

# Oppression, Rebellions & Campaigning

## Fighting for Freedom

From the moment of capture, many Africans fought for freedom, resisting their conditions and fate by running away. 18th century London newspapers carried adverts from slave traders and owners for the recapture of runaway slaves.

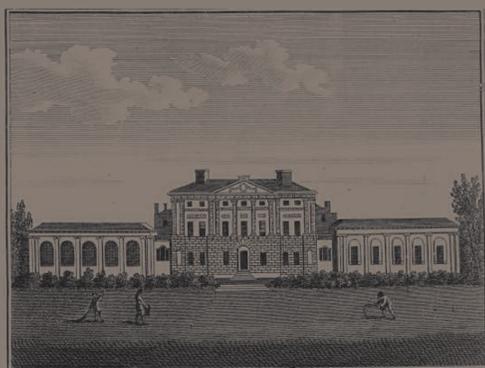


During the 1700s the shipping insurance newspaper 'Lloyd's List' recorded the many slave revolts at sea. It is estimated a revolt occurred on one in every eight journeys on British slave ships. Most were suppressed by the ship's crew. Slaves were then punished, tortured and brutally whipped for their resistance. Many were killed by being thrown overboard.



Slave rebellions took place on the Caribbean plantations during the 1600s and 1700s. Bloody uprisings were fought in Antigua, Barbados, Jamaica, Guadeloupe, Guyana, Granada, St Kitts and St Vincent. The Maroons of Jamaica were the descendants of runaway slaves who successfully resisted their owners in 1655. Establishing themselves in the remoter parts of Jamaica, their independence was eventually confirmed by a government treaty in 1739.

## The Beginnings of the Anti-Slavery Movement



View of CANE WOOD the largest Villa of the Earl of Mansfield near Highgate in Middlesex. Published according to Act of Parliament by John Bury 1786. Paternoster Row.

A lot of people in this country were beginning to recognise the evils of slavery. But it was not until the end of the 18th century that a movement began here with the aim of abolishing the trade.

Following the high profile Somerset Case of 1772 - brought to court by the campaigner Granville Sharp - slavery was declared illegal on British soil. Lord Mansfield of Kenwood House near Highgate was the judge of that case.

His significant ruling was that James Somerset, a runaway slave in England who had been recaptured, could not be sent back to Jamaica. His comments were:

*'Slavery is so odious that it must be construed strictly. No master was ever allowed here to send his servant abroad because he absented himself from his service or for any other cause. No authority can be found for it in the laws of this country and therefore we are all of the opinion that James Somerset must be discharged.'*

Granville Sharp used the Somerset Case to test the legality of slavery in Britain. This controversial case attracted wide interest. News of the ruling reached the Caribbean where it encouraged enslaved Africans who had taken part in plantation revolts.