

Cold Climates, Hidden Histories

Slavery Studies in Cold Climates

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Introduction

Transatlantic slavery was a system that relied on the exploitation of the enslaved through physical, social, and cultural violence. Bondage prevented enslaved persons from documenting their lives, however scholars continue to recover details about the lives and experiences of the enslaved. This research project targets the impact of cold climates on the enslaved in temperate regions and includes regions such as North America, Europe, and South America.

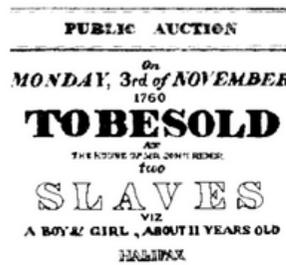
Cold Climates

Beginning in the 1500s, enslaved Africans lived in temperate and northern regions and were continuously brought to such areas throughout the period of European colonialism. While these regions did not always rely on systems of plantation agriculture, bondspeople nevertheless were used as a cheap source of labour. Enslaved persons occupied essential roles in many temperate and northern societies, economies, and families. This area of slavery studies is largely under-researched within the broad discourse of transatlantic slavery, especially in Canadian Slavery Studies.

Methodology

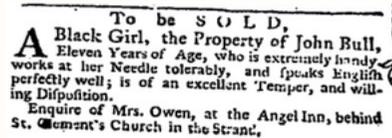
Research involved examining first and secondary sources including personal narratives of enslavement, maps, data charts, newspapers, advertisements for bondspeople – auction, sale, and fugitive, and comprehensive histories of slavery. Analysing these resources resulted in a bibliographic framework that discusses the impact of cold climates on enslaved populations. Factors include health, population, exposure (frostbite), housing conditions, and dress.

Types of Advertisements

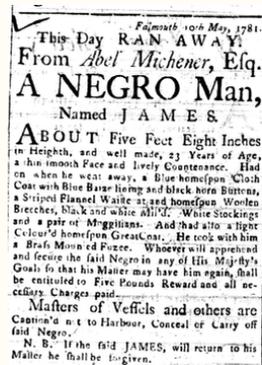


This auction advertisement announces the transfer of an enslaved boy and girl by sale to the highest bidder. (Halifax Gazette, 1 November 1760)

Sale advertisements announce the selling of a bondsman by a slaveholder and includes a description of the enslaved person's age, gender, and marketable skills. (London Public Advertiser, 28 November 1769)



A fugitive advertisement such as this notifies the general public of the escape of an enslaved person from their slaveholder. The ad includes a detailed description of the enslaved and an offer for reward upon capture. (Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle, 22 May 1791)



Enslaved Dress

Enslaved dress is one area of research that provides insight into the living conditions of enslaved persons in cold climates. Isolation or small population numbers often resulted in unique combinations of clothing and patterns of dress. Slaveholders through the provision of clothing restricted what enslaved persons wore, however, some bondspeople resisted through self-fashioning.

In seventeenth century Britain, there existed a tradition of dressing enslaved servants in large collars with padlocks to visibly display the person's status of bondage. (Image: Chapman & Hall, 1876)



TEN DOLLARS REWARD.

RUN-AWAY from the Subscriber, a Negro Slave named Ishmael, about 35 years old, 5 feet 8 inches high, pretty much marked with the Small-pox, wears his own Hair which is black, long and curly; has black Eyes, broad Shoulders, and tone of voice peculiar to New-England, where he was born: reads English tolerably well, and can speak a little French: He had on an old Hat bedewed with white Paint, an Ostrich Frock and Trowsers, a check Shirt, a short white flannel Jacket, and a pair of Mochinsons. If any person apprehend said NEGRO, and gives notice thereof to the Subscriber living at the Batoo-gate, he or she shall receive TEN DOLLARS Reward, besides all reasonable Charges: but, whoever carries him off, entertains, or employs him after this public notice, will be prosecuted according to Law.

Montreal, July 16, 1779.

John Turner.
(Quebec Gazette, 29 July 1779)

This fugitive advertisement from the Quebec Gazette provides a description of the

clothing worn by Ishmael, an enslaved black man. His pair of "Mochinsons" suggests that enslaved dress sometimes involved Indigenous clothing and was thus the result of combining different cultural forms of dress.

Acknowledgments

I thank Professor Charmaine Nelson for giving me the opportunity to work and learn under her guidance and support. I am grateful for Mr. Bram Garber who has made this research project possible through his support of Art History. Thank you to the Arts Internship Office for facilitating undergraduate research experiences like ARIA.

