

"I 'spects it's William, ma'am. Him's wid de soldiers in Virginny."

"But have you no other sons?"

"You 'member, ma'am, I bin-telling you de oder day de rebels catch my biggest boy an' hang him for a spy. An' Martin, the next boy, been sell off by de secesh, an' de Lord knows where him is ef him living."

"This letter is from Martin, Sarah."

The old woman dropped her head upon her knees, and began to rock forward and back, exclaiming, —

"T'ank ye, good Massa! T'ank ye, good Massa! O blessed Jesus! You is berry good, berry good! . . .

"Oh! I is satisfied, ma'am. Martin is alive. But read de letter, please, missis."

It was the same story, daily and hourly repeated. As soon as our troops took possession of Charleston the slave boy, now a free man, turned with his whole heart and soul to his wife and child and his mother. . . .

These people had a marvellous way of tracing out the missing members of their families, and inflexible perseverance in hunting them up.

"Where is Martin's wife?" I asked.

"Don't you know, ma'am? She is Jane Ferguson."

"Why, Sarah! Jane has taken another husband!" I exclaimed. . . .

"Never mind, ma'am. Jane b'longs to Martin, an' she'll go back to him. Martin been a sickly boy, an' de secesh treat him too bad, an' we never 'specs him to lib t'rough all."

Just then Jane came in.

"Bless de Lord, gal!" said Sarah. "Martin is alive an' coming back to we."

"What will you do now, Jane?" I asked. "You have got another husband."

She drew herself up, and said deliberately,—"Martin Bamwell is my husband, ma'am. I am got no husband but he. W'en de secesh sell him off we nebber 'spect to see each oder more. He said 'Jane take good care of our boy, an' w'en we git to hebben us will lib togedder to nebber part no more.' You see, ma'am, w'en I come here I had no one to help me."

"That's so," chimed in the mother. "I tell you, missis, it been a hard fight for we."

"So Ferguson come," continued Jane, "an' axed me to be his wife. I told him I never 'specs Martin *could* come back, but if he did he would be my husband above all others. An' Ferguson said, 'That's right, Jane,' so he cannot say nothing, ma'am."

"But supposing he *does* say something, and is not willing to give you up, Jane?"

"Martin is my husband, ma'am, an' the father of my child; and *Ferguson is a man*. He will not complain. And we had an understanding, too, about it. And now, please, ma'am, to write a letter for me to Ferguson,—he was with the Thirty Fourth Regiment. I want to treat the poor boy well."

I wrote the letter word for word as she dictated. It was clear and tender, but decided. Ferguson was not quite so ready to give her up as she expected. He wrote,— "Martin has not seen you for a long time. He *cannot* think of you as I do. O Jane! do not go to Charleston. Come to Jacksonville. I will get a house and we will live here. Never mind what the people say. Come to me, Jane."

I read the letter to her. It was evidently written by the chaplain, who sympathized with *his client*.

"Will you please, ma'am, write a letter yourself for me? Tell him, I say I'm sorry he finds it so hard to do his duty. But as he does, I shall do mine, an' I shall always pray de Lord to bless him."

"Shall I sign your name, Jane?"

"No, ma'am. I shall never write to him no more. But tell him I wish him well."

Soon after this Martin came and claimed his wife and child, who gladly clung to him.

7. Dave Waldrop, a Florida Freedman, Seeks to Reunite His Family, 1867

Milton Fla June the 18th 1867.

Dear Cousin I received word last week that you wer not doing very well in Montgomery and that times there wer very hard there. Now Sarah if you will come down here to me I will take care of you and your children and you and children shall never want for anything as long as I have anything to help you with. Come down and I will have a place for you and your three children for I Know that it is hard enough for a woman to get along that has a husband to help her and one that has not I do not Know how they do to get living these times. Cousin I want you to be shure and come down if you posibly can and stay here as long as you want to. if it is three or four year it will not make a bit of differance to me. Sarah you must excuse this paper and ill wrieten letter and bad composition for I am in a great hurry and have not much time to write for I have to go to away. But I shall look for you down here. Please come down and make your home here with my family. Kate and the children send you there love and best Respects and are wanting you to come down as they want to see you very bad. your friends sends there Respects to you.

I shall bring this to a close hoping this will find you well in health if not doing well. And I want to see you as soon as I can.

No more at this time. Farewell from your Cousin

Dave Waldrop

8. Harriet Hernandes, a South Carolina Woman, Testifies Against the Ku Klux Klan, 1871

Spartanburgh, South Carolina, July 10, 1871.

Harriet Hernandes (colored) sworn and examined.

Question. How old are you?

Answer. Going on thirty-four years.

Question. Where do you live?

Ira Berlin and Leslie S. Rowland, eds., *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era* (New York: New Press, 1997), 230-231.

42nd Congress, 2nd Session, S.R. 41, pt. 4, *Testimony Taken by the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, South Carolina*, Vol. 2 (GPO, 1872), 585-590.

Answer. Down toward Cowpens' Furnace, about nineteen miles from here.

Question. Are you married or single?

Answer. Married.

Question. Did the Ku-Klux come to your house at any time?

Answer. Yes, sir; twice.

Question. Go on and tell us about the first time; when was it?

Answer. The first time was after last Christmas. When they came I was in bed. They halloosed, "Hallo!" I got up and opened the door; they came in; they asked who lived there; I told them Charley Hernandes. "Where is he?" they said. Says I, "I don't know, without he is at the Cowpens; he was beating ore there." Says he, "Have you any pistol here?" Says I, "No, sir." Says he, "Have you any gun?" Says I, "No, sir." He took on, and says he, "Your husband is in here somewhere, and damn him, if I see him I will kill him." I says, "Lord o' mercy, don't shoot in there; I will hold a light under there, and you can look." I held a light, and they looked. They told me to go to bed; I went to bed. Two months after that they came again.

Question. How many men were there at that first visit?

Answer. Eight.

Question. How were they dressed?

Answer. All kinds of form; but the first ones that came would not look me in the face, but just turned their backs to me, for they knew I would know them.

Question. Had they disguises?

Answer. Yes; horns and things over their faces; but still, that did not hinder me from knowing them if these things were off.

Question. Did you know any of them?

Answer. I did not know any of the first ones, to say truthful, but the last ones I did know.

Question. Had the first ones arms—guns or pistols?

Answer. Yes, sir; they had their guns and pistols. They came with a long gun, and told me they were going to shoot my damned brains out if I did not tell where my husband was.

Question. What time of night was it?

Answer. Away between midnight and day.

Question. How long had your husband lived there?

Answer. We have been living there three years, now.

Question. Is he a mechanic or laboring man?

Answer. He is a laboring man.

Question. He was working at the furnace?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Go on to the second time; you say it was two months afterward?

Answer. Yes; just exactly two months; two months last Saturday night when they were at our house. . . . They came in; I was lying in bed. Says he, "Come out here, sir; come out here, sir!" They took me out of bed; they would not let me get out, but they took me up in their arms and toted me out—me and my daughter Lucy. He struck me on the forehead with a pistol, and here is the scar above my eye now. Says he, "Damn you, fall!" I fell. Says he, "Damn you get up!" I got up. Says he, "Damn you get over this fence!" and he kicked me over when I went to get

over; and then he went on to the brush pile, and they laid us right down there, both together. They laid us down twenty yards apart, I reckon. They had dragged and beat us along. They struck me right on the top of my head, and I thought they had killed me; and I said, "Lord o' mercy, don't, don't kill my child!" He gave me a lick on the head; and it liked to have killed me; I saw stars. He threw my arm over my head so I could not do anything with it for three weeks, and there are great knots on my wrist now.

Question. What did they say this was for?

Answer. They said, "You can tell your husband that when we see him we are going to kill him." They tried to talk outlandish.

Question. Did they say why they wanted to kill him?

Answer. They said, "He voted the radical ticket, didn't he?" I said "Yes," that very way. . . .

Question. Had your husband any guns or pistols about his house?

Answer. He did not have any there at all. If he had, I reckon they would have got them.

Question. How old is your daughter?

Answer. She is fifteen.

Question. Is that the one they whipped?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Is this all you know about it?

Answer. I know the people that came.

Question. Who were they?

Answer. One was Tom Davis, and there was Bruce Martin and his two sons. There are only four that I knew. There were only six that came that last night.

Question. When did your husband get back home?

Answer. He went back yesterday.

Question. When did he get back home after this whipping? He was not at home, was he?

Answer. He was lying out; he couldn't stay at home, bless your soul!

Question. Did you tell him about this?

Answer. O, yes.

Question. What caused him to lie out?

Answer. They kept threatening him. They said if they saw him anywhere about they would shoot him down at first sight. . . .

Question. Had he been afraid for any length of time?

Answer. He has been afraid ever since last October. He has been lying out. He has not laid in the house ten nights since October.

Question. Is that the situation of the colored people down there to any extent?

Answer. That is the way they all have to do—men and women both.

Question. What are they afraid of?

Answer. Of being killed or whipped to death.

Question. What has made them afraid?

Answer. Because men that voted radical tickets they took the spite out on the women when they could get at them.

Question. How many colored people have been whipped in that neighborhood?

Answer. It is all of them, mighty near. I could not name them all.

Question. Name those you remember.

Answer. Ben Phillips and his wife and daughter; Sam Foster; and Moses Eaves, they killed him—I could not begin to tell all—Ann Bonner and her daughter, Manza Surratt and his wife and whole family, even the least child in the family, they took it out of bed and whipped it. They told them if they did that they would remember it.

Question. You have seen those people that were whipped?

Answer. Yes, sir; and I have seen the marks on them, too.

Question. How do colored people feel in your neighborhood?

Answer. They have no satisfaction to live like humans, no how. . . .

Question. What do the colored people do for their safety?

Answer. They lie out all night.

Question. Is that generally the case?

Answer. Yes, sir; some families down there say they don't think they can get tamed to the house in five years.

Question. Does this fear extend to women and children and whole families?

Answer. Yes, sir; they just whipped all. I do not know how bad they did serve some of them. They did them scandalous; that is the truth—they did them scandalous. . . .

Question. Were those that came the second time the same as those that came the first time?

Answer. No, sir.

Question. How do you know?

Answer. I knew they were not.

Question. How do you know?

Answer. Because those that came the last time lived right at us in about a mile and a half, or worked right in that neighborhood; and ever since we have been there nigh them they can't face me, can't look at me . . . and these here wanted me to work for them a good while, and I could not work for them then. . . .

Question. You say one of the last six was Tom Davis?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Was he disguised?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. What had he on?

Answer. His horns and a long blue coat. He was the one that told them to lay us down, and then just jumped right on the top of my head.

Question. Could you see his face?

Answer. Not all of it. I had just seen him the day before. . . .

Question. It was a pretty bold fellow that came that way?

Answer. Yes, sir; that was one of Martin's sons . . . both were along.

Question. What are their names?

Answer. Romeo and Tine.

Question. Which one was it?

Answer. I think it was Romeo. . . .

Question. . . . [W]hat was the reason why you thought it was Romeo?

Answer. Because that family wanted me to work for them and I could not work for them; I was working for another man.

Question. How long was that time when they wanted you to work before this whipping?

Answer. Not more than a month.

Question. Before the last visit?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. What took place that you could not work?

Answer. My husband rented some land and I had to come home.

Question. Did they get mad?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. What did they say?

Answer. They said they were going to have me Ku-Kluxed. . . .

Question. Who was present?

Answer. Only old Missus Williams, and she said, "Harriet, you'll be Ku-Kluxed for that."

Question. Who is she?

Answer. She is a white woman. It was her son I was to work for. He wanted me to work for him.

Question. What is his name?

Answer. Augustus Williams.

Question. I thought it was the Martins you had the trouble with?

Answer. They were the ones that whipped me. I thought it was Mr. Williams that held the horses.

Question. You said the Martins wanted you to work for them and you could not?

Answer. Yes, sir, all the family; they were all kin.

Question. And when you could not work for them they said they would have you Ku-Kluxed?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Who said that, Bruce Martin?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. Was Mrs. Williams there?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. She heard them say that?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. They were bold enough to say before you and Mrs. Williams that you would be Ku-Kluxed?

Answer. Yes, sir, that I would be Ku-Kluxed. . . .

Question. You think the Martins did this for the reason that they were so mad because you would not work for them, that they Ku-Kluxed you?

Answer. Yes, sir; they got so mad that they could not stand it.

Question. Are they white people?

Answer. Yes, sir.

Question. How did you know Tine Martin?

Answer. By his size and his ways and all. . . .

Question. What did they do, that you knew them?

Answer. Their father was there. . . . One took hold of one arm of my little child and the other took the other arm, and I said, "Lord, don't kill my child;" and he knocked me down with the pistol and said, "Damn you, fall! Damn you, get up!" and I went to get up and he said, "Damn you, get over the fence;" and when I tried to get over he kicked me over, and I knew the horses.

Question. What horses?

Answer. One big black and four big sorrels and a mule. There were two of the Martins, and I reckon they had borrowed a mule of Gus Williams.

Question. Did you talk to him about it?

Answer. No, sir; if I told them I believed it was them they would have come the next night and killed me.

Question. Did you know the mule?

Answer. I knew it; it was Gus Williams's mule. He must have been holding the horses. He must have known that I would have known him if I had touched him almost.

Question. Did not the Martins know that you would recognize the horses?

Answer. I don't know. . . .

Question. Is there any justice of the peace up there? Have you any squires?

Answer. I know there was a squire named Blackwell.

Question. You could have come here and made complaint?

Answer. But I was afraid.

Question. Afraid of what?

Answer. Afraid of the Ku-Klux.

Question. What Ku-Klux?

Answer. Of the Martins.

Question. Why are you not afraid of them now?

Answer. I am; I am afraid to go back home.

Question. Are you going home?

Answer. I don't know whether I shall go back or not.

9. Elected Representatives, 1872

This 1872 Currier and Ives print depicts the black men who served in the Forty-first and Forty-second Congresses of the United States. From left to right they are: Sen. Hiram R. Revels of Mississippi; Rep. Benjamin S. Turner of Alabama; Rep. Robert C. De Large of South Carolina; Rep. Josiah T. Walls of Florida; Rep. Jefferson F. Long of Georgia; Rep. Joseph H. Rainey of South Carolina; and Rep. Robert Brown Elliott of South Carolina.

These first Congressmen came from a variety of backgrounds. Revels, Elliott, and De Large were born free; Elliott in Boston or England and Revels and De Large in North Carolina and South Carolina respectively. The other four were born enslaved, although Rainey's father purchased their whole family's freedom in the



mid-1840s, and Turner, while still enslaved, ran his own hotel and livery stable, accumulating considerable wealth. Their relations to the Confederate and Union forces suggest the range of experiences that black men had during the Civil War. De Large was employed by the Confederate Navy, while Rainey, impressed into work on Confederate fortifications, fled to Bermuda with his wife, returning only at the conclusion of the war. Walls, impressed into labor in the Confederate Army, was captured by Union forces and sent North where he enlisted in the 3d U.S. Colored Infantry, with which he returned South to fight the Confederacy. Revels served the Union forces as an army chaplain.

ESSAYS

The first essay by the late historian Herbert G. Gutman, recounts the ways ex-slaves throughout the South took responsibility for providing for their own education and that of their children. Gutman argues against the tendency to view aspirations for education as a middle-class value, noting the ways in which the desires and work for these schools were rooted in black working-class cultural values. In the second essay, Julie Saville, a historian at the University of Chicago, recounts the numerous ways ex-slaves in South Carolina sought to take charge of their economic lives in the post-Civil War era and especially how their struggles to define themselves as free workers were entwined with their struggles for political and family rights. In the final essay, Elsa Barkley Brown, who teaches history, women's studies, and African-American studies at the University of Maryland, explores the