

COLUMBUS AND SLAVERY

Question: Did Columbus bring slavery to the New World?

Answer: Slavery during Columbus's era was universal and practiced on every continent, but not every form of slavery was the same. Columbus only proposed to enslave the Caribs, who were cannibals. Due to tribal wars in Hispaniola, Columbus sent some of the defeated foes to Spain as slaves, but Queen Isabella later released them. The few times Columbus fought the natives, he did so at the request of or with the assistance of other allied tribes.

What you should know:

- Slavery did not originate in the New World—it originated in the Old World as that is where civilization began.
- Columbus never brought black slaves to the New World. Portugal was the first European nation to engage in the African Atlantic slave trade. In 1526—34 years after Columbus' arrival-- the Portuguese completed the first transatlantic slave voyage to Brazil.
- When people hear the word “slavery” in North America, they immediately think about racism. Slavery and racism are not one in the same.
- If slavery and racism were the same thing, white people would be racist when they enslaved other white people in Europe, while black people would be racist when they enslaved other black people. The same goes for indigenous people when they enslaved each other before any European contact.



- Historically speaking, most slavery was due to wars, conquests, and the like. Depending on where you were, you could go and obtain your freedom, meaning that not every form of slavery was permanent.
- Modern audiences often tie the race issue to slavery due to its strong association with the American Civil War. This association leads people to think of kidnappings, abuse, and other atrocities. Enslaving someone as punishment for a crime and enslaving someone who is innocent, as in the case of American Civil War-era slavery, are not the same thing—Civil War-era slavery was often permanent, while slavery as a punishment usually came with an end date.
- The Thirteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution states, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” A person who is sent to jail as punishment for a crime can be said to be enslaved because, as a result of his or her imprisonment, he or she loses freedom.
- Columbus enslaved the Caribs as he made a treaty with an indigenous Taino chief in Hispaniola to protect that tribe from its enemies, the Caribs—a cannibalistic tribe that would often invade the lands of other tribes and kill the populations of entire islands.

SOURCES:

Christopher Columbus

The Hero: Defending Columbus From Modern Day Revisionism by Rafael Ortiz. Create Space, 2017.

Columbus Day vs Indigenous

Peoples’ Day: The Truth Behind the Anti-Columbus Movement by Rafael Ortiz, Create Space, 2018.

Christopher Columbus and the Christian Church:

And Why He Matters to Believers Today by Rafael Ortiz, Create Space, 2019.

