

Freedom in the Night

Antebellum Slave Life After Dark

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Throughout the course of history, nighttime has witnessed people in some of their most active as well as inactive states. At no given point in time have the hours after sunset remained completely silent. For the world in which we live today, sleeping from seven to ten hours each night is the healthy norm.¹ People who tend to have trouble staying asleep for the duration of the night are labeled as insomniacs. But who is to say that those with this problem are not just experiencing the more natural pattern of sleep?² For many centuries, sleep was broken into two separate segments. As light entered the landscape of the night, segmented sleep started to disappear.³ Nighttime offered many a certain feeling of freedom that individuals lacked during the daylight hours. It was a time of the day where people felt as if they had control over their lives and could escape the certain realities they faced during the hours in the day. This feeling is present in every era of history whether it is the peasant class escaping the constraints imposed by the nobility or teenagers escaping their parents in the modern era.

¹ "National Sleep Foundation Recommends New Sleep Times," National Sleep Foundation, accessed 8 December, 2016, <https://sleepfoundation.org/media-center/press-release/national-sleep-foundation-recommends-new-sleep-times>.

² A. Roger Ekirch, "The Modernization of Western Sleep: or Does Insomnia Have a History?" *Past and Present* 226, no. 1 (2015): 149-192.

³ Segmented sleeping has both a "first" and "second" sleep cycle. Originally, the segments of sleep started as equal period, until the onset of industrialization. Industrialization and artificial light pushed back the first period of sleep to starting later and caused there to only be time for one segment of sleep. Ekirch, "The Modernization of Western Sleep?" 149-192.



The antebellum South is no exception when it came to this view of the night. Whites dominated the social and economic spheres in the period leading up to the Civil War. Not only did white Southerners control both of those spheres, but they also controlled the lives of blacks living below the Mason Dixon line. For slaves, the signs of daylight signaled that long hours of work were only moments away. In daylight, the sound of the overseer's whip cracking kept slaves from falling out of line, but darkness created an entirely new atmosphere where freedom seemed within reach. Nighttime and darkness catered to the slave's ability to choose how they conducted their hours after work, enhanced the thoughts and hopes of escaping from the plantation lifestyle, and finally offered the chance to rest after long work hours. No white southerner wanted to fathom the thought of lacking control over the slave population. However, nighttime came close to becoming this unimaginable thought. White Southerners knew the disadvantages night brought to their control over slaves; therefore, they demonstrated their authority through various "night rules."

The movement of slaves during the night is not an area that seems to have generated much conversation among scholars. The main narrative that slaves fall into is that of the brutality and oppression they endured in the South. While that narrative is important to reconstruct, the movements and actions of slaves after their work hours is just as crucial to our understanding. Looking at slave choices during the night can speak to what male and female slaves wanted for themselves as well as their families. Stephanie Camp and Deborah White both speak at great lengths in their books of the slave's nights, especially those of female slaves. Larry Hudson's book, *To Have and To Hold*, focuses on the nuclear slave family and included descriptions of their activities during the hours of darkness. The topic of slavery brings about many questions, but observing slave movements occurring at night may answer some of those questions. What roles did men take on during the night? What were the responsibilities of women after work hours? Did night play a significant role in slaves attempting or successfully running away? What was the reaction of white Southerners to slave mobility during the dark and did this mobility threaten daytime work? What were the sleeping conditions of slaves? In the antebellum South, nighttime offered slaves more than sleep. Night for slaves allowed them greater freedom such as white men experienced during the day. A sense of freedom existed for slaves, both male and female, during the hours of darkness: freedom not just from exhaustive hours of labor, but the freedom of choice in how to spend their time without the watchful eye of overseers.

Male Slaves after Working Hours

Nighttime, just as the day, promoted a kind of segregation, but whereas daytime was defined by a segregation of races, nighttime provided a segregation of the sexes within the slave world. It is no surprise that white Southerners led different lives than slaves during the night. However, male and female slaves also led different lives. Male slaves found themselves enjoying small doses of freedom that were otherwise unavailable during the daylight. Working in the fields, slaves were prohibited socializing among friends, family, and neighbors; however, upon returning home men found it possible to sit around and talk to one another before heading to sleep.⁴ Some men were not as lucky to find their nights open for talking and relaxing. Family chores still awaited the return from the fields. “Sometimes the men had to shuck corn till eleven and twelve o’clock at night” recalled Elisabeth Sparks, a former Virginia slave.⁵ Men occasionally hunted, fished, and collected firewood for the home during the night.⁶

Some male slaves volunteered themselves to work “overtime,” which meant that the work they did during the night would earn them wages or property. William Cook’s owner permitted him to split rails to earn extra money for his family.⁷ Overtime work did not merely provide some opportunities for wages; rather it allowed some families to have food set on their table. Pompey Lewis returned to the fields after his normal daily hours with the hopes of providing more for the family. He was able to lay claim to five-hundred and forty pounds of bacon and other items that he purchased.⁸ The bare minimum rarely seemed to suffice and to find oneself living under a master that allowed overtime seemed to be as close to a miracle as one could get.

Unlike Pompey Cook and William Lewis, living with family did not always prove true for all slaves. Men frequently lived away or separately from their spouses and children.⁹ Wandering off the plantation at

⁴ Deborah Gray White, *Ar’nt I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999), 122.

⁵ Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 17, Virginia, Berry-Wilson, 1936, manuscript/mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn170/>

⁶ Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 33.

⁷ Larry Hudson, *To Have and to Hold: Slave Work and Family Life in Antebellum South Carolina* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 28.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁹ When referring to family members living abroad, it means that they are owned by different families and living on different plantations.

night was unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of slave owners; leaving the premises was only possible if a slave gained permission in the form of travel passes. Men relied on the benevolence of their owners to grant them travel passes to see their family and friends living elsewhere. Unfortunately, not all male slaves found their masters to be understanding and forthcoming with passes to see their wives. But, travel passes could benefit the slave owner and not simply the slave's desire to visit loved ones. Nighttime became the time that masters sent men on errands, often having them deliver letters, messages, goods, or materials wherever needed.¹⁰ From obtaining passes to visit relatives to running errands, male slaves were primarily the ones granted the ability to travel. However, leaving the plantation without passes occurred on numerous occasions, especially when nighttime frolics and parties took place on nearby plantations.¹¹

Nighttime gave men the chance to be protectors of their family. In the daylight hours, the mindset had to be one based on survival of the individual. No one wished to be punished and in order to avoid it at all costs men sometimes silently witnessed their wives or family members undergoing brutal reprimands. One Georgia man delayed his efforts to save his wife from the torture she endured as a punishment. Rescuing her during the daylight hours was unthinkable because of the torture he might then endure. Waiting until nighttime proved to be this man's best hope to save his wife.¹² This Georgia slave did not face this dilemma alone. The sense of duty to protect loved ones did not perish in male slaves; rather, slave owners forced them to exert that feeling of duty in secret.

A Female Slave's Work Never Ends

Long days of work for women had long nights filled with work to follow. Fieldwork required female slaves, just like men, to work from sun up to sundown; however, a man's night did not consistently require him to perform extra labor. Women constantly executed additional tasks upon the onset of nightfall. Owners depended on their females to produce textiles for the use of the plantation, and one Georgia woman recalled her owner demanding that she spin at night. Many women faced these same demands and were punished the next morning if they failed to complete their tasks.¹³ Spinning and

¹⁰ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 27-28.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 93.

¹² White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?*, 146.

¹³ *Ibid*, 122.

textile production for the plantation's use was no frivolous task that slave women could take lightly. Female slaves took on the responsibility of preparing clothing for the plantation. Unlike their masters and mistresses of the plantation, who found joy in their clothing and often bought their outfits already made, the clothing slaves wore came from the hands of female slaves working in the night. Slaves did not have the pleasure of purchasing ready-made clothing or repurposing other ready-made materials. While these luxurious garments graced the backs of their masters and mistresses, cheap materials covered the backs of slaves. Female slaves, like their mistresses, valued the fashion of the day. While their mistresses possessed an abundance of clothing options, female slaves used night as a time for the creation of their own personal clothing.¹⁴ Women often adorned their apparel to construct their own identity through the use of tree bark, bamboo, and poison ivy dye.¹⁵ The limitation of resources posed difficulties at points, but women stayed up well past the men creating their custom dresses for special occasions.¹⁶ The night offered female slaves a chance to create their own distinctive self. In essence, it was at this time that they felt for a moment that they owned themselves. During the daylight such individuality was stripped from them.

Spinning and textile production played large roles in a woman's night hours, but these were not their lone responsibilities after hours. Women still found themselves with chores to do in the slave quarters even without working the field, spinning, and clothing production filling their hours. Saturday afternoons generally were the day when women were able to do laundry for their families; however, the numerous responsibilities that filled a female slave's time did not always allow for Saturday afternoon laundry. The chore of laundry then became another burden of the night hours.¹⁷ Elisabeth Sparks remembered her mother experiencing the burden of laundry in the night:

She had to wash white folks clothes all day an' huh's after dark. Sometimes she'd be washin' clothes way up 'round mid night. Nosir, couldn't wash any nigguh's clothes in daytime.¹⁸

Many women found themselves not only having laundry waiting for them after a long day's work, but other chores as well. Cooking supper for the family was a task that could never wait upon returning home from the fields and only occasionally was there enough food to

¹⁴ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 113-117

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 110.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 106.

¹⁷ White, *Ar'nt I a Woman?*, 121-123.

¹⁸ Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 17, Virginia, Berry-Wilson, 1936, manuscript/mixed

last into the following day for lunch.¹⁹ Slaves frequently fell victim to sickness induced by poor dietary habits. It fell upon the women to try to keep themselves, along with their family, healthy by guaranteeing there were nutritious meals on the table.²⁰ Between the extra work given by one's master and the everyday chores at home, slave women rarely saw the back of their eyelids. Sleep did not rank high on their list of priorities.

Female slaves worked as homemakers on the plantations, but other slaves sometimes feared them. While not every slave shared a belief in witchcraft and sorcery, there did exist talk of witches' existence within the slave quarters. For those slaves that did accept the presence of witches, the idea was that their sorcery caused illnesses or even restless nights.²¹ Primarily female slaves fell to becoming the ones accused as having mystical powers. Nighttime accelerated the fear of witches and represented the peak time for perceived witch activity. While it was impossible to tell the difference between witches and non-witches in daylight, the night was when "she shed her human skin and became a shadow who 'rode' her victims."²² A slave community in Georgia believed one of their own to be a witch. She had the name of "old Aunty" or "cat witch." Old Aunty faced accusations of beating a woman in the night who claimed soreness upon waking.²³ Slave Jacob Stroyer remembered that for any accidents occurring during the night hours witches held the blame.

Sometimes a baby would be smothered by its mother and they would charge it to a witch. If they went out hunting at night and were lost, it was believed that a witch led them off, especially if they fell into a pond or creek.²⁴

Fear of what a witch might do in the hours of darkness caused many slaves to tread lightly among those they assumed were possessed of supernatural powers.

Chasing Freedom under the Moonlight

Freedom seemed much closer for slaves during the night hours. The moonlit paths and amount of darkness in night provided favorable conditions for men and sometimes women to test their luck in escap-

Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn170/>.

¹⁹ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 33.

²⁰ White, *Ar'nt I a Woman?*, 83.

²¹ *Ibid*, 135.

²² *Ibid*, 135.

²³ *Ibid*, 135-136.

²⁴ Jacob Stroyer, *My Life in the South* (Salem: Newcomb & Gauss Printers, 1898), 55.

ing the tortuous life of a slave. Perhaps the one thing that had always made it easy for whites to practice slavery was also the blessing that allowed many to make it to freedom: the color of their skin. Slavery in the Americas had occurred differently than in ages before. In times past, people were enslaved following the conquest of their homes or an incurred debt. However, in the New World, slavery had emerged as a system based upon race alone. And it was difference defined by the color of one's skin that helped to trap millions in servitude. However, in many cases, the dark complexions of the slave's skin often gave those on the run a greater advantage during their nocturnal attempt at reaching a life filled with freedom and choice. The majority of runaways started their journeys on foot with the hopes that patrols could not follow on horseback into certain areas commonly used as paths of escape. Successful runaways did not embark on the journey alone. Commonly male family members or friends whom could be trusted to this act of secrecy helped the fugitive by bringing items of necessity to them.²⁵ The Underground Railroad is the exemplar network many slaves relied upon when hoping to find freedom in the North or Canada. The organization moved slaves under cover of night over distances of ten or even twenty miles that lay between most underground stations.²⁶ Most runaways were men. As above, men obtained travel passes with greater ease than female slaves did and, in turn, this made it possible to observe the landscape prior to their freedom attempts.²⁷ Not only did the men see the lay of the land, but they were also less likely to have attachments to the plantation.

Women were responsible for unborn and living children when travelling during the night. Long distance travels with children were never easy, and children often cried from tiredness and hunger, giving the group away.²⁸ Slave Henry Bibb tried to run away one night with his wife and child, but did not make it far before patrollers caught them. Though not reaching safety was disappointing, for Bibb the difficulties travelling with his whole family at night made his capture almost one of relief.²⁹ A man travelling alone was far more common for runaways than men with family or a woman travelling unaccompanied. In much

²⁵ Stoyer, *My Life in the South*, 65.

²⁶ The Underground Railroad led approximately 100,000 slaves to their freedom from 1810-1850. A "station" or "depot" was the home or place of shelter that slaves used during the night until they thought it was safe to move to the next location. Whites and blacks participated in helping these slaves escape the brutality of slavery, but blacks predominately paved the way to freedom. "Africans in America," Public Broadcasting Service. 1999. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2944.html>.

²⁷ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 41.

²⁸ White, *Ar'nt I a Woman?*, 71-72.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 72.

of the South, women comprised less than a third of total runaways: the largest percentage of women fugitives were found in Louisiana, where they comprised just twenty-nine percent of the runaway population.³⁰

Women did find ways to escape, but their absence proved to be only temporary. Familial ties and bonds were of grave importance to female slaves. A journey toward freedom only seemed worth it if one's child was able to travel as well. Thoughts of leaving children behind on the plantation often were the reason that kept many women from attempting escape.³¹ Truancy, on the other hand, offered female slaves a form of escape that did not mean permanently abandoning their families. Frequently a female slave escaped into the woods for a few nights in order to avoid slavers' brutality, but they could return to their families with ease. Sallie Smith, for example, wanted only to leave the plantation temporarily, and she slept in the woods under moss and leaves to keep hidden.³² The darkness of night gave slaves, both men and women, the ability to attempt escape, whether to permanent freedom in the North or to a temporary freedom just beyond the reality of plantation life. Nighttime saw much movement from slaves travelling paths seeking both kinds of escape from plantation life.

Controlling the Night Hours

The institution of slavery sought to control every moment of those who found themselves bound in the system of unfree labor.³³ Nighttime challenged that idea of controlling and managing the movements of slaves. As above, slaves did not solely work and sleep, rather the night gave them a chance to experience a mild freedom. White Southerners often feared that the small taste of independence night offered would lead to insurrections planned and carried out by slaves. Numerous forms of management existed during the night hours with the hopes of preventing meetings, frolics, travels, and rebellions of slave men and women. Denial of travel passes and mandatory curfews were among the ways that slave masters tried to prohibit nighttime movements from occurring. A Mississippian owner, William Ervin, required that his slaves know the plantation boundaries and set a curfew.

³⁰ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 38.

³¹ White, *Ar't I a Woman?*, 70-71.

³² Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 36-37.

³³ Free labor is only when the laborer has the ability to move freely within the labor system. Unfree labor is where the laborer has no choice or say in his or her labor type.A

At nine o'clock every night the Horne must be blown which is the signal for each to retire to his or her house and there to remain until morning.³⁴

Overseers enforced curfews on the plantations by checking each house to determine who was present and who was absent. Curfews not only signaled the return home, but also served to remind slaves that candlelight was to be extinguished as well. Slave Matilda McKinney remembered having to eat sitting in the dark when she was younger because of a curfew. Travel passes, for the most part, expired before the onset of darkness requiring once again that the slave return to the plantation by dark.³⁵ Both the pass denials and curfews were ways to keep white Southerners' minds at ease regarding their fear of unauthorized slave activity after work.

The minority of slaves were lucky enough to live on plantations where nighttime rules were nonexistent. Visiting friends and family elsewhere posed little problem with no rules barring travel without passes during the night. Male slaves frequently utilized this time and freedom to see wives and girlfriends. While slaves enjoyed these relaxed, or non-existent, night rules, white Southerners found it dangerous. One plantation owner, Henry Smith, did not require his slaves to obtain passes to travel at night and earned the name of "negro spoiler"³⁶ from his community. Another owner did not require passes nor allow patrollers on his property and his neighbors referred to his slaves as "old Ingram's Free Niggers."³⁷ White Southerners viewed owners like Henry Smith and Ingram as giving slaves too much freedom, which could lead to the downfall of what they affectionately referred to as their "peculiar institution."

While some slaves enjoyed nighttime freedoms, other took freedom into their own hands. Masters denying passes did not stop men and women from sneaking off the plantation grounds after sunset. Slave owners frequently found out that their slaves had enjoyed a night of levity at plantations nearby. Celebrations thrown, whether legally or illegally, drew attendance of men and women even without passes. In order to prevent people from travelling and merrymaking into the night, some plantation owners established patrols. So-called "Patty-rollers" enforced the rules of plantation owners and attempted to prevent the gatherings of slaves past sunset. Charles Crawley described

³⁴ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 20-21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

the pattyrollers as “a gang of white men gitting together goin’ through de country catching slaves an’ whipping an’ beatin’ em up if dey had no remit.”³⁸ Groups of patrolmen had the nightly duties of breaking up any party that occurred and punishing slaves that travelled without passes.

Slave activity during darkness not only made white Southerners feel threatened physically, but also socially and economically. Freedom offered to slaves by night challenged a complex balance between slaves and their owners. That taste of independence raised concerns amongst white plantation owners, for they believed that slaves would begin to see their owners as being “natural enemies,” which could lead to disobedience during the day.³⁹ The activities of slaves that filled their evening hours led many plantation owners to believe that daytime yields suffered as result of this covert nightlife. Frederick Olmsted witnessed slaves working in the fields of Virginia and believed that they would “go through the motions of labour without putting strength into them. They keep their powers in reserve for their own use at night, perhaps.”⁴⁰ Owners were convinced that night’s empowerment of slaves had crept into their daytime lives in the fields.

Unfavorable Sleep

When time permitted, sleep did take over the night’s remainder. For people of this time, sleep involved lying down on a bed with blankets, and for some, it might have included circulating cooler air. Slaves, on the other hand, experienced no such luxury. Austin Steward, a former Virginia slave, recollected the conditions in which slaves slept in his autobiography. The cabins were small and put together, as he said, “in the rudest possible manner.”⁴¹ Flooring often was the earth itself, and masters never provided furniture to their slaves. If families or individuals desired a bed to sleep on it was up to them to produce one. Holes left in the sides of the building were the only windows that existed for slaves.⁴² There was no way to protect the interior from weather entering the windows nor from the cold and damp floors.⁴³ Heat filling the

³⁸ Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 17, Virginia, Berry-Wilson, 1936, manuscript/mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn170/>.

³⁹ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 127-128.

⁴⁰ Frederick Law Olmsted, *The Cotton Kingdom* (New York: Mason Brothers, 1862), 80.

⁴¹ Austin Steward, *Twenty-two years a slave, and forty years a freeman; embracing a correspondence of several years, while president of Wilberforce Colony, London, Canada West* (Rochester, N.Y., W. Alling, 1857), 13.

summer air provided better conditions for rest than the cabin; and so many, slaves moved to sleeping under trees until the cooler months arrived.⁴⁴ Many found it hard to sleep in such unforgiving conditions. Not only did the building make rest hard to come by, but also overcrowding did not help. Numbers ranged as to how many people lived in each cabin depending on the plantation's population; however, it was common for anywhere from ten to twelve people to live in one cabin.⁴⁵ During the summer months, the heat plagued slaves at night. The number of bodies inhabiting one room and summer's heat added together made unfavorable sleeping conditions.

Domestic slaves had the luxury of being able to sleep in the big house, avoiding the damp floors and overcrowded space.⁴⁶ Austin Steward, a domestic slave, often slept in the same room as his owners, but his job was to circulate cool air in the room by fanning his master to sleep. Once his owner fell asleep, he was able to sleep as well. Though sleeping in the big house protected Steward from outside elements, he still had to manage with having only the floor as his bed.⁴⁷ Neither the big house nor slave cabin provided favorable conditions for sleeping. Now, that is not to say that slaves tried to avoid sleep. For the majority of the time when slaves found themselves with nothing to do they headed off to bed.⁴⁸

Sleep was important for multiple reasons in the world of slavery. After working from sun up to sundown, the chance to lay down and rest the body was a welcome respite. Adding to that, allowing the body to rest was one way to help ensure good health and well-being. The living conditions being unfavorable and uncontrollable on their end meant doing the best they could to try to avoid illnesses. As lack of sleep often led to exhaustion and a kind of physical crashing, the dread of oversleeping the next morning was a real fear, particularly for slaves. Partygoers and night owls from the previous night would show up to the fields late, but later paid the price of the whip.⁴⁹ Despite the poor conditions, no slave, whether female or male, underestimated the importance of their sleep.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Josiah Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson: Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada*, (Boston: Bolles and Houghton, 1849), 9-10.

⁴⁴ Stoyer, *My Life in the South*, 45.

⁴⁵ Henson, *The Life of Josiah Henson*, 9.

⁴⁶ The "big house" was the term used by slaves to reference their master's or mistress's home.

⁴⁷ Steward, *Twenty-two years a slave*, 26-27.

⁴⁸ Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 17, Virginia, Berry-Wilson, 1936, manuscript/mixed Material, retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn170/>.

⁴⁹ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 20-21.

Freedom in the Night

Nighttime represented much more than just the sun sinking below the horizon and the moon rising for slaves. The darkness proved to be more than the change in sunlight. Rather, in the words of Ebenezer Pettigrew, an Albemarle Sound planter, “night is their day.”⁵⁰ That choice of phrasing by Mr. Pettigrew shows that even white Southerners understood the significance of nightfall for the enslaved peoples living among them. This understanding is why many plantation owners did all they could to prevent slaves from enjoying the mobility that darkness made more accessible. Patrols, curfews, and physical boundaries were all ways in which masters tried to assert their dominance with the onset of night. Men frequently tested the perceived lessening of control by whites with attempts to escape their life of bondage. Providing for family, whether that be food or furniture, also fell to men during their free time at night. Female slaves saw the darkness as a time to care for the needs of family. She took on many extra responsibilities after the sun set beyond the horizon. Night was versatile. When considering the Antebellum South, it is indeed important to pay attention to the horrors of the slave system, to the inhumanity and the wrong done to a particular group of people. It is easy to speak of the work required of the slave and conditions in which he worked. However, one should not forget that these enslaved peoples had lives that existed outside of the fields. After working all day, slaves could organize the night for themselves. This was its own form of rebellion. Slaves could have easily collapsed upon returning home only to wake the next morning to the horn signaling work; instead, men and women stayed up into the morning hours embracing this little moment of freedom. The assumption that nighttime and darkness were meant only for sleep is inaccurate. Sleep did occur within the span of night’s hours, but sleep was not the sole option for slaves by any means. Mobility was one of the largest forms of freedom that a slave could experience. Slave owners did their best to limit the slaves’ mobility during the night with the hopes of destroying that chance to taste a small dose of independence. A slave’s nighttime was more than just darkness and sleep; it consisted of choice, and above all, the semblance and feeling of freedom.

⁵⁰ David S. Cecelski, *The Waterman’s Song* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 70.

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