Freedom's Journey
Poems and Meditations on African American Legacies in Connecticut

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Foreward

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the outbreak of the Civil War, inspiring us to continue conversations about civil rights, progress and justice. Join us to discover big ideas and special places in Connecticut where history was made. Special thanks to the Amistad Center for Art and Culture, Farmington Historical Society, Marian Anderson Studio/Danbury Museum, Mystic Seaport Norfolk Historical Society, Prudence Crandall House/Museum and the U.S. Custom House and Maritime Museum.

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Meditations
Graves tell us little, but they tell one another a lot. Looking through a town cemetery, we note that many of it inhabitants once ate together, slept together, worked together, and prayed together. When eight year-old James Mars and his family fled from their owner Mr. Thompson in Canaan, Connecticut, in 1798, they passed from house to house in the neighboring town of Norfolk, through a kind of underground railroad by which information, services, and gifts pass in every community. They were hidden in the homes of Norfolk, those whose graves talk mainly amongst themselves now.

What do cemeteries tell us about communities? Norfolk’s cemetery was founded in 1757 as a community burial ground, a year before the town was incorporated. The most striking fact about this cemetery is that, in a time when all cemeteries, in colonies north and south, were racially segregated, Center Cemetery in Norfolk, Connecticut, was not. Whites and blacks pass among one another here. Most black people in antebellum America, enslaved and free, were not even buried in marked graves. They passed on, but their stories did not.

How does considering a grave, a cemetery, the forever concentric circles of town, state, region, state, country, and out into the domains beyond the grasp of humans, affect how we understand history? In 1864, James Mars wrote his history as a slave because, as he says, most people “do not know that slavery ever lived in Connecticut.” It was called Life of James Mars, a Slave Born and Sold in Connecticut. Without a gravestone to mark one’s death, we might not know that a person ever lived. But a gravestone announces little more than a birth and death. Knowing that slavery once lived in Connecticut, like knowing that someone named James Mars once lived because his gravestone tell us that he died, does not explain how both slavery and Mars came to pass. That is for stories, and histories, to tell.

James Mars Meditation
by Michael Amico

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How does considering a grave, a cemetery, the forever concentric circles of town, state, region, state, country, and out into the domains beyond the grasp of humans, affect how we understand history? In 1864, James Mars wrote his history as a slave because, as he says, most people “do not know that slavery ever lived in Connecticut.” It was called Life of James Mars, a Slave Born and Sold in Connecticut. Without a gravestone to mark one’s death, we might not know that a person ever lived. But a gravestone announces little more than a birth and death. Knowing that slavery once lived in Connecticut, like knowing that someone named James Mars once lived because his gravestone tell us that he died, does not explain how both slavery and Mars came to pass. That is for stories, and histories, to tell.
In his autobiography, James recalls himself at eight years-old walking down the road to the home of his new owner Mr. Munger. Only “a little over a mile” passed between the prospect of freedom and what Mars saw in slavery as the personal segregation from the world of both whites and blacks. “I then felt for the first time that I was alone in the world,” he writes, “no home, no friends, and none to care for me.” He quickly realized, upon seeing his father at the end of the mile, that his family would be living no more than a mile away themselves. This fact “made the rough way smooth.” Yet, as James says, “now sixty-five years have passed away since that time; those feelings are fresh in my memory.” Mars was 74 years-old when he wrote those words, a free man for over fifty years, but some conditions had not passed. “The way was long. I was alone. Tears ran down my cheeks.” The same was true of his mother’s sight of her own mother “tied up and whipped until the blood ran across the floor in the room.” James’s grandmother’s blood passed through his tears as his previous owner Mr. Thompson “passed over [the fact] that God made of one blood all nations of men.” That was how slavery lived differently for each one of them.

How much do we pass over when travelling in our cars through Norfolk? The landscape we see out our windows is very similar to that seen two hundred years ago from a horse-pulled wagon, or on foot, walking to church or running from someone who might claim ownership over us. James and his family traveled from Canaan to Norfolk, passed from house to house, sometimes together, and sometimes separated. They stopped first at Pettibone’s tavern and then the Phelps’s empty house before James and his brother were shepherded over Burr Mountain to the Tibbals’ and then back again to the Phelps’s. These passings, the “transactions of this narrative,” as Mars writes, continued for a few months. After he was sold to Mr. Munger in 1798, James daily “passed” the Curtiss house, on the same road he lived with Mr. Munger, as he went to work in the field. Back and forth, back and forth, he came to identify with the white Curtiss boys as just another young male laborer preparing for a
future of independence. If the scenery of our travels through Norfolk today contains many of the trees, hills, rocks, and streams it once did, the view would have passed by more slowly before. Images of place remained in people’s eyes longer. Did these signs take stronger root in their minds as well? When James saw the Curtiss boys, did he constantly remember the kindness showed him when, as he reminds us, still eight years-old and before he was sold to Mr. Munger, he was sent to the Curtiss’s to hide from his owner Mr. Thompson under the pretense of filling a pail of water at their well? Would the penetration of the earth with his hoe, the forests and houses with his eyes, weave his future into his past? Houses of sustenance and servitude continuously interchanged on the road shared by the Munger and Curtiss families called “Sunset Ridge.” Mr. Munger had even before taken part in the sheltering of the Mars family from Mr. Thompson. Nestling them within his barn and bed chambers meant keeping them together. This story already had a family plot.

As time passed, to serve and sustain become inseparable. Like the blood that passed into tears, the water that he aimed to gather from the Curtiss’s when he was eight years-old flowed through James’s story and gathered in the cup of water he offered to Mr. Munger’s dying daughter. He remembers putting the glass of water to her lips, but she could not swallow. The comfort and concern he showed toward the Mungers by the then freed Mars would always be “cherished by me while I live,” he wrote. “That was a scene that I love to think of. It makes me almost forget that I ever was a slave to her father; but so it was.” In attempting to understand the past today, we may try to slow down, linger in front of houses, wander through the cemetery, and wonder to ourselves. “And now to look back on the whole transaction, it all seems like a dream,” James continued. With the passing of Mr. Munger and his daughter, Mars ends his history of how slavery lived in Connecticut. In 1825, James bought his own property in Norfolk, became a farmer, and passed by the houses that once both owned and
sheltered him. He wrote his story while visiting Norfolk in old age. He returned over the years to limp from house to house selling copies of it. As he wrote in his 1868 addendum to the fourth of its thirteen printings, “I have none to care for me that has anything to spare.” Now he walked that lonely road of his eight year-old mind toward a final freedom. James passed away in 1880 in Ashley Falls, Massachusetts, and his body was brought back to Norfolk to be buried next to his father in the town cemetery. Histories like Mars’s, and the writing of them, are partly a matter of the speed at which we look at the world and where we decide to rest our eyes, and our minds. That was how James Mars lived in Connecticut.

While living in Hartford in the 1830s and 1840s, Mars helped secure rights for black people. One of his objectives was to give African Americans a home in America. This was in response to the widely supported movement for blacks to re-settle, or repatriate, in Africa. Mars, however, believed that in a country that denied African Americans a gravestone, in a state through which he himself helped usher slaves with the aid of the Underground Railroad in Norfolk, the basic rights to citizenship included a right to land, to a place in a community, to a place, in essence, above ground.

From on top of the wooded ridge in Norfolk where eight year-old James Mars and his father once hid from Mr. Thompson, they could see the road to Canaan and the town cemetery which it passed. This view from above laid claim to a particular place. “As Paul said unto [the Athenians] when he stood on Mars Hill,” James had written, “God made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” Unlike Mr. Thompson, young lonely Mars did not pass over this instruction. He saw his rights to all the face of the earth then and there. In Thornton Wilder’s 1938 classic American play Our Town, the third act takes place among the buried in the town cemetery. And on a letter to one of the town’s young residents, the address reads: “Jane Crofut; the Crofut Farm; Grover’s Corners; Sutton County; New Hampshire; United States of America.... Continent of North
America; Western Hemisphere; the Earth; the Solar System; the Universe; the Mind of God.”

The ordered graves of a cemetery are a universal sight. In Norfolk, a town known for an altitude as high as the Adirondacks, perhaps no one descended as directly from beyond the confines of the earth than Mars from his father, known universally as Jupiter Mars. Bloodlines, the Underground Railroad, the Connecticut Freedom Trail, these are like roads, and the power of the water flow that has been central to Norfolk’s industry, to the labor of the free and enslaved, for over 250 years. They are flow through one another, integrated in their pass through town and time. A soaring mind, from earth to sky and back again, is a key to the place of the past here, one Mars used to reach his own future. We learn about him, and his life, today by letting our thoughts wander, maybe like his own, a drifting pass of freedom when enslaved, living and working in town.

Slavery lived as James Mars did. He secured his freedom at the age of twenty-one through Connecticut’s Gradual Emancipation Act of 1784, but he remained indentured to Mr. Munger until 1815, when he was twenty-five. The extension was due to the ambiguity of the law. A contract was devised for Mars to continue working for Mr. Munger in a kind of ambivalent servitude. James’s father died in 1818, two years before Mr. Munger’s daughter, the time when James had forgotten that he ever was a slave. “I wonder sometimes why I was not more contented than I was, and then I wonder why I was as contented as I was,” he wrote. Emotions passing into one another, the acknowledgement of ambivalence, this mixing of slavery and freedom, white and black, sadness and glee, life and death, mixes graves and leads Mars to conclude, “But I will pass on with my story.” Stopping and staring at a place, a landscape, that someone who lived over a hundred years ago saw every day may give us a close idea of that person’s history, but James Mars never saw his grave. Our interest is not in what it says but how it shows us to see.
We pick up the past in pieces, scattered by the very lives we hope to make whole. In 1834, Prudence Crandall was forced by violence out of her home in Canterbury, Connecticut, the first private school in New England for black girls and young women. We have put her broken world back together and claimed her as a noble pioneer of civil rights. What do the pieces themselves have to say in their dispersion, unmuffled by our voices?

This house is as stubborn as Prudence. What was she thinking the moment she made the decision in February 1833 to turn her school into one only for black students? She needed the support of prominent black men in New England to help her find new students, but the school was to exist for no one but herself and her girls. This is not to say that she did not accept the encouragement and believe in the cause of abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison who saw her project as part of a larger one for racial equality. It is to say that by conflating Garrison or others’ motivations with her own we risk substituting ideology for people. Prudence saw it the other way around. She emptied her school of white students and filled it with black students in rejection of political ideology. Her conviction in this action withdrew her from the world as it simultaneously gathered the full attention of that world in its wake. Let us stay with Prudence then, for a moment, and like those who destroyed this place, be mesmerized out of all reason.

Rather than make, or order, sense, this school defied it. Almost all anti-slavery supporters at this time thought that the best place for black people was in Liberia. That was the progressive position of the time and it was shared by those for and against an all-black school. Even Prudence did not see the benefits of immediate racial integration; she kicked out all the white students to make way for the black ones.
Such a feeling was not simply racial. The town of Canterbury had long wanted to keep to itself in self-sufficiency. The people of the town had wanted Prudence to run a private school for white girls so that they would not have to send their children away. Here, isolationism was not a bad word. The American Colonization Society was founded in 1816 to deal with the problem of a growing black population in the north. Whites and blacks saw the benefits of separate communities. Blacks should have a land to call their own, but when, and how? Many blacks wanted to choose their own land. Conflicting directions over which the country should move crossed through this town to converge the attention of the nation on this building.

In a reverse exodus, black women from all around New England journeyed here like chosen people emigrating to a Promised Land. One student was forced to walk six miles because no one would drive her the rest of the way, as if the place she was going to existed in her mind alone. What happened inside? What could and could not be heard through these walls, seen or not seen through these windows? When Crandall was on trial for breaking the new 1833 Black Law requiring the selectmen of the town to approve the habitation of any black person seeking education in Connecticut from out of state, no one who had visited the house and was called as a witness remembered seeing her teaching black girls; they could not make the inside of her house cohere in their minds as a school. They parted with the gift of amnesia. Was this house a shield, a form of protection, or in the quaint contributions it makes to the unique Federalist style of the community’s architecture, the piece that would make the town whole? If the outside world was incomplete without it, the school became the whole world for those inside it. This building soldered race to gender in powerful ways. Those on the outside were forced to rebuff what they saw as womanly as well as racial impertinence. Andrew Judson, Prudence’s prime social and legal antagonist who lived across the street, complained about racial mixing. Like many mens’ protestations of the
time, the town’s men worry of miscegenation evidenced an anxiety over their potential attraction to a race other than their own. They were pulled toward the school following the footsteps of black women.

Either in denial or embrace, the town was so mystified by the spell cast by the school that they avoided the building and any physical contact with the people in it. They marked their territory by throwing feces down the school’s well and impaling a dead white and black cat, throat sliced, on its fence. One black student called the white Canterburians “savage” in their efforts to establish their purity of place. Ann Eliza Hammond from Providence, Rhode Island, the first black student from out of state, was even willing to let violence be inflicted upon her in the spring of 1833. She would take the whipping in violation of the town pauper law if it allowed her to stay at the school. The law could not break her. This house was unyielding, giving up to us today, from the time it was a school, only shards of glass and an ink well, one a sign of meticulous focus, the other of the rocks thrown through the window by the town and displayed by Prudence on a mantelpiece.

Absorbed in knowledge and possibility, in the world of their imaginations, the students absorbed the world around them with enough force that only the law passed in the spring of 1833 could stem the power they held over the town and make them stop. But their pull was too strong, and the Black Law, as it was called, only strengthened the pull of this place by further isolating the school. The men of the town were scared of becoming intimate with black flesh, so they continued to instead take the law into their hands. Sarah Harris, Prudence’s first black student, had feared her admittance to the school the previous fall would be “a means of injuring” Prudence. For rocks continued to follow Harris’s path. William Lloyd Garrison suggested on his visit in October 1833 that Prudence not repair the broken windows and keep the latest two-pound rock on display as an heirloom of destruction. Prudence wrote to a friend that, because of her dependence
on God, she had learned how, “In the midst of this affliction, I am as happy as at any moment of my life.”

This house learned something from the harsh treatment borne by its pupils. Education demanded fortitude and exposure, a letting down of one’s guard to most fully absorb the world. The life of the mind also demanded focus and attention, the kind of isolation it took Prudence as a child to learn the duties of domesticity by sowing the alphabet into her sampler. Prudence no doubt made her school all black in order to stem conflict resulting from an interfering world. In a political sense, segregation and isolation were in view toward equal rights, raising citizens who would be able to educate themselves and others to best help their own race. One black student described the school as a place of “communion with heaven.” In the nineteenth century, heaven was believed to be a material place with all the joys of earth, radically improved. Only in a place of work and rest like this, a utopia existing in the middle of ungodly violence, could paradise be imagined beyond its walls.

Fifty years later and hundreds of miles to the west, African Americans would journey to the open lands of Oklahoma and Kansas to found all-black towns where the law was theirs to make. The success of this movement was dependent upon racial segregation. Prudence had known something similar. What does it mean to understand one time and place through another? What does it mean that Prudence’s first relative to arrive in the New World was banished from Massachusetts with other Anabaptists only to start their own segregated community of belief? What does it mean that Prudence herself eventually moved to Kansas in the 1880s at the exact time the all-black town movement was beginning there. Both events, the one out west and the one here, in Canterbury, were premised on the purity of a racial community in isolation. Does this comparison belie their place in time, or isolate it in clearer, and bolder, relief?
Toni Morrison writes of the all-black town of Ruby in her novel Paradise (1997). Five women live in a convent, once a school, on the outskirts of town, alone. They are living their own life in their own space in a town already in the middle of nowhere. Morrison opens her book with the actions of the black men of Ruby, threatened by women taking segregation too far. “They shoot the white one first. With the rest they can take their time.” The Canterburians did not take their time; they were not in control.

Education needed time, sowing a sampler needed time, and space, space to be filled by circumstance and interruption as much as imagination. That is how we learn, questioned by what catches us off guard, by what we are forced to confront. The answers, if too quick and pointed, can be deadly. Our forwardness of history, of narrative resolution, needs questioning. The bullets meant for the black women of Ruby hover over their story in anticipation of hitting their targets. What if history does not have a target to hit? What if we keep the bullets flying, or stop them in midair?

What would it have been like to be inside this building the moment the windows were shattered for the last time? What were the roughly twenty black students thinking when their quiet was broken, when their thick skin turned as thin as the glass that broke it? This school was too big of a question. It attracted too many answers. On September 9, 1834, men of the town began smacking the doors and walls with lead pipes and blew out ninety panes of glass in just one of its front sitting rooms. They entered the house and began decimating the ground floor. What happens to the unknowing, the not knowing of what history, if any, will be, of such a moment, the students’ unknowing, here, then, and ours, here, now? Can we un-know again and recover a moment that has been lost. Can we let the void be full of itself? What does it mean that what has actually survived this story is no narrative of equality but only an ink well without a quill and some shards of glass? Signs of incompleteness, of forgetting, fragility and destitution, that contain entire lives on their brink. Yet unlike
big issues, grand narratives, and political lessons, we can hold them in our hands.

Sarah Harris, Prudence’s first black student, gave birth to her daughter on the same night the town raided the school. Two things are devastatingly clear now. Men and women cracked together and a baby named Prudence was heard crying through shattered glass.
Salvage History Meditation
by Michelle Morgan

Perhaps it is because I grew up in the late twentieth century. Perhaps it is because I grew up in the late twentieth century in a wooded corner of New England, and not on the coast. Maybe it is from sheer ignorance. Whatever the cause, before May 5, 2011, the day I visited the New London Maritime Museum, I only knew one meaning of the word salvage. As far as I was knew, salvage was the stuff you picked through at a yard sale, or the leftovers remains from a flood or fire somewhere in the Midwest, shipped to the local who-knows-what-you’ll-find store to be bought for cheap.

This definition of salvage is what I had in mind when I came across a reference to “salvage law” in the New London Maritime Museum’s collections. The story ran thus: having encountered La Amistad off the shore of Long Island, Captain Gedney towed the ship into New London rather than New York, hoping to secure salvage rights. He would, in other words, earn a profit of the property value of the goods he “saved” from the ship. Since slavery was illegal in New York but not Connecticut, Gedney, allegedly, hoped Connecticut courts would consider the Mendian people onboard property and award him a percentage of their value. Salvage, I learned, is not just the property saved from a fire (or shipwreck); it is also—according to dictionary definitions and naval law—compensation for that property, based on a property’s determined value or worth.

What constituted property was constantly up for grabs during the early years of commodity capitalism and throughout the nineteenth century. Who could own property and who could not cut to the very heart of slavery—at its most basic level, white men could own property, and most others could not. Not being entitled, legally, to hold or own property of course did not necessarily make one property—
although, using the language of property, white suffragists and women’s rights advocates throughout the century

frequently made recourse to precisely this analogy between white women and slaves. Property was a key component of individuation and signified the right to own—literally—property in oneself. This possessive individualism was linked, from there, to citizenship rights, which, tautologically and fatalistically, determined who could own property. For enslaved African Americans, property in oneself was a legal impossibility.

How fitting, then, that Gedney pulled La Amistad into New London, docking at Lawrence Wharf only feet from the U.S. Custom House. In 1839, the Custom House sat directly on the water. Maps from the period show a bit of water immediately adjacent to the building, where small boats could “park” at the Custom House and do business, declaring their imports and exports in this busy Connecticut port. These imports and exports, of course, were future properties—either goods or materials that would be made into goods for sale here in the United States, or goods or materials that would be made into goods destined for foreign ports and lands.

From the moment La Amistad was dragged into New London, the press was obsessed not just with its human inhabitants, but with the goods it was carrying. The New London Gazette and General Advertiser wrote on Wednesday, August 28, 1839:

Over the deck were scattered in the most wanton and disorderly profusion, raisins, vermicelli, bread, rice, silk and cotton goods. In the cabin and hold were the marks of the same wasteful destruction. Her cargo appears to consist of silks, crapes, calicoes, cotton and fancy goods of various descriptions, glass and hardware, bridles, saddles, holsters, pictures, looking glasses, books, fruits, olives and olive oil, and “other things too numerous...
to mention”—which are now all mixed in a strange and fantastic medley. On the forward hatch we unconsciously rested our hand on a cold object, which we soon discovered to be the naked corpse, enveloped in a pall of black bombazine.* On removing its folds we beheld the rigid countenance and glazed eye of a poor negro who died last night. His mouth was unclosed and still were the ghastly expression of his last struggle.

The description of properties and goods “wasted” was undoubtedly at least a partial figment of a biased reporter’s imagination. Many of the Mendians onboard were starving or had died after ingesting lethal quantities of liquid medications, not suitable for consumption, in efforts to slake their thirst. Likewise, early accounts of La Amistad noted that the people on board had traded with other ships they encountered for goods like apples, an unlikely necessity if fruits had been “scattered” across the ship in disarray. The press, in other words, made it clear from the beginning that “property” had no clear idea of how to use property properly, even something as fundamental as foodstuffs. It is in these small, salvaged formulations of language, and in the stories told about people, that the deepest aspects of ideological reasoning surface.

This same newspaper article began by relaying further eyewitness testimony to Gedney’s initial visit to the ship. It states:

On her deck were grouped amid various goods and arms the remnant of her Ethiop crew, some decked in the most fantastic manner in the silks and finery pilfered from the cargo, while others in a state of nudity, emaciated to mere skeletons, lay coiled upon the decks. Here could be seen a negro with white pantaloons and the sable shirt which nature gave him, and a planter’s broad-brimmed hat upon his head, with a string of gewgaws around his neck, and another with a linen cambric shirt, whose
bosom was worked by the hand of some dark-eyed daughter of Spain, while his nether proportions were enveloped in a shawl of gauze or Canton crape.

*The New London Gazette* depicted a pantomime of property relations in its representation of the ship, its crew, and its cargo, with the Mendians either incapable of properly using and distributing the things among the people onboard or else, in the typical language of the time, “mimicking” the dress customs of their enslavers (if and when they were dressed at all). They are presented as having no proper use for the rich materials onboard, except as means for making spectacles out of themselves.

Gedney, of course, would not get his salvage compensation for the men, women, and children onboard the ship. Eventually Cinqué and his shipmates returned to Mende. But still the battle over the cargo and its worth waged on. For years cries for or against indemnity ricocheted around the halls of the Capitol, as the Cuban schooner and its Spanish owners pressed for recompense for the lost ship and its cargo. A decade later President Polk was still pushing to pay the Spanish government fifty thousand dollars. As David Brion Davis writes in his book *Inhuman Bondage*: “until the Civil War, the U.S. government was plagued by continuing disputes over Spanish claims and demands for monetary compensation. The Amistad affair underscored the interrelationship with the Atlantic Slave System, from a ship built on an American model... to an 1844 House of Representatives committee report that attacked the Supreme Court’s decision and called for payment of indemnity to Spain, an action that reflected the South’s growing interest in acquiring Cuba. Similar moves for indemnity payment were made in the Senate, and President Polk, in his address to the nation of December 9, 1847, in the midst of the Mexican War, called for appropriations to pay Spain for the value of the Amistad “slaves” as the only way of restoring friendly relations between the two nations” (26).
What Davis identifies as “interrelationships” between the United States and Spain regarding trade and economic systems, slavery, and the desire to “acquire” more land and its slave population is rightfully crucial to the stories we narrate about U.S. national history. Yet in many ways, the attention paid to the relationship between Spain and the United States in the wake of the Amistad affair has been “salvaged” by history and historians repeatedly. Less often told is the story of the Mendian’s property—for surely they owned property in themselves at the very least. It is probably true that each Mendian onboard La Amistad would have been stripped of any tangible property of value. But I wonder, as I think about the remains of things that circulate in museums and in historical society collections and libraries, and as I think about the ways so much history has a tendency to overlook the very remains and salvage it cannot immediately account for in larger systematic political structures or explanations of social behavior, about the small things these people might have found ways to hold close to them as they were packed into the schooner. Less is made, for example, of why the Mendians were not allowed “salvage compensation” for the ship when it was auctioned fourteen months after their initial capture, or why they were forced to raise funds for their return to Mende rather than using the proceeds of the auctioning of the ship and its cargos as fair due for their trials. Of course this is just wishful thinking on my part, this imagining that people who were barely given their freedom might actually be compensated for the atrocities they suffered.

But this wishful thinking should not blind me to the other small bits of property that might actually show up in these accounts. What was the “string of geegaws” the New London Gazette reported noted as hanging from one of the Mendian’s necks? Was it some “valueless” thing? To whom was it valueless? Gedney? History? As I read the reporter’s atrocious account of Gedney’s first encounter with La Amistad and its crew, it strikes me that this is not the only mention in the archive of a small, “worthless” piece of
property. In an early account of the Amistad affair by John Warner Barber, *A History of the Amistad Captives* (1840), Cinqué is described as entering Gedney’s cabin, on the U.S. cutter Washington, “manacled... [with] a cord around his neck, to which a snuffbox was suspended” (6). Here is the salvaged history of a small item Cinqué claimed as his, and yet again it is positioned as threatening. A snuffbox, suspended from a cord, which hung around his neck. Images of lynching are barely concealed beneath the surface of this passage—the only piece of property Cinqué owns, besides himself, appears around his neck, ready to “snuff” him out, as he is brought, manacled and under arrest, into the cabin of Capt. Gedney. Did that snuff box contain snuff produced by the hands of slaves in the tobacco fields of Cuba? Was the cord made of cotton or hemp? Either could have been made by slave labor, as well.

I cannot linger too long on the implications of this passage, where even this tiny, “worthless” bit of property was likely made by enslaved humans. Instead, I have to think about it from another, more positive view of salvage: as what remains unexamined in the archive and as something more valuable than anyone might have previously recognized. This snuffbox on a cord might just be the umbilical cord tying Cinqué to other black bodies, a thread running like a vein of blood through arms and wrists, challenging the ways slavery reduces what it deemed “valueless” to the salvage bins of history.
What is the history of Marian Anderson’s studio? It is a story of small-town community integrity against big-business out-of-town development. Anderson had lived in the west end of Danbury, Connecticut, on Joe’s Hill from the 1940s until her death in 1993. Marianna Farm, as her home was called, existed out of sight of neighbors in a heavily forested area with views into the distant New England countryside. By the 1990s, the location had become prime real estate for the building of McMansions and condominiums. The developer who bought Anderson’s land after she died wanted to raze the buildings and pave over the plot for the construction of a new road. Only after the developer agreed to donate and move Anderson’s private practice studio to the grounds of the Danbury Historical Society in the center of town were the land permits they had been waiting to receive finally granted. This tacit exchange of property rights for cultural treasure evidenced the Danbury community’s long-time embrace of Marian Anderson.

What is the history of Marian Anderson’s studio? It is a love story between Marian and her husband Orpheus Fischer and the world they built for themselves. In the early 1940s, before their marriage in 1943, Anderson and Fischer, known as “King,” worked to realize their wish of living in the country. They had a difficult time acquiring property because land owners in Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and New Hampshire would not sell to an African American couple. The previous owner of the house they finally bought in Danbury, Connecticut, tried to stop the sale. He was too late, but the couple reportedly had to purchase 100 acres of land, more than double what they needed, in order not to “contaminate” their neighbors’ space. King was an architect and eventually built a house for himself and his wife across the street. It included a small 20 by 24-foot practice studio for Marian overlooking the pond pooled by the dam of a nearby
With almost floor-to-ceiling windows on two sides, a fireplace, and a porch, this retreat was open to the land yet secluded from the world.

What is the history of Marian Anderson’s studio? It is a story of one girl’s urge to sing freely, and widely; her worry of offending anyone nearby with her loud voice; and her desire to sing for herself, for her own enjoyment. In Anderson’s 1956 autobiography My Lord, What a Morning, she writes of her first “private” studio in her family’s new house bought in Philadelphia in the early 1920s. “Every time I sang out I had a guilty feeling that I was disturbing our neighbors.” Her anxiety over invading other people’s space with her sound continued throughout her life. She comments in her autobiography about the many times she did not practice enough, or even adequately warm up her voice before performances, because she could not find a secluded enough room that met her comfort level in the back stage of theaters and in the many private homes in which she stayed on tour. In the book’s final chapter, “Looking Forward,” Anderson writes of the “many things in mind for the concert hall, and, if not there, for my personal pleasure in the studio.” One of those things was to work on her pianissimo, a musical notation meaning to sing very softly. Anderson felt that she had never mastered this quality of the voice. It is a difficult dynamic to sustain because it requires more, not less, breath to keep the air flowing so that sound can always be heard. Pianissimo was not a focus of her early voice lessons in her voice teacher Mr. Boghetti’s studio. She was taught to sing powerfully and assertively. When another teacher later in life made a point to work on her pianissimo she was given, she writes, “a feeling of security.” The private practice studio on Marianna Farm was meant to contain and continue that feeling, a reprieve from her public performances.

There are many histories of Marian Anderson’s studio. Our encounter with them in the actual form of her studio now located at the Danbury Historical Society demonstrates the disconnection between past and present, history and space,
even if we stand in the place where we know something has happened. Yet this decoupling of place, person, and story is what enables preservation and something called history to affect us. The historical crosscurrents at this place of the studio are what move us through time to experience something as history. A tour of the site of the studio includes other buildings at the Danbury Historical Society. We are led first through the John Rider house, built here in 1785, the oldest house in Danbury still occupying its original location. We enter from the rear, already backstage of how those once living here would have wanted us to enter. The smell of woodsmoke in the kitchen remains from the cooking done just a few days before by a colonial re-enactor for a group of school children. A long glass case of objects from early America fills the entire space of a musty upstairs bedroom. The tour of the grounds continues with a milliner’s shop, an entryway into Danbury’s history as the hat capital of the world in the mid-nineteenth century. But this building from 1790 was once located in the lot next door as a legal office and only moved here to be turned into a replica of a hat shop by the museum. Next on the tour comes a one-room schoolhouse, a complete recreation of a non-existent building, before we end inside Marian Anderson’s studio. History is told to visitors through this path. The Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) bought the front house in 1941 in order to keep it from destruction. It is their collection of artifacts on display in the bedroom glass case. The other rooms in the house are slowly being refurbished as the DAR now meets in Marian Anderson’s studio to plan for the future, including the preservation of their own group. The path they take, stretching from their past to future belongings, from the house directly to the studio, cuts the corners of history as told to the visitor of the site. Does their path muddle the story of Marian Anderson’s studio, or offer even another?

What does it mean to talk, and to talk of a particular past, in a space meant for singing, and for listening to oneself? In this place, sound stops at the end of a phrase; it is not
meant to travel. King helped design the studio to redirect the voice back to itself, enwrapping the singer in the gentle mold of the downward curving ceiling. But sound contained within may still have outside repercussions. Voices linger in the mind; word gets out. So it was when the DAR met over seventy years ago, in 1939, this time in regards to a space in which Marian Anderson had planned to sing: Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. Anderson had not directly heard why she was not allowed to sing there until a few weeks before the scheduled performance. She only knew, in her words, “that something was amiss” as she continued moving through her own world of concert engagements. Upon Eleanor Roosevelt’s resignation from the DAR after they barred Anderson from Constitution Hall because of her race, the Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, invited her to sing to a crowd of thousands at the Lincoln memorial on Easter Sunday, in public rhetorical defiance of the whispered racial prejudice that began within the meetings of the DAR.

Here is where our histories of Marian Anderson converge, but at cross-purposes. She has come to stand as synonymous with the voice that rose from her on that Sunday. But, as she writes, “I could see that my significance as an individual was small in this affair. I had become, whether I liked it or not, a symbol, representing my people.” Is the history of Marian Anderson’s studio a symbolic stand-in for a particular vision of America, for “our history,” or the standing remains of an individual, and the history she can only hear?

Perhaps we all share the same question of both song and history: what are we listening for? The day Anderson sang to America, everyone heard for themselves. “My head and heart were in such turmoil that I looked and hardly saw, I listened and hardly heard,” Anderson continued. Microphones can create such an alienating effect. “Singing into a microphone in a studio is like performing into dead space.” Perhaps the six radio recording microphones used for her Lincoln Memorial performance left a similar sensation, this time dizzyingly amplifying the reactions of the people sprawled
out in front her into a space that was all buffer, thicker than the walls of a room but thinner than the 100 additional acres of Marianna Farm. As if she were in one large private practice studio that stretched around the entire reflecting pool from the Lincoln Memorial to the Washington Monument, the sound, the whole experience, folded back upon her, “a feeling that a great wave of good will poured out from these people, almost engulfing me.” She felt that her words “would not come.” No doubt everyone in the audience strained to hear as much as Anderson lost all control, and direction, of her sound as soon as it was sent through the once-removed speaker, a system projecting the same sound waves at different criss-crossing points over seventy-five thousand bodies. The empty space in the middle of them all pooled and reflected the sound like invisible swirling strobe lights shining from the site of a main attraction that is never as close as it seems from afar. Indeed, the only way it would have been possible for people standing around the pool at staggered points in space, and time, to hear Anderson was for her sound to flow at different speeds and reach people at different times, moderated by speakers placed at various distances apart. Did they hear what Anderson actually sang? Or did they hear what they heard she sang? Anderson still doubts in her autobiography if she even said, after her songs, the few words reported in the newspapers. “Perhaps I did not grasp all that was happening,” she writes. Not only were her strong feelings distinct from “that demonstration of public emotion,” but “there were many in the gathering who were stirred by their own emotions.”

Listening to Marian Anderson today, visiting her studio, do we imagine ourselves in that crowd on Easter Sunday, feeling the power of a moment hearkening to a future of racial equality? Do we imagine so because that is what we hear, and want to hear, today? Can we only hear voices singing praise, woe, joy, despair because we ourselves are feeling that, because our bodies and voices are engaged in the sound, if only silently, or at a hum. For everyone hears Marian Anderson differently, an always mediated voice that only
becomes immediate through our own. What if the bravest Marian Anderson had been was in her small studio in the yard of her house in the middle of the woods of Danbury rather than in front of thousands of people at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939? The sounds of the two sites resist conflation.

Standing in either place, then and now, history becomes a question of what we hear, what we do not, and what we were never meant to. Some things are not meant to be heard, so we must listen for something else. If we are only hearing a distorted version of what we think we should be hearing, then what we are hearing is not where we think it is in history. This is what the present physical location of Marian Anderson’s studio, and its multiple histories, speaks to. History is here and we are its subjects. In this studio, in this most private of retreats for the singer, we may least hear the voice only meant for the singer, but following her example, listening carefully, we can more clearly hear ourselves. When we listen to the past, we listen to ourselves, our voices discussing the past, our instruments in recitals held here today.

Sound travels, like a house, like a history. To play our part in history, to understand it, like those, including Marian Anderson, courageous in chorus with the National Anthem at the Lincoln Memorial, we must not only listen to ourselves; we must, in song, be honest with what we hear.
In the late 1820s gift books were a new commodity. Published at the end of one year in anticipation of the next, they were comprised of a miscellany of short fiction, poetry, essays, and prints based on popular artworks. At the height of the 1827 Christmas season, one such book, called Ackerman’s “Forget-Me-Not for 1828,” included a short story by a Mrs. T.E. Bowdich, called “The Booroom Slave.” According to an advertisement for the gift book that ran in the December 18, 1827 edition of the National Gazette (a Philadelphia newspaper), the handsome volume included a plate by the same name, “The Booroom Slave,” illustrating the story. Nestled within the gift book were other prints as well, with titles such as “The Bridal Morning” (by the same engraver as The Booroom Slave) and “The Triumph of Poetry.”

Though the American advertisement does not list the image’s engraver, British reviews of the same edition of the book heaped praise on the lithograph’s creator, E. [Edward] Finden, claiming that “The Booroom Slave was “a masterpiece of engraving,” with the central character forming “a beautiful figure, and an exquisitely finished print.” Finden was probably grateful for the praise. Another London review from the same period noted that with this print of “The Booroom Slave,” Finden had “redeemed his reputation.” It was, by all accounts, a gorgeous print, communicating the plight of the enslaved female African within the sentimental and sublime conventions sympathetic white nineteenth-century audiences expected.

Only three short years later, Lydia Maria Child would use an engraving of “The Booroom Slave”—this time probably engraved by Joseph Andrews of the Boston firm Andrews, Ormsby & Co., and without the title—as the frontispiece
image for her abolitionist analysis of race and slavery, An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans. The story “The Booroom Slave” was published in other sources in the United States after its initial publication in the Forget-Me-Not, though apparently without the accompanying illustration. Regardless of her familiarity with the story (which was also published, in 1830, in the African Repository, and Colonial Journal, a publication of the American Colonization Society), Child most likely came across the engraving through her own work in children’s gift books, and she had used Andrews, Ormsby, & Co. for
several of her other children’s book project engraving needs, as well. Like the plate illustrating the Forget-Me-Not, the single, fore-grounded image in An Appeal shows a kneeling female slave surrounded by a few small items, hands clasped in earnest supplication while around her a tempest rages and lightning strikes.

It was the painter Henry Thomson, likely reading “The Booroom Slave” in earlier versions published in Bowdich’s native England, who painted what was probably the original composition, on which all subsequent engravings were based. He did so at least by 1827, when Finden’s version surfaces. After the print appeared in the United States in the 1828 Forget-Me-Not and then in Child’s 1833 book, it seems to have receded from view for a time. However, five years later it reappeared when, from October 4, 1838 through March 7, 1839, “Inna, the Booroom Slave” was advertised in The Emancipator, a key abolitionist paper, as the chief print for sale at the Depository of the American Anti-Slavery Society in New York. Indeed, a flurry of advertisements from 1838-1840 show that the print was for sale widely across the north: in addition to the regular ads in The Emancipator, which claimed the print could be purchased in Boston, Hartford, Providence, Philadelphia, Utica, Cincinnati, Pittsburg, Concord, New Hampshire, Vergennes, Vermont, and “etc.,” ads also ran in the Pennsylvania Freeman.

Yet this brief publishing history of the print in the antebellum north is only a tiny window on the image’s curious circulation, and tells us nothing about the central figure, Inna. Her tale is buried deep within—and is deeply connected—to the history of abolitionism, print, and visual culture in Connecticut in the decades leading up to the Civil War. In fact, one of the engraved versions—probably the same version sold by various abolitionist societies to raise funds in the late years of the 1830s—is housed in the Connecticut Historical Society’s collections. Engraved and washed in a few understated watercolors by the Connecticut lithography firm D.W. Kellogg & Co., “Inna, the Booroom Slave” (the firm seems to have
added the story’s main character’s name to the title of the print) was also advertised—in 1838—in the Hartford Courant.

Remarkably, the Connecticut Historical Society also owns an undated abolitionist banner featuring the same, central image of a young female African, dressed in red and yellow cloth. Removed from the ocean-side scene in which she appears in lithographed versions, Inna, in this hand-painted version, kneels next to a river, a variety of fauna and plant life marking the banner’s border. Divorced from the title “The Booroom Slave,” the banner proclaims, “Let the Oppressed Go Free!” across the top, while along the bottom an abolitionist version of Proverbs 14: 34 remonstrates its viewers: “Righteousness Exalteth a Nation—Slavery is a Reproach to Any People.”

The banner’s creator and date are unknown (there were almost 30 abolitionist societies in Connecticut alone in 1837, and while the Connecticut Historical Society has done some work trying to pinpoint the group the banner belonged to, no definite evidence has yet come to light), but we can imagine the ways images of Inna, the Booroom Slave, spoke (or failed to speak?) to abolitionists in the north during the year before (and indeed, if the advertisements are any indication, during the same period) La Amistad was dragged into New London harbor in the summer of 1839. It is impossible not to wonder why the image of her, despite over a decade of circulation in lithographic and narrative form, did not become as popular as the kneeling male figure in the (also originally British) abolitionist icon “Am I Not a Man and a Brother?” One possibility is that her gender and sex worked to her disadvantage. “Am I Not a Man and Brother” did have a female-gendered counterpart, “Am I Not a Woman and Sister,” but it clearly did not appeal to nineteenth-century universalizing notions of humanity the way the male version did. Nonetheless, the Inna of the engraving, story, painting, and banner has existed for almost two centuries in quiet, climate-controlled exhibition cases, in the black and white block print of nineteenth-century newspaper advertisements
and in the crumbling pages of Child’s book, but without much of an “identity.” The painting is not on public view, having been sold in auction in 1996 to a private collector, and with almost no visual records of its existence left as a testament to its very public and visual history. Even the banner, which was almost certainly based on the Kellogg print and would have been carried aloft through the streets during parades, abstracts Inna into a type and erases her name.

This erasure, perhaps, would only be a small injustice to the source of the banner’s imagery were it not for the fact that Inna was, most likely, an actual historical person, and not a fictional character imagined by Bowdich. Indeed, the “Mrs. T.E. Bowdich” who wrote the story was not just a married woman writing short stories to earn extra money, like many women in the nineteenth-century. She was, according to at least one historian, an accomplished scientist and botanist, whose name (like Inna’s) has all but disappeared from contemporary historical consciousness and memory. Bowdich accompanied her husband, Thomas, on several specimen collecting trips throughout Africa in the early nineteenth century. When he died unexpectedly, Bowdich published their joint findings (by some accounts the findings were more hers than they were “joint”) under her late husband’s name. It would have been extremely difficult if not impossible for Bowdich to publish scientific writing under her own name in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Necessity, in other words, forced Bowdich to sacrifice credit for her work to the chance to have it published at all.

Bowdich, at any rate, was a white female scientist virtually unparalleled in her day, and the story she tells of Inna claims that Inna is not a fiction and that her story is the truth, told to Bowdich during the long period of their “friendship” that followed their meeting. “The Booroom Slave” begins by telling of Inna’s happiness in her village, her impending marriage, her love of adventure and her clever, joking, trickster ways. Captured by slavers, she suffers excruciating
hardships before barely escaping the very night before the slavers’ ship was to set sail—the ship that would have taken her to the slave markets of distant shores. First taking refuge on the stormy coast close to where her captors and her fellow enslaved Africans are sleeping, she makes her way back, slowly and with pain, sickness, hunger, and toil, in what she thinks is the general direction of her home many miles distant. Bowdich and her husband “discover” Inna, who is at death’s doorstep, during one of their collection trips, listen to her remarkable story, and take her with them to their lodgings. There Inna convalesces, works as a “servant” for Bowdich, and is Christianized. Finally, Inna’s family tracks her down and she returns with them to her village.

Like the image of Inna that was, for a brief moment, a popular icon of abolitionism in Connecticut, the textual Inna is straddled between two worlds—having been captured, she escapes with her life, but not, as they say, her life. “Civilized” into Christianity, she exists in multiple registers and worlds—the most obvious being white and black, free and enslaved (she has to beg for Bowdich’s permission to leave her “employ” and return home, for example). Less obvious but perhaps even more importantly, Inna serves as a figure for the English Bowdich to assert a decidedly “British” superiority, as she assures a rightfully cautious Inna that the English no longer take slaves or tolerate slavery. The Bowdich’s particular brand of nineteenth-century colonizing scientism—collecting natural specimens in “exotic” lands—and its contribution to global economies that underwrite the perpetuation of the slave system also goes, of course, unnoted. The archive, then, is largely silent on this last point, and on at least two other fronts as well: on Bowdich as a major, white, female, scientist, and on Inna’s identity as a historical and not fictional person.

The image of Inna on the abolitionist banner, moreover, represents the economic and epistemological foundations for knowledge production and how that production, like physical production, also required slave labor. In this sense,
Inna quite simply cannot escape. She is used to “appeal” to particular sensibilities—abolitionist ones. Marcus Wood, in his book on the visual culture of slavery in the United States and England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Blind Memory, has argued that similar imagery “emerged as a necessary pre-condition for abolitionist polemic against the slave trade,” with “the black” serving “as a blank page for white guilt” (21). Inna’s praying figure, in this construction, has relinquished agency to a higher power, or, alternately, to whites, who “inscribe” on her their own guilt about black enslavement. And indeed, in the Connecticut abolitionist banner Inna cannot cross the river from the deciduous trees into the tropical foliage on the other side. She is situated, oddly, within an American context, her head turned away from the river (the River Jordan? her redemption?) and into the interior of a land she does not come from and will never actually come to. It is as though the story of her escape from slavery could not suffice as a representative image for white, abolitionist audiences, and so she had to be repositioned back into the narrative of enslavement in order to function as an image at all. There is enormous ambiguity about how she signifies, further compounded by the Amistad case and calls to send U.S. slaves back to Africa upon emancipation. These were the events surrounding the emergence of a repertoire of images of “Inna, the Booroom Slave,” in the same exact historical moment, in the same exact geographic location.

Other nagging questions about Inna’s story remain. While Bowdich’s name is unfamiliar to contemporary readers, she was more well known in her own time. As a scientist, or even as the mere “wife” of a scientist, she claimed for her story of Inna a veracity perhaps typical of many nineteenth-century fictional narrative conventions generally, but certainly far less common coming from the pen of a woman who had traveled extensively throughout Africa. And if Inna was real, and her image found its way onto a variety of media in Connecticut, and if she had escaped slavery by a hairsbreadth and remained in Africa, why wasn’t her story used, in 1839, to appeal to the Amistad Africans’ right to the same? Is it simply because her story did not end on the shore
of the United States, and was therefore less effective as propaganda or as a corollary to the Mendians’ tale?

While almost mindlessly clicking through the Connecticut Historical Society’s web pages, looking for something broadly visual and specifically female, I found the story of Inna, the Booroom Slave who was never really a slave at all. The historian in me wants to avoid sentimentalizing her story, and knows I need to be careful about how I position her as a historical person—as though after two hundred years she is not, in some ways, irrevocably lost in the archive no matter how hard I read her (fictionalized) image or search the newspapers for clues to her identity. It is clear, in other words, that the only historical “truth” of Inna is, precisely, an archival one. Imagining that she is as real as Bowdich claims she was smacks of triumphalism, of making a point about one tiny, lone person whose story partially survives out of the millions and millions of people who were enslaved and the millions who resisted but left no trace, for good or ill.

But it is precisely this archival trace that I want to celebrate here, on the anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War. It is a story of resistance and agency in the face of incredible odds, even if it took until 2011 for Inna’s story to emerge again. For if Inna’s tale is not true in the historian’s sense, and the archive fails to yield any more of her identity, her story is true, insofar that it is the story of many more like her who were able to escape making the Middle Passage, even if she crossed the Atlantic in other forms. And for at least one moment in the late 1830s, as Cinqué and his fellow Mendians fought for their right to return to Africa, at least the image of one African woman—Inna—circulated in Connecticut’s abolitionist community. For all the faults with her portrayal (and there are many), she represents, in the end, the fragmented stories and traces of many more African and African American women left out of the archive. The various threads tying Inna’s iterations together form a banner of possibility for the many more stories and women we have yet to uncover in the archives.
Poems
Born and Sold in Connecticut: A Zuihitsu on the Life of James Mars
by Ravi Shankar

Time appears as Spirit’s destiny and necessity, where Spirit is not yet complete within itself.
- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

He made the skies with spangles bright,
The moon to shine by silent night,
The sun, and spread the vast concave,
But never, never made a slave.
- from “God never made a Slave” by James Mars

i.

Jupiter Mars. Some took my father’s name as sign of provident astrological grace but me? Figured it for divine joke in which my family was punchline.

Plumb backwards. Should be Mars Jupiter Saturn. That’s the pattern hold us fixed in orbit together. Instead fixed as property, then on the run near half our lives, some of the last slaves born in Connecticut. Priced alongside horses, harnesses, wagon & load. Can you imagine? One of God’s very own owned?
Don't mind a hard day sowing rye, chopping wood, driving cattle, & raising June bug-sized calluses between my fingers as living trace to what I lifted & stacked in the woods in midday blaze or driving rain. But don’t press a bill of sale on me & call me “bondman” or “boy.” Don’t let some parson half my size & a third my wit up & threaten me with a lash, because he suspects that I know he has no real power, the secret that passes in barbed silence between us while I'm helping raise his children & plow his fields for harvest. I should hate him. But I just feel sorry for him.

Sorrier for myself. Caught at the wrong juncture of history under screwed up planetary alignment, taken from my family time & again, terrified by men in ruffs & doublets, hidden in leaf piles & in moldering attics like a chest of drawers, one of Cotton Mather’s abominations, breaking stones when I’d rather be reading or writing a book. Born seven years later & I would have had four years of freedom back, all thanks to the Gradual Emancipation Act, which approached but evaded the moral prerogative. Fair's fair so I fought the law & won. Man needs no manumission, because he is born & always will be divinely free. My father fiddled for his own & others’ amazement. I voted in five Presidential elections, for Lincoln twice & became a Deacon who counseled the joy of temperance to returning soldiers with a flap of skin sewn over the end of a sawn off stump.
I did alright. Put hog fat in the pot. Bought 23 acres of land to farm on, though it’s pure subsistence around the Litchfield hills. You can’t squeeze an ear of corn from iron country. Sold the plot & moved to Harford to do the Lord’s work. Once shared a few tankards with Noah Webster & told him he wasn’t a lexicographer worth his turnip diddle if his compendium didn’t include uh-huh & uh-uh in it. That’s Yoruba what one of my parishioners told me. I grunted yes & we both understood. Was written about in the Christian Freeman, the Liberator in Boston, the Colored American in New York City. Petitioned the state to vote. Had eight children each free to choose their path—back to Africa, enlistment, becoming a mother, sailing the high seas—they did it all & I stayed working the fields with a hand shearer, harvesting grain with a sickle, carting lumber to the sawmill, keeping up with young mules until I was near 74 & finally decided to stop. Still kept close contact with family of folk who hid me when I was young. Took to publish a book about my life as written by myself. Sold out thirteen editions. Told Crissey everything I knew about the life of colored folk around these parts, how they worked in the cheese box factories & in the silk mills but saved enough glory to light up the pews with psalms each Sabbath. Guess we were happy that we were no longer slaves, but we didn’t fit in either, except for with each other & in the eye of God. By the time my bones longed
for a blanket woven of earth, strangers had begun
to saunter around our woods saying how our air
was so “restorative.” I could see the next century
might be freer but wasn’t going to be a horsehair
easier than the one I just finished laboring through.
I sat at the deathbed of both my former master
& his daughter, shutting their eyes at their request.
Glad now to have joined them, lying next to father,
still amazed. Righting the influence of the spheres.

ii.

Norfolk Prices Current, 1778, copied verbatim et literatim
from Dr. Joseph Elridge’s papers:

We the Subscribers agreeable to a Law of the State of
Connecticut, maid at Thire Sescion in Febr. & March AD.
1778, whirin Thay Directed the Sivil Athorrity and Surlect men
of Each Town in Sd. State to make a List of the values of all
Articals of Labor and Produce not Perticalerly Stated in Sd.
Law as Therrin Set forth &c, Thherefore Agrayable Thhereo on
the 11th Day of March AD 1778 We met and affixed the Severl
Prieces Hereafter Mentioned not Affixed by Said Law (viz)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£</th>
<th>s.</th>
<th>d.</th>
<th>p.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor in April, May June July August and September Day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Except harvesting and moving in Sd Months which is pr Day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor in the rest of the month of the year pr Day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For shoeing a horse all round and steel corking</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For common chains &amp; plow pins pr pound</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a good narrow ax &amp; sith each</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a good broad hoe</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joiners by the D from the 10th of March to the 10th of Sept pr day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the rest of the year pr day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenters by the day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masons by the day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For making men’s shoes by the pair</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weaving plain cloth per yard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For sawing white pine inch boards by the thousand and other boards in proportion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A male tailor by the day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A female tailor by the day</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A clother for pressing thin cloth by the yard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For cowering and pressing D</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For cowering, pressing sheeps cullered cloths pr yard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For fuling tanthering thick cloth pr yard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For pressing each time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For shearing each time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For dying common brown by the yard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a good foot wheel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For stocking a gun</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For making a barrel without sap</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For a good pail</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavern keepers for a good meal of vittles, other vittles in proportion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For keeping a horse on hay for one night</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For keeping a yoke of oxen on hay for one night</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>s.</td>
<td>d.</td>
<td>p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For keeping D on grass one night</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For cyder by the mug</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good westingee rum at gill</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England rum, brandy, and gin</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mug of flip made of westingee rum, 2-4 other rum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good flax by the pound</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good wool by the pound</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good yard-wide tow cloth pr yard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good yard-wide sheet flanel pr yard</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good yard-wide white flanel</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good wool cards pr pair</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good felt hats each</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good wool men’s stockings pr pair</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor by the pound</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good merchantable pine boards in the middle of the town by the thousand;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other boards in proportion to their quality, and other boards at other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mills and places in Norfolk as usual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchantable flax seed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other flax seed in proportion; lanced oil by the barrel by the gallon</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchantable English hay by the ton out of the barn or stack</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D in the cock, in smaller quantities in the same proportion</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For horse hire by the mile; one yoke of oxen by the day to work in the</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common farming business at half the price of a man’s days work in the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>same time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good cyder by the barrel at the press</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D out of the seller</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metheglin by the gallon</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D by the quart</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco that is good by the pound</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Womans’ work by the week spinning 12 runs of lining; other works in</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Norwalk, August 3rd, 1816

Revd Sir,—I have received with your letter of April 19th a copy of the ledger entry for the charges and net proceeds of a certain Negroe man, James Mars and have read with interest your account of plantation ownership in Virginia. While I can appreciate the discrepancy between what was agreed upon in writing and witnessed by three men over a decade ago and what you now claim the going rate of sale at auction might be, I'm afraid that I am in no position to reopen accounts once closed, if not simply on matter of principle then for sheer dint of fact. James Mars no longer remains bonded to me and it has been the better part of five years since I've possessed any legal claim to his servitude.

You have inquired how I have got on with someone so intemperate and unreliable and I do answer with the recollection that James of his own volition chopped and stacked a cord of wood for me nigh a fortnight past, happy disproof of the error of your sentiment and indicative of my continued reliance on him in my aged state, even at a time when I no longer can claim purchase on his intentions. A pleasing and persuasive example of his pious constitution is that he has become an active member of the Church of Christ, Congregational and is often heard reading the bible and speaking against the lawlessness of drink with my daughter. He also continues to labor with more energy and singularity of purpose than many men much younger than him. Let me recommend these traits to the consideration of your better judgment and beg you leave behind any sense of past grievance with the farm, stock and tools sold to ensure your safe passage to the South.

Times swiftly alter and having occasion to fear the widening rift between the colonies, particularly when our concurrent and divergent paths seem inexorable, as evinced from your letter and the many accounts given to me by neighbors
predisposed to travel, I remain steadfast in wonderment, filled hopeful by what newness I see before me. This very month, we went to the banks of the Connecticut River to witness the unimaginable sight of a ferry boat contracting and expelling steam to move forcefully against the strength of current in an astonishing triumph of the mechanic over nature itself. I half expect in the years to come that we might even see our own stagecoaches replaced by such bold and outsize contraptions. In light of these transformations, I have no desire to travel backwards in time, even when I daily lament not having James on call to do my bidding. If you might permit me a measure of frankness, I would counsel to you the grace of demurring such transports as well and instead tending to the well-being and countenance of your family at the present moment as I am mine, leaving reminiscences and past deeds in a realm other than regret or recompense.

In return for your kind sentiments, I tender assurances of my esteem and my best wishes.

Elizur Munger

iv.

Connecticut Laws on Slavery from the Colonial Era to the Civil War

vi.

Opening of The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (1639), precursor to the United States Constitution

Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God by the wise disposition of his divine providence so to order and dispose of things that we the Inhabitants and Residents of Windsor, Harteford and Wethersfield are now cohabiting and dwelling in and upon the River of Connectecotte and
the Lands thereunto adjoining; And well knowing where a people are gathered together the word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of such a people there should be an orderly and decent Government established according to God, to order and dispose of the affairs of the people at all seasons as occasion shall require; do therefore associate and conjoin ourselves to be as one Public State or Commonwealth; and do, for ourselves and our Successors and such as shall be adjoined to us at any time hereafter, enter into Combination and Confederation together, to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also, the discipline of the Churches, which according to the truth of the said Gospel is now practiced amongst us; as also in our Civil Affairs to be guided and governed according to such Laws,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Laws/ Codes</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slavery legalized</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Connecticut became the second colony after Massachusetts to recognize slavery as a legal institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave code</td>
<td>1660</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Law prohibited blacks from acquiring military training in the militia. No black, mulatto, or Indian was permitted to wander outside of his community. If a ferry operator carried an enslaved person without a pass, he was fined 20 shillings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manumission</td>
<td>1702</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Required slave masters to obtain the consent of their local selectman before manumitting a slave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>1703</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Innkeepers could not sell alcohol to enslaved persons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>1708</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>To prevent slaves from stealing their masters’ property, no white could purchase anything from an enslaved person without an order from his master; if apprehended, the buyer had to return the property plus double its value. If he had disposed of the property, he paid three times its value. If unable to pay, he received 20 lashes, and the slave 30 lashes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Laws/ Codes</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of movement</td>
<td>1723</td>
<td>Statue</td>
<td>Enslaved persons were not permitted in the street after 9 p.m. without a pass. If picked up, the slave was brought to a justice of the peace and received ten lashes unless the master paid ten shillings to release him or her. Anyone harboring another person’s slave was fined ten shillings, half to the government and half to the informer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of movement and behavior</td>
<td>1730</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>If a free person entertained a black in his/her home after 9 p.m. without a certificate from the slave’s master, the free person was fined 20 shillings. If a black slave slandered a white, the slave received 40 lashes, and the slave’s master was fined for the blacks misbehavior. If the master refused to pay, the black was sold to cover costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave trade</td>
<td>1771</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Slave trade was outlawed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importation of slaves</td>
<td>1774</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Statute prohibited the importation of slaves because they were injurious to the “poor and inconvenient.” The fine for violating this statute was 100 pounds per slave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manumission</td>
<td>1779</td>
<td>Petition</td>
<td>Blacks who had served in the Continental Army petitioned the Connecticut legislature, stating: “We are endowed with the same faculties with our masters, and the more we consider the matter, the more we are convinced of our right to be free.” Emancipation bills were rejected in 1777, 1779, and 1780.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradual abolition</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Gradual emancipation scheme was included as part of a general statute codifying race controls. Black and mulatto children born after March 1 would become free at the age of 25.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave trade</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>No captain or master of a Connecticut ship was permitted to engage in the slave trade. The fine was 50 pounds per slave and 500 pounds per ship for violating this statute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Laws/ Codes</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave trade</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>It was illegal to import any inhabitants from Africa as slaves or servants. Penalty: $167 for every person found on board ship, and $1,667 for every vessel employed in the importation of slaves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnapping</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Any person found guilty of kidnapping any free black, Indian, or mulatto resident within the State was to be fined $334. Slave owners were permitted to remove enslaved persons who belonged to them outside of the State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Slave masters were required to register the names of all slave children born after March 1, 1784, within six months after their birth with the town clerk. Failure to do so would result in a penalty of seven dollars for every month's delinquency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave trade</td>
<td>1792</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Statute outlawed slave trade. Violators of statute were to be fined $334. Statute did not prevent slave owners from leaving the State with their property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manumission</td>
<td>1792</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Slave owners could emancipate their slaves and were to apply for a certificate from government authorities. A certificate would be awarded if an enslaved person was in good health and between the ages of 25 and 45. Upon receipt of such a certificate, the master and his heirs and executors would be forever discharged from any charge or cost associated with supporting the freed black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>A black, Indian, or mulatto slave found guilty of publicly offending another person (white) was to be whipped as many as 40 stripes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road service</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Indian, mulatto, and black servants or slaves between the ages of 15 and 60 (along with white persons) were to assist in the maintenance of state roads at least two days per year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Laws/Codes</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>“And whereas Indian, Negro, and Molatto Servants and Slaves are very apt to be Turbulent, and often to be quarrelling with white People, to the great Disturbance of the Peace.” It was unlawful for Indians, black or mulatto servants, or slaves to disturb the peace or attempt to strike a white person. If convicted, person was to be punished by flogging, not to exceed 30 stripes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Runaways</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Blacks, mulattoes or Indian servants traveling without a written pass were considered runaways. Persons who encountered such slaves were to secure them and bring them before a justice of the peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferries</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Ferry operators who transported any enslaved Indian, mulatto or black without a certificate were to be fined $3.34 for each offense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free blacks</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Free blacks found traveling without a pass were to be stopped and seized, and were required to pay all charges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Free persons were prohibited from trading with any Indian, mulatto or black servant or slave. Offenders were required to pay double the value of goods traded. If unable to make restitution, offender was to be publicly whipped up to 20 stripes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Indian, mulatto, or black servants or slaves found guilty of stealing money or goods were to be punished by whipping up to 30 stripes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom of movement</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Black, mulatto or Indian servants or slaves found away from home after 9 p.m. were to be apprehended and brought before a justice of the peace. Offenders were to be publicly whipped up to ten stripes, and to pay court costs. A master could redeem his servant by paying $1.67.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Laws/Codes</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importation of slaves</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>No Indian, black or mulatto slave was to be imported into Connecticut “by Sea or Land, from any Place or Places whatsoever, to be disposed of, left or sold within this State.” Offenders were to be fined $334 for every slave imported.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of freed slaves</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Enslaved persons set free were to be maintained by their former owners or their heirs, if they were in need of support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care of freed slaves</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Owners of emancipated slaves were freed from all responsibility if they procured a certificate from legal authorities who found such a person able to support himself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradual abolition</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Black or mulatto children born after March 1,1784, were to be freed at age 25.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradual abolition</td>
<td>1821</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Statute declared that all black and mulatto children born into slavery were to be freed at age 21. Emancipated slaves were to be supported by their owners. Masters could acquire a certificate relieving them of financial responsibility from town authorities when emancipating slaves who were no older than 45 and were in good health. The act prohibited the slave trade and exportation of slaves outside of the State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free blacks</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>A residency requirement was passed for blacks seeking to attend free schools, declaring that open admission “would tend to the great increase of the colored people of the State and thereby to the injury of the people.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slave trade</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Any action or prosecution related to the slave trade or concerning Indian, mulatto, and black servants and slaves, could be brought and prosecuted at any time within three years after such cause of action arose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abolition</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>The 1821 “Act to prevent Slavery” was reenacted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Laws/ Codes</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abolition</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>Statute</td>
<td>Slavery abolished in all forms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken from: http://www.slaveryinamerica.org/geography/slave_laws_CT.htm

V.
Opening of The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (1639), precursor to the United States Constitution

Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God by the wise disposition of his divine providence so to order and dispose of things that we the Inhabitants and Residents of Windsor, Harteford and Wethersfield are now cohabiting and dwelling in and upon the River of Connectecotte and the Lands thereunto adjoining; And well knowing where a people are gathered together the word of God requires that to maintain the peace and union of such a people there should be an orderly and decent Government established according to God, to order and dispose of the affairs of the people at all seasons as occasion shall require; do therefore associate and conjoin ourselves to be as one Public State or Commonwealth; and do, for ourselves and our Successors and such as shall be adjoined to us at any time hereafter, enter into Combination and Confederation together, to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also, the discipline of the Churches, which according to the truth of the said Gospel is now practiced amongst us; as also in our Civil Affairs to be guided and governed according to such Laws, Rules, Orders and Decrees as shall be made, ordered, and decreed as followeth—
vii.

Erasure of the Yelp review of Infinity Hall
Categories: American (New), Music Venues [Edit]
20 Greenwoods Rd
Norfolk, CT 06058
http://www.yelp.com/biz/infinity-hall-norfolk

I can’t speak to the bistro
leaf-spinach pommes frites
undercooked original grandeur
in the mezzanine rubbery sightlines
concert acoustics table lobsters
dreamy ceiling fan Trombone Shorty
produced an “oooh” from within me.

viii.

Excerpted and rearranged into quatrains from The Autobiography of James Mars

How were we to spend
the night I could not tell;
it was starlight, yet it was
out in the woods.

The trade was made.
We two boys were sold
for one hundred pounds
a head, lawful money.

Put in a back chamber,
behind barrels and boxes,
closely put together,
out of sight for safe-keeping.
He was fond of using his lash, would have me stripped and flogged until cut in strings.

Seems he forgot or passed over instruction of the apostle that God made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth. The morning was clear, without a cloud. I was sold.

The court sat; master and slave were both there. The court said the Supreme Court of Errors was to meet.

I wonder sometimes why I was not more contended than I was. Then wonder why I was as contented as I was.
Country Song
by Gabrielle Calvocoressi

If Mary Harris twists her ankle as she’s running
Back from church Oh if Mary twists her ankle
As she’s running back from church she will
Have to find a poultice and a rag to soak
And wrap around the ankle as it darkens.

And if Polly Freeman have a bee
That fly inside her cotton dress Oh if Polly
Freeman have a bee fly inside her cotton
Dress then let it make a church of her &
Hymn until she swells with spirit.

Oh but Hannah Pearl if you drink
Water from a tainted well I say Hannah
If you drink water from a tainted well
I will suckle you like Remus at the wolf
I will make a tincture and sit vigil through the night.

If Henrietta Bolt falls into a ditch and hears her femur
Snap Oh if Henrietta falls into a ditch and hears
Her femur snap she can call until the Rapture til
The angels close their ears and pray the world
Will end just to make her quiet down.

And Ann Eliza Hammond and her sister
Sarah Lloyd Oh Ann Eliza and her sister Sarah Lloyd
Could pass the whooping cough between them
like ball upon the yard and I will call the sunset
home and settle down to sleep.

But of Hannah Pearl if you drink
Water from a tainted well I say Hannah
If you drink water from a tainted well
I will suckle you like Remus at the wolf
I will make a tincture and sit vigil through the night.
If I sit in the silence long enough the greens begin to deepen around me so I almost become that green, not so much the leaves but the deepness inside the leaf, the breathing thing that takes the sun inside itself. If I sit in the silence long enough the light begins to come to me through the glass that shimmers like water in the creeks we passed as we made our way here and I almost become the water and move over the rocks like the apostle said about his Savior’s voice upon the waters so far from here but not far at all inside the silence when I sit in the upper room I almost become the upper room I do not contain it I am the good wooden floors and the walls that warm as the day grows hotter I am almost the laughter that moves through the house and the serious letters that form in the mouths A, B, the question of the W and how one almost becomes the wind to say it and make it into world or when or window. If I sit in the silence long enough I almost become the window, the way it looks wet on hot mornings and then refuses the wetness by late afternoon how it makes the hired man into a picture and I watch him cut the grass and gather up the cuttings so they don’t burn in the heat. I almost become the cuttings and the heat and the rising of the locust’s clamor, which means six weeks till frost how we’ll turn our collars up and walk a little faster to the church. If I sit in the silence long enough the greens begin to deepen around me so I almost become that green, not so much the leaves but the deepness inside the leaf, the breathing thing that takes the sun inside itself. 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enough I almost become the church but I do not become the church or the letter or the wind or the mouths that say the words that make the wind I do not become the hired man whose name is Horace who saved us when the walls began to burn the night Sarah’s girl was born I did not become the girl whose name is Prudence who is not me even if we sit in the silence long enough to start to think so to wish it so to make the we into a wind that blows over the leaves and the waters of the creek that shimmered as we made our way away from there for good the silence growing like a wheat field between Isaac and Rebecca before they ever met and became a story that deepens into something like meaning that one can ponder on the road.
In the Year of Our Lord CIRCA 1840
by Randall Horton

The Ion (formerly the Amistad) sets sail from New London, CT

a sight never to see
somebody once saw—

broken branches
swaying
in the breeze bodies
they were—

at the riverbank’s edge
overlooking splinted reeds
wooden houses quaint—

amistad means friendship
shall we befriend another

finely pilfered cargo draped
around melanin men crepe
& calico but some nude—

how odd the daylight
at half-mast no real flag flew—
a nation
above deck pitch dark
anarchy fore & aft

now seagulls stuck vertical
‘tween morning fog
no one notices—
allusions thought some
what audacity what
if—
it’s the question curled tight into clench fist

which became a-why-not-thing of intrigue here—

a schooner untroubled slicing-slicing the mist—once shone brilliant cane knives raised—steady now—along a lag tide

—menial wakes—almost river bottom the keel even & a dreg of sludge

against dawn’s still—the schooner’s hull but not forgotten

its breadth (amistad not the ion) held chattel

they had been men once before being

(re)sold (re)manacled (re)shipped (re)landed

(re)tried (re)imagined mende (said

(to own man is illogical) what lexicon shall we speak coherent
of trial cadences of gavel
sound & decisions spoke—
opposite a square stern
hold strong the bowsprit—

angular geese cry—taken
without consent (erasure
in the (re)naming

just above the esplanade)
along the shoreline
a u. s. custom house
in the year of our lord
(circa1840—

today begins in earnest
or paradoxical)
out of memory’s throat

angelic but devilish
steering wind by the lee
in the wet well
a saga—one day maybe salt
cod

mackerel—
coming down (soft rain
on the thames) through the
fog
soft rain—
My Lord, What a Morning
by Kate Rushin

for Miss Marian Anderson, contralto

1.

1897, South Philadelphia

marriage bed...birth
bed
rented room in a
rented
red brick row house
stone steps scrubbed
clean
sidewalk swept and
washed
curbstones and cobble stones
gleaming in the cool early sun
God’s Gift in the cry of a
little brown baby girl

Joy in the morning...
My Lord, what a morning...
2.

1921, Union Baptist Church

rich dark pews sweeping in an arc.
peaked windows up to the sky,
choir loft almost to heaven.

leave your coveralls,
put on your suit and tie,
angle your fedora.

leave your janitress uniform,
put on your fine flowered hat,
with the wide brim.

exchange your school dress
for Sunday Best...

close your eyes and sing.
raise your voice to Jesus,
free as a bird.

“We’ll see to it that ‘Our Marian’
gets her singing lessons.”

My Lord, what a morning!
3.

1920's-1960's, Touring in America

Over there John. Here you go, Boy.

He’s got you and me, Brother, in His hands...

Come here Mary. Get that Anna.

He’s got you and me, Sister, in His hands...

Soot and dirt in the Jim Crow Car.

Choose your seat and set down!

We don’t take colored. We don’t allow colored.

Another way will be made.

You have to enter through the Jim Crow Door.
Never said a mumb'ling word.

We don’t hire colored. We don’t sell to colored.

He’s got everybody here, in His hands.
Chose your seat and set down!

My Lord, what a morning!

4.

1943, Marianna Farm, Danbury, CT

Back home in Philadelphia, I shut myself into the tiny bathroom on Martin Street, praying that the neighbors and the rest of the
household couldn’t hear me.

Perhaps there are quite a few women who can say that their husband built a house for them. Not many can say that their husband renovated Mother’s house. Not many singers can say that their husband designed and built a studio just for them.

King found this land and created this space for me. Now I can sing and play and arrange at the piano whenever I want, record to my heart’s content under his elegant curved ceiling.

As I work in this airy, sun-filled room I can look out the large window over-looking the pond, the flowers, the apple and peach trees... I smile at the dogs and the farm animals. In winter, his stone fireplace keeps me warm.

Orpheus “King” Fisher...what a perfect name. My Lord, what a morning.

5.

1993, The Gift, Portland, OR

Our voice was a gift from God. At first, we didn’t see it, but how fitting that the 1939 Easter Sunday concert, was presented at The Lincoln Memorial before 75 thousand souls (another 6 million at their radios) under the great God’s great sky.

By and by, The Daughters of The American Revolution reversed their White-Artists-Only ban.
Years later, we began our farewell tour at Constitution Hall. We had no wish to benefit from the misfortune of the D. A. R.

We had learned, over time, to take good care having been appointed steward of the gift. What we had was singing.

Our mother, Anna, was steadfast in her faith. A way was made, a way was found. As the old Spiritual promised: We can choose our seat and set down.

He’s got the whole world in His hands. He’s got you and me, Sister, in His hands He’s got everybody here, in His hands.

My Lord, what a morning! He’s got everybody here, right in his hands!
Elegy for Foone
by Jarita Davis

He was nineteen years old and a man of Herculean build.

Foone wept for his mother that morning.

In the afternoon, when he dove into the Canal Basin he felt the strength of his arms, his legs, push him through the cool water. Sweet relief washed over his skin and his body seemed weightless.

He closed his eyes, and felt at peace beneath the surface too good to come up for air. Foone held his breath as if to stop time only for a moment and then, forever.
The Amistad Story
by Jarita Davis

They were paid to tell their story.

The Mendi told how they were kidnapped from their villages. How they were bound, right arm to neck And brought to camps, held in pens.

The told the story of being loaded In the dark hull of a ship Bodies pressed against bodies. Their own stench, the stench of each other. Weeks in the dark, in the weeping and the dying.

They told the story and took collections.

The told of the hot, wet canefields of Cuba, Being sold as slaves, their price a few pounds

They told their story in meeting halls in Boston To abolitionists in New York. They told their story in Philadelphia.

They told the story of being packed again Into a ship with a name of false friendship. They told of being pressed, body to body, again.

They told how they picked their shackles' locks with a thin piece of metal. Picked the lock of the man to the left Then passed him the scrap to do the same. They relived the story, told again How they lay in waiting And when every man was loose they sprang.

Cinque sometimes played the hero. He told the brave story of revolt
Told how he commandeered the ship  
And forced the crew to sail towards Africa.  
All they wanted from the beginning was to return home.

They couldn’t escape the story of their escape.  
When they closed their eyes at night  
They saw the open and gruesome eyes of slain Africans  
Their broken bodies thrown overboard.

Their story haunted their sleep.  
The Mendi awoke each other other with cries  
From dreams of being shackled to dead bodies  
In the dark hull of a boat.

They told and retold the story  
Of their zigzag journey along the Atlantic.  
The fear of starvation if they didn’t land.  
How all they wanted was to return home  
When the American sailors brought them ashore.

And again they relived and retold the story  
Of 18 months in a New Haven jail cell  
Of the prison guard who worked them like slaves  
And beat them for sport while they waited  
Their ruling—were they slaves or murders or free?

They told their story and took donations.  
Even though they were free, they were not at home.  
How could they explain in the parlors of Farmington  
The weight of a shackle around the ankle?  
Its metal press against the skin?  
How to tell of the humiliation of the auction block?  
Made to jump, show their teeth for health  
Their calloused palms for strength.

The retold their story in search of its end.

They told again of the last time they’d seen their wives,  
Of a son who must be walking now,
Of their aging parents.

They retold their story so they could stop telling it
Until their story could end
With their return home.

Freedom Journeys In Four Voices
by Bessy Reyna

At an early age I became a sentinel.
I protected a runaway slave hidden in the closet
inside my house at 27 Main Street, Farmington, CT.
I sat, all day, on the front steps obeying my father’s
instructions
to stop anyone from entering, and not to answer their
questions.

All alone, I confronted the slave hunter,
a red-faced Southern man who came frantically driving
his lather-covered horse down Main Street.
That day, I learned what it is to be an Abolitionist
to give moments of kindness and dignity to runaway slaves.

I am Mrs. Aaron Hardy, and I did those things
when I was Mary Ann Cowles, little more than a child,
the courageous child who has lived within me since.

My name is Mary K. Downer.
As a student in the Third prep class of 1855,
I posed this question on my essay: “Is it a sin to own slaves?”
I need to know. I am confused, pulled in two directions.
“A very beautiful and graceful paper” my teacher wrote.
I was not asking for her praise but for the truth.

My name is Nancy Jackson.
My freedom will depend on the judges’ interpretation
of the meaning of the word “Left”
This word being tossed around, turned over,
flattened, inflated and dissected by the Supreme Court.

My name is James Mars,
I was born a slave in Connecticut and I am not a hero.
I just had to help that young woman Nancy Jackson.
Others helped me, and my family, when we ran away.
Like Mrs. Darby, who had so little to give but she took me in.
No one suspected a fugitive could hide in her one-room house.

[2]

In school I have been taught that “thousands of these unfortunate people have been kidnapped from their native lands, by white men professing Christianity.”
In church, I hear that they have been “torn from their friends taken to foreign countries, sold into perpetual slavery, treated unmercifully.”

In court one lawyer asks if I was “disposed of, held in bondage against the law?”
I am trying so hard to understand this legal talk.
Another says I was “Suffered to remain” in Connecticut
The words sound pretty, but, it is the five judges’ definition of the word “left” that will decide my future.

What if? ... I asked in my essay
What if things were the other way around?
What if we, the Europeans, were the slaves, and the Africans our masters?
How would we like to be torn away from our families to be sold, humiliated, beaten.

The men who came to tell me about Nancy said:
Deacon James, we want to make a strike at liberty!
I liked the sound of that!
A strike at liberty, to erase a scar from the back of a slave, like my Grandmother who was tied and whipped until her blood covered the ground.

I tremble when I hear the lawyers say words I never heard before like “Non-importation Law of 1774”
Was I imported in 1835, like the furniture the Bulloch family brought with them?
Two years I lived in Hartford, caring for their daughters, learning about the lives of free colored men and women like Deacon Mars, who works at a shop, and his wife who does laundry for the Bullochs.
I want to be like them. I won’t go back to Georgia.

A white world, and a black one surround and separate me, dividing my mind and my heart.
If “Man is the most perfect of all God’s works” why is it, that I am not allowed to know Africans or to go to school with them?

No! We could not let that Presbyterian Elder James Bulloch keep Nancy a slave.
We created an excitement like Hartford had never seen before.
Like all of Connecticut had never seen before!
The abolitionist Theodore Weld, and the lawyer, Mr. Ellsworth, wrote a Writ of Habeas Corpus because Nancy had been “illegally confined for a long time.”
I was so proud when I signed that application to the Court.

The teacher tells us that in our country there are many slaves separated from everyone they love.
Poor wretches wishing they were in their graves.
In church, and in school, we repeat and repeat
“Man is the most perfect of all God’s works”
But, is not a slave also a man?
I must believe it is a sin to own slaves.
I most certainly do believe it is a great sin.

[4]

Yes, I was proud to help Nancy, but during those ten days till the decision
I saw the hold slavery had on the feelings of Hartford people.
I was frowned upon, blamed, told I had done wrong, I should be mobbed.
That the house where I live should be pulled down,
all this, by men of wealth and standing.

Two of the judges would send me back to slavery.
Two were for my release.
Am I standing at the threshold of my freedom, or my death?
We shall hear Chief Judge Williams’ with the final vote
of the Connecticut Supreme Court of Errors tomorrow at 8 o’clock.

I sit in court, quietly, gently touching the two opium pills
I have sawn inside my pocket. It is my secret.
I will not go back even if the court orders me to.
I have been a slave my 24 years and I rather die!

The room grew very quiet when Judge Williams spoke
“In the case of Nancy Jackson v James Bulloch, it is the opinion
of a majority of the court, that this slave was brought and left in this state,
contrary to the act of 1774 and therefore, that she cannot be claimed or treated
as a slave under our laws. We therefore advise that she be discharged.”
Sources Cited-
Nancy Jackson v. James Bulloch, 12 Conn. Reports, 1837 p.38 et seq.
The story of Mary Ann Cowles (later Mrs. Aaron Hardy) was published in Farmington Magazine, I, 11 Sept. 1901. The house at 27 Main Street, (the Smith-Cowles House) in Farmington, CT is referred to in many publications as a “Station” of the Underground Railroad. Cowles’ story is also mentioned by Strother, Ch. 12 at 170.
Poet Biographies


Bessy earned her Masters and Law degrees from the University of Connecticut. She was a monthly opinion columnist for The Hartford Courant and frequent contributor to its Sunday magazine Northeast, and conducted radio interviews at Hill-Stead Museum’s Sunken Garden Poetry Festival. Currently, she writes an arts-and-culture page for Identidad Latina and is a Master Teaching Artist for the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism. Awarded First Prize in the Joseph E. Brodine Poetry Competition and artist award grants from the Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism and the Greater Hartford Arts Council, she is also the recipient of the Connecticut Center for the Book Lifetime Achievement in Service to the Literary Community Award.

**Gabrielle Calvocoressi** is the author of *The Last Time I Saw Amelia Earhart* (Persea. 2005) and *Apocalyptic Swing* (Persea. 2009), finalist for The Los Angeles Times Book Award. She is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships including a Stegner Fellowship and a Jones Lectureship from Stanford University, a Rona Jaffe Woman Writer’s Award, and a fellowship to Civitella di Ranieri in Umbria. Her poetry has been featured in numerous journals including the Washington Post and Garrison Keillor’s Poet’s Almanac. She writes the Sports Desk column for The Best American Poetry blog and is the virtual editor for Broadsided Press. She is on the advisory board of The Rumpus’ Poetry Book Club and the Poetry Editor for the soon to be launched Los Angeles Review of Books. She lives in Los Angeles.

**Jarita Davis** is a poet and fiction writer who earned a B.A. in classics from Brown University and both an M.A. and a Ph.D. in creative writing from the University of Louisiana, Lafayette. She was the writer in residence at the Nantucket Historical Association and has received fellowships from the Mellon Mayes program, Cave Canem, and Hedgebrook. In addition, she was awarded a Woodrow Wilson Travel Research Grant, a Neiheisel Phi Beta Kappa Award, and a grant from the Louisiana Division of the Arts. Her work has appeared in the Southwestern Review, Historic Nantucket, Cave Canem Anthologies, Crab Orchard Review, and Plainsongs and Tuesday; An Art Project. For more, see her website: www.jaritadavis.com
Kate Rushin is the author of The Black Back-Ups (Firebrand Books). Her “The Bridge Poem” appears in This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color, a groundbreaking feminist anthology edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa. Recipient of the Rose Low Rome Memorial Poetry Prize and the Grolier Poetry Prize, her work is widely anthologized and has been published in such journals as Callaloo. Kate teaches creative writing at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts. Previously, she taught at Wesleyan University, where she served as Adjunct Assistant Professor and Visiting Writer in African American Studies. She has read at Hill-Stead Museum’s Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, the Geraldine Dodge Poetry Festival and Smith College Poetry Center, and has led workshops for the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies and Cave Canem Foundation. She has served as a judge for the Connecticut State University-IMPAC Young Writers Award, the Connecticut Poetry Circuit Student Poetry Contest, and the NEA’s/Poetry Foundation’s Poetry Out Loud.

Randall Horton is the author of The Definition of Place and the Lingua Franca of Ninth Street, both from Main Street Rag. Randall is the recipient of the Gwendolyn Brooks Poetry Award, the Bea Gonzalez Poetry Award and most recently a National Endowment of the Arts Fellowship in Literature. His creative and critical work has most recently appeared in Callaloo, Crab Orchard Review, and The Packingtown Review. Randall is a Cave Canem Fellow, a member of the Affrilachian Poets and a member of The Symphony: The House that Etheridge Built. He has a MFA in Poetry from Chicago State University and a PhD in Creative Writing from SUNY Albany. Randall is Assistant Professor of English at the University of New Haven.

Ravi Shankar is founding editor and Executive Director of Drunken Boat, international online journal of the arts and Co-Director of the Creative Writing Program at Central Connecticut State University. His books and chapbooks include the National Poetry Review Prize winner Deepening Groove, Seamless Matter, Voluptuous Bristle, Wanton Textiles (with Reb Livingston), and Instrumentality, finalist for the 2005 Connecticut Book Awards. Along with Tina Chang and Nathalie Handal, he edited W.W. Norton’s Language for a New Century: Contemporary Poetry from Asia, the Middle East & Beyond, called “a beautiful achievement for world literature” by Nobel Laureate Nadine Gordimer, and with Leslie McGrath, he edited Radha Says, the posthumous poems of Reetika Vazirani. He has won a Pushcart Prize and Connecticut Commission on the Arts grant, has received fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, the Jentel Foundation and the Djerassi Residency Artists Program, has appeared in the New York Times, the San Francisco Chronicle, The Financial Times and the Chronicle of Higher Education, performed his work around the world, including on the BBC and on NPR, and currently teaches in Fairfield University’s MFA Program and in the first international MFA Program at City University of Hong Kong.