

AFD Ep 329 Links and Notes - New York Conspiracy of 1741 [Bill/Kelley, Oct 18]

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Conspiracy_of_1741 This was a wave of mass arrests, executions, and deportations over an imagined conspiracy of poor whites and Black slaves to seize power in New York City, which was at the time a major slave city in the British North American colonies. It is often compared to the hysteria of the Salem Witch Trials in the 1690s because of coercion of unreliable witness accusations.
- <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1p286.html>
 - Historians debate whether there was actually any sort of conspiracy happening at the time.
 - The case rested nearly exclusively on the testimony of an Irish indentured servant (Mary Burton), who was rewarded with money and her freedom. She initially named the owner of the tavern where she worked, his wife, and two slaves and a prostitute who frequented the tavern. The tavern owner was John Hughson and he was well-known in criminal rings. His tavern was frequented by others in criminal rings.
 - There are a lot of theories about how Mary Burton's testimony may have been some version of the truth -those theories rely on the fact that John Hughson was doing some sort of criminal planning to take over a crime ring and had been telling slaves that he would free them if they supported him.
 - The accusations continued until she started to name wealthy, influential New Yorkers and then she was rewarded and the investigation ended.
 - A lot of what we know about the trial is based on what Daniel Horsmanden's *New York Conspiracy*, in which he documented the trials. Unsurprisingly he wrote it at the time in an attempt to document the evil of black folks, but it now reads as a text that reminds us of the horrors of slavery.
- <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/new-york-slave-conspiracy-1741/>
- <https://www.britannica.com/event/New-York-slave-rebellion-of-1741>
 - "The notion of a conspiracy was brewing. Meanwhile overseas, England had been at war for the previous two years with Spain, inciting a fear of Spanish attack on New York City and a general sentiment of anti-Catholicism. Causing widespread suspicion was a group of Black Spaniards who had been free citizens of Spain until they were captured by the British in the Caribbean and sold into slavery when they reached Manhattan in 1740. Harboring resentment, the Spaniards continued to declare themselves free and that, when captured, they should have become "prisoners of war," not slaves. Thus, Roman Catholics, African-born slaves, and Spanish-born Blacks were all under suspicion."
- https://www.jstor-org.dclibrary.idm.oclc.org/stable/274967?seq=11#metadata_info_tab_contents
 - "The trials revealed a minor, but in the circumstances fateful, consequence of the inability of whites and blacks to communicate with one another, except in the narrowest terms of master and slave. When black prisoners called white character witnesses, usually their masters, the whites were unable to speak on the slaves' behalf. For example, Adolph Philipse, called by Cuffee, could only say he had left his slave at home, "as to his character he knew nothing." John Roosevelt and his son thought Quack could not be involved in any mischief, but the best they could say of him was, "Quack was employed last year to work at the new battery, and that he minded his business very well."
- Background context: This hysteria arguably took place during the War of the Austrian Succession, but the view from the colonies was different. A pre-existing war in North America was known as The War of Jenkins' Ear due to an incident back in 1731, before

the conflict, when a Spanish Navy interaction with an alleged British smuggler resulted in a man named Jenkins getting his ear cut off. While the conflict over Austria did not kick off until the end of 1740, the longstanding trade tensions and colonial Georgia/Florida border disputes between the Spanish and British had erupted into armed actions by 1739 and New Yorkers were convinced by 1741 that a Spanish attack on New York and a slave insurrection backed by Spain was imminent. The War of Jenkins' Ear refers to the British-Spanish conflict in the Americas as opposed to the British-French-Indigenous conflict in the Americas, which happened later in the 1740s and was known as King George's War.