

Source B: Letter from Elizabeth Sprigs to her father

Background: Elizabeth Sprigs was an indentured servant in Maryland. What does she say about her living conditions and the way she is treated? Why might she be telling her father this?

Maryland, September 22, 1756

Honored Father,

My being for ever banished from your sight, will I hope pardon the Boldness I now take of troubling you with these, my long silence has been purely owing to my undutifulness to you, and well knowing I had offended in the highest Degree, put a tie to my tongue and pen, for fear I should be extinct from your good Graces and add a further Trouble to you, but too well knowing your care and tenderness for me so long as I retained my Duty to you, induced me once again to endeavor if possible, to kindle up that flame again.

O Dear Father, believe what I am going to relate the words of truth and sincerity, and Balance my former bad Conduct my sufferings here, and then I am sure you'll pity your Distressed Daughter, What we unfortunate English People suffer here is beyond the probability of you in England to Conceive, let it suffice that I—one of the unhappy Number—am toiling almost Day and Night, and very often in the Horses' drudgery, . . . I am tied up and whipped to that Degree that you'd not do to an Animal. I am given scarcely anything but Indian Corn and Salt to eat, and that even begrudged. I am kept almost naked, no shoes nor stockings to wear, and the comfort after slaving during Masters pleasure. What rest we can get is to wrap ourselves up in a Blanket and lie upon the Ground, this is the deplorable Condition your poor Betty endures, and now I beg if you have any Compassion left, show it by sending me some Relief; Clothing is the principal thing I need, which you may easily send to me by any of the ships bound to Baltimore Town on the Patapsco River in Maryland.

In Duty to you and Uncles and Aunts, and Respect to all Friends

Honored Father

Your undutiful and Disobedient Child

Elizabeth Sprigs