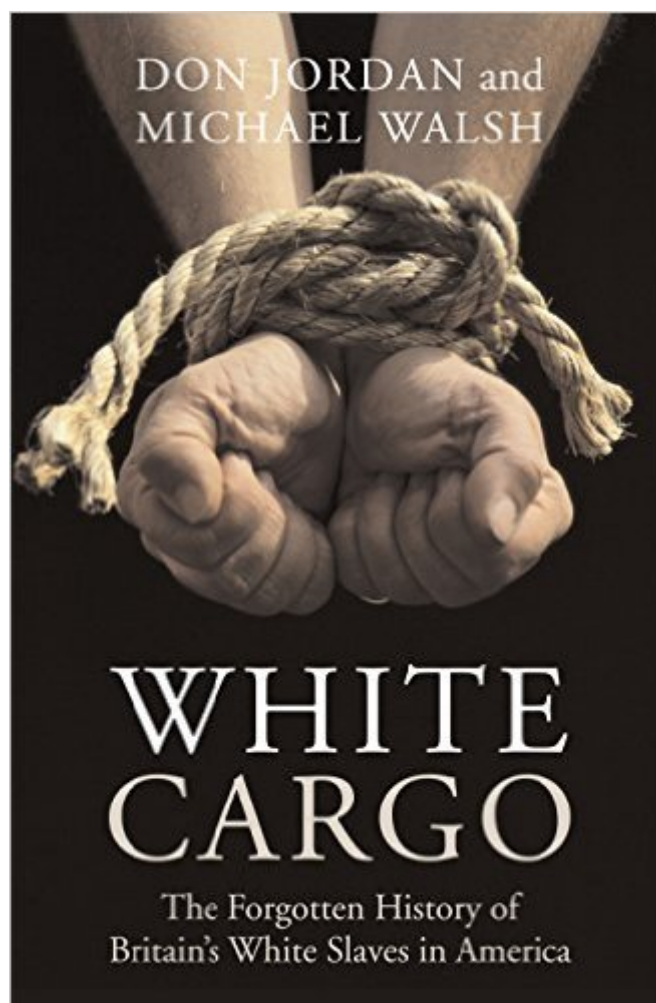


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# White Cargo: The Forgotten History Of Britain's White Slaves In America



## Synopsis

White Cargo is the forgotten story of the thousands of Britons who lived and died in bondage in Britain's American colonies. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, more than 300,000 white people were shipped to America as slaves. Urchins were swept up from London's streets to labor in the tobacco fields, where life expectancy was no more than two years. Brothels were raided to provide breeders for Virginia. Hopeful migrants were duped into signing as indentured servants, unaware they would become personal property who could be bought, sold, and even gambled away. Transported convicts were paraded for sale like livestock. Drawing on letters crying for help, diaries, and court and government archives, Don Jordan and Michael Walsh demonstrate that the brutalities usually associated with black slavery alone were perpetrated on whites throughout British rule. The trade ended with American independence, but the British still tried to sell convicts in their former colonies, which prompted one of the most audacious plots in Anglo-American history. This is a saga of exploration and cruelty spanning 170 years that has been submerged under the overwhelming memory of black slavery. White Cargo brings the brutal, uncomfortable story to the surface.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a Great Book! As a Boy from the Caribbean my Grandparents taught me about African slavery and Irish slavery and my ancestry. Being like many Afro-Caribbean people (especially people from Montserrat, the Virgin Islands, Trinidad, and Barbados) I have African ancestry as well

as Irish and Scottish Ancestry just as Colin Powell, singer Rhianna and many others. When I moved to the States I always wondered why they didn't also teach Irish Slavery in school. I understand that African-Americans endured slavery for longer in addition to being treated as second class citizens but never understood why both are not taught. I assume since America was founded by the British the history books were "edited" not to mention this time in history or "edited" to use lighter language like "indentured servants" instead of slaves. This is a must read for all history buffs.

The plight of millions of American slaves has been overlooked by historians for far too long. Slavery in the Americas was not limited to black Africans nor were the depredations inflicted on non-African slaves. This well-documented, scholarly expose of white slavery is a must-read for historians and civil-rights advocates, many of whom will be surprised by how widespread this practice was. The practice of indenture was well-known, but the fact that bondage often lasted until the end of life is not. I found this work to be simultaneously heartbreaking, infuriating, and riveting in content. My husband's sixth-great-grandmother and her son were sold on the block in Charleston, but whenever we tell this story, other people actually try to "correct" us with, "No, she was an indentured servant, not a slave." (Not true). This long-overdue work is a memorial to the nameless individuals who died in bondage as well as an expose of a practice too long forgotten and ignored by American history textbooks. Five stars.

It is significant that two journalists wrote this extremely important book. Many professional historians don't want much attention paid to white slavery for fear that it will take something away from black slavery or make whites feel less compassion for black slaves. That is foolish. People must realize that anyone could (and still can) fall into bondage under whatever name if the circumstances are right. Other books that covered similar subject matter (but received little attention) are: 1) *The Forgotten Cause of the Civil War: A New Look at the Slavery Issue* by Lawrence R. Tenzer. Shows that white slavery was present in the antebellum American South and played an important role in increasing the tensions between North and South that led to the American Civil War. 2) *Legal History of the Color Line: The Rise And Triumph of the One-drop Rule* by Frank W. Sweet. Shows that American slave status was not truly based on "race" but on maternal descent from a female slave, regardless of race or color. 3) *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* by Matthew Frye Jacobson. Shows how ruling planters created anti-black racism and white supremacy in order to divide the labor force and secure the help of lower class whites in putting down slave rebellions and fighting Indians.

This book is extraordinary and very upsetting indeed. Children were actually stolen along with adults who were carted off to America by the British. Many Irish people were among them. I read the book, lent it to my son, and when he didn't return it, I bought another copy. Be warned, however, there is a book of fiction also titled *White Cargo*. You can tell them apart because the nonfictional book has the subtitle "The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America."

This book's authors take a new look at a very old subject. As you probably know by now, *WHITE CARGO* equates the experience of indentured servants with slaves in colonial America. While this may initially strike some people (me included) as a mere polemic, this book makes its case convincingly. The book starts with discovery of the body of a teenaged European boy in Maryland in 2003. The remains date back to the 1600s, and he is found in a mound of trash. But who was this kid? And why was his body disposed of so unceremoniously? Walsh and Jordan tell the story of this anonymous indentured servant, and the hundreds of thousands of others like him, from both sides of the Big Pond. The first group of them arrived in 1619, and most of them were kids swept up from the streets of London. "Society's sweepings" were shipped west and made into indentured servants. As their stories unfold, the authors accumulate the evidence and arguments that show that both indentured servants and slaves were stripped away of virtually all civil rights and reduced to mere property. Further, the privations visited upon indentured servants (abuse, shortened lifespans, overwork) are so hair-raising, it's surprising this argument hasn't been made so convincingly long before 2008. This book is vital, it's engaging, and it's news to me. (See also *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*.)

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