

Document #1773-06-25-01 – Catharina Knows Her Worth

K4BL Abstract: The shift from French to Spanish dominion brought with it new laws, new customs, and new strategies for enslaved resistance. In 1773, Catharina, enslaved on the Destrehan Plantation, claimed her freedom based on a new system of manumission that came to be called *coartación*. A few things are important to note in her story. First, throughout the case, Catharina argued for and defended her right to a lower self-purchase price based on an unspecified infirmity. How the participants reacted to her claims of disability is of interest to anyone studying the history of disability and how it intersects with race, gender, and bondage. Second, the enslaver of note in this case is none other than Étienne de Boré, the man known in the history of United States slavery as the innovator of sugar cultivation in Lower Louisiana. This makes Catharina's case a critical part of the history of the plantation in the United States. Third, Catharina is not arguing just for herself in her battle for freedom; included in her claim is her five-year old daughter, Felicité. Once again, kinship remains the tie that binds and sustains, inspiring resistance, refusals, and challenges that might have been impossible to imagine otherwise.

<https://www.lacolonialdocs.org/document/14161>

WPA Card:

276, file 27

June 25, 1773-Sept. 4, 1774

PETITION BY SLAVE TO BUY OWN FREEDOM WITH GIVEN MONEY. CONTESTATION FOLLOWED BY PERMISSION.

Catalina, mulatress, 36 year old, and Felicite, 5 year old, from the estate of Juan Baptista Destrehan Sp. LHQ v.9. p.556

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LHQ - Vol.9 #3, 9/1926, pg. 556

Names: Black - (Destrehan), Catharina; (Destrehan), Carlota; (Destrehan), Felicité; (Destrehan), Manon

Names: White - Almonester y Roxas, Andrés; Beauregard (*père*), Jacques Santiago Toutant; de Boré, Jean Étienne; Braud, Dionicio; Broutin, François; Destrehan, Juan Baptista; Destrehan, Juan Bautista Honoré; Destrehan, Juan Luis; Destrehan, Juan Noel; Destrehan, Maria Isabel; Fazende, Juan Renato Gabriel; Fromentin, Nicolas; Lebeau, Francisco; St. Elenoy, Miguel; Quiñones, Estevan; Ranson, Lois; Thomasin, Antoine

Names: Native - n/a

Keywords - childhood, *coartación*, disability, kinship, motherhood, self-purchase, succession, valuation, womanhood

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| Transcription (Spanish, diplomatic) | Translation (English, modern) |
|--|--|
| <p>[folio 2 recto] [digital 4]</p> <p>[Marginalia:]</p> <p>Lo pres.^{to} la p.^{te} exp.^{te} no sa ver firmar nueva orléans 25 de Junio de 1773 doy feé [Firmado:] Almonester [Rubrica, Almonester]</p> <p>[círculo, moderno, a lápiz] 1 [moderno, a lápiz azul] #276</p> <p>[Cuerpo:]</p> <p>Catharina mulata esclava de los bienes de D. Juan Bautista Destrehan, en la mejor forma que haya lugar en drō ante V.S. paresco y digo que por hacerme bien algunas personas y en recompensa de beneficios y servicios que les ha prometrar hacer me quieren aprontar el dinero a que pueda hacen der el valor demi de libertad y la de mi hija nom.^{da} de edad de cinco a.s en cuya atencion Suplico a A.V.S. se sirva mandar a D. Gabriel Facensda y a D. Estevan Boré que administran</p> | <p>[page #1] [digital 4]</p> <p>[Marginal note:]</p> <p>Presented without signature, [being her] not knowing how to sign. New Orleans 25th of June of 1773. I hereby certify, [Signed:] Almonester [Rubrica, Almonester]</p> <p>[circled, modern, in pencil] 1 [modern, in blue pencil] #276</p> <p>[Body:]</p> <p>Catharina, <i>mulata esclava</i> [belonging] to the estate of <i>Don</i> Juan Bautista Destrehan, in the appropriate manner as provided by law, before Your Lordship appears and states that I have served well certain persons, and in recompense for the benefits and services that I have promised to do, I want to prepare the money that I can to amount to the value of my freedom, and that of my daughter, Felicité, five years of age. For this consideration I request, Your Honor, if it serves you, to order <i>Don</i> Gabriel Fazende and Estevan Boré, who administer</p> |

dichos bienes, nombren un terrero para que hagan mi estimacion y la de mi hija, que yo por mi parte nombró a S.

[f. 2 verso] [dig.5]

[rasgado] me otorguen la carta
[rasgado] conforme a drõ por tanto
[rasgado] se sirva proveer y mandar [rasgado] llevo pedir por ser refus.^a
lo sitios y Juro en lo necess.^o &^a

Traslado ____

[Firmado:] Unzaga [Rubrica, Unzaga]

[círculo, moderno, a lápiz] 2

Proveio lo el S.^r D. Luis de Unzaga y Amezaga Brig.^r de los rr^s ex^{os} y Gov.^{or} Grâl de esta Prov.^a por S.M. q lo Firmo en veinte y cinco de junio De mil set^s sesenta y tres _____

[Firmado:] Andrés Almonester
y Roxas S.^{no} pu.^{co}
[Rubrica, Almonester]

N.^a En el mismo dia hise saver el decreto q. ante de esta a la mulata Cathalina doy Fee ____

[Firmado:] Almonester [Rubrica, Almonester]

this estate, to name an assessor to do my estimation and that of my daughter, which I, for my part, named herein.

[p. #2] [dig.5]

[ripped] grant me the freedom papers
[ripped] in accordance with the law, thusly
[ripped] you provide and
order [ripped] I ask in hope that I am not refused
this [my request], I swear in the way in which it is necessary, etc.

Translated.

[Signed:] Unzaga [Rubric, Unzaga]

[circled, modern, in pencil] 2

Thus ordered: [By] the Lord *Don* Luis de Unzaga y Amezaga, Brigadier of the Royal Armies, and Governor General of this Province by His Majesty. Signed 25th of June 1773.

[Signed:] Andrés Almonester
y Roxas, Notary Public
[Rubric, Almonester]

Notarized: On the same day, having made known the decree which precedes to the *mulata* Catharina. I certify,

[Signed:] Almonester [Rubric, Almonester]

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