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Journal of Black Studies, Vol. 27, No. 5 (May, 1997), 598-614.

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ENSLAVED AFRICAN REBELLIONS IN VIRGINIA

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Throughout the history of enslavement in colonial America, rebellions or conspiracies for revolts were not uncommon, particularly in the antebellum South where there was a large concentration of Africans. In fact, well over 250 incidents of uprisings and plots were recorded in the South (Aptheker, 1974, p. 162). Many historians and legal scholars (Aptheker, 1971, 1974; Carroll, 1938; Chambers, 1968; Cheek, 1970; Cobb, 1858/1969; Coffin, 1860; Mullin, 1972; Nelson, 1966) have attempted to answer the intriguing question of why enslaved Africans continued to revolt in general, and in Virginia in particular, given that the odds against a successful revolt were so high.

The purpose of this article is to offer an assessment of African rebellions in Virginia, a hotbed of revolts, throughout the history of American enslavement. As Morgan (1975) put it, "If it is possible to understand the American paradox, the marriage of slavery and freedom, Virginia is surely the place to begin" (p. 6). The time frame for analysis stretches from the colonial period to the Civil War (1700-1865). Two of the three widely publicized rebellions chronicled in American history took place in Virginia. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Gabriel, enslaved to Mr. Prosser, launched an unsuccessful rebellious attempt in Richmond (Rose, 1976, pp. 107-114). More than a quarter of a century later, Nat Turner led a massive revolt in Southampton County (Johnson, 1966).¹

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *I am grateful to Earl Smith and Lauren Seiler for comments on an earlier version of this article.*

JOURNAL OF BLACK STUDIES, Vol. 27 No. 5, May 1997 598-614
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Several questions are central to my discussion: (a) What were the factors in preventing a successful revolt by enslaved Africans in Virginia? (b) What types of preventive measures were taken by the state and White plantation owners to reduce, if not entirely eliminate, the probability of outbreaks? (c) What role did the law play in curtailing or promoting uprisings? (d) Were there any other contributing factors to the development of the Gabriel Prosser conspiracy and the Nat Turner insurrection? (e) What changes were made in the legal system in response to a series of rebellious attacks?

The following is a brief summary of the judicial checks adopted by the state of Virginia to prevent insurrections. First, enslaved Africans were prohibited to travel to any place without their "master's" permission. Second, they were forbidden from lifting their hands against any White Christians. Third, Whites were guaranteed the absolute right to discipline their "property"—enslaved Africans. Fourth, enslaved and free Africans were not allowed to carry any arms. Fifth, association with others, Whites and non-Whites, was unlawful. Sixth, all Africans, regardless of their status, were not allowed to learn how to read and write. Seventh, enslaved Africans could not practice their own religion. Eighth, once they were freed, Africans had to leave the colony within a specific period of time. And ninth, enslaved Africans were subject to forced relocation to Liberia after emancipation.

This article demonstrates the critical role of law in creating, perpetuating, and upholding racial injustice in colonial America. Examining uprisings of enslaved Africans in Virginia will provide answers to why the ingenious and complex legal system (created by the White majority) had been unable to curtail the rebellious activities (orchestrated by a subordinated group). I will also argue that a number of factors had actually contributed to the outbreaks of revolts in Virginia. Such factors as (a) changes in the plantation economy, (b) a large concentration of enslaved Africans in the colony, and (c) the prevalence of antislavery and revolutionary philosophies had fostered the development of revolts. However, there were other measures against the rebellious activities by enslaved Africans. The number of uprisings in Virginia was signifi-

cantly reduced after the introduction of (a) a harsh penal system, (b) military surveillance on enslaved and free Africans, and (c) restrictive policies governing manumission and education of non-Whites and the use of religion.

DETERRENCE TO REVOLTS: LEGAL PREVENTIVE MEASURES

MOVEMENT AND ACTIVITIES

Different kinds of repressive laws were enacted to secure obedience from enslaved Africans. The primary objective of these statutes was to deny any freedom of movement, freedom of association, and any other opportunities to resist, revolt, or flee. One of the major checks on resistance was a restriction on the movement and activities of enslaved Africans within the colony. There were rigid stipulations on how far, when, and where enslaved Africans could travel. These regulations made it nearly impossible for Africans to organize or coordinate large-scale conspiracies for revolts.

The first legislative statute to restrict the freedom of Africans was enacted in 1639. Africans were prohibited from carrying arms (1639, Act X; Guild, 1936/1969, p. 35). Another act was passed to forbid servants from leaving the plantation *every day* without the owner's permission (1663, Act XVIII; Guild, 1936/1969, p. 42). Nevertheless, this statute was adopted not because of a fear of rebellion by enslaved Africans but to regulate the activities of all Virginia workers in general (Morgan, 1975, pp. 308-309).

A law for preventing insurrections was passed in 1680, after White indentured workers were gradually replaced by non-White servants. This statute imposed more and stricter restrictions on the activities of enslaved Africans. The enslaved were kept "as powerless as possible so that they will be submissive and dependent in every respect, not only to the master, but to Whites in general" (Higginbotham, 1987, p. 5). The enactments were designed in such a way that not only were the enslaved or free Africans prohibited

from "attacking" their "master" and/or Whites; they were not even allowed to "protect" themselves (Guild, 1936/1969, pp. 45-46). Another act was passed 2 years later to limit the maximum length of time an enslaved African could remain on plantations other than his master's without legal approval (1682, Act III; Guild, 1936/1969, p. 46).

The heightened fear of revolts in Virginia was manifested in the provisions of these two major acts—to confine the movement of Africans and to reduce their resistance to Whites. The laws in regulating and restricting movement of Africans had literally swept away the offensive as well as the defensive power of Africans in the colony, both enslaved and free persons.

During the eighteenth century, the outbreak of numerous and serious insurrections in several counties had prompted the Virginia Legislature to take bolder measures (Aptheker, 1974, pp. 169-179). The colonial government introduced a great number of "Black codes" to curtail the freedom and activities of non-Whites. Corporal and capital punishments against violators were legally sanctioned (e.g., 1705, Act XLIX; 1723, chapter IV; 1748, chapter XXXVIII; 1765, chapter XXV; 1785, chapter LXXXIV; and 1792, chapter 41; Guild, 1936/1969). These laws were aimed at discouraging revolts by enslaved Africans. For instance, the fear of revolt in Virginia had reached its climax after the Gabriel Prosser conspiracy of 1800. To prevent further occurrence of similar events, the colonial government banned all kinds of meetings among enslaved Africans, especially after dark (1804, chapter 119; Guild, 1936/1969, p. 71). It was quite an effective measure. As soon as any form of association among enslaved Africans in Virginia was made illegal, the probability of contemplating even a small-scale rebellion was reduced virtually to zero.

ALLIANCE BETWEEN WHITES AND NON-WHITES

Virginians were concerned about the collaboration among enslaved Africans, White indentured servants, and free Africans in conspiracy. In addition to restricting the movement of enslaved and

free Africans, laws were introduced to prohibit any dealings or the establishment of any emotional attachments with the enslaved (e.g., 1660, Act XXII; 1792, chapter 67; and 1798, chapter 4; Guild, 1936/1969). There were stiff penalties if anyone was found harboring, entertaining, escaping (e.g., the *John Punch* [1640] and the *Emmanuel* [1640] cases; Catterall, 1926/1968, vol. 1, p. 77), or having sexual relationships with enslaved Africans or non-Whites (e.g., the *Davis* [1630] and the *Sweat* [1640] cases; Catterall, 1926/1968, vol. 1, pp. 77-78). To a large extent, these measures succeeded in isolating the enslaved from the outside world. Launching an organized rebellion with the assistance of others was possible but highly unlikely. For example, after the Gabriel Prosser plot in 1800, the activities of enslaved Africans in the evening were curtailed. Furthermore, those who offered help to the enslaved in any way that led to unrest received very harsh punishment. The government made it plain and clear that those who assisted and conspired with the enslaved to take flight would receive their share of punishment (e.g., 1817, chapter XV; 1829, chapter 21; Guild, 1936/1969).

MANUMISSION AND FREE BLACKS

Imposing legal restrictions on the movement, freedom, and association of enslaved Africans did not seem to alleviate the fear of revolt among Virginians. These Black codes were deemed necessary *but insufficient* to guarantee a tranquil submission from non-Whites. As Jordan (1968) put it, "a chief source of danger . . . was the Negro who was not a slave" (p. 122). These free Africans, he added, were viewed as a liability and a potential threat to the colony (pp. 551-559). Carroll (1938) noted that their "privileged" status would always remind those who were still held in bondage that some day they might be freed as well (p. 65). That was one of the reasons why laws were introduced to make manumission and emancipation extremely difficult and in some cases undesirable. As early as 1691, Act XVI was passed to send free Africans out of the colony in a relatively short period of time (Guild, 1936/1969, p. 94). The primary objective of these statutes was to

seek to keep Blacks primarily as slaves, limit and discourage manumission, relegate free Blacks to a status as near as possible to slavery, pressure newly freed Blacks to leave and discourage freed Blacks from entering the community. (Higginbotham, 1987, p. 6)

In sum, the smaller the number of free Africans that resided in the colony, the more secure White Virginians felt.

EDUCATION

Denying Africans access to education² was another precautionary measure used by White Virginians to prevent rebellious and revolutionary ideas from infiltrating into the minds of the enslaved. To avoid any exposure to revolutionary or antislavery doctrines, the law prohibited any individual from teaching non-Whites how to read and write. The punishment for violation was severe. Both the learner and the instructor would be fined, whipped, and imprisoned, depending on the color of the offender (e.g., 1831, chapter XXXIX; 1848, Criminal Code, chapter 120; Guild, 1936/1969).

RELIGION

Africans did not enjoy religious freedom in colonial America. However, sometimes religious ideas were used to buttress the assertion that non-Whites were an inferior race (Aptheker, 1974, p. 57; Higginbotham, 1978, p. 37). The possibility of uprisings against Whites would be reduced, White Virginians believed, if Africans were "convinced" that they were actually created by God to serve and obey the orders of Whites.

In 1805, an act was introduced to strip the freedom of enslaved Africans to practice their own religion (Guild, 1936/1969, p. 72). After the outbreak of the two most violent rebellions in the history of Virginia, Whites were apprehensive about the role of Black preachers in invoking the desire among enslaved Africans for liberty (Carroll, 1938, pp. 118-120). A more repressive law was passed in 1832 to ban the spreading of gospels by non-White preachers (Guild, 1936/1969, pp. 106-108). These statutes had played a part in lowering African resistance to enslavement and, in

turn, the likelihood of insurrections. By denying the right to practice their own religion and encouraging Africans to adopt the religion of Whites, Whites succeeded in indoctrinating the ideas of White supremacy and enslavement among Africans (Higginbotham, 1987, p. 6). Religion therefore was instrumental in justifying White domination and absolute control over the enslaved.

DETERRENCE TO REVOLTS: OTHER PREVENTIVE MEASURES

MILITARY PATROL AND SURVEILLANCE

Virginians did not solely rely on legal measures to protect their lives and property. A large-scale military machinery of control was in place to crack down any conspiracies or uprisings. Jordan (1968) observed that, in addition to pleading for strengthening the Black codes, Whites in the Old South underscored the importance of a constant strong police force in the event of a confrontation with African insurgents (p. 111).

Private patrolling was not uncommon in antebellum Virginia. The preamble of An Act for Making Provision Against Invasion and Insurrections had emphasized the use of the militia in maintaining "peace and order" among Blacks (Hening, 1809-1823, pp. 112-113). Whites adopted a well-organized military control system to keep a watchful eye on the activities and behavior of enslaved Africans. Guards and police were deployed in the cities and the countryside to detect any suspicious movement or assembly of enslaved and free Africans (Aptheker, 1974, pp. 67-68; Carroll, 1938, p. 150).

USE OF SPIES

The precautions taken by Whites were by no means limited to the use of armed forces to break up any rebellious attempts. An effective informer system was installed on many large plantations. For instance, Thomas Jefferson, who "owned" more than 185

Africans (Morgan, 1975, p. 4), had spies on his plantations (Mullin, 1972, p. 31). In addition to the overseer, trustworthy African servants were instructed to pay close attention to the activities, conversations, and movement of other Africans working on the plantation. Lucrative material and monetary rewards were offered to those agents who turned in any sensitive and crucial information related to insurrections. By far, the most powerful incentive for turning in one's own people was a grant of freedom by the master. That made the task of spying almost irresistible for those who wished to have their liberty but did not want to assume the risks of being apprehended if they participated in revolts.

Two of the most well-known revolts by enslaved Africans in American history were derailed because of reports by faithful servants to White plantation owners (Rose, 1976, pp. 107-108, 115-116). The Gabriel Prosser plot was revealed the Saturday afternoon of August 30, 1800, when enslaved Africans were planning to take action that night:

Tom and Pharoah, slaves of a Mr. Mosby Sheppard of Richmond, Virginia, entered their master's office, closed the door behind them, and related to him the well-planned insurrection of General Gabriel, which was to have taken place that night (*The Virginia Recorder*, April 2, 1803, quoted in Carroll, 1938, p. 48).

The informers had forewarned Whites early enough so that Governor James Monroe was able to secure military assistance for a confrontation with the resistance forces (Johnson, 1966, p. 39). As a reward for this information, Sheppard released Tom and Pharoah from their bondage (Johnson, 1966, p. 38). These two enslaved Africans became free men by betraying their counterparts who sought to gain their own freedom.³

PRECIPITANT TO REBELLIONS

The preventive measures undertaken by the state were so comprehensive and exhaustive that the occurrence of a revolt became a remote possibility in Virginia. The history of enslavement in

Virginia, however, has shown that this is not exactly the case. In spite of an adoption of extensive legal, psychological, spiritual, and punitive measures, hundreds of uprisings broke out in the largest slave-holding state in colonial America. A whole host of factors had facilitated the development of revolts. The changing demographics, economic conditions in the colony, and religious and antislavery influence had offset the effects of measures taken by the state.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

There was a large concentration of Africans in Virginia during the antebellum period. Their increasing number had presented problems to Whites in terms of control and surveillance. A high enslaved African population density in the colony fostered the development of revolts. First, their congregation had created a critical mass in one area. This phenomenon facilitated communication and membership recruitment for rebellious activities. Second, a high density of Africans in one area significantly reduced the time required for exchange of information or organizing activities.

In 1670, there were approximately 2,000 enslaved Africans in Virginia (Elkins, 1969, p. 45). The number tripled in 20 years when enslavement expanded. In 1700, the White population was roughly 70,000. The enslaved African population in 1708 climbed to 12,000 (Mullin, 1972, pp. 15-16; Phillips, 1969, pp. 74-76). A continuous influx of Africans had contributed to a rapid growth of the population in Virginia. By 1730, Africans had composed about 40% of the total population in Virginia (Jordan, 1968, p. 103). The rate of increase of Africans, especially the free African population, was higher than that of Whites. Between 1790 and 1800, the rates of growth for Whites, enslaved Africans, and free Africans were 16.2%, 17.8%, and 56.4%, respectively (Aptheker, 1974, p. 210). Five years prior to the prohibition of the importation of enslaved Africans, Africans accounted for one half of the 340,000 Virginians (Mullin, 1972, p. 16).

Examining several attempts at revolt in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveals that each instance involved a very large number of Africans. This might well suggest that a growth of the

African population was linked to the frequency and the scale of uprisings. For example, the large number of Africans, enslaved and free, convicted in the Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner insurrections (Johnson, 1966, pp. 38, 185-186) illustrated a clear connection between the African population growth and the magnitude of revolts during the nineteenth century. Instead of an individual and disorganized effort (e.g., barn burning or poisoning of Whites), Aptheker argued that African resistance to enslavement had become a collective effort (1974, p. 211).

ECONOMIC CHANGES

Deterioration in the plantation economy and an accelerated growth of towns in the eighteenth century were other contributing factors to the outbreak of rebellions. Economic depression and low profitability of the plantation industry had resulted in changes of the nature and routine of the work of enslaved Africans. More and more enslaved Africans were contracted out to reduce the financial burden of the plantation. This arrangement might have increased the geographical mobility of Africans. However, for enslaved Africans, this tactic was nothing more than continued exploitation, because Africans could not derive economic gains from these practices (Rawick, 1972).

At the same time, the growth of commerce and the development of cities had led to a higher demand of skilled artisans and workers. Many enslaved Africans, who were previously trained by Whites, were able to take up these specialized jobs. The immediate consequence of these changes in Virginia was a larger concentration of free and enslaved Africans working and living in towns and cities (Mullin, 1972, pp. 124-126). These changes also undermined the ability of Whites to control the activities of enslaved Africans, while increasing the amount of freedom the enslaved could enjoy.

Equally important, with a larger African population and the increasing movement of the enslaved in the cities, plotting for revolts would not be too difficult (Aptheker, 1974, p. 114). When they traveled farther and more frequently away from the plantation complex, the chances of enslaved Africans conversing with and

learning from free Africans and Whites improved. Not surprisingly, a majority of participants in the Gabriel Prosser uprising were those who had an active urban existence (Rose, 1976, p. 108).

Additionally, in order to be able to perform the duties independently for Whites, enslaved Africans had acquired a minimum knowledge of writing and reading. These literacy skills were useful in organizing insurrections. For example, the leaders of the two most famous insurrections in Virginia, Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner, were able to read and write (Cheek, 1970, pp. 22-23; Cromwell, 1920, p. 208). These communication skills were crucial in setting up networks and mobilizing resources. Most important, the Bible and other antislavery materials were no longer off limits to Africans.

ABOLITIONIST INFLUENCE

Abolitionists played a critical role in the outbreaks of rebellions in Virginia. Their propaganda had a profound impact on the enslaved and free African population in the colony. Like the Quakers, Methodists, and Baptists, Abolitionists argued for emancipation of the enslaved. They held that "the entire abolition of slavery in the United States" was the safest and quickest solution to rebellion (Sunderland, 1834/1969, pp. 88-90).

The spreading of revolutionary and antislavery doctrines by White and free African Abolitionists in the colony had caused a great deal of concern among the White plantation owners and politicians. They contended that enslaved Africans, who were unable to make anything on their own, were under the strong influence of the Abolitionists. For example, abolition societies (e.g., the Virginia Abolition Society) were set up to educate free and enslaved Africans about their inherent rights of freedom and the ideal of equality (Jordan, 1968, p. 400). Governor James Monroe, in his analysis of the Gabriel Prosser plot, had accused White Abolitionists of perpetuating revolts (Carroll, 1838, p. 55). The Abolitionists indeed had a significant impact on the rebellious movement in Virginia. It is doubtful that without their activities and advocacy for egalitari-

anism, there would have been as many organized revolts in the history of enslavement in Virginia.

THE AFTERMATH

IMPORTATION OF ENSLAVED AFRICANS

A rapid growth of the African population as well as an increase in rebellious attempts did prompt many Whites to seriously consider putting a halt to the importation of enslaved Africans from overseas after the American Revolution. A majority reasoned that if they had trouble in controlling and dealing with Africans who were already here, bringing in more of them would only exacerbate the situation of rebelliousness. The fear of revolt motivated a lot of Virginians (politicians and lay persons) to propose a ban on the importation of Africans from abroad. An incident similar to the San Domingo insurrection, which took place in the West Indies (Jordan, 1968, pp. 375-377), was the last thing the colonists wanted.

Thomas Jefferson vigorously lobbied for a ban in Virginia on the continued practice of importation. His argument was that enslavement was incompatible with the principles of liberty. However, his antislavery ideas reflect his concerns and fears as a White plantation owner rather than as a moralist. Although Jefferson had publicly expressed deep discontent toward the institution, this prominent advocate sympathized with the plight of White plantation owners and not with the inhumane treatment of other human beings—Africans (Jordan, 1968, pp. 433-434).

Statute 1778 officially prohibited the continued importation of Africans from abroad. Based on the provisions of the new act, all enslaved Africans who were brought into the colony from overseas after 1778 would be entitled to free status (Guild, 1936/1969, p. 60). Many Virginians felt a sense of relief with the passage of this law. Most of them believed that these changes would result in better control over the growing African population in the colony.

COLONIZATION

The presence of a large concentration of free Africans in urban areas, partially from changes in the manumission and emancipation laws, had tipped off White fears of the outbreak of uprisings (Mullin, 1972, pp. 126-128). Thus a more realistic approach was to send free Africans to other parts of the country or other countries. The plan of colonization was conceived in the hope that through the provision of monetary incentives, White plantation owners would agree to transport their enslaved Africans out of the colony. Further, free Africans were either forced or encouraged to leave Virginia voluntarily (Aptheker, 1974, p. 168; Freehling, 1982, p. 177). Members of the American Colonization Society had considered Liberia as the ideal place for Africans to settle (Elkins, 1969, p. 178). According to Aptheker (1974), the idea of deportation had received widespread support in Virginia (p. 76).

In 1816, the first resolution over the emigration of Africans was passed—16 years after the abortive Gabriel Prosser revolt (Guild, 1936/1969, p. 99). In 1833, the assembly approved the appropriation of state funds for the removal of free Africans—2 years following the suppression of the Nat Turner insurrection in Southampton. Moreover, the extra taxes collected from free Africans were used to finance the resettlement of Africans in Liberia. Instead of sponsoring the colonization program themselves, White Virginians simply raised taxes on free Africans to secure the funds necessary for their deportation.

THE DEBATE OF 1831-1832

In addition to the colonization efforts, abolishing enslavement was another widely debated issue in Virginia after the Nat Turner insurrection. It had come to a point where the only maneuver left to White Virginians was to do the honorable thing—abolish enslavement in order to put a halt to insurrections. In fact, the Quakers, Methodists, Baptists, missionaries, and Abolitionists had forcefully argued this very point. Yet there was no consensus in the colony over how to go about implementing the idea. The question was if and when enslaved Africans would be emancipated. Some argued

for an immediate abolition, whereas others were in favor of a gradual emancipation. Needless to say, quite a few vehemently opposed any kind of abolition.

Judge St. George Tucker was one of the strong advocates for gradual emancipation (Tucker, 1796/1970, p. 89). Thomas Jefferson favored a policy of initial emancipation and eventual deportation (Freehling, 1982, p. 90). Meanwhile, other members in the General Assembly were divided over the issue of whether it was necessary to legislate on abolition (Cromwell, 1920, p. 229; Johnson, 1966, p. 164). Delegates in the assembly conceded that gradual emancipation was one of the options that ought to be considered. However, an immediate abolition of slavery was simply out of the question. Besides colonization, they preferred strengthening the Black codes instead of letting the enslaved go free so soon. For many Whites, revolts were certainly disturbing; however, the idea of putting an end to enslavement was unthinkable.

Thirty years after the debate, a major proclamation of emancipation was made in Virginia. The constitution stipulated that enslaved Africans who stayed in the colony for more than a year after securing their freedom could be enslaved again. Furthermore, in order to curtail any future attempts of revolt, the General Assembly did not rule out the possibility of codifying laws to restrict manumission and to transport free Africans out of Virginia (Guild, 1936/1969, p. 209).

The Virginia Slavery Debate of 1831-1832 revealed the level of paranoia people had reached. Whites understood that the passage of more repressive laws, colonization, and gradual emancipation was inadequate to tackle the problem of rebelliousness. Although a lot of their economic and political interests were closely tied to enslavement, breaking the chain of bondage might be the only viable means to obtain a permanent relief from the fear of revolt.

CONCLUSION

After the suppression of each incidence of revolt, the Virginia Legislature, plantation owners, and Whites in general took swift and

bold actions to prevent further occurrence of similar events. More often than not, drastic changes were made in the judicial, social, and political systems. The passage of a wide range of Black codes from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries was a direct response to revolts. Following each major uprising, more and harsher laws against the mobility and activities of the enslaved were enacted. A careful scrutiny of the statutes passed in Virginia history reveal the extent to which the beliefs and behaviors of subordinated groups can be regulated by the dominant group in society. An elaborate system of legal means was introduced and later refined to stamp out the desire of resisting and revolting among the enslaved.

These measures did make revolts extremely difficult but not entirely impossible. Demographic, economic, and religious forces were necessary but insufficient to entirely end attempts to rebel and revolt. Perhaps we should not overlook the innate desire for freedom that was also shared by enslaved Africans. This desire could not be suppressed by any means, neither legal nor psychological. So long as enslavement existed, the inborn love for liberty among those enslaved would always be there. That might be another reason why revolts continued to take place in different parts of the colony during the pre-Civil War years.

These historical events lend support to the claim that the laws of men (e.g., enslavement by positive laws) could not override human nature (e.g., craving for independence among the enslaved). Nothing could end one's desire for freedom, unless he or she was given back his or her own freedom. Similarly, White Virginians could never prevent revolts until they dismantled the institution of bondage. This inherent need for liberty among Africans, coupled with a growing African population, changes in the plantation economy, and the Abolitionist movement, might have been what sustained revolts among the enslaved Africans throughout the colonial era in Virginia.

NOTES

1. Another major uprising took place in Charleston, South Carolina. The unsuccessful plot was initiated by Denmark Vesey in 1822 (Koger, 1985, pp. 160-186).

2. Education for women and poor Whites was also often devalued by Whites.

3. The conspiracy of another famous uprising, the Denmark Vesey attempt, was disclosed by two enslaved Africans (William Paul and Peter Desverneys of Colonel J. C. Prioleau) on May 22, 1822, before it took place in Charleston, South Carolina (Cheek, 1970, pp. 111-113; Koger, 1985, p. 174). These two instances had indicated that the informer system worked extraordinarily well in preventing insurrection. The enslaved African population was not just under the close scrutiny of "outsiders" (e.g., plantation owners, guards, and overseers); enslaved Africans in the "Cotton Kingdom" were watched by "insiders" (i.e., African informers) as well.

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