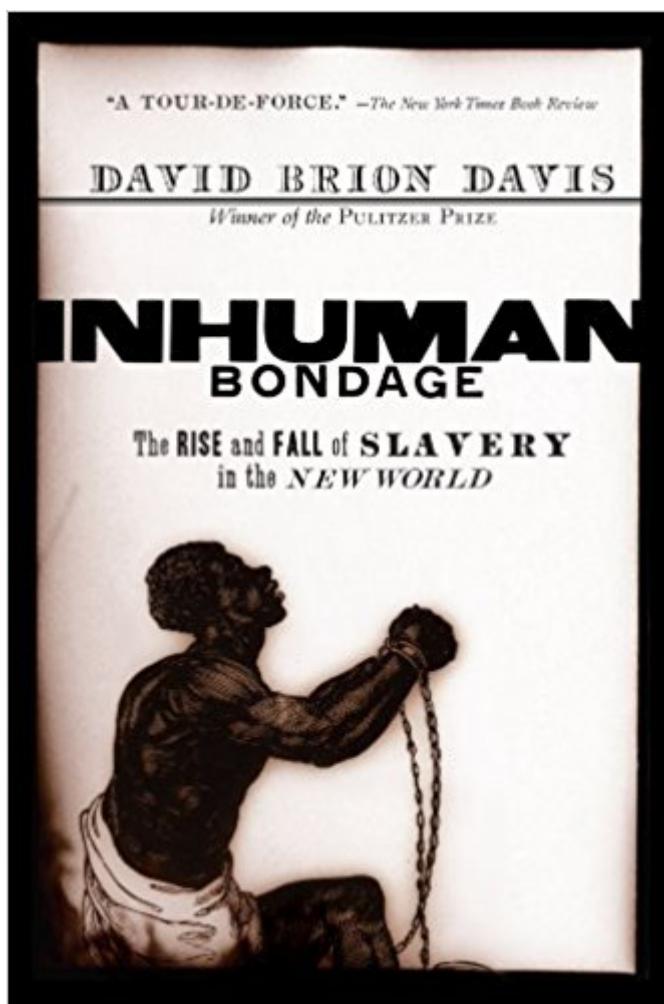


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Inhuman Bondage: The Rise And Fall Of Slavery In The New World



Synopsis

David Brion Davis has long been recognized as the leading authority on slavery in the Western World. His books have won every major history award--including the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award--and he has been universally praised for his prodigious research, his brilliant analytical skill, and his rich and powerful prose. Now, in *Inhuman Bondage*, Davis sums up a lifetime of insight in what Stanley L. Engerman calls "a monumental and magisterial book, the essential work on New World slavery for several decades to come." Davis begins with the dramatic Amistad case, which vividly highlights the international character of the Atlantic slave trade and the roles of the American judiciary, the presidency, the media, and of both black and white abolitionists. The heart of the book looks at slavery in the American South, describing black slaveholding planters, the rise of the Cotton Kingdom, the daily life of ordinary slaves, the highly destructive internal, long-distance slave trade, the sexual exploitation of slaves, the emergence of an African-American culture, and much more. But though centered on the United States, the book offers a global perspective spanning four continents. It is the only study of American slavery that reaches back to ancient foundations (discussing the classical and biblical justifications for chattel bondage) and also traces the long evolution of anti-black racism (as in the writings of David Hume and Immanuel Kant, among many others). Equally important, it combines the subjects of slavery and abolitionism as very few books do, and it illuminates the meaning of nineteenth-century slave conspiracies and revolts, with a detailed comparison with 3 major revolts in the British Caribbean. It connects the actual life of slaves with the crucial place of slavery in American politics and stresses that slavery was integral to America's success as a nation--not a marginal enterprise. A definitive history by a writer deeply immersed in the subject, *Inhuman Bondage* offers a compelling narrative that links together the profits of slavery, the pain of the enslaved, and the legacy of racism. It is the ultimate portrait of the dark side of the American dream. Yet it offers an inspiring example as well--the story of how abolitionists, barely a fringe group in the 1770s, successfully fought, in the space of a hundred years, to defeat one of human history's greatest evils.

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Customer Reviews

Pulitzer Prize-winner Davis follows Challenging the Boundaries of Slavery with this impressive and sprawling history of "human attempts to dehumanize other people" that focuses extensively on slave rebellions. These counter-attempts, Davis argues, are what form the base of the identities and communities of the descendants of New World slaves. In charting the evolution of slavery and societies' responses to it from 71 BCE to 1948, Davis author shows how ancient slavery practices mirrored the process of animal domestication, explores the moral conflicts the United States faced during the American Revolution and how the Haitian revolutions disrupted the class system. A lengthy and especially informative study of British and American abolitionist movements paves the way for a concise breakdown of American slavery politics during the Civil War and reconstruction. Davis's account is rich in detail, and his voice is clear enough to coax even casual readers through this dense history. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

History professor Davis places American slavery in the broader global context as part of the world's first system of multinational production from which mass markets were served. American slaves from West Africa produced commodities that fueled European expansion and the settlement of America. At its peak, American slave labor helped to maximize production for international markets. Davis emphasizes the dehumanizing nature of American slavery and the reliance on racial differences, i.e., between blacks and Native Americans, to solidify social and economic differences. Exploring the origins of antiblack racism, Davis examines nineteenth-century slave revolts, the Civil War, and emancipation. The Amistad case, involving African slaves who commandeered their slave ship and eventually sued for their freedom, provides the basis of an analysis of multinational charters of the Atlantic slave trade. The broader perspective on American slavery--its social and economic impact on the growth of the U.S.--forces readers to face the contradictions between our democratic ideals and economic impulses. Vernon FordCopyright © American Library

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A very scholarly book with many interesting citations which kept me constantly turning to the back of the book for more information. Progress was very slow, but the density of information did not disappoint. Many details of conversations, letters, lectures and other materials generated by the major players on both sides of the slavery issue provide much needed depth of understanding of the issues missing in many other books on the subject that just gloss over the issues with generalities. Personally, I would have preferred if many of the materials in the citations had been included in the main body of the book.

My only regret is that I did not buy this in hard copy. The next time I read it, and I will read it again, it will be in hard copy so that I can make notes and take more time to analyze and study the information. Do not be afraid of the academic sounding of this book. It is thought provoking, enlightening, challenging, and the passion of the author is evident. I have traveled a great deal around the world and the issue of poverty, especially extreme poverty, and slavery straddles a fine line. When a person, child or adult, is desperate for food, shelter, and a future it is very easy for them to be taken advantage of and placed in bondage and potentially in slavery. One of the key actions in this book is to define slavery and one definition stood out remarkably to me - "denial of a social identity". Removing a person's "social identity" denies that person human rights - such as the untouchables in India- denies them a voice in "democratic" countries - such as women who have no freedom without the presence of a male relative or the right to vote; denies them a place in society in order to obtain a job, build a home, have a family, and travel freely - as happened in the economically and politically motivated Apartheid of the United States and South Africa (that only came to a legal end in SA in 1994). Denial of Social Identity is only one aspect of the many nuances of slavery. The author also separates slavery from racism. It is possible to be racist without the presence of slavery, but slavery, or the history of a race can have an enormous impact on how they are perceived in a specific society or cultural group. The author explores these nuances and links the past with the present and on into the future. This is not just about slavery but how society can rationalize and justify its actions politically, economically, religiously, morally and ethically. It is how society can blind itself to its own lack of humanity. I would recommend this book to high school students. It should be read, discussed, argued about.... because slavery and bondage is still part of our world; in many different forms.

This is really one of the best books that I have read recently. It is objective, brings out the good with the bad in human nature, as it chronicles what in sum was the worst atrocity of modern times before the holocaust. Slavery has to be studied as an institution, an evil one but a complex one, not explained merely by a diatribe against the white man's racism (though that was there and can't be excused) but involving powerful economic factors as well. I am not a scholar of the subject, but have enough history to judge that if there are errors in this book, they would have to be errors of detail to be nitpicked over by academics; it is very complete and wholly persuasive on the broad picture, including the argument that ultimately slavery was abolished in the face of the economic interests of the countries involved, on the momentum of a moral movement initiated by genuinely altruistic persons.

"Inhuman Bondage" is an engaging, well-written, and fascinating history of slavery in the Western Hemisphere. I have an interest in the Civil War, and picked out this book to provide some background to understanding the roots of slavery in the United States. I couldn't have picked out a better book! Mr. Davis provides thorough coverage of every aspect of New World slavery, from its old world origins, to the history of abolitionism in England and America, to the end of American slavery with the Civil War. Davis has his own biases, but he doesn't hide them, and succeeds in presenting opposing viewpoints. While slavery was clearly a central theme towards the end of the war, there is less agreement about how important it was as its cause (vs. 'maintaining the Union'). Davis provides a convincing argument that slavery was, in fact, central to the very genesis of this conflict, with a degree of inevitability going all the way back to the founding of this country. For any armchair Civil War historian, this is an essential (and enjoyable!) read. It is fascinating, engaging, and highly educational. Highly recommended!

If you want to know the history of chattel slavery, and its eventual destruction in the Caribbean and the US, Inhuman Bondage is the book for you. Insightful, detailed, and comprehensive, the book covers slavery from ancient times, to its focus on Africans in the transatlantic slave trade, through its destruction in the British Empire and the US, with brief coverage of the end of slavery in Cuba and Brazil.

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