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Cuba as a Center of the Atlantic Slave Trade: The Carricaburu Family Network, 1791–1820

*By Pierre Force and Carlos Venegas Fornias*

The period 1808–20 was a peculiar moment in the history of the Atlantic slave trade, when the trafficking was banned by the United States and Britain but still allowed by Spain. In that brief period, during which the trade reached its highest point in history, Cuban slavers made large fortunes, which were reinvested in the island's fast-growing plantation economy. This article focuses on the Havana-based owners of the *Josefa Segunda*, a Spanish slave ship that was seized by U.S. Customs in New Orleans in 1818, triggering a case that went up to the U.S. Supreme Court. The shipowners were originally from southwestern France. Their presence in Cuba is puzzling because access to the Spanish Empire at the time was restricted to Spanish nationals. Archival research conducted in Cuba, the United States, Spain, France, and the United Kingdom makes it possible to fully map one slaving network that was part of the Basque/western Pyrenean trading diaspora. For Havana-based slavers, political and economic marginality was both motivating and enabling: motivating because it made them aspire to higher status; enabling because the ruling class, who wanted to keep a distance from slaving while still benefiting from it, gave them free rein and did not try to compete with them.