

~~Assignment #3~~

THE ORIGINS OF SLAVERY AND RACE PREJUDICE: AN EXERCISE

Directions:

You are a prominent historian. You are given the task of outlining a chapter for an upcoming textbook. This chapter is to discuss one aspect of a historical problem, which is the origins of slavery and racial prejudice in the Chesapeake region (Va and Md) in the 1600s. There are three critical questions which you wish to address in your chapter:

1. When did slavery become firmly established as a labor system (as opposed to indentured servitude)? Why did this switch to black slavery occur?
2. When did blacks begin to receive prejudicial treatment from whites? What factors contributed to this prejudice?
3. Which came first: prejudice or slavery? Did one cause the other?

The answers to each of these questions are the subtheses of your chapter. Fortunately, you have a wonderful research assistant (this time) who has already compiled notes from both primary and secondary sources. Some of these notes will be relevant to your arguments, others may not be. Some --especially the secondary sources-- will contradict each other; try to deal with these contradictions as best you can; this is the job of a historian!

Your end-product for this assignment is an answer (thesis statement) for each question and a reason you arrived at this answer. Answers should be no more than a paragraph or two, support can be noted in the form of a parenthetical reference (S1, P7, etc) that shows how you came to your conclusion.

Primary source material:

Here is the selection of primary sources. These are not actual primaries; I have reconstructed these passages from snippets of primary material found in several secondary sources. I have used my own words in reconstructing full quotes; do not use these as legitimate primaries for any purpose other than this exercise.

P1: Law passed by the Bermuda General Assembly, 1623: "An Act to restrayne the insolencies of Negroes: Being that many negroes have been found carrying secretly cudgels, and other weapons and working tools, such weapons being very dangerous and not meete to be suffered to be carried by such Vassals, negroes are hereby forbidden to weare any weapons in the daytyme, and are not to be found off their masters land during any undue hours in the night tyme."

P2:

Relative prices of servants and slaves
in the Chesapeake, selected years

<u>Year</u>	<u>Servant price (£)</u>	<u>Slave price (£)</u>
1674-76	8.0	23.0
1689-90	12.0	22.0
1707-09	11.0	29.0
1719-20	11.0	36.0

(Adapted from Menard's data from Maryland and Virginia probate inventories)

P3: From John Rolfe's account of the introduction of the first Africans into the Chesapeake, 1619: "About the last of August came in a dutch man of warre that sold us twenty Negars."

P4: English officials of the Providence colony to the governor of the colony, 1638: "We think it reasonable that wheras the English servants are to answer XX [pounds of tobacco] per head the Negros being procured at Cheaper rates more easily kept as perpetuall servants should answer 40 [pounds of tobacco] per head. And the rather that the desire of English bodyes may be kept, we are depending upon them for the defence of the Island. We shall also expect that negroes performe service in the public works in double proporcon to the English." (Note: The colony was located on a small Caribbean island. It lasted only until 1641. The "XX" pounds of tobacco refers to the price of indentured servants and slaves. Rather than pay in cash, which was rare in colonies, masters paid for labor in the one valuable commodity available -- tobacco.)

P5: English political philosopher John Locke, Two Teatises of Government (1689): "A slave has no rights, for the state of slavery is nothing else but the state of War continued, between a lawful Conquerour, and a captive."

P6: Paul Baynes, an English Puritan theologian, c.1617: "Now servants are either more slavish, or else more free and liberall: the first are such whose bodies are perpetually put under the power of the Master, as Blackmores with us; of which kinds servants are made sometime forcibly, as in captivity: sometime voluntarily, as when one doth willingly make himselfe over: sometime naturally,

as the children of servants are borne the slaves of their Masters; and this [last type] was the most frequent kinde of service, wherein parties are upon certaine termes or conditions for a certaine time onely under the power of a man: such are our Apprentises, maidservants, etc."

P7: "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I." (Hamlet, Act II, Scene 2)

P8: Late 16th century travel account: "The Negros are a people of beastly living, without a God, lawe, religion, or commonwealth."

P9: Late 16th century travel account: "Negros in colour so in condition are little other than Devils incarnate. The Devil has infused prodigious Idolatry into their hearts, enough to rellish his pallat and aggrandize their tortures when he gets power to fry their souls, as the raging Sun has already scorcht their cole-black carcasses."

P10:

Labor owned by a Virginia planter, -1648

	value (in lbs of tobacco)
Thomas Groves, 4 yeares to serve	1300
Francis Bomley for 6 yeares	1500
John Thackstone for 3 yeares	1300
Susan Davis for 3 yeares	1000
Emaniell a Negro man	2000
Roger Stone 3 yeares	1300
Mingo a Negro man	2000

(from a probate record found in Jordan, 76)

P11: Virginia court sentence, 1630: "Hugh Davis is to be souldly 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."

P12: Virginia statute, 1662: "If any christian shall committ Fornication with a negro man or woman, hee or shee soe offending shall pay double the usual fine."

P13: Maryland statute, 1681: "Such shamefull Matches between Negros and free women occurs always to the Satisfaccion of their [white womens'] Lascivious and Lustfull desires, and to the disgrace not only of the English butt allso of many other Christian Nations."

P14: Petition of a Virginia white man, 1663: "He Craves that his son may not be made a Slave a tearme soe Scandalous that if admitted to be the Condicon or tytle of the Apprentices in this Province will be soe destructive as noe free borne Christians will every be induced to come over servants."

P15: 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 Negroes lost time as well as his owne."

P16: 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."

P17: Massachusetts court case, 1660: "The indian may have the same distribution of Justice with our selves: ther is as I humbly conceive not the same argument as amongst the negroes, for the light of the gospell is a begining to appeare amongst them -- that is the indians."

P18: Late 16th-century English adventurer George Best: "On the Arke, Noah commanded his sons and their wives to use continencie, and abstaine from carnall copulation. Cham disobeyed, being perswaded that the first childe borne after the flood should inherite all the dominions of the earth. To punish this wicked and detestable fact, God willed that a sonne should bee born whose name was Chus, who not onely it selfe, but all his posteritie after him should bee so blacke and lothsome, that it might remain a spectacle of disobedience to all the worlde. And of this black and cursed Chus came all these blacke Moores which are in Africa."

P19: Late 16th century travel accounts: "The Negro women are hot constitution'd Ladies possessed of a temper hot and lascivious, making no cruple to prostitute themselves to the Europeans for a very slender profit, so great is their inclination to white men. If they can come to the Place the Man sleeps in, they lay themselves softly down by him, soon wake him, and use all their little Arts to move the darling Passion."

P20: Barbados planter, 1657: "The Iland is divided up into three sorts of men, viz. Masters, Servants, and slaves. The slaves and their posterity, being subject to their Masters for ever, are kept and preserv'd with greater care then the servants, who are their but for five yeers, according to the law of the Iland."

P21: Testimony of English sea captain, 1642: "I, John Skinner, mariner, agree to deliver unto Leonard Calvert, fourteen negro-men-slaves and three women-slaves."

P22: Journal of the Virginia House of Burgesses, 1666: "A certain mulato, being bought as a slave for Ever in 1644, is hereby judged no slave and but to serve as other Christian servants do and is freed as of September 1665."

P23: Virginia slave code, 1705: "All servants imported and brought into this country, by sea or land, who were not christians in their native country shall be accounted and be slaves, and as such be here brought and sold notwithstanding a conversion to christianity afterwards."

P24: Record of Virginia sale, 1652: "Mary a Negro girl is solde to Stephen Charlton with her Issue and produce and their services forever."

Secondary source material:

Quotations here have been cited correctly. See list of Suggested Readings for full bibliographical information on cited sources.

S1: "Through the first three-quarters of the seventeenth century, the Negroes . . . came into a society in which a large part of the population was to some degree unfree. . . . The Negroes' lack of freedom was not unusual. These newcomers, like so many others, were accepted, bought and held, as kinds of servants. They were certainly not well off. But their ill-fortune was of a sort they shared with men from England, Scotland, and Ireland. . . . Like the others, some Negroes became free, that is, terminated their period of service. Some became artisans; a few became landowners and the masters of other men. Thus the status of negroes was that of servants; and so they were identified and treated down to the 1660's." (Handlins, 202-3)

S2: In the early 1600s, "the word, 'slave' had no meaning in English law, but there was a significant colloquial usage. This was a general term of derogation. It described the low-born as contrasted with the gentry; to two hundred warriors, a sixteenth-century report said eight were gentlemen, the rest slaves. It was in this sense that Negro servants [in early seventeenth-century Virginia] were sometimes called slaves. Yet in not much more than a half a century after 1660 this term of derogation was transformed into a fixed legal position." (Handlins, 203-4)

S3: "Since early in the fifteenth century, the Portuguese had held Moors, white and black, in 'slavery,' at home, on the Atlantic islands, and in Brazil. But what was the status of such slaves? They had certain property rights, were capable of contracting marriages, and were assured of the integrity of their families. These were no chattels, devoid of personality. These were human beings whom chance had rendered unfree, a situation completely comprehensible within the degree of unfreedom familiar to the English colonist." (Handlins, 206)

S4: "The recent work of the Handlins and the fact that slavery first appeared in the statutes of the English colonies forty years after the negro's arrival, have tended to obscure the real possibility that the negro was actually never treated as an equal of the white man, servant or free. . . . The status of the negro in the English colonies was worked out within a framework of discrimination; from the outset, the Negro was treated as an inferior to the white man, servant or free. As slavery evolved as a legal status, it reflected and included as a part of its essence, this same discrimination which white men had practiced against the Negro all along and before any statutes decreed it." (Degler, 51-52)

S5: "There was little or no overt sense that biological race or skin color played a determinative role in making some human beings absolute masters over others. The combination of heathenness and *de facto* captivity was what made people enslavable, and it is thus misleading and anachronistic to read the overt physical racism that emerged later back into the thought of this era." (Frederickson, 73)

S6: "The available evidence suggests that for Englishmen settling in America, the specific religious difference was initially of greater importance than color, certainly of much greater relative importance for the Englishmen who confronted Negroes in their African homeland." (Jordan, 98)

S7: "The supply of servants increased more rapidly than the number of households in the Chesapeake from 1640 until the early to middle 1660s. . . . The process described by Adam Smith operated in the early Chesapeake: cheap land and scarce labor forced planter to pay high wages to servants once they became free, permitting a quick transition from agricultural laborer to yeoman planter. As a result of the rapid growth in the number of farms, the number of servants arriving in the Chesapeake had to increase each year in order to keep pace with demand. If the number of new arrivals merely remained steady, or even if it increased but more slowly than the number of households, planters would face a labor shortage." (Menard, 374-75)

S8: In England, wages had been falling from 1600 to about 1660; then they started rising again. Employment in England became more profitable around the middle 1660s. (Menard, 377)

S9: In England, the population grew more slowly during the period from 1650-1700 than from 1600-1650. (Menard, 376)

S10: Until the 1690s, Barbados had a bad reputation because sugar was notoriously difficult to work, and disease was rife. New England never developed a staple crop in the seventeenth century. In 1663, a group of English proprietors started the Carolina colony, which in a few decades found success growing rice, indigo, and sugar. In 1681, William Penn founded Pennsylvania, which soon boomed economically.

S11: "Bacon's Rebellion [in 1676], Morgan argued, was the key event. when armed, angry, landless, former servants -- a 'giddy multitude,' according to the Virginia legislature -- temporarily overturned the colony's political and social order, the elite read the writing on the wall. More white servants meant, potentially, more trouble." (Vaughan, 334)