Gabriel, also called GABRIEL PROSSER (b. c. 1775, near Richmond, Va. [U.S.]--d. September 1800, Richmond), American bondsman who planned the first major slave rebellion in U.S. history (Aug. 30, 1800). His abortive revolt greatly increased the whites' fear of the slave population throughout the South.

The son of an African-born mother, Gabriel grew up as the slave of Thomas H. Prosser. Gabriel became a deeply religious man, strongly influenced by biblical example. In the spring and summer of 1800, he laid plans for a slave insurrection aimed at creating an independent black state in Virginia with himself as king. He planned a three-pronged attack on Richmond, Va., that would seize the arsenal, take the powder house, and kill all whites except Frenchmen, Methodists, and Quakers. Some historians believe that Gabriel's army of 1,000 slaves (estimates range from 2,000 to 50,000), assembled 6 miles (9.5 km) outside the city on the appointed night, might have succeeded had it not been for a violent rainstorm that washed out bridges and inundated roads. Before the rebel forces could be reassembled, Governor James Monroe was informed of the plot and ordered out the state militia. Gabriel and about 34 of his companions were subsequently arrested, tried, and hanged.