



# White Pacific: U.s. Imperialism and Black Slavery in the South Seas After the Civil War

*Gerald Horne*

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Worldwide supplies of sugar and cotton were impacted dramatically as the U.S. Civil War dragged on. New areas of production entered these lucrative markets, particularly in the South Pacific, and plantation agriculture grew substantially in disparate areas such as Australia, Fiji, and Hawaii. The increase in production required an increase in labor; in the rush to fill the vacuum, freebooters and other unsavory characters began a slave trade in Melanesians and Polynesians that continued into the twentieth century. "The White Pacific" ranges over the broad expanse of Oceania to reconstruct the history of "blackbirding" (slave trading) in the region. It examines the role of U.S. citizens (many of them ex-slaveholders and ex-confederates) in the trade and its roots in Civil War dislocations. What unfolds is a dramatic tale of unfree labor, conflicts between formal and informal empire, white supremacy, threats to sovereignty in Hawaii, the origins of a White Australian policy, and the rise of Japan as a Pacific power and putative protector. It also pieces together a wonderfully suggestive history of the African American presence in the Pacific. Based on deft archival research in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Hawaii, the United States, and Great Britain, "The White Pacific" uncovers a heretofore hidden story of race, labor, war, and intrigue that contributes significantly to the emerging intersectional histories of race and ethnicity.

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