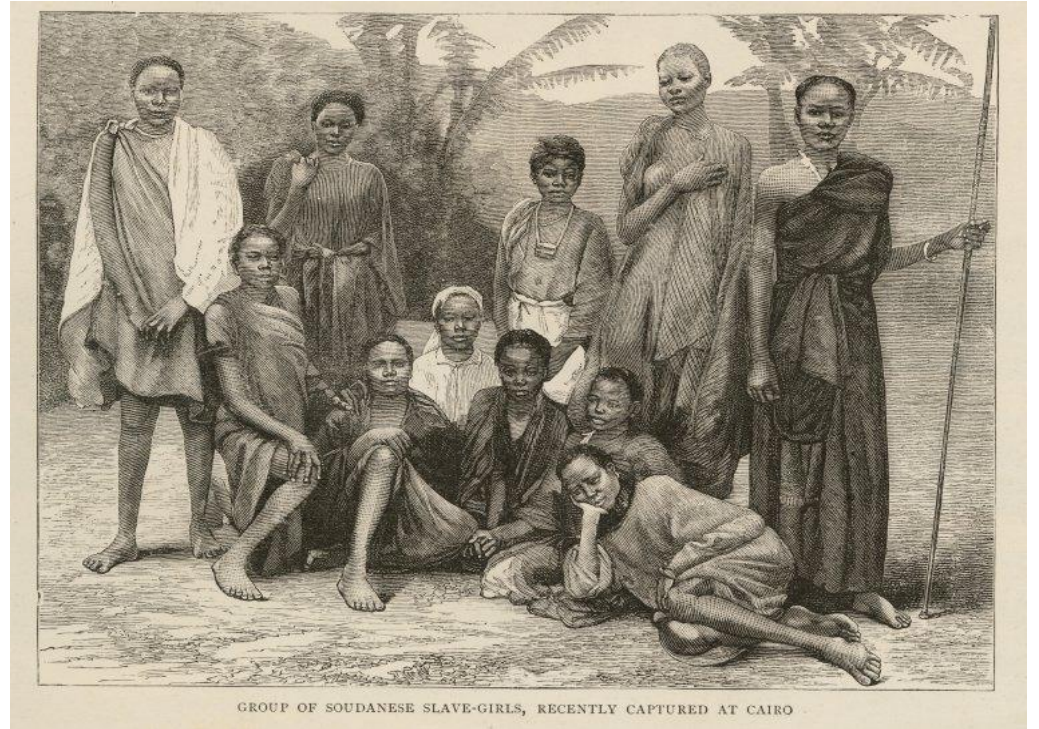


“From Africa to the Atlantic World: My
Black Woman Story!”
~Woman in Slavery~

By Kiera Morgan

Woman in Slavery

Slavery is a topic that will always be significant in the world to understand the trials and tribulations that black people have gone through for years. These hardships of not having freedom, working physically demanding jobs and being treated as if they weren't human all played a role in the fight for their place in the world.



This picture to me represents resilience, even under the circumstances these young women look like they hold a power that no one can compare to.

Elizabeth Freeman



Elizabeth “Mum Bett” Freeman is a black woman who was born into slavery around the 1740s. She is known because of her will to gain her freedom and for the significant impact it had on people all around the world just like her.

1740s-1829

Freeman's Beginnings

She spent her first years of slavery under the control of a slave owner named Peter Hogeboom in a town believed to be in Claverack, New York. Freeman's time spent amongst the Hogeboom's family is unknown, but it can be speculated when looking into other readings about slavery.



Hardships

Each image represents the work Elizabeth had to do. These jobs were very physically demanding because Elizabeth and her sister would have to work throughout the entire day tending to the Ashley family's needs.



Sheffield, Massachusetts is where Elizabeth and a her sister (which there isn't much record for) would eventually be sent to live. During this time in Elizabeth's life it is said that her new owners were the ones that really caused the most agony.



The event that caused physical pain.



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The slave owner wife had tried striking Elizabeth's sister with a hot shovel. But the hot shovel didn't touch her sister because Elizabeth put herself in front to block the impact. This event caused Elizabeth to have lacerations. And these wounds were left untreated by Elizabeth just so she was able to show the type of harsh treatment slaves endured by the hands of their owners.

Possible Challenge of Sexual Abuse.

Another important event in Elizabeth's life was the birth of her child. The birth of her child comes with some questions about the child's father. There are many speculations for the reasons the child's father is unknown, one of these reasons is that she was possibly sexual abused. The sexual abuse could've come from another slave or a slave owner. It wouldn't be shocking to figure out that the father was a slave owner especially with knowing why slave owners would sexually abuse their slaves. It states that what the slave owners would do was "an uncamouflged expression of the slave holder's economic mastery and the overseer's control over Black women as workers." (Davis 7) This is one of the harsh realities that black women had to go through. Another piece of information that should have some attention is slave women being classified as "breeders" (Davis 7). It was actually a law in some places that slave women weren't able to have any legal claims to their children. This meant that their children could be sold without them being able to do anything about it. So this was a struggle that Elizabeth potentially had to deal with now being a mother.



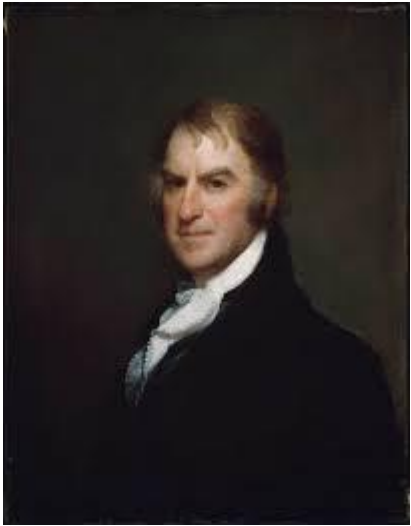
Illustration of Elizabeth and daughter by Dani Barrett

Elizabeth's path to Freedom

A mission to be free from the shackles of slavery began in the 1770s. Referring back to Elizabeth's owner Colonel John Ashley who's power played a role in Elizabeth's attempt. Ashley would hold meetings at his home where other power men were creating the Sheffield Declaration; The declaration was passed by 1773. A piece of the declaration that is believed to be what Elizabeth used to gain her freedom is "mankind in a state of nature are equal, free, and independent of each other, and have a right to the undisturbed enjoyment of their lives, their liberty and property." (Sheffield Declaration)

This statement was evidence to Elizabeth that she should also be able to reap the benefits of what she should have in life.

The trial that changed everything.



Theodore Sedgwick, Elizabeth's attorney

The argument that was placed was that Elizabeth should not be a slave anymore because of the new declaration. And the counter argument made by Colonel Ashley's defense team was that Elizabeth had been his property long before the declaration so it wouldn't make any sense to free them now. In the end Elizabeth won the case and gained her freedom. But what makes her situation much better was that her case led to the freedom of all slaves in Massachusetts because slavery was now seen as unconstitutional.

Ending

Elizabeth spent some of her life working for Theodore Sedgwick, eventually buying a house to live in with her children until she died in 1829. She was buried in the Sedgwick family plot, which was a first since she wasn't blood related to them and black. Elizabeth Freeman became the first African American enslaved woman to win freedom in the State of Massachusetts. And she should be recognized for her resilience which allowed her to do something that changed not just black women's lives but all black people's lives during that time and in the future.



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