

Lecture 3: *Servitude, Slavery, and Solidarities*

Examining two forms of labor systems developed side by side within English colonies

1. Indentured servitude
2. Slavery

Indentured Servitude: Origins and Characteristics

- Land, land, land!!!
 - 17th century English Colonies: 2/3 of settlers came as indentured servants
- ➔ This is due to or in response to the need for labor of harvesting of the tobacco crop
- Similarities to Slavery:
 - Bought and sold
 - No right to marry
 - Physical abuse, sexual abuse, and punishment
 - Unfree individuals
- Differences with slavery
 - Temporary (7 years)
 - Received “freedom dues”
 - Were still English citizens which meant they still had some rights
 - Based on contractual agreement not on race

Summary

Some Indentured Servants were people who were in prison for debt and used this as a way to “pay off their debts”

- Contract of 7 years of indentured servitude would pay off all their debt that they had accumulated (~ 35 years life span)

Slavery eventually becomes sole labor system

QUESTION TO KEEP IN MIND

How does slavery become sole system?

- ➔ Had certain characteristics that made it more profitable and therefore more preferable
- Slavery was permanent
 - No compensation or “freedom dues”

Indentured Servants and Freedom

- Tobacco Boom, Labor Source Vital, Immigration Zoons
- Servants came dreaming of their own Land Ownership, not Lifetime Laborers
- Hardships: High Death Rate, Meager Freedom Dues, Inhospitable conditions
- An unreliable. Unstable labor source
 - Unlike slavery because it was permanent

Summary

Indentured servants often ran away because of the inhospitable conditions and thought they could escape before their 7 years

- Could blend into cities and assume a new identity (since they were English)

Unstable and unreliable source of labor and was ended by late 1600's and replaced by slavery

Slavery: Origins and Characteristics

Advantages for owners

1. Lifetime service
2. Could not claim rights of English law
3. Not competitors for land
4. Children become slaves
 - a. Because it is not contractual and based on race as opposed to a contract
5. Africans did not suffer diseases
6. Escapees could not assimilate
 - a. Because Africans could not blend into their environment.

Summary

Slavery was more profitable and advantageous for landowners and for the people in charge

- Permanent vs. Temporary
- Non-Citizen vs. Citizen
- Cannot own land vs. Competitor for land
- Children are slaves vs. Contractual agreement
- Not being able to assimilate vs. Blending in and assimilating after escaping
- Resistance / immunity to disease vs. Susceptibility to disease and pathogens

RESPONSE TO QUESTION POSED

Slavery becomes sole system because there were factors that made it economically profitable for the landowners who were in charge. These factors have to do with the differences between indentured servants and slavery.

Slavery and Racism

What came first, slavery or racism?

- Discourse of "civilization"
 - Christian = civilized
 - Non-Christian = uncivilized
- Ant-Black stereotypes do develop
- Advantages lead to greater use of slavery, greater reliance, and thus intensifies these prejudices

Summary

Discourse of "civilization" initially was centered on religion but eventually became about race

Anti-Black sentiment harkens back to AN INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

- Point is that racism existed before slavery, since the beginning of civilization

Once slavery was advantageous the landowners would justify slavery and racism in the years to come

American Form of Slavery

- Chattel slavery

- Based on race rather than bad luck
- Plantation economy: one owner, many slaves
- Very demanding labor
- Lifetime of service
- Slavery becomes synonymous with race
 - White = free
 - Black = unfree

Summary

Chattel Slavery – Effort to dehumanize the individual or human being, to deny your humanity

Chattel slavery differs from other forms of slavery used in history because it tries to deny humanity

- Disconnect between owner and slave
 - Allows the owner to easily see them as less than human and dehumanize them\
 - Limits are off when you dehumanize someone

Slavery and the Law

- In 1620's
 - First legal divides
 - No blacks in militias
 - Free blacks cannot testify
- 1660's
 - Legally tie race with slavery
- 1662
 - Virginia Law
 - Children inherit status of mothers
- 1667
 - Conversion did not release slaves
- Stop growth of free black population
 - Manumitted slaves out of colony
 - Free slaves were removed to preserve the idea of slavery that existed

Summary

Law is tied to slavery, that creates a way of thinking, making it natural for the society.

Before it was clear that slavery would be profitable for landowners freedom from slavery was possible

Ambiguity of half-black / half-white children that under Virginia Law are still slaves even though your half English

One Drop Rule

1667 marks the change in the “Discourse of Civilization” from religion to race\

Bacon's Rebellion

Flashpoint event = “Bacon’s Rebellion”

- Virginia – 1676
- Former servants
 - Pushing into frontier
 - Poverty
 - Many w/o voting rights

- Bacon's promises
- Create white, male solidarity

Summary

Occurs around same time around King Philip's war in the north

Nathaniel Bacon had

- Slaves, indentured slaves

But did not have

- Governor position

Reached out to indentured servants and promised them land in order to kick out the sitting governor

- Create chaos and put blame on the governor
- Attack Native A. to create this chaos

Bacon tries to appeal to the commonality that "we are both white men"

Transition from class-based society to a race-based society

Bacon's Rebellion II

- Attack Indians
- Drive out governor
- Bacon takes over
- Great effort to restore power
- Agitate anxieties of elite
- Cement ties to poor white

Summary

Took months to eventually restore order back

Significance

- **Elites build solidarity between rich and poor with a racial identity of being white**
 - Elites give indentured servants the land

Bacon's Rebellion: Lasting Consequences

- Disastrous for Indians and Africans
- More aggressive frontier policy
- Accelerated shift from indentured servitude to slavery
- Land incorporated into "freedom dues"
- Filling poor whites with sense of freedom which rested on dispossessing Indians and enslaving massive numbers of Africans

Summary

Worked to solidify race relationship between rich and poor white men