

Gender and the American Civil War: Some Episodes in North Carolina During Civil War and Reconstruction

Takahiro Sasaki

Introduction

How did the Civil War affect the lives of ordinary men and women? Did the war and its subsequent events change the ways in which men and women interact with each other? What impact did the war produce on the notions of citizenship in these critically important nation-building years? With these questions in mind, I have searched and collected data from court documents for the past several years. My database now consists of more than 300 individual cases argued and decided between 1865 and 1885 in ten selected counties in the central part (Piedmont) of North Carolina.

This afternoon I would like to illustrate two of the more significant areas in which the concepts of gender and citizenship interplayed with each other. First, I would like to examine divorce cases of white citizens. To put it more precisely, there seems to have been a general pattern in which the wife was depicted in the petitions for divorce filed by her husband. How was the woman portrayed? What is the meaning of such depiction?

Secondly, I will examine violence committed by African Americans. There are several cases of bizarre violence committed by African Americans in this area during this period. Some of these events are so out of the ordinary that we as historians are often left perplexed and bewildered to understand why these incidents had to happen the way they did. We have to remember that in their slavery days African American slaves were not allowed to marry legally or to have families of their own. When they were emancipated and became citizens after 1865, African American freedmen's newly acquired civil and political liberties depended on their ability to control and maintain their families as household heads. Only when placed in this context, are we able to comprehend their seemingly inexplicable violent behaviors.

While the cases and incidents examined in this paper are far from complete, they nevertheless point to an important link between gender and citizenship at the time when the nation at large was struggling to define effectively and persuasively what it means to be a citizen of the United States.

Chapter One: Oh, My God, My Sweet Home Is Gone!

On July 7, 1860, Willie G. Couch married Emma Crabtree in Orange County, North Carolina. When they married, Willie claims in his petition for divorce, he never doubted the character of his newly-wed bride. He believed that Emma was "a virtuous woman and would make him a virtuous and faithful wife." Soon after their marriage, he

took his bride to “a home he had provided for them where they lived contented and happy as he believed.” About seventeen months after the marriage, sometime in the month of December, 1862, Emma Couch delivered a baby child which “had been earnestly hoped for” by the couple. The arrival of their own child seemed to “complete their happiness” in the early years of their married life.¹

Their happiness did not last very long, however. The Civil War intruded their lives and as one of the young men of the South Willie was called upon to take up the arms for the State of North Carolina. He left home on March 24, 1862.²

After about a year and a half in the service Willie Couch successfully obtained a furlough for a short time, and returned home in August 1863. He found his wife and their baby daughter in good health and happiness enjoying “all the comfort of the home he had provided for.” “Up to this time,” Willie recalls, he “was not only pleased with his marriage but happy in the belief that he had secured a loving wife; one faithful and true to all the duties of a virtuous wife; one . . . fitted to discharge the duties of a mother to his and her child and bring and raise her up in the palm of virtue.” Encouraged by this belief, Willie left home and returned to his company, then in active service in the field, where he remained on duty in various paths of Confederacy. He did not return home again until after the surrender of the Confederate Army in the spring of 1865.³

Willie came home in May, 1865 and saw his home completely transformed during his absence. Willie writes:

He arrived at home, may it please your Honor, on the 5th day of May 1865 and was shocked and overwhelmed to find that his wife had left home he had provided for her, had proved false to her marriage vow, and had given birth to a bastard child which was some few weeks old. Your petitioner had been absent from early in August 1863 until 5th May, 1865. His wife had been delivered of this child a few weeks before his arrival, and upon the only interview he has had with her since and that immediately upon his return, confessed to him, as she has done to others, that one Henry Neal of this County was the father of said child. Your petitioner further showeth that he has heard and believes that the said Emma has become a lewd woman and common prostitute. . . .⁴

Hearing this, the Orange County Superior Court decreed that the bonds of matrimony existing between Willie G. and Emma Couch should be dissolved, and granted the plaintiff a divorce *a vinculo matrimonii*.⁵

¹ Willie G. Couch and Emma Crabtree, July 7, 1860, Marriage Bonds, Orange County, North Carolina Department of Archives and History (hereafter cited as NCDAH); Willie G. Couch's Petition for Divorce dated August 27, 1867, Willie Couch vs. Emma Couch (1868), Orange County Divorce Records, Box 1, NCDAH.

² Willie Couch vs. Emma Couch (1868), Orange County Divorce Records, Box 1, NCDAH; *North Carolina Troops, 1861-1865: A Roster*, vol. 1, pp. 446, 587.

³ Willie Couch vs. Emma Couch (1868), Orange County Divorce Records, Box 1, NCDAH.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

How are we to understand and interpret this series of events? First, and foremost, it is important for us to remember that superior courts in the state of North Carolina during the nineteenth century remained very reluctant to authorize divorce. In the words of Thomas Ruffin, long-time Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court (1833-1852), the marriage contract was “a perfect union between the parties.” To enter into such a contract, both the husband and the wife should “become one”: they “ought to feel and believe that they are ever to remain so—that absolute union is also indissoluble.”⁶

It is possible, therefore, that Willie G. Couch emphasized his loyal, military service to his native state when depicting the “transformation” of his wife from a virtuous woman to a “common prostitute” during his absence in the hope to increase the possibility of winning the decision in his favor. According to the North Carolina statute at that time, if one party separates him or herself from the other, and commits adultery during the separation, that fact alone could be considered as a cause for divorce *a vinculo matrimonii* (absolute divorce).⁷

There are a few other divorce cases filed in the same area of this state in which a husband claimed his wife’s infidelity during his absence. In one of these cases, William D. Cross of Randolph County, sued his wife Elmira Cross for a divorce based on the fact that his wife had left his father’s house to her native county of Anson without his consent and refused to come back with him in spite of his repeated attempts to resume their married life again after he was discharged from his military service. William also learned “from a reliable source” that Elmira was living “in adultery with one Green Dabbs and sundry other men.” He claimed that she had been for “more than three years past living a life of a “common prostitute” who indulged herself in adultery with diverse persons.”⁸

William D. Cross’ choice of words in writing his petition for divorce are surprisingly similar to the words and phrases contained in Willie G. Couch’s petition, and there are reasons to believe that there might have been some concerted effort to construct the image of a disloyal wife betraying the trust of his husband to abandon him for a new lover. Like Willie Couch, William Cross also emphasized his loyal military service; he had not only born arms for Confederacy against the United States, had been captured by the United States forces, was sent to the U. S. prison, and then volunteered his services in the United States army and fought against his native state till the end of the war.⁹

However, there are also divorce cases in which the wife accused her husband of his infidelity. For example, Chesley Herndon married Mary Barbee in Wake County, North Carolina, in May 1859, and “from that time till about the month of June, 1861,” they “lived happily together as man and wife” in the neighboring county of Orange. When Chesley left home to join the Confederate army in June, 1861, however, Mary

⁶ *Scroggins v. Scroggins* (1832), 14 NC 535.

⁷ *Revised Code of North Carolina, 1855*, Chapter 39 (Divorce and Alimony), Section 2, p. 251.

⁸ William D. Cross’ Petition for Divorce dated January 11, 1868, William D. Cross vs. Elmira Cross (1868), Randolph County Divorce Records, Box 1, NCDAH.

⁹ *Ibid.*

returned "with her husband's full consent" to Wake County to live with her father because they had no children and it was difficult for Mary to support herself in the house her husband provided her in Orange. During their separation, Mary insists, she and her husband "kept up an affectionate correspondence by letter" and she even visited him to a prison camp near Carolina City when he was taken prisoner by the Union forces. When the war finally came to a close and her husband was released from the prison camp, Mary "anxiously expected him to return to her," but "she was grievously disappointed" in his action: her husband, "instead of going to see her upon his return to the State, went to *his* father's house in said County of Orange and neglected even to send her word that he was there and wished to see her." Mary visited her husband's father and begged him to come with her to live in Wake County, but he refused. It was not long before Mary knew the reasons for her husband's refusal to return to her. She learned that in January, 1866, her husband had a "pretended marriage" with one Mary George of Orange County with the justice of peace performing the ceremony. After the ceremony, her husband and his pretended wife Mary George "bedded and cohabited together as man and wife and then eloped together to some place unknown to your petitioner, and that she has not heard from him since." The Orange County Superior Court granted her an absolute divorce.¹⁰

It is important to note that this image of the dutiful, loyal wife waiting for the return of her husband, which is clearly depicted here in Mary Herndon's petition for divorce, is as misleading as the image of the wife becoming a common prostitute depicted in Willie G. Couch's petition. By portraying herself this way, the plaintiff hoped to impress the jury that she had been performing all the duties of a virtuous wife, and thus she could enhance her chances of winning the lawsuit.

Willie G. and Emma Couch's episode, in the final analysis, clearly illustrates the oft-cited sexual double standard deeply-imbedded in the society of the American South. In order to illuminate this double standard, it is insightful to contrast Willie G. Couch's experience against one woman's experience ten years later.

Mary A. Miller of Rowan County became increasingly suspicious of her husband's improper intimacy toward his African American female servant named Louisa Nash. In the summer of 1877, when Louisa's pregnancy became apparent to everyone's eyes, Mary asked her "what was the matter with her." Louisa confessed her mistress that "during the absence of the plaintiff [Mary A. Miller] from home, she had carnal intercourse more than once with the defendant [John C. Miller] in his bed chamber," and that she became "pregnant by the defendant." When Mary heard this, she immediately left her husband's house and sued for divorce *a mensa et thoro* ("separation of bed and board," a partial divorce) on account of her husband's conduct making her condition "intolerable and burdensome." The Rowan County Superior Court rendered a judgment for the defendant, and the plaintiff appealed to the State

¹⁰ Petition of Mary Herndon dated 18 February 1867, Mary Herndon vs. Chesley Herndon (1867), Orange County Divorce Records, Box 1, NCDAH; Chesley P. Herndon and Mary Barbee, May 3, 1859, Marriage Bonds, Wake County, NCDAH.

Supreme Court.¹¹

In the January Term, 1878, the Supreme Court affirmed the decision of the Superior Court and dismissed Mary's petition. Justice William B. Rodman expressed the opinion of the Court:

The acts of adultery by the husband [in this case] were repeated at intervals during a period of less than nine months, and resulted in the pregnancy of the female servant; but they were all committed during the absence of the wife from home, and never came to the knowledge until, seeing the condition of the servant, she inquired into the cause of it, and upon being informed, she immediately left the husband's house and has never since returned to it.

Justice Rodman continues:

The conduct of the husband, though immoral and blamable, was only such as many a sensible and good-tempered wife has thought it wise, and dutiful, and according to the impulses of her heart, to be blind to, or generously forgive. The husband's conduct was not *consciously or willfully* to the annoyance of the wife.¹²

It has to be remembered that Emma Couch's adultery with one Henry Neal was committed while her husband was absent from home and resulted in a birth of an illegitimate child. The basically same kind of conduct committed by the husband during the absence of his wife, on the other hand, was deemed immoral but acceptable by both the Rowan Superior Court and the State Supreme Court, as something "many a sensible and good-tempered wife . . . has thought it wise . . . to . . . forgive."

There seems to be more than just the usual sexual double standard (women are more severely punished than men for the same sexual offense) which separates Willie's treatment from Mary's. It is difficult to deny that Willie's military service helped to promote his cause a great deal. After all, he had sacrificed three full years in his youth for the defense of his home. He had performed all the duties required of a loyal, patriotic male citizen of this state. His wife's adultery and the resulting birth of a bastard child was not just an offence of their marriage covenant; it was also an unforgivable betrayal of a trusting soldier at home. Mary's absence from home, on the other hand, was necessitated by her personal or family needs. As a wife, she had a duty to obey the wishes of her husband, and his mistake during her absence ought to have been forgiven.

Capter Two: "She Is My Wife and I Will Prank with Her as Much as I Please"

¹¹ *Miller v. Miller* (1878), 78 NC 102; "Copy of Record" from Rowan Superior Court, Folder #12250 "Mary A. Miller v. John C. Miller," Supreme Court Cases, NCDAH.

¹² *Miller v. Miller* (1878), 78 NC 102.

An African American woman named Dicey Burwell lived in an apartment in Oxford, North Carolina, with her husband Dave, her daughter and several other children. On March 10, 1881, her friend Cloe Perkins came to visit her. She had two rocks in her hand, and told Dicey that if she would not “make Dave let her alone she would kill him.” For the past several days, Cloe explained Dicey, Dave had often picked on her without any reason. In fact, they had been constantly quarreling over “trifle matters.” As it was obvious that her friend was emotionally disturbed, Dicey made a frantic effort to calm her down but Cloe’s anger never subdued.¹³

When Cloe stepped out of the door into the yard to leave the place, she ran into Dave who had just returned. The fussing started again and they soon began shouting against each other. Dicey came out of the room and told her friend to go home. But Dave was out of control by that time. He walked up to his wife and knocked her down. When she got up, he knocked her down again.¹⁴

Laura Jordan, a sixteen-year-old daughter of Dicey’s, hurried out of the apartment to rescue her mother. When Laura struck Dave with both hands, Dave picked up a large maul which was lying on the ground, and heavily struck her on the side of her face. Laura fell on the ground. After Dicey carried her daughter to the apartment, she returned to her husband and shouted, “You have killed my child!” Dave was staggering about aimlessly in the yard with the maul in his hand. When Dicey approached him, he struck her down again. But Dave himself had stumbled over the ground with his foot caught by the roots of the grass, let the maul fall, and Dicey picked it up. Now it was Dicey’s turn to hit her husband with the maul. She missed him for her first attempt, but got him for her second. The maul hit him right onto the back side of his head. He fell to the ground completely out of conscious. Dave lay on the ground for about half an hour and was taken into the room.¹⁵

The next day, on March 11, at about nine o’clock in the morning, a physician was called in to examine the conditions of Dave Burwell. When the doctor arrived, he found Dave “in a state of coma conscious when roused, but would readily relapse to unconsciousness, pulse 38 or 40.” The doctor testified at the trial that “severe blows” by the maul “caused shocks to the nervous centers,” producing “a sort of paralytic state of the brain condition.” Dicey Burwell was arrested for assault and battery against Dave Burwell “with the intent to kill him,” and was tried at the Granville County Superior Court. At the trial, several of their neighbors testified as the witnesses to establish “self-defense” argument pursued by the defense. The jury returned the verdict of “not guilty,” and Dicey was acquitted.¹⁶

¹³ Testimonies of the witness Clara [Laura] Jordan and the defendant Dicey Burwell, *State vs. Dicey Burwell* (1881), Box 51, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAH.

¹⁴ Testimonies of the witnesses Ella Littlejohn, Julia Day, Clara [Laura] Jordan and the defendant Dicey Burwell, *State vs. Dicey Burwell* (1881), Box 51, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAH.

¹⁵ Testimonies of the witnesses Ella Littlejohn, Julia Day, Clara [Laura] Jordan and the defendant Dicey Burwell, *State vs. Dicey Burwell* (1881), Box 51, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAH.

¹⁶ Testimonies of the witnesses Dr. J. B. Williams and Clara [Laura] Jordan; “Issues” to the Jury, all in *State vs. Dicey Burwell* (1881), Box 51, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAH.

It is recorded that in June, 1880, about nine months before this family battle took place, Dave and Dicey Burwell's household consisted of eight family members. [See the Table below.] David (Dave) Burwell married Dicey Jordan on July 26, 1875.¹⁷ As Laura Jordan mentioned in her testimony, David Burwell was not her father; she and her sister Fannie were the daughters of Dicey Burwell and her unnamed husband in their slavery days. (It is possible that Laura and Fanny were really half sisters. Because Laura alone was listed as "mulatto," her father may have been white, while her half sister Fanny' was fathered by an African American man either slave or free.) Dicey's former common-law husband who likely fathered Fannie (and perhaps Laura) either had died or had left Dicey and their children in or shortly before 1865, and since the end of the war and the subsequent abolition of slavery, she and David Burwell had "lived together except one year."¹⁸ Neither David Burwell's name nor Dicey Jordan's name is listed in the 1866 Negro Cohabitation Certificates requiring all African American couples to register their names based on the 1866 law. Like many other African American freed people, neither of them perceived any need to legalize their cohabitation in 1866, and continued to live together without registering their relations. In all likelihood, Jane, George and William Burwell were their children; we do not have any information about Dave Burwell's "grandson" named Edward, but it is possible that he was an illegitimate son of Fannie Jordan because Laura Jordan testified under oath that she was not married nor had any children.¹⁹ (It is important to point out here that the David and Dicey's ages given as 30 and 45 respectively in 1880 are not at all to be trusted; being born as slaves they probably did not have any idea in which year they were born.)²⁰

The Household of David and Dicey Burwell (1880)

Name	Age	Sex	Race	Relation	Occupation
Burwell, David [Dave]	30	M	B	Head	Laborer
Burwell, Dicie [Dicey]	45	F	B	Wife	Keeping House
Jordan, Fannie	25	F	B	Stepdaughter	
Jordan, Laura	16	F	Mu	Stepdaughter	
Burwell, Jane	14	F	B	Daughter	
Burwell, George	12	M	B	Son	Laborer
Burwell, William	10	M	B	Son	Laborer
Burwell, Edward W.	3	M	B	Grandson	

M=Male; F=Female; B=Black; Mu=Mulatto

Source: 1880 Census, Granville County, North Carolina, E. D. 107 (Oxford Township), Page No. 13. T9, Roll 965, p. 534.

But what caused this family battle in the first place? Their neighbor Cloe Perkins' story is suggestive. She admitted in her affidavit that she and Davy Burwell exchanged a brief conversation in late February, about two weeks before this battle took

¹⁷ Register of the Marriages of Free People, vols. 1-2, Granville County, NCDAAH.

¹⁸ Testimonies of the witnesses Clara [Laura] Jordan, Julia Day and the defendant Dicey Burwell, *State vs. Dicey Burwell* (1881), Box 51, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAAH.

¹⁹ Testimony of the witness Clara (Laura) Jordan, *State vs. Dicey Burwell* (1881), Box 51, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAAH.

²⁰ The 1870 Census Population Schedule gives Dave Burwell's age as 30, and Dice [Dicey] Burwell [Jordan] as 35. See 1870 Census, Granville County, North Carolina, Oxford Township, Page No. 37, M593, Roll 1193, p. 303.

place. At that time Dave was out of work and was in a desperate need to find a job. When Cloe ran into Dave on a street, she mentioned to him that he would have to relieve Dicey of her responsibility to “feed him and his family.” Dave’s face instantly turned scarlet with rage, Cloe recalls in her affidavit. For the subsequent two weeks, she had been constantly annoyed by the curses and pranks played by Dave. On March 10, she decided that it was time to stop Dave from annoying her any further, and that was the main reason for her to visit her friend’s apartment on that day.²¹

Thus, it was David Burwell’s pride as a man that was being at stake. Here it is important to note that freed African American former slaves had lived only about fifteen years in freedom when this incident took place. The meanings of such words and phrases as freedom, citizenship, and voting rights were still unfixed especially when they were applied to African American or poor white citizens. Slavery had been abolished and all African Americans were declared free. They were now citizens of the United States, but did that mean that all African American men would have the same civil and political rights as wealthier white male citizens? Many white male citizens had not been permitted to vote in the antebellum South, either because they were simply too poor or because they as apprentices had to depend on their masters for their livelihood. Earning a living for himself and his family was crucial to become a citizen capable of exercising his political right, and it was in this context that newly freed African American men were particularly conscious of their manhood in relation to their civil and political rights.

A series of events which took place in the African American community in this area during the years after the Civil War are telltale evidence to black male citizens’ sensitivity to this particular question. For example, in 1872, Daniel Bullock’s son Young was hired as a laborer at a farm owned by a white landowner. When his employer’s brother threatened to whip Young for his failure to obey his orders promptly, Daniel intervened in his son’s favor. He said, “No, don’t do that, if you want him whipped, I will do it to your satisfaction, as I have done before.” By so insisting, Daniel Bullock effectively communicated to the employer’s brother his notions of parental authority over children as his dependants. It was not an employer’s job to discipline a child for his improper conduct; the whole question of whether or not, or how, to discipline a child should be decided by his father, his guardian, Daniel insisted.²²

In a similar vein, African American men’s civil and political liberties were tied with their ability to exercise complete control over the will and body of their wives. As Harry L. Watson and others have shown, the legal and political culture of North Carolina was based upon the democracy of independent, self-sufficient households where the head of each household represented the interests of their dependants. In such a culture, if one could not make his wife behave as he wishes, that person was not considered a worthy member (citizen) of the imagined republic. When African

²¹ Cloe Perkins’ Affidavit dated March 12, 1881, *State vs. Dicey Burwell* (1881), Box 51, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAH.

²² Testimonies of witnesses Daniel Bullock and Young Bullock; Statement of the defendant W. Robert Kirkland, all in *State v. Robert Kirkland* (1872), Box 46, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAH.

Americans were emancipated and became citizens of the republic, they developed a pattern of behavior in response to this culture.²³

Samuel Lawrence's behavior in the Granville County Court of the Peace in 1882 was most typical in this respect. When Judge William D. Allen told Samuel to behave himself and to treat his wife with more kindness and tender, he replied: "She is my wife and I will prank with her as much as I please." The judge had to tell him that he had to protect his wife "as the law was concerned." When he heard this statement, he was trembling visibly with rage, and shouted: "Damn the law! I don't care anything for it, and there is not enough damned negroes and poor white men on the ground to arrest me." The judge thought it his duty to arrest Samuel on the charge of contempt of the court. Samuel made fierce resistance, struck the judge and one other white man, and was indicted and convicted for the battery and assault against them.²⁴

We can understand Samuel's violent behavior in front of the judge inside the court room only within the context of the African American male citizens' extreme vulnerability to his notions of manhood at that time. He would have wished to assert that he was a free, independent citizen, and that, as such, he should have a right to determine for himself how to treat his wife. The judge's action to protect his wife's welfare, therefore, was taken as an intrusion by an outsider, a white man, into his family affairs. Samuel interpreted this as an insult, which resulted in his three month's imprisonment in a county jail.²⁵

For many African American women, on the other hand, marriage had quite a different meaning. When they were emancipated from slavery, these women had gained at least a minimal degree of control over their lives and future. For the first time in their lives these women had lived lives of their own; it had become possible for them to spend the day without obeying the orders and wishes of their masters. In marriage, however, this newly acquired autonomy was once again undermined by their husband's patriarchal authority.

When an African American man named E. M. Bullock caught his wife Jane entering a house in their neighborhood to visit her boyfriend, he remonstrated with his wife on "the impropriety and scandal of her conduct." But Jane, who had already made up her mind to break with her husband to live with her boyfriend, simply replied: "I am my own woman and will do as I please."²⁶

²³ Harry L. Watson, *Jacksonian Politics and Community Conflict: The Emergence of the Second American Party System in Cumberland County, North Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981); Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Laura F. Edwards, *Gendered Strife & Confusion: The Political Culture of Reconstruction* (University of Illinois Press, 1997).

²⁴ Testimonies of William D. Allen and W. H. Garner, both in *State vs. Samuel H. Lawrence* (1882), Box 52, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAH.

²⁵ "Verdict" by the Jury and Judgment, *State vs. Samuel H. Lawrence* (1882), Box 52, Criminal Action Papers, Granville County, NCDAH.

²⁶ E. B. Bullock's Petition for Divorce, and the defendant Jane Bullock's Answer, both in *E. B. Bullock vs. Jane Bullock* (1876), Granville County Divorce Records, Box 1, NCDAH. In another divorce cases involving an African American couple, the wife is reported to have said the exactly same sentence. See Smith Watkins' Petition for Divorce dated April 26, 1876, *Smith Watkins vs. Dink Watkins* (1876), Granville County Divorce Records, Box 1, NCDAH.

It is now impossible for us historians to know precisely how Dave and Dicey Burwell felt toward each other in their marriage, but it should not surprise us if they had in fact lived in just as much strain as E. B. and Jane Bullock. After all, we know from public record that they had delayed their marriage till July 1875 for as many as ten years since they started living together.

Concluding Remarks

I do not dare attempt to draw any broad, generalized conclusions from the events and episodes illustrated in my presentation this afternoon. There is simply much more work to be completed, much more information to be gathered, in order to determine whether these personal lives illuminated in this paper was typical or representative among more than 12 million white and African American Southerners living in the fifteen slave states in 1860.

The actual course of action taken by these citizens in my sample, however, is a track which might have never been taken under a different historical context. It was through their constant exchange of actions that the actual meaning of citizenship was made clear in the latter half of the nineteenth century when the nation at large was struggling to define the meaning of citizenship. Their lives at least serve as a reminder to let us know that the meaning of citizenship was being constructed through constant exchange between men and women, and that it would be a mistake for us to look into male citizen's public actions only. As much of recent historical scholarship has pointed out, cultural construction of citizenship is, and has always been, in many ways engendered.

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(Takahiro Sasaki, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)