

Female Slaves as Sexual Victims in Île Royale

Ken Donovan

Volume 43, numéro 1, winter/spring 2014

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad43_1for05

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Department of History at the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)

1712-7432 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Donovan, K. (2014). Female Slaves as Sexual Victims in Île Royale. *Acadiensis*, 43(1), 147–156.

Female Slaves as Sexual Victims in Île Royale

FEMALE SLAVES WERE VULNERABLE throughout the French Atlantic world – and more widely – because owners had power and control over slaves and their bodies. Whether captured on slave ships during the Middle Passage, labouring in the cane fields of Saint Domingue, or doing household chores in the towns and villages of New France, these women were assaulted by white males and men of all ethnicities. Women's degradation was a key tenet of slavery.¹ The French Atlantic context provides some necessary background to help explain the often brutal sexual exploitation of female slaves in Louisbourg and in the outport communities of Cape Breton (Île Royale).

Brought aboard the slave ship and stripped of their clothing, women were restricted to the quarterdeck during the day; there they ate their meals, washed, and danced. Slave traders forced female and male slaves to dance because they believed that exercise was vital to preserve the health of the enslaved. Females often danced to the music of African instruments whereas men generally kept time to the pounding of chains on the deck.² Many women crouched in shame in order to hide their genitals. Female slaves were not put in irons since it was believed that they did not have the physical strength to revolt and take over the ship. During the day, if weather permitted, the men were kept in irons on the main deck and part of the quarterdeck; they were separated from the women by a barricade that divided the ship. Since the women's living quarters were below deck near the officers' accommodations, the officers had easy access to the women. In fact, to pass from the slave deck to the quarterdeck the women had to climb stairs that passed through the officers' cabins. Women were thus subject to sexual advances and it was typical for an officer to choose a female slave to wait on him "at the table and in bed." Some crew members joined slaving voyages because they wanted free access to African women.³

Most seamen chose to believe the old European myth that African women were sexually permissive with insatiable sexual appetites. This common portrayal of black female slaves as licentious beings justified mistreatment of black women and the black race. Advocates of slavery maintained that black women simply could not be raped because they were so promiscuous.⁴ And ships' officers and crew took full advantage of their beliefs. One young French officer reported that seamen usually

1 Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 187-92.

2 Geneviève Fabre, "The Slave Ship Dance," in *Black Imagination and the Middle Passage*, ed. Maria Diedrich, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Carl Pedersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 33-46; Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship in Human History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 237-8.

3 Rediker, *Slave Ship*, 265, 241.

4 Annette Gordon-Reed, *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2008), 314.

selected favourites from among the women, giving them additional rations in exchange for sexual availability. These slaves, so the thinking went, also “adjusted better” to the journey because they bonded with the sailors.⁵ Another eyewitness, the captain of the *Jeannette*, a Nantes slave ship, allowed his sailors access to the slaves, “given the custom among them that each one should have a woman.”⁶

When female slaves debarked from the *Jeannette* and thousands of other slave ships in the French West Indies, they faced further sexual abuse. By the beginning of the 18th century, there were few white women in the West Indies because white males dominated the commodity production of slave plantations. Although white families had been established in the West Indies during the 17th century, the enormous growth of the slave plantation in the 18th century altered domestic arrangements and familial structures as slave mistresses and black domestic servants took the place of European wives.⁷ In combination with the disappearing white family, male slaves began to outnumber female slaves in Saint Domingue throughout the 18th century. The smaller number of female slaves in the white and black communities of Saint Domingue put further pressure on female slaves for sexual favours. Since female slaves had no legal standing and little status, they became susceptible to rape, sexual harassment, and some of the more sadistic forms of cruelty by whites. Unlike male slavery, female slavery had a psychophysical dimension because white men often gained sexual pleasure and gratification by inflicting physical and mental pain on enslaved women.⁸ The sexual exploitation of slave women by whites also resulted in a multitude of children. During the 1830s and 1840s thousands of mixed-race children and their mixed-race mothers were freed in the French Caribbean. More generally, the large population of people of Afro-European descent in the Iberian Americas provided further evidence that African women were not merely units of labour but were sexually abused by their European owners.⁹

Whether on French slave ships or in the French West Indies, female slaves became sexual victims of whites as part of a shared culture of abuse throughout the French Atlantic World and thus it should come as little surprise that female slaves in Île Royale were subject to rape and sexual harassment. There were 70 adult female slaves in Île Royale and, like other women in service, they were vulnerable to sexual exploitation by their owners. As many as 36 of the 70 women slaves gave birth to a total of 48 illegitimate children. Thus, in Louisbourg 21 slave mothers gave birth to

5 Henri Bouillier de Branche et al., *Plantations de l'Amérique et papiers de famille* (Mâcon : Imprimerie Protat Frères, 1960), vol. 2, 42-3, cited in David P. Geggus, “Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue,” in *More than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, ed. David Barry Gaspar and Darlene Clark Hine (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 265.

6 Quoted in Robert W. Harms, *The Diligent: A Voyage through the Worlds of the Slave Trade* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 312.

7 James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 117.

8 Geggus, “Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue,” 265; Pierre Pluchon, *Nègres et Juifs au XVIIIe siècle : le racisme de siècle des Lumières* (Paris : Tallandier, 1984), 166-72.

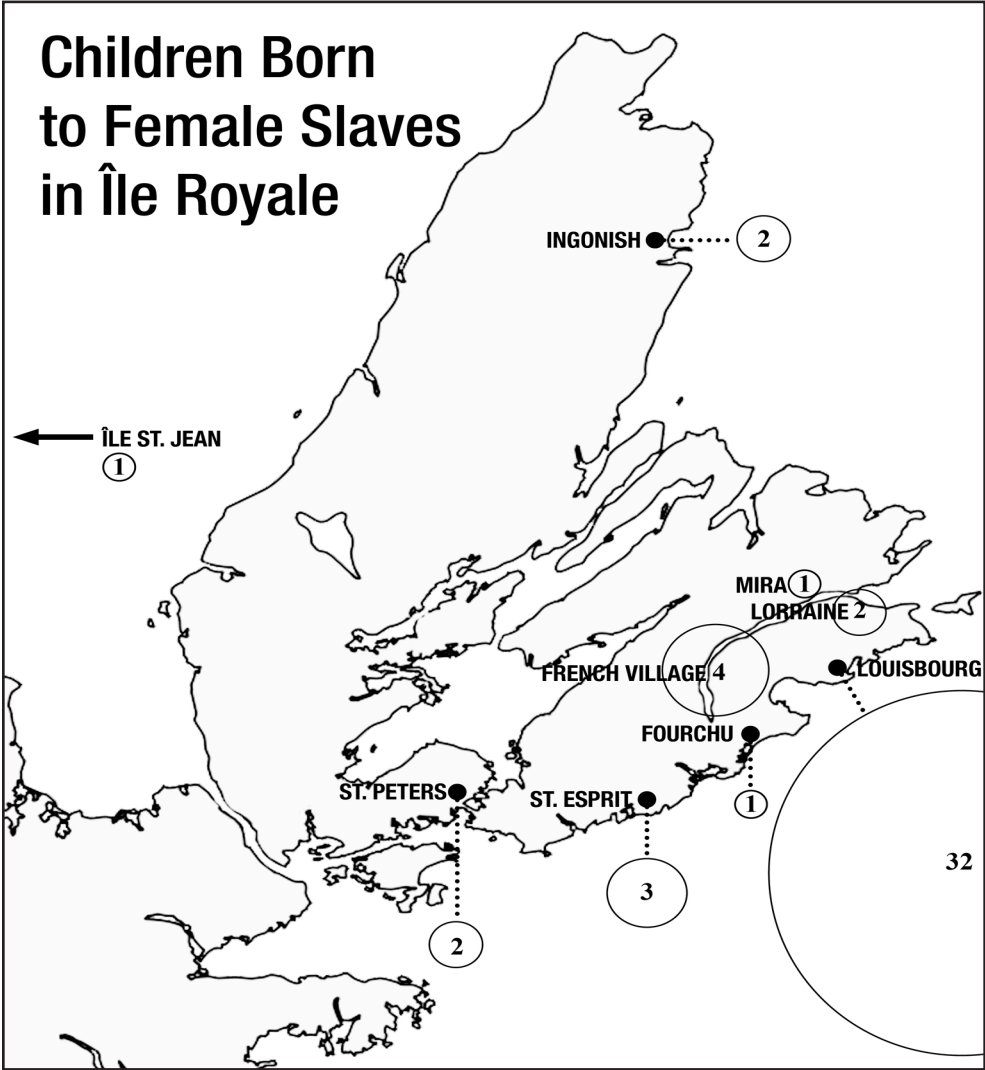
9 David Eltis, *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 103.

Table 1: Female Slaves who had Children in Île Royale

Name of Female Slave	Name of Children	Date of Birth
Louise, panis, 25 years	Louis, Louisbourg	1728
Marie Joseph	Claude François, Louisbourg	1729
Marie Thérèse, 19 years	Marie Françoise, Louisbourg	1734
	Claude, Louisbourg	1738
	Marie Angélique, Louisbourg (twin of Claude), Louisbourg	1738
Magdelaine Acheury	Philippe, Louisbourg	1734
Marie Louise	Jean Baptiste, Louisbourg	1736
	Isabelle, Louisbourg	1737
	Jacques, Louisbourg	1739
	Marie Jeanne, Louisbourg	1742
	Catherine, Louisbourg	1743
	Jean Pierre, Louisbourg	1749
	Jean Charles, Louisbourg	1753
	Michel, Louisbourg	1757
	Thérèse, Louisbourg	1757
Marie Marguerite Rose, 19 years	Jean-François, Louisbourg	1738
Marguerite	Joseph, Louisbourg	1739
	Angélique, Louisbourg	1743
Marguerite, panis, 26 years	Infant male, Louisbourg	1739
Mother of Pierre Joseph	Pierre Joseph, St. Peter's	ND
Mother of Victoire	Victoire, Mira	ND
Mother of Victor	Victor, Ingonish (described as a bastard)	ND
Mother of Marguerite	Marguerite, St. Peter's	ND
Mother of Marie Marguerite	Marie Marguerite, Ingonish	ND
Mother of Magdeleine	Magdeleine, Lorraine	ND
Mother of Estienne	Estienne, Fourché (Fourchu)	ND
Mother of Geneviève	Geneviève, Lorraine	ND
Mother of Marie Hector	Marie Hector, Île St. Jean	ND
Mother of Pierre	Pierre, St. Esprit	ND
Mother of Jule Louis	Jule Louis, Rouillé (French Village)	ND
Mother of Marie Clemence	Marie Clemence, Rouillé	ND
Mother of Marie Anne	Marie Anne, Rouillé	ND
Mother of Marie	Marie, Rouillé	ND
	Madeline, St. Esprit	1743
	Geneviève, St. Esprit	1743
Mother, panis, unnamed	Baby, Louisbourg	1745
Mother, unnamed	Antoine, Louisbourg	1745
Barbe, 25 years	Marie, Louisbourg	1748
Angélique	baby, Louisbourg	1749
Marie Joseph, panis	Marie Elizabeth, Louisbourg	1750

Mother, panis, unnamed	Adrien, Louisbourg	1750
Marie Anne	Joseph, Louisbourg	1753
Angélique	Pierre, Louisbourg	1754
Marie	Victor, Louisbourg	1756
Françoise	Marie Jeanne, Louisbourg	1757
Marie Flore	Denis, Louisbourg	1758
Marie Anne	Jeanne Joseph, Louisbourg	1758
Mother, panis, unnamed	baby, Louisbourg	1758

Source: The table, “Slave Women who had Children in Île Royale,” is based primarily on the data collected in the parish records and 19th century copies of the parish records of the Île Royale outposts besides Louisbourg.



The author would like to thank Blaine Aitkens for preparing this map.

32 children while 15 slave mothers in the Île Royale outports delivered 16 babies. The 34 adult female slaves who did not have children were either beyond their child-bearing years, had miscarriages, or had died as young adults before giving birth.

Louisbourg's illegitimacy rate of 4.5 per cent represented 101 children out of a total of 2,233 baptisms in the Louisbourg parish records; 12 slave women gave birth to 19.8 percent (20 of 101) of the town's illegitimate babies. In five instances, the women voluntarily identified fathers who were not their owners, but in the remaining 15 cases the fathers were listed as unknown.¹⁰ Research from other sources, besides the parish records, has revealed another 9 slave women who delivered 10 children in Louisbourg.¹¹

Whereas Louisbourg's parish records survived intact from 1722 to 1745 and from 1749 to 1758, only partial parish records remained for the outports of Baleine, Lorraine, Little Lorraine, St. Esprit, Mira, and Rouillé.¹² The parish registers for all 18 of the Île Royale outports were returned to France after the colony was taken from the French in 1745 and 1758. These records, summarized in the 19th century, included the names of the people who were baptised, married, or died. The original, detailed parish entries were subsequently lost, but the slaves were named and identified by the word "nègre" in the summaries.¹³

One of the clearest cases of sexual exploitation in the Louisbourg records involved Louise, a panis slave who arrived from Quebec during the summer of 1727.¹⁴ Louisbourg innkeeper Jean Seigneur purchased 25-year-old Louise from Captain Pierre Dauteuil in order to use her as a servant in his inn. Seigneur paid Dauteuil two barrels of red wine for Louise, and he agreed to complete the transaction the following year with two more barrels of wine. By February 1728, however, Seigneur realized that Louise was eight or nine months pregnant and therefore unsuitable as a servant in his establishment. In Louisbourg, as in France, it was customary to discharge servant girls when they became pregnant in order to avoid public scandal.¹⁵ Louise had been impregnated by her former owner and Seigneur now refused to keep

10 A.J.B. Johnston, *Control and Order in French Colonial Louisbourg, 1713-1758* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2001), 230.

11 Ken Donovan, "Slaves in Île Royale, 1713-1758," *French Colonial History* 5 (2004): 36-7.

12 The parish records for Baleine and St. Esprit are among the most complete.

13 Sieur Haran, alphabetical nominal lists of the births, marriages, and deaths of the parishes of Louisbourg, Île Saint Jean, Port Toulouse, Port d'Orléans [Ingonish], and Lorembec, 1715 to 1758, G 1, vol. 410, 411 bis, Centre des Archives nationales d'outre-mer (CAOM), Aix-en-Provence, France.

14 The term "panis" was derived from the Caddoan tribes of the great plains. The panis included slaves from more than 20 Native societies such as the Fox, Sioux, Iowa, Kansa, Chickasaw, Blackfoot, and Comanche. The French name "panis" had become a generic term for "Native slave" by 1750. See Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 165-73.

15 Ken Donovan, "Tattered Clothes and Powdered Wigs: Case Studies of the Poor and Well-to-Do in Eighteenth-Century Louisbourg," in *Cape Breton at 200: Historical Essays in Honour of the Island's Bicentennial, 1785-1985*, ed. Ken Donovan (Sydney, NS: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1985), 10; Jean-Louis Flandrin, *Families in Former Times, Kinship, Household, and Sexuality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 94; Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500-1800* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 278.

her on two counts: she “gave a poor example to his family, especially his young daughters, and he could not call on her services in his inn.”¹⁶ This was essentially the prevailing attitude to servant girls who became pregnant in France and Île Royale.

At the time this happened, Seigneur and his wife Marie Corporon, born and raised in Acadia, had four daughters ranging in age from 2 to 12 years. Seigneur took Dauteuil to court, claiming that Dauteuil had sold Louise under false pretences. A priest, Michel Leduff, was summoned for a private discussion with Louise and learned that, on the voyage from Quebec during the summer of 1727, when “the crew were quiet,” Louise had slept in Dauteuil’s cabin and was now expecting his child. Even though Louise was pregnant, Dauteuil had sold her to Seigneur – warning her to say nothing, but promising to return for her prior to the birth of the baby. There may have been an emotional bond or a perceived emotional bond between Louise and Dauteuil. At the very least, Dauteuil used both coercion (warnings) and promises to keep Louise silent, which suggests a multi-faceted relationship. Since she was a slave, Louise had little choice but to obey Dauteuil and had no recourse when he failed to keep his promise. As in the French West Indies, a slave such as Louise submitted to her owner’s sexual advances from a mix of “fear and hope.”¹⁷ Louise delivered her baby, Louis, on 3 April and he was baptized with Angélique, one of Seigneur’s daughters, serving as godmother. It was common in Louisbourg for young white children to become godparents of child slaves, especially within the family. Four months after the birth, Dauteuil and Seigneur appeared before a Louisbourg notary and agreed that Louise and her baby should be sold in Martinique for 600 livres and replaced by 14-year-old Étienne, who cost 650 livres.¹⁸ Upon his arrival in Louisbourg, Étienne was baptized and put to work in Seigneur’s inn.

Louise’s rape by Pierre Dauteuil was one of the few cases in the Île Royale archives, composed of 750,000 documents, which describes a white male owner’s sexual exploitation of his female slave.¹⁹ This is typical, because the French archival records of the 18th-century slave trade, similarly to records of Île Royale slaves, are almost entirely silent when it comes to the sexual abuse of enslaved women. In spite of the sheer number of the 1,101,000 French slaves imported from Africa to the French West Indies from 1701 to 1800, and the ready access of the officers to the women on thousands of French slave ships, there is little or no mention of women having sexual relations with white officers or seamen.²⁰ The same is true of the

16 Sale of an Indian to LaRivière by Delamolottière, 20 August 1727, G 3, 2058, no. 15, CAOM; Process concerning Louise, Panis Indian, 19 February to 2 March 1728, G 2, vol. 190, no. 3, fols. 74-76v., CAOM. I want to thank Brenda Dunn for her pioneering work on the history of the slave Louise and the Seigneur property. See Brenda Dunn, *History of Block Two, Louisbourg* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1971; revised 1978).

17 J.M.C. Américain, Sang-mêlé, *Précis des gémissements des sang-mêlés dans les colonies françaises* (Paris : Baudouin, 1789), 12, cited in Geggus, “Slave and Free Colored Women in Saint Domingue,” 265.

18 Delamolottière and Seigneur agreement, 28 August 1729, G 3, 2037, no. 58, CAOM. For the baptism of Louis, see 3 April 1728, G 1, vol. 406, fol. 36v., CAOM.

19 For the Louisbourg archives, see Eric Krause, “The Fortress of Louisbourg Archives: The First Twenty-Five Years,” *Archivaria*, no. 26 (Summer 1988): 137-48.

20 Harms, *The Diligent*, 312. For the more than one million slaves brought from Africa to the French West Indies from 1701 to 1800, see David Eltis, “The Volume and Structure of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd ser., 58, no. 1 (January 2001): 43, Table 1.

French West Indies. Arlette Gautier, in her *Les Soeurs de Solitude*, the pioneering study of female slaves in the West Indies, noted that patriarchal relations, prevalent throughout Europe and Africa, were maintained in the French islands. Whites and male slaves, in spite of their vast differences in power, status, and class, had one thing in common: they ensured that female slaves remained subservient to them.²¹ Throughout the French Atlantic white slave owners exploited their female slaves, including the French West Indies and Île Royale. Slave women suffered and were coerced on two levels: from slavery itself and from males, whether black or white, slave or free.²² By 1730 slaves made up four-fifths of the French West Indies population and thus the French islands had “more in common” with the English and Spanish islands than with the northern colonies of New France.²³ And yet the great majority of black slaves who were brought to New France, including Île Royale, were either born in the French West Indies or came to the colony after having been “seasoned” in the islands. Marie Louise, a native of Guinea, Africa, and the slave of merchant Louis Jouet, was one of the most exploited slave women in the colony. Marie had nine illegitimate children while working in the Jouet home.

Slave women in Île Royale were subject to abuse even in remote and isolated communities. There were at least 31 slaves living throughout the island in such communities as Ingonish, Mira, Lorraine, Fourchu, Rouvillé, St. Esprit, and St. Peters. Of the 31 slaves, 16 were children born to 15 slave women from approximately 1713 to 1758. Although the parish records for most of the outports have not survived, the fishing community of St. Esprit was an exception. Marie, a young black slave woman, for instance, lived with her owners Jean Peré and his wife Marguerite Guyon. Jean Peré had married Marguerite on 18 January 1735; she had two children by a previous marriage.²⁴ Madelaine, the first of Marie’s two children, was born on 12 May 1743. Marie’s second child, Geneviève, was born on the 5 September 1744 but only lived seven days.²⁵ There were at least 80 slaves baptised in Île Royale largely because there were no slave owners or plantation managers who opposed religious instruction of the slaves.²⁶

21 Arlette Gautier, *Les Sœurs de Solitude : La condition féminine dans l’esclavage aux Antilles du XVIIe au XIX siècle* (Paris : Éditions Caribéennes, 1985), 261-5. See also Arlette Gautier, “Les Esclaves femmes aux Antilles françaises,” *Réflexions Historiques* 10, no. 3 (Fall 1983): 409-35, which is a cogent summary of the book. Gautier’s published work is the leading study of female slaves in the French West Indies. David Geggus has added to this historical research over the past number of years.

22 Bernard Moitt, “Slave Women and Resistance in the French Caribbean,” in Gaspar and Hine, *More than Chattel*, 239.

23 Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 88-9.

24 The Guyons were one of the founding families of Île Royale and remained on the island throughout the 18th century, including the sieges of 1745 and 1758 as well as beyond. For background on the Guyons, see Christopher Moore, *Louisbourg Portraits: Five Dramatic True Tales of People Who Lived in an Eighteenth-Century Garrison Town* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2000), 245-50, and Ken Donovan, “Precontact and Settlement: Ingonish and Northern Cape Breton From the Paleo-Indians to the 18th Century,” *The Nashwaak Review* 22/23, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2009): 341-2.

25 Baptism of Madelaine, daughter of Marie, nègresse, 12 May 1743, G1, vol. 410, no. 6, fol. 5, CAOM; baptism and death of Geneviève, daughter of Marie, nègresse, 6 and 12 September 1744, G1, vol. 410, no. 6, fol. 10, CAOM.

26 Donovan, “Slaves in Île Royale, 1713-1758,” 36-7.

Jean Peré's sexual abuse of Marie reflected the wide chasm in power between slave and slave owner. As was typical, few records survive about Marie – her life and personality – except that she lived with one of the most powerful fishing and merchant families in Île Royale. Jean Peré came from a privileged background. His parents, Antoine and Marie Anne Peré, had moved from Newfoundland to Île Royale in 1713. Granted a fishing concession in Louisbourg in 1717, Antoine Peré was a prosperous fishing proprietor employing 40 fishermen by 1724.²⁷ Peré died in 1727 leaving his 47-year-old wife with five dependants. Marie Anne proved to be a resourceful woman, who successfully assumed ownership of her husband's fishing business. The total value of Madame Peré's estate, including her fishing properties in Île Royale, amounted to 40,807 livres when she died in 1735.²⁸

Whether providing a dowry for her daughters or supplying them with appropriate clothing, no detail concerning the welfare of her children seemed too insignificant. Marie Anne Peré continually wrote to her commercial agent in France requesting either material or complete suits of clothing for her children, including the future slave owner Jean.²⁹ "Please," she wrote her agent in Nantes on 22 December 1733, "send me whatever is necessary to make a suit of cinnamon colour for my son; jacket, vest and two pair of pants with lining of scarlet material; and all the trimmings; a hat priced about 18 livres and a wig with a bag that costs no more than 18 livres and a pair of woollen stockings, all to match the suit."³⁰ As part of the family's fishing operation, Jean Peré employed 25 men in the winter and summer fishery at St. Esprit, a fishing village 20 miles southwest of Louisbourg. By 1735 the Peré family employed an additional 37 fishermen in Louisbourg, including George, a slave, who was a fisherman.³¹ Jean Peré and his siblings, reared in a slave-owning household, went on to buy slaves for their own households. Jean had three slaves by 1744 and his sister Jeanne (married to Louis Jouet) eventually owned 17 slaves.

The exploitation of Marie by Jean Peré, and Louise by Pierre Dauteuil, had universal characteristics that went beyond boundaries, time, and space in all colonies with slaves. Annette Gordon-Reed, in her award-winning book *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* (2008), offered some provocative insights on the question of sex between enslaved women and white men. Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), the third president of the United States (1801-09) and the principal author of the American Declaration of Independence, inherited 150 slaves from his father and father-in-law and had more than 150 slaves when he penned the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Over the course of his life he had a total of more than 600 slaves.³²

27 Census of Louisbourg, 1724, G1, Vol. 466, pièce 67, CAOM.

28 Division of the estate of Antoine Peré and Marie Anne Peré, G2, vol. 195, no. 83, 1735, CAOM; inventory and sale of the moveable goods from the estate of Marie Anne Peré, 8 June 1735, G 2, vol. 194, no. 80, CAOM.

29 Donovan, "Tattered Clothes and Powdered Wigs," 14-16.

30 Marie Anne Peré to Villes Treux Peré, 22 December 1733, G 2, vol. 195, no. 83, pièce 19, CAOM.

31 Nominal list of fishermen employed by the Peré family in Louisbourg and St. Esprit, 15 October 1735, G 2, vol. 195, no. 83, pièce 109, CAOM.

32 Lois E. Horton, "Avoiding History: Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemmings, and the Uncomfortable Public Conversation on Slavery," in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, ed. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton (New York: The New Press, 2006), 136-

Sally Hemings, one of those 600 slaves, had six illegitimate children by Jefferson. Gordon-Reed maintains that it was impossible for Sally to give permission for sex since there was a “state of war” between masters and slaves. Hence, no enslaved woman “would ever have wanted to have sex with any white man. Faced with white men who showed interest in them, enslaved women, for completely sound ideological reasons, would be unwilling. Evidence that sex took place between the two – a child for example – would itself be evidence of rape.” Only male slaves, according to Gordon-Reed, were acceptable as female slave sex partners because men of African origin shared the same legal status and the same race. By combining years of analytical research with historical imagination, Gordon-Reed attempts to understand the thinking of Sally Hemings and all enslaved women. She concludes that all female slaves, given a choice, would have avoided sex with white males.³³

This radical historiographical perspective maintains that all slave women were placed in a compromised position, powerless against their male white owners. Marie thus had no lasting appeal to Jean Peré other than as a sexually attractive young woman. She was expected to do all of her chores during her pregnancy, much like pregnant slave women on plantations in the French West Indies and all places where slavery was legal. Marie’s work during her pregnancy may have contributed to the death of Geneviève, her second child, who died on 12 December 1744 just seven days after her birth. Marie, a young slave mother in St. Esprit, was powerless in comparison to Jean Peré, her brash and confident owner. Were all female slaves in Île Royale and beyond as vulnerable as Marie? There is a growing body of historical research and literature on slavery, rape, and sexual consent that suggests female slaves had cards to play – that they were able to use their sexuality to gain favours such as improved living conditions from whites. By acquiescing to sexual relations with their masters, other whites, and fellow slaves, enslaved women might be able to obtain rewards for themselves and their children and sometimes even win their freedom.³⁴

49; Lucia Stanton, *Free Some Day: The African-American Families of Monticello*, (Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, 2000), 17-18.

33 Gordon-Reed, *Hemingses of Monticello*, 313.

34 Brenda Stevenson, ed., “Introduction” to “Women, Slavery and the Atlantic World,” in Brenda Stevenson, guest editor, *The Journal of African American History Special Issue* 98, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 1-6; Brenda Stevenson, “What’s Love Got to Do With It? Concubinage and Enslaved Black Women and Girls in the Antebellum South,” *Journal of African American History Special Issue* 98, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 99-125; Brenda Stevenson, “Review Essay of Annette Gordon Reed’s *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*,” *The Journal of African American History* 96, no. 3 (Summer 2011): 1-15; Martha Hodes, ed., *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Jennifer Morgan, *Labouring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Richard C. Textler, *Sex and Conquest: Gendered Violence, Political Order, and the European Conquest of the Americas* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Gary B. Nash, “The Hidden History of Mestizo America,” *Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (December 1995): 941-64; Karen Y. Morrison, “Slave Mothers and White Fathers: Defining Family and Status in Late Colonial Cuba,” *Slavery and Abolition* XXXI, no. 1 (March 2010): 29-55; Wendy Ann Warren, “‘The Cause of Her Grief’: The Rape of a Slave Woman in Early New England,” *Journal of American History* 93, no. 4 (March 2007): 1031-49; Edward E. Baptist, “‘Cuffy,’ ‘Fancy Maids,’ and ‘One-Eyed Men’: Rape, Commodification and the Domestic Slave Trade in the United States,” *American Historical Review* 106, no. 5 (December 2001): 1619-50.

Besides Marie and the women of African descent, there were at least six panis enslaved women who were sexually abused by white males (five of whom were their owners) and who had children in Louisbourg. Françoise, a member of the Michel Dumoncel's household, was baptised to great fanfare on 4 June 1754, with eight witnesses signing her baptismal certificate. Dumoncel, a successful merchant, and his wife Geneviève Clermont had lived in Louisbourg since 1733 and had six children by the time they purchased Françoise in 1754. The elaborate baptismal ceremony, together with his wife and six children, who were present at the ceremony, did not prevent Dumoncel from impregnating Françoise, who delivered baby Marie Jeanne on 9 May 1757.³⁵ Françoise doubtless had a son by Dumoncel as well, because there was an anonymous male who died when the Dumoncel family debarked at La Rochelle on 28 April 1759. As was customary when a slave had a child, the name of the father was not mentioned in the baptismal records. Marie Anne, another panis, shared much the same fate as Françoise; purchased by Louis LaGroix, another prominent Louisbourg merchant and his wife Magdelaine Morin, Marie Anne helped to look after the three young LaGroix children and had her own child, Jeanne Josephe by LaGroix, in 1758.³⁶

Slaves such as Marie Anne and Françoise had children by their slave owners and yet the families remained intact because the wives ignored their husbands' sexual abuse and continued the pretence that all was well. David Eltis has examined "Gender and Slavery in the Early Modern Atlantic World" in his book on *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas* (2000). An expert on the transatlantic slave trade, Eltis concluded that the nuclear family and European serial monogamy were not endangered by slavery in the Americas in spite of the European dominance over Africans: "European settlers in the New World did not reshape European norms in family and sexual conduct whether they were living in predominantly slave or predominantly free societies."³⁷ The same pattern held true in Île Royale. Of the 277 French slaves in the colony, there were 70 adult females who served as domestic servants and nannies and who helped mothers cope with the stress of bearing children. Although these enslaved women assisted young mothers, they were vulnerable to sexual assault and 36 of them bore illegitimate children. Skin colour did not matter in terms of white males' sexual desires. Slave life in Île Royale was shaped by the history and culture of the island, yet it also reflected the lives of slaves throughout the French Atlantic world where racism and slavery went hand in hand. The wives in Île Royale and other French slave colonies looked the other way and preserved harmony within their families, and the abuse of slave women continued unabated.

KEN DONOVAN

35 Baptism of Françoise, 4 June 1754, G 1, vol. 409, register 1, fol. 17, CAOM; baptism of Marie Jeanne, 9 May 1757, G 1, vol. 409, register 1, fol. 17, CAOM.

36 Baptism of Jeanne Josephe, 14 March 1758, G 1, vol. 409, register 2, CAOM.

37 Eltis, *Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*, 103.