

ABSTRACT

In Jamaica during the Eighteenth Century, between one in ten and one in fifteen of all the slaves were or had been runaways. This study which begins in 1740 and ends in 1807, examines advertisements published in the Jamaican newspapers during the period, with the primary aim of establishing why the slaves ran away.

It begins by considering the advertisements as source material for runaway slaves. It next considers why the Maroons accepted Trelawny's peace settlement in 1739 and suggests that by it, the Maroons were able to preserve the cultural homogeneity of their groups. Then, through a loosely constructed Theory of Disruption, the study tries to make the point that the slaves, like the Maroons, valued their tribal and kinship groups which may have been destroyed by slavery sufficiently to run away to re-create them. This Theory does not attempt to refute current interpretations of running away as resistance to slavery but is merely presented as an extension of that premise.

It concludes by contrasting the escape devices of the slaves with the deterrents against running away to establish why some slaves managed to run away successfully and why others failed.