



# **It Takes Two to Tango: Africa, Europe, and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1500-1807**

*Matthieu Santerre*

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The role of European imperialism in the global system of African slavery has not been overstated, but rather that the role of Africa has been understated. European imperialism created demand for slaves in the Americas and had the trade power, financial and legal means to make it global. Yet, Africans played a role as well. Without the collaboration of African agents, the Atlantic slave trade would not have been possible. Central and Western Africa took advantage of the existing networks of the Muslim pan-Saharan slave trade to provide supply. Some resisted, but as with every coercive system, indigenous collaborators were needed.

History's most destructive structures of dominance have always had collaborators. Without African collaborators, the Atlantic Slave Trade could not have taken place as it did. Nevertheless, it should never be forgotten that the victims of one of history's great inhumanities were Africans. A burden which African diaspora around the Atlantic world must still live with. Both Europe and Africa played a role in establishing the global system of African slavery. Both need to be studied together, within a globalist perspective, to understand the trade.

Note: This short e-book was first presented, in an altered format, as an essay for the Department of International History at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

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