

An Act for the better Order and Government of the Negroes 1788.  
belonging to the several Negro-Towns, and for preventing Passed the 10th  
them from purchasing of Slaves; and for encouraging the of January.  
said Negroes to go in Pursuit of Runaway Slaves; and  
for other Purposes therein mentioned.

WHEREAS disorders frequently happen in the several Negro- ACT 34.  
Towns, for want of authority in the chief or commanding Preamble.  
officers of the negroes to keep a proper command over the rest, and  
because the white men who reside among them are not vested with  
legal power to punish them; and it being necessary, for the retaining  
those negroes in their duty and obedience, that an exact discipline  
should be observed, that all disorders, tumults, and disturbances  
among them may be suppressed on their first appearance, and the  
authors and abettors of them be brought to speedy punishment: We,  
your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Assembly of this your  
Majesty's island of Jamaica, do most humbly beseech your Majesty  
*that it may be enacted; Be it therefore enacted* by the Lieutenant-Gov-  
ernor, Council, and Assembly of the said island, *and it is hereby*  
*enacted and ordained by the authority of the said* That, from and after  
the passing of this act, every negro resident in, or belonging to, any  
of the Negro-Towns, who shall disobey the Governor's orders, or  
the orders of the Commander in Chief for the time being, or excite  
others to do the same, or shall excite, cause, or join in any disorder,  
tumult, or disturbance, tending to break the peace and good order  
of

Maroon Ne-  
groes dis-  
obeying the  
orders of the  
Commander  
in Chief, &c.  
how punish-  
ble.

1788. of the said towns, or any of them, shall suffer such punishment as shall be inflicted by the Superintendent, or white man, residing in the said town to which the offender belongs, and four of the negroes of the said town, of which the chief or commanding officer shall be one, not extending to life or limb.

The Governor or Commander in Chief to grant commissions to the white men and negroes in the Negro-Towns, for the trial of disorderly negroes.

II. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That the Governor or Commander in Chief for the time being may, by virtue of this act, have full power and authority to grant commissions to the white men and negroes, residing in or belonging to each of the Negro-Towns, for trying and punishing such offenders as aforesaid: *Provided always, and it is hereby enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That it shall and may be lawful, upon complaint made to any Justice of the Peace, of any felony or other crimes committed by any negro or negroes resident in, or belonging to, the said Negro-Towns, for such Justice to issue out his warrant for apprehending such offender or offenders, and for all persons to come before him that can give evidence; and if, upon examination, it appears probable that the negro or negroes apprehended is or are guilty, such Justice shall commit him, her, or them to prison, and certify to the next Justice the cause, and require him, by virtue of this act, to associate himself to him; which such Justice is hereby required to do; and they, so associated, shall issue out their warrant, to summon a sufficient number of freeholders, not less than nine, so that five of such freeholders shall be chosen by ballot, setting forth to them the matter, and requiring them, at a certain day and place, to be expressed in such warrant, and between the hours of eight and twelve in the forenoon, personally to be and appear before the said Justices; at which time and place the said Justices, and five of the said freeholders, shall cause the said negro or negroes, so charged with any such felony or other crimes, and the evidence or evidences, to come before them; and the said freeholders shall, by the said Justices, be sworn to judge uprightly, and according to evidence, on the matter then before them; and if the said Justices and freeholders, or the major part of such Court and Jury, (one of whom to be a Justice), shall judge the criminal or criminals guilty of the offence complained of, they shall give sentence of death, transportation, or such other punishment as the said Court shall determine, according to the nature of the offence; and shall cause such sentence to be carried into execution, at such time and place as they shall think proper; women with child only excepted, whose execution shall be respited till after delivery: *Provided always,* That in all cases where sentence of death shall be passed (excepting for murder, or rebellious conspiracy), execution shall be respited until the pleasure of the Commander in

in Chief shall be signified thereon: *Provided also*, That nothing in this act contained shall prevent the Justices, upon any such trial, from respiting the execution of any sentence, until the pleasure of the Commander in Chief shall in like manner be signified, in case proper cause shall appear to them for so doing: *Provided also*, That if any of the negroes belonging to the Negro-Towns in this island, shall be tried by two Justices and five freeholders, or by the white men and negroes commissioned as aforesaid, and shall be acquitted of any of the crimes or offences as aforesaid, such acquittal or conviction shall be a full bar to any other proceedings for the same offence.

1788.

III. *And whereas* several of the negroes belonging to the Negro-Towns have frequently left their several towns, and continued absent from them a considerable time, without the leave of their commanding officer; or, having had such leave, have not returned by the time prescribed to them, but have rambled about the several parishes of this island, and been harboured and concealed in divers places, whereby they have had opportunities of going among the slaves of the neighbouring plantations, creating factions and disputes among some, and persuading and enticing others to run away from their owners, contrary to the articles upon which they surrendered; which practices, if not timely prevented, will not only lessen the authority of those who now are appointed, and such others as the Governor or Commander in Chief of this island shall hereafter appoint, to command them, but may be attended with other ill consequences: For prevention of which, *Be it enacted and declared by the authority aforesaid*, That, from and after the passing of this act, every negro belonging to any of the Negro-Towns aforesaid, who shall absent himself or herself from the town to which he or she belongs, without leave of the commanding officer thereof, signified in writing, under the hand of the Superintendent, or the white man residing among them; or who, having had leave, shall continue absent therefrom for the space of seven days after the expiration of such leave; upon complaint made to any magistrate of the parish where he or she shall happen to be at that time, shall be committed to the Marshal of the parish or precinct where he or she shall be taken, and shall be sent by him to the county gaol, in order to be brought to trial for such offence, before two Justices and five freeholders, in the manner herein before directed; and, upon conviction of the crime, as aforesaid, the Justices and freeholders, or the major part of them (one of whom to be a Justice of the Peace), are hereby empowered to inflict such punishment as they shall think proper, not extending to life or limb; and in case the said two Justices and five freeholders, or the major

Maroon negroes, absenting themselves a longer time than allowed them from their towns, to lose their freedom.

1788.

part of them, shall think proper to deprive any offender, convicted under this act, of his or her freedom, they shall then order him or her to be transported off this island by the Receiver-General for the time being, and sold; and the money arising from such transportation and sale to be to our Sovereign Lord the King, his heirs and successors, for and towards the support of the government of this island, and the contingent charges thereof.

Maroons convicted of enticing slaves to run away from their owners, to forfeit their freedom, and be transported.

IV. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That every negro, belonging to any of the Negro-Towns in this island, who shall entice, or endeavour to entice or persuade, any slave or slaves to run away from their several and respective owners, and be thereof convicted in manner and form as aforesaid, shall forfeit his or her freedom, and be transported off this island as aforesaid, and sold; and the money arising from such transportation and sale shall be to our Sovereign Lord the King, his heirs and successors, for and towards the support of the government of this island, and the contingent charges thereof; any law, custom, or usage to the contrary notwithstanding.

Maroons not to purchase slaves, under penalty of forfeiting them. Persons selling slaves to Maroons, or to any other person in trust for any Maroon, to forfeit 100*l*.

Persons buying slaves in trust for Maroons, to forfeit 100*l*.

V. *And whereas* some of the negroes formerly in rebellion have purchased slaves, and it is apprehended that more slaves may be bought by them, which may be of ill consequence to this island, if not prevented; *Be it therefore enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That no negro, belonging to any of the Negro-Towns in this island, shall purchase or buy any slave or slaves whatsoever, under the penalty of forfeiting such slave or slaves to his Majesty; and if any merchant, factor, or other person whatsoever, shall knowingly sell, or give any slave or slaves to any negro belonging to either of the Negro-Towns in this island, or to any other person in trust for, or to the use of the aforesaid negroes, every such merchant, factor, or other person, shall, for every negro so sold or given, forfeit the sum of One Hundred Pounds; and every person who shall purchase, or be concerned in the purchase of any slave or slaves, in trust for any of the said negroes belonging to the said Negro-Towns, shall forfeit the like sum of One Hundred Pounds; which said penalties, and each of them, shall be recovered in the Supreme Court of Judicature of this island, by action of debt, bill, plaint, or information, wherein no essoign, protection, wager of law, or injunction, shall be granted or allowed, *Non vult ulterius prosequi* be entered; and one moiety thereof shall be to our Sovereign Lord the King, his heirs and successors, for and towards the support of the government of this island, and the contingent charges thereof, and the other moiety to the informer, or him, her, or them who shall sue for the same; any law, custom, or usage to the contrary notwithstanding.

VI. *And*

VI. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That the Superintendent of each and every of the Negro-Towns in this island, or the white man residing there, shall, as often as he sends out any party on duty, give his orders in writing to the commanding officer of such party, specifying at whose request such party is ordered out, the names of the officers and men composing such party, and the time when such party is to return; and that, on the return of such party, the Superintendent or white man residing in the town from whence such party was sent out shall, and he is hereby obliged to, make oath on the back of such order or orders, that the service on which such party or parties were sent out was duly performed, or as the circumstances of the case may happen to be; which oath any magistrate is hereby authorised and empowered to administer: *Provided always,* That no Superintendent or white man, residing in any of the Negro-Towns, shall order any party to remain out, at any time, exceeding twenty days.

1788.

Maroon parties to receive orders in writing from the Superintendent, &c. specifying at whose request they are fitted out, &c.

No party to be ordered to remain out exceeding 20 days.

VII. *And, as an encouragement for such party to do their duty, Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That a reward, not exceeding forty shillings, besides mile-money, shall be paid for every runaway negro, or other slave taken by them, and a reward, not exceeding twenty shillings, for every runaway taken by a Maroon or Maroons, when not on party; which rewards shall be adjudged by any magistrate.

Rewards allowed Maroons for apprehending runaway slaves.

VIII. *And whereas* it often happens, that maroon negroes are hired or employed by white people, and find difficulty in recovering their just demands; *Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That all such debts due to, or from, maroon negroes, shall be determined by two magistrates, in as summary a manner as is directed by the 111th act of this island, to decide all differences between masters and servants.

Demands for hire, how recoverable by Maroons.

IX. *And whereas* it is proper and necessary that maroon negroes should be protected in their persons against the violence of evil-disposed white persons, and free persons of colour; *Be it therefore enacted,* That, from and after the passing of this act, any person or persons whatsoever that shall wantonly or cruelly whip, beat, bruise, or wound any maroon negro or maroon negroes, shall be subject to be indicted for the same, at the Court of Quarter-Sessions of the parish or precinct where the offence happens; and, upon being thereof legally convicted, he, she, or they shall suffer such punishment, by fine or imprisonment, as such Court shall think proper to inflict; any law, custom, or usage to the contrary notwithstanding.

Persons beating Maroons, how punishable.

X. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid,* That the Superintendent of each and every of the Negro-Towns shall, once in every three months, during the continuance of this act, make a return

Superintendants once every 3 months to make a return

1783.

turn to the  
Commander  
in Chief, of  
the number of  
maroon ne-  
groes in their  
respective  
towns.

turn, on oath, to the Governor or Commander in Chief for the time being, of the number of negroes residing in each of their respective towns, setting forth particularly the number of men capable of bearing arms, as also those unfit for duty; the number of women and children; the condition of the house in which such Superintendent resides, together with the condition of the roads leading from the Negro-Towns to the settlements.

Maroon ne-  
groes, once  
every year, to  
repair the  
roads leading  
to their re-  
spective  
towns.

XI. *And whereas* the roads leading to many of the Negro-Towns are great part of the year very bad, and sometimes almost impassable; *Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That the negroes belonging to each of the Negro-Towns shall, once every year, repair the roads leading to their respective towns and settlements, when they shall be so ordered by their Superintendent; and, as an encouragement to the said negroes to amend and keep the said roads in repair, the Receiver-General for the time being, or the Commissaries appointed, or to be appointed, for the said towns, shall pay to each negro man belonging to the said towns, who shall be employed in making and repairing the roads leading to the said towns, one ryal *per* day; oath being first made by the Superintendent, or white man residing in the towns, of the number of negroes actually employed, and the time they worked on the said roads: *Provided always*, That such pay do not exceed the sum of Ten Pounds to each Negro-Town in each year.

Establishment  
of pay to the  
officers and  
men of each  
party while  
on actual  
duty.

XII. *And whereas* the sending out parties of negroes, belonging to the several Negro-Towns, to scour the woods, and take up runaway slaves, will be of great ease and advantage to the planters and white inhabitants of the island; *Be it enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That, as an encouragement to the said parties to be diligent in the said service, there shall be paid by the Receiver-General for the time being, or by the Commissaries appointed, or to be appointed, for the said towns, to the officer among the negroes in each party, in the rank of a Captain, two shillings and sixpence *per* day; to a Lieutenant, one shilling and three pence *per* day; and to every common man, one ryal *per* day, when on actual duty, and no longer; and that each party ordered out shall be supplied with a proportionable quantity of provisions and ammunition, requisite for the service they shall be sent on, to be approved of by the Commissary; and that no party shall consist of more than six men, including officers, except on particular occasions.

This act to be  
read to the  
Maroons eve-  
ry 3 months.

XIII. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That this act be read and explained, once every three months, by the white man residing in each of the Negro-Towns, to the negroes therein.

Continuance  
of this act.

XIV. *And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid*, That this act, and every clause, matter, and thing therein contained, shall

continues

continue and be in force, from the passing thereof, for and during 1788.  
the term of seven years, and no longer.

---

Jamaica. Acts of Assembly, passed in the island of Jamaica, from the Year 1784 to the Year 1788 inclusive. Printed by Alexander Aikman, printer to the king's most excellent majesty, MDCCLXXXIX. [1789]. Eighteenth Century Collections Online, [link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0124224324/ECCO?](https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CW0124224324/ECCO?) Accessed 21 Apr. 2024.