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## The Classification of Native Americans as Mulattoes in Anglo-North America

### AMERICAN–AFRICAN INTERACTION IN NORTH AMERICA: AN AREA OF SCHOLARLY NEGLECT

Contemporary scholarly and popular literature in the United States has largely ignored the significance of widespread Native American ancestry among Afroamericans and, also, of African ancestry among many Native groups. The consequences of this neglect are far reaching, and this is especially true in relation to studies of the evolution of music, folk tales, social organization, and other aspects of culture.

In a similar manner, the existence of a large group of 'Red-Black People', part-American and part-African, has been largely overlooked and, in fact, such people have been usually classified as 'Black' by both scholars and North American statutes. Still further, the former existence of comparatively large numbers of Native American slaves has also been ignored generally, with great consequence for both early Native and Afroamerican history.

There are, of course, exceptions to this pattern of overlooking the Red-Black connection. First, there are a large number of biographies and autobiographies, as for example, of musicians or singers such as Adelaide Hall, Willie the Lion Smith, Paul Robeson, Josephine Baker, Bunk Johnson, Lena Horne, Pops Foster, George Lewis, Pearl Bailey, Leadbelly, Tina Turner, and others, all of which have specific reference to Native American ancestry. Secondly, there is Almon W. Lauber's study of *Indian Slavery in Colonial Times* (1913), a work which has been grossly neglected in recent decades. And thirdly, there are several early attempts to document or to note the significance of the Black-American interaction. I wish to cite some of these works so as to illustrate a trend which has not been continued, by and large, since the 1930s.

As early as the late nineteenth century the *Nineteenth Annual Report* of the Bureau of American Ethnology noted that 'a considerable proportion of the

blood of the southern Negroes [of the US] is unquestionably Indian.'<sup>1</sup> The 1937 doctoral dissertation of James Hugo Johnston, belatedly published many years later, went further:

there developed, in the colonial period, much intermixture of the Indian and Negro slave. . . . The class commonly called the mulatto is the result, in many instances, of the union of the three racial elements. . . . To the visitor in the south the physical characteristics of many Negro slaves bore witness to their Indian origin. . . . *The mixed race in America today is the result of the union of the Indian, the Negro, and the white man.*<sup>2</sup> (italics added)

Johnston also noted that many Indians were enslaved along the eastern seaboard. 'The end of Indian slavery came with the final absorption of the blood of the Indian by the more numerous Negro slave. But the blood of the Indian did not become extinct in the slave states, for it continued to flow in the veins of the Negro.'<sup>3</sup> In an article published in the *Journal of Negro History* Johnston remarked: 'Where the Negro was brought into contact with the American Indian the blood of the two races intermingled, the Indian has not disappeared from the land, but is now part of the Negro population of the United States.'<sup>4</sup>

The latter statement might offend many Indians today, who still survive, of course, in great numbers as Native Americans, but nonetheless the significance of Johnston's thesis as regards the extent of Native American-African intermixture remains before us. Nor was Johnston alone. Frank H. Russell, in his *The Free Negro in Virginia*, wrote in 1913 that one of the ways in which the 'free colored' population grew was by the mixture of Indians and Negroes. He said also that 'there is no doubt that a considerable element in the free colored population of the nineteenth century was of Indian extraction.'<sup>5</sup>

One can also cite other authorities whose work caused them to consider the intermixture of African and American racial stocks. Helen T. Catterall in her work on slavery in Virginia noted that 'we have shown that the first slaves . . . were Indians, not negroes', and that the enslavement of Americans continued for many, many years.<sup>6</sup> In 1903, a historian of New Jersey noted that 'unions between Indians and Negroes were so commonly frequent, indeed, as to have left permanent impress upon many families of Negroes of the present day.' E. B. Reuter recognized (1927) that African-American mixture had taken place within slavery and said: 'The Indian slaves were gradually absorbed into the black population.'<sup>7</sup>

Also, during the 1920s and 1930s the *Journal of Negro History* frequently featured articles on Black-Native relations in Massachusetts, on Paul Cuffe (an American-African mixed-blood), and on other examples of Red-Black interaction.

Within anthropology a few scholars, such as Ashley Montagu (1944) have recognized the significance of African-American contacts:

With the discovery of the New World, intermixture between the Negroes and the indigenes of the West Indies began almost at once. . . . It must be supposed that these Negroes [from different parts of Africa] were already very thoroughly mixed, among

themselves and with the Indians of the islands and of the mainland of Brazil, by the time most of them reached North America. . . . The mingling of Negroes and Indians, of course, occurred first in the West Indies.

It is significant that Montagu recognized that many of the slaves, coming not directly from Africa but from the Caribbean, might have had American ancestry. 'Thus, it may be seen that not only was there much mixture between different varieties of Negroes in the islands, but also complete mixture with the indigenous Indians, and sometimes, with Indians who were not indigenous to these islands.' Montagu also recognized that once the people of African descent had reached North America, inter-mixture with Americans continued: 'The available evidence indicates that ethnic mixture between Indians and Negroes has been of vastly greater proportions than has hitherto been realized. . . . The American Negro population of today is a composite of African, White, and Indian elements.'<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, however, the prevailing trend of more recent years has been similar to what happened to Alex Haley's *Roots* when it fell prey to the television script-writers. Haley's book notes that the family absorbed Indian ancestry in the Carolinas but this element was eliminated for television viewing.

There are exceptions to the above trend, however, including J. Leitch Wright, Jr.'s *The Only Land They Know: The Tragic Story of the Americans of the Old South* (1981) and *Creeks and Seminoles* (1986); and Daniel F. Littlefield's studies of *Africans and Seminoles* (1977), *The Cherokee Freedmen* (1978), *Africans and Creeks* (1979), and *The Chickasaw Freedmen* (1980).<sup>9</sup>

Considerable controversy has developed at times among white writers as to how much American ancestry Afroamericans actually possess.<sup>10</sup> This controversy is apparently not found among Afroamericans, many of whom have told this writer of their Indian ancestry. Others related the same thing to Melville Herskovitz, August Meier and other researchers some years ago.<sup>11</sup>

One of the basic problems is to actually go back to the empirical evidence, the historical record, to document the extent of African-American interaction and mixture. To do this, however, one must begin by clarifying the meaning of racial terms as used by early sources.

The primary purpose here is to clarify the use of terms such as 'mulatto' and 'free colored' in the British North American colonies and, incidentally, to shed preliminary light on the relations between Black Africans and Native Americans.

As elsewhere I will use the term 'American' for Indians in the colonial era and 'African' rather than 'negro' for presumably unmixed sub-Saharan Africans.

#### EXPLICIT DEFINITIONS OF THE TERM 'MULATTO'

English writers began using the term 'mulato', 'mulatow' or 'molato' in the

1590s. The term was borrowed from Spanish and usually referred to persons met with in the Caribbean or South America. Early Spanish definitions of the term make it highly probable, indeed virtually certain, that such persons were usually half-African and half-American. John Minsheu, as already noted, defined 'mulato' in 1599, 1617 and later as a person who was the child of a *mauro* or 'blacke-Moore' and one from 'another nation'.<sup>12</sup> This extremely accurate (and timely) definition reflected Spanish usage very well. Now let us review other early English dictionaries.

John Florio (1611) does not include 'mulatto' in his dictionary but has 'muletto, a little or young mule' and 'mulo, a horse-mule. Also a bastard or misbegotten'.<sup>13</sup> Henry Cockeram (1623) does not have 'mulatto' but has 'A Black-moore. Ethyope'.<sup>14</sup>

Thomas Blount (1656) continues the Minsheu definition: 'Mulato (Span.) the son of a Blackmore and a man of another Nation, or 'e contra one that is of a mongrel complexion.' A 'muleto' is 'a great mule'.<sup>15</sup>

Edward Phillips (1658) states 'Mulato, (Span.) one whose father is a Blackmore, and his mother of another nation or contrarily'.<sup>16</sup> But in 1702 John Kersey broadens the scope of the concept. 'A Mulatto, the son of a Negro, or Indian woman and of a man of another Nation; or of a Negro man and a woman of another country'.<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that this nicely coincides with Virginia's legal definition of 1705 that a European-American mixed-blood is a mulatto and would seem to reflect some tendency in usage. We may also note that the term 'negro' replaces 'Blackamoor' in the dictionary although the 1708 Kersey usage is somewhat different: 'Mulatto (Sp.) one whose father is a Black-moor, and his mother of another Nation, or whose mother is a Negro, and his father of another country'.<sup>18</sup>

Chamber's *Cyclopaedia* (1727-41) states: 'Mulatto, a name given, in the Indies, to those who are begotten by a negro man on an Indian woman; or an Indian man on a negro woman.' This significant definition, so like Kersey's of 1702, undoubtedly reflects Spanish usage as well as practice in South Carolina and other English colonies.<sup>19</sup>

The various dictionaries of N. Bailey (1728-61) define 'Mulatto' as 'one born of parents, of whom one is a Moor, and the other of another Nation'.<sup>20</sup> He also states that a 'Moor' is 'a Native of Mauritania in Africa, a Blackmoor'. This would seem to imply that a mulatto could be the child of a North African and a non-North African, as well as of a Black African and a non-Black African, thus broadening the concept.

A different approach appears in an English-Portuguese dictionary of 1701. The English side does not have the term mulatto while the Portuguese term is defined as 'that mixture between a white and a black'. English 'black' is translated as *escura* (obscure, dark) and *sombria* (shady, sombre) as well as *negro* and *preto*.

Samuel Johnson, in 1756, is the first English-only dictionary-maker to apparently link mulatto to a black-white mixture. He states 'Mulatto (Spanish) one begot between a white and black'. In 1785 he states 'Mulatto (Spanish;

*mulat*, French; from *mulus*, Latin). One begot between a white and a black, as a mule between different species of animals.<sup>21</sup>

Johnson's attitude may well reflect a change in usage and also a growing racism, but we must note that the term 'black' is not defined. James Buchanan (1757) continued the trend: 'Mulatto (S.) one born of parents of whom one is black and the other white'. Buchanan is the first compiler to include a term for other kinds of mixed-bloods: 'Mestizo (S.) the breed of Spaniards with Americans'.<sup>22</sup> The significance of this will be noted later, but it should be stressed here that terms such as half-breed, half-blood, and half-caste never appear (with a racial meaning) in any of the above dictionaries.

Noah Webster in his 1828 dictionary fails to include 'mestizo' but he does have 'Mustee, mestee: A person of mixed breed—West Indies' and 'Mulatto: A person that is the offspring of a negress by a white man, or of a white woman by a negro'.<sup>23</sup>

Thus we can see a rather clear pattern. First, the term 'mulatto' is the *only* term available for referring to persons of mixed race, until 1757. Second, until c.1756 'mulatto' usually refers to a person half-African and half-something else but with a half-American, half-another-nation usage in 1702 and American-African in 1727.

After the 1750s the half-'black', half-'white', usage becomes dominant and replaces the half-African, half-another-nation pattern. It should be noted also that from at least 1741 the term 'mulatto' is used to designate a certain type of land or soil, sometimes described as 'a black mould and red earth' (1789) or 'the red or mulatto lands' (1883). This would tend to point in the direction of the term being used as a general marker for some shade of color.

The 1933 edition of *The Oxford English Dictionary* follows that tendency in stating: 'Mulatto [fr. Sp. & Pg. *mulato* young mule, hence one of the mixed race . . .] 1. One who is the offspring of a European and a Negro; also used loosely for any half-breed resembling a mulatto.' This reflects a great deal of early usage, cited by the *OED*, as when a British traveler speaks in 1789 of the 'mulattoes, or as they are called in the East Indies, half-casts [sic]'. Nonetheless, a 1940 dictionary tends to narrow the meaning somewhat: 'Mulatto. A person who is the offspring of a Negro and a white person; a Negro with some white blood. . . . Designating persons of mixed Negro and white blood. . . . Designating soils of a brownish color.'<sup>24</sup> Thus, gradually, the term comes to refer to persons of mixed white European and Black African ancestry, regardless of the exact degree of mixture. This usage is, however, not always the one actually used by legislative bodies and the courts, as will be analyzed below.

It should be noted that *it is very likely that from the beginning the English used the term 'mulatto' to refer to a wide range of brown mixed-bloods, especially since the precise ancestry of most such persons could not be known.* Such usage is reflected in Blount's 1656 definition (above, 'one that is of a mongrel complexion') and also in remarks such as that of Robert Hooke (c.1664): 'We find by relations, how much the Negro women do besmeer the offspring of the Spaniard, bringing forth neither white-skinned, nor black, but tawny hided mulattos.'<sup>25</sup>

In fact, virtually all of the early English references to mulattoes (1590s–1600s) are to individuals whose precise ancestry is unknown and whose origin usually has a Spanish connection or at least a West Indian one.

### Legal Definitions

Explicit legal (statutory) definitions of the term 'mulatto' are surprisingly few in the colonial period. General usage will be examined below, but first it is necessary to review those explicit references which do exist. We shall begin with Virginia, because that colony is thought to have exercised considerable influence on other areas.<sup>26</sup>

In 1705 Virginia prohibited any 'negro, mulatto, or Indian' from holding any public office. The act further stated:

and for clearing all manner of doubts which hereafter may happen to arise upon the construction of this act, or any other act, who shall be accounted a mulatto: Be it [etc], that the child of an Indian, and the child, grandchild, or great grandchild or a negro shall be deemed, accounted, held, and taken to be a mulatto.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, an American-European mixed-blood was defined as a mulatto, along with all part-Africans to the one-eighth degree. This statute apparently remained unmodified until 1785 when it was enacted that all persons with 'one-fourth or more Negro blood shall . . . be deemed a mulatto'. This remained the legal definition until 1866 when it was modified: 'Every person having one-fourth or more Negro blood shall be deemed a colored person, and every person not a colored person having one-fourth or more Indian blood shall be deemed an Indian.' This use of 'colored person' must be considered in relation to an 1860 statute using 'mulatto' for persons of one-fourth African descent and making 'negro' and 'mulatto' equivalent in all statutes.<sup>28</sup>

It would appear, then, that from 1705 until 1866 the only legal definition applying to mixed Native Americans (excepting those having one-fourth or more African ancestry) was that of 1705. Thus we might at first glance construe that a mixed American-European was legally a mulatto if of one-half or more American blood until that statute of 1866 making such persons 'Indians'. All American-African mixed-bloods remained mulattoes throughout the period, unless having less than one-eighth African ancestry (1705–85) or less than one-quarter African ancestry (1785–1910). After 1910 Virginia reclassified large numbers of persons by extending the 'colored' category to include people with minute amounts of African ancestry.<sup>29</sup>

It should be noted that in actual practice some Virginia officials seem to have assumed, after 1785, that all 'mulattoes' possessed one-quarter or more African ancestry. For example, a white petition asserted in 1843 that the Native Americans of King William County (Pamunkey and Mattaponi reservations): 'all of whome, by the laws of Virginia, would be deemed and taken to be free mulattoes . . . as it is believed they all have one-fourth or more of negro blood.'<sup>30</sup> In 1857 some local whites took away the Pamunkey people's guns.

The Indians complained to the governor and he wrote back that the law in question did not apply to Indians but that 'if any become one fourth mixed with the negro race then they may be treated as free negroes or mulattoes.'<sup>31</sup>

Thus we might conclude that sometime around the War of Independence the term 'mulatto' acquired, in Virginia, the same meaning assigned to it earlier by some English dictionary-makers, that is, that of a part-African person. Still further, it is clear that as late as 1843-57 a person of mixed American-African ancestry was considered to be a 'mulatto'. This differs, of course, from those later dictionary definitions limiting the term to European-African mixed-bloods. (But there are exceptions in usage which will be noted below.)

During the nineteenth century the courts of Virginia seem to have ordinarily limited the use of the term 'mulatto' to persons of one-quarter or more non-white ancestry. For example, in 1847 two brothers of Culpepper County, William and John Ross, were alleged to be 'mulattoes'. The court found that their grandfather David Ross 'was spoken of as a respectable man, though probably a mulatto, was a soldier in the revolution and died in the service.' His wife was probably white, and his son's wife 'certainly' was. The Supreme Court held that the Ross brothers were legally 'white'.<sup>32</sup>

South Carolina was another early leader in developing racial classification terms, somewhat independent of Virginia. Spanish practice seems to have greatly influenced this colony, especially in the use of the term 'mustee' or 'mustizo' (*mestizo*) for a certain type of part-American, mixed-blood. The government of colonial South Carolina would appear to have almost never directly defined racial terms but one instance is of great value to us.

In 1719 South Carolina decided who should be an 'Indian' for tax purposes, since American slaves were taxed at a lesser rate than African slaves. The act stated: 'And for preventing all doubts and scruples that may arise what ought to be rated on mustees, mulattoes, etc., all such slaves as are not entirely Indian shall be accounted as negroe.'<sup>33</sup>

This is an extremely significant passage because it clearly asserts that 'mustees' and 'mulattoes' were persons of part-American ancestry. My own judgement (to be discussed later) is that a mustee was primarily part-African and American and that a mulatto was usually part-European and American. The act is also significant because it asserts that part-Americans with or without African ancestry could be counted as negroes, thus having an implication for all later slave censuses.

As will be indicated below, South Carolina colonial legislation makes frequent reference to negroes, mulattoes, mustees and Indians, both as slaves and as free persons. This usage continued into the nineteenth century but new meanings were gradually assigned to the terms. An important factor was doubtless the complete assimilation of American slaves into the general slave population, and, to some extent, a similar absorption of Americans within the free 'colored' group.

In any case, there are many court cases from 1829 onward involving a discussion of the term 'mulatto'. In that year the Supreme Court stated that

when the words negro, mulatto, etc. are used in statutes 'for the purpose of designating a class, they are to be interpreted by their common acceptation' which in the case of mulatto meant 'offspring of a black and a white'.<sup>34</sup>

There is no legal definition of the term [mulatto] . . . in the first of the cases . . . [a judge said] that a mulatto was the offspring of parents, one . . . white, and the other black; and that he was disposed to think that where the white blood predominated, this disqualification [of mulatto status] ought not to attach. . . . It is certainly true that every admixture of African blood with the European, or white, is not to be referred to the degraded class. It would be dangerous and cruel to subject to this disqualification, persons bearing all the features of a white, on account of some remote admixture of negro blood; nor has the term mulatto, or person of colour, I believe, been popularly attributed to such a person. . . . *where there is a distinct and visible admixture of negro blood, the person is to be denominated a mulatto, or person of colour* . . . [it is] a question very proper for a jury.<sup>35</sup> (italics added)

South Carolina judges, in other words, gradually extended the term to be virtually an equivalent to 'colored person' and to include persons visibly part-African, regardless of actual degree of blood. In 1846 this was stated even more explicitly:

The constant tendency of this class [mulattoes] to assimilate to the white, and the desire for elevation, present frequent cases of embarrassment and difficulty. . . . It would be difficult, if not impolitic, to define by . . . inflexible rules the lines of separation. . . . the question of the reception of colored persons into the class of citizens must partake more of a political than a legal character, and, in a great degree, be decided by public opinion, expressed in the verdict of a jury.<sup>36</sup>

Regardless of the appearance of 'liberality' the court consistently drew the line at somewhere between one-eighth and one-sixteenth African ancestry, a line formalized in many other states at that date. Still further, the father of the litigant, one Elijah Bass, although showing some unspecified non-European features, had apparently been treated as a white man and his children had married white people. Thus the court was in some ways more conservative than the local white community. (And it is possible that Bass had American ancestry, since Bass people often have Indian affiliation in the South.)

It is clear from a decision of 1850 that persons of American descent, in order to escape from the status of mulatto or colored person had to prove that they were 'of free Indian descent, unmixed with African blood'. The case is as follows: Amelia Marchant was challenged as a witness on the grounds that she was a person of color. It was argued on her behalf that her grandparents were free Indians and also that her father, James Mitchell, was a Portuguese. Opponents said that Mitchell had associated with colored persons and was so considered. The verdict was in Marchant's favor, that is, that she was of free Indian ancestry and that she had no African blood. The Supreme Court reviewed the case and reversed the verdict, in spite of the fact that the Mitchells had paid no capitation tax (charged to free colored people) and that James Mitchell had apparently married a white woman. The grounds for reversal



were, in part, that many Indians had been enslaved and that the Mitchells came under the status of colored persons, apparently because they could not prove descent from 'free' Indians 'in amity' with South Carolina.<sup>37</sup>

If nothing else, this 1850 case illustrates that persons of American blood could still be considered to be mulattoes or colored persons in South Carolina, especially if a suspicion of African ancestry existed.

In Georgia (which usually followed the lead of South Carolina) a wealthy Spanish-Floridian of alleged mixed African and American ancestry was held to be a mulatto by a lower court. The higher court in 1856 reversed this decision and held him to be a white man.<sup>38</sup>

The other English colonies in North America seemingly failed to develop legal definitions for the various racial terms used in their statutes. Court cases occasionally shed light on meanings, as in Delaware where a woman was freed from slavery because she was descended in the female line from a 'native of Asia' (her grandmother). Slavery, it was said, extended only to 'negroes and mulattoes' descended from a 'female Negro'. Her father was a 'negro' and she apparently was classified as a mulatto.<sup>39</sup>

Many states adopted legal definitions after 1800. They are typified by the following examples.

Indiana (1817): Every person other than a negro, of whose grandfathers or grandmothers any one is or shall have been a negro, though his other progenitors may have been a white, shall be deemed a mulatto, and so every person who shall have one-fourth part or more of negro blood.

(Indiana also asserted that 'no negro, mulatto, or Indian' could be witness in cases involving white persons.)<sup>40</sup>

California (1850): persons having one-eighth or more of negro blood shall be deemed mulattoes, and persons having one-half of Indian blood, shall be deemed Indians. . . . no black or mulatto person, or Indian . . .

shall give evidence in a case involving a white person.<sup>41</sup>

In general, the statutes defining the term 'mulatto' always do so in such a way as to include virtually any American-African hybrid, provided that the African ancestry is one-quarter or more, one-eighth or more, and so on, depending on the time period. Alabama, however, tended to classify all part-Americans and part-Africans in the same 'colored' group:

All negroes, mulattoes, Indians and all persons of mixed blood descended from negro or Indian ancestors, to the third generation inclusive, though one ancestor of each generation only have been a white person, whether bond or free, shall be taken, and deemed incapable in law, to be witnesses . . . except for or against each other.<sup>42</sup>

In 1859 an Alabama court classified mixed persons of apparently part-American, part-African, and part-European descent as mulattoes.<sup>43</sup>

### *Census and Other Extra-Legal Definitions*

Colonial tax-rolls seldom give racial characteristics but there are exceptions which will be reviewed when pertinent. In Virginia many early tax rolls are missing; however, one can use fairly continuous records from c.1783 onward. There seems to be a common trend in these documents, as reflected by the rolls of Charles City County. From 1783 to the early 1800s no race is given for free persons – all are classified (for tax purposes) as 'white-tithable'. From 1809 to 1812 'free negro' is placed after the names of some free persons but mixed-bloods are still treated as white. Beginning in 1813, however, the word 'mulatto' appears beside mixed-people's names, along with 'free negro' for others. Persons who can be identified as Chickahominy Indians or as ancestors of the present-day Chickahominy are uniformly classified as mulattoes.

A similar trend occurs in King William, King and Queen, Caroline, and Essex Counties, except that Indians living on the two small reservations in King William (Pamunkey and Mattaponi) generally do not appear on the tax rolls (since their land was not taxable). On the other hand, relatives of the reservation Indians having taxable property or living off-reservation normally are classified as 'mulatto' or 'free colored'. In the other counties Indians are classified as above but also in several cases as 'F.N.' (free negro). It is very rare to see a person classified as 'Indian' in pre-Civil War Virginia records and *never* in the above counties (where the bulk of Indians were then concentrated).<sup>44</sup>

A similar situation exists in relation to early United States records. The first census (1790) forced the local enumerator to place all free persons in two categories: 'white' or 'all other free persons except Indians not taxed'. Most families known to be of Indian extraction in Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and elsewhere (Virginia is missing) were placed in the 'all other free persons' category. Occasionally, however, the enumerator also wrote in their specific racial status. Thus we find in South Carolina, Jordan Chavers of Cheraw classified as 'mulatoc' and Hannah Shavis of Edgefield classified as 'mulatto'. The Chavers-Chavis name is widely associated with Indian communities in both North and South Carolina.<sup>45</sup>

The 1800, 1810, 1820 and 1830 censuses use the 'free person of color' category for most non-whites, including Indians. Thus the Native families of Robeson County, North Carolina, and all Virginia counties are always classified as 'colored' persons. Carter Woodson's *The Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830*, being and indexing of the 'free colored' population, includes many thousands of Indians. For example, the entire Cherokee Indian population of Carroll County, Georgia was included as colored persons, with names such as Rattlesnake, Ekoah, Watta, Tah-nc-cul-le-hee, Wasotta, Keccha, Widow Swimmer, Pumpkinpile, Charles Vann, and so on. One also finds people like Stephen Jumper in Rockingham County, North Carolina, Charles Moose in the same county, and 'Indian Bill' of Westchester County, New York, classified as people of color, along with the general Indian population in county after county.<sup>46</sup>

In 1834 a special census was taken of the Choctaw Indian people. In it we find the following revealing entries:

Jacob O'Rare, a mulatto, half Indian and half negro.

James Blue, a Negro-Indian man, has an Indian wife.

William Lightfoot, a mulatto, half Indian and half Negro.

Jim Tom, half-breed Negro, has an Indian wife.

Jacob Daniel, has a half Indian and half Negro for a wife.<sup>47</sup>

In the 1840 US census the 'free colored' category continues to be used for most non-whites.

In 1850 US census enumerators were instructed 'in enumerating colored persons to write "B" or "M" in the space on the schedule.' The 'B' presumably stood for 'Black' and the 'M' for 'Mulatto' (although 'mixed' seems to be the more correct modern rendering). In both 1850 and 1860 these racial terms were not defined by the census officials.

In Virginia one finds that all of the Indians of the central tidewater counties were classified as 'M', including the residents of the Pamunkey and Mattaponi reservations, with a few exceptions in King William County where one or two were classified as 'B'. (The 'B' should be placed in context, since early Virginia tax-rolls (such as those of the 1780s) divided all tithable persons between 'white souls' and 'black souls'. The term 'black' or 'B' is, therefore, open to various interpretations.)

The same pattern appears in Norfolk County, Virginia where many members of the Nansemond Indian group living near Portsmouth were classified as 'M'. This is especially significant since the Nansemonds were categorized as 'I' (for Indian) on an 1860 local tax roll. At various dates, certificates were apparently issued to Nansemond Indian people, such as the following: 'William Bass, the bearer, tall, swarthy, dark eyes . . . is of English and Indian descent with no admixture of negro blood, numbered as a Nansemun by his own choosing.' This was in 1742. But in the following century many Nansemonds were harassed as 'mulattoes' and listed in the 1850 census with 'M' after their names. Nonetheless, a local county court ruled in 1833 that they were 'not free negroes or mulattoes, but are of Indian descent'.

Here we have a clear indication that *some* whites were still using the term 'mulatto' for people with no African ancestry, even in the nineteenth century, while the judiciary was holding to the letter of Virginia's 1785 law (requiring African ancestry).<sup>48</sup>

All in all, some 37 per cent of the free people of color in 1850 were classified as 'M' while only about one-twelfth of the slaves were so categorized.<sup>49</sup> It seems clear that a good many of the free people classed as 'M' were, in fact, Indians or of Indian descent.

It is helpful, at this point, to review a few specific cases so as to shed light on actual practice. An interesting one is that of the Dungee family. The name appears to originate in King William County, Virginia, as it is found nowhere else in the 1790 US census or in the Virginia tax-rolls of 1782-5 examined by

this writer. In 1782 a Joseph and John Dungee are recorded as 'white' tithables in King William. In 1783 John 'Dungary' is age 21 plus, has four 'white souls' in his household and no 'negroes' (slaves). In 1810 John Dungey is still listed as a 'white' tithable. By that date Dungees had also appeared in other Virginia counties. All are listed in the census as 'free colored' (except for one woman in Middlesex, classed as 'white'), and the situation is similar in 1820. On the tax-rolls of King William County after 1813 the Dungees are all listed as mulattoes. John Dungey specifically appears as a mulatto on the King and Queen County tax rolls for 1813.<sup>50</sup>

In 1825 an interesting document was submitted to the General Assembly of Virginia: 'Your petitioners John Dungee and Lucy Ann, his wife who are free persons of colour residing in King William County ask permission respectfully to represent to the Senate and House of Delegates of Virginia that your Petitioner John (who is descended from the aborigines of this Dominion), was born free.'<sup>51</sup> Lucy Ann (Littlepage) his wife, was an emancipated slave, half-African and half-white (the daughter of a wealthy planter). They, therefore, had to petition to remain in Virginia since she was required by law to leave the state.

Respected white planters endorsed the petition by stating that: 'Capt. Dungee is a Free born native of Virginia, was raised in the calling of a sailor and has for many years been the Commander of a vessel, constantly employed in the navigation of the Chesapeake Bay and the Rivers of Virginia.'<sup>52</sup>

By 1830 Dungees had spread to Tennessee, South Carolina, Ohio, New York and various parts of Virginia. Those in Virginia and Tennessee were all classified as free persons of color. In 1840 the same is true. In 1850 all of the Dungees in King William County, Virginia were classified as either 'M' or 'B' even though all were living on or near the Mattaponi or Pamunkey Indian reservations.<sup>53</sup>

A similar situation exists in relation to other prominent Indian families. The Sampson family contributed a great many students to the Indian college at William and Mary (Thomas 1754; John 1764; George 1769, 1775; Reubin 1775; Edmund 1776). An 1812 petition of the Pamunkey Tribe lists John, William and Henry Sampson as among the 'Headmen and Chiefs'.<sup>54</sup> It would appear that during that period many Sampsons left to settle elsewhere where they were in 1810 and later classified as 'free people of color'. The 1850 census for King William County classifies all of the Sampsons (all on the Pamunkey Reservation) as mulattoes ('M') including Thomas. In 1865 Thomas Sampson was re-elected a headman at Pamunkey.<sup>55</sup>

The same thing is true for the Langston family at Pamunkey, a family which contributed students to the Indian school at William and Mary College before the Revolutionary War. In 1830 and 1840 their descendants are classified as 'free colored' and in the 1850 as 'mulattoes' without exception. The same is true for all of the prominent Pamunkey and Mattaponi families, even including those of Rhoda Arnold and Molly Holt, two ladies from whom a visitor acquired some Indian words in 1844.<sup>56</sup>

Many photographs of Indian people in central tidewater Virginia were taken



by anthropologists in the 1890s–1920s. These photographs illustrate rather clearly that the people being described in the records as mulattoes are of complex racial origin, with Native American features predominating.<sup>57</sup>

Another interesting case is afforded by the Nottoway Tribe, a reservation group in Southampton County, Virginia. In 1808 a partial census of the tribe identified, for example, Littleton Scholar (age 51) as an Indian (full-blood) with a white wife. In the 1830 US census, however, Littleton's sons Billy and Ned are listed as free people of color. (And all of the surviving full-blood Nottoways are listed in the same manner.) In 1844 an 'enumeration of free negroes and mulattoes' in Southampton County listed 'certain mulatto children' including Alex, Bob, Samuel and Gideon Scholar, all children of a white mother.<sup>58</sup>

The Scholars do not appear to have had any African ancestry but are regarded nonetheless as mulattoes. Most of the other Nottoways, with some African ancestry, are classified as mulattoes or as free negroes.

Another case involves the Scott family of Indians in Richmond, Virginia. William Scott was listed as an Indian in the tax-rolls of the 1780s. By 1810 'Billy Scott' was called a free person of color, with nine in his household. By 1850 the oldest 'William Scott' in the area, age 49, was classified as an 'M' in the census, as was his probable son. (All other William Scotts were classed as either 'B' or 'M' in Henrico County.) In 1853 the Grand Jury charged 'William Scott', senior, a free negro for 'retailing ardent spirits to be drunk at the place where sold' without a license. The defendant 'moved the court to permit him to withdraw his pleas of "not guilty" and to plead that he was not a free negro . . . but an Indian'. The court held that to be immaterial since the charge was the same for whites, Indians, or free negroes.<sup>59</sup>

The William Scott claiming to be an Indian in 1853 was doubtless the same person as the Scott, age 49, classed as an 'M' in the 1850 census, since the latter had property worth \$3,000 and could read. Doubtless he owned a store or shop of some kind.

Many other examples could be cited, including that of the widespread Going (Gowen) family descended probably from 'Gowin, an Indian servant to Mr Thomas Bushrod' who was to be free in 1676. This Gowin, in turn, may be the child of one 'Mihill Gowen negro late servant' who was discharged from service in 1657 in York County and who had a son named William born to a woman belonging to a white lady. The latter gave up all claims on the child but it is possible that he was later indentured. (This is not the only example of the interchangeable use of 'Negro' and 'Indian' in Virginia.)

By 1754 many of the Gowens had moved to Granville, North Carolina, where Thomas, Michael, and Edward Gowen were all listed as 'mulatto' members of a militia company. Going/Gowen descendants are classified as free people of color (rarely as white) in the censuses through 1840 in Virginia, Tennessee and North Carolina. In 1850 they are usually classified as 'M' throughout the south.<sup>60</sup>

In 1870 the term 'mulatto' was defined by US Census officials 'to include

quadroons, octoroons, and all persons having any respectable trace of African blood' thus taking the definition far beyond the legal statutes of any states at that date.<sup>61</sup> Quite clearly, large numbers of people of Native American ancestry would be included under such a definition.

In 1880 and 1900 there were no published instructions, but in 1890 a 'black' was defined as a person with 'three-fourths or more "black blood"', other persons with any proportion of 'black' blood being classified as 'mulattoes', 'quadroons', or 'octoroons'. In 1910 'black' included all 'full-blooded Negroes' while 'mulatto' included 'all other persons having some proportion or perceptible trace of Negro blood.'<sup>62</sup> All of these definitions, of course, allowed broad scope to local white census-takers and went beyond the statutory definitions of 'mulatto' in most states.

Later censuses also tended to increase the size of the 'negro' group by including most persons of mixed Indian and African ancestry. For example, the 1930 census-takers were instructed to count as Indians those of mixed white and Indian ancestry 'except where the percentage of Indian blood is very small' or when the person 'is regarded as a white person . . . where he lives'. But this same reasoning was not applied to the African-American hybrids. Such people 'shall be returned as a Negro unless the Indian blood *predominates* and the status as an Indian is generally accepted in the community'. The 1940 census instructions required that an American-African hybrid be counted as a Negro unless the Native ancestry '*very definitely predominates* and he is *universally* accepted in the community as an Indian'. (italics added)<sup>63</sup>

Thus, although the term 'mulatto' ceases to be used in US censuses, the general tendency is to use the term negro to include all Indian-Black persons who earlier would have been categorized under the former term. In short, 'mulatto' had become subsumed completely under 'negro'. We can be reasonably certain, I would suggest, that in many parts of the country white census-takers would have counted as negro virtually all Indians showing African ancestry except in counties where the Indians openly resisted such a classification.<sup>64</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the most recent US census (1980) persons of part-Indian ancestry had to be very alert if they wished to be counted as an Indian. Census rules forbade a person being counted in more than one racial category and no 'mixed' status was allowed. Thus a person who checked more than one box was to be counted only with the first category marked and 'white' came first, 'black' second, and 'Indian' third. In short, any person who checked both 'black' and 'Indian' would be counted as 'black' only.<sup>65</sup>

Aside from census records, there are a few other extra-statutory definitions of the term 'mulatto' which are of interest. Examples will be cited in more or less chronological order.

In c.1648 an Englishman (Thomas Gage) who had lived in Mexico and Guatemala wrote a book which made frequent use of the terms 'mulatto' and 'mestizo'. The latter was defined as a Spanish-American mixture while 'mulatto' is used very frequently but only clarified in this passage:



Nay, a blackamoor or tawny young maid and slave will make hard shift, but she will be in fashion. . . . The attire of this baser sort of people of blackamoors and mulattoes (which are of a mixed nature, of Spaniards and blackamoors) is so light, and their carriage so enticing, that many Spaniards . . . disdain their wives for them . . . their bare, black, and tawny breasts are covered with bobs hanging from their chains of pearls.<sup>66</sup>

Gage, an ex-Catholic priest, was describing his memory of Mexico City after the passage of twenty years and we may suspect that his definition of 'mulatto' is not intended to be precise as to the exact genetic make-up of the part-African people he was describing. Subsequently, he frequently refers to Indians, mestizos, mulattoes, and blackamoors in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, and elsewhere, but he never introduces any term for African-American hybrids as such. Are we to believe that in such a heavily American region there were no American-African mixed-bloods embraced within his 'mulatto' category?

In 1673 an Englishman from Virginia visited the Tomahitan (Euchee) people living to the west in the Appalachian Mountains. They took him on an expedition to Spanish Florida, to a 'negro town' where they killed a negro man. Later it was reported: 'The Tomahitans have amongst them many brass pots and kettles from three gallons to thirty. They have two mullato women all ye white and black people they take they put to death since their twenty men were barbarously handled [by the Spaniards or "hairey people"]<sup>67</sup>. It seems quite clear that these 'mullato' women were neither white nor black but were of mixed race, including American ancestry, since it would make no sense to kill whites and blacks but keep people who were mixed white and black. A 'Spanish Indian boy' was also spared by the Tomahitans and was brought to Virginia by them.

In the 1684-99 period Ann Wall, a white woman, was convicted in Virginia of having 'two mulattoe bastards by a negro'. This illustrates a tendency found in some records and indicates that the term 'mulatto' could have been applied to children of some other type of father as well.<sup>68</sup> This is borne out by a statement of Helen T. Caterall, summarizing records of the seventeenth century. She states that the servant (but non-slave) class included: 'mulatto servants (whose servitude was the penalty for having a white mother and an Indian, negro, or mulatto father [a law reenacted in 1705] or, after 1723, for being descended in the maternal line from such a combination of ancestors).<sup>69</sup>

in 1704 a British writer refers directly to an Indian as a mulatto. He writes: 'I shall observe your Caution, says my Moletto Comrade [the Indian].'

In 1706 a girl described as a 'molatta or mustee' became pregnant in Accomack County, Virginia. She would have been punished with servitude but an Indian, Edward Bagwell, stepped forward to assume all costs. This clearly implies that she was half-American and that either of the two terms - mulatto or mustee - was a referent to such people.

In 1715 a South Carolina English missionary baptized a 'mulatto' girl whose mother he reported as an Indian and whose father he said was a white trader.<sup>70</sup>

During the period 1717-21 an Englishman named Hugh Jones lived in Virginia. In 1724 he published a book in which he stated: 'The [slave] children

belong to the master of the woman that bears them; and such as are born of a Negroe and a European are called Molattoes; but such as are born of an Indian and Negroe are called Mustees.<sup>71</sup> Some doubt is cast on Jones' accuracy or reliability in that the term 'mustee' seldom appears in any records of Virginia that I have examined. Instead one finds the following: 'A reward is offered [in 1782] for a runaway slave who, according to the description, was the offspring of an Indian and a negress; but he is called a mulatto.'<sup>72</sup>

Another example occurred in 1818 when Virginia judges considered a case where a free person was sold as a slave to defraud a buyer; 'the free man sold, was not proved to be either a negro or mulatto, but by one witness, who said he had heard that he was the offspring of a white woman by an Indian.'<sup>73</sup>

This would indicate that as late as 1818 the term 'mulatto' could be applied to a white-Indian mixed-blood by Virginia jurists (in spite of the evidence cited in the previous section).

From 1803 to the Civil War all free people of color in Virginia were required to register. The register for Essex County has survived and in it we find many Indian people listed but none are called Indians. Classifications given include black, dark brown, tawney, very dark mulatto, dark mulatto, shade lighter than a dark mulatto, bright mulatto, very bright mulatto, and very bright mulatto almost white. One man, the son of a non-white father (of Indian extraction judging from his family name) and a white mother was described in 1844 as 'color bright mulatto . . . with hair somewhat like a white persons'. His brother, a son of the same white man, was described as a bright mulatto with 'long hair'.<sup>74</sup> No doubt the hair was being worn long because of Indian identity since this was common for Native Americans in Virginia through the 1890s at least.

It should be noted that all of the persons with Indian family names registered in Essex, with the exception of one woman and her children, were 'born free'.

In Delaware in the 1850s several legal cases developed when laws designed to control 'free negroes and mulattoes' were applied to Indian communities in that state. One set of cases was designed to prevent certain Indians of Sussex County from buying or selling arms and ammunition. The Indians were found to be mixed with some vague degree of African ancestry and, therefore, legally mulatto.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, a relative of one of the above Indians, Peter B. Socum, was arrested for having entered the state, since the Revised Code prohibited entry by 'free negroes and free mulattoes'. He was fined and jailed but the judgement was reversed in 1856 because he had been a resident at the time the act had been passed.<sup>76</sup>

One more example will be given to show that the term 'mulatto' was regularly used to include persons of part-Indian ancestry. In North Carolina in the 1870s a white woman wrote a book about the people now known as the Lumbee Indians of Robeson County. The author traces the ancestry of many Lumbees and takes note of white and Indian as well as African ancestors. Nonetheless, all are referred to as 'bright' mulattoes, light mulattoes, or simply as mulattoes. She notes that the area of their settlement was called: 'Scuffletown, from the act of the mulattoes inhabiting that region congregating in Lowrie's grocery and



after imbibing pretty freely of whiskey, in engaging in the broad shuffle, and also from the fact that it was generally a scuffle with the mulattoes to live.' She describes a Lumbee resistance leader, Henry Berry Lowrie, as follows: '[His color was] of a mixed white and yellow, partaking of an admixture, resembling copper, the Indian color however, still predominating, although the white and black remain apparent. . . . He wore a dark goatee, his hair was straight and black like an Indian's.'<sup>77</sup> Nonetheless, he was a mulatto to white North Carolinians of 1875, even as his people were recorded as mulattoes in the US census.

In the same year there is testimony from the Robeson County attorney before a Congressional committee in which he says that 'the Mulattoes' of Robeson, as he termed the Lumbees, 'were a mixture of Cherokee and Portuguese'.<sup>78</sup> The use of the term 'Portuguese' may have been a euphemism for 'African', but nonetheless it seems clear that the term 'mulatto' was still being used in a very broad way.

The situation historically in North Carolina tax records and other document is summarized by Robert K. Thomas as follows (for the Lumbee people):

Most individuals are listed most commonly as Mulattoes. In that time in North Carolina the legal category Mulatto meant having one white parent and one non-white parent. The non-white parent could be either Indian or Negro. Some individuals in these families are listed as white, a few are listed as black, and occasionally an individual is listed as an Indian. . . . this meant full-blood Indian. . . . by definition, a mixed-blood Indian would be a Mulatto.<sup>79</sup>

A similar situation existed in Tennessee where the so-called Melungeon people (probably Saponi-Powhatan) of Hawkins, Grainger and nearby counties were often classed as 'free colored' and mulatto, but occasionally also as white.<sup>80</sup> A white writer of c. 1890 asserted of these people: 'A great many declare them mulattoes, and base their belief upon the ground that at the close of the civil war negroes and Malungeons stood upon precisely the same social footing, "free man of color" all.' One official said that the Malungeon 'isn't a nigger and he isn't an Indian, and he isn't a white man'. The author adds: 'In appearance they bear a striking resemblance to the Cherokees, and they are believed by the people around about to be a kind of half-breed Indian. Their complexion is reddish brown, totally unlike the mulatto.'<sup>81</sup> Here, of course, we sense that the writer of 1890 has a feeling that the term 'mulatto' ought *not* to be applied to persons whose shade of brownness (and probably other features) do not resemble those of an African-white hybrid.

This same confusion over the use of the term 'mulatto' is exemplified by the status of a similar group of mixed Indian people in South Carolina, called variously 'Brass Ankles', 'Redbones', 'Yellow People', and so on, until recently. Although frequently classified as mulattoes in earlier census records, these people in the 1940s were being variously called mulattoes, yellow people, 'half-niggers', and 'half-Indians' by the local whites. Some were being accepted as

whites also, albeit with reluctance. (The term mustee or mestizo had reportedly disappeared from local usage.)<sup>82</sup>

### *Runaway Slave Advertisements*

Advertisements for runaway slaves occasionally contain information which sheds light on racial terms. The term 'mulatto' is sometimes used for persons whose background cannot be documented, but very often American ancestry is specifically indicated. In the following examples from Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina, references to Americans held as slaves will also be included, along with those specifically using the term 'mulatto'.

We shall begin with Virginia:

- 1737 (1738): Amos, a 'Mulatto Man Slave . . . he is about 6 Feet high, with broad face and Shoulders, has bushy Hair and is a Native of this Country, altho he has the Countenance of a Madegascar.'
- 1752 Ran away from Somerset County, Maryland, 'a tall Slim Mulatto Man Slave, . . . looks much like unto an Indian and will endeavour to pass for such; had with him a strip'd Indian Match-coat.'
- 1772 Ran away 'a dark Mulatto Man Slave named Manuel, about five Feet nine Inches high, thirty years of age . . . and has bushy Hair; he has been used to go by Water, has much the appearance of a Sailor, and is a tolerably good Shoemaker; he was born in the Spanish West Indies, speaks Spanish fluently.'
- 1772 Ran away from Cumberland a 'Mulatto Man named Jim, who is a Slave, but pretends to have a Right to his Freedom. His father was an Indian, of the name of Cheshire, and very likely will call himself James Cheshire, or Chink.' He has 'long black hair resembling an Indian's.'
- 1773 Ran away with 'a Negro Fellow named Fortune . . . a Wench named Aminta . . . has much the Look of an Indian, and is so, her Mother having been brought from the Spanish Main to Rhode Island, has long black hair.' They were brought from Rhode Island.
- 1773 Ran away from Amelia County 'a Negro man of the name of Tom . . . of a yellowish complexion, much the appearance of an Indian. . . . His hair is of a different kind from that of a Negro's, rather more of the Indian's, but partaking of both, which though short, he frequently ties behind.'
- 1775 Ran away from Cumberland 'a Mulatto man slave named Sancho. . . . Absconded with him a white servant woman. . . . I expect they will change their names and endeavour to pass for husband and wife, as free people.'
- 1775 Ran away from Bute County, North Carolina, 'a Slave named Charles, of the Indian breed'.
- 1776 Ran away from Amherst County a 'Negro Fellow named Ben.' He used the name John Savage on a previous flight 'and has an Indian Woman for his wife who some Time ago lived in Goochland.'



- 1777 Ran away from Blandfield, in Essex County, 'a Negro Man named John Twopence . . . 40 years of age, of a yellowish complexion, a good countenance.' Twopence people were later regarded as Indians in neighboring King William County.
- 1777 Ran away from Amelia County 'a large young Mulatto Fellow named Sam, of the Indian breed. I expect he is in James City county, as he has a Mother who lives there.'
- 1785 Ran away from Dinwiddie County one Joe. 'He is a dark Mulatto . . . has a bushy head of hair, and is of the Indian breed; is an excellent sawyer . . . plays on the violin.' (Changed his name to Peter Tony.)
- 1790 Ran away from Southampton 'a lad about 18 or 19 years of age called Ben Whitehead, he is of the Indian breed and almost white, has coarse straight hair of a dark brown colour and black eyes . . . is a carpenter . . . and he can read.'<sup>83</sup>

The above evidence shows not only that Americans were still being held as slaves in Virginia as late as 1790 but that in 1772, 1777 and 1785 the term 'mulatto' was explicitly used for persons of American ancestry. In one of the cases the mulatto was also part-African but in the other two instances no African ancestry is specifically indicated.

In 1764 a 'Mulatto or Mustee slave, called Tony' ran away from New Bern, North Carolina. He had 'long stiff black hair, and greatly the looks and colour of an Indian.' In 1775 a 'Slave of the Indian Blood named Charles, of a very light Complexion' ran away from Bute County. He had been branded with a 'R' on the right cheek and a 'T' on the left. He had 'long straight black hair'.<sup>84</sup>

South Carolina newspapers feature numerous advertisements for 'mustee' slaves (usually of American-African mixture). The term 'mulatto' seems to have been used less commonly. Nonetheless a few examples can be found, along with evidence for continued American-African interaction up to the Revolutionary War period.

- 1738 Ran away, 'an Indian Man, named Peter.'
- 1740 Deserted from the sloop *May-flower* 'a tall rough Spanish Indian Fellow . . . also a well set Spanish Negro Fellow.'
- 1746 Ran away 'a tall lusty young Wench, can speak good English, Chickesaw, and perhaps French, the Chickesaws having taken her from the French settlements on Mississippi.' She fled with her negro husband.
- 1748 Ran away from Cohansey in New Jersey 'a very lusty Negro Man named Sampson, aged about 58 years, and has some mixture of Indian Blood in him. . . . He has taken with him a boy named Sam, who was born of an Indian woman, and looks much like an Indian only his Hair. . . . They both talk Indian very well, and it is likely have dress'd themselves in an Indian dress, and gone towards Carolina.'
- 1749 Ran away 'a slave between a mulato and a mustee, named Peter. . . . and can read currently well. . . . And was to have gone off with Mr Maxwell's

- mustee fellow named Abraham. . . 'tis supposed . . . he will harbour about Santee (where he hath a wife,) Pedce (where he hath many acquaintance,) Four-Holes, Seludy, or New-Windsor.'
- 1753 Ran away 'a mullatto girl (of the Indian breed) named Nancy, about 18 or 19 years old, has . . . long black hair.'
- 1761 Ran away 'a mulatto wench named Betty. . . .She is short and square made, has short Indian hair, is well known in Charles-Town.'
- 1762 Ran away 'a stout black Negro man . . . named Crack.' With him went 'a free Indian wench, wife to the fellow Crack, who had a child with her about two years of age: A white man was also seen in the canow with them'.
- 1770 A pilot boat taken by Jack 'a Negro Man' brought up in England and Tony, 'a brown Indian Man, speaks good English and Spanish'.
- 1771 Ran away 'a young mulatto or mustee wench, named Mary.' Well known at Ashley-River 'where she formerly lived, and was enticed away by her mother, an Indian wench, named Sarah, who lives at . . . Stono Plantation.'
- 1773 Ran away a 'Negro man, named Nero' and 'a Mulatto or half-Indian Man, named Frank, well made, about nineteen or twenty years old.'<sup>85</sup>

Aside from illustrating American-African contacts, the advertisements specifically ascribe American ancestry to mulattoes in 1753, 1771 and 1773 and, by inference, in 1761. The girl described as mustee or mulatto in 1771 was specifically stated to be the daughter of an American mother, thus implying that if her father was white she was a mulatto, while if black she was a mustee.

It would appear that in South Carolina mulatto was used for European-American (lighter) mixed persons while in Virginia mulatto was used for both European-American and African-American persons. In any event, it would seem clear from the foregoing that the term 'mulatto' has been used frequently so as to include persons of American ancestry, whether mixed with African or not. Before drawing any conclusions, however, it is necessary to examine a mass of data of a more indirect nature.

#### DEFINITIONS BY INFERENCE

As noted earlier in several places, there is a strong tendency for the English to use the term 'mulatto' in a general sort of sense, as to refer to any mixed-blood, to any brown person, or to some type of mixed origin. This usage is reflected in 1613 when Purchas asks: 'why then are the Portugalls children and Generations White, or Mulatos at most' and in 1657 when Ligon refers to 'A great fat man . . . his face not so black as to be counted a Molotto' or, as in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) 'My face, the color of it was really not so Moletta like, as one might expect.' Still more interesting is a reference in 1664 to 'Purgatory, which is a device to make men be mulatas, as the Spaniard calls



half Christians'.<sup>86</sup> Thus, a half-'heathen' might be called a mulatto, a usage very much in keeping with colonial attitudes towards both Americans and Africans.

As stated before, the earliest English usage of the term 'mulatto' seems to relate to individuals whose precise ancestry was not known, or who were associated with the Spanish. For example, in 1590 at Puerto Rico 'a mulatto named Pedro, who knew everything about our condition, deserted to the Spaniards' and in 1595 one of Sir Francis Drake's pilots was a 'mulato' who sailed from Plymouth but who was probably a Canary Islander in origin. Drake was also aided by a 'Mulatow and an Indian' on the coast of Jamaica.<sup>87</sup>

During the same general period Richard Hawkins sailed along the coast of western South America and put in at San Mathew (San Mato) Bay in the Ecuador area. In this area, Hawkins states, the Spaniards from Guayaquil had established a post but the Americans 'being a people of stomacke and presumption, they suffered themselves to bee persuaded and led by a Molato. This leader many years before had fled unto them from the Spaniards.' With the 'molato's' help the Americans forced the Spaniards to retreat to Quito, the nearest Spanish settlement.

No doubt most of the early mulattoes mentioned by the English were African-American mixed-bloods. This, however, is not the case with Andrew Battell's use of the term for Portuguese-African children born in the Congo (mentioned in a work published in the 1613-25 period).<sup>88</sup>

In 1632 the London Company wrote Captain Daniel Elfrye 'condemning his indiscretion in too freely entertaining a Mullato, as you call him, in the island [Providence Island], and in taking a Spanish frigate'. And in 1666 the Virginia House of Burgesses recorded that 'a Mulato named Manuel' was freed the previous year after being judged 'no slave and sent to serve as other Christians servants do.' In 1658 a London merchant went to 'Chelsea Colledge' to see if any prisoners there 'had lived as slaves and servants in the Indies' and would be willing to go to Virginia. 'Two mulattoes offered to go rather than remain eternally in prison.' And in 1678 a 'Spanish Mullatto, by name Anthonio' was sold by a Bostonian for ten years' service in Virginia.<sup>89</sup>

This rather general, imprecise use of the term continued. Two more specific examples will suffice: In 1724 the *Boston Gazette* reported that the crew of a Spanish 'pirate' ship off Virginia 'consists of about 60 Spaniards, including the Negroes and Molattos, 14 English, and 18 French.' In 1728 an English party surveying the Virginia-North Carolina border reported: 'we came upon a family of mulattoes that called themselves free, though by the shyness of the master of the house . . . their freedom seemed a little doubtful. It is certain many slaves shelter in this obscure part of the world.'<sup>90</sup> An even more explicit example of the usage is also from Virginia. In 1670 a law was adopted which confirmed the practice that all slaves converted to Christianity before coming to Virginia served for only a fixed term as servants. In 1682 this act was changed because 'many negroes, Moors, mulattoes, and others' born in a heathen country and of heathen parents but converted to Christianity elsewhere had been avoiding full

slave status. Quite clearly, the 'mulattoes' now to be made life-slaves were persons born in a non-Christian land to non-Christian parents, that is, Native Americans, Africans, Asians, and so on. Thus their precise ancestry could not be known.<sup>91</sup>

Another body of data which needs to be cited consists in reviewing lists of racial groups, usually in statutes, which serve to show that the term 'mulatto' embraced people of American ancestry. The first colonies to be sampled will be those where the term 'mustee' is never used in the statutes, beginning with Virginia:

1657-8	negroes and Indians.
1670	negro or Indian.
1672	negro, molatto, Indian slave, or servant for life [apprehension of runaways].
1680	negro or other slave; all negro and molatto children tithable at age 16 [Indian women age 16 up added in 1682].
1682	negros, Moors, mollattoes or Indians [except 'Turkes' and Moors in amity]; negroes, Moores, mollattoes, and others; negroc, moor, or molatto.
1691	negroes, mulattoes, and other slave or slaves; negroes, mulattoes, and Indians; negro, mulatto, or Indian; negro or mulatto; negro or mulatto (cannot be set free unless transported).
1705	Popish recusants, convict negroes, mulattoes, and Indian servants and others, not being Christians; no negroes, mulattoes or Indians, although Christians, Jews, or Moors, Mahometans, or other infidels; negro, mulatto, or Indian, Jew, Moor, Mahometan, or other infidel; negro or mulatto; negro, mulatto or Indian; [also definition of a mulatto given, includes child of an Indian].
1723	Free negro, mulatto, or Indian slaves.
1732	Free negroes, mulattos, or Indians; negros, mulattos, and Indians; that no negro, mulatto, or Indian slaves shall be set free; mulatto or Indian women; that no free negro, mulatto, or Indian, whatsoever, shall here after have any vote.
1732	negroes, mulattos, and Indians; negroes, mulattos and Indians [cannot be witness except in capital slave trials].
1744	any free negro, mulatto, or Indian [can be a witness in non-white cases].
1748	for the better government of negroes, mulattoes, and Indians, bond or free [re-enacted 1753].

- 1769 free negroes, mulattos and Indian women or the wives of free negroes, mulattos and Indians, except slaves.  
 1777 negroes and mulattoes.  
 1779 negro or mulatto servant or slave.  
 1792–1812 free negroes and mulattoes; no Indians listed as such.<sup>92</sup>

One can see that from 1682 through 1769 the usual pattern was to mention three groups: negroes, mulattoes, and Indians. In most cases, we are dealing with limitations being placed on the civil and property rights of such people and, therefore, we must assume that it was always the intention of the government of Virginia to subject African–American mixed-bloods (and probably European–American mixed-bloods if of one-half Native blood) to the same proscriptions as were imposed on European–African hybrids. The term ‘mulatto’ is clearly a ‘catch-all’ to cover all mixed people of whatever variety. Fortunately, in the case of Virginia, this interpretation is confirmed by the statute of 1705.

Maryland sources have the following:

- 1692 negroes or other slaves [marriage outlawed with whites].  
 1715 any negroes . . . or mulatto slave [cannot marry whites].  
 1717 No negro or mulatto slave, free negro, or mulatto born of a white woman . . . or any Indian slave or free Indian . . . [can testify where any Christian white is involved]; negroes or mulattoes . . . except mulattoes born in white women.  
 1728 free mulatto women . . . , negroes and other slaves, and free negro women.  
 1846–7 Repeats terms in statute of 1717 including negro, mulatto, Indian slave, free Indian, et cetera [otherwise 1803–60, free negro and negro used almost exclusively].<sup>93</sup>

(It should be noted that a number of Indian or part-Indian communities survived in Maryland. Many are called mulattoes in the 1790 census.)

In Delaware there are these references:

- 1721 negro or mulatto slaves;  
 mulatto children [by white mothers];  
 negro or mulatto women [no fornication with, by white men].  
 1739 free negroes [children to be bound out].  
 1760 children of white woman by negro or mulatto fathers . . . and [free] negroes [to be protected from enslavement].  
 1767 free negroes and mulattoes [are bad example to slaves].  
 1776 negro, Indian, or mulatto slave.  
 1787–1852 negro and mulatto used exclusively except for ‘colored persons’ in 1826.  
 1866 free negroes and free mulattoes [to be punished the same as white persons].<sup>94</sup>

(Several Indian communities survived in Delaware. They seem to be called mulattoes or colored people.)

Massachusetts sources offer the following quotations:

- 1652 all Scotchmen, negroes, and Indians.  
 1656 negroes or Indians.  
 1669–1776 Slave statutes refer to ‘all slaves’ or ‘negro or other slaves’.  
 1692 Negro, Indian or mulatto [cannot marry whites].  
 1694 negroes, mulattoes and Indian servants.  
 1695 Negroes, Mulattoes and Indian servants.  
 1698 Indian, molato, or negro servant or slave.  
 1703 molatto or negro slaves;  
 Indians, mulattoes, and negroes.  
 1705 Negro and mulatto;  
 negro or mulatto;  
 negro or mulatto.  
 1786 negro, Indian, or Mulatto [cannot marry whites].<sup>95</sup>

Maine continued the style of Massachusetts:

- 1821 negro, Indian or mulatto [cannot marry whites].<sup>96</sup>

Connecticut uses these terms:

- 1650 Indians and negroes.  
 1660 Indian or negroes.  
 1677 runaway Indians.  
 1708 negro and mulatto servants and slaves.  
 1711 negro, mulatto, and Spanish Indians . . . servants.  
 1715 Indians and other slaves.  
 1723 negro and Indian servants and slaves.  
 1730 negro, Indian, and mulatto slaves.  
 1769 Indian, negro, or mulatto slave.  
 1774 Indian, negro, or mulatto slave.  
 1784 free negroes;  
 Indian, negro or mulatto slave;  
 negro or mulatto child.  
 1788 free negro, Indian, or mulatto;  
 such negroes or mulattoes.  
 1797 negro or mulatto child.  
 1848 any Indian, negro or mulatto slave.<sup>97</sup>

Rhodes Island usage is:

- 1712 negroes or Indian slaves.  
 1715 Indian slaves.  
 1728 mulatto or negro slaves.  
 1750 Indian, negro or mulatto servants or slaves.



- 1766 Indian slaves [reprint of 1715].  
 1770 free negroes and mulattoes.  
 1784 negroes, mulattoes, and others [freed].<sup>98</sup>

In New Hampshire:

- 1714 Indian, negro, or molatto servant or slave;  
 Indian slaves.  
 1718 Indian or negro servant.<sup>99</sup>

Pennsylvania records list:

- 1700 servants or negroes, etc., Indian slaves [not to be imported after 1706].  
 1711 Indians and negroes [prohibitory duty on].  
 1721 Indian and negro slaves or servants.  
 1725 Free negroes [idle people]; no free negro or mulatto to entertain any  
 negro, Indian or mulatto slave.  
 1738 [Philadelphia]: negroes, mulattoes and Indian servants and slaves.  
 1780 negroes and mulattoes [and] others; negro and mulatto; thereafter only  
 negro and mulatto appear.

Finally, there are a couple of references from Kentucky:

- 1798 negro, or mulatto, or Indian, bond or free [cannot strike a white].  
 1799 negroes, mulattoes, and Indians [cannot serve in militia].

and Indiana:

- 1817 No negro, mulatto, or Indian [can be a witness in white cases].<sup>100</sup>

The above examples are duplicated by ones from others states, and together they should illustrate the thesis that the term 'mulatto' can only be interpreted as referring to mixed persons with Native American ancestry being a potential part of the mixture, especially during the periods when Indians are identified as being servants or slaves alongside of Africans. It is apparent that no other terms, such as 'half-breed' or 'mustee', are utilized. 'Mulatto' is, therefore, the only legal referent to racially mixed persons of whatever background.

At this point, it would be well to note other evidence showing that the mixed African-American people in Massachusetts (a rather numerous group) were consistently referred to as 'mulattoes' (or as people of color). Paul Cuffe, the noted half-Indian, half-Black mariner and merchant, referred to himself and his relations in petitions as: of 'our Colour', 'Indian men', 'Indian men', and 'all free Negroes and molattoes'.

Similarly, Crispus Attucks who died in the Boston Massacre was of Native American extraction but called a mulatto. 'He is usually described as a mulatto, but it seems probably that he was a Natick Indian from Framingham who was also of Negro blood.'<sup>101</sup>

An 1847 report stated that most of the Indians in Massachusetts 'are of mixed blood; mostly Indian and African'. Throughout the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries Massachusetts reports make reference to three classes of people in Indian communities: Indians, mulattoes, and Negroes (or later, Indians and people of color). A 1767 report stated that at Mashpee there were various 'wigwams' and 'shingled houses' belonging to and inhabited by 'Indians and mulattoes'. It would seem that the term 'mulatto' was used for white-Indian mixed-bloods as well as for African-Indian hybrids. An 1802 report notes that 'the inhabitants of Marshpee are denominated Indians, but very few of the pure race are left. There are negroes, mulattoes, and Germans.' The 1808 census counted 357 'Indians, negroes and mulattoes' there.<sup>102</sup>

Now we should look at the colonies using the term 'mustee' in official statutes, since they present a slightly more complex problem. In essence, four racial terms (Indian, Negro, Mulatto, Mustee) are used in situations where six groups existed (Africans, Americans, American-Africans, American-Europeans, European-Africans, European-African-Americans). The problem, then, is to decide which of the four mixed groups are represented under which of the two terms available for mixed people. As noted earlier, the meaning of the term 'mustee' will be analyzed separately but my interpretation is, in essence, that mulatto means primarily African-European or European-American and mustee primarily African-American. (But by the 1790s mustee also refers to an African-European-American hybrid of a 'yellowish' or light character.)

South Carolina uses the following terms:

- 1690 negro or Indian slaves.  
 1703 [duties on] negro slaves imported and Indian slaves exported.  
 1712 An Act for the better ordering . . . of negroes and slaves refers first to negroes and other slaves and then repeatedly to 'negroes, mulattoes, mestizoes, and Indians' [all of whom have been sold are slaves]; any negro or Indian slave, or any other slave [can be baptized but is not free].  
 1716 [Only white men and no other can vote].  
 1718 [will] all my slaves, whether Negroes, Indians, mustees, or Molattoes.  
 1719 [For tax purposes] all mustees and mulattoes [slaves who are not pure Indian] are to be counted as negroes.  
 1720 such negroes, mulattoes, mustees, and Indian slaves [for militia service].  
 1722 any negro, mulatto, mustee or Indian slave (repeat of 1712); Spanish Indians, mustees, negroes and mulattoes.  
 1735 said negro or Indian, mulatto or mestizo;  
 any negro, mulatto, mustee or Indians.  
 1740 All negroes, Indians [free Indians in amity . . . , and negroes, mulattoes or mestizoes who are now free, excepted], mulattoes, or mestizoes . . . and all their issue . . . are . . . absolute slaves, and shall follow the condition of the mother; every negro, Indian, mulatto, and mestizo is a slave unless the contrary can be made to appear . . . (but) Indians in amity . . . excepted.



- 1741 [Spanish force includes 800 men, whites, mustees and negroes, and 200 Indians; refers to 1706 event].
- 1751 [Treaty with Cherokee Nation] If any Negro or Mulatto shall desert . . . the Indians shall . . . apprehend him . . . and no Trader shall carry into the Indian Country any Negro or other slave.
- 1768 [Battle fought in SC with] a numerous collection of outcast mulattoes, mustees, and free negroes.
- 1784 [Charleston swarms with] blacks, mulattoes and mestizos. . . there are here many free negroes and mulattoes.
- 1789 [Tax imposed on all] negroes, mustizos, and mulattoes.
- 1792 slaves or negroes, mulattoes, Indians, Moors, or mestizoes bound for a term of years [entry prohibited].
- 1800 [Unlawful for any] free negro, mulatto, or mestizo [to enter]; [also applies to] other persons of color.
- 1922 [Unlawful for whites to marry] an Indian, Negro, Mulatto, Mestizo, or half-breed.<sup>103</sup>

It is quite clear that the 'mestizo' class remained legally significant in South Carolina for a considerable period, while the pure Indian group is treated somewhat separately after about 1750 when the colonial authorities began to see the Creeks, Cherokees, and so on, as important pawns in the political-economic struggle with Virginia, the French, and the 'Northern' (pro-French) tribes. Likewise, most 'settlement Indians' were by then viewed as useful allies and/or as having become mestizos or mulattoes.

North Carolina records have the following:

- 1669 [Taxable are] every white male, aged 16; and every slave, negro, mulatto or Indian . . . age 12.
- 1705 Negro Indyan and Mallotta slaves [sold in Chowan County].
- 1715 [fine for a white person marrying] negroes, mulattoes, or Indians.
- 1723 [Act for added tax on all] free negroes, mulattos, mustees, and such persons . . . as now or hereafter shall be intermarried with any such persons.
- 1741 [Fine for a white person marrying] an Indian, Negro, Mustee, or Mulatto . . . or any person of mixed Blood to the Third Generation, bond or free.  
negro, mulatto or Indian slaves [cannot be freed];  
negroes, mulattoes, bond and free to the third generation, and Indian servants and slaves [cannot testify in white cases].
- 1750 Every negro, mulatto or mustee, and every other person of mixed blood to the fourth generation, 12 years of age [is tithable]; [earlier act referred to every slave, negro, mulatto, or Indian, male or female, age 12].<sup>104</sup>
- 1777 'Indians, negroes, etc.' [cannot be witnesses in white cases].
- 1826 All free mulattoes descended from negro ancestors to the fourth generation inclusive . . . shall be deemed free persons, and persons of mixed blood.

- 1835 [At State Constitutional Convention one delegate proposed]: that no free negro, mulatto, or person of mixed blood [can vote if convicted of a serious crime or unless he has \$500 worth of property; defeated 64-65, thus leaving vote only to free white males].
- 1838 a free negro, or free person of color to the third generation [cannot marry a white].

In New York:

- 1684 Indians and Negros [as slaves];  
Negros and Indians (as slaves).
- 1688 Negros and Indians.
- 1702 [tax on] every Negro or Indian slave [imported];  
Negro or Indian slave [suppression of evidence];  
Indian and negroes;  
negroes and Indians.
- 1706 [to encourage baptism of] negroe, Indian and mulatto slaves;  
All and every negro, Indian, mulatto and mestee bastard child . . . who . . . shall be born of any negro, Indian, mulatto, or mestee, shall follow ye state and Condition of the Mother and be esteemed . . . a slave.
- 1708 Negro, Indian and other slaves.
- 1712 No negro, Indian or mulatto hereafter made free shall enjoy . . . any houses, lands, tenements . . . within the colony.
- 1717 Negroe, Indian, or Malatto slave (several times).
- 1741 Spanish Negroes, Negro and other slaves (in slave insurrection).
- 1768 No squaw Mustee or mulatto female shall . . . have any house or cellar, or wigwam (in Smithtown, NY).
- 1788 Every negro, mulatto, or mestee . . . who . . . is a slave . . . shall continue as such . . . (but) the children of every negro, mulatto, or mestee woman, being a slave, shall follow the . . . condition of the mother.
- 1806 'people of color' means mulattoes, mustees, costees, etc., all colors from black to white.
- 1811 [Certificate of freedom needed by] blacks or mulattoes [seeking to vote].
- 1814 men of color; free blacks.
- 1817 Every negro, mulatto, or mustee [shall be free by 1827 if born before 1799].
- 1824 No negro or mulatto [shall vote in the councils of the Stockbridge Indians].
- 1827 [an act against kidnapping persons] other than negroes, mulattoes, or mustees.<sup>105</sup>

And finally in New Jersey:

- 1694 negroes and other slaves; negroes and Indians.
- 1702 [Baptism gives no freedom to] any negro, Indian or mulatto slave.
- 1713 Indian, negro or mulatto slaves.
- 1739 [Duty proposed on] Indian, Negroe and Mollatto slaves imported.



- 1751 servants, negroes and mulatto slaves.  
 1769 [Duty levied on] all negro, Indian or mulatto slaves [except from other colonies].  
 1798 that every negro, Indian, mulatto or mustee [is still a slave if had been one]; free negroes; negro, mulatto, mestee, or Indian.<sup>106</sup>

(The term 'mustee' seems to have been introduced very late into New Jersey in spite of much evidence of Indian slavery in the colony.)

Finally, we may note that the federal act of 1807 prohibiting the general importation of slaves refers repeatedly to 'any negro, mulatto, or person of color'. Are we to believe that slaves of Native American ancestry could still be legally imported from Spanish Florida or Texas perhaps? In any case, African-American persons must have been covered by the act.<sup>107</sup>

There are also many descriptions of 'mulattoes' found in court cases and runaway slave advertisements which attest to Indian-looking persons being regarded as mulattoes or to Indian features being within the range of characteristics ascribed to mulattoes. A few examples should suffice: First, a man named Robbins was denied the right to vote in North Carolina. In the 1856 court case it was noted that 'his father was a dark colored man with straight hair, and that his grandfather was a dark red-faced mulatto, with dark straight hair'. In a Kentucky case in 1848 it was alleged that a girl's mother was Jin, 'a mulatto woman and a slave'. Others said Jin was a free Indian woman. The girl, Rose Landerdale, was very white looking and 'has more or less Indian blood in her'. There was strong evidence that she was 'a bound or indented Indian girl, to be free at the age of 18 or 21'.

In the case of *Gobu v. Gobu* (North Carolina) a person secured his freedom because of possible Indian ancestry. As an infant he had been found in a barn. He was later described as being 'of an olive color, between black and yellow, had long hair, and a prominent nose. . . . such persons may have descended from Indians in both lines; or at least in the maternal; they may have descended from a white person in the maternal line or from mulatto parents originally free.' In 1768 in New Jersey an advertisement was placed for 'a molatto man, named Samuel Wright' born near Hampton, Virginia. He had 'bushy' hair and was 'rather red'. Finally, in 1890, Bret Harte summed up things well when he said that Boone Culpepper's wife was 'variously believed to be a gypsy, a Mexican, a bright mulatto, a Digger Indian'.<sup>108</sup>

Many other examples could be cited of a similar nature.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF THE MEANING OF 'MULATTO'

In 1793 a prominent Cherokee leader, Little Turkey, declared that the Spaniards were not 'real white people, and what few I have seen of them looked like mulattoes, and I would never have anything to say to them'.<sup>109</sup> This

statement, designed to please Anglo-Saxon ears, is perplexing only if we conceive of the term 'mulatto' as referring to a narrow mixture of Black African and European Caucasian. The 'Spaniards' of Florida and Louisiana were, of course, largely mixed with Arawak-Carib and North American native ancestry, as well as with Black African and North African.

What conclusions can we arrive at, after reviewing the various types of evidence discussed?

First, we have found that no term was available to the English to refer to people of mixed race or intermediate ('mongrel') appearance from the sixteenth century until the eighteenth century except for mulatto. The term 'half-breed' seems to appear by 1751 in South Carolina (but is used primarily for European-American hybrids living in Native-controlled areas).<sup>110</sup> The term 'people of color' appears by 1777 in North Carolina and by 1800 in South Carolina. It is, however, primarily popularized by Federal use in the census of 1800 and adopted gradually in the statutes of most states in the next two or three decades.<sup>111</sup>

'Mustee' is used by 1712 in South Carolina but its use tends to be restricted to a few colonies only on the mainland, although it was also adopted in Jamaica and Trinidad. As noted, dictionaries do not cite 'mestizo' until 1757.

In the formative period of interracial contact, from the 1590s through c.1700-50, the term 'mulatto' must generally refer to any type of mixed-blood, as is corroborated by the Virginia legislation of 1705. Still further, 'mulatto' remains the only term commonly used for mixed-bloods in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware and all of the New England colonies. Not enough evidence is available for Pennsylvania, while in New Jersey 'mulatto' is always the primary term used, 'mustee' being rare.

Although many early dictionaries specify that 'mulatto' refers to a half-African person, enough evidence has been assembled to show that the word was used also for mixed-bloods (or even Native Americans) who had no African ancestry.

In general, the term seems to be best translated as 'mixed', although at times 'a brown-colored person' might be a more apt rendering.

We can be certain, I believe, that most American-African hybrids were called mulattoes (until being called 'colored' or even 'negro' at a later date.) We can also, I think, be certain that European-American and European-American-African hybrids were also called 'mulattoes', except (and as above also) where the term 'mustee' was in common use.

It would seem that those many students of North American history and society who have been fascinated solely with the Black-White nexus or who have conceived of Black and Native American history as being two largely separate streams are going to have to re-examine their assumptions. This will have great implications for the study of the diffusion of central traits in areas as diverse as folk-tales, music, social structure, folk language and religion. Especially important will be the construction of the basic 'plantation' and 'free non-white' cultures, both in North America and around the Caribbean, into



which all later slaves and free people became subsequently immersed.

We must also re-examine the myth of the 'lusty' white men who produced an entire race of 'mulattoes', the image so exuberantly portrayed by several writers. It must be kept in mind that the early documented cases of white parentage run into the dozens, or hundreds at the most, in any given colony, while the numbers of Indians forcibly merged into the slave population in South Carolina alone seems to exceed the total of white parentage cases for *all* of the colonies. Admittedly there is a great deal of hearsay, sometimes inflammatory, evidence relating to the sexually active white planter and overseer, but hearsay evidence must, in the end, give way before concrete empirical data.

The 'free colored' population before the Revolutionary War developed largely by the natural growth of a people descended from parents and especially mothers who were born free and not from manumissions.<sup>112</sup> These free mothers were ordinarily, therefore, of European, Native American, or mixed ancestry.

It would seem clear that the entire conception of the origin of non-African ancestry within the United States' Afroamerican population requires rigorous re-examination. In 1712 John Norris provided advice to prospective planters: he told them to buy fifteen Negro men and eighteen Indian women, or, if they were starting out small, 'a good Negro man' and 'a good Indian woman'.<sup>113</sup> The implications of such evidence must now, at last, be taken to heart.

Finally, a new look needs to be taken at the many surviving Native American communities, primarily along the east coast, who have been denied recognition because of being classified in the past as mulattoes or people of color. Needless to state, the presence of African ancestry should be no bar to state and federal recognition as Indians but, in addition, the use of the terms analyzed herein provides no evidence, in and of itself, of specific African descent. That racial mixture has occurred is obvious but its significance for ethnic and cultural self-definition is a quite separate matter.

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## 8

# Mustees, Half-Breeds and Zambos

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I have earlier introduced evidence relating to the terms 'mestizo', 'mustee', and 'zambo', but it is still necessary to explore these concepts in greater depth, since all have direct relevance to the classification of people of American and African ethnic backgrounds in Anglo-North America and the Caribbean.

### THE TERM 'MUSTEE'

The forms 'mustee', 'mestizo', and 'mestee' were used commonly in the South Carolina region, in New York, and also in such British Caribbean colonies as Jamaica and Trinidad and in India. They clearly are derived from Spanish *mestizo* and Old French *mestis* (now *métis*).<sup>1</sup> The term means 'mixed' but came, in Spanish America, to refer most commonly to persons of European and American ancestry, as opposed to part-Africans.

Historians of North America have not been in agreement as to the meaning of the term in the English colonies. Peter H. Wood (in *Black Majority*) states that 'the term . . . came to be used in South Carolina to distinguish those who were part Indian, and the remainder of their ancestry was often African.' Winthrop D. Jordan, in an article about mulattoes, said: 'the term mustee . . . was used to describe a mixture which was in part Indian, usually Indian-Negro but occasionally Indian-white. The term was in common use only in the Carolinas, Georgia and to some extent New York.' The meaning is narrowed to a very precise one by Joel Williamson (1980) who states: 'there was also miscegenation between American Indians and Negroes. Offspring of such unions were usually called "mustees".'<sup>2</sup>

From the 1560s onward, and especially after the 1620s, the English came into frequent contact with Spanish-speaking mixed-bloods, many of whom were associated with the crews of ships raiding Spanish fleets and who were later captured and enslaved. In securing slaves the English seem to have been quite willing to abduct Spanish-speaking, Christianized persons, whether of