

# The Other Slavery at the Heart of America: Andrés Reséndez, Indian Enslavement, and Looking South to Amazonia

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This essay examines Andrés Reséndez's award-winning book, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (2016), to assess its analytical, historiographical, and theoretical contributions. The conceptual utility of the 'other slavery' is also explored in a context beyond the scope of the book—the Ecuadorian Amazon—where a complex regime of coerced and racialized labor flourished well into the twentieth century.

**Keywords:** slavery, indigenous, race, ethnicity, Ecuador

*The old slave mill  
might grind slow  
but it grinds fine  
—Bob Marley, 1973*

Andrés Reséndez's book, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (2016), drew immediate attention as a finalist for a National Book Award (2016) and winner of the Bancroft Prize (2017). The book is timely and should reverberate across the Americas. Some have praised it as having the power to 'change the course of an entire field and upset the received notions and received knowledge of the generations' (Treuer 2017). Reséndez has brought the story of Indian slavery to a broad audience and has forced the general public to confront a tragic historical legacy that, for too long, has been muddled in popular memory with myths, lies, or both. This essay weighs the contributions of the book and briefly highlights how the conceptualization of the 'other slavery' can be productively engaged beyond its geographical and temporal scope.

Reséndez analyzes the complex variations and contexts of Indian slavery from the first encounter between the colonists under the leadership of Columbus and native peoples of the Caribbean. Early slavery in the Circum-Caribbean region was not only a thriving local trade dominated by important figures like the 'discoverer' of Florida, Juan Ponce de León, but it also inaugurated a 'reverse Middle Passage' of mostly indigenous women and children from America to

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Spain (Reséndez 50). Columbus himself began this trade, taking hundreds of indigenous slaves to the markets of southern Spain, where some of them fought for and won their freedom.

Reséndez contributes to a newer historiographic terrain by illuminating what some would call the agency of Native Americans, showing that they were also involved in—and sometimes dominated—the slave trade. However, he never simplistically flips the power script but instead walks a fine line between domination and resistance in a way that sharply demonstrates the complexities of power. In studying the Jesuit efforts in the Sonoran desert with the Seri Indians, for example, he argues that the ‘padres may have thought they were “civilizing” the Seris, but the opposite was equally plausible: the Seris had incorporated the missions into their way of life, as they continued to move, hunt, and gather’ (205). Nevertheless, some readers, especially those familiar with the theoretical debates on ‘agency’ (see Mahmood 2011; Roberts 2017), may be left thirsty for deeper analysis in the chapters illuminating ‘native power’ (see especially chapter 9).

The book moves seamlessly through the well-worn territory of sixteenth century debates on Indian slavery, the New Laws of 1542, and explores the antislavery convictions of Spanish royals such as Queen Isabella, Philip IV (in his later years), and reluctant reformist governors who held ‘good intentions gone terribly wrong’ (35). Reséndez brings fresh interpretation to subjects with deep historiographies, arguing, for example, that Indian slavery has been largely overlooked as a causal factor for the massive Pueblo Revolt of 1680. While most historiography argues that the revolt was the result of a clash of cultures and religious beliefs, Reséndez shows that the Indian slave trade blossomed in the decades leading up to the revolt and therefore should not be overlooked.

The concluding chapters focus on the particulars of the ‘other slavery’ in the western United States. Reséndez analyzes the slaving operations of California legends like John Sutter and how the ‘other slavery’ was enshrined into law. Proclamations and legislation of the 1840s and 1850s—including a certificate and pass system, as well as an ‘apprenticeship program’—indicate that California was a testing ground for postbellum forms of racialized coercion in the South. Reséndez also traces shifts in the ‘other slavery’ as the West came under US rule. Civil War soldiers who found themselves in the West as part of the Union army launched a scorched-earth campaign against the Navajo that sought to remove them from their homelands and onto a reservation at Bosque Redondo. Reséndez argues that this campaign and the steady occupation of the West rejuvenated the Indian slave trade, especially among the Navajo. The last chapter shows how postbellum abolition efforts largely excluded any consideration of Indian enslavement, and states like California were unable to eliminate it. In New Mexico, where a sympathetic governor declared all Indian peons free in 1867 after the passage of the Peonage Act, legislation against Indian servitude made more progress, diminishing but not eliminating it until well into the twentieth century.

## **Frontiers, Modernity, and Coloniality**

Although the scope of the book is undoubtedly vast, Reséndez foregrounds a few caveats, one being that the book ‘does not offer a running history of Indian slavery in the Western Hemisphere,’ which

would be, as he rightly notes, ‘a gargantuan task’ (9). The focus is predominately on the Caribbean, northern Mexico, and the US Southwest, although he gives more than a brief nod to Indian slaving and Spanish antislavery campaigns in South America that will be of interest for Latin Americanists. He notes that after an Indian insurrection in southern Chile in the late sixteenth century, the Mapuche were stripped of royal protection in 1608, thereby legalizing Indian slavery in the southern tip of the empire. Nearly five decades later, Philip IV launched a crusade to end the enslavement of Mapuches, an effort that continued with gusto under the reigns of Queen Mariana and Charles II.

Seventeenth-century slaving in southern Chile is one of many examples illustrating a central tenet of Reséndez’s book: the unique particularities of frontier zones often undermine political and ethical principles held in centers of power. Even amidst royal antislavery crusades of the mid-seventeenth century, the slaving grounds simply ‘shifted to remote frontiers ... where imperial control remained minimal or nonexistent and the constant wars yielded steady streams of captives’ (132). Frontiers like the Los Llanos of Colombia and Venezuela were also fertile slaving grounds where Carib Indians often became the main slave suppliers. In the face of royal decrees against Indian slavery, local governors and Catholic missions—a typical frontier institution that receives thorough analysis—resisted and continued to participate in slave markets, thereby bringing into ‘sharp relief the limits of monarchical power, especially in distant lands and backwaters’ (146).

Although perhaps it was not his intention, Reséndez presents arguments that fit well into larger debates about modernity, colonialism, and coloniality. In contrast to British and French postcolonial analysts, Latin American decolonial thinkers (Dussel 1993, 2000; Mignolo 2000; Quijano 2000, 2010) have argued that modernity dawned in the sixteenth century, and Reséndez sketches the uniquely modern aspects of the Spanish empire, as does Irene Silverblatt (2004). Indian slavery itself comes across as a modern form of coercion rooted in epistemic structures that ranked human difference in fundamentally modern ways, in contrast to their less secular predecessors. Furthermore, the Spaniards set precedents for those empires usually associated with modernity. For instance, Reséndez notes that a ‘century before the American and French Revolutions, the Spanish crown set out to free the slaves around the world’ (125). Nevertheless, the book shows that despite humanitarian impulses and the liberatory promises of modernity, abusive and coercive structures transformed and survived—often in the frontiers—leaving intact what Quijano called the ‘coloniality of power’ (2000).

Enlightenment-era empires carried this legacy forward, simultaneously embracing universalist values while colonizing and enslaving. Postcolonial thinkers of the Anglo and Francophone worlds like Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Edward Said launched potent critiques against these epistemic and political regimes. Colonial spaces in which law and ethics were suspended, and behaviors and practices outlawed in metropolises thrived, constituted what Fanon called the ‘zone of nonbeing’ (Fanon 2008: 90; Maldonado Torres 2014: 701-702). Reséndez highlights the Spanish American origins of what became central to postcolonial and decolonial critiques of Euromodernity. He also reveals that Fanon’s ‘zone of nonbeing’ was not exclusive to colonial outposts, but in fact thrived in the postcolonial and postbellum US.

## Conceptualizing the ‘Other Slavery’

Another important conceptual contribution by Reséndez is analyzing the variety of racialized regimes of coerced labor as part of a dynamic and flexible ‘other slavery.’ Many historians have been hesitant to take this position, although meticulous empirical studies have focused on debt peonage systems that survived in Latin America even long after Reséndez’s study cuts off. However, systems like debt peonage are not usually conceptualized as slavery, or even an ‘other’ slavery, and historians have created a remarkable array of labels for systems of racialized coercion that are at the heart of Reséndez’s study while avoiding the s-word. For example, in the Ecuadorian Amazon the market in buying and selling ‘debt’ (which also meant the human being attached to the debt) has been studied as part of a larger process of ‘transfer and export of indigenous labor,’ and scholars have debated whether it was the person or the debt that was being purchased in these transactions (Barclay 1998; Muratorio 1991). Even where fraudulent debts permanently attached Indians to whites—an attachment that sometimes passed through generations—historians continue to subsume this under the elusive system of debt peonage. Nevertheless, the consensus is that in many contexts, debts were cooked in fraudulent account books, could almost never be cancelled, and therefore constituted a means to justify the permanent attachment of an indigenous person to an owner.

While certain legal technicalities may distinguish this labor regime from the antebellum chattel slavery or eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial slavery that we commonly associate with the term, Reséndez intrepidly calls these systems what they undoubtedly felt like for those subjected to them—slavery, but an ‘other slavery’ that was sometimes ‘disguised as debt peonage’ (8). In parts of Mexico, Reséndez argues that after the abolition of slavery, ‘debt peonage proliferated... and emerged as the principal mechanism of the other slavery’ (238). In other words, for Reséndez, some forms of servitude (but not all) that were legalized as ‘debt peonage’ were nothing more than a mechanism for legalizing ‘other slavery’ in postabolition societies.

The concept of ‘other slavery’ suffers no generalized overuse in this book. Reséndez carefully traces the particularities of coerced labor regimes and distinguishes where the ‘other slavery’ was most prominent and where different labor regimes prevailed. For instance, the *encomienda* that ensnared native agriculturalists of central Mexico ‘was not tantamount to slavery’ although ‘abuse was rife’ (62). In this context, the tribute paid was more useful than sheer labor power extracted through enslavement. On the other hand, the nomadic hunter-gatherers of northern Mexico ‘had little to give but their labor,’ and thus their treatment at the hands of the Spaniards ‘was tantamount to slavery, albeit with some peculiar features’ (93). While at times Reséndez interprets these differences in economic terms, the offensives launched against nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples across the Americas were often justified by placing these peoples on the far end of the civilization-barbarism scale.

So, what exactly is this ‘other slavery’? Being the careful historian, Reséndez notes that ‘no

simple definition is possible' and that a vast array of institutions looked a lot like slavery but were legal, whereas slavery was officially illegal. There are, however, four common elements that Reséndez identifies: 'forcible removal of the victims from one place to another, inability to leave the workplace, violence or threat of violence to compel them to work, and nominal or no pay' (10). And while the many versions of Indian slavery covered in this book do not strictly meet all four elements, Reséndez undoubtedly points us in the right direction and broadens our perspectives on the coerced labor regimes to which Indians throughout the Americas fell victim and rebelled against.

## **Looking South to Amazonia**

Reséndez's arguments should resonate far beyond the focus of his book, as the enslavement of indigenous peoples in the postcolonial and postabolition era was not a unique outcome of the failures of modern US or Mexican democracies. In many pockets of the Western Hemisphere, such enslavement thrived long after formal abolition (see Brown and Fernandez 1992; Reeve 1988; Stanfield 1998; Wasserstrom 2017), allowing us to spatially and temporally extend Reséndez's conceptual arguments about the 'other slavery' and the transformation of colonial institutions in the republican era.

Even after the official abolition of slavery and tribute in the Andean republics, areas existed of not only tributary systems (Larson 2004; Thurner 1997), but also outright enslavement lasting well into the twentieth century. One of these places is western Amazonia. Our contemporary culture has deployed a variety of means to ignore or misrepresent the histories of places where Indian enslavement thrived. In the upper Amazon, contemporary popular culture—from films and popular media to messages from environmental NGOs—has constructed an image of the region as pristine and unchanged. Films with eye-catching titles like *First Contact: Lost Tribe of the Amazon* (2016) begin by narrating a history that has culminated in a present where 'a few men and women still live in complete isolation, untouched by modern civilization.' Although some popular outlets do a better job than sheer ahistorical romanticizing (see, e.g., Anderson 2016; Marris 2016; Wallace 2015), historical knowledge of these areas of America is desperately lacking.

Popular myths about the upper Amazon and idealized notions of the untouched jungle and the humans who live there do a profound disservice to our understanding of the modern world and its indigenous inhabitants. Romantic myths of the timeless Amazon contribute to a similar historical ignorance that Reséndez's book sets out to disrupt. Rather than remaining unscathed by modern civilization, the upper Amazon has rich and varied histories with both colonial and postcolonial society, and coerced labor regimes, including the 'other slavery,' are central elements in these histories.

Reséndez's 'other slavery' is particularly helpful in analyzing the upper Amazon, as the literature on late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social history is often cluttered with unclear distinctions between 'slavery' and 'debt peonage,' with both systems—at different times and places—often bleeding into each other. On one hand, scholars have analyzed particular cases of

clear and violent enslavement, with the Casa Arana operation in the Putumayo being the most notable (T'ausig 1987). We now know that this slaving operation was not the norm, but 'represented the most notorious point on a spectrum of Amazonian servitude running from outright enslavement to near autonomy,' as Robert Wasserstrom has rightly pointed out (2017: 36). For Ecuador, Blanca Muratorio (1991) has argued that a less coercive form of debt peonage existed for the Napo Runa, whereby indigenous workers voluntarily took on debt in exchange for access to commodities and were sometimes able to switch patrons when better opportunities arose. These relations, however, were typically wrought with corruption, inflated prices, and forged account books. Nevertheless, throughout western Amazonia, violence, forceful capture, and enslavement of indigenous people often coexisted alongside debt peonage (Brown and Fernandez 1992; Varese 1968: 124-126). The prominence of debt peonage has led some analysts to subsume slavelyike systems—where debt is no longer legitimate, violence and force are regularly deployed, and humans can be sold as commodities—under the elusive system of peonage. In other words, the complex history of the region, characterized by diverse racial and labor regimes, has led to equally obscure historiographic terrain.

The ill-defined grey area between peonage and slavery is not unique to literature on the Amazon. Suzanne Miers (2003) has shown that definitions of slavery take on different meanings in different contexts and pivot around questions such as whether slaves were property and could be sold or transferred at the will of the owner—generally known as chattel slavery, although as Miers notes, even this has taken many forms (see also Johnson 2004). Researchers have also hinged distinctions and definitions of slavery on how and why slaves become attached to an owner, the underlying purpose of slavery, and whether the slave condition was one of 'social death' (Patterson 1982), although heated political undercurrents have left open the issue of definition. Matters are not any simpler when we turn to 'Indian slavery.' Rebecca Anne Goetz recently noted that the term has been loosely used for diverse unfree labor regimes, and thus 'defining precisely what we mean when we call a practice or experience "Indian slavery" is a difficult and contested exercise' (Goetz 2016). In my view, Reséndez helps push this nebulous terrain in a productive direction by attempting to shed light on the ways Indian slavery was disguised and justified while operating openly, though sometimes illegally. What is at stake in engaging Reséndez is more than merely replacing 'debt peonage' with 'slavery' or the 'other slavery.' Rather than merely advocating for a new label, we should attempt to understand both the scope of violent capture and enslavement of native peoples, as well as the factors that pushed the system legitimized as debt peonage closer to slavery, such as violence, forceful capture and/or removal, inescapable debt, and the sale/transfer of peoples.

Here, I will briefly attempt to anchor these questions in the social landscape of Ecuador's small and relatively understudied north-central Amazon region (the Oriente). At the end of the nineteenth century, the Oriente experienced an abrupt rupture in its social order when the Jesuits were expelled following the anticlerical Liberal Revolution. Their exit eliminated white settlers' main competitor for domination over indigenous communities. Amidst the rubber boom—a commodity boom desperately starved for labor—merchants made use of many unfree labor practices. Local forms were dependent on place, political economy, and whites' particular racial ideas that were used

to justify the treatment of nonwhites. Many of these labor regimes were remarkably similar to what Reséndez has called the 'other slavery,' and they continued to flourish well into the twentieth century.

As early as 1898, local officials in the Oriente noted that many peonage relationships had become inescapable. Enrique Hurtado reported to his superiors that, 'no indian is free,' and their servitude sometimes extended for three generations (Archivo Nacional del Ecuador, Ministerio del Interior, Oriente, ANE-MIO, 1898). On the Napo, the US missionary Howard K. Dinwiddie suggested that indigenous people were 'for the most part in a condition of peonage which is a form of slavery.' For Dinwiddie, these peons were de facto slaves because they were paid in supplies, not in money, which always contributed to rather than reduced their debt. Furthermore, he noted that in his interactions with locals, 'no instance was mentioned wherein an indian had ever worked off his obligation,' thereby astutely capturing the reality that peonage was often permanent (Dinwiddie 1924: 35). According to one local official, certain merchants like Nicolás Torres became infamous for 'systematically denying the liquidation of debts' (Vicariato Apostólico de Napo, Misión Josefina, hereafter VAN-MJ, 1925a). Denying debt liquidation made the condition of servitude permanent, and debt—the principle organizing mechanism of the system—largely meaningless. Where debt mattered most was in determining the value of a peon, but often the possibility to work off a debt did not exist. Denying liquidation was such a widespread problem that in 1930, the Minister of the Oriente sent a dispatch to all authorities in the region with concrete instructions on the issue (VAN-MJ 1930).

The abused system of peonage also gave rise to a market in buying and selling debt. Scholars have debated whether the rationality behind this practice ultimately amounted to the buying of the person or the debt and have developed complex arguments to support both conclusions (see Barclay 1998: 227-30; Muratorio 1991). Nevertheless, for the persons being transferred/sold, these distinctions were likely irrelevant, as they did not change their condition of servitude or their status as a commodity. It is worth noting that this market operated openly and legally and was considered a *traspaso de cuentas* (transfer of accounts). As the most coveted resource in the region, indigenous people and their labor power were often the only valuable asset for landowners who fell on hard times, and patrons often paid their own debt by selling their peons' debt to their creditors (Barclay 1998). Dinwiddie witnessed this practice along the Napo, whereby indigenous peons were 'transferred from one "patron" to the other by the sale of their "debts"' (1924: 35). In 1922, the director of the Oriente, *indigenista* intellectual Pío Jaramillo Alvarado, condemned whites in the region who 'sold [indians] like animals' (1936: 47). For state authorities, this practice became particularly troublesome when patrons uprooted indigenous peons and sold them across Peruvian, Brazilian, or Colombian borders (VAN-MJ 1925a). Authorities warned that this constituted 'a serious threat to the agricultural interests of the region and can lead to severe depopulation' and urged local leaders to punish any landowner who did so, although sanctions rarely occurred (VAN-MJ 1918).

The market in buying and selling Indians/debt was so powerful that even those who frowned on the practice were forced to participate in it. As late as 1958, the newly established

Capuchin mission at Nueva Rocafuerte faced a series of difficulties, the main one being the ‘lack of freedom enjoyed by the local indigenous population,’ which was ‘almost completely dependent on señor Francisco Mejía.’ In order to overcome this difficulty, the Capuchin mission bought Mejía’s hacienda on the shores of the Payamino river. With the purchase, came ‘all of the natives that were, in one form or another, dependent on Señor Mejía’ (VAN-MJ 1958). According to Francisco Javier Beghin, the native people who came with the land continued to work for the mission ‘voluntarily.’ In the pages of *El Comercio*, Beghin argued that in the Oriente, ‘the Indian is a merchandise that can be bought and sold at the will of the owners,’ amounting to what he called a system of ‘true slavery’ (Beghin 1963).

The abused system of debt peonage was not the only way local merchants created a slavlike system. Outright slave raids also occurred simultaneously, accompanied by physical violence, which Reséndez identifies as an integral part of the ‘other slavery.’ Archival records show that in October 1910, local authorities were informed of a night raid by the Peruvian Ramón Ugalte who kidnapped numerous indigenous women and children from the Florencia hacienda (Archivo de la Gobernación de Napo, Tena, hereafter AGN 1910b). Most often, however, victims of violent capture were not peons, who were more to the ‘civilized’ end of the local spectrum of race-thinking, but those who occupied remote portions of the forest, had violently resisted contact with whites, and did not speak Kichwa. Dating back to the early years of the rubber boom, these people—often referred to by whites as infidels, savages, or barbarians—were ‘simply captured with physical violence in the most remote areas’ and spent their lives in servitude (Barclay 1998: 197). In 1903, Hamilton Rice witnessed this first hand, writing that in ‘the battles of the rubber forests, the savages come out second best.’ After being captured, their left cheek was branded, which signified ‘slavery until maturity, in the majority of cases for life’ (Rice 1903: 413-414). Violence was not reserved exclusively for the forceful seizure of unconquered peoples, but also for those already under the settlers’ control. One local official noted that numerous colonists possessed an ‘arsenal of bars, stocks, and other instruments of torture to impose terror among the Indians in order to put them at their service’ (AGN 1916).

The same civil authorities that condemned white abuses against the more ‘civilized’ peons sometimes condoned war parties against the ‘savages,’ suggesting the importance of white race-thinking in determining the ‘proper’ treatment of nonwhites. In August 1910, Genaro Garcia reported that the indigenous peons of Hector E. Garcés were attacked by ‘savages from the Nushino,’ and in retaliation, the *jefe político* of Napo formed a war party to pursue and capture the assailants. When the governor of the Oriente was informed of this, he did not condemn the war party but wrote requesting details about the pursuit and information on the makeup of the war party, ‘with distinction between whites and Indians,’ in order to offer modest payment for their services (AGN 1910a). Although we do not know if this war party was successful, it is clear that these raids often succeeded in capturing and enslaving so-called ‘savages.’ In his travels, Dinwiddie came across captive slaves at Bélgica, Huasis, and La Providencia haciendas and heard stories of a group of men who ‘went to steal Aukas [Huaorani] for slaves,’ and others attempting to form a ‘well armed party for the purpose of shooting Indians’ (Dinwiddie 1924: 45-47). White perspectives on the

Huaorani—a regular target for violent slaving raids—were perhaps most clearly elaborated by Sam Souder, a North American fortune seeker who arrived in the Oriente around 1910 and stayed for more than two decades. When asked about the future of the area, Souder replied, ‘first exterminate the damned Aucas, and then we can talk about a bright future and all that sort of thing!’ (in Blomberg 1956: 32).

While most of these slaving operations were relatively unknown by Ecuadorians outside the region, occasionally they became national political scandals. In 1909, Miguel Román wrote to President Eloy Alfaro to inform him of a vibrant slave trade operated by a Colombian named Jaime Mejía. Román noted that many formerly flourishing towns were in shambles because Mejía had taken to stealing Indians from Ecuadorian haciendas and rubber traders and selling them to Peruvians in Iquitos. According to Abraham Pinzón, many civil authorities knew about this but had been silenced out of fear. The Peruvian commissioner on the lower Curaray noted that every time Mejía arrived in Iquitos, he had indigenous Ecuadorians to sell. Nicolás Torres supposedly ‘saved’ an indigenous woman, Virginia Coquinche, from a dark future in Iquitos by buying her from Peruvians and taking her to his hacienda (ANE 1909). Román was not the only one who recognized the destructive effects of this slave trade on the regional population. Reflecting on this era, Fernando Andrade also noted that entire indigenous populations in numerous settlements had been forcefully taken to Iquitos (in Dall’Alba 1992: 53).

Less dramatic forms of capture also permeated the region. In November 1921, Pablo Surbacco de Lara wrote to the *teniente político* of Coca informing him that: ‘numerous indigenous women from Sarayaku have come to file complains that their fathers, sons, and husbands are being arbitrarily detained by Mr. Abrahán Ron and José Antonio Baquero’ and forced to work on their estates. The women bringing the complaint to the authorities were keenly aware that these were illegal attacks on individual liberty, citing the fact that *concertaje* (debt labor) was abolished. Surbacco urged the authorities to inquire into the truth about the detained men and free them from this illegal servitude so that they could return to their families (VAN-MJ 1921).

Although some government officials condemned the abuse committed against the Indians, seeing it as ‘backward’ and ‘uncivilized’ to exploit populations with, in the words of one official in Quito, an ‘intellectual capacity [that] is so limited,’ government officials were not beyond coercing local Indians into unpaid labor (VAN-MJ 1918). In 1922, a Josephine priest noted that roughly twenty percent of the local nonindebted indigenous population typically worked two days per week for civil authorities without pay (VAN-MJ undated). Sometimes they received pay, but this was more an exception than the rule (Dyott 1926).

Even after the rubber boom burst, and despite numerous laws aimed at eliminating *concertaje*, systems of coerced labor remained intact. Beginning in the 1930s, a program of intraregional passports mandated that native workers carry documents naming the employer with whom they held debt (Wasserstrom and Bustamante 2015: 6). In a study of the budding oil region published in 1969, Agustín Cueva noted that the debt peonage system had been slowly breaking apart over the previous ten years. According to Cueva, it was not uncommon to hear indigenous people exclaiming “Soy

libre!” (I am free!) along the shores of the Napo. Nevertheless, some haciendas maintained what he called ‘feudal’ conditions of peonage (Cueva 1969).

## Conclusion

This brief foray into the history of the Ecuadorian Amazon shows that a variety of unfree labor regimes existed well into the twentieth century, and many of them parallel what Reséndez calls the ‘other slavery.’ We are fortunate that Reséndez has produced such an empirically rich study with numerous opportunities to engage his conceptual arguments beyond the scope of the book. It should force us to ask a few important questions: How extensive was the ‘other slavery’? Where did it exist? When and how did it end? Reséndez’s study should also push us to examine the scope of violent capture and enslavement of native peoples, as well as the ill-defined grey areas where debt peonage bled into something akin to the other slavery. Some of the ways in which this occurred, as outlined here and in Reséndez’s book, included the impossibility of canceling debt, the use of violence or force to move peons against their will, and the development of a market to buy and sell people under the guise of debt. By carefully analyzing the scope of coerced and racialized labor, we can engage, and perhaps more fully develop, Reséndez’s concept of the ‘other slavery’

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