

Nancy E. van Deusen. *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century Spain.* Narrating Native Histories Series. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015. 352 pp. \$99.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8223-5847-3.

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The recent work by historian Nancy E. van Deusen, *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century Spain*, examines the creation of the indio category in Spanish courts. Between 1530 and 1585, indio slaves living in Castile brought lawsuits to the Spanish courts, with the objective of being freed. Van Deusen analyzes 184 of these lawsuits by adapting Arjun Appadurai's concept of "ethnoscape," which she rechristens "indioscape." Her objective is to understand "how deterritorialized indios in the sixteenth century—no longer associated with an ethnic lord, an ethnicity, or a single master—were being defined in Castilian legal context" (p. 12). According to van Deusen, "the notion of indioscape includes a sense of rootedness—in this instance, of belonging to places and cultures other than Castile and in Castile—and routedness, or a distinct sense of time and space based on experiences of bondage and deracination" (p. 13). She frames this aim from a theoretical and methodological perspective that seeks both to bring voice to the voiceless and to reveal the interdependency of global and local dynamics to understand notions of belonging and identity construction of *indioness* during the sixteenth century.

The book is structured in seven chapters, each related to a different aspect of the construction of the indio category. The first three chapters analyze bondage experiences from more intimate spaces by detailing the journey of becoming a slave as well as life in the village and the household. From this perspective, van Deusen documents how the indio category was given relational, contextual meaning in each of these spaces. Progressively, van Deusen broadens the scope to analyze what she calls "the bureaucratic and legal culture of the courtroom," in which she includes procedures, evidence, the authority of documents, and the power of expert witnesses (p. 31). She also studies the arguments used to justify the continuation of indigenous slavery by examining several legal concepts, such as "natural slavery," just war, ransom, and cannibalism. Finally, the last chapters of the book are focused on imperial politics, and particularly on the tensions between the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns regarding indigenous slavery. In them, van Deusen pays attention to geographical origins, markets, physiognomic conventions, and language referents—among others—used as arguments to help determine whether indigenous litigants would become free vassals of the Spanish Crown or not. This analyti-

cal structure reveals how indios became trans-imperial subjects and border crossers, and also exposes the entangled nature of slavery during early modern times. Methodologically, it is also an attempt to understand the global from the particular, not by generalizing the latter, but by looking for the globality of details.

In this review, I want to highlight two elements of van Deusen's work. First, I will discuss her work on "giving voice" to the voiceless, and, second, I will look more closely at the possibility of applying her work to the contemporary agendas of legal history and cultural history of law. Van Deusen starts her work by establishing the challenge of giving voice to the voiceless indigenous slaves of early Spanish and Portuguese America. With this challenge in mind she designed a methodology seeking to hear those voices. Drawing on the methods used in microhistorical analyses and historical ethnography, van Deusen compares evidence from the litigation suits to other official sources in order to grasp the global and local dimensions of indigenous slavery in individual lives. By doing so, she offers a detailed story of individual characters, their presumed personal journeys, their networks, their arguments for manumission, and their successes or failures in becoming free vassals of the Spanish Crown by claiming their *indioness*. From this methodological and theoretical perspective, van Deusen creates a masterful narrative combining the specificity of the individual experiences of slavery and the global perspectives that came from economic and political dynamics. Throughout the reading of *Global Indios*, we meet diverse characters (Beatriz, Felipa, Aldonza, Pedro, Lucía, Jorge, and many others) and get to know their personal life stories as slaves. These stories are presented to the reader in a structured, linear, convincing, and reader-friendly manner. The life stories show the different ways imperial normativity fashioned their personal lives and how this

normativity became a space of dispute to define their status.

So, this illustrative and useful narrative about girls and boys, as well as men and women, in bondage during the sixteenth century does more than just give voice to the voiceless; it also fulfills other criteria. By rewriting their stories, the author makes a contribution to think about modern history anew, and that is the big issue, historiographically speaking. Van Deusen's work not only skillfully explains the history of these trans-imperial subjects and the building process of *indioness* as a juridical category in an increasingly globalized world, but also opens up a number of questions about the multiple faces of modernity and the diversity of actors and scales that have contributed to this constructive process of making *indioness*, issues that have become key to understanding contemporary indigenous peoples' history. This perspective is also relevant in a political sense, because it allows us to hear their voices in the present. By prolonging the key questions of the book into the present time, such as what does it mean to be an "indigenous person" in contemporary Latin America, we can reformulate and recontextualize its political implications, and above all, we can look for their legitimate voices and different ways of knowing.

Global Indios offers a skillfully written narrative as the result of a multi-step process of production: a selection and collection of sources; a careful reading of them; a translation from the sixteenth-century Castilian to contemporary English; and particularly, a rigorous scrutiny, comparison, and contrast of the different kinds of sources to fill the gaps of the trial proceedings. However, van Deusen dedicates very little space to quotations from the documents, and, throughout the text, it is not easy for the reader to determine the process according to which the author interpreted the case; compared and contrasted the data (or the absence of it); and, above all, reconstructed this voice of the voiceless and brought it from the

past to life. It would have been interesting, and perhaps even useful in the classroom, to have a few examples along with the text of the methodology van Deusen employed to form her narrative.

From a disciplinary perspective, *Global Indios* also makes significant contributions to the field of legal history. The to and fro between the micro and the macro scales is expressed in the waver not only between the global and the local but also between the individual and the institutional spheres. In that sense, it allows the reader to consider the different perspectives historians can take to analyze legal orders. This author's interest about "how some of the most peripheral individuals of empire—people of bondage—actively enforce large scale changes on a local level" shows one of these possible perspectives and also allows us to formulate many other questions to think about law in the past (p. 30).

One big question is, for example, how to deal with the limits of legality in legal history. It calls attention to how van Deusen reconstructed the strategies people in bondage used to create spaces of freedom under tremendously harsh conditions by means of the current regulations of the time. However, as van Deusen shows, the legal strategy was not always successful, so from there we can start thinking in endless possibilities people might have been created to deal with bondage in everyday life (for example, flee, the facto relationships with the lord, illegal children, compadrazgo, crime, etc.). This situation might have different consequences in disparate households, not all of them juridical, but key to strategically construct freedom in a place where the legal option was not the better option. So, how can we interpret this "silence" of the legal sources to understand better the limits of law? This reflection on the extra-judicial practices should be an important part of the legal history and cultural history of law agenda in order to understand the limits and scopes of the juridical phenomenon in an interdisciplinary fashion.

I consider van Deusen's work to be highly relevant for legal historians interested in interdisciplinary approaches, for example, by taking a bottom-up perspective, or for cultural and social historians who are interested in understanding past legal orders. Needless to say, her work makes a substantial contribution to the historiography about the Spanish and Portuguese empires in a global perspective, and about the indigenous people placed under its authority.

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