

Slavery in Virginia: Timeline

1607

Jamestown, the first British North American settlement, was founded in Virginia.

1619

The first African Americans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia.

1640

Virginia courts sentenced a black run away servant, John Punch, to "serve his said master . . . for the time of his natural Life."

1661

Virginia courts proscribed slavery for white servants who ran away with black servants.

1662

Virginia's leaders hold that "Negro women's children to serve according to the condition of the mother." WHEREAS some doubts have arisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free, Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly, that all children borne in this country shall be held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother."

1667

Whereas some doubts have arisen whether children that are slaves by birth. . . should by virtue of their baptism be made free, it is enacted that baptism does not alter the condition to the person as to his bondage or freedom; masters freed from this doubt may more carefully propagate Christianity by permitting slaves to be admitted to that sacrament.

1669

An act about the casual killing of slaves. WHEREAS the only law in force for the punishment of refractory servants (a) resisting their master, mistress or overseer cannot be inflicted upon negroes, nor the obstinacy of many of them by other than violent means suppressed, Be it enacted and declared by this grand assembly, if any slave resist his master (or other by his masters order correcting him) and by the extremity of the correction should chance to die, that his death shall not be accounted felony, but the master (or that other person appointed by the master to punish him) be acquitted from molestation, since it cannot be presumed that premeditated malice (which alone makes murder felony) should induce any man to destroy his own estate.

1672

The King of England encourages the Royal African company to expand the British slave trade. Within 16 years the company transports nearly 90,000 Africans to the Americas.

1682

Act I. It is enacted that all servants. . . which [sic] shall be imported into this country either by sea or by land, whether Negroes, Moors [Muslim North Africans], mulattoes or Indians who and whose parentage and native countries are not Christian at the time of their first purchase by some Christian. . . and all Indians, which shall be sold by our neighborly Indians, or any other trafficking with us for slaves, are hereby adjudged, deemed and taken to be slaves to all intents and purposes any law, usage, or custom to the contrary notwithstanding.

XIX. And for a further prevention of that abominable mixture and spurious issue, which hereafter may increase in this her majesty's colony and dominion, as well by English, and other white men and women intermarrying with negroes or mulattos, as by their unlawful coition with them, Be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, and it is hereby enacted, That whatsoever English, or other white man or woman, being free, shall intermarry with a negro or mulatto man or woman, bond or free, shall, by judgment of the county court, be committed to prison, and there remain, during the space of six months, without bail or mainprize; and shall forfeit and pay ten pounds current money of Virginia, to the use of the parish, as aforesaid.

XXXIV. And if any slave resist his master, or owner, or other person, by his or her order, correcting such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction, it shall not be accounted felony; but the master,

owner, and every such other person so giving correction, shall be free and acquit of all punishment and accusation for the same, as if such accident had never happened: And also, if any negro, mulatto, or Indian, bond or free, shall at any time, lift his or her hand, in opposition against any christian, not being negro, mulatto, or Indian, he or she so offending, shall, for every such offence, proved by the oath of the party, receive on his or her bare back, thirty lashes, well laid on; cognizable by a justice of the peace for that county wherein such offence shall be committed.

1698

The English Parliament ends the monopoly of the African slave trade by the Royal African Company. As a result, the number of Africans transported to the British colonies increases from 5,000 to 45,000 a year. England becomes the largest trafficker in slaves in the Western world.

1705

The Virginia General Assembly declared:

"All servants imported and brought into the Country...who were not Christians in their native Country...shall be accounted and be slaves. All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves within this dominion...shall be held to be real estate. If any slave resist his master...correcting such slave, and shall happen to be killed in such correction...the master shall be free of all punishment...as if such accident never happened."

The code, which would also serve as a model for other colonies, went even further. The law imposed harsh physical punishments, since enslaved persons who did not own property could not be required to pay fines. It stated that slaves needed written permission to leave their plantation, that slaves found guilty of murder or rape would be hanged, that for robbing or any other major offence, the slave would receive sixty lashes and be placed in stocks, where his or her ears would be cut off, and that for minor offences, such as associating with whites, slaves would be whipped, branded, or maimed.

1750

Virginia passes laws defining the distinction between a slave and a servant, relegating all slaves to the status of property.

Slavery and the Law in Virginia The Growth of the Black Population:	
1625	23
1648	300
1671	2,000
1680	3,000
1700	16,390
1720	26,559
1730	30,000
1740	60,000
1775	210,000

