black women as active agents who regularly resisted slavery by any and every means available to them.

enslaved women of color might achieve freedom through avenues other than the polar extremities of flight or escape and legal manumission supported by official or other acceptable documentation. The pursuit of freedom through all available means is clear evidence that freedom, however precarious and challenging, was preferable to slavery. However they may have achieved freedom, free women of color were motivated by a desire to place themselves beyond slavery, and that desire might be the

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22 Ibid, 2.

23 Hucksters sold sundry items, things they grew or food that they caught. They also sold merchandise that they had either made or bought to sell. Hucksters may sell out of stands and storefronts or by utilizing pushcarts. Bills against the selling of goods to “negroes” were presented as early as 1688, and then again in 1708 ‘An act to Prohibit the inhabitants of this Island [Barbados] from employing Negroes and other Slave in selling and Bartering’ is shown in Hilary McD. Beckles, Afro-Caribbean Women and Resistance to Slavery in Barbados (London: Karnack House, 1988), 51.

24 Moitt, Women in Slavery, 126.
beginning of a long-range plan to assist family members or friends and relatives in doing the same.\textsuperscript{25}

Perhaps this explains why certain modes of women’s resistance were so obscure and difficult to detect. In placing themselves beyond the reach of slavery, free women of color—particularly those inclined towards entrepreneurship—engaged in activities, which on the surface resembled accommodation. However, in helping to free family members and others from bondage, these women may have been the most effect rebels against the institution of slavery.

Some enslaved women were successful and eventually gained their freedom. These free women of African descent occupied a unique space in the eighteenth century. Typically these women lived in fear that their status would be contested and that they could possibly be forced back into slavery. Although they were no longer enslaved, they were not afforded all of the same rights as whites and experienced distinct social limitations. Pedro Welch argues that “free couloureds” were represented in many activities in Bridgetown, Barbados as merchants, hucksters, artisans and tavern-keepers to name a few.\textsuperscript{26} However, according to Welch, “They were excluded from the civil and political bureaucracy and from social gatherings of the white elite.”\textsuperscript{27} Free black women and men were required to pay taxes on their property and belongings without any sort of government representation, and were limited in their interactions with the enslaved


\textsuperscript{26} Pedro Welch, \textit{Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680-1848} (Oxford: James Curry Publishers, 2004), 166.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
population. Facing these limitations and with their free status in constant jeopardy, the many examples of free women of color helping others obtain freedom demonstrates a commitment to liberty and a hatred of bondage.

Sources

For this project, a variety of sources were utilized in order to flesh out the lives of the women involved in both obscure and overt forms of resistance. Of particular interest were ship records, specifically in considering the importance of the maritime industry in Rachel Pringle’s life. I also considered her will, which has not, previously been used in a scholarly discussion. Old Doll and her family sent numerous letters to their white “owners,” in which they requested their manumission. These documents were insightful and useful in demonstrating her conscious efforts to resist bondage. For the discussion of Queen Nanny as a transcendent folkloric and historical figure in Jamaica, oral histories provided by the descendants of the Moore Town Maroons helped illuminate the role Nanny continues to play in the consciousness of the people there. In addition to the few primary sources that were available, a plethora of secondary sources were utilized to fill in the empty spaces.

Organization

This project is divided into three parts, each covering a significant Black woman’s life in the British Caribbean. The first chapter focuses on Rachel Pringle-Polgreen, an entrepreneur who used her wealth and status to help liberate other women from the chains of bondage. Pringle-Polgreen was enslaved as a child and manumitted as an adult. Upon her manumission, she played a central role the early tourist industry in Barbados, and

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28 Ibid, 168.
pioneered a social space for black women entrepreneurs in the city of Bridgetown. She also allowed other enslaved women the opportunity to earn money to purchase their own freedom. Pringle-Polgreen represents a larger group of female entrepreneurs who used this route to regularly fight for their freedom and the freedom of others.

Chapter two considers Old Doll, an “elite” domestic servant in Barbados, who maintained her own semblance of freedom through the unique status she was able to attain on the Newton plantation. Old Doll worked her way to a privileged status as a slave, which allowed her the freedom to choose not to perform her assigned tasks. Her immediate family was awarded the same privileges and, with time, they all began petitioning for their freedom by writing letters to government officials and whites in positions of power on the plantation. Old Doll and others were able to manipulate the relationships they formed with white elites. When total freedom was not an option, an elevated status was the next best thing.

Queen Nanny is the subject of chapter three; perhaps the most renowned enslaved female rebel in the history of the Western Hemisphere. Nanny was an escaped slave who settled a maroon town in Jamaica where she became the symbolic mother of those enslaved persons who escaped populated the settlement. She also fought to protect her “family” from re-enslavement and harm. Her story and the folklore surrounding her becomes a symbol of a much more pervasive consciousness and set of concerns on the part of white planters. The folklore about Queen Nanny inspired fear in Jamaica’s white population. This same folklore motivated enslaved people to run from their plantations to the protection that Queen Nanny offered, because they believed she was able to employ supernatural powers to them from white oppression. The folklore, and history,
surrounding Nanny epitomize the ways in which women were essential to the maintenance of these societies.

The aforementioned women all contributed to the culture of resistance that enslaved women in the British Caribbean developed. Through documenting their lives one can see the unique ways in which women chose to assert their agency and resist their enslavement. Their methods of resistance can be used to discover larger themes of resistance unique to enslaved women, specifically in the British Caribbean, because of the particular social and political realities of the region.

This thesis offers new directions for developing historical perspectives in defining slave resistance by women in the British Caribbean. It challenges normative definitions of resistance and female roles (and agency) in slavery. It also reconstructs a history of British Caribbean slavery to clarify and illuminate the conscious acts of resistance by women of color. It is important that women who resisted being enslaved, even as individuals, be able to occupy a space worthy of serious historical inquiry. When Black women asserted their agency, they did so out of nearly impossible circumstances. This thesis, then, is a recovery of silenced historical narratives and a collective story of human triumph against seemingly insurmountable odds.
Chapter 1: Rachel Pringle: From Enslavement to Bajan Entrepreneur

Black women—free and enslaved—operated stores, established hotels and entered into prostitution to earn money to purchase or maintain their freedom. These spaces were not welcoming to them, but many women were still able to establish themselves as active members of the communities to which they belonged. This chapter focuses on the story of one such woman in the British colony of Barbados who ran the Royal British Navy Hotel—Rachel Pringle-Polgreen. Her particular case is intriguing and exemplifies women entrepreneurs resisted slavery for themselves and others. Pringle-Polgreen was one of the first women of color to own multiple businesses in Barbados. She was known on both sides of the Atlantic ocean—in the Caribbean and Europe—and is credited with starting the tourist industry in Barbados by offering food and alcohol, nighttime accommodations and, in some cases, sexual companionship for those who traversed the Americas.\footnote{\footnote{29 Hilary Mc.D. Beckles, \textit{Natural Rebels}, 144.}} Although Pringle-Polgreen resisted her own enslavement and provided opportunities for other black women to do so as well, she can also be understood as contributing to the horrors of enslavement. Once she attained her freedom she owned slaves, whom she employed as bar-girls and domestic workers. The complexity of Rachel Pringle-Polgreen’s life, and her assertion of some control over it, has not been recognized.
Barbados is also an important actor in this story. The island was one of the first colonies in the Caribbean to make significant capital from the production of sugar cane.\textsuperscript{30} Barbados was also the only slave society in the Americas with a higher proportion of enslaved women in comparison to men. Also, the city of Bridgetown, where much of Pringle-Polgreen’s story takes place, is a port city on the coast and thus a perfect site for Black women’s entrepreneurial endeavors. The color line has been understood as impenetrable in Barbados, but Rachel Pringle-Polgreen was able to walk the tightrope between white and black, slave and free, to achieve an elevated social status, among both blacks and whites in Barbados.\textsuperscript{31}

Women who operated businesses, such as inns and taverns, are generally recognized as being resourceful.\textsuperscript{32} Pringle-Polgreen’s identity, which encompasses her status as a mixed race woman in Barbados is important for this discussion of her resistance to slavery. Various scholars describe Pringle-Polgreen as leading a life of debauchery. Others recognize the accomplishments she made despite the obvious ways that she was limited by her gender and race.\textsuperscript{33} She is not an easy historical figure. However, one must not simply dismiss the ways in which Pringle-Polgreen’s played a vital role in the emancipation of other women.\textsuperscript{34} Unfortunately this aspect of Pringle-


\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
Polgreen’s life is often ignored by scholars, who have preferred to focus on her links to prostitution.

Rachel Lauder was born around 1753 to a Scottish schoolmaster William Lauder and one of the “African women he had purchased.”35 Rachel’s “father,” Lauder, was fired from his position as a schoolmaster and opened a huckster store in downtown Bridgetown.36 Rachel was forced to work in this store throughout her childhood and into her young adulthood. It was during this time that her “father” attempted to rape her, but according to all known accounts Rachel was able to fight off these attempts.37 On the last occasion that Rachel fought off her father’s sexual advances he sent her to be whipped in a public venue as punishment.38 When the whipping was set to begin, a white sailor Thomas Pringle stepped in, grabbed Rachel, and ran away with her.39

Sexual crimes against women of color were regular occurrences in the Caribbean. Unfortunately, the common laws of Barbados were not established for the protection of


36 The term father is used only to denote that he was Rachel’s biological father, but this is done with hesitation, as he was also her “master”.

37 These accounts can be found in: Jerome Handler “Joseph Rachell and Rachael Pringle-Polgreen: Petty Entrepreneurs,”; Jill Hamilton Women of Barbados: Amerindian Era to Mid 20th Century; Sir Algernon Aspinall “Rachel Pringle of Barbados.”


39 Ibid, 383. Although it is a possibility that Pringle and Rachel had a relationship prior to this occasion it is not likely as Pringle’s stays in Barbados were limited to when his ship was in port.
women against sexual assault, rather they protected property owners and their rights.⁴⁰

Lauder, enraged that Rachel had been taken, pressed criminal charges against Pringle for harboring a runaway slave.⁴¹ Pringle, in turn, purchased Rachel from Lauder for an “extortionate sum,” manumitted her, unofficially married her, changed her surname from Lauder to Pringle, and then purchased a house for Rachel in Bridgetown so that she would have somewhere to stay while he was out at sea.⁴²

Because Rachel already had experience working in a business, she immediately realized that she could earn significant income if she built an addition onto her house. Pringle established the addition as a tavern for the sailors who disembarked from the ships at Bridgetown port.⁴³ In 1780 she further expanded the space and established it as the Royal Navy Hotel.⁴⁴ In doing so, Rachel became one of the first women of color, and possibly one of the first women of any ethnicity, to establish a hotel or tavern in Barbados.

The establishment of the Royal Navy Hotel was simply a starting point for Rachel Pringle. She continued to save money and purchase additional properties throughout Barbados. Rachel set up these new properties as houses and stores, establishing herself as an entrepreneur in eighteenth-century Barbados. Property records reflect that in 1779 she was the owner of a single property, but by 1783 she owned two properties including a

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⁴⁰ “An Act for the better ordering and governing of Negroes,” September 27th, 1661.

⁴¹ Ibid.


⁴⁴ Ibid.
boarding house. In 1788 the records show that she owned five properties, and by the time of her death in 1791 she owned one large house, two side houses, five tenements in a yard and two houses all valued at £1,300.

The decision Rachel Pringle made to form an attachment with Thomas Pringle was clearly calculated as doing so gave her the opportunity to enter into spaces previously closed to her as an enslaved woman. This assertion of agency on Pringle’s part is undeniable. Once manumitted by Pringle, she became a successful businesswoman in a space where the lives of most women of color were controlled and almost completely circumscribed. Some have argued that Pringle’s dramatic rescue of Rachel was premeditated and they obviously had a long-standing relationship. The sources are silent, however, as to the nature of their relationship prior to that fateful day, but even a prior relationship does not negate Rachel made a conscious effort to stay with Pringle for her own self-interest.

It is understandable then that securing her relationship with her husband would obviously have been of considerable importance to her. In one instance, while Pringle was away on duty, she “borrowed” a newborn baby from a woman in town and claimed it as her offspring with Pringle. Unfortunately, when Pringle returned to Bridgetown, the biological mother of the child changed her mind and wanted the baby back. When Pringle found out what Rachel had done he left Bridgetown, never to return again. But she was

45 Welch, *Slave Society*, 172.

46 Ibid, 122.
not single for long. A gentleman from Barbados, Polgreen became Rachel’s suitor, and although they never married Rachel took his surname.47

The properties Rachel Pringle owned and the taxes she paid on them, would have afforded her the right to vote and serve on a jury had she been a white male. However, as a Black woman she was denied these forms of political participation in society. Even still she was given the title of “Miss Rachel” by the townspeople and sailors. This was unusual for even a mixed race female at this time as the title “Miss” was reserved only for white women. Hilary McD Beckles contends that racism in Barbados was stricter than anywhere else in the Caribbean, arguing that there was a color line that not even the fairest skinned mixed race person could cross.48 Rachel Pringle-Polgreen defied this rule, because of her economic prosperity, and crossed the color line, establishing herself as an essential community member of Bridgetown.

Rachel Pringle-Polgreen also gained fame in Britain when Prince William Henry went to Barbados with the British Royal Navy. While his ship was docked in Barbados, he stayed at “Miss Rachel’s” hotel.49 Although not his first visit to her establishment, the Prince documented a specific trip in 1786 in his diary that reflects Rachel’s entrepreneurial cunning. On the last night of his visit, the Prince and his men became rowdy after a night of drinking and began to tear up the hotel, breaking much of the furniture, shredding the mattresses and pillows, breaking dishes and silverware, and damaging other valuables. While this mayhem occurred, Pringle-Polgreen sat calmly in a


49 Ibid, 386. Prince William Henry later became King William IV.
chair on the porch and let the Prince continue to have his fun, as she described it. She stated, “Go, go long man, da’ de King’s son! If he no do wha’ he please, who d’en can do ‘um? Let he lon! Lay he muse heself–da’ de King’s son! Bless he heart! Da’ de King’s son.”

The following morning, Pringle-Polgreen tallied the cost of the damage to present to the Prince before he was due to set sail for St. Vincent. The bill came to approximately £700, and included items such as “beds, feather mattresses, pier glasses, pictures, chandeliers, lamps, decanters, wine glasses, porcelain, and crockery.” The Prince paid the tab without question and set sail. Pringle-Polgreen also placed an ad in the paper for items that had been thrown out of the windows by the Prince and his men and subsequently taken by looters. Those items included, “a small filigree waiter scalloped around the edge, seven silver table spoons, seven teaspoons and two desert spoons marked R. P. in a cypher.” Pringle-Polgreen used the £700 she received to rebuild her hotel and refurnish it even more sumptuously than before.

Some people mentioned Pringle-Polgreen’s establishment as a hotel and tavern, while others described it as a house of “debauchery.” At the time of her death, Pringle-Polgreen owned about 26 slave women, a large number for any slave owner regardless of

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50 Aspinall, Rachel Pringle of Barbados, 118.


53 Ibid.
race or gender.\textsuperscript{54} Many of these women worked as prostitutes and bar girls, but Pringle-Polgreen also helped them earn the money necessary to manumit themselves.\textsuperscript{55} The employment of these women creates an analytical conflict. Can one understand Pringle-Polgreen’s employment of these women as prostitutes as a form of resistance? One of the only ways for an enslaved person to obtain their freedom themselves was to purchase it. Unfortunately there were not many options for enslaved women to earn money. Pringle-Polgreen provided this opportunity for these women. She also manumitted an unusually large number of enslaved people in her life and through her death, in defiance of laws restricting the number of slaves an owner could manumit. Pringle-Polgreen allowed these women to keep some of their earnings so that they could pay their required manumission fees, while she paid the fines associated with manumitting them.\textsuperscript{56}

Some residents of Barbados were able to get around manumission fees but these residents were typically white males who not only had the money to travel but also the freedom to move from country to country freely. Men who had the means to travel could take those enslaved people they wished to manumit directly to England where there was no fee or required annuities associated with manumission. Black women who owned slaves did not have this same privilege, because traveling evoked the constant threat of

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 387. Jerome S. Handler, \textit{The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados} (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 135. The accounts of the number of slaves she owned varies, some document it at 19, others 23 and still others document it at 39. In looking directly at her “Last Will and Testament” the number that I was able to come up with was 20 adults and approximately six children.


\textsuperscript{56} Pedro Welch, \textit{Slave Society in the City: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680-1834}, (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2003), 175; “Last Will and Testament of Rachel Pringle-Polgreen”
re-enslavement for women of color. They also may not have been afforded the right to travel freely; even though they were considered free, their freedom was not equal to that of whites.

The threat of re-enslavement was always present for free people of color. This fact forced them to find ways to ensure their freedom at any cost. Rachel Pringle-Polgreen was able to resist being re-enslaved by forging relationships with her oppressors. She was able to climb the social ranks to a status that was not readily available for most people of color, and most certainly not for black women. She obtained and maintained her status as a free black woman while becoming one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the Caribbean during the late-eighteenth century.

Upon Rachel’s death she left a will that manumitted nine of her slaves and their children. The others were divided between five of her white friends. She left the hotel in Bridgetown to Nancy Clarke, one of her former slaves, whom she had previously manumitted, and Clarke continued to run the establishment. Pringle-Polgreen also left one of her houses to an enslaved women she manumitted named “Princess.” The remainder of Rachel’s property, including land and houses, were sold—per her will—to pay the required fees for those she manumitted, her own funeral expenses, and any remaining debt. Whatever was left was to be divided between the friends listed in her

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58 Handler, The Unappropriated People, 135.
will: William Firebrace, William Stevens, and Thomas Pringle equally.\textsuperscript{59} Although easily dismissed, she can be seen as resisting slavery by accomplishing all of these things.

Resistance can take many forms. Many scholars define resistance as overt acts aimed directly against the institution of slavery. Women like Rachel Pringle-Polgreen fought in their own way, to carve out a public space for black women to occupy, but she also worked to gain the respect of whites in Barbados. In order for Pringle-Polgreen to have the space necessary to resist, she had to simultaneously accommodate elite whites. British sailors made a conscious effort to port at Bridgetown and stay at the Royal Navy Hotel, and returned to it each and every time they came. It is no wonder then that Rachel Pringle-Polgreen is credited for starting the tourist industry to Barbados. Because of this reputation, Pringle-Polgreen was able to set the stage for the Black women business owners who followed her, including Nancy Clarke.

Rachel Pringle-Polgreen also contributed to the institution of slavery, even though she supported manumission and allowed the women to purchase their freedom when requested. The latter cannot be ignored, and the former must not overshadow the fact that while she and her employees were accommodating Europeans they were also resisting their enslavement, or the threat of re-enslavement. Unfortunately, she was unable to manumit all of her slaves, because of the island’s laws forbidding this.\textsuperscript{60} Manumission laws in Barbados were strict and not adhering to them appropriately could result in the manumission being declared “void and without effect” by the churchwarden. In order to

\textsuperscript{59} Handler, “Joseph Rachell and Rachael Pringle-Polgreen: Petty Entrepreneurs,” 387.

\textsuperscript{60} Welch, \textit{Slave Society in the City}, 168.
initiate manumission there was a flat fee of £50.61 According to an amendment to An Act for Governing of Negroes passed in 1739 there was also an annuity of £4 that had to be paid as a maintenance fee.62 These fees remained the same until 1801 when the fee was raised to £300 for women and £200 for men which was non-negotiable.63 These fees made it difficult for one to obtain their freedom and even more difficult to maintain it by paying the required annual maintenance fees. If the enslaved person was freed via a will, the executor of the will was responsible for paying all of the required fees. It is this environment that scholars must not overlook. The impetus to keep people of African descent enslaved and prevent the rise of a free colored class constrained all of Pringle-Polgreen’s actions, thus her strategic decisions about manumission more were very complex.64

Black women in the late 1700s-mid 1800s regularly utilized prostitution, and their sexuality more generally, as a means to gaining their freedom.65 When prostitution became widespread in 1802, the manumission rates among black women began to steadily increase. (See Table 1.1) Black women prostitutes asserted their agency by choosing to use their sexual exploitation they faced at the hands of Europeans as a means to gain their freedom. With the increase in manumission fees by the government it

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.


64 Ibid.

became more common for women to pay for their own manumission. According to John Husbands, “By far the greater number of free colored persons in Barbados have either obtained their freedom by their own prostitution, or claimed it under some of their female ancestors who in like manner obtained it and have transmitted it to the descendants.”

Therefore, most of the women whose freedom was obtained in Barbados did so through the means of prostitution and should not be overlooked.

### Table 1.1: Slave Manumissions in Barbados, 1809-32

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>No. Males</th>
<th>No. Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% Males</th>
<th>% Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1809-11</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>61.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1812-14</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1815-17</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818-20</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821-23</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824-26</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1827-29</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>68.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830-32</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1089</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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66 Joseph Husbands, *An Answer to the Charge of Inhabitants of Barbados* (New York: Richardson, 1831), 19.
It is important to highlight those women who were able to fund their manumission or secure a quasi-freedom in addition to those who participated in maroonage, armed resistance, and other overt forms of resistance. Only by doing so is the scholarship able to create an accurate picture of how women fought against slavery. When women made the conscious decision to end the exploitation of their labor by their oppressors, and in turn utilize that exploitation for their own benefit, they were resisting at once the dehumanization of their enslavement and, eventually, their bondage.

How one defines resistance can alter how one determines where one sees resistance. Is the person resisting being enslaved for themselves or for the greater community of enslaved persons? Using Pringle-Polgreen’s example, I assert that it does not matter who one resisted for; resistance efforts should not be stratified making one more important than another. Every enslaved person in the Americas found themselves in unique situations that make comparison problematic. Domestic labor should not be compared to field labor; urban slaves should not be compared to plantation slaves, as the situations required different interactions with the oppressor. Granted, those in the household may not have had to work long days in the field, but they were subjected to the constant supervision of the master or mistress and were therefore subjected to different forms of exploitation. Consequently, resistance efforts had to adapt to the situation of the enslaved.

Pringle-Polgreen worked to maintain her freedom by establishing herself as a businesswoman and property owner in Bridgetown. Although her efforts may not be viewed as large-scale resistance, she most certainly resisted slavery for herself and for the women she manumitted. Pringle-Polgreen is an example of a larger group of women of
color in the British Caribbean who utilized their skills as entrepreneurs to assure their own freedom while obtaining freedom for many of their family members. Enslaved women started businesses in order to provide for their families and some were able to make their businesses lucrative enough to purchase their freedom.

Rachel Pringle-Polgreen was not an anomaly. She carved out a space to freely live her life, while allowing other women of color to do the same. Some chose to follow in her footsteps and establish inns and taverns, others chose to run stores or sell goods on the side of the road. There are examples of women entrepreneurs in urban ports throughout the Caribbean. Many established hotels for traveling sailors to rest, eat, drink and socialize, and most certainly there were many houses of “debauchery.” Pringle-Polgreen is just one of the women who created a thriving business to ensure that she would remain free.
Chapter 2: Old Doll: A Letter for Freedom

Honoured Master,

I take the liberty of conveying these few lines to you hoping to find you my master and mistress and family well, and requesting the kind of favor of you to be so good as to take the trouble to have my manumission executed for me. As you will find by Mr. Jackson’s letter, my friend who has wrote to you on the subject, as I chose it sent to you from all your former kindness to me and my family, I would wish you to complete the business for you servant.

Hon’d Sir I remains
Your Humble Servant

Dolly Newton

The letter above was handwritten by an enslaved woman—Dolly Newton—a member of a family of “elite slaves” who worked on the Newton Plantation in Barbados. She wrote the letter in an attempt to coax her owner to officially manumit her and her family from slavery. Letter writing was a way in which this family tried to prove over and over again that they were respectable people who should be released from the bonds of slavery. During the mid-18th century the Newtons of Barbados—owners of a sprawling sugar plantation—were unique in terms of the relationships they formed with some of their enslaved women.68 While the relationships opened the way to avenues of resistance, the social stratification of the plantation itself was prototypical of those found on holdings throughout the Caribbean.

As was the case on most sugar plantations, the enslaved worked in a variety of capacities to help ensure the smooth operation of sugar cane production. Due to the demographic realities in which a large majority of the population were dependant

67 Karl Watson, A Kind of Right to be Idle: Old Doll, Matriarch of Newton Plantation (St Michael: Cole’s Printery, 2000), 35.

68 Beckles, Natural Rebels, 65.
laborers of color, white planters often found it necessary to elevate the status of a handful of bondspeople, which a limited number of whites could do not do. In his analysis of Brazil, Carl Degler evoked the notion of the “mulatto escape hatch” to demonstrate the social mobility of mixed race people who enjoyed an elevated status due to a desperate demographic plea of the Portuguese planters. In Barbados however, escape hatches were not solely limited to mixed race people. In this case, a number of enterprising women of color actively used their connections with white men and women to their advantage—in effect negotiating their circumstances in order to achieve some semblance of freedom.

True freedom was not always attainable for slave women in Barbados. At times they could achieve an elevated or privileged status, which could just as beneficial for those involved. Women, such as “Old Doll,” as Dolly Newton was known, formulated relationships with white men and women in a conscious attempt to gain certain freedoms and reduce the arduous workloads for which she and her extended family were responsible. This active negotiation of a socio-sexual relationship is an aspect of resistance that Beckles calls scholars to further explore in *Afro-Caribbean Women & Resistance to Slavery in Barbados*. Old Doll and her family epitomize this conscious manipulation or relationships to resist slavery and achieve an elevated status. Through a series of letters written by Old Doll, her extended family, and plantation managers this

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chapter reconstructs some of the relationships with privileged whites that Old Doll’s family cultivated. This chapter opens with a letter Old Doll wrote to request her manumission and states that she had a Mr. Jackson write a letter in support of her request. Old Doll actively petitioned for her freedom by writing letters and eventually other members of her family joined her in the campaign.

Black women in Caribbean slave systems formulated a “culture of resistance,” formulated out of the unique social situations in which enslaved women were placed. The resistance in which they participated again defies the standard definition and creates a space for simultaneous acts of accommodation alongside more overt modes of action. Typically, resistance is seen as the polar opposite of accommodation and archetypes are constructed—as in the case of Stanley Elkins and John Blassingame—in which enslaved people are either rebels or sellouts but never fully articulated human beings. Enslaved people were at their core human beings with a range of characteristics, behavioral traits, and potentialities. In this way, enslaved people could potentially resist and accommodate as part of a normal behavioral pattern.

Although Stephanie Camp has attempted to redefine how acts of resistance may look differently for women, the bulk of the academy has been slow to accept a more expansive definition. Beckles states that women utilized specific strategies to secure their spaces in societies dominated by white men and women. Old Doll participated in two of the strategies that Beckles discusses: procreation with proper tied white men and

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entering “intimate social friendships with elite white women whose need for friendship and companionship reflected the considerable restrictions placed on their lives within the patriarchal system.”\textsuperscript{74}

Old Doll’s family also participated in active “whitening” of their family. When one chose to “whiten” one’s family line, one actively participated in a unique form of resistance, which recognized that the more one’s children were able to blend in with European society, the more freedoms they could access and the less they would suffer the horrors of enslavement. However these women should not be confused with women who were raped by white men, their lighter offspring was not a part of the same social processes at operation here.

Ostensibly, breaking free of the constraints of slavery was the ultimate goal for those participating in resistance efforts. Unfortunately, all did not achieve manumission and, in the instance that it could not be obtained, a privileged status was pursued. The general ambition of the enslaved was to avoid being subjected to the cruelty, inhumanity and dehumanization of slavery. Transforming their social location in a slave-based society was not a simple task and took great planning and perseverance. At times, this planning involved securing relationships with white men and women who were property owners or had access to wealth. These relationships could lead to the enslaved being granted privileges that were not afforded to others. The relationships formed were not always sexual and at times simply involved being a “friend” to someone who had status in the white community.

\textsuperscript{74} Beckles, "Historicizing Slavery in West Indian Feminisms," 39.
Old Doll clearly had a “privileged” status on the Newton plantation in Barbados. According to plantation records she was Elizabeth Newton’s “housekeeper” for many years. In the early 1790’s when Old Doll was approximately sixty years of age, Newton decided to hand over her plantation to two of her cousins Thomas and John Lane.\(^\text{75}\) Newton made it clear in the transfer of her property that Old Doll and her family were to retain their status as “semi-free” persons.\(^\text{76}\)

Old Doll’s relationship with Newton was different from many of the relationships that white women formed with enslaved black women. When enslaved women of color were granted special privileges, in many cases it was the result of a sexual relationship with a white man. For instance, there were many cases of black women achieving a heightened status from white men due to periodic or continual sexual liaisons. However, in Old Doll’s case it was Elizabeth Newton that held Old Doll and her family in higher esteem due to the bonds of “friendship” between the two women and over time, Newton purchased additional enslaved women to perform Old Doll’s housekeeping duties so that she would no longer have to work.\(^\text{77}\)

Old Doll was also given certain “rights” by Newton and took full advantage of them. She was given the privilege to come and go as she wished with few restrictions on her time or where she could go. Her children were given tutors paid for by the Newt ons, as Old Doll was insistent that her children know how to read and write. She also associated herself with the free population of Barbados and conducted herself as if she

\(^{75}\) Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 67.

\(^{76}\) Beckles, "Historicizing Slavery in West Indian Feminisms," 41.

were legally free. Although Old Doll was never officially manumitted, she worked hard to maintain the status that she achieved for herself and her family.\(^7^8\)

But Old Doll did not rely simply on Newton’s friendship to secure her place in society. Although she had worked hard in her younger years, Old Doll began to establish relationships with white men to ensure that her children would not have to perform arduous tasks.\(^7^9\) In addition to the friendship with Elizabeth Newton, Old Doll also had a sexual relationship with a white man who held a management position on the Newton plantation. She was seen as the manager’s wife and they had children together. Entering into this relationship was strategic as it helped to ensure her “quasi-freedom” during a time when the freedom of black and mixed-race women was circumscribed regularly.\(^8^0\)

Beckles states that “since the concept of a free black woman seemed contradictory, most free black women found themselves constantly challenging attempts to re-enslave them; many were kidnapped and removed to unfamiliar jurisdictions…[their lives] were shaped by fundamentally different experiences.”\(^8^1\) Therefore, even though manumission was the probable goal for Old Doll, her “quasi-free” status was not as freely challenged by those outside of the plantation, as her legal manumission might have been.

Resistance in Old Doll’s case came in many forms; she participated in what Beckles would call a “plantation based mentality of protest” that included refusing to

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\(^8^0\) Beckles, "Historicizing Slavery in West Indian Feminisms," 38.

\(^8^1\) Ibid.
perform the laborious tasks that were required of those who were enslaved.\footnote{Beckles, \textit{Afro-Caribbean Women}, 75.} Old Doll refused to participate in the labor force of the Newton plantation even after the whites she had formulated relationships with left Barbados and went back to England. According to Karl Watson, “[Black] women of the family played important and meaningful roles, and so by using them, we can reject the stereotype of the slave woman as a passive bystander; acted on rather than exercising her own judgment.”\footnote{Karl Watson, \textit{A Kind of Right to be Idle: Old Doll Matriarch of Newton Plantation}, (St. Michael: Cole’s Printery, 2000), 10.} When ownership of the plantation changed hands Old Doll continued to function as an “elite” and refused to work.\footnote{Ibid.}

“Elite” status came with unique privileges not available to the general enslaved population. Old Doll’s half sister Mary Ann also had an “elite” status. She was a mixed race women married to a white man. She was given slaves and as a property owner she was afforded the right to leave a will in the case of her death. When Mary Ann died she bequeathed her slaves to Old Doll. This was an unusual occurrence, as it was not typical for slaves to be allowed to own and/or bequeath other slaves and Mary Ann’s ability to do so reflects her status in her community. Old Doll was also known as a “huckster” and was able to make money in this manner. She worked out of her house and sold “dry goods, rum, sugar and other commodities.”\footnote{Ibid.} Old Doll operated as an entrepreneur in Barbados, which helped to shape her elevated status, and ensured that she had a steady income.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{82} Beckles, \textit{Afro-Caribbean Women}, 75.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{83} Karl Watson, \textit{A Kind of Right to be Idle: Old Doll Matriarch of Newton Plantation}, (St. Michael: Cole’s Printery, 2000), 10.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.}
Mary Ann and Old Doll attempted to “whiten” their families by continuing to have relations with white men and encouraging their children to do the same.\(^{86}\) In the end, every woman in Old Doll’s family was “married” to or had children with white men in positions of power within the plantation system. This encouragement of intergenerational interracial relationships was a mechanism of resistance to slavery, to ward off attacks against elevated status and racial hierarchies. Old Doll well understood that being white afforded one privileges that were not automatically granted to the Black population. Just as she understood that being literate would help in her family’s fight for freedom she also understood that having a lighter (whiter) complexion was useful.

But freedom, not increased rights, was the overall focus of Old Doll’s family. They were not concerned with fighting to end slavery for every slave; they simply wanted to achieve freedom for themselves. Their acts of resistance were individual or familial, as opposed to collective. Owning slaves was not a problem for the members of this family, because they were only concerned with the freedom of their own bloodline. For example, Old Doll’s daughter, Dolly, was the mistress of a white man who owned a store. Dolly used this relationship to benefit her family, by taking items from the store to give to her family members. When this relationship ended the family continued to benefit because Old Doll’s cousin also worked at the store and took goods as needed.\(^{87}\)

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\(^{87}\) Hilary McD. Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 83. Hucksters sold sundry items, things they grew or food that they caught. They also sold merchandise that they had either made or bought to sell. Hucksters may sell out of stands and storefronts or by utilizing pushcarts. Bills against the selling of goods to “negroes” were presented as early as 1688, and then again in 1708 ‘An act to Prohibit the inhabitants of this Island [Barbados] from employing Negroes and other Slave in selling and
But Dolly wanted to make her freedom official, so she wrote a letter requesting her manumission. A few years later, her sister did the same and her freedom was granted. Unfortunately, Dolly’s request was not successful. However, literacy played a large role in the family’s quest for freedom. Old Doll’s children took it upon themselves to write letters to their owners and other plantation officials on their own behalf in a constant attempt to achieve legal manumission. Jenny Lane, another of Old Doll’s daughters, wrote several letters to her owner requesting manumission:

My Honoured Master,
I hope you will pardon the liberty your slave has taken in addressing herself to you on a subject which I hope may not give you the least displeasure of offence. When my valued and good Master Wood was about to leave this Country, I requested him to make a proposal to you in my behalf, which he most kindly promised to do, but as I understood he never had it in his power to make my request. I now with my Mistress Wood’s approbation, venture to address myself to you which favour I have to ask good Master is this. I have a friend who has been generous enough to promise me if I can obtain your consent will pay for my freedom but first I must implore you to take another good slave in my stead, or sell me, which ever you please to do, and you shall be most honestly paid if it should please you to sell me. I should never have thought of changing my situation if I could be assured of always living as I have done with my master and mistress Wood, but as you are at a distance and I don’t know whose hands I may fall into, I hope you will not blame me for embracing this offer of my freedom. With all due obedience and submission I sign myself your humble slave,
Jenny Lane

Although Elizabeth Newton had promised to care for Old Doll’s family and keep them from having to perform hard labor, the ultimate freedom of these people was not something she had thought about or took the time to organize. Not all members of Old

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Doll’s family were able to gain their manumission, but none of them ever gave up on their pursuit. This constant push for legal freedom suggests that even the elevated status that they fought for was not equal to the freedom of those they observed in the greater community.

Jenny Lane also attempted to gain freedom for her sons, Robert and William Henry, who were the biracial children of the plantation manager. She wrote to the manager on March 4, 1813:

Honoured Sir
I have taken the liberty to write to you, hope you will excuse me requesting the favour of your goodness to oblige me with my two Mullato sons at Newton’s; the Name of one is Robert a joiner by trade, but one of his arms is affected and no use to the estate; the other is William Henry a taylor [sic] by trade and a Poor constitution that I think is but little use to the estate. If I thought or knew they was any Great use, you may Depend I would not taken the liberty, but my having A little to Depend on and they poorly would wish to have them to own it, which I have named to General Haynes (plantation attorney), and I know what I say in this letter to be true.
I Remains your truly well
Wisher and very humble servant
Jane Lane

Jenny Lane participated in both accommodation and resistance in this letter appealing to the plantation manager while simultaneously directly asking for her sons’ freedom.

Old Doll and her family were able to maintain their social status and some of her family members were manumitted. They did all of this by formulating relationships first with a white woman, and then with white men. Although Old Doll was not biracial, she was the mother and grandmother of biracial children. She maintained that her status would not be changed and separated herself from the enslaved population as much as

89 Ibid, 40.
possible. Although the terms “elite” and/or “privileged” are not entirely appropriate when discussing un-free persons, Old Doll certainly had privileges that were not enjoyed by the majority of the enslaved population. The privileges that she actively cultivated were not complete freedom but did open new spaces in which she and her family could continue to negotiate for their freedom.

When the transfer of ownership occurred, Old Doll’s new owner questioned why she was not a laborer. He also felt that if Old Doll had special circumstances, that this should not interfere with her young, able-bodied children to serve as productive workers. Dolly, in fact, told their new manager that she had never “swept out a chamber or carried a pail of water to wash, since Old Doll had other slave assistants to do that sort of work.” The manager became furious but because of their “elite” status among whites even threats of work in sugar cane fields did not change Old Doll’s family’s privileges.

Old Doll was able to achieve a sort of quasi-freedom throughout her time on the Newton plantation by accommodating her white owners. One could simultaneously participate in acts of resistance while continuing to accommodate white oppressors. While Old Doll was actively forming intimate relationships with white men and women she was consciously creating a space for her family to be more comfortable. Old Doll and her family fought for their freedom as one unit. They seemed to share authority over family matters and ensured that each of the children were educated and trained in a useful trade to sustain them once freedom had been granted. Because obtaining the status of an

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92 Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 129.
“elite” slave was so coveted, families such as Old Doll’s tended to, according to Beckles, “close ranks and reinforce their advantage.” They resisted slavery together to ensure that one day they would all be free.

Both Old Doll and Rachel Pringle were able to resist their enslavement by forging relationships with their oppressors. Although Rachel Pringle was manumitted and Old Doll was not, Old Doll was able to maintain her quasi-freedom until her death, when she was buried in the same manner as whites of the time. Old Doll’s coffin was carried by a horse-drawn hearse, an Anglican clergyman presided over the service and many prominent white families were present. Rachel Pringle’s funeral was of the same caliber. Both of these women were able to climb the ranks of society to a status that was not yet readily available for black people.

Old Doll acted as her own agent while on the Newton Plantation. She consciously forged relationships with those who could give her a heightened status and then utilized that status to remain “quasi-free” until her death. Old Doll ensured that neither she nor her family would be subjected to the intense work-load or harsh treatment that was associated with British Caribbean slavery. They worked together to resist slavery and even though their status afforded them some of the freedoms they sought, they also continued to fight for their legal freedom.

93 Ibid.
94 Beckles, “Black Female Slaves and White Households in Barbados,” 120.
Chapter 3: Queen Nanny: Fictional Character or Leader of Resistance Among the Windward Maroons?

“Not Every skin-teeth
Is a smile ‘Massa’
if you see me smiling
when you pass
if you see me bending
when you ask
Know that I smile
know that I bend
only the better
to rise and strike
again”95

As the previous two chapters have shown, women were often engaged in forms of resistance which were subtle, obscure, and very often linked to relationships—sexual and platonic—with whites. Although, this does not negate the reality that throughout the Western Hemisphere women of color were involved in all aspects of the broad spectrum of resistance. For example, enslaved women were implicated in a number of mass conspiracies and revolts during the eighteenth and nineteenth century Caribbean, including Antigua, St. Domingue and Jamaica. Perhaps the most signal form of overt resistance in which women of color participated would be the various modes of maroonage. Maroonage, petit and grande, is when an enslaved person runs away from bondage and, in the most extreme forms, establishes independent maroon societies. Petit

maroonage, which was the most common form of maroonage, was when enslaved people ran away temporarily to visit loved ones or for other personal reasons. This form was also known as outlying and was one of the most prevalent forms of resistance. As a result of its ubiquity, petit maroonage became an accepted practice by planters due to their inability to effectively prevent it.96

*Grande maroonage* was a more permanent solution to enslavement. In this mode, enslaved people typically ran away as a group or formed enclaves after successful escapes from plantations. *Grande maroonage* was permanent flight and was associated with greater, and more cruel, punishments for those captured by colonial authorities.97

Maroonage was the most commonly reported form of resistance for women in the British Caribbean in particular.98 It is also likely that some of those who did not directly participate in maroonage may have assisted others in doing so.99 It was so frequent that in 1731 the British colony of Barbados enacted a law to increase the amount and type of punishment given to those who participated in it:

Whereas drivers, negroes and other slaves do often runaway and absent themselves from the service of their owners, and are willfully entertained, harboured and concealed by other slaves to the great detriment of the owners of such runaway slaves, and to the grievous mischief of inhabitants…in general, be it therefore enacted…that if any negro or slave shall hereafter willfully entertain, harbor or conceal any runaway slave and shall be thereof adjudged guilty by any Justice of the Peace,

96 Beckles, *Natural Rebels*, 165.

97 Ibid.


upon confession or proof, such negro or other slave shall receive one and twenty lashes on their bare backs; and for the second offence of the same nature...thirty and nine lashes..., and for the third offence..., shall receive thirty and nine lashes...and be branded in the right cheek with a hot iron marked with the letter R, and shall be then punished at the discretion of the Justice, life and limb excepting.\textsuperscript{100}

Even after the enactment of this law, enslaved people continued to run without hesitation. Some fled to urban areas, where they pretended to be free, others left for the mountains and hills, still others participated in what is known as maritime maroonage where they would use boats in order to escape to other islands and relocate as necessary in order to avoid recapture.\textsuperscript{101} Although men and women alike participated in resistance through maroonage, in the eighteenth century there were actually more women and children than men in maroon towns throughout the British Caribbean.\textsuperscript{102}

In the case of \textit{grande maroonage} in which entire communities were formed women were present for all stages of the development of these maroon settlements. And even if they not maroons women continued to support those who were attempting to reach the settlements and those who currently resided in maroon enclaves. Barbara Bush states that women were essential to the promotion and maintenance of the “spirit of resistance.”\textsuperscript{103} According to Bush, maroon mothers carried on a “tradition” of animosity against whites by passing on the necessity of constant resistance to their children. Maroon

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{100} Beckles, \textit{Persistent Rebels}, 1010. \\
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid, 1012. \\
\end{flushright}
women were also responsible for the physical survival of the maroon camps as they continued planting and maintaining crops—roles they played on plantations as well. Without the contribution of women, maroon camps would not have been permanent establishments.\(^{104}\)

Once these communities were settled they became the sites of new kinship networks and a developing community not heavily influenced by Europeans. In order to gain entrance into these newly formed communities, one was typically required to go through an initiation process to ensure their loyalty to their new kin group.\(^{105}\) In some instances this initiation, which entailed a blood oath and a probationary period, was meant to ensure that those who were granted entrance would be loyal to their new family and would fight to protect their community from European oppressors.\(^{106}\)

Women in maroon communities were vital to their self-sufficiency and sustenance. The survival of the maroon community was based on the productive and reproductive roles that women played. Any, if not all, maroon societies were matrifocal as a result of either cultural or demographic realities. Simply put, women’s capacity as producers of food and reproducers of future generations explains their centrality and elevated importance. Women were equally important on plantations, which meant a constant conflict between the interests of the plantocracy and those of the maroons. In fact, when maroons raided plantations in order to liberate slaves, enslaved women—due to their cultural and social importance—were the ones who were most cherished. In fact,

\(^{104}\) Ibid.


\(^{106}\) Ibid, 65.
maroon societies had to be self-sufficient because jeopardizing the plantocracy’s labor force obviously threatened their security. Slavery in the Western Hemisphere depended on the enslavement of the collective womb of African women; conversely, maroon communities owed their very existence to the liberation and elevation of enslaved women. 107

According to Beckles, “The possibility of individual flight might have partially reduced the need for the collective, violent anti-slavery confrontation, but maroonage expressed certain philosophical characteristics found among slaves: their right to assert control over self; the supremacy of their social relationships over labour commitment to the workplace; and the power of their individuality to transcend the control mechanism of enslavement.” 108 In essence, those who chose to participate in this form of resistance to slavery were asserting their agency by choosing to change their status from enslaved to free. In the case of maroon societies, one was able to attain freedom individually and then maintain it in a group of other people likewise positioned.

One of the most famous maroon settlements in the British Caribbean was Nanny Town, or Moore Town as it is known today in Jamaica. The community was originally located on 600 acres of land in the Back Rio Grande Valley, strategically located near the coastline. 109 The first extant record of the settlement was in the 1730s. 110 When the


108 Beckles, Natural Rebels, 164.

109 Mair, The Rebel Woman, 999.

110 Ibid. This community was established as early as the 1690s.
British stumbled upon it, the town was already a highly organized society with Queen Nanny serving as its leader. The Nanny Town or Windward Maroons also had an alliance with the Leeward Maroons led by Cudjoe.111

The stories of Queen Nanny and Nanny Town can be difficult to historicize since many of the historical facts are intertwined with elements of folkloric legends. Although she was only documented four times in historical records, her existence is aptly shown through the various legends about her. Whether or not Nanny was enslaved on a plantation at any time is unknown. Even if she had never been enslaved on a plantation, she was certainly enslaved during her journey from Africa to Jamaica. Karla Gottlieb, among others, state that she was of a royal heritage, possibly an Akan-speaking Queen Mother, but when she arrived in Jamaica, and the nature of her status upon her arrival, is unclear.112

According to Kenneth Bilby, the oral history shows that Grandy Nanny was an obeah woman from West Africa who swallowed some special herbs during her ship passage to Jamaica.113 Upon her arrival she then excreted the herbs and used them to run or fly away from her enslavers. At this point, she founded Nanny Town.114 Another story about her escape from slavery involves a sequence of events occurring after Nanny and her sister Sekesu arrived from the West African coast. Nanny fled slavery and her sister Sekesu remained on a plantation. For those that tell this story, they conclude that all

111 Ibid.

112 Gottlied, The Mother of Us All, xv.


114 Ibid.
people born on the island were cousins, as Sekesu and Nanny were the mothers of all of the children in Jamaica. This is echoed in one particular folkloric tradition regarding the dual heritage of African-Jamaicans one oral historian states:

A two sister child, you know. Well, one was Grandy Nanny, that’s the Maroon. And de other one is Mother Ibo, a African woman. Two sister child. So, Maroon is fe Grandy Nanny, and we [Bongo people] are Mother Ibo grandchild. We was warned. We was warned not to eat salt. But, you know, some can’t bear hungry. Anything him got, him eat. But Maroon never eat, in de slavery time dem never eat, they feed on green bush.

The historian infers that there were two sisters who came to Jamaica from Africa. The one that became a Maroon was Nanny and she became the mother of all the maroons. The other sister was the mother of those who remained enslaved. Bilby argues that this second explanation is more a “mythic account of dual ethnogenesis” explaining the two population clusters in Jamaica: the Maroons and the descendants of plantation slaves.

The stories surrounding Nanny and her existence are numerous, but there are two major tales that have remained consistent over time and may have a significant piece of history embedded in them. The first tale is the story of the boiling cauldron that remained at the base of the mountain where Nanny resided. According to legend, the cauldron was boiling at all times with no fire at its base. Apparently it was Nanny’s “obeah power” that was able to keep the pot boiling. When Europeans would attempt to gain entrance to the camp for any purpose they would fall into the cauldron and perish. In the late 1800s it

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116 Ibid, 119.
117 Bilby, True-Born Maroons, 111.
seemed that “Nanny’s Pot” was an actual geographical location where two rivers met and fell over a rocky basin creating an image of “frothy and foaming” waters providing validity to the stories of the boiling cauldron with no fire beneath. In this story, Nanny operates as the protector of her family, producing and reproducing to ensure the future of her town.

The second story frequently told about Queen Nanny is her ability to catch bullets with her buttocks. This story was publicized by Herbert Thomas, an inspector in the Jamaican constabulary, sent to Nanny Town in 1891 to dispel certain rumors about Jamaica, in order to increase tourism. He was also told to visit the town and bring artifacts back from Nanny Town to add to an exhibit in Kingston. When he left Nanny Town he wrote:

The notorious Nanny was a woman, and the wife of the leader Cudjoe,-or, I presume, one of his wives- and, like all unsexed women who have led a freebooter’ life, ten times more ferocious and blood-thirsty than any man among the Maroons. She was possessed of supernatural powers, and spirited away the best and finest of the slaves from the outlying estates. She never went into battle armed like the rest, but received the bullets of the enemy that were aimed at her, and returned them with fatal effect, in a manner of which decency forbids a nearer description. She kept at the junction of the Nanny and Stony rivers, at the foot of the precipice on whose brink Nanny Town stood, a huge cauldron boiling, without any fire underneath, and when the soldiers and militia drew near to inspect this marvelous phenomenon, they fell headlong into in and were suffocated.

The meaning of this story has been interpreted in many ways. Some say that it was an attempt to dehumanize and de-gender Nanny, to erase women from history and especially deny them their role in resistance against being enslaved in the Caribbean. Others have

119 Ibid, 16.
120 Ibid., 8.
121 Ibid., 12.
made reference to it being a metaphor for a gesture that women in West Africa and the Caribbean frequently do, turning around their bottoms and shaking them as a sign of disrespect or as a direct insult. Still others believe that she literally caught the bullets with her bottom citing her strength in being a woman of “science” or an “obeah woman” who had great power. Although the maroons of Nanny Town chose to refer to her as a woman of “science” versus an “obeah woman,” her supposed powers can show the maintenance of certain cultural beliefs from West and/or West Central Africa, as the creation story gives her the power of flight and she is frequently linked to the use of herbs for doing both harm and good.

In the 1730s, the British invaded Nanny Town. The community served as a direct threat to the colonial government and plantocracy because they took labor from the plantations. At the time of the invasion, Queen Nanny had the women and children moved to Girls Town and Women’s Town in the John Crow mountains which is the site of modern day Moore Town in Jamaica. Moore Town, which continues to thrive today, was hidden by the foliage and therefore safer. Those who reside in Moore Town today continue to consider themselves Grandy Nannys’ yoyo, or her descendents.

Nanny’s fighting strategies were akin to guerilla warfare. Although Nanny was never known to fight herself, she was the strategist behind the Maroons’ defense against the British. Philip Thicknesee who fought against the Maroons in the 1730s left a description of Nanny as a warrior in his Memoirs stating calling her an “old Hag” who

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123 Ibid., 80.

124 Gottlied, The Mother of Us All, 24.
had a “girdle rounder her waist with (I speak within compass) nine or ten different knives hanging in sheaths to it, many of which I have no doubt, had been plunged in human flesh and blood.”

Thicknesse also brought back stories of the Maroons wearing bracelets, necklaces and anklets made of human teeth and bones, creating an image of the Maroons as savages and barbarians.

In 1739 the British sent representatives to Nanny Town to have the Windward Maroons sign a peace treaty already signed by Cudjoe of the Leeward Maroons. Nanny had been alerted by another member of the town through an abeng, cow horn, and thus knew that the British were coming. She allowed the British in after much hesitation, since she did not trust their intentions. Nanny refused to sign the document and, when the last Europeans, came she showed them the jaw-bone of one of the men who had come in an earlier attempt and then ordered them to be killed.

By 1740 a land grant was given to Queen Nanny by the British government. The existence of this grant not only proves her historical existence, but also the status she accrued as the leader of the Windward Maroons. The granting of this land is significant because, typically, land was only granted to whites. Giving land to free blacks, especially those who had run away was unheard of. The land grant of 1740 stated:

George the 2nd by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland and King of Jamaica, Lord Defender of the Faith…have given and granted…and do give and grant unto Nanny and the people residing with


126 Gottlied, The Mother of Us All, 24.

127 Gottlied, The Mother of Us All, 26.

128 Ibid, 27.
her and other heirs and I do assign a certain parcel of land containing five hundred acres in the parish of Portland branching north south east on Kingsland and west on Mr. John Stevenson. 129

Nanny herself is surrounded by mystery, not only because there are very few accounts of of her in the historical record, but also because her history has become conflated with other figures who went by the name “Nanny” in other Jamaican maroon communities. “Nanny” is possibly a blend of two terms used by Akan-speakers: Nana, which is a term utilized for individuals of royal heritage and Ni which means “first mother.” 130

Nanny was inducted as a “national hero” of Jamaica, but only after Edward Braithwaite showed that she played a significant role in the freedom of slaves and “served as a symbolic force in the national liberation of Jamaica.” 131 Braithwaite also had to prove her historical existence and was made to separate the “real Nanny” from the “fables” that surround her existence. Braithwaite stated that instead of the story that has been represented by Europeans, depicting Maroons as “Wild Negroes,” the documentation of Nanny and the Nanny Town Maroons shows the history of a people who resisted being enslaved and resisted being assimilated into European culture. He further states that the Windward Maroons returned to the cultural belief systems and practices that had been their own prior to their victimization in the slave trade.

After her induction as a National Heroine, her picture was permanently embossed on Jamaica’s five hundred dollar bill. (See Appendix D) Her image was also caste on the

129 Ibid, 28. The Leeward Maroons were also granted land at one point, but that was only as a spoil of war. Ibid, 29.

130 Ibid.

131 Sharpe, Ghosts of Slavery, 20.
cups at McDonalds restaurants on the island. The National Library of Jamaica also reproduced her image on posters with the statement “With courage, vision and purpose she led her people in the struggle against oppression, Nanny of the Maroons: Self-Awareness. Self-confidence. Self-reliance.” Also, Nanny’s use of the abeng was the topic of Michelle Cliff’s historical novel Abeng. In the novel she does not recreate the history of Nanny, but uses Nanny as inspiration to claim supernatural powers to not only resist, but “vanquish,” her colonial enemies. “The extent to which you can believe in the powers of Nanny that they are literal examples of her Africanness and strength, represents the extent to which you have decolonized your mind.”132 In the last few decades Nanny has become a household name in Jamaica and throughout most of the British Caribbean as a symbol of resistance against oppression in enslavement and colonization.

Even through the haze surrounding Queen Nanny’s existence she was a historical figure that had a significant impact on the history of women’s resistance and the history of Jamaica. Queen Nanny fought for the maintenance and continuation of Nanny Town. Intertwined with the stories of “magic” and “spells” is a story of the preservation of culture and resistance to assimilation to European norms of the time. Nanny continues to be a symbol of the resilience of women throughout the Caribbean and her power evokes fear even today. Her descendants regard her memory as power and have sustained Moore Town as their home. Maroonage is often included in the historiography of resistance, but the participation of women in it has been silenced or ignored. Nanny is an example of one of the many women who actively participated in maroonage as a form of resistance in the Caribbean and throughout the Atlantic World.

Conclusion

Sugar and slavery created an economy in the British Caribbean that allowed the planter class and the European colonizers to benefit monetarily for hundreds of years. The benefits reaped by this brutal system continue to be enjoyed today by those same insurance companies, banks, and businesses built from the profits of slave labor. The history of those who were enslaved on these islands has begun to emerge in the scholarship over the last few decades, and as time moves on, this history is evolving and attempting to represent the lives of the enslaved population more appropriately. Originally, the story that emerged was one that only included men. As women entered the historical picture, their lives as enslaved people, and the ways they resisted that condition, have begun to achieve scholarly consideration, most notably by Hilary McD. Beckles, Barbara Bush, Verene Shepherd, Karl Watson.

It is time now for scholars to dig deeper into the sources and read against the grain to expand what is known about enslaved women and their lives. The archives need to be utilized to find new primary sources. Current sources also need to be re-examined for clues that could lead to how enslaved women interacted with the world around them. The roles women played must be examined and the complexity of their lives should be taken into consideration when determining the intent behind their actions. Women not only played an essential role in the smooth running of the plantation economy, but they also played vital roles in the maintaining of family structures on the plantation. Women in
urban areas were able to enter into unique situations and access opportunities related to their interaction with whites in the cities.

Looking at the lives of women like Rachel Pringle-Polgreen, Old Doll and Queen Nanny allows us insight into the ways that three very different women resisted being enslaved. Each of these women made the most of their situation. In doing so, they were able to obtain differing levels of freedom. Choosing the ways in which they negotiated their relationships with the white population became central to determining how effective their resistance efforts would be. These three women stand as representatives for other enslaved women who saw these same opportunities for freedom and acted in similar manners.

The British Caribbean is composed of many islands, and this thesis has only brought to light the story of three women on two of the them, but the scholarly community has generally ignored other countries, such as Trinidad & Tobago and Antigua. The histories of all of these countries need to be uncovered, and the women that have been silenced must be given the ability to speak again. Women manipulated the system, while suffering brutal punishments. Historians need to go into these untouched areas and recreate the history so that the stories of the enslaved are not lost.

Rachel Pringle-Polgreen should not only be remembered as running a house of debauchery, but should be seen as a woman who facilitated the liberation of many of the women who worked for her. These women should not only be seen as victims, but as people who found ways to take control of their victimization by white men and transform that exploitation into a road towards freedom. Old Doll and her family manipulated their situations as well. They formulated relationships with white men and women in an
attempt to achieve a status that would afford them the freedoms that they wanted. In addition to the relationships that they formed and manipulated they also actively wrote the plantation manager and other government officials petitioning regularly for their freedom. Each one not only pursued freedom for themselves but also for their family members.

Rachel Pringle, Old Doll and her family, all also enslaved others. Although Pringle enslaved women, she also provided them with an avenue to obtain their own freedom. Allowing the women who worked in her bar to keep their earnings in order to accumulate the funds to manumit themselves was an intentional decision by Pringle. Old Doll and her family did not offer any sort of option for manumission to those that they enslaved. Additionally, Old Doll and her family were still enslaved themselves when they were given their own slaves by the plantation mistress. It is imperative to remember though, that their exploitation of others does not negate their efforts for their own freedom.

Queen Nanny participated in a more undeniable form of resistance—maroonage. What is intriguing about Nanny is the folklore that surrounds her and her history. Many times her story is dismissed as fable. Queen Nanny was a historical figure who, although being wrapped up in this folklore, was able to establish a maroon village that housed numerous men, women and children who had escaped slavery. In fact this folklore becomes the unique piece to discussing her resistance. The stories about Nanny created fear in the white population that allowed her to effectively maintain her community. Nanny and her town were so influential that it continues to stand today, and her descendants allow her legacy to live on in Jamaica today.
The door is open now for historians to go forward and continue to find evidence of those men and women that struggled and survived while being enslaved in the Americas. The legacy of those who were enslaved should be handled with care and represented appropriately by those who have a passion for the history that they are presenting to the students of today.
Appendix A

Printing of Rachel Pringle, a free coloured tavern keeper in Bridgetown (circa 1790) Original Print by Thomas Rowlandson.
Appendix B
Appendix C

Ya ye yanimi
Grandy Nanny Come-ee
Grandy Nanny Come-ee
Ya ye yanimi
Mumma come-ee
Me bring gyal, me bring bwai
Me bin a Anabo
   Anabo him come from, Africa-A part in Africa on de west!
       Me bin a Anabo
       Me come pon Toni Riba-ee
       Me bring gyal, me bring bwai
       A me come from Hanabo-ee
       Anabo him come from.
           Anabo!
           Boy ship him there!
               Anabo!
Sister come from Pringfil-Seke _come from de river-
Riches-de Golden River, Gold Coast, above Anabo Hill.
   Anabo Hill him come from,
       Anabo him come from.
   Me say me come from Nanny Town-ee
       Me come from Hanabo-ee
           Anabo is direct in Africa134

134 Bilby, True Born Maroons, 73-74.
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