# Introduction

In the early modern era, millions of people were enslaved, dispossessed, and forcibly displaced from sites in West Africa and West-Central Africa to European imperial realms where the meanings of slavery and freedom were codified into distinct rules of law. These laws and traditions often differed from legal cultures about slavery in enslaved peoples' places of origin or the sites where they or their ancestors were first enslaved. Slavery and Freedom in Black Thought traces how West Africans and West-Central Africans and their descendants reckoned with the violent world of Atlantic slavery that they were forced to inhabit, and traces how they conceptualized two strands of political and legal thought - freedom and slavery in the early Spanish empire. In their daily lives, Black Africans and their descendants grappled with laws and theological discourses that legitimized the enslavement of Black people in the early modern Atlantic world and the varied meanings of freedom across legal jurisdictions. They discussed ideas about slavery and freedom with Black kin, friends, and associates in the sites where they lived and across vast distances, generating thick spheres of communication in the early modern Atlantic world. Discussions about freedom and its varied meanings moved from place to place through diverse exchanges of information, fractured memories, and knowledge between Black communities and kin across the Atlantic Ocean.

Slavery and freedom were two concepts and legal categories that regulated the lives of every person of African descent in continental Europe and in the Americas in the early modern era. European empire-building projects in the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards and ambitious plans to extract and exploit the region's natural resources led to insatiable demand for unfree labor to sustain these projects. In response,

2

Slavery and Freedom in the Early Spanish Atlantic

European traders and colonists created intense demand for the enslavement, dispossession, and forcible displacement of people from West Africa and West-Central Africa.<sup>1</sup> Armed with slave-trading licenses granted by the crowns of Spain, Portugal, England, France, and other European kingdoms (and, later, nations), merchants, investors, and ship captains who operated in sixteenth-century West Africa and West-Central Africa attempted to transform people into commodities, who they would later trade as inanimate property. This acute European demand for enslaved labor displaced over 12.5 million people from their kin and homelands over the course of three centuries, barring them from property ownership and free will, and causing cycles of devastating warfare and displacement across West African and West-Central African polities and kingdoms.<sup>2</sup> European merchants and slave-ship captains subjected their victims to grueling and violent crossings of the vast Atlantic, a voyage known contemporaneously as the Middle Passage.<sup>3</sup> Ship captains presided over such dangerous, violent, and cramped conditions on their ships that the mortality rate among enslaved people on these crossings was approximately 20 percent prior to 1600.4 When slave ships arrived in the Americas, merchants sought to trade their enslaved embargo in the marketplaces of emerging slave societies on the continent. In doing so, they condemned those who survived the horrors of the Middle Passage to a life of harsh and dangerous unfree labor in slave societies where their enslavement was codified in laws (especially in the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies), and where the emergence of racial thinking tended to equate people who were racialized as Black as slaves or enslaveable.<sup>5</sup> In this violent early modern Atlantic world, European legal codes and prevalent

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Eltis, "A Brief Overview."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Brown, The Reaper's; Candido, Wealth and an African; Green, a Fistful and the Rise; Heywood and Thornton, Central Africans; Konadu, Many Black Women; Law, Ouidah; Lingna Nafafé, Lourenço; Northrup, Africa's Discovery; Patterson, Slavery; Rediker, The Slave Ship; Smallwood, Saltwater Slavery; Thornton, "African Political."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Morgan, "Accounting" and Reckoning; Rupprecht, "Middle Passage."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Rupprecht, "Middle Passage."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> For selected scholarship and debates on meanings of Blackness and emergence of racial thinking in Iberia, see Böttcher, Hausberger, and Hering Torres, *El peso*; Bryant, *Rivers of Gold Bondage*; Camba Ludlow, *Imaginarios ambiguos*; Gómez, "El estigma"; Gonzalbo Aizpuru, "La trampa"; Hering Torres, "Purity"; Herring Torres et al., *Race*; Herzog, *Defining Nations*; Ireton, "They Are"; Lewis, "Between," 113–114; Lowe and Earle, *Black Africans*; Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*; Milton and Vinson III, "Counting Heads"; Nemser, "Triangulating Blackness" and *Infrastructures of Race*; Schwaller, *Géneros de Gente*; Sweet, "Iberian Roots"; Velázquez Gutiérrez, *Mujeres de orígen africano*; Vinson III, *Before Mestizaje*.

#### Introduction

attitudes of intolerance towards people racialized as Black rendered the lives of Africans and their descendants as highly vulnerable to unquantifiable harm, trauma, and violence. In this context, it is no surprise that enslaved and freeborn Black people sought to grapple with the diverse juridical meanings and rules of law concerning slavery and freedom in European empires, and understand how these differed from those in their places of origin in West Africa and West-Central Africa.

Freedom was often the most important concept that governed the preoccupations and day-to-day lives of enslaved, liberated, and freeborn people who were racialized as Black in the early modern Atlantic world. Some sought freedom from slavery on their own terms through precarious flights from enslavement and the establishment of self-governing communities, often known as *palenques*.<sup>6</sup> Fugitives from slavery built *palenque* communities across the sixteenth-century Spanish Americas (and in the broader Atlantic world), particularly in the Spanish Caribbean. The Spanish crown often waged war against such communities, perceiving their establishment as an act of aggression, while occasionally negotiating peace when politically expedient. Black people discussed freedom across legal jurisdictions too, as enslaved people learned about laws of slavery and freedom in other imperial realms where they might be able to obtain freedom or live with greater degrees of liberty within enslavement. One example is how enslaved Black people in late seventeenth-century British Jamaica and other Caribbean sites sometimes fled plantation slavery by aiming for Spanish territories where they understood slavery and freedom as being distinct legal categories in Castilian law that might improve their precarious lived experiences. For example, after the Spanish crown introduced sanctuary policies in the 1680s, enslaved people in English and French imperial realms soon learned that they could claim liberty under Spanish law if they touched foot in Spanish territories, and they

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Brewer-García, Beyond Babel, 116–163; Córdova Aguilar, "Cimarrones"; Dawson, "A Sea"; de Avilez Rocha, "Maroons," 15–35; Díaz Ceballos, "Cimarronaje"; Fra-Molinero, "A Postcard"; García de León, *Tierra adentro*, 555–563; Hidalgo Pérez, Una historia and "Volviendo"; Kauffman, Black Tudors; Landers, "The African" and "Cimarrón"; Laviña et al., "La localización"; McKnight, "Confronted Rituals"; Navarrete Peláez, "De reyes," "Por haber," and Cimarrones; Naveda Chavez-Hita, "De San Lorenzo" and Esclavos negros; Obando Andrade, De objeto; Sánchez Jiménez, "Raza"; Schwaller, African Maroons, "Contested," and "The Spanish Conquest"; Serna, Los cimarrones; Sorrell, "They Acknowledge Themselves Soldiers and Subjects of the King: Afro Spanish Maroons Negotiating Freedom and Belonging in English Jamaica 1655–1688" (manuscript in progress shared with author in private correspondence); Tardieu, *Cimarrones*; Wheat, *Atlantic Africa*, 1–4.

4

Slavery and Freedom in the Early Spanish Atlantic

shared this precious information with other enslaved people to encourage them to join the flight.<sup>7</sup> Other enslaved Black people in the Spanish empire navigated diverse legal ecologies of freedom by litigating for their entire or partial freedom in royal, ecclesiastical, and inquisitorial courts, while sharing the broad aim of pressing for a freedom (or fraction of freedom) that was codified in law and could be proven through official paperwork issued by a court.<sup>8</sup> Whatever means Black people deployed to seek degrees of freedom in their lives, discussions about freedom and its varied meanings moved across the Atlantic world.

Slavery and Freedom in Black Thought traces how Black communities and kin exchanged ideas about slavery and freedom across the long sixteenth century (1520–1630) in the Spanish Atlantic world. The book sketches the emergence of thick spheres of communication among free and enslaved Black people between key port towns through relays of word of mouth, epistolary networks, and legal powers. In particular, everyday lives and experiences in the ports that constituted the maritime trading routes in the late sixteenth-century Spanish Atlantic (known as the Carrera de Indias), namely Cartagena de Indias, Havana, Nombre de Dios (and later Portobelo), Sevilla, and Veracruz, and the towns dotted along trading routes between key ports and the viceregal capitals, especially Lima and Mexico City (the capitals of the viceroyalties of Peru and New Spain, respectively), were often intertwined with events across the Atlantic, as ship passengers and port-dwellers trafficked in mundane and noteworthy information about people and events in faraway places

<sup>7</sup> "Felipa, negra, libertad," Archivo General de Indias, (cited as AGI), Escribanía 48A, libro 13, no. 2; Bretones Lane, "Free to Bury"; Dawson, "A Sea"; Fisk, "Transimperial Mobilities"; "Hoonhout and Mareite," "Freedom"; Landers, *Black Society* and "Spanish Sanctuary"; Rupert, *Creolization*, "Seeking the Water," and "Curaçaoan Maroons"; Schneider, "A Narrative"; Singleton and Landers, "Maritime Marronage."

<sup>8</sup> For selected scholarship of freedom through litigation, see Bennett, Colonial Blackness; Bryant, Rivers of Gold; Chira, "Affective Debts," "Freedom with Local Bonds," and Patchwork Freedoms; Diaz, The Virgin; de la Fuente, Havana and "Slave Law"; de la Fuente, and Gross, Becoming Free; Fernández Martín, "Entra las" and "La esclavitud"; Graubart, "Pesa más"; Helg, Slave No More; Ireton, "Black African's"; McKinley, Fractional Freedoms; Navarrete Peláez, "Consideraciones en Torno"; Obando Andrade, De objeto; Owensby, "How Juan"; Salazar Rey, Mastering. For selected scholarship on clothing as expressions of freedom, see Dawson, "The Cultural"; Walker, Exquisite Slaves. For ideas about freedom through intimacy, safety, and security, see Johnson, Wicked Flesh. For ideas about freedom and changing meanings of freedom in later periods, see Barragan, Freedom's Captives; de la Torre, The People of the River; Eller, "Rumors of Slavery"; Landers, Atlantic Creoles; Oliveira, Slave Trade; Reis et al., Oalufá Rufino; Rossi, "Beyond the Atlantic" and "Global Abolitionist"; Scott and Hébrard, Freedom Papers; Scott and Venegas Fornias, "María Coleta." Smith, Liberty, Fraternity.

#### Introduction

(Figure 1.1). *Slavery and Freedom in Black Thought* explores how relays of word of mouth – stitched together through itinerant merchant communities, mariners, and passengers – bridged vast distances across the Spanish empire and allowed Black dwellers to send and receive messages from kin and associates from afar. Tapping official and informal messengers also allowed Black people to partake in a lettered world of communication by sending and receiving missives that traveled across the Atlantic. Rare surviving letters penned by enslaved Black people to their distant kin also reveal conversations about their hopes and expectations of freedom.

Slavery and Freedom in Black Thought argues that these vast spheres of communication shaped Black individuals' and communities' legal consciousness about the laws of slavery and freedom in the early Spanish empire. This builds on foundational work by scholars who have explored the emergence of a Black legal consciousness in colonial Latin America, as well as scholarship that has explored how Indigenous Americans developed knowledge of plural legal jurisdictions and petitioning in the Spanish and Portuguese empires.<sup>9</sup> For example, Alejandro de la Fuente has posited that scholars working on the history of slavery should acknowledge that it was not laws that had a social agency, but instead that enslaved people gave meaning to laws through their work as litigants.<sup>10</sup> Herman L. Bennett has also explored how free Black people residing in New Spain developed a creole legal consciousness and an understanding of how to navigate legal structures. With a focus on the eighteenth

<sup>9</sup> For selected studies of Black legal consciousness in the Spanish empire, see Belmonte Postigo, "La vida improbable"; Bennett, Colonial Blackness and Africans in Colonial; Bryant, Rivers of Gold; Cardim, "Mulheres negras"; Chira, "Affective Debts," "Freedom with Local Bonds," and Patchwork Freedoms; de la Fuente, Havana and "Slave Law"; de la Fuente and Gross, Becoming Free; Fernández Martín, "La esclavitud"; Graubart, "Pesa más" and Republics of Difference; Ireton, "Black African's"; McKinley, Fractional Freedoms; Navarrete Peláez, "Consideraciones en Torno"; Obando Andrade, De objeto. For selected studies of Indigenous Americans' legal consciousness, see Ares Queija, "Un borracho"; Cunille, "El uso indígena," "Etnicidad en clave," "Justicia e interpretación," "La negociación," Los defensores, "Los intérpretes," and "Philip II"; Cunill, et al., Actores, redes; Cunill and Glave Testino, Las lenguas; Deardorff, A Tale; de la Puente Luna, Andean Cosmopolitans, "En lengua de" and "That Which Belongs"; de la Puente Luna and Honores, "Guardianes"; Domingues et al., Os indígenas. Graubart, Republics of Difference, "Shifting Landscapes," and With Our Labor; Mumford, "Aristocracy" and "Litigation as Ethnography"; Owensby, Empire of Law, "Pacto entre rey," and "The Theatre"; Owensby and Ross, Justice; Premo, "Custom Today" and The Enlightenment; Ruan, "The Probanza"; Yannakakis, "Allies or Servants?," "Indigenous People," Since Time Immemorial, and The Art of Being; Yannakakis and Schrader-Kniffki, "Between the."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> de la Fuente, "Slave Law."

6

Slavery and Freedom in the Early Spanish Atlantic

century, Bianca Premo has explored how Indigenous Americans, enslaved Africans, and colonial women pressed for royal justice in colonial courts and composed legal arguments about the secularization of law, formalism, rights, freedom, and historicism, and conceptualized ideas in their legal arguments that scholars often associate with a lettered European Enlightenment.<sup>11</sup> Michelle A. McKinley has studied how enslaved Black women sought to negotiate fractions of their freedom within enslavement in ecclesiastical courts in seventeenth-century Lima.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Adriana Chira has explored how Afro-descendants in nineteenth-century Cuba engaged with colonial legal frameworks that allowed custom and manumission in order to gradually wear down the institution of slavery through litigation, self-purchase, and the collection of fragmentary legal papers.<sup>13</sup>

Slavery and Freedom in Black Thought reveals how the speed of communication flows across the late sixteenth-century Spanish Atlantic shaped the lives, ideas, and legal consciousness of enslaved and free Black people who lived in key trading entrepôts. The intensity and fast pace of maritime communication between key port towns in this period meant that news in Sevilla about an enslaved person's litigation for freedom against their owner in a royal court, or of how an owner had sold one of their domestic slaves and displaced them from Sevilla, or news about an enslaved person's liberation from slavery may have reached friends and acquaintances in the ports of Veracruz or Cartagena de Indias more quickly than the same news traveled to kin living in other parts of Castilla. For instance, enslaved and free Black residents of late sixteenth-century Sevilla could send a letter or a message through word of mouth to an associate or kin in the Spanish Caribbean and reasonably expect a response with the arrival of the fleet the following year.<sup>14</sup> This constant movement of people, information, and news about freedom in particular sites served as crucial infrastructure for certain Black individuals and communities to exchange ideas about the laws and customs of slavery and freedom. Partaking in these flows of communication allowed free and enslaved Black people to gather requisite information, knowledge, and strategies to seek or defend their own freedom before royal courts dotted across Spanish imperial realms.

<sup>11</sup> Premo, *The Enlightenment*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> McKinley, Fractional Freedoms.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Chira, Patchwork Freedoms.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> González Martínez, "Comunicarse a pesar" and "Communicating an Empire."

#### Introduction

These spheres of communication also shaped the legal consciousness and political strategies of Black religious brotherhoods and confraternities on both sides of the Atlantic. This book is influenced by recent historiographical debates about the applicability of the concept of the "public sphere" to contexts beyond a European lettered and "enlightened" elite, and works that have explored how enslaved and free Black people's movement across spaces (both voluntary and involuntary) led to the emergence of new forms of knowledge, including ideas about subjecthood, medicine and healing, and Black Catholicism.<sup>15</sup> For example, it traces how Black confraternities sometimes maintained contact with Black brotherhoods in other sites and shared legal strategies. Take the case of the leader of a prominent Black confraternity in late sixteenth-century Lima, Francisco de Gamarra, who formerly resided in Sevilla where he had been enslaved.<sup>16</sup> Upon his liberation from slavery, he crossed the Atlantic and settled in Lima where he became a sought-after builder (albañil). In Lima, Gamarra drew on a lifetime of experiences and memories from Sevilla as well as his ongoing ties to the city, especially as his enslaved daughter languished there while he sought to raise funds to pay for the price of her liberty and her voyage to Lima.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, leaders of Black religious brotherhoods in Mexico City and Sevilla in the early seventeenth century likely communicated with each other in the aftermath of severe political persecution and repression that was instigated by religious and royal authorities in their respective cities. This book traces their strategies for royal justice and the locations from where they organized their petitions, and suggests that the leaders of the Black brotherhoods in Sevilla and Mexico City likely communicated and shared political strategies to build their legal petitions to press for royal justice.

Slavery and Freedom in Black Thought also analyzes how free and enslaved Black people attempted in their daily lives to forge a sense of belonging in an empire that was hostile to them. Existing scholarship

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> For debates about "public sphere," see Garnham, "Habermas"; Goodman, *The Republic*; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*; Hoexter et al., *The Public Sphere*; Shami, *Publics, Politics*; Ogborn, *The Freedom*. For scholarship on significance of movement on knowledge in Black Atlantic, see Gómez, *The Experiential*; Fisk, "Black Knowledge" and "Transimperial Mobilities"; O'Toole, *Bound Lives*; Wheat, *Atlantic Africa* and "Tangomãos." See also, Scott, *The Common Wind*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> "Ana," AGI, Indiferente, 2098, no. 18. See also Apodaca Valdez, Cofradías Afrohispánicas, 90–91; Graubart, "So color"; Hayes, "They Have Been United"; Jiménez Jiménez, "A mayor culto," 354.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> "Ana," AGI, Indiferente, 2098, no. 18.

8

Slavery and Freedom in the Early Spanish Atlantic

has explored how enslaved and free Black people sought to build political ideas of belonging in the Spanish Americas through clothing, economic activities, property ownership, and participation in festive rituals and Black confraternity life.<sup>18</sup> Slavery and Freedom in Black Thought builds on these studies by exploring how Black people attempted to forge belonging through their participation in colonial bureaucracy (and especially in the creation of paperwork) to build evidentiary thresholds that would improve or defend their legal status.<sup>19</sup> In particular, the study traces how enslaved and free Black people understood that ideas and practices of belonging in the Spanish empire were often determined by an individual's local ties, namely the ability to command credible witness testimonies within a community, and the resources to document ties and biographies through paperwork, often before a public notary that would result in a legally binding notarial document known as an escritura.<sup>20</sup> They learned how to access royal justice and engage in royal petitioning, and understood the significance of gathering relevant paperwork and creating community ties to build evidentiary thresholds in legal spheres. They participated in legal cultures of belonging by enlisting diverse witnesses to testify about their biographies, including friars, friends, former owners, neighbors, merchants, members of the nobility, messengers, priests, servants, slaves, tradespeople, treasurers, and officials in city governance. Those who lacked community ties invested copious resources in generating supplementary paperwork to prove their belonging, in particular to protect and duplicate their freedom papers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> For select examples, see Bennett, Colonial Blackness; Bryant, Rivers of Gold; Fromont, Afro-Catholic; Graubart, "Los lazos," Republics of Difference, and "The Bonds"; Jaque Hidalgo and Valerio, Indigenous and Black; Jouve Martín, Esclavos and "Public Ceremonies"; McKinley, Fractional Freedoms; O'Toole, Bound Lives, "The Bonds," and "(Un)Making"; Terrazas Williams, The Capital; Valerio, Sovereign Joy; Walker, Exquisite Slaves; Wheat, Atlantic Africa and "Catalina."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> The idea of forging belonging through participation in colonial bureaucracy (and especially paperwork) builds on various works, including Chira, *Patchwork Freedoms*; Deardorff, *A Tale*; de la Puente Luna, *Andean Cosmopolitans*; Sartorius, *Ever Faithful*; Scott, *Freedom Papers*, Yannakakis, *The Art*. For broader history of colonial subjects and the law, see references in note 11, and also Benton, *Law and Colonial*; Brendecke, *Imperio e información*; Coleman, *Creating Christian*; Díaz Rementería, "La formación"; Escudero, *Felipe II*; Gómez Gómez, "Libros de gestión"; Harris, *From Muslim*; Herzog, *Defining Nations* and *Frontiers*; Luque Talaván, *Un universo*; Manzorro Guerrero, "Prácticas documentales"; Masters, "A Thousand," and We, the King; Rosenmüller, *Corruption*; Schäfer, *Las rúbricas*; Sellers-García, *Distance and Documents*; Starr-Lebeau, *In the Shadow*; Tau Anzoátegui, *El poder* and *La ley*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> My argument here is inspired by Gonzalbo Aizpuru, "La trampa."

#### Introduction

Freeborn and liberated Black people also forged belonging in the Spanish empire by defining and expanding the privileges and rights of freedom. They did so through their day-to-day lives across different sites in the Spanish Atlantic, including their participation in economic life and commerce, labor, property ownership, litigation in royal and ecclesiastical courts, applications for royal licenses to cross the Atlantic as passengers on ships, and petitions to the crown for royal justice in response to local authorities' attempts to limit the inclusion of free Black men and women in society. Freeborn and liberated Black people also negotiated the meanings of freedom through carefully crafted petitions to the crown requesting justice or grace (privileges) for themselves or their communities. In their petitions, they often envisioned the meanings of freedom and belonging in the Spanish empire in expansive terms. These free Black political actors deftly negotiated various, and often overlapping, legal jurisdictions, and deployed political discourses of belonging to broaden the meanings of Black freedom in the Spanish empire.

As enslaved and free Black people conceptualized and pressed the crown to broaden the meanings and privileges of freedom through their daily practices and petitions in courts, they sought to shape an Iberian rule of law and Catholic tradition that would include Black people in society. An apt example of this discourse of belonging emerges from the defense presented by a Black confraternity in early seventeenth-century Sevilla, in which the Black brothers rejected their proposed exclusion from public religious life in the city by arguing that "Christ put himself on the Cross for everyone, and our Mother of the Church does not exclude us, and she adored us, and many other things more than white people, for we proceed from gentiles and Old Christians, and Black people are not excluded from priesthood as there are today many Black priests and prebendaries in our Spain."21 The intellectual work in this line of defense, and among those deployed by many others who petitioned the crown in this period, sought to reject Iberian ideas that coalesced in the late sixteenth century that regarded Black people's purity of blood as permanently tainted by slavery and as irredeemably stained, thereby preventing their full inclusion into the Iberian community of Old Christians (a term used for people who could claim at least four generations of Christianity in their family).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> "Pleito, Nuestra Señora de los Angeles," Archivo General del Arzobispado de Sevilla (cited as AGAS), 1.III.1.6, L.9885, no. 1. For a discussion of this statement, see Chapter 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> See note 5.

### 10 Slavery and Freedom in the Early Spanish Atlantic

In other words, their intellectual work to define the meanings of slavery and freedom in the early Atlantic world rejected ideas about blood lineage that sought to exclude Black Africans and their descendants from Iberian societies and render all Black people as slaves and enslaveable. Instead, through their petitions to the crown, free Black people attempted to expand the meanings of political belonging in the Spanish empire to be inclusive of free Black people. Black people's intellectual work around political belonging in the Spanish empire had profound implications for the history of ideas about race, Blackness, exclusion, and inclusion in the Spanish Atlantic world, and the meanings and legal customs of slavery and freedom.

## FROM ARCHIVAL ABSENCES TO KALEIDOSCOPIC ARCHIVES OF EXCESS: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON INTELLECTUAL HISTORIES OF THE BLACK ATLANTIC

This study of how enslaved, liberated, and free Black people reckoned with the legal meanings of slavery and freedom builds on foundational scholarship in African American intellectual history and the long Black intellectual tradition that has sought to broaden the definitions of intellectual work, in particular, by positioning enslaved and free Black people as intellectual actors in the early modern Atlantic world.<sup>23</sup> For example, the notion of reckoning deployed in this book builds on Jennifer Morgan's landmark *Reckoning with Slavery*.<sup>24</sup> Morgan traced how enslaved Black women understood economic value during the violent commodification of their own bodies, and how they assessed and measured economic value in their day-to-day lives and decisions. *Slavery and Freedom in Black Thought* positions enslaved and free Black men and women as intellectual actors, while deploying the notion of "reckoning" to study how people conceptualized juridical concepts of slavery and freedom and the diverse ways in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> On African American intellectual history, see Baldwin, "Foreword"; Bay et al., *Toward An*; Byrd, "The Rise"; Byrd et al., *Ideas in Unexpected*; Blain et al., *New Perspectives*; Gaglo Dagbovie, "African American Intellectual History"; Ramey Berry and Harris, *Sexuality and Slavery*. For select examples of Black intellectual history in era of Atlantic slavery, see Brown *Tacky's Revolt*; Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts"; Morgan, *Reckoning*; Scott, *The Common Wind*. For influence of African American Intellectual History and Black Studies in early modern Hispanic studies, see Branche, *Trajectories*; Smith, Jones, and Grier, "Introduction: The Contours."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Morgan, *Reckoning*.