# Intersectional Incidents:

## Harriet Jacobs and the Intersectionality of Slave Women's Experience in Nineteenth Century America

*~ Death is better than slavery.~*
*-Harriet Jacobs*

Mina Raja s4677765
Pre-Master American Studies
Supervisor: Laura Visser-Maessen
June 17, 2019

ENGELSE TAAL EN CULTUUR

**Teacher who will receive this document:** Laura Visser-Maessen

**Title of document:** Intersectional Incidents: Harriet Jacobs and the Intersectionality of Slave Women's Experience in Nineteenth Century America

**Name of course:** Bachelor Thesis Pre-Master American Studies

**Date of submission**: June 17, 2019

**Word Count:** 14,966

**The work submitted here is the sole responsibility of the undersigned, who has neither committed plagiarism nor colluded in its production.**

**Signed**

**Name of student:** Mina Raja

**Student number:** s4677765

TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Abstract

The institution of slavery in the United States is a widely studied subject, wherein scholars often focus on a particular era. The Antebellum and post-Antebellum period is one such era and continues to fascinate historians and literary experts alike. Notably, this period in American slavery was marked by some of the most prominent slave narratives to date, written by former slaves. Society was undergoing an industrial revolution during the nineteenth century, which allowed for oppressed people to make their voices heard more than in the past. One of the most influential slave narratives from this era was *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs. In addition to her first-hand descriptions of life in slavery, it is one of the few slave narratives written by a woman. This made it a very unique piece of writing at the time of its publication. Although it was largely overlooked in the beginning, due to it being published at the start of the Civil War, Jacobs' narrative still captured the sympathy of several anti-slavery activists at the time.

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* illustrates how the intersection of slave women's gender, race, and social class placed them in a distinct position of disadvantage within the hierarchy of society. Nineteenth century American society operated under a patriarchal system, which was also based on certain racist beliefs regarding black and other non-white people. White men dominated the topmost position in this hierarchy, while slave women suffered in the lowest. This thesis will analyze three recurring themes in Jacobs' narrative. The first of these themes is the Cult of True Womanhood, which affected all women at the time. Second, the Southern justifications for slavery and the added fear of sexual abuse that plagued slave women, and thirdly, motherhood in slavery. The goal of this thesis is to highlight the particular importance of intersectionality within feminism, using Jacobs' slave narrative as the starting point for intersectional feminism theory.

Key Words: Intersectionality, Black women, Slave narratives, Slavery, United States, Nineteenth Century, Cult of True Womanhood, Justifications for Slavery, Sexual Abuse of Slave Women, Motherhood in Slavery

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to devote a few words of gratitude to three people in particular, whose academic support, friendship, and love have been an invaluable source of encouragement to my task of finishing this thesis. I would not have this completed product without their positive influence during these arduous few months.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my wonderful supervisor, Laura Visser-Maessen for her guidance and constructive feedback during all stages of this thesis. She put an extraordinary amount of effort into providing me with helpful and very thorough feedback in order to ensure that my work would be a reflection of the very best of my ability. Additionally, her warmth, kindness, and understanding made my time working with Laura an entirely positive experience, for which I am enormously grateful.

Secondly, I would like to acknowledge my good friend and unofficial mentor in this process, Melanie van der Elsen. Her friendship and support has carried me a long way during this thesis project. I am thankful for both her emotional and academic support, as well as her continuous faith in my abilities.

Lastly, I must extend my infinite thanks to my partner, Frederik Schramm, who never wavered in his support during this process. This thesis would not be what it is now without his presence in my life and the love he continues to show me, and for that I am extremely grateful.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

*"When they told me my new-born babe was a girl, my heart was heavier than it had ever been before. Slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women." (Jacobs, 54)*

This anguish-laden quote is from former slave Harriet Jacobs' narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.* Published in 1861 and edited by abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, Jacobs' narrative offers a raw and unique view into slave women's lives in the nineteenth century. (Patton, 53) Her story details the perils of trying to obtain freedom both for herself and for her two children after several years of abuse under a merciless master.

Unlike most slaves in nineteenth century America, Harriet Jacobs was not aware of her status until the age of six, when her mother died. After her mother's death, Jacobs went to live with her mother's mistress, who taught her how to read and write; a luxury not often afforded to slaves. This relative happiness came to an end, however, when this mistress died and Jacobs became the de facto property of Dr. and Mrs. James Flint. (Andrews, 1) As she grew into adulthood, Jacobs endured years of sexual abuse by Dr. Flint, as well as verbal abuse from his jealous wife. Wishing to deter him from potentially impregnating her, Jacobs began a consensual relationship with a white man named Samuel Sawyer. They had two children, but both were born enslaved to Flint, due to the law which stated, "all children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother." (Hening, 1809)

In 1835, at age twenty-two, Jacobs began her journey to freedom, which began with several, arduous years of hiding in a shed near her grandmother's house. The small space did not provide any comfort apart from its function as a hiding place. Jacobs was forced to watch her children grow up from afar, unable to interact with them, helpless to protect them from "the storms of life" (Jacobs, 94). In 1842 she successfully escaped to the North and was cared for by abolitionist friends in Philadelphia, eventually reuniting with her children and settling in New York in 1845. (Yellin, 1-51)

It is important to note that Jacobs' target audience consisted mostly of Northern, upper-class white women. In telling her story, Jacobs hopes to appeal to the anti-slavery views

often held by these women. In the preface of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl,* she emphasizes this ambition: "I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse." (3) Jacobs was accurate in assuming that her target audience would be sympathetic to her message, as "Northern women, largely from leisured middle-class households, were among the abolitionist movement's most dedicated participants." (Doherty, 81) Even though women "faced a special measure of public resistance, ridicule, and censure" (81) in Northern abolitionist groups, their sympathy to the cause made them vital allies to slave women. Furthermore, "[Jacobs'] refusal to compromise and insistence on asserting her 'self' makes the slave girl's relationship with her obsessed master more nearly one of psychological equality." (88) This unique triumph of Jacobs' adds a slightly hopeful tone to the story.

Harriet Jacobs highlights several aspects of society in her narrative, which remain relevant today; namely, feminism and gender, race, class, and black identity. Black Americans are still engaged in a fierce battle for freedom and equality, a challenge that modern black women feel most acutely, due to their social location as both women and people of color. This is where the theory of intersectionality becomes relevant as it helps explain the unique disadvantages that black women in America face today, and have faced throughout history.

*Incidents* presents a moving image of the unique struggles that slave women endured in nineteenth century America. For the purposes of this thesis, Jacobs' narrative will serve as a specific case study to illustrate how the intersectionality of race, class, and gender functioned to oppress slave women in the nineteenth century. The resulting overall analysis will add further insight into the pre-existing discourse surrounding the lives of slave women in particular. Additionally, this analysis of Jacobs' story will help to further the crucial debate regarding feminism, racism, and the complexity of intersectionality as it pertains to women, both historically and in the present day.

**1.1 Social and Academic Relevance**

It is easy to discern - from a modern day standpoint - that Harriet Jacobs' story highlights the brutal history of slavery in the United States, which, although outlawed more than a century ago, is still etched into the corners of American society today. One example of this is evidenced in a feature story article written by Olga Khazan for the July/August 2018 issue of *The Atlantic.* She writes that, "the legacy of racism can literally take years off their [Black people's] lives. Far from being a relic of the past, America's racist and segregationist history continues to harm black people in the most intimate of ways—seeping into their lungs, their blood, even their DNA." (Khazan, 2018)

While Khazan's story only focuses on the plight of one woman, Kiarra Boulware, the numerous health problems that Boulware struggles with are indicative of a much larger history of racism and oppression of black people in America. This oppression used to manifest itself in the form of slavery and outright racism. However, in today's world discrimination more commonly takes the form of institutional or structural racism that is, "racial discrimination that has become established as normal behavior within a society or organization." ("Institutional Racism") The term was first used in 1967 by Kwame Ture (born Stokely Carmichael) and Charles V. Hamilton, who wrote that institutional racism "originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society, and thus receives far less public condemnation than individual racism." (Carmichael, et. al. 4) Additionally, they argue that institutional racism is more difficult to see, due to its "less overt, far more subtle nature." (4)

This type of racism has become second nature in American society, including in large cities like Chicago, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. These cities tend to be heavily influenced by systematic discrimination, such as redlining, which refers to "the systematic denial of various services to residents of specific, often racially associated neighborhoods or communities, either directly or through the selective raising of prices."(Gross, 2017) Olga Khazan notes that in Baltimore - where Kiarra Boulware resides - a twenty year gap in life expectancy exists between the poor and mostly black neighborhoods and the wealthier, predominantly white neighborhoods.

She further notes that "similar disparities exist in other segregated cities, such as Philadelphia and Chicago." This extreme wealth gap between black Americans and White Americans is no coincidence.

The group of people most severely affected by societal racial discrepancies are black women. Although slavery is outlawed and considered a human rights violation, black women continue to suffer more severely than white women or, indeed, black men. This is due to the intersection of their gender and race; they are part of the oppressed group in both of these identities, which, subsequently places them in the lowest socioeconomic class in society. According to Greenfield and Holman (2018), "On average, a black woman in the U.S. has to work more than eight additional months to earn what, on average, a white man does in one calendar year." They elaborate, saying that "occupational sorting" is the main reason for why black women are disadvantaged in this manner. Occupational sorting is "the clustering of demographic groups into certain jobs and fields." Using data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, Greenfield and Holman note that some of the most common jobs for black women today are, home health or personal care aides, secretaries or administrative assistants, housekeepers, and social workers. Additionally, "Women tend to cluster in lower paying jobs than men, black people in lower paying jobs relative to white people…" It is, therefore, inevitable that "Black women are doubly punished" because they are both women *and* black. (Greenfield & Holman, 2018) White women, for example, are only disadvantaged by their gender in relation white men, because white men generally occupy the most privileged socioeconomic class in American society. A white woman is usually paid less than her male counterparts, but white women's jobs pay "almost twice as much as the most popular jobs for black women" (Greenfield & Holman, 2018). Stories like Kiarra Boulware's echo much of the same oppression that Jacobs experienced. Although American society has become more modern in many ways, black women's social position within the hierarchy of society is largely the same as it was when Harriet Jacobs wrote her slave narrative.

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is "a testament to the human will to survive" and has become one of the most renowned and valued slave narratives in recent decades. (Gates, 11) Due to the fact that it was published just as the Civil War was beginning, Jacobs' narrative "was

buried beneath news of the war." (Bayim and Levine, 818-819) Until fairly recently, it was "long thought to be either a novel assuming the shape of a slave narrative… or else a ghostwritten autobiography that strained credibility." (Gates, 11) According to Gates, it was scholar, Jean Fagan Yellin who "demonstrated conclusively that Jacobs indeed wrote the narrative of her bondage and freedom." (Gates, 12) Yellin's conclusion became public knowledge in Afro-American studies in 1981 and has since molded the discussion into how impressive the narrative is, particularly with regard to the events themselves.

Caitlin O'Neill notes that "Jacobs' narrative should be considered foundational to the development of black women's letters, as it is among the earliest full-length texts authored by a black woman." (O'Neill 56) *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* presents such a stark image of slavery that some scholars revere it as the foundation of black feminist theory. (O'Neill, 56) The narrative's emphasis on the female slave experience is also greatly important, as it is "a leading example of black women utilizing autobiographical writing to creatively construct themselves as subjects in the presence and aftermath of slavery.

Jacobs' narrative highlights the importance of women's particular form of suffering through intersectionality during slavery in the nineteenth century. Jacobs' aim in writing *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* was to "capture the attention of Northern white women in particular, to show them how slavery debased and demoralized women…" (Levine, et. al. 878-879) She wanted to highlight the fact that despite their position in the lowest class of society, slaves were also women and mothers. In her narrative, Jacobs appeals to the motherhood of white women to unite them with herself and with slave women in general. In addition, however, "she sought to win the respect and admiration of her readers for the courage with which she forestalled abuse and for the independence with which she chose a lover rather than having one forced on her." (Levine, et. al. 879)

Considering black women's uniquely disadvantaged position within society since the time of slavery, it is unsurprising that they are - and have been - at the forefront of social change. They participated significantly in the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, but "because of their gender, were often channeled away from formal leadership positions and confined to the informal level of leadership." (Robnett, 1667) Robnett further notes that because

of this "gendered organization," women in the Civil Rights Movement became bridge leaders, as well as leaders in several grassroots movements.These were the only leadership opportunities available to black women in the Civil Rights Movement, due to the prevailing ideal of separate spheres or gender-separated work. (1667) Although this renowned movement advocated for social change, gender equality was not at the forefront. Robnett explains that "notions of feminism and equal representation of women were not considerations in movement participation" and therefore, the fact "that women were excluded from formal leadership positions during the time of the civil rights movement should come as no surprise." (1669)

Black women continue to be the driving force behind social justice movements today, including the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM). Black Lives Matter began in 2013, one year after a black teenager named Trayvon Martin was shot to death by a white man; the neighborhood watch coordinator in Martin's father's gated community. The man responsible for Martin's death, George Zimmerman, was found "not guilty of second degree murder and acquitted of manslaughter." (Day, 2015) Alicia Garza, Patrisse Khan-Cullors, and Opal Tometi are the three women who co-founded BLM together. It started with Garza's impassioned Facebook post after news of Zimmerman's acquittal became public. She ended the post by saying, "Black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter." (Qtd. in Day, 2015) Cullors shared the post and included the hashtag, "#blacklivesmatter" in each repost.

The phrase resonated with black people across America, and in August 2014, when the news broke that another unarmed black teenager, eighteen-year old Michael Brown, had been shot and killed by a white police officer, riots broke out in Brown's hometown of Ferguson, Missouri. Garza, Khan-Cullors, and Tometi organized a freedom ride to Ferguson for the BLM campaign. "More than 500 people signed up from 18 different cities across America. When they reached Ferguson, Garza was astonished to see her own phrase mirrored back at her on protest banners and shouted in unison by people she had never met." (Day, 2015) These women and their advocacy for the safety of black people in America is but one example of how black women continue to be the driving force of social change in the nation. Centuries of oppression and racism against black people - both outright and structural- has created a complex and problematic

system in which history, race, class, and gender all influence each other to negatively impact black people in the United States.

In order to understand black women's situation and social location in society today, it is necessary to look back at the origins of their struggles. Slave narratives of the nineteenth century provide a unique method of doing so, particularly in the context of intersectionality, which is defined as "the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race/class/gender and how they apply to a given individual or group; regarded as creating an overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination/disadvantage." ("Intersectionality") In reference to women, it is sometimes referred to as "intersectional feminism." (IWDA, 2018)

The term was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her 1989 article, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." In a later article, Crenshaw elaborates on the socio-economic position of black women in the structure of society, respective to intersectionality. Specifically, she explains how "feminist efforts to politicize experiences of women and antiracist efforts to politicize experiences of people of color have frequently proceeded as though the issues and experiences they each detail occur on mutually exclusive terrains." (Crenshaw, 1242)

Intersectionality seeks to recognize two things: 1. That a person usually holds multiple identities within society and 2. These identities - whether it is race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc. - all influence each other to create a specific type of social location that is unique to each individual. Furthermore, Crenshaw claims that in order for society to counter racism and discrimination, it is first necessary to realize and consider the intersection of peoples' multiple social identities and how they work together within the structure of society. (IWDA, 2018)

Despite their shared gender, intersectionality does not unite all women under the single injustice of sexism. Sharon Smith explains,

> Because of the historic role of slavery and racial segregation in the United States, the development of a unified women's movement requires recognizing the…implications of

> this continuing racial divide. While all women are oppressed as women, no movement can claim to speak for all women unless it speaks for women who also face the consequences of racism…Race and class therefore must be central to the project of women's liberation if it is to be meaningful to those women who are most oppressed by the system. (Smith, 2013)

Ignoring the role that racism plays in the oppression of non-white women is fundamentally detrimental to the women's rights movement, because "failure to confront racism ends up reproducing the racist status quo." (Smith, 2013) Therefore, without recognizing the significance of intersectionality amongst women, uniting under the banner for gender equality seems pointless to black women.

A few years before Crenshaw, author bell hooks wrote, "Feminist analyses of women's lot tend to focus exclusively on gender and do not provide a solid foundation on which to construct feminist theory. They reflect the dominant tendency in Western patriarchal minds to mystify woman's reality by insisting that gender is the sole determinant of a woman's fate." (hooks, 1984) Feminism in the typical sense, has largely focused on the example of an oppressed woman as a white middle class suburban housewife. This image was linked with a set of expectations known as the Cult of True Womanhood/Domesticity. While white women were indeed oppressed under such constricting expectations, this type of feminis excluded non-white - and especially black - women, as well as denying them the opportunity to make their mark within feminism. hooks expands on this by saying that, "Certainly it has been easier for women who do not experience race or class oppression to focus exclusively on gender." (1984)

It is relevant to note that much of Jacobs' readers were white women - sometimes with abolitionist views - whom she directly addresses multiples times throughout her story. She appeals to her readers, saying, "Surely, if you credited one half the truths that are told you concerning the helpless millions suffering in this cruel bondage, you at the north would not help to tighten the yoke." (Jacobs, 20) The target audience for a narrative like this is key to understanding the social position occupied by slave women in the nineteenth century and black women today.

## 1.2 Research Questions and Methodology

Intersectionality is the fundamental theme in Harriet Jacobs' narrative, as it is what places her in the position of a slave and further disadvantages her due to her gender. The overarching research question of this thesis is: How does the intersection of gender, race, and class illustrate the unique position of disadvantage for slave women in nineteenth century America, as seen in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Gir*l? This question will be answered through detailed literary and discourse analysis, using Jacobs' slave narrative as the central primary source.

Three recurring themes will be discussed from Jacobs' narrative, each of which, highlight the unique struggles of slave women in the nineteenth century. These themes are the virtues that make up the Cult of True Womanhood, the relationship between justifications for slavery and sexual abuse, and motherhood in slavery. These three themes will be analyzed both individually and in relation to each other as they are seen in Harriet Jacobs' story. A number of sub-questions arise from these themes namely, how did the Cult of Domesticity/True Womanhood pertain to slave women? Harriet Jacobs' narrative offers insight into the complexities surrounding slave women's attempt at attaining True Womanhood. Another important question to explore is in what ways was motherhood unique for slave women? The second sub-questions asks, how did the Southern justifications for slavery (such as paternalism) help to justify the sexual abuse or sexual harassment of slave women? Furthemrore, how did sexual abuse complicate motherhood for slave women even further? Further analysis will be conducted around the current academic discourse about Jacobs' narrative, including (but not limited to): book reviews, analysis of themes in the book, historical perspectives on the history of slavery and the Cult of True Womanhood, and secondary sources regarding Harriet Jacobs' biography.

Analyzing Harriet Jacobs' narrative as it relates to women and intersectionality will add to the ongoing academic discussion and debate about women's disadvantages in society. The history of slavery is still highly relevant in American society, particularly with regards to institutionalized or systematic racism. This thesis will aim to highlight how the struggles that plagued slave women in America during the nineteenth century continue to affect black women

today due to the unchanged structure of intersectionality. This structure continues to place black women in a uniquely disadvantaged position in society. It is necessary, therefore, that discussion about their struggle and complicated history is constantly improved upon and integrated into modern day feminism.

# Chapter 2 - A True Woman

## 2.1 - The Cult of True Womanhood: Introduction

"The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit with my children in a home of my own, I still long for a hearthstone of my own, however humble." (Jacobs, 136) *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* ends with Jacobs having obtained freedom for both herself and her children. However, she still feels that her life is lacking in true domestic comfort as was common in middle-upper class nineteenth century homes. While her final pages brim with gratitude at having finally escaped slavery, there is an underlying sadness, which speaks to black women's low status in the nineteenth century, whether free or in slavery.

The reason for Jacobs' sadness even after obtaining freedom is because she was aware of the social stigma that surrounded black women even in Northern society, where anti-slavery sentiments were generally strong. She would never be able to assume the virtues of a True Woman as outlined in the Cult of True Womanhood. This term is used to describe "the prevailing value system among the upper and middle classes during the nineteenth century in the United States…" (Keister and Southgate, 228) It was a series of expectations and standards that society expected all middle and upper class women to embody. If they did not at least try to adhere to the virtues that made up the Cult of True Womanhood, they would not be accepted in their social circles and would be deemed unworthy.

The term, "Cult of True Womanhood" was first used by Barbara Welter in her 1966 article, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." She explains that, "a true woman was a true woman, wherever she was found. If anyone, male or female, dared to tamper with the complex of virtues which made up True Womanhood, he was damned immediately as an enemy of God, of civilization and of the Republic." (Welter, 152) The belief was, "put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife - woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power." (Welter, 152)

Strictly speaking, all women were supposed to attempt to embody the virtues of True Womanhood; piety, purity, domesticity, and submission. However, social discrimination and prejudice, as well as economic disparities, prevented most black, working class, and immigrant

women from doing so. (Patton, 29) Slavery further deprived black women of the chance to live up to the standards of True Womanhood and subsequently, they were not accepted as 'True Women' in society. "Enslaved women could never be legally secure in marriage, motherhood, or home. Forced to labor for their white owners, they could not create private households of their own." ("The Radical in the Kitchen: Women, Domesticity, and Social Reform," 2017) This instability in every aspect of their lives, combined with the fact that all slaves were treated - both socially and legally - as property, meant that slave women were not afforded the same opportunities to achieve True Womanhood compared to white women. Although domesticity and submission were expected behaviors for slaves working in households, they were not able to apply these traits to their own lives. A life in bondage consisted of fulfilling a master's needs, whether out in the fields for production purposes or inside the house serving his family. Slaves had very little time for cultivating a domestic family life, let alone the agency or the resources to do so. Slave women like Harriet Jacobs first had to fight for their freedom from these restrictions before they could realistically aspire to the Cult of True Womanhood.

### 2.2 - Harriet Jacobs in the Context of True Womanhood

Despite her status as a slave, Harriet Jacobs strives to uphold certain expectations tied to womanhood, although she claimed that "...the slave woman ought not to be judged by the same standard as others." (Jacobs, 39) She was aware of the contradiction that came with being a slave woman, particularly in regard to societal expectations. Barbara Welter's article divided these expectations into four ideal virtues: piety, purity, domesticity, and submission. In order to understand the Cult of True Womanhood as a societal structure and how it affected both white women and slave women, it is necessary to examine each of these aforementioned virtues individually.

The intersection of Harriet Jacobs' social identities served to make her life - like most slave women in the nineteenth century - exceptionally difficult. The societal expectations of women within the Cult of True Womanhood added to slave women's complex position within society, because it simultaneously reinforced the exclusion of black women from the definition of "woman" and allowed both white men and white women to discriminate against them. This is

important to note, because in its ideal form, the Cult of True Womanhood only realistically applied to white women; more particularly white women of a relatively high socioeconomic status. Venetria K. Patton affirms this in her book, *Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction*. She says that, "Although this ideal of womanhood was presented for all women to emulate, only white middle-class women could hope to embody it." (Patton, 29-30) However, while the Cult of True Womanhood mostly pertained to wealthy white women, the fundamental expectations of womanhood were nevertheless present for women of all social classes and races; slaves included.

Slave women were the lowest class in society due to their social location as both women and people of color, which meant that they would never be able to embody True Womanhood the way white women did. Nonetheless, slave women like Harriet Jacobs still tried to encompass the virtues of True Womanhood and in doing so, attempted to regain both their status as 'woman' as well as their personal freedom. The struggle to be accepted as a 'True Woman' was intertwined with the freedoms that came with such a status; most prominent in Harriet Jacobs' account is bodily autonomy. The lives of slave women were distinguished from those of slave men's due to their "actual and imagined reproductive labor and their unique forms of bodily suffering (notably sexual exploitation…") (Camp, 2002)

This is a recurring theme in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, because Jacobs herself was subjected to continuous sexual harassment at the hands of her owner, Dr. Flint. While most of her story depicts her own experiences under slavery, she also highlights the general plight of slave women during that era. "No matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair as her mistress. In either case, there is no shadow of law to protect her from insult, from violence, or even from death; all these are inflicted by fiends who bear the shape of men." (Jacobs, 20) It can be concluded, therefore, that while Jacobs suffered terribly under the institution of slavery, she also used her understanding of the system's brutal rules to regain her claim to spiritual, geographical, and bodily freedom.

**2.3 - Piety**

Piety was an aspect of True Womanhood that was more problematic for slave women to uphold than for white women, because the intersection of their race and gender positioned slave women under layers of oppression and the corresponding oppressors. Piety or "the quality of being religious or reverent" (Oxford English Dictionary) was believed to belong to women "by divine right" according to the Cult of True Womanhood. (Welter, 152) The common belief in nineteenth century America was that women were naturally more able to welcome the love of God into their hearts and with that particular susceptibility, they would remain pure and free from the sins of "the naughty world of men." (152) Welter further elaborates that "if religion was so vital to a woman, irreligion was almost too awful to contemplate. Women were warned not to let their literary or intellectual pursuits take them away from God." (154) This insistence on women to be religious stemmed from the underlying belief that they were (ideally) responsible for the "morality and spiritual well-being of their husbands and children." (Wayne, 50) Therefore, a woman had to be pious not only for her own self-worth and reputation, but also for her family's moral education.

In addition to morality, religion also offered women the chance to step outside of their homes while still satisfying the domesticity aspect of True Womanhood. The concept of "separate spheres" was essential to a functional household during the nineteenth century. This was a system wherein the woman maintained the home and children and the man went to work and provided an income for his family. Specifically, these two gender roles became known as the "private sphere" for the woman and the "public sphere" for the man. Welter elaborates on this idea, explaining that, "unlike participation in other societies or movements, church work would not make her less domestic or submissive, less a True Woman…" (Welter, 153) Religious work was deemed feminine work, because it was believed that women were more susceptible to God. Therefore, it was perfectly acceptable that she work in a religious environment, like the church.

Nineteenth century women embraced their roles in the church and within the community and even took pride in it. Tiffany K. Wayne, a former scholar at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at Stanford University, elaborates that women during that time period "were responsible for reading the Bible to their children… involving the family in church-related

activities and charitable giving, and getting the family to attend services on Sundays." (Wayne, 50) The church was arguably the least constricting aspect of the Cult of True Womanhood, as it did allow women to participate in society outside their homes. They established relief organizations and Sunday schools, which, gave unmarried women the opportunity to be spiritual and religious teachers to children. (Wayne, 50) Women who embraced the role of religious and spiritual leader in their household often gained a sense of purpose and companionship from like-minded women. However, the fundamental, sexist fact remained that if they did not fulfill the virtue of piety, they would not be thought of as 'true women.'

Despite being a slave, Harriet Jacobs also tried to be pious, but her motive for doing so was largely because religion and the church offered some semblance of comfort and community. She describes one of the church members, uncle Fred, as a person "whose piety and childlike trust in God were beautiful to witness." (Jacobs, 51) Jacobs taught uncle Fred how to read the Bible upon his earnest request, despite it being illegal. She reflects on these lessons with fondness for Uncle Fred, but also with sadness and contempt for the law: "His gratitude, and the happiness imparted, were more than a recompense for all my trouble … There are thousands, who, like good uncle Fred, are thirsting for the water of life; but the law forbids it, and the churches withhold it." (51)

Laws like these made it more difficult for women, such as Harriet Jacobs to fully uphold piety in the Cult of True Womanhood. Her master makes it clear to her that the morals of Christianity did not apply to her, nor did the Bible protect her from his wrath:

> 'You can do what I require; and if you are faithful to me, you will be as virtuous as my wife,' he replied.
> I answered that the Bible didn't say so.
> His voice became hoarse with rage. 'How dare you preach to me about your infernal Bible!' he exclaimed. 'What right have you, who are my negro, to talk to me about what you would like and what you wouldn't like? I am your master, and you shall obey me.' (53)

Jacobs' link to religion shows how slave women often tried to make the most of their dismal situation and strived to be True Women in whatever ways they could manage. Slaves who were permitted to join a church often found an invaluable peace, although they knew that the respite was only temporary. Jacobs regarded the "singing and shouting" (50) church services as one of the few positive things in a slave's experience on a regular basis. However, she also asks a bitter question about how much these church services actually help slaves. "Precious are such moments to the poor slaves. If you were to hear them at such times, you might think they were happy. But can that hour of singing and shouting sustain them through the dreary week, toiling without wages, under constant dread of the lash?" (50)

**2.4 Purity**

Equally important in the Cult of True Womanhood was that a 'True Woman' must be sexually pure, even naive. Most importantly, the ideal woman would remain a virgin until her wedding night. However, as Jacobs notes, this was significantly more difficult for slave women to aspire to than for white women. "If God has bestowed beauty upon her [the slave woman], it will prove her greatest curse. That which commands admiration in the white woman only hastens the degradation of the female slave." (Jacobs, 20) The slave woman was not in control of her own body and was forced to adhere to her master's wishes, regardless of the level of so-called sin it might impart upon her.

Welter explains that, "the marriage night was the single great event of a woman's life, when she bestowed her greatest treasure upon her husband, and from that time on was completely dependent upon him, an empty vessel, without legal or emotional existence of her own." (Welter, 154-155) A woman's "greatest treasure," according to the Cult of True Womanhood, was her sexual purity, that is, her virginity. The Cult of True Womanhood even labeled women as "distinctly asexual, naturally pure" as opposed to "men, whose sexuality was so rampant and hard to control." (Lindley, 53)

It was the woman's responsibility to hold herself to the highest standards of propriety; to avoid sexual temptation at least until marriage. Although this positioned her on a higher level of morality than men, it was both expected of women and accepted as the norm in nineteenth

century society. Indeed, William Alcott praises women's purity and moral intelligence in *The Young Man's Guide* (1833), claiming: "Nothing is better calculated to preserve a young man from contamination of low pleasures and pursuits than frequent intercourse with the more refined and virtuous of the other sex." (229) Essentially, men were grateful for women's purity and moral superiority, because it allowed them to direct their sexual energy towards respectable, pure women, since it was considered atypical and even unnatural for women to have sexual desires. The virtue of purity within the Cult of True Womanhood was the embodiment of the societal expectation that women should remain asexual and naive. "A 'fallen woman' was a 'fallen angel,' unworthy of the celestial company of her sex." (Welter, 154)

Jacobs writes about the measures she took to keep her sexual purity for as long as she could in her circumstances. One of her greatest triumphs, which she indeed conveys with a note of pride in her narrative, was the fact that she successfully avoided being raped by her master. Instead, she was able to have consensual relations with a man of her own choosing, a fact that she only revealed to her master when she became pregnant with her first child. Jacobs describes the feeling of freedom she felt in being able to choose her own lover and having her love reciprocated, "There is something akin to freedom in having a lover who has no control over you, except that which he gains by kindness and attachment." (Jacobs, 39)

While she is triumphant in having chosen her own lover, Jacobs still begs pity from her readers when she tells of the events and decisions that led her to become pregnant with her first child, notably because this occurred out of wedlock. Having a child without being married was a strict social taboo in the nineteenth century, which transcended class and race. Jacobs explains that she took a white lawyer as a consensual lover because she anticipated Dr. Flint's intent to sexually abuse her, which would likely have resulted in her bearing his child. Any child that she bore from him would subsequently have been born a slave under his ownership; something that Jacobs was desperate to avoid. Despite her decision being - to a certain degree - voluntary, she agonizes over the psychological consequences. She asks the reader to consider the miserable situation of a slave girl. "O, ye happy women, whose purity has been sheltered from childhood, who have been free to choose the objects of your affection, whose homes are protected by laws, do not judge the poor desolate slave girl too severely!" (Jacobs, 38) Here, she directly highlights

the ways in which slavery created a unique and complex struggle for slave women regarding their purity and bodily autonomy.

Intersectionality was the fundamental reason why Jacobs was in this position; both her race and her gender made her vulnerable to different types of threats. Specifically, she was vulnerable to sexual abuse from white men and - to a lesser degree - black men. Being a black woman also made Jacobs more vulnerable to discrimination by white women, as is evident in the chapter entitled, "The Jealous Mistress." Her socio-economic status is also relevant, as she is part of the lowest class in society - slaves. However, slaves were put in this class by the very nature of their race, so it is clear that slave women's unique position of disadvantage is due to the intersection of their various social identities.

In addition to begging pity from the reader, Jacobs also tries to justify her actions, aware of the expectation that women should remain pure until marriage. "I wanted to keep myself pure; and, under the most adverse circumstances, I tried hard to preserve my self-respect; but I was struggling alone in the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery; and the monster proved too strong for me." (38) Jacobs makes it clear that all women, regardless of the racial bias within the Cult of True Womanhood, still felt enormous pressure to be a 'pure' and 'true' woman. The slave woman expected this of herself, even though she knew that it might not be possible to fulfill all the virtues of True Womanhood as a slave. However, knowing that she was in the disadvantaged position of slavery, Jacobs defiantly states that white women have no right to judge her, because they have never been in her position. "Pity me, and pardon me, O virtuous reader! You never knew what it is to be a slave; to be entirely unprotected by law or custom; to have the laws reduce you to the condition of a chattel, entirely subject to the will of another." (Jacobs, 39)

The reader whom Jacobs addresses in this passage, is presumably a white woman. After begging forgiveness and pity from said reader, she goes on to describe specific situations that she - and all slave women - inherently fear. "You never exhausted your ingenuity in avoiding the snares, and eluding the power of a hated tyrant; you never shuddered at the sound of his footsteps, and trembled within hearing of his voice." (39) Jacobs' words are meant to arouse both sympathy and admiration from the reader; the wider target audience being white women.

**2.5 Domesticity**

The Cult of True Womanhood was also referred to as the Cult of Domesticity, because a 'True Woman' had to be fundamentally domestic in her nature and actions. Her role of homemaker and moral teacher of the family depended upon her domestic skills. Welter explains that, "Home was supposed to be a cheerful place, so that brothers, husbands and sons would not go elsewhere in search of a good time. Woman was expected to dispense comfort and cheer." (Welter, 163) The woman's role was firmly set in making sure that the house was not only physically comfortable, but also provided a comforting, lively atmosphere.

During the nineteenth century a plethora of literature existed that was aimed at guiding and instructing young women how to maintain a home and thus, achieve True Womanhood. The format of the literature varied, from weekly magazine or newspaper articles to fully fledged books, written by both men and women, the sole purpose of which was to aid in educating young women about how to be properly domestic and, furthermore, to take pride in being so. One of the books written for this exact purpose was *Letters to Young Ladies* (1834) by Lydia Howard Sigourney. The book consists of a series of letters from Sigourney to her target audience, young women. Each letter is a chapter centered around an etiquette theme, such as time management, manners, reading, conversation, and benevolence. In the second chapter of her book, Sigourney lists examples of appropriate domestic activities for ladies; namely needlework and knitting. (Sigourney, 25-26) She then writes about the general importance of domesticity, both as a virtue in women and as a feature of the ideal home: "Since the domestic sphere is entrusted to our sex, and the proper arrangement and government of an household are so closely connected with our enjoyments and virtues, nothing that involves the rational comfort of home is unworthy of attention." (27) Women like Sigourney thereby subscribed to the Cult of True Womanhood or Domesticity and tried to encourage it as a standard for all women.

Domesticity was a way for men and women to create a sense of control "in a society where values changed frequently, where fortunes rose and fell with frightening rapidity, where social and economic mobility provided instability as well as hope…" (151-152) It is important to acknowledge the social and industrial revolution that took place during the nineteenth century. Advances in technology, an increasing and diversifying population due to in-migration and

immigration (particularly in large cities), as well as changing social attitudes, all served to create an overwhelming world in which families tried to hold on to vestiges of control as best they could. The ideology of separate spheres emerged from the fundamentality in the desire for domestic tranquility.

The virtue of domesticity was one aspect of True Womanhood that Harriet Jacobs was unable to fulfill due to her slave status. However, the domestic space was not entirely absent from her life. Jacobs' grandmother, Martha, was a freed woman who was "a capable, devout Christian" and had "earned the respect of her community, black and white." (Sherman, 171) In addition, Martha owned her own home, something that Jacobs was not able to have, but which became a safe haven for her. "My grandmother had, as much as possible, been a mother to her orphan grandchildren. By perseverance and unwearied industry, she was now mistress of a snug little home, surrounded with the necessaries of life." (Jacobs, 12) Owning a home was a goal that no enslaved woman could achieve, which meant that she could also never be a 'True Woman' as white women were. Jacobs writes that she and her brother, "longed for a home like hers. … There was a grand big oven there, too, that baked bread and nice things for the town, and we knew there was always a choice bit in store for us." (13)

Jacobs' desire to be a free, domestic woman, who is able to organize her own home, was likely genuine. However, she was also aware that she would better capture the attention and sympathy of her white female readers if she emphasized the slave woman's lack of acceptance into the Cult of True Womanhood. Moreover, white women were often involved in abolitionist movements, so Jacobs hoped to shed light on slave women's suffering in order to "kindle a flame of compassion in your hearts for my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered," (Jacobs, 21) Her aim is to call attention to how slavery not only generally degrades slaves, but specifically deprives women of the ultimate goal of the virtue of domesticity.

**2.6 Submission**

Submission was a fundamental and essential characteristic of a True Woman, because it was only by submitting to the will of men - particularly to their husbands - that women could hope to fulfill the other virtues within the Cult of True Womanhood. It was the expectation underlined

every other virtue and, as with purity, submission was partly tied to religion; seen as an expectation of God. According to Welter, "…men were the movers, the doers, the actors. Women were the passive, submissive responders. The order of dialogue was, of course, fixed in Heaven." (Welter, 159) This patriarchal system functioned well, because no one would dare dispute the will of God. Any woman who spoke out against this order would be judged severely by society, and, as Welter explains, "women were warned that if they tampered with this quality they tampered with the order of the Universe." (159) Women's expected lot in life was to submit to this "order of the universe" or risk social and moral destruction.

Submission in a nineteenth century woman was also an advantage for her husband, because it asserted his position as leader, which was also believed to be the will of God and ordained in heaven. Submission was encouraged in popular literature of the time, such as Florence Hartley's book entitled *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness: A Complete Hand Book for the Use of the Lady in Polite Society* (1860). Hartley writes that "there can be no doubt Providence has willed that man should be the head of the human race, even as woman is its heart…" (Hartley, 294) The ideal woman was submissive enough to allow her husband to steer the family as protector and provider. The home was her domain in some respects, but "a really sensible woman feels her dependence." (Qtd. in Welter, 159) A woman was entirely dependent on her husband, having no legal right to property nor any socially acceptable presence in the labor market outside of the home.

True Women were also expected to maintain composure and dignity even in unpleasant situations. Hartley notes, "A well bred woman will not…show dissatisfaction and resentment if she fancies herself neglected." (Hartley, 291) The Cult of True Womanhood demanded that women rise above all disagreeable situations, even if she has been wronged. There is little encouragement offered to women to defend themselves or speak out against wrongdoings. Society centered around the belief that as long as women were domestic and docile, the system would function as it was meant to.

The typical households wherein a woman was expected to adhere to the Cult of True Womanhood were generally upper or middle class white families. Since women were not supposed to work except in the context of the home, it fell to the man to earn a high enough

wage to provide luxuries for his wife and children. This was not difficult for wealthier families and many nineteenth century housewives relished in the joy of having access to such luxury items. According to Susan M. Cruea, "an upper-class woman's primary function was to display her husband's wealth, for idleness had become a status symbol." (Cruea, 189) Women who had to work were usually immigrants, slaves, or poor white women. True Women pitied and looked down on these members of their sex, because they had to toil and do a man's work, which indicated a distinctly austere lifestyle. Welter further describes upper class women's dependency on their husbands, saying that, "a wife who submerged her own talents to work for her husband was extolled as an example of a true woman." (Welter, 160) Nineteenth century women in the upper class strived to remain "ever timid, doubtful, and clingingly dependent…" (qtd. in Welter, 160)

Submission looked different for slave women, because even though they also had to submit to white men, their submission was forced upon them by more than societal expectation. The submission of slave women - although related to the Cult of True Womanhood in some respects - was more binding and harsh than upper class 'True Women' ever faced. The complex and cruel system of slavery often forced slave women to do their master's bidding, no matter the costs. A distinction should be made between slave men and slave women in regards to forcible submission.

All slaves were subjected to brutal treatment, but a slave woman's situation was further complicated by her ability to bear children. In addition to all the usual evils of slavery, a slave woman was forced to bear any sexual abuse that white men inflicted upon her. Jacobs notes that the slave girl soon "will learn to tremble when she hears her master's footfall. She will be compelled to realize that she is no longer a child." (Jacobs, 20) In addition to sexual harassment and abuse, the slave owners often psychologically manipulated their victims, making them feel ashamed or scaring them into silence about the incidents. "I longed for some one to confide in. I would have given the world to have laid my head on my grandmother's faithful bosom, and told her all my troubles. But Dr. Flint swore he would kill me, if I was not as silent as the grave." (21)

Harriet Jacobs also recalls how Dr. Flint began lusting after her as she grew into womanhood. Although her description does not specify exactly what he is doing and why, it

leaves the reader in doubt of what the situation must be: “My master met me at every turn, reminding me that I belonged to him, and swearing by heaven and earth that he would compel me to submit to him.” (Jacobs, 21) The relationship that Jacobs describes in this brief interaction draws a fine line between the expectation of submission for white women and for slaves.

Rape and sexual harassment are still highly relevant in modern American society. There are several instances of women getting raped and their attackers walking free, having served little to no jail time. Such was the case for a twenty-two year old Stanford University student who was sexually assaulted by Brock Turner, another Stanford student. Although prosecutors recommended a six-year prison sentence, ultimately Turner only served six months in county jail followed by a mandatory three year parole requirement. (“Brock Turner sentenced to six months amid calls for tougher penalty,” 2016) Cases like this are indicative of the toxic, patriarchal hierarchy under which society functions, which automatically places women in a lower position than men. Black women still occupy the most disadvantageous position within society, which has its roots in centuries of slavery. Harriet Jacobs’ story illustrates how the sexual abuse of slave women in the nineteenth century still resonates strongly in American society today.

# Chapter 3 - Sexual Abuse of Slave Women and Its Justifications

## 3.1 Overview: Southern Justifications for Slavery

During the nineteenth century Southerners and Northerners developed opposite views on slavery. The biggest difference was between Northern abolitionists and Southern slaveholders. "Defenders of slavery argued that if all the slaves were freed, there would be widespread unemployment and chaos. This would lead to uprisings, bloodshed, and anarchy." ("The Southern Argument for Slavery")

Southern defenders of slavery also used religion to underline their argument, citing passages in the Bible, which mentioned slaveholders. The last of the Ten Commandments was a prime example. Southerners used this Commandment to argue that slavery was accepted by God. "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (*New American Standard Bible,* Exodus 20:1-17) The use of religion to justify slavery extended to racist beliefs. Defenders of slavery argued that "the institutionwas divine, and that it brought Christianity to the heathen from across the ocean." ("The Southern Argument for Slavery," par. 7) Spreading Christinaity was still considered important in the nineteenth century. Therefore, the argument that slavery helped educate "heathen people" was effective and relevant.

Defenders of slavery also justified slavery in economic terms. They argued that slaves were treated much better than "the poor of Europe and the workers in the Northern states." ("The Southern Argument for Slavery," par. 8) Failing to understand the fundamental problem with bondage, slaveholders claimed to care for their slaves in a similar manner to a parent or guardian, arguing that slaves had more stability than workers who - one fired - "were left to fend helplessly for themselves." ("The Southern Argument for Slavery," par. 8) Although some slave owners were less harsh than others - an exceptional few taught their slaves how to read and write - the reality was that "the system of slavery was held in place by violence. … It could not survive without the force of the whip, the gun, the patrollers, the overseer, and the physical and psychological torture mechanisms designed to subdue a people." (Smith, 2014) Nevertheless, the paternalistic relationship that some slaveholders claimed to have with their slaves was not

enough to overshadow the inevitable injustices of slavery, particularly because slave owners often exaggerated their kindness towards slaves. (Buhle, et al. 171; Clinton, 88-89)

**3.2 The Paternalism Argument**

In March 1858, Senator James Henry Hammond made a speech saying that slavery was a 'necessary evil' which is defined as "something unpleasant that must be accepted in order to achieve a particular result." ("Necessary Evil") Elaborating upon this term, Hammond used the Mudsill theory to explain why the exploitation of black people was acceptable, particularly for purposes of hard labor. He argued that "in all social systems there must be a class to do the menial duties, to perform the drudgery of life. That is, a class requiring but a low order of intellect and but little skill." (PBS.org) Hammond further explains that, "such a class you must have, or you would not have that other class which leads progress, civilization, and refinement." ("Mudsill Theory," *PBS.org*) Although the Mudsill Theory was proposed late in the history of slavery in the South, it echoes the fundamental belief that black people were naturally more suited to hard, physical labor more than white people.

The law also echoed this view on slaves, particularly in the South. For example, the Fugitive Slave Act, enacted in 1850, stated that any official "who did not arrest an alleged runaway slave" was "liable to a fine of $1,000 (about $30,000 in present-day value)." (Williams, 151) Potential runaway slaves could be arrested simply based on a claimant's sworn testimony of ownership, the result being that the slave in question would be forced to return to the South with the claimant. Due to the accepted belief that black people were inferior to white people, a person who was accused of being a runaway slave "could not ask for a jury trial or testify on his or her own behalf." (151) The Fugitive Slave Act equated slaves with property and its goal was to return missing property to the rightful owners.

One of the most common and complex pro-slavery arguments was paternalism. The paternalistic justification for slavery said that slaves - and black people in general - were in need of guidance due to their natural inferiority to white people. "In the conventional image the typical proslavery thinker is a wealthy planter who doubled as a politician. He looked upon his slaves as children in need of guidance and care." (Tise, 124) Pro-slavery views like that of the

wealthy plantation owner were based on the belief that "slaves were dependent upon slaveholders for their survival and that slaves were not capable of being responsible for their own fates." (Lott, 187) According to pro-slavery Southerners, slavery was in the best interests of the slaves, because without paternal guidance they would not know how to navigate the harshness of life. Slave owners who subscribed to this ideal subsequently believed that if they treated their slaves well; ie teaching them how to read and write, not punishing them in painful ways, then slavery was not a bad situation for them to be in. Paternalism was a convincing argument, because it showed slave owners in a good light, while hiding the darker truths behind slavery. Additionally, it allowed white people to reject any feeling of guilt in favor of heroism.

However, many slave owners viewed slaves as physical property. Former slave Harriet Jacobs writes about this harsh truth in regard to her father's death. "I spent the day gathering flowers and weaving them into festoons, while the dead body of my father was lying within a mile of me. What cared my owners for that? He was merely a piece of property." (Jacobs, 8) Slave owners like Jacobs' - a man named Dr. Flint - considered their slaves primarily equivalent to material goods. Certainly a slave's humanity was less than that of the owner himself. "Slaves were considered property, and they were property because they were black." (PBS.org)

It must be noted, however, that while Flint usually displayed cruelty towards Jacobs and her family, he resorted to paternalistic statements in attempting to prevent her from leaving. He tells her that her goal of freedom can only be achieved through him. Rather than granting her freedom, he asks her to move into a cottage he will build for her and her two children, claiming that their "labor shall be light, such as sewing for [his] family." (Jacobs, 58) His real intention was to have Jacobs and her children remain slaves on his property without her realizing it. In order to try and convince Jacobs further, Flint says, "You know I exact obedience from my own children, and I consider as yet a child" and goes on to say that if she does not accept this offer, then she and her children will be sent to work in her "young master's plantation." (58) Additionally, he tells her that if she chooses to go to the plantation, then her children "shall fare like the rest of the negro children." (58) It is important to note that Flint had an ulterior motive in using paternal language with Jacobs. Ultimately, she refuses his offer and resolves to go to the plantation.

Paternalism was also a way for slave owners to emotionally manipulate their slaves, often making them feel guilty or ashamed for not being grateful to the protection their master offered. Dr. Flint manipulated Jacobs in this manner several times throughout her narrative. “Sometimes my persecutor would ask me whether I would like to be sold. I told him I would rather be sold to any body than to lead such a life as I did.” (Jacobs, 25)

Her description of Flint has her “prosecutor” is highly relevant to the complexity of the paternalism justification. Paternalism created the illusion that slave owners were helping slaves by taking them into their homes and affording them the luxuries of what they believed was a good life. However, they failed to acknowledge that the problem was slavery itself. While the “typical slaveholder was ignorant, but not evil,” (Lott, 1998), Dr. Flint assumed a false sense of paternity, hoping to make Jacobs further submit to his will.

> On such occasions he would assume the air of a very injured individual, and reproach me for my ingratitude. ‘Did I not take you into the house, and make you the companion of my own children? … Have *I* ever treated you like a negro? I have never allowed you to be punished, not even to please your mistress. And this is the recompense I get, you ungrateful girl!” (Jacobs, 25)

Flint’s strategy was echoed by many other slave owners during the nineteenth century. The base expectation was that slaves should be grateful that their situation was not worse, and it was precisely this, which slave women like Jacobs fought against. Her descriptions of Flint’s behavior suggest to the reader that she was acutely aware of his tactics and what he hoped the outcome would be. She begins to implement subtle evasive tactics in order to escape “the usual fate of slave girls…” (43) This was often rape, extreme physical punishment, or even murder. Jacobs’ awareness of the complex system of paternalistic justification helped her to avoid this traumatizing fate.

**3.3 Sexual Abuse: Why Slave Women Had More to Fear**

Although the fear of physical punishment was shared amongst all slaves, slave women were vulnerable to a different type of suffering, namely, sexual abuse. This was due to the fact that their race and gender intertwined to make them more vulnerable to the perils of slavery than their male counterparts. According to Harriet Jacobs, "Women are considered of no value, unless they continually increase their owner's stock. They are put on par with animals." (Jacobs, 35) Slave women's ability to bear children was of great importance to most slave masters, because it gave them more slaves without having to put in the effort of buying them. In addition to a slave owner's lust, he sometimes sexually abused his slaves in order to produce slave children that he would eventually own and put to work. A woman's black position as a slave was a result of her race, which, when combined with her gender, made her significantly more disadvantaged than male slaves. (Moon, 234)

This unique position of disadvantage, combined with racism within society and the legal system, made it extraordinarily difficult for slave women to escape the threat of sexual abuse. Furthermore, because slaves were generally seen as property they had no legal rights whatsoever. It was precisely this, which allowed slave owners, overseers, and other white men to frequently rape or sexually harass slave women. Furthermore, slave women were bound by law and under threat of severe punishment, to obey their master's every wish and command. They had almost no control over where they went, what they did, and with whom they interacted. This meant that sexual abuse was a grim reality for thousands of slave women.

However, they were not entirely helpless. Slave women sometimes organized to shield each other from the slave master's lustful gaze. They also used "verbal confrontations, gestures, attitudes, looks, facial expressions that showed lack of respect and challenged authority…" (Diouf, 2015) This is also evident in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. In Chapter VII, Jacobs details the conversation she had with Dr. Flint after she had expressed the wish to marry a free black man. "You have tried to kill me, and I wish you had; but you have no right to do as you like with me. … I know I have been disrespectful, sir… but you drove me to it; I couldn't help it." (Jacobs, 28) Small moments of resistance, such as this scene in Jacobs' narrative shows that slave women sometimes succeeded in reclaiming their bodily autonomy and ridding themselves

of the 'victim' label if only in minor ways. In spite of these resistance strategies, however, the reality was that a multitude of enslaved women and girls were subjected to sexual abuse and could do very little to better their situation.

Chapter V of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is titled "The Trials of Girlhood." Jacobs painfully articulates the hardships that came with entering adolescence. Notably, she begins to see a disturbing change in her master when she turns fifteen. "But I now entered on my fifteenth year - a sad epoch in the life of a slave girl. My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of." (Jacobs, 20) The sexual harassment that Jacobs endured from Flint had significant psychological consequences. Despite the fact that he did not succeed in raping her, Jacobs reflects that, "the influences of slavery had had the same effect on me that they had on other young girls; they had made me prematurely knowing, concerning the evil ways of the world." (38) According to historian Nell Irvin Painter (1995), Jacobs experienced "a phenomenon that psychologists call inappropriate sexualization, which encourages a child to interpret her own value primarily in sexual terms." (Painter, 135) The burden of being thus "robbed of her innocence and purity" (135) took its toll on Jacobs, as it did with countless other young, female slaves.

Although Jacobs was forced to endure vile words of sexual harassment, which made her knowledgable about sexual impurities at a young age, she managed to use this unfortunate knowledge to avoid being raped. As a preventive measure she took a kinder white man as her lover and a short time after her involvement with him, she became pregnant with her first child. Jacobs' writes about her initial feelings of relief and pride in having outwitted Flint, but she soon spirals into psychological turmoil when she reveals the news to him. "I thought I should be happy in my triumph over him. But now that the truth was out, and my relatives would hear of it, I felt wretched." (Jacobs, 40) It is at this point that Jacobs begs forgiveness and pity from the reader, citing the institution of slavery as the reason why "the slave woman ought not to be judged by the same standard as others." (39) Once again, Jacobs urges her readers to be lenient towards her and all slave women in her position. The slave woman, she claims, is in a notably more disadvantaged position compared to white women. Intersectionality created such a strong

blanket of oppression over slave women that they had almost no bodily autonomy. Jacobs experienced a rare triumph in avoiding being raped by her master. The rarity of slave women's assertion of bodily autonomy is what Jacobs aims to emphasize to her readers in this passage. However, she also understands that white women were oppressed by white men, as well. She used this to appeal to white women's gendered solidarity with slave women.

**3.4 The Jealous Mistress**

Situations of sexual abuse were sometimes complicated further by the presence of a jealous mistress. According to Weiner (1998), "Mistresses were more likely to aid [slave] women when the attacker was the overseer or another non-elite white man than they were when he was their own husband or son." (Weiner, 141) Wives of wealthy plantation owners often felt neglected by their husbands; a feeling that was exacerbated when their husbands lusted after slaves. Weiner explains that, "mistresses, of course, blamed black women who drew the attention of their husbands or sons and hated the children they fathered." (141) Harriet Jacobs found herself caught between a master who "whisper foul things" to her and a mistress who became extremely jealous. Jacobs pities her mistress and says that, "She felt that her marriage vows were desecrated, her dignity insulted…" (Jacobs, 24) These reflections are from the chapter entitled, "The Jealous Mistress," which takes place during Jacobs' youth. Her empathy for Mrs. Flint is admirable, because "she had no compassion for the poor victim of her husband's perfidy. She pitied herself as a martyr; but she was incapable of feeling for the condition of shame and misery in which her unfortunate, helpless slave was placed." (24) Still, Jacobs was able to sympathize with her mistress and her understanding of the complex situation highlights her emotional intelligence. Highlighting her sympathy for her jealous mistress is a tactic to spur the cause of abolition in her white readers.

This hypocrisy on Mrs. Flint's part is an accurate depiction of how white women generally felt in these situations. The Cult of True Womanhood dictated that they should be passive and accept the fact that men were tempted by "sordid and sensual considerations" (Qtd. in Welter, 157) Wives of slave slaveholders were unable to prevent their husbands from seeking relations with slaves and this powerlessness created an intense resentment towards the slaves

who commanded their husbands' attention. It was also the reason why most mistresses "blamed them as much, if not more, than the men whose power and control it [the sexual abuse] represented." (Weiner, 141) Jacobs describes how she longed for a kind word from her mistress, and how that "would have brought [her] to [her mistress's] feet." (Jacobs, 23) Despite this desperate desire to be able to confide in Mrs. Flint, Jacobs understands why she is so unkind towards her, and does not harbor any lingering resentment towards Mrs. Flint. "…I knew I could not expect kindness or confidence from her under the circumstances in which I was placed. I could not blame her. Slaveholders' wives feel as other women would under similar circumstances." (24) It is unclear, however, whether these sympathetic reflections about Mrs. Flint depict Jacobs' feelings in the situation itself, or if they are a result of years of reflection and life experience.

A jealous mistress was not only problematic for slave women who were victims of sexual abuse, but also for their children. A mistress often became jealous if a slave mother bore a child from sexual relations with her husband, regardless of whether or not the child was a result of rape. According to Weiner, wives of slaveholders were "unable to acknowledge the responsibility of white men." (Weiner, 141) Therefore, they often "assumed black women were complicit in their own sexual abuse and… blamed them as much, if not more, than the men whose power and control it represented." (141) Usually, mistresses faced with their husbands infidelity could not bring themselves to outwardly show kindness or pity towards the victimized slave. "The mistress, who ought to protect the helpless victim, has no other feelings towards her but those of jealousy and rage." (Jacobs, 20)

White men's infidelity towards their wives also resulted in "jealousy and hatred enter[ing] the flowery home." (Jacobs, 25) Jacobs talks about young Southern women who "have romantic notions of a sunny clime, and of the flowering vines that all the year round shade a happy home. To what disappointments are they destined! The young wife soon learns that the husband in whose hands she has placed her happiness pays no regard to his marriage vows. Children of every shade of complexion play with her own fair babies, and too well she knows that they are born unto him of his own household." (25-26) The jealousy of a slaveholder's

mistress often meant that mixed-race children of slave mothers were sold off quickly and quietly so as to get rid of the offending offspring.

The law only served to further complicate the situations of mixed-race children. According to the law called 'Partus sequitur ventrem,' any child born to a slave mother was automatically a slave regardless of the race or condition of the father**.** Harriet Jacobs recalls the moment when her master reminds her of this law, after the birth of her first child. "Dr. Flint continued his visits, to look after my health; and he did not fail to remind me that my child was an addition to his stock of slaves." (Jacobs, 43) Slaveholders benefited from this law, because it gave them more slaves without the effort of having to purchase them.

**3.5 Sexual Abuse of Slave Women: Conclusion**

Sexual abuse of slaves was common and often resulted in mixed-race children. Slaveholders' jealous wives made it even more difficult and painful for slave women in these situations, especially if they bore children through the sexual abuse inflicted upon them. Mistresses would often blame the victim, because the rules of society did not allow her to confront her husband about his licentious behavior even if she had indisputable evidence that he had been unfaithful to her with one of his slaves. This evidence was even easier to obtain if the slave woman bore children, as they would often bear some resemblance to their father. The wrath of a jealous wife often forced slaveholders to sell mixed-race children so that she would not have to see living evidence of her husband's infidelity.

Aside from societal expectations the law also favored white men, who "could rape female slaves without fear of punishment." (Moon, 235) In addition, these men benefited from the Partus law, which stated that all children born to a slave mother were considered slaves. This allowed slaveholders to obtain new slaves and benefit from the profits they produced, without having to buy them first. Jacobs laments about the injustices of the law, exclaiming, "With all the all my detestation of Dr. Flint, I could hardly wish him a worse punishment, either in this world or that which is to come, than to suffer what I suffered in one single summer. Yet the laws allow *him* to be out in the free air, while I, guiltless of crime, was pent up here, as the only means of avoiding the cruelties the laws allowed him to inflict upon me!" (Jacobs, 83)

# Chapter 4 - The Children

## 4.1 Motherhood in Slavery

This chapter will focus on the circumstances and trials that slave mothers endured, using Harriet Jacobs' narrative as the main example and case study. "I expressed a wish to have my children sent to me at the north, where I could teach them to respect themselves, and set them a virtuous example; which a slave mother was not allowed to do at the south." (Jacobs, 87) The reality of motherhood for many slaves was that their babies often died shortly after birth. Data results from studies on the mortality rates for slaves, as well as more recent US census data, "places the infant mortality rate in the neighborhood of 350 per thousand and total losses before the end of the first year (stillbirths plus infant deaths) at nearly 50%." (Steckel, 427) Equally as relevant is that "the infant mortality rate for slaves was about 17 percentage points above the rate for the entire antebellum population in the United States." (428) A significant contributing factor to infant deaths was the working conditions of pregnant slaves. Evidence suggests that the larger a plantation was, the more likely it was that slave masters and overseers imposed harsher labor rules on their slaves. (432) A larger plantation subsequently meant more people, usually working in fairly unhygienic conditions, which all led to the spread of disease; a potential death sentence to a newborn baby.

The diet of a slave must also be considered in the relationship between infant mortality and pregnant slave women. According to Johnson (1981), "the typical slave diet may have been adequate in caloric quantity but deficient in nutritional quality. The nutritional requirements of a pregnant slave woman were obviously greater both in calories and in specific nutrients." (Johnson, 510) Slaves were given meager rations of food and had no control over what type of food they were given. In addition, a lack of medical knowledge in the nineteenth century meant that both slaves and their masters were often unaware of the relationship between hard, physical labor, pregnancy, and nutrition. Exceptionally harsh slaveholders would not have treated pregnant slaves any differently than they did all other slaves. It is possible to conclude, therefore, that the high infant death rate amongst slaves in nineteenth century America was largely due to strenuous working conditions and insufficient nutrition. (Johnson, 511)

Sometimes, slave masters took it upon themselves to pair up their female slaves with another slave, often from another plantation or slave owner. “A slave girl was expected to have children as soon as she became a woman. Some of them had children at the age of twelve and thirteen-years-old” (Works Project Administration). Slave owners wanted their slaves to have children in order to increase the number of slaves in their stock, as children born to slave mothers would also be slaves and were potentially profitable to the slaveholder as they grew older. Therefore, they often favored young and healthy women who could bear children when considering the purchase of new slaves. A slave’s ability to reproduce became especially important to slave owners once Congress officially banned the importation of slaves in 1808. (Norton et. al, 200) Due to this legislation, female slaves were increasingly categorized according to their physical ability to have children.

Marci Bounds Littlefield notes that “unlike white women, who could identify motherhood with privilege and social status, motherhood for slave women was connected and rooted in a social system of bondage.” (Littlefield, 54) Motherhood was not joyful for slave women, due to the constant fear that her children could be sold away from her. Jacobs writes extensively about the bitter consequences of being a slave mother, most notable of which, was the fact that her children were also slaves. “I could have made my escape alone; but it was more for my helpless children than for myself that I longed for freedom. Though the boon would have been precious to me, above all price, I would not have taken it at the expense of leaving them in slavery.” (Jacobs, 62) Jacobs repeatedly emphasizes that her struggle for freedom was more for the sake of her children than her own. She did this in order to gain sympathy from her white female readers and to make them see her as a woman equal to them, despite the intersectional barriers of race and class.

**4.2 Motherhood in Jacobs’ Narrative**

Unlike Jacobs, most slaves did not dare, nor had the option to escape. The best outcome for slave mothers in these situations was that all her children stayed in the same place with her. However, this was often not the case. Slave children were frequently sold to other slaveholders, because they were merely considered property and therefore both profitable and interchangeable.

Even though slave marriages and families were not legally recognized in Southern states during this time, slaves still tried to keep their families together and safe, to the best of their abilities. "Some enslaved people lived in nuclear families with a mother, father, and children. In these cases each family member belonged to the same owner. Others lived in near-nuclear families in which the father had a different owner than the mother and children." (Williams, 2010) If a slave mother or father was able to attain freedom, either by running away or being set free, then they were sometimes able to purchase their own children, reunited the family. This was the case for Harriet Jacobs' grandmother, who sold her baked goods for a small profit. "Each year she laid by a little, which was saved for a fund to purchase her children." (Jacobs, 5) When her youngest son was sold upon the death of her master "she went to work with renewed energy, trusting in time to be able to purchase some of her children." (6) This determination was present in the hearts of many slave women. They all tried to protect their children fiercely, but with varying degrees of success.

Harriet Jacobs was fueled by love for her two children, Benjamin and Ellen, in her journey to freedom. She repeatedly mentions how her children gave her the strength and courage to bear the trials of attaining a free life. "Every trial I endured, every sacrifice I made for their sakes, drew them closer to my heart, and gave me fresh courage to beat back the dark waves that rolled and rolled over me in a seemingly endless night of storms." (62) Although it was not possible for Jacobs to interact with Benjamin and Ellen while she was hiding in her grandmother's shed, she happened to find a tool there, which she used to make a small peep hole. "Through my peeping-hole I could watch the children, and when they were near enough, I could hear their talk … How I longed to *tell* them I was there!" (80) Indeed, this small window that allowed her to observe her children gave Jacobs the strength to endure seven, long years in her cramped hiding place. However, she also shares the pain she felt in not being able to tell her children that she was there. She devotes an entire chapter to describing one Christmas during those seven years. She explains with a sorrowful note to her writing that "even slave mothers try to gladden the hearts of their little ones on that occasion. Benny and Ellen had their Christmas stockings filled. Their imprisoned mother could not have the privilege of witnessing their surprise and joy." (81)

One of the most prominent themes throughout *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is the extreme anguish that slave mothers felt in regard to their children; for many, it was unbearable to witness their children "in the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery" (Jacobs, 38). In addition, there was the constant threat of their children being sold at any time, which often served to intensify slave mothers' protectiveness over them.

Motherhood, combined with the horrific realities of slavery, often caused severe psychological trauma for slave women. Jacobs narrative includes several remarks on the miserably dark thoughts that became a reality for a number of slave mothers, including herself; namely, wishing their children dead rather than remain alive and in bondage. Slave women who thought like this often struggled with pre-existing thoughts about wanting to die in order to escape slavery, and subsequently projected these thoughts onto their children. Chapter III of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is titled "The Slaves' New Year's Day." In this chapter, Jacobs explains that January 1st is hiring day and January 2nd is when "the slaves are expected to go to their new masters." (11) She juxtaposes the two versions of New Year's Day as white people and slaves experienced it: "O, you happy free women, contrast *your* New Year's day with that of the poor bondwoman! … Children bring their little offerings, and raise their rosy lops for a caress. They are your own, and no hand but that of death can take them from you." (12) She writes, of course, from the perspective of a slave, and therefore her voice echoes sorrow and longing in this description. She goes on to describe the slave mother's New Year's Day, which is a rather more dismal experience: "But to the slave mother New Year's Day comes laden with peculiar sorrows. She sits on her cold cabin floor, watching the children who may all be torn from her the next morning; and often does she wish that she and they might die before the day dawns." (12)

Although Jacobs herself mentions several instances when she wished death for her children rather than slavery, she ultimately uses motherhood to claim "the insurgent ground of her social identity and formulates her resistance to human bondage." (Li, 2006) More than half of her narrative is devoted to the story of her escape from slavery to the North. The notable thing in Jacobs' narration is that she deliberately highlights how the sole driving force behind all her actions and endurance was the love she had for her children, Benjamin and Ellen. In Jacobs'

narrative, “maternal love is shown to offer a model of relations that opposes the economy of exchange and possession characterizing the antebellum system of human bondage.” (Li, 15) As her journey to freedom progresses, it becomes clear that Jacobs uses motherhood as a way to reclaim the image of slave mothers as held by white people. She eventually reaches the Northern free states, but continues to fight for her children’s freedom. Such dedication and determination emphasizes that “there is might” in “a woman’s pride” and in a mother’s love for [her] children…” (Jacobs, 59) Through her writing, Jacobs tries to put slave mothers on an equal level as white mothers, describing how “my thoughts wandered through the dark past, and over the uncertain future. Alone in my cell, where no eye but God’s could see me, I wept bitter tears. How earnestly I prayed to him to restore me to my children, and enable me to be a useful woman and a good mother!” (91) She also notes that she heard her children talking one day and that her daughter asked, “I don’t remember how mother looked - do you, Benny?” (91) Jacobs’ deliberate emphasis on her maternal feelings and the sadness in hearing that her child could hardly remember her helps to create a more accurate image of the reality of motherhood as a slave.

**Conclusion**

"When the ruthless hand of man strikes the blow, regardless of the misery it causes, it is hard to be submissive … I indulged the hope that the dark clouds around me would turn out a bright lining. I forgot that in the land of my birth the shadows are too dense for light to penetrate." (Jacobs, 26) Women in slavery were among the most downtrodden, degraded, and abused individuals in nineteenth century America. Their experience was a result of the intersection of their race and gender, both of which served to place them under the brutal lash of slavery.

Slave women suffered all the common evils of slavery, but their misery was made even greater by the added threat of rape and sexual harassment. Jacobs writes about her conscious efforts in trying to prevent her master's threats from escalating. "By managing to keep within sight of people, as much as possible, during the day time, I had hitherto succeeded in eluding my master, though a razor was often held to my throat to force me to change this line of policy." (Jacobs, 23) Her description of this situation shows that not only did slave owners often threaten their female slaves with sexual violence, but they also used physical and psychological methods of punishment to keep them from divulging these moments to anyone else. Jacobs concludes that this was because her master was "a married man, and a professional man" and therefore "deemed it necessary to save appearances in some degree." (23) Ultimately, Jacobs escapes Dr. Flint by having two children with a free white man. Despite this, however, he is determined to assert his dominance over her, which results in him sending her children to work at a nearby plantation. White men usually faced no punishment for their actions and even their wives - who sometimes had evidence of their husbands' actions - did not have much power in the legal system. Social expectations also undermined their attempts to bring about justice in these situations.

Motherhood was also complicated by slavery, especially if motherhood came at the price of sexual abuse. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding their conception, children born to slave mothers were condemned to slavery just like their mother. The law disregarded the condition of the father, and offered no support towards slave women who were victims of sexual abuse. Slaves were viewed as property under the law, therefore even if a master promised freedom to a slave's children, it would not be legally binding, due to the fact that "a slave *being* property can *hold* no property." (Jacobs, 6) She elaborates on this point later in the book,

explaining, “I do not say there are no humane slaveholders. Such characters do exist, notwithstanding the hardening influences around them. But they are like angels’ visits - few and far between.” (35) Reality for slave mothers usually involved fear as well as terrible emotional anguish if her children were taken from her.

Being a woman in the nineteenth century came with its own set of burdens, by which white women were also affected. The Cult of True Womanhood imposed strict expectations upon women, mandating certain virtues that they were supposed to embody. These virtues were piety, purity, domesticity, and submission. If a woman embodied these four virtues she was believed to be the ideal woman. (Welter, 151) Although the Cult of True Womanhood was not nearly as oppressive and harsh as slavery, it still served to oppress women; especially white women living in upper and middle class households. Jacobs used this mutual oppression to try and create a feeling of solidarity between herself (representing all slave women) and white women. She knew that her readership consisted of women with abolitionist views and who were in a better position to fuel the abolitionist movement during that time.

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is one of the most revered slave narratives to this day. Jacobs’ vivid descriptions and emotional connection to her readers is both bold and inspiring. “As far as we know now, Jacobs was the only black woman in the United States to author her own slave narrative during the pre-Civil War period.” (Andrews, 463) This makes Jacobs one of the pioneers in black feminist thinking. Her narrative provides insights of the many struggles that slave women faced in the nineteenth century. However, she also gives some sympathy to white women, because they are her presumed audience (Patton, 55). Jacobs’ narrative explains how the intersection of gender, race, and class placed slave women in a uniquely disadvantaged position in nineteenth century America, and also serves as a guide as to how this intersectionality still affects black women in the United States today.

**Works Cited**

"American Passages - Unit 7. Slavery and Freedom: Context Activities." *Annenberg Learner*, 2017, www.learner.org/series/amerpass/unit07/context_activ-1.html.

Andrews, William, L. "Harriet A. Jacobs (Harriet Ann), 1813-1897." *Harriet A. Jacobs (Harriet Ann), 1813-1897*, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill , 2015, docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/bio.html.

Andrews, William L., et al. "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself." *Black American Literature Forum*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1987, pp. 463–465., doi:10.2307/2904120.

"Black Women and Feminism: Shaping Theory." *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, by Bell Hooks, Routledge, 2015.

Boardman, Kay. "The Ideology of Domesticity: The Regulation of the Household Economy in Victorian Women's Magazines." *Victorian Periodicals Review*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2000, pp. 150–164. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20083724.

"Brock Turner sentenced to six months amid calls for tougher penalty". *espn.go.com*. June 5, 2016.

Buhle, Mari Jo, et al. *Women and the Making of America*. Pearson Prentice Hall, 2009.

Camp, Stephanie M. H. "The Pleasures of Resistance: Enslaved Women and Body Politics in the Plantation South, 1830-1861." *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 68, no. 3, Aug. 2002, pp. 533–572., doi:10.2307/3070158.

Carmichael, Stokely, Hamilton, Charles V. (1967). *Black Power: Politics of Liberation* November 1992. New York Vintage. p. 4

Cimprich, John. "Evil Necessity: Slavery and Political Culture in Antebellum Kentucky (review)." *Civil War History*, vol. 52 no. 1, 2006, pp. 98-99. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/cwh.2006.0002

Clinton, Catherine. *The Plantation Mistress: Woman's World in the Old South*. Pantheon, 1982.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color.” *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, July 1991, pp. 1241–1299., doi:10.2307/1229039.

Cruea, Susan M., "Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement" (2005). General Studies Writing Faculty Publications. 1. https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/gsw_p

Davis, David Brion (2014) "Slavery, Sex, and Dehumanization."

“Defining a Nation, 1801-1823.” A People and a Nation: a History of the United States, by Mary Beth Norton et al., Cengage Learning, 2015, p. 200

“Definition of Institutional Racism in English .” *Oxford Dictionaries - English*, Oxford Dictionaries, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/institutional_racism

“Definition of Intersectionality in English .” *Oxford Dictionaries - English*, Oxford Dictionaries, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/intersectionality

Diouf, Sylviane. “Remembering the Women of Slavery.” *New York Public Library*, 27 Mar. 2015, www.nypl.org/blog/2015/03/27/remembering-women-slavery.

Doherty, Thomas. “Harriet Jacobs' Narrative Strategies: ‘Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.’” *The Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1986, pp. 79–91.

Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. “Introduction.” *The Classic Slave Narratives: The Lifeof Olaudah Equiano, The History of Mary Prince, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.* Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Penguin Books, 2002, pp. 1-14.

Greenfield, Rebecca, and Jordyn Holman. “Black Women's Top Jobs Pay Half What White Women's Do.” *BloombergQuint*, Bloomberg Quint, 7 Aug. 2018, 9:50 PM, www.bloombergquint.com/onweb/black-women-s-top-jobs-pay-half-what-white-women-s-do.

Gross, Terry. "A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America". *NPR.org*.

Gustafson, Sandra M, and Robert S Levine. “Harriet Jacobs.” *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 9th ed., vol. 1, W.W. Norton & Company, 2017, pp. 878–879.

"Harriet Jacobs," *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (Shorter Eighth Edition). Ed. Nina Baym and Robert S. Levine. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2013. 818-19.

Hartley, Florence. *The Ladies' Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness: A Complete Hand Book for the Use of the Lady in Polite Society.* 1872. TS. *University of California Libraries.*

Hening, William Wallis. *Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, from the First Session of the Legislature, in the Year 1619*. Forgotten Books , 2016.

Jacobs, Harriet A. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Edited by Lydia Maria Child, Black & White Classics, 2014.

Johnson, Michael P. "Smothered Slave Infants: Were Slave Mothers at Fault?" *The Journal of Southern History*, vol. 47, no. 4, Nov. 1981, pp. 493–520., www.jstor.org/stable/2207400.

Jones, Jae. "The Price of Being Born of Mixed-Race During Slavery." *Black Then*, 7 Nov. 2015, blackthen.com/the-price-of-being-born-of-mixed-race-during-slavery/.

Keister, Lisa A., and Darby E. Southgate. *Inequality: A Contemporary Approach to Race, Class, and Gender*. 1st ed., Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Lamb, Gregory M. "The Peculiar Color of Racial Justice." *The Christian Science Monitor*, The Christian Science Monitor, 25 Jan. 2005, www.csmonitor.com/2005/0125/p15s01-bogn.html.

Li, Stephanie. "Motherhood as Resistance in Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl." *Legacy*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2006, pp. 14–29., doi:10.1353/leg.2006.0009.

Lindley, Susan Hill. *You Have Stept Out of Your Place: A History of Women and Religion in America*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Patton, Venetria K. *Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction*. State University of New York Press, 2000.

Littlefield, Marci Bounds. "Black Women, Mothering, and Protest in 19th Century American Society ." *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, Nov. 2007, pp. 53–61., doi:http://www.jpanafrican.org/docs/vol2no1/BlackWomenMotheringAndProtest.pdf.

Lott, Tommy L. *Subjugation and Bondage. Critical Essays on Slavery and Social Philosophy.* Oxford, England: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 1998. 187-206.

Moon, Dannell (2004). "Slavery". In Smith, Merril D. (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Rape*. Greenwood. p. 234.

Mulligan, Erin R. "Paternalism and the Southern Hierarchy: How Slavery Defined Antebellum Southern Women." *Armstrong Undergraduate Journal of History*, Armstrong State University, 2019, www.armstrong.edu/history-journal/history-journal-paternalism-and-the-southern-hierarchy-how-slavery-defined.

"Necessary Evil." *Cambridge Dictionary.* 2019 https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/necessary-evil (10 June 2019)

O'Neill, Caitlin. "'The Shape of Mystery': The Visionary Resonance of Harriet Jacobs's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl." *The Journal of American Culture*, vol. 41, no. 1, 9 Mar. 2018, pp. 56–67., doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/jacc.12840.

Painter, Irvin, Nell. "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting." *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays,* edited by Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, University of North Carolina Press, 1995, 125-146.

Patton, Venetria K. *Women in Chains: the Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction*. State University of New York Press, 2000.

*PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, 2018, www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2956.html.

Smith, Robyn, N. "There Were No 'Good' Slaveowners." *Reclaiming Kin,* 9 November 2014. www.reclaimingkin.com/there-were-no-good-slaveowners/

Steckel, Richard H. "A Dreadful Childhood: The Excess Mortality of American Slaves." *Social Science History*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1986, pp. 427–465., doi:10.2307/1171026.

Sandford, Elizabeth. *Woman, in Her Social and Domestic Character*. Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1831.

Sherman, Sarah Way. "Moral Experience in Harriet Jacobs's 'Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl." *NWSA Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1990, pp. 167–185., www.jstor.org/stable/4316015.

Sigourney, Lydia Howard. *Letters to Young Ladies* . 2nd ed., William Watson, 1835.

"The Southern Argument for Slavery." *Ushistory.org*, Independence Hall Association, www.ushistory.org/us/27f.asp.

*The Bible.* New American Standard Version, The Lockman Foundation, 1977.

Tise, Larry. *PROSLAVERY: a History of the Defense of Slavery in America, 1701-1840*. UNIV OF GEORGIA Press, 2018.

Wayne, Tiffany K. *Women's Roles in Nineteenth-Century America*. Greenwood Press, 2007.
Weiner, Marli Frances. *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina, 1830-80*. University of Illinois Press, 1998.

Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1966, pp. 151–174., doi:10.2307/2711179.

"What Does Intersectional Feminism Actually Mean?" *IWDA*, International Women's Development Agency, 11 May 2018, iwda.org.au/what-does-intersectional-feminism-actually-mean/.

Williams, Heather Andrea. "How Slavery Affected African American Families." Freedom's Story, TeacherServe. National Humanities Center. <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1609-1865/essays/aafamilies.htm>

Williams, Irene E. (1921). "The Operation of the Fugitive Slave Law in Western Pennsylvania from 1850 to 1860". *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*. 4: 150–60

Works Project Administration. *The Voices from the Past - Hundreds of Testimonies by Former Slaves in One Volume: The Story of Their Life – Interviews with People from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia…* e-art now, 2017.

Yellin, Jean Fagan., editor. "September 1810 – November 1843: Slavery and Resistance." *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, University of North Carolina Press, 2008, pp. 1–51.