

Audio 7: Slavery

Becoming Texas Audio Guides

Sophia T.: Slavery has been embedded in Texas history from the start. Archaeological evidence as well as the earliest European accounts suggest that some Native American groups enslaved one another. When colonists arrived, they offered captives to them, serving as guides and guardsmen. It didn't take long for the colonists to start their own forms of a Native American slave trade. The enslavement of Native American people actually outlasted African American slavery.

The enslavement of Native Americans is a system that is poorly understood. Spain was the country that enslaved the most Native Americans although all European empires took part. Ironically, the Spanish Crown had laws preventing slavery. But the Spanish colonists used Native Americans to work for minimal or no compensation despite it being outlawed in Spain.

A difference between the enslavement of Native Americans and Africans was that colonists preferred Native American women and children. Native American women were worth 30 to 40 percent more than men. This was because of their ability to have children and because they were seen as docile. Colonists also liked to enslave Native American children because they could learn the colonizer's language quickly and adapt to the captor's culture more easily.

It may not be known that slavery started before the colonists arrived. Some tribes in the Americas enslaved one another. A few examples of this are the Iroquois waged "mourning wars" on neighbors to avenge and replace their dead, and Native American groups along the North Pacific Coast exchanged enslaved people as part of marriage arrangements. Enslavement of the Native Americans continued through the 19th century, and in some remote areas, even into the 20th century.

Proceed to the back wall that shows a series of years as well as treaties. You will learn about diplomacy as well as conflict between French and Spanish colonists and Native Americans.