

A note on terminology: I chose to capitalize both Black and White because all other races and groups are capitalized; Latino, Asian, African, etc. Thus, it does not make sense to not capitalize them, or to capitalize only one of them. Also, I chose not to use African American because no America existed during the time period of my paper.

It is undisputed that a strain of slavery unlike any other previous form existed in what was to become the United States of America. The question is, how the relationship between White and Black servants impacted the abandonment of European indentured servants for the enslavement of Africans, and to what degree racism played a role in the conquest of people of color. Though the British were tainted by prejudices of their time, in the middle of the 16th century the woman in power in England supported a scheme to build a multi-racial community of Europeans, Cimarrons-Africans who had fled the Spanish in Panama, and Chichimichis-natives of north Mexico on Roanoke (Morgan 29-34). This was obviously motivated by Queen Elizabeth's desire to undermine Spain's position in the New World rather than to create a utopian society, but nonetheless an idea of creating a society free of exploitation of those of a darker hue was promoted and discussed in the 1500's. Even if no one actually desired this idea to take root, its existence is simply extraordinary. How then did the oppressive system known as slavery develop from this more egalitarian strain of thought and practice? The racism that accompanied the slavery in this country derived from the severing of the unity and common interests of the White and Black workers, which was accompanied by the raising up of the small White farmers' status and the dehumanization of the Black population. This was reinforced through the creation of laws that put into writing the differences between Black and White.

To understand why the colonies were so receptive to the idea of indentured servitude and to slavery, it is necessary to look at the conditions besieging England at the time. The high population in England caused a work shortage, thus labor was rationed so everyone could have a share in the labor (Morgan 47). This element alone explains why the English were not exactly content with their standard of life. In addition, English cities were dirty, unsanitary, crowded, and unpleasant places to be, thus people jumped at any opportunity to leave England (de Blij). Queen Elizabeth was embroiled in a less than friendly rivalry with Spain during the period of initial colonization, so any possibility of causing damage to Spain was pursued (Morgan 29). From all of this sprang the idea for the Roanoke settlement as described above, the failure of which gave birth to the idea for the Virginia Company. Though its primary aim was of course financial gain; (to obtain precious metals and other commodities Britain imported), its loftier goal was to serve as a patriotic enterprise to reduce crime and idleness among the unemployed masses of England (Morgan 49). To do this however required a substantial supply of men.

After a survey of the resources Virginia offered, it was found that the only valuable product to be had in that region was tobacco. The cultivation of tobacco took many hands, and as the word of the opportunity in the new world spread, the influx of servants increased. The rapidly growing colonial population required equally rapid growth in the number of indentured servants (Kolchin 7). In Virginia, success lay not upon acquiring the best piece of land, but on amassing servants (Morgan 114). Thus, they were hotly recruited, so much so that the indentured servants strained resources because they were so numerous. The men could not, and/or would not grow food to feed themselves. They instead preferred to depend on the neighboring Native American tribes for aid (Morgan 36). However, the Native Americans lived from harvest to harvest, and they did not have sufficient stores in reserve to meet the increased demand (Morgan 40). Thus, many of the men starved, because the desire to become rich was too strong leading them to grow tobacco instead of food.

The conflict between the Europeans and the natives over food highlights the shift in the perception of Native Americans as friendly neighbors to a more racist attitude, which was eventually transferred to Africans and slaves. Initially the English viewed the Native Americans as belonging to two camps. There was the good, acceptable group who would welcome English aid in minimizing the influence of the second group, the bad, savage Native Americans (Morgan 24). But when the native peoples became negligent in constantly supplying food, the settlers consolidated their views and no longer separated the Indians into good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable (Morgan 44); rather all tribes became disagreeable. It can be said that the Europeans only liked the Native Americans when there was something to gain from them. This occurrence also explains why it was not profitable to have slaves in the first stage of colonization, because they would have been much more of an initial investment than White servants, and the master most likely would not have had time to recoup the losses before his slaves died (Morgan 85). Thus it was necessary to have White servants, who were treated only with a minimally higher amount of respect and dignity that was not afforded to the slaves.

The first Black people to be brought to the colonies had no specific status, because the legal difference between a slave and a servant did not exist. The relationship that the Black and White servants shared was amicable in the beginning, due primarily to the similar way in which masters viewed them. Masters, at least initially attributed the same negative characteristics to Blacks as they did to White servants. These were generally that they were a shiftless, irresponsible, unfaithful, got drunk whenever possible, and did not work enough or regularly group of people (Morgan 319). This put the two racial groups on a relatively equal though still disadvantageous footing. It is important to remember that even White servants going to Virginia became for a number of years "a thing, a commodity, a machine to make tobacco for somebody else (Morgan 129)". They could also be sold on a whim (Morgan 128). This increased the feeling of mutual suffering. As a result, Black and non-white people who were serving the same master worked, ate, shared escapades, escapes, punishments, and slept together (Morgan 155). Though there is almost no evidence to show that by

1660, Blacks were subjected to more severe discipline than other servants, (Morgan 154), masters did not hesitate to put female slaves to work in the tobacco fields, though White servants would not have been so employed (Morgan 310). Thus, the treatment of Black people differed because their forced migration separated them from Whites who had voluntarily migrated (Kolchin 17). This manifested itself in the necessity of "breaking-them in," that is, a crash course in language, customs, work habits, and obedience for the slaves (Kolchin 16). Another component of "breaking-in" was the need to provide the slaves who had no incentive to work with a motivating factor. Using pain was decided upon as the most useful incentive, because the slaves began working for the thing perhaps most precious, their lives. Because Virginians realized that masters of slaves had to "inflict more pain" on their charges than master of servants, the assembly passed a law giving masters the right to beat their slaves without the fear of being charged with a felony (Morgan 312). This is the beginning of the move to sever the camaraderie between the White and Black servants by creating differences between them.

In addition to masters fearing that the Black and White servants would band together and revolt, thus overturning the entire system upon which they had come to depend, lay other problems. These were mostly financial, tied up in the extended lifespan of the servants. The efforts that were enacted to curtail this trend planted seeds of racism and superiority in the psyches of White servants. With the development of orchards, and dispersal of fruit throughout colonial communities, the life expectancy of settlers increased because nutrients became more available (Morgan 184). More men surviving to the end of their terms, meant that more people were producing tobacco, rather than just simply tending it. The increased amount of tobacco on the market depressed the prices it garnered. This upset the big planters, who began searching for ways to limit the number of tobacco cultivators (Morgan 215). The methods they chose curtailed and threatened the independence of small freemen, and worsened the servant's lot. They were: lengthening terms of servitude for those who came to the New World without specified term durations. The Virginia assembly prescribed that servants could be kept for 4 years if over 20 at time of arrival, for 5 years if between 12 & 20, and for 7 years if under 12 years of age at their time of arrival (Morgan 216). The more sneaky ways devised were to manipulate the freedmen's need for land. Servants who became free after 1660 found it increasingly difficult to locate workable, unclaimed land that was not in the frontier, near the Native Americans (Morgan 220). The effect of this artificial scarcity of land was to keep the freemen available for hire, because if a man could not find land without renting it, he might return to his master and work for him (Morgan 223). This course of action was not tolerated for long. When the frustration of freemen manifested itself in the form of Bacon's Rebellion, the idea of slave labor became much more enticing to the big planters.

Nathaniel Bacon, in short, led a band of Virginians against the Doegs and Susquehannocks, to win their land (Norton 82), and to release pent up resentment and hatred against the Native Americans. According to Morgan, Bacon's Rebellion made Virginians connect their most powerful racial hostilities,

both public and private, officially with slavery. This was because Bacon had directed racism against the Native Americans, and the Virginia assembly, in 1676, gave Bacon and his men the right to keep all of the captured Native Americans as slaves and to enslave any Native Americans that they would capture in the future (328). This facilitated the big planters plan of convincing the White servants that they were superior to the Black servants. The idea of slavery against a darker group of people had already been accepted; all that remained to do was to create a feeling of shared interest between the big and small planter.

This shared interest depended on the perceived common identity between the big and small planters. This had already developed somewhat due to the decline in the number of immigrating Europeans, the opening of new land free from interference by Native American tribes, and the fact that only landowners-the bulk of the White population-could vote (Morgan 364). Another common interest was their shared crop, tobacco, and the taxes placed on said crop. When the taxes were lessened, the small planter became "less turbulent and dangerous, more respectable." Thus, the interests they shared became more important than those that divided them (Morgan 366)." This alignment made them more susceptible to rhetoric of superiority. But the event most integral in the conversion process was the passage of laws strengthening and defining slavery, and legally setting Blacks apart from Whites.

There was a variety of legislation passed defining slavery throughout the colonies. These laws were approved by England even though they were contrary to English common law because Black were viewed as a brutish, dangerous people, and to prevent them from doing mischief, the laws concerning them had to be different (Morgan 314). In the 1640's the courts recognized property in men, women, and unborn progeny (Morgan 297). This law solidified slavery for a group of people who had not volunteered for the part. Laws were also passed limiting what could be used as deferments. For example, in 1667, it was decided that conversion to Christianity after a slave's arrival did not alter their status (Morgan 329). Thus, one of the methods of wiggling out of slavery was taken away. This law also served to dehumanize the slaves, because they were told that their faith entitled them to no humanity, no privilege, and no recognition of fellow human beings. Another example of this was the law passed in 1669, by the Virginia assembly that gave masters the right to beat their slaves harder than servants (Morgan 312). While the rational reasons for this were explained above, this clearly fits into the goal of those in power to create a difference between White and Black. In 1670, a law was passed alienating Blacks from another potential ally, the enslaved Native Americans. For as Kolchin notes, Native Americans also served as slaves (7). It was determined that non-Christian servants who were brought to the colony via land, namely Native Americans from other regions, would serve for 12 years, but if children at time of arrival, would serve till they turned 30. Non-Christian servants who were brought to the colonies via shipping were to be slaves for life. This act makes a clear distinction between Black servants-who would be the ones transported by ships-and other Native Americans. While this could be based heavily on the easier attainment of African slaves than Native, this also displays some racial bias. In

1670, Native Americans and Blacks were forbidden to own Christian servants, and in 1680, thirty lashes were prescribed for any Black person who lifted a hand to a Christian. This allowed servants to bully slaves without a fear of retribution and made White servants feel psychologically on par with their masters (Morgan 330). Perhaps the most telling law however was the one condoning master's sexual harassment of female slaves. In 1662, it was decided that children took their mother's status. This prevented children of master's to be freed because of their relation to a free White person. This law was the most effective at separating the races (Morgan 333). These laws were so effective at their goals of segregation and racism that most White Americans came to assume that Blacks were so different from whites that slavery was their natural state. A universal assumption also pervaded that Black people were slaves and White people were free (Kolchin 18).

Though the racism, legislation, the feelings of common identity and superiority were already in place, the switch to slavery was further facilitated by the fact that so much of the infrastructure was already present. Virginians had already developed a plantation system; complete with separate houses, labor was already supervised in groups of 8/10 by an overseer, and servants were already underfed, underclothed, and subject to correction by whipping. And the greatest fear that masters had, that of a slave rebellion, was already present (Morgan 308). All masters had to do was to purchase slaves instead of servants, and the conversion was complete. The substitution of slaves for servants ended the threat freemen posed, because as the annual number of imported servants dropped, so did the number of men becoming free (Morgan 308). For the servants were now all bound for life.

Thus, though racial distinctions facilitated enslavement as Kolchin noted (13), racism was not present in the beginning of this country. A racially integrated community was the stated initial goal of the designers of the Roanoke settlement and the Virginia Company. When White and Black servants were thrown together in the field, camaraderie developed. Indeed, one of the last groups to surrender to Nathaniel Bacon was a mixed band of 20 English servants and 80 Blacks (Morgan 327). There apparently was no refusal at working together, as there was only half a century later. The racism that developed was forced by the desire of some powerful members of the colonies to make the most money possible by raising up the small White farmer and enslaving the Black men that were ones his partners. Racism was accepted by the majority because of the desire to be superior to some group of people. In short, slavery was backed up and created by an attitude of racism that was artificially fashioned to advance economic gain and ensure political stability in the colonies.

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