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Catherine M. Lewis, J. Richard Lewis, eds. *Women and Slavery in America: A Documentary History.* Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2011. Illustrations. 330 pp. $59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-55728-957-5; $22.50 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55728-958-2.

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Voices Recovered and Documented: A Record of Women and Slavery in America

When the latest batch of ancestry-related, reality television shows aired this past summer, one episode in particular was noticed by genealogists as well as the *New York Times*. On the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) program "Finding Your Roots with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.," comedian Wanda Sykes's family was traced back to a free black woman living in seventeenth-century Virginia. The discovery came from a court record dated 1683 in York County, Virginia. The document detailed Elizabeth Banks's punishment for "fornication & Bastardy with a negroe slave," resulting in the birth of a biracial child named Mary Banks. In accordance with Virginia statute, Mary inherited her mother's free status as well as her indentured servitude.[1]

This is just the type of recovered story that one can expect to find in *Women and Slavery in America.* Editors of previous documentary collections on school desegregation in Little Rock (2007) and Jim Crow America (2009), Catherine M. Lewis and J. Richard Lewis tackle a more ambitious slice of African American history in this volume. The 119 primary documents give readers "an opportunity to examine the establishment, growth, and evolution of slavery in the United States as it impacted women–enslaved and free, African American and white, wealthy and poor, Northern and Southern" (pp. xi-xii). The collection spans seven centuries from "Las Siete Partidas" (The Seven Sections), a Spanish code from 1265 governing slavery in Spanish colonies, to an autobiographical account of slavery published in 1946. The majority of the documents, however, come from the United States during the nineteenth century. Each document reveals how slavery affected the daily lives of women, even if the source does not specifically mention women.

The generous mix of newspaper articles, broadsides, cartoons, pamphlets, speeches, photographs, memoirs, and editorials are organized thematically into five sections: "Law, Custom, and Tradition," "Work and Daily Life," "Building Community," "Resisting Slavery," and "The Meaning of Freedom." A substantial introduction precedes each theme and situates the documents within the current historiography of the social, cultural, economic, and political aspects of slavery. British historian Peter J. Parish's caution against generalizations serves as an important challenge for the editors: "'There can be no greater mistake than to regard slavery as monolithic.... Slavery was a system of many systems with numerous exceptions to every rule"' (p. xii).Therefore, the volume seeks to present a more complicated view of the peculiar institution's impact on women across race, class, religion, and region in America.

After the introduction, the editors allow the documents to stand alone. Each is accompanied by a brief head note that provides background information. Transcribed excerpts, both long and short, make up the bulk of the collection. The familiar voices of Abigail Adams, Catherine E. Beecher, Sarah and Angelina Grimké, Sojourner Truth, and Julia Ward Howe combine with lesser-known voices from narratives, petitions, diaries, and poetry to illustrate how contradictory ideas and inconsistent practices surrounding slavery evolved over time in America. The documents, when taken together, offer a patchwork of women's experiences of slavery and their ideas about slavery.

This sampling of the records available to scholars and students is, in fact, the volume's greatest contribution. Illuminating as they are stark, the documents tell stories of coercion, exploitation, and violence, as well as cooperation, autonomy, and agency. The editors' thoughtful selection of documents allows them to speak to one another across the chapters. For instance, document 10, which prohibited the importation of slaves to the United States after 1807, makes a direct connection to the increased

value of female slaves as "reproductive property," as seen in document 39, a plantation manual from the 1850s that provides detailed instructions for the work and living arrangements of pregnant women. This practice is then described firsthand in document 44, an oral interview excerpt from a woman named Rose, who recounted how as an enslaved woman from Texas she learned that she was expected to live with an older slave "to bring forth portly children" (p. 108). These and other documents illustrate what the editors describe as the "distinctly gendered" nature of slavery in America (p. xvi). The final section of the reader, "The Meaning of Freedom," will be of particular note for historians of southern history, as it explores the complexities of social relations and ideas about race during the Civil War and Reconstruction and highlights the impact of the Freedmen's Bureau on literacy and education.

Despite the comprehensive scope set out in the introduction, the American West goes largely unnoticed. References to the impact of westward expansion on the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 (document 15) and the status of emancipated slaves in western territories (documents 17 and 18 regarding Dred Scott) allude to the region as distinctive. More documents from west of the 98th meridian could have further illuminated the tensions between race and gender so intimately explored in this volume.[2]

Some of the images in the reader are reproduced on full pages, but some illustrations may be too small to view important details. Since most of the images come from the Library of Congress, a student can easily access them online through the Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Web site http://www.loc.gov/pictures/. For example, typing the title for document 31 into the online catalog results in a digital file of the 1849 "Receipt for sale of Jane, age 18, and her son Henry, age 1 and all future children" (p. 71). Access to a large image of the document facilitates a greater appreciation of this 150-year-old, trifolded piece of paper.

Ideal for undergraduate and graduate use, the book is easily adaptable to courses in history, southern history, women's studies, and African American studies. Three appendices provide a timeline, study questions, and suggested classroom activities. An annotated bibliography provides a detailed list of online resources, as well as traditional books and monographs. The index makes documents easy to find, as they are listed by title, subject, and format (e.g., photographs, letters, etc.).

Notes

[1]. Felicia R. Lee, "Family Tree's Startling Roots," *New York Times*, March 19, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/20/arts/television/wanda-sykes-finds-ancestors-thanks-to-henry-louis-gates-jr.html (accessed July 30, 2012).

[2]. Two notable examples of the complexity of slavery in the American West would be Native American communities in Oklahoma (the so-called Five Civilized Tribes who owned slaves) and the addition of a third racial "other," such as Mexican Americans in Texas, described in Neil Foley's *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

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