

SPEAKER 1: and welcome to the Harvard Center for International Development's weekly podcast. The Other Slavery examines a system of bondage that targeted Native Americans. A system that was every bit as terrible, degrading, and vast as African slavery. Anywhere between 2.5 and 5 million Native Americans may have been enslaved throughout the hemisphere in the centuries between the arrival of Columbus and the beginning of the 20th century.

And interestingly, in contrast to African slavery, which targeted mostly adult males, the majority of these Indian slaves were women and children. Today on CID speaker series podcast, Hannah [INAUDIBLE], student at the Harvard Kennedy School interviews Andres Resendez, author of The Other Slavery and Professor of History at UC Davis.

SPEAKER 2: Thank you so much for joining us today Professor. And thank you for a really fascinating talk that you gave. So your book is titled The Other Slavery. And just to start off with, could you talk a bit about what is this other slavery that you're exploring in your book?

ANDRES RESENDEZ: Sure. Thank you it is a pleasure to be here. Well, it is the other slavery in two ways. So in the most obvious way, it's other slavery in that it targeted Native Americans as opposed to Africans. But perhaps more fundamentally, I call it the other slavery because the enslavement of Indians was early on abolished by the Spanish crown.

And the slavers, in order to retain mastery over their natives, basically resorted to a series of subterfuges and euphemisms in order to get around the law and continue to benefit from exploited labor. So it is other more fundamental than that it became clandestine and therefore far more difficult to track down and to eradicate. And so that's how it survived from the 16 all the way through the 19th centuries.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah, great. Thank you. To further explore what was other or different about this form of slavery, how is the practice of settling the Americas and enslaving Native Americans similar to or different from the patterns of slavery and colonialism that we see in Africa and the practice of using African slaves?

ANDRES RESENDEZ: Sure. So first of all, just to get a sense of the scope, I will have to say that while we now know that 12.5 million Africans were forcibly transported across the Atlantic, these other slavery of Native Americans involved anywhere between 2.5 and 5 million people. So not quite as many, but a very significant number as well. So that's just to start.

The other very interesting point of contrast is that while African slavery, mostly targeted adult males, two thirds of those 12.5 million that we're talking about were males, adult males, in the case of Native Americans, in many cases, we are really talking about women and children. And in that sense, it is like a mirror image of African slavery.

It is harder to document because while African slavery was legal, and

this is the final and perhaps most important point, Indian slavery was made illegal. And so therefore it has been very hard for us to understand its scope and recognize it as a phenomenon, because for African slavery, you always have port records. It was legal, sanctioned by governments all over the world. Slavers counted the African slaves along the way, and they show up in wills and bills of sale and other assorted documents that we can easily check.

In the case of Indian slavery, we don't have those records because it was illegal. And so you have to do a lot of detective work in order to understand how these occurred on the ground. And that's why it has taken us this long to actually recognize it as a very significant phenomenon that it was.

SPEAKER 2: One of the things that I was struck by in your talk was how wide the diversity is of different kinds of slavery or different practices of enslaving and coercing people. And so I wondered if you could talk about the varieties of enslavement that you see in the Americas and how that exists within the spectrum of different forms of slavery, both in the past and the modern slavery that we see today.

ANDRES RESENDEZ: Sure. So we need to understand that Indian slavery was legal for a few decades earlier. And was made illegal except in a few circumstances. So, for example, if there were natives who were or had been already enslaved by other Indians, it was possible for Spanish colonies to actually purchase those Indians. And the theory was that it was better for those Indians to be in Christian households as opposed to in pagan households. Or Indians who were cannibalistic could be legally enslaved. The theory there was that cannibalism was such a nefarious sin that the only way to correct that was by enslavement.

And so you see all these Spaniards claiming cannibalistic Indians all over the Caribbean and elsewhere. So it started out as a tolerated institution for 50 years and until 1542 when it became illegal. And when that happened, then a variety of institutions took place of that legal slavery. And so we can name just a handful of them. But there are many, many, many that we can possibly talk.

So one was encomiendas, which were grants of Indians given to meritorious Spanish colonists in return for some service that they had provided. These were technically not slaves in that they did not belong to the encomendero as the person receiving the encomenda was called. The Indians would remain with their own leaders, indigenous leaders.

And they would mostly provide a percentage of whatever they produce, turn that over to the encomendero. In many cases, it work like that. But in other cases, especially Indians who did not have anything but their workforce to give, fell in to something that was akin to slavery. So that was one.

Another one was repartimientos. Again, these were forced drafts, like corver labor to which various indigenous groups were subjected to provide labor for the mines, to provide labor for building roads and other public works. It was supposed to be very well regulated. It was supposed to be remunerated. But in practice, the remuneration often

took place in the form of clothes and food rather than hard cash.

There was also a limit to how long, how many weeks or months of the year this could take place. But eventually, repartimientos, especially in very dynamic areas where Indian labor was required, especially in the mining districts, these regulations were often not obeyed. So that was another way.

Third one was crimes or the legal system. So, for example, in the North of Mexico, some indigenous nations were deemed dangerous and were actually branded as enemies of the Spanish. The most obvious case are Apaches, Apache Indians. And because they were criminals in the eyes of the Spanish crown, they could be legally seized and they were not enslaved, but their service, they were condemned to 10, 15, or 20 years of service. And that service could be sold to Spanish colonists. So that was another way in which this activity took place.

And fourth one and perhaps the one that survived the longest, and the one that became the most important is debt peonage. So that is individuals willingly receiving money from a lender. And by that virtue, they would not be able to leave the place of work until they had repaid that debt.

And in reality, what that meant was the loss of freedom for that individual and his family. He had to repay the debt, but he also needed to eat and get clothes, et cetera. And so that often added to the account. The debts were sometimes passed from parents to children. So these often amounted to multigenerational forms of enslavement in all but name. So these are just some of the forms in which these other slavery took place.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah, interesting. OK. So just for some context, are there particular parts of the Americas where the practice of slavery was concentrated? Or is it something that you see all over the place? Or what's the geographic story of where this is happening?

ANDRES RESENDEZ: Yes. Well, some form of Indian slavery happened all over the Americas, from Canada all the way to Chile. And from the Canary Islands all the way to the Philippines, archipelago. But in large sedentary agricultural centers, because crown officials resided there, they tended to exercise more oversight over labor conditions there. So I'm talking about Mexico City, Lima in Peru.

These large areas had more oversight. And so owners of Indian slaves who were doing this illegally opened themselves to more risk by doing this. And we have periodic accusations leveled against people for holding Indians illegally. So that was more difficult to do there.

We see it especially in frontier areas, especially in areas where there were important economic activities like mining, textile factories called [SPANISH] in Spanish were also another major site for this, but they also existed in ranches, agricultural states. So again, peripheral regions where you have sedentary and nomadic Indians coming together and different groups, sometimes some groups preyed on other groups and sold their captives to colonists, that also tended to favor the enslavement of Indians. But it went on in one form or another all over the Americas. Yeah.

SPEAKER 2: Great. Thank you. So you've spoken to the idea that slavery was actually illegal in the Americas. And that's part of what made it so insidious and so last for so long. But that people came up with different legal justifications to get around the fact that it was actually illegal. So I'd be curious to hear what some of those justifications were or how people negotiated at that space and then how it shaped slavery because of that.

ANDRES RESENDEZ: Sure. So we have a very good example in the 17th century when we normally tend to think of the Spanish crown as the bad guy of the movie. But in this particular story that I'm telling, the Spanish crown actually tried to enforce the law. It is remarkable that the Spanish crown actually outlawed Indian slavery in 1540 to even earlier except in some instances as we were talking. And then tried to enforce these laws, even at the risk of alienating some of the crown's colonists and jeopardizing some of the crown's economic interests in the new world.

So in the late 17th century, in the 1670s and 1680s, the crown went on an empire-wide anti-slavery crusade to try to stamp out this institution. And this was brought about because the King, Philip IV, heard or entertained reports from various parts of the empire saying that this practice was going on in spite of the prohibition of his predecessors over 100 years earlier.

And so he went into overdrive, sent all of these orders to seize immediately these practices. And what we have is really remarkable about just the limitations of colonial power, we tend to think of the absolute Spanish monarchy. But basically, the governor in Chile said, well, I'm sorry. You seem like a well-meaning King, but you don't understand how things work out here.

If we were to do this, we would wipe out the entire colony here. We are living close to these very strategic Strait of Magellan. The natives that we've held in bondage for so long would turn against us, that we would risk our lives. So this is not practical. And so he basically refused to follow through in the case of Chile. And something similar happen in the case of the Philippines another Spanish colony.

In other places like in Northwestern Mexico, there were officials on the ground who try to implement these laws, but eventually their efforts were short lived and the colonists whose economic interests were the most powerful prevailed. In some cases, they, for example, gave new names in Chile and in Mexico both.

They said, OK, so slavery is prohibited. The enslavement of Indians is prohibited. So we're not going to call them slaves. We're going to call them Indians held in deposits. So everybody who has Indians, please come to the government, register your Indians. We will now call them Indians in deposit, and that's going to be it. So it's going to be perfectly OK. So this is one very obvious way to get around the law.

And again, the other institutions that we were talking about in an earlier answer, like repartimientos was another effort to find a

different name to get around the problem of slavery, yet the work of Indians was absolutely necessary for many of these businesses. And so repartimiento seem like a better way to call this. But in practice, became a very insidious form of slavery.

SPEAKER 2: That's so interesting that just changing the name as an effort to make it seem less like slavery and more like some other more socially sanctioned form of labor.

ANDRES RESENDEZ: Exactly.

SPEAKER 2: Building on that, but maybe pulling out of the specific context. I'm curious because this makes me think of a lot of efforts that social change. You'll first pass a law against something, but then and often the law doesn't get implemented or people find their ways around it in terms of--

I've worked some in the Mauritanian context, where slavery is also going on and where I think it's been illegal for 20 years or something. But it's still very much practiced. And so I'm curious if this research has given you any thoughts on how to go about making social change when you can change the laws, but that's not actually changing what people are doing in society.

ANDRES RESENDEZ: Yeah, absolutely. One of the most obvious takeaways in researching and writing this book was that simply making it illegal solves very little. It is a very important step. But that itself, in the course of my research, I find at least three different instances in which that happen and the people who held Indians in bondage successfully continued their practices.

So when was in these 1542 with different names, et cetera, and under the Spanish. Under the newly independent Mexican Republic in 1810, 1821, also did the same, actually giving citizenship rights to all Indians born within the territory of Mexico and yet it continued. Interestingly, the federal government prohibited Indian slavery, but the state constitution, so the different states have provisions for peonage. And what happens if the peon runs away? And how are they going to be rounded up and returned to the owners? These kind of things.

So which already suggest that the state governments were worried about the labor situation in the face of these abolition of Indian slavery. And of course, the same thing occurred with the Civil War in which the 13th Amendment was narrowly interpreted in such a way as to not include Indians who were being held, especially in the Western states of the United States.

This story just shows that the people who benefit from coerced labor will find a way to continue their activities. If there is a lot of attention to one particular group, they will move their operations from that group to a different group. If there is too much weight on one particular term, they will use a different term to call their activities. They will use prison sentences. They will use debts. They will use anything to justify their holding Indians against their will and exploit their labor.

So I think the only solution to that is to have a very dynamic and very vigilant form of enforcement. In the same way that you have individuals who go to great lengths in order to continue to enslave other human beings, you really depend on enforcers who will go to great lengths to find out what these people are doing and how they are doing it, and try to apply the laws wherever they need to be applied. There's just no other solution, but a very dynamic, very vigilant, and very careful form of enforcement. There's just no other way.

SPEAKER 2: Thank you. So you spoke in your talk a bit about this idea of modern slavery and human trafficking, and the various ways in which we see this happening today. And I wonder how you see those as being similar or different from the enslavement that we saw in the past in the Americas.

ANDRES RESENDEZ: Sure. So let me maybe take a step back and say that the story that we are most familiar with in terms of slavery today is African slavery. And it is a satisfying story in the sense that it was legal, it happened for a few centuries and then it became illegal in different parts of the world and it ended.

And that is one satisfying story, but it is not the whole story because these other forms of enslavement continued. In some ways, they survived. So Native Americans, because they were not legally enslavable, they continue to be enslaved for longer, and the institutions continued.

And in my book, I tried to argue that if you really want to understand the kinds of coercive labor practices that are occurring today, the antecedents hark back not necessarily to that story that we are so familiar with of African slavery, but they hark back to these other slavery that I document for the Caribbean, and Mexico, and the American Southwest. But that, in fact, you can find in many other parts of the world. Slavery is illegal around the world, including in Mauritania today. But it does occur because people will go to enormous lengths to do this against the law.

So I think that you really want to understand that, we really need to unearth these messier story that is not so satisfying that did not end with the Civil War, but that continues. In my book, I end in 1900 because I needed to finish this book before this book was going to kill me. And I do this jump with very little connective tissue to present day circumstances. But others might want to pursue that connection throughout the 20th century, which I know exists between these forms of enslavement that I'm talking about and what goes on today. Yeah.

SPEAKER 2: Yeah, I thought it would be fascinating. So coming back to the particular context of the Americas, I wonder as a historian if you see legacies of these enslavement practices in the Americas today?

ANDRES RESENDEZ: I've given 40 or 50 talks about the subject of the book all over the United States and elsewhere. And I'm always amazed that in some of these talks people come and talk to me about, yes, that describes what they know from family history; or that they, yes, they knew that there were some indigenous people in their household, but they never quite knew what to make of that or under what

circumstances these people arrived in their houses.

So this is a story that is still remembered in many parts of the United States. And it is one of the most fascinating things. As a historian, I am a specialist on a certain period, and I normally don't bring up the story to today. But in this particular case, I've been just fascinated to work with audiences who still remember these phenomena and who weren't necessarily aware of the larger context, and who are piecing together their own family histories.

SPEAKER 2: That's really fascinating. Well, thank you so much for all of your insight and for talking about your research [INAUDIBLE].

ANDRES RESENDEZ: Thank you so much. Thank you.

SPEAKER 2: Thank you.

SPEAKER 1: you want to learn more about CID research and events, please visit cid.harvard.edu. See you next week.

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