

The relationship between poor european americans, poor free whites, african americ...

[History](#)



The Relationship between Poor European Americans, Poor Free Whites, African Americans and the Native Americans during the Early Colonial Period

During the early colonial period, approximately one-half to two-thirds of European who migrated to the American colonies had arrived under indentures, meaning they had to work pay for passage to the New World. However, this population of indentured servants and free poor Whites was outnumbered by African Americans who were mostly poor Blacks, slaves and both indentured and non-indentured servants. Although these two races lived and worked alongside each other, their relationship has led historians to acknowledge that racism has never been so important and for so long in any other country than the US (Zinn 19). The poor European Americans also interacted with Native Americans during that period. With regard to the early colonial period, this paper will discuss the relationship between poor European Americans and both African Americans and Native Americans. Although the first African Americans in Virginia are considered by some historians to have been equal servants with their White indentured counterparts, they were treated and perceived differently. Some African Americans had earlier on been treated in the same manner as European American indentured servants, albeit with limited terms of indentures, but racial differences soon changed the situation. The indentured servant system created disorder, making racial slavery more attractive to slaveholders (Morgan 32). Essentially, these made African Americans a permanent and dependent source of labor, often seen as people set racially apart while European American indentured servants earned freedom after several years. It follows, therefore, that under such circumstances the European American

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slaves also viewed themselves as superior to African Americans. The slave owners developed crude systems to maintain their hold on the African American slaves because they were thought to have agricultural skills. In a human society, it was inevitable for the European Americans to develop awareness of racism, which negatively impacted their relationship with the African Americans. The two populations were both slaves, but their relationship was further strained by the fact that African Americans had been isolated from their culture and plunged into a new and strange heritage of family relations, language and customs. Here, personal responsibility can be said to have shaped the relationship between the two populations, as African Americans were weighed down by their new and mostly involuntary statuses.

Compared to African Americans, Native Americans were considered stronger. The relationship between European American indentured servants and the Native Americans seemed more natural than the way the European Americans' relationship with African Americans was (Myra 214). This is because even in the British American colonies, the European Americans were still in their own familiar European culture, while the natives inhabited their own land (Zinn 21). However, initially, the Native Americans had initially resisted the encroachment of both settlers and European Americans onto their land. The Natives soon became aware of the settlers urgent need of labor and their inability to work their own farms. When this awareness was made known to the settlers, they knew their survival depended on the Natives. This prompted some European American servants to befriend the Native Americans, although those found by their owners were punished for

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