

intervened to prevent masters from freeing their servants early). These agreements specified the masters' obligations with regard to clothing, diet, maintenance and training, and usually required education for younger servants.

In contrast, New England courts did not regulate the relationships between Pequot captives and their masters in this early period. Thus the use of the term "servant" in this case did not necessarily carry the same sense of mutual obligation, award, or finite framework covered in the common law. English employers appear not to have entered into recorded legal contracts with Indians until later in the seventeenth century, and did not always include Indian servants and slaves in estate inventories. Existing law affected some elements of Indian servitude—particularly when it came to punishment and masters' rights—but the English colonists deviated from their customs when it came to length of term, masters' obligations, and other aspects of Indian captives' status.

The rapid entry of Indians into the labor market in other English colonies in the late 1620s and the 1630s exposed this gap. The anomalous status of Indians as a laboring group that occupied a legal gray area between servants of European origins and African slaves attracted attention (and legislation a year before the Pequot conflict) in Barbados and Providence Island, two colonies with close ties to New England. Pequot and Manissee captives exported out of New England in the 1630s entered an Atlantic world where Indians already composed a significant proportion of the agricultural and public works and infrastructure labor force. They joined Caribs and Arawaks from the Caribbean Islands, Guyana, and Venezuela; Miskitos and members of smaller groups raided by the Miskitos from Central America; and Indians from northern Mexico and South America traded through Gracias De Dios, a port on the coast between present-day Nicaragua and Honduras. Indian captives from this western rim region also moved to and through Jamaica, which served as a hub of the region's labor market. By the 1640s, the Dutch in New York and the English in Virginia exported Indian captives to Curaçao, Bermuda, and Barbados.<sup>5</sup>

## **From Servitude to Slavery in the Seventeenth-Century Atlantic**

The status of Indians in many Atlantic societies changed between 1630 and 1650 from contract workers to servants, and eventually to "perpetual slaves." Sometime around 1629–30, during a contest for control between battling groups of Barbados proprietors, Henry Hawley, a representative of the Earl of Carlisle, reduced to forced servitude a group of Arawaks who had voluntarily

accompanied the first English there with “divers sorts of Seeds & Roots, and agreed with them to instruct the English in Planting Cotton, Tobacco, Indigo, Etc.” The Arawaks helped construct the initial settlement.<sup>6</sup> In 1636, now Governor Hawley and his council made efforts to distinguish between Indians and European servants by declaring that Indian and African servants and their children would henceforth be considered slaves for life unless they had formal contracts for service that specified a lesser term.<sup>7</sup>