

The desire for
freedom was too
strong.



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The institution of slavery is a black mark on the record of Americans. Marking a time of hate and racism, an oppression spurred by fear that would plague our nation for decades upon decades. An Act for the Better Order and Government of Negroes and Slaves, and Conflicts between Masters and Slaves: Maryland in the Mid-Seventeenth Century, illustrate the dismay and panic European Colonials endured as they enslaved Africans. This dismay and panic generated laws to be established that further widened the gap between Europeans and Africans, stripping the Africans of any legal rights. The dismay and panic concerned losing a valuable economic pawn.

The first piece, An Act for Better Ordinance, clearly portrays the attitude of the majority of White Europeans. “Whereas the plantations and estates of this Province cannot be well and sufficiently managed and brought into use, without the labor and service of negroes and other slaves i. e., Indians; and forasmuch as the said negroes and other slaves brought unto the people of this Province for that purpose, are barbarous, wild, savage natures, and such as renders them wholly unqualified to be governed by the laws, customs, and practices of this Province; but that is absolutely necessary.”¹ The white men of the time felt that their superiority was deemed by a higher power, why else would their skin tones be so drastically different.

Racist views of these ‘savage’ men created fear. With the growing number of slaves, they had to be stripped of everything to prevent anarchy, as the white men could not envision a world without slave labor. The white men rationalized that slaves will escape. To prevent this one must allow them nothing beyond the plantation they were running from.

The white men turn to government. “ And for the better security of all such persons that shall endeavor to take any run-away, or shall examine any slave for his ticket, passing to and from his master’s plantation, it is hereby declared lawful for any white person to beat, maim or assault, and if such negro or slave cannot otherwise be taken, to kill him, who shall refuse to shew his ticket, or, by running away or resistance, shall endeavor to avoid being apprehended or taken.”² White men had granted themselves a license to kill Africans whose desire for freedom was too strong.

Likewise, the second piece, Conflicts between Masters and Slaves, continues to clarify the sentiment of white slave owners. “ Whereupon Mr. Overzee beate him with some peare tree wands or tweiggs to the bigness of man’s finger att the biggest end, which hee held in his hand, and uppon the stubbornness of the negro caused his dublett to be taken of and whip’d him upon his bare back . . . ”³ This testimony was given at a trial holding Mr. Overzee responsible for the death of the slave that ensued from the beating described.

The case discussed illustrates that there was an extent. The license to kill apparently had restrictions. However, Mr. Overzee was acquitted when the case went before a higher court.

⁴ Equally important as the feelings of slave owners and the means that they used to justify their feelings is the fact that these two pieces are not biased. Securing the Leg Irons: Restriction of Legal Rights for Slaves in Virginia and Maryland, 1625-1791 and Enslaved African rebellions in Virginia continue to demonstrate the fear of slave labor disappearing caused many to turn to

government. Securing the Leg Irons vocalizes the relationship of slave and owner, “ the right of personal liberty in the slave is utterly inconsistent with the idea of slavery, and whenever the slave acquires this right, his condition is ipso facto changed .

. . So long as two races of men live together, the one as masters and the others as dependents and slaves to a certain extent, all of the superior race shall exercise a controlling power over the inferior. 5 This view on the association between the two classes does not ignore fear of the freedom of slaves as factor in legal proceedings but lays the groundwork for legal justification of the treatment of slaves. Outwin goes on to articulate the slaves were more valuable as slaves