

Virginia Laws and Statutes

Over time, the laws in many British colonies adopted laws that created specific legal distinctions between forced laborers such that “race” came to define a person’s legal status and degree of freedom.

ACT LIV.

What persons are Tythable.

Edit. 1733 and
1752.

Purvis 41.
Persons tithable—all male persons, negroes male or female, Indian servants male or female 16 years old.

Who exempted.

WHEREAS severall disputes have been made of what persons were tytheables : *It is hereby enacted and declared* that all male persons, of what age soever imported into this country shalbe brought into the lyst and be lyable to the payment of all taxes, and all negroes male and female being imported shalbe accompted tythable, and all Indian servants male or female however procured being adjudged sixteen years of age shalbe likewise tythable from which none shalbe exempted, but such christians only as are either natives of this country, or are imported free by their parents or others who shall not be lyable to the payment of le-vyes until they be sixteen years of age, or such others as by particular acts of assembly are exempted.

ACT XII.

Edit. 1733 and 1752. *Negro womens children to serve according to the condition of the mother. (a)*

Purvis 111.
Children to be
bond or free,
according to
the conditⁿ of
their mother.

Double fines
for fornication
with a negro.

WHEREAS some doubts have arrisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or free, *Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly, that all children borne in this country shalbe held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother, And that if any christian shall committ ffornication with a negro man or woman, hee or shee soe offending shall pay double the fines imposed by the former act.*

Hening, William Waller, ed. *Statutes at Large; being a Collection of all the Laws of Virginia from the First Session of the Legislature, in the year 1619*, vol. II. New York: R & W & G Bartow, 1823.