

# Brad DeLong's Grasping Reality

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## Morgan: American Slavery, American Freedom—Noted

**Edmund S. Morgan:** *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia*  
<https://github.com/braddelong/public-files/blob/master/readings/book-morgan-slavery.pdf>:  
'Slaves could not be made to work for fear of losing liberty, so they had to be made to fear for their lives. Not that any master wanted to lose his slave by killing him, but in order to get an equal or greater amount of work, it was necessary to beat slaves harder than servants, so hard, in fact, that there was a much larger chance of killing them than had been the case with servants. Unless a master could correct his slaves in this way without running afoul of the law if he misjudged the weight of his blows, slaveowning would be legally hazardous. So in 1669 the assembly faced the facts and passed an act that dealt with them forthrightly: '**An act about the casuall killing of slaves**: Whereas the only law in force for the punishment of refractory servants resisting their master, mistris or overseer cannot be inflicted upon negroes [because the punishment was extension of time], nor the obstinacy of many of them by other than violent meanes suppress, Be it enacted and declared by this grand assembly, if any slave resist his master (or other by his masters order correcting him) and by the extremity of the correction should chance to die, that his death shall not be accompted Felony, but the master (or that other person appointed by the master to punish him) be acquit from molestation, since it cannot be presumed that prepensed malice (which alone makes murther Felony) should induce any man to destroy his own estate..." With this act already on the books in 1669, Virginia was prepared to make the most of slavery when slaves began to arrive in quantity... #noted #2020-07-13

Posted on July 13, 2020 at 12:24 in #noted | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)

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Brad DeLong's Short Biography