



May 2016

"Spies All Their Lives": African Americans and Military Intelligence During the Civil War

Carly S. Mayer
University of Pennsylvania

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr>

Recommended Citation

Mayer, Carly S. (2016) "'Spies All Their Lives': African Americans and Military Intelligence During the Civil War," *Penn History Review*. Vol. 23 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol23/iss1/3>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol23/iss1/3>
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

Spies All Their Lives



Kilkenny Cat Fight Cartoon with Union General Ulysses S. Grant,
published in June 25, 1864 issue of *Harper's Weekly*

“SPIES ALL THEIR LIVES”:
AFRICAN AMERICANS AND MILITARY
INTELLIGENCE DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Carly S. Mayer

In December 1863, an Irish-born Confederate officer of the Army of Tennessee concluded that only one measure could possibly save the slaveholders' republic. Major-General Patrick Cleburne, panicking about the sequence of devastating defeats suffered by his army, proposed that the Confederacy arm and emancipate its slaves. Such an assertion from a southern senior military officer was astonishing, to say the least. The Confederacy went to war to preserve the institution of slavery and to defend its right to exist as the only independent slaveholding republic.¹ Yet, Cleburne's memorandum starkly revealed the reality of the war—that slavery was no longer the “great...truth” that Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens had claimed it to be in March 1861.² Over the course of the struggle, Cleburne insisted, the institution of slavery had become one of the Confederacy's “chief sources of weakness.”³ Although Cleburne's proposal was never adopted, his core contention highlighted the immense threat enslaved African Americans posed to the embattled Confederacy.

In the address to his fellow officers, Major-General Cleburne recounted the humiliating circumstances of the Confederacy during the war. “Every soldier in our army already knows and feels our numerical inferiority to the enemy,” he affirmed, and, “if this state continues much longer we must be subjugated.” Moreover, Cleburne identified “the three great causes operating to destroy us,” specifically, numerical inferiority of southern troops, inadequate supplies, and, most shockingly, the increasing military cost of slavery.⁴ He explained

Spies All Their Lives

that slaves worked actively against the Confederacy, serving as an “omnipresent spy system” and deterring Southerners from fighting Union troops because they had to ensure that their slaves were “not free to move and strike like the enemy.”⁵ Because of slavery, Cleburne affirmed, the South was forced to wage war “with the Union army in front and ‘an insurrection in the rear.’”⁶ Slaves had become, in every sense, “the enemy within.”⁷

Even prior to Cleburne’s realization of slaves’ contributions to Union military intelligence, southern planters and military officials recognized the immense problem of slave allegiance. Planters routinely complained about their slaves’ insubordination, unsure of how to control the restive population. These planters feared that slaves were endlessly assisting Union officials throughout the South, posing an acute threat to the Confederacy that was seemingly impossible to halt. From the civilian viewpoint, slaves, who were “absent[t] of the political ties of allegiance,” were utterly undermining the Confederacy; they had indeed become the Confederacy’s “most vulnerable point.”⁸

The reality was undeniable—enslaved, escaped, and freed African Americans greatly assisted the Union war effort. This thesis aims to uncover the military and naval intelligence contributions of African American men and women during the American Civil War (1861-1865). In particular, it focuses on why and how African Americans participated in clandestine activities—what made them excellent scouts and guides, how they contributed in Union campaigns, and the means they used to undermine the Confederacy on its plantations and in its households.

The independent slaveholding republic fell victim not just to Union forces but also, significantly, to the determined resistance of its enslaved population. The Confederacy’s fleeting existence demonstrates that, in so many ways, human chattel made history: they cemented the destruction of the Confederacy and the institution of slavery. War transformed enslaved men

Spies All Their Lives

and women into the “enemy within” that the Confederate South was simply unable to suppress.

In May 1861, Union Major General Benjamin Butler occupied Fortress Monroe, Virginia, which served as an important staging ground for naval operations and intelligence-gathering activities along the coastlines of the Carolinas. Beyond its strategic significance, Fortress Monroe served as the grounds where Butler and the region’s slaves forged the first alliance between the Union Army and the South’s enslaved population. Butler recognized that fugitive slaves possessed exceptionally valuable information regarding Confederate activities and a superior understanding of local southern terrain.⁹ Accordingly, he deployed fugitives’ talents against the Confederacy.¹⁰ When Butler was transferred from Fortress Monroe to the Department of the Gulf in early 1862 to lead “the land forces destined to cooperate with the Navy in the attack upon New Orleans [in Louisiana],” he knew that slave military intelligence would again play a critical role.¹¹ Thus, Butler recruited Abraham Galloway, a fugitive slave and northern spy, to assist in the perilous campaign.

This was far from Galloway’s first Union intelligence task. In April 1861, by the recommendation of abolitionist George Stearns, Massachusetts’s war leaders *recruited* Galloway to serve as a spy in the Confederacy.¹² Galloway did not stumble upon the Union camp in his attempt to escape the South nor did he beg for admittance into the camp as a safe haven; rather, in all certainty, he was sought after to participate in the northern intelligence network.¹³ Galloway routinely aided in Union military operations, traveling extensively behind enemy lines and risking his life infiltrating unfamiliar southern plantations.

The logic behind Galloway’s recruitment was seemingly incontrovertible. Who better to stealthily blend into Confederate society than a black man born and raised in the South? Who more adept to penetrate the Confederacy than an ex-slave who previously escaped to the North? And yet, Galloway’s

Spies All Their Lives

recruitment to the Union intelligence network marked one of the first instances that Union military leaders recognized the potential of slaves to undermine the Confederate war effort.¹⁴

At the start of the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln and the federal government were politically committed to defeating the South, irrespective of slavery.¹⁵ In his proclamation on April 15, 1861, President Lincoln promised “to avoid any destruction of, or interference with, property,” namely slavery.¹⁶ “Certain it is that the Republicans...are ‘no friends of slavery,’” Treasury Secretary Samuel Chase assured a prominent Kentuckian, “but it is just as certain that they have never proposed to interfere...with slavery in any State.”¹⁷ Thus, the fluid relationship between Galloway and Butler would not have been feasible in most Union commands.¹⁸ That spring, the prevailing military opinion was that a northern victory should pose no threat to the rights of southern slaveholders to hold African Americans in bondage. A few days after Butler occupied Fortress Monroe, for instance, Major General George B. McClellan, later commanding field general, reassured Virginia’s Unionists that he would not confiscate their slaves. Indeed, McClellan promised to fight “for my country and the Union, not for abolition...” and to “crush any attempt at insurrection.”¹⁹ Abiding by this sentiment, Union forces routinely vowed that they would not interfere with southern property, most essentially slavery, upon attacking the South.²⁰

Accordingly, when Major General Butler encountered slaves entering Fortress Monroe, he specifically labeled them “contraband of war” to obliterate any obligation to return them to slaveholders who claimed them as property.²¹ If his troops had acquired a Confederate wagon or mule, would they have contacted their rightful owners to return them? In reality, the Union troops simply would have put the acquired resources to good use. Thus, while Butler’s use of the term “contraband of war” was loose, his argument made logical sense. When he

Spies All Their Lives

justified his decision to the Union War Department, President Lincoln deemed it unobjectionable. In early August 1861, the United States Congress formulated the general principle into The First Confiscation Act, which ordered the forfeiture of any slaves utilized in direct assistance to the Confederate war effort.²² This resolve was directly tested at the end of August 1861, when Major General John C. Frémont, Commander of the Western Department, exercised stern measures to suppress guerrilla activity.²³ On August 30th, he declared martial law throughout Missouri, mandating, “the court-martial and execution of all persons taken with arms in their hands within Union lines.”²⁴ As a way to punish those who abetted southern partisans, Frémont ordered the property of active dissenters confiscated and their slaves declared free, asserting that the proclamation was of military necessity. President Lincoln contested the order, stating that the permanent future condition of slavery “must be settled according to laws made by law-makers, and not by military proclamations.”²⁵ Frémont was thereby instructed to rescind the emancipation provision. Accordingly, Butler’s “contraband” order and Frémont’s unsuccessful proclamation determined the limits of acceptable military interference with slavery during the first years of the American Civil War.²⁶

Growing recognition of fugitive slaves’ military value, specifically of their local knowledge and their experience to spy, scout, or guide Union troops, slowly eroded the policy of exclusion. Yankee Colonel Simon H. Mix of the 2nd New York Cavalry attested to their importance in assisting military expeditions into Confederate territory. “In all our expeditions in North Carolina we have depended upon the negroes as guides,” Mix claimed, “for without them we could not have moved with any safety.” He was particularly grateful for slaves’ guidance in the Low Country, as “nowhere in the swamps of North Carolina can you find a path where a dog can go that the negro does not understand.”²⁷ “Upwards of fifty volunteers of the best and

Spies All Their Lives

most courageous,” reported Vincent Colyer, superintendent of the poor in New Bern, North Carolina in 1862, “were kept constantly employed on the perilous but important duty of spies, scouts, and guides.”²⁸ In these tasks, Colyer recounted, slaves barely escaped with their lives, as they were pursued on several occasions by bloodhounds and taken as prisoners.²⁹ He affirmed that African American operatives were “invaluable and almost indispensable [sic]” and “frequently went from thirty to three hundred miles within the enemy’s lines” to “bring back important and reliable information.”³⁰ Such accounts confirmed that many Union leaders had begun to recognize the advantages and the value of slaves’ intelligence.

In March 1862, Congress instituted The Act Prohibiting the Return of Slaves, which barred Union soldiers from returning fugitive slaves to their owners. The new article undermined the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850—which legally required all runaway slaves to be returned to their masters—and marked a turning point in federal policy.³¹ In April 1862, Major General Abner Doubleday’s instructions to Colonel J.D. Shaul, Commander of the 46th New York Infantry, cited the new article of war in requiring his troops to treat fugitive slaves “as persons and not as chattels.” “Under no circumstances has the commander of a Fort or camp the power of surrendering persons claimed as fugitive slaves as this cannot be done without determining their character,” Doubleday affirmed. When asked by the commander if it would be better to exclude fugitive slaves altogether from Union lines, Doubleday responded, “. . .they bring much valuable information which cannot be obtained from any other source. They are acquainted with all the roads, path fords and other natural features of the country and they make excellent guides. They also know and frequently have exposed the haunts of secession spies and traitors and the existence of rebel organization. They will not therefore be excluded.”³²

A July 1862 article in the *Chicago Tribune* cemented this

Spies All Their Lives

opinion, advocating for an “immediate alliance with the slaves of rebels” as they were the most versatile guides, a sort of “live map.”³³ The article continued:

Oh, how must the Genius of rebellion have grinned, from her outlook, at the misguided wandering in an unmapped wilderness of an army of invasion! Maps! Useless works of the engineering art, when negroes, live maps, that could see, and walk, and talk, and point with the index finger—crowds of them—stood expectant within reach of our army, and hungered and thirsted to be employed to conduct us to the enemy by the driest and best paths—maps capable of leading us, with unerring certainty, through the woods to the lowest and weakest parts of the line of entrenchments the rebels had thrown up...aged maps, sold from plantation to plantation, through the Peninsula, and familiar from ancient coon-hunting, and still persistent night wandering, with every road and swamp in it...would have led our army right up to the places of weakness...I knew 108,000 men in April last who, under such guidance and such God-speed, would have stormed the gates of hell.³⁴

The *Chicago Tribune* reporter, like Doubleday, promoted the Union’s collaboration with slaves in gaining military intelligence.

Many Union military officials, however, resisted utilizing slaves in their military campaigns. “Not all Union officers welcome blacks into their lines,” explained Captain C.B. Wilder, Superintendent of Contrabands at Fortress Monroe, as “many

were suspicious of the abandoned and self-liberated slaves.” These officers “lacked a forthright commitment to emancipation” and “placed a higher value upon potentially loyal slaveholders than upon demonstrably loyal slaves.”³⁵ Specifically, Major General Don Carlos Buell, Commander of the Army of Ohio in Kentucky, sought to exclude all slaves from Union lines despite the fact that slaves provided “in every case the most reliable as well as important information of the rebel movements” to officers in Kentucky and Tennessee. In April 1862, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Major General Buell received “the means of detecting officers and spies lurking in Nashville [in Tennessee],” critical information that enabled him “to nip a conspiracy in the bud and prevent an insurrectionary movement.” Nonetheless, Buell denied the intelligence of slaves, “...a people who are naturally enemies to those who hold them in bondage.”³⁶

Yet, other Union military officials quickly learned the value of African Americans’ willingness to provide intelligence and became staunch opponents of proslavery military policies. Initially, like most Union generals at this pre-emancipation stage of the war, Major General Ormsby M. Mitchel, commander of a division of the Army of Ohio, did not encourage slave rebellion. He scrupulously conformed to Buell’s orders regarding fugitive slaves. However, Mitchel’s subordinates denounced such obedience. One commander of an Ohio regiment offered his resignation in protest against Mitchel’s order—issued at the express direction of Buell—to expel fugitive slaves from the camps of their division. Characterizing the order as “repugnant to my feelings as a man,” the officer threatened to abandon his service if forced to obey it. Although only a few other officers and enlisted men took such a principled stance, several faulted Mitchel for “inconsistency in regard to the eternal negro question.”³⁷ Their resentment toward Buell’s solicitude for the rights of slaveholders, and of Mitchel’s subservience to Buell, was made blatantly apparent.³⁸

Spies All Their Lives

Military circumstances prompted Mitchel to dissociate himself from Buell's policy though. In late March and early April 1862, as the majority of Buell's army moved southwest from Nashville to join the other western armies at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, Mitchel's division marched south toward Huntsville, Alabama, in the heart of the Tennessee Valley plantation district. Deep in enemy territory and attempting to guard several hundred miles of railroad and river, Mitchel depended on slaves for information about Confederate concentrations and movements. "With the assistance of the Negroes in watching the River," Mitchel expressed, "I feel myself sufficiently strong to defy the enemy." He later revealed that African Americans were "our only friends" and that "in two instances I owe my own safety to their faithfulness."³⁹ In gratitude, Mitchel promised military protection to his slave allies, "who have given me valuable assistance and information." In May 1862, he wrote to Secretary of War Edward M. Stanton requesting the "protection of my government" for "slaves who furnish us valuable information." Like his subordinate, Mitchel affirmed that if his request were disapproved, "it would be impossible for me to hold my position."⁴⁰ Stanton endorsed the appeal. "The assistance of slaves is an element of military strength which under proper regulations you are fully justified in employing for your security and the success of your operations," Stanton replied, and to abstain from its use "would be a failure to employ means to suppress the Rebellion."⁴¹

Mitchel corresponded with Stanton one month later in defense of the slaves who assisted him. After reading a republished letter in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* that caused him "to fear that the Commanding General of the Army has returned to their masters, Slaves, to whom I promised the permanent protection of the Government of the United States," Mitchel wrote to Stanton attesting that these slaves "had rendered valuable services, and had obtained for me most important

Spies All Their Lives

information.” He begged for Stanton’s intervention on behalf of these slaves, for “if they fall into the hands of their masters, their lives will not be safe.”⁴² Assistant Secretary of War Peter H. Watson responded to Mitchel’s panicked letter, avowing that the newspaper’s statement had “no significant authority to sustain it” and thus Mitchel’s promise to the slaves was upheld.⁴³

At this pre-emancipation stage of the war, Mitchel’s appreciation of slaves’ assistance to Union troops fighting in the South was quite progressive. Even after January 1, 1863, Union military officers baselessly differentiated between fugitive slaves and outlined in a complex array the circumstances under which they should and should not be welcome in Union camps.⁴⁴ For example, Brigadier General Henry Hayes Lockwood, a commander of volunteers in the lower Potomac, affirmed that “military camps shall not be used as places of public resort or for idlers” and all should be denied admittance *except* those providing information. “Information will be sought for from all sources and rewards in money,” Lockwood declared, “with protection from danger from giving information may be promised to all, White and Black.”⁴⁵ There was, seemingly, a difference drawn between accepting slaves as fugitives and accepting the integral intelligence that they brought with them.

The value of military intelligence held by enslaved, escaped, and freed African Americans became undeniably apparent. “It is utterly impossible for us to subdue the rebels, without an alliance with their slaves,” the *Chicago Tribune* detailed in July 1862, as “we have everywhere been helpless without these blacks, or exposed to hap-hazard.” The report recounted numerous Union military blunders and claimed that “this alliance with the slaves would have saved the precious, time-wasting preparations.”⁴⁶ Moreover, Union Colonel of the 1st South Carolina Volunteers Thomas W. Higginson astutely noted that slaves “have been spies all their lives.” “You cannot teach them anything” with respect to clandestine activity, Higginson

Spies All Their Lives

revealed, and “I should not attempt to give them instructions... they would better be able to teach me.” Higginson realized that slaves had practiced dissemblance and stealth throughout their lives. Nearly from birth, they learned “to travel furtively at night, to communicate surreptitiously, and to defend themselves”; they already mastered the arts of masquerade, disguise, and forgery.⁴⁷

Abraham Galloway was chief among them. At the commencement of the war, he traveled to the Confederacy seeking “to go South to incite insurrections.”⁴⁸ Galloway joined Butler’s command at Fortress Monroe in May 1861 and “possess[ed] the fullest confidence of the commanding General.”⁴⁹ In the following two and a half years, Galloway deployed his covert intelligence against the Confederacy from the Chesapeake Bay to the Mississippi River, risking his life skirting slave patrols, enemy scouts, and Confederate army units. Reporting directly to one of the Union Army’s highest ranking field officers, Galloway seemingly played a significant role in Union intelligence in Virginia. In a letter to a colleague in the fall of 1863, Brigadier General Edward A. Wild, a colonel in the Army of the Potomac, succinctly noted Galloway’s service as a spy: “I would like to do all I can for Galloway, who has served his country well.”⁵⁰

Former slaves such as Galloway were uniquely suited to operate behind enemy lines: they were familiar with southern life, able to fade unobtrusively into local slave communities, and conditioned to living by guile and by stealth. African Americans utilized their local knowledge and their experience to guide Union troops through the southern terrain. Accustomed to traveling furtively between southern plantations, they “were as thoroughly acclimated as the black snakes and alligators that bask in these Southern waters.”⁵¹ Additionally, African Americans’ knowledge of the physical geography was especially helpful to Union soldiers. When two Northerners escaped from a Confederate prison camp in Columbia, South Carolina, they chanced upon a large plantation in Pickens District. The plantation’s slaves readily

Spies All Their Lives

“provided information about the local terrain, the movement of Confederate troops, the location of practical supplies, and the presence of rebels and political sympathizers alike.” They also advised the soldiers “to stop at the home of John W. Wilson, a strong Union man.”⁵² Virtually everywhere Union soldiers traveled, they encountered slaves such as these ready to provide geographical information about the local terrain, the movement of Confederate troops, the location of pickets and armaments, and the presence of rebels and political sympathizers alike.

Additionally, slaves crafted maps of the South, consisting of paths unknown to their masters. Such cartographic diagrams—shared amongst slaves and with Union troops—illustrated “the shortcuts and winding paths that crisscrossed the land and plantation boundaries and led out into the woods, along which people and goods moved clandestinely.”⁵³ When W.L. Curry of the 1st Ohio Cavalry was cut off from his command south of the Tennessee River and was seeking safety, he met “a colored man going to mill with a sack of corn on his back” who revealed that he was only ten miles away from his destination. “He directed me the way I should go,” Curry recalled, “and cautioned me to keep away from public roads, as the country was full of rebel cavalry and I was liable to be picked up at any moment.”⁵⁴

Similarly, James Pike, a Texas-born white Union spy, received vital assistance from slaves he encountered while struggling to find his way back to his command in northern Alabama in the late summer of 1862. Having spent the night soaking wet after falling into a swamp, Pike chanced upon a plantation, where he befriended the working slaves and sought out their assistance. One young slave guided Pike away toward Huntsville, Alabama. Pike recounted, “My guide seemed to be perfectly at home in the swamp, and piloted the way for three miles over a string of logs, which seemed to be arranged by accident, and not design, so as to form a complete chain across it, so that we were landed on the opposite side without wading a

Spies All Their Lives

step.”⁵⁵ Curry and Pike, astounded at the secret pathways that were revealed to them, were lucky beneficiaries of slaves’ surreptitious travel methods.⁵⁶ Such instances affirmed that “contrabands” provided “some of the most valuable information” regarding the “position, movements, and plans of the enemy, use of topography of the country.”⁵⁷

African Americans’ greatest concealment was, naturally, their skin color, which allowed them to observe, eavesdrop, and carry back information to Union lines without suspicion. “Slave cover” rendered African Americans “so ubiquitous” in a southern household “that neither the table, the parlor, nor the sleeping room has any secrets from them.” They “catch up on everything that is said,” a *Chicago Tribune* reporter attested in August 1861, and “their opportunities for getting information are vastly better than those of the poorer class of whites...”⁵⁸ William Robinson, a driver and house servant on a North Carolina plantation, was “the kind of slave whose mobility and access to white conversations provided him with valuable information and the means to relay it.”⁵⁹ Although he was illiterate, he nonetheless outfoxed slaveholders by learning how to “listen carefully to every conversation held between white people.”⁶⁰ According to the *Chicago Tribune*, slaves such as Robinson “hung about groups of whites,” their “countenances unutterably stolid, or grinning with stupid indifference,” as if they neither heard nor understood, yet actually retained and transmitted everything said.⁶¹ In his autobiography, late nineteenth century black activist Booker T. Washington recounted that slaves “got knowledge of the results of great battles before the white people,” owing to the clever machinations of the bondman assigned to pick up the mail. “The man who was sent to the office would linger about the place long enough to get the drift of the conversation from the group of white people,” Washington revealed, and “the mail-carrier on his way back to our master’s house would as naturally retail the news that he had secured among the slaves.”⁶² In these

Spies All Their Lives

ways, slaves were constantly a step or two ahead of their masters.

Union military officials such as Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Given, a commander of an Ohio regiment, benefited from such covert activities. While stationed in Tennessee in December 1862, Given received information from a slave named Johnston, who arrived at his pickets and informed him “that he overheard [a party of the southern cavalry] tell his master that they were going to a certain point on the road from Shelbyville to Fayetteville that night and would attack and capture a supply train that was to pass there in the morning.” Acting upon this information, Given sent two infantry companies, accompanied by Johnston who served as a guide, to surround and to capture the enemy. “They reported to me to have found everything just as [Johnston] represented,” Given attested.”⁶³ Simply by working as human chattel within southern homes, slaves were capable of utterly undercutting those who were fighting a war to keep them in bondage.

“Slave cover” proved so effective for Union intelligence that Sarah Emma Edmonds, a white northern woman, disguised herself as an African American male to infiltrate the Confederacy, crossing gender and racial lines. Edmonds “dyed her skin with silver nitrate, donned a minstrel wig, and posed in a double disguise as a man and an African American.”⁶⁴ Playing the role of a man named “Cuff,” she worked in Confederate kitchens and ramparts, and collected information on troop figures, fortifications, and morale. “Of one thing I am sure,” the *Chicago Tribune* reported, “that the negroes, whose cunning and duplicity are wonderful, have a pretty fair idea of what is going on, and only await the word to work fearful mischief.”⁶⁵

Beyond their own aptitude for clandestine activities, African Americans advantageously exploited the ways in which white men perceived black men and defined the American Civil War. At the war’s onset, the majority of white men, northern and southern, did not seriously consider African Americans

Spies All Their Lives

part of the war effort.⁶⁶ Historian Stephanie McCurry explains that whites on both sides of the war viewed the conflict as the “Brothers’ War,” meaning white man against white man, not one in which slaves were included to participate. It was “the brothers who brought it on in their (divided) capacity as the people,” she explains, “and the brothers assumed it would be theirs to fight.”⁶⁷ Despite being excluded from political life (i.e. citizenry), slaves were counted, as labor, in the southern war effort; Confederate white men believed firmly that slaves were one of the Confederacy’s “most potent elements of strength.”⁶⁸ McCurry reveals that Confederates assumed adamantly that “the southern negro ha[d] no sympathies with Northern abolitionists.”⁶⁹ African Americans could not seek out more than that kind of oblivion, which allowed for their penetration of Confederate lands. Thus, African Americans were capable of taking advantage of the southern collective mindset that could not envision them as agents actively undermining the Confederate war effort.

In fact, southern slaveholders entered the war confident in their slaves’ devotion to the Confederacy. No master pondered if his slaves would participate in the war, McCurry notes, as “racial ideology provided all of the proof needed of slaves’ willingness to serve the masters’ cause.”⁷⁰ In his March 1861 “Cornerstone Speech,” Confederate Vice President Stephens explained that the Confederacy’s “foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery is his natural and moral condition.”⁷¹ Thus, the *Houston Telegraph* declared, “if slavery is what we believe it to be—the best form of society—it is not only fitted for peace but for the exigencies of war.”⁷² Human bondage was not considered a “necessary evil”—it was deemed a legitimate advantage to the southern war effort.

Such racial ideology solidified slaveholders’ risky undertaking. “One salutary result of the movement in favor of Southern independence has been the awakening of Northern

Spies All Their Lives

minds to the true relations existing between the negro and the white man,” wrote a Louisiana editor in March 1861. “The idea of the equality of race is a figment,” he maintained, as “the negro is happiest” when in servitude.⁷³ Accordingly, Chief of the Confederate Bureau of War Albert T. Bledsoe affirmed “that almost every slave would cheerfully aid his master in the work of hurling back the fanatical invader.”⁷⁴ “They would as soon suspect their children of conspiring against their lives,” a correspondent of the *Charleston Mercury* stated, affirming that planters had absolutely nothing to fear regarding their slaves in wartime.⁷⁵ In fact, “many masters...have actually called their slaves together and given them long pretended ‘explanations’ of the pending troubles,” the *Chicago Tribune* reported in August 1861, “and told them bug bear stories of what the Abolitionists in ‘Old Abe’s’ army would do to them if they ever got them in their clutches.”⁷⁶ Thus, enslaved men and women were to be entirely disposed depending upon their masters’ consent.⁷⁷ Early thoughts of slavery as an element of strength in the war rested upon the baseless assumption that slaves would simply join the southern effort.

As secessionists boasted about the advantages of slavery to a republic at war, their slaves sought to undermine directly that very notion. Nearly everywhere behind Confederate lines, slaves attempted to be informed of military and political developments, which, in a variety of ways, eroded the customary masterly authority. According to Booker T. Washington, slaves in the hills of western Virginia “watched...every success of the Federal armies and every defeat of the Confederate forces...with the keenest and most intense interest.”⁷⁸ Indeed, a former slave who lived in a remote section of east-central Texas divulged, “during them times just like today nearly everybody knows what going on” and that slaves helped “news travel pretty fast.”⁷⁹

Major General Butler’s experience outwitting local planters in New Orleans demonstrated slaves’ intimate knowledge

Spies All Their Lives

of southern activities. Following his successful amphibious assault on Hatteras Inlet in North Carolina in August 1861, Butler traveled to New Orleans and took command of the city. While attempting to bring order to the city, he implemented “speedy and condign punishment” of southern offenders, which fostered a prevailing belief “that nothing could be done there that [he] could not find out.” It was supposed that Butler had “the best spy system in the world.” That was quite true, yet not in the way Confederates imagined. In early June 1862, Butler was informed of a series of “sewing bees” taking place in the house of a Confederate woman, where secessionist women gathered to craft a flag to send to a Confederate New Orleans regiment. When he confronted the ringleader, she instinctively denied his charges. “General, you must be mistaken; you have been misinformed as to the person,” she claimed. Butler retorted, “Madam, if I were you I wouldn’t deny that which you know and I know. You have had that flag made; it is finished and in your house; and I should get it from there now, as I have seen fit to move about it, if I had to take down your house from roof to hearth-stone.” After revealing the flag, she asked Butler, “which of those girls gave information about this flag?” as she was certain that “it was not one of my servants.” “I have no objection to you secession women eating each other like Kilkenny cats,” Butler replied, “but you may accuse her unjustly. It may be your servants, which I suppose you have.” She adamantly retorted, “No, it was not my servants, General; that won’t do.” Butler later revealed in his private writings that, in truth, “the negroes all came and told me anything they thought I wanted to know.”⁸⁰

A similar instance of surreptitious slaves emasculating their ‘patriarchs’ was recorded in the diary of Julia LeGrand, the daughter of a successful Louisiana planter and a New Orleans resident.⁸¹ James Woodson, a slave of Jack Toney in Fluvanna County, Virginia, escaped from his cruel master and reached Union troops under the command of General Philip Sheridan,

Spies All Their Lives

then raiding Virginia. The fugitive directed Union soldiers to the home of his former employer and had his master tied up and whipped as Woodson's master had done to the former slave countless times. Woodson then guided the Union soldiers to abundant stores of armaments, which they took away or destroyed on the spot.⁸² Such activities aggravated Southerners and prompted them to further punish their slaves. Likewise, the slaves on John Williams's plantation in Helena, Arkansas, exposed their master's small supply of arms and ammunition. Lieutenant M.H. David recalled, "When upon investigating his 'negroes', I ascertained that Williams had in his possession [guns and rifles], which he had just denied saying he was an honest man and did not have any use for arms, or ammunition... consequently I had his house minutely searched..." David found many guns, some of which were even hidden within his wife's belongings. Similar to Butler's confession, David admitted, "The 'negroes' told me that [Williams] had [the arms and ammunition] the night before..."⁸³ Ultimately, masters least appreciated being undermined. A Louisiana editor and slaveholder, John H. Ramsdell characterized this best when he described his slaves as "ungrateful and vindictive scoundrels who took possession of their master's property, pointed his place of refuge out to the enemy, or voluntarily acted as guides to them in their marauding overspreading of our country."⁸⁴ Yet, slaveholders were helpless—the slaves were the enemy within.

The continuation of extensive black communication networks formed during the antebellum period allowed intelligence to travel over long distances, which further revealed the limits of slaves' supposed allegiance.⁸⁵ "Somehow or other, by some secret telegraph which cannot be detected, whatever one learns is speedily communicated to the rest," the *Chicago Tribune* reported in August 1861.⁸⁶ John Azor Kellogg, Colonel of the 6th Wisconsin Infantry Volunteer Regiment, found the slave "telegraph line" in Georgia's northeastern highlands particularly

Spies All Their Lives

useful in reporting on military activity within the region. Kellogg was so impressed with the information slaves provided that he characterized slaves “as a class, better informed of passing events and had a better idea of questions involved in the struggle between North and South, than the majority of that class known as the ‘poor white’ of the South.”⁸⁷

George Washington Albright, born a slave but who would later serve in the Mississippi State Senate as a free man in the 1870s, revealed a far better coordinated network of communication in Marshall County.⁸⁸ “That was my first job in the fight for the rights of my people,” he recalled, “to keep [slaves] informed and in readiness to assist the Union armies whenever the opportunity came.” Fifteen years old at the time, Albright had been “a runner for what we called the 4-Is—Lincoln’s Legal Loyal League” and consequently, “traveled about the plantations within a certain range and got together small meetings in the cabins.”⁸⁹ The South Carolina planter and politician James Henry Hammond was certain that he could see the disconcerting results of such communication networks “on all the negro faces” on his plantation, Redcliffe, in late June 1863. Hammond took little comfort in the “peculiar furtive glance with which they regard me and a hanging off from me that I do not like.”⁹⁰ Such complaints resounded in the diaries and letters of numerous slaveholders remaining at home or refuged at other sites, and testified to what could be considered a “second front” opened by slaves within the Confederacy.⁹¹

Masters’ knowledge of the lengths to which their slaves went to assist the enemy obliterated their fictions of passivity and loyalty. “It eventually registered at every level of the Confederate regime, from the plantation to the high officials of central state authority,” McCurry affirms, and spawned a series of significant adjustments in the southern conduct of war. In August 1862, slaves from Beaufort, South Carolina and Savannah, Georgia arrived at Union lines carrying valuable information threatening

Spies All Their Lives

the safety of local Confederate troops. Accordingly, southern officers instructed to “make a reconnaissance up the country around Summerville, South Carolina” due to the “disturbance and alarm...caused by gangs of runaway negroes, leagued with deserters in that neighborhood.”⁹² A few months later, Confederate Colonel Lawrence Keitt confirmed the persistent need for troops in coastal South Carolina to guard all of the inlets along the coast. McCurry notes, “It was knowledge of those kinds of inland waterways and the number and precise position of Confederate troops, pickets, fortifications, and guns” that slaves “conveyed in astonishing detail to federal forces in Beaufort.”⁹³ Thus, Keitt assigned more men, whom he could not afford to relinquish from his own operations, to join the “three cavalry companies...and two infantry companies” already assigned to guard and patrol the coast.⁹⁴ Keitt’s understanding of vulnerable points of exit and entry along the coast of South Carolina demonstrated the challenges slaveholders faced in trying to keep the enemy out when there was another enemy to guide them in.⁹⁵

Similarly, in November 1862, a Confederate Major Jeffords ordered the removal of the slaves of Mr. Warren, an Ashepoo River planter, on “incontestable proof” that they were “in continual intercourse with the enemy” and thus endangered his picket line. Jeffords’ commanding officer confirmed the truth of the charges against local slaves. When he sent a scout “who pretended to be a Yankee” to test “one or two negroes near the enemy’s lines,” they provided him with “all the information an enemy could desire in regard to position and strength of my pickets.”⁹⁶ Union naval men operating on the South Carolina rivers relied on this type of intelligence to strategize and plan their operations. “It is a matter of notoriety,” lamented Confederate States District Attorney P.H. Aylett, “in sections of the Confederacy where raids are frequent that the guides of the enemy are nearly always free negroes and slaves.”⁹⁷

Spies All Their Lives

In an attempt to maintain southern order and prevent slaves from assisting the Union, the Confederacy created the “Twenty Negro Law” in October 1862, which provided exemptions from military service to those who owned twenty or more slaves.⁹⁸ Among planters and state officials, the “Twenty Nigger Law,” as white southerners called it, generated demands to protect plantations and curtail escape to the enemy. In late 1863, near the town of Charlotte, North Carolina, a planter requested a military exemption for his brother so that “order and discipline” might be better maintained “in the neighborhood.”⁹⁹ Women, who remained on plantations as their husbands served in battle, also voiced their fears publicly, writing hundreds of letters to state and Confederate officials imploring that men be released from military service to control slaves. “I fear the blacks more than I do the Yankees,” confessed Mrs. A. Ingraham of Vicksburg, Mississippi. In Virginia, one woman observed that living with slavery in wartime was like living “with enemies in our own households.”¹⁰⁰ The imperatives of controlling a restive slave population strained relations within the Confederacy and confirmed that slaves were, in fact, the Confederacy’s “open enemies” who were “well calculated to do [the South] immense injury.”¹⁰¹ The “Twenty Negro Law” was only the most conspicuous political example of how slaves, the “second front,” came to undermine the slaveholders’ republic.¹⁰²

Having first been seen as an element of strength, slaves unquestionably became the enemy within the Confederacy, as they fled readily to Union lines and provided Union soldiers with pertinent information. Thus, in January 1864, Major-General Cleburne proposed to emancipate slaves to “enlist their sympathies” in the Confederate cause, which blatantly acknowledged slaves’ potent impact on southern society. “Wherever slavery is once seriously disturbed, whether by the actual presence or the approach of the enemy, or even by a cavalry raid,” Cleburne recorded, “the whites can no longer

Spies All Their Lives

FORM 1.
TO BE GIVEN BY PERSONS CLAIMING EXEMPTION UNDER THE 24 CLAUSE OF THE 4TH ARTICLE, 10TH SECTION OF THE ACT OF CONGRESS, APPROVED FEBRUARY 17, 1864.

THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA:
State of Georgia

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, That We, *Lycurgus S. Rees* of *Columbia* County, in the said State, *James B. Neal* Secy of *Columbia* County, and *John E. Smith* Secy of *Columbia* County, in the said State, are held and firmly bound unto the Confederate States of America, in the penal sum of *Ten Thousand* Dollars to be paid to the said Confederate States of America; for which payment well and truly to be made and done, we bind ourselves, and each of us, our heirs, executors and administrators, jointly and severally, firstly by these presents.

Sealed with our seals and dated this *May* day of *May* in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty *four*

Whereas, the above bound *L. S. Rees* has applied for the exemption of *himself* as a *Planter or Agriculturist* under the fourth article of the tenth section of the Act of Congress, approved 17th February, 1864, entitled "An Act to organize farms to serve during the War," there being upon the farm or plantation of the said *Lycurgus S. Rees* for which exemption is sought, *Fifteen* able-bodied slaves between the ages of sixteen and fifty, within the meaning of said act; and which application is to be granted upon the satisfactory execution of this Bond:

Now THE COMMISSIONER OF THE ORDNANCE IS SEEN, That if the above bound *Lycurgus S. Rees* shall deliver to the duly authorized Officer or Agent of the Confederate States, at *Thomson Depot S. C.*, or at such other place as may be directed by the Secretary of War, or his duly authorized Officer or Agent, within twelve months from the date hereof, *Fifteen* pounds of Bacon, or, at the election of the Government, its equivalent in Pork, and *fifteen hundred* pounds of salt Beef, (said Beef to be delivered on foot,) to be paid for by the Government at the prices fixed by the Commissioners of the State, under the Impoundment Act, and shall sell the marketable surplus of provisions and grain now on hand, and which he may raise from year to year while this Exemption continues, to the Government, or to the families of soldiers, at prices not exceeding the prices fixed by the Commissioners of the State, under the Impoundment Act; and shall in all other respects faithfully conform to the requisitions of the said Act, under which the said *L. S. Rees* is exempted according to the true intent and meaning thereof, (he being entitled to the commutation therein provided upon compliance with the terms thereof,) then this obligation to be void and of no effect, or else to remain in full force and virtue.

Signed, Sealed and Delivered in presence of

Robert Martin J. P. } *James B. Neal* (SEAL)
John E. Smith (SEAL)

2140 1864 (SEAL)

Application submitted by Confederate Private Lycurgus Rees in May 1864 for exemption from military service on the grounds of owning fifteen slaves, in accordance with the terms established by the "Twenty Negro Law" passed by the Congress of the Confederate States of America in October 1862

Spies All Their Lives

with safety to their property only sympathize with our cause.”¹⁰³ Slavery forced the Confederacy “to wage war with the Union army in front and ‘an insurrection in the rear,’” becoming “in a military point of view, one of our chief sources of weakness.”¹⁰⁴

Despite the fact that both sides in the war starkly recognized the clandestine activities of freed, enslaved, and runaway African Americans, their legacies are fleeting in historical memory. Cloaked in secrecy and often illiterate, African Americans’ covert work is rarely recorded. “Not surprisingly,” historian David S. Cecelski writes, “Galloway’s duties as a spy consigned the details of his missions to the shadows.”¹⁰⁵ Galloway, Butler, and other Union officers whom the former slave assisted were continually reticent about precisely where Galloway traveled and what he did; they put little, if anything, into writing. While Galloway occasionally alluded to his service as a spy in postwar years, he never divulged the particulars of his covert activities behind enemy lines.¹⁰⁶ An excerpt of a later speech to the Republican State Convention in Raleigh, North Carolina, in September 1867, demonstrated Galloway’s oblique manner of discussing his service as a Union spy: “I rendered good service to this government—if I didn’t do it publicly, I did it privately.”¹⁰⁷ In particular, how Galloway survived in the Deep South after being captured at Vicksburg in 1862 and suddenly reappearing at a Union camp in New Bern, North Carolina, in mid-1863 remains unknown. He was illiterate and never transcribed how he managed to escape from a Confederate stockade or prison camp in Mississippi and how he traversed from the heart of the Confederacy back to New Bern.¹⁰⁸ A later edition of the newspaper *Anglo-African* proved the only exception, as it alluded to Galloway being captured on the “distant Southern strand,” but provided no further information.¹⁰⁹ Most likely, Galloway never fully revealed his experience as a captured Union spy in Mississippi.¹¹⁰ His life as a slave, fugitive, and spy trained him to take caution habitually, hardly provoking him to publicize his

Spies All Their Lives

efforts.¹¹¹

Like Galloway's records, most military records of African Americans' covert activities are utterly incomplete.¹¹² What remains are military correspondences noting the assistance of "negroes," indistinctly termed together and devoid of any recorded identity. Nonetheless, each and every "negro" undoubtedly shaped the five-year conflict that resulted in a Union victory.

By April 1865, the reality was evident: the attempt to build an independent slaveholding republic had failed. The southern vision crumbled in the face of Union forces and the heroic resistance of its own enslaved population. Rather than furthering its own ideals, the Confederate war effort cemented the destruction of slavery.¹¹³ The war itself highlighted that the slaves' "war within" was boundless, that they undermined the Confederacy in ways unimaginable.¹¹⁴ The slaves proved, time and again, their vast abilities to assist the Union Army and Union Navy, so much so that by 1865, some Confederates even argued for the eradication of slavery to ensure their own safety and the survival of their own country.

The war itself produced the very conditions that enabled African Americans to participate in northern clandestine activities and become so detrimental to the southern cause—it was precisely because of their exclusion from the political, and thereby military, arena that allowed for their casual exploitation of the Confederacy. Despite the fact that southern planters and mistresses suspected and feared their slaves' insurgent activities throughout the war, African Americans continually participated in covert activities throughout the five-year struggle. The war transformed the society it sought to preserve.

Spies All Their Lives

¹ Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 325-326.

² Alexander Stephens, “Cornerstone Speech,” (Savannah, Georgia, March 21, 1861).

³ Major-General Patrick Cleburne et al. to Commanding General, Army of Tennessee, (January 2, 1864), 587.

⁴ Ibid., 586-587; McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 326.

⁵ Ibid., 586-587.

⁶ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 327; Cleburne, 590.

⁷ Cleburne, 588.

⁸ R.Q. Mallard, P.W. Fleming, E. Stacy, Committee of Citizens of the 15th District, Liberty County, Georgia, to Brigadier-General Mercer, OR, Ser. 4, 2: 36-38; Cleburne, 589.

⁹ David S. Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 47-48, 50. The dangers of spying were, of course, tremendous. Military records do not reveal how many African American spies died while contributing to the Union intelligence network, but certainly many did not survive. In most cases, a hangman’s knot, not a prison camp, awaited captured spies, regardless of skin color.

¹⁰ Spying was not one-sided; the Confederacy also planted spies around Fortress Monroe.

¹¹ H.E. Paine to Major General O.O. Howard, June 13, 1866, quoted in Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 51.

¹² How Stearns knew of Galloway and his covert capabilities is largely undetermined. He may have encountered Galloway through abolitionist colleagues or during some unknown sojourn in Galloway’s travels of escaping from the South, prior to the American Civil War. Regardless, by early 1861, Stearns recognized Galloway’s potential to contribute to the Union war effort. His recommendation of Galloway reflects—as Stearns considered himself a “practical abolitionist”—one who instinctively resorted to violence and to war as the means to ending human bondage. He was drawn to abolitionists who shared his apocalyptic fervor, eagerness to fight, and refusal to abide compromise with the “Slave Power.” See Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*.

¹³ Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 44.

¹⁴ Ibid., 43.

¹⁵ Although President Lincoln personally believed that secession was primarily rooted in the institution of slavery, the majority of Northerners disagreed. Rather, they were fighting against the act of secession, as they considered enslavement an appropriate status for African Americans; black equality was not deemed worthwhile to fight for. See Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 122.

Spies All Their Lives

¹⁶ Quoted in James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 56.

¹⁷ Quoted in Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 122. In the monumental presidential election of 1860, Samuel Chase attempted to run for President of the United States, but lost the Republican nomination to Abraham Lincoln. Thereafter, Chase and Lincoln's relationship was often strained. Thus, while Chase was an ardent abolitionist and most likely agreed with this statement, it is possible that he was, in fact, trying to mock the Republican Party.

¹⁸ Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 48.

¹⁹ George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, (New York: Charles Webster, 1884), 33, 35; George McClellan to the Union Men of Western Virginia, May 26, 1861, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (OR)*, (Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. 2, 1:753.

²⁰ Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 122.

²¹ Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 48.

²² Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 123.

²³ Frémont was a fierce abolitionist throughout the American Civil War. For example, in 1861, he already issued an emancipation edict in Missouri. Throughout the struggle, Frémont garnered a tremendous amount of support from fellow northern abolitionists. See McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality*, 264.

²⁴ *Ibid.* No condition was more ideal for slavery, with its strong need for imposed order, than martial law.

²⁵ Quoted in Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War*, 123-124.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁷ Quoted in Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 66.

²⁸ Vincent Colyer, *A Brief Report of the Services Rendered by the Freed People to the United States Army in North Carolina*, (New York, 1864), 9-10.

²⁹ According to Colyer's account, three African Americans were taken as prisoners. One of these men was shot and the fate of the other two was not ascertained. See Colyer, *A Brief Report*, 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

³¹ On September 18, 1850, the United States Congress passed the Fugitive Slave Act as part of the Compromise of 1850. This statute was one of the most controversial elements of the compromise, and heightened northern fears of a slave power conspiracy.

³² Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Steven F. Miller, Joseph P. Reidy, Leslie S. Rowland, *Free At Last: A Documentary History of Slavery, Freedom, and the Civil War*, (New York: The New Press, 1992), 35-36.

³³ "THE SLAVES AND THE WAR: The Necessity of an Immediate Alliance

Spies All Their Lives

with the Slaves of the Rebels,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 17, 1862, 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁵ Excerpts from testimony of Capt. C.B. Wilder before the American Freedman’s Inquiry Commission, May 9, 1863, filed with O-328 1863, Letters Received, Ser. 12, RG 94 [K-68].

³⁶ “FROM TENNESSEE: FEDERAL OPERATIONS IN THAT STATE. Loyalty of the Nashvillians. Mitchell’s Division,” *Chicago Tribune*, Apr 17, 1862, 5.

³⁷ Ira Berlin, Barbara J. Fields, Thavolia Glymph, Joseph P. Reidy, and Leslie S. Rowland, *The Destruction of Slavery in Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation 1861-1867*, Series I, Volume I, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 256-258.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 256-258.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 256-258.

⁴⁰ OR, Ser. I, Vol. 10, Pt. 2, 162.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*; Commander of the 3rd Division of the Army of the Ohio to the Secretary of War, and the Latter’s Reply, May 4-5, 1862 in Berlin et al., *The Destruction of Slavery in Freedom*, Series I, Volume I, 256-258.

⁴² Major General O. M. Mitchel to Secretary of State E. M. Stanton, July 26, 1862, in Berlin et al., *The Destruction of Slavery in Freedom*, Series I, Volume I, 282-283.

⁴³ Assistant Secretary of War P[eter] H. W[atson] to Brigadier General Ormsby M. Mitchel, 7 October 1862, M-1743 1862, Letters Received, Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, Record Group 107, National Archives [FSSP L-17]. To note, parts of Watson’s first and last names in brackets because he signed with his initials, not his full name. To note, all letters and numbers in brackets preceded by “FSSP” denote the control number of the document in the collection of the Freedmen and Southern Society Project, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland.

⁴⁴ Berlin et al., *Free At Last*, 334-334.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 334-335.

⁴⁶ “THE SLAVES AND THE WAR: The Necessity of an Immediate Alliance with the Slaves of the Rebels,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 17, 1862, 2.

⁴⁷ Excerpts from the testimony of Colonel Thomas W. Higginson before the American Freedmen’s Inquiry Commission, (Beaufort, S.C. June 1863), in Berlin et al., *The Destruction of Slavery in Freedom*, Series I, Volume I, 138.

⁴⁸ *Liberator*, July 12, 1861.

⁴⁹ *Raleigh Weekly Standard*, September 7, 1870; Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 45.

⁵⁰ Wild to Kinsley, November 30, 1863, quoted in Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 46.

⁵¹ Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the Civil War*, (Boston: Little Brown Company,

Spies All Their Lives

1953), 84.

⁵² Steven Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 89.

⁵³ Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 228-229.

⁵⁴ W.L. Curry, *Four Years in the Saddle: History of the First Regiment Ohio Volunteer Cavalry: War of the Rebellion—1861-1865*, (Columbus: Chaplin, 1898), 343.

⁵⁵ James Pike, *The Scout and Ranger: Being the Personal Adventures of Corporal Pike of the Fourth Cavalry...Fully Illustrating the Secret Service*, (Cincinnati: J.R. Hawley, 1865), 225-226.

⁵⁶ Margaret Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama's Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), 153.

⁵⁷ "OUR ARMY CORRESPONDENCE: Usefulness of the Contrabands Important Information Obtained from Them Arrest of Supposed Spies The Enemy Concentrating Near Petersburg, &c.," *The New York Times*, July 31, 1862, 1.

⁵⁸ "IMPORTANT FROM NORTH CAROLINA: The Negroes on the Alert—The Spy System," *Chicago Tribune*, August 19, 1861, 2.

⁵⁹ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 228.

⁶⁰ Reverend W.H. Robinson, *From Log Cabin to the Pulpit, or, Fifteen Years in Slavery*, (Eau Claire, 1913), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/singleton/menu.html>.

⁶¹ "IMPORTANT FROM NORTH CAROLINA: The Negroes on the Alert—The Spy System," *Chicago Tribune*, 2.

⁶² Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography*, (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1907), 8-9.

⁶³ Statement of Lieutenant Colonel Josiah Given, 19 December, 1862, G-97 1862, Letters Received, Ser. 925, Dept. of Cumberland, RG 393 Pt. 1 [C-3] in Berlin et al., *The Destruction of Slavery in Freedom*, Series I, Volume I, 297-298.

⁶⁴ Michael J. Sulnick, *Spying In America*, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2012), 103-104; Laura Leedy Gansler, *The Mysterious Private Thompson*, (New York: Free Press, 2005), 85-97.

⁶⁵ "The Negroes on the Alert—The Spy System," *Chicago Tribune*, August 19, 1861, 2.

⁶⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880," (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935), 57.

⁶⁷ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 82.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 223.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 224.

Spies All Their Lives

⁷¹ Alexander Stephens, “Cornerstone Speech,” (Savannah, Georgia, March 21, 1861).

⁷² *Houston Telegraph*, March 29, 1865. Quoted in McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 310.

⁷³ *New Orleans Bee*, March 16, 1861. Quoted in McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 225.

⁷⁴ A.T. Bledsoe to W.S. Turner, August 2, 1861. OR, Ser. 4, 1:529. Planters’ nonchalant attitude towards their slaves at the start of the war demonstrated their utter oblivion to the danger in their midst.

⁷⁵ *Charleston Mercury*, November 11, 1859.

⁷⁶ “The Negroes on the Alert--The Spy System,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 19, 1861, 2.

⁷⁷ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 224.

⁷⁸ Washington, *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography*, 8-9.

⁷⁹ Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 87.

⁸⁰ Benjamin Butler, *Private & Official Correspondence of General Benjamin F. Butler, 1818-1893*, (Boston: A.M. Thayer & Co. Book Publishers, 1892), 449-451.

⁸¹ Slaveholders often described their relationship with their slaves in familial and patriarchal terms; Julia LeGrand was a pro-Confederate woman who was notorious for her provocations for federal troops and officers. LeGrand’s diary recorded her experiences as a southern woman engaged in the Confederate war effort. See Scott P. Marler, *The Merchant’s Capital: New Orleans and the Political Economy of the Nineteenth-Century South*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁸² Kate Mason Rowland and Morris L. Croxall, ed., *The Journal of Julia LeGrand*, (Richmond: Everett Waddey Co., 1911), 283.

⁸³ Lieutenant M. H. David to General Buford, 2 June 1864, C-299 1864, Letters Received (Supplemental), series 4677, District of Eastern Arkansas, Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393 Pt. 2 No. 299, National Archives [FSSP C-1814].

⁸⁴ G.P. Whittington, ed., “Concerning the Loyalty of Slaves in North Louisiana,” *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 14 (October 1931): 487-502, quotation at 490.

⁸⁵ Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 41-43.

⁸⁶ “IMPORTANT FROM NORTH CAROLINA: The Negroes on the Alert—The Spy System,” *Chicago Tribune*, August 19, 1861, 2.

⁸⁷ John Azor Kellogg, *Capture and Escape: A Narrative of Army and Prison Life*, (Democrat Printing Co., 1908), 147, 149.

⁸⁸ Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 87.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 87. The existence of “Lincoln’s Legal Loyal League” is widely debated and mostly appears in secondary literature. Slaves supposedly formed secret lodges known as “Loyal

Spies All Their Lives

Leagues” and used code words such as “Friends of Uncle Abe” and “Light and Liberty” to assist the Union (see Ervin L. Jordan Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 283). However, there is hardly any primary documentation of the existence and activities of this “Loyal League.” In December 1861, the *Daily Times* of Leavenworth, Kansas, succinctly reported about “a slave league,” which was “not positively known” yet “suspected by many of the slave-holders” (*Daily Times*, Leavenworth, Kansas, December 21, 1861). In Allan Pinkerton’s memoir, *The Spy of the Rebellion*, he notes the existence of a slave league in his discussion of African American spy John Scobell. Although Pinkerton founded the Union Intelligence Service, his work is largely debated and deemed somewhat fictional. Thus, neither the *Daily Times* article nor Pinkerton’s work can verify the existence of a slave league. Such fabrication is commonplace in the discussion of African American covert activities during the American Civil War.

⁹⁰ Carol Bleser, ed., *Secret and Sacred: The Diaries of James Henry Hammond, a Southern Slaveholder*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 289-290. Hammond is a prime example of a cruel slaveholder. During the American Civil War, he sought to extract as much labor and profit from his slaves’ work. Hammond defended the institution of slavery from an economic standpoint and adamantly resisted the abolition of slavery until he could no longer do so.

⁹¹ Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 88.

⁹² A.A.G. R. W. Memminger to Brigadier General Johnson Hagood, August 16, 1862, in Berlin et al., *The Destruction of Slavery in Freedom*, Series I, Volume I, 132.

⁹³ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 296.

⁹⁴ Colonel Lawrence M. Keitt to General, January 9, 1863. In Berlin et al., *The Destruction of Slavery in Freedom*, Series I, Volume I, 134-136; McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 296.

⁹⁵ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 296.

⁹⁶ Commander of the 3rd Military District of the Confederate Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida to the Headquarters of the Confederate Department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, Pocotaligo, South Carolina, 18 November 1862; Brigadier General W. S. Walker to Brigadier General Thomas Jordan, 18 November 1862, filed with R-1421 1863, Letters Received, series 12, Adjutant & Inspector General, War Department Collection of Confederate Records, Record Group 109, National Archives [FSSP F-193]; McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 295.

⁹⁷ D.W. Vowles to John H. Winder, April 11, 1864, quoted in Mark E. Neely Jr., *Southern Rights: Political Prisoners and the Myth of Confederate Constitutionalism*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 135.

Spies All Their Lives

⁹⁸ Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 88. From the beginning of the secession crisis, there was apprehension about slave discipline, but the war had exacerbated the challenges southern communities faced in trying to maintain effective slave patrols. Passed in October 1862, the infamous “Twenty Negro Law” triggered enormous popular resentment, both from non-slaveholders who regarded it as valuing the lives of the elite over their own, as well as from slaveholders who were not eligible. In a speech in Jackson, Mississippi, in December 1862, President Jefferson Davis affirmed the logic of the law. “The object of [it]... was not to draw any distinction of classes, but simply to provide a...police force, sufficient to keep our negroes in control. This is the sole object of the clause.” See McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 293; Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 55; and George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 155-156.

⁹⁹ Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 88.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 58-60.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 289.

¹⁰² Hahn, *A Nation Under Our Feet*, 88.

¹⁰³ Major-General Patrick Cleburne et al. to Commanding General, Army of Tennessee, (January 1864), 588.

¹⁰⁴ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 327; Major-General Patrick Cleburne et al. to Commanding General, Army of Tennessee, 587.

¹⁰⁵ Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 46.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁰⁷ *Weekly North-Carolina Standard*, September 11, 1867.

¹⁰⁸ Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 62.

¹⁰⁹ *Anglo-African*, January 16, 1864. Based in New York City, New York, the *Anglo-African* was one of the few black-owned and -operated newspapers in the country during the American Civil War.

¹¹⁰ While there are few writings about Galloway’s clandestine activities, there are some that elaborate on his life pre- and post-war. Because Galloway transformed into an active political figure in the later years of the American Civil War and during the Reconstruction Era, his legacy as a whole is not entirely forgotten. For more information about Galloway’s life, see *Weekly Standard*, September 7, 1870; *New National Era*, September 22, 1870; and Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*.

¹¹¹ Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 62.

¹¹² Military records of Galloway’s activities are far from fruitful sources of information. Particularly in the early years of the war, before the Union War Department created a central intelligence agency, commanders individually managed their spies. For example, Butler paid his spies from Secret Service

Spies All Their Lives

Funds that required minimal documentation or from his personal finances. By paying spies in this way, Butler did not feel obligated to enumerate sources or explain details to other military officers. See Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom*, 46.

¹¹³ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, 361.

¹¹⁴ Thavolia Glymph, "Rose's War and the Gendered Politics of a Slave Insurgency in the Civil War," in *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol. 3, No. 4, (December 2013), 505.

Images:

Page 10: "Kilkenny Cat Fight 1846," in-text wood engraving cartoon of General Ulysses S. Grant, 1864, June 25, 1864 issue of *Harper's Weekly*, via Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/64/Kilkenny_Cat_Fight_1864.jpeg (accessed May 4, 2016).

Page 32: "Twenty Negro Act Exemption," Confederate States Government, February 17, 1864, via Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/90/Twenty_Negro_Act_Exemption.jpeg (accessed May 4, 2016).