



**Chained to the Rock of Adversity: To Be Free,  
Black, and Female in the Old South (Southern  
Voices from the Past: Women's Letters, Diaries,  
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*Chained to the Rock of Adversity* offers valuable insight into the lives of the Old South's free women of color, using personal letters and a diary to tell an extraordinary story.

The letters, from family members and friends, were written between 1844 and 1899 to Ann Battles Johnson, wife of prominent Natchez businessman William T. Johnson, and her daughter Anna, while Ann's daughter Catharine wrote the diary. A freed slave herself, Ann Johnson became the head of her family and a slaveholder before the Civil War. Her days were filled with the often tedious and sometimes overwhelming duties assigned to slaveholding women, but her race separated her from most other women of this class. The writings depict a tight-knit network of family and friends and show a family well aware of its precarious position in society, feared by most whites and resented by other blacks.

Editor Virginia Meacham Gould provides an extensive introduction, a cast of characters, identifying notes, and a brief afterword tracing the Johnson family to the present day.

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