

# In the Name of the Mother: The Story of Susannah Mingo, A Woman of Color in the Early English Atlantic

By Jenny Shaw

Susannah Mingo was an enslaved woman of color. In the 1670s and 1680s, she labored on a Barbados sugar plantation before being taken by her master to an English estate on the outskirts of London in 1686. After his death in 1689, Susannah lived in *de facto* freedom in the capital until her death in 1726. Mining legal records, deeds, wills, plantation inventories, shipping logs, and ecclesiastical documents from England and the Caribbean, this article examines the myriad facets of Susannah's life. It pays careful attention to the dynamics of Susannah's interactions with her master (with whom she had three children), her experiences in the West Indies and London, and her role as a mother. Her biography challenges scholarly assumptions about enslaved women's sexual coercion, the role of planter patriarchy in the English world, and early modern metropolitan life. In so doing, Susannah's experience reveals the many ways that she simultaneously embodied and transcended norms regulating racial identity, labor, reproduction, and even enslavement itself. Ultimately, Susannah's story demonstrates how enslaved people understood and responded to the ways that family, patriarchy, and the rise of racial slavery shaped the early modern English transatlantic world.