

**EXCERPT FROM FORWARD OF ERICA ARMSTRONG DUNBAR'S NEVER CAUGHT**

"Very few eighteenth-century slaves have shared their stories about the institution and experience of slavery. The violence required to feed the system of human bondage often made enslaved men and women want to forget their pasts, not recollect them. For fugitives, like Ona Judge, secrecy was a necessity. Enslaved men and women on the run often kept their pasts hidden, even from the people they loved the most: their spouses and children. Sometimes, the nightmare of human bondage, the murder, rape, dismemberment, and constant degradation, was simply too terrible to speak of. But it was the threat of capture and re-enslavement that kept closed the mouths of those who managed to beat the odds and successfully escape. Afraid of being returned to her owners, Judge lived a shadowy life that was isolated and clandestine. For almost fifty years, the fugitive slave woman kept to herself, building a family and a new life upon the quicksand of her legal enslavement. She lived most of her time as a fugitive in Greenland, New Hampshire, a tiny community just outside the city of Portsmouth.

At the end of her life, Ona Judge made another bold decision: she would tell her story. She granted interviews to two reporters for abolitionist newspapers, the first of which, with Thomas H. Archibald, appeared in the Granite Freeman in May of 1845, almost forty-nine years to the day of her escape. Judge's second, and final, interview appeared in 1847 on New Year's Day in the Liberator, the nation's most powerful abolitionist newspaper. Judge's interviews are quite possibly the only existing recorded narratives of an eighteenth-century Virginia fugitive. Her oral testimony allows us to learn about the institution of slavery not only through the lens of white abolitionists and slave owners, but through the voice of a fugitive."

Dunbar, Erica Armstrong. *Never Caught : The Washingtons' Relentless Pursuit of Their Runaway Slave, Ona Judge*, Simon & Schuster, 2017. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unc/detail.action?docID=5671773>. Created from unc on 2023-07-25 16:45:15.

**Questions for Discussion**

- Most American high school students are familiar with the nation's first president, George Washington, but are unaware of stories like Judge's. Why do you think this was the case?
- Whose story is privileged and whose is silenced and why?
- Why do you believe her story is now being heard?
- Why is it essential to learn about the history of slavery and the lives of enslaved women such as Ona Judge?