



## Equality in the Golden Age of Piracy

In this [#TallShipTuesday](#), the crew of *Providence* kicks off Black History Month by looking at a period of history that has captivated public attention for decades, but often is glossed over in many ways. As is the case with many parts of history, we learn the white washed version, and the reality of living on board a pirate ship was more colorful than one may realize.



*A representation of life on board a pirate ship*

As was mentioned in the video, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the sea was a place that black folks could [find equality](#). The sea provided physical distance between them and their oppressors, however; on whaling or merchant vessels, they would often find that their status remained lower than the white men on these ships. It was [on board pirate ships](#) that the barriers of race seemed to disappear. Black men could hold positions of power, they were distributed their share of wealth, and could vote on ship matters.

Researchers estimate that between 1682 and 1726, the average pirate ship had a makeup of between [25-30 percent](#) black crew on board. Of course there was likely still prejudice amongst the crew, but the [radical democracy](#) that pirates practiced, voting on leaders and actions taken by the ship's crew, may have limited the impact on their hierarchy. The equality black crew experienced also likely rose out of pragmatism due to the need for pirates to have competent and hard-working deck hands.

[#TallShipTuesdays](#)

201 North Union Street | Suite 110 | Alexandria, VA 22314 | 703.915.1600

[tallshipprovidence.org](http://tallshipprovidence.org)