

The Evolution of Slavery in the United States (a quick summary)

4 main reasons for the development of slavery

1. General need for an abundant, cheap labor force
2. Issues with enslaving Native Americans
3. Problems with Indentured Servitude
4. Barriers to using Africans existed until the late 1600s

Why not Africans in the first place?

- Very expensive in the early part of the 1600s
 - Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch had a monopoly on the slave trade
- English Merchants unable to acquire large amounts of African Slaves
 - had a foothold in the New World but not in Africa

**English Colonies wanted but could not afford (e.g. slaves introduced to Jamestown, 1619)

1. Need for an abundant, cheap labor force (1600s, 1700s)

- main crop of the Chesapeake colonies (Virginia and Maryland) was tobacco
- Tobacco
 - needed large amounts of land to cultivate tobacco for a profit
 - labor intensive and very few willing to perform task unless either forced to or given an incentive to do so

2. Issues with enslaving Native Americans

- primary issue was the near extinction of the Native population (European diseases wiped out 90% by 1700)
- those enslaved could easily escape
 - close to their own territory
 - knew the terrain
- Colonists needed them more for trade

3. Indentured Servitude became the answer in the early days of the colonies (1600s)

- English tradition of indentured servitude (to a certain extent like an apprenticeship)
- Large rate of unemployment in England
 - enclosure movement removed subsistence farmers from public land
 - rising population in England
- Headright System
 - Plantation owners or wealthy English citizens received land in exchange for paying the ocean passage of an indentured servant
 - Servants promised freedom dues at the end of service (e.g. land)

Problems with Indentured Servitude in the mid to late 1600s

- Fewer Englishmen willing to become indentured servants
 - more jobs available in England
 - start of industrial revolution in England
 - Great London Fire in 1660s
 - decline in birthrate and migration to the New World reduces size of population
- Problems in America
 - servants did not always receive freedom dues promised
 - many did not survive until end of contract due to labor and environmental conditions
 - rebellions began to occur (e.g. Bacon's Rebellion)-----Plantation owners became less willing to use servants

4. Barriers to acquiring Africans disappeared in the late 1600s

- Royal African Company lost its charter and subsequently its monopoly on the slave trade in 1698
 - many Americans take an interest in the slave trade which creates competition amongst slave traders
 - increase in importation of Africans and competition amongst slave traders reduced the price of acquiring a slave

Why do Plantation owners love the idea of African Slaves?

- life-time servitude
- slave status passed on to subsequent generations
- slaves more manageable than English Servants (slave codes)
- slave codes gave slaves little to no rights and prevented them from doing much else other than working and living on the plantations