

A People's History of the United States, 1492-Present

By Howard Zinn

CHAPTER 1. Columbus , The Indians, and Human Progress

"History is the memory of states," wrote Henry Kissinger in his first book, *A World Restored*, in which he proceeded to tell the history of nineteenth-century Europe from the viewpoint of the leaders of Austria and England, ignoring the millions who suffered from those statesmen's policies. From his standpoint, the "peace" that Europe had before the French Revolution was "restored" by the diplomacy of a few national leaders. But for factory workers in England, farmers in France, colored people in Asia and Africa, women and children everywhere except in the upper classes, it was a world of conquest, violence, hunger, exploitation—a world not restored but disintegrated.

My viewpoint, in telling the history of the United States, is different: that we must not accept the memory of states as our own. Nations are not communities and never have been. The history of any country, presented as the history of a family, conceals fierce conflicts of interest (sometimes exploding, most often repressed) between conquerors and conquered, masters and slaves, capitalists and workers, dominators and dominated in race and sex. And in such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people, as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners.

Thus, in that inevitable taking of sides which comes from selection and emphasis in history, I prefer to try to tell the story of the discovery of America from the viewpoint of the Arawaks, of the Constitution from the standpoint of the slaves, of Andrew Jackson as seen by the Cherokees, of the Civil War as seen by the New York Irish, of the Mexican war as seen by the deserting soldiers of Scott's army, of the rise of industrialism as seen by the young women in the Lowell textile mills, of the Spanish-American war as seen by the Cubans, the conquest of the Philippines as seen by black soldiers on Luzon, the Gilded Age as seen by southern farmers, the First World War as seen by socialists, the Second World War as seen by pacifists, the New Deal as seen by blacks in Harlem, the postwar American empire as seen by peons in Latin America. And so on, to the limited extent that any one person, however he or she strains, can "see" history from the standpoint of others.

My point is not to grieve for the victims and denounce the executioners. Those tears, that anger, cast into the past, deplete our moral energy for the present. And the lines are not always clear. In the long run, the oppressor is also a victim. In the short run (and so far, human history has consisted only of short runs), the victims, themselves desperate and tainted with the culture that oppresses them, turn on other victims.

Still, understanding the complexities, this book will be skeptical of governments and their attempts, through politics and culture, to ensnare ordinary people in a giant web of nationhood pretending to a common interest. I will try not to overlook the cruelties that victims inflict on one another as they are jammed together in the boxcars of the system. I don't want to romanticize them. But I do remember (in rough paraphrase) a statement I once read: "The cry of the poor is not always just, but if you don't listen to it, you will never know what justice is."

I don't want to invent victories for people's movements. But to think that history-writing must aim simply to recapitulate the failures that dominate the past is to make historians collaborators in an endless cycle of defeat. If history is to be creative, to anticipate a possible future without denying the past, it should, I believe, emphasize new possibilities by disclosing those hidden episodes of the past when, even if in brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, to join together, occasionally to win. I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past's fugitive moments of compassion rather than in its solid centuries of warfare.

That, being as blunt as I can, is my approach to the history of the United States. The reader may as well know that before going on.

What Columbus did to the Arawaks of the Bahamas, Cortes did to the Aztecs of Mexico, Pizarro to the Incas of Peru, and the English settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts to the Powhatans and the Pequots. In the North American English colonies, the pattern was set early, as Columbus had set it in the islands of the Bahamas. In 1585, before there was any permanent English settlement in Virginia, Richard Grenville landed there with seven ships. The Indians he met were hospitable, but when one of them stole a small silver cup, Grenville sacked and burned the whole Indian village.

Jamestown itself was set up inside the territory of an Indian confederacy, led by the chief, Powhatan. Powhatan watched the English settle on his people's land, but did not attack, maintaining a posture of coolness. When the English were going through their "starving time" in the winter of 1610, some of them ran off to join the Indians, where they would at least be fed. When the summer came, the governor of the colony sent a messenger to ask Powhatan to return the runaways, whereupon Powhatan, according to the English account, replied with "noe other than prowde and disdaynefull Answers." Some soldiers were therefore sent out "to take Revenge." They fell upon an Indian settlement, killed fifteen or sixteen Indians, burned the houses, cut down the corn growing around the village, took the queen of the tribe and her children into boats, then ended up throwing the children overboard "and shoteinge owit their Braynes in the water." The queen was later taken off and stabbed to death.

Twelve years later, the Indians, alarmed as the English settlements kept growing in numbers, apparently decided to try to wipe them out for good. They went on a rampage and massacred 347 men, women, and children. From then on it was total war.

Not able to enslave the Indians, and not able to live with them, the English decided to exterminate them. Edmund Morgan writes, in his history of early Virginia, *American Slavery, American Freedom*:

Since the Indians were better woodsmen than the English and virtually impossible to track down, the method was to feign peaceful intentions, let them settle down and plant their corn wherever they chose, and then, just before harvest, fall upon them, killing as many as possible and burning the corn... Within two or three years of the massacre the English had avenged the deaths of that day many times over.

When the Pilgrims came to New England they too were coming not to vacant land but to territory inhabited by tribes of Indians. The governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, John Winthrop, created the excuse to take Indian land by declaring the area legally a "vacuum." The Indians, he said, had not "subdued" the land, and therefore had only a "natural" right to it, but not a "civil right." A "natural right" did not have legal standing.

The Puritans lived in uneasy truce with the Pequot Indians, who occupied what is now southern Connecticut and Rhode Island. But they wanted them out of the way; they wanted their land. And they seemed to want also to establish their rule firmly over Connecticut settlers in that area. The murder of a white trader, Indian-kidnaper, and troublemaker became an excuse to make war on the Pequots in 1636.

A punitive expedition left Boston to attack the Narragansett Indians on Block Island, who were lumped with the Pequots. As Governor Winthrop wrote:

They had commission to pat to death the men of Block Island, but to spare the women and children, and to bring them away, and to take possession of the island; and from thence to go to the Pequots to demand the murderers of Captain Stone and other English, and one thousand fathom of wampum for damages, etc. and some of their children as hostages, which if they should refuse, they were to obtain it by force.

The English landed and killed some Indians, but the rest hid in the thick forests of the island and the English went from one deserted village to the next, destroying crops. Then they sailed back to the mainland and raided Pequot villages along the coast, destroying crops again. One of the officers of that expedition, in his account, gives some insight into the Pequots they encountered: "The Indians spying of us came running in multitudes along the water side, crying, What cheer, Englishmen, what cheer, what do you come for? They not thinking we intended war, went on cheerfully... -"

So, the war with the Pequots began. Massacres took place on both sides. The English developed a tactic of warfare used earlier by Cortes and later, in the twentieth century, even more systematically: deliberate attacks on noncombatants for the purpose of terrorizing the enemy. This is ethno historian Francis Jennings's interpretation of Captain John Mason's attack on a Pequot village on the Mystic River near Long Island Sound: "Mason proposed to avoid attacking Pequot warriors, which would have overtaxed his unseasoned, unreliable troops. Battle, as such, was not his purpose. Battle is only one of the ways to destroy an enemy's will to fight. Massacre can accomplish the same end with less risk, and Mason had determined that massacre would be his objective."

So the English set fire to the wigwams of the village. By their own account: "The Captain also said, We must Burn Them; and immediately stepping into the Wigwam ... brought out a Fire Brand, and putting it into the Matts with which they were covered, set the Wigwams on Fire." William Bradford, in his History of the Plymouth Plantation written at the time, describes John Mason's raid on the Pequot village:

Those that scaped the fire were slaine with the sword; some hewed to peeces, others rune throw with their rapiers, so as they were quickly dispatchte, and very few escaped. It was conceived they thus destroyed about 400 at this time. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fyer, and the streams of blood quenching the

same, and horrible was the stincke and sente there of, but the victory seemed a sweete sacrifice, and they gave the prayers thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to inclose their enemise in their hands, and give them so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting an enimie.

As Dr. Cotton Mather, Puritan theologian, put it: "It was supposed that no less than 600 Pequot souls were brought down to hell that day."

The war continued. Indian tribes were used against one another, and never seemed able to join together in fighting the English. Jennings sums up:

The terror was very real among the Indians, but in rime they came to meditate upon its foundations. They drew three lessons from the Pequot War: (1) that the Englishmen's most solemn pledge would be broken whenever obligation conflicted with advantage; (2) that the English way of war had no limit of scruple or mercy; and (3) that weapons of Indian making were almost useless against weapons of European manufacture. These lessons the Indians took to heart.

A footnote in Virgil Vogel's book *This Land Was Ours* (1972) says: "The official figure on the number of Pequots now in Connecticut is twenty-one persons."

Forty years after the Pequot War, Puritans and Indians fought again. This time it was the Wampanoags, occupying the south shore of Massachusetts Bay, who were in the way and also beginning to trade some of their land to people outside the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Their chief, Massasoit, was dead. His son Wamsulta had been killed by Englishmen, and Wamsulta's brother Metacom (later to be called King Philip by the English) became chief. The English found their excuse, a murder which they attributed to Metacom, and they began a war of conquest against the Wampanoags, a war to take their land. They were clearly the aggressors, but claimed they attacked for preventive purposes. As Roger Williams, more friendly to the Indians than most, put it: "All men of conscience or prudence ply to windward, to maintain their wars to be defensive."

Jennings says the elite of the Puritans wanted the war; the ordinary white Englishman did not want it and often refused to fight. The Indians certainly did not want war, but they matched atrocity with atrocity. When it was over, in 1676, the English had won, but their resources were drained; they had lost six hundred men. Three thousand Indians were dead, including Metacom himself. Yet the Indian raids did not stop.

For a while, the English tried softer tactics. But ultimately, it was back to annihilation. The Indian population of 10 million that lived north of Mexico when Columbus came would ultimately be reduced to less than a million. Huge numbers of Indians would die from diseases introduced by the whites. A Dutch traveler in New Netherland wrote in 1656 that "the Indians ... affirm, that before the arrival of the Christians, and before the smallpox broke out amongst them, they were ten times as numerous as they now are, and that their population had been melted down by this disease, whereof nine-tenths of them have died." When the English first settled Martha's Vineyard in 1642, the Wampanoags there numbered perhaps three thousand. There were no wars on that island, but by 1764, only 313 Indians were left there. Similarly, Block Island Indians numbered perhaps 1,200 to 1,500 in 1662, and by 1774 were reduced to fifty-one.

Behind the English invasion of North America, behind their massacre of Indians, their deception, their brutality, was that special powerful drive born in civilizations based on private property. It was a morally ambiguous drive; the need for space, for land, was a real human need. But in conditions of scarcity, in a barbarous epoch of history ruled by competition, this human need was transformed into the murder of whole peoples. Roger Williams said it was a depraved appetite after the great vanities, dreams and shadows of this vanishing life, great portions of land, land in this wilderness, as if men were in as great necessity and danger for want of great portions of land, as poor, hungry, thirsty seamen have, after a sick and stormy, a long and starving passage. This is one of the gods of New England, which the living and most high Eternal will destroy and famish.

Was all this bloodshed and deceit-from Columbus to Cortes, Pizarro, the Puritans-a necessity for the human race to progress from savagery to civilization? That quick disposal might be acceptable ("Unfortunate, yes, but it had to be done") to the middle and upper classes of the conquering and "advanced" countries. But is it acceptable to the poor of Asia, Africa, Latin America, or to the prisoners in Soviet labor camps, or the blacks in urban ghettos, or the Indians on reservations-to the victims of that progress which benefits a privileged minority in the world? Was it acceptable (or just inescapable?) to the miners and railroaders of America, the factory hands, the men and women who died by the hundreds of thousands from accidents or sickness, where they worked or where they lived-casualties of progress? And even the privileged minority-must it not reconsider, with that practicality which even privilege cannot abolish, the value of its privileges, when they become threatened by the anger of the sacrificed, whether in organized rebellion, unorganized riot, or simply those brutal individual acts of desperation labeled crimes by law and the state?

If there are necessary sacrifices to be made for human progress, is it not essential to hold to the principle that those to be sacrificed must make the decision themselves? We can all decide to give up something of ours, but do we have the right to throw into the pyre the children of others, or even our own children, for a progress which is not nearly as clear or present as sickness or health, life or death?

CHAPTER 2. Drawing the Color Line

A black American writer, J. Saunders Redding, describes the arrival of a ship in North America in the year 1619:

Sails furled, flag drooping at her rounded stern, she rode the tide in from the sea. She was a strange ship, indeed, by all accounts, a frightening ship, a ship of mystery. Whether she was trader, privateer, or man-of-war no one knows. Through her bulwarks black-mouthed cannon yawned. The flag she flew was Dutch; her crew a motley. Her port of call, an English settlement, Jamestown, in the colony of Virginia. She came, she traded, and shortly afterwards was gone. Probably no ship in modern history has carried a more portentous freight. Her cargo? Twenty slaves.

There is not a country in world history in which racism has been more important, for so long a time, as the United States. And the problem of "the color line," as W.E.B. Du Bois put it, is still with us. So it is more than a purely historical question to ask: How

does it start?-and an even more urgent question: How might it end? Or, to put it differently: Is it possible for whites and blacks to live together without hatred?

If history can help answer these questions, then the beginnings of slavery in North America - a continent where we can trace the coming of the first whites and the first blacks - might supply at least a few clues.

Some historians think those first blacks in Virginia were considered as servants, like the white indentured servants brought from Europe. But the strong probability is that, even if they were listed as "servants" (a more familiar category to the English), they were viewed as being different from white servants, were treated differently, and in fact were slaves.

In any case, slavery developed quickly into a regular institution, into the normal labor relation of blacks to whites in the New World. With it developed that special racial feeling - whether hatred, or contempt, or pity, or patronization - that accompanied the inferior position of blacks in America for the next 350 years - that combination of inferior status and derogatory thought we call racism. Everything in the experience of the first white settlers acted as a pressure for the enslavement of blacks.

The Virginians of 1619 were desperate for labor, to grow enough food to stay alive. Among them were survivors from the winter of 1609-1610, the "starving time," when, crazed for want of food, they roamed the woods for nuts and berries, dug up graves to eat the corpses, and died in batches until five hundred colonists were reduced to sixty.

In the Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia is a document of 1619 which tells of the first twelve years of the Jamestown colony. The first settlement had a hundred persons, who had one small ladle of barley per meal. When more people arrived, there was even less food. Many of the people lived in cavelike holes dug into the ground, and in the winter of 1609-1610, they were "...driven thru insufferable hunger to eat those things which nature most abhorred, the flesh and excrements of man as well of our own nation as of an Indian, digged by some out of his grave after he had lain buried three days and wholly devoured him; others, envying the better state of body of any whom hunger has not yet so much wasted as their own, lay wait and threatened to kill and eat them; one among them slew his wife as she slept in his bosom, cut her in pieces, salted her and fed upon her till he had clean devoured all parts saving her head."

A petition by thirty colonists to the House of Burgesses, complaining against the twelve-year governorship of Sir Thomas Smith, said:

In those 12 years of Sir Thomas Smith, his government, we aver that the colony for the most part remained in great want and misery under most severe and cruel laws... The allowance in those times for a man was only eight ounces of meale and half a pint of peas for a day ... mouldy, rotten, full of cobwebs and maggots, loathsome to man and not fit for beasts, which forced many to flee for relief to the savage enemy, who being taken again were put to sundry deaths as by hanging, shooting and breaking upon the wheel ... of whom one for stealing two or three pints of oatmeal had a bodkin thrust through his tongue and was tied with a chain to a tree until he starved...

The Virginians needed labor, to grow corn for subsistence, to grow tobacco for export. They had just figured out how to grow tobacco, and in 1617 they sent off the first cargo to England. Finding that, like all pleasurable drugs tainted with moral disapproval, it brought a high price, the planters, despite their high religious talk, were not going to ask questions about something so profitable.

They couldn't force Indians to work for them, as Columbus had done. They were outnumbered, and while, with superior firearms, they could massacre Indians, they would face massacre in return. They could not capture them and keep them enslaved; the Indians were tough, resourceful, defiant, and at home in these woods, as the transplanted Englishmen were not.

White servants had not yet been brought over in sufficient quantity. Besides, they did not come out of slavery, and did not have to do more than contract their labor for a few years to get their passage and a start in the New World. As for the free white settlers, many of them were skilled craftsmen, or even men of leisure back in England, who were so little inclined to work the land that John Smith, in those early years, had to declare a kind of martial law, organize them into work gangs, and force them into the fields for survival.

There may have been a kind of frustrated rage at their own ineptitude, at the Indian superiority at taking care of themselves, that made the Virginians especially ready to become the masters of slaves. Edmund Morgan imagines their mood as he writes in his book *American Slavery, American Freedom*:

If you were a colonist, you knew that your technology was superior to the Indians'. You knew that you were civilized, and they were savages... But your superior technology had proved insufficient to extract anything. The Indians, keeping to themselves, laughed at your superior methods and lived from the land more abundantly and with less labor than you did... And when your own people started deserting in order to live with them, it was too much... So you killed the Indians, tortured them, burned their villages, burned their cornfields. It proved your superiority, in spite of your failures. And you gave similar treatment to any of your own people who succumbed to their savage ways of life. But you still did not grow much. Black slaves were the answer. And it was natural to consider imported blacks as slaves, even if the institution of slavery would not be regularized and legalized for several decades. Because, by 1619, a million blacks had already been brought from Africa to South America and the Caribbean, to the Portuguese and Spanish colonies, to work as slaves. Fifty years before Columbus, the Portuguese took ten African blacks to Lisbon—this was the start of a regular trade in slaves. African blacks had been stamped as slave labor for a hundred years. So it would have been strange if those twenty blacks, forcibly transported to Jamestown, and sold as objects to settlers anxious for a steadfast source of labor, were considered as anything but slaves.

Their helplessness made enslavement easier. The Indians were on their own land. The whites were in their own European culture. The blacks had been torn from their land and culture, forced into a situation where the heritage of language, dress, custom, family relations, was bit by bit obliterated except for the remnants that blacks could hold on to by sheer, extraordinary persistence.

Was their culture inferior—and so subject to easy destruction? Inferior in military capability, yes—vulnerable to whites with guns and ships. But in no other way—except that cultures that are different are often taken as inferior, especially when such a judgment is practical and profitable. Even militarily, while the Westerners could secure forts on the African coast, they were unable to subdue the interior and had to come to terms with its chiefs.

African slavery is hardly to be praised. But it was far different from plantation or mining slavery in the Americas, which was lifelong, morally crippling, destructive of family ties, without hope of any future. African slavery lacked two elements that made American slavery the most cruel form of slavery in history: the frenzy for limitless profit that comes from capitalistic agriculture; the reduction of the slave to less than human status by the use of racial hatred, with that relentless clarity based on color, where white was master, black was slave.

The conditions of capture and sale were crushing affirmations to the black African of his helplessness in the face of superior force. The marches to the coast, sometimes for 1,000 miles, with people shackled around the neck, under whip and gun, were death marches, in which two of every five blacks died. On the coast, they were kept in cages until they were picked and sold. One John Barbot, at the end of the seventeenth century, described these cages on the Gold Coast:

As the slaves come down to Fida from the inland country, they are put into a booth or prison. . . near the beach, and when the Europeans are to receive them, they are brought out onto a large plain, where the ship's surgeons examine every part of everyone of them, to the smallest member, men and women being stark naked.... Such as are allowed good and sound are set on one side . . . marked on the breast with a red-hot iron, imprinting the mark of the French, English, or Dutch companies. . . . The branded slaves after this are returned to their former booths where they await shipment, sometimes 10-15 days. . .

Then they were packed aboard the slave ships, in spaces not much bigger than coffins, chained together in the dark, wet slime of the ship's bottom, choking in the stench of their own excrement. Documents of the time describe the conditions:

The height, sometimes, between decks, was only eighteen inches; so that the unfortunate human beings could not turn around, or even on their sides, the elevation being less than the breadth of their shoulders; and here they are usually chained to the decks by the neck and legs. In such a place the sense of misery and suffocation is so great, that the Negroes ... are driven to frenzy.

On one occasion, hearing a great noise from below decks where the blacks were chained together, the sailors opened the hatches and found the slaves in different stages of suffocation, many dead, some having killed others in desperate attempts to breathe. Slaves often jumped overboard to drown rather than continue their suffering. To one observer a slave-deck was "so covered with blood and mucus that it resembled a slaughter house."

Under these conditions, perhaps one of every three blacks transported overseas died, but the huge profits (often double the investment on one trip) made it worthwhile for the slave trader, and so the blacks were packed into the holds like fish.

First the Dutch, then the English, dominated the slave trade. (By 1795 Liverpool had more than a hundred ships carrying slaves and accounted for half of all the European slave trade.) Some Americans in New England entered the business, and in 1637 the first American slave ship, the *Desire*, sailed from Marblehead. Its holds were partitioned into racks, 2 feet by 6 feet, with leg irons and bars.

By 1800, 10 to 15 million blacks had been transported as slaves to the Americas, representing perhaps one-third of those originally seized in Africa. It is roughly estimated that Africa lost 50 million human beings to death and slavery in those centuries we call the beginnings of modern Western civilization, at the hands of slave traders and plantation owners in Western Europe and America, the countries deemed the most advanced in the world.

In the year 1610, a Catholic priest in the Americas named Father Sandoval wrote back to a church functionary in Europe to ask if the capture, transport, and enslavement of African blacks was legal by church doctrine. A letter dated March 12, 1610, from Brother Luis Brandaon to Father Sandoval gives the answer:

Your Reverence writes me that you would like to know whether the Negroes who are sent to your parts have been legally captured. To this I reply that I think your Reverence should have no scruples on this point, because this is a matter which has been questioned by the Board of Conscience in Lisbon, and all its members are learned and conscientious men. Nor did the bishops who were in Sao Thome, Cape Verde, and here in Loando—all learned and virtuous men—find fault with it. We have been here ourselves for forty years and there have been among us very learned Fathers . . . never did they consider the trade as illicit. Therefore we and the Fathers of Brazil buy these slaves for our service without any scruple....

With all of this – the desperation of the Jamestown settlers for labor, the impossibility of using Indians and the difficulty of using whites, the availability of blacks offered in greater and greater numbers by profit-seeking dealers in human flesh, and with such blacks possible to control because they had just gone through an ordeal which if it did not kill them must have left them in a state of psychic and physical helplessness – is it any wonder that such blacks were ripe for enslavement?

And under these conditions, even if some blacks might have been considered servants, would blacks be treated the same as white servants?

The evidence, from the court records of colonial Virginia, shows that in 1630 a white man named Hugh Davis was ordered "to be soundly whipt ... for abusing himself ... by defiling his body in lying with a Negro." Ten years later, six servants and "a negro of Mr. Reynolds" started to run away. While the whites received lighter sentences, "Emanuel the Negro to receive thirty stripes and to be burnt in the cheek with the letter R, and to work in shackle one year or more as his master shall see cause."

This unequal treatment, this developing combination of contempt and oppression, feeling and action, which we call "racism"—was this the result of a "natural" antipathy of white against black? The question is important, not just as a matter of historical accuracy, but because any emphasis on "natural" racism lightens the responsibility of the social system.

If racism can't be shown to be natural, then it is the result of certain conditions, and we are impelled to eliminate those conditions.

We have no way of testing the behavior of whites and blacks toward one another under favorable conditions—with no history of subordination, no money incentive for exploitation and enslavement, no desperation for survival requiring forced labor. All the conditions for black and white in seventeenth-century America were the opposite of that, all powerfully directed toward antagonism and mistreatment. Under such conditions even the slightest display of humanity between the races might be considered evidence of a basic human drive toward community.

It may be that, in the absence of any other overriding factor, darkness and blackness, associated with night and unknown, would take on those meanings. But the presence of another human being is a powerful fact, and the conditions of that presence are crucial in determining whether an initial prejudice, against a mere color, divorced from humankind, is turned into brutality and hatred.

In spite of such preconceptions about blackness, in spite of special subordination of blacks in the Americas in the seventeenth century, there is evidence that where whites and blacks found themselves with common problems, common work, common enemy in their master, they behaved toward one another as equals. As one scholar of slavery, Kenneth Stampp, has put it, Negro and white servants of the seventeenth century were "remarkably unconcerned about the visible physical differences."

Black and white worked together, fraternized together. The very fact that laws had to be passed after a while to forbid such relations indicates the strength of that tendency. In 1661 a law was passed in Virginia that "in case any English servant shall run away in company of any Negroes" he would have to give special service for extra years to the master of the runaway Negro. In 1691, Virginia provided for the banishment of any "white man or woman being free who shall intermarry with a negro, mulatto, or Indian man or woman bond or free."

There is an enormous difference between a feeling of racial strangeness, perhaps fear, and the mass enslavement of millions of black people that took place in the Americas. The transition from one to the other cannot be explained easily by "natural" tendencies. It is not hard to understand as the outcome of historical conditions.

Slavery grew as the plantation system grew. The reason is easily traceable to something other than natural racial repugnance: the number of arriving whites, whether free or indentured servants (under four to seven years contract), was not enough to meet the need of the plantations. By 1700, in Virginia, there were 6,000 slaves, one-twelfth of the population. By 1763, there were 170,000 slaves, about half the population.

Blacks were easier to enslave than whites or Indians. But they were still not easy to enslave. From the beginning, the imported black men and women resisted their enslavement. Ultimately their resistance was controlled, and slavery was established for 3 million blacks in the South. Still, under the most difficult conditions, under pain of mutilation and death, throughout their two hundred years of enslavement in North America, these Afro-Americans continued to rebel. Only occasionally was there an organized insurrection. More often they showed their refusal to submit by running away.

Even more often, they engaged in sabotage, slowdowns, and subtle forms of resistance which asserted, if only to themselves and their brothers and sisters, their dignity as human beings.

The refusal began in Africa. One slave trader reported that Negroes were "so wilful and loth to leave their own country, that they have often leap'd out of the canoes, boat and ship into the sea, and kept under water till they were drowned."

A Virginia statute of 1669 referred to "the obstinacy of many of them," and in 1680 the Assembly took note of slave meetings "under the pretense offcasts and brawls" which they considered of "dangerous consequence." In 1687, in the colony's Northern Neck, a plot was discovered in which slaves planned to kill all the whites in the area and escape during a mass funeral.

Gerald Mullin, who studied slave resistance in eighteenth-century Virginia in his work *Flight and Rebellion*, reports:

The available sources on slavery in 18th-century Virginia-plantation and county records, the newspaper advertisements for runaways-describe rebellious slaves and few others. The slaves described were lazy and thieving; they feigned illnesses, destroyed crops, stores, tools, and sometimes attacked or killed overseers. They operated blackmarkets in stolen goods. Runaways were defined as various types, they were truants (who usually returned voluntarily), "outlaws" . . . and slaves who were actually fugitives: men who visited relatives, went to town to pass as free, or tried to escape slavery completely, either by boarding ships and leaving the colony, or banding together in cooperative efforts to establish villages or hide-outs in the frontier. The commitment of another type of rebellious slave was total; these men became killers, arsonists, and insurrectionists.

Slaves recently from Africa, still holding on to the heritage of their communal society, would run away in groups and try to establish villages of runaways out in the wilderness, on the frontier. Slaves born in America, on the other hand, were more likely to run off alone, and, with the skills they had learned on the plantation, try to pass as free men.

In the colonial papers of England, a 1729 report from the lieutenant governor of Virginia to the British Board of Trade tells how "a number of Negroes, about fifteen ... formed a design to withdraw from their Master and to fix themselves in the fastnesses of the neighboring Mountains. They had found means to get into their possession some Arms and Ammunition, and they took along with them some Provisions, their Cloths, bedding and working Tools.... Tho' this attempt has happily been defeated, it ought nevertheless to awaken us into some effectual measures...."

Slavery was immensely profitable to some masters. James Madison told a British visitor shortly after the American Revolution that he could make \$257 on every Negro in a year, and spend only \$12 or \$13 on his keep. Another viewpoint was of slaveowner Landon Carter, writing about fifty years earlier, complaining that his slaves so neglected their work and were so uncooperative ("either cannot or will not work") that he began to wonder if keeping them was worthwhile.

Considering the harshness of punishment for running away, that so many blacks did run away must be a sign of a powerful rebelliousness. All through the 1700s, the Virginia slave code read:

Whereas many times slaves run away and He hid and lurking in swamps, woods, and other obscure places, killing hogs, and committing other injuries to the inhabitants ... if the slave does not immediately return, anyone whatsoever may kill or destroy such slaves by such ways and means as he ... shall think fit. ... If the slave is apprehended ... it shall ... be lawful for the county court, to order such punishment for the said slave, either by dismembering, or in any other way ... as they in their discretion shall think fit, for the reclaiming any such incorrigible slave, and terrifying others from the like practices. ... Mullin found newspaper advertisements between 1736 and 1801 for 1,138 men runaways, and 141 women. One consistent reason for running away was to find members of one's family-showing that despite the attempts of the slave system to destroy family ties by not allowing marriages and by separating families, slaves would face death and mutilation to get together.

In Maryland, where slaves were about one-third of the population in 1750, slavery had been written into law since the 1660s, and statutes for controlling rebellious slaves were passed. There were cases where slave women killed their masters, sometimes by poisoning them, sometimes by burning tobacco houses and homes. Punishments ranged from whipping and branding to execution, but the trouble continued. In 1742, seven slaves were put to death for murdering their master.

Fear of slave revolt seems to have been a permanent fact of plantation life. William Byrd, a wealthy Virginia slaveowner, wrote in 1736:

We have already at least 10,000 men of these descendants of Ham, fit to bear arms, and these numbers increase every day, as well by birth as by importation. And in case there should arise a man of desperate fortune, he might with more advantage than Cataline kindle a servile war ... and tinge our rivers wide as they are with blood.

It was an intricate and powerful system of control that the slaveowners developed to maintain their labor supply and their way of life, a system both subtle and crude, involving every device that social orders employ for keeping power and wealth where it is. As Kenneth Stampp puts it:

A wise master did not take seriously the belief that Negroes were natural-born slaves. He knew better. He knew that Negroes freshly imported from Africa had to be broken into bondage; that each succeeding generation had to be carefully trained. This was no easy task, for the bondsman rarely submitted willingly. Moreover, he rarely submitted completely. In most cases there was no end to the need for control-at least not until old age reduced the slave to a condition of helplessness.

The system was psychological and physical at the same time. The slaves were taught discipline, were impressed again and again with the idea of their own inferiority to "know their place," to see blackness as a sign of subordination, to be awed by the power of the master, to merge their interest with the master's, destroying their own individual needs. To accomplish this there was the discipline of hard labor, the breakup of the slave family, the lulling effects of religion (which sometimes led to "great mischief," as one

slaveholder reported), the creation of disunity among slaves by separating them into field slaves and more privileged house slaves, and finally the power of law and the immediate power of the overseer to invoke whipping, burning, mutilation, and death. Dismemberment was provided for in the Virginia Code of 1705. Maryland passed a law in 1723 providing for cutting off the ears of blacks who struck whites, and that for certain serious crimes, slaves should be hanged and the body quartered and exposed.

Still, rebellions took place – not many, but enough to create constant fear among white planters. The first large-scale revolt in the North American colonies took place in New York in 1712. In New York, slaves were 10 percent of the population, the highest proportion in the northern states, where economic conditions usually did not require large numbers of field slaves. About twenty-five blacks and two Indians set fire to a building, then killed nine whites who came on the scene. They were captured by soldiers, put on trial, and twenty-one were executed. The governor's report to England said: "Some were burnt, others were hanged, one broke on the wheel, and one hung alive in chains in the town...." One had been burned over a slow fire for eight to ten hours—all this to serve notice to other slaves.

A letter to London from South Carolina in 1720 reports:

I am now to acquaint you that very lately we have had a very wicked and barbarous plot of the designe of the negroes rising with a designe to destroy all the white people in the country and then to take Charles Town in full body but it pleased God it was discovered and many of them taken prisoners and some burnt and some hang'd and some banish'd.

Around this time there were a number of fires in Boston and New Haven, suspected to be the work of Negro slaves. As a result, one Negro was executed in Boston, and the Boston Council ruled that any slaves who on their own gathered in groups of two or more were to be punished by whipping.

At Stono, South Carolina, in 1739, about twenty slaves rebelled, killed two warehouse guards, stole guns and gunpowder, and headed south, killing people in their way, and burning buildings. They were joined by others, until there were perhaps eighty slaves in all and, according to one account of the time, "they called out Liberty, marched on with Colours displayed, and two Drums beating." The militia found and attacked them. In the ensuing battle perhaps fifty slaves and twenty-five whites were killed before the uprising was crushed. Herbert Aptheker, who did detailed research on slave resistance in North America for his book *American Negro Slave Revolts*, found about 250 instances where a minimum of ten slaves joined in a revolt or conspiracy.

From time to time, whites were involved in the slave resistance. As early as 1663, indentured white servants and black slaves in Gloucester County, Virginia, formed a conspiracy to rebel and gain their freedom. The plot was betrayed, and ended with executions. Mullin reports that the newspaper notices of runaways in Virginia often warned "ill-disposed" whites about harboring fugitives. Sometimes slaves and free men ran off together, or cooperated in crimes together. Sometimes, black male slaves ran off and joined white women. From time to time, white ship captains and watermen dealt with runaways, perhaps making the slave a part of the crew.

In New York in 1741, there were ten thousand whites in the city and two thousand black slaves. It had been a hard winter and the poor-slave and free-had suffered greatly. When mysterious fires broke out, blacks and whites were accused of conspiring together. Mass hysteria developed against the accused. After a trial full of lurid accusations by informers, and forced confessions, two white men and two white women were executed, eighteen slaves were hanged, and thirteen slaves were burned alive.

Only one fear was greater than the fear of black rebellion in the new American colonies. That was the fear that discontented whites would join black slaves to overthrow the existing order. In the early years of slavery, especially, before racism as a way of thinking was firmly ingrained, while white indentured servants were often treated as badly as black slaves, there was a possibility of cooperation. As Edmund Morgan sees it:

There are hints that the two despised groups initially saw each other as sharing the same predicament. It was common, for example, for servants and slaves to run away together, steal hogs together, get drunk together. It was not uncommon for them to make love together. In Bacon's Rebellion, one of the last groups to surrender was a mixed band of eighty negroes and twenty English servants.

As Morgan says, masters, "initially at least, perceived slaves in much the same way they had always perceived servants ... shiftless, irresponsible, unfaithful, ungrateful, dishonest... ." And "if freemen with disappointed hopes should make common cause with slaves of desperate hope, the results might be worse than anything Bacon had done."

And so, measures were taken. About the same time that slave codes, involving discipline and punishment, were passed by the Virginia Assembly, Virginia's ruling class, having proclaimed that all white men were superior to black, went on to offer their social (but white) inferiors a number of benefits previously denied them. In 1705 a law was passed requiring masters to provide white servants whose indenture time was up with ten bushels of corn, thirty shillings, and a gun, while women servants were to get 15 bushels of corn and forty shillings. Also, the newly freed servants were to get 50 acres of land.

Morgan concludes: "Once the small planter felt less exploited by taxation and began to prosper a little, he became less turbulent, less dangerous, more respectable. He could begin to see his big neighbor not as an extortionist but as a powerful protector of their common interests."

We see now a complex web of historical threads to ensnare blacks for slavery in America: the desperation of starving settlers, the special helplessness of the displaced African, the powerful incentive of profit for slave trader and planter, the temptation of superior status for poor whites, the elaborate controls against escape and rebellion, the legal and social punishment of black and white collaboration.

The point is that the elements of this web are historical, not "natural." This does not mean that they are easily disentangled, dismantled. It means only that there is a possibility for something else, under historical conditions not yet realized. And one of these conditions would be the elimination of that class exploitation which has made poor whites desperate for small gifts of status, and has prevented that unity of black and white necessary for joint rebellion and reconstruction. Around 1700, the Virginia House of Burgesses declared:

The Christian Servants in this country for the most part consists of the Worser Sort of the people of Europe. And since . . . such numbers of Irish and other Nations have been brought in of which a great many have been soldiers in the late wars that according to our present Circumstances we can hardly governe them and if they were fitted with Armes and had the Opertunity of meeting together by Musters we have just reason to fears they may rise upon us.

It was a kind of class consciousness, a class fear. There were things happening in early Virginia, and in the other colonies, to warrant it.

CHAPTER 3. Persons of Mean and Vile Condition

In 1676, seventy years after Virginia was founded, a hundred years before it supplied leadership for the American Revolution, that colony faced a rebellion of white frontiersmen, joined by slaves and servants, a rebellion so threatening that the governor had to flee the burning capital of Jamestown, and England decided to send a thousand soldiers across the Atlantic, hoping to maintain order among forty thousand colonists. This was Bacon's Rebellion. After the uprising was suppressed, its leader, Nathaniel Bacon, dead, and his associates hanged, Bacon was described in a Royal Commission report:

He was said to be about four or five and thirty years of age, indifferent tall but slender, black-hair'd and of an ominous, pensive, melancholly Aspect, of a pestilent and prevalent Logical discourse tending to atheisme... . He seduced the Vulgar and most ignorant people to believe (two thirds of each county being of that Sort) Soc that their whole hearts and hopes were set now upon Bacon. Next he charges the Governour as negligent and wicked, treacherous and incapable, the Lawes and Taxes as unjust and oppressive and cryes up absolute necessity of redress. Thus Bacon encouraged the Tumult and as the unquiet crowd follow and adhere to him, he listeth them as they come in upon a large paper, writing their name circular wise, that their Ringleaders might not be found out. Having connur'd them into this circle, given them Brandy to wind up the charme, and enjoyned them by an oath to stick fast together and to him and the oath being administered, he went and infected New Kent County ripe for Rebellion.

Bacon's Rebellion began with conflict over how to deal with the Indians, who were close by, on the western frontier, constantly threatening. Whites who had been ignored when huge land grants around Jamestown were given away had gone west to find land, and there they encountered Indians. Were those frontier Virginians resentful that the politicians and landed aristocrats who controlled the colony's government in Jamestown first pushed them westward into Indian territory, and then seemed indecisive in fighting the Indians? That might explain the character of their rebellion, not easily classifiable as either antiaristocrat or anti-Indian, because it was both.

And the governor, William Berkeley, and his Jamestown crowd-were they more conciliatory to the Indians (they wooed certain of them as spies and allies) now that they had monopolized the land in the East, could use frontier whites as a buffer, and needed peace? The desperation of the government in suppressing the rebellion seemed to have a double motive: developing an Indian policy which would divide Indians in order

to control them (in New England at this very time, Massasoit/s son Metacom was threatening to unite Indian tribes, and had done frightening damage to Puritan settlements in "King Philip's War"); and teaching the poor whites of Virginia that rebellion did not pay-by a show of superior force, by calling for troops from England itself, by mass hanging.

Violence had escalated on the frontier before the rebellion. Some Doeg Indians took a few hogs to redress a debt, and whites, retrieving the hogs, murdered two Indians. The Doegs then sent out a war party to kill a white herdsman, after which a white militia company killed twenty-four Indians. This led to a series of Indian raids, with the Indians, outnumbered, turning to guerrilla warfare. The House of Burgesses in Jamestown declared war on the Indians, but proposed to exempt those Indians who cooperated. This seemed to anger the frontiers people, who wanted total war but also resented the high taxes assessed to pay for the war.

Times were hard in 1676. "There was genuine distress, genuine poverty.... All contemporary sources speak of the great mass of people as living in severe economic straits," writes Wilcomb Washburn, who, using British colonial records, has done an exhaustive study of Bacon's Rebellion. It was a dry summer, ruining the corn crop, which was needed for food, and the tobacco crop, needed for export. Governor Berkeley, in his seventies, tired of holding office, wrote wearily about his situation: "How miserable that man is that Governes a People where six parts of seaven at least are Poore Endebted Discontented and Armed."

Bacon's "Declaration of the People" of July 1676 shows a mixture of populist resentment against the rich and frontier hatred of the Indians. It indicted Berkeley for unjust taxes, for putting favorites in high positions, for monopolizing the beaver trade, and for not protecting the western farmers from the Indians. Then Bacon attacked the friendly Pamunkey Indians, killing eight, taking others prisoner, plundering their possessions.

There is evidence that the rank and file of both Bacon's rebel army and Berkeley's official army were not as enthusiastic as their leaders. There were mass desertions on both sides, according to Washburn. In the fall, Bacon, aged twenty-nine, fell sick and died, because of, as a contemporary put it, "swarmes of Vermyn that bred in his body." A minister, apparently not a sympathizer, wrote this epitaph:

Bacon is Dead I am sorry at my heart,
That lice and flux should take the hangmans part.

The rebellion didn't last long after that. A ship armed with thirty guns, cruising the York River, became the base for securing order, and its captain, Thomas Grantham, used force and deception to disarm the last rebel forces. Coming upon the chief garrison of the rebellion, he found four hundred armed Englishmen and Negroes, a mixture of free men, servants, and slaves. He promised to pardon everyone, to give freedom to slaves and servants, whereupon they surrendered their arms and dispersed, except for eighty Negroes and twenty English who insisted on keeping their arms. Grantham promised to take them to a garrison down the river, but when they got into the boat, he trained his big guns on them, disarmed them, and eventually delivered the slaves and servants to their masters. The remaining garrisons were overcome one by one. Twenty-three rebel leaders were hanged.

It was a complex chain of oppression in Virginia. The Indians were plundered by white frontiersmen, who were taxed and controlled by the Jamestown elite. And the whole colony was being exploited by England, which bought the colonists' tobacco at prices it dictated and made 100,000 pounds a year for the King. Berkeley himself, returning to England years earlier to protest the English Navigation Acts, which gave English merchants a monopoly of the colonial trade, had said:

... we cannot but resent, that forty thousand people should be impoverish'd to enrich little more than forty Merchants, who being the only buyers of our Tobacco, give us what they please for it, and after it is here, sell it how they please; and indeed have forty thousand servants in us at cheaper rates, than any other men have slaves....

From the testimony of the governor himself, the rebellion against him had the overwhelming support of the Virginia population. A member of his Council reported that the defection was "almost general" and laid it to "the Lewd dispositions of some Persons of desperate Fortunes" who had "the Vaine hopes of takeing the Countrey wholly out of his Majesty's handes into their owne." Another member of the Governor's Council, Richard Lee, noted that Bacon's Rebellion had started over Indian policy. But the "zealous inclination of the multitude" to support Bacon was due, he said, to "hopes of levelling."

"Levelling" meant equalizing the wealth. Levelling was to be behind countless actions of poor whites against the rich in all the English colonies, in the century and a half before the Revolution.

In the 1600s and 1700s, by forced exile, by lures, promises, and lies, by kidnapping, by their urgent need to escape the living conditions of the home country, poor people wanting to go to America became commodities of profit for merchants, traders, ship captains, and eventually their masters in America. Abbot Smith, in his study of indentured servitude, *Colonists in Bondage*, writes: "From the complex pattern of forces producing emigration to the American colonies one stands out clearly as most powerful in causing the movement of servants. This was the pecuniary profit to be made by shipping them."

After signing the indenture, in which the immigrants agreed to pay their cost of passage by working for a master for five or seven years, they were often imprisoned until the ship sailed, to make sure they did not run away. In the year 1619, the Virginia House of Burgesses, born that year as the first representative assembly in America (it was also the year of the first importation of black slaves), provided for the recording and enforcing of contracts between servants and masters. As in any contract between unequal powers, the parties appeared on paper as equals, but enforcement was far easier for master than for servant.

Indentured servants were bought and sold like slaves. An announcement in the *Virginia Gazette*, March 28, 1771, read:

Just arrived at Leedstown, the Ship *Justitia*, with about one Hundred Healthy Servants, Men Women & Boys... . The Sale will commence on Tuesday the 2nd of April.

Against the rosy accounts of better living standards in the Americas one must place many others, like one immigrant's letter from America: "Whoever is well off in Europe better remain there. Here is misery and distress, same as everywhere, and for certain persons and conditions incomparably more than in Europe."

Beatings and whippings were common. Servant women were raped. One observer testified: "I have seen an Overseer beat a Servant with a cane about the head till the blood has followed, for a fault that is not worth the speaking of...." The Maryland court records showed many servant suicides. In 1671, Governor Berkeley of Virginia reported that in previous years four of five servants died of disease after their arrival. Many were poor children, gathered up by the hundreds on the streets of English cities and sent to Virginia to work.

Servants could not marry without permission, could be separated from their families, could be whipped for various offenses. Pennsylvania law in the seventeenth century said that marriage of servants "without the consent of the Masters . . . shall be proceeded against as for Adultery, or fornication, and Children to be reputed as Bastards."

Although colonial laws existed to stop excesses against servants, they were not very well enforced, we learn from Richard Morris's comprehensive study of early court records in *Government and Labor in Early America*. Servants did not participate in juries. Masters did. (And being propertyless, servants did not vote.) In 1666, a New England court accused a couple of the death of a servant after the mistress had cut off the servant's toes. The jury voted acquittal. In Virginia in the 1660s, a master was convicted of raping two women servants. He also was known to heat his own wife and children; he had whipped and chained another servant until he died. The master was berated by the court, but specifically cleared on the rape charge, despite overwhelming evidence.

After the participation of servants in Bacon's Rebellion, the Virginia legislature passed laws to punish servants who rebelled. Two companies of English soldiers remained in Virginia to guard against future trouble, and their presence was defended in a report to the Lords of Trade and Plantation saying:

"Virginia is at present poor and more populous than ever. There is great apprehension of a rising among the servants, owing to their great necessities and want of clothes; they may plunder the storehouses and ships."

Escape was easier than rebellion. "Numerous instances of mass desertions by white servants took place in the Southern colonies," reports Richard Morris, on the basis of an inspection of colonial newspapers in the 1700s. "The atmosphere of seventeenth-century Virginia," he says, "was charged with plots and rumors of combinations of servants to run away." The Maryland court records show, in the 1650s, a conspiracy of a dozen servants to seize a boat and to resist with arms if intercepted. They were captured and whipped.

More than half the colonists who came to the North American shores in the colonial period came as servants. They were mostly English in the seventeenth century, Irish and German in the eighteenth century. More and more, slaves replaced them, as they ran away to freedom or finished their time, but as late as 1755, white servants made up 10 percent of the population of Maryland.

What happened to these servants after they became free? There are cheerful accounts in which they rise to prosperity, becoming landowners and important figures. But Abbot Smith, after a careful study, concludes that colonial society "was not democratic and certainly not equalitarian; it was dominated by men who had money enough to make others work for them." And: "Few of these men were descended from indentured servants, and practically none had themselves been of that class."

After we make our way through Abbot Smith's disdain for the servants, as "men and women who were dirty and lazy, rough, ignorant, lewd, and often criminal," who "thieved and wandered, had bastard children, and corrupted society with loathsome diseases," we find that "about one in ten was a sound and solid individual, who would if fortunate survive his 'seasoning,' work out his time, take up land, and wax decently prosperous." Perhaps another one in ten would become an artisan or an overseer. The rest, 80 percent, who were "certainly ... shiftless, hopeless, ruined individuals," either "died during their servitude, returned to England after it was over, or became 'poor whites.'" Smith's conclusion is supported by a more recent study of servants in seventeenth-century Maryland, where it was found that the first batches of servants became landowners and politically active in the colony, but by the second half of the century more than half the servants, even after ten years of freedom, remained landless. Servants became tenants, providing cheap labor for the large planters both during and after their servitude.

It seems quite clear that class lines hardened through the colonial period; the distinction between rich and poor became sharper. By 1700 there were fifty rich families in Virginia, with wealth equivalent to 50,000 pounds (a huge sum those days), who lived off the labor of black slaves and white servants, owned the plantations, sat on the governor's council, served as local magistrates. In Maryland, the settlers were ruled by a proprietor whose right of total control over the colony had been granted by the English King. Between 1650 and 1689 there were five revolts against the proprietor.

In the Carolinas, the Fundamental Constitutions were written in the 1660s by John Locke, who is often considered the philosophical father of the Founding Fathers and the American system. Locke's constitution set up a feudal-type aristocracy, in which eight barons would own 40 percent of the colony's land, and only a baron could be governor. When the crown took direct control of North Carolina, after a rebellion against the land arrangements, rich speculators seized half a million acres for themselves, monopolizing the good farming land near the coast. Poor people, desperate for land, squatted on bits of farmland and fought all through the pre-Revolutionary period against the landlords' attempts to collect rent.

Carl Bridenbaugh's study of colonial cities, *Cities in the Wilderness*, reveals a clear-cut class system. He finds:

The leaders of early Boston were gentlemen of considerable wealth who, in association with the clergy, eagerly sought to preserve in America the social arrangements of the Mother Country. By means of their control of trade and commerce, by their political domination of the inhabitants through church and Town Meeting, and by careful marriage alliances among themselves, members of this little oligarchy laid the foundations for an aristocratic class in seventeenth century Boston.

At the very start of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, the governor, John Winthrop, had declared the philosophy of the rulers: "... in all times some must be rich, some poore, some highe and eminent in power and dignitie; others meane and in subjection."

Rich merchants erected mansions; persons "of Qualitie" traveled in coaches or sedan chairs, had their portraits painted, wore periwigs, and filled themselves with rich food and Madeira. A petition came from the town of Deer-field in 1678 to the Massachusetts General Court: "You may be pleased to know that the very principle and best of the land; the best for soile; the best for situation; as laying in ye center and midle of the town: and as to quantity, nere half, belongs unto eight or nine proprietors. ..."

In Newport, Rhode Island, Bridenbaugh found, as in Boston, that "the town meetings, while ostensibly democratic, were in reality controlled year after year by the same group of merchant aristocrats, who secured most of the important offices...." A contemporary described the Newport merchants as "... men in flaming scarlet coats and waistcoats, laced and fringed with brightest glaring yellow. The Sly Quakers, not venturing on these charming coats and waistcoats, yet loving finery, figured away with plate on their sideboards."

The New York aristocracy was the most ostentatious of all, Bridenbaugh tells of "window hangings of camlet, japanned tables, gold-framed looking glasses, spinets and massive eight- day clocks ... richly carved furniture, jewels and silverplate. ... Black house servants."

New York in the colonial period was like a feudal kingdom. The Dutch had set up a patroonship system along the Hudson River, with enormous landed estates, where the barons controlled completely the lives of their tenants, hi 1689, many of the grievances of the poor were mixed up in the farmers' revolt of Jacob Leisler and his group. Leisler was hanged, and the parceling out of huge estates continued. Under Governor Benjamin Fletcher, three- fourths of the land in New York was granted to about thirty people. He gave a friend a half million acres for a token annual payment of 30 shillings. Under Lord Cornbury in the early

1700s, one grant to a group of speculators was for 2 million acres. In 1700, New York City church wardens had asked for funds from the common council because "the Cry of the poor and Impotent for want of Relief are Extreemly Greivous." In the 1730s, demand began to grow for institutions to contain the "many Beggarly people daily suffered to wander about the Streets." A city council resolution read:

Whereas the Necessity, Number and Continual Increase of the Poor within this City is very Great and ... frequeny Commit divers misdemeanors within the Said City, who living Idly and unemployed, become debauched and Instructed in the Practice of Thievery and Debauchery. For Remedy Whereof... Resolved that there be forthwith built... A good, Strong and Convenient House and Tenement.

The two-story brick structure was called "Poor House, Work House, and House of Correction."

A letter to Peter Zenger's New York Journal in 1737 described the poor street urchin of New York as "an Object in Human Shape, half starv'd with Cold, with Cloathes out at the Elbows, Knees through the Breeches, Hair standing on end.... From the age about four to Fourteen they spend their Days in the Streets ... then they are put out as Apprentices, perhaps four, five, or six years...."

The colonies grew fast in the 1700s. English settlers were joined by Scotch-Irish and German immigrants. Black slaves were pouring in; they were 8 percent of the population in 1690; 21 percent in 1770. The population of the colonies was 250,000 in 1700; 1,600,000 by 1760. Agriculture was growing. Small manufacturing was developing. Shipping and trading were expanding. The big cities-Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Charleston-were doubling and tripling in size.

Through all that growth, the upper class was getting most of the benefits and monopolized political power. A historian who studied Boston tax lists in 1687 and 1771 found that in 1687 there were, out of a population of six thousand, about one thousand property owners, and that the top 5 percent-1 percent of the population-consisted of fifty rich individuals who had 25 percent of the wealth. By 1770, the top 1 percent of property owners owned 44 percent of the wealth.

As Boston grew, from 1687 to 1770, the percentage of adult males who were poor, rented a room, or slept in the back of a tavern, owned no property, doubled from 14 percent of the adult males to 29 percent. And loss of property meant loss of voting rights.

Everywhere the poor were struggling to stay alive, simply to keep from freezing in cold weather. All the cities built poorhouses in the 1730s, not just for old people, widows, crippled, and orphans, but for unemployed, war veterans, new immigrants. In New York, at midcentury, the city almshouse, built for one hundred poor, was housing over four hundred. A Philadelphia citizen wrote in 1748: "It is remarkable what an increase of the number of Beggars there is about this town this winter." In 1757, Boston officials spoke of "a great Number of Poor ... who can scarcely procure from day to day daily Bread for themselves & Families."

Kenneth Lockridge, in a study of colonial New England, found that vagabonds and paupers kept increasing and "the wandering poor" were a distinct fact of New England life in the middle 1700s. James T. Lemon and Gary Nash found a similar concentration of wealth, a widening of the gap between rich and poor, in their study of Chester County, Pennsylvania, in the 1700s.

The colonies, it seems, were societies of contending classes-a fact obscured by the emphasis, in traditional histories, on the external struggle against England, the unity of colonists in the Revolution. The country therefore was not "born free" but born slave and free, servant and master, tenant and landlord, poor and rich. As a result, the political authorities were opposed "frequently, vociferously, and sometimes violently," according to Nash. "Outbreaks of disorder punctuated the last quarter of the seventeenth century, toppling established governments in Massachusetts, New York, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina."

Through this period, England was fighting a series of wars (Queen Anne's War in the early 1700s, King George's War in the 1730s). Some merchants made fortunes from

these wars, but for most people they meant higher taxes, unemployment, poverty. An anonymous pamphleteer in Massachusetts, writing angrily after King George's War, described the situation: "Poverty and Discontent appear in every Face (except the Countenances of the Rich) and dwell upon every Tongue." He spoke of a few men, fed by "Lust of Power, Lust of Fame, Lust of Money," who got rich during the war. "No Wonder such Men can build Ships, Houses, buy Farms, set up their Coaches, Chariots, live very splendidly, purchase Fame, Posts of Honour." He called them "Birds of prey ... Enemies to all Communities-whenever diey live."

The forced service of seamen led to a riot against impressment in Boston in 1747. Then crowds turned against Thomas Hutchinson, a rich merchant and colonial official who had backed the governor in putting down the riot, and who also designed a currency plan for Massachusetts which seemed to discriminate against the poor. Hutchinson's house burned down, mysteriously, and a crowd gathered in the street, cursing Hutchinson and shouting, "Let it burn!"

By the years of the Revolutionary crisis, the 1760s, the wealthy elite that controlled the British colonies on the American mainland had 150 years of experience, had learned certain things about how to rule. They had various fears, but also had developed tactics to deal with what diey feared.

The Indians, diey had found, were too unruly to keep as a labor force, and remained an obstacle to expansion. Black slaves were easier to control, and their profitability for southern plantations was bringing an enormous increase in the importation of slaves, who were becoming a majority in some colonies and constituted one-fifth of the entire colonial population. But the blacks were not totally submissive, and as their numbers grew, the prospect of slave rebellion grew.

With the problem of Indian hostility, and the danger of slave revolts, the colonial elite had to consider the class anger of poor whites-servants, tenants, the city poor, the propertyless, the taxpayer, the soldier and sailor. As the colonies passed their hundredth year and went into the middle of the 1700s, as the gap between rich and poor widened, as violence and the threat of violence increased, the problem of control became more serious.

What if these different despised groups-the Indians, the slaves, the poor whites-should combine? Even before there were so many blacks, in the seventeenth century, there was, as Abbot Smith puts it, "a lively fear that servants would join with Negroes or Indians to overcome the small number of masters."

There was little chance that whites and Indians would combine in North America as they were doing in South and Central America, where the shortage of women, and the use of Indians on the plantations, led to daily contact. Only in Georgia and South Carolina, where white women were scarce, was there some sexual mixing of white men and Indian women. In general, the Indian had been pushed out of sight, out of touch. One fact disturbed: whites would run off to join Indian tribes, or would be captured in battle and brought up among the Indians, and when this happened the whites, given a chance to leave, chose to stay in the Indian culture, Indians, having the choice, almost never decided to join the whites.

The white rulers of the Carolinas seemed to be conscious of the need for a policy, as one of them put it, "to make Indians & Negroes a cheque upon each other lest by their Vastly Superior Numbers we should be crushed by one or the other." And so laws were passed prohibiting free blacks from traveling in Indian country. Treaties with Indian tribes contained clauses requiring the return of fugitive slaves. Governor Lyttelton of South Carolina wrote in 1738: "It has always been the policy of this government to create an aversion in them [Indians] to Negroes."

Part of this policy involved using black slaves in the South Carolina militia to fight Indians. Still, the government was worried about black revolt, and during the Cherokee war in the 1760s, a motion to equip five hundred slaves to fight the Indians lost in the Carolina assembly by a single vote.

Blacks ran away to Indian villages, and the Creeks and Cherokees harbored runaway slaves by the hundreds. Many of these were amalgamated into the Indian tribes, married, produced children. But the combination of harsh slave codes and bribes to the Indians to help put down black rebels kept things under control.

It was the potential combination of poor whites and blacks that caused the most fear among the wealthy white planters. If there had been the natural racial repugnance that some theorists have assumed, control would have been easier. But sexual attraction was powerful, across racial lines. In 1743, a grand jury in Charleston, South Carolina, denounced "The Too Common Practice of Criminal Conversation with Negro and other Slave Wenches in this Province." Mixed offspring continued to be produced by white-black sex relations throughout the colonial period, in spite of laws prohibiting interracial marriage in Virginia, Massachusetts, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, Georgia. By declaring the children illegitimate, they would keep them inside the black families, so that the white population could remain "pure" and in control.

What made Bacon's Rebellion especially fearsome for the rulers of Virginia was that black slaves and white servants joined forces. The final surrender was by "four hundred English and Negroes in Armes" at one garrison, and three hundred "freemen and African and English bondservants" in another garrison. The naval commander who subdued the four hundred wrote: "Most of them I persuaded to goe to their Homes, which accordingly they did, except about eighty Negroes and twenty English which would not deliver their Armes."

A report to the English government in 1721 said 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. The militia of this province does not consist of above 2000 men." Apparently, two thousand were not considered sufficient to meet the threat.

This fear may help explain why the Virginia Assembly, after Bacon's Rebellion, gave amnesty to white servants who had rebelled, but not to blacks. Negroes were forbidden to carry any arms, while whites finishing their servitude would get muskets, along with corn and cash. The distinctions of status between white and black servants became more and more clear.

In the 1720s, with fear of slave rebellion growing, white servants were allowed in Virginia to join the militia as substitutes for white freemen. At the same time, slave patrols were established in Virginia to deal with the "great dangers that may ... happen by the insurrections of negroes...." Poor white men would make up the rank and file of these patrols, and get the monetary reward.

Racism was becoming more and more practical. Edmund Morgan, on the basis of his careful study of slavery in Virginia, sees racism not as "natural" to black-white difference, but something coming out of class scorn, a realistic device for control. "If freemen with disappointed hopes should make common cause with slaves of desperate hope, the results might be worse than anything Bacon had done. The answer to the problem, obvious if unspoken and only gradually recognized, was racism, to separate dangerous free whites from dangerous black slaves by a screen of racial contempt."

The growing cities generated more skilled workers, and the governments cultivated the support of white mechanics by protecting them from the competition of both slaves and free Negroes. As early as 1686, the council in New York ordered that "noe Negro or Slave be suffered to work on the bridge as a Porter about any goods either imported or Exported from or into this City." In the southern towns too, white craftsmen and traders were protected from Negro competition. In 1764 the South Carolina legislature prohibited Charleston masters from employing Negroes or other slaves as mechanics or in handicraft trades.

Middle-class Americans might be invited to join a new elite by attacks against the corruption of the established rich. The New Yorker Cadwallader Golden, in his Address to the Freeholders in 1747, attacked the wealthy as tax dodgers unconcerned with the welfare of others (although he himself was wealthy) and spoke for the honesty and dependability of "the midling rank of mankind" in whom citizens could best trust "our liberty & Property." This was to become a critically important rhetorical device for the rule of the few, who would speak to the many of "our" liberty, "our" property, "our" country.

Similarly, in Boston, the rich James Otis could appeal to the Boston middle class by attacking the Tory Thomas Hutchinson. James Henretta has shown that while it was the rich who ruled Boston, there were political jobs available for the moderately well-off, as "cullers of staves," "measurer of Coal Baskets," "Fence Viewer." Aubrey Land found in Maryland a class of small planters who were not "the beneficiary" of the planting society as the rich were, but who had the distinction of being called planters, and who were "respectable citizens with community obligations to act as overseers of roads, appraisers of estates and similar duties." It helped the alliance to accept the middle class socially in "a round of activities that included local politics ... dances, horseracing, and cockfights, occasionally punctuated with drinking brawls..."

Those upper classes, to rule, needed to make concessions to the middle class, without damage to their own wealth or power, at the expense of slaves, Indians, and poor whites. This bought loyalty. And to bind that loyalty with something more powerful even than material advantage, the ruling group found, in the 1760s and 1770s, a wonderfully useful device. That device was the language of liberty and equality, which could unite just enough whites to fight a Revolution against England, without ending either slavery or inequality.

A Patriot's History of the United States

By Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen

INTRODUCTION

Is America's past a tale of racism, sexism, and bigotry? Is it the story of the conquest and rape of a continent? Is U.S. history the story of white slave owners who perverted the electoral process for their own interests? Did America start with Columbus's killing all the Indians, leap to Jim Crow laws and Rockefeller crushing the workers, then finally save itself with Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal? The answers, of course, are no, no, no, and NO.

In the writing of this book, we remain convinced that if the story of America's past is told fairly, the result cannot be anything but a deepened patriotism, a sense of awe at the obstacles overcome, the passion invested, the blood and tears spilled, and the nation that was built. An honest review of America's past would note, among other observations, that the same Founders who owned slaves instituted numerous ways—political and intellectual—to ensure that slavery could not survive; that the concern over not just property rights, but all rights, so infused American life that laws often followed the practices of the common folk, rather than dictated to them; that even when the United States used her military power for dubious reasons, the ultimate result was to liberate people and bring a higher standard of living than before; that time and again America's leaders have willingly shared power with those who had none, whether they were citizens of territories, former slaves, or disenfranchised women. And we could go on.

Honor counted to founding patriots like Adams, Jefferson, Washington, and then later, Lincoln and Teddy Roosevelt. Character counted. Property was also important; no denying that, because with property came liberty. But virtue came first. Even J. P. Morgan, the epitome of the so-called robber baron, insisted that “the first thing is character...before money or anything else. Money cannot buy it.”

As colonies became independent and as the nation grew, these ideas permeated the fabric of the founding documents. Despite pits of corruption that have pockmarked federal and state politics—some of them quite deep—and despite abuses of civil rights that were shocking, to say the least, the concept was deeply imbedded that only a virtuous nation could achieve the lofty goals set by the Founders. Over the long haul, the Republic required virtuous leaders to prosper. Yet virtue and character alone were not enough. It took competence, skill, and talent to build a nation. That's where property came in: with secure property rights, people from all over the globe flocked to America's shores. With secure property rights, anyone could become successful.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, there was a subtle and, at times, obvious campaign to separate virtue from talent, to divide character from success. The latest in this line of attack is the emphasis on diversity—that somehow merely having different skin shades or national origins makes America special. But it was not the color of the skin of people who came here that made them special, it was the content of their character. America remains a beacon of liberty, not merely because its institutions have generally remained strong, its citizens free, and its attitudes tolerant, but because it, among most of the developed world, still cries out as a nation, “Character counts.” Personal liberties in America are genuine because of the

character of honest judges and attorneys who, for the most part, still make up the judiciary, and because of the personal integrity of large numbers of local, state, and national lawmakers.

No society is free from corruption. The difference is that in America, corruption is viewed as the exception, not the rule. And when light is shown on it, corruption is viciously attacked. Freedom still attracts people to the fountain of hope that is America, but freedom alone is not enough. Without responsibility and virtue, freedom becomes a soggy anarchy, an incomplete licentiousness. This is what has made Americans different: their fusion of freedom and integrity endows Americans with their sense of right, often when no other nation in the world shares their perception.

It all goes back to character: the best way to ensure virtuous institutions (whether government, business, schools, or churches) was to populate them with people of virtue. Europe forgot this in the nineteenth century, or by World War I at the latest. Despite rigorous and punitive face-saving traditions in the Middle East or Asia, these twin principles of liberty and virtue have never been adopted. Only in America, where one was permitted to do almost anything, but expected to do the best thing, did these principles germinate.

CHAPTER ONE: The City on the Hill, 1492-1707

The English Presence

In 1578, Elizabeth granted Humphrey Gilbert rights to plant an English colony in America, but he died in an attempt to colonize Newfoundland. Walter Raleigh, Gilbert's half brother, inherited the grant and sent vessels to explore the coast of North America before determining where to locate a settlement.

Settlers received stock in Raleigh's company, which attracted 133 men and 17 women who set sail on three ships. They reached Roanoke Island in 1587, and a child born on that island, Virginia Dare, technically became the first European born in America. Delays prohibited supply ships from returning to Roanoke until 1591, when John White found the Roanoke houses standing, but no settlers. Whatever the fate of the Roanoke settlers, the result for England was that by 1600 there still were no permanent English colonies in America.

Foundations for English Success in the New World: A Hypothesis

England had laid the foundation for successful North American settlements well before the first permanent colony was planted at Jamestown in 1607. Although it seemed insignificant in comparison to the large empire already established by the Spanish, Virginia and subsequent English colonies in Massachusetts would eclipse the settlement of the Iberian nations and France. Why?

It is conceivable that English colonies prospered simply by luck, but the dominance of Europe in general and England in particular - a tiny island with few natural resources - suggests that specific factors can be identified as the reasons for the rise of an English-Atlantic civilization: the appearance of new business practices, a culture of

technological inquisitiveness, and a climate receptive to political and economic risk taking.

One of the most obvious areas in which England surpassed other nations was in its business practices. English merchants had eclipsed their Spanish and French rivals in preparing for successful colonization through adoption of the joint-stock company as a form of business. One of the earliest of these joint-stock companies, the Company of the Staple, was founded in 1356 to secure control over the English wool trade from Italian competitors. By the 1500s, the Moscovy Company (1555), the Levant Company (1592), and the East India Company (1600) fused the exploration of distant regions with the pursuit of profit. Joint-stock companies had two important advantages over other businesses. One advantage was that the company did not dissolve with the death of the primary owner (and thus was permanent). Second, it featured limited liability, in which a stockholder could lose only what he invested, in contrast to previous business forms that held owners liable for all of a company's debts. Those two features made investing in an exciting venture in the New World attractive, especially when coupled with the exaggerated claims of the returning explorers. Equally important, however, the joint-stock feature allowed a rising group of middle-class merchants to support overseas ventures on an ever-expanding basis.

In an even more significant development, a climate receptive to risk taking and innovation, which had flourished throughout the West, reached its most advanced state in England. It is crucial to realize that key inventions or technologies appeared in non-Western countries first; yet they were seldom, if ever, employed in such a way as to change society dramatically until the Western societies applied them. The stirrup, for example, was known as early as a.d. 400-500 in the Middle East, but it took until 730, when Charles Martel's mounted knights adopted cavalry charges that combat changed on a permanent basis.³⁵ Indeed, something other than invention was at work. As sociologist Jack Goldstone put it, "The West did not overtake the East merely by becoming more efficient at making bridles and stirrups, but by developing steam engines...[and] by taking unknown risks on novelty."³⁶ Stability of the state, the rule of law, and a willingness to accept new or foreign ideas, rather than ruthlessly suppress them, proved vital to entrepreneurship, invention, technical creativity, and innovation. In societies dominated by the state, scientists risked their lives if they arrived at unacceptable answers.

Still another factor, little appreciated at the time, worked in favor of English ascendancy: labor scarcity ensured a greater respect for new immigrants, whatever their origins, than had existed in Europe. With the demand for labor came property rights, and with such property rights came political rights unheard of in Europe.

Indeed, the English respect for property rights soon eclipsed other factors accounting for England's New World dominance. Born out of the fierce struggles by English landowners to protect their estates from seizure by the state, by the 1600s, property rights had become so firmly established as a basis for English economic activities that its rules permeated even the lowest classes in society. English colonists found land so abundant that anyone could own it. When combined with freedom from royal retribution in science and technological fields, the right to retain the fruit of one's labor - even intellectual property - gave England a substantial advantage in the colonization process over rivals that had more than a century's head start.³⁷ These advantages

would be further enhanced by a growing religious toleration brought about by religious dissenters from the Church of England called Puritans.³⁸

The Colonial South

In 1606, James I granted a charter to the Virginia Company for land in the New World, authorizing two subsidiary companies: the London Company, based in Bristol, and the Plymouth Company, founded by Plymouth stockholders. A group of "certain Knights, Gentlemen, Merchants, and other Adventurers" made up the London Company, which was a joint-stock company in the same vein as the Company of the Staple and the Levant Company. The grant to the London Company, reaching from modern-day North Carolina to New York, received the name Virginia in honor of Queen Elizabeth (the "Virgin Queen"), whereas the Plymouth Company's grant encompassed New England. More than 600 individuals and fifty commercial firms invested in the Virginia Company, illustrating the fund-raising advantages available to a corporation. The London Company organized its expedition first, sending three ships out in 1607 with 144 boys and men to establish a trading colony designed to extract wealth for shipment back to England.

Seeking to "propagate the Christian religion" in the Chesapeake and to produce a profit for the investors, the London Company owned the land and appointed the governor. Colonists were considered "employees." However, as with Raleigh's employees, the colonists enjoyed, as the king proclaimed, "all Liberties, Franchises, and Immunities...as if they had been abiding and born, within this our Realm of England."³⁹ Most colonists lacked any concept of what awaited them: the company adopted a military model based on the Irish campaigns, and the migrants included few farmers or men skilled in construction trades. After a four-month voyage, in April 1607, twenty-six-year-old Captain John Smith piloted ships fifty miles up the James River, well removed from eyesight of passing Spanish vessels. It was a site remarkable for its defensive position, but it sat on a malarial swamp surrounded by thick forests that would prove difficult to clear. Tiny triangle-shaped James Fort, as Jamestown was called, featured firing parapets at each corner and contained fewer than two dozen buildings. Whereas defending the fort might have appeared possible, stocking the fort with provisions proved more difficult: not many of the colonists wanted to work, and none found gold. Some discovered pitch, tar, lumber, and iron for export, but many of the emigrants were gentleman adventurers who disdained physical labor as had their Spanish counterparts to the Southwest. Smith implored the London Company to send "30 carpenters, husbandmen, gardeners, fishermen, blacksmiths, masons and diggers up of trees...[instead of] a thousand of such as we have."⁴⁰ Local Indians, such as the Monacan and Chickahominy, traded with the colonists, but the English could neither hire Indian laborers nor did Indian males express any interest in agriculture themselves. Reaping what they had (not) sown, the settlers of James Fort starved, with fewer than one third of the 120 colonists surviving a year. So few remained that the living, Smith noted, were scarcely able to bury the dead.

Disease also decimated the colony. Jamestown settlers were leveled by New World diseases for which they had no resistance. Malaria, in particular, proved a dreaded killer, and malnutrition lowered the immunity of the colonists. The brackish water at that point of the James River also fostered mosquitoes and parasites. Virginia was hardly a "disease-free paradise" before the arrival of the Jamestown English.⁴¹ New

microbes transported by the Europeans generated a much higher level of infection than previously experienced by the Indians; then, in a vicious circle, warring Indian tribes spread the diseases among one another when they attacked enemy tribes and carried off infected prisoners.

Thanks to the efforts of Smith, who as council president simply assumed control in 1608, the colony was saved. Smith imposed military discipline and order and issued the famous biblical edict, "He who will not work will not eat." He stabilized the colony, and in the second winter, less than 15 percent of the population died, compared to the more than 60 percent who died just a year earlier. Smith also organized raids on Indian villages. These brought immediate returns of food and animals, but fostered long-term retribution from the natives, who harassed the colonists when they ventured outside their walls. But Smith was not anti-Indian per se, and even proposed a plan of placing white males in Indian villages to intermarry - hardly the suggestion of a racist. Subsequent settlers developed schools to educate Indians, including William and Mary. Smith ran the colony like an army unit until 1609, when confident of its survival, the colonists tired of his tyrannical methods and deposed him.

At that point he returned to England, whereupon the London Company (by then calling itself the Virginia Company) obtained a new charter from the king, and it sought to raise capital in England by selling stock and by offering additional stock to anyone willing to migrate to Virginia. The company provided free passage to Jamestown for indentured, or servants willing to work for the Virginia Company for seven years. A new fleet of nine ships containing six hundred men and some women left England in 1609. One of the ships sank in a hurricane, and another ran aground in Bermuda, where it remained until May 1610.

The other vessels arrived at Jamestown only to experience the "starving time" in the winter of 1609-10. English colonists, barricaded within James Fort, ate dogs, cats, rats, toadstools, and horse hides - ultimately eating from the corpses of the dead. When the remnants of the fleet that had been stuck in Bermuda finally reached Virginia in the late spring of 1610, all the colonists boarded for a return to England. At the mouth of the James River, however, the ships encountered an English vessel bringing supplies. The settlers returned to James Fort, and shortly thereafter a new influx of settlers revived the colony.⁴²

Like Smith, subsequent governors, including the first official governor, Lord De La Warr, attempted to operate the colony on a socialist model: settlers worked in forced-labor gangs; shirkers were flogged and some even hanged. Still, negative incentives only went so far because ultimately the communal storehouse would sustain anyone in danger of starving, regardless of individual work effort. Administrators realized that personal incentives would succeed where force would not, and they permitted private ownership of land. The application of private enterprise, combined with the introduction of tobacco farming, helped Jamestown survive and prosper - an experience later replicated in Georgia.

During the early critical years, Indians were too divided to coordinate their attacks against the English. The powerful Chief Powhatan, who led a confederation of more than twenty tribes, enlisted the support of the Jamestown settlers - who he assumed were there for the express purpose of stealing Indian land - to defeat other enemy

Indian tribes. Both sides played balance-of-power politics. Thomas Dale, the deputy governor, proved resourceful in keeping the Indians off balance, at one point kidnapping Powhatan's daughter, Pocahontas (Matoaka), and holding her captive at Jamestown. There she met and eventually married planter John Rolfe, in 1614. Their marriage made permanent the uneasy truce that existed between Powhatan and Jamestown. Rolfe and Pocahontas returned to England, where the Indian princess, as a convert to Christianity, proved a popular dinner guest. She epitomized the view that Indians could be evangelized and "Europeanized."⁴³

Tobacco, Slaves, and Representative Government

Rolfe already had made another significant contribution to the success of the colony by curing tobacco in 1612. Characterized by King James I as a "vile and stinking... custom," smoking tobacco had been promoted in England by Raleigh and had experienced widespread popularity. Columbus had reported Cuban natives rolling tobacco leaves, lighting them on fire, and sticking them in a nostril. By Rolfe's time the English had refined the custom by using a pipe or by smoking the tobacco directly with the mouth. England already imported more than £200,000 worth of tobacco per year from Spanish colonies, which had a monopoly on nicotine until Rolfe's discovery. Tobacco was not the only substance to emerge from Virginia that would later be considered a vice - George Thorpe perfected a mash of Indian corn that provided a foundation for hard liquor - but tobacco had the greatest potential for profitable production.

Substantial change in the production of tobacco only occurred, however, after the Virginia Company allowed individual settlers to own land. In 1617, any freeman who migrated to Virginia could obtain a grant of one hundred acres of land. Grants were increased for most colonists through the headright policy, under which every head of a household could receive fifty acres for himself and an additional fifty acres for every adult family member or servant who came to America with him. The combination of available land and the growing popularity of tobacco in England resulted in a string of plantations stretching to Failing Creek, well up the James River and as far west as Dale's Gift on Cape Charles. Virtually all of the plantations had riverfronts, allowing ships' captains to dock directly at the plantation, and their influence extended as far as the lands of the Piedmont Indians, who traded with the planters.⁴⁴

Tobacco cultivation encouraged expansion. The crop demanded large areas of farmland, and the methods of cultivation depleted the soil quickly. Growers steadily moved to interior areas of Virginia, opening still more settlements and requiring additional forts. But the recurring problem in Virginia was obtaining labor, which headright could not provide - quite the contrary, it encouraged new free farms. Instead, the colony placed new emphasis on indentures, including "20 and odd Negroes" brought to Virginia by a Dutch ship in 1619.

The status of the first blacks in the New World remains somewhat mysterious, and any thesis about the change in black status generates sharp controversy. Historian Edmund Morgan, in *American Slavery, American Freedom*, contended that the first blacks had the same legal status as white indentured servants.⁴⁵ Other recent research confirms that the lines blurred between indentures of all colors and slaves, and that establishing clear definitions of exactly who was likely to become a slave proved difficult.⁴⁶ At least some white colonists apparently did not distinguish blacks from other servants in

their minds, and some early black indentured servants were released at the end of their indentures. Rather than viewing Africa as a source of unlimited labor, English colonists preferred European indentured servants well into the 1670s, even when they came from the ranks of criminals from English jails. But by the 1660s, the southern colonists had slowly altered their attitudes toward Africans. Increasingly, the southerners viewed them as permanent servants, and in 1664 some southern colonies declared slavery hereditary, as it had been in ancient Athens and still was throughout the Muslim world.⁴⁷

Perhaps the greatest irony surrounding the introduction of black servants was the timing - if the 1619 date is accurate. That year, the first elected legislative assembly convened at Jamestown. Members consisted of the governor and his council and representatives (or burgesses) from each of the eleven plantations. The assembly gradually split into an upper house, the governor and council, and the lower house, made up of the burgesses. This meant that the early forms of slavery and democracy in America were “twin-born at Jamestown, and in their infancy... were rocked in the Cradle of the Republic.”⁴⁸

Each of the colonists already had the rights of Englishmen, but the scarcity of labor forced the Virginia Company to grant new equal political rights within the colony to new migrants in the form of the privileges that land conferred. In that way, land and liberty became intertwined in the minds and attitudes of the Virginia founders. Virginia’s founders may have believed in “natural law” concepts, but it was the cold reality of the endless labor shortages that put teeth in the colony’s political rights. Still, the early colonial government was relatively inefficient and inept in carrying out its primary mission of turning a profit. London Company stockholders failed to resupply the colony adequately, and had instead placed their hope in sending ever-growing numbers of settlers to Jamestown. Adding to the colony’s miseries, the new arrivals soon encroached on Indian lands, eliciting hostile reaction. Powhatan’s death in 1618 resulted in leadership of the Chesapeake tribes falling to his brother, Opechancanough, who conceived a shrewd plan to destroy the English. Feigning friendship, the Indians encouraged a false sense of security among the careless colonists. Then, in 1622, Opechancanough’s followers launched simultaneous attacks on the settlements surrounding Jamestown, killing more than three hundred settlers. The English retaliated by destroying Indian cornfields, a response that kept the Indians in check until 1644. Though blind, Opechancanough remained the chief and, still wanting vengeance, ordered a new wave of attacks that killed another three hundred English in two days. Again the settlers retaliated. They captured Opechancanough, shot him, and forced the Indians from the region between the York and James rivers.⁴⁹

By that time, the Virginia Company had attracted considerable attention in England, none of it good. The king appointed a committee to look into the company’s affairs and its perceived mismanagement, reflecting the fact that English investors - by then experiencing the fruits of commercial success at home - expected even more substantial returns from their successful operations abroad than they had received. The raids seemed to reinforce the assessment that the London directors could not make prudent decisions about the colony’s safety, and in 1624 the Court of King’s Bench annulled the Virginia Company’s charter and the king assumed control of the colony as a royal province.

Virginians became embroiled in English politics, particularly the struggle between the Cavaliers (supporters of the king) and the Puritans. In 1649 the Puritans executed Charles I, whose forces had surrendered three years earlier. When Charles was executed, Governor William Berkeley and the Assembly supported Charles II as the rightful ruler of England (earning for Virginia the nickname Old Dominion). Parliament, however, was in control in England, and dispatched warships to bring the rebellious pro-Charles Virginians in line. After flirting with resistance, Berkeley and his supporters ultimately yielded to the Puritan English Parliamentarians. Then Parliament began to ignore the colony, allowing Virginia to assume a great deal of self-government.

The new king, Charles II, the son of the executed Charles I, rewarded Berkeley and the Virginia Cavaliers for their loyalty. Berkeley was reappointed governor in 1660, but when he returned to his position, he was out of touch with the people and the assembly, which had grown more irascible, and was more intolerant than ever of religious minorities, including Quakers. At the same time, the colony’s population had risen to forty thousand, producing tensions with the governor that erupted in 1676 with the influx of settlers into territories reserved for the Indians. All that was needed for the underrepresented backcountry counties to rise against Berkeley and the tidewater gentry was a leader.

Bacon’s Rebellion

Nathaniel Bacon Jr., an eloquent and educated resident in Charles City County, had only lived in Virginia fourteen months before he was named to the governor’s council. A hero among commoners, Bacon nonetheless was an aristocrat who simmered over his lack of access to the governor’s inner circle. His large farm in the west stood on the front line of frontier defense, and naturally Bacon favored an aggressive strategy against the Indians. But he was not alone. Many western Virginians, noting signs of unrest among the tribes, petitioned Berkeley for military protection. Bacon went further, offering to organize and lead his own expedition against the Indians. In June 1676 he demanded a commission “against the heathen,” saying, “God damme my blood, I came for a commission, and a commission I will have before I go!”⁵⁰ Governor Berkeley, convinced that the colonists had exaggerated the threat, refused to send troops and rejected Bacon’s suggestion to form an independent unit.

Meanwhile, small raids by both Indians and whites started to escalate into larger attacks. In 1676, Bacon, despite his lack of official approval, led a march to track hostiles. Instead, he encountered and killed friendly Indians, which threatened to drag the entire region into war. From a sense of betrayal, he then turned his 500 men on the government at Jamestown. Berkeley maneuvered to stave off a coup by Bacon when he appointed him general, in charge of the Indian campaign. Satisfied, Bacon departed, whereupon Berkeley rescinded his support and attempted to raise an army loyal to himself. Bacon returned, and finding the ragtag militia, scattered Berkeley’s hastily organized force, whereupon Bacon burned most of the buildings at Jamestown.

No sooner had Bacon conquered Jamestown than he contracted a virus and died. Leaderless, Bacon’s troops lacked the ability to resist Berkeley and his forces, who, bolstered by the arrival of 1,100 British troops, regained control of the colony. Berkeley promptly hanged 23 of the rebels and confiscated the property of others - actions that violated English property law and resulted in the governor’s being summoned back to

England to explain his behavior. Reprimanded by King Charles, Berkeley died before he could return to the colony.⁵¹

Life of the Common Colonials

By the mid-1700s, it was clear across the American colonies that the settlers had become increasingly less English. Travelers described Americans as coarse-looking country folk. Most colonials wore their hair long. Women and girls kept their hair covered with hats, hoods, and kerchiefs while men and boys tied their hair into queues until wigs came into vogue in the port cities. Colonials made their own clothes from linen (flax) and wool; every home had a spinning wheel and a loom, and women sewed and knitted constantly, since cotton cloth would not be readily available until the nineteenth century. Plentiful dyes like indigo, birch bark, and pokeberries made colorful shirts, pants, dresses, socks, and caps.

Far more than today, though, politics - and not the family - absorbed the attention of colonial men. Virtually anyone who either paid taxes or owned a minimum of property could vote for representation in both the upper and lower houses of the legislature, although in some colonies (Pennsylvania and New York) there was a higher property qualification required for the upper house than for the lower house. When it came to holding office, most districts required a candidate to have at least one hundred pounds in wealth or one hundred acres, but several colonies had no requirements for holding office. Put another way, American colonials took politics seriously and believed that virtually everyone could participate. Two colonies stand out as examples of the trends in North American politics by the late 1700s - Virginia and Maryland.

The growth and maturation of the societies in Virginia and Maryland established five important trends that would be repeated throughout much of America's colonial era. First, the sheer distance between the ruler and the governed - between the king and the colonies - made possible an extraordinary amount of independence among the Americans. In the case of Bacon's Rebellion, for example, the Virginia rebels acted on the principle that it is "easier to ask forgiveness than to seek permission," and were confident that the Crown would approve of their actions. Turmoil in England made communication even more difficult, and the instability in the English government - the temporary victory of Cromwell's Puritans, followed by the restoration of the Stuarts - merely made the colonial governments more self-reliant than ever.

Second, while the colonists gained a measure of independence through distance, they also gained political confidence and status through the acquisition of land. For immigrants who came from a nation where the scarcity of land marked those who owned it as gentlemen and placed them among the political elites, the abundance of soil in Virginia and Maryland made them the equals of the owners of manorial estates in England. It steadily but subtly became every citizen's job to ensure the protection of property rights for all citizens, undercutting from the outset the widespread and entrenched class system that characterized Europe. Although not universal - Virginia had a powerful "cousinocracy" - nothing of the rigid French or English aristocracies constrained most Americans. To be sure, Virginia possessed a more pronounced social strata than Maryland (and certainly Massachusetts). Yet compared to Europe, there was more equality and less class distinction in America, even in the South.

Third, the precedent of rebellion against a government that did not carry out the most basic mandates - protecting life, property, and a certain degree of religious freedom (at least from the Church of England) - was established and supported by large numbers, if not the vast majority, of colonists. That view was tempered by the assumption that, again, such rebellion would not be necessary against an informed government. This explains, in part, Thomas Jefferson's inclusion in the Declaration of Independence the references to the fact that the colonists had petitioned not only the king, but Parliament as well, to no avail.

Fourth, a measure of religious toleration developed, although it was neither as broad as is often claimed nor did it originate in the charity of church leaders. Although Virginia Anglicans and Maryland Catholics built the skeleton of state-supported churches, labor problems forced each colony to abandon sectarian purity at an early stage to attract immigrants. Underlying presuppositions about religious freedom were narrowly focused on Christians and, in most colonies, usually Protestants. Had the colonists ever anticipated that Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, or members of other non-Christian groups would constitute even a small minority in their region, even the most fiercely independent Protestants would have agreed to the establishment of a state church, as Massachusetts did from 1630 to 1830.

America's vast size contributed to a tendency toward "Live and let live" when it came to religion. Dissidents always could move to uninhabited areas: certainly none of the denominations were open to evangelizing from their counterparts. Rather, the colonists embraced toleration, even if narrowly defined, because it affected a relatively cohesive group of Christian sects. Where potentially deeply divisive differences did exist, the separation caused by distance prevented one group from posing a threat to others.

Finally, the experiences in Virginia and Maryland foreshadowed events elsewhere when it came to interaction with the Indians. The survival of a poorly armed, ineptly organized colony in Jamestown surrounded by hostile natives requires more of an explanation than "white greed" provides. Just as Europeans practiced balance-of-power politics, so too the Indians found that the presence of several potential enemies on many sides required that they treat the whites as friends when necessary to balance the power of other Indians. To the Doeg Indians, for example, the English were no more of a threat than the Susquehannock. Likewise, English settlers had as much to fear from the French as they did the natives. Characterizing the struggle as one of whites versus Indians does not reflect the balance-of-power politics that every group in the New World struggled to maintain among its enemies.⁵⁸

New England's Pilgrims and Puritans

Whereas gold provided the motivation for the colonization of Virginia, the settlers who traveled to Plymouth came for much different reasons.⁵⁹ The Puritans had witnessed a division in their ranks based on their approach to the Anglican Church. One group believed that not only should they remain in England, but that they also had a moral duty to purify the church from the inside. Others, however, had given up on Anglicanism. Labeled Separatists, they favored removing themselves from England entirely, and they defied the orders of the king by leaving for European Protestant nations. Their disobedience to royal decrees and British law often earned the Separatists persecution and even death.

In 1608 a group of 125 Separatists from Scrooby, in Nottinghamshire, slipped out of England for Holland. Among the most respected leaders of these “Pilgrims,” as they later came to be known, was a sixteen-year-old boy named William Bradford. In Holland they faced no religious persecution, but as foreigners they found little work, and worse, Puritan children were exposed to the “great licentiousness” of Dutch youth. When few other English Separatists joined them, the prospects for establishing a strong Puritan community in Holland seemed remote. After receiving assurances from the king that they could exercise their religious views freely, they opened negotiations with one of the proprietors of the Virginia Company, Sir Edwin Sandys, about obtaining a grant in Virginia. Sandys cared little for Puritanism, but he needed colonists in the New World. Certainly the Pilgrims already had displayed courage and resourcefulness. He therefore allowed them a tract near the mouth of the Hudson River, which was located on the northernmost boundary of the Virginia grant. To raise capital, the Pilgrims employed the joint-stock company structure, which brought several non-Separatists into the original band of settlers. Sailing on the Mayflower, 35 of the original Pilgrims and 65 other colonists left the English harbor of Plymouth in September 1620, bound for the Hudson River. Blown off course, the Pilgrims reached the New World in November, some five hundred miles north of their intended location. They dropped anchor at Cape Cod Bay, at an area called Plymouth by John Smith.

Arriving at the wrong place, the colonists remained aboard their vessel while they considered their situation. They were not in Virginia, and had no charter to Plymouth. Any settlement could be perceived in England as defiance of the Crown. Bradford and the forty other adult men thus devised a document, before they even went ashore, to emphasize their allegiance to King James, to renounce any intention to create an independent republic, and to establish a civil government. It stated clearly that their purpose in sailing to Virginia was not for the purposes of rebellion but “for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith, and honor of our king and country....”⁶⁰ And while the Mayflower Compact provided for laws and the administration of the colony, it constituted more than a mere civil code. It pledged each of them “solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one another” to “covenant and combine ourselves under a civil Body Politick” under “just and equal laws...[for the] furtherance of” the glory of God. To the Pilgrims, a just and equal society had to be grounded in religious faith. Developing along a parallel path to the concepts of government emerging in Virginia, the Mayflower Compact underscored the idea that government came from the governed - under God - and that the law treated all equally. But it also extended into civil affairs the concept of a church contract (or covenant), reinforcing the close connection between the role of the church and the state. Finally, it started to lay a foundation for future action against both the king of England and, eighty years after that, slavery by establishing basic principles in the contract. This constituted a critical development in an Anglo-European culture that increasingly emphasized written rights.

As one of the first acts of their new democracy, the colonists selected Bradford as governor. Then, having taken care of administrative matters, in late December 1620, the Pilgrims climbed out of their boats at Plymouth and settled at cleared land that may have been an Indian village years earlier. They had arrived too late in the year to plant, and like their countrymen farther south, the Pilgrims suffered during their first winter, with half the colony perishing. They survived with assistance from the local Indians, especially one named Squanto - “a special instrument sent from God,” as Bradford

called him.⁶¹ For all this they gave thanks to God, establishing what would become a national tradition.

The Pilgrims, despite their fame in the traditional Thanksgiving celebration and their Mayflower Compact, never achieved the material success of the Virginia colonists or their Massachusetts successors at Massachusetts Bay. Indeed, the Plymouth colony’s population stagnated. Since the Separatists’ religious views continued to meet a poor reception in England, no new infusions of people or ideas came from the Old World. Having settled in a relatively poor region, and lacking the excellent natural harbor of Boston, the Pilgrims never developed the fishing or trading business of their counterparts. But the Pilgrims rightly hold a place of high esteem in America history, largely because unlike the Virginia settlers, the Separatists braved the dangers and uncertainties of the voyage and settlement in the New World solely in the name of their Christian faith.

Other Puritans, though certainly not all of them Separatists, saw opportunities to establish their own settlements. They had particular incentives to do so after the ascension to the throne of England of Charles I in 1625. He was determined to restore Catholicism and eradicate religious dissidents. By that time, the Puritans had emerged as a powerful merchant group in English society, with their economic power translating into seats in Parliament. Charles reacted by dissolving Parliament in 1629. Meanwhile, a group of Dorchester businessmen had provided the perfect vehicle for the Puritans to undertake an experiment in the New World.

Puritans, far from wearing drab clothes and avoiding pleasure, enjoyed all things. Winthrop himself loved pipe smoking and shooting. Moreover, Puritan ministers “were the leaders in every field of intellectual advance in New England.”⁶³ Their moral codes in many ways were not far from modern standards.⁶⁴

A substantial number of settlers joined Winthrop, with eleven ships leaving for Massachusetts that year. When the Puritans finally arrived, Winthrop delivered a sermon before the colonists disembarked. It resounded with many of the sentiments of the Plymouth Pilgrims: “Wee must Consider that wee shall be as a City upon a Hill, the eyes of all people are upon us.” Winthrop wanted the Puritans to see themselves as examples and, somewhat typical of his day, made dire predictions of their fate if they failed to live up to God’s standard.

The Massachusetts Bay colony benefited from changes in the religious situation in England, where a new policy of forcing Puritans to comply with Anglican ceremonies was in effect. Many Puritans decided to leave England rather than tolerate such persecution, and they emigrated to Massachusetts in what was called the Great Migration, pulled by reports of “a store of blessings.”⁶⁵ This constant arrival of new groups of relatively prosperous colonists kept the colony well funded and its labor force full (unlike the southern colonies). By 1640, the population of Massachusetts Bay and its inland settlements numbered more than ten thousand.

Puritan migrants brought with them an antipathy and distrust of the Stuart monarchy (and governmental power in general) that would have great impact in both the long and short term. Government in the colony, as elsewhere in most of English America, assumed a democratic bent. Originally, the General Court, created as Massachusetts

Bay's first governing body, was limited to freemen, but after 1629, when only the Puritan stockholders remained, that meant Puritan male church members. Clergymen were not allowed to hold public office, but through the voting of the church members, the clergy gained exceptional influence. A Puritan hierarchy ran the administrative posts, and although non-Puritan immigrant freemen obtained property and other rights, only the church members received voting privileges. In 1632, however, the increasing pressure of additional settlers forced changes in the minority-run General Court. The right to elect the governor and deputy governor was expanded to all freemen, turning the governor and his assistants into a colonial parliament.⁶⁶

Political tensions in Massachusetts reflected the close interrelationship Puritans felt between civil and religious life. Rigorous tests existed for admission to a Puritan church congregation: individuals had to show evidence of a changed life, relate in an interview process their conversion experience, and display knowledge of scripture. On the surface, this appeared to place extraordinary power in the hands of the authorities, giving them (if one was a believer) the final word on who was, and was not, saved. But in reality, church bodies proved extremely lenient in accepting members. After all, who could deny another's face-to-face meeting with the Almighty? Local records showed a wide range of opinions on the answer.⁶⁷ One solution, the "Halfway Covenant," allowed third-generation Puritan children to be baptized if their parents were baptized.⁶⁸

Before long, of course, many insincere or more worldly colonists had gained membership, and with the expansion of church membership, the right to participate in the polity soon spread, and by 1640 almost all families could count one adult male church member (and therefore a voter) in their number. The very fact that so many people came, however tangentially, under the rubric of local - but not centralized - church authority reinforced civic behavior with a Christian moral code, although increasingly the laity tended to be more spiritually conservative than the clergy.⁶⁹

Local autonomy of churches was maintained through the congregational system of organization. Each church constituted the ultimate authority in scriptural doctrine. That occasionally led to unorthodox or even heretical positions developing, but usually the doctrinal agreement between Puritans on big issues was so widespread that few serious problems arose. When troublemakers did appear, as when Roger Williams arrived in Massachusetts in 1631, or when Anne Hutchinson challenged the hierarchy in 1636, Winthrop and the General Court usually dispatched them in short order.⁷⁰ Moreover, the very toleration often (though certainly not universally) exhibited by the Puritans served to reinforce and confirm "the colonists in their belief that New England was a place apart, a bastion of consistency."⁷¹

The Pequot War and the American Militia System

The Puritan's religious views did not exempt them from conflict with the Indians, particularly the Pequot Indians of coastal New England. Puritan/Pequot interactions followed a cyclical pattern that would typify the next 250 years of Indian-white relations, in the process giving birth to the American militia system, a form of warfare quite unlike that found in Europe.

Initial contacts led to cross-acculturation and exchange, but struggles over land ensued, ending in extermination, extirpation, or assimilation of the Indians. Sparked by the

murder of a trader, the Pequot War commenced in July of 1636. In the assault on the Pequot fort on the Mystic River in 1637, troops from Connecticut and Massachusetts, along with Mohican and Narragansett Indian allies, attacked and destroyed a stronghold surrounded by a wooden palisade, killing some four hundred Pequots in what was, to that time, one of the most stunning victories of English settlers over Indians ever witnessed.

One important result of the Pequot War was the Indians' realization that, in the future, they would have to unify to fight the Englishmen. This would ultimately culminate in the 1675-76 war led by Metacombet - known in New England history as King Philip's War - which resulted in a staggering defeat for northeastern coastal tribes. A far-reaching result of these conflicts was the creation of the New England militia system.

The Puritan - indeed, English - distrust of the mighty Stuart kings manifested itself in a fear of standing armies. Under the colonial militia system, much of the population armed itself and prepared to fight on short notice. All men aged sixteen to sixty served without pay in village militia companies; they brought their own weapons and supplies and met irregularly to train and drill. One advantage of the militia companies was that some of their members were crack shots: as an eighteenth-century American later wrote a British friend, In this country...the great quantities of game, the many lands, and the great privileges of killing make the Americans the best marksmen in the world, and thousands support their families by the same, particularly the riflemen on the frontiers.... In marching through the woods one thousand of these riflemen would cut to pieces ten thousand of your best troops.⁷²

But the American militia system also had many disadvantages. Insubordination was the inevitable result of trying to turn individualistic Americans into obedient soldiers. Militiamen did not want to fight anywhere but home. Some deserted in the middle of a campaign because of spring plowing or because their time was up. But the most serious shortcoming of the militia system was that it gave Americans a misguided impression that they did not need a large, well-trained standing army.

The American soldier was an amateur, an irregular combatant who despised the professional military. Even 140 years after the Pequot War, the Continental Congress still was suspicious that a professional military, "however necessary it may be, is always dangerous to the liberties of the people.... Standing armies in time of peace are inconsistent with the principles of republican government."⁷³

Where muskets and powder could handle - or, at least, suppress - most of the difficulties with Indians, there were other, more complex issues raised by a rogue minister and an independent-minded woman. Taken together, the threats posed by Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson may have presented as serious a menace to Massachusetts as the Pequots and other tribes put together.

CHAPTER TWO: Colonial Adolescence, 1707-63

The Inability to Remain European

England's American colonies represented only a small part of the British Empire by the late 1700s, but their vast potential for land and agricultural wealth seemed limitless.

Threats still remained, especially from the French in Canada and Indians on the frontier, but few colonists saw England herself as posing any threat at the beginning of the century. Repeatedly, English colonists stated their allegiance to the Crown and their affirmation of their own rights as English subjects. Even when conflicts arose between colonists and their colonial governors, Americans appealed to the king to enforce those rights against their colonial administrators - not depose them.

Between 1707 (when England, Scotland, and Wales formed the United Kingdom) and 1763, however, changes occurred within the empire itself that forced an overhaul of imperial regulations. The new policies convinced the thirteen American colonies that England did not see them as citizens, but as subjects - in the worst sense of the word. By attempting to foster dependence among British colonists throughout the world on each other and, ultimately, on the mother country, England only managed to pit America against other parts of the empire. At the same time, despite their disparate backgrounds and histories, the American colonies started to share a common set of understandings about liberty and their position in the empire. On every side, then, the colonies that eventually made up the United States began to develop internal unity and an independent attitude.

Shaping “Americanness”

In *Democracy in America*, the brilliant French observer Alexis de Tocqueville predicted that a highly refined culture was unlikely to evolve in America, largely because of its “lowly” colonial origins. The “intermingling of classes and constant rising and sinking” of individuals in an egalitarian society, Tocqueville wrote, had a detrimental effect on the arts: painting, literature, music, theater, and education. In place of high or refined mores, Tocqueville concluded, Americans had built a democratic culture that was highly accessible but ultimately lacking in the brilliance that characterized European art forms.¹

Certainly, some colonial Americans tried to emulate Europe, particularly when it came to creating institutions of higher learning. Harvard College, founded in 1636, was followed by William and Mary (1693), Yale (1701), Princeton (1746), the College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania) (1740), and - between 1764 and 1769 - King’s College (Columbia), Brown, Queen’s College (Rutgers), and Dartmouth. Yet from the beginning, these schools differed sharply from their European progenitors in that they were founded by a variety of Protestant sects, not a state church, and though tied to religious denominations, they were nevertheless relatively secular. Harvard, for example, was founded to train clergy, and yet by the end of the colonial era only a quarter of its graduates became ministers; the rest pursued careers in business, law, medicine, politics, and teaching. A few schools, such as the College of New Jersey (later Princeton), led by the Reverend John Witherspoon, bucked the trend: Witherspoon transformed Princeton into a campus much more oriented toward religious and moral philosophy, all the while charging it with a powerful revolutionary fervor.²

Witherspoon’s Princeton was swimming against the tide, however. Not only were most curricula becoming more secular, but they were also more down to earth and “applied.” Colonial colleges slighted the dead languages Latin and Greek by introducing French and German; modern historical studies complemented and sometimes replaced ancient history. The proliferation of colleges (nine in America) meant access for more middle-class youths (such as John Adams, a Massachusetts farm boy who studied at Harvard).

To complete this democratization process, appointed boards of trustees, not the faculty or the church, governed American universities.

Colonial art, architecture, drama, and music also reflected American practicality and democracy spawned in a frontier environment. Artists found their only market for paintings in portraiture and, later, patriot art. Talented painters like John Singleton Copley and Benjamin West made their living painting the likenesses of colonial merchants, planters, and their families; eventually both sailed for Europe to pursue purer artistic endeavors. American architecture never soared to magnificence, though a few public buildings, colleges, churches, and private homes reflected an aesthetic influenced by classical motifs and Georgian styles. Drama, too, struggled. Puritan Massachusetts prohibited theater shows (the “Devil’s Workshop”), whereas thespians in Philadelphia, Williamsburg, and Charleston performed amateurish productions of Shakespeare and contemporary English dramas. Not until Royall Tyler tapped the patriot theme (and the comic potential of the Yankee archetype) in his 1789 production of *The Contrast* would American playwrights finally discover their niche, somewhere between high and low art.

In eighteenth century Charleston, Boston, and Philadelphia, the upper classes could occasionally hear Bach and Mozart performed by professional orchestras. Most musical endeavor, however, was applied to religion, where church hymns were sung a cappella and, occasionally, to the accompaniment of a church organ. Americans customized and syncopated hymns, greatly aggravating pious English churchmen. Reflecting the most predominant musical influence in colonial America, the folk idiom of Anglo, Celtic, and African emigrants, American music already had coalesced into a base upon which new genres of church and secular music - gospel, field songs, and white folk ballads - would ultimately emerge.

Colonial literature likewise focused on religion or otherwise addressed the needs of common folk. This pattern was set with Bradford’s *Of Plymouth Plantation*, which related the exciting story of the Pilgrims with an eye to the all-powerful role of God in shaping their destiny. Anne Bradstreet, an accomplished seventeenth-century colonial poet who continued to be popular after her death, also conveyed religious themes and emphasized divine inspiration of human events. Although literacy was widespread, Americans read mainly the Bible, political tracts, and how-to books on farming, mechanics, and moral improvement - not Greek philosophers or the campaigns of Caesar.

Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* is a classic example of the American penchant for pragmatic literature that continues to this day. Franklin wrote his *Autobiography* during the pre-Revolutionary era, though it was not published until the nineteenth century. Several generations of American schoolchildren grew up on these tales of his youthful adventures and early career, culminating with his gaining fame as a Pennsylvania printer, writer, scientist, diplomat, and patriot politician. Franklin’s “13 Virtues” - Honesty, Thrift, Devotion, Faithfulness, Trust, Courtesy, Cleanliness, Temperance, Work, Humility, and so on - constituted a list of personal traits aspired to by virtually every Puritan, Quaker, or Catholic in the colonies.³

Franklin’s saga thereby became the first major work in a literary genre that would define Americanism - the rags-to-riches story and the self-improvement guide rolled

into one. Franklin's other great contribution to American folk literature, Poor Richard's Almanac, provided an affordable complement to the Autobiography. Poor Richard was a simply written magazine featuring weather forecasts, crop advice, predictions and premonitions, witticisms, and folksy advice on how to succeed and live virtuously.⁴

Common Life in the Early Eighteenth Century

Life in colonial America was as coarse as the physical environment in which it flourished, so much so that English visitors expressed shock at the extent to which emigrants had been transformed in the new world. Many Americans lived in one-room farmhouses, heated only by a Franklin stove, with clothes hung on wall pegs and few furnishings. "Father's chair" was often the only genuine chair in a home, with children relegated to rough benches or to rugs thrown on the wooden floors.

This rugged lifestyle was routinely misunderstood by visitors as "Indianization," yet in most cases, the process was subtle. Trappers had already adopted moccasins, buckskins, and furs, and adapted Indian methods of hauling hides or goods over rough terrain with the travois, a triangular-shaped and easily constructed sled pulled by a single horse. Indians, likewise, adopted white tools, firearms, alcohol, and even accepted English religion, making the acculturation process entirely reciprocal. Non-Indians incorporated Indian words (especially proper names) into American English and adopted aspects of Indian material culture. They smoked tobacco, grew and ate squash and beans, dried venison into jerky, boiled lobsters and served them up with wild rice or potatoes on the side. British-Americans cleared heavily forested land by girdling trees, then slashing and burning the dead timber - practices picked up from the Indians, despite the myth of the ecologically friendly natives.⁵ Whites copied Indians in traveling via snowshoes, bullboat, and dugout canoe. And colonial Americans learned quickly - through harsh experience - how to fight like the Indians.⁶

Only a small number of colonial Americans went on to college (often in Great Britain), but increasing numbers studied at public and private elementary schools, raising the most literate population on earth. Americans' literacy was widespread, but it was not deep or profound. Most folks read a little and not much more. In response, a new form of publishing arose to meet the demands of this vast, but minimally literate, populace: the newspaper. Early newspapers came in the form of broadsides, usually distributed and posted in the lobby of an inn or saloon where one of the more literate colonials would proceed to read a story aloud for the dining or drinking clientele. Others would chime in with editorial comments during the reading, making for a truly democratic and interactive forum.⁷ Colonial newspapers contained a certain amount of local information about fires, public drunkenness, arrests, and political events, more closely resembling today's National Enquirer than the New York Times.

Americans' fascination with light or practical reading meant that hardback books, treatises, and the classics - the mainstay of European booksellers - were replaced by cheaply bound tracts, pamphlets, almanacs, and magazines. Those Americans interested in political affairs displayed a hearty appetite for plainly written radical Whig political tracts that emphasized the legislative authority over that of an executive, and that touted the participation of free landholders in government. And, of course, the Bible was found in nearly every cottage.

Democratization extended to the professions of law and medicine - subsequently, some would argue, deprofessionalizing them. American lawyers learned on the job and engaged in general legal practices. The average American attorney served a brief, informal apprenticeship; bought three or four good law books (enough to fill two saddlebags, it was said); and then, literally, hung out his shingle. If he lacked legal skills and acumen, the free market would soon seal his demise.⁸

Unless schooled in Europe, colonial physicians and midwives learned on the job, with limited supervision. Once on their own they knew no specialization; surgery, pharmacy, midwifery, dentistry, spinal adjustment, folk medicine, and quackery were all characteristic of democratized professional medical practitioners flourishing in a free market.⁹ In each case, the professions reflected the American insistence that their tools - law, medicine, literature - emphasize application over theory.

Slavery's American Origins and Evolution

As Edmund Morgan has shown, African American slavery evolved slowly in the seventeenth-century American South.¹⁴ White Virginians and Carolinians did not come to America with the intention of owning slaves, yet that was precisely what they did: between 1619 and 1707 slavery slowly became entrenched. Opportunities in the economically diverse Northeast proved much more attractive to immigrants than the staple-crop agriculture of Virginia and the Carolinas, making for permanent labor shortages in the South. Increasingly, it became more difficult to persuade white indentured servants or Indian workers to harvest the labor-intensive tobacco and rice crops. This was hard physical labor best performed in gang systems under the supervision of an overseer. No free whites would do it, and Southerners discovered that the few Indians they put to work soon vanished into the forest. Southern tobacco planters soon looked elsewhere for a more servile work force.

Yet why did tobacco and rice planters specifically turn to African slaves? In retrospect, one must conclude that Africans were more vulnerable to enslavement than white indentured servants and Indians. The African Gold Coast was open to exploitation by European sea powers and already had a flourishing slave trade with the Muslims. This trade was far more extensive than previously thought, and involved far more Europeans than earlier scholars had acknowledged.¹⁵ Thanks to this existing trade in human flesh, there were already ample precedents of black slavery in the British West Indies. More important, those African slaves shipped to North America truly became captives. They did not (initially) speak English, Spanish, French, or Indian language and could not communicate effectively outside their plantations. Even before they were shipped across the Atlantic, traders mixed slaves by tribe and language with others with whom they shared nothing in common except skin color, isolating them further. The first generation of slave captives thus became demoralized, and rebellion became infrequent, despite the paranoia over slave revolts that constantly gripped plantation whites.

How could these English colonists, so steeped in the Enlightenment principles of liberty and constitutionalism, enslave other human beings? The answer is harsh and simple: British colonists convinced themselves that Africans were not really human beings - that they were property - and thus legitimate subjects for enslavement within the framework of English liberty. Into English folk belief was interwoven fear of the color black, associating blackness with witchcraft and evil, while so-called scientists in Europe argued that blacks were an inferior species of humans. English ministers abused

the Bible, misinterpreting stories of Cain and Abel and Noah's son Ham, to argue for separate creation and an alleged God-imposed inferiority on blacks as the "curse of Ham."¹⁶ When combined with perceived economic necessity, English racism and rationalization for enslavement of African people became entrenched.¹⁷

Slavery's institutionalization began in Virginia in 1619 when a small group of black slaves arrived. The term "slave" did not appear in Virginia law for fifty years, and there is evidence that even the earliest Africans brought over against their will were viewed as indentured. Free blacks, such as "Antonio the negro," were identified in public records as early as 1621, and of the three hundred Africans recorded as living in the South through 1640, many gained freedom through expiration of indenture contracts. Some free blacks soon became landholders, planters, and even slaveholders themselves. But at some point in the mid-seventeenth century, the process whereby all blacks were presumed to be slaves took root, and this transformation is still not well understood. Attempts by scholars such as Peter Kolchin to isolate race begs the question of why whites permitted any blacks to be free, whereas Edmund Morgan's explanation of slavery stemming from efforts by poor whites to create another class under them is also unpersuasive.¹⁸ However it occurred, by 1676, widespread legalized slavery appeared in Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, and within thirty years, slavery was an established economic institution throughout the southern and, to a much smaller degree, northern American colonies.¹⁹

English, Dutch, and New England merchant seamen traded in human flesh. West African intertribal warfare produced abundant prisoners of war to fuel this trade. Prisoners found themselves branded and boarded onto vessels of the Royal African Company and other slavers. On the ships, slaves were shackled together and packed tight in the hold - eating, sleeping, vomiting, and defecating while chained in place. The arduous voyage of three weeks to three months was characterized by a 16 percent mortality rate and, occasionally, involved suicides and mutinies. Finally, at trip's end, the slavers delivered their prisoners on the shores of America.

Every American colony's legislators enacted laws called black codes to govern what some would later call America's Peculiar Institution. These codes defined African Americans as chattels personal - moveable personal property - not as human beings, and as such slaves could not testify against whites in court, nor could they be killed for a capital crime (they were too valuable). Black codes forbade slave literacy, gun or dog ownership, travel (excepting special travel permits), gatherings numbering more than six slaves, and sex between black males and white women (miscegenation). However, as the development of a large mulatto population attests, white men were obviously free to have sex with - or, more often, rape - black women. All of the above laws were open to broad interpretation and variation, especially in northern colonies. This fact did not alter the overall authoritarian structure of the peculiar institution.²⁰

The vast majority of slaves in the New World worked in either Virginia tobacco fields or South Carolina rice plantations. Rice plantations constituted the worst possible fate, for Carolina lowlands proved to be a hot, humid, and horrible work environment, replete with swarms of insects and innumerable species of worms. Huge all-male Carolina work forces died at extraordinary rates. Conditions were so bad that a few Carolina slaves revolted against their masters in the Cato Conspiracy (1739), which saw seventy-five slaves kill thirty whites before fleeing to Spanish Florida; white militiamen

soon killed forty-four of the revolutionaries. A year later, whites hanged another fifty blacks for supposedly planning insurrection in the infamous Charleston Plot.

Slave revolts and runaways proved exceptions to the rule. Most black slaves endured their fate in stoic and heroic fashion by creating a lifestyle that sustained them and their will to endure slavery. In the slave quarters, blacks returned from the fields each day to their families, church and religion, and a unique folk culture, with music, dance, medicine, folktales, and other traditional lore. Blacks combined African customs with Anglo-and Celtic-American traits to create a unique African American folk culture. Although this culture did not thoroughly emerge until the nineteenth century, it started to take shape in the decades before the American Revolution. African American traditions, music, and a profound belief in Christianity helped the slaves endure and sustained their hopes for "a better day a comin'."

Although the institution of slavery thoroughly insinuated itself into southern life and culture in the 1600s, it took the invention of the cotton gin in the 1790s to fully entrench the peculiar institution. Tobacco and rice, important as they were, paled in comparison to the impact of cotton agriculture on the phenomenal growth of slavery, but the tortured political and religious rationales for slavery had matured well before then, making its entrenchment a certainty in the South.²¹

A few statistics clarify these generalizations. By the mid-1700s, Americans imported approximately seven thousand slaves from Africa and the Caribbean annually. Some 40 percent of Virginians and 66 percent of all South Carolinians in 1835 were black. Of these, probably 95 percent were slaves. By 1763, between 15 and 20 percent of all Americans were African Americans, free and slave - a larger per capita black population than in modern-day America. Yet 90 percent of all these African Americans resided south of the Pennsylvania line. Northern slavery, always small because of the absence of a staple crop, was shriveling, its death accelerated by northern reformers who passed manumission acts beginning late in the 1700s, and by the formation in 1775 of the world's first abolitionist group, the Quaker Anti-Slavery Society - by Pennsylvania Quakers. Other Northerners routinely freed their slaves or allowed them to buy their own freedom, so that by 1830 there were only three thousand slaves left in all of the North, compared to more than two million in the South.²² When individual initiative did not suffice, Northerners employed the law. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 would forbid slavery above the Ohio River, and the Constitution would allow abolition of the slave trade by 1807.²³

Some Northerners envisioned, and prayed for, an end to American slavery, as did a small number of Southerners. George Washington would free all of his slaves following his death; Jefferson and Madison would not. They privately decried slavery as a "necessary evil" - something their fathers and they had come to depend upon, but not something they were proud of or aimed to perpetuate.²⁴ Jefferson's commitment to ending slavery may be more suspect than Washington's or, certainly, Franklin's. But virtually all of these men believed that slavery would someday end, and often they delayed confronting it in hopes that it would just go away. Until the invention of the cotton gin, their hope was not necessarily a futile one. After the advent of the Cotton Kingdom, however, increasingly fewer Southerners criticized slavery, and the pervading philosophy about it slowly shifted from its presence as a necessary evil to a belief that slavery was a positive good.

“A People’s History of the United States” Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

1. Why does Zinn dispute Kissinger’s statement: “History is the memory of states?”
2. Explain Governor John Winthrop’s legal and biblical justification for seizing Indian land.
3. Explain the main tactic of warfare used by the English against the Indians.
4. According to Roger Williams, how did the English usually justify their attacks on the Indians?

Chapter 2

1. According to Zinn, what is the root of racism in America?
2. Why were Africans considered “better” slaves than Indians in Virginia?
3. How did the slave trade begin in North America?
4. What evidence exists that America’s slaves did not accept their fate easily?
5. Why did slave owners fear poor whites?

Chapter 3

1. According to Zinn, what was the underlying cause of Bacon’s Rebellion?
2. What was the "double motive" of the Virginia government vis-à-vis Bacon’s Rebellion?
3. What generally happened to indentured servants after they became free, and to what extent did a class structure emerge in America by 1700?
4. Explain the statement: *"The country therefore was not "born free" but born slave and free, servant and master, tenant and landlord, poor and rich."*
5. Explain the statement: *"race was becoming more and more practical."*

“A Patriot’s History of the United States” Discussion Questions

Chapter 1

1. What knowledge and capabilities would contribute to survival in the early colonies?
2. What gain would be achieved by England establishing colonies?
3. How did the Puritan viewpoint influence future development of the United States?
4. Why were indentured servants in the colonies?
5. Discuss interactions between Europeans and American Indians.

Chapter 2

1. How would New England climate and environment affect its trade?
2. How would Southern colonies be affected by climate and environment?
3. What are the natural resources found in the colonies?
4. How was religion different in the New England colonies compared with the Southern colonies?
5. Compare and contrast the Middle colonies with the New England colonies; with the Southern colonies. How did labor systems vary?

Comparison Questions

1. What is the main point (thesis) that Howard Zinn is trying to make in writing “A People’s History of the United States?”
2. What is the main point (thesis) of the authors of “A Patriot’s History of the United States”?
3. How do Zinn’s conclusions about the purpose and method of English colonization compare to Schweikart’s? Give specific examples of similarities and differences.
4. Compare the causes and consequences of Bacon’s Rebellion in both texts. How does each author use the rebellion to emphasize their ideas about the development of colonial America?
5. What are the differences in both texts about race relations and slavery in colonial America? What points about the development of the slave system and racism does each author emphasize in order to support their point?
6. Which book makes the strongest arguments in support of their thesis? How do you know? What evidence from the text supports their historical arguments?
7. Which author do you tend to agree with more? Why? How did you decide – what factors shape your own understanding of history?
8. What is the value of using different texts and readings to cover the same subject in history?