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Origin of Racial Slavery in America
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The Origin Of Racial Slavery

I believe that the Origin of Slavery started in Virginia years after the Bacon's Rebellion because rich whites started implementing new laws just for African Americans so that they could divide them from other European servants. This is evidenced by historian Theodore Allen in an article called "The Invention of the White Race" where he discusses how it led up to African slavery and just how they did it with intent. Rich whites did this because they wanted to maintain social control and feared black and white servants coming together and starting another rebellion.

In 1606, the English decided to go to America specifically Jamestown to start a settlement. 104 English men and boys were the first to arrive in colonial Virginia and throughout the months they started a life there and had resources. As Winter came it became much harder to find resources and grow crops because of the cold. The colonists started dying and by January 1608, there were only 38 alive. They started drinking water that was salty and contained arsenic, eventually their food started running out fast, and famine started to set in. The colonists then resorted to digging up corpses out of graves and eating them to maintain their hunger but then not long after did they resort to cannibalism. They eventually recovered and in 1670, legislatures decided to pass down a law saying that only men with land could vote because they were scared of what poor men could do. During that time, every white man was required to have a gun to use in defending the colony, this scared William Berkeley who was the governor even more since they were "poor, indebted, discontented, and armed." The governor was afraid

of them revolting and joining forces with their enemies. He was even more afraid of just black and white servants being united, and revolting together, and just overpowering him and starting rebellions. In 1676, the Governor's fears became reality. Nathaniel Bacon who is a tobacco planter organized a militia because he was concerned about the attacks on settlers. Against the Governor's concerns, Bacon and his men killed members of a friendly tribe and another tribe called Susquehanna, a tribe that was hostile towards the settlers. The governor called Bacon a rebel and charged him with treason, Bacon's response was to march with five hundred armed men to Jamestown and then burn the settlement to the ground. Captain Graham decided to negotiate with the rebels by saying how they forgave them and are free from slavery, most of them agreed to surrender and others didn't. In the end, Graham lied and the government's forces captured the rebels and returned them to their masters and hanged several of the rebellion's masters.

One argument that supports the claim that rich whites implemented laws in order to separate black and white servants from each other is that laws were created to make white servants privileged and reduce Africans to permanent slavery mostly after the Bacon's Rebellion. For example

“In 1705, white bond-servants, upon completion of their terms of servitude, were to receive under the law the following freedom dues: men, 10 bushels of corn, 30 shillings in money, and a musket worth 20 shillings; women, 15 bushels of corn and 40 shillings in money. The Afro-American laborers were not to receive freedom dues, since they were not to have freedom.” (Allen)

This evidence proves that when white servants finished their years of servitude, they received

things to build up their life such as getting land, protecting themselves and their property, and starting up a farm to feed themselves and their animals. and more while African american servants were not given any of those things or even freedom. The excerpt states,

“The white-skin privileges of the poor free whites were simply reflexes of the disabilities imposed on the Negro slave: to move about freely without a pass; to marry without any upper-class consent; to change employment; to vote in elections in accordance with the laws on qualifications; to acquire property; and last, but not least, in this partial list, the right of self-defense.” (Allen)

In this quote, Theodore Allen is saying that white servants were given a lot of privileges while Black servants did not receive any privileges. This is a significant observation because with these privileges they had a little bit more of freedom and had rights. With having a pass they could go anywhere they liked without asking for permission and get married to another servant with permission. They could even buy properties, change jobs, and were allowed to defend themselves which is something that is important. For example, if someone were to attack them, they were allowed to protect themselves in any way such as using their fists or muskets.

The second argument is that wealthy white people were creating laws to give white servants privileges such as food, guns and even off the penalties that white servants had from the Bacon's Rebellion but excluded black servants from those privileges. These privileges were given because rich white people wanted to enforce a distinction between black and white servants so that black people could know they were different from them. It states

In 1680, Negroes were forbidden to carry arms, defensive or offensive. In 1705, the specified freedom dues for a white bond-servant included a musket. In 1680, the law

provided that any Negro who raised his or her hand against any Christian white would be liable to receive thirty lashes, well laid on. Under the law of 1705, a white servant raising a hand against the master, mistress or overseer was liable to an extension of a year of his or her servitude. Under the same law, the killing of an Afro-American life-time bond-servant was legal if the bond-servant resisted "correction" by the master or his agent. (Allen)

This piece of evidence proves that black servants weren't allowed to carry weapons, do certain things, and receive harsher punishments while white servants could carry weapons, do certain things and as a punishment they would receive an extra year. According to the text, it states

Not only the free whites, but the white bond-servants were given privileges in relation to the African. In 1680 the Virginia Assembly repealed all penalties that had been imposed on white servants for plundering during Bacon's Rebellion. The language of the act implicitly excluded from this benefit any Afro-American freedmen or limited-term bond-servants who had taken part in the Rebellion. Negro children were made tithable, hence workable, at twelve years of age, while white bond-servants were exempt until they were fourteen. (Allen)

This evidence proves that wealthy white people gave white servants privileges and removed penalties off of white servants that participated in Bacon's Rebellion, while they excluded black servants from that and added another because they wanted black servants to start working at an early age. From these pieces of evidence this also just shows that they created these laws to give white servants privileges and rights while they didn't give black servants any of those privileges and rights in order to slowly divide them and show them that they are different.

The third argument is that William Gooch, who was the Governor of Virginia at that time, finally admitted free blacks shouldn't have the right to vote because he believed that the planters "needed to fix a perpetual brand on all Negroes" because he wanted it to be known that there was distinction between a=black and white servants. In the letter Governor Gooch wrote, he confessed

yet such was the insolence of the free negros at that time, that the next Assembly thought it necessary, not only to make the meetings of slaves very penal, but to fix a perpetual brand upon free negros and mulattos by excluding them from that great priviledge of a Freeman..... And 'tis likewise said to have been done with design, which I must think a good one, to make the free negros sensible that a distinction ought to be made between their offspring and the descendants of an Englishman, with whom they never were to be accounted equal. (Allen)

This evidence proves that Governor Gooch saw that there were free black people and wanted to take that from them by not giving them the right to vote. He wanted to make sure that there was a distinction between white and black people by taking away their freedom. In that piece of evidence Gooch says "tis likewise said to have been done with design, which I must think a good one," which shows that he did this with intent and believed it was a good thing to do because he thought that black people weren't equal at all to them. These were the first steps of taking away their freedom and then starting slavery. From what Governor Gooch said, it shows how they started slavery on purpose. They intended to do all of this by taking away their freedom and creating new laws that separate white and black people to make it clear that they weren't equal. It

wasn't an unthinking decision, that wasn't the case because when I think of the word "design" I think about a plan. Governor Gooch and other wealthy white people slowly planned everything out, they didn't just start racial slavery just cause they felt like it, they took the time to thoroughly think about it and made a plan how how they would slowly do it.

The fourth argument is that Wealthy white people feared they would lose power and money if white and black servants came together and revolted against them so they implemented new laws. According to the excerpt, it states "The same letter from merchants possessing estates in Virginia and Maryland made the point that they "have no white men to superintend our negroes, or repress an insurrection of Negroes. . . ." The Council of Trade and Plantations reported to the King on September 8, 1721 that in South Carolina "black slaves have lately attempted and were very near succeeding in a new revolution . . . and therefore, it may be necessary . . . to propose some new law for encouraging the entertainment of more white servants in the future." (Allen) This evidence is saying that merchants in Virginia said that there wasn't anyone who could watch the black servants because they have been attempting to start a new revolution and wanted to do something about it so they decided to create some new laws and even thought about bringing in more white servants so that they can possibly join the militia and be those that watch and protect the wealthier whites from black servants.

(Section 4)

Others, like Winthrop Jordan, may disagree with this idea, arguing that racial slavery didn't happen on purpose but that certain events resulted into slavery accidentally. In observations made by Winthrop Jordan from the book "Race Of North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview: Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley" it states

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 were known for their cattle - keeping and breeding and leatherworking....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, the tropical environment, or techniques for the cultivation of tropical plants. (Audrey & Brian D. Smedley, 104/111-112)

This argues that wealthy white people found that black people were more useful because they already had experience in farming, carpentry, weaving, and all sorts of things so they rather use them as their labor source instead of the Irish because they didn't know anything about farming at all and didn't have experience in it either. Also according to the source from "Alienable Rights: The Exclusion of African Americans in a White Man's Land 1619" by Francis D. Adams and Barry Sanders, it states

At the same time [1640], the flow of white servants coming from England slackened. After 150 years of continual growth, in which the English population exploded from 3 million to over 5 million, the increase in numbers fell to almost nothing. No one knows for certain what caused the change, but by the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century English complaints of overpopulation had stopped and pressure on the poor to leave England began to recede. The ravages of the plague and the great London fire of 1666 may have played a part by reducing the labor pool and raising wages for workers at

home; whatever the reasons, the colonies received fewer indentured whites. (Francis D & Barry Sanders, 7)

This differs from Theodore Allen's observations because the evidence states that these events is what made rich white people result to racial slavery. In this piece of evidence, it talks about how England's population went from 5 million to the population number's lessening because of events like the great london fire which caused them to send fewer indentured servants to Colonel Virginia. Overall, these sources give an alternative view that racial slavery happened because of certain events or circumstances that took place which resulted in fewer servants being sent to Virginia and having to use black servants instead of Irish servants since they knew more about farming. This argument falls short because I don't find his points convincing at all because Winthrop Jordan doesn't really go into depth and racial slavery started on purpose, it didn't happen by accident. In the excerpt by Theodore Allen, it states that "How was the bourgeoisie to turn that old situation around, break up the solidarity of black and white, and then enlist the poor whites in the social control apparatus of the ruling class? ...The plantation bourgeoisie deliberately extended a privileged status to the white poor of all categories as a means of turning to African slavery as the basis of its system of production."(Allen) Allen argues here that the wealthy white people wanted to do something about dividing black and white servants so they "deliberately" went with starting African slavery and give the poorer whites privileges.

It's very important to know the Origin of Racial Slavery and the events that went on back then because it shows what life was like back then and how racial slavery started and what black people had to go through. Just learning about the origin of racial slavery just makes you realize how far black people have come and how there's so much we have to work on to change how

things are right now in the world especially for the future generations. I always knew that there was still racism and how black people are still being discriminated against, but the events that took place last year really opened my eyes up more. When the video of George Floyd came out, that was the first time I've ever seen something like that and it made me think to myself how I never knew things like this happened in the black community and it just saddens me to know they are still being targeted because of their skin color. From seeing that video, many people were outraged which sparked a movement that spreaded around the country and people protested about George Floyd and how Black Lives Matter. His death was horrible, it something that shouldn't have happened but it did sadly, and the response of people was so understandable because an innocent life was taken away. I just hope that things change soon because there needs to be a stop to this and I don't want future generations to deal with being targeted because of their skin color.

The Origin Of Racial Slavery started many years ago in Jamestown Virginia after Bacon's Rebellion which was in 1676. The wealthy whites started creating many laws in order to separate black and white servants so that it can be apparent that they are not equal. Even Governor Gooch confessed that he took away free black people's rights to vote so that he can show that black people are not like white people and so they make sure they know that. They even made sure to give poorer whites more privilege and take away any penalties they had except they excluded black people from this to further show a distinction between them. Wealthy whites did all of this because they were afraid of black and white people coming together and revolting, they also feared losing their power because of this. Today, black and white people work besides each other in different fields, they come together and protest, they live beside each

other, and are able to walk freely amongst white people and have rights that they didn't have many years ago. We do still have racism in this world and it's something that I would love to see disappear. Everything that is happening in the 21st century, is something I'm not happy about and I just want the future to be better than the present. I would love for there to be many positive changes in the future, but to get there, we need to start making changes now so that the future generations don't have to go through what the black community is facing now.

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