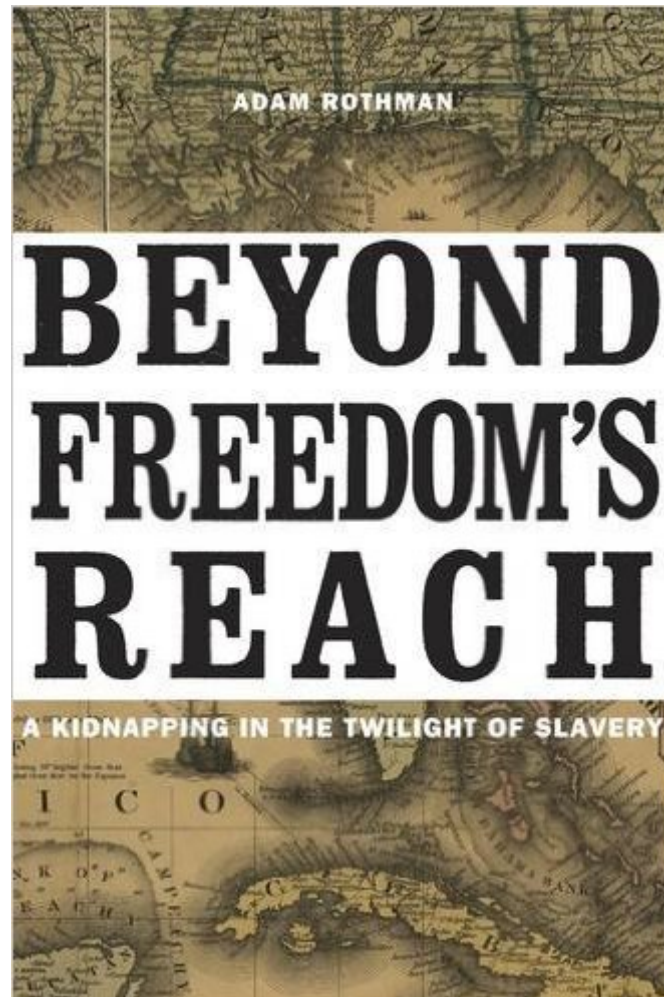


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# Beyond Freedom's Reach: A Kidnapping In The Twilight Of Slavery



## Synopsis

Born into slavery in rural Louisiana, Rose Herera was bought and sold several times before being purchased by the De Hart family of New Orleans. Still a slave, she married and had children, who also became the property of the De Harts. But after Union forces captured New Orleans in 1862 during the American Civil War, Herera's owners fled to Havana, taking three of her small children with them. *Beyond Freedom's Reach* is the true story of one woman's quest to rescue her children from bondage. In a gripping, meticulously researched account, Adam Rothman lays bare the mayhem of emancipation during and after the Civil War. Just how far the rights of freed slaves extended was unclear to black and white people alike, and so when Mary De Hart returned to New Orleans in 1865 to visit friends, she was surprised to find herself taken into custody as a kidnapper. The case of Rose Herera's abducted children made its way through New Orleans's courts, igniting a custody battle that revealed the prospects and limits of justice during Reconstruction. Rose Herera's perseverance brought her children's plight to the attention of members of the U.S. Senate and State Department, who turned a domestic conflict into an international scandal. *Beyond Freedom's Reach* is an unforgettable human drama and a poignant reflection on the tangled politics of slavery and the hazards faced by so many Americans on the hard road to freedom. *Beyond Freedom's Reach* received the Jefferson Davis Award from the American Civil War Museum and the 2016 Margaret T. Lane/Virginia F. Saunders Memorial Research Award from the Government Documents Round Table of the American Library Association. It was named a 2016 Book of the Year by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Through the prism of one slave woman's efforts to recover her kidnapped children during the Civil War, Adam Rothman weaves a masterful and gripping story of the cruelty and chicanery of slave owners and slave dealers alike in thwarting the potential freedom of young children. By swiftly transferring her three children to a ship bound for Cuba, the owners sought to hang on to their "property" in the form of three children under 10. Rose fights relentlessly to have her children returned from Cuba, using lawyers and politicians sympathetic and skilled. Rothman keeps the story's excitement keen, and yet also buttresses the events with the attending history of New Orleans from 1862 to 1865. I found this single story a way to learn about the tumult and uncertainty of life in the south during the Civil War: slave owners, wanting to keep their property were prepared to take any number of circuitous routes to capture and re-enslave freed African Americans. Both Confederate and Union sides were capable of taking advantage of the former slaves, and only a few men of principle were willing to try to help a woman reclaim her children. The vision of post Emancipation southern life, especially in places like New Orleans, informs our country even today. The book is a page-turner, fascinating in its unique story and skilled in its writing. I could not sleep until I finished it!

This is micro-history at its finest. In examining and contextualizing the trials of the Herera and the De Hart families, Rothman is able to do much more than relate a story. He is able to see the Civil War in a new light--to celebrate the great triumph of emancipation while simultaneously recognizing its lamentable limitations. By weaving together concise narrative with sharp analysis, the reader is treated to a compelling glimpse of the lives of the extraordinarily typical men, women, and children of Civil War-era Louisiana. I look forward to seeing how Rothman is able to synthesize this history in his anticipated scholarship on nineteenth-century New Orleans.

Adam Rothman has succeeded in crafting a work that is both historically informative and emotionally gripping. In *Beyond Freedom's Reach*, he writes about the complexities of the Emancipation movement through the story of Rose Herrera, a mother who struggles against an unjust system to retrieve the children that were stolen from her by her previous mistress. Rothman is an incredibly knowledgeable and resourceful historian as well as an eloquent writer; he has created a compelling narrative that seamlessly integrates fact, detail and compassion. *Beyond Freedom's*

Reach is a story that is highly relevant today, amidst continuing racial turmoil and the ongoing struggle for true emancipation. Thus Adam Rothman's *Beyond Freedom's Reach* is a must read for all those who believe we need to learn from our past to achieve true justice and freedom.

Well written and very informative

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