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| **Slave Resistance and Revolts** |  |  |
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Enslaved African Americans resisted slavery in a variety of active and passive ways. "Day-to-day resistance" was the most common form of opposition to slavery. Breaking tools, feigning illness, staging slowdowns, and committing acts of arson and sabotage--all were forms of resistance and expression of slaves' alienation from their masters.

Running away was another form of resistance. Most slaves ran away relatively short distances and were not trying to permanently escape from slavery. Instead, they were temporarily withholding their labor as a form of economic bargaining and negotiation. Slavery involved a constant process of negotiation as slaves bargained over the pace of work, the amount of free time they would enjoy, monetary rewards, access to garden plots, and the freedom to practice burials, marriages, and religious ceremonies free from white oversight.

Some fugitives did try to permanently escape slavery. While the idea of escaping slavery quickly brings to mind the Underground Railroad to the free states, in fact more than half of these runaways headed southward or to cities or to natural refuges like swamps. Often, runaways were relatively privileged slaves who had served as river boatmen or coachmen and were familiar with the outside world.

Especially in the colonial period, fugitive slaves tried to form runaway communities known as "maroon colonies." Located in swamps, mountains, or frontier regions, some of these communities resisted capture for several decades.

During the early 18th century there were slave uprisings in Long Island in 1708 and in New York City in 1712. Slaves in South Carolina staged several insurrections, culminating in the Stono Rebellion in 1739, when they seized arms, killed whites, and burned houses. In 1740 and 1741, conspiracies were uncovered in Charleston and New York. During the late 18th century, slave revolts erupted in Guadeloupe, Grenada, Jamaica, Surinam, San Domingue (Haiti), Venezuela, and the Windward Island and many fugitive slaves, known as maroons, fled to remote regions and carried on guerrilla warfare (during the 1820s, a fugitive slave named Bob Ferebee led a band in fugitive slaves in guerrilla warfare in Virginia). During the early 19th century, major conspiracies or revolts against slavery took place in Richmond, Virginia, in 1800; in Louisiana in 1811; in Barbados in 1816; in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822; in Demerara in 1823; and in Jamaica and in Southampton County, Virginia in 1831.

Slave revolts were most likely when slaves outnumbered whites, when masters were absent, during periods of economic distress, and when there was a split within the ruling elite. They were also most common when large numbers of native-born Africans had been brought into an area at one time.

The main result of slave insurrections was the mass executions of blacks. After a slave conspiracy was uncovered in New York City in 1740, 18 slaves were hanged and 13 were burned alive. After Denmark Vesey's conspiracy was uncovered, the authorities in Charleston hanged 37 blacks. Following Nat Turner's insurrection, the local militia killed about 100 blacks and 20 more slaves, including Turner, were later executed. In the South, the preconditions for successful rebellion did not exist, and tended to bring increased suffering and repression to the slave community.

Violent rebellion was rarer and smaller in scale in the American South than in Brazil or the Caribbean, reflecting the relatively small proportion of blacks in the southern population, the low proportion of recent migrants from Africa, and the relatively small size of southern plantations. Compared to the Caribbean, prospects for successful sustained rebellions in the American South were bleak. In Jamaica, slaves outnumbered whites by ten or eleven to one; in the South, a much larger white population was committed to suppressing rebellion. In general, Africans were more likely than slaves born in the New World to participate in outright revolts. Not only did many Africans have combat experience prior to enslavement, but they also had fewer family and community ties that might inhibit violent insurrection.

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