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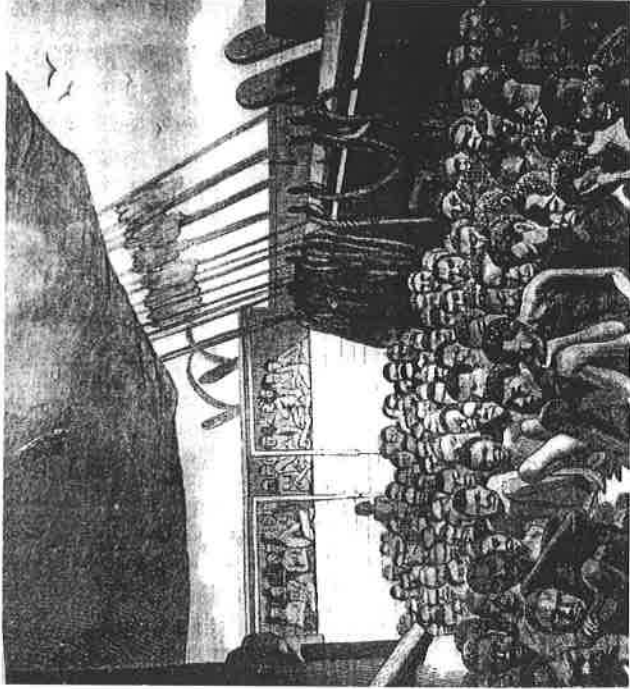
African-Americans in the English Colonies

It is the poor negroes who alone work hard, and I am sorry to say, fare hard. Incredible is the fatigue which the poor wretches undergo. Notwithstanding this humiliating state and rigid treatment to which this wretched race are subject, they are devoid of care, and appear jovial, contented, and happy. There certainly must be something in their constitutions, as well as their color, different from us.

This is the account of an English officer who spent several years in Virginia. Though he obviously sympathized with the plight of the slaves, he still could not rise above the racial preconceptions and misconceptions held at this time, and for long after, by Americans and Englishmen alike.

The Slave Trade

English traders had little contact with Africa until the middle of the sixteenth century; even then most of them did not—or, more accurately, were not allowed by Spain or Portugal to—participate in the slave trade. The earliest violator of this rule was John Hawkins, who between 1562 and 1567 made three slave-trading voyages from Africa to the Spanish West Indies (barely escaping with his life from the third). Although the English government made several attempts to organize slave-trading companies, the Dutch controlled the slave trade for most of the seventeenth century. In 1672, however,



The Slave Deck of the Bark "Willdiffe," Brought into Key West on April 30, 1860 (Library of Congress)

the Royal African Company was granted a monopoly of the English slave trade, which it held until 1689. During this period the company took the first of several steps which ultimately were to win for England the dubious distinction of being the largest slave-trading nation in the world. This domination was reinforced after the company's monopoly was broken: In 1713 England was granted the Asiento, or privilege of importing about 4,800 slaves annually into Spanish America for thirty years.

Relatively small numbers of African slaves were imported into Portugal and Spain. It was only the demand for labor in the New World that triggered the modern slave trade that was eventually to bring an estimated 11–15 million Africans to the Americas. Of these, almost 2 million were sold to the British colonies, with about 80 percent going to the West Indies. Most of these slaves were captured by African rulers who sent their troops into the interior on slave-hunting expeditions.

European nations established forts, or "factories," along the west coast of Africa, where they held the slaves they purchased from the local rulers. Sometimes slaves were purchased for cash, but more often they were exchanged for textiles, tools, guns, beads, or liquor. Often a slave trader had to make several stops along the African coast to secure a full cargo of slaves and the supplies necessary for the voyage to America—the infamous middle

passage. Slaves might be packed so tightly they could barely breathe and with almost no attention paid to sanitation, it was inevitable that smallpox and other diseases would wipe out large numbers of slaves—and crew members as well. Other slaves jumped overboard, starved themselves, strangled themselves with their chains, and, in spite of their lack of seamanship, attempted to take over the vessel and sail to freedom. Economics played a major role in the treatment of slaves during the middle passage. It is estimated that in the late seventeenth century when slaves could be purchased cheaply in Africa, almost a quarter of them died in transit to America. A hundred years later when the cost of slaves had more than doubled, conditions aboard slave ships became somewhat less barbarous and the death rate dropped to 10 percent.

The Development of Slavery

To understand the development of slavery in the mainland colonies, it is necessary to review the institution of indentured servitude which, as we have seen, was the main source of labor for Virginia and Maryland (as well as other colonies) during the entire seventeenth century. From the point of view of the planter, indentured servitude had many drawbacks. Indentured servants with, for example, four-year terms barely became proficient in their duties before they had to be freed. Indentured servants could not be worked past a certain point for fear of violating local laws or discouraging the emigration of other indentured servants. Being indistinguishable from the rest of the population, indentured servants had the opportunity—which they often exercised—of running away from their owners, moving elsewhere, and becoming lost in the general population. When legally freed, indentured servants typically received the freedom dues referred to earlier (a suit of clothes, a barrel of corn, an ax, a hoe, and a parcel of land) which made them potential competitors of their former owners. Gradually, the planters of Virginia and Maryland began to realize that black slavery would have few, if any, of these drawbacks.

In contrast to white indentured servants, Africans came to the New World involuntarily. They were forcibly uprooted from their homes and transported to America for the sole purpose of having their labor exploited. The planters were well aware of the existence of slavery in Latin America and were all too eager to take advantage of the Africans' skin color and lack of Christianity to place them in similarly degraded status in the English colonies. The price of a slave was not much higher than that of an indentured servant, and the cost of maintaining a slave was far less. Most slave owners possessed fewer than five slaves, but it is estimated that three to four slaves could double their owners' income. Even the owners of several plantations rarely had more than thirty-five slaves on any one of them.

The first Africans arrived at Jamestown in 1619. Others must have followed them, since in 1649, 300 Africans were listed among Virginia's population of about 15,000. The status of these Africans varied. Anthony Johnson, one of the original twenty, was free and owned servants of his own. Some Africans served short terms as indentured servants and received land at the expiration of their terms of service; gradually, however Africans began serving longer terms than whites and were discriminated against in other ways as well.

Even if free, Africans were not allowed to bear arms. Female African indentured servants were put to work in the fields but not female white indentured servants. Also, opposition to sexual relations or marriage between the races became institutionalized. This contrasts sharply with Latin America, where—perhaps because of the small number of female settlers and the influence of the Catholic Church—intermarriage was always practiced. In 1630 a white man was whipped in the words of the court for "defiling his body in lying with a negro," but we are not sure whether this was because of a breach of racial etiquette or a case of homosexuality. In 1662 Virginia passed a law levying a stiff fine for interracial sexual relations, and in 1664 Maryland banned "shameful Matches," or interracial marriages. Yet, marriage between Africans and whites still took place occasionally until finally banned by Virginia in 1691.

The greatest distinction made between the races was in the length and conditions of their servitude. In 1640 a Virginia court added several years to the terms of two runaway white servants but sentenced an African man who ran away with them to servitude for the rest of his life. The higher prices paid for African indentured servants indicates that life servitude became common for them during the 1640s and 1650s and often for their progeny, as well.

A Virginia law of 1661 demonstrates that by that time, most Africans were servants for life, if not full slaves. It declared that white indentured servants who ran away with Africans were to have not only their own missed time added to the term of their indenture but also the African's time, because as the statute states, Africans "are incapable of making satisfaction by addition of time." In 1662 another Virginia law declared that a child born of an African woman was to be a slave even if the father was white. In 1664 Maryland attempted to make all the Africans residing in that colony slaves by proclaiming that those already living in, or later imported into, Maryland were to serve for life. (Later, however, this law was modified so that it was possible to be both African and free in Maryland.) Further, Locke's Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina (1662) contained a clause stating that every free man had absolute power and authority over his "Negro" slaves.

One of the major obstacles to the development of full-fledged slavery was the commonly held belief that only heathens might be enslaved and that Christianity freed one from bondage. As already noted, that may have been one of the reasons why the first Africans to arrive in Jamestown were not sold

as slaves. Instances where slaves were freed because they were Christians indicate that this theory was actually put into practice. In 1667, however, the legislature of Virginia decreed that "the conferring of baptism doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom." Maryland followed with a similar law in 1671, and other colonies gradually came to the same conclusion.

As the religious rationale for slavery declined, the racial rationale was emphasized. The alleged "savagery" or "barbarism" of the so-called black race was cited to justify the enslavement of anyone of that color. This helps explain why in the mainland colonies, unlike the West Indies or Latin America, mulattoes were considered to be the same as full-blooded Africans. Winthrop Jordan in *White Over Black* sums up this transformation by pointing out that *Christian* was the term by which the colonists distinguished themselves from Africans during the first half of the seventeenth century. As time went on this term was replaced first by *English*, then by *free*, and finally, by *white*.

The Black Population

By the eighteenth century, once slavery was legally recognized and the Royal African Company and other English and American slave traders gained experience, the importation of Africans into the English colonies increased greatly. The narrowing of the price differential between indentured servants and slaves also accelerated this increase. The figures (though admittedly inexact) are illuminating. In 1671 Virginia had a population of about 40,000, which included 6,000 white indentured servants and only 2,000 slaves. By 1708 the number of slaves in Virginia reached 12,000; by 1715, 23,000; and by 1756, 120,000 as compared to 137,000 whites. At the middle of the century, Maryland had 40,000 slaves, compared to 100,000 whites. Still, even at this date, the typical farmer in the upper south owned only one or two slaves. In the Carolinas slavery was encouraged from the start by promises of land grants for every slave imported into the colony. By 1708 the black and white populations of South Carolina were about equal at 4,000, but by the middle of the century slaves outnumbered whites by more than two to one (70,000 to 30,000). At that later date North Carolina, where small farms still predominated, only had 19,000 slaves, as compared to 60,000 whites. By the 1760s, Georgia's population included 8,000 slaves, as compared to 10,000 whites. The importation of slaves swelled after 1763 so that by the end of the colonial period, the slave population of the mainland colonies totaled about 540,000 or about 21 percent of the total population. This increase in the importation of slaves took place in spite of the fact that slave prices rose from approximately £25 for a male field hand in 1700 to £75 three-quarters of a century later.

By the mid eighteenth century, approximately one-half of the slave population of the mainland colonies was native-born. The figure of 540,000 slaves

\$200 REWARD!

Ran away from his owner [a Lady residing near Upper Marlboro, Prince George's County, Md.] on or about the 12th inst. of this month, a bright Mulatto man named Frank, a carpenter by trade, he is about five feet 9 or 10 inches high, light grey eyes, slow in speech, and very good personal appearance, about twenty-five years of age, his clothing good.

One Hundred dollars will be paid if apprehended within thirty miles of home, if more than thirty, the above reward, provided he be secured in Jail so that his owner gets him again.

W. D. BOWLE,

for the owner,

Buena Vista Post Office, Prince George's Co. Md.
February 14th, 1853.

Poster Advertising a \$200 Reward for the Capture of a Runaway Slave, February 14th, 1853 (Corbis-Bettmann).

(which includes the 275,000 who were imported into the mainland colonies) indicates that the slave population of the mainland colonies was growing by natural increase as well as importation—a very unusual phenomenon in western slave societies. This may be explained by the gradually narrowing gap between the number of male and female slaves; the early age of slave women at marriage; and the *relatively* better living and working conditions on the mainland compared to the West Indies or Central and South America.

Black Opposition to Slavery

As the number of slaves multiplied during the eighteenth century, the degree to which they accepted their servitude became an important—literally a vital—matter. When Africans first arrived they were put through a "seasoning process" whose purpose was to produce hard-working, yet docile, slaves. Although slaves were worked hard, they tended not to be hard workers; contrary to the Sambo stereotype, significant numbers of slaves were far from docile. Nor does Stanley Elkin's theory (formulated in *Slavery: An American Institution*) that the plantation system infantilized the slaves and made them

completely dependent on their masters (much as the concentration camp system operated on its inmates) hold up under close scrutiny. True, some slaves did act obsequiously, but often this was merely an example of "puttin' on massa," or of slaves playing the role which they believed their owners expected from them.

The best evidence of the slaves' lack of docility are the innumerable accounts of their malingering, running away (particularly at busy seasons),* injuring themselves, infanticide and suicide, assaulting or poisoning overseers or owners, breaking tools, pilfering, burning barns, and—most terrifying of all—slave revolts. The choice of these protest tactics depended somewhat on the slaves' status. Plantations had three types of slaves; skilled workers, house servants, and field hands. Carpenters, bricklayers, blacksmiths, tailors, and coopers were all needed on a plantation. The slaves who performed these tasks were more valuable and tended to be better treated than the unskilled laborers. Sometimes they were rented out to other whites; sometimes they were allowed off the plantation to purchase needed supplies. In either case they had an opportunity, which they often seized, of running away and, if successful, practicing their much-needed trades as free men in some other area—often with the aid of free blacks or even of whites.

House servants such as cooks, maids, nurses, butlers, and coachmen were also better fed, clothed, and housed than the agricultural workers. House servants who were well treated were much more likely to identify with their owners than were other groups of slaves. However, house servants had to be constantly servile because they were under the direct supervision of, and more exposed to, the cruelty of whites than were other groups of slaves. In addition, they often felt isolated from their fellow slaves. Their discontent was often manifested through malingering, stealing, stammering, and drunkenness.

The largest group of slaves was the field hands who did the clearing, planting, cultivating, and harvesting of the tobacco, rice, indigo, or whatever else was grown on the plantation. Field hands were worked in two ways. Under the gang system (used on most tobacco plantations) all slaves worked together on a common assignment. This might mean working from sunrise to sunset—and even longer during the harvest season. Under the task system (often found on rice or indigo plantations) each slave was responsible for a specific part of the assignment. Although designed to keep a slave busy for a full day, once the task was completed, the slave's time was his own. The staple slave diet was corn meal, salt pork, and fish (supplemented by an occasional rabbit or opossum) and vegetables, if the owner allowed the slaves some time to tend their gardens. Clothes were made of the cheapest and coarsest cloth, and shoes were worn only in winter. During the colonial

*Significant numbers did find permanent refuge in a slave settlement in the Great Dismal Swamp on the Virginia-North Carolina border.

period slave quarters were usually cabins with dirt floors and no windows. Air and light—and rain and cold—came in through the chinks between the logs. As might be expected, the field hands were the most discontented group of slaves.

Slave revolts are virtually as old as slavery itself. In 1663 a group of Virginia slaves and white indentured servants planned an uprising, but the plot was uncovered and quashed. Virginia experienced many slave insurrections—one of the most serious occurring in 1730, when slaves in the vicinity of Williamsburg heard a rumor that the king had issued an order freeing all slaves who were baptized. Ten years later a large group of Maryland slaves attempted to capture Annapolis, but the plotters failed.

However, the revolts that involved the largest number of slaves took place in South Carolina, where field labor was more arduous and the percentage of slaves in the population was higher than in any other colony. South Carolina slaves may also have been more discontented than other slaves because in the early years of South Carolina's settlement—before the development of rice as a staple crop—they had enjoyed more freedom than the slaves of the Chesapeake area. In 1720 an uprising in South Carolina resulted in the death of two whites and the execution of three slaves. In 1730 another plot was discovered in Charleston, and its leaders were put to death. Several revolts took place in South Carolina in 1739 when war broke out between England and Spain. A group of Charleston slaves attempted to reach Florida (where the Spanish had promised them refuge) but failed. Later the same year about 100 slaves under a leader named Cato made the same attempt. They were turned back after fighting several battles with the militia. Forty-four slaves and twenty-one whites were killed in this Stono Rebellion. John K. Thornton has pointed out its African implications. The leaders of the rebellion were Catholic slaves from an independent, Portuguese-speaking African state who had been soldiers in their native land and who used African military tactics during the fighting. The following year about 200 slaves in Charleston planned a revolt, but it was crushed in its incipient stage, and fifty slaves were executed. No major outbreak took place again in South Carolina until 1765, when over 100 slaves attempted to fight their way to freedom on the frontier.

White Reaction to Slave Discontent

Although no slave insurrection of the colonial period ever reached the proportions of Nat Turner's Rebellion or other nineteenth-century revolts, southerners of the eighteenth century lived in continuous fear of slave wars. Here again brief comparison with Latin American slavery is in order. It is not surprising that Latin American revolts were on a larger scale than North American revolts—Latin America had a much larger slave population. Numbers also help explain why fewer North American slaves ran away to

the native Americans (although additional factors come into play here). By the eighteenth century contacts between native Americans and slaves were limited in New England, the middle colonies, and the Chesapeake area. However, in South Carolina, in spite of a policy of turning the native Americans against the slaves, and vice versa, by using slaves to fight native Americans and native Americans to put down slave revolts, significant numbers of slaves sought refuge with the Tuscaroras, Yamasees, Creeks, and Cherokees. Some were returned to their owners; some were enslaved by the native Americans; but most were peacefully absorbed in the native American tribes.

Fear of slave uprisings caused many colonies to pass laws discouraging the increase in the number of slaves. Usually these laws placed heavy duties on slaves imported into the colony. During the eighteenth century every southern colony, at one time or another, enacted such laws. South Carolina, for example, fearing that troublesome slaves might be "dumped" within its border, imposed a tax of £50 on slaves imported from other mainland colonies (and lower taxes on slaves imported from Africa or the West Indies). Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and North Carolina, all of which had large Quaker populations, had similar laws, but for more humanitarian reasons. It is worthy of note, however, that in almost every case these laws were disallowed by the Privy Council on the grounds that they adversely affected the economic interests of English slave traders.

Another reaction to slave revolts—as well as to the other manifestations of black resistance to slavery—may be seen in the increasingly harsh slave codes promulgated during the eighteenth century. The beginnings of slave codes might be traced back to a statute passed by the Bermuda legislature in 1623 which attempted to curb so-called "insolencies of the Negroes." Certainly, by the last quarter of the seventeenth century, when slaves far outnumbered whites, elaborate and brutal slave codes had been developed in the West Indies. Slaves were not allowed to leave the plantation without a pass, possess weapons, engage in trade, meet together, strike a white person even in self-defense, drink alcoholic beverages, or learn to read or write. Penalties for the violation of any of these provisions included whipping, branding, cropping the ears or slitting the nose, breaking bones or cutting the hamstring muscle, and castration. White men formed special slave patrols to enforce these regulations. It was not considered murder to kill a slave who was undergoing punishment or resisting a slave patrol.

During most of the seventeenth century, the mainland colonies did without formal slave codes, utilizing the body of law governing indentured servants whenever necessary. Virginia was the first colony to draft a slave code (1682). However, as might be expected from its West Indian antecedents and the high percentage of slaves in its population, by 1712 South Carolina had developed the harshest code of any of the mainland colonies (though gradually, other colonies copied many of its features).

Family and Religious Life

The slave codes reduced slaves to the level of chattels, or inanimate property. This was a lower status than that of Latin American slaves who, under the protection of the Catholic Church and Roman law, were considered human beings with immortal souls and human rights. Yet, in North America, even if they were not legally recognized as such, blacks remained living human beings with a rich cultural heritage. It is true that the devastating effect of being wrenched from their homeland and forced to work under brutal conditions disrupted African cultural patterns. This process was intensified by plantation owners who refused to allow their slaves to use drums or perform African dances lest they promote group solidarity and resistance to slavery. However, African names might be retained and even with the work schedule of the plantation, slaves had the opportunity—at least on Sundays—to meet together and have (particularly in South Carolina and Georgia) the many newly arrived slaves from Africa refresh their memories and their ties with their homeland. Children who were too young to work in the fields were usually taken care of by elderly women who might pass on bits and pieces of African lore and customs to them.

What eventually developed was a new African-American culture that differed from colony to colony depending in part on the section of Africa from which the slaves came. The other factor that influenced this new culture was the extent and the type of relationships between Africans and Europeans, which also differed from colony to colony (and even within colonies), from job to job, and from time to time. However, it must be stressed that the definers of African-American culture were the African-Americans themselves.

Christianization of slaves proceeded slowly, even after it had been established that baptism did not free them. As Morgan Godwyn, a minister interested in slave conversion, complained in a 1681 tract, owners still feared that baptism might make their slaves expect more "merciful usage." It was to take another fifty years before a significant number of owners became convinced that Christianity might make their slaves more tractable. Nor were slaves eager to convert, preferring to retain their African religious beliefs and to utilize the services of witch doctors and conjurers. Even after the Great Awakening of the 1740s, when large numbers of slaves were converted to revivalist Protestantism, they shaped their religious experience to fit their own needs.* Rather than allow religion to shift their focus from "this world to a world after death where the weary would find rest" (as the sociologist Franklin Frazier expressed it in *The Negro Family in the United States*) the slaves used religion to keep alive their own self-respect and hopes for freedom. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in black spirituals, which, using African rhythms, reminded the slaves how an earlier group of slaves, the Hebrews, had escaped from bondage in Egypt.

*Actually African-American shouting and singing in church strongly influenced southern Protestant services.

The other institution around which slave life revolved was the family. True, unlike Latin American slave codes, the codes in the English colonies did not recognize the validity of slave marriages: A slave could be separated from his or her mate and children at their owner's discretion. The best that might be expected was that a mother and her extremely young children would be kept together. Another deterrent to stable family life was the surplus of male over female slaves, which lasted until the 1750s. Most destructive to normal family relations was the realization by the black husband that he could neither provide for his family nor protect his wife and children from physical, or even sexual, assault by white males. Marriages had to be approved by the owner. The ceremony often consisted of having the couple jump over a broomstick together. According to John Blasingame in his volume, *The Slave Community*, this ceremony supposedly determined who would be the dominant partner in the marriage. Even after marriage, promiscuity among slaves was tolerated, if not encouraged, by slave-owners. Nevertheless, close monogamous relationships were formed between slaves. Unlike wives in most white families, the slave wife worked beside her husband in the fields as well as in the cabin. Therefore, the husband was no longer the absolute ruler of the family as he had been in Africa. Still, he assumed the responsibility for disciplining the children. As the colonial period came to a close, more planters were beginning to encourage slave marriages, realizing that slaves were less likely to run away or cause trouble if they were part of a family unit.

Slavery in the Northern Colonies

Although the form of slavery that developed in the southern colonies became almost standard, it is still of value to survey the development of slavery in the northern colonies. Slavery in New England (outside of the large farms in Rhode Island) was largely an urban institution.* Slaves worked in lumberyards and shipyards, on the docks and aboard ships, and as servants for wealthy merchants. Often it was to their owner's advantage to teach them to read and write. Cotton Mather in a work called *The Negro Christianized* claimed that slaves had souls "as white and pure as those of other Nations," and some were admitted to membership in the Congregational Church. Although all New England colonies drafted slave codes in the eighteenth century, they were much more moderate than southern slave codes and recognized slave marriages and the integrity of slave families.

Slavery never played a crucial role in the economies of Pennsylvania or New Jersey. However, by the end of the colonial period, New York had the highest proportion of slaves (14 percent) of any colony outside the South.

*Although African-Americans made up only 3 percent of the general New England population, they constituted 10 percent of Boston's population and 20 percent of Newport's.

Many slaves had been imported into this colony by the Dutch East India Company before 1664, and the English settlers continued the practice. Some New York slaves worked in New York City, where slaves made up about 20 percent of the population. Most of these urban slaves were household servants, teamsters, porters, gardeners, and semiskilled laborers in shipyards. It is ironic, but not surprising, that the relative freedom they enjoyed helped lead to the most serious slave revolts which ever took place in the colonies.

In April 1712 a group of about twenty slaves in New York City deliberately set fire to a house and then lay in wait for any whites who might come to put it out. Nine white men were killed and nine others wounded before the militia put down this revolt. Eight slaves were killed in fighting, six committed suicide, and eighteen more were executed—three were burnt, thirteen hanged, one broke on the wheel, and one hanged alive in chains. In spite of the harshness of these punishments and the slave code which was drawn up after these events, in 1741 New York City was again plagued by a series of fires and thefts, and the fear of a slave conspiracy was revived. Two slaves were executed, though they denied any knowledge of a conspiracy. Afterwards a white tavern owner, his wife, and a female indentured servant (who had made the accusations of a slave conspiracy in the first place) were executed in spite of their denials of complicity in the plot. Even this did not allay the general panic, and during the next few months over 150 slaves and twenty-five whites were arrested. Under threat of, or actual, torture, sixty-seven confessions were elicited. Finally, eighteen slaves and four whites (including two women) were hanged; thirteen slaves were burned at the stake; and seventy others were transported to the West Indies in what the black historian, John Hope Franklin, called in his volume *From Slavery to Freedom* "the greatest orgy of Negro persecution that appeared anywhere during the colonial period."

White opposition to slavery was relatively rare for most of the colonial period. The first recorded protest was that presented by Francis (or Franz) Daniel Pastorius to a Quaker meeting in 1688. The signers of this so-called Germantown Protest stated that they felt it un-Christian "to bring men hither, to rob and sell them against their will" merely because of the color of their skin. No action was taken on this petition, but the seed had been planted. Much later, in 1755, the Quakers decided to expel any of their members who imported slaves, and three years later they recommended that all Quakers who owned slaves should free them.

George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, opposed slavery, but the man most responsible for developing antislavery sentiment among the Quakers (and others) was John Woolman. Woolman preached in *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1754) that "liberty was the natural right of all men equally" and that slavery fostered "misery on both [races]" because it not only oppressed African-Americans, but gave whites a false sense of pride and power. Another Quaker, Anthony Benezet, influenced by

Woolman, opened a school for African-American children to prove that African-American alleged mental inferiority was founded only on white ignorance and prejudice.

One of the few non-Quaker opponents of slavery was Judge Samuel Sewall, a stern Boston Puritan. In 1700 Sewall wrote a tract entitled "The Selling of Joseph," which denied that the curse on the descendants of Ham (Genesis IX, 25-27) or the doctrine of captives in a just war justified African slavery. Sewall, however, was no believer in racial equality and warned his readers that slavery could not only adversely affect the prosperity and security of New England—"as many Negro Men as there are among us, so many empty places are there in our Train Bands (militia) and the places taken up by men that might make husbands for our Daughters." Interestingly enough, the only rebuttal to Sewall's pamphlet, and—according to Winthrop Jordan—the "only forthright defense of slavery in the continental colonies until the time of the Revolution" came from the pen of John Saffin, a fellow townsman of Sewall's. Saffin defended slavery on the dual bases of the Africans' paganism as well as their alleged innate inferiority.

Free African-Americans

Some free African-Americans were found in all colonies, although their lives were not easy. The very fact that they were free was felt to be a bad example for slaves. Free African-Americans were frequently accused of dealing in goods stolen by slaves, helping them to escape, and even of fomenting slave revolts. Some colonies ordered newly freed slaves to leave the colony; other colonies passed laws which made it difficult for owners to free their slaves. This contrasts with Latin American slavery in which manumission was encouraged.

Free African-Americans suffered from a wide variety of legal disabilities. In the southern colonies they were not allowed to testify against whites, to move about freely, to own real estate, to marry whites, and (except in North Carolina) to vote. In many colonies they were barred from service on juries or in the militia and were kept out of certain occupations. Most free African-Americans owned small farms, although even during the colonial period, many moved to towns. There they worked as domestics, barbers, skilled and unskilled laborers, sailors, and in numerous other occupations. Overall, the number of free African-Americans continued to grow by means of manumission, purchase of a slave's freedom by the slave or by free African-Americans, running away, and natural increase. It is estimated that free African-Americans made up about 7 percent of the total black population by the end of the colonial period.

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