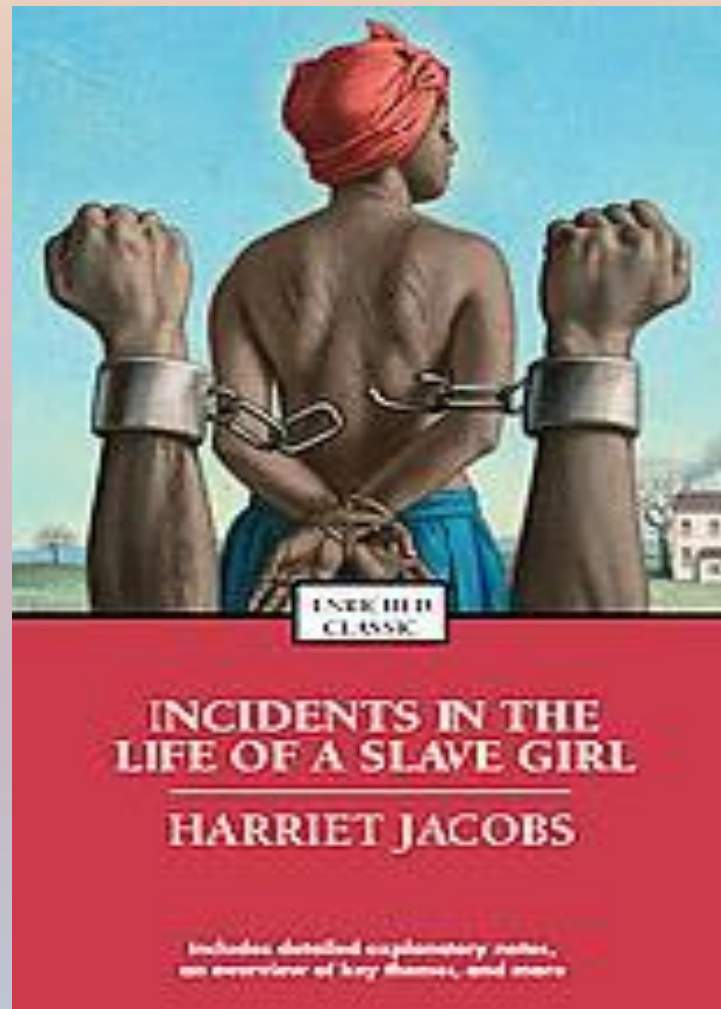
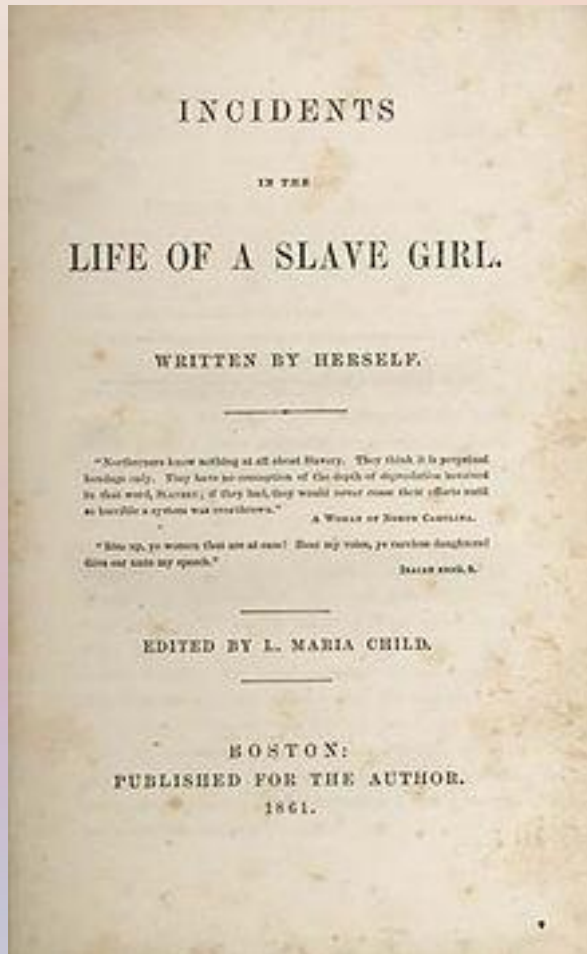


# Harriet Jacob's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

## Lecture 5: The Final Chapter



# Dismissed by Scholars



- Has pseudonym
- Seven years in an attic?!
- “Family” story less important than escape slave narratives
- Feminist literature (ptth!)
- Scholars thought maybe the editor (Childs) wrote it
- Story rediscovered in the 1970's – research has backed its authenticity

# Feminist Literature as Well



The Abolitionist movement was split over the question of womens' rights.

The start of the Women's Rights Movement was born from the Abolitionist movement in that women were allowed to be involved.

Ultimately, African American males received the power to vote before women



# Reward Poster for Harriet's Return

## \$100 REWARD

**W**ILL be given for the apprehension and delivery of my Servant Girl **HARRIET**. She is a light mulatto, 21 years of age, about 5 feet 4 inches high, of a thick and corpulent habit, having on her head a thick covering of black hair that curls naturally, but which can be easily combed straight. She speaks easily and fluently, and has an agreeable carriage and address. Being a good seamstress, she has been accustomed to dress well, has a variety of very fine clothes, made in the prevailing fashion, and will probably appear, if abroad, tricked out in gay and fashionable finery. As this girl absconded from the plantation of my son without any known cause or provocation, it is probable she designs to transport herself to the North.

The above reward, with all reasonable charges, will be given for apprehending her, or securing her in any prison or jail within the U. States.

All persons are hereby forewarned against harboring or entertaining her, or being in any way instrumental in her escape, under the most rigorous penalties of the law.

**JAMES NORCOM.**

*Edenton, N. C. June 30*

7752W

# Reward Poster Text

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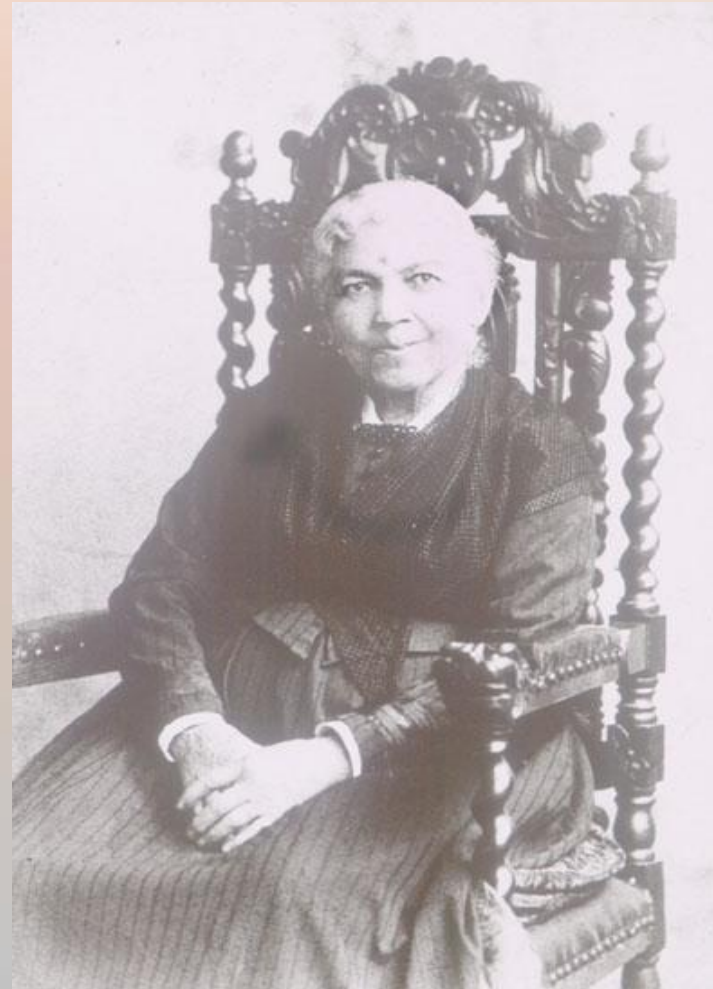
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JAMES NORCOM.

# What Happened to Harriet Jacob?

- Norcom would hunt for Harriet for the rest of his life
- An abolitionist woman bought her freedom.
- She went on to serve as a nurse in the Civil War
- She and her daughter opened schools to educate newly freed children
- Harriet Jacob died in March of 1897



# Harriet Jacob & Edenton N.C

Letter from Harriet Jacobs to Ednah Dow Cheney  
1867

Two years had passed since the end of the Civil War. Harriet Jacobs had spent the time helping freed slaves by distributing relief supplies, teaching, and providing health care. She had returned to her childhood home in Edenton, North Carolina, to help those she once knew.

In a letter to Ednah Dow Cheney, a Boston abolitionist and secretary of the New England Freedmen's Aid Society, Harriet wrote from her grandmother's old house, giving a report on the state of the recently-freed slaves.

Please note that spelling has not been corrected and that, as was Harriet's style, the first characters of sentences were not capitalized.



# Jacob's Letter

Edenton, April 25th

Dear Mrs Cheney

I felt I would like to write you a line from my old home. I am sitting under the old roof twelve feet from the spot where I suffered all the crushing weight of slavery. thank God the bitter cup is drained of its last dreg. there is no more need of hiding places to conceal slave Mothers. yet it was little to purchase the blessings of freedom. I could have worn this poor life out there to save my Children from the misery and degradation of Slavery.

I had long thought I had no attachment to my old home. as I often sit here and think of those I loved of their hard struggle in life -- their unfaltering love and devotion toward myself and Children. I love to sit here and think of them. they have made the few sunny spots in that dark life sacred to me.

I cannot tell you how I feel in this place. the change is so great I can hardly take it all in[.] I was born here, and amid all these new born blessings, the old dark cloud comes over me, and I find it hard to have faith in rebels.



# Letter Continued

the past winter was very severe for this region of Country[.] it caused much suffering, and the freedmen with but few exceptions were cheated out of their crop of cotton. their contract masters shipped it for them, and when they ask for a settlement, they are answered I am daily expecting the returns. these men have gone to work cheerfully, planted another crop without the returns to live on until their present crop is made. many of the large plantations of the once wealthy Planter, is worked under the control of Colored Men. the Owners let [rent] their Plantations to the freedmen in preference to the poor Whites. they believe the Negro determined to make money, and they will get the largest portion of it. last years experience I think will be a profitable lesson[.] many will learn to act for themselves. Negro suffrage is making a stir in this place. the rebels are striving to make these people feel they are their true friends, and they must not be led astray by the Yankees. the freedmen ask if Abraham Lincoln led them astray, that his friends is their friends his enemies their enemies.

I have spent much of my time on the Plantations distributing seed and trying to teach the women to make Yankee gardens. they plant everything to mature in the summer, like their corn and cotton fields. I have hunted up all the old people, done what I could for them. I love to work for these old people. many of them I have known from Childhood

there is one School in Edenton well attended. on some of the Plantations there is from 15 to 25 Children that cannot attend School, the distance is so far. some of the freedmen are very anxious to establish Plantation schools, as soon as the more advanced Schools, can send out teachers. many of the freedmen are willing and will sustain their teachers.

# Letter Concluded

at present there is a great revival in the colored Churches. the Whites say the Niggers sung and prayed until they got their freedom, and they are not satisfied. now they are singing and praying for judgment. the white members of the Baptist Church invited the colored members to their Church, to help them sing and pray. I assure you they have done it with a will. I never saw such a state of excitement[.] the Churches have been open night and day. these people have time to think of their souls, now they are not compelled to think for the Negro.

my love to Miss Daisy [Cheny's daughter]. I send her some Jassmine blossoms[.] tell her they bear the fragrance of freedom.

Yours Truly

H Jacobs

# What Happened to the Norcom's?

Ja Norcom, Letter to Mary Matilda Norcom (1846)

Edenton, N. C., 19 August 1846

My dear Daughter,

. . . You must remember, my daughter, what I have said to you, on a certain subject. I would not acknowledge myself to be engaged, affianced, to any man not in a condition to give me a comfortable & respectable support-to place me beyond the chance of want or poverty. I, my dear, could never never ratify such an engagement were you to make it. Everything, therefore, in relation to this matter must be conditional. It cannot be positive, for, however meritorious a man may be, & how high he might be in my opinion or esteem, I could not sanction his connexion with a daughter of mine, in the "Holy Estate" with the prospect of poverty & wretchedness before her.

Treat the man who honors you with his partiality & preference with candor, politeness-nay, with kindness, but let him not hope, if he is inconsiderate enough to wish it, to draw you into a situation in which you would be less comfortable than you are in your father's dwelling, or less comfortable than you could be among your friends, in your present condition. W-is a meritorious and respectable young man, an honour to his family, & worthy of general esteem; and had I a fortune, my daughter, to give you, or the means of making you independent, I see nothing in his character to object to. But his inability to support a family, as long as it lasts, is an insurmountable objection, & of the probability of its removal no correct opinion can now be formed. Time alone can instruct us on the subject. Pray be prudent, my daughter, and do nothing in your absence from us, that you would not do in the presence of your father,

Ja Norcom

From Donald M. Scott and Bernard Wishy, *Americas Families, A Documentary History* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1988).