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Patterns of Race Hate in the Americas before 1800

by
Rhett S. Jones

The recent growth in the study of the African diaspora reflected in a number of comparative studies calls attention to the ways in which the black experience in the United States—and the thirteen British colonies in North America that preceded its formation—differs from that of blacks elsewhere in the Americas. This paper examines the unique form of race hatred that emerged in North America and places that hatred in the cultural context of race relations in the hemisphere.

Hatred of another because of his or her race was commonplace in the New World. Discrimination against persons based on race was not uncommon in the Old World, nor were negative ideas about Africans, as studies of the English, French, and Spanish demonstrate.[1] In the Americas these negative ideas, combined with powerful economic, demographic, cultural, and ultimately psychological factors, gradually evolved into racism. A distinction is drawn here between racism and race hatred. In the New World only whites have been racists because only they have had the power to act on their race hatred systematically over a long period of time and to create institutions that express and manifest this hatred. The shift from race hatred to racism was an evolutionary one, as studies by a number of scholars make clear.[2] Lacking power, blacks never became racists, yet millions of them hated whites.

Black hatred of white people has been curiously muted in the scholarly literature as though historians, both black and white, are ashamed of it. Black people themselves were not so squeamish. For instance, in 1829 David Walker wrote:

> The whites have always been an unjust, jealous, unmerciful, avaricious and blood thirsty set of beings, always seeking after power and authority. . . . We view them all over the confederacy of Greece, where they were first known to be anything [in consequence of education] we see them there, cutting each other's throats—trying to subject each other to wretchedness and misery—to effect which, they used all kinds of deceitful, unfair, and unmerciful means . . . we see them acting more like devils than accountable men.[3]

With certain notable exceptions[4] the cruelties whites inflicted on blacks have received little scholarly attention, yet these cruelties were responsible for black hatred.

The Two Variants of Race Hatred

There were at least two patterns in the evolution of race hatred in the New World, one centered in the thirteen colonies of British North America, the other characteristic of the rest of the hemisphere. Tannenbaum argued that blacks were more cruelly treated in British North America than in Spanish and Portuguese colonies for two reasons: first, because the Roman Catholic church declared strongly and unreservedly that Africans were full members of the human race, entitled to the sacraments and to equal spiritual treatment; and second, because the Spaniards, unlike the English, had an established working system of slavery at the time they colonized the Americas.[5]

In the New World only whites have been racists because only they have had the power to act on their race hatred systematically. . . .

In terms of the first distinction, Tannenbaum argued that Protestants, unlike members of the Catholic church, were far from convinced that blacks were human and were not prepared to extend spiritual equality to them until they proved themselves worthy. Even when blacks made themselves over into model Protestant citizens, living not much different from white folk, they were still viewed as inferiors. Modern scholarship confirms Tannenbaum's conclusions, demonstrating that blacks were second class citizens in Protestant North America.[6] As noted above, Tannenbaum also argued that because the Spaniards had an established, working system of slavery at the time they colonized the Americas, they had no need to invent reasons for enslaving Africans. The English, in contrast, had no tradition of slavery and after casting about for various excuses to justify the enslavement of blacks hit upon the idea that Africans and their African-American children were intended to be slaves. In what Jordan termed an "unthinking decision," British colonists gradually transformed negative ideas about blackness into a full-fledged racist system.[7] Bennett, however, is among those who have argued that far from being unthinking the racist system created in North America was well thought out and deliberately aimed at excluding blacks from the freedom Englishmen and their Anglo-American children took for granted.[8]

The Tannenbaum thesis, which argues that blacks were better treated in Ibero-America than in Anglo-America for reasons of religion and culture, has come in for considerable criticism.[9] Much of this scholarly criticism demonstrates that blacks were treated as brutally in Brazil and in the Spanish-American settlements as they were in British North America. No cruelty dreamed up and executed by an English settler went unmatched by a Spanish or Portuguese settler. Recent studies of slavery and race relations in Brazil show that racism has been as important in Brazilian culture as in the United States.[10]

Black hatred of white people has been curiously muted in the scholarly literature as though historians, both black and white, are ashamed of it.

Despite the fact that the Tannenbaum thesis has been subjected to much deserved criticism, it calls attention to two patterns of racial cruelty in the hemisphere and hence to two patterns of race hatred. In the sugar islands of the Caribbean, slavery got off to a brutal start. In the latter part of the seventeenth century and for much of the eighteenth century, slaves there were literally worked to death. With the slave trade at its apogee during the middle third of the latter century, slaves were cheap and plentiful. Slaveholders imported more males than females, and when females were present they worked in the cane field much like the males. The result was that slaves in such places as Barbados, Jamaica, and the sugar producing regions of northeastern Brazil seldom reproduced. The slaveholders were content if they received seven years of labor out of a slave, who was then simply replaced with another, freshly imported from Africa. For the bulk of the eighteenth century the black population of the Caribbean and many adjacent areas was largely African, not American born. Of course, not all areas of the circum-Caribbean participated in the eighteenth century sugar boom. Trinidad, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and some of the smaller islands in the Caribbean were not dominated by a sugar oligarchy, so their patterns of race relations and race hatred were different.

At the end of the eighteenth century a number of factors together served to transform the nature of slavery and eventually brought it to an end in much of the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Eric Williams's now classic economic explanation for the end of slavery argues that slavery became less harsh and eventually ended in the English-speaking Caribbean because it had served its purpose by providing the profits necessary to make possible the development of English industrial capitalism.[11] Williams himself wrote in response to an earlier school of thought that argued that the English had first made slavery less harsh and then ended it as part of a humanitarian movement, which also saw rising concern for the poor, the ill, the insane, and the young. Modern scholarship has advanced multicausal explanations, suggesting that the rise of humanitarian thought was made possible by the declining political power of the West Indian planters. It has also been suggested that the many revolts and rebellions of the slaves themselves had an impact on the ideas of Europeans and Euro-American colonists concerning slavery.[12]

Whatever the explanation, with the exception of the southern part of what was to become the United States, the position of blacks in and around the Caribbean gradually improved. In the English colonies, planter-controlled legislative bodies began to pass laws to protect slaves from some of the more brutal practices. Independent Haiti outlawed slavery. Many of the Spanish-American revolutionaries declared their stance against slavery at the same time they declared their commitment to independence, realizing they could not hope to win independence from Spain without black support. While racial cruelty continued to be important in these new nations, their official ideologies were, from the early years of the nineteenth century on, not simply neutral in the matter of race, but antiracist.

The impact of such antiracist political posturing should not be exaggerated. In most of the newly independent American nations blacks, although freed, remained at the bottom of the socioeconomic system, and Africanity was still regarded with contempt.[13] Powerful politicians frequently declared their belief in white supremacy. Some went so far as to suggest their country might improve by a deliberate policy of whitening the population.[14] Most Latin American nations welcomed European immigrants, but erected barriers to keep blacks from entering. Many black themselves sought to escape from an Africanity despised by their fellow citizens by moving upward into one of the intermediate racial castes that were a colonial legacy in the Caribbean, Central America, South America, Mexico, and certain small parts of what is now the United States.[15] Persons of African descent continued to be discriminated against, exploited, and oppressed in these areas, but in general their lot was far better than that of their

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parents and grandparents. Proof of this can be found in the fact that blacks began to reproduce themselves in large numbers so that the population gradually became African-American not African.

In the Anglo-North American variant, cruelty evolved in a different way. A number of scholars have concluded that slavery in British North America was initially not very harsh, and that there were originally no strong anti-African attitudes.[16] In a study of Virginia's eastern shore during the seventeenth century, Breen and Innes found a middling class of free black entrepreneurs who received equal treatment in the courts, held white indentured servants, owned property, and even assumed guardianship over white children. The two authors concede, however, that the descendants of these African Americans did not fare so well. By the end of the seventeenth century white Virginians were already beginning to place restrictions on blacks whether slave or free.[17] Similarly, Sobel argues that English settlers and Africans in colonial Virginia had so much in common that they united in creating a common American culture that was viewed as threatening by such leading Virginians as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. She goes on to argue that events of the late eighteenth century gradually drove the two races apart, but that their shared eighteenth century culture continues to link them.[18]

By the middle of the nineteenth century high barriers had been constructed to segregate and separate the races, but for much of the eighteenth century, blacks and whites had lived together.

In Dutch New Netherlands, a number of recent dissertations demonstrate that the settlers were little concerned with race.[19] In their settlements in what is now New York, the Dutch introduced a system of "half-freedom," which required former slaves to contribute a stated amount of labor to their former masters and/or to the state. After meeting these requirements blacks might own property, be married in the church, possess weapons, and generally behave as whites. When the English took control of the New Netherlands they reduced Africans and their African-American children to a lower status by depriving them of the rights they had enjoyed under the Dutch.

In New England patterns of race relations and cruelty were different from those in Virginia and New Netherlands. New England was like New Netherlands in having a comparatively small number of blacks. Studies of New England's colonial black population suggest that blacks lived in two very different circumstances.[20] In such communities as Boston, Portland, Maine, Newport, Rhode Island, and New London, Connecticut, they were city dwellers who—while they often lived in the households of their masters—were sufficiently numerous to form not only Afro-American communities, but to actually construct independent self-supporting Afro-American self-help societies, schools, and churches. Other blacks lived in isolation scattered about New England's rural hinterland where there were no black communities. The one exception to these two patterns was the Narragansett country of southern Rhode Island where a large number of slaves lived on the large estates of the region, allowing them to establish networks of black folk, tied together by knowledge of one another, by marriage, and by kinship.

While at first glance these patterns of race relations in Dutch and British North America seem bewilderingly complex, they are different from those elsewhere in the hemisphere in that they are built around comparatively small numbers of blacks and they included large numbers of American-born blacks. The careful statistics amassed by Kulikoff show that blacks in Virginia early began to reproduce.[21] By the 1770s the vast majority of blacks living in the thirteen colonies of British North America were the grandchildren of persons who were American born. Blacks in Dutch and British North America were not so cruelly treated that they could not establish families and pass onto their children a perspective on whites, on slavery, and on blackness.

Students of the slave experience in the Americas often ask why slave rebellions were common in Brazil, Antigua, Jamaica, Mexico, and elsewhere in the New World, but comparatively uncommon in British North America. These revolts were, more often than not, led by African-born slaves who, newly arrived and familiar with slavery in their homelands, were politically and psychologically prepared to challenge slaveholding societies. But in British North America, American-born slaves reflected on their enslavement, carefully instructed their children in the ways of coping with slavery, and often cautioned against open rebellion.[22]

Throughout the New World slaves were subjected to physical cruelties, but only in British North America were they subjected to a special psychological cruelty through which an American-born black people gradually came to understand that brutalities were inflicted on them solely because they were black. Blacks in British North America watched racism grow up. The newly arrived Africans who came in large numbers to the sugar islands of the Caribbean, to Brazil, and to other parts of the New World over the course of the eighteenth century initially had no special animosity for whites as whites. Hundreds of thousands of them were worked to death before they had time to understand the workings of the systems, much less the ideological rationaliza-

tions white folk were in the process of developing to justify the enslavement of blacks.

In the thirteen colonies that made up British North America black hate for whites developed in three stages. First, blacks become knowledgeable of whites and the cruelties they were inflicting on Africans and their African-American descendants. Second, blacks established networks to communicate this knowledge, and third blacks created an Afro-American culture that validated the knowledge passed along these networks.

Networks, Culture, and Race Hate in North America

The eighteenth century Afro-American population had close relationships with whites. According to Piersen:

> In New England, bondage meant a form of family slavery. Because of the restricted economic opportunities for gang labor, the majority of Yankee bondsmen found themselves in service to masters who could afford no more than one or two slaves to help them with household, farm or business chores. Since northern slave owners rarely held enough bondsmen to permit the expense of separate living quarters for the races, common residence during the more domestic hours reinforced the proximity of workaday relationships.[23]

In Providence nearly 83% of blacks lived in households headed by whites in 1774; and even by 1790, more than 73% still lived in such households.[24] These intimate living conditions were not limited to New England. In Philadelphia the majority of working black women were engaged in tasks that brought them into white homes if they did not already reside there.[25] In Virginia many blacks lived either in or in close proximity to their masters' homes. Moreover there were enough "events involving whites with blacks to leave no doubt but that interaction was intimate and significant for both."[26] In these personal relations blacks were not only frequently subjected to white cruelty, but also had an opportunity to reflect on the reasons Euro-Americans put forth to justify their cruelties.

The majority of slaveholders in eighteenth century British North America, even in the southern colonies, did not own large numbers of slaves. They knew their bondsmen and bondswomen well and were well-known in return. The large plantations of the Caribbean were often populated by hundreds of slaves, most of whom had little direct contact with their owner. Their day-to-day dealings were either with a white overseer or a black one. White overseers seldom remained on a particular plantation for any length of time, usually moving about in attempts to better themselves. They were seldom in intimate, close, or lasting relationships with their slaves. Moreover, the bulk of Caribbean slaves were African born, spoke no English, and even when a white overseer was present often communicated with him through a black English-speaking intermediary. Race animosity may well have developed under such conditions, but it did not have the personal dimension characteristic of North America.

In Latin America individuals were not the only slaveholders. The church, religious organizations, guilds, and schools often owned slaves. Sometimes, as in the case of the religious orders, large numbers of slaves were held. The relationship between the slaves and the corporate structure that owned them was typically distant and impersonal, lacking the intense intimacy of North American master/slave relationship. The intimate footing on which slaves lived with their masters in North America not only enabled them to learn much about white attitudes toward blacks, but insured that the learning process itself was not neutral, but rather was colored by personal relationships.

While the small size of the black North American population as compared to that of blacks enslaved in other parts of the hemisphere made possible an intimate black-white relationship, it meant that blacks were often isolated from one another. On the large plantations an Afro-American culture emerged naturally and easily as the slaves realized their common condition. Its full flowering was delayed only by the fact that for much of the eighteenth century the majority of the population was African, committed to one of West Africa's many cultures. However, as the century unfolded and the number of African-born slaves declined, there were fewer Africans whose ideas and commitment to a particular African culture could hinder the formation of Afro-American culture.

Early on, the slaves responded to their comparative isolation by creating networks of their own. According to Kulikoff, slaves in the eighteenth century Chesapeake region "created flexible kinship networks that permitted slaves to adjust to separation resulting from being sold apart from kindred with some success. Most slaves were either members of a kin-based household or could call upon kindred on their own or nearby quarters for aid and encouragement."[27] As slaveholders sold members of slave families apart they created networks of black family members initially scattered only over the tidewater

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region, but eventually spreading into the hinterland. These family networks were not only reliable channels of information by means of which blacks learned of white cruelties, but this involuntary scattering of family members was itself proof of white cruelty.

Family networks were not the only linkage among slaves. As much recent scholarship has demonstrated blacks, both slave and free, were an important component of North America's seagoing population.[28] Not only were black sailors thrown into intimate contact with their white fellows while on ship, and hence had an opportunity to observe white rationalizations for racism, but as they travelled from port to port they were able to pass on their insights to other blacks. On a smaller scale Jones, in writing of the slaves of the Narragansett Country of Rhode Island, notes:

> The planters also occasionally lent their slaves to one another, particularly when urgent tasks needed completing. South County slaveholders lent one another oxen, boats, and farm equipment and therefore saw nothing unusual in loaning one another slaves. The . . . lending of slaves back and forth created opportunities for bondsmen and bondswomen who were willing to use their working visits to learn more about the system.[29]

These family and occupational networks were supplemented by religious ones. The thirteen colonies were characterized by two significant religious movements in the eighteenth century known to historians as the first Great Awakening and the second Great Awakening. These religious movements were characterized by fiery preaching and mass conversions. Eloquent and sometimes explicit attacks on the ruling class not only attracted whites in large numbers, but blacks as well. The mass meetings to which slaveholders often brought their slaves provided bondswomen and bondsmen with yet another opportunity to network and to reflect both on the cruelties of whites and on the strategies for a black response.

As slaves encountered one another, whether as family members, fellow workers, or as religious believers, they doubtless informed one another that the conditions under which they lived and labored were improving, much as it was for white workers of the time. But the psychological environment was worsening. Euro-Americans were tightening up the system to better control Afro-Americans, to limit their opportunities, and to prevent them from rising in society. As Boles sees it,

> Soon southern planters sought by a series of legislative enactments to control slave behavior. Beginning about 1700 harsh, rigorous codes were passed in each southern colony. In successive decades these laws were elaborated, made more inclusive, and utilized to maintain total white hegemony.[30]

Over the course of the eighteenth century, southern colony after colony passed laws preventing slaveholders from manumitting their slaves out of fear that the number of free blacks would significantly increase.[31] These fears were not limited to the South. In the North whites began to explore colonization schemes aimed at sending all blacks, slaves or free, whether African born or American, back to Africa.

Against this backdrop, an African-American culture emerged. In a sense this culture was North America's first counterculture, as the personal experiences of blacks and what they learned from one another through their many networks enabled them to construct an independent viewpoint on America. The turmoil surrounding the American Revolution made it possible for blacks to buttress their cultural insights with political constructs. They seized on the Euro-American justifications for revolution and insisted that blacks, too, were entitled to liberty. The "slaves carved out areas of self-control, seized and multiplied their limited opportunities, and resisted becoming simply human property."[32] This reflective and separate Afro-American culture suggested that whites were not satisfied with enslaving blacks, taking the products and profits of their labor, and subjecting them to segregation even in churches, but were moving to find a racial justification for their cruel exploitation.

Despite their enslavement of Africans and their African-American descendants, most eighteenth century whites in British North America lived in intimate association with them. From the black perspective the lies that whites were creating must have appeared to be deliberate and in contradiction to white experiences with blacks. For example, at the same time that Euro-Americans were building an argument that blacks were subhuman creatures, stupid, and little above the level of brutes, they were interacting with their slaves on an intimate day-to-day basis. By the middle of the nineteenth century high barriers had been constructed to segregate and separate the races, but for much of the eighteenth century, blacks and whites had lived together. Blacks supervised the children of whites, managed their business affairs, and participated with them in church governance. They were regarded by Euro-Americans as adults so knowledgeable, intelligent, and ambitious that restrictions were placed on them and ways devised to prevent them from getting ahead. Based on their day-to-day interaction with white folks, blacks knew they could not really believe the anti-black lies whites were in the process of creating.

Patterns of Black Behavior in British North America

The evolution of black race hate for whites followed a different course in the thirteen colonies than elsewhere in the hemisphere, manifesting itself in different patterns of black behavior. Brazil, Jamaica, St. Domingue, and other American colonies were wracked by slave rebellions, by revolts, and by slave rebellions during the eighteenth century as blacks responded to slavery in strong, aggressive, and overt ways. In British North America, however, race hate seems to have been more subtle for four reasons.

First, as an Afro-American people, American-born slaves understood the odds against them. Whites were more numerous, they were better armed, and by the last third of the eighteenth century they were in the process of arguing and believing that they were a superior and special people. Euro-Americans constructed such arguments to justify their struggle for independence from Great Britain. They saw themselves as a rugged, proud, innovative folk justified in seizing their freedom. For example, they abandoned the rules of conventional warfare and, instead of openly marching rank upon rank on the battlefield, skulked and hid, firing from ambush and quickly fleeing when it appeared the British would win a battle. The English army held the Americans in contempt, regarding them as cowards who were afraid to fight in the open. These charges bothered few rebels who had, by the time of the Revolutionary War, convinced one another that they were a special people and that it was their definition of proper battle—not that of the British—that counted. Eighteenth century Afro-Americans understood this ruthless smugness, this belief that white Americans were a chosen people, and knew that just as Euro-Americans showed their English opponents little mercy, they showed blacks even less. Black Americans doubtlessly thought long and hard before overtly expressing their hate for such a well-organized, numerous, and cruel folk.

The second reason that black race hate in British North America seems to have been more subtle is that because of the intimate relationship between blacks and whites in North America race hate was less clear-cut and sharp, more ambiguous. There were slaves who identified with their masters—a fact that is hardly surprising given that slaves often lived on intimate terms with their owners. This close association sometimes blunted their hate and had an impact not only on blacks but upon black American institutions. For example, Piersen's description of the Black Election Day ceremonies in colonial Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island indicates that in electing a man as the "governor" of the slave community—a symbolic position without real power—the slaves took into consideration his standing in the slave community, his rank in Africa if he was African born, and the status of his owner. Some owners supported their slaves, aiding them in the campaign for governor by providing food and drink to help woo the voters, and the loan of horses, carriage, and fine clothes if elected. Owners, understanding that the election of one of their slaves as "governor" reflected, at least in part, on their own prestige, often energetically supported them.[33] Just as blacks had knowledge of the white system, given the close association of the races, so too did whites have knowledge of the black system. Because some blacks identified with whites it was inevitable that manifestations of race hatred would often be less obvious and sharp.

The third reason for the different intensity in race hatred was that, in addition to these mitigating personal relationships, black and white cultures in North America were intertwined in such a way that black hate for whites was muted. Writing about whites in Latin America, Klein observes that while they believed in the essential humanity of black folk:

> [A]t the same time, these were inevitably racist societies which rejected black self-identity and self-worth and often created a second class citizenship for those who achieved their freedom. Social ascension and mobility were possible enough for blacks to give a majority a sense of hope, but the terms were always a rejection of their Afro-American cultural identity and their blackness. In such a situation it was inevitable that the cultures which were established by the slaves in America would serve two often conflicting purposes: that of integrating the slaves into the larger master-dominated societies while providing them with an identity and meaning that protected them from that society's oppression and hostility.[34]

As Klein sees it, blacks in South America essentially operated in two cultures: one created and controlled by whites, the other built by themselves. In Latin America, however, the conflict between these two different cultures was muted by a complex socio/racial caste system that recognized not only whites and blacks, but a wide range of intermediate types as well. In sharp contrast to the thirteen colonies, where what Hoetink terms a two-tiered system of race—one black and one white—emerged,[35] in

Without money, without property, and without even full control of their bodies, bondswomen and bondsmen created a system in which slaves delivered respect to one another.

Latin America there were many intermediate racial groups.[36] There was a slave culture in Latin America, but not all persons of African ancestry participated in it or even thought of themselves as black. In British North America, however, a sharp line emerged in which all slaves were black and together they created an African-American culture sharply separated from its European-American counterpart. The line between the two cultures was enforced both

Black Americans have, out of necessity, always been reflective folk, a people who have watchfully observed white Americans and been cautious in their expressions of race hate.

by whites, who used their power to force blacks into an inferior status, and by blacks, who—seeing no way to overtly challenge their subordinate position—created a culture that enabled them to work within it.

The African-American culture the slaves created in North America ranks among the most remarkable achievements in the history of mankind. Without money, without property, and without even full control of their own bodies, bondswomen and bondsmen created a system in which slaves delivered respect to one another. Young people respected and supported their elders, black men and black women, respecting one another, worked together in an egalitarian relationship that was far different from the patriarchy that characterized white society. But the blocks used to construct this new social order were not exclusively black. Isaac writes, "Clearly during the formative decades of the eighteenth century the slaves were able to keep alive distinctive African expressive styles and sensibilities."[37] But the slaves were also much influenced by European, or more precisely Euro-American, sensibilities as well. "Slaves," writes Cheek, "even the most dull witted ones, had ample exposure to the ideas and symbols of freedom."[38] The complex linkages among white culture and black during the eighteenth-century North America robbed race hate of much of its aggressive hostility. Africans in Antigua, Mexico, and elsewhere who rose up in angry, open rebellion against whites shared little with their white oppressors. Slavemasters were cruel, little-known oppressors. But in North America, by attacking Euro-Americans, Afro-Americans were in effect attacking a part of themselves, so closely were the cultures of the two races linked and so powerfully did they impact on one another.

A fourth reason why race hate was less overt in British North America than elsewhere in the New World is to be found in black Christianity. Scholars generally agree that over the course of the eighteenth century two forms of Christianity, one black and one white, grew up side by side in North America. According to Isaac, in eighteenth century Virginia members of both races were converted but:

> That is not to say, however, that "conversion" had the same meaning for blacks as for whites. It seems that Afro-American evangelicalism, taking root in the profoundly communal ethos of the quarter, did not typically involve its adherent in an isolating experience of awakening to a deep sense of guilt and sinfulness. Black religion, unlike its white counterpart, was not polarized between individualism and communitarianism but was centered much more unambiguously in collective celebration.[39]

Nineteenth century Afro-American Christianity became more militant. The slaves turned for their lessons to the Old Testament, with its vengeful Jehovah who would punish the evil slaveholder, humble his pride in race, and remind him that all the peoples of the earth were equal in God's sight. But in the eighteenth century, black American Christianity was still in its infancy and throughout the thirteen colonies whites and blacks often united in Christian fellowship. The New Testament, not the Old, and the teachings of the gentle Christ, Redeemer of all mankind, was the center of the lessons the slaves taught one another.

Regardless of the focus of their teachings, however, black Christians could not find justification for race hate during either the eighteenth century or the nineteenth. Christianity, as Stuckey makes clear in his brilliant work on slave culture, was a means of bonding black Americans together despite their different African backgrounds; yet the link was one of Christian love; it could not serve as a basis for ennobling black hatred of whites.[40] Of course, there were many Africans and African Americans who remained outside the Christian fold through at least the first-half of the eighteenth century, but these men and women left no evidence that they were organized along the lines of race hate either.

In any case, it is clear that by the end of the eighteenth century the vast majority of black Americans were involved in a religion that provided them with neither legitimate nor institutional ways of expressing their hatred of whites. Black folk in North America were fettered by the Christianity they were molding to meet their needs. Because they saw themselves as special in the eyes of the Lord, a people unjustly and without cause subjected to a vicious slavery, Afro-Americans could not openly admit their hatred of whites. Their religion required them to forgive, to turn the other cheek, and to look forward to a heaven where racial distinctions would be elimi-

nated, God's black people exalted, and race-proud whites made humble.

Conclusion

Blacks' hatred of whites during eighteenth century North America has been difficult for historians and other scholars to identify because, in contrast to race hate elsewhere in the hemisphere, it was muted and subtle. By the nineteenth century black Americans had become so adept at hiding it that such noted Afro-American scholars as W. E. B. Du Bois and Kelly Miller argued that Africans and persons of African descent were the female of the races—gentle, loving, and willing to forgive.[41] Many white observers reached a similar conclusion, contrasting the alleged feminine qualities of Africans with the aggressive, entrepreneurial, masculine qualities of the Anglo-Saxon "race."

Doubtless, many blacks believed themselves to be a more Christ-like, loving, and forgiving race than whites, a conception of self that may have made possible the widespread appeal of the nonviolent philosophy of Martin Luther King, Jr. Viewed in the context of the response of eighteenth-century slaves to white oppression, the willingness of black civil rights demonstrators to meekly accept abuse, insult, and even physical violence becomes understandable. The African Americans who participated in nonviolent civil disobedience were continuing a North American black tradition older than the United States, one which urged them to return love for hate and to extend a Christian forgiveness to their oppressors.

Black Americans have, out of necessity, always been reflective folk, a people who have watchfully observed white Americans and been cautious in their expressions of race hate. But there is another tradition. In 1829 David Walker wrote to white Americans: "You are not astonished at my saying we hate you, for if we are men, we cannot but hate you, while you are treating us like dogs."[42] Even Walker qualified his hate, however, making it clear that it stemmed from white treatment of blacks. Throughout his *Appeal*, Walker flayed Euro-Americans for failing to live up to their own Christian, democratic, and egalitarian principles, making it clear that blacks were right in their hatred of a people who treated other people like "dogs." But Walker believed European Americans could redeem themselves, end black hate of whites, and win the favor of God and the admiration of the nations of the world by ending slavery and the cruel maltreatment of African Americans. His hate, and the hate he believed blacks held toward whites, was a qualified hate, one that was neither rooted in the genes nor eternal. Whites could eliminate black hate simply by treating blacks as they wanted to be treated themselves.

Endnotes

[1]For such a study on the English see: Jordan, W. D. (1969). *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*. Baltimore: Pelican Books; for a study on the French see: Cohen, W. D. (1980). *The French Encounter with African: White Response to Blacks, 1530-1880*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; for a study on the Spanish see: Rout, L. B., Jr. (1976). *The African Experience in Spanish America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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