#3. Control and Resistance

[Note to teachers: This section of the activity introduces students to a key concept in understanding slavery — the dual forces of control and resistance that were present in the interactions between the enslaved and slaveholders (as well as representatives of the broader slave society). It is useful to begin with students' own experiences of control and resistance in their own lives. The prompts in Section A here may or may not be appropriate or generative for your students; think of one that will connect directly to their own experience.]

A. How do people control one another? How do people resist efforts to control them?

In small groups and large societies, people are often the subject of control by other people. There are a variety of reasons for these kinds of control – some of them are fair, and some unfair. Often when people are controlled by another person or institution, they choose to find ways to resist. Think about how these ideas of control and resistance have been part of your life.

Ideas for Thinking or Writing:

- What are some of the ways that your behavior or your actions are controlled by others? Think about situations in school, at home, or in your community in which you experience limitations or regulations on what you can or cannot do.
- Who exercises control over you? What are the ways in which they influence your actions or behavior?
- In what situations have you resisted someone else's control? How have you chosen to resist? What were the consequences of your resisting?

B. Control and resistance in the experience of Charleston slaves

Slavery is one of the most extreme examples of efforts of humans to control the actions of other humans. You may already have learned about many ways in which slaveholders and the larger society tried to control the behavior of the enslaved. Now that you have learned about some of the specifics of slavery in the Charleston area, you can look in more detail at the question of how enslaved people resisted these attempts to control their actions, especially during the tumultuous

#3. Control and Resistance (cont'd)

times of the Civil War. Remember that resistance could take a variety of forms — some enslaved people resisted their owners' control, while others took steps that showed resistance to the entire structure of Charleston as a slaveholding society and part of the Confederacy.

Understanding how the enslaved were controlled, and how they resisted, is an important part of learning about what may have encouraged or discouraged slaves from taking actions like escaping or joining the Union army that will be part of your Spy Report to Stanton.

To collect information about kinds of control and resistance in the lives of Charleston's enslaved people, look at these resources:

#4: Slave hire tags in Charleston

#6: Elias Johnson escape story

#7: Holmes re: education

#10: Robert Smalls story

#11: Elliot letters re: attempts at escape

#12: Union soldiers accounts of assistance from African Americans

#13: Summary of Vesey rebellion and consequences

#14: Susie King Taylor on USCT; Saxton to Stanton re: recruiting

You can keep track of what you are learning on the **Official Investigation Record.**
[link here to pdf of Learning Activity #3 worksheet]

C. Writing the second part of your report

You can use the information you collected in Section B to write the second part of your Spy Report to Stanton.

In your report, you should provide Stanton information about the ways in which slaveholders and the public authorities in Charleston try to control enslaved people, how the enslaved resist, what opportunities they might have for resisting, and what the consequences have been in situations in which they have resisted. This explanation will provide important background information for the predictions you'll be making in the final section of your report.