

THE MISCELLANEOUS AFRO-LATIN AMERICA COLLECTION

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Collection Summary

The Miscellaneous Afro-Latin America Collection consists of a mix of official, private, and family papers documenting the experiences of peoples of African descent in the colonial Spanish American territories of Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay and Venezuela. The documents are all from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, except for a chronology of the history of blacks in Uruguay from 1680-1990.

Included in the official documents are a number of royal decrees concerning the commerce in Africans, the education, treatment and occupation of enslaved laborers, and the liberation of fugitives from the territories of imperial rivals.

The family and private papers are concerned primarily with the sale and manumission of enslaved persons.

Description of Documents

Fugitive Slaves in the New World

Royal decree issued by the King of Spain concerning fugitive slaves, stating that slaves fleeing from other territories into Spanish America became free and were not to be returned to their former owners.

1789

Introduction of Slave Trade in Spanish Colonies

Royal decree granting Spanish subjects and foreigners in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo and the Province of Caracas the right to purchase black slaves.

1789, 1791

[three items, two folios and one broadside]

Royal decree

Decree issued by the king of Spain to continue the free commerce of blacks in the Indies and Philippine Islands, and to extend their introduction to the Spanish colonies for 12 years by Spaniards, and 6 years by foreigners. Decree also refers to the exemption of agricultural products produced in the colonies from taxes and other regulations.

April 22, 1804

Education, Treatment and Occupation

Royal decree concerning the education, treatment and occupation of slaves in all of the Spanish territories of the Indies and the Philippine Islands.

1810

ARGENTINA

Magan Family Legal Documents

Five documents dealing with the disposition of property belonging to the Magan family. The first document contains the statement by Dr. Antonio Jose Magan regarding the last will and testament of his mother, Inez de Cabrera y Magan, including a listing of her slave holdings (pp.12-13), and her wish to grant freedom to her slave Josefa (pp.4, 13).

1726, 1761

Exchange of Slaves

Incomplete document regarding an exchange or sale of a male slave for a female slave.

1753

Slave Trade

Don Joaquin Lemos, Portuguese citizen residing in Buenos Aires, contrasts laws of Castile with those of Brazil with respect to importation of black slaves.

June 1808

Forced Draft of Slaves into Armed Forces

Decree regulating the forced draft of slaves into the Armed Forces. Signed by Miguel de Azuenaga, Governor of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata (Argentina).

1813

Free Womb Decree

Order freeing all children of slaves born after January 3, 1813.

1813

Broadside

[Flat box]

Case of Petrona Celestina

Legal papers regarding a legal suit brought by Juan Bravo against Isabel Medina seeking to cancel a contract for the purchase of a slave girl and restitution of sale price. Bravo purchased Petrona Celestina, a 16 year old slave, from Medina and subsequently discovered that the girl was a chronic runaway and that she had contracted a venereal disease. Among the witnesses in the trial was Petrona's mother, Concepcion Gurman (p.6). Summary of Bravo's case against Medina can be found on page 16.

1813-1816

Black Troops - Regiment of Freemen

Decree by Don Miguel de Azquenaga y Basabilvaso, Colonel of the State Armed Forces. Decree orders the creation of a regiment of Freemen. The decree spells out the procedure for how slaves are to be incorporated into the regiment and extends the decree of May 31, 1813 throughout the Province of Buenos Aires.

post-1813

Free Black Population in Buenos Aires, 1815

Chart listing various statistics among the free black population in Buenos Aires by parish, 1813-1815. Includes the number of births, stillbirths, total births and deaths, and the total free black population.

[in the Gazeta de Buenos Aires May 1816]

Black Troops - Infantry Regiment of Blacks and Mulattoes

Address by Nicolas Cabrera, commander of the Infantry Regiment of Blacks and Mulattoes, exhorting the regiment to continue their honored and meretorious service to the government in the face of rumors and accusations of disloyalty.

Buenos Aires, 1819

Juliana

Documents regarding the return of a slave woman, Juliana, to her original owner. [8 pages]

Buenos Aires, 1823-1824

Maria Garcia, Liberta

Joaquin Antonio Sanaballa, husband of Maria Garcia, a free woman (Liberta) declares that his wife was taken by Portuguese pirates and given to Don Genero Chaves who gave her to Don Vicente Rosas on condition that he teach her to pray; that Rosas refuses to allow

wife and husband to meet; that Rosas went to ask intervention of priest who told him to go to court, from which he now asks for justice.

1831

Genaro Pelliza

Order of the Justice of the Peace to evict a black man, Genaro Pelliza, from his home, and report of the court officer that carried out the eviction. Causes for the eviction are not given. [folio]

1842

Proclamation issued by Manuel Pagola, Colonel of the Country's Armies and General Commander of the Armed Forces

Commends the citizens of Buenos Aires for resisting the forces of Carranzas, and expresses his particular esteem for the blacks' determined effort in this struggle. n.d.

Official Decree issued in Mendoza, Argentina

Frees slaves who travel to Chile with their owners and return to Argentina. Runaway slaves were excluded from this decree. Mendoza, Argentina, 1820-1830.

The Slave Trade in Mar del Plata

Document about a legal dispute during the mid-18th century between Argentinean slave importers and traders. It provides a rich description of the commercial slave importation system as well as the structure of the plantation system in the region of Mar del Plata. The manuscript contains detailed information regarding the number of slaves passing through Mar del Plata and the various prices of enslaved Africans imported during the four-year period. Mar del Plata, Argentina, 1749.

Black Society of the Tauza Nation

Fourteen page document containing a legal request from the Black Society of the Tauza Nation to the government and local police authority of Buenos Aires. The Black Society of the Tauza Nation sought to establish a mutual aid society where Afro-descendant people could congregate, dance, play traditional music, and carry out ceremonies. In addition there are documents signed by the legal authorities approving the society as well as a description of the purpose, activities, and bylaws of the black society. Buenos Aires, Argentina.

1828

CUBA

Etat de L'Isle de Cuba

Register listing the number of houses, churches, schools, number of free blacks and mulattos, mulatto and black slaves, white men and women of all races and conditions in 17 cities in Cuba. [in French]

1775 [Flat box]

Negros Cimarrones

Series of reports (handwritten) made to the provincial governor by Captain Antonio Garacia Gral and his subordinates, providing an account of maroons who had revolted and escaped into the forests of Ceira de Mocha in Matanzas Province. The military was unable to subdue them and hired bounty hunters with dogs to enter the forests in pursuit.

1837-1838

El Correspondencia de la Tercera Partida del Lanceros del Rey sobre el ataque que le dio a los Negros apalencados en la loma de Guachinango

[Correspondence of the 3d division of His Majesty's Lancers regarding the attack launched upon the maroon Negroes in the hills of Guachinango.]

Twenty-two manuscript reports on the campaign to capture the leader of a group of Africans in the remote area of Guachinanga. The Africans were led by "Felipe, ganga" a native African. The insurrection ended in February 1833 with the capture of Felipe, some of his followers, and an arsenal. He was tried with 7 others. Their fate is not specified.

1833

Four bills of sale for slaves

Documents give the name of the slave and the amount paid, names of the seller (private citizen) and the person to whom the slave is being sold.

1843, 1847, 1852

Runaway Slave Register

Register of runaways captured and housed in the municipal jail during the month of July 1858. Lists first name, age, physical description, *nacion*, owner, and date of capture.

1858

[Flat box]

La Protectora Compania

Receipt from La Protectora, an insurance company that specialized in insuring slaves (*General Cubana de seguros mutuos sobre la vida de esclavos*).

1859

MEXICO

Elections in Indian towns

Despatch referring to the problems and disruptions caused by elections among the Indians. Deals specifically with the case of the town of Xochimilco in which two "half castes," Miguel Galicia and his son, Antonio Abad, who claimed to be Indians, were elected to the position of Governor. According to the law of 1687, the governors of Indians towns and areas had to be 100% "pure" Indian, via both parental lineages, however, due to the fact that Spaniards, Blacks, mulattos and mestizos were living in Indian towns these electoral problems were becoming commonplace. The decree seeks the arrest of Antonio Abad Galicia for sedition and to prohibit Miguel Galicia or others from influencing the natives to vote for their candidate as opposed to a native candidate chosen by the Indians.

1789

Decree regarding Behavior during Carnivals.

Describes the behavior that will not be allowed and the punishment to be meted out to Spaniards, mulattos, Blacks, Indians and other castes caught breaking the rules; punishment for non-whites was double the prison penalty received by the Spaniards.

Mexico, February 10, 1789

[Flat box]

Payment of Tax by Widows, Single Women and Matrons

Refers to the decree issued March 26, 1787 establishing that free black, mulatto and other caste widows, single women and matrons would be exempted from the payment of taxes. This decree establishes a mechanism for the circulation of copies of the decree among government officials and compliance with the 1787 decree.

Mexico, September 19, 1789

Decree Prohibiting Intermarriage

Decree prohibiting intermarriage between whites and blacks, mulattos, Chinese or other castes. Mentions three cases: Jose Betancourt (white) and Catalina Truxillo (parda); Josefa Espinosa

(parda) and the son of Don Bernardino Monteagudo (white), both cases occurring in Cuba; and Rafael Garzes (white), a soldier, and Maria Josefa de Regla Travieso (a free morena). These three cases were brought to the attention of the Viceroy of Nueva Espana who ruled that mixed marriages were prohibited, especially marriages between people of "known nobility and pure blood" and blacks, mulattos and other castes, regardless of the age and legal status of the parties involved. In making this ruling the decision was also influenced by cases reported in Buenos Aires in which mature individuals of "evident purity and nobility" had sought marriages with free blacks and mulattos.

Mexico, December 18, 1810

[Flat box]

Education of Spanish Subjects of African Origin

Decree declaring that all Spanish subjects of African origin shall be given access to study the sciences and undertake religious careers in order to be useful to the State, and that they can be admitted to the University, seminaries and join religious orders. Issued in Cadiz, January 29, 1812. Decree was ordered placed in all public places in cities and towns.

Mexico, September 25, 1812

[Flat box]

Abolition of Slavery

Decree declaring the abolition of slavery in the Mexican republic and providing for the indemnification of slave-owners. Broadside 1837

PERU

Slave Registrations

Five form documents (partly printed) giving the name of the enslaved individual, their age, and the name of the slave ship on which they arrived. Also notes state of slave's health.

1801, 1806, 1810

PUERTO RICO

Etat de L'Isle de Porto-Rico

Register of the number of whites, blacks, free mulattos and slaves as well as agricultural products in 28 cities in Puerto Rico.

[in French]

1778 [Flat box]

Schomburg, Carlos Federico

Six documents related to Don Carlos F. Schomburg. Includes document establishing a business, Schomburg & Company, and three documents related to a legal case involving Guillermo Schroder against Schomburg.

1850s, Aguada, Puerto Rico

URUGUAY

Ildefonso Pereda Valdes

Twenty-three letters from Ildefonso Pereda Valdes (1899-1996) to his literary agent Hector Midi. Pereda Valdes was a Uruguayan author, poet and anthologist. In the 1920s and 1930s, Pereda Valdes actively promoted and published works by South American black authors. He edited anthologies, including *Raza Negra* (1929), *Antologia de la poesia negra americana* (1936, 1940), *El negro rioplatense y otros ensayos* (1937) and *La linea de color: Ensayos Afro-americanos* (1938). The letters to Midi were written between 1936 to 1939 and reveal Pereda Valdes' effort to publish a work called *Aporte del negro a nuestra formacion nacional*. Although the manuscript is not included in the collection, it could have been published under a different title, *El negro en el Uruguay pasado y presente* (1965). The letters from Pereda Valdes also disclose his ideas and activities, intellectual aspirations regarding his work, and challenges he was experiencing with his publisher.

Los Descendientes de Africanos en el Uruguay

Three-page chronology of the history of blacks in Uruguay, 1680-1990. Includes description of black organizations. Prepared by Jose Enrique Diaz, an Afro-Uruguayan.

VENEZUELA

Plantation Inventory

Manuscript inventory of a plantation in Venezuela listing 32 slaves, plus a 3-page appendix outlining rules for the treatment of slaves. 1753