of prominent early national abolition societies became increasingly significant. The New York Manumission Society was committed from its inception to protecting the personal liberty of Black New Yorkers. Their full name, as announced at their inaugural meeting, was “A Society for promoting the Manumission of Slaves and protecting such of them as have been or may be Liberated.”\footnote{New York Manumission Society Records, 5:4.} As early as 1786 the NYMS Standing Committee reported with great concern that a “very Considerable” number of Black New Yorkers were being “shipped off to the Southern States,” and that they have reason to believe that “several” free people were among them.\footnote{New York Manumission Society Records, 5:17.} In spring 1787 the society tried to appeal for the introduction of law forbidding the export of slaves, and managed to get it “twice read in the Legislature,” but for “some Cause at present unknown” were unable to usher it into law.\footnote{New York Manumission Society Records, 5:23.} In 1788, the NYMS submitted pamphlets and a letter encouraging the Connecticut state legislature to adopt an anti-kidnapping measure. The standing committee proudly reported the passage of that law in Connecticut to their society at large in November of that year.\footnote{New York Manumission Society Records, 5:28.}

By 1791, a dramatic shift had occurred in the quarterly reports of the standing committee to the society. Prior to the 1788 law NYMS standing committee reports referred to legal cases—if at all—briefly and in general terms.\footnote{New York Manumission Society Records, 5:25, 6:23.} In the years following the passage of that law, standing committee reports to each meeting featured as many half a dozen, and sometimes even more, ongoing personal freedom cases. The cases were each referred to 1-3 members of the standing committee, who would judge the evidence and validity of each case, and push it toward court if viable, sometimes with the help of neighboring abolition societies.\footnote{See, for example: New York Manumission Society Records, 7:1-6.} The period also saw a