

Phillip Gowen, Petition for Release from Servitude, 1675

To the Rt: Honble: Sr: William Berkeley knt: Governr: & Capt. Genll: Of Virga: with the Honbl: Councill of State:

The peticon of Phillip Gowen a Negro, In all humility Sheweth: That yor. petr. being a servt: to Mrs. Amye Beazlye late of James Citty County Widdow decd. the said Mrs. Beazlye made her last will & testament in writtinge under her hand & seale, bearing date the 9th. day of Aprill An Dom. 1664: and amongst other things, did order, will, & appoint, that yor. petr. by the then name of Negro Boy Phillip, should serve her Cousin Mr: Humphrey Stafford, the terme of Eight yeares then next ensueing, and then should Inioy his freedom,e & be paid three barrells of Corne & a suit of Clothes, As by the said will appeares, Soone after the makinge of which will, the said Mrs. Beazlye departed this life, and yor petr. did continue & abide with the said Mr. Stafford (with whome he was orderd by the said will to live) some years, and then the said Mr. Stafford sold the remainder of yor. petr. time, to one Mr. Charles Lucas, with whome yor petr alsoe continued, doeing true & faithfull Service, but the said Mr: Lucas coveting yr petr. Service longer then of right itt was due, did not att the expiracon of the said Eight years, discharge yor petr. from his service, but compelled him to serve three yeares longer then the time sett by the said Mrs: Beazleys will, and then not being willing yr. petr. should Inioy his freedom, did contrary to all honesty & good conscience, with threats & a high hand, in the time of yor. petr. Service with him, and by his confedracy with some persons, compell yor. petr. to sett his hand to a writeing, which the said Mr. Lucas now saith, is an Indenture for twenty yeares, and forcet yor. petr. to acknowledge the same in the County court of Warwick.

Citation: Undated petition of Phillip Gowen to Governor Sir William Berkeley, ca. 1675, Colonial Papers, Folder 19, No. 2, Record Group 1, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

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Now for that may itt please yor. honrs: yor. petr. was att the time of the makeing thes said forst writeing, in the service of the said Mr. Lucas and never discharged from the same, the said Mr: Lucas alwaies uniuistly pretending that yor. petr. was to serve him three yeares longer, by an order of Court is untrue, which pretenses of the said Mr. Lucas will appeare to yor. honrs. by t[he] testimony of persons of good creditt:

Yor: Petr. therefore most humbly prayeth yor. honrs. to order that the said writeing soe forced from him be made void; and that the ssid Mr. Luca[s] make him sattisfacion for the said three yeares service above his tim[e] and pay him Corne & Clothes with costs of Suite:

And yor. petr. (as in duty bound) shall ever pray &c.

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