



# Chains of Love: Slave Couples in Antebellum South Carolina

*Emily West*

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Historians have traditionally neglected relationships between slave men and women during the antebellum period. In *Chains of Love*, historian Emily West remedies this situation by investigating the social and cultural history of slave relationships in the very heart of the South. Focusing on South Carolina, West deals directly with the most intimate areas of the slave experience including courtship, love and affection between spouses, the abuse of slave women by white men, and the devastating consequences of forced separations. Slaves fought these separations through cross-gender bonding and cross-plantation marriages, illustrating West's thesis about slave marriage as a fierce source of resistance to the oppression of slavery in general. Making expert use of sources such as the Works Progress Administration narratives, slave autobiographies, slave owner records, and church records, this book-length study is the first to focus on the primacy of spousal support as a means for facing oppression. *Chains of Love* provides telling insights into the nature of the slave family that emerged from these tensions, celebrates its strength, and reveals new dimensions to the slaves' struggle for freedom.



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