

University of Bristol

Department of Historical Studies

Best undergraduate dissertations of 2026

Mia Viventi

**Underestimated: Enslaved People with
Disabilities and the Making of Resistance in
the Antebellum South**

The Department of Historical Studies at the University of Bristol is committed to the advancement of historical knowledge and understanding, and to research of the highest order. Our undergraduates are part of that endeavour.

Since 2009, the Department has published the best of the annual dissertations produced by our final year undergraduates in recognition of the excellent research work being undertaken by our students.

This was one of the best of this year's final year undergraduate dissertations.

Please note: this dissertation is published in the state it was submitted for examination. Thus the author has not been able to correct errors and/or departures from departmental guidelines for the presentation of dissertations (e.g. in the formatting of its footnotes and bibliography).

© The author, 2026

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without the prior permission in writing of the author, or as expressly permitted by law.

All citations of this work must be properly acknowledged.

**Underestimated: Enslaved People with
Disabilities and the Making of Resistance in the
Antebellum South**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Shaun Wallace, for his guidance, support, and invaluable feedback throughout the development of this dissertation.

I would also like to thank my friends Lara and Bella, for being in the library everyday with me and making a stressful time enjoyable.

CONTENTS

Abbreviations.....	7
A Note on Terminology.....	8
Introduction.....	10
Chapter One – The Cultivation of Value on Plantations.....	18
Chapter Two – The Unassuming Runaway.....	27
Conclusion.....	36
Bibliography.....	38

ABBREVIATIONS

WPA – Works Project Administration

FOTM – Freedom on the Move

FSA – Fugitive Slave Advert

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

This study recognises the politics of choice made when using the language of disability.¹ Therefore, when not directly quoting sources, this study follows the recommended language in *Guidelines* based on a survey of national disability organisations and individuals with disabilities.² This study adopts ‘person-first’ language throughout, recognising that whilst disability was central to how these individuals were categorised and controlled, it was only one aspect of their complex identities, which this study seeks to recover, not reduce.³

Discriminatory language used in primary sources is quoted in this dissertation – apart from the ‘N-word’ which will be censored with asterisks when quoted. Finally, ‘enslaved person’ and ‘bondsperson’ are used interchangeably throughout the study.

Definitions and Caveats

This study adopts a deliberately expansive and historically grounded definition of ‘disability’, neither fixed nor purely biological, but instead as a category produced alongside racialised and gendered hierarchies.⁴ The legal, temporal, and spatial restrictions inherent to the institution of slavery made it in itself a ‘disabling institution’.⁵ Therefore, disability arises not from physical and mental impairments themselves, but, from the ‘complicated web’ of personal experiences, cultural assumptions, attitudes, and reactions to those conditions.⁶ To account for this,

¹ Sari Altschuler, ‘Disability’, *Journal of the Early Republic*, 43 (2023), 121-129, (p.121).

² The University of Kansas, Guidelines: How to Write About People with Disabilities (9th edition) ‘Research & Training Center on Independent Living’, <<https://rtcil.org/guidelines>> [accessed 20 March 2026].

³ It is important to note that when using disability language, it is best to ask the individual/community what language they prefer. Importantly, this study adopts a wide-net approach to disabilities, this is purely due to the sources available and does not intend to suggest a uniform experience, construction, or stigma across all disabilities.

⁴ Jenifer L. Barclay, *The Mark of Slavery: Disability, Race, and Gender in Antebellum America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021), p.22.

⁵ Cristina Visperas, ‘The Able-Bodied Slave’ *Journal of Literacy & Cultural Disabilities Studies*, 13 (2019), pp. 93-110, (p.93).

⁶ Dea H. Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability: Bodies, Property, and Power in the Antebellum South, 1800-1860* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.8.

‘disability’ within this study is approached as something ‘culturally constructed, rather than natural and timeless.’⁷

Yet, disability was not merely socially and culturally constructed, but deliberately weaponised by the institution to commodify and control enslaved bodies. Therefore, the uncritical naming of disability within colonial archives can be an act of ‘interpretive violence.’⁸ This project takes this critique seriously, recognising that terms used to describe impairment in slaveholding records – particularly in FSA’s – are deeply embedded in systems of surveillance and control. In response, this study adopts what Eamon Tewell terms a ‘resistant reading’ of its sources.⁹ Where the intended message of slaveholding records is understood, but refused, and substituted with an interpretation that restores agency to the individuals they sought to dehumanise and control.¹⁰

⁷ Douglas C. Baynton, ‘Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History,’ in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. by Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, (New York University Press, 2001), pp. 33-57, (p.52).

⁸ Visperas, ‘The Able-Bodied Slave’, p. 100.

⁹ Eamon Tewell, ‘Toward the Resistant Reading of Information: Google, Resistant Spectatorship, and Critical Information Literacy,’ *Libraries and the Academy*, 16 (2016), pp. 289-310, (p. 290-291).

¹⁰ Ibid.

INTRODUCTION

‘Evidence of slave disability abounds in primary documents but remains invisible to those who choose not to see it.’¹¹

– Dea H. Boster

*\$300 REWARD. RANAWAY from Nashville on 29th December, a negro man nam LEWIS: he is about six feet high, dark mulatto, between 35 and 40 years old, lame in the left leg, produced by white swelling while a boy; a member of the Baptist church and a preacher by profession, has bushy hair, and an unusually high and retreating forehead; can read in the Bible and Testament and commonly carried those books with him, sings unusually well and is a very good rough carpenter. He left Nashville as is supposed, with a negro man by the name of Carr, the property of H. Petway Esq. It is thought that they both have free papers or passes, and are making their way to some of the non-slaveholding States. I will give the above reward for his apprehension and delivery to me at Nashville, or 150 dollars if secured in any jail in the United States so that I get him again.*¹²

ARCHIBALD W. OVERTON.

Nashville, April 22, 1841.

Lewis was, by every measure the plantation used to assign worth, useless – and by every measure it underestimated, one of the most prepared to leave it. Running from his Nashville plantation in the dead of winter, Lewis left employable, knowledgeable of rival geographies, and embedded in kinship networks beyond the plantation.

An injury acquired in childhood left Lewis ‘lame in the left leg,’ an impairment that marked him economically useless in the eyes of the plantation.¹³ Across the antebellum South,

¹¹ Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*, p. 2.

¹² Archibald W. Overton, ‘\$300 REWARD’, *Nashville Union*, 22 April 1841, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 21 March 2026]; all FSA’s within this study are from the FOTM database and can be found through the links in the bibliography.

¹³ Jeff Forret, ‘“Deaf & Dumb, Blind, Insane, or Idiotic”: The Census, Slaves, and Disability in the Late Antebellum South’ *The Journal of Southern History*, 82 (2016), pp.503-548, (p. 547).

real or imagined limitations of such individuals' labour potential made selling them unprofitable, and unappealing to purchasers.¹⁴ To keep human chattel profitable enslavers would go as far, as Cornelia Andrews recalls, to 'operate' on 'runty n***** [...] so's dat dey can't have no little runty chilluns'.¹⁵ Valued on perceived physical prowess and reproductive potential, aesthetics and personal preferences deemed individuals with disabilities 'useless', 'unsound', and even 'chargeable'.¹⁶ Deemed unfit for productive field labour they were often excluded and isolated from their counterparts, set to 'easy work', or taught skilled labour.¹⁷

It is here the plantation's cruelty created its own contradiction. Lewis' exclusion took him from the totalising surveillance of the plantation – into a space of liminality wherein he could reclaim a value rooted in something other than the wealth his body created.¹⁸ Although named a 'very good rough carpenter', Lewis employed himself as 'a member of the Baptist church and [...] preacher by profession'. A position wherein he could cultivate value rooted in himself, gain a position of authority and distinction that no ledger could account for.¹⁹

Lewis's disability-determined labour on his plantation was not just a place wherein he could resist the devaluation of his body – it produced the infrastructure of his escape. Any participation in church required congregation, interaction and movement, gaining knowledge of rival geographies that existed outside and in tension with the plantation to facilitate escape and refuge.²⁰ Overton's notice of his leaving with Carr, who belonged to another plantation, solidifies the type of off-plantation networks Lewis's labour afforded him.

Four months gone, and not a trace. Overton's '\$300' reward did not reflect the worth of Lewis's body – the market had already deemed it useless. It reflected the distance his disability-determined labour had carried him from everything Overton thought he controlled. He had given Lewis a trade, a congregation, and a Bible – with which Lewis had not only resisted his devaluation – but forged his escape.

¹⁴ Barclay, *Mark of Slavery*, p. 56.

¹⁵ Library of Congress, 'Cornelia Andrews' in *Federal Writers' Project: Vol.11, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter*, <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>> [accessed 28 March 2026] p.27.

¹⁶ Dea H. Boster, "'Useless": Disability, Slave Labor, and Contradiction on Antebellum Southern Plantations' *Review of Disability Studies*, 7 (2014); Nathaniel Windon, 'Superannuated: Old Age on the Antebellum Plantation' *American Quarterly*, 71 (2019) pp.93-110 (p. 95); Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*, (University of Illinois Press, 2016) p. 48.

¹⁷ Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*, p.82.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 56.

¹⁹ Daina Ramey Berry, 'Soul Values and American Slavery,' *Slavery & Abolition*, 42 (2021), pp. 201-218, (p. 203).

²⁰ Viola F. Müller, *Escape to the City: Fugitive Slaves in the Antebellum Urban South*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 2022), p. 6.

The historiography has not yet made room for Lewis. It has made room for the heroic body, the skilled tradesman, and the determined fugitive – but not for the man who was all three and walked with a limp.²¹ This study intervenes at this intersection. Offering the first sustained study of disability as a generative condition that forged the precise conditions that made resistance, on and beyond plantations, possible.

Literature Review:

The history of resistance in the antebellum South has undergone a fundamental transformation. Where earlier scholarship centred large-scale rebellion, historians have since recovered the everyday acts of resistance enacted in the intimate spheres of enslaved life.²² Yet, historians' pervasive assumption of non-disability of the subjects of its inquiry have excluded individuals with disabilities from this revision. This study intervenes in these histories, answering calls to expand and complicate both where, and by whom, resistance was enacted.²³

Disability studies, an interdisciplinary field dating from the mid-1980s, repositioned disability as a key defining social category on par with race, class, and gender – extracting disability from narratives of passive victimhood and into the centre of historical inquiry.²⁴ Although it has slowly been adopted into mainstream history, in regard to U.S. slavery, and particularly resistance, it remains underdeveloped. Two historians, Dea H. Boster and Jenifer L. Barclay, have most consequentially tackled the former, and whose work builds the foundation of this study.

Boster's pioneering study observed the fluidity of disability in the antebellum South, and how bondspeople actively 'negotiated meanings of disability', becoming, for Boster, an 'important element of slave agency and resistance' in the antebellum South.²⁵ Yet, Boster's

²¹ John Hope Franklin and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 144.

²² James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (Yale University Press, 1985) p. 29; Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 3.

²³ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, p. 2.

²⁴ Catherine J. Kudlick, 'Disability History: Why We Need Another "Other"', *The American Historical Review*, 108 (2003), pp. 763-793 (p. 764).

²⁵ Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*, p. 36.

recognition of disability as a site of agency remains anchored in its strategic performance – the feigning, exaggeration, and negotiation of impairment as a ‘contested space’ between enslaved people and their enslavers.²⁶ In doing so, she stops short of asking what occurred beyond that negotiation, omitting the more personal, intimate ways in which resistance could be enacted within these positions, and how those positions became the infrastructure of escape.

Barclay’s work begins to illuminate these more intimate social dynamics. She recognised that they often existed within a ‘liminal space’, dismissed as ‘weak and lacking in value’, they had opportunities to weaponise dismissive attitudes for their own gain.²⁷ Wherein lessened surveillance and easy categorisation of their bodies allowed for them to undertake necessary roles on plantations their counterparts benefitted from.²⁸ Yet, placing them as figures of ‘stability and continuity’ for their communities, Barclay fails to foreground how individuals with disabilities employed agency and resistance for themselves in these positions.²⁹ And where Barclay turns to fugitivity, it is to the disabling legislation, the intentional disfigurement of those who repeatedly sought to escape, rather than those who fled successfully through the very conditions their disabilities forged.³⁰

Taken together, Boster and Barclay establish disability as negotiated, socially constructed, and as a new lens to understand power relations in the antebellum South. Yet, resistance remains in both studies, peripheral, and in cases of fugitivity, entirely absent. This study intervenes here, arguing that disability actively structured the conditions through which resistance, and escape, could become possible.

To do so, this study nuances and advances key theoretical frameworks put forward by Stephanie M. H. Camp and Daina Ramey Berry. Camp asks scholars to turn their attention ‘to the everyday, to the private, concealed, and even intimate worlds’ to excavate resistance, and in extending this framework to individuals with disabilities, the specific spatial dynamics Camp identified that were designated by gender become blurred.³¹ This dissolution of gendered spatial boundaries created conditions for resistance that Camp’s application, centred on enslaved women, could not capture.³² Further, Berry identifies resistance grounded in interiority that ‘spoke to the spirit and soul’ of enslaved people where they sought to maintain the value of their

²⁶ Ibid, p. 150.

²⁷ Barclay, *Mark of Slavery*, p. 68.

²⁸ Ibid, p.17, p.25.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 42.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 87.

³¹ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, p. 3.

³² Ibid.

souls whilst captive in an institution that treated them as property.³³ Berry examines reconnecting to soul values through nature, music, spirituality and after physical beatings, but does not explore how labour could be an avenue to cultivate their soul value.³⁴

Finally, this study intervenes in the historiography of fugitivity. It challenges stories of resistance from what Eli Clare coins the ‘supercrip narrative,’ which focus on ‘disabled people “overcoming” [their] disabilities’, such as Hunt-Kennedy’s assessment that individuals ran away *despite* their disabilities.³⁵ And instead, directly expands Viola F. Müller’s identification of the ‘new fugitive slave’.³⁶ Müller rejects the features typically attributed to fugitives, the foremost being male, skilled, and physically fit and puts forward a model that ‘foregrounds horizons created by physical mobility, autonomy, and exposure to other people who were not slaves or slaveholders.’³⁷ Whilst she defines a new fugitive in terms that would logically include individuals with disabilities, they remain omitted from her study. This study nuances Müller’s observation through a lens of disability that positions disability, not as a constraint on resistance, but as one of its most generative conditions.

Taken together, this study expands these intertwining histories, offering the first sustained study that centres individuals with disabilities as key figures in the history of resistance in the antebellum South.

Methodology:

This study prioritises the voices and resistance of the previously enslaved. It does so by reading existing sources in new and innovative ways.³⁸ This study adopts Eamon Tewell’s ‘resistant

³³ Daina Ramey Berry, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Beacon Press Boston, 2017), p. 7.

³⁴ Berry, ‘Soul Values’, p.204, p.206.

³⁵ Janell Hobson, ‘Of “Sound” and “Unsound” Body and Mind: Reconfiguring the Heroic Portrait of Harriet Tubman,’ *A Journal of Women Studies*, 40 (2019), pp.193-218, (p. 194); Stefanie Hunt-Kennedy, ‘Had his nose cropt for being formerly runaway’: disability and the bodies of fugitive slaves in the British Caribbean,’ *Slavery & Abolition*, 41(2), pp. 212-233, (p. 226).

³⁶ Müller, *Escape to the City*, p. 5.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 5.

³⁸ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, p. 2.

reading’, and employs what Daniel Wickberg termed the ‘reading of absence’.³⁹ A resistant reading calls for the intended message of a source to be understood, but rejected, and reinterpreted to recentre performances of resistance and autonomy.⁴⁰ In focusing on what is presented and what is omitted, this approach allows for the absences in the source materials to be given a voice.⁴¹ In tandem, this approach provides a method to ‘read’ ideas about disability and resistance in many different kinds of sources. Therefore, the triangulation between freedom narratives, WPA narratives, and FSA’s put against this methodology allows this study to directly intervene within histories of disability and resistance to offer a new central agent.

Whilst freedom narratives are not without their challenges – memory, omissions, and white mediation – they offer invaluable insight into how individuals valued themselves and those around them.⁴² A resistant reading brings to the forefront the self-making that existed alongside literary conventions, where the idiosyncrasies in theme, style, and content can be realised.⁴³ It rejects these autobiographers as passive to white mediators, and instead, active shapers who ‘set about changing the rules by which the game was played even as they played along with it.’⁴⁴ In doing so, freedom narratives become crucial – not only to centre the voices of the previously enslaved, but to gain insight into forms of resistance scholarship could otherwise not realise.

Where freedom narratives provide insight into the colonial, early republic, and early antebellum period – this study engages with a larger temporal range by substituting some of the 3,000 WPA interviews to provide coverage of the late ante- and post-bellum period. Issues of age, self-censorship, and white mediation are again overcome through this study’s approach.⁴⁵ Reading what is included and omitted with equal rigour, information that would otherwise be almost completely hidden from view which documents created by white people could not address, the WPA interviews record.⁴⁶ Further, as this study focuses on self-making and

³⁹ Tewell, ‘Toward the Resistant Reading’, p. 290; Daniel Wickberg, ‘Heterosexual White Male: Some Recent Inversions in American Cultural History’, *The Journal of American History*, 92 (2005), pp.136-157, (p. 154).

⁴⁰ Tewell, ‘Toward the Resistant Reading’, p. 290.

⁴¹ Ibid; Shaun R. C. Wallace, ‘Fugitive Voices,’ in *American Cultures as Transnational Performance*, ed. by Katrin Horn (New York: Routledge, 2021), pp.113-126, (p.113).

⁴² James Olney, ‘“I was Born”: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature’, *Callaloo*, 20 (1984), pp. 46-73 (p.48); Jennifer Fleischner, *Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women’s Slave Narratives* (New York University Press, 1996), p. 15.

⁴³ Fleischner, *Mastering Slavery*, p. 15.

⁴⁴ William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*, (University of Illinois Press, 1988) p. 6.

⁴⁵ Marie Jenkins Schwartz, ‘The WPA Narratives as Historical Sources’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. by John Ernest, (Oxford University Press, 2014) pp. 89-101 (p. 90).

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 93.

resistance, what is remembered years later, and what is chosen to be included and excluded, is of high importance. This approach allows for a greater range across age, gender, and time, to be realised within this study.

Finally, this study is informed by the FSA's compiled in the FOTM database – the largest searchable digital archive of FSA's from the antebellum South between 1704-1894.⁴⁷ It is with FSA's that this study's methodology is most meticulously applied. Intended to reaffirm enslavers' power and diminish the enslaved, we receive documents inscribed with their violence.⁴⁸ Yet, through a resistant reading, the stories of liberation they also record can be brought to the forefront – becoming what David Waldstreicher frames as 'the first slave narratives.'⁴⁹ Historians of fugitivity have long deployed this reading against FSA's, but it has yet to be extended to individuals with disabilities.⁵⁰ Where Boster, Barclay, and Hunt-Kennedy read them as disabling forces in the arsenal of enslavement, this study offers a new approach.⁵¹ In doing so, this study bridges the gap between disability history and the study of resistance through its use of FSA's.

Read in concert and read resistantly, these three source bases make visible a symbiotic relationship between disability and resistance that no single source, and no previous study, has made visible. It is through this framework that Lewis, 'lame', a preacher by profession and headed to freedom, ceases to be an anomaly and becomes emblematic of a resistor and fugitive the historiography has not yet had the tools to uncover.

Structure:

This dissertation is organised in a two-chapter format, to distinguish between the forms of resistance individuals with disabilities enacted within and beyond plantation boundaries.

⁴⁷ *Freedom on the Move* <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 26 March 2026]

⁴⁸ Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (University of Philadelphia Press, 2016), p. 14.

⁴⁹ David Waldstreicher, 'Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 56 (1999), pp. 243-272, (p.247).

⁵⁰ Waldstreicher, 'Reading the Runaways', p.247; Wallace, 'Fugitive Voices,' p.113.

⁵¹ Hunt-Kennedy, "Had his nose cropt", p. 226; Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*, p. 72; Barclay, *Mark of Slavery*, p. 87.

Chapter One: The Cultivation of Value on Plantations

Chapter Two: The Unassuming Runaway

CHAPTER ONE – THE CULTIVATION OF VALUE ON PLANTATIONS

‘Sometimes we are blessed with being able to choose the time and the arena and the manner of our revolution, but more usually we must do battle wherever we are standing.’⁵²

- Audre Lorde

In a mid-1930s interview, Frank Fikes reminisced about his childhood on a plantation in Arkansas. He especially remembered how his work set him apart from the other boys his age as he was ‘crippled’ with something ‘wrong with [his] foot when [he] first started [...] walking.’ Where the other boys ‘carried water, pine, drove cows and held the calves off and made fires’ Frank was set to the ‘very easy’ work, where he had to ‘nurse all of the time.’ Under a system in which his body was routinely categorised and valued based on size, strength, physical ability, and skill, Frank possessed few attributes that made him valuable to slaveholders.⁵³

And yet, Frank’s disability did not diminish his identity, it provided an alternate arena in which to construct it. His plantation had ‘a hundred families [...] and nearly every family had a baby,’ ‘sometimes,’ he recalled, ‘as fast as I got one baby to sleep, I would have to nurse another one to sleep’. After reimagining his position on the plantation, he revised his previous evaluation, concluding he ‘had a big job after all.’ Frank’s recollection is striking for how he chose to reframe his position. In asserting his work as a ‘big job’ he reclaims the importance of his labour, and its essential nature to the functioning of plantation life. Whilst Frank’s body may have been deemed useless due to his disability, his testimony reveals a competing framework of value grounded in responsibility and communal necessity. In this sense, Frank did not merely reframe his labour, he refused the plantation’s terms for assigning worth entirely and implemented his own.⁵⁴

Scholarship has recognised labour as an ‘arena of “self-making”’ to affirm gendered identities and self-images, but this has not been extended to individuals with disabilities.⁵⁵ In focusing on

⁵² As cited in, Sharla M. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 193.

⁵³ Barclay, *Mark of Slavery*, p.28, p.29.

⁵⁴ Library of Congress, ‘Frank Fikes’ in *Federal Writers’ Project: Vol.2, Arkansas, Part 2, Cannon-Evans* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn022/>> [accessed 30 March 2026], p.283.

⁵⁵ David Stefan Doddington, *Contesting Slave Masculinity in the American South* (Cambridge

the reclamation of their self-hood, this chapter deviates from previous scholarship. Barclay positioned individuals with disabilities as passive occupants of roles rather than active agents within them, whilst Boster recognised disability as a site of agency, but limited that recognition to labour demands, feigning and exaggeration.⁵⁶ This chapter argues that it was there, in the spaces Barclay and Boster identified but did not enter, that the most consequential resistance was forged.

To enter those spaces, this chapter answers Camp's demands to attend to the everyday, concealed and intimate worlds of resistance and complicates her 'geographies of containment' to include bodies perceived as disabled.⁵⁷ It also expands Berry's concept of 'soul values' to illuminate how individuals with disabilities cultivated internal value through everyday on-plantation labour.⁵⁸ Focusing on childcare, preaching, and healing, this chapter demonstrates how each offered an active arena of self-making, beyond the geographies of containment their non-disabled counterparts were restricted to.⁵⁹ The devaluation imposed by the institution produced the precise conditions under which an alternate economy of worth could be built. Turning inward and seeing labour as a place for reinterpretation of themselves, this chapter uncovers individuals with disabilities engaging in a deliberate and daily resistance to their devaluation.

Similarly to Frank Fikes, Charlie Van Dyke and Willie Wallace's testimonies reveal how disability-determined labour could become, for the individual, a space to reclaim their social identity and value.

Charlie's recollection that enslaved men were not 'allow[ed] [...] to marry unless [they] could split a hundred rails a day' reveals how plantation regimes tied masculinity to physical productivity. His disability therefore excluded him from normative markers of manhood, and with it, his value. Similarly, Willie Wallace's father, who was 'crippled' and therefore 'couldn't work in the field,' was also geographically, and emotionally, excluded from his counterparts.

And yet, rather than rendering these men socially irrelevant, their exclusion forged the opportunity for an alternative structure of value, not in terms of monetary value, but in

University Press, 2018), p. 90.

⁵⁶ Barclay, *Mark of Slavery*, p. 42; Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*, p. 160.

⁵⁷ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, p. 3.

⁵⁸ Berry, 'Soul Values', p. 201.

⁵⁹ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, p. 3.

caregiving and cultural transmission. Being ‘never required to do heavy work as he broke his leg when a boy,’ Charlie’s master ‘let him just work around the yard and look after his sisters and brothers and also the other slave children.’ Placed in charge of children on a plantation spanning ‘about a thousand acres’ with ‘a hundred head of slaves,’ Charlie occupied a role that extended mere supervision, and took him beyond spatial restrictions his counterparts were held to. In caring for and interacting with children, he participated in the transmission of values, behaviours, and identities that existed outside the ideological and geographical control of slaveholders.⁶⁰ Charlie’s labour, overlooked by overseers and account books, was redefined into a site of self-making.

For Willie Wallace’s father, living within an environment where enslaved mothers had to continuously compromise with their master’s control of their intimate life, carrying ‘the children out to the field to be suckled’ facilitated moments of intimacy that the plantation sought to regulate or outright deny.⁶¹ The rearing of children offered opportunities to provide alternate values and self-image to that of what masters tried to instil.⁶² In protecting what was the most important survival mechanism in slavery – the family – her father’s work placed him at the centre of community cohesion, wherein he could reclaim a social-identity wholly separate to that of his enslavers.⁶³

The active reclamation of their social identities is solidified in Charlie’s interview. After speaking of marriage restrictions, he asserts he ‘was a man long afore it all started, lady’ – suggesting that for Charlie, masculinity was not dictated by when he got married, or the wealth his body could accumulate, but through his position in his community. In expanding their work as a place to reclaim their identities and value, Charlie and Willie’s father’s resisted their devaluation.⁶⁴

This form of work was not passive as scholarship has suggested, but a place of redefinition and reclamation.⁶⁵ Frank Fikes, Charlie Van Dyke and Willie Wallace’s father

⁶⁰ John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, (Oxford University Press, 1972), p.79.

⁶¹ Brenda E. Stevenson, ‘Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South,’ *The American Historical Review*, 102 (1996) pp.189-190, (p. 282).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Blassingame, *The Slave Community*, p. 79; ‘Library of Congress, ‘Willie Wallace’ in *Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narratives Project, Vol.2, Arkansas, Part 7, Vaden-Young*, , <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn027/>> [accessed 2 April 2026], p.42.

⁶⁴ Library of Congress, ‘It Took \$50.00 to put Uncle Charlie on de Floor!’ in *Federal Writers’ Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol.1, Alabama, Aarons-Young* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn010/>> [accessed 2 January 2026], p.398-400.

⁶⁵ Doddington, *Contesting Slave Masculinity*, p.90.

positioned themselves as central to community cohesion, wherein childcare became an arena in which they could reclaim their sense of self and value.

Where childcare offered reclamation of value in reclaiming social identity, preaching offered reclamation of value through influence and social distinction. Like all humans, ‘slaves were sensitive to privilege, status, and inequality’, and where value was tied to physical prowess, preaching bolstered a sense of self and purpose beyond what childcare could offer.⁶⁶

The importance of religion to enslaved communities has long been realised, but has yet to be extended to the intimate ways in which religion and spirituality could serve individuals with disabilities.⁶⁷ The often-cited voices in slave religion, Eugene D. Genovese and Albert J. Raboteau, overlook disability from their studies.⁶⁸ Religion is recognised to have created identities that remained strong through chaos, disappointment, and disaster, but this has not been extended to individuals with disabilities whose lives on plantations were structured through their exclusion.⁶⁹

As white-led church services centred servitude and punishment, bondspeople had to look elsewhere for more authentic Christian preaching, and individuals with disabilities answered their call.⁷⁰ Decreased surveillance and access to rival geographies allowed individuals with disabilities to undertake these roles. In these positions, no enslaver could devalue someone who had become, in the eyes of their community, a spokesperson of an alternate system of power at odds with their own.

Ella Glespie’s interview illuminates how enslaved persons with disabilities actively sought to bolster their social positions through preaching. Her father acquired an injury that rendered him a ‘cripple’, and by implication, exempted from field labour. He instead worked both as ‘a shoemaker’ and a ‘preacher’. While the plantation sought to reassign value to a body perceived as disabled through skilled labour, her father found greater value in a profession wherein he could ‘read and write and make change.’ Although his work as a shoemaker, ‘made

⁶⁶ David Brion Davis, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*, (Oxford University Press, 2006), p.196.

⁶⁷ John B. Boles, *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*, (University Press of Kentucky, 1988), p. 1; Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South*, (Oxford University Press, 2004) p.260.

⁶⁸ Genovese, *Roll Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, (Pantheon Books, 1974) p.258 p.255; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, p.250.

⁶⁹ Davis, *Inhuman Bondage*, p.196; Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, p.266.

⁷⁰ Raboteau, *Slave Religion*, p.178.

a right smart of money' some worth as 'high as twenty dollars', Ella's father continued to preach post-emancipation. Suggesting that for Ella's father, preaching, beyond the expectations and control of enslavers, offered influence and distinction no skilled labour could.⁷¹

Purposeful cultivation of social distinction to bolster these individuals' internal value can also be read in Josiah Henson's narrative. After a brutal beating, Henson was left permanently disabled, an attempt to return to his field labour 'shattered [his] shoulder-blades again'.⁷² Although he retained his position as overseer, a resistant reading of his narrative illuminates how much of his reclamation of value came from his position as a preacher.

Henson recalled becoming 'quite as esteemed preacher among them,' reflecting on his worth not in terms of pride, but of purpose, adding he 'will not believe it is vanity which leads [him] to think [he] was useful to some.'⁷³ Henson's portrayal of his work as valuable to others illuminates how he saw himself and his social distinction cultivated through his preaching.

Whereas his role as overseer exploited his counterparts on behalf of his enslaver, Henson realised how his work as a preacher could return it. He recalled 'imparting to the poor slaves those little glimmerings of light from another world,' knowingly offering a vision of power and personhood entirely at odds with the one slavery imposed. Importantly, his distinction between himself and 'the poor slaves' solidifies how, as their preacher, Henson perceived himself above the social station of his counterparts, a perception enabled through his disability.⁷⁴

Henson's liminal positioning on his plantation was not simply useful to his congregation, but became an arena in which he could construct an image of himself that reclaimed his value. No longer reliant on the value slaveholding society held his body to, an overseer who could not raise his arms above his shoulders became, in the eyes of those around him, a conduit to another world entirely.

Whereas Henson's narrative allows for a reading of *his* interpretation of cultivated authority amongst his community, Frederick Douglass's narrative illuminates the reverse. Douglass recalls Uncle Isaac Copper, the man who bought ideas of religion into his 'dark corner' of the world, 'lame as he was', when he sat before them, 'he could reach every boy in

⁷¹ Library of Congress, 'Ella Glespie' in *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 2, Arkansas, Part 3, Gadson-Isom*, <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn023/>> [accessed 2 April 2026], p.45.

⁷² Josiah Henson, 1789-1883, *Truth is Stranger Than Fiction: Father Henson's Story of His Own Life*. ed. by Samuel A. Eliot (Boston: J. P. Jewett, 1858) p. 18.

⁷³ *Ibid*, p.13.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*.

the room'.⁷⁵ Douglass recognises that perceptions of Uncle Isaac's disability may have inhibited him from reaching other aspects of life, but when it came to imparting the word of the Lord, his disability positioned him right where he was meant to be.

The title Douglass bestows him, as their 'Doctor of Divinity', is not incidental but reflective of a community that recognised the social influence Copper had cultivated.⁷⁶ Through his disability-determined mobility and spiritual authority, Uncle Isaac Copper's role as a preacher did more than resist his devaluation, it cultivated power in distinction.

His distinction is solidified in his 'privilege of whipping somebody else.'⁷⁷ Not only in his commanding of the children to 'kneel down' and repeat his prayer with 'promptness and uniformity' before him, but he would also punish mistakes. When they faltered, Uncle Isaac would pause 'to give [them] a short lecture, and to use the switches on [their] backs.'⁷⁸ Where Uncle Isaac was empowered by his being the voice of their souls, as other black preachers who 'enjoyed a considerable reputation' in the South, his offering to understand and address their hopes and miseries could be exploited to position himself, figuratively, and literally, above them.⁷⁹

Only when scholars understand and read spirituality as an arena of self-making for individuals with disabilities, can their everyday resistance be realised.⁸⁰ For Ella Glespie's father, Josiah Henson, and Uncle Isaac Copper, the devaluation they undertook in the eyes of slaveholders was not just resisted through an alternate value system, but in forging an alternate system of hierarchy in which they could be revered.

Where preaching offered a reorganisation of plantation hierarchy in which individuals with disabilities could be revered, healing could transform not only the perception of their value, but of their disabilities themselves. The body that slavery marked as deficient became, through healing, the body that others depended on for survival.

In doing so, this chapter deviates further from Boster, whose focus on healing is restricted to perspectives on slave diseases, or Barclay who recognises that conjuring could link

⁷⁵ Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time*, (Hartford, CT: Park, 1881) p.47, p.42.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 47.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Genovese, *Roll Jordan, Roll*, p. 257, p.258.

⁸⁰ Berry, 'Soul Values', p. 214.

individuals with disabilities to another realm, her analysis remains centred in what they could do for their communities, and not themselves.⁸¹ Instead, this study directly expands Fett's seminal work *Working Cures*, not only expanding it to individuals with disabilities, but in extending the gendered categorisations Fett observed in the delegation of roles of healing.⁸² Although she recognises that they were authorial figures on plantations, her analysis is rooted in the perspective of the community, and therefore the more personal ways healing could empower these people is missing from her analysis.⁸³ Instead, this section focuses on the personal and intimate ways in which healing offered reclamation over the very bodies of enslaved persons with disabilities.

Doctor Copper's case once again makes this visible. Douglass records that when the honorific 'Uncle' was dropped, he 'was called Doctor Copper'.⁸⁴ Doctor Copper illuminates how healing offered an arena to reconstruct his bodily difference from devaluation in the eyes of his enslaver, to a source of authority over his community.

Douglass asserts that 'though lame, he was no sluggard,' witnessing how Doctor Copper 'made his crutches do him good service' as he sought out the sick, suffering and whose ailments no white medicine could see to the way he could.⁸⁵ Crutches that have been read as immobilising become Doctor Copper's pass to move freely throughout his plantation. Moving with authority, forged through his disability, his reclamation over his very body was visible. So much so, that although Douglass cannot recall where he learnt his knowledge, 'he was too well established in his profession to permit question as to his native skill or attainments'.⁸⁶

Further, Mrs. Emmaline Heard's interview consists of a striking recollection of Aunt Darkas, a conjurer and healer. Described as 'blind', she could 'go ter the woods and pick out any kind of root or herb she wanted.' While blindness marked her as deficient within the plantation economy, Heard's testimony reveals how blindness could be read as a source of social distinction.

Heard frames Aunt Darkas' knowledge as divinely guided, recalling how 'the Lord told her what roots to get,' asserting that 'the Lord gave [Darkas] power and vision', positioning her skills within a spiritual framework that exceeded plantation logics of value. For her community,

⁸¹ Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*, p. 21; Barclay, *Mark of Slavery*, p.68, p.70.

⁸² Fett, *Working Cures*, p. 199.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 198.

⁸⁴ Douglass, *The Life and Times*, p. 47.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

her physical body was viewed as a *vehicle* for a greater power, rather than an embodiment she had to overcome. For her community, Darkas's vision saw to another world. The respect Darkas accumulated is solidified by there being 'a piece in the paper 'bout her' after she died. Darkas's disability actively reoriented a disability that plantations read as useless, to a signal of spiritual authority. Again, liminality afforded the accumulation of knowledge, spiritual distinction and influence over her community.⁸⁷

This analysis of healing expands Berry's interiority into its most literal sense, into a form of value that existed beyond any external system of control.⁸⁸ 'Soul values' in healing were not just spiritual, they were located in a knowledge system the plantation had no access to and therefore no power over. Through these accounts, healing emerges as more than a space to aid their communities. It becomes a place to reclaim their value through reconfiguring perceptions of their bodies, both physically and spiritually, on their own terms.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the spaces of liminality Boster and Barclay recognised but did not enter and found a system of daily and deliberate resistance to their devaluation under the system of slavery. Whether working in childcare, preaching, or healing, these positions were not passive, or merely for the sake of others, but were arenas wherein these individuals could reclaim their social identity, become revered both in spirit and body. This resistance was not in spite of their disabilities but forged through it. Underestimated, ignored, and forgotten by enslavers – they became renowned, central, and valued by others, and most importantly, themselves.

The chapter that follows asks how being underestimated and devalued could become, for many, the infrastructure of flight.

⁸⁷ Library of Congress, 'Emmaline Heard' in *Federal Writer's Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 2*, Garey-Jones, <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn042/>> [accessed 2 April 2026], p.147.

⁸⁸ Berry, 'Soul Values', p.201.

CHAPTER TWO – THE UNASSUMING RUNAWAY

Harriet Tubman has functioned as perhaps the most iconic black woman in American culture, as a famed ‘conductor’ of the Underground Railroad, political activist, entrepreneur, and suffragette.⁸⁹ Yet, she remains almost entirely invisible as a formerly enslaved woman with a disability.

Tubman sustained a trauma-induced lifelong injury which ‘cause[d] her often to fall into a state of somnolency [...] from which it [was] almost impossible to rouse her.’⁹⁰ Suffering episodes of what scholars pertain to epilepsy, what enslavers denoted ‘hopeless’, and ‘incurable’, and what scholarship has remained unable to reckon with.⁹¹ Recently, there have been calls to attend to the ways historiography has discursively distinguished between weakness and strength, ‘in which the superwoman is always capable, [...] her opposite – the disabled woman – is often assumed to be incapable.’⁹² A body worth ‘sixpence’ on the antebellum slave market was not a body the scholarship could call heroic.⁹³

Harriet Tubman is emblematic of the historiography of fugitivity’s reproduction of the ‘disabled slave/able-bodied freeperson’ binary that wrote individuals with disabilities out of its history before it began.⁹⁴ Where Forret asserted individuals with disabilities ‘made unlikely candidates for flight,’ a strict imagination of fugitives as non-disabled reflects a cultural logic that continues to frame disability as an obstacle to flight.⁹⁵ This study intervenes here. Arguing instead that disability actively generated the conditions for fugitivity.

Where Chapter One observed how unique positioning on plantations afforded individuals a liminality wherein they could cultivate an alternate system of value, this chapter follows these individuals off of plantations. Observing how the same logics that deemed them useless on plantations created the infrastructure of their escape.

⁸⁹ Kahlil Chism, ‘Harriet Tubman: Spy, Veteran, and Widow,’ *OAH Magazine of History*, 19 (2005), pp.47-51, (p.47).

⁹⁰ Sarah Bradford, *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W. J. Moses, Printer, 1869), p. 13.

⁹¹ Dea H. Boster, ‘An “Epileptick” Bondswoman: Fits, Slavery, and Power in the Antebellum South’ *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 83 (2009), pp. 271-301, (p.279).

⁹² Hobson, ‘Of “Sound” and “Unsound” Body and Mind,’ p.194.

⁹³ Bradford, *Scenes in the Life*, p. 14.

⁹⁴ Jean Franzino, ‘Lewis Clarke and the “Color” of Disability: The Past and Future of Black Disability Studies’ *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 35 (2016).

⁹⁵ Forret, ‘Deaf & Dumb’, p. 532 ; Waldstreicher, ‘Reading the Runaways’, p. 257.

Three trends emerge consistently across the FOTM database. Firstly, white enslavers continuously underestimated their bondpeople with disabilities as they could not accept that the individuals they deemed ‘useless’ could escape on their own, instead insisting on enticement, coercion, and aid. This devaluation is reflected in their being hired out, which inadvertently put these individuals into contact with the spaces, people, and knowledge most conducive to flight.⁹⁶ In doing so, disability blurred the typical categorisations of gender, age, and labour that structured plantation surveillance.⁹⁷ And when individuals with disabilities appear in group escapes, they emerge not as burdens but as knowledgeable, organising, and even leading presences whose inclusion was deliberate. Where underestimation enabled, labour equipped, and community trusted, the presence of disability forged a fugitive the historiography has not had the framework to see.

In doing so, this chapter intervenes in resistance and disability historiography on three fronts. Hunt-Kennedy’s ‘supercrip’ framing positions disability as an obstacle to be overcome, this study rejects this entirely.⁹⁸ Arguing instead that disability structured the possibility of flight rather than threatening it. Barclay and Boster’s focus on disabling legislation fixed individuals with disabilities to plantation boundaries, overlooking those who fled successfully through the very conditions their disabilities had forged.⁹⁹

Most significantly, this chapter directly extends Müller’s identification of the ‘new fugitive slave’ dictated by autonomy, mobility, and knowledge.¹⁰⁰ Although Müller’s criteria describe the conditions disability-determined labour created, her new fugitive remains implicitly non-disabled.¹⁰¹ In bringing individuals with disabilities into Müller’s framework, it demonstrates that disability was one of the most consistent mechanisms through which the conditions she identified were produced. In doing so, this chapter offers the first sustained analysis of individuals with disabilities as architects of escape.

⁹⁶ Müller, *Escape to the City*, p.29.

⁹⁷ Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*, p. 83, p.84; Fett, *Working Cures*, p.26.

⁹⁸ Hunt-Kennedy, “Had his nose cropt”, p. 226; Hobson, ‘Of “Sound” and “Unsound” Body and Mind’, p.194.

⁹⁹ Barclay, *Mark of Slavery*, p.87; Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*, p.72.

¹⁰⁰ Müller, *Escape to the City*, p. 29.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

The tension between enslavers' perceptions of individuals with disabilities and the reality of their resistance created conditions that could be strategically exploited. For example, Enslaver C. H. Simmons requested for 'information of the person who took [Charity] off the island.' Finding it hard to believe a 'negro Wench [...] short size and lame in her left arm' could manage to escape his plantation on her own, even if it was her fifth time successfully fleeing.¹⁰²

Where Charity's impairment was specific and named, Caroline's enslaver recorded only that she was 'thin' with 'the appearance of being sickly'. Demonstrating that an impression of frailty was sufficient to render her, in his estimation, non-threatening and therefore unworthy of close surveillance.¹⁰³

Similarly, Daniel Spark is entirely unable to conceptualise that individuals he deems 'crippled' and 'crooked' could coordinate – and effectively escape – his control on their own without white mediation in procuring them passes and routes to freedom. Out of a group of five persons, he singles out Adisson, 'crippled' in her hand, and Dave, 'badly ruptured' as the ones to be 'enticed away'. Whilst the others, prime and sound, were not doubted the same way.¹⁰⁴

These narratives reveal that surveillance under slavery was not total, but contingent. This gap shaped by ableist assumptions allowed individuals with disabilities to evade detection by virtue of being misread. Scholarship of feigning disability observed a reliance on white society's habit of hiding and ignoring bodies deemed disabled, which created the conditions ripe for exploitation.¹⁰⁵ Which, paradoxically, has not been extended to individuals with disabilities and attempted escape.

Individuals with disabilities taking advantage of this habit of white society becomes visible in their weaponisation of disability-determined labour off of plantations. Whether being hired-out or acting as tradesmen, individuals with disabilities were removed from the totalising surveillance of the plantation.¹⁰⁶ Perceived as weak and lacking in value, their enslavers had unknowingly handed them the tools of their own liberation.

Joe, a 'tailor by trade' in Charleston, encapsulates this dynamic. Described in the advert as 'deformed in person, having a humpback, very high chest, short neck, and very hollow

¹⁰² C. H. Simmons, *The City Gazette*, 11 July 1794.

¹⁰³ G. Prigge, '\$15 REWARD', *Wilmington Journal*, 23 January 1851.

¹⁰⁴ Dan'l P. Spark, '\$525 REWARD', *The Daily Picayune*, 7 November 1844.

¹⁰⁵ Boster, *African American Slavery and Disability*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 83, p.84; Berry, "We'm Fus' Rate Bargain", p. 57.

waist', an attempt to reclaim Joe's body unveils how he escaped. Joe had 'been in the employ of Mr. Berbant in King-st' and 'with Matthews, a colored man in Boundary-st', a reallocation that made him mobile within Charleston's urban labour and social networks. As a tailor, Joe occupied a role that was inherently mobile, requiring interaction with clients, and clear movement between workplaces, making him not only familiar to the city, but the city familiar with him. His employment across multiple sites, including with a free or semi-independent African American artisan, exemplifies his access to networks that extended beyond the direct oversight of his enslaver.¹⁰⁷ In this sense, Joe's disability *forged* his flight, and became the infrastructure through which knowledge, relationships, and opportunity for flight became possible.

Harry Harrison illustrates this further. A 'shoemaker by trade', described as walking 'crippled' is positioned within networks of exchange and rival geographies that could be repurposed for escape. His enslaver Joshua Barney's doubling of the reward for his capture is particularly telling. Where most groups and individuals were apprehended due to running 'where slave owners would look first', the reward reflects how his accumulated knowledge and networks took him beyond the immediate reach of those seeking to recapture him. Illuminating disability not only facilitating his escape, but his refuge.¹⁰⁸

Further, hired out labour aboard ferries and steamers could place individuals with disabilities at the intersection of the South's most mobile and least surveilled spaces.¹⁰⁹ Blind 'in one of his Eyes', Sandy worked 'in the capacity of Captain, or head man of one of the Ferry Boats at Milton Ferry.' His social distinction beyond the plantation signals a social world operating entirely alongside and independently of the plantation's hierarchy, where his disability did not exclude, but forged his place there.

Time spent navigating those routes as head man of a ferry boat had given Captain Sandy something no enslaver could appraise or confiscate - an intimate knowledge of the geography of escape. William Matthews, in publishing his advertisement, was not merely seeking the return of a runaway. He was reckoning with the consequences of having handed a man he deemed useless knowledge of what Rediker has termed the 'overseas freeway'.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ EDW. L. Roche, 'TEN DOLLARS REWARD.', *Charleston Mercury*, 13 July 1836.

¹⁰⁸ Joshua Barney, 'DOUBLE PAY', *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, 7 September 1818; Franklin, *Runaway Slaves*, p. 52; Müller, *Escape to the City*, p.6.

¹⁰⁹ Marcus Rediker, 'Escaping Slavery by Sea in Antebellum America: A Labor History', *Mundos do Trabalho*, 14 (2022), pp.1-18, (p. 2).

¹¹⁰ William Matthews, 'TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD', *Charleston Mercury*, 5 March 1835; Rediker, 'Escaping Slavery by Sea', p. 2.

Allick, Shedrick, and Jeffery escaped captivity through the same logic. Allick, ‘blind in one eye’ and a ‘Biscuit Baker by trade’ escaped with his wife, who lived on another plantation. His trade, inherently social and mobile, determined through his disability, forged the knowledge necessary for flight.¹¹¹ Shedrick, ‘a preacher’ for work, forty years old and having ‘both small toes cut off’ escaped his Louisiana plantation for the second time in three years.¹¹² Jeffery, ‘by trade a sail maker’ and ‘blind of one eye’ is ‘well known in and about Charleston.’ Recalled being ‘seen going over Wragg’s ferry, near Georgetown,’ and confident enough to be heard saying ‘he was bound for Virginia’, having been ignored, misread, and reallocated, Jeffery was one step closer to freedom.¹¹³ This identifying trend across the FOTM database solidifies disability as generative for escape.

As tailors, shoemakers, preachers and sailors, individuals with disabilities moved where surveillance was uneven and where disabled bodies, often read as non-threatening, could move with greater flexibility. Spanning across the South, individuals with disabilities weaponised the misreading of their ability to become architects of escape, and it was not just bondsmen adopting this tactic.

The symbiotic relationship between disability and fugitivity becomes even more radical when extended to bondswomen. Disability dissolved the spatial categorisation that made enslaved women’s flight under any other circumstance almost impossible.¹¹⁴ The work bondswomen completed was typically confined to plantation boundaries, making them ‘especially noticeable passers-by’ on main roads and pathways throughout the South.¹¹⁵ Yet, the work bondswomen with disabilities undertook, and the liminality it afforded them, made the impossible, possible.

For example, Lyd, described as being ‘very much pigeon toed’ escaped from her enslaver whilst being hired out in the Capitol. Lyd was employed ‘selling apples’ where she was ‘well known in the city.’ Unlike many bondswomen whose movement was tightly regulated within plantation spaces, Lyd’s disability helped to reposition her within a labour system that granted access to rival geographies and social worlds unavailable to many of her non-disabled

¹¹¹ Samuel Smith; William Patterson, *Journal and Advertiser*, 22 January 1790.

¹¹² Armant Brothers, ‘TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD’, *The Daily Picayune*, 11 January 1853.

¹¹³ Mary Stewart, ‘RUN-AWAY’, *The City Gazette*, 9 January 1792.

¹¹⁴ Stephanie M.H. Camp, ‘“I Could Not Stay There”: Enslaved Women, Truancy and the Geography of Everyday Forms of Resistance in the Antebellum Plantation South,’ *Slavery and Abolition*, 23 (2002), pp. 1-20, (p.3, p.4).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

counterparts. In a place she was ‘well known’ – Lyd could bypass being a noticeable passer-by, her disability enabling and concealing her as an active fugitive.¹¹⁶

Beck and Jane extend the pattern. Beck, described as an ‘elderly mustee wench’ and ‘well known in the town’ as a washerwoman, was taken out of the totalising surveillance of the plantation through the same logic that repositioned Lyd. Her enslaver’s suspicion that she was ‘probably employed in that way’ exemplifies how her unique positioning not only offered employment off of the plantation, but what came along with it – the kinship networks, refuge, and support.¹¹⁷ Jane, who was ‘blind in one eye’ and hired out, follows the same trajectory. In each case, the disability that marked these women economically useless blurred the spatial boundaries that made escape, for most bondswomen, unachievable.¹¹⁸

Where Camp looks to the ‘duty, affection, and conceptions’ of black womanhood that tightened and complicated their abilities to flee plantations, a lens of disability disrupts her analysis.¹¹⁹ Liza was thirty-five, a woman, and a mother – who under Camp’s analysis, would not be a participant for running away permanently. Yet, she and her daughter, Louisa, escaped together from their Louisiana plantation. The publishing of the FSA itself signals that this was not an act of truancy to steal themselves for a short period – but an established escape. Enabled, not by masculinity, strength, or skill but the perception of inability as they were ‘both of a very feeble constitution.’ Deemed non-threatening enough that tight surveillance was perceived as unnecessary, perceptions of disability enabled Liza and Louisa to escape.¹²⁰

In this sense, Lyd, Jane, Beck, Liza and Louisa’s escapes were not despite their perceived or embodied disabilities but structured through them. This gendered dynamic reveals how a lens of disability calls for a complete reorganisation of the category of fugitivity scholarship has accepted.

Individuals with disabilities as central agents of fugitivity is cemented through their inclusion in group escape. The reoccurrence of group escapes indicates that individuals with disabilities were integral to the social infrastructure of resistance. Illuminating, that like Tubman, individuals with disabilities’ resistance went further than stealing themselves, they challenged

¹¹⁶ John Threl, ‘TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD’, *Washington DC National Intelligencer*, 7 December 1808.

¹¹⁷ Gregorie, ‘Ran away.’, *Charleston Mercury*, 18 July 1825.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Lloyd, ‘RUNAWAY’, *Elizabeth City Star and North Carolina Eastern Intelligencer*, 15 September 1831.

¹¹⁹ Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, p. 37.

¹²⁰ Arthur Fortier, ‘\$30 REWARD’, *The Daily Picayune*, 16 August 1846.

slaveholders' power over their entire workforce, a position of power scholarship has yet to attribute to them.¹²¹

In Texas 1853, J.D. Waters published a \$150 reward for the return of three bondmen, and in doing so, inadvertently documented the presence of disability as central to their escape. Two of the men are noted as afterthoughts, one 'slow spoken,' the other with 'a cast-down look' who 'speaks low', presented, in Waters' own language, as passive and non-threatening. It is Harmon who commands his attention. 'Rather knock-kneed,' 'quick spoken,' and possessed of 'considerable blarney,' Harmon 'pretends to be a preacher' and works as a cooper by trade. It is Harmon, Waters' language suggests, and this resistant reading argues, who organised their escape.

Intending to damn Harmon as deceitful, Waters reveals the precise conditions that made him dangerous. Noting his being sold along the Brazos and Colorado rivers – as well as potentially going off-plantation in his cooper work – Harmon gained knowledge of rival geographies beyond the plantation's control. His work as a preacher, that Waters dismisses as another ruse, but as chapter one identified, could cultivate a position of authority and distinction amongst his counterparts. Harmon had knowledge of rival geographies and a revered position amongst his community, perfectly positioned as a leader of their escape.

Their decision to steal 'three horses', on 'which they rode off,' suggests that the three men did not see necessary to slip off into darkness on foot but rode off with confidence toward a destination they likely already decided on. An escape forged under Harmon's direction and enabled through his disability.¹²²

Where Harmon's disability positioned him as a natural organiser, the narrative of Dick and Joe cement the presence of disability as not only facilitating, but leading escape. Dick had an 'awkward walk' – 'bent forward' and 'rocking', as well as having 'incontinence of urine, which [kept] his clothes wet'. His enslaver, J. H. Crawford catalogued a body that, under every assumption of the plantation, as well as previous scholarship's logic, should have been the last to consider flight, and yet he emerges as its leader.

Dick's companion, Joe, is thoughtlessly noted in just two sentences. Described as 'quite an active fellow', raised locally, and who Crawford was convinced 'would not leave the settlement'. The only explanation Crawford could imagine was that 'he may have gone off with

¹²¹ Hunt-Kennedy, "Had his nose cropt", p. 212.

¹²² J.D. Waters, '\$150 REWARD!', *Texas State Gazette*, 6 August 1853.

Dick.’ Dick’s work, wherein he ‘followed the waggon’ gained him ‘an extensive acquaintance’. So that even a month since their departure, they had ‘not been heard of’. Dick’s unique positioning to accumulate knowledge facilitated not only his freedom, but also that of his counterparts. Where masculine, strong, and skilled bodies were thought to pose the greatest threats to enslavers’ property, Dick was not who Crawford assumed he would have to be suspicious of.¹²³ His misreading cost him not only Dick, but Joe.¹²⁴

Where it could often mean life or death, choosing who to run away with was not random. These individuals were not included by chance, but because they offered knowledge, networks, and refuge that their non-disabled counterparts could not access.

Conclusion

Taken together, this chapter has uncovered disability as one of fugitivity’s most generative conditions. The unassuming runaway – ‘lame’, ‘deformed’, ‘crippled’, and ‘ruptured’ – knew the waterways, the city streets, the rival geographies, and the kinship networks that made sustained escape possible. Further, this chapter has contributed to the historiography of bondswomen’s resistance. Disability dissolved the spatial boundaries that made flight for bondswomen almost impossible. In doing so, this chapter calls for a fundamental reckoning with the historiography of fugitivity. These were not unlikely candidates, or people who fled *despite* their disabilities. They were, in case after case, uniquely positioned to take flight.

¹²³ Waldstreicher, ‘Reading the Runaways’, p.257

¹²⁴ J.H. Crawford, ‘STOP THE RUNAWAY.’, *Weekly Standard*, 24 July 1848; Waldstreicher, ‘Reading the Runaways’, p. 248.

CONCLUSION

This study's triangulation across freedom narratives, WPA narratives, and FSA's has allowed, for the first time, the symbiotic nature of disability and resistance to be realised. Across two chapters, it has uncovered that the same logic that excluded individuals with disabilities from the plantation's economy of worth was the logic that handed them the infrastructure of resistance. This section will synthesise the findings presented across both chapters, reflect on their broader significance, as well as identify potential avenues for future research.

Taken together, these two chapters have observed that perceived disability blurred the spatial and temporal restrictions on and off of plantations. Placed into a space of liminality, these individuals had unique opportunities for resistance. Reading on-plantation and off-plantation resistance alongside one another has allowed this dissertation to uncover that devaluation could not just be internally resisted through the creation of alternate systems of value but could be materially converted into flight.

No existing study has offered a sustained analysis of either the everyday resistance individuals with disabilities enacted, or brought together disability studies, the FOTM database, and the historiography of fugitivity. The closest existing work, Boster, Barclay, and Hunt-Kennedy all address disability and slavery but do not examine fugitivity or everyday resistance through this lens. Although Müller's new fugitive framework is promising for a more inclusive future of fugitivity studies, it had not been extended to individuals with disabilities.

The historiographical implications of these findings call for a reconsideration of the histories of resistance. Everyday resistance and fugitivity have been fundamentally built around an assumption of non-disability that this study has demonstrated was never warranted. A lens of disability disturbed every given the scholarship has accepted, how they resisted, where they resisted but most importantly, who resisted.

There is undoubtedly further scope for study, especially in the realm of fugitivity. Applying geographical or temporal ranges to the FSA's could uncover trends of flight that are beyond the scope of this study. Alternatively, a study wholly focused on gendered intersections of disability and fugitivity promise to uncover a new dynamic within bondswomen's resistance. Finally, the same logic this study employed, through taking a resistant reading and lens of disability to FSA's should be applied to other source bases. Plantation records, sale ledgers,

court documents, and medical records under this reading promise to recover dimensions of disability and resistance that this study's triangulated approach could not reach. In doing so, every assumption the scholarship has accepted in regard to resistance stands to be complicated, if not fully reorganised.

Overall, Lewis emerges from this study not as an exception, but a rebel that our scholarship did not have the tools to read. Misread, reallocated, and underestimated, Lewis took advantage of his unique positioning to coordinate his escape. Evidence of slave disability was never invisible, it was ignored. This dissertation has succeeded in offering a framework that promises to not let these individuals be left on the peripheries of our history again.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Freedom Narratives:

Bradford, Sarah H., *Scenes in the Life of Harriet Tubman* (Auburn: W. J. Moses, Printer, 1869)

Douglass, Frederick, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass Written by Himself: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time*, (Hartford, CT: Park, 1881)

Henson, Josiah, 1789-1883, *Truth Is Stranger Than Fiction: Father Henson's Story of His Own Life*. ed. by Samuel A. Eliot (Boston: J. P. Jewett, 1858)

Slave Narratives Published Online by the Library of Congress:

Alabama:

Library of Congress, 'It Took \$50.00 to put Uncle Charlie on de Floor!' in *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 1, Alabama, Aarons-Young* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn010/>> [accessed 2 January 2026] 397-400

Arkansas:

Library of Congress, 'Willie Wallace' in *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol.2, Arkansas, Part 7, Vaden-Young*, <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn027/>> [accessed 2 April 2026] 42-43

Library of Congress, 'Ella Glespie' in *Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 2, Arkansas, Part 3, Gadson-Isom*, <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn023/>> [accessed 2 April 2026] 44-46

Library of Congress, 'Frank Fikes' in *Federal Writers' Project: Vol.2, Arkansas, Part 2, Cannon-Evans* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn022/>> [accessed 30 March 2026] 283-285

Georgia:

Library of Congress, 'Emmaline Heard' in *Federal Writer's Project: Slave Narrative Project, Vol. 4, Georgia, Part 2, Garey-Jones*, <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn042/>> [accessed 2 April 2026] 147-160

North Carolina:

Library of Congress, 'Cornelia Andrews' in *Federal Writers' Project: Vol.11, North Carolina, Part 1, Adams-Hunter*, <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn111/>> [accessed 28 March 2026] 27

Fugitive Runaway Advertisements Published by Freedom on the Move:

Louisiana:

Armant Brothers, 'TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD', *The Daily Picayune*, 11 January 1853, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 23 March 2026]

Fortier, Arthur '\$30 REWARD', *The Daily Picayune*, 16 August 1846, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 23 March 2026]

Spark, Dan'l P., '\$525 REWARD', *The Daily Picayune*, 7 November 1844, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 22 March 2026]

Maryland:

Barney, Joshua, 'DOUBLE PAY', *Baltimore Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser*, 7 September 1818, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 2 April 2026]

Smith, Samuel; Patterson, William, 'ALLICK; a Runaway Mulatto Man.', *Journal and Advertiser*, 22 January 1790, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 22 March 2026]

North Carolina:

Crawford, J.H., 'STOP THE RUNAWAY.', *Weekly Standard*, 23 August 1848, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 2 April 2026]

Prigge, G. '\$15 REWARD', *Wilmington Journal*, 23 January 1851, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 15 February 2026]

Lloyd, Elizabeth, 'RUNAWAY', *Elizabeth City Star and North Carolina Eastern Intelligencer*, 15 September 1831, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 15 February 2026]

South Carolina:

Gregorie, 'Ran away.', *Charleston Mercury*, 18 July 1825, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 21 March 2026]

Matthews, William, 'TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD.', *Charleston Mercury*, 5 March 1835, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 15 February 2026]

Roche, EDW. L., 'TEN DOLLARS REWARD.', *Charleston Mercury*, 13 July 1836, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 21 March 2026]

Simmons, C. H., *The City Gazette*, 11 July 1794, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 21 March 2026]

Tennessee:

Overton, Archibald W., '\$300 REWARD', *Nashville Union*, 22 April 1841, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 21 March 2026]

Texas:

Waters, J.D., '\$150 REWARD!', *Texas State Gazette*, 6 August 1853, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 22 March 2026]

Washington, D.C.:

Threl, John, 'TWENTY DOLLARS REWARD', *Washington DC National Intelligencer*, 7 December 1808, <<https://freedomonthemove.org>> [accessed 22 March 2026]

Secondary Sources

Journals:

Altschuler, Sari, 'Disability', *Journal of the Early Republic*, 43 (2023), pp. 121-129

Barclay, Jenifer L., 'Bad Breeders and Monstrosities: Racializing Childlessness and Congenital Disabilities in Slavery and Freedom' *Slavery & Abolition*, 38 (2017), pp. 287-302

Berry, Daina Ramey, 'Soul Values and American Slavery,' *Slavery & Abolition*, 42 (2021), pp. 201-218

Boster, Dea H., 'An "Epeleptick" Bondswoman: Fits, Slavery, and Power in the Antebellum South' *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 83 (2009), pp. 271-301

– "'Useless": Disability, Slave Labor, and Contradiction on Antebellum Southern Plantations' *Review of Disability Studies*, 7 (2014)

Camp, Stephanie M. H., 'I Could Not Stay There': Enslaved Women, Truancy and the Geography of Everyday Forms of Resistance in the Antebellum Plantation South,' *Slavery and Abolition*, 23 (2002), pp. 1-20

Chism, Kahlil, 'Harriet Tubman: Spy, Veteran, and Widow,' *OAH Magazine of History*, 19 (2005), pp.47-51

Faust, Drew Galpin 'Culture, Conflict, and Community: The Meaning of Power on the Antebellum Plantation,' *Journal of Social History*, 14 (1980), pp.83-97

Forret, Jeff, "'Deaf & Dumb, Blind, Insane, or Idiotic": The Census, Slaves, and Disability in the Late Antebellum South' *The Journal of Southern History*, 82 (2016), pp. 503-548

Franzino, Jean, 'Lewis Clarke and the "Color" of Disability: The Past and Future of Black Disability Studies' *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 35 (2016)

Hobson, Janell, 'Of "Sound" and "Unsound" Body and Mind: Reconfiguring the Heroic Portrait of Harriet Tubman,' *A Journal of Women Studies*, 40 (2019), pp.193-218

Hunt-Kennedy, Stefanie “‘Had his nose cropt for being formerly runaway’: disability and the bodies of fugitive slaves in the British Caribbean,” *Slavery & Abolition*, 41 (2020), pp. 212-233

Kudlick, Catherine J., ‘Disability History: Why We Need Another “Other”,’ *The American Historical Review*, 108 (2003), pp. 763-793

Olney, James, “‘I Was Born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature’ *Callaloo*, 20 (1984), pp. 46-73

Prude, Jonathan 'To Look upon the "Lower Sort": Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800,' *The Journal of American History*, 78 (1991), pp.124-159

Rediker, Marcus, ‘Escaping Slavery by Sea in Antebellum America: A Labor History’, *Mundos do Trabalho*, 14 (2022), pp.1-18

Stevenson, Brenda E., ‘Life in Black and White: Family and Community in the Slave South,’ *The American Historical Review*, 102 (1996), pp. 189-190

Tewell, Eamon, 'Toward the Resistant Reading of Information: Google, Resistant Spectatorship, and Critical Information Literacy,' *Libraries and the Academy*, 16 (2016), pp. 289-310

Visperas, Cristina, ‘The Able-Bodied Slave’ *Journal of Literacy & Cultural Disabilities Studies*, 13 (2019), pp. 93-110

Waldstreicher, David, 'Reading the Runaways: Self-Fashioning, Print Culture, and Confidence in Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Mid-Atlantic' *The William and May Quarterly*, 56 (1999), pp. 243-272

Wickberg, Daniel, 'Heterosexual White Male: Some Recent Inversions in American Cultural History', *The Journal of American History*, 92 (2005) pp. 136-157

Winton, Nathaniel, 'Superannuated: Old Age on the Antebellum Plantation' *American Quarterly*, 71 (2019), pp. 93-110

Books:

Andrews, William L., *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*, (University of Illinois Press, 1988)

Barclay, Jenifer L., *The Mark of Slavery: Disability, Race, and Gender in Antebellum America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021)

Berry, Daina Ramey, *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Beacon Press Boston, 2017)

Boles, John B., *Masters and Slaves in the House of the Lord: Race and Religion in the American South, 1740-1870*, (University Press of Kentucky, 1988)

Boster, Dea H., *African American Slavery and Disability: Bodies, Property, and Power in the Antebellum South, 1800-1860* (Routledge, 2013)

Blassingame, John W., *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, (Oxford University Press, 1972)

Camp, Stephanie M H, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2004)

Davis, David Brion, *Inhuman Bondage: The Rise and Fall of Slavery in the New World*, (Oxford University Press, 2006)

Doddington, David Stefan, *Contesting Slave Masculinity in the American South* (Cambridge University Press, 2018)

Fett, Sharla M., *Working Cures: Healing, Health, and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002)

Franklin, John H., and Loren Schweninger, *Runaway Slaves: Rebels on the Plantation*, (Oxford University Press, 2000)

Fuentes, Marisa J., *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (University of Philadelphia Press, 2016)

Fleischner, Jennifer, *Mastering Slavery: Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives* (New York University Press, 1996)

Genovese, Eugene D., *Roll Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (Pantheon Books 1974)

Hunt-Kennedy, Stefanie, *Between Fitness and Death: Disability and Slavery in the Caribbean* (University of Illinois Press, 2020)

Johnson, Walter, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Harvard University Press, 1999)

Müller, Viola F., *Escape to the City: Fugitive Slaves in the Antebellum Urban South*, (The University of North Carolina Press, 2022)

Mustakeem', Sowande M., *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage*, (University of Illinois Press, 2016)

Raboteau, Albert J., *Slave Religion: the "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South*, (Oxford University Press, 2004)

Scott, James C., *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (Yale University Press, 1985)

Chapters:

Baynton, Douglas C., 'Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History,' in *The New Disability History: American Perspectives*, ed. by Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky (New York University Press, 2001) pp.33-57

Berry, Daina Ramey, "'We'm Fus' Rate Bargain": Value, Labor, and Price in a Georgia Slave Community' in *The Chattel Principle: Internal Slave Trades in the Americas* ed. By Walter Johnson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 55– 71

Schwartz, Marie Jenkins, 'The WPA Narratives as Historical Sources,' in *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*, ed. by John Ernest, (Oxford University Press, 2014), pp.89-101

Wallace, Shaun R. C., 'Fugitive Voices,' in *American Cultures as Transnational Performance*, ed. by Katrin Horn (New York: Routledge, 2021), pp.113-126

Online Resources:

The University of Kansas, 'Guidelines: How to Write About People with Disabilities (9th edition)' *Research & Training Center on Independent Living*, <<https://rtcil.org/guidelines>> [accessed 20 March 2026]

Unpublished works:

Mitchell, Edith, "'Still I Rebelled, from Inside of Me": A Study of Slave Disability and Resistance in the United States' (unpublished undergraduate thesis, University of Bristol, 2024) <<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/history/documents/dissertations/Edith%20Mitchell.pdf>> [accessed 15 September 2025]