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# AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND MINORITY LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE IN THE UNITED STATES

By  
Mark L. Louden

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past thirty years, scholars who study the relationship between language and society (sociolinguists) have devoted a number of studies to the verbal behavior of African-Americans, primarily focusing on the modern and historical aspects of African-American Vernacular English (Black English, Ebonics). Specifically in the area of the historical development of AAVE, recent years have witnessed intensified work on early (pre-1900) attestations of older stages of the ethnolect. As regards the origins of AAVE, two distinct schools of thought have emerged. On the one hand, there are those who argue that modern AAVE is the descendant of originally pidginized, and subsequently creolized varieties of English which developed among African slaves from differing linguistic backgrounds who lacked a common language.<sup>1</sup> In support of their theory, “creolists” point to significant lexical and structural differences between AAVE and white varieties of English, as well as parallels between AAVE and West African languages and creolized forms of English (e.g. those spoken in the Caribbean). On the other hand, a second theory of AAVE origins holds that first-generation African-American slaves, despite their appalling social circumstances, were in much the same kind of linguistic situation as non-English speaking immigrants by choice, that is, with varying degrees of success, they came to learn the various forms of English spoken by coterritorial whites. The “dialectologists”, as they are often referred to, in contrast to the creolists, emphasize the structural similarities between AAVE and Southern White Vernacular English (SWVE), the non-standard form(s) of English spoken by whites in the American South.<sup>2</sup>

These two accounts of the origins of AAVE, creolist and dialectologist, are premised on fundamentally different understandings of the sociohistorical circumstances of African-Americans during the colonial and antebellum periods. The creolist position assumes a significant degree of social distance between blacks and whites during this time, the idea being that social separation necessarily leads to linguistic differentiation. Alternatively, dialectologists are inclined to assume that enslavement and more benign forms of social segregation need not have implied a severe lack of social, and hence linguistic contact between African and white Americans. In other words, a dialectologist’s reading of the historical record is more likely to recognize the extent to which blacks and whites have interacted with another in a variety of social domains.

Recently, a group of AAVE specialists, notably Donald Winford of the Ohio State University, have articulated a view on the origins of AAVE which synthesizes ele-

ments from both the creolist and dialectologist perspectives. Winford, for example, relying heavily on the sociohistorical evidence, charts a middle course between the two extremes and argues that while AAVE is not simply a variety of SWVE spoken by African-Americans, neither is it the direct descendant of a plantation creole.<sup>3</sup> Rather, in Winford's view the ethnolect emerged, beginning in the seventeenth century, as the result of the partially successful acquisition by African-born slaves and their descendants of a number of English dialects spoken in certain parts of the South, especially Virginia and North Carolina; this would explain the structural similarities between AAVE and SWVE, a dialectal "cousin" of AAVE. On the other hand, successive waves of large numbers of slaves imported directly from Africa or by way of the Caribbean throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries and the emergence of large plantations in places such as South Carolina and Georgia led to the inclusion of creolized structures to the emerging AAVE dialect. As Winford puts it,

AAVE was the result of relatively successful acquisition and adaptation of settler English, and owes much of its structural features to those superstrate sources. At the same time, I also argue that this continuing process of adaptation resulted in a certain degree of substratum influence from other languages spoken by Africans, including African languages and restructured, especially creolized varieties of English. It is likely that the second language varieties of settler English spoken by Africans varied to some extent from area to area and from period to period, depending on the nature of the contact, the mix of languages and the model presented to them. Eventually, however, a relatively homogeneous variety emerged throughout the southern colonies, which bore all the distinctive marks of what is now called AAVE.<sup>4</sup>

Winford bases his view on the "growing body of sociohistorical information which demonstrate[s] that the early phases of settlement in the Caribbean colonies and elsewhere must have involved close contact between Africans and Europeans and a balance of their numbers, often in fact a majority of Europeans" and draws the logical conclusion that "such conditions would have initially favored acquisition of European languages by Africans".<sup>5</sup>

Despite the recognition by Winford and others that blacks and whites have historically been in much greater contact with one another than has been previously acknowledged, there has been a major gap in the study of the sociolinguistic history of African-Americans. Specifically, there is significant evidence from a variety of often obscure sources on the degree to which blacks have spoken languages and varieties other than English, not only as media of communication with non-blacks, but as intra-group varieties as well. The task of this paper, then, is to complement the synthetic view of African-American sociolinguistic history by examining a number of references to black multilingualism derived from a variety of sources. To that end, the paper will consist of extensive citation of these original references. It must be stressed, however, that these data represent preliminary findings from a cursory, albeit broad-based review of a number of historical sources. It is hoped that these preliminary findings will encourage other researchers to take note of similar references to African-American multilingualism they may come across either first-hand in fieldwork or secondarily in research, and thereby add to this important, yet underexplored chapter in African-American sociolinguistic history. As a caveat, it should be borne in mind that, in the absence of reliable statistical data on language use (as for example modern censuses aim to elicit) our ability to make general statements about widespread "patterns" of

historical African-American multilingualism is necessarily limited. The question, to what extent the cases cited below are exceptional or reflect general trends of sociolinguistic reality, is impossible to answer with absolute certainty. On the other hand, to overlook multiple attestations of the same basic phenomenon, a phenomenon which is consistent with our increasingly detailed picture of black-white proximity during the colonial and antebellum periods, would risk leaving the historical record incomplete.

The data will be presented in three major sections. In the first, we will consider the black acquisition of European languages from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Many of the references to black multilingualism in this section come from reprintings of runaway slave advertisements.<sup>6</sup> In the second section, we will look at the linguistic results of black-Native American contact. Although it is well-known among African-American and Native American historians that there has been considerable intermingling of the two groups, primarily in the eastern United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, little mention has been made of the sociolinguistic implications of this contact. To that end, we will consider references to verbal behavior found in general historical sources. In this section, we will also discuss some of the implications of African-American minority language use, including their social function as cultural mediators between whites and Indians as guides and interpreters. Then we will consider traces of the survival of minority languages in the so-called "tri-racial isolates" of the Eastern and Mid-Atlantic states. In the third section, the question of the New World maintenance of African languages is addressed. This section will be followed by some concluding observations on the history African-American contacts with other social groups.

#### BLACK ACQUISITION OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

We look first at evidence of blacks speaking European languages. What we find is that in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in nearly every region of the Colonies and later the United States where speakers of languages other than English were concentrated and African-Americans also resided, there are attestations of blacks having some facility in these languages. The languages for which attestations have been collected include French, Spanish, Portuguese, West Indian creoles, German, Dutch, Swedish and Gaelic, these being spoken from as far north as Nova Scotia, down the eastern seaboard to Florida, west to California, and north to Missouri. The sources for these attestations are diverse, including some oral ones, but especially important are the eighteenth-century runaway slave advertisements reprinted in the sources cited above.<sup>7</sup>

**FRENCH:** In the runaway slave advertisements of the eighteenth century, French is the language other than English most commonly cited as being spoken by blacks. There are a number of references in the advertisements to "French Negroes," most of whom clearly came from the French possessions of St. Domingue on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola (modern-day Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and the Louisiana Territory (including the modern states of Louisiana and Missouri).<sup>8</sup> Also, as Peter H. Wood<sup>9</sup> points out, in northeastern South Carolina there was a settlement of French Huguenots in the eighteenth century, some of whom owned slaves. For the Louisiana

Territory, there is extensive literature on the French-speaking presence up to the present which includes discussions of the racial composition of the various speech communities who have spoken one or more of three varieties, Louisiana Standard French, Cajun French, and Louisiana Creole French.<sup>10</sup> Though there are attestations of African-Americans speaking all three varieties, the greatest percentage of speakers have been associated with the latter one, Louisiana Creole French. An important point to be noted about the situation of French in Louisiana is that in many cases, the relations between whites and persons of African descent were much closer relative to other parts of the South. This was reflected sociolinguistically by the fact that whites often spoke French creole with blacks and, conversely, blacks not only learned predominantly white varieties of French (Louisiana Standard and Cajun), but were even sent to France to further their education in the language.

. . . [Predominantly Senegalese] negroes, brought to a community where French was spoken exclusively, evolved from the language of their masters "le patois nègre," often mis-named "the Creole dialect" [sic].

"The master, in order to be understood by the slave, speaks with him also the language invented by the latter; the white child entrusted to the care of the negress, learns to speak as his guardian."<sup>11</sup>

So today in addition to being spoken by the colored population in French-Louisiana, "le patois nègre" is spoken and understood by a great number of white Creoles. Some white natives of Louisiana speak Creole [Louisiana Standard French, MLL], Acadian, English, and the Negro-French patois with almost equal facility.<sup>12</sup>

Negro slaves were even sent to France to be educated so that they might serve as tutors to their young masters. These tutor slaves were usually given their freedom on the death of the old master and a new class emerged in Créole society, the well-educated freemen. Some of these "free men of color" became outstanding figures in the literary world of Louisiana and France itself.<sup>13</sup>

Below follow a number of runaway advertisements which refer to French-speaking slaves from outside the Louisiana Territory, attesting to their broad geographic distribution in eighteenth-century America. It is interesting to note that many of the French-speakers are multilingual, the next most common language being Spanish, a fact which is explainable through the simultaneous presence of Spanish speakers in the West Indies and, to a lesser extent, in Louisiana.

Run away, . . . , a negro Fellow called Jem, the Property of John Barton; Esq; of the Island of Antigua; . . . he talks French, can read and write, and dresses and shaves tolerably well. [Norfolk, VA, 1773]<sup>14</sup>

Ran away, . . . , a Mulatto Slave, named Emanuel . . . As he was born in the Spanish West-Indies, bred a sailor, and converses fluently in the French and Spanish languages, he may probably pretend to be a free man, . . . [Baltimore, MD, 1781]<sup>15</sup>

Ran away, yesterday morning, Negro James, a Barber, a Native of Jamaica, speaks English and French, very well, . . . [Baltimore, MD, 1789]<sup>16</sup>

Ran-away from the Subscriber . . . a Negro fellow named Lando; . . . he speaks French tolerable well, and is too fond of the French Negroes, it is supposed he is harboured by some of them. . . [Charleston, SC, 1797]<sup>17</sup>

Other instances of black speakers of French will be mentioned below in the discussion of African-Americans as cultural and linguistic interpreters between whites and Native Americans. The role of blacks in influencing the language and culture in Missouri, as well as in Louisiana, is attested to in the following quotes.

. . . [T]here are elements of Missouri French which smack strongly of the negro. The French of southern Missouri possessed slaves who had been purchased, necessarily, 'down the river.' It was inevitable that their language, like the English of Anglo-American southerners, should be affected by negro speech; . . . hence, in the general intonation of the whole tongue, a twang only to be explained, as one says, by the "tar brush."<sup>18</sup>

Though some of the animal tales current in Missouri are known in Canada, it is probable that here French and Canadian sources cease to be drawn upon, or that they contribute less than do memories of the southern negro folk-lore. The colonists of the Sainte Genevieve District had many slaves who came, necessarily, from Lower Louisiana. Some had been born there, and some, apparently, had been purchased directly from the crews who had brought them from Africa or the West Indies. A slave is listed in the inventories of the archives as *natif créole*, or *pièce d'Inde*. With these blacks the colonists lived as did our Americans of the pre-war South. They were nurses and 'house-darkies' loved by everyone of the family, but especially by the children, who were, in turn cherished with fierce loyalty by the slaves. Thus the ancestors of the present Missouri Creoles were as familiar as any southerner with Uncle Remus and his *Compère Lapin*.<sup>19</sup>

To underscore the influential role blacks played in shaping Missouri French language and culture, Dorrance cites a number of linguistic features, phonological and lexical, as well as folk tales which are of African(-American) ("Negro") origins.

**SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE:** Historical references to African-American speakers of Spanish indicate three primary areas of origin: the West Indies, Spanish Florida, and Mexico. Though there is anecdotal evidence of black Spanish speakers among the Isleños of Louisiana, this has yet to be confirmed.<sup>20</sup> As was mentioned above, Spanish is mentioned in a number of slave advertisements along with French and indeed, most of the West Indian Spanish speakers were identified as French speakers as well. A handful are also described as speaking Portuguese, including one born in the Cape Verde Islands. Some typical advertisements are given below.

Ran away from the Subscriber, a Negroe Man, named Emanuel. . . He lately came from New-York, in the Sloop Henry, and talks good English; and pretends to talk Spanish, and to be a Frenchman. [Petersburg, VA, 1752]<sup>21</sup>

Run away from the subscriber, a Negro fellow named Josee, . . . pretends to be a Spaniard, by his account born at Comana; . . . [Hanover, VA, 1766]<sup>22</sup>

Ran away from the Subscriber's Plantation, on John's Island, . . . , three New Negroes of the Guiney Country, . . . , named Boston, Toney, and Marcellus: Boston is a young Fellow, about 24 Years of Age, and speaks very good English, Spanish and Portuguese. [Charleston, SC, 1769]<sup>23</sup>

Ran away this morning, from the subscriber, Mark, a black negro man, was born in the Island of Saint Jago, and speaks his native (the Portuguese) language, by his talk is easily discovered to be a foreigner, . . . [Fauquier County, VA, 1784]<sup>24</sup>

Turning away from the West Indies, there is extensive mention of black speakers in Spanish America, including Florida and Mexico in the historical literature on the sub-

ject. One particularly interesting individual was Jorge Biassou, “Florida’s only black *caudillo* or commander”, who distinguished himself as a leader of slave rebellions in Hispaniola and was designated a leader of the “Black Auxiliaries” of King Carlos IV of Spain.<sup>25</sup> Another important source is Jack D. Forbes’ article, “Black Pioneers: The Spanish-Speaking Afroamericans of the Southwest”, which provides an overview of the history of the black presence in the Spanish New World.<sup>26</sup> In particular, Forbes gives precise figures of Spanish-speakers of African descent who were involved in the exploration and settlement of Mexico and the American Southwest in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One particularly interesting example of this pertains to the founding of Los Angeles, California. As Forbes notes, “[t]he total population of Los Angeles in 1781 consisted of forty-six persons, of whom twenty-six were African or part-African. Thus the Afro-American percentage was 56.5.”<sup>27</sup>

**WEST INDIAN CREOLES:** In this section we consider references of West Indian black speakers of languages other than French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch, namely creole languages. Often the label “Creole” is loosely applied, but occasionally, as is shown below, the advertisements are more specific.

Run away from the subscriber, . . . , A Stout Able Negroe Fellow, called Pedro, . . . , of the Angola country, but speaks the Paplmento [sic.] or Curason and English language very well; . . . [Savannah, GA, 1768]<sup>28</sup>

Ran away, from the subscriber, about ten days ago, a Spanish Negro Man slave, . . . , talks French, Spanish, and Poplimento [sic.], but very little English. [Baltimore, MD, 1777]<sup>29</sup>

Run away on the 26th of May from the schooner Hannah, a mustee man slave, born in Caracoa [likely Curaçao, MLL], . . . , as he was employed in the West Indies as a coasting sailor, he speaks all the languages used there; . . . [Charleston, SC, 1783]<sup>30</sup>

Ran away, from St. Thomas’s in the West-Indies, . . . Jack, a lively active Negro Man, . . . , talks good English and Negro Dutch, being a Creole of St. Eustatius. [Baltimore, MD, 1783]<sup>31</sup>

Ran away, from the subscriber, . . . , a likely Negro Fellow named Quash, . . . , speaks in the dialect of the Creole Negroes; . . . It is supposed that he will endeavour to get to St. Eustatia to some vessel, as he was brought from that Island, lately, to Virginia. [Suffolk, VA, 1783]<sup>32</sup>

Ran away . . . Jack, a lively active Negro man . . . talks good English and Negro Dutch, being a Creole of St. Eustatius. [St. Thomas, W.I., 1783]<sup>33</sup>

Of course, any discussion of African-American speakers of creole languages in North America will necessarily include the two well known cases of Louisiana Creole French (cited earlier) and Gullah, as well as the lesser known English-based creole related to Gullah, Afro-Seminole, studied by Ian Hancock.<sup>34</sup>

**GERMAN:** For German, there is written documentation of black (and, interestingly, Gypsy) speakers of Pennsylvania German (popularly known as “Pennsylvania Dutch”) in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Strangest of all is to hear the dialect from the lips of a Negro or a gypsy. A few of the old Negro families who settled in the Dutch country shortly before or after the Civil War adopted the speech and customs of their Dutch neighbors a long time ago; while to the gypsies, many of whom came from the Rhineland, Dutch is as much their mother tongue as Romany.<sup>35</sup>

In my own fieldwork I have heard consultants tell of similar contacts with Pennsylvania German-speaking blacks in this century, and it may survive in the Welsh Mountain area of Lancaster County today. Similarly, some Wengerite (Old Order) Mennonites, all of whom still speak Pennsylvania German natively, are descended from a black woman they identify through oral history as Annie Brown who married into the community in the nineteenth century and presumably learned the language. Distinctively black physical features are apparent today in some of Annie Brown's modern descendants in the German family.

There is also evidence of German use in the Mohawk Valley of upstate New York and central Texas.

On one occasion during the middle 1930s the writer had an opportunity by pure chance to have an extended conversation with an elderly woman of the Negro community of Rome, New York. Unfortunately, I do not remember her name. Her father was a Negro from Virginia (still living at the time, although over a hundred years old), but her mother was the daughter of two early residents of Canjoharie who had met and married while working for Mike Keller on that man's farm. The grandfather was half Irish and half Mohawk, while the grandmother was half German and half Mohawk. As a girl in Rome, my informant had often heard her grandmother and mother conversing between themselves in Palatine Dutch, and as a child will, she had picked up a few words.

In the late 1880s, as a young woman, my informant was working as a cook in an institution in Utica, and customarily went home to Rome on her afternoon off. She told me that one day on the train, she had noticed two men looking at her very closely. As the train came into the Rome station, she got up to leave the car, and as she passed these two men, she heard one say to the other in a low voice, "schwarze" ("black"). She immediately turned and looked them full in the face, and said sharply: Yes, and you're a "schwortze deiwel" ("black devil") yourself.

My informant told me, with relish, that she would never forget the look on the two men's faces.<sup>36</sup>

In the case of German in Texas, Glenn Gilbert (p.c.) recalls that while conducting the fieldwork for his dissertation on Texas German in the 1960s he met some German-speaking blacks who had learned the language as ranch hands employed by Texas Germans. Other anecdotal references have been made to German-speaking blacks still residing today in Industry, Texas (Hubert Heinen, p.c.).

In runaway slave advertisements of the eighteenth century, we can find a few references to German speakers, including some identified as speaking "Dutch" or "High Dutch", terms which into the twentieth century were ambiguous as to whether they referred to German or (Netherlandic) Dutch (see below). Not surprisingly, these blacks are often identified as coming from areas with sizable German-speaking populations, such as Pennsylvania, Maryland and North Carolina, as well as Georgia. Advertisements for (probable) German-speaking runaways are given below.

Ran away from Saluda Fork, in September last, a negro man named Suba, . . . speaks high Dutch or German and no English; . . . [Charleston, SC, 1766]<sup>37</sup>

Run away some time last month from the subscriber living in Berkely county, Virginia, a yellow coloured negro man named Tom, . . . was born and raised in Newcastle county, Pennsylvania, talk's Dutch, and speaks hoarse . . . [Williamsburg, VA, 1779]<sup>38</sup>

Absented himself from the subscriber, on the 16th inst. a Negro Fellow, called Billy, . . . and can talk German and English . . . [Savannah, GA, 1781]<sup>39</sup>



Ran-away from the subscriber on Wednesday evening last, a Mulatto fellow named Harry (sometimes calls himself Waters), speaks good English and tolerable German, . . . [Charleston, SC, 1786]<sup>40</sup>

Ran away . . . a Negro wench called Eleanor, alias Nell, but supposed will change her name, and, probably, call herself Lindy: She . . . understands and can speak German; . . . and, it is thought, will attempt to get to Philadelphia . . . [Baltimore, MD, 1789]<sup>41</sup>

**DUTCH:** As mentioned above, the English term “Dutch” has historically been ambiguous in its reference to German and Netherlandic. Here I will use the term Dutch to refer exclusively to the latter. This question aside, there is considerable evidence of black speakers of Netherlandic Dutch who learned it in one of two areas, in the West Indies or in the New Netherland settlement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which stretched from modern-day northern New Jersey, through the New York metropolitan area, including Long Island, and upstate along the Hudson toward Albany.

We will first look at references to Caribbean Dutch speakers. In the runaway slave advertisements, there are a number of references to slave multilingualism, whereby, as was seen above, combinations of French and Spanish with Dutch are frequent. Below follow a number of slave advertisements which refer to black speakers of Dutch.

Run away on Friday the 13th from the Printer hereof a Negro fellow named Pierro, but commonly stiles himself Peter, . . . He is a middle siz'd Fellow, about 25 years of Age, speaks good English, French and Dutch . . . [Charleston, S.C., 1740]<sup>42</sup>

Ran away, . . . , a Mulatto Boy, named James M'Gee, aged about 14 or 16 years, . . . speaks good Dutch, and some French, stutters a little . . . [Baltimore, MD, 1784]<sup>43</sup>

Run away . . . Frank, a foreign Negro, a very good cook, says he was born in the Spanish West Indies, speaks bad English, as also French, Spanish, and some Dutch, . . . [Westmoreland, VA, 1770]<sup>44</sup>

The evidence of African-Americans speaking Dutch in New Netherland is particularly interesting for the fact that they not only maintained the language into the twentieth century, but were in fact among its last native speakers. Afro-Dutch linguistic and cultural contact in the New York/New Jersey area was considerable and has continued to the present day.<sup>45</sup> A number of the eighteenth-century runaway advertisements from these areas mention black Dutch speakers, and in one of the most detailed treatments of Jersey Dutch, one of the people the investigator interviewed was William De Freece, a speaker of the “black” variety of the dialect, termed *Neger Duits*.

William De Freece, a negro (mixed with Minsi Indian), *aetat* 75, a laborer on the Hewitt estate at Ringwood, Passaic County, N.J., [was] an excellent authority on the negro variant of the dialect. My other teachers characterized many of his words as distinctly “nigger”, an interesting circumstance showing that the negro slaves of the old settlers used an idiom tinged with their own peculiarities. There is a small colony of old negroes living on the mountain back of Suffern, N.Y., who still use their own dialect of Jersey Dutch, but they are very difficult of access, owing to their shyness of strangers.<sup>46</sup>

The survival of traces of this *Neger Jersey Duits* in the English of the modern tri-racial isolate in this area, the Ramapo Mountain People, is also attested.<sup>47</sup>

**SWEDISH, GAELIC:** Finally, we consider attestations of African-American speakers of Swedish and Gaelic, the former being spoken in and around the modern state of Delaware (at one time part of New Sweden) and the latter in parts of northern North Caro-

lina. Below is a single runaway advertisement from a slave owner from South Carolina named William Moore, who describes:

. . . a Mulatto Man Slave, aged about 22, has a likely whitish countenance, of a middle stature . . . he speaks Swede and English well. [Moorhall, Chester County, S.C., 1740]<sup>48</sup>

As for Gaelic being spoken by blacks in North Carolina, below are two references, the first from a general treatment of Highland Scottish settlement in the state.

Among these people for half a century and much longer after the Revolution, for it is in the memory of the writer, the Gaelic tongue was as commonly spoken on the streets of Fayetteville and in the sand hills of Cumberland, and in parts of Richmond and Robeson, as the English. The older ones spoke little else; the younger understood and could speak it, and did speak it to their fathers and mothers. Even the negro slaves, who were treated with the greatest kindness, some of them spoke the Gaelic.<sup>49</sup>

A second reference comes from a study of the Scottish Gaels in Nova Scotia, in which it is stated that:

Gaelic was once very strong in all the larger Highland settlements in North America. In North Carolina even the Negro servants learned the language from their masters—a circumstance that greatly confused an old Highland lady when she landed on the shores of America. As she disembarked at the wharf, she was delighted to hear two men conversing in Gaelic. Assuming by their speech that they must inevitably be fellow Highlanders, she came nearer, only to discover that their skin was black. Then she knew that her worst forebodings about the climate of the South were not unfounded and cried out in horror, *A Dhia nan gras, am fas sinn uile mar sin?* (“O God of mercy, are we all going to turn black like that?”).<sup>50</sup>

Later on in the same chapter, Dunn makes reference to two adopted black twins who spoke Gaelic in Nova Scotia.

**ENGLISH VARIETIES:** In the literature on the origins of Black English, special attention has been paid to references in documents such as the runaway slave advertisements to distinctively “Negro” features of English.<sup>51</sup> While there are a number of such references in the advertisements, the vast majority of evaluations of slaves’ facility in English deem it simply as either “good” or “bad”, with a number commenting positively on how well they spoke. In addition, there are a handful of references to blacks not only speaking good English, but even distinctively white varieties, as well as “Negro” varieties.

Run away from Drummond’s neck, . . . a young negro man named Harry, who can read and write, . . . [he was brought] from Scotland, where he had been many years. He has had the smallpox, can speak Scotch, and sings Scotch songs. [James City County, VA, 1775]<sup>52</sup>

Run away . . . a negro wench, named Road . . . She was born in New England, and speaks in that dialect, . . . [Edenton, NC, 1775]<sup>53</sup>

Run away from the Subscriber, a likely Negro Fellow named Jacob, . . . He was born in Pennsylvania, bred a Farmer, pretends to great skill in Fariery, speaks in the Scotch-Irish Dialect, and in Conversation frequently uses the Words moreover and likewise; . . . [Louisa, VA, 1776]<sup>54</sup>

Ran away last night from the subscriber a dark mulatto woman named Pleasant; . . . speaks a little in the negro accent, . . . [Annapolis, MD, 1780]<sup>55</sup>

Run away about two months ago, a negro Man named Mick, . . . of East-Florida, . . . he was brought up in the French West-Indies, but talks English as well as negroes generally do. [Charleston, SC, 1782]<sup>56</sup>

Ran away, from the subscriber . . . Charles Jackson, . . . , was born on Long-Island and formerly belonged to one Simmonds, speaks in the Quaker dialect; . . . [Baltimore, MD, 1782]<sup>57</sup>

Ran Away, From the Subscriber, A Dark Mulatto Wench, by name Rachel; . . . speaks a little more properly than Negroes do in general; . . . [Charleston, SC, 1784]<sup>58</sup>

### BLACK ACQUISITION OF NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES

In this section we consider a second major instance of African-Americans acquiring languages in North America, namely through their extensive contact and intermarriage with, as well as sporadic enslavement by Native Americans.<sup>59</sup> This relates to an important, but often neglected chapter in African-American history, though this historical oversight has in many ways been rectified by J. D. Forbes' outstanding study, *Black Africans and Native Americans: Color, Race and Caste in the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples*.<sup>60</sup> Forbes' synthesis deals with such contacts not only in North America, but throughout the New World. A thorough review of this topic is beyond the limits of the present discussion of African-American verbal behavior, but it should be pointed out that there is documentation of considerable African-Native American social and linguistic contact in every region where the two groups were coterritorial, especially in Florida in the well-known case of the Seminoles.<sup>61</sup> Below follow a number of runaway slave advertisements which refer to black speakers of Indian languages.

Runaway, the 26th of June last, from Samuel Leonard of Perth Amboy in New Jersey, a thick short fellow, having but one eye. His name is Wan. He is half Negro and half Indian; he had on when he went away a blue coat. He plays the fiddle, and speaks good English and his country Indian . . . [Perth Amboy, NJ, 1734]<sup>62</sup>

Run away from Point-Comfort on Savannah River, . . . , a tall lusty young Wench, can speak good English, Chickesaw, and perhaps French, the Chickesaws having taken her from the French Settlements on Mississippi: . . . [Charleston, SC, 1746]<sup>63</sup>

Runaway on the 20th of September last, from Silas Pavin, at Cohansie in New Jersey, a very lusty Negro fellow named Sampson, aged about 58 years and had some Indian blood in him . . . He has taken with him a boy about 12 or 13 years of age named Sam. Was born of an Indian woman, and looks much like an Indian only his hair. They are both well clothed, only the boy is barefooted . . . They both talk Indian very well, and it is likely they have dressed themselves in the Indian dress, and gone to Carolina. [Cohansie, NJ, 1747]<sup>64</sup>

Ran away on the 12th of January instant, from my Plantation on Lady's-Island, a Negro Man named Jack, . . . speaks the Creek language tolerably well; . . . [Charleston, SC, 1771]<sup>65</sup>

From further west, there is a reference to an African-American employee of the American Fur Company, John Brazeau, whose multilingualism bespoke close contact with Native Americans and who died around 1868.

[He was] a full-blooded Aethiopian, apparently, of small stature and intelligent, though not handsome, face. He must have been 70 or over when he died. He enunciated his English well . . . spoke French better than most Canadians, also Sioux and other Indian languages. He was hardy, courageous.<sup>66</sup>

The linguistic abilities of African-Americans such as John Brazeau, as well as their multicultural backgrounds, enabled them to serve as go-betweens between whites and Indians, notably as guides and interpreters. There is documentary evidence of blacks serving in such mediating roles back to the days of the slave trade in Africa, as is evident in the anecdote cited below.

As the slave trade grew, black linguists became common fixtures aboard English vessels, where they translated orders and conveyed information. A mate aboard the *Rainbow*, which carried slaves from Benin to St. Thomas in 1758, testified before the Vice Admiralty at Charlestown [S.C.] that "Capt. Harrison at Benin hired one Dick, a free Negro Man as a Linguist between him and the Slaves to proceed on the said Voyage." It was acknowledged under oath "that his being onboard the Said Snow was of great Consequence to the Interest of the Voyage"<sup>67</sup>

Kenneth W. Porter devotes an entire article on the role of African-American interpreters in the case of the Seminole Wars.<sup>68</sup> And in his 1956 article on black-Indian contact in Texas, he also recounts the interesting story of William Goings.

Perhaps the most remarkable man of color in early Texas was William Goings, Goyans, or Goyens . . . , who was living in Nacogdoches as early as 1821 . . . Goyens could write reasonably well in both English and Spanish and could speak several Indian languages, including the Cherokee. He was consequently very useful to the settlers.<sup>69</sup>

Further, it is important to note that there are a number of instances in American Western frontier history in which African-Americans served as interpreters and cultural mediators between whites and Indians. One important example is that of Isaiah Dorman, a former slave probably from Louisiana who lived among the Sioux, married a Sioux woman, and learned the language fluently. Dorman, who had been both a friend of Sitting Bull in 1868, and later a personal servant and Sioux interpreter for General Custer, was killed with Custer at the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876.<sup>70</sup>

A final aspect of the discussion of the sociolinguistic contact between blacks and Native Americans involves modern-day tri-racial isolates of the Eastern and Mid-Atlantic states. These are small "clans" of tightly-knit families of mixed white-black-Indian descent who have lived in extreme social isolation since the Colonial Era.<sup>71</sup> Though most academic studies of these groups are sociological in nature, what linguistic work has been done sheds some light on aspects of the historic sociolinguistic relationship between African-Americans and Native Americans. Glenn G. Gilbert and Carol Pfaff have identified a number of residual Creole English features in the speech of one such group, the Brandywines of southern Maryland.<sup>72</sup> Gilbert further documents the apparent partial maintenance of the Piscataway (Indian) language among Brandywines into this century.<sup>73</sup>

References to language in other studies of tri-racial isolates indicate maintenance of other non-English languages, as well as non-standard English forms. For example, Cohen, in his 1974 study of the Ramapo Mountain People of northern New Jersey, mentions not only the survival of certain Dutch expressions in their speech such as "I'm feest of it" for "I'm disgusted by it", but also an expression of Scottish origin,

namely “dause the glim” for “dim the light”.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, as Prince’s (1910) fieldwork on Jersey Dutch revealed, the Ramapo Mountain People were likely the last to use Dutch as an intra-community variety. Hopefully, more research on the verbal behavior of these tri-racial communities will be conducted to yield further insights into the nature of black-Indian sociolinguistic contact of earlier generations.

#### MAINTENANCE OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES

Most scholars of African-American sociolinguistic history have acknowledged the fact that maintenance of African languages in North America was negligible, being almost exclusively restricted to first-generation slaves, though some have noted the retention of African naming practices beyond the first generation as one important form of sociolinguistic maintenance.<sup>75</sup> Although a number of the runaway advertisements refer to the region of origin of African-born slaves, few mention language. Some of these are given below.

Run away the 21st of April last, Two Negro Men that have been in the country two years, and speak English so as to be understood . . . Bucharah . . . and . . . Cupid, his country name Yonge . . . They are both of a country which they call Sofo, and both speak the Bombra language and Cupid the Fulla language; . . . [St. Mathew’s parish, SC, 1774]<sup>76</sup>

Ran away, from the subscriber, . . . a Negro Woman named Sue . . . She can talk a plausible story when examined; talks something after the Guinea dialect, and can read a little English. [Baltimore, MD, 1783]<sup>77</sup>

Absented [herself] from the subscriber, . . . a Negro woman, named Betty, . . . has her country marks very conspicuous in the face, speaks tolerable English and understands two or three different African languages; . . . [Savannah, GA, 1785]<sup>78</sup>

One rather exceptional case of language maintenance on the part of an African-born slave is that of Omar ibn Seid.<sup>79</sup> Omar was born around 1770 in what is modern-day Senegal. The son of a merchant, Omar was converted by Muslim missionaries, learned Arabic and was a teacher and missionary, as well as a salt and cotton trader. He also visited Mecca as a pilgrim. He was brought to the United States in 1807 and in 1831 wrote his autobiography in Arabic with the support of his last master, who also provided him with copies of the Koran and the Bible in Arabic. Omar died in 1859 on the Owen Hill plantation near Wilmington, SC.<sup>80</sup>

#### CONCLUSIONS

To sum up, I must reiterate what I stated in the Introduction, namely that this overview of historical black multilingualism represents only a preliminary step toward a more complete understanding of African-American sociolinguistic history. But despite the preliminary nature of this overview, there are implications to be drawn. On a very concrete level, the more that is learned about historical black multilingualism, the more the contributions of individual African-Americans such as Isaiah Dorman or the black Spanish-speaking founders of Los Angeles can be appreciated. On a more gen-

eral level, though, data such as those presented above are relevant in the ongoing interpretation of the origins, development, and functions of AAVE referred to in the Introduction. In the discussions of these aspects of AAVE, the emphasis has been heavily on the degree to which African-Americans have remained apart from the social mainstream, either by virtue of the distance imposed by slavery and other forms of social exclusion stemming from racism, or for reasons of choice on the part of the victims of this racism.<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately, attempts to view the relationship between African-Americans and other Americans in a somewhat more positive light as one of limited proximity, rather than negatively in terms of distance, have smacked of a kind of reactionary tendency, harking back to traditional (white) dialectological accounts of AAVE as simply (white) English dialects “corrupted” or “bastardized” by uneducated and socially marginal people. In this way, blacks are denied any respect for either contributing to the larger culture, or for developing a new and legitimate culture through the combination of various historical inputs.

The synthetic view of AAVE origins advanced by Donald Winford and others, which presumes that black-white linguistic contacts were historically more substantial than previously assumed, is supported by Gerald W. Mullin’s analysis of the acculturation of African-born slaves during the colonial and early antebellum periods in Virginia.<sup>82</sup> Mullin argues that African resistance to slavery was not expressed in outright rejection of the culture of their white oppressors. Rather, African-born slaves, realizing the unlikelihood of returning home, adopted a “know thy enemy” strategy to survival which necessarily involved learning the language(s) spoken by the slaveowners and others.

The “outlandish” slave’s initial reaction to slavery as a runaway and his reluctance or inability to learn English demonstrate that at the dynamic level of his behavior, the level of philosophical orientation, he had remained an African. . . . But in a year or so the “outlandish” African changed. As he became a “new Negro” he acquired English and new work routines which transformed his communal and outward style of rebelliousness. For the African, learning English was the key to this process of cultural change, for the norms of the slave society were mediated through his captor’s language. In acquiring English, the “new Negro” learned about slavery, and how whites expected field hands to act. . . . [T]he African’s acquisition of his second language fell into two periods. During the first few months after procurement, while some were trying to form settlements or return “home”, Africans were unable to learn even a word of English. But after six months, knowledge of the language increased sharply; and within another two and a half years most Africans were conversant in English.<sup>83</sup>

This pattern of linguistic *acculturation*, while accompanied by the inevitable loss of African languages beyond the first generation, is not, in Mullin’s view, to be equated with complete linguistic (and cultural) *assimilation*. It is clear that many early African-Americans empowered themselves by adapting their verbal behavior to particular settings, depending on whether they were communicating among themselves or with whites. Speaking of fugitive artisans as described in runaway notices, Mullin notes two important characteristics.

[F]irst, their masters openly praised their character as well as their highly esteemed skills, and then evaluated their motives as rebellious slaves, and their most illusive, but essential quality: an intelligent and adaptive manner in speaking situations. Second, assimilateds revealed themselves by such by-products of their training as reading, writing, conversational English, and musical and religious

interests. These abilities, which protected the assimilated's individuality and enhanced his ability and desire to function on his own, were also the basis for his outward—that is, creative, imaginative, and personally rewarding—styles of resistance.<sup>84</sup>

Despite their acquisition of English, the individual African-American's identity distinct from that of whites was maintained in patterns of verbal in-group communication, the ancestor varieties of modern AAVE, which remained inaccessible to whites.

In the dynamic environment of speech and languages—which provides the most adequate examples of the bicultural setting in eighteenth-century Virginia—Negro speech often confused whites. The medley of dialects and languages spoken in the colony before the war included a patois which all slaves used to protect themselves and their culture.<sup>85</sup>

In the present study we have expanded the view of the African-American situation in colonial and antebellum America beyond a “bicultural setting” to a truly multicultural, hence multilingual one. What the historical data of African-American multilingualism above show are regular patterns of black interaction with other groups, European and Native American, which, rather than reflecting cultural submission, loss, or oppression, indicate the cultural synthesis and change through dynamic interaction Mullin describes. This dynamic relationship is expressed in three different ways. First, blacks have incorporated non-African languages and cultures within their own community in a synthesis with distinctively African or African-American patterns. An example of this would be the use of Dutch as an intra-community medium within the context of Afro-Dutch cultural syncretization in New York and New Jersey. A second type of cultural contact is the mediating and interpreting role blacks have played between themselves and European Americans, as well as between Native and European Americans. And finally, a third consequence of black-white sociolinguistic contact is the contribution of features African and African-American linguistic and cultural patterns to the various European-American milieus, making it impossible in many cases to speak of a truly white European-American culture. A good example of this would be the role played by blacks in shaping Louisiana and Missouri French language and culture.

This synthetic view of the sociolinguistic interaction of blacks and non-blacks whereby blacks both adopt European and Native American elements and contribute something of their own to these other cultures thus fits well with current views of the origins of AAVE. It is important to acknowledge the true agency African-Americans have displayed in shaping their identity, based on selective cultural and linguistic contacts with, as opposed to distance from, whites (and Native Americans). Further, these empowering contacts have enabled blacks to transmit non-white linguistic and cultural influences to the larger white culture, as, for example, through raising white children on plantations<sup>86</sup>, or functioning as guides and interpreters on the American frontier. In any case, as our picture of African-American sociolinguistic history becomes more complete, so will our understanding of the historical and ongoing dynamic relationship between all cultures in the United States become clearer.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> A PIDGIN LANGUAGE may be defined as a grammatically and lexically limited form of language that develops when adults without a common language need to communicate with one another. If pidgin speakers intermarry and pass on the pidgin to their children, then the pidgin will likely become a CREOLE LANGUAGE, which differs from a pidgin in that it has a fully developed grammar and lexicon. Sources which discuss the evidence in support of a creole source for AAVE include: W. A. Stewart, "Sociolinguistic Factors in the History of American Negro Dialects", *Florida Foreign Language Reporter* 5 (1967), 11, 22, 24, 26; J. L. Dillard, *Black English*, (New York, 1972); John Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles: Volume 2*, (Cambridge, 1989), 498-503.

<sup>2</sup> See Sarah G. D'Eloia, "Issues in the Analysis of Nonstandard Negro English: A Review of J. L. Dillard's *Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States*", *Journal of English Linguistics* 7 (1973), 87-106. See also Shana Poplack and Sali Tagliamonte, "African American English in the Diaspora: Evidence from Old Line Nova Scotians", *Language Variation and Change* 3 (1991), 301-339; Guy Bailey, Natalie Maynor, and Patricia Cukor-Avila (eds.), *The Emergence of Black English*, (Amsterdam/Philadelphia, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> Donald Winford, "On the Origins of African American Vernacular English—A Creolist Perspective. Part I: The Sociohistorical Setting", *Diachronica* 14 (1997), 305-344; "On the Origins of African American Vernacular English—A Creolist Perspective. Part II: Linguistic Features", *Diachronica* 15 (1998), 99-154.

<sup>4</sup> Donald Winford, "On the Origins of African American Vernacular English—A Creolist Perspective. Part I: The Sociohistorical Setting", 307-308.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 308-309.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. Allen Walker Read, "Eighteenth-Century Slaves as Advertised By Their Masters", *Journal of Negro History* 1 (1916), 163-216; Lathan A. Windley (ed.), *Runaway Slave Advertisements: Volumes I-IV*, (Westport, CT, 1983).

<sup>7</sup> The citation for each slave advertisement will be preceded by the location and year of the appearance of the notice. Where possible, the slave's precise location of enslavement will be indicated, otherwise the city where the advertisement appeared will be noted.

<sup>8</sup> Alice Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana I", *Journal of Negro History* 1 (1916), 361-376; Laura Foner, "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue", *Journal of Social History* 3 (1970), 406-430.

<sup>9</sup> Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, (New York, 1974), 176-177.

<sup>10</sup> John Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles*, 387-391.

<sup>11</sup> S. de la S. Déléry and G. A. Renshaw. *France d'Amérique*, (Chicago, 1932), 68.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph LeSage Tisch, *French in Louisiana*, (New Orleans, 1959), 44.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 42; see also Alice Dunbar-Nelson, "People of Color in Louisiana I" and "People of Color in Louisiana II", *Journal of Negro History* 2 (1917), 51-78; Laura Foner "The Free People of Color in Louisiana and St. Domingue".

<sup>14</sup> Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, vol. I, 137.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, 254-255.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

<sup>17</sup> Allen Walker Read, "Eighteenth-Century Slaves as Advertised by Their Masters", 171-172.

<sup>18</sup> W. A. Dorrance, "The Survival of French in the Old District of Sainte Genevieve", *University of Missouri Studies*, vol. X, no. 2, (1935), 47.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-107.

<sup>20</sup> John M. Lipski, *The Language of the Isleños: Vestigial Spanish in Louisiana* (Baton Rouge, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, vol. I, 28.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, 279.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, 366.

<sup>25</sup> J. Landers, "Jorge Biassou, Black Chieftain", *Clash Between Cultures*, ed. by Jacqueline K. Fretwell and Susan R. Parker, St. Augustine Historical Society, (1988), 86-100.



- <sup>26</sup> Jack D. Forbes, "Black Pioneers: The Spanish-Speaking Afro-Americans of the Southwest", *Phylon* 27 (1966), 233-246.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.
- <sup>28</sup> Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, vol. IV, 30.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, 196.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, 719.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, 283.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.
- <sup>34</sup> Ian Hancock, "Texan Gullah: The Creole English of the Bracketville Afro-Seminoles", *Perspectives on American English*, ed. by J. L. Dillard, (1980), 305-333; see also John Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles*.
- <sup>35</sup> Fredric Klees, *The Pennsylvania Dutch*, (New York, 1950), 279.
- <sup>36</sup> R. H. Tooker, "Palatine Dutch, a Fragmentary Record", *Der Reggeboege*, 19 (1985), 39.
- <sup>37</sup> Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, vol. III, 416.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, 279.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. IV, 97.
- <sup>40</sup> Allen Walker Read, "Eighteenth-Century Slaves as Advertised By Their Masters", 186.
- <sup>41</sup> Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, vol. II, 399.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, 41.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, 322.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. I, 80.
- <sup>45</sup> Shane White, "Pinkster: Afro-Dutch Syncretization in New York City and the Hudson Valley", *Journal of American Folklore* 102 (1989), 68-75.
- <sup>46</sup> J. D. Prince, "The Jersey Dutch Dialect", *Dialect Notes* 3 (1910), 459-460; cf. also John Holm, *Pidgins and Creoles*, 337.
- <sup>47</sup> David S. Cohen, *The Ramapo Mountain People*, (New Brunswick, 1974).
- <sup>48</sup> Allen Walker Read, "Eighteenth-Century Slaves as Advertised By Their Masters", 185.
- <sup>49</sup> James C. Macrae, "The Highland-Scotch Settlement in North Carolina", *The North Carolina Booklet* 4 (1905), 20.
- <sup>50</sup> Charles W. Dunn, *Highland Settler: A Portrait of the Scottish Gael in Nova Scotia*, (Toronto, 1953), 138.
- <sup>51</sup> Allen Walker Read, "The Speech of Negroes in Colonial America", *Journal of Negro History* 24 (1939), 247-258; J. L. Dillard, *Black English*, 83-85.
- <sup>52</sup> Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, vol. I, 249.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 331-332.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-176.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, 125.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, 598-599.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, 268-269.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. III, 385.
- <sup>59</sup> See Kenneth W. Porter, "Relations Between Negroes and Indians", *Journal of Negro History* 17 (1932), 287-367 and "Notes Supplementary to 'Relations Between Negroes and Indians' ", *Journal of Negro History* 18 (1933), 282-321, who points out, among other things, that two famous African-Americans, Crispus Attucks and Frederick Douglass were both of mixed African-Native American descent.
- <sup>60</sup> (Oxford, 1988). Forbes is by no means the first historian to deal with this topic; the studies of J. H. Johnston, "Documentary Evidence of the Relations of Negroes and Indians", *Journal of Negro History* 14 (1929), 21-43 and Kenneth W. Porter (cf. his anthology of earlier articles which appeared in this journal, *The Negro on the American Frontier*, New York, 1971), represent some of the earliest research on black-Indian relations in North America.
- <sup>61</sup> See also Herbert Aptheker, "Maroons Within the Present Limits of the United States", *Journal of Negro History* 24 (1939), 167-184, on the related question of the Maroons.
- <sup>62</sup> J. H. Johnston, "Documentary Evidence of the Relations of Negroes and Indians", 28.
- <sup>63</sup> Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, vol. III, 71.
- <sup>64</sup> J. H. Johnston, "Documentary Evidence of the Relations of Negroes and Indians", 28.
- <sup>65</sup> Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, vol. III, 436-437.

<sup>66</sup> Cited in Kenneth W. Porter, "Notes Supplementary to 'Relations Between Negroes and Indians' ", 313.

<sup>67</sup> Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority*, 174.

<sup>68</sup> Kenneth W. Porter, "Negro Guides and Interpreters in the Early Stages of the Seminole War, Dec. 28, 1835-Mar. 6, 1837", *Journal of Negro History* 35 (1950), 174-182.

<sup>69</sup> Kenneth W. Porter, "Negroes and Indians on the Texas Frontier, 1831-1876", *Journal of Negro History* 41 (1956), 205.

<sup>70</sup> Kenneth W. Porter, "Notes Supplementary to 'Relations Between Negroes and Indians' ", 316-317; Roland C. McConnell, "Isaiah Dorman and the Custer Expedition", *Journal of Negro History* 33 (1948), 344-352. In another possible instance of an important black interpreter, Kenneth W. Porter, "Relations Between Negroes and Indians", 292 recounts a story of York, the slave of George Rogers Clark who accompanied him and Meriwether Lewis on the famed expedition of the West. Porter, citing earlier reports of a "mulatto who spoke bad French and worse English" on the expedition who aided in the communication, by way of Sacagawea and her French-speaking husband, Toussaint Charbonneau, speculates that York was this "mulatto", "having [probably] picked up a smattering of French from French-speaking local Negroes [in St. Louis]" (Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontier*, 89). Robert B. Betts, *In Search of York: The Slave Who Went to the Pacific with Lewis and Clark*, (Boulder, CO, 1985), however, casts doubt on the identity of York as the unnamed interpreter, even suggesting that the "mulatto" was in fact of mixed Indian and white ancestry. These questions aside, York's invaluable assistance to the expedition in other ways has been underacknowledged.

<sup>71</sup> Arthur H. Estabrook and Ivan E. McDougale, *Mongrel Virginians: The Win Tribe*, (Baltimore, 1926); Clinton A. Weslager, *Delaware's Forgotten Folk: The Story of the Moors and Nanticokes*, (Philadelphia, 1943); Brewton Berry, *Almost White*, (New York, 1963); David S. Cohen, *The Ramapo Mountain People*.

<sup>72</sup> "Language and Caste: The Survival of Creole Features in the Brandywine Population of Southern Maryland", unpublished manuscript, Southern Illinois University; Glenn G. Gilbert, "The English of the Brandywine Population: A Triracial Isolate in Southern Maryland", *Language Variety in the South: Perspectives in Black and White*, ed. by Michael B. Montgomery and Guy Bailey, (Huntsville, AL 1986).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-103.

<sup>74</sup> David S. Cohen *The Ramapo Mountain People*, 143-144.

<sup>75</sup> J. L. Dillard, *Black English*, 123-135; P. H. Wood, *Black Majority*, 181-186; cf. also Lorenzo D. Turner's classic study, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, (Chicago, 1949).

<sup>76</sup> Lathan A. Windley, *Runaway Slave Advertisements*, vol. III, 455.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. II, 292.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. IV, 134-135.

<sup>79</sup> George H. Callcott, "Omar Ibn Seid, A Slave Who Wrote His Autobiography in Arabic", *Journal of Negro History* 39 (1954), 58-63.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. also Peter H. Wood's, (*Black Majority*, 178-180) story of ". . . Bilali, an African slave on a plantation near Savannah. He had been born near Timboo in the Kingdom of Bambara and educated in Arabic writing and the Muslim faith. He always wore a cap resembling a Turkish fez, prayed to Allah three times each day and was buried with his Koran and praying sheepskin. A slave on a neighboring plantation was also from Bambara, having been born in Kianah on the Niger River between Jenne and Timbuctoo. When he and Bilali conversed they used the Fula language. Bilali's children spoke French, English, and Fula and continued to practice the Mohammedan faith".

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Elizabeth Whatley, "Language Among Black Americans", *Language in the USA*, ed. by Charles A. Ferguson and Shirley Brice Heath, (Cambridge, 1981), 92: "During the period of slavery, as well as in the modern period, the patterns of communication between Black and other Americans reflected the social distance between them."

<sup>82</sup> Gerald W. Mullin, *Flight and Rebellion: Slave Resistance in Eighteenth-Century Virginia*, (New York, 1972).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>86</sup> The important reality of white-black contact in childhood during slavery is aptly noted by Craig Carver, *American Regional Dialects: A Word Geography*, (Ann Arbor, 1987), 150, quoted in Donald Winford, "On the Origins of African American Vernacular English—A Creolist Perspective. Part I: The

Sociohistorical Setting", 337, fn. 31. In no other section of the country [i.e., the South] were the races so closely in contact. The members of the typical small family farm worked side by side with one or two slaves. On the large plantations, the black mammy raised the white children, whose playmates were apt also to be black. When these white children reached adulthood, their contact with black servants continued. Though isolated socially and educationally so that their subculture maintained its identity, the blacks were an integral and interdependent part of white culture.