



MERSHON CENTER for International Security Studies



- ABOUT US
- RESEARCH
- NEWS**
- EVENTS
- GRANTS
- PEOPLE
- PUBLICATIONS
- CONTACT

You are here: [Home](#) ▶ [News](#) ▶ [Mershon News](#) ▶ Newell's 'Brethren by Nature' explores Native American slavery

NEWS MENU

MERSHON NEWS

EXPERTS LIST

FACT SHEET

NEWELL'S 'BRETHREN BY NATURE' EXPLORES NATIVE AMERICAN SLAVERY



Mershon faculty affiliate [Margaret Newell](#) has been on the speaking circuit this year for her new book, *Brethren by Nature: New England Indians, Colonists, and the Origins of American Slavery* (Cornell University Press, 2015). The book [began with a 2006 grant](#) from the Mershon Center.



In *Brethren by Nature*, Newell reveals a little-known aspect of American history: English colonists in New England enslaved thousands of Indians. Massachusetts became the first English colony to legalize slavery in 1641, and the colonists' desire for slaves shaped the major New England Indian wars, including the Pequot War of 1637, King Philip's War of 1675–76, and the northeastern Wabanaki conflicts of 1676–1749. When the wartime conquest of Indians ceased, New Englanders turned to the courts to get control of their labor, or imported Indians from Florida and the Carolinas, or simply claimed free Indians as slaves.

Drawing on letters, diaries, newspapers, and court records, Newell recovers the slaves' own stories and shows how they influenced New England society in crucial ways. Indians lived in English homes, raised English children, and manned colonial armies, farms, and fleets, exposing their captors to Native religion, foods, and technology. Some achieved freedom and power in this new colonial culture, but others experienced violence, surveillance, and family separations.

Newell also explains how slavery linked the fate of Africans and Indians. The trade in Indian captives connected New England to Caribbean and Atlantic slave economies. Indians labored on sugar plantations in Jamaica, tended fields in the Azores, and rowed English naval galleys in Tangier. Indian slaves outnumbered Africans within New England before 1700, but the balance soon shifted. Fearful of the growing African population, local governments stripped Indian and African servants and slaves of legal rights and personal freedoms.

Nevertheless, because Indians remained a significant part of the slave population, the New England colonies did not adopt all of the rigid racial laws typical of slave societies in Virginia and Barbados. Newell finds that second- and third-generation Indian slaves fought their enslavement and claimed citizenship in cases that had implications for all enslaved peoples in 18th century America.

The book has recently been covered in the [Smithsonian](#), [Slate](#), and [Indian Country News](#).

MERSHON CENTER

- About Us
- Research
- News
- Events
- Grants
- People
- Publications
- Contact

ARTS AND SCIENCES

- College of Arts and Sciences
- Academics
- About the College
- News and Events
- Research
- Arts and Culture
- Alumni

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

- Office of International Affairs
- Center for African Studies
- Center for Latin American Studies
- Center for Slavic & East European Studies
- East Asian Studies Center
- Institute for Chinese Studies
- Institute for Japanese Studies
- Institute for Korean Studies

RESOURCES

- Events Calendar
- E-Newsletters
- Annual Reports
- Fact Sheet
- Experts List
- Faculty Books
- Furniss Award
- Knowledge Bank



© 2013 Mershon Center for International Security Studies – College of Arts and Sciences

1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

Phone: 614-292-1681 | Fax: 614-292-2407

Request an alternate format of this page.

