

10 Questions for: Frank Lee
Lives Bound Together Interview Activity

Interviewers: Oliver Holtz and JP Chameli

Background: When did your subject live on Washington's Mount Vernon, what was their role, and what were their connections to the Washington family and others free and slave who lived and worked on the plantation?

Frank Lee lived on Mount Vernon from 1768-1799 after being bought by George Washington. He worked in George Washington's Mansion first as a waiter, then promoted to a Butler. He served the Washington family every day during every meal and welcomed all the visitors in a nice and kind way. He did what assigned and was released in 1801, by Washington's will.

Question 1: Hello Frank, my first question is, how did you get into slavery, and where did you arrive from?

Answer- I was born into slavery from my mother, Mary Lee as well as my brother William. George Washington bought me for 50 pounds in 1768, and I was to report to his mansion for my instructions. I found my way and met Sir Washington.

Question 2: What jobs did you take on during your serving time in Mount Vernon and what did you think about your experience while working.

Answer- When I arrived at Mount Vernon, Sir Washington greeted me and invited me inside showing me around the place giving me the job as a waiter. I was responsible for giving him his food every meal, setting up the table and making sure all his guests as well as himself were pleased when there. I soon was promoted to the Butler position. This gave me a room in the south wing of the mansion with my own closet under my own authority.

Question 3: Do you have a family? If so, who, and did you get to be with them during your time as a slave?

Answer- Yes I do have a family. I was born and raised from an enslaved mother, and a white man. I have a brother named William Lee, who is also enslaved and working at Mount Vernon for George Washington. I have a wife named Lucy, and four children, Mike, Phillip, Patty, and Edmund. Edmund died early after being born.

Question 4: Can you explain to me what a full day looked like at Mount Vernon, and how difficult it was?

Answer- A full day in my eyes was waking up and immediately working. I was usually the first one up because to get all my jobs done, I needed to spend a lot of time on some of them, especially cleaning and tidying up the mansion for Sir Washington. After that on some days, guests will come into the mansion. I did my best to make them feel welcome and direct them to where they needed to go. If no one came I would remain doing jobs while watching the entrance. In the Midst of this, I would prepare all the meals for Sir Washington and Martha. Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner. After this I would clean up for them and head off to relax and dose off. Then I would repeat the next day.

Question 5: When you were done with your day, how would you describe the night? Did any major things happen that are worth talking about?

Answer- No, everything seemed quite normal. After doing all my jobs during the day, I needed rest so I fell asleep usually quickly. The next day I would get up and immediately start working my jobs again. As long as I pleased Sir Washington, It would only get easier from there.

Question 6: How did you get out of slavery, and when did you get out?

Answer- When Sir George Washington died in 1786, in his will it said that all of his slaves were to be freed when he passed on. So I, along with the 122 others, were released in 1801.

Question 7: If George Washington's will was to release all his slaves when he died, how come you weren't released until 15 years later?

Answer- What happened was when George Washington died, his will wasn't exactly right when he dies all of the slaves got released, it was his wife. So when his wife Martha Washington died, that was when we got released so that's why it took longer.

Question 8: What happened to your family after slavery, and what happened to you?

Answer- After I was released from slavery, my wife Lucy and my children remained enslaved because they were not owned by George Washington. After Martha's death however, Lucy and the kids were inherited by Martha's granddaughter Eleanor. Phillip was sent to Arlington house where he worked as a valet for Martha's grandson George Washington Parke Custis.

Question 9: In your family, whom were you close with?

Answer- I was mostly close with my brother William. I wouldn't say I was super close with my parents, but at the same time I wouldn't say I wasn't close because at the end of the day they were my parents and raised me. But yes, I would say my brother. Especially after we both got enslaved to the same person .

Question 10: What did you think of your job, and do you think it was better than the other slavery job's that you've heard about?

Answer- Honestly at first when I started off as a waiter I hated it. I didn't think I would ever get out of it. Once I got my job as a butler for George Wasnington and his wife in the mansion, my whole perspective changed. I was put in as a high profile butler, and that got me into contact with Mount Vernon, which although slavery was the worst thing to ever happen to me, made the job and slavery overall way better. I don't really have an opinion on the other jobs because I never heard much about them or people complaining about what job they had. Everyone just kind of sucked up whatever job they had to do and embraced it.

Scoring- 20 points... Please format so that this rubric follows your interview on its own separate page.

Criteria	5 Points	4 Points	3 Points	2 Points
Knowledge	Students accurately	Students accurately	Students accurately	Students invent

Gained and Shared	answer 7-10 questions about the person who was interviewed/studied and can tell how this interview relates specifically to the topics being studied in class.	answer 4-6 questions about the person who was interviewed/studied and can tell how this interview relates in general to the topics being studied in class.	answer 2-3 questions about the person who was interviewed/studied.	answers to questions about the person who was interviewed/studied.
Questions	Students carefully studied the biography and related sources about their subject and created an informative and interesting series of relevant questions and follow up questions for their subject.	Students studied the biography and related sources about their subject and created an informative and interesting series of relevant questions that stand alone.	Students asked questions about their topic in general but didn't make them specific to the life experiences of their subject.	Students asked random questions that didn't follow the biography or other sources related to their subject.
Presentation	The presentation is well organized, polished, and full of accurate facts that connect multiple sources that teach about slavery from the particular experiences specific to the subject.	The presentation is organized and easy to follow and has accurate facts about the particular experiences specific to the subject.	The presentation is not organized, but has accurate facts about slavery in general along with some experiences specific to the subject.	The presentation is not organized and is hard to follow. Generalizations about slavery are not supported by specific facts.
Formatting and Editing	Students edited and organized the transcript in a way that made the information clear and interesting.	Students edited and organized the transcript in a way that made the information clear.	Students edited and organized the transcript, but the information wasn't as clear as it could have been due to grammar, spelling, and capitalization errors.	Students typed a transcript, but there is no evidence of proofreading or editing.
Total Score		Comments		