***CHAPTER ONE: Spanish Origins***

*The first black settlers in the region that would become the American West originated in Mexico and traveled north rather than west. Their experiences are profiled in the following vignettes. The first vignettes,* ***Esteban and the "Discovery" of the U.S. Southwest*** *and* ***The Death of Esteban*** *describe the role of one Spanish-speaking African in establishing Spain's claim to Northern Mexico.* ***Race and Class in Colonial Mexico*** *and* ***Race Mixture in Colonial New Mexico*** *describes the multiracial population which emerges first in Mexico City and later in the remote provinces across much of Northern New Spain. That theme is also pursued in* ***Marriage in Colonial New Mexico: The Rodriguez Saga*** *and* ***Slavery and Freedom in Spanish New Mexico****. Two vignettes show the concerns of black women at the time. Both* ***Isabel De Olvera Arrives in New Mexico*** *which describes the first black woman on the Northern frontier of New Spain, and* ***Anttonia Lusgardia Ernandes Fights for Her Son*** *discuss the status of black women in the region. The vignettes* ***Afro-Spaniards in the Far Southwest*** *and* ***The Founding of Los Angeles*** *describe the black and mulatto settlers in colonial California while* ***Sonora y Sinaloa: Madre Patria Chica de Los Angeles*** *describes the area of origin of these settlers.* ***Black Settlement in Spanish Texas*** *describe their counterparts in Texas.* ***Free Blacks on the Texas Frontier*** *describes the initially successful effort by some African Americans to find freedom and economic security on the "cultural frontier" of Mexican Texas.* ***Santa Anna and Black Freedom*** *and* ***The Yellow Rose of Texas*** *describe African Americans and the Texas independence campaign.* *The final vignettes describe the first English-Speaking African Americans who arrive in the region after 1800. The vignette* ***York and the Lewis and Clark Expedition*** *profiles the slave who accompanied the most famous western explorers.* ***Edward Rose and the Overland Astorians*** *and* ***James Beckwourth: Mountain Man*** *discuss the two most famous black fur trappers in the West. Finally, the vignette* ***William A. Leidesdorff and John A. Sutter****, describes the former as a prosperous pre-Gold Rush California merchant.*

*Terms For Week One* :

*Esteban*

*Hawikah*

*Isabel De Olvera*

*Founders of Los Angeles:*

*Luis Quintero and Maria Petra Rubio*

*Jose Moreno and Maria Guadalupe Gertrudis*

*Manuel Camero and Maria Tomasa*

*Antonio Mesa and Ana Gertrudis Lopez,*

*Maria Manuela Calixtra and Basilia Rosas*

*Maria Rufina Dorotea and Jose Antonia Navarro*

*Pio Pico*

*lobos*

*Sebastian Rodriguez Brito*

*Anttonia Lusgardia Ernandes*

*William Goyens*

*Moses and Stephen Austin*

*Benjamin Lundy*

*Fanny McFarland*

*Emily (West) Morgan*

*The Ashworth Clan*

*General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna*

*James Beckwourth*

**ESTEBAN, THE BLACK "KATSINA"**

*Most accounts of Esteban, the African-born slave whose exploits helped establish the Spanish claim to what is now the southwestern section of the United States, are written from the perspective of the Europeans who sponsored his foray into the Zuni village of Hawikuh in 1539. Ramon A. Gutierrez, however, attempts to explain Esteban through the eyes of the Indian leaders who encountered and were forced to kill him "so that he would not reveal our location to his brothers."*

In May of 1539, as preparations were being made to call the *katsina* (ancestor spirit) to bring rain, the Zuni warriors of Hawikuh spotted a black katsina approaching from the west. The katsina was unlike any they had ever seen before. He was large in stature, wore animal pelts, and was richly adorned with large pieces of turquoise. He "wore bells and feathers on his ankles and arms, and carried plates of various colors." Many Pima, Papago, Opata, and Tarahumara Indians accompanied the katsina. The called him Estevanico, a great healer and medicine man. The men showered him with gifts, and the women, hoping to obtain his blessings, gave him their bodies. All along Estevanico's route, he constructed large prayersticks (crosses) that he commanded everyone to worship.

Hawikuh's cacique awaited the arrival of the black giant with great foreboding. While still a day's distance from the village, Estevanico sent the town chief a red and white feathered gourd rattle and a message that "he was coming to establish peace and to heal them." When the chief saw the rattle, he became very angry and threw it to the ground saying, "I know these people, for these jingle bells are not the shape of ours. Tell them to turn back at once, or not one of their men will be spared."

Undaunted by what his messengers told him, Estevanico proceeded to Hawikuh. The road to the village was closed symbolically with a cornmeal line, and when the black katsina crossed it, the pueblo's warriors took him prisoner and confined him in a house outside the village. There, "the oldest and those in authority listened to his words and tried to learn the reason for his coming." The katsina told them that other white katsina, children of the Sun, would soon arrive. The cacique thought these words were crazy, and when Estevanico demanded turquoise and women, he had him killed as a witch and foreign spy.

The old men of the village huddled together in the *kiva*, pondering the meaning of what had been said and done. Repeatedly they asked, Who was this black katsina? Whence had he come? What did he want? Would more katsina shortly arrive, as Estevanico said. The old men were silent on these matters, as were the ancient myths. The answers to these questions would be found not in the Pueblo world but in a distant land across a sea in a place the black katsina called Castile...

*Source: Ramon A. Gutierrez, When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power in New Mexico, 1500-1846 (Stanford, 1991), pp. 39-40.*

**THE DEATH OF ESTEBAN**

*Although the death of Esteban at the hands of the Zuni Indians is certain, the reason for his murder remains a mystery. Four possible explanations appear below. The first is provided by Fray Marcos De Niza, the second is from Captain Hernando de Alarcon who sailed up the Gulf of California one year later where he met Indians who were aware of Esteban's encounter with the Zuni, the third is Francisco Vazquez de Coronado's report to Governor Mendoza in 1540 after he had reached Hawikuh, and the fourth, the narrative of Pedro de Castaneda, a member of the Coronado Expedition.*

*Fray Marcos's account:* As we were on our way, one day's journey from Cibola (Hawikuh), we met two...Indians of those who had gone with Esteban. They were bloodstained and had many wounds. Upon their arrival, they and those who were with me began such a weeping that they made me cry too, both through pity and fear. They asked how they could keep still when they knew that of their fathers, sons, and brothers who had gone with Esteban, more than three hundred men were dead. They said that they would no longer dare go to Cibola as they used to... I asked the wounded Indians about Esteban and what had happened... They told me that when Esteban was within a day's travel of the city of Cibola, he sent his messengers with a gourd to the ruler of the place, informing him of his visit and of how he was coming to establish peace and to heal them. When the emissaries handed the ruler the gourd and he saw the jingle bells, he became very angry and threw the gourd to the ground, saying, "I know these people, for these jingle bells are not the shape of ours. Tell them to turn back at once, or not one of their men will be spared." The messengers went back very dejectedly,, and [told] Esteban. He told them not to fear, that he would go there, for although the inhabitants gave him a bad answer, they would receive him well.

So Esteban went ahead with all his people, who mush have numbered more than three hundred men, besides many women, and reached the city of Cibola at sunset. They were not allowed to come into the city, but were placed in a large house, quite a good lodging, which was located outside of the city. Then the natives of Cibola took away from Esteban everything he carried, saying that it had been so ordered by their lord. "During the whole night," the wounded Indians said, "they did not give us anything to eat or drink. The next morning, when the sun had risen the height of a lance, Esteban went out of the house and some of the chiefs followed him, whereupon many people came out of the city. When Esteban saw them, he began to flee, and we did also, They at once began to shoot arrows at us, wounding us, and thus we remained until night, not daring to stir. We heard much shouting in the city, and we saw many men and women on the terraces, watching, but we never saw Esteban again. We believe that they shot him with arrows and also the others who were with him, as no one except ourselves escaped."

Hearing with the Indians said, and in view of the poor conditions for continuing my journey as I desired, I could not help but feel some apprehension for their loss and mine... Thus I turned back with much more fear than food...

*de Alarcon's account:* I asked [the chief] about Cibola and whether he knew if they people there had ever seen people like us. He answered no, except a negro who wore on his feet and arms some things that tinkled. Your Lordship must remember this negro who went with Fray Marcos wore bells, and feathers on his ankles, and arms, and carried plates of various colors. He arrived there a little more than one year ago. I asked him why they killed him. He replied that the chieftain of Cibola asked the negro if he had any brothers, and he answered that he had an infinite number, that they had numerous arms, and that they were not very far from there. Upon hearing this, many chieftains assembled and decided to kill him so that he would not reveal their location to his brothers. For this reason they killed him and tore him into many pieces, which were distributed among the chieftains so that they should know that he was dead.

*Coronado's account:* The death of the negro is perfectly certain, because many of the things which he wore have been found, and the Indians say that they killed him here because the Indians of Chichilticale said that he was a bad man, and not like the Christians who never kill women, and he killed them, and because he assaulted their women, who the Indians love better than themselves. Therefore they determined to kill him, but they did not kill any of the others who came with him...

*Castaneda's account:* After the friars and the negro Esteban set out, it seem that the negro fell from the good graces of the friars because he took along the women that were given to him, and collected turquoises, and accumulated everything. Besides, the Indians of the settlements they crossed got along better with the negro, since they had seen him before. For this reason he was sent ahead to discover and pacify the land so that when the others arrived all they would have to do would be to listen and make a report of what they were searching for.

When Esteban got away from the said friars, he craved to gain honor and fame in everything and to be credited with the boldness and daring of discovering, all by himself, those terraced pueblos, so famed throughout the land. Accompanied by the people who followed him, he tried to cross the uninhabited regions between Cibola and the inhabited area. He had traveled so far ahead of the friars that when they reached Chichilticale...he was already at Cibola.

I say, then, that when the negro Esteban reached Cibola, he arrived there laden with a large number of turquoises and with some pretty women, which the natives had given him. The gifts were carried by Indians who accompanied and followed him through every settlement he crossed, believing that, by going under his protection, they could traverse the whole country without any danger. But as the people of the land were more intelligent that those who followed Esteban, they lodged him at a lodging house which they had outside of the pueblo, and the oldest and those in authority listened to his words and tried to learn the reason for his coming to that land.

When they were well informed, they held councils for three days. As the negro had told them that farther back two white men, send by a great lord, were coming, that they were learned in the things of heaven, and that the were coming to instruct them in divine matters, the Indians thought he must have been a spy or guide of some nations that wanted to come and conquer them. They though it was nonsense for him to say that the people in the land whence he came were white, when he was black, and that he had been sent by them. So they went to him, and because, after some talk, he asked them for turquoises and women, they considered this an affront and determined to kill him. So they did without killing any one of those who came with him... The friars were seized with such fear that, not trusting these people who had accompanied the negro, they opened their bags and distributed everything they had among them keeping only the vestments for saying mass. From there they turned back without seeing more land than what the Indians had told them of. On the contrary, they were traveling by forced marches, with their habits up to their waists.

*Source: George P. Hammond, and Agapito Rey, eds., Narratives of the Coronado Expedition, 1540-1542 (Albuquerque, 1940) pp. 77, 145, 177-178, 198-199.*

**RACE AND CLASS IN COLONIAL MEXICO**

*As the Esteban vignette, and those which follow, attest, historians have taken great pains to establish the presence of persons of African ancestry in the history of colonial Mexico. The task before the next generation of historians is to determine the quality of the life they led and their interaction not only with the Spanish but with Indians and the various bi- and multi-racial populations which emerged in the region. In the following vignette R. Douglas Cope analyzes the population of Mexico City between 1660 and 1720, and in the process, suggests some possibilities for this next stage of historical inquiry.*

African slaves had accompanied the Spaniards from the beginning. Before the century's end, tens of thousands more would be imported. As foremen, managers, and skilled laborers, Africans provided invaluable aid to the process of Hispanic colonization; as slaves and thus potential insurrectionaries, they provoked the fear and contempt of their masters. But for the Spanish, Africans were the devil they knew. Still more troublesome was the inevitable yet unexpected emergence of the *castas*, products of miscegenation, new kinds of people for whom names had to be invented: mestizos, *castizos, zambos*, and many other names.

The Spaniards, of course, had always been a minority in Mexico, their scattered cities bulwarks against the indigenous countryside. But by the early seventeenth century, the rapid growth of the castas had created large non-Hispanic populations in Spanish urban centers and mining campus and even in the Spaniards' chief redoubt, Mexico City. How could the heirs of the conquistadors sustain their rule over this multiracial melange without the benefit of a standing army? Spaniards thought themselves superior to the people they dominated. The trick lay in convincing Africans and Indians of this tautological line of reasoning.... The Spanish monopolized political power and dominated the elite occupations, thereby enjoying a grossly disproportionate share of Mexico's wealth. In contrast, Indians, Africans, and mixed-bloods languished in low-paying, low-prestige positions...

We should not [however] assume that subordinate groups are passive recipients of elite ideology. Mesoamerican Indians, for instance, demonstrated a remarkable ability to resist cultural impositions...and indigenous structures and patterns survived the conquest on a much more massive scale and for a longer period of time than had seemed the case when we had to judge by the reports of Spaniards alone...

We would do better, then, to view culture as a contested terrain, in which people from all walks of life (and not just the dominant group) engage in a continuous process of manipulating and constructing social reality. In a multiracial society such as colonial Mexico, ethnic identity itself became a prime point of contention and confusion. Elite attempts at racial or ethnic categorization met with resistance as non-Spaniards pursued their own, often contradictory...self-definition...

Race, after all, was not the only dividing line in colonial Mexico. Nor was it the only principle of social organization... A mulatto marries a mestiza. Who can say what combination of affection, sexual desire, family considerations, and economic calculation went into that decision. We cannot know, from the act itself, whether one partner exulted in an opportunity or the other agonized over marrying "down." The problem requires a more comprehensive...approach... What material and social constraints shaped their world? What role did race play? How did their beliefs compare with those of the elite? And what kinds of relations existed between those two components of society?

*Source: R. Douglas Cope, The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660-1720 (Madison, 1994), pp. 3-7.*

**ISABEL De OLVERA ARRIVES IN NEW MEXICO**

*The 16th and 17th Century historical records of the U.S. Southwest are replete with examples of persons of African ancestry who accompanied Spanish explorers and colonizers. The Juan de Onate party that established a colony along the upper Rio Grande near Santa Fe, in 1598, included at least five blacks and mulattoes, two of whom were soldiers. Most of those explorers and settlers were men. However in 1600 one black woman, Isabel De Olvera of Queretaro, the daughter of a black father and Indian mother, accompanied the Juan Guerra de Resa relief expedition to Santa Fe to strengthen the Spanish claim on the region. Her arrival predates by 19 years the first known landing at Jamestown, Virginia, of twenty persons of African ancestry in British North America. De Olvera, who was a servant for one of the Spanish women, was apparently concerned about her safety and status in the frontier region and gave the following deposition to the alcalde mayor of Queretaro. To buttress her claim, Olvera presented three witnesses, Mateo Laines, a free black man living in Queretaro, Anna Verdugo, a mestiza who lived near the city, and Santa Maria, a black slave of the alcalde mayor.*

In the town of Queretaro in New Spain, January 8, 1600, there appeared before Don Pedro Lorenzo de Castilla, his majesty's alcalde mayor in this town, a mulatto woman named Isabel, who presented herself before his grace in the appropriate legal manner and declared:

As I am going on the expedition to New Mexico and have reason to fear that I may be annoyed by some individual since I am a mulatto, and as it is proper to protect my rights in such an eventuality by an affidavit showing that I am a free women, unmarried, and the legitimate daughter of Hernando, a negro and an Indian named Magdalena, I therefore request your grace to accept this affidavit, which show that I am free and not bound by marriage or slavery. I request that a properly certified and signed copy be given to me in order to protect my rights, and that it carry full legal authority. I demand justice.

The alcalde mayor instructed her to present the affidavits which she thought could be used and ordered that they be examined in accordance with this petition and that she be given the original. He so ordered and signed. DON PEDRO LORENZO DE CASTILLA. Before me, BALTASAR MARTINEZ, royal notary.

*Source: George P. Hammond, and Agapito Rey, eds., Don Juan de Onate: Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595-1628 (Albuquerque, 1953), pp. 560-562.*

**RACIAL MIXTURE IN COLONIAL NEW MEXICO**

*Like California and Texas, the Spanish-speaking population of New Mexico was of diverse racial origins. In the account below historian J. Manuel Espinosa, describes the emergence of that population and one example of its consequence, the role of blacks and mulattos in the famous Pueblo Indian Revolt of 1696*

Among the colonists, those of predominately Spanish blood dominated the patterns of social life and customs. In the beginning there was clearly a considerable number of Spanish-born citizens, with a handful of non-Spanish Europeans. By 1680 most of the population had been born in the province itself. Over the years, blood mixture was inevitable in an isolated community which lived as neighbors among sedentary Indians who outnumbered them and on whom they were dependent economically. Moreover, many of the first colonists were themselves mestizos. The colonists, therefore, although a homogeneous group, were made up of Spanish-born Spaniards, American-born Spaniards, mestizos, and a variety of ethnic mixtures. The servants, muleteers, farm and ranch hands, and menial workers were mestizos, New Mexican and Mexican Indians, Negroes, mulattoes, and a mixture of those in varying degrees of racial predominance. There was a high proportion of lower-class elements and even some fugitives from justice.

With the existence of a large proportion of persons of mixed blood, some obtained prominence who were referred to as *mulato pardo*, *pardo*, *mestizo-amulatado*, or *mulato*, including captains in the Spanish military forces and at least one *alcalde mayor*. From the mid-seventeenth century on there were Pueblo Indian leaders who were mestizos, mulattos, *coyotes* (mixture of Indian and mestizo), and *lobos* (mixture of Negro and Indian) and there were *ladinos* among them who were quite proficient in speaking, reading, and writing in the Spanish language. There were some local admixtures across the whole spectrum. In general, however, social distinctions were simpler than those in New Spain. Certainly no difference was made between Spaniards and creoles, and the position of mestizo in New Mexico was apparently better than in the more densely settled areas of New Spain.

\* \* \*

Pueblo Indian medicine men, who were unwilling to give up their traditional influence, backed by many of the Pueblo Indian chiefs and warriors, were always a threat to the authority of the friars at the missions by stirring up trouble among peaceful mission converts. Some of the most troublesome were a small group of renegades of racial mixture, including mistreated mulattoes and Negroes, originally from New Spain, who had gone to New Mexico from areas north of Mexico City in the hope of escaping from a life doomed to lowly servitude and who had taken up residence with the Indians....

*J. Manual Espinosa, ed., The Pueblo Indian Revolt of 1696 and the Franciscan Missions in New Mexico: Letters of the Missionaries and Related Documents (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), pp. 11-13, 24-25.*

**MARRIAGE IN COLONIAL NEW MEXICO: THE RODRIGUEZ SAGA**

*In the following account historian Dedra McDonald introduces both Sebastian Rodriguez Brito and provides a glimpse into the fluid social relations of multiethnic and multiracial Colonial New Mexico.*

In 1689, Sebastian Rodriguez Brito, an African from Luanda in the nation of Angola and Antonia Naranjo, daughter of a New Mexico mulatto family, initiated marital proceedings in the jurisdiction of El Paso del Norte. Their plans to wed, however, soon faltered. Rodriguez's former employer, Governor Pedro Reneros de Posada, claimed that Rodriguez had already married a woman in Veracruz. In response, Rodriguez insisted, "I am free and single," and that Reneros' allegations were false. Rodriguez brought forward three witnesses to attest to his bachelorhood.

Those witnesses, Juan Luis, Francisco Romero de Pedraza, Esteban de Berdiguil, and Antonio Montoya, all living at El Paso del Norte, did not help matters much. They could only repeat what they had heard from Governor Reneros while working from him. Juan Luis reported that Sebastian Rodriguez informed Reneros of his plans to marry Antonia Naranjo and that Reneros expressed pleasure at this news, "preferring this step to [Rodriguez's] whoring around." A few days later, Luis explained, Reneros told Rodriguez that he could not get married because he must continue to work as Reneros' servant when he returned from El Paso del Norte to New Spain. Francisco Romero de Pedraza's testimony also provided little support for Sebastian's claims. Romero had overheard Governor Reneros say that Sebastian was married and that he should return to Mexico City... Romero added that Reneros had summoned Antonia Naranjo's mother, Maria Romero, to inform her of Sebastian's status as a married man. The third witness, Esteban de Berdiguil, declared that two Mexico City merchants claimed that Rodriguez had already married and requested that he "be put in manacles and returned to his wife." Finally, Antonio Montoya corroborated the previous testimonies. The marriage did not take place.

Three years later, in May 1692, Sebastian Rodriguez proved his status as a single man when a Franciscan testified regarding a handwritten letter dated April 14, 1692, in which Governor Reneros de Posada admitted that Rodriguez had not previously married. Rodriguez, age 40 in 1692, had planned another marriage, this time to widow Isabel Olguin, an *espanola* and 44 years of age. With the matter of his marital status clear, Rodriguez could and did marry Olguin. Their wedding took place June 4, 1692.

Isabel Olguin died within four years of the marriage, which brought Sebastian to initiate yet another marriage, this time with Maria de la Cruz, *mestiza* and servant of Lieutenant General Luis Granillo. This marriage may not actually have taken place, for less than one year later, on May 2, 1697, Sebastian initiated a fourth marriage, with Juana de la Cruz, *coyota* (the offspring of parents of mixed heritages including mulatto, *mestizo*, Indian, and Spanish) of Las Salinas. Their marriage took place May 12, 1697...

Sebastian Rodriguez's fascinating life story provides more than entertainment. Rodriguez, a free black African from Angola whose parents were *bozales*, or African-born slaves, lived and worked on the far northern frontier of New Spain in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He intermarried, or at least attempted to marry, women representing the spectrum of racial categories that existed in colonial New Mexico. Moreover, he exhibited economic mobility as he moved from a position as a servant to drummer and soldier, as well as landholder. In all of these aspects, Sebastian Rodriguez's experience suggest that the history of colonial New Mexico must include the stories of black and mulattoes, free and enslaves, and that the region's geographical isolation allowed them unprecedented economic and social opportunities.

*Source: Dedra S. McDonald, "Black Drummers and Mulatto Slaves: African Descendants in Colonial New Mexico," Unpublished paper presented at the Rocky Mountain Council on Latin American Studies Conference, 1995, pp. 1-4.*

**SLAVERY AND FREEDOM IN SPANISH NEW MEXICO**

*In the following account by Dedra McDonald we see a snapshot of slavery and at least one manner of exit from the institution in 16th and 17th Century colonial New Mexico.*

Enslaved blacks and mulattoes accompanied their masters to New Mexico, assisting in both the seventeenth century colonization and eighteenth-century recolonization of the region. High prices and a shortage of slaves on the far northern frontier made slave ownership prohibitive for all but the wealthiest landowners, government officials and merchants. Eighteenth-century El Paso de Norte slaveholders included the landowning Valverde Cosio family, who listed eight slaves, four of them mulatto, ranging in age from 14 to 31 years. Merchant Jose de Colarte and his wife, Manuela Garcia de Noriega, owned six mulatto slaves, ages 10 to 46, during the years 1760 to 1785... Even clergyman Bachiller Telles Giron owned a mulatta named Jesus and her child. The youth of several of these slaves suggests that natural increase, along with outright purchase, added to the slave population in northern New Spain.

Colonists residing to the north of El Paso also owned slaves. Francisco Javier's mulatta slave, Maria Madrid...was captured by the Picuris Indians when the Pueblo Revolt broke out in 1680. Diego de Vargas's forces liberated her in 1692... Some slaves accompanied high ranking government officials as they moved from one post to the next. Jose Manuel Reinoso, slave of Governor Valverde Cosio, arrived in New Mexico with his master prior to 1720. The son of don Antonio Reinoso and Maria de la Encarnacion, who was a slave...Jose Reinoso married Elena de la Cruz, native of Santa Fe, on February 6, 1720. Reinoso's elite status, it seems, did not lead to manumission... While not all New Mexicans could afford to own slaves, enough colonists acquired slaves to make the institution of slavery and interactions with African descendants a part of everyday life in New Mexico.

The life story of Jose Antonio exemplifies the New Mexican slave experience: slave trade; northward journey; frontier life, intermarriage; and manumission. Jose Antonio began his experience as a slave at the tender age of three years. Originally from the Congo, he left Cabo Verde on the west coast of Africa around 1738, arriving in the port city of Veracruz that same year. Bought and sold five times, Jose Antonio accompanied his fifth recorded owner, Sargento mayor Manuel Antonio San Juan Jaquez de Valverde, on a journey through Chihuahua to El Paso del Norte. Arriving in El Paso in 1752, Jose Antonio, along with his master, became a resident of the area. Eight years later, at age 23 he married an Apache woman named Marcela, age 19. She had been reared and educated in the house of Javier Garcia de Noriega, for whom she worked as a maid servant. Jose Antonio may have brought some education to his marriage, as is indicated by his clear signature and fancy rubric on extant documents...

In 1764, Sargento mayor Jan Juan drafted a will in which his asking price for Jose Antonio's services [was lowered] from 300 pesos to 200 pesos. Perhaps San Juan hoped to make it easier for Jose Antonio to earn enough money to purchase his freedom. His plan, however, fell through. Following San Juan's death, Celedonio de Escorza purchased Jose Antonio at the reduced rate of 200 pesos, destroying Jose Antonio's opportunity to gain his freedom...

[One] path to freedom for enslaved blacks and mulattoes involved the indirect process of racial mixture, occurring over time and across generations. Slave men married free women to ensure that their children would be free. Legal and social traditions assigned slave or free status according to the status of the child's mother. In New Mexico, the admittedly sparse evidence suggests that slave men appear to have married non-slave women more frequently than they married slaves. Out of fifty marriages, only one took place between two slaves. Moreover, enslaved blacks and mulattoes expanded their connections with free persons through the daily relations of work, religion and family. Networks linking slaves to free persons were frequently noted through the structure of witnessing marriages...

In 1736, Guadalajara native Nicholas Joseph Antonio Morales, mulatto slave on the Hacienda of San Antonio de Pauda, married Apache servant Maria Isidra at Santa Maria de las Caldas, a community in the El Paso del Norte district... Also in Santa Maria de las Caldas in 1736, mulatto slave Pablo Jose Vanegas married free mulatta Josefa Naranjo, age 16... Naranjo declared that she wished to marry Vanegas and that she knew he was enslaved, but her feelings for him "were born in her heart." Don de Dios, mulatto slave of don Jose Garcia de Noriega, married Bernarda, [an] Apache. Bernarda, age 32, was the widow of Quitenio, a slave owned by dona Francisca Garcia de Noriega... Finally, in 1776 in El Paso del Norte, Pedro Joseph Chacon, black slave of militia captain Jose Garcia de Noriega, married Manuela Jimenez, free mulatta born of free parents... Through both spousal selection and social networks, slaves attempted to gain access to freedom, if not for themselves, then for their children...

In addition to the freedom of future generations guaranteed by marriages of male slaves to free women of various ethnicities, the documentary glimpses of the lives of blacks and mulattoes portray colonial New Mexico as a multicultural meeting place, where blacks, mulattoes, Indians, mestizos, and Spaniards intermingled on the most intimate of levels--marriage, as well as in society and the economy.

*Source: Dedra S. McDonald, "Black Drummers and Mulatto Slaves: African Descendants in Colonial New Mexico," Unpublished paper presented at the Rocky Mountain Council on Latin American Studies Conference, 1995, pp. 11-28.*

**ANTTONIA LUSGARDIA ERNANDES FIGHTS FOR HER SON**

*Occasionally the records of Colonial New Spain reveal not only numbers of blacks and mulattoes but some idea of their status, and of relationships among the colony's Spanish-speaking which crossed race, class and gender boundaries. In 1735, for example, Anttonia Lusgardia Ernandes, a free mulatta in San Antonio, [Texas] sued her former patron, Don Miguel Nunes Morillo, for custody of their son. Morillo admitted paternity but argued that Ernandes had voluntarily relinquished custody to his wife. The court found otherwise and awarded custody to the biological mother on the condition that she give her son a "proper home." Her lawsuit petition appears below.*

I, Anttonia Lusgardia Ernandes, a free mulatta residing in the presidio, do hereby appear before your Lordship in the best form according to law and my own interests and state that about eight or nine years ago I entered the home of Don Miguel Nunes, taking a daughter of mine with me. I entered the said home without any salary whatever and while I was working in the said home of Don Miguel Nunes Morillo I suffered so much from lack of clothing and from mistreatment of my humble person that I left the said house and went to the home of Alberto Lopez, taking two children with me, one of whom I had when I entered the home of the said Don Miguel and another which I gave birth to in his home. Just for this reason, and because his wife baptized the said creature, he, exercising absolute power, snatched away from me my son--the only man I have and the one who I hope will eventually support me. He took him from the house where I live and carried him to his own, I being but a poor, helpless woman whose only protection is a good administration and a good judicial system. Your Lordship will please demand that the said Don Miguel Nunes, without the least delay, shall proceed to deliver my son to me without making any excuses. I wish to make use of all the laws in my favor, and of Your Lordship, as a father and protector of the poor and helpless, as well as anything else which might be in my favor.

*Source: Vicki L. Ruiz, "Gendered Histories: Interpreting Voice and Locating Power," in Clyde A. Milner, ed., A New Significance: Re-Envisioning the History of the American West (New York), p. 99.*

**SONORA y SINALOA: MADRE PATRIA CHICA DE LOS ANGELES**

*In the following vignette historian Antonio Rios-Bustamante describes the particular role of the New Spain provinces of Sonora and Sinaloa in the founding of Los Angeles.*

Probably the least understood, most controversial aspect of the early history of Los Angeles had been the significance of ethnicity and origins of the founding pobladores and other settlers. While it has long been acknowledged that the original group of 11 families which founded Los Angeles was composed primarily of mulattoes, Indios, and Mestizos, past interpretations have erroneously indicated that they were atypical of later settlers and presidial soldiers. Just the opposite is the case; the original settlers of Los Angeles were racially mixed persons of Indian, African, and European descent. This mixed racial composition was typical of both the settlers of Alta California and of the majority of the population of the northwest coast provinces of Mexico from which they were recruited.

Since the majority of the settlers of Alta California came from Sonora and Sinaloa, it is not surprising that people in mid-nineteenth century California often considered the Mexican states of Sonora and Sinaloa as "la madre patria," or motherland of California. Also important is the fact that the basic social and cultural patters of Mexican society in Alta California had been brought there from these states where they had been developed during the previous 200 years of colonization...

Apparent from the 1793 census is the fact that a much larger proportion of the population was of African descent than has been previously admitted. Mulattoes, mestizos, and other persons of mixed caste were not a rarity in Sonora, Sinaloa, or in colonial Mexico. In Sinaloa in 1793, there were only 139 European Spaniards and 18,394 espanoles Americanos, while there were 15,078 mulattoes, 2,671 persons of other mixed castes and 18,780 Indians. In Sonora the ethnic composition of the population was similar, except that there were fewer mulattoes recorded and more Indians. Also give the fact that most Africans had entered these provinces about 100 years earlier, and that their descendants were racially mixed by 1769, it is clear that persons of African descent in Alta California were no more atypical than the large number of mulattoes in the population of Sonora and Sinaloa. The Los Angeles pobladores were simply a fair cross-section of the laboring population of these provinces...

The [founders of Los Angeles] reflected the ethnic composition of Sonora y Sinaloa from which most came. Eight of the twenty-three adults were Indians, ten were of African descent, two *negros*, and eight mulattoes. Records also show that one of the black settlers, Luis Quintero, was the son of a black slave and an Indian woman of Alamos. One was born in Cadiz, Spain; another listed as an *espanol americano*...a person of Spanish descent born in Mexico. One person was listed as a *coyota*, a coyota or coyote, usually considered to be the child of a mestizo and an Indian of the frontier, or a mulatto and an Indian of the frontier. One person was a *Chino*, Chinese, which sometimes meant an Asian and sometimes a person of mixed black Indian descent. This was Antonio Miranda Rodriguez, who was probably a Filipino, since records show that he was born in Manila, the capital of the then Spanish colony of the Philippines. Similarly out of the 21 children, 19 were of racially mixed descent, while two were Indios...

*Antonio Rios-Bustamante, "Los Angeles, Pueblo and Region, 1781-1850: Continuity and Adaptation on the North Mexican Periphery," (PhD dissertation, UCLA, 1985), pp. 56-59, 71-72.*

**THE FOUNDING OF LOS ANGELES**

*In the account below historian Lonnie Bunch, III, describes the establishment of Los Angeles and the role persons of African ancestry played in its settlement.*

Of the forty-four *pobladores* or settlers of the pueblo of "Nuestra Senora la Reina de Los Angeles de Porciuncula," twenty-six were either black or of mixed racial ancestry. The site that would become Los Angeles was known to the Spanish governors of Mexico as early as 1769. However, plans to settle the area remained unclear until Felipe de Neve, the governor of Alta California (literally the current state of California), decided a civilian community was needed in the region between the mission in San Gabriel and the Presidio of Santa Barbara...

Captain Fernando X. Rivera was charged with obtaining twenty-four families of farmers, artisans and cattlemen. Rivera was ordered to offer these families cash, supplies, tools, animals, clothing, a limited period of no taxation, and access to land. Despite these inducements, only twelve families agreed to undertake the venture. Those individuals who did agree were recruited from Sinaloa, Mexico, a less than prosperous area of the country where one third of the residents were of African ancestry. Many of the *pobladores* hailed from the city of Rosario, a village where two-thirds of the residents were listed as mulattoes in the census, many having resided as free men and women for a long period of time.

This band of settlers...left Alamos, Sonora, with their military escorts in February 1781. After months of travel, eleven of the twelve families that left Sinaloa arrived at the mission in San Gabriel that August. After a month's quarantine to ensure that the settlers did not carry the smallpox virus, the band of Indians, mulattoes, and Spaniards arrived in the area of the planned settlement on 4 September...

The Afro-Mexican families that contributed to the establishment of Los Angeles were a diverse group ranging from 1 to 67 years of age. They included: Luis Quintero, a 55-year-old black tailor accompanied by his mulatto wife Maria Petra Rubio, 40 and their five children. Quintero was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco in 1725. Jose Moreno, 22, and Maria Guadalupe Gertrudis, 19, a recently wed mulatto couple, were both born in Rosario, Mexico as were Manuel Camero, 30, and Maria Tomasa, 24, two mulattoes also from Rosario. Antonio Mesa, 38, a Negro born in Alamos, Sonora, his mulatto wife, Ana Gertrudis Lopez, 27, and their two children. Maria Manuela Calixtra, 43, the mulatto mother of six and her Indian husband, Basilia Rosas, 67. Maria Rufina Dorotea, 45, also a mulatto, brought her three children and her mestizo husband, 42-year-old Jose Antonia Navarro.

These settlers...worked hard to maintain the colony. Los Angeles was laid out in the typical pattern for Spanish colonial towns: Each family was allocated a lot surrounding the rectangular public plaza, with meadows, common grazing and farm lands on the outskirts of the pueblo. Immediately after establishing the town lots, the community built the *zanja madre*, a series of channels created to bring water into the area. Within a short time, the colony no longer relied upon supplies from Mexico and its population grew to 141 residents, according to the *Estado* taken on 17 August 1790...

[Los Angeles] prospered enough to become the largest Spanish settlement in Alta California by 1800... As Los Angeles matured, many of its citizens received large grants of land to encourage the development of rancheros--large ranches that prospered due to the cattle and tallow trades. Several Afro-Mexicans received these grants from the Spanish colonial administration, demonstrating the significant roles they were expected to play in the affairs of the colony... The Pico brothers, Pio and Andes, obtained land near Simi, while Francisco Reyes controlled large areas of the San Fernando Valley and Lompoc. Other landowners of Africa descent were Bartolo Tapia, whose holdings were centered near the Topanga Canyon, and Manuel Nieto in the eastern San Gabriel Valley... By 1820 Maria Rita Valdez, a descendant of Luis Quintero...was granted Rancho Rodeo de Las Aquas--now a quaint little village called Beverly Hills...

*Source: Lonnie Bunch, III, Black Angelenos: The African American in Los Angeles, 1850-1950 (Los Angeles, 1989), pp. 10-12.*

**BLACK SETTLEMENT IN SPANISH TEXAS**

*The following account provides a brief description of the contrasting status of African Americans in Spanish\Mexican and Independent Texas.*

Blacks participated in the initial exploration and settlement of Texas.... Esteban, an African who was one of the four survivors of the Cabeza de Vaca expedition that shipwrecked on the Texas coast in 1528, established the pattern of black involvement in Spanish Texas. Blacks accompanied most Spanish expeditions into Texas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and they were part of the population of most Spanish garrisons and settlements in Texas in the eighteenth century. Blacks probably comprised between 15 and 25% of the population of Spanish Texas in the late eighteenth century. Furthermore, although the Spanish introduced slavery into Texas, the majority of blacks residing in the province were free. For examples, in the San Antonio area in 1778, 151 of 759 male residents were black or mulatto, and only 4 of these were slaves. Free blacks in Spanish Texas faced few, if any, restrictions on their freedom. They were accepted socially and followed whatever trade or profession that they chose. Census data lists blacks or mulattos as farmers, merchants, teachers, shoemakers, carpenters, miners, teamsters, laborers, and domestic servants. Several of them owned land and cattle.

Most of the blacks who resided in Spanish Texas were born there or even further south in what is present-day Mexico. However, beginning in the early nineteenth century, an increasing number came from the United States. This migration increased after 1821, when Mexico won its independence from Spain. Free blacks came to Texas because there was greater opportunity and much less racial prejudice under Spanish and Mexican governments than in the United States. Tex also attracted its share of runaway slaves, especially from neighboring Louisiana. Under Mexican rule, conditions that blacks faced in Texas were hospitable enough for abolitionist Benjamin Lundy to seek official permission to establish a colony of free American blacks there in the early 1830s. The Mexican government endorsed Lundy's proposal, but the project was dropped after Texas achieved its independence.

Despite the generally enlightened racial attitude of the Mexican government, the situation for blacks in Texas began to deteriorate under Mexican rule, especially when the government opened Texas' borders to colonists from the United States. When Moses Austin rode into San Antonio in 1820 seeking permission to establish a colony in Texas, he brought a black servant with him. Nearly all of the white settlers who followed Austin into Texas either brought slaves with them or strongly supported slavery. Mexican law prohibited slavery, and the Mexican government periodically attempted to apply this law. Enforcement was never effective, however, and Texas settlers rather easily circumvented the law. Consequently, slavery flourished in most Anglo communities in Texas. In 1825, for example, 69 of 1,347 residents of the Austin colony were slaveholders who owned 443 slaves. As more Anglos migrated from the United States, slavery grew; as a result, by the late 1820s slaves outnumbered free blacks in Texas for the first time. The number of slaves in the Austin colony grew to approximately 1,000 in 1835; in that year there were an estimated 5,000 slaves in all of Texas. After independence the slave population increased from 11,323 in 1840 to 58,161 in 1850 and then to 182,556 in 1860. Due to restrictions imposed by the Texas government, the free black population in the state dwindled to less than 500 by the eve of the Civil War.

*Source: Howard Beeth and Cary D. Wintz, Black Dixie: Afro-Texan History and Culture in Houston (College Station, 1992), pp. 13-14.*

**FREE BLACKS ON THE TEXAS FRONTIER**

*In the 1965 article George Woolfolk argues that although Southern white settlers brought slavery to Texas, free blacks nevertheless sought the province in the 1820s and 1830s when it was still part of Mexico because the area represented a "cultural frontier" where they could easily gain land and were accepted by their German and Mexican neighbors. Part of his article is reprinted below.*

Free persons of color whose connections with white parents, husbands or wives made their position untenable in Southern society [moved to Texas]. In this group would be John Bird, Negro [grandson] of General Bird of Virginia. John and his son, Henry, had "emigrated and settled in Texas under the belief that they would be received as citizens under the colonization laws of the Mexican United States and entitled as such to land. David (white) and his wife Sophia (Negro) Townes fled to Texas with their children in 1827 where they could be married legally under the Mexican regime. Samuel McCullouch came....before the Texas Declaration of Independence with Peggy and Rose, two women of color, "desiring [they] should....remain free all the remainder of their lives."

More poignant still was the plight of the free persons of color whose wives and children were slaves. When the master moved to Texas, ties...pulled these husbands and fathers after their own. Single men and women who were either emancipated or bought their freedom in the old South [also] fled to Coahuila and Texas to remain free. Nelson Kavanaugh, a barber freed in Richmond, Kentucky was to find such sanctuary in Houston as did Zylpha Husk and child, one of a number of extraordinary Negro women who found both freedom and opportunity on this cultural frontier.

Land hunger....pulled free persons of color to Texas.... Land was not only an item of wealth, but also a badge of citizenship. Samuel Hardin and his wife came to Texas "under laws that invited their emigration and acquired rights and property..." William Goyens "accumulated considerable property in land.... The fabulous Ashworth clan moved from Louisiana into Coahuila and Texas, and, by taking advantage of every homestead and headright provision, acquired vast holdings that reached from Jefferson County on the Southeast to Angelina County in deep East Texas. Both black and mulatto free Negroes brought to the Texas cultural frontier the full range of [old South] skills. Free Negroes....engaged in stock raising and serving as herdsmen. A goodly representation of domestic servant, artisan and diversified laboring skills were to be found in this group; and there were a few professionals.

Few urban free Negroes chose the plantation areas of East Texas. The Mexican area below the German barrier [area of heavy German settlement] was the locale of the urban Free Negro with the towns of Galveston, San Antonio, Brownsville, and Austin being preferred. Free Negro farmers were concentrated in the plantation area of East Texas running roughly from Nacogdoches County to the Galveston-Jefferson County region. Stock-raising Free Negroes tended to concentrate in Jackson County, an old area for cattle. Artisans, servants and some agricultural laborers also found the German-Mexican areas of central-south Texas more hospitable and concentrated there....

*Source: George R. Woolfolk, "Turner's Safety-Valve and Free Negro Westward Migration," Journal of Negro History, 50:3 (July, 1965), pp. 193-196.*

**SANTA ANNA AND BLACK FREEDOM**

*While most histories depict the Texas Revolution of 1835-36 as the struggle of liberty-loving Texans against a brutal Mexican dictator General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, the black slaves of the province clearly understood that their personal freedom rested with the success of the Mexican Army. In the account below, historian Paul Lack describes the relationship between the antislavery sentiments of Mexico and black liberation.*

Mexico did not officially invite a slave rebellion. In fact its army marched northward without a clear policy regarding slavery. As late as February, 1836, Santa Anna queried government officials in Mexico: "Shall we permit those wretches to moan in chains any longer in a country whose kind laws protect the liberty of man without distinction of caste or color?" At the end of the month F. M. Diaz Noriega replied that the contract system of Texas was an illegal pretext for slavery. In fact, those "unhappy people became free solely by the act of stepping into our territory," and he advised recruiting blacks for the army so they could discover and claim their own freedom.... Minister of War Jose Maria Tornel wrote Santa Anna on March 18, agreeing that the "philanthropy of the Mexican nation" had already freed Texas slaves. He advised Santa Anna to grant their "natural rights," including "the liberty to go to any point on the globe that appeals to them...."

Whatever hesitation may have been shown in published Mexican policy, the Mexican army had an actual disposition toward black freedom. The ranks of the first troops to arrive in Bexar even included some black infantrymen and servants. Until March the location of the fighting limited contact between Mexican soldiers and slaves, but the army's basic attitude became clear when Joe, a black servant of William B. Travis, survived the slaughter at the Alamo, the only male to do so. During the six week interval that followed this victory, the Mexican army moved east of the Colorado and then the Brazos River and thus into the region where most Texas bondsmen lived. General [Sam] Houston attempted to secure the slave property of those who fled but did not always succeed in preventing blacks from "joining the enemy," as one observer described it. Slaves often seized the opportunity of running away, frequently in group ventures, and gained refuge with the invaders. Fourteen slaves and their families became free by fleeing to the command of General Jose de Urrea near Victoria on April 3, 1836. Even in retreat the Mexican forces attracted runaways: a Matagorda resident who returned to his home in early May discovered that at least thirteen blacks had "left my neighborhood" with the southbound army. He complained, too, that many cattle and eight wagons loaded with provisions, property that he valued at a total of $100,000, had been taken by the enemy. According to General Vicente Filisola, at least some of the plundered goods were taken by slaves who robbed houses in their flights for liberty. The Mexicans found these fugitives often ready to serve as well as to seek protection. Blacks aided river crossings, acted as messengers, and performed other chores for their liberators.

*Source: Paul D. Lack, "Slavery and the Texas Revolution," Southwestern Historical Quarterly 89:2 (October 1985), pp. 193-194.*

**THE YELLOW ROSE OF TEXAS**

*While the vast majority of African American slaves in Texas favored a Mexican victory over the Texas insurgents, at least one black woman, Emily (West) Morgan, claims a place in ensuring the opposite outcome. Morgan "occupied the attention" of General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna at the beginning of the Battle of San Jacinto in 1836 and according to some sources accounted for the surprise victory of the Texans led by Sam Houston over a much larger Mexican Army. The victory at San Jacinto established an independent Texas. The vignette below attempts to place Emily Morgan, and the state song she inspired, "The Yellow Rose of Texas," within the larger context of Texas and African American history.*

I would venture to say that most Americans are familiar with the folksong, "The Yellow Rose of Texas." If they cannot recall all of the lyrics, there is still a resonant quality about the song. I would also venture to say that few of those Americans--Texans notwithstanding--have reflected overly long on the implications of the fact that the song is not just about a woman, but about a black woman, or that a black man probably composed it. Scholars such as Martha Anne Turner have linked the song to its contextual origins--that of the Texas war for independence from Mexico in the 1830s and a specific incident in 1836--and others have argued its irrelevance to that event. It was only in 1989, however, when Anita Richmond Bunkley published Emily, The Yellow Rose, a novel based upon the presumed incidents that spawned the fame of the yellow rose, that the fictionalized expansion of the facts encouraged a larger and perhaps different audience to become aware of the historical significance of Emily D. West, the hypothetical "Yellow Rose of Texas." This publishing event certainly re-centered the song and the incident in African-American culture, for over many years and numerous versions, the song had been deracialized. Bunkley, herself an African-American woman, researched the complex history of another African-American woman and imaginatively recreated and reclaimed it.

The presumed historical facts are simple and limited. Emily D. West, a teenage orphaned free Negro woman in the northeastern United States, journeyed by boat to the wilderness of Texas in 1835. Colonel James Morgan, on whose plantation she worked as an indentured servant, established the little settlement of New Washington (later Morgan's Point). When Santa Anna and his troops arrived in the area, he claimed West to take the place of his stay-at-home wife in Mexico City and the traveling wife he had acquired on the way to Texas. The traveling wife had to be sent back when swollen river waters prevented him from taking her across in the fancy carriage in which she was riding. Santa Anna was either partying with West or having sex with her when Sam Houston’s troops arrived for the Battle of San Jacinto, thus forcing him to escape in only a linen shirt and “silk drawers,” in which he was captured the next day. West's possible forced separation from her black lover and her placement in Santa Anna's camp, according to legend, inspired her lover to compose the song we know as "The Yellow Rose of Texas." Publicity surrounding the hotel in San Antonio that was named after Emily Morgan asserts that West was a spy for Texas. Other historians claim there is absolutely no tie between West and the events of the Texas war for independence from Mexico. Still others claim that it was only West's heroic feat of keeping Santa Anna preoccupied that enabled the Texas victory. Broadening perceptions of how texts are created and the purposes to which they are put provide the context, during the course of this paper, from which I want to explore West’s story and take issue with assigning heroic motives to her adventure.

*Source: Trudier Harris, “The Yellow Rose of Texas: A Different Cultural View,” in Francis Edward Abernathy and Carolyn Fielder Satterwhite, eds., Juneteenth Texas: Essays in African-American Folklore (Denton, 1996), 316-17.*

**YORK AND THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION**

*York, the personal servant of Lieutenant William Clark, accompanied the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806, the first Americans to travel overland from St. Louis to the Pacific coast. Although a slave to Lieutenant Clark, York proved to be an essential member of the party before the expedition ended, as a hunter, explorer, trader and scout. The following vignette, however, suggest that York's actions occasionally generated problems for the expedition, as during the party's 1804 encounter with the Arikara Indians along the Upper Missouri in what is now South Dakota.*

It was York who proved to be the center of attention [in the Arikara village] that afternoon. The Arikaras were both attracted to and terrified by his blackness. Having never seen a black man, they were quite unsure if York was a man, a beast, or a strange and powerful spirit being. Clark later explained that Arikaras who had seen whites but not blacks though York "something strange & from his very large size more vicious than whites." On the other hand, those Arikaras who had seen neither whites nor blacks were convinced that all members of the expedition, regardless of color, were possessed with extraordinary powers. York thoroughly enjoyed his newfound celebrity status and had already "made himself more turribal" than the captains wished. That afternoon York and hordes of Arikara children had chased each other, the black man bellowing at them that he was a wild bear caught and tamed by Captain Clark. What may have worried the Captains in this playful sport was York's boast that he ate human flesh. The Arikaras practiced ritual cannibalism of their fallen enemies, but that was a far cry from consuming village youth. With Arikara chiefs embroiled in factional disputes and Teton agents ready to use those tensions against the expedition, Lewis and Clark did not need rumors drifting through the earth lodges that the Americans kept a great he-bear ready to eat Indian children.

In the notebook journals of the expedition, there were only the most oblique references to sexual contact with Arikara women. Clark claimed that Arikara overtures were rejected while the expedition was at the village but implied that once the party departed on October 12 it was quite a different story. Clark recorded that on the evening of the 12th two young women were sent by an Arikara man "and persisted in their civilities...." Other travelers observed that Arikara women usually initiated sexual encounters, and there seems to be little doubt that the men in the expedition accepted the offers. The only fully documented case of this involved York. In the Arikaras' eyes, York was the central attraction of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Airguns, gifts, and strange doings with a sextant all paled in insignificance before York. The black man fascinated Indian adults and terrified their children. York's blackness was viewed by the Arikaras as a sign of special spiritual power, and they appropriately named him "the big Medison." To have sexual contact with York was to get in touch with what seemed awesome spirit forces. On one occasion an Arikara man invited York to his lodge, offered him his wife, and guarded the entrance during the act. When a member of the expedition came looking for York, "the master of the house would not let him in before the affair was finished."

*Source: James P. Ronda, Lewis and Clark Among the Indians (Lincoln, 1984), pp. 58-59, 64.*

**EDWARD ROSE AND THE OVERLAND ASTORIANS**

*York was a member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and as such his loyalties to the expedition, and to EuroAmerican interests were unquestioned. This was not the case with Edward Rose, the black trader who became a "transfrontiersman," that is, he worked on behalf of his adopted people the Absaroka (Crow) Indians of the Upper Missouri region. Wilson Price Hunt, leader of the Overland Astoria Party feared that loyalty during his brief encounter with Rose in what is now northeastern Wyoming in the late summer of 1811. Here below is a description of that encounter.*

Heading southwest from their camp, the Astorians followed a rough trail that cut across the headwaters of the north and middle forks of Crazy Woman Creek. On August 29 hunters reported fresh signs of Indians.... Indian sign became Indian presence the next day when two Crows showed up at the Astorians' camp. Their arrival signaled the beginning of serious trouble between Hunt and a remarkable character named Edward Rose. Rose had joined the Astorians at the Arikara villages. His background and extraordinary personal history would soon set him at odds with the entire Astorian enterprise.

There was little hint of impending trouble when a great parade of Crows came to the Astorians' camp on August 31. Men, women, and children--all mounted on fine horses--made a spectacular entrance.... The Crow's welcome put [Wilson Price] Hunt at ease and soon the Astorians were headed to pay a visit to the Indians' camp... Perhaps using Edward Rose as an interpreter, Hunt explained his journey to the Crow chiefs and gave them gifts of cloth, powder, bullets, and knives... In the midst of this good-natured swapping, Hunt began to hear rumors about Rose. The trapper had been engaged because he was an experienced mountain man... Hunt [later] described Edward as a "very bad fellow full of daring." Perhaps it would have been fairer to have marked him as a man who lived by his wits, always ready to grab the main chance.

Rumor in camp had it that Rose's main chance would come when the Astorians reached Crow country. As Hunt heard it in whispers from others, Rose "planned to desert us,...taking with him as many of our men as he could seduce, and steal our horses." The expedition's leader vowed to watch Rose closely in the days to come. Robert McClellan, always an advocate of direct action, wanted to end the affair quickly by shooting Rose. On September 2, with the Astorians traveling south along the eastern foothills of the Bighorns, a second band of Crows suddenly appeared. Hunt took their arrival as an opportunity to confront Rose. Hunt had decided that it would be wiser to bribe the trapper than force his outright expulsion from the party. Pointing to the newly arrived Crows, Hunt suggested that Rose join them. As an incentive, Hunt promised half a year's wages, a horse, three beaver traps, and some trade goods. Just what scheme Rose had in mind remains unclear, but with Hunt determined to watch his every move, Rose decided to clear out before the bargain got less attractive.

Rose's departure may have eased some fears about mutiny, but it did nothing to smooth what was quickly becoming a treacherous mountain passage.... By September 3 the expedition was laboring to escape "precipices" in elevations of seven and eight thousand feet. Stumbling horses and men gasping for breath slowed progress to an agonizing crawl. When Edward Rose suddenly reappeared on September 4, Hunt must have thought his troubles had just compounded. But Rose brought salvation, not discord.... The Crow chief whose band Rose had joined realized that the Astorians had strayed off the main trading path. Rose was not at Hunt's camp with accurate travel directions. The next day the Astorians struck that path, found a pass over the main divide of the Bighorns, and came down on the west side of the range just east of present-day Ten Sleep, Wyoming.

*Source: James P. Ronda, Astoria and Empire (Lincoln, 1990), pp. 172-174.*

**WILLIAM A. LEIDESDORFF AND JOHN A. SUTTER**

*Historian Albert Hurtado in his book on California Indians described the correspondence between William A. Leidesdorff and John A. Sutter, revealing an extensive business relationship involving the exchange of trade goods for Indian labor. The correspondence also shows that the Indians were considered little more than slaves by both Mexican and non-Mexican residents. Sutter probably did not know of Leidesdorff's African ancestry. Examples of the relationship between these two pre-Gold Rush Californians appear below.*

[John A.] Sutter tried to make sure that his Indian workers were clothed with at least cotton shirts, but his goal was not always met. In 1845 Sutter wrote to William Leidesdorff requesting some brown manta cloth for his "boys and girls of the house, about 100, who are nearly all in rags and naked." He was concerned because "when strangers come here it looks very bad...."

Sutter sent Indian workers to many whites in northern California including Antonio Sunol, John Marsh, Henry Delano Fitch, Charles Weber, Vicente Peralta, John Coppinger, and William Leidesdorff. The surviving financial details of these transactions are sparse, but among the manuscripts in the Leidesdorff Collection at the Huntington Library is a statement of Sutter's financial dealings with Leidesdorff from August 1844 to January 1846, showing that he owned Leidesdorff $2,198,10. To help pay his debt, Sutter charged Leidesdorff for Indian labor as well as other goods and services. After giving himself credit for all these items, Sutter reckoned he owned only $114.90. By Sutter's figures, $716.05 of his charges to the merchant were for Indian labor and associated expenses. In other words, Sutter was able to liquidate nearly one third of his debt by supplying Leidesdorff with Indian workers.

The account shows that the value of Indian workers varied according to their skills and that Sutter charged higher rates for short terms of service. For example, he received two dollars per day apiece (or the equivalent of sixty dollars per month) for Indian boys kept for only three days. On the other hand, Sutter received eight to ten dollars per month for Indians whom he sent to Leidesdorff for two months or more. A vaquero equipped with two horses returned three dollars per day. This account also indicates some dissatisfaction among the Indians who went to Leidesdorff, since six of them ran away. Two others "left previous" to the date that this document was executed, but no reason was reported.

The Sutter-Leidesdorff correspondence reveals other characteristics of the traffic in Indian people. In the spring of 1846 Leidesdorff requested nine Indians, including a girl, but Sutter could not supply them because he did not have enough workers for his own rancho. Several weeks later Sutter begged off again, claiming he only had a few new hands from the mountains. He promised to send the merchant ten or twelve "selected Indians...which will be of some service to you," as well as "6 new hands for Vicente Peralta, and five Sawyers and Shingle makers to Denis Martin." In the meantime he sent Leidesdorff "two Indian Girls, of which you will take which you like best, the other is for Mr. Ridley, whom I promised one longer as two year's [sic] ago." Sutter added, "As this shall never be considered an article of trade [I] make you a present with the Girl..." Sutter's blacksmith, John Chamberlain, reported that it was "customary for Capt Sutter to buy and sell Indian boys and girls at New Helvetia." Evidently, Sutter did not commit to writing some details of the New Helvetia Indian trade.

In any case, Leidesdorff not only accepted the Indian girls from Sutter but gave one of them to Mrs. William G. Rae, widow of the Hudson's Bay Company representative in California. Since William Buzzell, Leidesdorff's Sacramento Valley ranch overseer, occasionally sent Indian children to Yerba Buena (San Francisco), he also participated in the trade in native services.

*Source: Albert L. Hurtado, Indian Survival on the California Frontier (New Haven, 1988), pp. 58-61.*

**JAMES BECKWOURTH: MOUNTAIN MAN**

*James P. Beckwourth is one of the most remarkable individuals to emerge in a region of exceptional African Americans. Born in Virginia of a white father and slave mother in 1798, Beckwourth lived and worked throughout the West as a fur trader, trapper, Army Scout, and erstwhile entrepreneur for nearly sixty years, residing at various times in Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, California, New Mexico and Colorado and roaming over much of the rest of the region. Easily persuaded that his life was significant, Beckwourth told his story to New York writer Thomas Bonner who "ghost wrote" his 1856 autobiography, one of the few book-length primary sources detailing the lives of mountain men. The vignette below describes Beckwourth's discovery of the mountain pass and valley in the Sierra Nevadas that bear his name. Although the autobiography appeared when Beckwourth was 58 years old, it does not cover the last decade of his life where he became in 1859 one of the first residents of Denver, and where one year later he married Elizabeth Lettbetter, the only African American woman of his four wives (the other two were Native American women and Louisa Sandoval, a "young Spanish girl" he wed in Santa Fe in 1840). Nor does it chronicle his witnessing the Sand Creek Massacre of 1864 and his subsequent testimony before a military commission which investigated the slaughter. Because the massacre "revolted him," Beckwourth, now widowed, abandoned Denver and returned to the Montana-Wyoming Montana where he died among the Absaroka Indians in Montana in 1866*

The next Spring [1851] I engaged in mining and prospecting in various parts of the gold region. I advanced as far as the American Valley, having one man in my company, and proceeded north into the Pitt River country... While on this excursion I discovered what is now known as "Beckwourth's Pass" in the Sierra Nevada... On my return to the American Valley, I made known my discovery to a Mr. Turner, proprietor of the American Ranch, who enthusiastically [endorsed my plan to] divert travel into that road; he thought I should be a made man for life...

I immediately went out to [Northern Nevada] to turn emigration into my newly-discovered route. While thus busily engaged I was seized with erysipelas, and abandoned all hopes of recovery; I was over one hundred miles away from medical assistance, and my only shelter was a brush tent. I made my will, and resigned myself to death. Life still lingered in me, however, and a train of wagons came up, and encamped near to where I lay. I was reduced to a very low condition, but I saw the drivers, and acquainted them with the object which had brought me out there. They offered to attempt the new road if I thought myself sufficiently strong to guide them through it. The women, God bless them! came to my assistance, and through their kind attentions and excellent nursing I rapidly recovered from my lingering sickness, until I was soon able to mount my horse, and lead the first train, consisting of seventeen wagons, through "Beckwourth's Pass."

In the spring of 1852 I established [my home] in Beckwourth Valley, and finally found myself transformed into a hotel-keeper and chief of a trading-post. My house is considered the emigrant's landing-place, as it is the first ranch he arrives at in the gold state, and is the only house between this point and Salt Lake. Here is a valley two hundred and forty miles in circumference, containing some of the choicest land in the world. Its yield of hay is incalculable; the red and white clovers spring up spontaneously, and the grass that covers its smooth surface is of the most nutritious nature. When the weary, toil-worn emigrant reaches this valley, he feels himself secure; he can lay himself down and taste refreshing repose, undisturbed by the fear of Indians. His cattle can graze around him in pasture up to their eyes, without running any danger of being driven off by the Arabs of the forest, and springs flow before them as pure as any that refreshes this verdant earth... There is no place in the whole state that offers so may attractions for a few weeks' or months' retirement; for its charms of scenery, with sylvan...sports, present unusual attractions. During the winter season my nearest neighbors are sixteen miles away; in the summer they are within four miles of my house, so that social broils do not disturb me.

*Source: James P. Beckwourth, The Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth: As Told to Thomas D. Bonner (New York, 1856), pp. 514-528.*