

Selected Acts Concerning Indian Slavery in Virginia (1662-1682)

****please note, if you choose to use this source, you do need not include all of these acts in your paper—you may select only those that are relevant to your argument.*

All sources downloaded from: <http://www.virtualjamestown.org/laws1.html>

March 1662-ACT CXXXVIII. Concerning Indians.

[The legislators decided that Native American and English servants were to serve their owners the same length of time.]

And be it further enacted that what Englishman, trader, or other shall bring in any Indians as servants and shall assigne them over to any other, shall not sell them for slaves nor for any longer time than English of the like ages should serve....

Source: Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large, vol. 2, p. 143.

October 1670-ACT XII. What tyme Indians to serve.

[This law created an additional distinction between African Americans and Native Americans. It was an attempt to make lifetime servitude the normal condition for all Africans imported into Virginia. The legislators repealed this statute in November 1682.]

WHEREAS some dispute have arisen whither Indians taken in warr by any other nation, and by that nation that taketh them sold to the English, are sevants for life or terme of yeares, It is resolved and enacted that all servants not being christians imported into this colony by shipping shalbe slaves for their lives; but what shall come by land shall serve, if boyes or girles, untill thirty yeares of age, if men or women twelve yeares and no longer.

Source: Hening, ed., The Statutes at Large, vol. 2, p. 283.

November 1682-ACT I. An act to repeale a former law making Indians and others ffree.

[In 1676 many Virginians were alarmed by Governor Berkeley's poor leadership and weak response in handling the Indian threat by merely suggesting a series of forts be built along the frontier rather than dispatching troops. Nathaniel Bacon, a member of England's gentry newly arrived in Virginia, became the military leader of a band of Virginians who armed themselves

against the Indians in defiance of the governor. Until Bacon's death from natural causes on October 26, 1676 he and Governor Berkeley struggled to control Virginia militarily and politically, embroiling Virginians in civil war. During Bacon's Rebellion, Native people suffered greatly—Bacon and his men killed many people and destroyed a number of villages. In June of 1676, in the midst of the rebellion, members of the Virginia Assembly decreed that Native Americans captured during the rebellion would become slaves for life. Five years later, in November of 1682, the Virginia Assembly passed two more act that joined Native Americans and Africans into one racial category-"negroes and other slaves."]

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that all servants except Turkes and Moores, whilest in amity with his majesty which from and after publication of this act shall be brought or imported into this country, either by sea or land, whether Negroes, Moors, Mollattoes or Indians, who and whose parentage and native country are not christian at the time of their first purchase...and all Indians which shall hereafter be sold by our neighbouring Indians, or any other trafiqueing with us as for slaves are hereby adjudged, deemed and taken to be slaves to all intents and purposes, any law, usage or custome to the contrary notwithstanding.

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, vol. 2, pp. 491-492

November 1682-ACT II. An act declaring Indian women servants tithables [taxable].

WHEREAS it hath bin doubted whether Indian women servants sold to the English above the age of sixteene yeares be tythable, Bee it enacted and declared...that all Indian women are and shall be tythables, and ought to pay levies in like manner as negroe women brought into this country doe....

Source: Hening, ed., *The Statutes at Large*, vol. 2, p. 492.