

## SOCIAL CLASS AND SLAVERY IN COLONIAL VIRGINIA

From: Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, p. 37.

Only one fear was greater than the fear of black rebellion in the new American colonies. That was the fear that discontented whites would join black slaves to overthrow the existing order. In the early years of slavery, especially, before racism as a way of thinking was firmly ingrained, while white indentured servants were often treated as badly as black slaves, there was a possibility of cooperation. As Edmund Morgan sees it:

There are hints that the two despised groups initially saw each other as sharing the same predicament. It was common, for example, for servants and slaves to run away together, steal hogs together, get drunk together. It was not uncommon for them to make love together. In Bacon's Rebellion, one of the last groups to surrender was a mixed band of eighty negroes and twenty English servants.

As Morgan says, masters, "initially at least, perceived slaves in much the same way they had always perceived servants . . . shiftless, irresponsible, unfaithful, ungrateful, dishonest. . . ." And "if freemen with disappointed hopes should make common cause with slaves of desperate hope, the results might be worse than anything Bacon had done."

And so, measures were taken. About the same time that slave codes, involving discipline and punishment, were passed by the Virginia Assembly,

Virginia's ruling class, having proclaimed that all white men were superior to black, went on to offer their social (but white) inferiors a number of benefits previously denied them. In 1705 a law was passed requiring masters to provide white servants whose indenture time was up with ten bushels of corn, thirty shillings, and a gun, while women servants were to get 15 bushels of corn and forty shillings. Also, the newly freed servants were to get 50 acres of land.

Morgan concludes: "Once the small planter felt less exploited by taxation and began to prosper a little, he became less turbulent, less dangerous, more respectable. He could begin to see his big neighbor not as an extortionist but as a powerful protector of their common interests."

We see now a complex web of historical threads to ensnare blacks for slavery in America: the desperation of starving settlers, the special helplessness of the displaced African, the powerful incentive of profit for slave trader and planter, the temptation of superior status for poor whites, the elaborate controls against escape and rebellion, the legal and social punishment of black and white collaboration.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Colonial Records of Virginia [1624]

All Flourdien Hundred (This is a census record for a geographical area)

1	Richard Gregory	Gilbert Pepper
	Edward Alborn	Thomas Mimes
	Thomas Dellimager	John Linge
	Thomas Hack	John Gale
	Anthony Jones	Thomas Barnett
	Robert Guy	Roger Thompson
	William Strachey	Ann Thompson
	John Browne	Ann Doughty
	Annis Boulton	Sara Woodson
	William Baker	Negors
	Theodore Berislou	Negors
	Walter Blake	6 Negors
	Thomas Watts	Negors
	Thomas Doughty	Negors
	George Deverell	Negors
	Richard Sparling	Grivell Pooley, Minister
	John Woodson	Samuel Sharp
	William Straimge	John Upton
	Thomas Dune	John Wilson
	John Landman	Henry Rowinge
	Leonard Yeats	Nathaniell Thomas
	George Levet	William Barrett
	Thomas Harvay	Robert Okley
	Thomas Filenst	John Bramford
	Robert Smith	Anthony
	Thomas Garmder	William } Negors men
	Thomas Gaskon	John }
	John Oliver	Anthony }
	Christopher Pugett	A Negors Woman
	Robert Peake	
	Edward Tramorden	
	Henry Linge	

# Musters

2.    Edward Hubbertlead 26  
      John Lithrop 25  
      Thomas Chambers 24  
      Walter Jackson 24  
      Henry Sanders 20  
      William Allen 22  
      Greg Dawson 24  
      John Upton aged 26 in the Bona more 1622  
      John Bramford aged 23 years in the James 1622  
      William Garrett aged 22 in the George 1619  
      Thomas Samuel aged 26 in the George 1619  
      Henry Rowinge aged 25 years in the Temperance 1621  
      Nathaniell Thomas aged 23 years in the Temperance 1621  
      Richard Bradshaw aged 20 years in the same Shipp  
      Rodney Okley aged 19 years in the William & Thomas 1618  
      Negro  
      Negro  
      Negro }     4 men  
      Negro }  
      Alice Thogmaten } maid servants arived in the Southampton 1623  
      Katherine Lohman }  
      Negro Woman  
      Negro Woman and a young Child of hers
3.    1625 Census:     "John Pedro, a Neger aged 30 in the Swan 1623"  
                      "Antoney Negro: Isabell Negro: and  
                      William Theire Child Baptised."
4.    1627 Will:     "John Throgmorton's will gave unto ye wife of  
                      Oliver Jenkins the service of his Negar for a yere:  
                      And further he gave unto his two servants, William  
                      Edes & Thomas Stent two yeares a peece of their time."
5.    1627 Will:     "Sir George Yardley's will gave unto his  
                      heirs his good debts chattles servants negars cattle  
                      or any other thyng."
6.    Virginia court sentence, 1630:     "Hugh Davis is to be soundly  
                      whipped, before an assembly of negroes and others for  
                      abusing himself to the dishonor of God and shame of  
                      Christians, by defiling his body in lying with a negro."
7.    Virginia statute, 1661:     "In case any English servant shall  
                      run away in company with any negroes who are incapable of  
                      makeing satisfaction by addition of time, he [the servant]  
                      must serve for the Negros lost time as well as his onwe."
8.    Virginia statue, 1667:     "A mulatto child's status followed  
                      its mother's condition rather than its father's."
9.    Virginia statute, 1667:     "Baptism could not bring freedom to

9. Virginia statute, 1667: "Baptism could not bring freedom to slaves by birth."
10. Virginia statute, 1669: "WHEREAS the only law in force for the punishment of servants resisting their master cannot be inflicted upon negroes, if a slave by the extremity of the correction should chance to die, the master shall not be adjudged guilty of felony since it cannot be presumed that prepensed malice (which alone makes murther Felony) should induce any man to destroy his own estate."