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The Arrival of Africans and Descent into Slavery

There were Africans and men of mixed European and African ancestry on the ships that came with Columbus and on many of the ships of later conquistadors, merchants, pirates, and immigrants. Many of these people were descendants of the Africans brought back to Portugal and Spain after trading forays along the west coast of Africa in the mid–fifteenth century. Others descended from the Almoravid invaders of the eleventh century and later immigrants. Most had been baptized, had assimilated to Iberian cultures, and were accepted as part of the Christian community. There may have been a few who were African-born, men with sailing expertise who were taken aboard ship when Columbus stopped to rest and refuel at Ceuta on the coast of West Africa. It is said that Pedro Alonzo Niño, the pilot of one of Columbus's ships, was a Negro. According to John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss:

> Thirty Negroes, including Nuflo de Olano, were with Balboa when he discovered the Pacific Ocean. Cortes carried blacks with him into Mexico, and one of them planted and harvested the first wheat crop in the New World. Two accompanied Velas in 1520. When Alvarado went to Quito, he carried two hundred with him. They were with Pizarro on his Peruvian expedition and carried him to the Cathedral after he was murdered. The Africans in the expeditions of Almagro and Valdivia saved their Spanish masters from the Indians in 1525.
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> . . . They were with Alarcón and Coronada in the Conquest of New Mexico. They accompanied Narváez on his expedition of 1527 and were with Cabeza de Vaca in the exploration of the southwestern part of the present United States. One of the outstanding Negro explorers was Estevanico, who opened up New Mexico and Arizona . . . and prepared the way for the conquest of the Southwest by the Spaniards.
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> Africans were with the French in their explorations of the New World. . . . When the great conquest of the Mississippi Valley was undertaken by the French in the seventeenth century, Negroes constituted a substantial portion of

> the pioneers who settled in the region. Around 1790, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a French-speaking black, erected the first building in a place that came to be known as Chicago. (1988, 30–31)[1]

The documentation of the number of people of African ancestry who participated in the exploration of New World territories represents a major departure from the usual image of "the discoverers" of the Americas conveyed in the media and in traditional educational institutions. But this should be understood and explicated in light of Franklin's next sentence: "Negroes did not accompany the English on their explorations in the New World" (1988, 31).

This is a point of critical significance, particularly when we look at the manner in which history has been written by English-speaking peoples. It is also at the heart of major historical debates over the origins of American slavery and over differences in the "racial" attitudes and behaviors between the Europeans who settled in North America and those of Latin America. Of the major European colonizing nations, only the English had not had substantial experience with dark-skinned peoples prior to settlement in the New World. Although the English public had heard about Africans, very few had had encounters with black persons before the mid–seventeenth century.[2] Whereas the Portuguese had established trading relationships with West Africans as early as the 1440s, and Africans had been in Spain and Portugal since ancient times, the English did not begin to interact directly with Africans until well over a hundred years later.[3]

Like other Europeans, the English went to Africa primarily as traders and engaged in business transactions with native leaders or their representatives. During the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603), when Englishmen increasingly turned their attention to overseas enterprises, a few men became involved in the slave trade, long before the institution of slavery was actually established in North America. John Hawkins organized three raids into Africa for slaves. On one occasion alone he captured over 300 Africans. Like John Cabot and Sir Francis Drake, Hawkins also pirated Spanish ships carrying slaves. Before the English established their own trading connections, this was a favored source of slave merchandise. Such slaving activities must have encouraged a callous indifference to the slaves as human beings and increased the perception of the Africans as mere cargo, like cattle, horses, and pigs. The attitudes toward Africans and treatment of them by slave traders were probably shared among all nationalities, mirroring the hard-hearted nature of the slavery enterprise. Slave traders throughout history have been unique in their indifference to the humanity of their cargo.

Francis Drake met Africans in a somewhat different context, as we have seen, when he allied with the Cimarrons against their former Spanish masters. Throughout Central and South America, escaped slaves earned a repu-

tation as fierce fighters, and in the competition among the various European states for colonial possessions these men and women would lend their support to any group that promised them their freedom. Drake was thus in a position to have a positive image of some Africans as allies and potential confederates in settling the New World. For several years, Drake maintained alliances with the Cimarrons, during which time they attacked Spanish settlements, wagon trains, and ships and looted a fortune in gold, silver, and precious jewels. According to Edmund Morgan and other historians, the friendship between the English and the Cimarrons "suggest[s] a camaraderie that went beyond the mutual benefits of the alliance." The Spanish feared that the English in collusion with the Cimarrons might make themselves "masters of the Pacific" (1975, 13).

Aside from these experiences, knowledge of which filtered into communities both in Europe and the Americas, English people had other, quite vague, impressions of Africans. Some early seventeenth-century writers made comparisons between the Africans and the Irish (Quinn 1966, 26–27). Among a few commentators there was a general sense that the Irish, the Africans, and the Indians were all more or less savages. But this was not a uniform or homogeneous view. And it reflected more than anything the ethnic chauvinism of many English people. As was to be expected, there was unmistakable ethnocentric bias against what was presumed to be the habits, dress (or lack thereof), customs, and supernatural beliefs of the Africans. Some subjective negative responses to their physiognomy were also expressed.

Winthrop Jordan made the point that when Englishmen did begin to interact with Africans in overseas trade, it was not within a context "which prejudged the Negro as a slave" (1968, 4). They were just another type of humankind, albeit black and with curious languages, religious beliefs, and other cultural features. Some reports show that the natives were initially judged to be both civil and hospitable; the earliest records do not suggest the more virulent image of savagery that was to come much later.

Those advocates of colonization who held a utopian view of the potential New World colonies, where different kinds of men lived together in peace and harmony, must undoubtedly have had a benign attitude toward the Africans and the Indians without much prejudgment as to their potential for civilized behavior. Under the colonization schemes of Walter Raleigh and Humphrey Gilbert, for example, the first English colony in North America, Roanoke Island, was to be populated with Indians and Africans freed from the Spanish. These first English traders, like their Latin predecessors, evinced unmistakable cognizance that they were dealing with people from well-organized sociopolitical systems, people who were sophisticated and intelligent.

In the broader historical context of over a hundred years of enslavement of Indians and Africans by the Portuguese and Spanish, it was reasonable to

expect that the English would show little reluctance to ultimately accept Africans as slaves. Other Europeans had successfully used Africans in such a manner, and they were known to be productive workers. When the English did enter the slave trade, not only did their North American and Caribbean colonies become major importers of Africans but English traders eventually dominated the slave trade until it was outlawed in 1807.

The First Africans

Africans were first introduced into the English colony at Jamestown in 1619. They were part of a "cargo" of people sold from a Dutch ship that had been trading along the Virginia coast. The little Jamestown colony thus found itself the beneficiary of a new group of laborers for which its settlers had had no previous preparation or experience. In the New England colonies, a few African servants were introduced as early as 1633; they were in Connecticut by 1639 and in New Haven by 1644. In none of these areas were their numbers initially very large.

For the rest of that century, a small but steady stream of Africans were brought to the mainland colonies, particularly after the development of the tobacco industry. In 1670, Virginia still relied for most of its laborers and servants on imports from England. Sugar plantations requiring massive labor had developed in the West Indian islands after about 1640, and the number of Africans imported there increased rapidly from midcentury on. The French, the Spanish, the Dutch, and the English were busily establishing plantations in the Caribbean islands, while competing and fighting among themselves. Those who were successful came increasingly to rely on African slave labor.

A key issue that has prompted much debate and speculation among contemporary historians has been the precise status of these Africans in North America before the institutionalization of laws creating permanent slavery. There is no agreement among scholars on this question. Some historians have suggested that the Africans were slotted into already existing roles as servants, working for the normal period of debenture, from four to seven years. The term "slave" was rarely applied to these Africans during the first decades of their presence in North America. At the same time, historians have noted that varying degrees of servitude were recognized by the English, although the distinctions between them were not very precise.[4]

On this point David Brion Davis observes: "Not only did slavery and serfdom coexist and overlap, but medieval jurists tended to confuse the two conditions" (1966, 48). Jordan claims that there was a measure of precision in the English concept of "slave" but that it has not been well analyzed. He argues that for most Englishmen, slavery denoted a complete loss of freedom, akin to the loss of one's humanity, and to treat a man as a slave was to

treat him as a beast (1968, 54). That some ordinary European servants were sometimes called slaves may reflect not only the confusion of the two categories but, most likely, the subjective feelings of those who held positions as owners and masters.

Perhaps the most recent exploration of this issue is the work of Theodore Allen. With meticulous detail, he has examined the primary sources, from the earliest records of the Virginia colony through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. He has concluded that the status of the first Africans was "indeterminate because it was being fought out" (1997, 178) (see below).

What is indisputably clear is that beginning in the latter part of the seventeenth century major social and economic transformations began to take place that eventually obliterated the uncertain status of Africans and their descendants. Through the passage of various laws, "Negroes" were separated out from other servants and gradually reduced to the status of permanent hereditary slavery. A date frequently noted by historians to mark the first official recognition of permanent slave status in law is 1661, when the Virginia assembly passed an act making a servant who ran away with a Negro responsible for serving the time of the Negro slave (Morgan 1975, 311). However, North American slavery was not the result of a single law or a single court decision, but of numerous individual acts, decisions, and practices that over time became codified into the legal framework of colonial society.

These changes continued into the early eighteenth century, and in the process produced a system of bondage that was unique in human history. Its primary distinctiveness rested on the fact that such slavery was reserved exclusively for black Africans and their descendants. This was a critical step in the evolution of the social construction of race. In the next section we will examine this process more intensively.

The Descent into Permanent Slavery

There is a tradition in American history that rightly connects race and racism with slavery and thus focuses upon the relationship between the two peoples who were most entangled in that institution, Africans and Europeans. The inerrancy of a historical linkage between slavery and racism in North America has to be recognized, although, as we shall see later, there is no intrinsic relationship between the two institutions. Nevertheless, much of the historiography of the twentieth century has centered on the issue of which came first, racism or slavery.

One school of thought has argued that it was the slave condition itself, especially the debased status of the slave, combined with the physical differences in the populations of masters and slaves, that generated the negative attitudes of racism and subsequent social discrimination. Alexis de

Tocqueville, one of the earliest external chroniclers of the American experience, observed in the 1830s that slavery had given birth to what he saw as "immovable" prejudice against the Negro (1948, 359).[5] He was followed in this view by most historians of the slave period.[6] The implication of this position, not always apparent to scholars, was that without slavery, race and racism might not have occurred.

Another school of thought holds that a kind of racial antagonism was present from the beginning of English contact with Africans. And the institutionalization of racial discrimination, including the separation of blacks and whites both spatially and socially, preceded the establishment of slavery. The arguments on both sides are compelling and can be illustrated by the works of several scholars.

In the late 1950s, Carl Degler raised the question of causal priorities again and proceeded to suggest evidence that, in all of the English colonies, "discrimination against the Negro preceded the evolution of a slave status and by that fact helped to shape the form that institution would assume" (1959–1960, 62). The institution of slavery, he argued, came to mirror the discrimination that had occurred from the first contact with Africans on American soil, and "in so doing, perpetuated it" (66). Likewise, Arnold Sio argued that "discrimination against the Negro occurred before the slave status was fully defined and before Negro labor became pivotal to the economic system" (1964–1965, 304).

Somewhat later, Winthrop Jordan offered an expanded version of this view. He attempted to explain or rationalize English attitudes and behavior toward Africans by suggesting that the very blackness of Negroes was, on first contact, sufficiently traumatic to ensure the development of bias toward them (1968, 4–20). Their skin color apparently rarely went unnoticed, and he feels that the frequent comments on this characteristic were a measure of the impression that it made on the English. On this feature alone, Africans contrasted strikingly with the English, who were among the lightest-skinned peoples of Europe. He speculated that the "powerful impact which the Negro's color made upon Englishmen must have been partly owing to suddenness of contact." He added that the English experience with Africans was "markedly different from that of the Spanish and Portuguese who for centuries had been in close contact with North Africa and had actually been invaded and subjected by people both darker and more highly civilized than themselves" (1968, 6).

Jordan saw as the basis of English hostility that the concept of blackness in the English language conveyed predominantly negative images. In this respect, the English language and culture helped to predispose its carriers toward prejudice against Africans. On the one hand, black meant filthy, evil, vile, sinister, ugly, fearful, and deadly. It was the color of mourning, "an emotionally partisan color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a

sign of danger and repulsion" (1968, 7). White, on the other hand, was the color of beauty, virtue, purity, goodness, wonder, and perfection. These contrasting elements in the meaning of these color terms insinuated their way, perhaps subliminally, into English thought and may have become incipient molders of the English attitude toward and evaluation of the Africans.

Degler agreed with Jordan that the English had a cultural predisposition, derived from values associated with the color black, toward a negative view of African people. He argued: "From the 1630s up until slavery clearly appeared in the statutes in the 1660s, the Negroes were being set apart and discriminated against as compared with the treatment accorded Englishmen, whether servants or free" (1959–1960, 53). Even though the term "slave" was rarely used, the actual practice, according a distinct and lower status to Negroes, was already in place. For some Negroes, Degler continued, the reality of their servitude already amounted to slavery in that they served for life.

These authors cited examples of white men who were whipped or otherwise penalized in some other way for consorting with Negroes or for "lying with a negro"; or they received differential sentences for the same crimes. They noted that Virginia and Maryland after midcentury passed laws prohibiting Negroes from bearing arms, imposing separate punishments for Negro and white servants, requiring Negro and Indian women to work in the fields, and taxing Negroes separately. There is evidence that lifetime servitude had been imposed on at least some Negroes and their offspring in practice even before the existence of laws permitting it. And they account for the frequent incidences of higher prices paid for Negroes over white servants as evidence of the practice of keeping blacks in servitude for life. Thus it was not the economic need for slaves alone that explains the inferior social status accorded to Negroes even before slavery was instituted.

Other historians have argued that the experiences of the first Africans in North America was never so clear; their position was in fact somewhat ambiguous. Many feel that there is insufficient evidence in the available sources to declare for certain that all Africans were from the beginning kept separate and apart from the white population. Mary and Oscar Handlin, among prominent historians, have presented considerable evidence and logical arguments for the position that the first Africans were not slaves. "Slavery," they claim, "had no meaning in law; at most it was a popular description of a low form of service" (1972, 26). They point out that Africans were brought into a society where large numbers of people were unfree to some degree, so that the lack of freedom for Africans was not at all unusual.

We have already seen that among the many indentured servants in the New World, some of whom were the "wild Irish," were other kinds of bonded laborers, including some who were permanent. Indian slavery had commenced within a few years of the early settlements and the first conflicts

with the Pilgrims, and many of these Indians were held for life. Although their numbers were not large, Indian slaves were found throughout the early colonies. That they were heathens and had been conquered in a just war was the reason that was put forth as vindication for such treatment. Because of variations in the condition of bonded servants of European background and variations in the treatment of Indians, there were many degrees of servitude in the colonies. Not only immigrant servants, bound to a stated number of years of service, but convicts, vagabonds, orphans, illegitimate children of all "races," and debtors were frequently bought and sold and even occasionally referred to as "slaves."[7]

George Fredrickson ([1971] 1987, 1981) believes that Jordan's argument on the psychological reaction of the English to the blackness of the Africans is too speculative and lacking strong evidence.[8] He finds little to suggest that before the 1680s Africans were treated any differently from other servants. All were subjected to the same discipline and general living conditions. The fact that some blacks gained their freedom, acquired property, and seemingly suffered little or no discrimination is indicative that they were not set apart from all others in their station until the 1690s. Heathenism and captivity, Fredrickson claims, made people enslavable, not the pigment of their skin (1981, 73).

Edmund Morgan agrees that the initial status of blacks was not permanently fixed at the lowest social level. They seemed to suffer no greater debilities than white servants or freed white men. After their terms of service, many blacks gained their freedom and apparently had no difficulty in acquiring property or even voting. Some became landowners or entrepreneurs and commanded the respect of others because of their success. They engaged in trading and other commercial activities and had business dealings on an equal footing with whites. Some black men of substance even acquired slaves of their own. Most were able to experience the same degree of civil rights, with access to the courts and police protection, as Europeans (Morgan 1975, 154–157).

Early references to blacks reveal little clear evidence of a uniform or widespread social antipathy on account of their color. Some records show a fairly high incidence of cooperation among black and white servants and unified resistance to harsh masters. Blacks and whites sometimes escaped from bondage together, or collaborated in insurrections, especially in the English Caribbean islands.

Both Liggio (1976) and Morgan (1975) suggest that in the 1660s and 1670s, the ruling classes in the island plantations were more afraid of a general uprising of the servile classes and landless poor than of any threat presented by the Negroes per se. "There is more than a little evidence," writes Morgan, "that Virginians during these years were ready to think of Negroes as members or potential members of the community on the same terms as

other men and to demand of them the same standards of behavior. Black men and white serving the same master worked, ate, and slept together, and together shared in escapades, escapes, and punishments" (1975, 155). Intermarriage among black and white servants was not unusual and was apparently accepted. Some of the early laws enacted against intermarriages, especially with Indians, may have had other motivations than antipathy toward physical differences (Fredrickson 1981; Nash 1992). Until recently, the disagreement over the status of blacks before the impact of slave laws, and certainly before 1660, was not easily resolved on the basis of available evidence.

Jordan's own final analysis obviates the question of causal primacy. "Rather than slavery causing 'prejudice,' or vice versa," he avers, "they seem rather to have generated each other. Both were . . . twin aspects of a general debasement of the Negro. Slavery and 'prejudice' may have been equally cause and effect, continuously reacting upon each other, dynamically joining hands to hustle the Negro down the road to complete degradation" (1968, 80). There is probably unerring accuracy in this portrayal, but it does not adequately answer the query about the ultimate causes of either black slavery or racism.

The imposition of permanent slavery on Negroes was not the result of a single, abrupt decision as virtually all historians now note. Slavery as an institution only gradually developed. In Virginia, over the critical years between 1660 and 1705, dozens of statutes and regulations were passed restricting some of the rights of blacks, establishing servitude for life, limiting their rights to bear arms and to hold certain property, and providing penalties for interracial marriage or fornication. Both Virginia and Maryland systematically and step by step enclosed blacks, both bonded servants and free Negroes, in a tightening vise of legal restrictions, the most telling of which were the prohibitions against private manumissions during the 1690s. North and South Carolina followed suit in the early decades of the eighteenth century. By 1723, the right to vote was ultimately denied to all Negroes in the southern colonies, free as well as slave.

Little is known about the legal treatment and social position of blacks in New England during the early decades of their presence there. Although both bonded servants (slaves) and free blacks could be found in New England during this time, there were few documented laws or statutes that differentially affected them. Their skin color had seemingly little effect on opportunities to obtain training and employment, rights to police protection, access to justice and the court system, and some level of participation in the political system.

Yet in the 1650s, the New England colonies enacted laws prohibiting Indians and Negroes from serving in the militias. This was the earliest of a number of legal restrictions affecting blacks and Indians alike. In the 1680s more regulations of a confining nature applying to Indians, Negroes, mulattoes, servants, and apprentices were enacted. The equivalence of these categories may be misleading, for the laws and statutes may have been differentially applied. On the other hand, they do seem to reflect a perception of a common identity among these categories of people and a clear intent to exclude them from the privileges and responsibilities enjoyed by Europeans.

The major restrictions on Negroes in all of the colonies had been fully implemented by the first decades of the eighteenth century, when manumission was made more difficult or even impossible, curfews were imposed, and property and marriage regulations established to separate Negro slaves from free persons and other servants. Although there were far fewer slaves in New England than in the South, and the economic value and need for slavery in this region has been questioned, every colony passed laws defining "the Negro" as a subordinate and differentiating blacks from other residents.

Nash encapsulated the process of transforming Africans into chattel slaves in a powerfully succinct manner:

> In rapid succession Afro-Americans lost their right to testify before a court; to engage in any kind of commercial activity, either as buyer or seller; to hold property; to participate in the political process; to congregate in public places with more than two or three of their fellows; to travel without permission; and to engage in legal marriage or parenthood. In some colonies legislatures even prohibited the right to education and religion, for they thought these might encourage the germ of freedom in slaves. . . . Gradually they reduced the slave, in the eyes of society and the law, from a human being to a piece of chattel property. (1992, 159)

The question has been legitimately raised as to why, after forty years of relatively indifferent or indecisive social treatment, the English colonists found it necessary to impose permanent bondage on Africans and their descendants. The enslavement of Indians was comprehensible in the context of the conquest situation, where historical precedent reinforces the tendency of conquerors to reduce victims to forced labor. Both the Indians and the Irish were people whose lands the English had coveted and confiscated. But the Negro as slave did not fit into this classic mold, and this may help us to understand the early ambiguity of the Africans' relationships to the European community.

Overtly the English really had little reason to compare the Africans with the Indians except in their powerlessness. The African was neither native to the Americas nor an enemy captured in war and thus the target of the enmity or belligerence of his conquerors. Moreover, by their own criteria of the requisites for civilized behavior, Africans met at least the basic ones. They were all farmers and some were artisans and craftsmen, adept in a range of skilled activities from blacksmithing and goldsmithing to bricklaying, carpentry, weaving, and leatherworking. Some undoubtedly came from areas of highly

organized state societies and were accustomed to social hierarchies and obedience to positions of legitimate power. Englishmen consequently had no reason to see in the Africans the same image of the "savage," whom they had interpreted in earlier contexts as an impediment to progress.

The answer to the question "Why Africans?" is complex and perhaps best understood in the broadest historical context, encompassing economic and material explanations along with those cultural and historical variables that are so important in human lives but, under recent trends in scholarship, are much too often ignored. What seems absent from the calculations of many recent historians of this phenomenon is the recognition and inclusion in their analysis of the historical penchant that the English had long displayed toward extreme ethnic chauvinism, independently of any contact with Africans and Indians. Certain conditions presaging a negative evaluation of Africans were present even before Englishmen arrived on the coasts of North America.

By the sixteenth century, the English had developed belligerent or competitive relationships with virtually all other groups with whom they had had any contact. Their animosity and willingness to treat others inhumanely has already been documented in the descriptions of the relationships they established with the Irish and the Indians. Even before they established settlements in the New World, the English had developed, as has been noted, a view of the world composed of unequal groups, at the bottom of which were the "savages." This pattern of inhumane treatment of non-English peoples encompassed not only their long-standing conflicts with other Europeans but a culturally induced belief in their own superiority that already bordered on racism and that shortly would be nourished by a newfound and at times fanatical Anglo-Saxonism.

What seems strange is that most Englishmen did not immediately identify the Africans as wild men or savages. It was not until the eighteenth century, at least in the written record, that widespread English attitudes toward Africans mirrored popular evaluations and stereotypes of Irishmen and Indians. The same negative language and antiprimitivistic characterizations of savagery that had been used to refer to the Irish and Indians were then widely applied to Africans and greatly amplified in the next century.

This then is the broader context in which we must look for answers explaining English attitudes toward the Africans and their offspring. But there are also some very specific circumstances that are far more revealing about why English colonizers, long imbued with notions of liberty and righteousness, turned to a system of black slavery.

The Problem of Labor

Consider the circumstances of English expansion. Faced with an abundance of rich lands, what was lacking for their successful exploitation was the labor

to fully cultivate or explore them for minerals or other forms of wealth. Following earlier precedents, English settlers throughout North America attempted to coerce the native populations into the kind of controlled labor that they perceived would be most profitable. When the Indian population proved to be insufficient and ineffective (see below) as slaves, the English turned to importing impoverished men, women, and children from the streets of Liverpool and Bristol, or to rounding up peasant Irishmen and Scotsmen conquered in warfare and shipping them off to provide labor for the early settlements, especially the sugar plantations in the West Indies. In fact, the wholesale shipment of Irishmen into servitude in the New World became an acceptable option for "disposing" of them. The English knew that slavery was not illegal under international laws. So it did not matter who the slaves were so long as they were not proper Englishmen, Protestant, and "civilized."

Englishmen were involved in the Irish "slave trade" to the West Indies beginning in the late 1620s, long before they became the major carriers in the transatlantic trade in African slaves. The largest numbers of Irish were brought in during midcentury, when Oliver Cromwell had instigated his scorched-earth policy against the Irish; the choice as he saw it was to exterminate them or expel them.[9]

Throughout this period there was no reason to predict that the African-Atlantic trade would ultimately supplant the white "vagabonds," "destitutes," and convicts with an unlimited supply of black labor. Moreover, it did not matter that the English had no immediate experience, or recognition, of slavery in British law. As a human institution, slavery was widely accepted as legal and appropriate for some people. For the English plantation owner, what was needed was a docile workforce over whom he had absolute authority, who could be put to work for no more than minimal keep, and thus who could be treated as property such as livestock. The English attempted to put this kind of system into practice with European labor even before the Africans figured significantly into the equation. By the second decade of the seventeenth century, the colonists had already established a plantation system with separate, substandard, and miserable servant housing; poor food; whippings and maiming for punishment; and forced gang labor.

In the 1620s, claims Theodore Allen, some colonists already acquiring wealth from tobacco had transformed the immigrant European labor force from "tenants and wage laborers to chattel bond-servitude in Virginia" (1997, 178). Opportunities for such profit-generating activity were realized after the 1622 attack by Indians on Jamestown that killed off nearly a third of the small colony's population. The survivors from outlying areas fled to the better-protected town, abandoning their fields and forestlands. During the chaos of the next few years, numerous unoccupied and unclaimed lands were taken over by members of the small elite, and they began to use coercive tactics to force laborers and servants to work these lands. The unex-

pected drop in the price of tobacco during the 1620s exacerbated the situation, compelling tobacco producers to constantly seek reductions in the cost of labor; their preference was for bonded laborers who did not need to be paid wages.

For the most part, the institution of bonded or indentured servitude, while not unknown in Europe, was an aberration from traditional English laws and customs. Whereas English servants contracted to serve for a year and were paid wages, indentured bondsmen were obliged to serve a stated number of years (usually four to seven) without pay to work off their debt. Moreover, they could be, and frequently were, bought and sold, maltreated, abused, even brutalized with impunity. Morgan, in his detailed study of the Virginia colony, gives convincing evidence that servants in Virginia were generally degraded and treated as objects: "Virginians dealt in servants the way Englishmen dealt in land or chattels" (1975, 128). White servitude, he claims, came closer to slavery in the tobacco fields of Virginia than anything hitherto known by Englishmen (296). Such degradation, Fredrickson notes, was tolerated by the English and colonial governments because of their own "conviction that the poor deserved no better" (1981, 60).

Because the death rate was so high, most of these usually young servants never lived out their debenture to acquire freedom. So lifetime servitude had already become a reality for many. For those who survived, there was little or no land available primarily because wealthy colonists, in their desire to increase tobacco profits, had already laid claim to all lands not under Indian control. The demand for indentured laborers, not only for the production of tobacco and corn (the principle food) but for defense of the settlement, the crafting and maintenance of tools and equipment, and other laboring chores, increased. And England, with a surplus of labor during the first half of the century, was anxious to siphon off the excess poor, convicts, vagabonds, captured Irish, and homeless Scots and English to the colonies.[10]

One of Allen's major theses is that this turning to heavy usage of bond labor, what he calls the "chattelization" of English plantation labor, "constituted an essential precondition of the emergence of the subsequent lifetime chattel bond-servitude imposed upon African-American laborers" (1997, 300 ff.). He provides supporting quotations from a number of other historians, among them Eric Williams and Lerone Bennett, who claimed that the major features of black slavery were first tried out and perfected on white men and women, providing a "proving ground" for the institution that was later to come (Bennett 1975, 40–41).

Thousands of people were conscripted or forced into this labor system. But by midcentury, more and more were living longer and becoming freed men and women, and this soon became a problem. This was just one of the circumstances that compelled English colonists to try to develop a more permanent, and cheaper, labor force.

Morgan's analysis of the early Virginia colony provides the kind of cultural-historical context out of which we can better grasp the process of transformation to a slave society in the Chesapeake region. Unlike the New England colonizers, Englishmen in this rough and disorderly world set out to exploit other people, including one another, with few scruples about it. The colony contained a large number of rebellious and unruly young men, predominantly unmarried, freed after serving their years of indenture, and on the make. But Morgan claims that in fact there were fewer opportunities for them to make their fortunes than history has portrayed, and they formed an unhappy cadre of idle, restless drifters who caused more than a little trouble and embarrassment to colony leaders. Eager for action, frustrated by those who tried to control and exploit them, these drifters were more than willing to rebel against the colony's elite. The tragedy was that they took out their frustrations on a population relatively easy to hate with impunity, the Indians, who became the scapegoat for their ire. Not only did they often physically attack Indians but they demanded of the colonial government the right to move neighboring Indians off more and more land and to confiscate it for their own private use.

It was Bacon's Rebellion of 1676 that prompted wealthy planters to realize clearly the dangers posed by the dissatisfied laborers, according to Allen. This rebellion was one of a number of acts of opposition that threatened the colonial government. Although originating in anti-Indian agitation during the winter of 1675–1676, part of the significance of the rebellion lay in Nathaniel Bacon's leadership of certain county planters in opposition to the policies of the governor, William Berkeley. With hundreds of volunteer militia attacking Indians, and internal disputes within the wealthy planter and ruling classes, by May 1676 there was a complete breakdown of law and order. The rebels turned their grievances against the government because of perceived corruption, abuses of power, and the imposition of unfair taxes. Various factions demanded more equitable distribution of land, less focus on the monoculture of tobacco, greater land and resources for cattle ranges, an end to the patronage system that dominated the fur trade, and a host of other measures. Among the strongest demands was freedom from the kind of chattel servitude that oppressed the servant class. In 1676, bond laborers began to join the rebellion in masses. In September they burned Jamestown to the ground.

What most frightened planters was that the rebellion brought together several thousand poor, working-class men and women, the majority of the colony's population, including both white and black servants. It was this threat to the system of bond servitude that engaged the planters and their supporters in responding to the rebellion. Production in the tobacco industry required a servile and disciplined labor force, and now this labor force virtually ceased to exist. With bond laborers deserting and joining the rebel

forces, all social order broke down. When the British sent an expedition to put down the rebellion, its leader, Captain Thomas Grantham, had to promise freedom to the bond laborers, "about foure hundred English and Negroes," who constituted the rebel army (Allen 1997, 214). The significance of this, says Allen, is that "128 years before William Lloyd Garrison was born, laboring class African-Americans and European-Americans fought side by side for the abolition of slavery. In so doing they provided the supreme proof that the white race did not then exist" (1997, 215).

The rebellion dissipated; some say it was put down, having been weakened by the death of Bacon. But the royal commissioners, sent out by the British government, noted that the population at large was sullen and obstinate and that the vast majority had supported the rebellion. Social stability had not yet been achieved. As late as 1698, the governor of Maryland reported that nearly 400 bond laborers, mostly from Africa, had arrived, as well as "600 or 700 bond-laborers" from Europe, "chiefly Irish" (Allen 1997, 218). He feared that if that trend were to continue, the two groups might join forces in both Virginia and Maryland and make "great disturbances, if not a rebellion." Such a stated fear was expressed on other occasions, and Allen believes that it lay at the heart of the conscious decision to develop a stratagem for social control that would at the same time ensure the presence of sufficient bond laborers to promote the production of tobacco and other goods in increasing quantities.

At the end of the rebellion the planters were greatly strengthened, especially when armed ships from England arrived. Now the colony's leaders could restore the masses of rebellious workers, who were continuing to plunder and loot, to their proper places. The answer to many of the problems came increasingly to be seen as permanent black slavery. The defeat of Bacon's Rebellion, says Allen, "cleared the way for the establishment of the system of lifetime hereditary chattel bond-servitude" (1997, 239).

But this was not the sole cause of the changes that were to come. Several developments, perhaps unanticipated, led to the growing preference for Africans as laborers and indeed to the fashioning of the institution of slavery for Africans only. In the West Indies as well as on the mainland, quite early in the contact period, Europeans began to realize that the native populations were a poor source of potential labor. For one thing, the Indians had little or no immunity to the Old World diseases that Europeans brought with them. Ordinary children's diseases and respiratory infections from the common cold to tuberculosis had a fatal impact on the indigenous populations, many of whom succumbed rapidly or became weakened to the point of incapacity. In fact, between disease and warfare, the Indian population was drastically reduced and in some cases, particularly on the Caribbean islands, eliminated entirely. Moreover, the surviving Indians, after capture, were still on their own territory, and often individuals or groups would escape and disappear into the hinterlands. In most cases, these runaways would never be recap-

tured, and this posed a major problem for plantation owners. Enslaved Indians had communities of support among their own people, and the threat of Indian attacks to recapture their own tribespeople was constant. Besides, Indians were dealt with as whole societies, not as disconnected individuals who had no social identity other than that provided by their owners. Trading and other agreements, while often breached by Europeans, also acted as a bar to the wholesale enslavement of Indians.

Added to this was the fact that, except in some of the southeastern regions, none of the Indian groups represented large populations. The native peoples of the eastern coastal areas of North America were thinly scattered so that, even when conquered, they did not supply sufficient labor to meet the demand. Indians were also needed as trappers to satisfy the growing demand in Europe for furs. Most of the natives of the regions settled by the English were food collectors or simple horticulturists. Although the eastern woodlands and southern Indians grew some food crops, their techniques and customs did not allow for substantial or continuous surplus production. When some southeastern tribes, like the Creeks, Cherokees, and Choctaws, did take up settled farming lifestyles, they were able to establish treaties with the whites that prevented efforts to enslave them. On the tropical islands, where Europeans had established plantations early on, food cultivation was little known among the native populations, who quickly succumbed to the ravages of disease and warfare.

English willingness to use fellow Europeans as forced labor in the West Indies was not an insignificant precursor of their massive involvement with African slaves. As we have seen, European servants came under the same restrictions as all servants and slaves, and they were often treated worse than others.[11] The Irish particularly were a rebellious lot. Their comparatively high linguistic and cultural homogeneity allowed them to plot mutinies and insurrections, in several of which they were successful. Often they went over to the side of the French or the Spanish in their battles with the English, alliances also experienced in Europe and based on their common Catholic faith. Support from these coreligionists was often critical to the success of some Irish rebellions. That they were threatening to the English planters is evidenced by the report that "English officials armed their black slaves rather than trust the Irish" (Liggio 1976, 29). But adding to the angst of the plantation managers and owners was the fact that the Irish, who as we have already seen had been primarily pastoralists, knew nothing about intensive agriculture, or the tropical environment, or techniques for the cultivation of tropical plants. "Not unlike the Indians to which they were so frequently compared, the Irish, as the English had constantly said, would not submit to the kind of agricultural work which feudalism had demanded. The Indian tended to escape or die; the Irish either resisted work discipline, tending toward idleness, or they rebelled" (Liggio 1976, 30).

There were other factors about the Irish that diminished their value as a controllable and powerless labor force. Individual Irishmen could escape and blend in with the free white population in the ports and other towns, especially on the mainland. Plantation owners soon determined that the expense and difficulties of retrieving these runaways were not worth the bother. Planters also thought of the Irish as having a dangerous nature. Irish servants frequently engaged in drunken brawls and thus quickly gained a reputation for aggressiveness and violence. Predictably, they often turned on their masters. Liggio has concluded that Irish servitude became either impractical or burdensome to the planters. "The Gaelic insurrections caused the English to seek to replace this source of servile labor entirely with another source, African slaves" (Liggio 1976, 29).

White indentured servitude was never certain or predictable. For upward of seventy years it had been the dominant source of labor, but it was self-limiting. The treatment of European servants was subject to criticism abroad, and economic and social developments in Britain soon diminished the supply. White servants were products of European cultural values, and many knew that certain laws protected them in their servitude, even if they happened to be convicts. In the latter part of the seventeenth century the numbers of newly arriving indentured servants began to diminish, in part because of a general population decline in England and the opening of new job opportunities in the homeland. They were never again significant as a labor pool in the exploitation of the colonies either in the West Indies or mainland North America.

The advantages of African labor over that of either the Indians or the Irish were made very obvious to English plantation owners by the late seventeenth century, as they had been earlier to the Spanish and Portuguese. The supply of African slaves increased to meet a growing demand for labor, and the cost to the planters of purchasing a slave for life soon fell below the cost of a European servant. Perhaps more striking, as revealed in the records of the early West Indian planters themselves, was the fact that the Africans initially were considered a civilized and relatively docile population whose members had knowledge of and experience with tropical cultivation and who were accustomed to discipline, one of the hallmarks of civilized behavior, as well as to working cooperatively in groups.

A factor of equal importance was that Africans had natural immunities to Old World diseases, an ecologically adaptive feature they shared with their masters. Africans in North America were also in a strange land, with no place to hide and no powerful European friends or allies to support them in their cause. They were essentially alone and without external political support.[12] Accordingly, individual planters began to hold some Africans in servitude indefinitely, conscious that they were encountering no moral or legal resistance to the practice. Many Africans thus survived, despite the brutal circumstances of their transport to North America and their subsequent lives there, and produced the tobacco, sugar, indigo, cotton, rice, and other crops that generated the great wealth realized by Europeans in the New World.

A Focus on Physical Differences and the Invention of Social Meanings

There should be no doubt that the Africans' physical differences facilitated their reduction to the kind of servitude that the English had long wanted and that agricultural circumstances demanded. But this was not the single cause of their reduction to slavery. The visibility of Africans made it possible to structure the demarcation point of permanent slavery solely on the basis of color. Captured Africans, removed from any possible source of aid and comfort and thrown together with others who did not share their language, culture, or religion, were the most vulnerable of all of the subordinate populations, even without the vast difference represented by the physical badge of color. Yet it is interesting that the justification for their reduction to slavery did not hinge initially on this physical difference. In fact, English arguments for embarking on the enslavement of Africans rested on the same issues of religion and "savagery" that they had applied to the Irish and the Indians. So the colonists convinced themselves, and others, that the Africans deserved the status of slavery because they had lived in sin and savagery in Africa. Indeed, many colonists of the seventeenth century believed, or vindicated their actions with the belief, that enslavement was a major step toward saving the souls of the Africans.

Nevertheless, consciousness of the physical distinctiveness of dark-skinned Africans and of their political and social vulnerability became a core component of English thinking about their own social and economic predicament during the late seventeenth century, especially in Virginia and Maryland, when sources of white servants began declining. English traders entered the slaving business, lowering the costs of importing Africans, whose numbers increased rapidly. The singular identification of dark skin with slave status progressed just as rapidly. Jordan believes that "by the end of the seventeenth century dark complexion had become an independent rationale for enslavement" (1968, 96). At least some planters would have agreed.

However, it is important to emphasize that complexion alone was not put forth as a primary justification for slavery. The growing imagery of human differences was much more complicated. Dark skin color would soon become a symbol of savagery and heathenism and all the other negative characteristics that these terms connoted in the English worldview. The image evolving in the English collective consciousness, not yet fully articulated, was that the Africans were different in a way that transcended all other modes of

ethnic differentiation. As the eighteenth century wore on, their savagery became intrinsic and terminal.

Permanent lifelong slavery, passed on from parent to child and relegated solely to Africans and their descendants, was not a single political decision made in a moment's time. It was a series of decisions building upon one another, made by men and women who were conscientiously creating a new institution. Jordan portrayed the process as an "unthinking decision" growing out of the desperate need for labor, the increasing availability of Africans from numerous traders, and the already existing subtle associations of blacks with slavery in Latin America (1968, chap. 2). But other historians have concluded that such a decision was hardly "unthinking."

Edmund Morgan argues that, from the standpoint of the English in Virginia, they did not have to actively enslave anyone, "they converted to slavery simply by buying slaves instead of servants" (1975, 197). Indeed, they often placed the blame for slavery on the English government, which, after all, permitted the traffic in slaves. Yet it is quite evident that the colonists felt the need to concretize their practices and the customs developing around them in law by passing dozens of statutes and regulations that hemmed in the Africans with increasingly tighter restrictions. Englishmen in Virginia, as in Maryland, South Carolina, and other colonies, actively passed numerous laws separating out Africans for special treatment and institutionalizing permanent hereditary slavery for them and their descendants. Although these acts contradicted prevailing English laws governing servants and their treatment, it is obvious that the Virginia planters expected no reaction from the English government. The Africans were different; they were heathens and they were already slaves, it was argued; and to some they were a "brutish people" whom English laws need not protect (Morgan 1975, 314). Thus it became easier to think of them solely as slaves and property purchased for an obvious good.

The substitution of slaves for servants, Morgan tells us, gradually eased the threat posed by unruly, aggressive freed servants driven by desire for land and contemptuous of authority (Morgan 1975, 308). A clearly demarcated category of slaves allowed freed European servants new opportunities to realize their own ambitions and to identify common interests with the wealthy and powerful. Allen agrees, as we have seen, and has built on this analysis to demonstrate with meticulous evidence and admirable logic that the reduction of Africans, especially those newly arriving, to permanent lifetime slave status was a social control mechanism, one he believes was deliberately and consciously contrived.

The implication of his argument is clear; although colonists recognized the physical diversities in their population, until the end of the seventeenth century they had not yet imposed *social* meanings on them. Allen's fundamental argument is that by dividing the laboring class along color lines, by allocating privileges and rights to poor European freedmen, and by abrogating the rights of Negroes by relegating them to permanent bondage, the bourgeois plantation owners diminished the possibility of the kind of "class warfare" that Bacon's Rebellion had portended. In passing laws offering material advantages (land, tools, and equipment) and opportunities to the freed European poor, opposition to official policies was muted. And there were few to oppose the enforcement of permanent slavery on Africans. Written expressions of the colonists' motivations and intentions in letters and the records of the colonial assembly were unambiguous (see Allen 1997).

Wealthy planters were also doing something else in what appeared to be a calculated manner. They were creating a sort of "consciousness of kind" that eventuated in the formation of the "white race," out of a heterogeneous and motley collection of Europeans *who had never before perceived that they had anything in common.* A watershed in the developing ideology was reached when in 1723 the General Assembly of Virginia passed an act ostensibly designed to promote better government and social control. One of its most significant articles states that "no free negro, mulatto, or indian whatsoever, shall have any vote at the election of burgesses, or any other election whatsoever" (Allen 1997, 242). By such disenfranchisement of people who had been free for upward of five generations, according to Virginia's governor at that time, William Gooch, the assembly sought "to fix a perpetual Brand upon Free Negros & Mulattos" (245). Allen's analysis of the significance of Gooch's letter, often overlooked by historians, is critical to understanding the thinking behind the numerous acts leading to the creation of race ideology.

It was the political elevation of notions of separateness and difference that formed the substratum out of which were formed the social categories that came to be designated as "races" in North America. For the next two centuries Americans continued to imbue these categories with social meanings and to act as if these meanings were tantamount to reality. The attributes embroidered for each social category were intended to forever maintain the inequality and power differentials that the colonists had established.

Black slavery in America, it should be emphasized, was an important economic institution. It was profitable for both the traders and for those whose wealth was acquired from the labor of slaves.[13] But colonists of all sorts, slave owners and non–slave owners, did not seek to maintain slavery for merely economic reasons. It became predominantly a social institution, a mechanism integral to the structuring of the colonies' social system. It evolved simultaneously as a relationship of dominance and power and as a form of conspicuous consumption for the socially ambitious. Europeans of all social and economic classes and ethnic identities learned that they had the right to yearn for the plantation lifestyle with its comforts, graciousness, elite mannerisms, and luxuries. Even if the economic efficiency of slavery declined or was subject to question at times, the structural relationships and social functions persisted and strengthened in the eighteenth and nineteenth cen-

turies. Historians who have treated American slavery as only an economic institution, as a mode of production, have often ignored or failed to perceive the importance of this social-cultural factor. It was this latter reality that generated the greatest resistant to ending slavery, as southerners and other proslavery advocates recognized that the social dimension in all its complexity was critical to what they saw as their way of life. This will be discussed further in Chapter 9.

The process of creating this new slave system, at the domestic level, at the plantation production level, and at the level of legislated decisions and public policy, was cognitively connected to the physical differences between those who had the power to enslave and those, lacking power, who were enslaved. As I have already emphasized, the English, not unlike other Europeans of this era, had always found it easy to treat the poor and powerless with contempt and indifference. When society was transformed so that indelible physical differences were linked to such victims, the situation literally called for the exaggerated degradation of all who bore such features. Thus even African Americans who were ostensibly, and legally, free were demarcated from the rest of society and gradually demoted to a status of permanent inferiority. A multitude of decisions made in the individual treatment of relatively powerless blacks resulted in, and reinforced, attitudes of contempt and denigration focused on the blackness itself.

Conscientiously moral human beings, however, do not conventionalize such habits of thought and behavior without formulating a rationalizing ideology. Even as laws were enacted and customs created, the colonists were inventing ideologies to mirror, explain, and justify them. After all, they told themselves in the beginning, Africans had been slaves in their homelands and ipso facto accustomed to much worse treatment. They were heathens and wracked with sin. How much better to be slaves in Christian colonies where hard work would purify their souls and prepare them for Christian worthiness? It was in this manner that Africans soon became the new savages. Almost imperceptibly the status of "the Negro" in the gallery of interacting populations in the colonial world was lowered below that of Indians, most of whom were, after all, formally free. Indians gradually receded as the most savage creature; by the latter half of the eighteenth century a primitivistic view of the Indian, elevating him as a "noble savage," began to take hold in North America. A subtle reshuffling of the existing ranking system was taking place.[14]

In summary, then, in the process of advancing slowly along the road to a full-scale slave society, English colonists gradually transferred an institution (indentured servitude) into a form of permanent slavery for people of African origin. While doing so they initiated the development of a unique and subtle ideology about human differences, not the least of which was the homogenization of all Europeans into a "white" identity, and of all those with African ancestry into an identity as "Negroes" and slaves.

As they were creating the institutional and behavioral aspects of slavery, the colonists were simultaneously structuring the ideological components of race. The practices and customs of black slavery and white freedom thus helped form the basis for the racial worldview. By the latter part of the eighteenth century we see "race" appearing not merely as a subdivision of interacting populations in the colonies but as (1) an intellectual construct about human differences and power relationships and (2) a novel and unprecedented quality introduced into the structuring of social status. This was the only slave system whose rationale became uninhibitedly and exclusively "racial." By increasingly limiting perpetual servitude to Africans and their descendants, the colonists were proclaiming that blacks would forever be at the bottom of the New World social hierarchy. By keeping blacks, Indians, and whites socially and spatially separated and enforcing endogamous mating, they were making sure that visible physical differences would be preserved as the premier insignia of unequal social statuses. In this way they institutionalized exclusive group membership and paved the way for later rationalizations of group distinctiveness in terms of natural, inbred inequality.

Throughout the eighteenth century even free persons of African ancestry were diminished and degraded into what some have called a "pariah" caste. Thus the creation of this new dimension of social difference went beyond the mere transformation of those who were already slaves. It helps us to understand the potential autonomous nature of "race" itself, how it developed as an essential quality and came to persist as a form of social identity independently of slavery (see Chapter 9).

On this point, we should again emphasize that there is no intrinsic relationship between slavery and the development of race and racism. Many find this difficult to comprehend, in part because the American experience has so dramatically intertwined the two in our historical memories.[15] But as will be shown in Chapter 6, slavery existed long before race and racism. Whether race ideology could have evolved without black slavery is another question future scholars will no doubt explore.

Although we must separate conceptually the idea of race from slavery, for our present purposes we must acknowledge that historically the circumstances of black slavery provided the fertile soil out of which the English ideology of race evolved. It is in these unique components of North American slave practices and beliefs, especially as they evolved in the eighteenth century, that we penetrate to the core of the race idea. In the next chapter we take a closer look at the institution of Anglo-American slavery.

Notes

1. In the sixth edition of his famous work, written in conjunction with Alfred A. Moss, John Hope Franklin refers to the works of Leo Wiener and Ivan Van Sertima, two scholars who have argued that Africans were in the Americas before the explo-

rations of the Spanish and Portuguese. Since the theories and evidence offered by these historians have not been accepted by most scholars, Franklin notes that the "traditional story of the coming of Africans to the New World remains essentially unchanged" (1988, 30).

2. There were a few Africans in England following the wars with Spain in the late sixteenth century who served primarily as personal servants to traders, military men, and foreign diplomats. They were concentrated in London and other port cities.

3. Historian Colin Palmer acknowledges that there are no comprehensive statistics on the number of African slaves in Spain in the sixteenth century. Africans were not distinguished as a separate category of slaves. He records, however, that "in 1565 there were 6,327 slaves in Seville out of a total population of 85,538," and states that a majority were probably Africans. He notes further that Antonio Dominguez Ortiz claimed that there were about 100,000 slaves in Spain at this time, most of whom were not Africans (1976, 6). The Almoravids (followers of Ibn Yasin, a Muslim holy man residing in Sijilmasa) who conquered Spain during the last quarter of the eleventh century, and the later Almohades, included large numbers of supporters from the Senegal River area of West Africa (see Rotberg 1965, 39–40; also Hitti 1953, 540).

4. Compare Nash 1982 and Handlin [1948] 1957.

5. Tocqueville had an amazing clairvoyance about the American experience. Writing about democracy and the potential for revolutionary fervor after his 1831 visit to the United States, he noted: "If ever America undergoes great revolutions, they will be brought about by the presence of the black race on the soil of the United States; that is to say, they will owe their origin, not to the equality, but to the inequality of condition" ([1831] 1945, 270).

6. The classic work of Eric Williams, for example, declares unequivocally: "Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery" ([1944] 1966, 7). Williams believes that the initial impetus for establishing slavery was economic and was unrelated to the physical features of the black population.

7. In 1547 a statute was passed in England inflicting slavery upon "vagabonds" and "runaways," but it proved unenforceable and was repealed in 1553. Laws of this sort contradicted the trend toward personal liberty that increasingly characterized English society (Jordan 1968, 51).

8. Similar values and associations for the colors black and white are shared by other European cultures. This raises questions about the real significance of the initial English reactions to skin-color differences and what such differences might have meant in the English interpretation of social status in the absence of slavery.

9. Louis Ruchames cites H. N. Brailsford's description of the aftereffects of the English Civil War of 1648 in which he speaks of "the systematic sale of prisoners, Welshmen, Scots and Englishmen, to serve as slaves in all but name in the plantations of Barbados and Virginia" (1969, 7).

10. Allen has calculated that of "some 92,000 European immigrants brought to Virginia and Maryland between 1607 and 1682, more than three-quarters of them were chattel bond-laborers, the great majority of them English" (1997, 119).

11. Part of the larger ethical position of Protestants was a deep-seated and irrational hatred of the poor. In their view, men who were idle were also evil and sinful, and of course likely to be criminals. This accounts for the jailing of poor and destitute individuals, the establishment of poorhouses and workhouses under government sponsorship, and their harsh treatment and unmitigated exploitation. This attitude provided a legacy that weaves throughout American culture down to the present time.

12. As should be well known, Africans did resist slavery and were sometimes successful in escaping. In some parts of Latin America and on Jamaica and other islands, some Africans escaped and founded remote villages replicating the villages of their African homelands. These Cimarrons frequently posed threats to Spanish settlements, often attacking supply stations and wagons as well as local militias. See, for example, Palmer 1976 and Bowser 1974. We saw earlier (in Chapter 4) how Francis Drake made alliances with some Cimarrons, and he wrote admiringly of them.

13. Some recent publications have criticized Eric Williams's principal theory that slavery generated the wealth for the development of modern industrial capitalism. Scholars may debate the point indefinitely, but when export crops produced by slaves, such as tobacco, sugar, and cotton, generated the greatest wealth, it is legitimate to raise the question of what the alternative may have been. In any case, social policymakers aiming at eliminating racism might consider the fact that when history finally gives the African slaves their due—by emphasizing the real contributions of their strength, skills, and knowledge to the building of America—we will have made a giant step toward transforming racial attitudes.

14. A good illustration of this subtle change is found in Thomas Jefferson's historical work on the state of Virginia. He staunchly defended the Indians' abilities while simultaneously diminishing those of Negroes. Jefferson was among many who held out the possibility that the Indian might ultimately be assimilated into colonial society. This was never considered an option for the Negro.

15. It is interesting that Moses I. Finley, writing on the topic of slavery for the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (1968a), felt it necessary to include a section on color prejudice, so closely bound together are these topics in the American mind.