2

Imagining Freedom

Black Atlantic Communities in Sevilla

Felipa de la Cruz spent her whole life hoping to be liberated from slavery and imagining freedom.[1] Cruz grew up enslaved in a prominent household in late sixteenth-century Sevilla, where she met and married the aforementioned enslaved Black man named Antón Segarra. In 1602, Cruz witnessed how her husband was liberated from slavery and his subsequent departure from Sevilla to New Spain as a wage-earning servant for a Dominican friar. Together they had two children, who were also enslaved to Cruz's owner, following Castilian laws of slavery that determined that children inherited their mother's enslaved legal status.[2] During Segarra's absence, Cruz penned two letters to her husband that she sent to his place of dwelling in the port of Veracruz through a network of trusted messengers in 1604 and 1608. Laced with the emotional pain and heartache of missing her loved and adored husband, Cruz also kept her spouse informed about news of their children, friends, neighbors, and members of the noble family to whom Cruz was enslaved. These letters were not just loving epistles between spouses separated by vast distances, they were also reminders of an informal contract between husband and wife that Segarra would use his freedom to accumulate capital and send funds to Sevilla to liberate his wife and children from slavery. Felipa de la Cruz left a remarkable documentary trail of her multiple attempts to obtain liberty for herself and her two enslaved children, revealing her legal know-how of different paths to *alhorría* (the juridical status of liberation from slavery). These attempts

[1] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}. For this case and letters discussed in this chapter, see also von Germeten, *Violent Delights*, 100–101.

[2] *Las Siete partidas del Sabio Rey don Alfonso*, "Quarta Partida, Titulo XXI, De los Siervos," 38–39.

involved urging her husband to accumulate capital in Veracruz so that he could purchase the price of his family's liberty, and latterly, petitioning to inherit her late husband's property by falsifying information about her status as a free woman before judges at the House of Trade in Sevilla.

Exploring Felipa de la Cruz's various pursuits of freedom and the lives and affairs of other enslaved and liberated Black people in her generation who lived in her neighborhood brings into relief the varied conversations and fractured memories, hopes, and desires about paths to freedom among free, enslaved, and *horro* Black populations in late sixteenth-century Sevilla. The pages ahead play with various scales of analysis, shifting between micro and macro lenses to explore Cruz's world and her hopes and expectations about liberty for her and her children and a broader history of ideas about freedom and mutual aid practices in Sevilla. The microscale involves drawing on information penned by Cruz to explore the urban environment that she inhabited, her walks in the neighborhood, her community ties and neighbors, and the key institutions of the Spanish crown that she interacted with throughout her lifetime. Expanding to a macro vista of Black life in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sevilla reveals how Felipa de la Cruz's epistles to her absent husband represented a broader history of Black residents' transatlantic ties with kin and associates in the Americas. Assembling diverse archival materials that catalog how hundreds of free and liberated Black men and women crossed the Atlantic as passengers on ships also reveals fragmentary evidence of spheres of communication between Black and *mulato* residents of Sevilla with kin and associates in the Spanish Americas, especially through word of mouth and letters. Such records also document mutual aid practices across the vast Atlantic world, when Black parents in the Spanish Americas sent funds to Sevilla to liberate their kin from slavery. Such Atlantic ties and fractured community memories of liberations from slavery inevitably impacted enslaved Black Sevilla-dwellers' ideas and hopes about liberty. Felipa de la Cruz's letters and interactions with royal institutions show that even though she remained trapped in captivity for most (if not all) of her life, Cruz was also a member of an emerging lettered Black public sphere in late sixteenth-century Sevilla.

PLAYING WITH SCALES, FROM MICRO TO MACRO: WALKING THROUGH FELIPA DE LA CRUZ'S NEIGHBORHOOD IN LATE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY SEVILLA

Felipa de la Cruz's personal cartography stretched across the Atlantic world, even though she never left the city of Sevilla. Cruz's ideas about

freedom and slavery were influenced by the urban environment in which she lived, in particular, the lives of free and enslaved Black neighbors, the institutions of religious and royal governance that surrounded the streets near her home, and the ubiquity of traders, passers-by, men of the sea, colonial officials, religious clerics, and many others sojourning in central Sevilla before undertaking voyages to the Americas, Asia, West Africa, West-Central Africa, and beyond.

Felipa de la Cruz grew up enslaved in a palace at the north entrance of a street known as Calle Carpinterías and Carpinteros (present-day Calle Cuna) in the San Salvador parish of the city.[3] Cruz was enslaved to a prominent family in Sevilla's aristocratic landscape whose name, Fernández de Santillán, was associated with the Catholic monarchy's reconquest of Sevilla and the subsequent governance of the city, while the clan had also fostered powerful noble alliances through generations of well-chosen marriages.[4] Cruz's owner, Francisco Fernández de Santillán (b. 1565), served as a *caballero veinticuatro de Sevilla*, one of twenty-four *regidores* (officers charged with the governance of the city) in the *cabildo* of Sevilla.[5] The Fernández de Santillán family had lived since the early fifteenth century in a palace that sprawled over a 2,000 square meter plot at the entrance of Calle Carpinterías on the northern edge of San Salvador parish.[6] Known in the sixteenth century as the Casa Palacio Francisco Fernández de Santillán, the property housed Fernández de Santillán's six children and many notable visitors, including the aforementioned Doña Juana Segarra de Saavedra (see Chapter 1) and her slave, Antón Segarra, as well as a sizable retinue of wage-earning servants and domestic slaves (Figure 2.1).[7] Felipa de la Cruz probably met Antón Segarra during one of his many visits when his owner stayed as a guest in the palace between 1596 and 1601, or possibly earlier when Antón was enslaved to another member of the Sevilla nobility.

[3] Ramírez de Guzmán, *Libro de algunos ricoshombres*, 509.

[4] *Origen y Descendencia de la Casa y familia de Santillán de la Ciudad de Sevilla, con otras varias noticias de los linages de ella por el enlace que tienen con la referida casa.16??*, Biblioteca de la Universidad de Sevilla, A 331/214, fol. 42^{v}; Cuartero y Huerta et al., *Índice de la Colección*, 103; Rivarola y Pineda, *Descripcion historica*, 381–382; Cartaya Baños, "Un listado inédito," 103.

[5] Rahn Phillips, *El tesoro*, 56.

[6] Ramírez de Guzmán, *Libro de algunos ricoshombres*, 509. I thank Juan Cartaya Baños at Universidad de Sevilla for his advice about locating information about the family's place of residence.

[7] Núñez González, *La casa sevillana*; "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}.

FIGURE 2.1 Photograph of the present-day facade of the palace in Sevilla where Felipa de la Cruz was enslaved; known in the late sixteenth century as Casa-Palacio Fernández de Santillán, and presently known as Palacio del Marqués de la Motilla. Photograph by Miguel Ángel Rosales, 2024. Reproduced with permission from Miguel Ángel Rosales.

Within the palace there existed a hierarchy between enslaved laborers, and Cruz viewed herself among the most prominent enslaved servants in the household.[8] Cruz seemed to occupy a prominent role in the house, likely in the service of Fernández de Santillán's wife, whom she described in some detail in her 1608 letter. Cruz's prominent status within the palace is also apparent in her description of another enslaved woman's fate. She relayed how her enslavers had sold another enslaved Black woman in the palace, named Ana, because she had married. Even though Cruz had also exchanged marriage vows a few years earlier, her owners had not subjected her to Ana's fate. Her discussion of Ana's duties within the palace also suggests that she perceived her own position in the household as more prestigious than the one that Ana occupied. In conveying the news about Ana's forced departure, Cruz seemed relieved not to have been asked to take on Ana's cooking duties, as she wrote that "These noble people have rewarded me as I deserved, instead of throwing me in the kitchen when they sold Ana because she got married."[9] In another instance, Cruz described how her enslavers had sold "María the Black" without giving any further explanation as to the reasons for the sale. Cruz never described her enslavers

[8] Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 1or, 18v–20v.
[9] Ibid.

as her owners, instead referring to Fernández de Santillán and his wife as *mi señor* and *mi señora* throughout. This choice of language might reflect Cruz's views on her elevated status in the palace. Certainly, Cruz's comments about her enslavers included a few witty remarks about their affairs, as she described how "My *señora* is well. She only cares about giving birth and getting pregnant soon after."

Cruz also developed relationships with her neighbors in San Salvador parish. In her 1608 letter, she sent news about neighbors and friends beyond the palace walls, informing her husband of the recent marriages, births, and deaths in the neighborhood, and relaying how "all of the rest of our other acquaintances kiss your hands with much desire to see you."[10] These lines suggest that Cruz's relationships stretched well beyond the household where she was enslaved, and that she was privy to broader know-how and relays of information in her neighborhood.

Cruz lived in the compact and strategically located parish of San Salvador. This neighborhood constituted one of the most important commercial markets for city dwellers, providing bread, fish, meat, and vegetables, as well as serving as the artisanal heartbeat of the city, while also maintaining its status as a residential neighborhood. City dwellers, laborers, and passers-by in the area might also spend time relaxing in the many taverns and *bodegas* that opened along the narrow alleys in the late sixteenth century.[11] Streets in the parish often comprised both palatial homes, such as the one where Cruz dwelt, as well as the homes and rooms of artisans and traders, whose shops lined the storefronts.[12] Figure 2.2 is a late eighteenth-century street map of Sevilla (and the earliest known street map of the city), with an overlay that indicates the location of Felipa de la Cruz's dwelling at the turn of the seventeenth century and an approximate outline of the border for the parish of San Salvador.

Cruz's ideas about freedom were inevitably impacted and shaped by her experiences in San Salvador parish, and, in particular, her discussions about slavery and freedom with other Black dwellers of the parish and beyond. Following in Cruz's footsteps on a fifteen-minute walk through her neighborhood allows us to trace her daily life in the city, her participation in spheres of communication between Black neighbors, her networks with friends and kin in the broader Atlantic world, and her know-how about freedom. This act of walking with Cruz in her

[10] Ibid.
[11] Núñez González, "Las áreas de mercado," 27–30.
[12] Núñez González, *La casa sevillana* and "Las áreas de mercado."

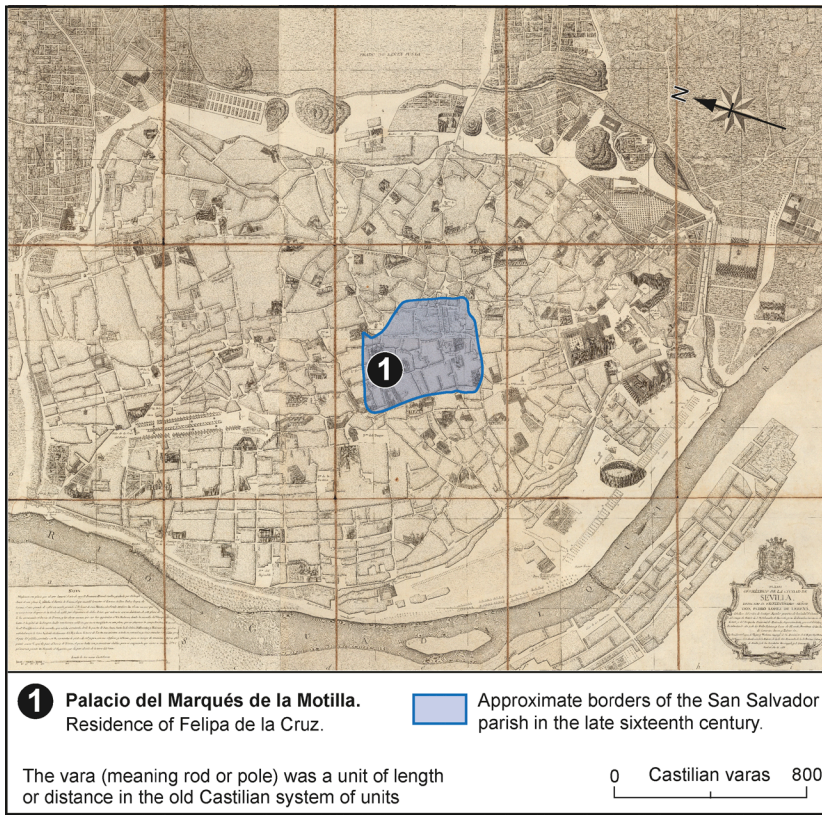

FIGURE 2.2 Location of the palace where Felipa de la Cruz was enslaved and an approximate outline of the parish where she resided (San Salvador), overlaid on Tomás López de Vargas Machuca, "Plano geométrico de la ciudad de Sevilla…." Tomás López: Madrid, 1788. David Rumsey Map Collection, List no. 10717.000, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries. Adaptation of the map by Cath D'Alton, Drawing Office, University College London.

neighborhood draws on an array of archival fragments that record elements of Black life and thought in the environs of San Salvador parish in this period, as well as information that she penned in her letters and other documents that she generated during her years-long pursuit of freedom.

Walking southbound along Calle Carpinterías from her owner's palace, Cruz would have been acquainted with the wood-artisans and carpenters whose workshops lined the narrow street.[13] City ordinances of

[13] Núñez González, "Las áreas de mercado," 27.

Sevilla published in 1525 and 1632 prohibited any free or enslaved Black person from admittance to city examinations for the carpentry trade, and prohibited any free or liberated Black wood-artisan from opening a carpentry shop on Calle Carpinterías.[14] The existence of such rules suggest that free and enslaved Black men may have labored as wood-artisans in this area, and that some may have toiled in the shops that lined Felipa de la Cruz's street.[15]

Calle Carpinterías led to the bustling square of Plaza del Salvador (henceforth Salvador Square) (Figure 2.3, no. 2).[16] The square housed one of the most prominent and prestigious places of worship in the city, the imposing Iglesia Colegial del Divino Salvador (henceforth, Salvador Church). By the mid sixteenth century, Salvador Square and its adjoining squares and streets lay at the heart of Sevilla's commercial district for internal trade, where city dwellers purchased food and products for their own consumption.[17] Upon entering Salvador Square, Cruz might smell the putrid odor of rotting fish floating from the nearby Plaza de Arriba that housed a daily fish market or in the morning the warm aroma of baking bread wafting from the bakers on the lower square. Salvador Square was lined with shops selling candlewax and incense, and during religious festivities clouds of aroma-filled smoke engulfed the square. Nearby, Calle Sierpes and the adjoining streets that led to Salvador Square housed shops where shoemakers, saddlers, leather artisans, swordsmiths, knifesmiths, locksmiths, and printers peddled their trades.

Felipa de la Cruz's relationships with the artisans of the parish are reflected in her letters, as she reported on news from the wider neighborhood. For example, she described that "Beatriz Gómes married her niece to a capmaker, and she is pregnant," and that "Casilda de Velasco is also well. You have already heard that her daughter, Francisca de Velasco, passed away, and how she arranged for her granddaughter to marry a shoemaker from Montilla. María Jiménez arranged for her daughter Elvira to marry a silversmith."[18] Cruz also built kinship ties in the parish. For example, she enlisted a *vecino* of the parish named Luis de Aguilar to serve as her son's godfather in 1603, as she explained to her husband:

[14] *Recopilacion de las ordena[n]ças*, "titulo, de los Carpinteros, CXLVII," 313–315. *Ordenanças de Seuilla*, fols. 148^{r-v}.
[15] Ibid. and Núñez González, *La casa sevillana*.
[16] Collantes de Terán Sánchez et al., *Diccionario Histórico*, See entry for "Cuna."
[17] Núñez González, "Las áreas de mercado"; Collantes de Terán Sánchez, "*Los Mercados*."
[18] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}.

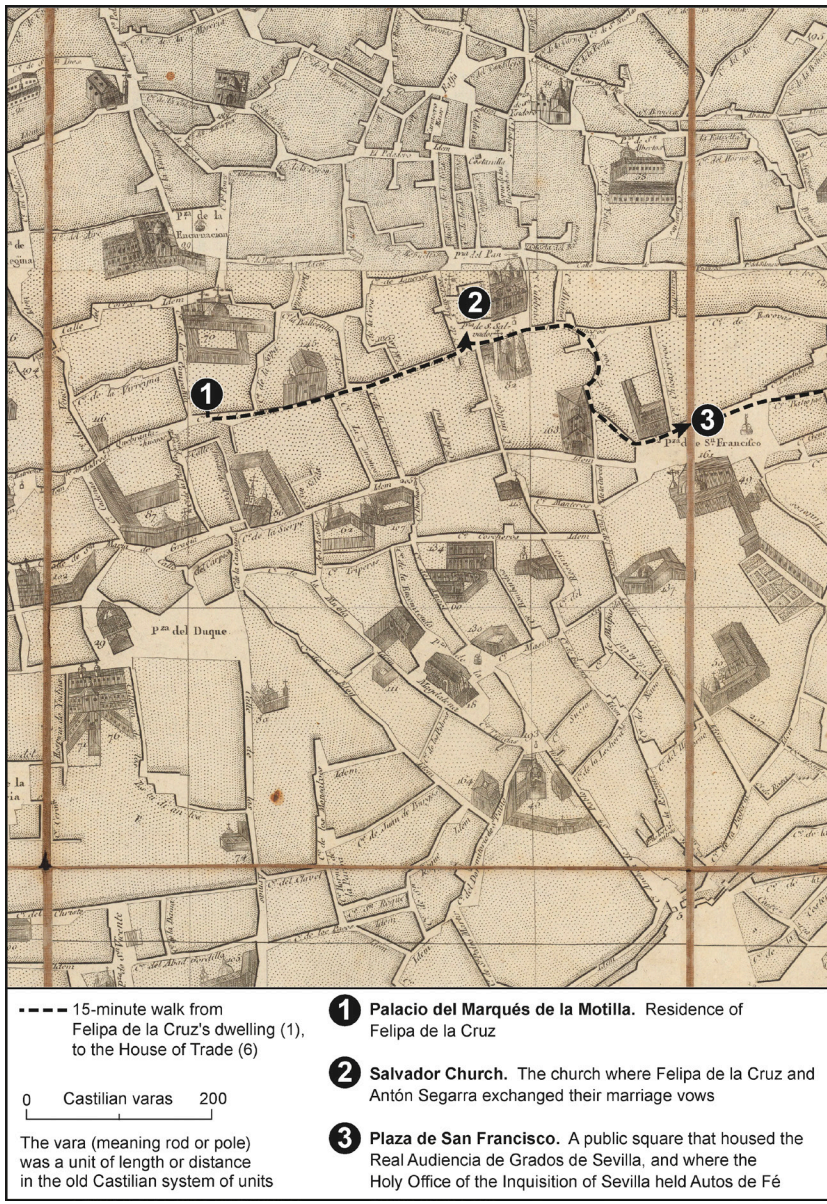

FIGURE 2.3 Map of a fifteen-minute walk from Felipa de la Cruz's dwelling to the House of Trade, overlaid onto Tomás López de Vargas Machuca, "Plano geométrico de la ciudad de Sevilla…." (detail). Tomás López: Madrid, 1788. David Rumsey Map Collection, List no. 10717.000, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries. Adaptation of the map by Cath D'Alton, Drawing Office, University College London.

4 **Gradas.** The most important site of mercantile activity and trade in sixteenth-century Sevilla along the steps at the northern side of the Cathedral

5 **Riverbank/Port of Sevilla.** Site where Felipa de la Cruz may have met prospective and returning passengers on ships

6 **House of Trade.** A royal institution where Felipa de la Cruz petioned to inherit her deceased husband's belongings in 1612

FIGURE 2.3 (cont.)

"You have Luis de Aguilar as a godfather, who lifted Andres out of the baptismal font."[19] This kinship tie is also confirmed in the baptism records for the parish, where the following entry was recorded for a baby named Andrés on December 11, 1603: "I, Alonso Fernández del Tovar, priest of Salvador Church, baptized Andrés, slave of don Francisco de Santillán, son of Antón, Black, and of Phelipa. Luis de Aguilar, *vecino* of this parish was his godfather."[20] Cruz therefore knew some of the artisans on her street and the broader neighborhood, and would have constantly seen and met passers-by from other parishes of the city.

In Salvador Square, Felipa de la Cruz would have heard any official news from the crown or city governance, as the square was one of five sites in Sevilla where town criers were required to sing news announcing any royal decrees, local legislation, or announcements from the city *cabildo*. The other sites where city dwellers would hear such news included the nearby Plaza de San Francisco (hereafter San Francisco Square), Plaza del Alfalfa, Plaza de los Terceros, and Calle Feria. City ordinances stipulated that only fifteen people could be appointed as city criers at any time, with two senior criers (*pregoneros mayores*) who would examine and appoint thirteen junior criers (*pregoneros menores*), subject to confirmation by the *cabildo*.[21] As well as their responsibility for conveying news and official announcements, town criers also had to offer their services to private individuals wishing to organize any public sales, and to announce any lost property, including enslaved people who fled their owners. Given the proximity of her dwelling to this square, Cruz would have heard official news through the criers' songs throughout her lifetime, in particular about the absconding of any enslaved people from their owners in this compact neighborhood.

In Cruz's lifetime, San Salvador parish had a sizable Black population comprising enslaved, liberated, and freeborn dwellers.[22] Their presence is reflected in the marriage and baptism records for the parish, especially in Salvador Church. Enslaved and free Black couples exchanged marriage vows there throughout Cruz's lifetime, and most of them likely resided

[19] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}.

[20] "Andrés, 11th December 1603," AGAS, Parroquia del Salvador, 3.I.1.1, "Libro de Bautismos," libro 11, 1597–1605, fol. 330.

[21] *Recopilacion de las ordena[n]ças*, "titulo, de los Pregoneros, CXXXIIII," pp. 284–288; *Ordenanças de Seuilla*, fols. 84^{v}–85^{v}, 132^{v}–133^{v}; Walleit, "El oficio de pregonero."

[22] Corona Pérez, "Aproximación," and *Trata Atlántica*; Valverde Barneto, "La esclavitud."

(at least temporarily) in San Salvador parish.[23] For example, in 1564, at least thirty-one free and enslaved Black couples exchanged their vows in Salvador Church.[24] The records of these marriages reveal the entangled lives of the Salvador-elite with the lives of dispossessed enslaved Black people and free Black artisans and laborers who also resided in the parish. For example, records of marriages in 1564 reveal ties across socioeconomic strata in the parish: an enslaved Black couple, Jorge and Ana – who were each enslaved to two different *vecinos* of the parish – wed on January 4; Francisco and Leonor, the former described as Black and both as free servants to different Salvador residents, married on January 30; finally, Francisco and Francisca, both described as Black and enslaved to the same *vecino* of San Salvador named Alonso de la Pricola, exchanged their vows on July 20.[25]

Marriage records also reflect how enslaved Black people formed familial and social bonds across different parishes in the city. In Cruz's generation, various enslaved Black couples who wed in Salvador Church dwelt in different parishes from each other, suggesting that enslaved people living in San Salvador parish sometimes developed ties across different regions of the city. For example, in March 1590, an enslaved Black man named Sebastián from the parish of Santa María La Mayor exchanged marriage vows in Salvador Church with an enslaved Black woman named Catalina, who was owned by a *vecino* of San Salvador parish.[26] A decade later an enslaved Black couple named Antón and Marta wed in Salvador Church, even though Antón's owner resided in the Magdalena parish and Marta was enslaved in San Salvador parish.[27] Like other enslaved Black couples who married across parish lines, Felipa de la Cruz and Antón Segarra also exchanged vows in Salvador Church sometime between 1591 and 1601, at a time when both were enslaved to different owners and when Segarra's owner resided in the town of Écija.[28] The

[23] "Libro de Matrimonios de la Parroquia del San Salvador," AGAS, 3.I.2.1, libros 2–6; Valverde Barneto, "La esclavitud."
[24] Corona Pérez, *Trata Atlántica*.
[25] "Libro de Matrimonios," libro 2, 1563–1566, AGAS, 3.I.2.1, Año 1564.
[26] Ibid., March 13, 1590, May 31, 1590.
[27] "Libro de Matrimonios," libro 6 1601–1609, AGAS, 3.I.2.1, April 26, 1601.
[28] Libro 5 corresponding to the years 1591–1601 of the "Libro de Matrimonios" for San Salvador parish in AGAS has been lost and is not accessible in the archive. Felipa and Antón's marriage record does not appear in libros 2–6 spanning the years 1563–1610. This date range for the marriage dates their union between two and four years prior to the baptism of their second child, Andrés, in December 1603 (see note 20).

pair met at Salvador Church for their marriage sacrament in the presence of their friends, neighbors, and Cruz's owners, who likely walked there from the palace along Calle Carpinterías.[29]

Salvador Square was also the site of a violent encounter between a prominent Black brotherhood named Our Lady of the Angels (Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles) and a white confraternity on Maundy Thursday during Easter celebrations in 1604, one year after Segarra had departed Sevilla for New Spain.[30] Contemporary accounts often point to the frightening, confusing, and dangerous nature of the "panics" that emerged in the early hours during the long processions of Maundy Thursday in the city. This highly contested incident between the two brotherhoods took place at one of the busiest crossroads of Maundy Thursday processions, near Salvador Church. One witness described how the white confraternity's procession departed from the church towards Calle Carpinterías (Figure 2.3, no. 2) and a procession led by the Black brothers of the confraternity Our Lady of the Angels (Figure 4.1, no. 1) attempted to barge through and ambush their *paso* (a large float that dozens of confraternity brothers balance on their heads while marching in procession, upon which lies a platform with a sumptuously decorated life-size sculpture of a biblical image). Mayhem ensued, predictably so given a collision of two elaborate *pasos* in the early hours of Maundy Thursday in narrow streets packed with devout onlookers, with dozens of confraternity members holding the weight on their heads of heavy floats loaded with images and adornments. To add to the drama, the white confraternity claimed that the Black brothers were armed with swords and rocks and had proceeded to attack them with the aim of breaking up the procession and injuring the members. The *alguacil* (sheriff) of the Real Audiencia of Sevilla arrested eleven of the Black confraternity brothers that night.[31] A shoemaker who lived nearby described how he was woken by the commotion to find his wife observing the unfolding violence on Salvador Square through their window.[32] Another *vecino* of San Salvador parish testified to having seen

[29] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 25^{r}–30^{r}.

[30] My description is based on testimonies in "Pleito entre la Hdad de Ntra Sra de la Antigua y la de los Ángeles," AGAS, III.1.6, L.9883, Expte 2; "Pleito, Nuestra Señora de los Angeles," AGAS, 1.III.1.6, L.9885, no. 1. Other scholars who have analyzed this event and subsequent trial include Berruezo-Sánchez, *Black Voices*; Beusterien et al., "Callejeando Sevilla"; Fracchia, "*Black but Human*"; Moreno, *La Antigua*; Rowe, *Black Saints*.

[31] La Cofradia de hermanos de Nuestra Señora de la Antigua y Siete Dolores, AGAS, 1.III.1.6, legajo 9885, no. 1, fols. 4^{r}–11^{r}.

[32] Ibid., fol. 7^{v}.

the Black brothers' nocturnal processions in the neighborhood over the previous eight years.[33] Although these witnesses attested in a charged court hearing in order to support an archbishop who was intent on prohibiting the Black confraternity from participation in Holy Week, their vivid descriptions of the violence and piercing screams imply that most people living in the vicinity would have been aware of the commotion. Cruz may not have kept abreast of their subsequent legal trials between 1604 and 1606 and the Black brothers' insistence on their right to partake in public displays of piety in the city (see Chapter 4), but she probably witnessed or heard about the conflict during Holy Week in 1604.

Another Black soundscape that Cruz may have witnessed in this square was enslaved and free Black performers singing *Villancicos de Negros* (Christmas carols of Black people). Although the first recorded instances of *Villancicos de Negros* being performed in Salvador Church and in the cathedral date to 1635 and 1625, respectively, it is possible that such traditions may have begun by the late sixteenth century.[34] Living in this area, Cruz likely also witnessed Black dancers and musicians during city festivities, such as the raucous "Black people dance" ("*negro baile*") that the playwright Lope de Vega (1562–1635) depicted unravelling in the street below a window scene in central Sevilla in the first decade of the seventeenth century, when Black characters entered the stage singing, dancing, and playing music on guitars and jingles.[35]

Turning south-west from Salvador Church, Cruz would have reached the San Francisco Square within a few minutes (Figure 2.3, no. 3). This prominent central square housed the Real Audiencia of Sevilla. Like Real Audiencias in the Americas, subjects from lower socioeconomic spectrums and legal statuses of bondage and unfreedom sometimes managed to bring cases for justice at this court.[36] San Francisco Square was also the site where the Holy Office of the Inquisition of Sevilla

[33] "Pleito entre la Hdad de Ntra Sra de la Antigua y la de los Ángeles," AGAS, III.1.6, legajo 9883, Expte 2, *Sin Foliación*, Testigo, Julio López de la Cruz.

[34] Pujol i Coll, "'Els vilancets.'" See also Berruezo-Sánchez, *Black Voices*; Brewer Garcia, *Beyond Babel*; DiFranco and Labrador Herraiz, "Villancicos de negros" 163–188; Fracchia, "*Black but Human.*"

[35] Lope de Vega, *La Vitoria de la Honra*. For other examples, see also Berruezo-Sánchez, *Black Voices*; Beusterein, *An Eye on Race*; de Salas Barbadillo, *The Gawkers/Los Mirones*; Fra-Molinero, "Black Pride," *La Imagen*; Fra-Molinero et al., "Antón's Linguistic Blackface"; Jones, *Staging*.

[36] Rubiales Torrejón, *La Real Audiencia*. For an example of an enslaved Black person petitioning for justice in this court, see Chapter 1, notes 126–128.

celebrated twenty three *autos-da-fé* (Acts of Faith) between 1559 and 1604.[37] Inquisitors hoped that the lavishly expensive day-long *autos-da-fé* in San Francisco Square, and the city-wide processions that preceded them, would induce fear and awe in city dwellers and prevent them from succumbing to heretical practices, especially Lutheranism, Judaism, and Islam, while indoctrinating residents in the Catholic faith.[38] The processions departed from the Castle of the Inquisition in Triana, crossing the rickety bridge balanced on a line of boats anchored across the Guadalquivir river, and then snaked through the city to celebrate the *auto-da-fé* in San Francisco Square. Those whom the Inquisition had condemned to death endured a further procession to their ghastly fates in the *Quemadero de San Diego* (Incinerator of San Diego) in the Prado San Sebastián. Inquisitors described an *auto-da-fé* in 1546 as "an extraordinarily solemn event" that lasted an entire day from ten in the morning to sunset and condemned seventy people, including the burning of twenty-one and the sentencing to perpetual jail of sixteen.[39] Inquisitors in Sevilla had a wide geographical remit, investigating transgressions in the city and other regions of Andalucía. The *auto-da-fé* of April 26, 1562, for example, condemned individuals who lived in Sevilla, Cádiz, Gibraltar, Granada, and further away.[40] News of neighbors' arrests and punishment by the Inquisition spread widely and were especially visible in local church gatherings and processions, as Inquisitors often punished the condemned by ordering that they hear the *missa mayor* in their parish on a Sunday or feast day while standing naked or walking the procession barefoot without a *bonete* and with a *soga* around their throat, while holding a wax candle. Inquisitors on occasion also imposed sentences of temporary exile and banishment from the city of Sevilla for a number of years.[41]

[37] "Relacion de las Causas de Autos da Fé en la Inquisición de Sevilla," AHN España, Inquisición, 2075, expedientes 1–29. See also González de Caldas, *Judíos o cristianos?*, 528.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Relacion de las Causas, Sevilla, AHN, España, Inquisición, 2075, Expediente 1, September 21, 1559, fols. 2^{r}–11^{v}.

[40] Relacion de las Causas, Sevilla, AHN, España, Inquisición, 2075, Expediente 4, April 26, 1562, fols. 1^{r}–11^{v}. For another description of an *auto-da-fé* in Sevilla, see also "Auto Publico de Fe," John Carter Brown (cited as JCB), Library, Rare Books, BA646.A446s, fol. 158^{r}.

[41] For an example of such punishments for free Black men and women in the 1562 *auto-da-fé*, see Relación de las Causas, Sevilla, AHN, España, Inquisición, 2075, Expediente 4, fol. 9^{v}.

San Francisco Square also housed a sprawling Franciscan convent known as Casa Grande de San Francisco, which served as the regional headquarters for the Franciscan order's missionary efforts for global Christian expansion. The Casa Grande's activities contributed to Sevilla feeling like a global city in the sixteenth century, as the institution provided extended hospitality for Franciscans departing and returning from the Americas and other regions of the world.[42] The compound also housed prominent confraternities that were embedded in Sevillian society. While the Casa Grande's most elite confraternity, de la Vera Cruz, did not appear to have members who were identified as Black or *mulato*, other confraternities within the Casa Grande did admit Black and *mulato* members.[43] At least one late sixteenth-century free *mulato* parishioner maintained long-standing religious ties with the Casa Grande, even from the Americas.[44] A *mulato* named Diego Suárez (d. 1589), who was born in the nearby Pajería Street (present-day Calle Zaragoza), was a member of one of the brotherhoods in the convent.[45] In Sevilla, Suárez was a stage-actor who donned extravagant military garments for his roles, while his free Black mother eked out a living by peddling sweets on the streets in the area. When Suárez traveled to the Americas in the 1570s employed as a soldier and an actor, the brotherhood of San Buenaventura and Ánimas in the Casa Grande reportedly tasked him to collect alms in the Spanish Americas on their behalf.[46] In the Indies, Suárez likely continued working as both a soldier and an actor as he named a Captain Pedro de Valencia as one of his benefactors, and he owned a horse and a saddle, while he also had scripts for plays among his personal papers. When Suárez became ill in Arequipa, he composed a will leaving money to the Casa Grande in San Francisco Square and to his mother.[47]

Wandering southeast from San Francisco Square, Cruz would reach the northern edge of the cathedral, where a bustling market of global goods sprawled across the large concrete steps that encircled this holy site of worship. This space, where competitive mercantile life often

[42] McClure, "Worlds within worlds."
[43] On cofradia, de la Veracruz, see McClure, "Worlds within Worlds."
[44] "Diego Suárez," AGI, Contratación 255, no. 1, ramo 5.
[45] "Diego Suárez," AGI, Contratación 255, no. 1, ramo 5. Collantes de Terán Sánchez et al., *Diccionario Histórico*, See entry for "Zaragoza," 486–487. For a detailed study on Diego Suárez, see Garofalo, "Afro-Iberians in the Early"; Ireton, "They Are." See also Figure C.1.1.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

encroached on the holy sanctity of the interior patios of the vast edifice of the cathedral, was known as Gradas. Here, Cruz would have encountered one of the most significant sites of global mercantile activity of the late sixteenth century, as merchants peddled their wares from distant lands and signed lucrative commercial and trading contracts (Figure 2.3, no. 4). Gradas may also have been the location where Cruz sought the services of informal writers, known as *escribientes*, to pen her letters. Merchants often crowded into the cathedral's interior Patio de los Naranjos through one of the cathedral doors known as the Puerta del Perdón, especially in inclement weather, causing consternation among generations of archbishops who fretted about mercantile activity polluting a site of worship.[48] According to a sixteenth-century city chronicler named Alonso Morgado, hordes of criers congregated at Gradas every single day to auction wares that merchants or private individuals had tasked them to sell. The city ordinances ruled that the city criers should be present at Gradas every day except festivities between sunrise and ten o'clock in the morning to offer their services to potential customers wishing to organize a sale.[49] Morgado described how these daily auctions were notable for "the continual, perpetual, and great abundance of items of great value that are auctioned there, including gold, silver, expensive and luxury clothes, possessions, expensive textiles and tapestries, and many slaves, weapons, and all of the riches that can be imagined."[50] The streets that lined Gradas also overflowed with silversmith workshops.[51]

Perched at Gradas amid the commotion of sales and bartering, it is likely that Cruz witnessed a common scene in the city – the daily sales of enslaved Black people on the steps of the cathedral. Onlookers in the sixteenth century regularly witnessed enslaved Black men and women locked in chains awaiting their torturous fates after sale to the highest bidder, as criers and prospective buyers haggled over prices for their bodies and labor. Such sales tended to be organized by private individuals selling their enslaved property, rather than large-scale lot-type auctions by merchants.[52] City ordinances

[48] Eventually, the crown built a dedicated building for mercantile activity, known as the Casa de Lonja, on the south side of the cathedral in the mid seventeenth century.

[49] *Recopilacion de las ordena[n]ças*, 1527, "titulo, de los Pregoneros, CXXXIIII," pages 284–288; *Ordenanças de Seuilla*, 1632, fols. 84v–85v, 132v–133v; Walleit, "El oficio de pregonero."

[50] Morgado, *Historia de Sevilla*, 1587, libro JI, capítulo 13, 169.

[51] Núñez González, *Arquitectura, dibujo*.

[52] On the presence and importance of the slave market in Gradas among other commerce, see ibid.; see also Vaseur Gamez et al., *La esclavitud*; Chaves and Pérez García, *Tratas atlánticas*; Pérez García et al., *Tratas, esclavitudes*.

also obliged criers to organize the auctions of deceased people's belongings at Gradas to avoid fraud.[53] As a result, any enslaved person in Sevilla who was due to be sold as part of their late owner's estate would likely be subjected to a sale by auction there. It may well be that Felipa de la Cruz's enslaver had sent Ana and María, who had previously labored with Cruz in the palace, to be sold by public auction at this very site. Bearing witness to this common scene of economic trade that led to the inevitable destruction of kinship ties – as mothers and children were sold to different enslavers or siblings were separated by the demands of the market – would have served as a patent reminder to Felipa of her and her children's enslavement and her lack of agency over their own lives and bodies. Even though Felipa once described how her enslavers treated her well, she could never forget that her family could be ripped apart in an instant at the whims of her enslavers.

Walking a few minutes southwest from the cathedral, Cruz would have reached Arenal. This was the neighborhood that bordered the banks of the Guadalquivir River. Residents of Sevilla gathered here to meet the ships arriving from the Spanish Americas, West Africa, and beyond, and to offer services to weary passengers (Figure 2.3, no. 5). Cruz was on high alert in the years between 1604 and 1611 for any information from or about her husband. Cruz likely approached the riverbanks numerous times over the course of the summer of 1608 in the hopes of hearing news from distant shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Four long years had passed since Segarra had been liberated from slavery and had left Sevilla on a ship destined to sail to the Americas. Felipa was feeling exasperated. Segarra's long absence was even more inexplicable for Cruz as she had not heard any news from him in some time. In a letter that Cruz penned to her husband earlier in the year, she had beseeched him to contact her:

> I am very upset for the great neglect that you have shown in not writing to me for so long, and I do not know what I can attribute [myself] to your great forgetfulness, except that it must be for to the little love that you have for me and your children; it [your love] is not steadfast like mine because every hour and every moment I remember you and there is never a time that I attend mass or that I am in the house that I do not entrust you to God that he protect you and bring you before my eyes and those of our children so that their great wish to see you can be fulfilled.[54]

[53] *Ordenanças de Seuilla*, 1632, fols. 84^{v}–85^{v}, 132^{v}–133^{v}.
[54] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}.

Late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sevilla was a key node in the annual fleets of ships that crossed the Atlantic to the Spanish Americas under the auspices of the Spanish crown, known as the Carrera de Indias (Figure 1.2). From the late 1560s onwards, two fleets consisting of hundreds of medium-sized ships departed Sevilla annually to the Americas. One fleet set sail from Sevilla in April towards the port of Veracruz, and another fleet departed Sevilla in August destined to the port of Nombre de Dios (and after 1599, to Portobelo). The respective convoys sailed to the Canary Islands, before crossing the Atlantic. After anchoring briefly in Isla Dominica, smaller ships with other destinations peeled off from the fleet, and the ships destined for New Spain sailed to the port of Veracruz, while the Tierra Firme fleet sojourned in Cartagena de Indias for a two-week stopover, before anchoring at Nombre de Dios (or Portobelo after 1599). These vessels remained in the Americas over the winter until March, when captains readied their ships by loading cargo, mostly the silver caravels transported from the mines in the mountainous peaks of the silver-boomtowns in the Americas, as well as paperwork and information, passengers, and diverse cargoes of private merchandise. The fleets set sail from Veracruz and Nombre de Dios to the port of Havana in Cuba, from whence the two fleets sailed in convoy to Sevilla, often numbering 400 ships.[55]

The arrival and departure of the fleets in Sevilla touched almost every aspect of daily life in the city. Ships brought news from afar through word of mouth, epistles, and petty trade. Relays of word of mouth stitched together through itinerant merchant communities, mariners, and passengers bridged vast distances across the Spanish empire. Everyday lives and experiences in urban sites that formed part of the Carrera de Indias ports, namely Sevilla, Havana, Veracruz, and Nombre de Dios (and, later, Portobelo) – even among those in the lowest socioeconomic spectrums of society – were often intertwined with events across the Atlantic as passengers and port-dwellers trafficked in mundane and noteworthy information about people and events in faraway places. Recollections about events that had taken place years earlier reveal a world of word of mouth about passengers that preceded most people's arrival in particular ports of embarkation.[56] Such information about passengers' places of origin, destinations,

[55] For studies on the socioeconomic fabric of urban life in along the Carrera de Indias routes, see Clark, *Veracruz*; de la Fuente, *Havana*. For an important study of smuggling activities and intra-imperial relations in the ports and regions where the Carrera de Indias fleets did not anchor in the Caribbean, see Ponce Vázquez, *Islanders and Empire*.

[56] For example, "Juan de Pineda," AGI, Indiferente, 2094, no. 1, fols. 3^{v}–7^{r}; "Jerónimo González," AGI, Contratación, 5238, no. 1, ramo 38, fols. 1^{v}–2^{r}.

and retinue was often gathered and exchanged in taverns and inns on the key trade and travel routes between towns and in the docks in port towns.[57]

News in Sevilla in the summer months of the impending arrival of the fleets from the Americas created a sense of excitement and trepidation among city-dwellers. Merchants and investors would soon discover whether their investments had been successful or whether they had incurred insurmountable losses. Judges at the House of Trade adjudicated on individuals' requests for embarkation licenses throughout the year, but with the impending arrival of the fleets, officials at the House also readied themselves for the bureaucratic task of cataloging and collecting taxes on imported silver and other natural resources violently extracted from the veins of the Americas with forced Black and Indigenous labor, and adjudicating between ship captains, investors, and the crown about the division of gains and losses incurred on overseas ventures. Those waiting for news from kin, friends, or associates organized their affairs to the beat of the annual arrival of the fleets. City dwellers could send news to kin and associates in ports along the Carrera de Indias with a letter or by word of mouth in the spring, knowing that the recipient would receive the message by the summer, and they would then hope to hear a response by the following year with the arrival of the fleets in the summer months. By the time that Cruz penned her second letter on March 15, 1608, she had endured an interminable four-year wait for news from or about her husband since her first letter in 1604. She may have waited a further four years until she heard news in 1612 of his untimely death.

The arrival of the annual fleet in the summer, often numbering hundreds of ships, was a visual spectacle. The scene inspired the artist Alonso Sánchez Coello (1531–1588) to paint *Vista de la ciudad de Sevilla* in the late sixteenth century (Figures 2.4–2.6). The fleets brought hundreds of passengers and maritime laborers to Sevilla, who often spent time residing in the city prior to an onward journey.[58] The lower socioeconomic rung of Sevillian society often eked out a living in trades that supported this maritime commerce by unloading the silver cargo and other precious metals from the ships and hauling the wares to the House of Trade for tax collection, laboring on ship repairs in the Reales Atarazanas or on the shores of

[57] For an example of these exchanges taking place in taverns and inns along key overland trading routes, see witness statements in "Juan de Rojas," AGI, Contratación, 293A, no. 1, ramo 6.

[58] For more on mariners and men of the sea in late sixteenth-century Sevilla, see Pérez-Mallaína Bueno, *Spain's Men of the Sea*.

FIGURE 2.4 Alonso Sánchez de Coello, "Vista de la ciudad de Sevilla," late sixteenth century, oil on canvas, width: 295 cm, height: 146 cm (P004779). Prado Museum, Madrid. © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.

the river in Triana, or by providing other services at the river. Town criers crisscrossed the city announcing the arrival of news from the Americas and readied to their voices before taking up their role as auctioneers of exotic goods from distant lands at Gradas. City-dwellers crowded onto the riverbanks to watch people disembarking from the ships, and often met new acquaintances among the weary passengers reaching land for the first time in months. Sevilla residents who were plotting their own Atlantic voyages might seek out precious knowledge about the crossing by conversing with passers-by who were disembarking. Other city-dwellers arrived on the riverbanks, poised to offer much-needed services, such as beds, food, information, and healing. Tavern owners, including free *mulatas*, such as Ana Sánchez who owned a tavern in Triana in the 1590s, prepared for the arrival of an influx of customers.[59]

Some Sevillians approached the river to wait expectantly for news from afar. Many would hear about friends or family through word of mouth from passengers disembarking from the ships. Others approached the river to wait for messengers to deliver long-awaited private letters from kin and associates. Cruz may well have been on the riverbank when she tasked trusted messengers to deliver letters to her husband in 1604 and 1608. On the far-left side of Figure 2.5, Coelho depicted a Black woman in conversation with two recently arrived passengers from the Indies. Sevillians from all socioeconomic spectrums crowded the riverbanks to receive legal papers (notarial *escrituras*) drawn up and signed by kin and associates in the Americas that spelled out powers of attorney (*poderes*) that instructed them to engage in commercial transactions on their associates' behalf in Castilla.[60] Others, such as

[59] "Lucas Sanchez Barquero contra Christoval esclavo," AHN, España, Inquisición, 2058, exp. 17, fols. 2^{v}–5^{v}.

[60] For select examples of *poderes* issued in towns in New Spain and Lima and sent to Sevilla, see "Poder," Unidad de Servicios Bibliotecarios y de Información, Jalapa (cited as USBI Xalapa), Protocolos Notariales Jalapa, Año del protocolo: 1578–1594, April 14, 1582, no. 1, clave del acta: 22, 1578, 196, fols. 67–67^{vta}; "Poder," USBI Xalapa, Protocolos Notariales de Orizaba, Año del protocolo: 1583–1584, September 14, 1583, no. 5, clave del acta: 220, 1583, 21290, fols. 7–8; "Poder," USBI Xalapa, Protocolos Notariales Jalapa, Año del protocolo: 1600–1608, 27 de dic. 1604, no. 3, clave del acta 27, 1600, 1461, fols. 320–320^{vta}; "Poder," Archivo General de la Nación, Perú (hereafter AGNP), Protocolos Notariales de Lima (hereafter PNL), Bartolomé Gascón, Protocolo, 42.1, 19, fols. 23–25 (January 7, 1554); "Poder," AGNP, PNL, Juan Gutiérrez y Nicolás de Grado, Protocolo, 69, 827, fols. 1018–1019 (November 24, 1567); "Poder," AGNP, PNL, Juan Gutierrez, Protocolo, 71, 205, fols. 422–424^{v} (April 16, 1573); "Poder," AGNP, PNL, Alonso de la Cueva, Protocolo, 29,264, fols. 7^{v}–9 (January 9, 1580); "Poder," AGNP, PNL, Cristóbal De Aguilar Mendieta, Protocolo, 4,177, fols. 367^{v}–368 (April 1, 1597).

FIGURE 2.5 Alonso Sánchez de Coello, "Vista de la ciudad de Sevilla," (detail), late sixteenth century, oil on canvas, width: 295 cm, height: 146 cm (P004779). Prado Museum, Madrid. © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.

FIGURE 2.6 Alonso Sánchez de Coello, "Vista de la ciudad de Sevilla," (detail), late sixteenth century, oil on canvas, width: 295 cm, height: 146 cm (P004779). Prado Museum, Madrid. © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.

a free *mulata* named Catalina Rámirez, might approach the ships to hear news of whether the *poderes* that she had previously sent to Lima had been actioned.[61] Upon learning in 1605 that such instructions had not been carried out, Rámirez decided to embark on an expensive journey to Lima, along with her two freeborn *mulata* daughters, to organize her late husband's estate and ensure the integrity of her daughters' inheritance.[62] Free Black *vecinas* of Sevilla, such as Inés de Jesús, waited anxiously in the early 1600s for factors to deliver funds from their debtors in the New World.[63] Upon hearing of the death in 1615 of the factor tasked to deliver her money, Jesús petitioned to inherit the funds that she was owed from the late factor's estate at the House of Trade.[64] Family members of men and young boys from the lower socioeconomic rungs of society who labored as ship crew and mariners crisscrossing the Atlantic, might also approach the riverbanks to learn about the fate of their kin. A free *mulato vecino* of San Juan de la Palma parish named Juan de Montedeosca learned in 1591 of the death of his brother, a *mulato* soldier named Pedro de Montedeosca,

[61] "Catalina Ramírez," AGI, Contratación, 5313, no. 13. Catalina Ramírez, AGI, Indiferente, 2106, no. 85.
[62] Ibid.
[63] "Francisco Morales Matamoros, Inés de Jesús," AGI, Contratación, 324B, no. 1, ramo 9.
[64] Ibid.

after the latter had spent eleven years laboring on Atlantic fleets.[65] Other people readied for their own journeys, sometimes crossing the Atlantic to return to their place of birth and traveling as multigeneration families, as was the case when an elderly *morena horra* named Lucía Cordera received a license to return to Cuba with her *mulato* son, his wife, and their two children in 1576.[66]

Enslaved people in private households of Sevilla might fear the fleets, knowing that their owners could forcibly displace them to the Spanish Americas at any time. This was the case for an enslaved Black woman from Portugal named Margarita de Sossa, whose owner sent her from Sevilla to be sold in New Spain in 1580, never to return.[67] Enslaved people in private households in the city might also find themselves laboring with people from distant lands, as passengers who arrived there often brought servants, including Indigenous Americans and enslaved Black people whom they had purchased in the Americas (and elsewhere) to labor in their households. For example, an enslaved Black man named Juan Miguel was forcibly displaced by his owner from Mexico City to Sevilla in the early seventeenth century.[68] For other enslaved Black people such as Felipa de la Cruz, the arrival of the fleets might signify hopefulness, as they wondered whether their distant kin in the Spanish Americas had sent funds to liberate them from slavery.

Many Black residents of San Salvador parish in Felipa de la Cruz's generation had ties that stretched across the Atlantic, while others embarked on voyages to the New World. For example, free Black woman named Ana Gómez owned two pairs of houses on Salvador Square on the corner of Calle Torneros (known today as Calle Álvarez Quintero) (Figures C.1.1, C1 and 2.3, no. 2).[69] Ana Gómez had traveled to the Panama region in 1576 and settled in Nombre de Dios, where she cemented her status as a wealthy merchant. Gómez maintained ownership of her properties in Salvador Square during her twenty-year absence, and a Sevilla-based factor collected rent on her behalf throughout the late sixteenth

[65] "Pedro de Montesdeoca," AGI, Contratación, 485, no. 4, ramo 5; "Testamento de Pedro de Montesdeoca mulato libre," May 24, 1580, AHPS, signatura P-152, libro del año 1580, oficio 1, libro 2, Escribanía de Diego de la Barrera Farfán, fols. 353r–53v. I thank David Wheat for sharing a transcription of this source.

[66] "Lucía Cordera," AGI, Contaduría, 241, no. 74; "Lucía Cordera," AGI, Indiferente, 1968, libro 20, fol. 255^{v}; "Lucía Cordera," AGI, Indiferente, 1968, libro 20, fol. 259.

[67] "Margarita de Sossa," AGN, Inquisición 208, exp. 3, 80–84,

[68] "Sebastián Robles," AGI, Contratación, 5352, no. 33.

[69] "Ana Gómez," AGI, Contratación, 257A, no. 3, ramo 12, fols. 84^{r}–115^{v}.

century until her death in 1596.[70] Gómez's houses on Salvador Square were worth 14,500 *maravedíes* when town criers sold them in a public auction in 1600, while her remaining houses in Magdalena parish at the intersection of Calle de San Pablo and the Puerta de Triana were sold for 6,000, 7,500, and 8,000 *maravedíes* respectively, and her houses in the peripheral parish of San Gil sold for 3,000 *maravedíes* (Figure C.1.1, C1–3).[71] For a sense of the approximate value of these sums, in the late sixteenth century an average mariner on a merchant ship in the *Carrera de Indias* would have earned between 18,750 and 22,500 *maravedíes* in wages per annum in addition to board and sustenance and any spoils from petty trade, while the average cost to an enslaved person to purchase their liberty in Sevilla in this period was approximately 22,720.7 *maravedíes*.[72]

Cruz likely witnessed the liberation from slavery and the transatlantic lives and ties of some of her Black neighbors in San Salvador parish. Ana de Carvajal, a *mulata* and *natural* of Sevilla, probably also lived in the Salvador neighborhood as she enlisted two *vecinas* of the parish to testify to her freedom when applying for an embarkation license in 1576.[73] Other Black *vecinas* who lived in the area during Cruz's lifetime included Leonor de Alarcón, a free *mulata* who resided on Calle Carpinterías. Alarcón provided testimony about the free status of a Black woman named Juana Bautista when the latter applied for an embarkation license in 1592.[74] Another Black woman who grew up enslaved in the vicinity was Agustina de Jesús, who was born in the nearby parish of San Vicente and was liberated from slavery upon the death of her owner sometime before 1593.[75] After her liberation, Jesús embarked on a voyage to Santo Domingo as a wage-earning servant in 1593. María de la O also lived in San Salvador parish when her owner liberated her from slavery in 1596, and four years later she sought an embarkation license to travel to Peru

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid., fols. 1^{r}–1^{v} (digital image, 749–750).

[72] Fernández Chaves, "Amas, esclavas, y libertad"; Pérez-Mallaína Bueno, *Spain's Men of the Sea*, 99. For the value of money, see Muñoz Serrulla, *La Moneda Castellana*; Serrulla calculates that 450 *maravedíes* was the equivalent of 1 *peso de oro común*.

[73] "Ana de Carvajal," AGI, Contratación, 5225A, no. 1, ramo 35. See also Figure C.1.1, 3a–d.

[74] "Simón López, Juana Bautista," AGI, Contratación, 5237, no. 2, ramo 47; "Juana Bautista," AGI, Contratación 5538, libro 3, fols. 127$^{v\,(5)}$. See also Figure C.1.1, 6a–c.

[75] "Agustina de Jesús," AGI, Contratación, 5243, no. 2, ramo 40; "Libros de Asientos de Pasajeros," "Agustina de Jesús," AGI, Contratación 5538, libro 3, fol. 151$^{r\,(2)}$. See also Figure C.1.1, 8a–d.

with her husband.[76] A Black *horro* from Santo Domingo named Gaspar Juan (see Chapter 1) likely also lived in this neighborhood. He tasked *vecinos* from San Salvador and the nearby parish of Santa María la Mayor to provide testimony about his liberation from slavery and his successful petition for freedom at the Real Audiencia when he requested an embarkation license in 1594.[77] At the turn of the seventeenth century, an enslaved Black woman named Lucía Tenorio Palma, who resided in San Salvador parish near the convent of San Leandro, bore a daughter named Juana Tenorio with her enslaver, Gregorio Tenorio. Palma obtained her liberty and subsequently crossed the Atlantic and settled in Portobelo.[78] It is unclear whether Gregorio Tenorio also liberated their daughter, as Lucía departed from Sevilla without Juana. In Portobelo, Palma accumulated some wealth and married an enslaved Black man named Cristóbal de la Palma, whom she lent 500 pesos so that he could liberate himself from slavery. She also purchased at least six Black slaves, some houses, and a *buhio*.[79] Like Felipa de Cruz, the young Juana Tenorio – who may or may not have been enslaved, but who remained in Sevilla after her mother departed the city – may also have approached the riverbanks in the hopes of hearing news from or about her absent mother.

A final site in Felipa de la Cruz's neighborhood for possible news about her husband was the palace of the Real Alcázar where the House of Trade was located (Figure 2.3, no. 6). The walk from the Fernandéz de Santillán palace to the House of Trade would have taken approximately twelve to fifteen minutes on foot. Cruz was familiar with this institution and the strategies deployed by liberated Black people to apply for embarkation licenses, as her own husband had petitioned for one in 1603. This is also where Cruz later attempted to inherit her deceased husband's property by falsifying information about her status as a free woman.[80] In this neighborhood, she may have known another Black couple who later experienced a similar fate to her own. Isabel de Vargas was a free Black woman who labored as a servant in a distinguished household in Santa Cruz parish near the House of Trade (Figure C.1.1, G). Vargas had married an enslaved Black man in the same household, who later

[76] "María de la O," AGI, Contratación, 5262A, no. 55. See also Figure C.1.1, 10a–g.
[77] "Gaspar Juan," AGI, Contratación, 5248, no. 1, ramo 17; "Gaspar Juan," AGI, Contratación, 5538, libro 3, fol. 230.
[78] "Lucía Tenorio Palma," AGI, Contratación 526, no. 1, ramo 1, doc. 8, fol. 60r. See also Figure C.1.1, F.
[79] Ibid. A *buhio* is a hut built with wood, branches, cane, or straw.
[80] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación 303, no. 2, fols. 4r–5r.

obtained his liberation from slavery and departed Sevilla in 1624 to labor as a wage-earning drummer (*atambaor*) on board a ship destined for the Americas.[81] Like Felipa de la Cruz, Isabel de Vargas remained in Sevilla waiting for news about her absent husband, until she learned of his death at sea in 1627.[82]

Cruz might have approached the House of Trade in the hope of hearing news about her husband's whereabouts. This is because the crown established probate courts of assets of the deceased (*bienes de difuntos*) across the viceroyalties of the Spanish Americas to ensure the return of Castilians' orphaned property – when no heirs existed in the Indies – to the kingdom of Castilla. Such courts in the American viceroyalties dispatched officials to inventory orphaned goods and to establish biographical information about the deceased and their heirs. These courts then sent the worth of the deceased's property to the House of Trade in Sevilla to be distributed among existing heirs.[83] House officials alerted potential heirs in a three pronged effort, first by publishing written information for public viewing at the interior squares adjoining the building of the House of Trade in the Real Alcázar, then by dispatching criers to sing news of death and property in Sevilla's public squares, and finally by dispatching messengers to the deceased's places of *naturaleza* (birthplace) across Castilla.[84]

House of Trade criers announced the arrival of the assets of the deceased across public squares in Sevilla, meaning that those who lived in the city, and especially those who resided near the House of Trade, would regularly hear about the arrival of deceased Castilians' goods, including those of at least thirty-five men and women who were described by probate judges as Black or *mulato* who perished in the Indies between 1550 and 1630 and whose property was returned to the House of Trade.[85] As Cruz dwelt in or near the neighborhoods where Diego Suárez, Pedro de Montedeosca, and Luis Pinelo grew up and where Ana Gómez owned property, it is possible that she heard House of Trade criers announcing news of their respective deaths in 1590, 1591, 1596, and 1610 (Figure C.1.1, A–E).[86] Even

[81] "Alonso de Castro," AGI, Contratación, 526, no. 1, ramo 1, doc. 12.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Almorza Hidalgo, "*No se hace pueblo sin ellas*"; González Sánchez, *Dineros de ventura*; Mangan, *Transatlantic Obligations*; Tempère, *Vivre et mourir*.
[84] Ibid.
[85] "Real Cédula," AGI, Indiferente, 1967, libro 16, fols. 251–251[v].
[86] "Ana Gómez," AGI, Contratación, 257A, no. 3, ramo 12; "Diego Suárez," AGI, Contratación 255, no. 1, ramo 5; "Pedro de Montedeosca," AGI, Contratación, 485, no. 4, ramo 5; "Luis Pinelo," AGI, Contratación, 296A, no. 2, ramo 3.

if Cruz had not personally heard the criers singing the news, she may later have heard about inheritance of their estates, as neighbors regularly discussed such details among their acquaintances. For example, in Cruz's 1608 letter to Segarra, she offered details about the property that her neighbors had inherited, describing how María Jiménez had "married her daughter, Elvira, to a silversmith. As a dowry for the marriage, she gave 400 ducats of the 1,000 that she had been given for the death of Julián González."[87] Cruz may also have heard that a twenty-two-year-old free *mulata* named María de Ribera, who resided in the Plazuela de Santa Catalina in the parish of San Pedro (a seven-minute walk from the palace where Cruz lived), inherited money in 1610 to pay for her marriage after her late brother perished in Cuba and named her as a benefactor in his will.[88] Cruz may also have heard about Ana Gómez's and Diego Suárez's posthumous endowments to local religious associations in her vicinity – in 1596, Gómez bestowed fifty *ducados* to the hospital of Nuestra Señora de la Paz that stood opposite Salvador Church where Cruz and Segarra had exchanged marriage vows, while Suárez's estate donated monies to the confraternities in the Franciscan Convent in San Francisco Square after a lengthy legal dispute between his heirs in the probate courts at the House of Trade.[89]

Tracing Cruz's footsteps and experiences along this fifteen-minute walk from the palace where she was enslaved to the House of Trade reveals how her personal cartography stretched well beyond Sevilla, even though she never left the city. Her hopes and ideas about freedom and slavery were inevitably impacted and informed by the global city that she inhabited and the relationships that she forged in the palace where she was enslaved and in her broader neighborhood.

BLACK TRANSATLANTIC TIES: WORD OF MOUTH AND EPISTLES ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

Thick spheres of communication emerged across the Spanish Atlantic between free and enslaved Black people woven through relays of word of mouth, epistolary networks, and legal powers. These ephemeral histories of nascent Black public spheres that stretched across vast distances in the

[87] "Antonio Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}.
[88] "Luis Pinelo," AGI, Contratación, 296A, no. 2, R.3, fols. 5^{r}–6^{v}.
[89] "Ana Gómez," AGI, Contratación, 257A, no. 3, ramo 12. fols. 84^{r}–115^{v}; "Diego Suárez," AGI, Contratación 255, no. 1, ramo 5, fols. 27^{r}–30^{r}.

early Atlantic world are difficult to trace as the evidence that catalogs this history is fragmentary and scattered across diverse archives. Transatlantic conversations often became etched into archives through witness testimonies about people's biographies across various types of documents, including in trials prosecuted by Holy Offices of the Inquisition stationed across the Spanish empire, in petitions to royal and ecclesiastical courts, in criminal cases, in notarial records, and in free and liberated Black people's petitions for passenger and embarkation licenses to cross the Atlantic. In particular, Black petitioners who requested embarkation and passenger licenses responded to policies introduced by the Spanish crown to control who could migrate to the Americas by discussing their ties in the Spanish Americas (where relevant to their lives). Judges at the Council of the Indies regarded family reunification or return to place of birth as legitimate reasons for individuals to undertake journeys to the Americas from Castilla.[90] Consequently, free Black and *mulato* applicants for passenger licenses often relied, where possible, on evidence of their familial ties in the Americas. To prove such ties, supplicants would enlist witnesses in Sevilla to speak of their American *naturaleza* or family ties across the Atlantic. These testimonies mirrored broader strategies deployed by Castilians of all socioeconomic strata, as prospective passengers presented letters sent by their kin in the Americas or information that they had obtained through word of mouth to the House of Trade as evidence of their ties to America. The tendency among married Castilian women of all social strata to present letters from their absent husbands to the House of Trade has resulted in one of the richest archives of private letters and information about word of mouth in the early modern period.[91] In lieu of presenting original letters, some supplicants for licenses brought witnesses who would attest to the existence of this Atlantic correspondence. These witness testimonies catalog how Black dwellers of late sixteenth-century Sevilla often partook in epistolary networks and relays of word of mouth with kin and associates in the Americas.

Word of mouth was a powerful form of communication in this period. Trading entrepots in Castile and the Spanish Americas were often connected through hearsay, whispers, and gossip about people's lives, as passers-by trafficked in information about the whereabouts of family members. These informal whispers through word of mouth were sometimes formalized through webs of informants to the Inquisition,

[90] Almorza Hidalgo, "*No se hace pueblo sin ellas*"; Rey Castelao, *El vuelo corto*.
[91] Almorza Hidalgo, "*No se hace pueblo sin ellas*"; Otte, *Cartas Privadas*.

especially for suspected crimes of bigamy.[92] For example, two Iberian *mulatos* accused of bigamy in Inquisitorial trials in Mexico City in 1579 and 1622, named Antonio de Arenas and Cristóbal de Castroverde, suggested to Inquisitors that they had not committed bigamy as they had learned upon arriving in the Americas that they had become widows. They each explained that they had heard news about the deaths of their respective *mulata* wives in Cádiz and Sevilla through information relayed by travelers passing through the port of Veracruz.[93] Neither of these individuals lived in the port of Veracruz. Instead, they resided in Mexico City and the rural and mining environs of the viceregal capital. But their pinpointing of Veracruz as the site where they received news of their wives' deaths in Castilla highlights that they traveled through that port on their way to Mexico City and shows how people often heard news about loved ones in distant lands when passing through port towns.[94] Similarly, in 1575, a free Black woman named Luisa de Abrego defended herself against charges of bigamy before Inquisitorial authorities in Mexico City. The accusations had materialized because five different passers-by in Mexico City had heard rumors that Abrego had married a free Black man in Jerez de la Frontera in Castilla some years earlier. In her trial, she explained that she had not married in Jerez and instead had only received a promise of marriage and an embrace from a suitor, who later married someone else.[95] Since this episode in Jerez, Abrego had spent some years living in Sevilla, and had crossed the Atlantic onboard a ship in an Armada (a large fleet of military ships equipped for wars at sea or land) to Florida where she had married one of the soldiers on the fleet, the couple then moving to Mexico City. Despite the many years that had elapsed between the episode with her suitor in Jerez and her life in Mexico City, rumors from Abrego's affair followed her to Mexico City and resulted in Inquisitors ordering her arrest. While Inquisitors determined that both Castroverde and Arenas were guilty of bigamy as they had both married *mulata* women in Cádiz and Sevilla, respectively, and subjected them to severe punishments, in Luisa de Abrego's case, judges ruled that she was innocent of the charges, after Abrego declared that her experience in Jerez had not been a marriage as there was "no carnal

[92] "Cristóbal de Castroverde," AGN, México, GD61 Inquisición, vol. 310, exp. 7, fol. 53.
[93] Ibid., fols. 30^{v} (547^{v}), 31 (548); "Antonio de Arenas," AGN, México, GD61 Inquisición, vol. 107, exp. 4, fol. 209^{v}.
[94] "Cristóbal de Castroverde," AGN, México, GD61 Inquisición, vol. 310, exp. 7, fols. 32 (549)–32^{v} (549^{v}).
[95] "Luisa de Abrego," AGN, México, GD61 Inquisición, vol. 103, exp. 6, fol. 20.

copulation or any thing else, other than holding hands, embracing, and kissing each other."[96]

Another example of how word of mouth brought news from afar appears in Juan de Pineda's 1583 petition for a passenger license to return from Sevilla to Lima to reunite with his recently liberated Black mother, María de Pineda.[97] Juan de Pineda had been brought to Sevilla when he was three years-old by a Sevilla-merchant named Pedro de Ribera, who had resided in Lima in the 1560s. Juan was reportedly the son of Ribera's Black slave, María de Pineda, and his servant named Pedro de Osorio. Pedro de Ribera had apparently promised to look after Osorio's son and bring him to Sevilla so that he could learn how to read and write, and in so doing had separated enslaved mother and child. Juan de Pineda managed to keep in touch sporadically from Sevilla with his mother in Lima. Fifteen years after arriving in Sevilla, he received news that his mother was alive and that she had accrued significant wealth in Lima after her liberation from slavery. One witness described how it is "well known that for a woman of her color, she is rich and well resourced."[98] Specifically, Pineda reported that this news had reached him via the fleet of ships that arrived from Tierra Firme in 1583. Whether María de Pineda sent a letter to her son inviting him to return to Lima via a messenger aboard this fleet or whether the news arrived through word of mouth is unclear. Nonetheless, in this connected world between Lima and Sevilla, with merchants moving between sites who testified to having personal relationships with both mother and son, it is not unfeasible that the latter was the case.

Witnesses' discussions of how Black residents of Sevilla sent and received letters reveal Black people's access to lettered cultures in this period. The cases studied here reveal Black letter writers who were either literate or were able to purchase the services of *escribientes* (individuals who knew how to read and write, but lacked the formal education or social status that would allow them to enter a writing profession, such as the notarial ranks, and instead wrote and read documents for a fee), or relied on the favors of friends or associates who possessed these skills. In the 1550s, there was at least one *mulato escribiente* in Sevilla, named Juan de Lugones; he sent a petition regarding a probate case to the Council of

[96] "Luisa de Abrego," AGN, México, GD61 Inquisición, vol. 103, exp. 6, fols. 263[r] and 274[r].
[97] "Juan de Pineda," AGI, Indiferente, 2094, no. 1.
[98] Ibid.

the Indies.[99] The aforementioned Black confraternity of Our Lady of the Angels in Sevilla appointed a brother to the role of *escribano*; in 1604, a Black brother named Antonio de Villalobos occupied this position, signing declarations on behalf of all the Black brothers in the confraternity.[100]

Free and enslaved Black people in Sevilla and its environs were also sometimes taught how to read and write in formal settings when they were children.[101] For example, the aforementioned Cristóbal de Castroverde described how he had learned to read and write with a tutor while living with his free Black mother and white father in late sixteenth-century Carmona (a village neighboring Sevilla), while Leonor de la Isla, a Cádiz-born *mulata* arrested by the Inquisition in Veracruz in 1622, described how her father had sent her to a convent as a child to learn how to read and write.[102] Another indicator of literacy was if an individual signed documents and petitions; a signature implied that the individual did not require the document to be read to them to understand the contents.[103] Other examples of literacy emerge in the testimonies of free Black and *mulato* people who reported sending and receiving letters to their kin across the Atlantic when arrested by a Holy Office of the Inquisition. Leonor de la Isla described how she sent letters from Veracruz to her friends in Cádiz; María Gerónima, a Sevilla-native *mulata*, testified that she maintained

[99] "Juan de Lugones, de color mulato, loro, escribiente," AGI, Indiferente, 1207, no. 60, fol. 1.

[100] "Pleito entre la Hdad de Ntra Sra de la Antigua y la de los Ángeles que llaman la de los morenos," AGAS, III.1.6, L.9885, No. 1, fols. 14^{r}–15^{r}.

[101] For examples of Black and *mulato* people learning how to read and write as children in Sevilla, see "Juan de Pineda," AGI, Indiferente, 2094, no. 1; "Pedro," AGI, Indiferente, 2089, no. 29. For selected scholarship on Black people's access to writing and literacy in the colonial period, see Acree Jr, "Jacinto Ventura"; Berruezo-Sánchez, "Negro poeta"; Borucki, *From Shipmates*; Borucki and Acree, *Los caminos*; Cañizares-Esguerra, "The Imperial"; Dawson, "A Sea" and *Undercurrents of Power*; Fisk, "Black Knowledge" and "Transimperial Mobilities"; Fracchia, "*Black but Human*"; von Germeten, *Violent Delights*. Gómez, *The Experiential*; Graubart, *Republics of Difference*; Jouve Martín, *Esclavos* and "Public Ceremonies"; Lazzari, "A Bad Race"; Martín Casares, *Juan Latino*; Rowe, *Black Saints*; Wright, *The Epic*.

[102] "Cristóbal De Castroverde," AGN, México, GD61 Inquisición, vol. 310, exp. 7, fols. 32–32^{v}; "Leonor de Isla," AGN, México, GD61 Inquisición. vol. 341, exp. 1, fols. 71^{v}.

[103] Selected Black and *mulato* people who signed their name on petitions and who resided in, or passed through Sevilla, in the late sixteenth century include "Sebastián de Toral," AGI, Indiferente, 2059, no. 108, fol. 3^{r}, See also Restall, *The Black Middle*, 6–12, 15–16; "Juan Baptista de Cárdenas," AGI, Indiferente, 1233; "Jerónimo González," AGI, Contratación, 5238, no. 1, ramo 38; "Angelina Díaz," AGI, Indiferente, 2102, no. 166; "Susana Manuel," AGI, Indiferente, 2075, no. 140.

written correspondence with her Sevilla-based son intermittently every few years during the three decades she resided in Cartagena de Indias and Veracruz; Cristóbal de Castroverde attested to receiving letters in New Spain from his Sevilla-based free *mulata* wife Isabel Hernández, interpreting the absence of these letters in later years as confirmation of the news of her death; while as a final example, in 1605, an eighty-year-old liberated Black woman named Catalina Déniz, who had borne fourteen children and married three times in Tenerife (Canary Islands), testified before Inquisitorial authorities that she had received letters from two of her sons who had departed to the Indies.[104] Occasionally, probate records also revealed indicators of literacy. For example, listed among the possessions of the previously mentioned Diego Suárez were scripts of plays, namely "scripts of comedies and *autos* of comedies."[105] The fact that Suárez had "scripts of comedies" among his possessions suggests that he was literate, as actors who were given such scripts tended to be able to read and memorize complex dialogue, unlike illiterate actors who might act in a play by improvising a scene.[106] Similarly, dozens of letters listed among Ana Gómez's possessions reveal that she was also literate.[107] Other lettered enslaved and liberated Black people from this era included Juan Latino, who penned epics and epithets in Latin and taught Latin and grammar in Granada Cathedral in the late sixteenth century, and the Tangier-born free *mulato* named Gaspar de Vasconcelos who lived in various sites of the Atlantic world before eventually settling in Mexico City in the early seventeenth century, where he earned a living as an *escribiente* to high-ranking colonial officials and also taught grammar in a school.[108]

[104] "Leonor de Isla," AGN, Mexico, GD61 Inquisicion. vol. 341, exp. 1, fols. 154^{v}–155^{r}; "Trial of María Gerónima [de Vallejo], mulatto, for witchcraft," Huntington Library, San Marino (cited as HLSM), Huntington Manuscripts (cited as HM), 35165, fol. 34; Catalina Déniz,' Archivo del Museo Canario, Inquisición de Canarias, INQ-142.001, Causas de fe, Libros de penitenciados, vol. 146, libro 34 de penitenciados, fols. 41^{r}–43^{v}; Cristóbal De Castroverde,' AGN, México, GD61 Inquisición, vol. 310, exp. 7, fols. 32–32^{v}. For analysis of Catalina Déniz, see Fra-Molinero, "'Mis padres."

[105] "Diego Suárez," AGI, Contratación 255, no. 1, ramo 5, fol. 29^{r}.

[106] I thank Baltasar Fra-Molinero for conveying this point about the significance of Suárez possessing these papers in a conversation with me.

[107] "Ana Gómez," AGI, Contratación, 257A, no. 3, ramo 12.

[108] "Proceso Contra Gaspar de Rivero Vasconcelos, Mulato Libre, Estudiante Canonista," AGN, Mexico, GD61 Inquisicion, vol. 435, exp. 248, fols. 527–528. See also, Lazzari, "A Bad Race"; Latino, *The Song of John*; Martín Casares, *Juan Latino*; Wright, *The Epic*.

Black residents of late sixteenth-century Sevilla who penned and sent letters across the Atlantic likely relied on the services of trusted messengers. Antón Segarra sent Felipa de la Cruz at least one letter from New Spain to Sevilla, as she acknowledged its receipt in the first lines of her 1604 letter, describing her elation at receiving it: "I received your letter with much happiness to learn that you are in good health and that you had a successful crossing [of the Atlantic], and I rejoiced greatly, and I plead to God that he give you [good health], and that he gives it to you entirely, which is what I wish."[109] Four years later, she explained that she had sent such a long epistle because "The messenger is trustworthy as it is *señor* Juan García." Cruz's first lines in her 1608 missive indicated to the messenger that her husband was "in the convent of Santo Domingo in San Juan de Ulúa," the religious institution where Segarra spent some years laboring as a wage-earning servant to Fray Pablo de la Magdalena.[110] This suggests that her husband would know where to collect her correspondence and that Cruz probably used a *particular* (private messenger), who may have been a trusted *vecino* of Sevilla, a merchant, or a religious figure who traveled between both sites. As historian González Martínez has shown, private messengers played an important role in delivering official mail relating to urgent royal affairs as well as private mail, the main qualification for the role being "inspiring trust in the sender" that they would deliver the letters.[111] For example, the previously mentioned Leonor de la Isla offered a detailed description of the arrival of the *navío de aviso* (a ship within the annual fleet that transported royal mail) to the port of Veracruz, and how she had sent letters to her friends in Cádiz to convey news about a recent murder in Veracruz by enlisting the help of a resident of Cádiz who was on board the *navío de aviso* and agreed to deliver letters to her friends in Cádiz.[112]

In other cases, private merchants and passengers served as informal messengers who delivered messages via word of mouth as well as precious letters. Witness testimonies in Luisa de Valladolid's petition for a passenger license reveal the interconnected world that allowed Black

[109] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}.

[110] Ibid. On the role of private merchants in royal mail, see González Martínez, "Comunicarse a pesar de."

[111] González Martínez, "Comunicarse a pesar de."

[112] "Leonor de Isla," AGN, México, GD61 Inquisicion. vol. 341, exp. 1, fols. 154^{v}–155^{r}. For a discussion of systems of mail delivery in the Spanish empire in the sixteenth century, see González Martínez, "Comunicarse a pesar de" and "Communicating an Empire."

kin separated by vast distances to keep in touch via letters. Luisa de Valladolid, a sixteen- to eighteen-year-old free *mulata* who resided in Sevilla, sent a petition to the Council of the Indies in 1588 to request a passenger license to cross the Atlantic so that she could return to the port of Nombre de Dios.[113] Luisa de Valladolid employed a procurator to help deliver the petition. Speaking on her behalf, the procurator explained that Valladolid had been born free in Nombre de Dios and that her mother was a free Black woman named Sebastiana de la Sal who resided in the Caribbean port town. While dwelling in Sevilla, Luisa de Valladolid had kept in touch with her free Black mother through letters that she had sent via trusted messengers on ships that crisscrossed the ocean and via word of mouth involving merchants and other passengers who passed through both Atlantic ports. They were sufficiently in contact for Sebastiana de la Sal to hear news about the death of Valladolid's father sixteen years after their departure to Sevilla. After hearing the news, Sebastiana de la Sal wrote many letters to her daughter insisting that she return to Nombre de Dios, and she also sent money to pay for her daughter's voyage. Luisa's procurator explained how Sebastiana de la Sal "resides in the city of Nombre de Dios and she is rich, and she has written to Luisa to ask her to go there to be with her and she has sent funds for the cost of the journey."[114] Sebastiana de la Sal might have also provided funds to employ the services of a procurator to help maneuver Luisa de Valladolid's petition to the Council of the Indies for a passenger license.

In anticipation of this 1588 petition, Luisa de Valladolid and her procurator gathered four merchants to testify about her life before a public notary in Sevilla. These Sevilla-based merchants' descriptions of their acquaintance with mother and daughter in Nombre de Dios and Sevilla over the previous two decades reveal the impact of mercantile travel in connecting disparate communities across the Atlantic. These witnesses attested that they had attended Luisa's baptism in Nombre de Dios and knew that Sebastiana de la Sal had sent letters to her daughter in Sevilla. One witness explained that Sal had also written letters to him, urging that he ensure that Luisa "be made to start the journey to Nombre de Dios."[115] It is possible that these witnesses may have delivered verbal messages and letters across the Atlantic between mother and daughter

[113] "Luisa de Valladolid," AGI, Indiferente, 2097, no. 197.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., fols. 2^{v}–4^{r}.

during the course of the sixteen years that Luisa de Valladolid lived in Sevilla, as they testified to traveling between the two places during this period.[116] Further examples of letter writing between Black parents residing in the Americas and their progeny in Castilla, especially when a parent had accumulated sufficient capital to pay for the cost of their voyage and maintenance, are also recorded in other petitions for passenger licenses.[117]

Letter writing practices between Black kin generated a sense of public knowledge in Sevilla about family arrangements across the Atlantic. Individuals discussed letters they had sent and received in their daily life with their friends, neighbors, and associates. For example, a poverty-stricken *mulata* from Sevilla named Francisca de Figueroa petitioned for a passenger license at the Council of the Indies by providing witness testimony at the House of Trade in June 1600, and later applied for an embarkation license.[118] Figueroa positioned her impending departure as a response to a family member "calling for her" (*la ha mandado a llamar*) from the Americas, thereby attempting to prove her familial ties in the Americas, even though she was a *natural* of Castilla. She claimed that her daughter had sent her many letters from Cartagena de Indias, promising to pay for the cost of her and her twenty-year-old daughter's voyage. Figueroa's five witnesses lived across various parishes of the city (Figure C.1.1, 11a–f). They described her transatlantic family ties and letter writing, explaining that Juana de Figueroa resided in Cartagena de Indias and had sent her mother many letters inviting her to live in Cartagena, with one witness describing how "she knows that [Juana de Figueroa] called for her mother Francisca de Figueroa to relieve her of her needs and because of the poverty that she and her daughter María experience in these kingdoms."[119] Another witness explained that "she has seen the letters of Juana Figueroa in which she tells her mother to go and offering her money for the cost of the voyage and that she will help/

[116] Ibid., The Council of the Indies initially rejected Luisa de Valladolid's petition, noting "no ha lugar," but changed their decision upon appeal and granted the passenger license.

[117] For other examples of Black parents in the Indies writing to their children in Sevilla, see "Beatriz de Landa," AGI, Indiferente, 2095, no. 14; "Crispina de Herrera," AGI, Indiferente, 2105, no. 17; "Crispina de Herrera," AGI, Contratación, 5262A, no. 73; "Isabel de Vitoria," AGI, Indiferente, 2091, no. 24.

[118] "Francisca de Figueroa," AGI, Contratación 5268, no. 2, ramo 68; "Francisca de Figueroa," AGI, Contratación, 5261, no. 2, ramo 33. Part of this petition is transcribed in Garofalo, "Afro-Iberian Subjects."

[119] Ibid., fols. 1^{v}–2^{r}.

relieve her."[120] Neighbors, friends, and associates therefore sometimes saw, read, or heard about transatlantic epistles between family members, leading to public awareness about the Atlantic dimensions of Black kinship networks.

Two of Figueroa's witnesses at the House of Trade were members of the professional ranks of official messengers in the city, tending to the business of delivering letters across the sprawling Spanish empire.[121] One witness was Francisca de Mendoza who described herself as the "wife of Sevastian de Saavedra, messenger by horse of our king (*correo a lla caballo del rey nuestro*)" and lived in the parish of La Magdalena. A *correo* in this period was a specialized professional who served as a messenger for institutions and private individuals, often working seasonally on different routes (based on necessity and demand), who often accumulated some capital.[122] Francisca de Mendoza testified on two occasions for Francisca de Figueroa (in 1600 and in 1601), suggesting a close friendship between the pair. A second witness was Felipe de Selpuldes, who described himself as a *correo* and as a resident of the parish of San Bartolomé. Figueroa's reliance on these witnesses implies that she was friends with, and possibly formed part of a network of, messengers in Sevilla whose trade involved delivering letters across the peninsula and the Atlantic. Historian González Martínez has traced how messengers often crossed the Atlantic with two cases of letters, one containing mail pertaining to official business of the Spanish crown and the other containing private letters.[123] It is possible that one of these witnesses delivered letters between Francisca de Figueroa and her daughter in Cartagena, or that they saw letters that other messengers delivered.

Letter writing between Black kin also generated knowledge about the Atlantic world in particular sites, as friends and neighbors sometimes participated in relays of exchanges of information by hearing about contents of letters and commenting on these with others. In a petition for an embarkation license at the House of Trade in 1607, a twenty-six-year-old *mulata vecina* of Havana (Cuba) named Francisca de Azuaga stated that she had journeyed to Sevilla five years earlier to meet and communicate with her family in the Castilian city and for other important matters that

[120] Ibid.

[121] González Martínez, "Comunicarse a pesar de" and "Communicating an Empire."

[122] I thank Nelson Fernando González Martínez for sharing his manuscript for an article titled "Postal Freedoms and Coverage: The Multispatial Circulation of Correspondence Between Spain and America (1492–1560)" with me in private correspondence in 2023.

[123] Ibid.

obliged her to be in Sevilla.[124] Azuaga explained that she now wished to embark on the next fleet to Havana as her mother, a free Black woman named María Bautista, had sent a message instructing her to return.

Azuaga brought three witnesses to the House of Trade. Their testimonies reveal an interconnected world of communication across key trading entrepots of the Spanish Atlantic and highlight the public dimensions of letter writing between kin.[125] A widow from the neighborhood of Triana named Catalina Ruíz described how she had met Azuaga five years earlier when Azuaga had disembarked from the ship in Sevilla. Ruíz testified that she knew that Azuaga had received letters from her mother in Havana because she had heard the letters being read aloud.[126] This description points to the aurality of written correspondence in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sevilla. The exact phrase that Ruíz used leaves some ambiguity as to who exactly was reading the letters: "and she [Ruíz] has heard her [Azuaga] read letters from the said her mother in which her mother calls for her" (*y ésta le ha oydo leer cartas de la dicha su madre en q enbia a llamarla*).[127] This implies that they either lived in close quarters and Ruíz heard Azuaga reading the letters aloud, and possibly also discussed the contents of the letters, or perhaps that Azuaga sought the services of an *escribiente* in a public or private space and Ruíz was privy to hearing the letters being read. Azuaga may have enlisted two merchants who regularly crossed the Atlantic between Havana and Sevilla to deliver her correspondence with her mother, as these two witnesses each later claimed to have known and communicated with Azuaga and her mother in Havana every time they passed through that port, that they knew that María Bautista had sent her daughter to Sevilla five years earlier, and that they had communicated with Azuaga in Sevilla over the preceding five years.

Free Black women also used evidence of epistles with their distant spouses to persuade judges at the House of Trade and the Council of the Indies that their husbands had invited them to travel to the Indies to live together. Such strategies were common among women of all socioeconomic backgrounds, as married Castilian women rarely obtained a passenger license unless they traveled to join their husbands with the view to living a married life in the Indies. The phrase "he has called for her

[124] "Francisca de Azuaga," AGI, Contratación, 5301, no. 2, ramo 6.
[125] Ibid., fols. 2r–3r.
[126] Ibid., fols. 2r–3r.
[127] Ibid., fol. 3r.

(*la ha mandado a llamar*)," appears frequently in petitions for licenses across all socioeconomic spectrums. In addition, some husbands in the Indies issued *poderes* to associates in Sevilla to help guide their wives and children through the process of petitioning for a passenger license and sometimes also to accompany them to the Americas. Such was the case when a carpenter from Sevilla who resided in the town of Jalapa in New Spain issued a *poder* to two associates in 1619, instructing them to organize provisions in Sevilla to bring his wife and children on the first fleet to New Spain and provided money to cover the costs.[128] Black and *mulata* women also deployed this strategy to argue in their petitions that their absent husbands had "called for them." One example is María Gutiérrez, a woman who described herself as *mulata* and *lora* and *vecina* of Cádiz. In her petition for a passenger license in 1577, Gutiérrez explained that her husband had left Cádiz for the viceregal capital of Mexico City to work as a tailor and had sent her "many letters" begging her to travel to New Spain to live a married life with him.[129] Many Black and *mulata* women who crossed the ocean to reunite with their husbands or other family members also traveled with their children, as was the case of Sofía Hernández, a free Black woman from Sevilla who traveled to New Spain with her son, Pedro, in 1578 to live with her husband, Pedro de Lunares.[130] Sometimes spouses returned to Castilla to collect their wives and children and accompany them through the process of applying for the relevant licenses for the family to move to the Indies.[131]

These archival fragments that document how free and enslaved Black dwellers of late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Sevilla kept

[128] "Poder," USBI Xalapa, Protocolos Notariales de Jalapa, Años de Protocolo, 1617–1631, no. 5, May 21, 1621, clave del acta: 27, 1617, 2644, fols. 140–140^{v}.

[129] "María Gutiérrez," AGI, Indiferente, 2058, no. 51; "Real Cédula, María Gutiérrez," AGI, Indiferente, 1968, libro 21, fol. 1.

[130] "Sofía Hernández," AGI, Contratación 5538, libro 1, fol. 95^{v}; "Real Cédula, Sofia Hernández," AGI, Indiferente, 1969, libro 22, fol. 130. Other selected examples of Black and *mulata* women who petitioned for licenses to cross the Atlantic to live a married life with their spouses in the Spanish Americas include "Juana," AGI, Contratación, 5537, libro 3, fol. 429^{r}; "Jeronima," AGI, Indiferente, 2084, no. 98; "Constanza Sánchez," AGI, Indiferente, 2053, no. 43; "Constanza Sánchez," AGI, Contratación, 5225B, no. 33; "Felipa de Santiago," AGI, Contratación, 5248, no. 1, ramo 1. See also Garofalo, "The Shape of a Diaspora."

[131] "Antonio Núñez," AGI, Indiferente, 2084, no. 52; "Francisco González," AGI, Indiferente, 2052, no. 14; "Francisco González," AGI, Indiferente, 2058, no. 6; "Francisco González," AGI, Contratación 5538, libro I, fol. 427^{v}; "Francisco González," AGI, Indiferente, 1968, libro 21, fol. 131^{v}; "Francisco González," AGI, Contaduría, 241, no. 117.

in touch with associates, kin, and friends from afar through word of mouth and written communication reveal the emergence of a nascent Black public sphere that stretched across the Spanish Atlantic world in the late sixteenth century. The history of Black thought in Sevilla in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries must be studied through the prism of Black city dwellers' interactions with the broader Atlantic world, in particular through their participation in relays of word of mouth and letter writing, as well as varied experiences of movement across maritime spaces, including as a result of forced displacements as enslaved people, and departures as free and liberated people spurred by opportunities for wage-earning labor, or as fee-paying independent passengers. The diverse social and economic ties that Black dwellers of Sevilla maintained across the Atlantic as well as the impact of the arrival of news from afar inevitably shaped enslaved and free people's ideas about freedom and slavery in Sevilla.

IMAGINING FREEDOM IN SEVILLA THROUGH FRACTURED COMMUNITY MEMORIES OF *RESCATES* FROM AFAR AND TRANSATLANTIC EPISTLES

In Felipa de la Cruz's social milieu, freedom was on everybody's lips. Within the palace, enslaved laborers and servants gossiped constantly about other people's lives and status as free, *horro*, or enslaved (and under what conditions). They spoke among themselves to exchange news about the lives of their friends and acquaintances within and outside their households, and inevitably shared such news with other acquaintances.

Glimpses of such gossip within the palace walls appear in Felipa de la Cruz's letters to her absent husband.[132] Other evidence emerges from witness statements made by three palace-servants who attested on behalf of Cruz's husband, Antón Segarra, to certify his freedom in February 1603.[133] They described that they knew Segarra because he used to stay in Fernández de Santillán's Sevilla residence with his former owner, Juana Segarra de Saavedra. They explained that they had heard from other servants in the household about Segarra's impending freedom owing to result of a liberation clause in his late owner's will, with one servant testifying that he had "heard other servants in the house talk about it many

[132] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}.

[133] Ibid., fols. 11^{v}–13^{r}. These testimonies are transcribed, along with Antón Segarra's cache of freedom papers, in Ireton and Álvarez Hernández, "Epístolas."

times."[134] According to their testimonies, everyone in Fernández de Santillán's household knew that Antón Segarra had been subject to a six-year delayed manumission clause and that Juana Segarra de Saavedra had liberated Segarra after he had completed the required service. Segarra's witnesses also described having seen, touched, and in some cases transported Segarra's freedom certificate. For example, Julián González explained how Saavedra had notarized Segarra's *carta de alhorría* in the town of Écija and had entrusted him to deliver the document to Antón Segarra. The testimonies of the three servants in Fernández de Santillán's palace indicate that Segarra's status, his eventual liberation from slavery, and the physicality of Segarra's *carta de alhorría* were common knowledge, and that laborers in the household shared and exchanged information about people's status and liberation from slavery. The discussions about freedom and slavery within this palace reflected broader conversations across neighborhoods in Sevilla, as residents gossiped about one another.

Felipa de la Cruz's letters to her husband reveal how enslaved Black people in Sevilla might have held out hope that distant family members would send funds to purchase their liberty from slavery. Cruz's letters envisioned Segarra's Atlantic travels as a means to accumulate wealth in order to purchase her and their children's freedom.[135] In her 1608 letter, among news about their neighbors and her enslavers, Cruz also described how the children were faring without their father and exasperatedly reminded Segarra of his family's enslaved status and that their children had no other salvation except to hope that their father would relieve them of their enslaved condition:

> Your daughter María is healthy, although in past days the poor creature was very unwell, and all she does is ask after you and when you will return, and they take great care to entrust you to God every night when they go to sleep. Your son Andrés Segarra is also pretty: all he does is play with these ladies, and in this way, fortunately, both siblings entertain themselves in this way, and they are always chirping for their father. And I am not surprised, because they do not have any other source of goodness or relief other than God, if it is not the one you will have to provide them.

The source of relief that Cruz envisioned Segarra providing their children likely reflects a previous arrangement between the married couple that Antón would use his liberty to earn enough money to send funds to pay for their liberation from slavery.

[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., fols. 10r, 18v–20v.

Cruz spelled out this expectation in the final lines of her 1608 letter, when her anxiousness about Segarra's silence became unbearable. In the closing lines of that epistle, Cruz beseeched Segarra to remember how much enslaved people desired liberty:

> Dear brother of my soul, remember my predicament and how I am not in my house, even though it is true that these people raised me and treat me well. You already know my [enslaved] condition and that it does not spare anyone, and so for your life's sake keep this ahead of anything else and see that your children are captive, and suffering grief and spite. You already know how much we desire freedom. Let me know about your health.

These lines reveal how Cruz envisioned Segarra's Atlantic sojourns as a means of accumulating capital to purchase their freedom.

Cruz's letters are emblematic of a host of collective and fractured memories in Sevilla of histories of liberation from slavery shared by neighbors and mutual aid practices between Black kin that sometimes spanned the Atlantic. Cruz's reminder to her husband not to forget her desire for liberty likely reflected an informal contractual agreement between husband and wife that he would use his liberty to accumulate capital and purchase his kin's freedom. Such an agreement reflects a broader practice between spouses of engaging in mutual aid to liberate their loved ones from enslavement.[136] Cruz may have been thinking of the experience of her neighbor, the aforementioned María de la O, who grew up enslaved in San Salvador parish and married a free man named Francisco Hernández in 1583. Hernández eventually purchased María de la O's freedom in 1596 for sixty *ducados en realles de plata*,[137] and the couple subsequently traveled to Peru in 1600 as free people.[138]

Cruz may also have known or heard about María Gómez, the beforementioned free Black woman who traveled to Sevilla from Cabo Verde in the early 1570s and who generated new freedom papers through witness testimonies in 1573 after losing her freedom papers on a ship.[139] Those testimonies also revealed that Gómez had traveled from Cabo Verde to Sevilla to liberate her sister from slavery in Sevilla.[140] Vasco Fernández,

[136] For an overview of the number and proportion of enslaved people who purchased their liberty in sixteenth-century Sevilla based on notarial records, see Fernández Chaves, "Amas, esclavas, y libertad" and Pérez García, "Matrimonio, Vida Familiar."

[137] "María de la O," AGI, Contratación, 5262A, no. 55, fols. 10^{r}–11^{r}.

[138] Ibid.

[139] See Chapter 1, notes 136–145; "María Gómez," AGI, Contratación, 5226, no. 2, ramo 28, fols. 1^{v}, 5^{r}–6^{v}.

[140] Ibid.

a mariner who testified about Gómez's lost *carta de alhorría* in 1573, described how she had traveled from Cabo Verde to Sevilla to liberate (*alhorrar*) her sister in Sevilla. A second witness, Jorge Viegas, described that Gómez "is from Cabo Verde, where this witness is resident and *natural* and that she [María Gómez] is *horra* and free and came to this city with a freedom certificate (*carta de alhorría*) of her own and she came to Castilla to liberate her sister."[141] In short, Gómez was a liberated Black woman who had embarked independently on a voyage from Cabo Verde to Sevilla armed with her own freedom certificate to liberate her sister who was languishing as an enslaved subject in the city of Sevilla.

Gómez's voyage to Sevilla from Cabo Verde sheds light on flows of communication through word of mouth and letters between Black populations in Cabo Verde and Castilla, and this will be of significance to those studying Sevilla-Cabo Verdean merchant communities in sixteenth-century Cabo Verde. But this epic history of a formerly enslaved Black woman traveling to Sevilla to liberate her sister from slavery may also have become etched into communal memories within late sixteenth-century Sevilla, impacting the personal cartographies and horizons of possibilities and expectations for enslaved Black people in the city, such as Felipa de la Cruz. Gómez resided in Sevilla for at least ten years before she embarked on a voyage as a wage-earning servant to Nicaragua in 1577.[142] Cruz was likely a young child during the years that Gómez resided in Sevilla, so she may have heard about this history of mutual aid between Cabo Verde and Sevilla, especially as Gómez likely resided in the parish of San Juan or San Pedro, which lay in close proximity to Cruz's abode on the northern edge of San Salvador parish (see Figure C.1.1).[143]

Cruz may also have heard about how some liberated Black people who had moved from Sevilla to the Spanish Americas later sent funds to liberate their enslaved children and pay for their journey to the Spanish Americas. Examples of mutual aid and liberation between parents and children that span the Atlantic reveal transoceanic ties and communication between Black people forcibly separated by slavery, and the existence of webs of trust that permitted absent Black parents to facilitate the fraught and delicate legal process of liberating their children from afar. Sending money and engaging in economic transactions in absentia

[141] Ibid.
[142] "María Gómez," AGI, Contratación, 5538, libro 1, fol. 10r.
[143] "María Gómez," AGI, Contratación, 5226, no. 2, ramo 28, fols. 2r–3r.

involved a degree of literacy as well as access to networks of social capital and trust. These cases reveal that absent parents communicated through letters and word of mouth across the Atlantic, and also that they employed legal representatives to act on their behalf in Sevilla.

One example of a liberation from afar by an absent parent took place in 1579, when twenty-year-old Isabel de Vitoria petitioned the Council of the Indies in Madrid for a license to travel to Lima.[144] Vitoria explained that she wished to be reunited with her mother, a free Black woman named Ginesa de Sosa, who resided in Lima. Sosa was likely born enslaved in Sevilla, but had obtained her freedom and traveled to Lima. In Lima, Sosa had gathered enough capital to send money to pay for her daughter's liberation from slavery. The freedom certificate that Isabel de Vitoria presented at the House of Trade to prove that she was an *horra* outlined how Sosa had sent the funds for her daughter's liberation.[145] Sosa would have instructed an agent to take the funds for her daughter's liberation from Lima to Sevilla, and to act on her behalf in the city of Sevilla when drawing up the contract of purchase with Vitoria's owner. In this case, Ginesa de Sosa entrusted the purchasing of her daughter's liberation to a factor named Fernando Guzmán, whom she presumably also entrusted to deliver some of her letters to Vitoria. Guzmán also likely helped Vitoria with the process of petitioning for a passenger license at the Council of the Indies. Vitoria described how her mother had sent her letters requesting that she travel to Lima and had provided the money to pay for the cost of the journey. Vitoria obtained a license, as she was recorded as a passenger on a ship bound for the Americas on January 23, 1582.[146] Within a decade, Ginesa de Sosa was an active economic actor in Lima who had accumulated some wealth, signing various notarial contracts in the 1590s that cataloged commercial agreements and her purchase and sale of enslaved people.[147]

A second example of liberation from slavery by absent parents is the case of Francisco de Gamarra, described as both *mulato* and Black, who was formerly enslaved in Castilla and settled in Lima as a free man where he became a distinguished and celebrated builder (*albañil*), commanding a

[144] "Isabel de Vitoria," AGI, Indiferente, 2091, no. 24.
[145] Ibid., fols. 2^{r}–3^{r}, 6^{r}–7^{v}.
[146] "Isabel de Vitoria," AGI, Contratación 5538, libro 1, fol. 330^{r}.
[147] "Isabel de Vitoria," AGI, Indiferente, 2091, no. 24; "Isabel de Vitoria," AGI, Contratación 5538, libro 1, fol. 330^{r}; "Ginesa de Sosa," AGNP, Notarias, no. 1 DCM1 23,75 and 23,76, fols. 109^{v}–112 (November 21, 1591).

significant salary for his work.[148] He also held the position of *mayordomo* in a prominent Black confraternity that was established between 1569 and 1574, called the Cofradía de Nuestra Señora de la Antigua, at Lima Cathedral.[149] Gamarra's tenure as *mayordomo* lasted until some time between 1585 and 1598, after which subsequent *mayordomos* pursued him for embezzlement of alms.[150] He owned Black slaves and regularly signed labor, commercial, and trading contracts before Lima's notaries and won building contracts commissioned by Lima's *cabildo*. In the late 1580s, Gamarra sent funds across the Atlantic to purchase his daughter's freedom from slavery in Sevilla and to pay for her voyage to Lima. In 1589, a young Black woman named Ana explained in a petition for a passenger license that her father, Francisco Gamarra, had sent funds from Lima to Sevilla to "purchase her liberty" ("*rescatarla*"), and that she wished to travel to Lima to live with him.[151] Even though Francisco de Gamarra was comparatively wealthy for a *horro*, the cost of sending funds to Sevilla to liberate his daughter from slavery would not have been insignificant. He would have sent these funds via trusted associates given this was such a delicate matter. Ana described how the person who brought the funds that her father had sent from Lima was the same person who had paid her owner for the price of her liberty to liberate her from slavery. I have been unable to locate any further information as to whether judges at the House of Trade or the Council of the Indies granted Ana a license to cross the Atlantic to join her father in Lima, although there is no indication that her request was denied. Francisco de Gamarra later became embroiled in legal disputes with associates in the 1590s and was briefly imprisoned, but when he passed away in 1605 he had significant capital.[152]

[148] Francisco de Gamarra was contracted for many building projects by the *cabildo* of Lima, and appears in Bromley, *Libros de Cabildos de Lima*, 118, 163, 266, 316, 328, 363, 421, 436, 517, 584, 639, 666, 703–4, 741–742, and 757. See also AGNP, PNL, N 1, CYH1: 29,74, fols. 102^{v}–103^{v}; 29,397, fols. 261–261^{v}; AGNP, PNL, N 1 RGB1 43,61 fols. 105^{v}–106; AGNP, PNL, N 1 AYH1: 10,39, fols. 246–246^{v}; 10,291, fols. 317–317^{v}; AGNP, PNL, N 1 AYH1: 11,305, fols. 84–84^{v}; 11,319, fols. 105–105^{v}; AGNP, PNL, N 1 CAM1 3,786, fols. 1193–1193^{v}; AGNP, PNL, N 1 CAM1: 5,730, fols. 1232–1232^{v}; 7,151, fols. 281^{v}–282; AGNP, PNL, N 1 JBE1 12,679, fols. 1075–1075^{v}.

[149] Apodaca Valdez, *Cofradías Afrohispánicas*, 90–91; Graubart, "'So color de una cofradía'"; Jiménez Jiménez, "A mayor culto," 354.

[150] Campos and Sevilla, *Catálogo de Cofradías*, 117: Cat. no. 584 "Libro LXIV:3 1598/99 Lima. Autos seguidos contra Francisco Gamarra, moreno libre. Car, 32f."

[151] "Ana," AGI, Indiferente, 2098, no. 18.

[152] Francisco de Gamarra's brief imprisonment appears in Bromley, *Libros de Cabildos de Lima*, 76, 77, 97, 123, 126, 149, 181, 470, 584, 939.

Felipa de la Cruz's reminder to her husband to "remember my predicament" and to not forget "how much we desire freedom" because the condition of slavery "does not spare anyone" thus reflects a broader history of ideas and hopes about slavery, freedom, and mutual aid in Sevilla. Such ideas permeated the worlds of many of Cruz's contemporaries and the collective memories of enslaved and formerly enslaved Black people in the city.[153] While it may not be possible to discern the precise moments when individuals discussed collective memories and their knowledge about possible paths from slavery to freedom, these discussions were omnipresent as enslaved people went about their daily lives in the city, performing labor duties, tending to their affective ties, and hearing about news of their neighbors and friends, near and far. Cruz's plea to her husband formed part of a broader set of murmurs and discussions in her household and in the streets of Sevilla about people's paths to liberty, as well as the fractured communal memories about how kin might send funds across the Atlantic to pay for the price of their loved one's liberty.

LAST HOPE FOR FREEDOM: FELIPA DE LA CRUZ'S PETITION TO THE HOUSE OF TRADE

Freedom was constantly on Cruz's mind, especially when she learned in the early months of 1612 of her husband's early demise. Three years after penning her last letter – and nine years after Segarra had left Sevilla – Cruz received news that her husband had been killed in Veracruz two years earlier. Cruz's hopes that he would liberate her from slavery were dashed in an instant. Through the word-of-mouth networks that brought news of her husband's early demise, Cruz also learned that he had left some property in Veracruz. Such news also caused a dilemma. Castilian laws dictated that neither Cruz nor her two enslaved children could inherit this capital, as enslaved people could not own property.[154] Cruz's actions after learning about Segarra's death reveal her engagement with the rule of law in the Spanish empire, and the know-how she possessed to maneuver through legal cultures in the hopes of obtaining a coveted *carta de alhorría*. While enslaved her whole life in Sevilla, Cruz possessed an acute awareness of the laws of freedom, the role of

[153] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}.

[154] *Las Siete partidas del Sabio Rey don Alfonso*, "Quarta Partida, Titulo XXI, De los Siervos," 38–39.

the House of Trade, the rights of imperial subjects to petition for royal justice at the Council of the Indies, and of the various possible routes to obtain liberation from slavery.

After hearing that Segarra had perished in Veracruz, Cruz employed the services of a procurator to send a petition to the Council of the Indies.[155] At the time of this petition, Cruz had only learned of her husband's death through informal networks and had not yet heard an announcement from the House of Trade. She therefore surmised that royal officials in New Spain had not yet sent the value of Segarra's belongings to Castilla, even though two years had already elapsed since his death. In her petition to the Council of the Indies, Cruz insisted that the crown order royal officials in New Spain to investigate her husband's death and to collect the value of his property.[156] Without a doubt, she presented herself to the crown in this petition (and perhaps also to her procurator) as a free Black woman who had the right to inherit her deceased free husband's property, and hid the fact that she was enslaved. Although I have not yet located Cruz's original petition, it is likely that she explained she had heard about Segarra's death through word of mouth: The resulting royal decree noted that "Phelipa de la Cruz, Black woman, *vecina* of the city of Sevilla, has made representations that her husband Antón Segarra was killed in New Veracruz about two years ago, and that he left certain effects and property in the power of Francisco Moreno, notary of the *cabildo* of that city."[157] These lines reveal that Cruz was able to date the time of Segarra's death and the location of his property in Veracruz before official news of his death arrived in Sevilla. Her petition also shows her awareness of the role that the House of Trade played in distributing the property of deceased Castilians to their heirs in Castilla. In her petition to the Council of the Indies, Cruz also pleaded that the crown ensure that royal officials in New Spain send Segarra's belongings to the House of Trade in order that she could then petition to inherit the property, as the resulting royal decree explained how "the property should be inherited by her."[158] Cruz's petition to the Council of the Indies resulted in the crown issuing a royal decree on May 29, 1612, instructing royal officials

[155] The royal decree issued in response to Cruz's petition is Real Cédula, AGI, México 1094, legajo 18, fols. 102r–103r. I have not yet located Cruz's petition, although so far, I have searched for it in Peticiones y Memoriales, AGI, Indiferente, 1257, 1434, and 1435, and Expedientes y Peticiones sueltas, AGI, Escribanía, 974.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid.

in New Spain to ensure the safe return of Segarra's estate to the House of Trade in Sevilla.

By early April 1612, however, Cruz had already received news that the value of Segarra's belongings had arrived at the House of Trade. Soon thereafter, she appeared in person at the House of Trade to request further information and to inform officials that she was the legitimate heir.[159] During that visit, Cruz requested that the House of Trade show her a copy of Segarra's testament and any other relevant paperwork, noting that she had the right to receive these documents as she was Segarra's wife. Such a request signals that Cruz was not yet aware that Segarra had perished intestate. Cruz may also not have known that Segarra had received her letters in Veracruz and had kept them locked in a box along with his treasured freedom papers, and that transcribed copies of her letters had arrived in Sevilla as part of his estate. She also made a statement that embellished her fictional account as a free Black woman by claiming that she and Segarra had a son named Cristóbal who had been born free, and positioned herself as the guardian of Segarra's heir:

> Felipa de la Cruz, a Black woman, widow of Antón Segarra, who perished in the Indies. As I am the legitimate mother of Cristóbal, my son, and son of the said my husband, I say that the property of my husband Antón Segarra has arrived in this House [of Trade], in the value of 44,500 *maravedíes*, as is recorded, which I should be given as the administrator of the said Cristóbal my son, as there are no other heirs except me and my son.[160]

In this statement, Cruz omitted any reference to her two enslaved children, Andrés and María. Instead, she described the freeborn son as Segarra's only child. She also suggested that she resided in a different parish of the city to San Salvador, noting that the pair had married in San Magdalena parish.

Cruz's statement to the House of Trade reveals her strategies to obtain freedom, even after the tragic death of her husband. She hoped to inherit Segarra's estate and save enough capital to eventually purchase her children's liberty. The amount of money that arrived in Sevilla as Segarra's estate was 44,500 *maravedíes* (approximately 99 *pesos de oro común*). Historian Fernández Chaves has traced how the average cost to enslaved people in Sevilla of purchasing their own liberty was approximately 22,720.7 *maravedíes* in the late sixteenth century.[161] Segarra's estate

[159] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fol. 2r.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Corona Pérez, *Trata Atlántica*; Fernández Chaves, "Amas, esclavas, y libertad."

therefore represented a significant sum for Cruz, an amount that could help her to purchase the freedom of her children and possibly contribute towards the cost of her own liberation too.

To support her request to inherit Segarra's belongings, Cruz also presented a written petition to the House of Trade (likely through a procurator) on April 6, 1612.[162] In this, she explicitly stated that she was a free Black woman: "I Felipa de la Cruz, of Black color, widow of Antón Segarra, Black man who perished in the Indies, and as the legitimate mother of Cristóbal Cigarra my son and son of the said my husband … I declare that I am a free person and not subject to any captivity." In addition, the petition contained declarations by two witnesses who both attested to Cruz's fabricated biography as a free Black woman.[163] One of these witnesses was a free Black woman named María de la Torre, whose declaration provides tentative evidence of a community of free and enslaved Black residents of Sevilla who might act in solidarity to help liberate one another from slavery. In this case, perhaps Cruz hoped that if she managed to convince judges at the House of Trade that she was a free person, she might have the opportunity to funnel the funds to a friend or corporation that would help her to pay for the price of her liberty; perhaps to María de la Torre.

Unfortunately for Cruz, her owner discovered her ploy, and within two months of her petition, Don Francisco Fernández de Santillán sent a competing claim to the House of Trade, on June 8, 1612. Fernández de Santillán argued that while Segarra was indeed a liberated Black man, his heirs – his two children named María and Andrés (and not Cristóbal) – were his property.[164] Santillán presented three witnesses to support his claim. One was his daughter, Doña Beatriz Gómez, who had known Felipa de la Cruz as a slave in the palace her whole life, and the other two were neighbors who lived on Calle Carpinterías.[165] They described how they had known Cruz for over twenty years as Fernández de Santillán's slave and that they had witnessed Cruz and Segarra exchanging vows in Salvador Church (not Magdalena Church as Cruz had attested in her own petition that same year), and that the couple had two children named Andrés and María (and not Cristóbal) who were also enslaved to Francisco Fernández de Santillán.[166]

[162] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 4^{r}–5^{r}.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid., fols. 25^{r}–30^{r}.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid.

Without the copies of Cruz's own letters to Segarra in 1604 and 1608, which were serendipitously transcribed on the orders of the judge of the assets of the deceased in Veracruz in 1609, it might be tempting to regard the entire episode as a nefarious attempt by Fernández de Santillán to illegitimately claim Cruz as his slave. However, Cruz's descriptions of her enslaved status, her two children, and her owner's affairs in the letters that she penned and sent to her husband make it fairly certain that Cruz did fabricate her biography as a free woman in 1612 in the hope of inheriting her husband's property and then purchasing her freedom. For example, in 1608, she had relayed news about her owners and the affairs of the Sevillian nobility who had passed through the prominent palace. Cruz described her owner's recent ill-health, writing that "Don Francisco, my *señor*, is well, although before now he had a great illness that almost left him blind." Describing the children of the household, she noted that the young daughters of the noble family, including one of the witnesses who later testified against her at the House of Trade, "Doña Beatriz and Doña Luisa are very pretty," while also sending news of the birth of her owner's son, "my *señora* gave birth to a child last Christmas, a boy called Don Alonso de Santillán."[167] Here, Cruz was describing the birth in 1604 of Alonso Fernández de Santillán, a figure who would go on to cement the family's prominent status through his appointment by the Spanish monarchy as Caballero de Santiago, while his own son, Francisco Fernández de Santillán (b. 1629), elevated the family's noble status when the Spanish monarchy granted him the title of Marqués de la Motilla in 1679. Thereafter, the family's palace – where Cruz had grown up – became known as the Palacio del Marqués de la Motilla and remained in the family's ownership for the next four centuries until 2023, when the property was sold to a Córdoba-based company, reportedly for the owner's private use.[168]

Faced with these two competing claims for Segarra's inheritance, judges at the House of Trade concluded that Fernández de Santillán should inherit Segarra's property as he had proven that both of Segarra's children and their mother were his slaves.[169] Such a decision is not surprising given Cruz's enslaved status. Judges at the House of Trade did not rule against Cruz because they perceived that she was ineligible to

[167] Felipa uses the phrase "mi señora" and "mi señor" to refer to her owners. Ibid., 10^{r}, 18^{v}–20^{v}.
[168] Antolín, "Una empresa cordobesa," *Diario de Sevilla*, November 12, 2022.
[169] Ibid.

claim inheritance if she was in fact a free Black woman – other Castilla-based free Black individuals were successful at petitioning the House of Trade to inherit Black family members' property – but rather, her petition failed because judges reasoned that Castilian law stipulated that owners of slaves legally inherited any property that might transfer to their slaves (in this case, Segarra's two enslaved children), and that Cruz and her two children were indeed enslaved to Fernández de Santillán.[170] Such a logic contradicts the practice of urban slave-owners allowing their slaves to accumulate small portions of their wages as slaves for hire with the aim of eventually purchasing their liberty, thus implying a degree of legal separation of property between slaves and their owner, as Chapter 3 explores. Nonetheless, judges at the House of Trade reasoned that Cruz and her children could not inherit the estate because they were enslaved. In addition, the prominence of Francisco Fernández de Santillán in the governance of the city of Sevilla as a *venticuatro* and as he was a member of one of the city's most notable families likely swayed House judges to rule in his favor, especially as Cruz provided no further countertestimony or evidence in her petition after her owner made a claim to the property.

CONCLUSION

Although Felipa de la Cruz spent her entire life languishing in enslavement in a palace near Salvador Church in Sevilla, she maintained transatlantic ties and developed extensive legal know-how in her pursuit for freedom. Free and enslaved Black people who resided in, or passed through, Sevilla often formed part of diverse webs of transoceanic relationships that were stitched together through word of mouth on ships, letter writing, and relationships born out of the commerce that serviced annual fleets of ships in particular ports. The history of ties and communication between key urban and maritime nodes in the Atlantic world facilitated the exchange, discussion, and disputation of ideas between Black individuals and communities in urban spaces across the Atlantic world in the late sixteenth century. Felipa de la Cruz's interactions with the House of Trade after Segarra's death indicate that she possessed an acute awareness of the rule of the law in the Spanish empire and of the role of the House of Trade in administering and distributing property that belonged to

[170] "Alonso de Castro, Isavel de Vargas," AGI, Contratación, 526, no. 1, ramo 1, doc. 12; "Cristóbal López Riquel," AGI, Contratación, 963, no. 2, ramo 11; "Alonso Hernández Manzano," AGI, Contratación, 476, no. 1, ramo 5.

deceased members of the Castilian diaspora. Further, mirroring her husband's copious efforts to obtain two freedom certificates upon his liberation from slavery in 1602, Cruz understood the importance of freedom papers and the possible routes to obtain these coveted documents.[171] In her fabricated tale of 1612, Cruz presented herself to the House of Trade as a free Black woman who had the right to inherit her deceased husband's property. She anticipated that doing so might provide her with a marginal chance to purchase her and her children's liberty. Living in the center of Sevilla near to the House of Trade and the routes of town criers who announced recent deaths, and thus the possibilities to inherit the riches of those who perished in the Indies, inevitably informed her knowledge about how to petition for her husband's property both at the Council of the Indies and at the House of Trade. Additionally, her relationships with, or knowledge of, many other Black men and women in her neighborhood who had obtained their liberation from slavery and sometimes left Sevilla for the Americas also meant that she was privy to a constant murmur of information among Black residents about slavery and freedom.

Felipa de la Cruz, a Black woman who spent a lifetime in captivity toiling as a domestic slave, interacted with the Atlantic world and the Castilian empire with confidence and knowledge. She took pen to paper to fight for her freedom on various fronts, and in so doing left a remarkable trail of documents about her life. It is a great injustice to her and her fearless pursuit of freedom that the historical archives remain silent as to whether she and her children ever obtained their liberty, or how gravely she was punished by her owners for attempting to inherit her deceased husband's property – or by judges at the House of Trade for providing false testimony about her status as a free woman. Hopefully, scholars working on the history of enslaved and free people in Sevilla's notarial, parish, or judicial archives will in due course locate further documents about her life, and write a more comprehensive history of this remarkable woman who spent her life imagining, hoping, and fighting for liberty.

[171] "Antón Segarra," AGI, Contratación, 303, no. 2, fols. 11^{v}–13^{r}. See also Chapter 1, notes 96–103.