

# The Effects of Slavery on Other Areas of Caribbean Life

**What effects did the introduction of slaves to the Caribbean have on the society and economy of the region? What political effects did it have?**

## **Social**

1. An artificial increase in the size of the population as literally hundreds of thousands of African slaves were imported annually into the New World.
2. A change in the racial composition of the society. Before the Sugar Revolution the majority of the population was white and the minority black. By the mid 18th century blacks far outnumbered whites, in some cases the ratio was as much as 25:1
3. A host of new laws were introduced to regulate and define the relationship between master and slaves. For example the **Deficiency Act** was passed to deal with the unequal ration. Then each Colonial Power drafted their own set of laws: **Spanish: Siete Partidas**, **French: Code Noir** and the **English** colonies enacted their individual **Slave Codes**.
4. A whole new culture was introduced- the African culture. There was a small amount of mixing of the two cultures as well.
5. A new 'breed' of person was introduced. These were the mulattoes. They were the off springs of the whites and blacks.
6. Society became highly stratified. A person was now judged firstly by colour and then wealth, so that even a poor white was deemed to be of a higher status than a rich mulattoe.

## **Economic**

7. The pattern of landownership changed. Before sugar and slavery there were many farmers owning small plots of land on which they grew tobacco and other cash crops. This pattern changed to a few landowners owning large estates on

which they cultivated sugar cane to be manufactured into raw muscavado sugar for export to the Mother Country.

**8.** The price of land increased dramatically towards the end of the 17th century and into the 18th century as more and more sugar estates were being established.

**9.** Large amounts of capital were invested in the sugar industry. Most of this capital however came from the Mother Country itself. Soon the West Indian planters became indebted to (European) British bankers, investors and merchants.

**10.** The plantation owners became very wealthy. Some of them went back to Europe to live in comfort and style, showing off their wealth. The expression "as rich as a West Indian planter" became the accepted description of any wealthy person.

**11.** England collected a lot of taxes and duties and shared in the profits of the Sugar Industry. Later she would use much of this money to finance her Industrial Revolution.

**12.** The Triangular trade provided employment in a number of areas from shipbuilding to insurance, to porters and warehouse landlords among others.



*A map showing the triangular trade route*

**13.** The West Indian colonies became monocrop economies. That means that they concentrated on producing only one crop for export. All other production was mainly for local consumption. Some was done by the slaves on provision grounds.

## Political

**14.** Britain and France became major super powers and the colonies were used as pawns in their rivalry for supremacy. They were the most valuable possessions of any Empire and were fiercely fought over in wars and at Peace Conferences.

**15.** The Mother Countries tightened their control over their colonies. Britain changed from a Proprietary System of Government to a Representative System where a Governor was sent from England for a specific period or term of office to ensure that the colony remained firmly under her control.

**16.** Laws were instituted to get rid of the Dutch: Navigation Acts and Mercantilism.

**17.** Back in the colonies, the franchise (right to vote) was granted only to those who owned a certain acreage of land. The whites were the only ones then with the right to vote and they ultimately controlled the House of Assembly.