



# The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America

*Andrés Reséndez*

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**The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America** Andrés Reséndez  
**A landmark history — the sweeping story of the enslavement of tens of thousands of Indians across America, from the time of the conquistadors up to the early 20th century**

Since the time of Columbus, Indian slavery was illegal in much of the American continent. Yet, as Andrés Reséndez illuminates in his myth-shattering *The Other Slavery*, it was practiced for centuries as an open secret. There was no abolitionist movement to protect the tens of thousands of natives who were kidnapped and enslaved by the conquistadors, then forced to descend into the “mouth of hell” of eighteenth-century silver mines or, later, made to serve as domestics for Mormon settlers and rich Anglos.

Reséndez builds the incisive case that it was mass slavery, more than epidemics, that decimated Indian populations across North America. New evidence, including testimonies of courageous priests, rapacious merchants, Indian captives, and Anglo colonists, sheds light too on Indian enslavement of other Indians — as what started as a European business passed into the hands of indigenous operators and spread like wildfire across vast tracts of the American Southwest.

*The Other Slavery* reveals nothing less than a key missing piece of American history. For over two centuries we have fought over, abolished, and tried to come to grips with African-American slavery. It is time for the West to confront an entirely separate, equally devastating enslavement we have long failed truly to see.

## The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America Details

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## From Reader Review The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America for online ebook

### David says

Thoroughly researched and extremely informative. Over 100 pages of endnotes with extensive background information, primary source material, and a detailed account of the 'other' slavery, which essentially was the precursor to modern human trafficking. Focuses primarily on the Spanish (and later Mexican) aspect of the 'other' slavery, as the author is a Mexican historian, with only a portion of the book dealing with American trafficking of Native Peoples or other forms of coerced labor or outright slavery. A very heavy and scholarly book, not for the faint of heart.

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### Beata says

A very interesting piece of non-fiction tackling the issue that is not so widely discussed. I definitely learnt a lot about slavery other than described in novels.

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### Forgottendreamr says

While an important part of Mexican and United States history, I found the book to be a bit dry at times. There is a lot of recitation of fact and not as much accounts that keep the reader engaged.

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### Darcia Helle says

When you hear or see the word 'slavery', what comes to mind? As Andres Resendez points out, the vast majority of us will envision African slaves, over-crowded and disease-ridden boats, and southern plantations. While that is a tragic, inexcusable part of American history, Africans were not the only people enslaved during the early, tumultuous years of America's beginnings. The Native Americans who'd roamed the country freely, who'd called the land their own for centuries before Europeans appeared, suddenly found themselves ripped away from their homeland and families, bought, sold, and traded. This occurred in staggering numbers, over a period of centuries.

This book is exceptionally well researched, yet it does not read like a dry textbook. Yes, it's a fairly academic read, in that it's rich in detail, but the writing is alive with texture and emotion. Resendez takes us back to an America most of us wouldn't recognize, to a time when owning a person was somehow justified as a Christian act of kindness. People disguised greed and bigotry as a necessary and righteous behavior, enabling themselves to steal Indian children and put them to work in the name of God.

Resendez takes us from the early struggles with Mexico, up through the Civil War. Most of the focus here is on the American Southwest and Mexico, then over to the American West. He highlights the country's dichotomy in fighting a Civil War to free African slaves, while continuing the enslave a disturbing number of Native Americans. In closing, Resendez briefly discusses our world history of slavery, and how it has never gone away but only evolved into something else to fit the circumstances and skirt the law.

This is a powerful, well written, disturbing, must-read book that should be in every school, a part of every history curriculum, and read by every adult. We need to acknowledge our problematic past if we have any hope of preventing a disastrous future.

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### **JQAdams says**

Perhaps my expectations were raised too high by the intriguing topic and all the awards this book was shortlisted for, but I found it somewhat disappointing. Perhaps "indifferently edited" would be the aptest description? A lot of the material is fairly episodic and seems random in its inclusion. (Similarly, the book luxuriates in a pleasingly large number of maps, but they're often semi-pointless, seemingly not designed to be particularly informative.) To be fair, Reséndez did an impressive job turning materials up from a circumspect historical record here. And most of the times when he wandered afield, the points were interesting in their own right -- the Spaniards' having imported slaves to the Americas from the Philippines, the Pueblo revolt of 1680 (Reséndez basically argues that because the revolt is multicausal, it's as much about slavery as anything else, which is plausible but not the most compelling way to achieve coherence), etc.

Yet the book kept stumbling over itself. It'd do a lot of things like bringing up a person and then talking about him again two pages later as though he were unfamiliar. And like arguing that the Mexican silver industry was bigger than the American gold industry because it took place across much of the country over many decades while American gold production happened in many different parts of the country at many different times. And so on. There is a lot of compelling material here, but the whole felt like less than the sum of its parts; it felt like notes for a book rather than a book itself.

Also, it was a minor, idiosyncratic annoyance, but the introduction hyped Amerindian slavery up as though it was something nobody had ever heard of before this book came along. This was another point where I agreed with the author's basic conclusion that his topic is understudied, but was nonplussed by the presentation: the story's more powerful when it's not choking on clouds of self-aggrandizing puff.

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### **Jo Stafford says**

In this important history of the enslavement of the Native peoples of the Americas, Andres Resendez takes us through 400 years of the buying and selling of Indian people and the exploitation of their forced labor, from the gold mines of Hispaniola in the 1500s to the silver mines of Mexico in the 1600s and the sprawling ranches of northern California in the 1800s.

There is a wealth of information in this well-researched and enlightening book. Resendez throws new light on the causes of the 1680 Pueblo revolt against the Spanish in New Mexico; highlights the brutal impact of slavery on the indigenous people of the Caribbean, Chile, and Mexico; and describes how the Mormons came to justify the enslavement of Native Americans.

Resendez confronts the history of Indian slaveholding head-on. He points out that human bondage in Native American societies existed in very specific cultural contexts and did not resemble the wholesale trafficking in humans that Europeans engaged in when they colonized the Americas. He also discusses how some Native American nations, such as the Comanche and the Ute, became dominant players in the slave trade, as they adapted their own captive-holding practices to meet the demands of the Euro-American slave market.

Although *The Other Slavery* is wide-ranging in scope, it is also tightly focused. Resendez has a strong command of his material, and I found the maps particularly helpful.

This is essential reading for anyone seeking to learn about one of the most shameful and least-known chapters in the history of the European invasion of the Americas.

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### **Tanya says**

While I found Resendez's book interesting, his argument that enslavement was a major overlooked cause of the decimation of the New World Indian population fell short for me. I was convinced that in the early Columbian period a large segment of natives were worked to death, but the numbers for later periods seemed relatively small. Yes, enslavement of the Indians definitely happened, and the author is correct that most Americans overlook this fact and think of slavery in the United States as a Negro phenomenon, but I feel The Other Slavery overstates its case.

I was especially unconvinced by his assumption that every Indian child appearing in Mexican (including territories that became part of the U.S. with the Gadsden Purchase in 1853) baptismal records was a slave. Is it so unbelievable that there were good people who actually adopted these children, even if they were culturally ignorant by today's "enlightened" standards? He makes the same supposition in regards to Mormon settlers in Utah who took in Indian captives, often when Indian raiders gave them the choice of purchasing the children or watching them have their throats slit. My 4th great-grandfather, Abraham Hunsaker, "adopted" an orphaned Indian child who was later shot by federal soldiers claiming to believe he was "stealing" the cattle he was herding (yes, children in families did work back then), and I've read the journal entry where that beloved child was mourned. He was not a slave, yet Resendez would have included Lemuel Hunsaker in his list of enslaved Utah Indians. How can I trust that he is correct in any of his other inferences?

This book did make me rethink some of my own assumptions about the relationships between whites and natives in the American west, including those of my own ancestors. I have always taken the above story of Indian Lemuel at face value, but can I be sure he was truly an orphan? And did he want to be with the Hunsaker family, even if they did treat him like one of their own? Did he feel robbed of his culture, or was he grateful to be included in the white world? And how included was he really?

Anyway, I'm glad I read the book because it made me think, but I was not convinced by the overriding thesis. 3.5 stars.

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### **Alison says**

It's been a long time since I took American History in school, but I know "The Other Slavery" was not only not taught, it wasn't even mentioned which it should have been. Atrocities, mistreatment and dehumanization applied to African as well as Indian slaves; and, not just by the white man. The book takes us from Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand funding exploration of the new world (and the slavers and slavery that became an industry) through the New Mexico, the United States as it was being settled and the wild west was being discovered, through modern day (think human trafficking).

It's no wonder there were Indian uprisings and rebellions, explorers and exploiters tricked Indians into thinking they were friends then turned around and massacred the men and enslaved the women and children.

They brought new diseases to the new world that sickened the Indians and caused many deaths. They relocated tribes hundreds of miles away from their homeland where they had been successful at agriculture, for instance, and relocated them to barren plains and deserts.

Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it - and thus we have human trafficking in the world today. A well written and well researched book.

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### **John says**

A careful work of scholarship, the author puts to rest any notion that "slavery" in the context of the Indians of the Americas is just "spin." Though different from the enslavement of so many Africans and African-Americans, this very adaptable "other slavery" came first, outlasted the American Civil War, provided the architecture for "Jim Crow" laws, and has echoes in today's human trafficking.

And the book's documentation of New Mexico as a slaving ground for Mexico's silver mines provides a horrible explanation for Onate's presence, the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, and the hideous antagonism that has lasted so long among all the state's peoples.

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### **Julie says**

The revelation in this book about the unbreakable cycle of slavery in the world is disheartening, but vital. When you eradicate slavery in one area, history demonstrates that a new slavery will be born in its place. That was just one of the profound insights offered in this detailed and well-constructed book. It is a fascinating thought-experiment to imagine how the world would have evolved without slaves since pretty much every mineral, wealth, and product has been (or currently is) a result of slavery - including peonage. Also: I did not know the 13th amendment makes our current system of prison slavery legal. Much to think on.

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### **Jason King says**

Probably the best book on the subject out there but one should know a few things about what the author's central thesis is:

- 1) The definition of slavery is far too narrow. By the author's own admission the period of what we could call chattel slavery - the buying and selling of people, concomitant with the purchasing of their marginal value product, for the term of their life - occurred for a very short period toward the Native American population in the New World (the Spanish crown made it illegal by the mid-16th century). The author's central thesis is that many other forms of semi-free labor, such as debt peonage, war prisoners, and convict labor, done by Americans, Spaniards, Mexicans, and Native Americans alike, should fall into this category.
- 2) The economic dimension of indentured labor is wholly absent from the author's narrative - which is a shame, because it would have done wonders to help expand the reasoning.

The book suffers from a lack of primary sources to work with and the author fills what is absent largely with

speculation. The book itself is choppy - some chapters in it discuss slavery only tangentially (such as the histories of the Comanche and Navajo peoples). I think for a casual reader of history it would be very easy to get confused and to lose the bigger picture along the way.

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## David Dinaburg says

I spend a lot of time thinking about clichés. I worry that they shape experiences, a rigid form that alters the world to fit the saying. Still, they are such reliable old chestnuts and well-worn codas for a reason. When they break the surly bonds of exact meaning to stand for a lazy linguistic shortcut or in-group meme, the actual core and history behind such phrasings can be lost to the ether. Aside from the panoply of examples I have already thrown at your face, “she makes this look easy” is one such idiom that came up during [The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in American](#). For all intents and purposes (there’s another), “*making this look easy*” is an exclamatory way to profess admiration for someone’s extraordinary ability to complete a task, especially if they complete it with aplomb. Any focus on the task itself, rather than the skill of the subject, falls by the wayside. It is taken for granted that that task is a difficult one.

But making something look easy is different from just being really, really good at it. [The Other Slavery](#) is not something I would colloquially say makes reading about indigenous slavery look easy, because reading comprehension typically doesn’t command the visual component as do the deft physical challenges usually associated with that idiom. But if you really parse the words, that is exactly what it does. It is startling after a few chapters just how much information has been conveyed. This was a topic where I came in with no prior knowledge. It would have been so easy to become overwhelmed by the breadth or bored with the depth, as often happens when an expert decides to flex his non-fiction bona fides. That does not happen here, and that alone is impressive.

Put another way: this is a dense and sincerely troubling topic. The book takes it, makes it approachable without watering it down, and then does that over and over again for a half-dozen regions, eras, and cultures. Simple presentation mixes with disgusting fact:

In the Carolinas, for instance, English colonists took tens of thousands of Indian slaves and shipped many of them to the Caribbean. In the period between 1670 and 1720, Carolinians exported more Indians out of Charleston, South Carolina, than they imported Africans into it.

[The Other Slavery](#) makes difficult topics feel simple and reduces overwhelmingly complex ideas in approachable starting points. The pace of the narrative builds momentum until all of a sudden the book is over, native slavery in the Americas has made an indelible mark on your mind, and there is an overwhelming feeling that the author has made promulgating these facts look easy.

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## Nancy Oakes says

4.5 stars rounded up.

Thinking about the subject of slavery in America will, for most people, conjure up horrific images of Africans taken from homeland and families, packed in confined spaces on ships and enduring unimaginable conditions and treatment once they reach their destination. It is a tragic and vile chapter in our history, and a reminder of the horrors that humans can inflict on other humans in the name of economic power and gain. But, as the author of this book reveals, Africans were not the only victims of the slave trade in America --

"the other slavery" involved indigenous people. This "other slavery" didn't replace African slavery; on the contrary, it was, as the author notes, "there all along."

Starting with the Caribbean, the book moves through parts of Central America and on into North America to reveal that while the practice of slavery had already long existed between tribes in these areas prior to European contact, it was the arrival of the Europeans that caused a major transformation in the practice itself. As they spread throughout these areas, "the other slavery" was "never a single institution," but became a "set of kaleidoscopic practices suited to different markets and regions." As the dustjacket blurb notes, "what started as a European business passed into the hands of indigenous operators and spread like wildfire across vast tracts of the American Southwest." This transformation also had a tremendous impact on and helps to better understand the shared history of Mexico and the United States.

This book is not only eye opening, but eye popping as well. It is a difficult book to read at times on an emotional level, but even though as one GR reader put it is "heavy on historical terminology," it is still very accessible readingwise. Just don't expect the history for the masses approach going into it and you won't be disappointed. And of course, I've written a longer post found here if anyone's interested.

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### **Ben says**

Exhaustive look at the enslavement of Native American peoples throughout the 16th-19th centuries, it was a difficult read but all-encompassing and interesting at the same time. I feel like I've learned a lot not only about American history but the concept of slavery and how persistent in different forms that it really is.

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### **Ai Miller says**

An interesting introduction to thinking about enslavement of American Indian people from the beginnings of colonization. Reséndez traces not only explicit enslavement, but also the ways in which enslavers (particularly Spanish enslavers) managed to keep systems of enslavement in place even when laws dictated they should fall apart. Through this analysis, Reséndez makes the systems of enslavement that still exist more legible as such.

His analysis does fail entirely to go into the ways that sexual violence was a major part of this--he makes clear that women were more highly valued on slave markets, but just erases the reasons for that, which mirrors the continual erasure of the amount of sexual violence that Native women experience to this day. This massive gap in his analysis really needs to be addressed, and the fact that it is not in this book is really a problem.

Nevertheless, undoubtedly this book will open doors for more historians to examine this phenomenon, and to begin to make connections intellectually between American Indian enslavement and African enslavement on the North American continent, making both avenues of thought more productive.

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