

Karl W. Weiss '87 Faculty Lecture Series 2016-2017

Angela Keysor

Racial Borders of Belonging: Community Networks of Care, African Americans and Citizenship in Massachusetts, 1780-1810

While the enslaved may have gained legal freedom in Massachusetts as a result of the 1783 Quock Walker cases, these newly freed residents were refused access to local networks of care. Two legal decisions rendered by Massachusetts county courts in 1796 attempted to bring clarity to heated discussions among town authorities over whether newly freed men and women should be considered citizens in the realm of local health care.

The Shelburne and Greenfield decisions instead created legal confusion. As a result, community authorities interpreted 'freedom' in vastly different ways. Selectmen used arguments over money to construct substantial differences in the welfare a town gave to their white and black residents. This paper will follow the experiences of African American residents of Charlestown, Massachusetts to argue that after the Revolutionary War, local health care networks within Massachusetts transitioned into racialized welfare processes.



Elizabeth Freeman Center

Wednesday, January 25th at 7:00 pm
Campus Center 301 & 302