

Date: 1527, June 28. Valladolid, Spain

Theme: Order from king Charles V mandating the promotion of marriage among “blacks” in La Española

Source: PARES, Portal de Archivos Españoles—Archivo General de Indias,INDIFERENTE,421,L.12,F.151R-152R

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So that blacks in the  
Española island /  
get married

Don Carlos Etc[etera] since we are informed that,  
because many blacks have been shipped and are shipped every /  
day to the Española island and [because] there are very few /  
Christian Spaniards in it, [this] could be cause for some /  
unrest or uprising of the said blacks seeing themselves /  
powerful and enslaved or [that] they leave for the mountains and escape /  
from the farms and orchards where they are, like sometimes /  
they have tried, and there will be no entire /  
security, and there could occur other damages and /  
inconveniences. And after discussing it in our Consejo de /  
las Indias it has been considered that it will be great remedy to order /  
the marriage of the blacks that from now on are shipped /  
to the said Island and those that are now in, and that /  
each one [of them] has his woman, because with this and the /  
love that they would have for their women and children, and with the /  
order to marry it would be cause for great /  
quite among them, and other sins and inconveniences will be prevented /  
that otherwise occur. And also /  
we are informed that despite that /  
some Christian Spaniards wanted to get /  
them married, for this reason they have not done it, with /  
fear that they [the slaves] tell them that by doing so they will become free, /  
not been so, and they will not be oblige anymore to serve them. /  
all these been consulted with me, the King, it was agreed /  
that we should mandate to issue this our letter /  
on the said matter. And we deemed appropriate, for which /  
we mandate that now and from now on /  
all and any persons that may have /  
our licenses both general, per the authority /  
that we have given to the said island, and special /  
to private individuals to ship black /  
slaves to the said Española island, be obliged /  
to ship one half males and the other half females /

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out of the persons for whom they have license, so that /  
they carry the same amount of both, /  
and to get them married under law and benediction, /  
the blacks willing and on their volition, under penalty /

that he who were to ship blacks in another manner, even /  
with explicit license from us, loses them /  
for the benefit of our office and treasury and /  
also we order that all and any /  
persons, denizens and transients in the said island that /  
have or may have black slaves in the future /  
be obliged to get them marry and do get them marry /  
within fifteen months following the proclamation /  
of this our letter, provided it is the will of the said /  
male and female blacks, because matrimony must /  
be free and not forceful, under penalty that not /  
getting them married as it was said, they be applied /  
and we hereby apply them to the said /  
our office and treasury, since hereby /  
we declare that, by getting them marry and consenting /  
to it their masters and lords, it is not understood /  
that they are free but enslaved, as if the said /  
matrimony has not happened. All that is said /  
contained in this our letter we mandate /  
our president and *oidores* of our *audiencia real* of the Indies that resides /  
in the said island and other justices of it /  
to so have it obeyed and complied with and execute it /  
in all and for all, according to /  
its content, with no fault, under penalty of our /  
grace and loss of all their assets /  
for our office and treasury. And because /  
the aforementioned be notorious and nobody /

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may pretend ignorance of it, we order that /  
this our letter be announced publicly /  
at the squares and markets of the city of Seville /  
and the cities, villages and places of the Española /  
island by town crier and before public notary. /  
Issued in Valladolid on the twenty eighth of /  
the month of June, year of the birth of our /  
lord Jesus Christ of fifteen hundred and twenty /  
seven. I the King. Certified by Covos. /  
Signed by the Bishop of Osma and the Canaries /  
and Beltrán and Manuel /  
[ ? ] To the islands of Cuba and San Juan /