

## Slave Codes

Slaves did not accept their fate without protest. Many instances of rebellion **1) I wonder what "rebellion" means. I guess it's connected to "rebel."** were known to Americans, even in colonial times. These rebellions were not confined to the South. **2) What does "confined" mean? Whatever it means, rebellions were not whatevered to the South.** In fact, one of the earliest examples of a slave uprising was in 1712 in Manhattan. **3) As in, Manhattan, New York!? Really? I didn't know there were slaves in the north.** As African Americans in the colonies grew greater and greater in number, there was a justifiable paranoia **4) What in the world does justified paranoia mean? Well, I know paranoia sounds like paranoid, which means really worried. Justified? I'm not sure. I'll read on and see if I can figure it out.** on the part of the white settlers that a violent rebellion could occur in one's own neighborhood. It was this fear of rebellion that led each colony to pass a series of laws restricting slaves' behaviors. The laws were known as "slave codes." **5) I'll bet a lot of these laws were really dumb.**



Although each colony had differing ideas about the rights of slaves, there were some common threads in slave codes across areas where slavery was common. Legally considered property, slaves were not allowed to own property of their own. **6) Does this mean they didn't own anything?** They were not allowed to assemble **7) Monitor comprehension/ fix-up/infer** without the presence of a white person. Slaves that lived off the plantation were subject to special curfews. **8) Monitor comprehension/ fix-up/infer**

In the courts, a slave accused of any crime against a white person was doomed. **9) Make a prediction (Why?).** No testimony could be made by a slave against a white person. Therefore, the slave's side of the story could never be told in a court of law. Of course, slaves were conspicuously **10) Monitor comprehension/ fix-up/infer** absent from juries as well.

Slave codes had ruinous effects on African American society. **11) Make a prediction (What kind of ruinous effects?)** It was illegal to teach a slave to read or write. Religious motives sometimes prevailed, however, as many devout white Christians educated slaves to enable the reading of the Bible. **12) Wow, this is unexpected.** These same Christians did not recognize marriage between slaves in their laws. **13) Connect to prior knowledge in order to make a prediction as to why this was the case.** This made it easier to justify the breakup of families by selling one if its members to another owner.

As time passed and the numbers of African Americans in the New World increased, so did the fears of their white captors. With each new rebellion, the slave codes became ever more strict, further abridging **14) Monitor comprehension/ fix-up/infer** the already limited rights and privileges this oppressed people might hope to enjoy.

About the Image: Nat Turner was inspired by visions of the Spirit to lead a slave uprising in Virginia on August 22, 1831. The Granger Collection, New York

Source: <http://www.ushistory.org/us/6f.asp>