#4. Making Decisions About Resistance

Now that you've learned a lot about slavery, control, and resistance in Charleston, it's time to move on to the part of your report that Secretary of War Stanton is most interested in — **your predictions**. Do you think that many African-American people in the Charleston area will choose this time, during the Civil War, to resist slavery? What kinds of resistance will they choose, and why? And who within the African-American population in Charleston is most likely to resist?

You will be making predictions about the kinds of decisions that you think enslaved people in Charleston will make, at this period of time. In this activity you'll first learn how to follow a logical process to make decisions. Next we will apply your newly developed decision-making skills to looking at the decision that members of the African American community in the Charleston area may have made in regards to resisting slavery through joining with the Union cause, escaping from their owners, or choosing other forms of resistance.

A. Decision-Making

We all make decisions all the time. Some are small decisions (What should I wear today? Whom will I sit next to on the bus?). Some are big decisions (Where should I apply to college? What kind of car should I buy?).

When we make small decisions, we usually don't have to go through a complicated thought process to figure it out. But when you make a major decision, it helps to think through your decision carefully and rationally.

Learn to make a decision

We are going to follow the **PACED** model for decision. **PACED** is an acronym that stands for the following:

P-Problem—State the Problem.

A-Alternatives—List the Alternatives.

C-Criteria—Identify Criteria.

E-Evaluate—Evaluate your Alternatives.

D-Decision—Make your Decision.

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You will use a matrix like the one below to record your decision-making process.

Problem: (write in)

Criteria>>	C1.	C2.	C3.	C4.
Alternatives				
Alt. 1				
Alt. 2				
Alt. 3				

Let's suppose you are discussing with your friends what movie to go see this weekend. You could use a decision-making matrix to make your decision.

Let's go through the process.

P-Problem—State the Problem

That's easy. For this situation your problem is, *what movie should we see this weekend?*

Write the problem across the top of your decision-making matrix.

A-Alternatives—List your Alternatives

In this case, your alternatives are the movies you may want to see.

List your alternatives (the movies you may want to see) down the left hand side of the decision-making matrix.

C-Criteria—Identify Criteria

This is where you have to decide what is important to you. *What factors are going to go into what movie you want to see?*

#4. Making Decisions About Resistance (cont'd)

These may include things like where and when things are showing, how many in your group want to see each movie, what type of movie you are in the mood for, what type of reviews has each movie gotten

E – Evaluate.

Which one of the alternatives meets the most of your criteria?

Ideally, there will be a movie that most or all of the people in your group want to see, that has gotten good reviews, and that matches your mood. This would clearly be the movie to pick.

D – Decide.

Select the alternative that meets the most of your criteria, or meets your criteria most fully.

B. Apply your decision-making skills to predicting the decisions of African-Americans in the Charleston area

[Note to teacher: Distribute one "identity" from the list below to each student, ensuring that there is a mix of the four in the class. Once students have come to a decision for the identity they have, lead a class discussion in which students of each identity share which decision they predicted and why. Have a few students take notes. These notes will be helpful as students write the final part of their Spy Report.

*** Note that the identities below are fictitious and designed to portray a range of experiences from the Charleston area.]*

So now you can use the process you just learned to think about how different African-Americans in Charleston may have thought about the decision to resist slavery during the Civil War.

Individuals would have made this decision differently, depending upon the circumstances of their own lives – free or enslaved, female or male, their family status. Therefore, the best way to make your predictions is to think of the circumstances of one of the African-Americans you met in and around Charleston. Using the knowledge you've gained about slavery, control and resistance in Charleston, you can use a decision-making matrix like the one above to predict how this African-American might have made his or her decisions about

#4. Making Decisions About Resistance (cont'd)

resistance.
[link here to Learning Activity #4 worksheet]

Four African-Americans you met in and around Charleston:

- Lydia, 18, a woman enslaved in a Charleston household with 6 other enslaved persons. Lydia's owner has recently given her a set of slave hire tags that allow her to travel in Charleston to do laundry and other domestic chores for other white families (with almost all of the pay going to her owner). Lydia has not married and doesn't have children.
- Moses, 22, is enslaved on the Jersey Hill rice plantation located about 25 miles from the city of Charleston. Moses' wife and young daughter live on a different but nearby plantation. The owner of Jersey Hill, Mr. Edwards, has left the plantation in the hands of the overseer, who is notoriously cruel. Edwards and his family felt that it was too dangerous to stay at the plantation or in their townhouse in Charleston, and have gone to stay with his brother's family farther inland. Edwards has talked a lot about having the overseer bring the enslaved people to his brother's plantation. If this were to happen, Moses would be separated from his wife and daughter.
- George, 38, is a free African American man who works as a blacksmith in Charleston. He is a leader in the free black community, known chiefly for his powerful sermons delivered at the African Methodist Episcopal church. Through his network of friends and business associates in the community, George hears a lot about what is happening in different Charleston households and on the plantations, as well as what is going on behind the Union lines.
- Patience, 30, is an enslaved woman on a cotton plantation located approximately 10 miles from Charleston. Both of Patience's brothers joined a group of runaways who planned to join the Union army. According to rumors that she has heard, her brothers succeeded in getting to the Union lines and were registered with the United States Colored Troops. Since their escape, Patience's owner has been talking about moving inland and selling all but a few of the people he has enslaved.

#4. Making Decisions About Resistance (cont'd)

C. Make your predictions to complete your report to Stanton

You've thought about predictions for one of the four African Americans you've met, but other spies in the class have considered the other stories. Listen to their conclusions about who is most likely to resist slavery in Charleston, and in what ways.

Now that you've heard predictions about how four different African-Americans might have chosen to resist slavery (and, in the eyes of Stanton, taken actions that would have helped the US government), you can write the final part of your Spy Report.

In this section, you need to predict which parts of the African-American population in Charleston would be most likely to resist slavery, and in what ways. Being specific is important, since Stanton is more interested in some kinds of resistance – escaping and joining the USCT, for example, than he is in other kinds of resistance – learning to read and building up one's skills for freedom, for example, or choosing to desert the plantation but not join up with the Union army.