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Entangled Histories, Entangled Worlds: The English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery

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The American Historical Review, Volume 112, Issue 3, 1 June 2007, Pages 764–786,

<https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.112.3.764>

Published: 01 June 2007

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ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 19, 1741, Peter Vezian, quartermaster of the Boston sloop *Revenge*, appeared before a British judge on New Providence Island to request permission to sell four black prisoners taken on board a Spanish privateer. By all accounts, one of the prisoners, Francisco Menéndez, was a man of high rank, having commanded a Spanish unit of black soldiers during the relief of the British siege of St. Augustine in 1740, and a pair of witnesses claimed that the other three prisoners, who had served in Menéndez's company, were also freemen. Exploiting inconsistencies in the testimony, Vezian insisted that neither witness was to be believed. Instead, he invoked the indisputable evidence of skin color. “Does not their Complexion and features,” Vezian asked the Bahamian court, “tell all the world that they are of the...

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