

# Natural Selection Through Slavery and the African Slave Trade

By NATHANIEL WEYL

While contemporary studies of the American Negro and the African slave trade are voluminous, they concentrate primarily on sociological, ideological and moral aspects of these institutions. They cast little light on the genetic implications for the Negro population of the New World of the slave trade and chattel slavery.

An exception is a recent book on comparative Negro-White intelligence by Dr H. J. Eysenck, which contains these speculations:<sup>1</sup>

If, for instance, the brighter members of the West African tribes which suffered the depredations of the slavers had managed to use their higher intelligence to escape, so that it was mostly the duller ones who got caught, then the gene pool of the slaves brought to America would have been depleted of many high-I.Q. genes. Alternatively, many slaves appear to have been sold by their tribal chiefs; these chiefs might have got rid of their less intelligent followers. And as far as natural selection after the shipment to America is concerned, it is quite possible that the more intelligent Negroes would have contributed an undue proportion of "uppity" slaves, as well as being much more likely to try to escape. The terrible fate of slaves falling into either of these categories is only too well known. White slavers wanted dull beasts of burden, ready to work themselves to death in the plantations, and under these conditions intelligence would have been counter-selective. Thus there is every reason to expect that the particular sub-sample of the Negro race which is constituted of American Negroes is not an unselected sample of Negroes, but has been selected throughout history according to criteria which would put the highly intelligent at a disadvantage. The inevitable outcome of such selection would of course be the creation of a gene pool lacking some of the genes making for higher intelligence.

These aprioristic speculations inevitably over-simplify a rather complex situation. Dr Eysenck is, I believe, on sounder ground when he discusses the selective influences of the African slave trade than when he expatiates on those of plantation slavery. His harsh judgments in the latter area are perhaps more realistically

<sup>1</sup> H. J. Eysenck, *The I.Q. Argument: Race, Intelligence and Education*, Library Press, New York, 1971, p. 42.

descriptive of sugar-plantation slavery in such areas as the British West Indies, Surinam and Brazil than they are of the cotton and general farming slavery of the Southern United States.

The I.Q.-test scores of native Africans are generally much lower than those of U.S. Blacks.<sup>2</sup> This does not, however, necessarily refute Eysenck's hypothesis that the latter are genetically less intelligent than their African populations of origin. American Negroes have been exposed for generations to modern education, urbanization and industrialization. Moreover, they are a racially mixed population, with perhaps 16 per cent white genes.<sup>3</sup>

#### WHO WERE CHOSEN?

Abolitionist propagandists gave wildly inflated estimates of the total number of Africans sent as slaves to the Americas. Thus, R. I. Rotberg cites the eminent demographer, Robert R. Kuczynski, as authority for the alleged fact that "at least twenty-million slaves" were victims of the trade.<sup>4</sup> Basil Davidson, the author of books which make extravagant claims for the glories of extinct Negro civilizations in Africa, also cites Kuczynski, but quotes him correctly and gives fifteen millions as his estimate.<sup>5</sup> However, the late Dr Kuczynski did not arrive at his estimate by a process of demographic analysis, but borrowed his round figure from an obscure propagandist of the 1860s named Edward E. Dunbar who published polemical articles against slavery in order to drum up American support for the cause of Benito Juarez in Mexico.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> L. E. Andor, *Aptitudes and Abilities of the Black Man in Sub-Saharan Africa, 1784-1963: An Annotated Bibliography*, National Institute for Personnel Research, South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Johannesburg, 1966. This bibliography comprises 486 items on intelligence and 35 on personality.

<sup>3</sup> Nathaniel Weyl, "Some Genetic Aspects of Plantation Slavery," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, Summer 1970, pp. 618-625. The article points out that prevalent estimates that the American Negro is 25 per cent Caucasian are based on serological data from Baltimore and other large cities which selectively attract light-skinned and racially-mixed Blacks. A study of rural Georgia Negroes, by contrast, shows only 9 per cent white genes. In each case, race mixture is determined by the R<sup>o</sup> chromosome combination in the Rhesus blood group, or cDe in the R. A. Fisher notation.

EDITOR: I have argued elsewhere that the blood groups do not necessarily show the amount of admixture. Therefore, I think the Caucasoid element in the American Negro may be higher.

<sup>4</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, *A Political History of Tropical Africa*, New York, 1965, p. 152.

<sup>5</sup> Basil Davidson, *Black Mother*, London, 1961, p. 89.

<sup>6</sup> Edward E. Dunbar, "History of the Rise and Decline of Commercial Slavery in America, with Reference to the Future of Mexico," *Mexican Papers* 1, No. 5, April 1861, pp. 269-270.

Fortunately, Professor Philip D. Curtin has published a study of the African slave trade which scholars recognize as definitive. In it, he reaches the conclusion that an estimated 9,566,100 Africans were transported as slaves between 1451 and 1870 and that, of these, all but 175,000 were shipped to the Americas.<sup>7</sup>

Estimates of the number of slaves imported into the United States from the Colonial era to the Civil War also vary wildly. Interestingly enough, the contemporary estimates were considerably more accurate than those of some modern authorities. Thus, in 1853, the pioneer statistician, Henry C. Carey, estimated that from 250,000 to 300,000 slaves had been brought into the country.<sup>8</sup> These modest figures contrasted with the assertion of Noel Deer, the historian of the sugar industry, that 1,500,000 Africans had been brought in prior to the outlawry of the trade in 1808 and another million thereafter.<sup>9</sup>

Curtin, who reviewed all these estimates in detail, came to the conclusion that only 399,000 Africans were brought into the United States during the four centuries of the slave trade.<sup>10</sup>

Almost half of the slaves brought into the United States came from the Bight of Biafra and from Angola, according to Curtin. An estimated 15.9 per cent came from the Gold Coast, 13.3 per cent from Senegambia and another 11.4 per cent from the Windward coast. South Carolina slave-owners had strong views about the comparative value of the different African tribes. They gave first preference to Negroes from Senegambia, gave the Gold Coast Blacks second choice, and sought to avoid those from the Bight of Biafra.<sup>11</sup>

"Persons became slaves," Ulrich B. Phillips wrote in his great classic on American slavery, "through capture, debt or malfeasance, or through the inheritance of the status."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1969, p. 269, Table 77.

<sup>8</sup> Henry C. Carey, *The Slave Trade, Domestic and Foreign*, Philadelphia, 1872, p. 18. The first edition appeared in 1853.

<sup>9</sup> Noel Deer, *The History of Sugar*, London, 1949-1950, Vol. 2, p. 282.

<sup>10</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

<sup>11</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>12</sup> Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1966, p. 6. This pro-Southern account of the peculiar institution was first published in 1918. Hailed at the time as a classic, it has been treated "with hostility, suspicion and even contempt" by modern historians who object to its viewpoint. Yet, in a measured introduction to the 1966 edition, Professor Eugene D. Genovese, a Marxist authority on slavery, calls attention to the excellence of Phillips's research and the penetrating character of some of his insights. "Phillips," Genovese writes, "came closer to greatness as historian, perhaps as close as any historian this country has yet produced." (p. vii)

In the Gold Coast, the Fanti acquired slaves either by waging war on other tribes or by trade with the dreaded Ashanti. The latter "obtained their captives either in upcountry wars or in trade with the neighboring savanna tribes farther north, and in later years, they may also have bought a few petty criminals and Bantu prisoners from the Hausa traders who traversed the interior."<sup>13</sup>

In general, we can conclude that the slaves destined for the Americas had several characteristics not necessarily shared by the majority of the black populations from which they derived. Obviously, they were drawn primarily from tribes which were unsuccessful in warfare, from the weak, defeated and subjugated. Where they were obtained by means of intertribal trade, they would consist disproportionately of people whom the chiefs wanted to get rid of. This would include criminals and other offenders, incompetent workers, the inept, the unruly and the slow-witted. Finally, they had to survive the ordeal of transportation over enormous distances from their upland points of capture to the seaboard trading stations where they were sold to European purchasers. Phillips<sup>14</sup> writes:

The coffles came from distances ranging to a thousand miles or more, on rivers and paths whose shore ends the European traders could see but did not find inviting. These paths, always of single-file narrowness, tortuously winding to avoid fallen trees and bad ground, never straightened even when obstructions had rotted and gone, branching and crossing in endless network, penetrating jungles and high-grass prairies, passing villages that were and villages that had been, skirting the lairs of savage beasts and the haunts of cannibal men, beset with drought and famine, storm and flood, were threaded only by negroes bearing arms or bearing burdens. Many of the slaves fell exhausted on the paths and were cut out of the coffles to die. The survivors were sorted by the purchasers on the coast into the fit and the unfit, the latter to live in local slavery or to meet either violent or lingering deaths, the former to be taken shackled on board the strange vessels of the strange white men and to be carried to an unknown fate.

When he explored its hinterland in 1795-1797, Mungo Park estimated that the slave population of the Niger Valley outnumbered the free by three to one. The hereditary slave class was the source of manpower for sale to the Europeans. As a rule, household slaves would not be sold for ocean transport since

<sup>13</sup> Donald L. Wiedner, *A History of Africa South of the Sahara*, Vintage Books, New York, 1964, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> Ulrich B. Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

that would induce their fellows to run away. But when they were captured in war by a rival tribe, these domestic slaves would be sent in coffles to the trading factories.

In addition to the winnowing effect of surviving the long march in coffles from upland to seaboard trading post, the slaves faced the selective process of the Mid-Passage. The former eliminated the physically weak and diseased; the main hazards of the latter were dysentery, scurvy and smallpox.

The horrors of the Mid-Passage have been inflated by abolitionist writers. Moreover, risks and discomforts which seem unbearable to modern readers, used to ocean-liner or jet-plane travel, would have appeared normal to free men and women who travelled steerage at the time. Consider the testimony of Henry Laurens, "an atypical South Carolinian for he loathed slavery and had no qualms about the mass arming of Negroes" in the American Revolutionary War.<sup>15</sup>

Laurens withdrew from the slave-trading business in 1768 on moral grounds. He wrote:<sup>16</sup>

Yet I never saw an instance of cruelty in ten or twelve years' experience in that branch equal to the cruelty exercised upon those poor Irish . . . Self-interest prompted the baptized heathen to take some good care of their wretched slaves for a market, but no other care was taken of those poor Protestant Christians from Ireland but to deliver as many as possible alive on shoar upon the cheapest terms, no matter how they fared upon the voyage nor in what condition they were landed.

William Snelgrave, a veteran captain in the slave trade, customarily told his cargo that they were being taken across the ocean to work the land, not to be eaten; that if they were mistreated, they were to complain to the interpreter; that if they struck a member of the crew, they would be severely punished.

It is also worth noting that the mortality of slaves during the Mid-Passage was substantially lower than that of the crews which transported them. For example, Curtin cites figures for Bristol ships in the 1780s. The death rate per thousand seamen per year was 10 in the Greenland trade, 41 in the East Indian trade, and 219 in the slave trade.<sup>17</sup> The death rate per annum among British

<sup>15</sup> Nathaniel Weyl and William Marina, *American Statesmen on Slavery and the Negro*, Arlington House, New Rochelle, 1971, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Ulrich B. Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 36. These victims were Scotch-Irish. Eighty years later, planters in the new cotton lands of Mississippi, Arkansas and Texas would use Irish Catholic laborers rather than Negroes, to dig post holes in malaria country infested with rattlesnakes. The death of Irishmen was of no importance, that of Negroes represented a substantial loss of capital.

<sup>17</sup> Philip D. Curtin, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

military personnel living in the Gold Coast during 1817-36 was 668 per thousand.<sup>18</sup> These excessive death rates were largely due to the fact that Europeans had little immunity to West African diseases. Nevertheless, they also suggest that the trials and perils of the African slaves during their shipment to the Americas were not extraordinary in comparison with those of free white men in the tropics.

#### COROMANTY NEGROES, AN AFRICAN ARISTOCRACY?

The market preferences of American purchasers obviously influenced the selective process of the slave trade. Buyers and slave-catchers would concentrate on those regions and tribes which were esteemed as slave labor and, other things being equal, would avoid those held in low repute.

Unfortunately, the evidence concerning these preferences has not been carefully studied by historians. Moreover, the designations are often vague and inaccurate and at times vary from one slave-using area to another. Nor do the tribal designations used by eighteenth century writers correspond to those currently in use.

Eysenck makes the somewhat simple-minded assumption that white slave traders wanted "dull beasts of burden" rather than Negroes capable of acquiring skills. This view is not substantiated by the evidence. Nor is it validated by the opinions which contemporary authorities held concerning the various tribes of West Africa.

Thus, the Coromanty Blacks from the Gold Coast, belonging to the Akan ethnic group, were "frequently instigators of slave conspiracies and insurrections. Yet their spirit of loyalty made them the most highly prized of servants by those who could call it forth."<sup>19</sup> Some eighteenth century writers urged planters to avoid these natural leaders of insurrections; others expatiated on their courage and manly qualities. The Jamaican planters had a very high opinion of these Coromanty Blacks and had much less use for those from the Niger delta. South Carolinians considered them far better material than Blacks from Biafra.

<sup>18</sup> Philip D. Curtin, "Epidemiology and the Slave Trade," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 83, 1968, p. 203.

<sup>19</sup> Ulrich B. Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 42, quotes a 1701 report to the Board of Trade by Christopher Codrington, Governor of the Leeward Islands. "The Coromates are not only the best and most faithful of your slaves," he wrote, "but they are really all born heroes. There is a difference between them and all other negroes beyond that 'tis possible for your lordships to conceive. There never was a raskal or coward of that nation . . . My father, who had studied the genius and temper of all kinds of negroes forty-five years with a very nice observation, would say, noe man deserved a Corramante that would not treat him like a friend rather than a slave." *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, 1701, pp. 720-721.

In Surinam, or Dutch Guiana, the leaders of the slave revolts were invariably Coromantys. The word derives from the Coromantyne river in the Gold Coast where the Dutch had two slave factories. The Dutch traded directly with the Ashanti, a conger of tribes which developed in the eighteenth century into an aggressive warrior nation that prospered by seizing slaves in raids and battles. Probably, the Africans who fell victim to the powerful Ashanti armies were a more hardy and courageous breed than the criminals, outcasts and slaves by birth offered for sale to the European factories by the less military black slave-catching tribes. In 1740, a war, which was to last more than thirty years, broke out between the Ashanti and the Wassa, in which the prisoners which each side took were sold to the slave factories.<sup>20</sup> The Coromantys were "so warlike, so prone to cause uprisings—that only Dutch and English colonies consented to buy them and in these colonies when slave rebellions broke out to alarm the white planters, they were led by the proud Coromantyne slaves."<sup>21</sup>

Captain John Gabriel Stedman, the chronicler of the slave wars in Surinam, states that the Coromanty Negroes are more "esteemed" than any other Blacks. He adds: "... if they think their punishment unmerited, immediate suicide is too often the fatal consequence, especially among the *Coromantyn* Negroes, who frequently, during the act of flagellation, throw back their heads and *swallow their tongues*, which chokes them upon the spot, when they drop dead in the presence of their masters."<sup>22</sup>

Brian Edwards, the distinguished historian of slavery in the Antilles, held similar views concerning the Coromantys and was ambivalent about their relationship to the slave system:

Firmness of mind and body, and a ferociousness of disposition, distinguish the Koromantyn or Gold Coast negroes from all others: but with these, they possess activity, courage, and a degree of magnanimity which incited them to difficult and dangerous enterprises, and enabled them to meet death in its most terrible shape with either fortitude or contempt. As the Gold Coast too is inhabited by various different tribes which live in a state of perpetual hostility with each other, it is indisputably certain that many of the captives taken in battle

<sup>20</sup> Rudolf van Lier, *Samenleving in een Grensgebied: Een Sociaal-Historische Studie van die Mattschappij in Suriname (Living Together in a Frontier Area: a Socio-Historic Study of Surinam Society)*, Martinus Nijhoof, The Hague, 1949, pp. 122-123.

<sup>21</sup> Melville J. and Frances S. Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny*, Whittlesey House, New York, 1934, p. 323.

<sup>22</sup> Captain John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative of an Expedition to Surinam*, J. Johnson, London, second edition 1813, Vol. II, p. 280.

and sold in the European settlements were free in their native country, and perhaps had slaves in their own possession. It cannot be an object of wonder that such men should endeavour, even by the most desperate means, to regain the freedom which they have lost; nor can any thing further be necessary to excite them to action, than the circumstances of being sold into captivity in a distant country. This was the origin of the negro-rebellion which happened in Jamaica in 1760.

After describing the intrepidity with which the Coromantyn leaders of this rebellion suffered being slowly burned alive and being left to die suspended on gibbets, Edwards<sup>23</sup> continued :

The fortitude and unconcern, with which these people suffer death, is without doubt in a great measure produced by their national manners, wars and religion, all which are in the highest degree savage and bloody. Every master of slaves on the Gold Coast has power over the lives of his slaves; and this power he exercises on every trifling occasion, without hesitation or remorse. Fathers too have the like power over their children. In their wars they are bloody and cruel, beyond any nation that has ever been known to exist; for they murder, with the most horrible barbarity, all their captives that they do not reserve for slaves; cutting them across the face, and tearing away the under jaw, which they preserve as a trophy, and then leave the unhappy victims to perish in that shocking condition . . .

It is surely to be lamented that a people, who naturally possess such emulation and intrepidity, should be sunk into such a lamentable state of barbarity, and oppressed by the yoke of such rigid slavery. For qualities so admirable as these plainly evince that they are born free, and are only accidentally slaves, since (as the Stagyrice beautifully observes) “ those who are born with strong bodily and weak mental powers are born to serve; but whenever the mind predominates over the body, it confers natural freedom on its possessor.”

The anonymous “ professional planter ” who wrote a rule book for slave management in the sugar islands was more realistic about the Coromantys. “ The inhabitants of the Gold Coast being habituated from infancy to war, the necessary movements of which give flexibility to the muscles and energy to the mind, are by far the most hardy and robust,” he wrote, “ yet bringing with them into slavery lofty ideas of independence, they are dangerous

<sup>23</sup> *An Abridgment of Mr Edwards's Civil and Commercial History of the British West Indies*, J. Parsons and J. Bell, London, 1794, Vol. II, pp. 373-379. The quotation is presumably a paraphrase of Aristotle's *Politics*, Book I, Chapter 5, pp. 1254b-1255a.



inmates on a West India plantation, when implicit subjection must necessarily be exacted."

The planter points out that these Gold Coast Blacks were primarily responsible for the major slave rebellions in Jamaica and were excluded from the Windward Islands despite their "superior aptitude" because of their "mischievous spirit." Wishing "hardy" slaves, the planters of Tobago "purchased largely of the Coromantins or Phantees; in consequence of which they had soon reason to repent of their imprudence by insurrections, which greatly retarded the progress of that colony, and occasioned a considerable effusion of blood."<sup>24</sup>

The distinguished writer and scholar, Robert Graves, who was presumably ignorant of the outstanding ability and courage of the Coromantyn Negroes, nevertheless advanced the interesting hypothesis that they are partially of Caucasian stock. Asserting that the word *Koromantse* derives from the Goddess Ker, who gave her name to the Carians, Graves states that Libyans of Cushite-Berber stock were subjugated in the second century A.D. and driven to the south bank of the Upper Niger where they fused with the native Negro population.<sup>25</sup> Thence, they might have moved westward to lands within the reach of the warlike Ashanti. However, blood-type analysis shows that the people of the Gold Coast are preponderantly Negro. One of the most significant serological indices of negritude is the proportion of R<sup>o</sup> (or cDe) chromosomes in the Rh group. This has been placed at 48 per cent for the Gold Coast Ewe and 56 per cent for the Ashanti as against 49\* per cent for New York Negroes and 3 per cent for American Whites.<sup>26</sup>

The character of Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the late Ghana dictator, may seem inconsistent with the virtues imputed by eighteenth century writers to the Negroes of the Gold Coast. I am reliably informed, however, that one of Nkrumah's best kept secrets was that he was not of Gold Coast tribal origin, but belonged to a Liberian tribe which enjoyed low status because of its hereditary occupational association with the removal of night soil.

<sup>24</sup> *Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves in the Sugar Colonies*, by a Professional Planter. London, 1803, part I, chapter I. Reproduced in John R. Commons, *et al.* (editors) *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, Arthur H. Clark Company, Cleveland, 1910, Vol. II: *Plantation and Frontier*, pp. 127-128.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, Braziller, New York, 1957, Vol. I. p. 33.

\* Since the American Negro frequently has Caucasoid genes this figure being lower than that for the Ashanti is to be expected.—EDITOR.

<sup>26</sup> A. E. Mourant, *The Distribution of Human Blood Groups*, Blackwell Scientific Publications. Oxford, 1954, Tables 23 and 27.

## OTHER AFRICAN TRIBES AS SLAVES

There is some disagreement among eighteenth century writers on slavery as to the characteristics of the different West African tribes and their comparative suitability for plantation labor. Edwards, who wrote with more authority and exerted a wider influence than the other sources I have quoted, deals with the putative ethnopsychology of the black tribes at length.

The Mandingoes (Mande peoples), Edwards tells us, practice circumcision, fast on Fridays, and "have not in common the flat noses and thick lips of the more southern natives; and they are in a great measure free from that strong and fetid odour which exhales from the skin of the latter." A few of them are literate and they consider themselves "far superior to the rest of the slaves." They are distinguished by "the great gentleness of their manners," by the fact that "they are more inclined to theft than any of the African tribes," and by their poor adaptability "for hard labour."<sup>27</sup>

If the Mandingoes were often preferred as slaves in the Thirteen Colonies and in the United States, the Papaws, or people of Whidah, were regarded by Edwards as "beyond all doubt the most tractable slaves that are imported from any part of Africa." While he considered them greater thieves than the Gold Coast Blacks, they "pay the greatest attention to agriculture in their native country" and "dread pain" more than other tribes.

Finally, there are the Eboes from the Bight of Benin, "the lowest and most miserable of all the nations of Africa." Although they were cannibals at home, these Eboes are distinguished by a "meekness and humility of deportment which forms a striking contrast to the bold and fearless temper of the Koromantyn negroes." Yellowish in complexion, they seemed diseased to Edwards even when in perfect health. "The principal objection to the Eboes as slaves is their natural timidity and dejection." He added that their features bear "a great resemblance to that of the baboon."<sup>28</sup>

The anonymous professional planter agreed with Edwards on the superiority of the Papaws as slaves, but he found the Mandingoes "reared in the habits of indolence," with "nerveless frames which easily sink under fatigue . . ." While unfit for field labor, they could be used as watchmen or in the distilleries and sugar boiling houses. The Eboes, he thought "turbulent, stubborn and much addicted to suicide," but "hardy and susceptible of labour . . ." From the kingdom of Gabon, "a good negro was scarcely ever bought." Weak in physique, they were bought cheaply

<sup>27</sup> Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 372-373.

<sup>28</sup> Edwards, *op. cit.*, pp. 381-383.

and sold to planters ignorant of their defects. The professional planter suggested that "the gentlemen who have attached themselves to the abolition of the slave trade would do well to commence their reform by obtaining a law for the suppression of this part of the traffic (the importation of Gabon Negroes), which would injure nobody."<sup>29</sup>

These and other writings indicate a somewhat ambivalent attitude toward their Negro slaves by the Antilles planters. They admired the warlike tribes, in particular the Coromantyn Blacks, and despised the weak and timid ones. The drift of their somewhat confused advice was in favor of preferring Papaws, who struck a mean somewhere between the intrepid and rebellious Coromantyn Negroes and the meek and humble Blacks from closer to the Equator.

#### THE PLANTERS' NEED FOR SKILLED LABOR

It is a fairly safe assumption that those writers who theorize about the planters' desire for a labor force consisting of "dull beasts of burden" have never had the responsibility of managing crews of workmen.

Even the most cursory examination of chattel slavery should have convinced Dr Eysenck that one of its worst aspects from an economic standpoint was the inability or unwillingness of the Blacks to acquire labor skills or apply intelligence to their occupations. Planters had to pay what they considered to be exorbitant wages to free white workers whenever they were faced with repairs or construction requiring a minimum of skill.

Throughout the ante-bellum period, the South failed to develop a viable livestock agriculture, partly due to "the brutal and careless treatment that slaves accorded livestock."<sup>30</sup> Crude and heavy farm implements were used, but even those were habitually broken and left in disrepair. Maintenance of equipment, repairs, household industry and skilled work in general had to be assigned to paid white workers. "The harsh treatment that slaves gave equipment shocked travellers and other contemporaries, and neglect of tools figured prominently among the reasons given for punishing Negroes," Genovese observed.<sup>31</sup> Even in Virginia, which was in advance of the Deep South in agricultural techniques, the slave plantations had to discard the "Yankee hoe," which slaves habitually broke, in favor of the clumsy "nigger hoe," which weighed three times as much.

A basic principle of the slave economy, Karl Marx observed,

<sup>29</sup> Professional Planter, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-130.

<sup>30</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery*, New York, 1965, p. 110.

<sup>31</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

is "only to employ the rudest and heaviest instruments and such as are difficult to damage owing to sheer clumsiness." In the slave states bordering on the Gulf of Mexico down to the date of the Civil War, plows constructed on old Chinese models, which turned up the soil like a hog or a mole, instead of making furrows, were alone to be found. Marx<sup>32</sup> quoted Frederick L. Olmstead's classic, *A Journey in the Back Country* (1860):

So too when I ask why mules are so universally substituted for horses on the farm, the first reason given, and confessedly the most conclusive one, is that horses cannot bear the treatment that they always must get from the negroes; horses are always soon foundered or crippled by them, while mules will bear cudgelling, or lose a meal or two now and then, and not be materially injured, and they do not take cold or get sick, if neglected or overworked. But I do not need to go further than the window of the room in which I am writing, to see at almost any time, treatment of cattle that would ensure the immediate discharge of the driver by almost any farmer owning them in the North.

Genovese imputes these clumsy, cruel and destructive working habits to the outrage of the Negroes at their enslaved condition. Yet similar lack of skill or forethought of any sort can be seen in the Bahamas, among a black population which has been free for a century. Whether the incompetence of the slaves was due to resentment or to deficiency in intelligence, it was an economic burden that inflated the cost of farming unreasonably. If intelligent tribes had been found in Africa, willing to acquire skills and responsibility, they would have been imported at premium prices. As it was, skilled Negroes always commanded large premia over mere brute muscle on the slave marts. This alone serves to refute Eysenck's economic and psychological assertions.

#### GENETICS OF MANUMISSION

I have pointed out elsewhere that differential mortality rates "favored cotton and tobacco workers as against rice and sugar workers, house servants as against plantation hands, craftsmen as against unskilled laborers. This tended to give Negroes with white blood higher rates of natural increase."<sup>33</sup> A somewhat extreme statement of the difference in living conditions and life expectancy between field hands and other slaves comes from Stedman's work on Surinam. Of the 80,000 slaves in the colony, Stedman estimated that 30,000 artisans, house workers and specialized estate workers "live better than the common people of England," that another

<sup>32</sup> Karl Marx, *Das Capital*, Vol. I, pp. 219-220. fnt.

<sup>33</sup> Nathaniel Weyl, *op. cit.*, p. 518.

30,000 "are kept in idleness and do no work in the fields," and that the remaining 20,000 are "among the most miserable wretches on earth; and are worked, starved, insulted, and flogged to death." These 20,000 field hands had an average life expectancy under slavery, Stedman calculated, of ten years.<sup>34</sup>

The household workers, artisans and specialized estate workers were presumably chosen on the basis of intelligence, skill, physical attractiveness, and willingness to learn and adapt. In other words, they were winnowed out of the slave mass on the basis of brain and degree of white admixture.<sup>35</sup> The field hands were chosen for stamina and strength and because they lacked any redeeming features, in the eyes of their masters, that would have promoted them to more congenial occupations. This process of selection tended to give slaves with white genes lower mortality rates and hence a differential survival advantage.

Ironically, manumission of slaves, which was highly selective for white genes and which was regarded by masters and servants alike, as a signal mark of favor, generally operated in the opposite direction. As I wrote in a recent article:<sup>36</sup>

Demographic conditions conspired to decrease the rate of population growth among free Negroes far below that among slaves. This condition prevailed in the United States both because the medical care which masters gave their slaves from reasons of self-interest was markedly better than that which the free Negroes obtained for themselves and because the emancipated black population was unwanted by white society, despised, impoverished and socially degraded. In areas such as the West Indies where the mulatto and free Negro populations enjoyed a more stable social status (one superior to that of the slaves), this difference may not have prevailed. If so, the comparative survival rates of free Negroes and black-white crosses would be materially different in the Antilles than was the case in the United States.

<sup>34</sup> Captain John Gabriel Stedman, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 393, 373.

<sup>35</sup> The admixture of Caucasian genes could have come from contact with Hamites or Arabs in Africa or from miscegenation under slavery. First, the preponderant evidence from I.Q. tests is that intelligence is positively correlated with white genes. Second, most people define physical attractiveness in terms of their own race; if slave-owners were no exception, they would have given preference to racially mixed Negroes. Third, degree of body odor is important in choosing household workers in the tropics; the apocrine glands of Negroes secrete the enzyme, acetylcholinesterase, causing their musky odor, whereas the apocrine glands of Caucasians do not secrete this enzyme, and the Mongoloids have hardly any apocrine glands at all. — Carleton S. Coon, *The Living Races of Man*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1965, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Nathaniel Weyl, *op. cit.*, pp. 618-619.

The statistical evidence in support of the assertion that manumission was dysgenic in the United States is so clear that it is astonishing that scholars have not heretofore stressed it.

Between 1850 and 1860, Census figures show that the slave population increased 28.8 per cent, the free Negro population only 12.3 per cent. These gains were due almost exclusively in both instances to natural increase. Slave imports via the illegal African trade must have been offset by manumissions, escapes and Liberian colonization. The free Negro population probably gained more from manumission than it lost by emigration and passing for white.

Contemporary records in Northern cities with good birth and death statistics reveal a uniform pattern of excessive mortality among free Negroes. In Boston in 1855-1859, Negro deaths exceeded Negro births by almost two to one, in Philadelphia in 1860 by more than two to one. In Rhode Island and Connecticut, Negro and mulatto deaths regularly exceeded births.<sup>37</sup>

In his outstanding study, *The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations*, William Dosite Postell reviewed the testimony of contemporary physicians that the Negro slave received "good care, wholesome diet, prompt medical attention, and restraint from dissipations that were injurious to his health" and was "healthier in the main than the whites." Tuberculosis, scrofula, cancer and syphilis were described as rare among plantation slaves. By contrast, in the post-bellum period, the Negro tuberculosis mortality rate rose to double that among Whites. Postell's examination of numerous plantation records convinced him that slave mortality was about equal to that of the white people in the same region. The slave infant mortality rate for the plantations studied averaged 152.6 per thousand. By comparison, as late as 1915, the infant mortality rate among Negroes was 163 in Massachusetts, 185 in Pennsylvania and 192 in New York.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, ignorance and poverty combined to drive free Negroes toward biological extinction. This was an unmitigated misfortune for the Negro population of the United States since those slaves manumitted prior to 1863 formed the foundation for a potential aristocracy of intellect. It was a tragedy for a man like Thomas Jefferson who fathered five children by his quadroon slave mistress, Sally Hemings, and manumitted them in his will.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Introduction to the 1860 Census of the United States*, Government Printing Offices, Washington, 1860, pp. 7-8.

<sup>38</sup> William Dosite Postell, *The Health of Slaves on Southern Plantations*, University of Louisiana Press, Baton Rouge, 1951, pp. 143, 158.

<sup>39</sup> For the evidence see Nathaniel Weyl and William Marina, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-99.

## SUMMARY

The African slave trade operated as a selective force in favoring Negroes from defeated or unmarital tribes, Negroes who belonged to hereditary slave classes, Negroes whom their chiefs wished to get rid of because of real or imagined inadequacies or offenses, and Negroes with the physical stamina to survive the long march to the coastal factories and with the resistance to disease needed to live through the Mid-Passage. The selection of African tribes by the slave-owners was based on ethnopsychological evaluations based entirely on subjective impressions and was somewhat confused as to direction and impact. Surveying the process of slave-catching and transportation to the Americas as a whole, however, Eysenck's generalization that the process was selective for lower-than-average intelligence is probably well founded.

Upon their arrival, the Negroes were exposed to winnowing forces of a different nature. Physical strength may have become disadvantageous since the most hardy slaves were assigned to field gangs where mortality was high.<sup>40</sup> Selection for the coveted jobs of household workers and skilled artisans was based on natural intelligence, ability to learn quickly, manual dexterity, physical attractiveness and possession of white genes. If this selective process was positive for intelligence, manumission operated in the contrary direction by casting the most intelligent elements in the Negro population adrift, where poverty, superstition, ignorance of medicine and exposure to the diseases of urban slums took a dreadful toll.

To attempt a quantitative evaluation of all these causal factors and forces to see whether the process was selective for intelligence or the reverse would be a fascinating field of research. Unfortunately, not even a beginning has been made in this task.

<sup>40</sup> Once assigned to the field gang, however, superior physical strength and stamina would be survival advantages.

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# The Case of William Shockley

By JULIUS EPSTEIN

Dr William Shockley, professor at Stanford University and a Nobel prize-winner for his contributions to the invention of the transistor, was denied the right to teach a graduate special course on his research in "dysgenics." The denial was communicated by Lincoln Moses, Dean of the Graduate School, Stanford University.

Shockley defines dysgenics as "the study of mechanisms adverse to human genetic quality, particularly retrogressive evolution through disproportionate reproduction of the genetically disadvantaged."

After three months of deliberation, a faculty advisory committee recommended approval provided the class were *not* taught for credit. The committee also stipulated that the course be restricted to one *single* quarter term and be presented only *once*. Dr Moses demurred and made the decision not to authorize the course at all.

In his letter of notification to Professor Shockley, Dr Moses wrote: "Your expertise for teaching this course is subject to doubt."

Shockley's right to lecture about his thoughts and findings is guaranteed under the rules of academic freedom. This freedom is explicitly granted to all members of the Stanford faculty and, of course, to every teacher at any U.S. university. This right is not, and cannot be abrogated by controversy about a teacher's opinions. In fact, academic freedom is designed to protect academics against the hazards of controversy. The denial of Shockley's right to teach was, therefore, most surprising. This infringement raised the question of whether the Dean of the Graduate School, Stanford University, is opposed to academic freedom or whether he does not understand the meaning of this basic right.

Professor Shockley responded to Dean Moses by stating that "the threat to academic freedom was trivial compared to the administration's illusion that all races of mankind are genetically equal." This opinion, he added, reflects the "illusion of flat human quality," which is "so central to the thinking of the Graduate School administration at Stanford as to exclude a sincere search for truth."

Shockley proposed to teach a course on new methods of research dealing with the "determination of the Caucasian fraction