

Petition of Slave Margaret Lee

"To the Honorable the Judges of the Superior Court of Law for the District of Washington,

Your unfortunate petitioner Margaret Lee in behalf of herself and her tender little Infants Maria & Abraham, humbly begs leave to represent to your Honor,

That she is the immediate offspring of Descinda and Thomas Lee, free citizens of the Town of Boston in the State of Massachusetts.

That her Parents, altho' of a black hue, had the Happiness to be born free citizens [sic] people, and as such, enjoyed all the benefits of freedom, in the above mentioned State.

That your petitioner sometime in the year 1774 (or she believes), and a little after sun setting, happening to be on the Town Wharf, was suddenly seized by a certain Samuel Satin, bound with cords, and hurried on Board of a vessel, which sd. Satin commanded.

That your petitioner was immediately lodged in the Hold of the vessel, where

she bewa--[?] her distressful situation, unpitied and unseen by every human Eye. After undergoing for some time this melancholy confinement, her fetters were unloosened, and the Light of the Sun once more she experienced. But new sorrows now filled her Breast - the Land which she had been accustomed to dwell in was now vanished from her sight and every Gale wafted her further and further from her affectionate Parents, Relations, friends and Country. Every revolving day now heightened her sorrows, till at length her Destiny was fixed, villainy triumphed, and her misery became complete: the vessel having escaped the Dangers of the sea, your petitioner was landed in the State of Maryland, and there doomed to Servitude.

The cruel Satin then traded your petitioner as a Slave, and Labour, oppression, & their attendant griefs hovered around her. But recollecting the invaluable Blessing of which she had been so unjustly deprived, she communicated her situation to some benevolent men, with a view of obtaining

relief, but Satin, fearful lest truth might appear from Investigation, sold her to a certain George Johnson, who sold her not long afterwards to Mr. Francis Hawkins, who sold her to a Mr. Butcher[?] Boylen[?] of Frederick County, the state of Maryland, and by this last mentioned Gentleman, she was sold & delivered to a certain Samuel Gammon of Sullivan County, in the South Western Territory, in whose possession she now is, in the capacity of a humble Slave.

This your Honors must discover, that your Petitioner, for the period of twenty years, has suffered a Life of servitude, in a Country where she had inherited from her Parents Liberty.

Your petitioner's situation need only be recollected, to convince your Honors that she is unable to defray the expenses of a Law suit. She therefore humbly solicits the interposition of this Honorable Court, in favor of herself and her two little infants. And if it should seem meet to your Honors, that the most gracious Writ of Liberty, of a Habeas Corpus cum causa, may immediately issue, directed to Samuel Gammon of Sullivan County, commanding him to appear before your Honors ----[?] with the bodies of Margaret Lee & her two children Maria & Abraham, together with the cause of their Detention, or that your Honors may take such steps, as will give your petitioner an opportunity of shewing that freedom was her Birthright. And your petitioner will ever pray &c. [Signed] Margaret (X) Lee, in behalf of herself and her two children Maria & Abraham. 18th of September 1795."

[From Box 2, Folder 7, Washington Superior Court Loose Papers.]