

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

The Precarious Freedom of Blacks in the Mid-Atlantic Region: Excerpts from the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1776

During the pre-Revolutionary period, blacks who gained their freedom in the Middle colonies, either by manumission or escape, often remained uncertain about how long they would enjoy their newly found status.¹ Never sure whether the next encounter with whites might lead to imprisonment or bondage, some blacks must have passed many days in quiet desperation, horrified at the image of being torn from close friends and loving family. Many blacks without masters may have led the lives of fugitives, both real and imagined. The newspaper excerpts reproduced below suggest the degree to which freedom was precarious, a sometimes ephemeral possession for which blacks continually had to struggle.

The *Pennsylvania Gazette*—Benjamin Franklin's newspaper and Philadelphia's foremost news journal during the eighteenth century—contained hundreds of advertisements for escaped slaves and imprisoned blacks.² For historians, those announcements provide a rich cache

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¹ On slaves who gained their freedom in the Mid-Atlantic region during the eighteenth century, see Edgar J. McManus, *Black Bondage in the North* (Syracuse, 1973); Jean R. Soderlund, *Quakers & Slavery: A Divided Spirit* (Princeton, 1985); and Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840* (Cambridge, 1988).

² A sample of 300 advertisements for runaway slaves are reprinted in Billy G. Smith and Richard Wojtowicz, eds., *Blacks Who Stole Themselves: Advertisements for Runaways in the Pennsylvania Gazette, 1728-1790*, (Philadelphia, 1989). Most of the advertisements printed in the present article in the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* are not included in the book.

of information about various topics concerning blacks in the Mid-Atlantic region. Designed to identify as precisely as possible the people who fled bondage, the published notices detailed a great many characteristics of escapees. Owners generally indicated the name, age, sex, height, color, bodily markings, and clothing of runaways, and they sometimes described the runaways' work skills, birthplaces, musical and linguistic abilities, speech difficulties, previous owners, frequency of escape attempts, and even the types of chains with which a few were shackled. Masters also commented on the personalities of their human chattel, their motivations and escape strategies, and their monetary value as suggested by the rewards proffered. Finally, constables and jailers placed in the newspaper announcements that designated where and when suspected fugitives had been apprehended and specified who, if anyone, the imprisoned blacks had identified as their owner.

Between its establishment in 1728 and the outbreak of the American Revolution, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which enjoyed wide circulation throughout the Delaware Valley, carried advertisements offering rewards for the capture of 783 runaways and notices about 193 blacks jailed as suspected fugitives.³ The number of advertised escapees varied substantially over time; the announcements for an average of three escaped blacks per year during the 1730s increased to thirteen in the 1740s, sixteen in the 1750s, forty in the 1760s, and then declined to twenty-five annually between 1770 and 1776. The vast majority of runaways described in these advertisements absconded from sites in the Mid-Atlantic region: three of every four escaped from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or Delaware, while one in five fled masters in northern and eastern Maryland.⁴ At the same time, the best estimates indicate that the slave population in the former three colonies quadrupled between 1730 and 1780, growing from slightly less than 5,000 to more than 21,000.⁵

³ The *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia) began publication on Dec. 24, 1728, and continued, with only minor interruptions, until Oct. 11, 1815. Most of its subscribers lived in the Mid-Atlantic region, although the paper regularly circulated from the Carolinas to New England.

⁴ Of the 783 runaways advertised by masters, 71 percent absconded from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or Delaware, and 19 percent escaped from Maryland.

⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, 1975), Part 2, 1168.

These advertisements permit a systematic analysis of various characteristics of escaped slaves. For example, the "typical" fugitive during the last half-century of the colonial era was a man in his mid-twenties, born on the North American continent, and worth a reward of nearly three pounds for his capture. Specifically, 91 percent of advertised escapees were male, 55 percent were between twenty and twenty-nine years of age, and 63 percent were natives of America.⁶ The notices not only provide a statistical profile of these and other attributes of runaways, but they also chronicle the stories of hundreds of escape attempts in impressive detail and allow us to identify some major themes in the lives of blacks. Information about the runaways' primary language, ritualistic African markings, religion, literacy, and connections to friends and family also offers clues to the culture and values of many slaves.

We have selected thirty excerpts from Franklin's newspaper, and have grouped them into four categories to illustrate some of the threats that free and escaped blacks in the Mid-Atlantic region faced during the eighteenth century. The first set of nine advertisements indicates that many masters doggedly sought their bondspeople for several years after their departure. For example, Anthony Winston offered a reward for the slave Essex five years after he had escaped (see excerpt number 7); John Brown fell into a jailer's hands ten years after he fled (excerpt number 9); and Violet had been absent for nine years when Philip Kearney (who apparently had recently purchased her from her master's estate) set out to obtain his property (excerpt number 6). Thus, even the men and women who managed to elude their masters for a considerable time rarely could ignore the

⁶ For comparisons with the characteristics of fugitives in other areas of eighteenth-century America, see Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia* (New York, 1972); McManus, *Black Bondage in the North*; Lorenzo J. Greene, "The New England Negro as Seen in Advertisements for Runaway Slaves," *Journal of Negro History* 29 (1944), 125-46; Daniel E. Meaders, "South Carolina Fugitives as Viewed through Local Colonial Newspapers with Emphasis on Runaway Notices, 1732-1801," *ibid.* 60 (1975), 288-319; Lathan Algerna Windley, "A Profile of Runaway Slaves in Virginia and South Carolina from 1730 through 1787" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1974); Marvin L. Michael Kay and Lorin Lee Cary, "'They are Indeed the Constant Plague of Their Tyrants': Slave Defence of a Moral Economy in Colonial North Carolina, 1748-1772," *Slavery and Abolition* 6 (Dec. 1985), 37-56; and Philip D. Morgan, "Colonial South Carolina Runaways: Their Significance for Slave Culture," *ibid.*, 6 (Dec. 1985), 57-78.

continual risk of recapture. That Pennsylvania's 1780 gradual emancipation law allowed masters to recover and register slaves for five years after they had absconded demonstrates the expectation that fugitives were liable to long-term pursuit.⁷

It is impossible to determine either the number of slaves who escaped or their success rate, although it must have been difficult, especially for blacks not fluent in English, to gain permanent freedom. William Moraley, a New Jersey indentured servant during the early 1730s, may have been correct in believing that "it is in vain [for slaves] to attempt an Escape, tho' they often endeavour it."⁸ The second set of eight advertisements narrate the stories of two blacks who ran away repeatedly. When confined by Jacob Graybill to York jail in 1764 on suspicion of being a runaway (excerpt number 10), Moses Grimes claimed to be a free man. Apparently no white stepped forward to identify Grimes as his property, so he probably was sold to the jailer's relative, Philip Graybill. According to the advertisements (excerpt numbers 11 through 14), Grimes subsequently absconded twice in 1769, once the following year, and yet another time in 1772 before he disappears from the records. Cuff Dix, a hammerman in a Berks County forge, fled his master in early May 1775, worked as a free man for most of the summer in Chester County, then was imprisoned in November as a fugitive and reclaimed by his master (excerpt numbers 15 and 16). A year later, and a few weeks after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Dix fled again, intending this time, his master believed, to join Lord Dunmore's "black regiment" (excerpt number 17).⁹

The third set of six notices issued by sheriffs and jailers describes blacks who claimed but failed to prove their freedom to the satisfaction of the local authorities. The Delaware Valley colonies mandated that slaves had to carry a pass when away from their masters. Slaves were to be whipped if caught without a written permit more than five miles from their New Jersey owners or ten miles from their Penn-

⁷ James T. Mitchell and Henry Flanders, comps., *The Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682 to 1801* (18 vols., Harrisburg, 1896-1915), 10:72.

⁸ William Moraley, *The Infortunate: or, the Voyage and Adventures of William Moraley . . .* (Newcastle, England, 1743), 32.

⁹ Benjamin Quarles discusses Lord Dunmore's regiment in *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, 1961), chap. 2.

sylvania masters.¹⁰ Sylvia Dubois, a free black, left a dramatic account of being stopped while traveling through New Jersey:

On my way, a man called to me, asking me "Whose nigger are you?" I replied "I'm no man's nigger—I belong to God—I belong to no man." He then said "Where are you going?" I replied "That's none of your business. I'm free. I go where I please." He came toward me. I sat down with my young one, showed him my fist, and looked at him: and I guess he saw 't was no use. He moseyed off, telling me that he would have me arrested as soon as he could find a magistrate You see, in those days anybody had authority to arrest vagrant negroes. They got paid for arresting them and charges for their keeping till their master redeemed them. But he didn't arrest me—not a bit.¹¹

A number of young whites described their own predicament of being questioned and detained under suspicion of being fugitives from bondage. Wandering through the Middle colonies after gaining his freedom from servitude, William Moraley was seized and returned to his former master by a citizen who hoped to claim a reward if he were a runaway.¹² Benjamin Franklin likewise recounted his interrogation while fleeing from his apprenticeship, noting that he "was suspected to be some runaway servant, and in danger of being taken up on that suspicion."¹³

Fugitive slaves and free blacks must have encountered even greater difficulties than whites. Constables undoubtedly rounded up both escapees and free blacks. Once imprisoned, escaped slaves often identified their owners, although a considerable number of blacks maintained that they were not bound to any master. Many free blacks consequently suffered from the routine process of capturing and

¹⁰ Samuel Nevill, comp., *The Acts of the General Assembly of the Province of New Jersey* (2 vols., Philadelphia and Woodbridge, NJ, 1752-1761), 1:18-19; Mitchell and Flanders, comps., *Statues at Large of Pennsylvania*, 4:63. See also McManus, *Black Bondage in the North*, 108-24; and Edward Raymond Turner, *The Negro in Pennsylvania: Slavery—Servitude—Freedom 1639-1861* (Washington, 1911), 109-13.

¹¹ C.W. Larison, *Sylvia Dubois, A Biography of the Slave Who Whipt Her Mistress and Gained Her Freedom*, ed. by Jared C. Lobdell (New York, 1988), 69-70.

¹² Moraley, *The Infortunate*, 44.

¹³ L. Jesse Lemisch, ed., *Benjamin Franklin: The Autobiography and Other Writings* (New York, 1961), 37.

returning runaways, for if the authorities rejected evidence of their status, captives might be detained for weeks or months, illegally claimed as bound workers, or eventually sold into servitude to pay the costs of their arrest and care while in jail.

Free blacks confronted still other threats to their liberty. Like neighboring colonies, Pennsylvania provided that blacks could legally be sold into bondage under certain conditions. In 1726 the legislature stipulated that magistrates could indenture black vagrants on a year-to-year basis, bind the children of free blacks until the age of twenty-one for females and twenty-four for males, and enslave blacks for life for marrying a white or for seven years for engaging in interracial fornication.¹⁴ In addition, whites frequently seized and sold free blacks as slaves. In one of the earliest slave journals, Gustavus Vassa (Olaudah Equiano) noted in 1764 that such activities were commonplace not only in the West Indies but "even in Philadelphia."¹⁵ During the debate about ending slavery in Pennsylvania in 1779, a newspaper contributor who supported abolition acknowledged the "danger that the young blacks, thus set free, would run, of being kidnaped to the West India islands, or the Southern States" and that "many such poor wretches have actually been dragged from this State, and their dearest connections, to distant and inhospitable lands."¹⁶ The fourth set of newspaper excerpts printed below identifies several whites who engaged in such activities. Robert Caten (excerpt number 24) not only stole three slaves but previously he had sold a "free born Mulattoe Woman" into bondage.

Of special interest is the advertisement (excerpt number 25) placed by Baldwin Wake for his escaped "slave," Frank, and the resulting exchange of letters (excerpt numbers 26 through 30) published in the newspaper between Wake and Samuel Allinson concerning

¹⁴ Mitchell and Flanders, comps., *Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania*, 4:59-64. Turner discusses this law in *The Negro in Pennsylvania*, 92, 111-13. Benjamin Franklin reprinted the racial code established by the 1726 law in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 5, 1750/51. The laws of the surrounding states are considered in McManus, *Black Bondage in the North*, chap. 5, and William M. Wiecek, "The Statutory Laws of Slavery and Race in the Thirteen Mainland Colonies of British America," *William and Mary Quarterly* 34 (1977), 258-80.

¹⁵ Arna Bontemps, ed., *Great Slave Narratives* (Boston, 1969), 89.

¹⁶ "Another Letter to a Clergyman," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 24, 1779.

Frank's actual status. Mirroring the larger pre-Revolutionary debates about the English threat to the liberty of the colonists and about the morality of African slavery itself, this personal controversy became so heated that the participants threatened to settle it in a duel.

While the identity of Baldwin Wake remains a mystery (he described himself as a "Man who is but a Stranger in America"), considerable information is available about his antagonist. Samuel Allinson was a committed Quaker, a member of the elite in Burlington, New Jersey, and a firm opponent of the "peculiar institution." In his former role, he represented the Burlington Quarterly Meeting for seven years, served on a number of church committees, and reviewed appeals of disciplinary cases in religious matters.¹⁷ Materially, Allinson lived a comfortable life. On the eve of the Revolution he owned more than a hundred acres of land, sixteen horses and cattle, and a riding chair, all of which placed him among the wealthiest 20 percent of Burlington taxpayers.¹⁸ Allinson's position undoubtedly accounts for Wake's derisive references to his "eminence." Finally, in other public forums Allinson argued strenuously against slavery on both practical and moral grounds.¹⁹

We have reproduced the following excerpts exactly as they appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. The date at the top of each entry is that of the edition in which it appeared; any subsequent date represents

¹⁷ Minutes of the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting (Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College). Jean R. Soderlund generously provided us with this and the following references about Samuel Allinson.

¹⁸ Burlington City Tax List, 1773 (Division of Archives and Records Management, Trenton, NJ).

¹⁹ In "Reasons in favor of a Law for the more equitable Manumission of Slaves in New Jersey" (Burlington County Abolition Society Papers [Burlington County Historical Society]), Allinson tendered various arguments in favor of manumission. He pointed out that even though the imports of slaves had decreased, natural propagation provided a sufficient number to sustain slavery unless the new emancipation law was enacted. In practical terms, the present law did not assure that free blacks would not become a public charge. The proposed law would rectify that as well as protect the life and property of whites by making blacks liable for a variety of new offenses. Allinson further pointed out that manumitting slaves would benefit whites in other ways as well. Politically, free blacks would support the U.S. Constitution and the new national government since they would have a stake in its success. Legally, the government could more effectively control blacks than could many masters. Finally, argued Allinson, slavery debased not only slaves but also masters, and, while the scars of slavery could not be erased, the opportunity now existed to abolish the institution for future generations.

the date of submission. The number at the beginning of each passage will aid the reader in locating the excerpts described above.

I) Runaways who had eloped many months previously:

#1

April 4, 1745

Maberrin, in Bertie County, North-Carolina, March 13, 1744-5. RUn away from the Subscriber, in *Bertie County, North-Carolina*, a likely Negroe Slave, named *Tony*, *Virginia* born, about Thirty Years of Age, middle sized, well set, short Neck, and somewhat round Shoulder'd, yellow Complexion, and scarr'd on his Shoulders by Correction. He pretends to making and burning Bricks, and is a good Sawyer. He ran away the 18th of *June*, 1743, and has been heard of in *Pennsylvania* Government. Whoever takes him up, and brings him to the Subscriber, in *North-Carolina*, shall be Paid Ten Pistoles,²⁰ or if delivered to Mr. *Hugh Parker*, in *Philadelphia*, shall receive Five Pistoles.

Benjamin Hill.

#2

October 31, 1745

WHereas Negroe Jo (who formerly liv'd with Samuel Ogle, Esq; then Governor of Maryland, as his Cook) about 13 Months ago run away from the Subscriber, who was then at Annapolis, and has since been out a Voyage in one of the Privateers belonging to Philadelphia, and is returned there: These are to desire any Person to apprehend the said Negroe, so that he may be had again, for which, on their acquainting me therewith, they shall be rewarded with the Sum of Five Pounds, current Money: Or if the said Negro will return to me, at my House in St. Mary's County, he shall be kindly received, and escape all Punishment for his Offence. PHILIP KEY.

²⁰ The basic Spanish monetary unit, the pistole equaled an average of 1.06 Pennsylvania pounds between 1740 and 1775; see John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600-1775* (Chapel Hill, 1978), 98-107, 185-86.

#3 July 17, 1760

RUN away from the Subscriber, in Amelia County, Virginia, in May 1759, a very likely Negroe Man, named Dick (but used to call himself Richard Jenkins) about 30 Years old, of a middle Size, well set, very black, his Back much scarified, is a good Sawyer, and plays on the Violin. Whoever conveys the said Negroe to me, shall have TEN POUNDS Reward, paid by WOOD JONES.

#4 July 24, 1760
New-York, July 10, 1760.

RUN away from DENNIS HICKS, of Philipsburgh, in Westchester County, and Province of New-York, A Mulatto²¹ Man Slave, named Bill, about 20 Years of Age, has a long sharp Nose, with a black Mole on the right Side of his Face, near his Nose, has very large Ears, speaks good English, and pretends to be free, and can read and write well; says he has a White Mother, and was born in New-England: He is of a middle Size, and has a thin Visage, with his Hair cut off. All Persons are forbid to harbour him, and all Masters of Vessels are forbid to carry him off, as they will answer it at their Peril. TWENTY-FIVE POUNDS Reward for securing him in any Goal, or bringing him to me, so that I may have him again, and reasonable Charges, paid by DENNIS HICKS.

N.B. This Fellow was advertised in the New-York Papers the 5th of June, and in New-Haven the 11th of June, 1759; was afterwards taken up in Waterbury, and was put into Litchfield Goal, from thence he was brought to Bedford, and there made his Escape from his Master again. Those who apprehend him, are desired to secure him in Irons. He was taken up by Moses Foot, of North-Waterbury, in New-England. It is likely he will change his Cloaths, as he did before. The Mole above mentioned is something long.

*By Information he was in Morris County, in the Jerseys all the Winter, and said he would enter into the Provincial Service.

²¹ The term *mulatto* identified a person as the offspring of the union of a white and a black. Colonial Americans also applied it loosely to describe anyone who resembled a mulatto. Winthrop D. Jordan discusses such terminology in "American Chiaroscuro: The Status and Definition of Mulattoes in the British Colonies," *William and Mary Quarterly* 19 (1962), 182-200.

#5

March 14, 1765

TEN PISTOLES Reward.

RUN away from the Subscriber, living near the Great Falls of Potowmack, in Frederick County, Maryland, a Mulattoe Man Slave; he has been gone upwards of two Years, and last January was twelve-month he was seen near Reading Town, and have since heard he was at Hacket's Iron-works, in West-Jersey; he is about five Feet eight or ten Inches high, he resembles an Indian, as his Father was one, walks very upright, something bow-legged, had very black Hair, which he takes great Care of, and curls, has little or no Beard, broad across his Eyes, a Scar on one Side of his Nose, and several on his Head, one very large; went by the Name of Daniel, but may have changed his Name, very apt to get drunk, and then is bold and saucy; he understands Farming Business, about Forty-three Years of Age. Any Person that will secure him in any Goal, and gives Notice to the Subscriber, shall have the above Reward, paid by THOMAS DAVIS, Tavern-keeper.

#6

July 4, 1771

Perth-Amboy, July 1, 1771.

FIFTEEN POUNDS REWARD.

RUN away from the subscriber, in the month of October, 1762, a Mulattoe Woman SLAVE, named VIOLET, about 35 years of age; she is very active, and rather tall. Some time afterwards she was seen in company with one James Lock somewhere on the Sasquehanna, and by information was apprehended and committed to goal, in the year 1764, in Frederick-Town, in Maryland, on suspicion of having run away. From that goal she was reported to have made an escape, and about two months ago was discovered about 15 miles from Ball-Fryer's ferry, in Frederick county, in Maryland aforesaid, where she had three children. Edward Bonnel, of Monmouth county, in the province of New-Jersey, was formerly her owner, and after his decease, she was sold by his executors to the subscriber. Any person who may take her up must secure her strictly, or she will certainly escape again, being remarkably artful. Whoever delivers her, and her children, to the subscriber, or to THOMAS M'KEAN, Esq; in New-Castle, on Delaware, shall receive the above reward, or TEN POUNDS for the wench only, and reasonable charges, from PHILIP KEARNEY.

#7

September 1, 1773

RUN AWAY from the subscriber, in the lower end of Buckingham county, Virginia, between 4 and 5 years ago, a young NEGROE fellow, named ESSEX; he is a middle sized fellow, very straight, has large eyes, and had many places broke out and cured under his jaws; I have never heard of him till lately, and that was by a gentleman's servant, who was at Philadelphia, and saw the said runaway in that city, about twelve months ago, who knew him perfectly well, and says he went by the name of JOE SCOTT, was a sailor in Captain Atcheson's vessel, or ship, and passed for a freeman; I always imagined he was gone to some of the distant colonies, or the West-India Islands; I will give a reward of FIFTY POUNDS, to any person that will prove the Captain of a ship or vessel that carried him out of Virginia, so that he is legally convicted of the same, and can be brought to consign punishment; I will give a reward of TWENTY POUNDS, to any person that will deliver the said slave to me; and I do forewarn all persons from employing the said slave, or in any wise harbouring of him; in case no person will deliver him to me, I will thankfully pay any Captain of a vessel, that will put the said runaway in irons, and deliver him to Col. WILLIAM WAGER, at Hampton; to Mr. GEORGE DONALD, at Richmond town; Mr. JOHN JOHNSON, at Hanover town, or Col. GEORGE TAYLOR, at Conway's warehouse, on Rappahannock river. I request the favour of the gentleman to whom he is delivered, to pay the charge, and hire some safe hand to deliver him to me, or to put him in goal and advertise him.

July 3, 1773.

ANTHONY WINSTON.

#8

July 20, 1774

FIVE POUNDS Reward.

RUN away from the subscriber, living in Kent county, in the province of Maryland, about the middle of May, in the year 1773, a Mulattoe Slave, named BEN, about 32 years of age, of a thin visage, hollow eyed, with a black beard, and black curled hair, has lost one of his fore teeth, about 5 feet 8 or 9 inches high, much addicted to strong liquor, and has been much whipped on his back; he understands most parts of the farming business, has been much used to minding horses and waiting in houses; he is likewise a good sailor, especially in small vessels. I am apprehensive that he is in or about Philadelphia, as he

was seen there about five weeks past, at which time he had on a blue coat, and a striped waistcoat. Whoever apprehends and secures the said slave, so that the subscriber gets him again, shall receive the above reward, besides all reasonable charges.

July 9, 1774.

ROBERT READ.

#9

May 15, 1776

Philadelphia, April 20, 1776.

ON the 29th of January last was committed to my custody, a certain Negroe Man by the name of JOHN BROWN, who says he ran away from Joseph Milburin, in St. Mary's county, Maryland, about ten years ago: And as I have sent several letters to acquaint his master thereof, I now publicly advertise and give notice to his master, that unless he comes, pays charges and takes him away, he will be sold for the same in one month from this date.

THOMAS DEWEES, Goaler.

II) Runaways who fled repeatedly:

#10

October 18, 1764

York Goal, Oct. 6, 1764.

WAS committed to the Goal of this County the two following Persons, viz. John Stevens, a Frenchman, about 29 Years of Age, about 5 Feet 4 Inches high; has on a coarse Tow Shirt, light coloured Jacket, Ozenbrigs²² Trowsers, but no Shoes nor Stockings. Moses Grimes (a Negroe) this Country born, about 5 Feet 6 Inches high; has on a green Thickset Coat and Jacket, blue Breeches, with white Metal Buttons, and had with him a bay Horse, and says he is free. Their Masters, if any they have, are desired to come and pay Charges, and take them away, otherwise they will be sold for the same, in 30 Days from the Date hereof, by

JACOB GRAYBILL, Goaler.

²² Ozenbrigs, Oznaibrigs, Oznabrug, or Osnaburg appears often in the runaway advertisements and designates a strong linen, inexpensive and of a rough texture, usually worn by working people; see Peter F. Copeland, *Working Dress in Colonial and Revolutionary America* (Westport, 1977), 204.

#11

March 30, 1769

RUN away last night from the subscriber, living in York Town, a Negroe MAN, who calls himself MOSES GRIMES, about 5 feet 4 or 5 inches high, about 29 years of age; had on and took with him, a white coloured broadcloth coat, a green ditto, much torn, a flowered silk jacket, a half silk red striped ditto, a brown broadcloth ditto, a nap ditto, one pair of broadcloth blue breeches, a pair of cotton stockings, and a pair of ash coloured ditto, two pair of shoes, with a pair of brass buckles, and a pair of boots, two linen shirts, an old hat, with a hole in the crown. Whoever takes up said Negroe, and secures him in any of his Majesty's goals, so that his master may have him again, shall receive FORTY SHILLINGS reward, and reasonable charges, paid by me

PHILIP GRAYBILL.

March 20, 1769.

#12

July 13, 1769

RUN away, on the 12th of June last, from the subscriber, living near Wright's Ferry, in York county, a Negroe man, that calls himself Moses Grimes, country born, is about 28 years of age, 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, is very talkative, and given to lying, has been used to be an hostler,²³ and to wait in a tavern; had on, and took with him, an old felt hat, without lining, two white diaper caps, a new hemp shirt, an old flax ditto, two pair of tow linen trowsers, a pair of old leather breeches, a pair of white cotton stockings, a pair of blue ribbed ditto, a pair of boots, a pair of channel pumps, a light coloured cloth coat, a short green cloth ditto, a brown broadcloth jacket, one ditto flowered silk, one striped cotton and silk ditto, a grey cloth double breasted ditto; it is likely that he will pass for a free man, and get somebody to forge a pass for him. Whoever apprehends said Negroe, and secures him in any goal, so that his master may have him again, shall receive Thirty Shillings reward, and reasonable charges, paid by

THOMAS MINSHALL.

N.B. He is very yellow, and has passed for a Mulattoe.

²³ An individual who attended horses.

#13

May 17, 1770

THREE POUNDS Reward.

RUN away from the subscribers, living in York county, near Wright's Ferry, a Negroe man, called Moses Grimes, about 30 years of age, about 5 feet 5 inches high, his head is a little bald, very talkative, a great liar, this country born, and will pass for a free Negroe; had on a felt hat, a blanket coat, broken about the arm and shoulder, old tow linen shirt, a pair of tow trowsers, and old shoes. Likewise went off in company with the above Negroe, Jacob Davis, who is an apprentice to Henry Davis, is a mason by trade, about 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, well set, black hair, and full faced; had on, when he went away, an old felt hat, old blue coat, much broken about the sleeves, a blue jacket, the back parts much lighter coloured than the fore parts, a new sheepskin apron, a pair of new striped trowsers, new shoes, pieced on one of the toes, a pair of half worn ash-coloured lincey breeches; he took with him a mason's hammer and trowel. Whoever apprehends the above runaways, and secures them, so that their masters may have them again, shall receive Three Pounds reward for both, or Thirty Shillings for each, with reasonable charges. THOMAS MINSHALL, and HENRY DAVIS.

May 8, 1770.

#14

November 25, 1772

THREE POUNDS Reward.

RUN away on the 10th of August last, from the subscriber, living in Lombard-street, Philadelphia, a Negroe man, named *MOSES GRIMES*, about 32 years of age, about 5 feet 6 inches high, of a yellowish complexion, the fore part of his head shaved, and is rather bald, he sometimes wears a wig, is very religious, preaches to his colour, walks before burials, and marries; he is very artful, pretends to be free, and will no doubt get a forged pass; he is very fond of liquor, and if spoke familiarly to pretends to simplicity and laughs; he had on, when he went away, an ozenbrigs shirt, and jacket, with sleeves, bound with green binding. Whoever apprehends the said Negroe, and confines him in any of his Majesty's goals, so as his master may have him again, shall receive the above reward, and reasonable charges, paid by

JOHN HALES.

N.B. It is supposed he is gone to Carolina, or Carlisle in this province.

#15

October 11, 1775

SIXTEEN DOLLARS Reward.

RUN away, the 8th of May, 1775, from Birdsborough Forge, a Negroe man, named *Cuff*, goes by the name of *Cuff Dix*, a smart well set fellow, about 5 feet 4 or 5 inches high, speaks good English, but has a little stoppage in his speech; had on, and took with him, an old felt hat, an iron collar round his neck, it is likely he soon got that off, a brown jacket, ozenbrigs shirt and trowsers, leather breeches, and good shoes; is a hammerman by trade. Also a Negroe man, named *Chester*, on Saturday night, September 9, 1775, a stout fellow, about 5 feet 8 inches high, speaks good English, is pock-marked,²⁴ and flat footed; had on, when he went away, a good beaver hat, a light coloured Wilton coatee, ozenbrigs shirt and trowsers, and good shoes. *Chester* formerly belonged to one Keys, in the Jerseys, and was seen on the road to Philadelphia. Whoever takes up said Negroes, and brings them home, or secures them, or either of them, in any goal, so that their master may have them again, shall have THREE POUNDS reward for each, and reasonable charges, paid by MARK BIRD.

#16

November 15, 1775

Chester, November 7, 1775.

WAS committed to my custody, on the 23d day of October last, a certain *Frances Lyons*, on suspicion of being a runaway servant, she is of a darkish complexion, and middle size. Likewise a Negroe man, on the 29th, who calls himself *Cuff Dicks*, and says he belongs to Mark Bird, Esq., in Berks county. Their masters (if any they have) are desired to come, pay the charges, in three weeks from this date, otherwise they will be discharged, on paying their fees, by JOEL WILLIS, Goaler.

²⁴ That is, marked by scars resulting from a bout with smallpox.

#17

July 17, 1776

THREE POUNDS Reward.

RUN away from Birdsborough Forge, in Berks county, Pennsylvania on the 16th of June, 1776, a Negroe Man, commonly called CUFF DIX; he is an active well made fellow, and most excellent hammerman; he is about 5 feet 5 or 6 inches high, fond of liquor, understands English well, though he stammers in his speech; there is an iron ring in one of his ears, which if he can take out, a hole will remain [in] it, large enough to receive the small end of a pipe stem, in which case he will very probably endeavour to conceal the hole by filling it up; he wore, when he went away, a small old hat, light coloured homespun jacket, tow shirt and trowsers. He has often run away, changed his name, denied that the subscriber was his master, and been confined in several goals in this province; he was employed the greatest part of last summer by a person near Dilworth's town, in Chester county. Any person who shall harbour said Negroe shall be dealt with as the Law directs, and his name not omitted in a future advertisement. As Negroes in general think that Lord Dunmore is contending for their liberty, it is not improbable that said Negroe is on his march to join his Lordship's own black regiment, but it is hoped he will be prevented by some honest Whig from effecting it. Any person who shall bring said Negroe home to his master, or secure him in any goal, so that he may be had again, shall receive the above reward and reasonable charges, paid by MARK BIRD.

III) Jailed blacks who claimed they were free:

#18

October 7, 1762

Committed to Easton Goal, in Northampton County, on the 21st of September last, a Negroe Man, named Spencer Lake, about 28 Years of Age, says he was born on Muskmelon-creek, in Sussex County, Maryland, and that he is free. The Master or Owner is desired to come, pay Charges, and take him out, otherwise he will be discharged in December next, by JOHN JENNINGS, Sheriff.

#19

January 20, 1763

New Castle, Jan. 15, 1763.

Committed to the Goal of this County, a Negroe Man, who calls himself Tom, says he is a free Man, and a Tenant to Mr. Thomas Riche, Merchant, in Philadelphia; he is about five Feet ten Inches

high, wears a good blue Coat, with Metal Buttons, Great Coat, Leather Breeches, good Shoes and Stockings, &c. His Master, if he has any, is desired to come in four Weeks from the Date hereof, pay Charges, and take him away, otherwise he will be sold for the same, by

ALEXANDER HARVEY, Goaler.

#20

March 7, 1765

WAS Committed to Carlisle Goal, in Cumberland County, the 28th of January last, on Suspicion of being a Runaway, a likely Negroe Fellow, about 25 Years of Age, very thick and strong built, about 6 Feet high, calls himself William Heans, says he is a free Man, and that he was born in St. Mary's, in Maryland. His Master (if any) is desired to come and take him away, otherwise he will be sold for his Fees, by

HENRY CUNNINGHAM, Goaler.

#21

February 12, 1767

Carlisle Goal, Cumberland County, Jan. 24, 1767.

NOW in said Goal, on Suspicion of being Runaways, the two following described Fellows, viz. Daniel Edwards, a Molattoe, near six Feet high, a very stout well built Fellow, about 35 Years of Age, plays on the Fiddle, says he is a free Man, and was born in the City of Boston. James Sweney, a young slim Lad, says he belongs to, and run away from, Stephen Mendenhall, of New-Castle County, near Wilmington. Their Masters (if any they have) are hereby notified to come and take them away, otherwise they will be sold out for their Fees within six Weeks from the Date hereof, by

HENRY CUNNINGHAM, Goaler.

#22

June 8, 1774

Bridgetown Goal, Cumberland County, West-Jersey, May 23, 1774.

DELIVERED to my custody, the 16th instant, a certain Negroe man, named *Richard Thompson*, who says he came from Black-river, or otherwise called Black-creek, in Virginia, in the schooner Sally, Captain Weatherhold, bound for New-York, and was cast away on Cape-May, about 4 months ago: The said Negroe says he is a freeman, and is about 24 years of age, about 5 feet 6 inches high. His master, if he has any, is desired to come, pay charges, and take him away, in 3 weeks from the date hereof, otherwise he will be sold out for the same.

ELIAS WHITAKER, Goaler.

#23

August 21, 1776

York Goal, August 5, 1776

LAST week was committed to my custody, a dark coloured Mulattoe, about 5 feet 9 inches high, strong and well made, aged 24 years in December last; he says he is a freeman, that his name is Jacob Johnston, his mother's name was Dorcus Perkins, at Accomack, in Virginia, that she was a white woman, that Mr. Thomas Kirkly, in Kent, and Doctor Ridgley, in Dover, know him to be a freeman, that he laboured in that county about three months in the spring 1775, from thence he moved to [?], worked with John and Joseph Miller, from thence to William Read in this county, where he was taken up, &c.

Also Thomas Casbon, who saith he ran from Lee Masters, at Little Pipe-Creek Furnace, Maryland.

Their masters, if they have any, are hereby desired to come and take them away, in four weeks from the date hereof, or they will be disposed of to pay their fees, MICHAEL GRAYBILL, Goaler.

IV) Advertisements and an Exchange of letters about slavery:

#24

August 28, 1760

TWENTY POUNDS Reward.

RUN away on Tuesday, the 12th Day of this instant August, from the County of Kent, upon Delaware, a certain Robert Caten, born in the said County; he is a short well built Fellow, his upper Teeth before ride over each other; he had on, when he went away, a blue Coat, a cock'd Hat, and ties his Hair behind; he took with him four Negroes, three of which he stole, they being taken in Execution by me the Subscriber; these three are, a Wench about 40 Years of Age, named Cate; a Girl about nine or ten Years old, named Sue; and a Boy about two and a Half Years old, named Tony; the other was a young Child, in the Wench's Arms. He is supposed to have gone to the Back Woods, somewhere near Potomack, he being acquainted there, and has a Brother living there, named Thomas Caten; he rode a roan Mare. Any Person, who may have the Opportunity of apprehending him, and the said Negroes, are desired to take very good Care of them, as he will perhaps make fair Promises, and thereby deceive them. I would likewise inform the Public, that the Debt for

which the Execution arose was, That the said Robert Caten took, some time ago, a free born Mulattoe Woman, and sold her for a Slave; which villainous Affair he was obliged to compound, by giving a Judgment Bond, upon which the above mentioned Execution issued; therefore People may judge what sort of a Person he is. The above Reward shall be paid on the Delivery of the aforesaid three Negroes, Cate, Sue and Tony, at Dover, in the County aforesaid, or in Proportion for any of them, and reasonable Charges, by

August 16, 1760.

THOMAS PARKE, Sheriff.

N.B. All persons are forbid buying them.

#25

September 28, 1774

FIVE POUNDS Reward.

ON Sunday, the 18th of September, absconded from his service, at Franklin Park, near Burlington, a NEGROE slave, the property of the subscriber, by name Frank, was purchased of a certain John Davan, Haccansack township, Bergen county, New-Jersey. Whoever secures the said Negroe in any of his Majesty's goals in America, shall be entitled to the above reward. He is a likely fellow, about 5 feet 10 inches high, bushy hair, and of the Indian cast; has had several masters, and never staid long in one place, when abroad imposes himself on the public for a free man. At the time of his elopement he stole a horse from out of the pasture, turned him adrift near Bordentown, which is since come home, and is supposed to have stolen another near the place where he turned mine off, the property of one Mr. Quicksey, near Bordentown, an iron grey mare, about 14 hands high, natural pacer, a star in her forehead, neither brand or ear-mark, quite sound, one of her hoofs a little twisted.—It is not known what he went off in, but took a bundle with him, which is supposed to contain the following articles, viz. 3 or 4 shirts, 3 or 4 pair of linen trowsers, a pair of red ditto, a brown cloth jacket, a striped lince ditto, 2 or 3 pair of worsted stockings, a pair of good shoes, and a good hat.

BALDWIN WAKE.

#26

October 26, 1774

Burlington, Tenth-Month 17, 1774.

IN looking over the last Gazette I noticed an advertisement, signed by Baldwin Wake, in which he describes a certain Negroe, named Frank, who lately departed his service at Franklin Park, near Bur-

lington, and calls him *his slave*. As I know the Negroe to be only an indented servant, it becomes my duty (in behalf of a *fellow-man*, though black) thus publicly to say so, that no person may be induced to purchase him as a *slave*. Let no one think me wrong on the master's producing a bill of sale for the Negroe; it is well known that after he had made the purchase, and after the Negroe, upon soon leaving him, was brought back and put into goal, he was so far satisfied that Davan (of whom he bought him) was an impostor, and the Negroe not a slave, that he laid aside his bill of sale as indefensible; and having promised the Negroe to set him free, on obtaining his money and damages from Davan, or to pay the Negroe a certain sum of money for his service, he prevailed on him to execute an indenture for seven years. This *Wake himself informed me*, and on my mentioning to him, that the bill of sale being founded in *wrong* ought to be destroyed, he expressly declared, that he should not look upon the Negroe any more as a *slave*, but it was necessary to keep the bill of sale, in order to support his remedy against the villain who had committed the fraud. I have no interest in thus appearing to oppose the claim of a neighbour, but, as I have said, the motives of common duty in defence of the rights of mankind, and should have been glad [if] the advertisement had appeared in other terms agreeable to the truth, which would have saved me this trouble. I know little of the Negroe's disposition; he may be vicious; I have been told he is laborious, and at times foolish and weak in his understanding. Unjustly held in the *servile* state of *slavery* from youth until after the years of manhood (when his liberty was ascertained and obtained) without education or example to polish the mind, or stimulate to virtuous actions, it is not so much a matter of wonder that his conduct should be irregular; which indeed is no more than a natural consequence of *slavery*. But surely all will agree, that running from his masters (which the advertisement mentions, and which is the greatest fault I have known charged against him before now) is not a sufficient cause to make a *fellow-man* a *perpetual slave*; for if it may be extended to one, it may to all; and if we can bear in silence to see this practised upon *others*, why are we complaining of its *imposition*, though in much less degree upon *ourselves*.

SAMUEL ALLINSON.

#27

November 2, 1774

Messieurs HALL and SELLERS,²⁵

When any Man throws a Shade that may in the least Degree darken another's Character, I presume your Gazette is always open to the Person injured, upon which Supposition I request you to publish the following Letter.

To Mr. SAMUEL ALLINSON, Editor of the New-Jersey Laws.

Learned Sir,

YOUR generous Disinterestedness and noble Motives, together with your great Abilities to stand forth the Advocate for Humanity, must not only intitle you to a Place in the Esteem of your "*Fellow-men*," as well for the Goodness of your Heart, as for the Probability of Success which generally waits upon a Man of Eminence; but, Sir, if your Zeal for that *Liberty* "which we all love," and pious Detestation of "the *servile* State of *Slavery*," which you emphatically distinguish, should carry you beyond the Bounds of Reason and Truth, into the abominable *Liberty* of abusing me, I would advise you to keep it in some Measure restrained.

Your Profession may preserve you from reaping the Fruits of the *Liberty* you have already taken, but it can never justify your ungentlemanly Insinuation, that I should offer an Imposition on the Public, by selling a free Man as a Slave. Did I ever deceive you, Sir? Can you mention a single Instance wherein my Honesty has been impeached? I believe not. If you can, I call upon you publicly to do it: If not, tho' you have the Appearance of a *Friend*, your Conduct is *unfriendly*.

I bought the Negroe as a *Slave*, and paid £70 for him; which is a larger Sum than we commonly pay for a few Years Servitude. In a little Time [I] understood that he was a free Man, and that I had been imposed upon by the joint Artifices of his former Master and himself.—Soon after his Elopement the first Time, he was apprehended and brought to Burlington, I sent him to Goal, there he

²⁵ Hall and Sellers were the editors of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*.

continued but one Night before he was released, and in the Presence of the Sheriff voluntarily offered to bind himself as a Servant to me for the Term of eight Years; I accepted of seven. From my first Knowledge of this Circumstance, notwithstanding he deceived me, I have ever treated him with the utmost Humanity, and have spared no Pains to find out the Impostor who sold him, in order to do Justice to the Negroe.

Without the least Sense of Gratitude for all this Lenity and Friendship, he has again left me, and under those Circumstances I looked on myself justifiable in advertising him as a Slave, by which Means I stood a better Chance of having him secured, tho' I assure you, Sir, it was never with an Intention of selling him in that Character.

I should be surprized, if I had not some Knowledge of your Abilities, to know what you mean towards the Bottom of your concise Advertisement, by asserting, "all will agree, that *Fellow Men* running from their *Masters*, is not a sufficient Cause to make them perpetual *Slaves*;" what a strange jumble of Eloquence is here! I would not mean to point out to the Editor of our Laws, that there is such a Thing as perpetual Servitude for perpetual Runaways, or that there is perpetual Medlers, who, like Monkies, are perpetually doing Mischief, and shewing their - - - sides by exposing themselves to the View of the World.

Dear Sir, you have undertaken a Task that might employ your Time to more Advantage than your weak Attack upon me. I wish you Success, and am, Sir,

Your most humble Servant,

Franklin-Park, New-
Jersey, October, 1774

BALDWIN WAKE

#28

November 16, 1774

The following designed for our last, but came to hand too late.

Friends HALL and SELLERS.

IN your Gazette of Yesterday I find a Piece addressed to me by *Baldwin Wake*, which I read, smiling at its Contents—and as I feel neither the Stimulus of disappointed *Interest*, or the Impulse of *Anger* to actuate me, shall content myself with a simple Relation of Facts, and some few Comments; from which it will appear that I have not acted *officiously* or "unfriendly."

Some Years past I gave my Opinion and Advice, in order to obtain the *Freedom* of the Negroe, whose *Liberty* is the present Subject, and soon after it was granted him—A short Time after his late Confinement, his Mother (who appears to be a sober Woman) with a Letter from a Person of Repute where she lives, accompanied by her Tears, besought my Help to procure Justice for her Son. On calling upon B. Wake, he, in a handsome Manner, acquainted me with the Contract which had just been entered into between him and the Negroe, and gave me the Assurances I have already published. I was glad to find there was no Intention of *enslaving* him, and therefore advised him “to serve his Master faithfully,” pursuant to their Contract, as this would interest him to prosecute the Imposter who sold him.—

Amazed at reading Wake’s first Advertisement, I told him my Surprise at seeing so different a Claim set up; he signified the Negroe had used him ill, and “if he ever got him again, he would *treat him as a Slave*,” and threatened, that if I opposed him in that Claim, “he would use me as bad as the Negroe.”—The evening on which he saw what I had published, he called to ask me if I had seen the Paper, and in the Course of our Conversation *uniformly persisted* in declaring he would enslave the Negroe, “in Spite of me and all my Fraternity;” he must therefore excuse me if, upon the Authority of these repeated Declarations, I cannot give Credence to his late Palliation, when he says, “it was *never* his Intention to sell the Negroe in that Character.”—He asserts his “Honesty,” and calls upon me to shew “publicly” if he ever deceived me. I must do him the Justice to say, I never heard him impeached in these Respects, nor do I know any Cause for it, these Inconsistencies of Behaviour excepted, which I shall forbear giving any other Name to.

All that I before intended was, to advertise the Public that the Negroe was not a *Slave*, this Wake has now “honestly” confessed, whether uninfluenced by that Advertisement the World must judge.—I could not convey the Truth to all, to whom his Advertisement had or might come, in any other Manner, or I should not have preferred the Press.

That the Negroe “*voluntarily offered* to bind himself” for eight Years, and he accepted of seven, is a *Part* of the Truth; he should have mentioned, that he first proposed to the Negroe his binding himself, and added Argument to induce him; and he ought to have done the Sheriff the Justice to say, that *he* lowered the Term to seven;

on this the Contract was mutually entered into, and People of B. Wake's Understanding do not usually contract with *Slaves*; indeed such a Conduct would *manumit* one.

I meant no Attack upon B. Wake—I had not nor have the least Ill-will towards him, and with Pleasure could do him any Kindness; until this Matter occasioned an Acquaintance, he was a Stranger to me—I took the most friendly Means to avoid appearing in print, and I have now done nothing deserving the illiberal Treatment he has given me both in public and private.

He must excuse my declining to “exchange a Ball” with him—I am not intimidated by his Threats of Revenge, uttered in my own House.—It is very consistent for an “*Editor of Laws*” to claim the Benefit of the *Law*, and assert a Right, in Favour of a Person helpless and destitute; but I will not say how far B. Wake's Behaviour respecting this Negroe and myself consists with the *Duty* of a Justice of the Peace—The Challenge I will accept, when he shall condescend to give it, is, to appear before any two impartial Men of Sense where we live, let them examine whether I have gone “beyond the Bounds of Reason and Truth, into the *abominable Liberty* of abusing him;” if they shall think I have, I will make him what they determine to be an adequate Satisfaction, and this he may then have the Triumph of publishing.—Hence I shall think myself at *Liberty* to treat any of his Productions with Neglect.

Burlington,

11th Mo. 3, 1774.

SAMUEL ALLINSON.

#29

November 23, 1774

To the PUBLIC.

WHEN a Writer, with the Signature of his own Name, submits the Effusions of his Pen to the Favour or Condemnation of your impartial tribunal, he should approach you with a becoming Diffidence, nor dare, with a conscious Assurance, to judge for all the World in the Rectitude of his Performance.

My *smiling* Antagonist has obliged me once more to attempt a Vindication of my Character from his unjust Aspersions; and altho' a *smile* of Self approbation might be of some Weight, if it had beamed from the Countenance of a Man eminent for his Wisdom or Learning, yet when an Air of Greatness is assumed by a Trifler, of no Importance

but in his own Imagination, it should fix him as an Object of Ridicule or Contempt.

If Mr. Samuel Allinson had allowed himself actuated by the *Stimulus of disappointed Vanity*, or an Impulse of the *Cacoethes Scribendi*,²⁶ I would not contradict his *simple* Relation of Facts, but as I believe it will appear that he has “officiously” taken a very “unfriendly” Part, I shall submit the following Circumstances for the Judgment of the Public to decide.

I have set forth, in my Letter in the Gazette, No. 2393, that I was entirely ignorant that the Negroe (who is the Cause of the present Dispute) was ever free, till after his first Attempt to escape from me, and that herein he deceived me. Mr. Allinson artfully *insinuates* in his second Paragraph (tho’ he does not *absolutely* say so) by the Mother seeking *his* Assistance to procure *Justice* for her Son, that he was treated with *Injustice* by me, tho’ Mr. Allinson knew at that very Time, that the Negroe was employed as my Servant, not as my Slave. He then proceeds to recommend himself to the Public by amusing them with the Goodness of his own Heart, in his advice to the Negroe, which they are at Liberty to believe or disbelieve at Pleasure.—

I could wish that a Man of Mr. Allinson’s Appearance had confined himself more strictly to the Truth, than to insert as my Words, that “if ever I get him again I would *treat him as a Slave*,” I deny my ever saying so, and declare, quite *uninfluenced by his Advertisement*, that I had no Intention of treating the Negroe as a Slave—When Mr. Allinson was pleased to interfere in the Matter—offended at his Officiousness, I did say that I *would use him as bad as the Negroe* if he concerned himself in my Affairs, but can he infer from this, that I meant to make the Negroe a Slave?

I have already said, that from my first Knowledge that the Negroe had been once free, I had no Intention of treating him as a slave, therefore my *uniformly persisting to declare that I would enslave the Negroe*, must be the mere Agitation of Mr. Allinson’s Brain, without any other Foundation.

Mr. Allinson is also guilty of a gross Mis-representation when he asserts, that I first proposed to the Negroe his “binding himself, and

²⁶ *Cacoethes scribendi*, the proper spelling, translates as “an incurable itch to write.” See Eugene Ehrlich, *Amo, Amas, Amat and More* (New York, 1985), 71.

added Argument to induce him." I have once said that the Negroe *voluntarily offered* to bind himself, which I now say is the *whole* Truth, and the first Acceptation of the Proposal was not by me, but by the Sheriff, merely because he thought a Servitude of seven Years a small Compensation justly due for the Trouble and heavy Expences he had put me to; the Truth of the above has been solemnly attested by Affidavit of the Sheriff for the County.

If a Man will not act upon Principle, and adhere strictly to the Truth, let his Story be ever so *simply* told, it cannot be called a "Relation of Facts." In a Part of the Country where Mr. Allinson was born and educated, he may presume upon his Advantages over a Man who is but a Stranger in America, and assert such Things as he is not able to prove, tho' his Neighbours may believe them, because they are unacquainted with the Character and Principles of his Opponent; But, at the respectable Tribunal of a considerate Public, where the plain Truth on both Sides of the Argument is *fairly* laid down, where Prejudice will not sway, nor Interest bias, then will the scale of Impartiality preponderate in Favour of the Injured.

Mr. Allinson's own Words are, in many *Places*, beyond my Comprehension: "I meant no Attack upon B. Wake;" Good Sir, what did you mean? Is it not strange, that after the most illiberal Reflections upon me, in two long Addresses to the Public, any Man in his proper Senses could say, he "meant no Attack upon B. Wake?" To use Part of his own Language, who can give Credence to this Assertion?

The Manner of our Education has been widely different. I did at first, and do now consider myself reflected upon in an ungentlemanly Manner; and that my bearing a Commission of the Peace should be a Reason for my not resenting Mr. Allinson's Abuse, is as absurd as to suppose that Commission bestowed, in order that the Possessor may be insulted at the Will and Pleasure of every Hypocrite, who can claim his Protection under the Cloak of his Profession.

The plain Matter of Fact, touching the Decision of the Dispute by Ball, is this: I put the Question to Mr. Allinson, how far he would go to protect the Freedom of the Negroe; will you go farther than the Pen? His Answer was Yes; which occasioned the following Reply. Will you exchange a Ball with me?

Mr. Allinson chose the Newspaper as a Method of deciding our Difference, which, though perfectly agreeable to me, is rather an infringement on the patience of the Public—Here let the Dispute

subside. But if this is not entirely satisfactory to Mr. Allinson, I submit to his Proposal in the last Gazette, though not with a View of publishing his concessions, for I should think these a triumph far too mean.

Franklin-Park, Nov. 19, 1774

BALDWIN WAKE

#30

December 7, 1774

Friends HALL and SELLERS,

Having, in the Conclusion of my Reply to *Baldwin Wake*, intimated my being at Liberty to treat any of his Productions with Neglect, I should not have taken up my Pen again, but to rescue the Object of my Aim from the Obscurity in which it seems to be enveloped, by the Piece that he owns with his Name in your last Gazette; hence I request the Candid will excuse this further Encroachment on their Province.

The Considerate will I hope remember, that not to "attack or asperse a *Stranger*," of whom I before know nothing amiss, but to save from *Slavery* a Man born as free as myself, was the sole Motive of my Appearance in Print; for I am not of *Wake's* Opinion, that "Negroes are no more fit for, or intitled to *Liberty*, than the *Brute Beasts*."

In my last I proposed to him a Mode of determining whether, in doing this, I had violated Truth, or abused him, as the Warmth of his Selling suggested—I shall therefore pass over the "ungentlemanly" Names of "Monkey, perpetual Medler, Trifler of no Importance," &c. which he has so liberally bestowed on me, with all other Matters foreign to the true Merits, and only observe, that if I understand the Meaning of plain Words, he *declines* pursuing that Mode, at the same Time that he acknowledges its Reasonableness by declaring a "*submitting*" thereto.

When I told him of the Mistake he had committed in his Advertisement, by calling the Negroe a "*Slave*" (which I did in as complaisant a Way as is common for me to speak) and he justified it, I was naturally led to *contradict* that Claim, and nothing less than the Press could answer a *public* Advertisement, under which the Negroe might have been taken and sold as a *Slave* at 100 Miles from any one who knew his *Freedom*, as Wake then intimated a Doubt of his being a *Freeman*, and said he would treat him as a *Slave*, no other Person being present to hear it. The Fault then, which I considered

myself guilty of, was laying *Wake* under the Necessity of declaring to the World, that the Person who he had called a "*Slave*," was only an *indented Servant*; I therefore proposed, that when (for this Piece of Indiscretion) he should "condescend to give me the amicable Challenge" there mentioned, I would "*accept*" it; but instead of calling upon me for this Purpose, his last evasive Piece appeared—in which he signifies, that if I am not satisfied with that, he "submits" to my Proposal, "tho' not with a View of publishing my *Concessions*." I had not made any *Concessions*, nor did I expect to make any, *his* Determination of the Cause in his *own* Favour was therefore rather premature. And what does he submit to? To "condescend" to call on me, and "give the Challenge?" When he does this, he will find me ready to perform my Engagement; and I believe if he applies with Calmness he may save himself any further Trouble.

I can look back without Pain on the Part I have acted in this Matter, as I am not conscious that any Thing *unjust* or *untrue* has escaped me. He knows I cautioned him against the Press, and strove to avoid it myself; with what Justice therefore he can say I "chose the News-paper," I leave; and request him coolly to reflect, and pursue the Dictates of his own Mind, and, without calling in the Aid of any Incendiary, to advise with those who study to promote *Peace* and *Harmony*.

Burlington,
11th Mo. 28, 1774.

SAMUEL ALLINSON

Montana State University

BILLY G. SMITH
RICHARD WOJTOWICZ