



# Whispers of Rebellion: Narrating Gabriel's Conspiracy (Carter G. Woodson Institute Series)

*Michael L. Nicholls*

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An ambitious but abortive plan to revolt that ended in the conviction and hanging of over two dozen men, Gabriel's Conspiracy of 1800 sought nothing less than to capture the capital city of Richmond and end slavery in Virginia. *Whispers of Rebellion* draws on recent scholarship and extensive archival material to provide the clearest view yet of this fascinating chapter in the history of slavery—and to question much about the case that has been accepted as fact.

In his examination of the slave Gabriel and his group of insurgents, Michael Nicholls focuses on the neighborhood of the Brook, north of Richmond, as the plot's locus, revealing the area's economic and familial ties, the geographic proximity of the key conspirators, and how their contacts allowed their plan to spread across three counties and into the cities of Richmond and Petersburg.

Nicholls explores underdocumented aspects of the conspiracy, such as the participants' recruitment and motives, showing them to be less ideologically driven than previously supposed. The author also looks at the state's swift and brutal response, and argues persuasively that, rather than the coalition between blacks and whites that has been described in other accounts, the participants were all slaves or free blacks, suffering under an oppressive white population and willing to die for their freedom.

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