Resource #6. An Interrogation

In the course of an interrogation by Union authorities, an enslaved man who had come to the Charleston area from the countryside described how he made his escape from slavery.

[*Morris Island? S.C. September 4? 1864*]

> *Examination of Elias Johnson (colored) who came into our lines Sept. 4th 1864.*
>
> *I was a slave and belonged to Mr. William Merton of Somervill a county place. 22 miles from Charleston. I was a waiter on the overseer "Mr. Anderson." He whipped me a good deal he is a bad man. I came to Charleston the 1st of May I was at work on Goose Creek and the Cooper River, bringing wood on a flat boat to Charleston. I was at Hunts Station near the bridge when I met these two men, John Malone & John Edmands. They asked me to desert with them and I done so. Mr Merton my master is a very rich man, he has 150 slaves and four large Plantations on the Ashley River called Savannah Place, Jer[s]y Hill, Enton place, & Riverside. They are all connected. He also has a large brick house in Charleston head of Meeting Street, it is not damaged by our shells. I am 19 years old. my Father is free. his mother was an Indian. My Mother is a slave. There are two companies of Art[iller]y and once co. of cavalry at Mount Pleasant. I do not know anything of any other troops, or the guns. I have not seen any of the Prisoners in Charleston. I came over in a boat. to Morris Island.*

Statement of Elias Johnson, [4? Sept. 1864], Letters Received by the Provost Marshal, ser. 4277, Provost Marshal, Department of the South, Records of U.S. Army Continental Commands, Record Group 393 Pt. 1, National Archives [FSSP C-1546].

Questions for Students:

- How did Johnson's owner try to control him?
- How did Johnson resist?
- What were the consequences of Johnson's resistance?