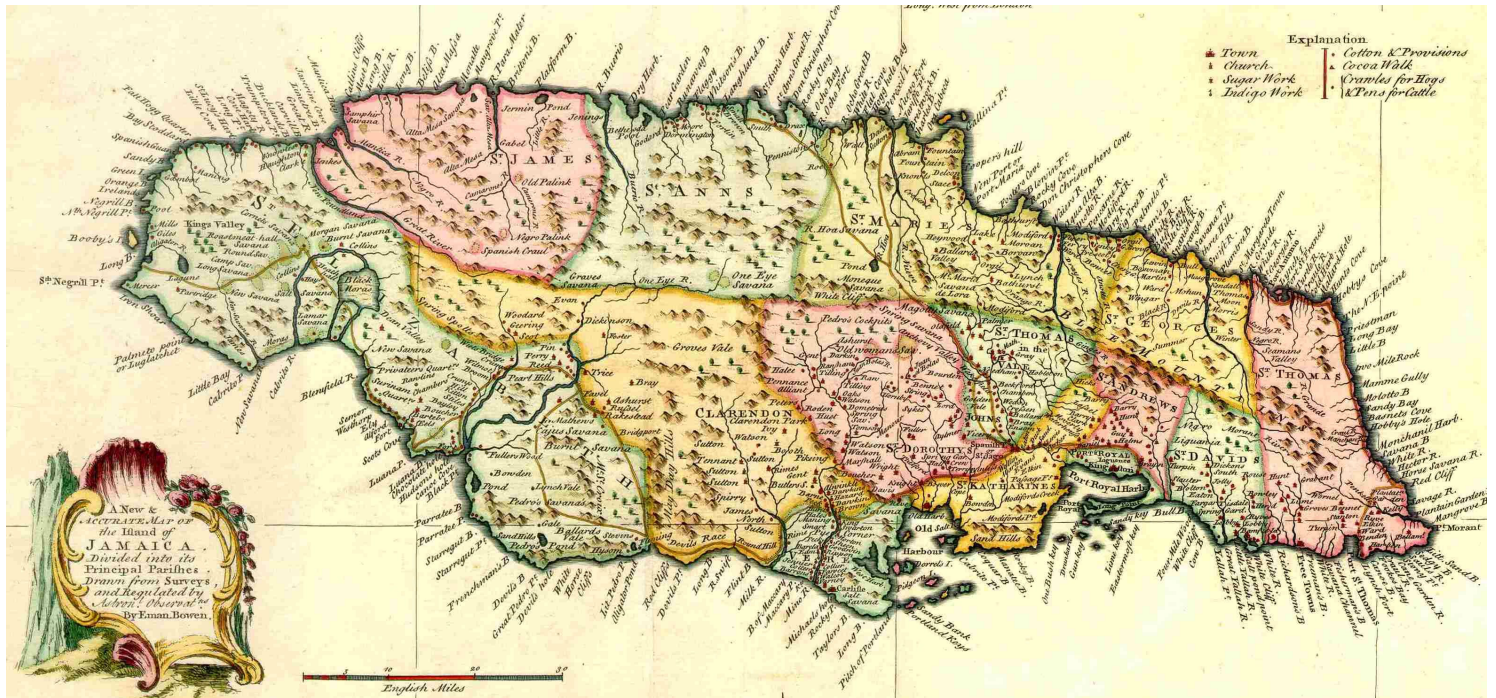


# The Myth of Colonel William Brayne and the "Irish slaves"



Liam Hogan Follow

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Map of Jamaica by Emanuel Bowen (1747)

*This is part six of my series debunking/contextualising the "Irish slaves" meme. See Part One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Seven.*

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If you have read any of the various "Irish slaves" articles and memes that are scattered across the internet you may have come across a striking quote attributed to Major-General William Brayne, a senior Cromwellian officer who hailed from Scotland and was briefly the Military Governor of Jamaica (1656–1657). This oft-repeated quote suggests

that "Irish slaves" were being beaten to death or worked to death in Jamaica and so Brayne apparently suggested that they be replaced with African slaves. Why? These articles claim that African slaves were treated *much better* than "white slaves" across the British West Indies and so it would be more humane for all concerned. But is this quote legitimate?

### Where this "quote" appears on the web.

One of the most influential "Irish slaves" blogs is an unreferenced and grossly inaccurate blog post that was published on a Kavanagh family history website in 2003. This blog was one of the main sources for that notoriously ahistorical "Global Research" piece that has been shared close to one million times on social media alone; and following the popular-with-white-supremacists claim about enslaved Africans receiving "much better treatment" than indentured servants, it includes this "quote" attributed to Brayne. Here's the excerpt.

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*"Although the Africans and Irish were housed together and were the property of the planter owners, the Africans received much better treatment, food and housing. In the British West Indies the planters routinely tortured white slaves for any infraction. Owners would hang Irish slaves by their hands and set their hands or feet afire as a means of punishment. To end this barbarity, Colonel William Brayne wrote to English authorities in 1656 urging the importation of Negro slaves on the grounds that, "as the planters would have to pay much more for them, they would have an interest in preserving their lives, which was wanting in the case of (Irish)...." many of whom, he charged, were killed by overwork and cruel treatment."*

— "Irish slaves in the Caribbean" by James F. Cavanaugh — *Clann Chief Herald* (2003)

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Ten years later this was copied almost word for word in a popular *Daily Kos* "forgotten white slaves" blog (shared over 63,000 times) and this piece was in turn re-published this year by the *Newport Buzz*, a Rhode Island online magazine.

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— "The slaves that time forgot" by gjohnsit, *Daily Kos*, (2013)

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It has since proliferated across the social web to the point where it is now an established part of the "white Irish slaves" tropology. The white supremacist webzine *American Renaissance* also used this trope when they argue that whites "had it worse" than blacks in Colonial America. Referring to Brayne they write how "one Briton on Barbados wrote to Cromwell urging him to bring more life-time black slaves to the island because expendable whites were being worked to death." This was similarly referenced in Jim Goad's *Redneck Manifesto* (1998) where he asserted that "One island commissioner reportedly petitioned Cromwell to switch over to black slavery, reasoning that since black slaves were a costlier, more permanent investment, the vicious overseers might *"take more interest in their preservation and so work them with moderation."*

Both authors have mixed up Barbados and Jamaica, but this is the *least* significant error with regards to this claim.

## Where does this disinformation originate?

One of the earliest publications that appears to have directly influenced these articles is a curious piece by Colonel A.B. Ellis entitled "White Slaves and Bond Servants in the Plantations" that appeared in *The Argosy* in 1883. It reached a wider audience when it was republished in the *Popular Science Monthly* magazine in **1893**. Ellis (who was then based in the British colonial outpost, Tower Hill barracks, Sierra Leone) stated...

*"...we find General Brayne, who arrived in Jamaica as governor in December, 1656, urging Cromwell to have negro slaves imported from Africa, on the ground that, as the planters would have to pay for them, they would have an interest in the preservation of their lives, which was wanting in the case of bond-servants, numbers of whom were killed by overwork and cruel treatment."*

So now it has changed. The victims are not "Irish slaves" but "bond servants". **That's the first major distortion.** Additionally, it is quite clear that Ellis' paraphrased version of the source has now *become* the quote, as if these were Brayne's actual words.

In fact, one of the most influential "white slaves" popular histories, *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America* (Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, 2008, p. 188) also runs with this. They quote Ellis but distort their source to make it appear as if they are quoting Brayne. This is how they present it.

*"A few years later, a Colonel William Brayne wrote a letter to Oliver Cromwell from Jamaica saying that the planters should employ Africans. The reasoning was that 'the planters would have to pay for them and would have an interest in preserving their lives, which was wanting in the case of bond servants'.*

They then inform their many thousands of readers that this communiqué directly led to the importation of "tens of thousands of Africans." Thus Jordan and Walsh bluntly claim that it was white suffering which influenced the rise of the transatlantic slave trade.

*"Such observations by the colonel and others led to tens of thousands of Africans being shipped into Barbados in the middle of the century."*

This same passage from Ellis is also used by the Holocaust denier and conspiracy theorist, Michael Hoffman II. In his self-published decontextualised screed about "white slavery" *They Were White and They Were Slaves* (p. 38, 1993) he states\* that

*"In the British West Indies the torture visited upon White slaves by their masters was routine. Master hung White slaves by their hands and set their hands afire as a means of punishment. To end this barbarity, Colonel William Brayne wrote to English authorities in 1656 urging the importation of negro slaves on the grounds that, "as the planters would have to pay for them, they would have an interest in preserving their lives, which was wanting in the case of (Whites)..." many of whom he charged, were killed by over work and cruel treatment."*

Comparing all of these versions we can now deduce that Cavanaugh and Goad got their disinformation from Hoffman, while Jordan and Walsh sourced Ellis directly. The *Daily Kos* blog draws on Cavanaugh and is thus indirectly endorsing Hoffman. You can also see how each author is distorting the passage for their own purposes. For Cavanaugh and the *Daily Kos* blogger they are "Irish" and for Hoffman they are "Whites".

## **Distortion also present in the Academy**

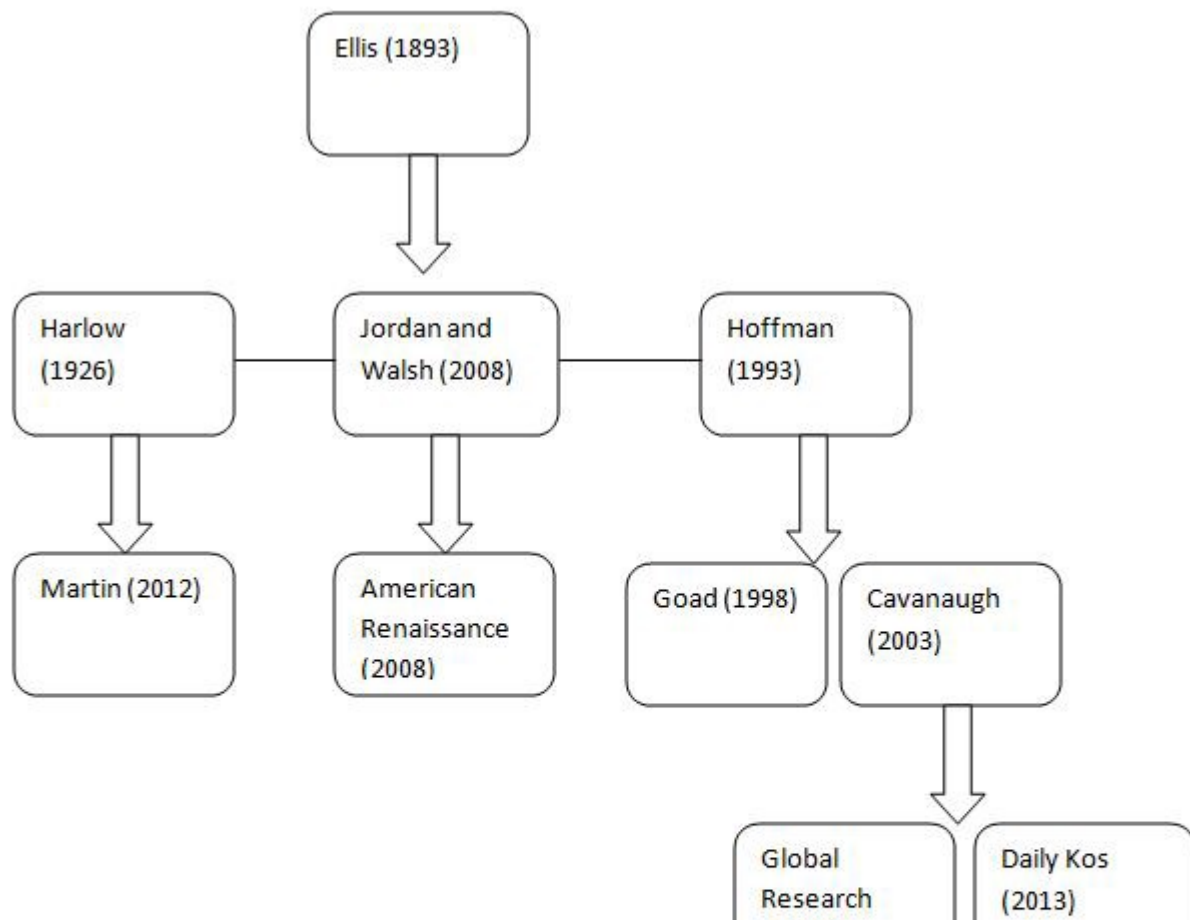
What's also interesting, if disconcerting, is that this same passage from Ellis is quoted occasionally in academia. The most influential is Vincent Harlow, a former Rhodes Professor of Imperial History at King's College London and Eric Williams' doctoral thesis supervisor. In his *A History of Barbados: 1625–1685* (1926) he quotes Ellis verbatim yet references it as appearing in the Thurloe papers, vol. v, p. 473. I have no explanation to

offer as to why he did this as it does not appear in the Thurloe papers and this is a grossly misleading passage in his otherwise very useful work. I can only guess that he was reluctant to cite Ellis and pretended he has referenced the primary source. I can only conclude that what Ellis was saying suited Harlow’s thesis and so he used it without checking its veracity, but made it appear as if he did.

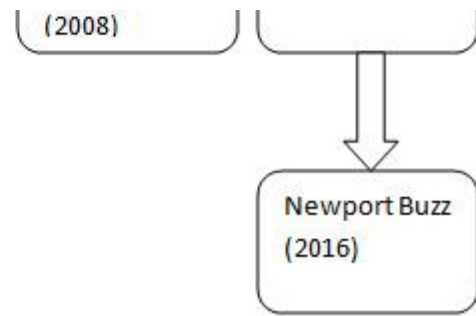
pector from jamaica urging him to have negroes imported from Africa, ‘because, as the planters would have to pay for them, they would have an interest in preserving their lives, *which was wanting in the case of bond servants*’, numbers of whom were killed by overwork and cruel treatment (*Thurloe*, vol. v, p. 473). Cf. Ligon, p. 43.

Harlow, *A History of Barbados: 1625–1685*, p. 303

Harlow has been drawn on by scholars for the past 90 years as it is assumed that his referencing of primary sources is consistent and legitimate. Not so in this case. One recent example I found is a fascinating PhD dissertation by Laura E. Martin (2012) which quotes from Harlow (page 38–39) and thus repeats the same erroneous distortion that appeared in Colonel Ellis’ article.







How this disinformation spread from the late 19th century to the present day.

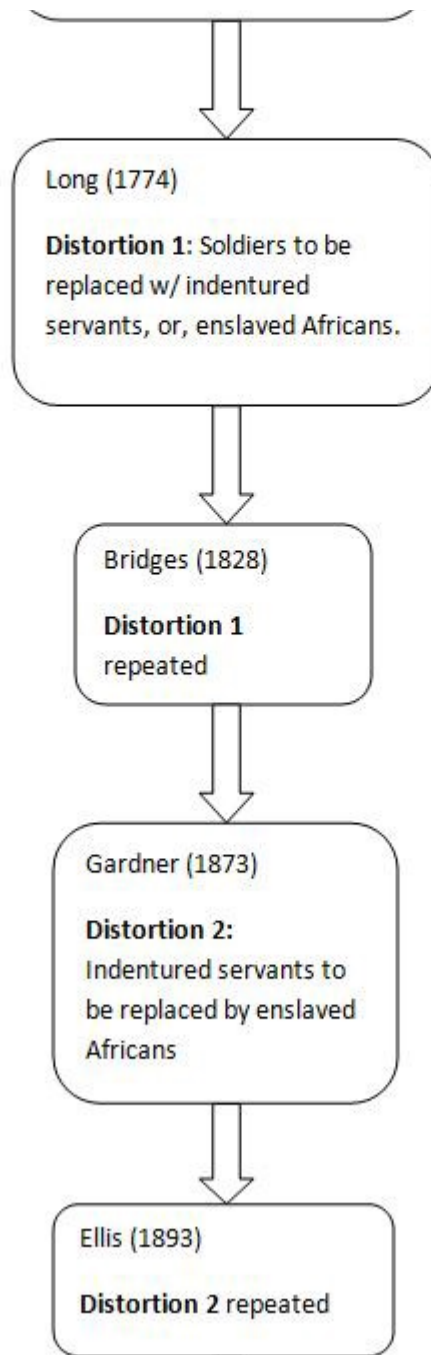
## Implication

All of the aforementioned authors are thus explicitly implying that English governors/administrators encouraged planters to enslave Africans as they thought it was the lesser of two evils. That racialised perpetual hereditary chattel slavery of people from Africa was *more humane* than time-limited bonded labour from Europe. They are claiming that the transatlantic slave trade was further invested in because indentured servitude was too cruel a system. This is important. While colonial servitude was indeed a cruel system primarily designed to exploit, and that at least two other seventeenth century contemporaries believed that indentured servants, because of their temporal status, were treated relatively “worse” than enslaved Africans, namely, Ligon and Esquemeling, it is this “quote” from Brayne which is specifically used by contemporary “white slavery” purveyors to rationalise the transatlantic slave trade, heighten white victimhood and diminish black suffering. It is also an important quote as it purportedly came from a military governor of an English colony in the Caribbean and thus carries more ideological weight than two contemporary witnesses.

Considering that this illusive quote is used to support such a spurious premise, it is vital that the primary source is reviewed to confirm what Brayne actually wrote. We also need to examine where Ellis is getting his information from. He evidently did not read the primary source, so what secondary source led him astray?

Brayne (1657)

**Primary Source:** Soldiers to be replaced w/ indentured servants from Britain and Ireland



How the Myth of Col. Brayne and the "white slaves" or "Irish slaves" is borne of a double distortion of the primary source.

## William James Gardner's History of Jamaica (1873)

It appears that the Rev. W.J. Gardner's general *History of Jamaica* is the likely culprit. Gardner writes

*"Alarmed by the mortality among English labourers, Brayne was induced to apply to Cromwell for an importation of African slaves, enforcing his plea by the argument that as their masters would have to pay for them, they would feel a greater interest in the*

*preservation of their lives than in that of mere labourers, and therefore be more careful only to work them to moderation."*

Gardner clearly did not read the primary source, so what secondary source did *he* rely upon? And again since he did not include any references, I can only take a guess at his source.

### **George Wilson Bridges' *The Annals of Jamaica, Vol. 1 (1828)***

In my view he has misrepresented George Wilson Bridges' *The Annals of Jamaica, Vol. 1 (1828)*. Bridges' version of events are that those suffering were not English labourers but Cromwellian soldiers and that Brayne was calling for either indentured servants or enslaved Africans to replace them. You'll notice that his reference to Africans is put second, but for some inexplicable reason Gardner removed the first and (as we'll soon see) most credible interpretation of Brayne's words.

The judicious policy of Brayne was rewarded by a large and happy increase. But the arts of cultivation have far less energy and effect than the spontaneous vigour of nature, and of freedom. The vigour of the soldiers, who were now urged to labour beyond their strength, soon melted beneath a vertical sun: many who possessed not the means to settle plantations of their own, sold their services to their more fortunate neighbours, and perished beneath the toils imposed upon them. The Governor, in this emergency, applied to the Protector for a supply of indentured servants, or an importation of African slaves; urging, that "their masters having by this means an interest in their servants, would be more careful of them, and work them more moderately."



We are now getting closer to the truth. But we are not quite there yet.

Bridges, in turn, has almost certainly taken his information from Long's *History of Jamaica* (1774)

### **Edward Long's The History of Jamaica (1774)**

Unlike most of the above works, Long attempts to set Brayne's letter in context. He describes the challenges faced by the first Cromwellian troops and colonists in Jamaica (the latter were a group from Nevis led by the Governor of that colony) and how Brayne tried to improve their chances of survival and consolidate the settlement. Long, holding the view that the planter-soldiers were being overworked by their officers, refers to Brayne's letter as follows (p. 269)

“This was found much too severe for their broken constitutions, and moved the general [Brayne] to propose, that the Protector should send over a number of indented servants, or a supply of Africans, giving as a reason, “*that their masters, having by this means an interest in their servants, would be more careful of them, and work them more moderately; by which many lives would be saved, and the plantations more forwarded.*” This clearly insinuates, that he thought the soldiers had been urged to labour beyond their strength; and that many had perished from this cause, whose deaths were regarded by their officers with indifference, as the loss fell on the state or public, and not on them.”

Is this accurate? Not exactly. Long has omitted some important details which I will explore shortly. We should be generally wary of Long's historical writing. He was an enslaver of Africans in Jamaica and an influential pro-slavery propagandist. Petley has observed that “Long's work played an important part in the codification of pro-slavery and racist thought, and the *History of Jamaica* inspired subsequent polemics by slaveholders.” But I digress.

All of the above have misrepresented, to various degrees and in various ways, Brayne's words and meaning. So let's take a look at the actual letter and then place it in historical context.

## Excerpt of a letter from Major-General William Brayne to Secretary Thurloe (9 July 1657)

*“Through God’s mercy all the shipping you mention came safe hither, whereby through God’s mercy and his highnes’s care we are very well supplied for a long time to come; and I hope before it be all spent wee shall ease his highnes and the state of much chardge, if God give a blessing to our endeavours. Wee are now generally healthfull, except those that came last, of which wee must expect to loose a considerable number; their dyett and behaviour is soe irregular, and it is impossible to compell them to the contrary, for their first fitt of sicknes takes away their intellectualls; yet there is nothing neglected, that may tend to their preservation: but if servants were sent, they that have interest in them will be more carefull of them, and worke them moderately, by which many more lives would be saved, and plantations more forwarded.”*

*Cagway Bay, Jamaica, 9 July 1657*

After reading Brayne’s actual words we can quite clearly see that Long was distorting his source. Nowhere does it directly insinuate that soldiers were being worked to death by their officers. Brayne says that he expected a high death rate among “those that came last” as “their diet and behaviour is so irregular” but this is due to “sicknes.” He likely refers to the Cromwellian troops that arrived with Col. Moore from Ireland in January 1657 (this is the “last” arrival of troops that I could ascertain) who were going through what was referred to as “seasoning” i.e. contracting yellow fever or malaria. If we read between the lines it is clear that efforts were made to convince these men what to do to survive the conditions but this was apparently in vain and Brayne lamented that “it is impossible to compel them to the contrary.” Brayne noted that as these new arrivals became ill this impaired their judgement as to what to do, “yet there is nothing neglected, that may tend to their preservation.” *Nothing neglected.* This flies in the face of Long’s interpretation. Mortality rates were shockingly high among Cromwellian troops and settlers in Jamaica at this time (not *normalising* until post-1658) and most of the deaths were due to yellow fever, malaria, other tropical diseases, hunger, and sporadic attacks launched by the Spanish and maroons. So, rather than Long’s inference about a supposed “indifference” to their deaths, this group were apparently offered advice, support and possibly provisions to help them survive.

### Aspirational

It is quite clear that Brayne was making an aspirational request for civilians (indentured servants, voluntary and/or involuntary) to settle Jamaica so that it would be firstly self-sufficient and then secondly a profitable colony. It is evident from all the communication from Jamaica at this time that many of the soldier-planters were reluctant to tend the land, due to infighting, understandable anxiety at being forced to stay on an island in the midst of a plague, and exploitation by some of their superiors (one of whom was later court martialled). Many were preferring instead, as soldiers were used to, to rely on the import of provisions and were thus a constant charge on the treasury. Others were apparently being overworked due to the martial nature of command. If you read Brayne's, D'Oyley's and Sedgwick's letters they all make the same observation about the unsuitability and unwillingness of the soldiery to planting or to be (illegally) transformed into unpaid servants and the need for indentured servants to be sent (see Appendix below). They also make multiple requests for servants from Britain and Ireland to be sent to Jamaica. Before Brayne arrived in December 1656 there had been a dispute among the soldiers and officers over the land. Some officers wanted the soldiers to become their servants, while the soldiers wished to co-own the land. Brayne sided with the soldiers and dismissed the officers who he determined were causing the unrest. His call for servants would also have reduced this tension by putting a fixed class structure in place. What also strengthens this reading is the language used. Brayne made a similar call in an earlier letter referring to a "good store of servants."

“If the governors of the Caribe Islands were sett right for this designe, or good store of servants sent, this island wold soone be planted.” — Brayne to Secretary Thurloe, 27 April 1657

This is the exact same phrase that Richard Ligon used when referring to indentured servants in his well-known account of 1640s Barbados. If Brayne was alluding to Africans he would have used the term "negro" or modified/qualified his request by adding this term. Another factor is that Brayne was struggling to suppress the maroons in Jamaica (a community of Africans, previously enslaved by the Spanish) and had requested (9th July 1657) the importation of bloodhounds to assist his troops. It is

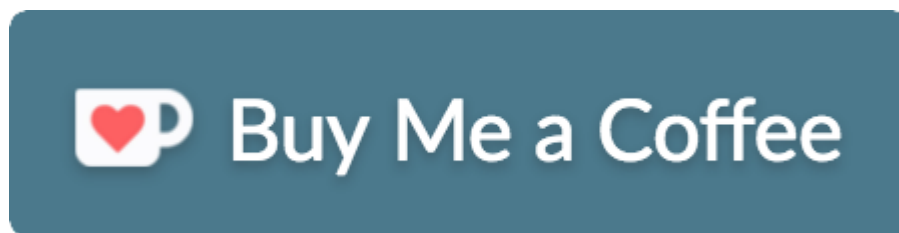
extremely unlikely that he would have sought to increase the population of Africans on the island when his men were suffering so much from their presence.

It is useful to look to the English colony in Antigua for a similar call for servants (free or bonded) to be sent there from Britain and Ireland. The Governor of Antigua, Colonel Christopher Kaynell, petitioned the Committee for Trade and Navigation to “preserve Antigua from present ruin and destruction.” He noted that “No supplies of servants have of late arrived from England; number of fighting men very inconsiderable. Unless some speedy course is taken to remedy these evils, the island will be quite deserted, and if it fall into the possession of an enemy, the utter ruin of all the English plantations in those parts will be imminent.” He thus proposed (16 April 1656) that English servants should be sent over “as prisoners and the like, if not, Scotch and Irish.” He also petitioned the Council of State (1 July 1656) for a “garrison of 500 soldiers to be kept on the island, or a supply of English and Scotch servants , with arms, ammunition and negroes.” You’ll note the differentiation between “servants” (Europeans) and “negroes” (enslaved Africans). Kaynell, like many other prominent English merchants, had no qualms about requesting coerced labour from England, Scotland and Ireland and concluded his petition with “A continued supply of servants necessary as prisoners, and the like. Course for their transportation.” They wanted this forced labour to be continuous and requests fulfilled *on demand*. He also separately proposed to Col. Jones (Council of State) that Antigua be “supplied with 400 or 500 servants.”

This is part six of my series debunking the “Irish slaves” meme.

See Part One, Part Two, Part Three, Part Four and Part Five

After reading this second sentence of the passage quoted from *We Were White and We Were Slaves* we now know that Hoffman is the source for a portion of a racist meme that I debunked last year.



[CLICK HERE](#)

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## Appendix — Excerpts of Letters from Jamaica (1655–1657)

**5 November 1655**

### **Major Sedgwicke to Cromwell**

For the army, I found them in as sad, and deplorable, and distracted a condition, as can be thought of; and indeed think, as ever poor Englishmen were in; the commanders some having left them, some dead, some sick, and some in indifferent health; the soldiery many dead, their carcasses lying unburied in the high-ways, and among bushes to and again; many of them, that were alive, walked like ghosts or dead men, who, as I went through the town, lay groaning and crying out, bread for the Lord's sake.

The truth is, when I set my foot first on land, I saw nothing but symptoms of necessity and desolation. I found the shore thereabout filled with variety of several casks and hogsheads, punchions, butts, barrels, chests, and the like, and several dry goods of the state's, as linnen shirts and drawers, shoes, stockings, hats, armor, arms, and nails, with divers other things lying without any shelter, exposed to all the damage, that either rain or sun could do to them, and to the thest and rapine of either soldiers, or strangers, who without question imbezzled much of them. All that little bread they had, which was about thirty thousand, only kept in cask without doors, and much of it damnised by weather, which bread was kept to distribute a little to the soldiers, and most, when sent out upon parties. The people here were in daily expectation of a supply of provisions, yet made not the least preparation for the receiving of them. It is a wonder to consider so many wise men, that had been here, should leave so much of the state's goods so exposed to ruin, that were so absolutely necessary for the well-being of the army, when in a few days a few men might have made a house to have secured them all; but so things lay, as if men had run away in a strange distracted affrighted condition, as leaving all to the spoil, and never once looking back.

As soon as we arrived here we had four merchant ships to unlade, having near a thousand tuns of provisions in them. We first set the ships to be taking in their proportion; and in the interim with the help of admiral Goodson, who was very active, the seamen built a store-house at the landing place, to receive the soldiers provisions,

which being a hundred foot in length, and 25 foot broad, was finished in six or eight days; so that in sixteen days we had the four ships delivered, and the goods housed in good condition, **with little or no help from the army, they being a people in such condition, as they had rather die than work.**

As soon as the provisions were landed, we forthwith set out a proportion for the soldiery, allowing to each man half a pound of bread a day, and to every four men either a pint of oatmeal, or a pint of peas, or a pound of flower per day; and at this proportion we accounted the provisions would extend to five or six months, a short allowance, but it was that they were at present glad of. We had no sooner thus settled ourselves in our business, but God visited the major general with sickness, and in four or five days snatched him away.

The condition of the army is at present very sad and sickly; and unless God in mercy stay his hand, will all perish, and shall be as water spilt upon the grass, that cannot be gathered up again. We caused lately a muster to be made both of quantity and quality of the soldiers, a copy whereof is here enclosed. The greatest part of them are sick, which is really true, and those set down well are pitifully well. We landed 831 in col. Humfrey's regiment, lusty, healthful, gallant men, who encouraged the whole army. There are at this day 50 of them dead, whereof two captains, a lieutenant, and two ensigns, the colonel himself very weak, the lieutenant colonel at death's door. I think all the captains sick, not above four commission-officers in that regiment now fit to march, and the men most part of them sick. Col. Doyley is fallen sick again, and col. Carter very weak; as also divers other field officers. Soldiers die daily; I believe 140 every week; and so have done ever since I came hither. It is strange to see young lusty men, in appearance well, and in three or four days in the grave, snatch'd away in a moment with severs, agues, sluxes and dropsies, a conslucence of many diseases. The truth is, God is angry, and the plague is begun, and we have none to stand in the gap. God goeth on in destroying to destroy us, and tells us, he will take no delight in us by his ways and outgoings towards us; and there hath been, I fear, in all this design nothing but wrath and heavy displeasure. I would not grieve, but my heart and soul grieveth, when I think of Hispaniola business; one or two negroes to make 500 Englishmen sling down their arms, and run away.

**The soldiery here, most part of them, hope your highness will still be mindful of them, either to employ them, or send for them home again. Dig or plant they**



**neither can nor will, but do rather starve than work.** They might have planted so much provision, as might have kept them alive. There is some little thing done in that kind, and but little; so that unless there be more supply of provisions, if the people live, they will perish for want of food. However God disposeth your heart to this, I humbly beg, that your highness would cast an eye this way, that these poor people be not made a sacrifice to the enraged enemy; who else, I know, must of necessity perish by the sword, if they be not here guarded by your highness's favour, which I no way question or doubt.

**24 January 1656**

**Major Sedgwicke to Secretary Thurloe**

...The sick and low estate of our army puts us upon much trouble in our actings; it is certain we have enemies both of Spaniards and Blacks in the island, and they watch for an opportunity of our men; **as for planters we have not above one family settled, if one amongst us, neither do I expect any from our English colonies, till God give health amongst us.** Here hath come down to us from many of the windward islands divers people, with intentions of sitting down with us, but at their coming hither, either fall sick and die, or are so affrighted and dismayed, as that although to their much impoverishing, yet will not be persuaded to stay with us. **Many women, that came down to their husbands, finding them to be dead, have sold themselves for servants to be gone upon other plantations rather than abide with us, though we have offered them any encouragements to remain here.** Divers small merchantmen, that have been with us, that are gone to most of our English plantations from hence, have carried I know sad and dismal reports of our sad condition, which makes me fear we can expect but few to come to us.

As for our present condition in respect of provision, we all, both fleet and army, are wholly supplied out of the common magazine of English provisions, and they are not so apt to keep here as in other places. I pray God they fail us not, when we come most to make use of them.

**12 March 1656**

**Major Sedgwicke and Vice Admiral Goodson to Cromwell**

...we have as much as we could animated our souldiers to planting; something they do, but not much..."

**12 March 1656**

## **Major Sedgwicke to Secretary Thurloe**

As for the present state of the army, although they be far more healthful than they have been, yet they are but weak many of them, however, getting strength daily, albeit some die, and many are brought so low, that I know they will scarcely recover.

There are two things by his highness principally enjoyned us to put them upon, fortification and plantation. Should I give you a character of the dispositions and qualifications of our army in general, some few particulars excepted, I profess my heart would grieve to write, as it doth to think of them. **I believe they are not to be paralleled in the world, a people so basely unworthy, lazy and idle**, as it cannot enter into the heart of any Englishman, that such blood should run in the veins of any born in England, so unworthy, slothful and basely secure, and have out of a strange kind of spirit desired rather to die than live.

The [fortification] work, so far forth as is effected, hath been wholly done by the seamen, without any help from the army, save by a few carpenters belonging to the train.

As for planting there is but little done in it, and the truth is I verily believe little will, though they have had all the entreaties and encouragements that were possibly in our power to assist them. **The commanders and officers say the soldiers will not plant**, when it is most certain they are not willing they should, but still stand gaping to go off the island as after a goal-delivery, and you may be confident there will be little done that way by this sort of people. Such kind of spirit breathing in Englishmen, I yet till now never met withal."

Concerning the state of the enemy on shore here, the Spaniard is not considerable, but of the Blacks there are many, who are like to prove as thorns and pricks in our sides, living in the mountains and woods, a kind of life both natural, and, I believe, acceptable to them, and are enemies to us, looking upon us a bloody people, giving no quarter. I am sure they give none to us, but destroy our men: there scarce a week passeth without one or two slain by them, and as we grow secure, they grow bold and bloody: a people that know not what the laws and customs of civil nations mean, neither do we know how to capitulate or discourse with them, or how to take any of them, though there is a work we are now contriving to effect, for be assured they must either be destroyed or brought in

upon some terms or other, or else they will be a great discouragement to the settling of a people here.

**The island, if planted by an industrious people, would questionless answer any labour bestowed upon it, and be exceeding profitable to the inhabitants and to the states of England,** and as convenient to the carrying on our design in the Indies as can be thought of; but as for planters, we have not one yet settled amongst us: we have sent letters to all the colonies in the Indies of our present state and health, and give all encouragements that in us lay, and we hope that governour Stokes with his people may come to us.

**18 April 1656**

**Col. D'oyley, to Secretary Thurloe**

We are much afraid of want; our provision beginning to spoyle, and the quantity much shrunke. **We cannot yet make our soldiers sensible of their condition, nor without severitye plant soe much as provision for themselves. Wee have forced them to work for feare of hunger. Something they have done, which may stop a gap, till we are further supplied, but not at all considerable as to provision.** The enemy hath of late by ambuscados infested us, and slaine divers of our men; and planting, which is so necessary, that wee cannot expect to hold out without it, takes up all our men's tyme and labour. Indeed I cannot judge, but that is neither souldiers nor planters from the other islands do come hither, wee cannot long keep the place, the advantages of the enemy being able to poise the difference in numbers. Wee have endeavoured all meanes to treat with them but cannot. The best part of our fleet is gone to see what they can do on the coast. Wee looke on our selves as very unhappy, that wee should suffer soe much by the heate of the climate and continuall distempers, and want, and yet doe our nation noe service. **We hope we shall have his highness best construction, here being many very desirous to serve their country and his highness, though we have the continual clamour of home, home.** For my owne parte, I am still prepared for his service, if I could understand his commands; and shall endeavour the utmost to evidence, that I was **not borne for myselfe, but for my nation.**

[Postscript]: we have had a threatning danger, **some of coll. Buller's regiment being discontented at plantinge, and lesseninge their bread by a quarter of a pound a daie, conspired to revolt from us;** and accordingly 20 and more marcht from us,

whome wee pursued, and tooke; executed three of the most notorious, and pardoned the rest.

### 30 April 1656

#### Major-General Sedgwicke to Thurloe

More than forty of our souldiers were cutt off by the Negros, as they were carelessly going about their quarters, such a sordid neglectfull speritt doth still possess them as 'tis to admiration; since which time wee have cut off 7 or 8 of them, the first worke of that nature done by us since my arrivall heere; but a day or 2 before about 30 of our souldiers in a discontent forsooke their quarters and coullers, with an intent either to joyne with the enemy, or to doe as great mischeife, or otherwise it was a conspiracy of many, but God in mercy timely prevented it, for they were soone reduced, and I hope the rest will be quiet, three of the chiefest of them being executed.....

Sir, suffer mee without greiving you to lett you know my thoughts. **I must againe say wee are here generally a most unworthy people, altogether unsuitable to the settlement of a plantation; and I am confidently bold to affirme, that little will be done by them,** and I cannot but think, his highness is either sending down to us a sufficient supply of forces to attacque some considerable place in the Indies, or else people to settle the island in a civill way of government, thereby to withdrawe this excessive charge, which by the way wee are yett in, will effect nothing but an exhausting of treasure from you.

### 30 April 1656

#### Capt. Wm. Godfrey to Robert Blackborne [Secretary to the Admiralty Commissioners]

Sent account of proceedings by the Grantham which sailed 14 March, as also of God's goodness in stopping the raging fury of mortality in the Army which is almost destroyed. If he may speak his thoughts, believes the soldiers were much bound up with thoughts of their own strength, not considering the power of God's ability, and with covetous expectations of Indian treasure. **As yet no planters are come down to them, our soldiers are too much addicted to sloth, and would rather famish than use means of preservation. A few days since a number of them revolted, but most of them were retaken and three of the ringleaders hanged. Most of the Spaniards have deserted the Island and now and then we receive opposition from the negroes and**

**mulattoes who slew about 40 of our soldiers about a month since.** There is great want of seamen to supply the places of those dead, and **provisions are getting scarce,** not having above 4 months in the fleet. There are 11 sail abroad with the Admiral.

### **30 April 1656**

#### **Capt. Mark Harrison to the Admiralty and Navy Commissioners**

The soldiers are being employed by the Commissioners in planting, and it not being relished by many, about 25 of them ran from their colours but were retaken and some of them executed. A party of soldiers lately fell upon some negroes as they were in Council and killed eight, the rest escaping save one woman, which is the first service they have done upon the enemy since his arrival, and **it is supposed they were the negroes who killed so many of our men.**

### **30 April 1656**

#### **Capt. Ja. Tarry to Blackborne**

Last week 30 soldiers ran away but were retaken and three hanged as an example. A party of soldiers also fell upon some plantation negroes, killed eight and took a boy and a woman.

### **5 June 1656**

#### **Instructions for Colonel Brayne, Commander in-Chief in Jamaica**

...To take into consideration how the island may be most speedily and effectually planted....

### **10 October 1656**

#### **Captains Jeffery Dare and Mark Harrison to [Commissioners of the Admiralty]**

...no visible enemy now appears except some few negroes...

### **10 January 1657**

#### **Colonel Brayne to Secretary Thurloe**

I beseech you let not money and provisions be delayed, least their bee a shipwracke in the very harbour's mouth of all our endeavours. I **finde all the land affaires in very great confusion here, and difficultys rather greater than they were in the beginning, plantations being raised, and seeds and plants not to bee had; soe that I**

must bee forced to send to other Islands for them, stores imbezilled, great animosities betwixt officers and souldiers, and want of performance of duty on both sides; great want of able accomptants, as also of men cordiall to the busines. Yet I hope God will bring us thro' all these difficultys.

I promised in my last to give you an account of Barbados. At my comeing there, I found a generall aversness, even of those in authority, to this designe, which I endeavoured to satisfy, and enquireinge diligently into the cause, I finde the takeing of persons thence doth in their oppinions lessen their profit, the excise of goods being employed to their's and the country's benefit; to remedy which, if their were an able person sent over as attorney, or solliciter for his highnes, to raise and take care for all dewes, that belong to his highnes, as excise, petty impostes, fines, forfeitures, amerciaments, and all other perquisits of courts, I easily believe it might be worth 10,000 l. per annum; part whereof might bee laid out for necessary fortification by some able engineer, that allready done there being of no worth, and great cost; **besides, the remayneing part might ease his highnes's charge here, and might bee ordered to pay for the transport of men from thence hither, there being many continually made free, who cannot have plantations upon that place, and the great men there doe now see, that though they have hindered them from comeing hither, yet they daily departe thence to other plantations.**

**12 March 1657**

**Colonel Brayne to the Protector**

...about two thirds of the planters that came along with him [Governor Stokes from Nevis] the rest in a very sickly condition, and in danger of starveing (though the earth produceth in abundance of what they planted); but they are so weake, that they are neither able to gather the old, nor to plant againe. The children of colonel Stoakes are an object of your highnes pittie and charitie, their estate being but small, and they yong. **Neere a third part of the souldiery that came along with me are dead, and many of the rest sick.** I have delivered out the last moneth's provision that I had for souldiery and fleete, soe that if some supply come not before that be ended, we shal be in great hassarde of starveing. Our onely hopes is, that (through God's providence and your highnes care) something will arrive before this be all spent. **The old souldiery here are generally in good health, and have planted much within these two moneths; but I seare necessitie will compell them to take that up againe before it be neere its full**



**growth, and soe waste that in few dayes, which in a competent time would have bin sufficient to have maintained them.** I have done my utmost to prevent it, by sending out those that have shoes and competent cloathing to kill cattle, to supply the sicke, and them that attend the plantations. Those of the new souldiery that are in health, I have ordered to help the Nevis planters, to gett meate by their labour. I have ordered the fleete to the several quarters of the iland, to kill cattle, and soe to lengthen out their provisions. I have sett people at worke, to make fault; and I hope there wil be sufficient to lade back the New-England vessels, when they shall come hither with provisions. I have also imployed a German, to catch and tame cattle (he having done the same formerly in Brazelle); he is to have every fiste beast for himselfe, the other sower parts I shall divide among them that are in greatest want. I have likewise sent to New-England for provisions, soe that I am not conscious to my selfe of neglecting of any thing that might tend to the conservation of our lives, if the Lord please to blesse these weake endeavours. I have sent the Martin-galley with letters to Bermudas, to perswade the inhabitants to remove hither; she is to touch at Barbadoes, Nevis, and Christophers; but the interest of the governours being to keepe the inhabitants there (they receaving benefitt by them) I feare I shall have little successe therein; yet I thought it my duty to attempt.

**12 March 1657**

**Colonel Brayne to Secretary Thurloe**

...my utmost endeavours shall never be wanting to preserve our selves and the place, **though the hearts of our souldiery, by reason of sicknes and wants, is brought very lowe, most being barefoote, and some scarcely cloathed to cover their nakednes, and some dead by famine, they having eaten in one weeke as much as was allowed them for a moneth.** I found nothing considerable here, and brought little with me (two of our ships miscarrying by the way) and I may truly say, that all that we had hath bin husbanded to the utmost advantage.

**18 April 1657**

**Lieutenant-General Brayne to the Protector**

Our present condition is sadd, neither fleete nor land-forces haveing any provisions. The land-forces I have dispersed, some of them into the most convenient places for hunting; and as many as can live upon the plantations, I have ordered to stay there, and to continue their labour. Also part I have sent to assist the

planters at Port Morant, soe that most are in a probable way of subsisting, **onely the sicke and lame are in danger of starveing; and some little provisions being reserved for them, the knowledge of it hath trebled the former number of them: so base a spirit are they, that they care not how they live, soe they may not work.**

This year hath been so full of raines, that we could make but small quantities of salt as yet, otherwise could have helped ourselves much with turtle. **Besides the souldiers are forced to neglect the strictness of their martiall duty, by rambling to seeke a livelihood;** soe that if the enemy from Spaine shold attempt us in this condition, I **greatly fear the soldiers wold make but weake resistance, their spirits have bin soe dejected by the wante of necessary foode and rayment; but many of the officers (through the assistance of God) seeme resolved to sell their lives as deere as they can;** but had we had a competence of provisions or moneys to have bought, we needed not, through God's mercy, feare any force of the enemys.

I am allsoe credibly informed, that **the gouvernours of these islands are a greate hindrance to the peoples removeing hither, by deteining them for debts (though they have treble the summe oweing to them upon the island) and by nourishing disadvantage or false reports of this place;** and enquireing into the reasons, I finde, that they have good estates there, therefore have an eye to their owne security; besides their pay is by their poll of the inhabitants, soe that the goeing off of any is a manifest disadvantage to them. I thought myselfe bounde in duty to acquaint your highnes with it, because I humbly conceave, **there is noe other probable waye of cheape and speedy planting of this place, but from these islands;** therefore may well deserve a speedy remedie.

**27 April 1657**

**General Brayne to Secretary Thurloe**

...Two moneths provisions at this time wold probably have put us out of all danger of starveing hereafter; but now, I feare, we shall spoyle all our former labours, besides the losse of the best season of the yeare. I am at present but in weake condition, haveing had much blood taken from me to prevent the malignitie of a fever, which I was, by all symptomes, in great danger of; therefore hope your honour will excuse this rude scribling of

Your honor's most oblidgeed servant,  
Will. Brayne.

Cagway in Jamaica, 27 April 1657.

**If the governors of the Caribe Islands were sett right for this designe, or good store of servants sent, this island wold soone be planted.**

**20 June 1657**

**Capt. D. Cookin to secretary Thurloe**

The disposing hand of God hath so ordered that affayre of transplanting New-England people unto Jamaica, that a further account is scarsly worth his highness's knowledge; yet duty obliedging me, I dare not omitt it. So it is, that **since the returne of those, that went to view the island from hence, and the inteligence by the last of them, of the mortalitie amongst the Nevis planters, such a dampe is put to the most active ingagers, that all are silent to a remove at present.** I am apt to thinke, that divers of them will find cause to repent of this their change, and breach of promise, seeing there is no just cause of discouragement as I can perceive. As for that of Nevis men, that place (as I heare) was ominous to the Spanyard for unhealthfulness; and all men, even those that went, report the delicasy and fertility of the island, which, by God's blessing, would have been a meanes to put a change unto some of their low conditions...

**9 July 1657**

**Lieutenant-general Brayne to secretary Thurloe**

Through God's mercy all the shipping you mention came safe hither, whereby through God's mercy and his highnes's care we are very well supplied for a long time to come; and I hope before it be all spent wee shall ease his highnes and the state of much chardge, if God give a blessing to our endeavours. **Wee are now generally healthfull, except those that came last, of which wee must expect to loose a considerable number; their dyett and behaviour is soe irregular, and it is impossible to compell them to the contrary, for their first fitt of sicknes takes away their intellectualls; yet there is nothing neglected, that may tend to their preservation:** but if servants were sent, they that have interest in them will be more carefull of them, and worke them moderately, by which many more lives would be saved, and plantations more forwarded.

The batchellors here complayne much, that the married men are payd their fourth part, but not they, who desired me to represent it to his highnes; and in truth my judgment is, that it would redound more to the benefitt of the state, if the batchellors were payd; for then it wold be returned hither, either in money, goods or servants; whereas that given to wises is spent in victualls and cloathes.

**I heare his highnes doth intend to send Col. Holdip hither, which will breed great disturbance here, he is soe extreemly hated for his crueltie and oppression, which thay say he hath executed in the Indies.** Mr. Martin Noell can informe you more fully in the busines, to whom I have written more particularly.

**Colonel More, at his arrival here from Ireland, was very earnest to returne back.** I could him it was too soone, he haveing receaved a good advance, and ingadged in the service, he ought not to desert it soe speedily: with that he grew into passion, saying, God had destroyed the former generalls for being cruell, and not sufferring people to goe off the island; and was this his reward for his many considerable services, and for the losse of his blood in the quarrell? and tould me, that if I acted as they had acted, I shold looke for the same judgment. I tould him, I wold endeavour to performe my trust, and submitt to the pleasure of the Almighty; but at last he grew soe high as to chardge with blood-guiltines all those that had, or have any hand in the designe. Then I could forbear noe longer, but told him, that he must answer it at a court-martial, which quietted him imediately. **I acquaint your honor with this passage, that you may understand what kinde of officers are sent out of Ireland; therefore if it be intended to send any more men out of Ireland. I conceive it will do well to head them with officers from England or Scotland, for those in Ireland onely minde their great estates there, and these sent hither were such as I never had to deale withall; they have put the state to great chardge, and will doe them little service.**

## **6 August 1657**

### **Order of the Council of State**

Information having been received that Wm. Harwyn, a soldier, and divers young persons were without their consent taken on board the Conquer, bound to the West Indies; Sir John Barkstead, Lieut. of the Tower, Col. Francis White, and Major Miller are directed to inform themselves what passengers are there embarked, and upon what terms, and in

case they find any not engaged by indenture, to be forced or enticed aboard, to order their discharge, and to report their proceedings.

Col. Fr. White and Major Miller [of the Committee for America] to [the Council of State?]. Have taken an account of the passengers embarked on board the Conquer, and how they were enticed there. Those persons unwilling to go were demanded of the master of the vessel, but he refused them, and only two soldiers were delivered. On the same sheet is, *annexed. Names of persons on board the Conquer, bound to Virginia. They include 11 persons "taken by the Spirits," most of whom are unwilling to go; Mary Cooper and Elizabeth Smaldrige willing to go if they had their clothes; and 15 persons who voluntarily went on board.*

## **14 August 1657**

### **Order of the Council of State**

Upon report of Col. White and Maj. Miller, certifying that they found Wm. Adrian and ten others unduly enticed on board the Conquer, **directing that the ship be suffered to depart after setting on shore those unwilling to go the voyage.**

## **7 August 1657**

### **Lieutenant-general Brayne to secretary Thurloe.**

I have likewise ordered the catch to bring downe hither as many planters as she shall finde willing either in Barbadoes or the Leeward-Islands; for I finde the souldiery lasie and unsetled, expecting to be always maintayned at the publique chardge: those of them, that I found able to live of themselves, I have dischargd, to ease the state in provisions. I have likewise lent the planters, that came downe from Nevis, some provisions, it being now a time of want with them. Wee have (through his highnes's care) at least sixe months provisions good in stoare, which, God willing, shall be husbanded to the best, though I feare much of it will decay before wee come to use it all.

## **August 1657**

### **Minute from meeting of the Council of State**

Proposals for transporting Irish to Maryland "respited."

## 14 June 1661

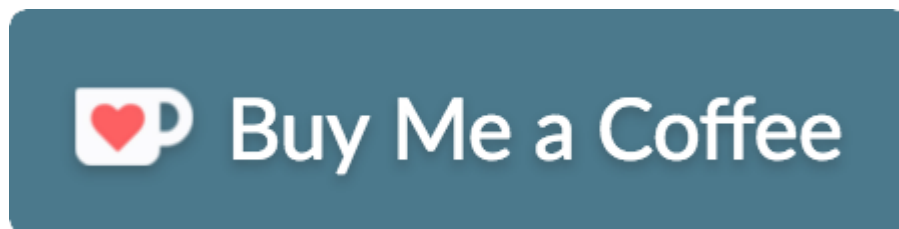
### Narrative of the buying and forfeiture of a shipload of negroes

On June 14, 1661, Col. D'Oyley, then Governor of Jamaica, received into the harbour of Cagway a Dutch ship laden with 180 negroes ; and being desirous to make a profit for himself out of them, called the Council and urged them to vote a trade with the Dutchman, though contrary to the Act of Parliament, saying that the negroes were much needed, and that the only penalty was his loss of office, which he had virtually lost already ; but, grateful for his Majesty's favour, the Council refused to infringe the Act, which so enraged the Governor that he told the Council they refused because they themselves were poor and could not buy, but, however, he would forthwith buy them all, which he did within two or three hours. Whiting, commander of his Majesty's frigate Diamond, seized said ship ; but the Governor made "rescue and retrivall," and sold 40 of the negroes to Major John Coape, a Quaker and ancient rebel, and the rest, at great price, to a Spanish ship, to which he also gave a safe-conduct. For this the Council called him in question, and desired to know by what power or reason of state he had acted, to which he replied that he brooked not such interrogatories, that he could not forget he had been a General, though it was for the rebels, that Captain Whiting's commission was not in force where Governor D'Oyley commanded, and that he was not accountable to the Council, but would answer to his Majesty at home.

## June 1661

### Minutes of the Council for Foreign Plantations

Report to be presented to the King that it is the humble opinion of this Council that the soldiers in Jamaica, reserving 200 men in pay, forthwith become planters, each private soldier to have an allotment of 50 acres, and an increase to officers, a colonel to have 500 acres ; also 30 acres to be allotted to each man's wife or servant above the age of 14.



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