

Title Information

A Cross of Thorns

The Enslavement of California's Indians by
the Spanish Missions

by Elias Castillo

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Illustrations • Bibliography • Index

A Cross of Thorns reexamines a chapter of California history that has been largely forgotten—the enslavement of California's Indian population by Spanish missionaries from 1769 to 1821. California's Spanish missions are one of the state's major tourist attractions, where visitors are told that peaceful cultural exchange occurred between Franciscan friars and California Indians.

In schools across the state, as required by the California State Board of Education, fourth graders are taught that life between the friars and the Indians was based on peace and mutual respect. Both tourists and schoolchildren are being deliberately misled—in truth, the missions were places of enslavement and deliberate cruelty.

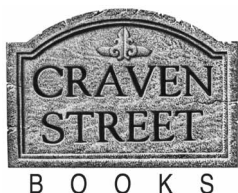
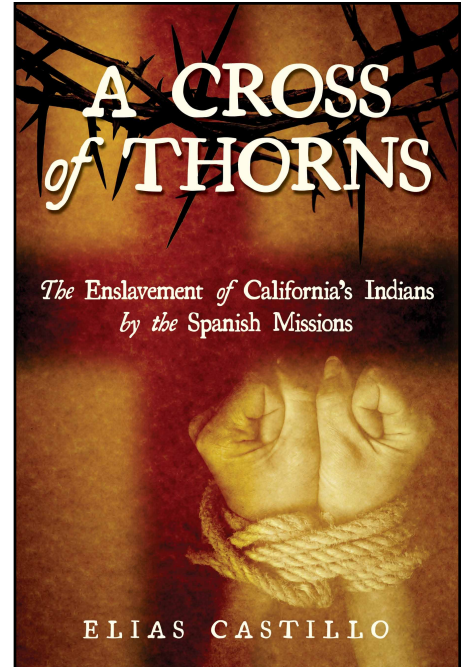
A Cross of Thorns challenges this mythologized history and presents the facts of the Spanish occupation of California and the cruel reality of mission life. Beginning in 1769, California Indians were enticed into the missions, where they and their descendants were imprisoned for 60 years of forced labor and physical punishment.

The chilling depictions of colonial cruelty in *A Cross of Thorns* are based on little known church and Spanish government archives and letters written by the founder of California's mission, Friar Junípero Serra (who advocated the whipping of Mission Indians as a standard policy), and published first-hand accounts of 18th and 19th century travelers.

Tracing the history of Spanish colonization in California from its origins to its legacy of shattered Indian communities that still suffer today, *A Cross of Thorns* is one of the most thought-provoking books ever written on California history.

Audience: California, Western, and Native American history readers.

About the Author: **Elias Castillo** is a three-time Pulitzer Prize nominee and the winner of thirteen journalism awards. Born in Mexicali, Baja California, Castillo holds two degrees from San Jose State University and is a former reporter for the *San Jose Mercury News* and the Associated Press.



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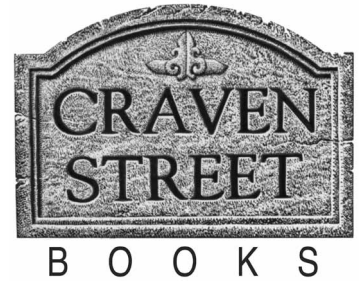
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New history book *A Cross of Thorns* delivers a damning indictment of the exploitation of California Indians by the Spanish Missions

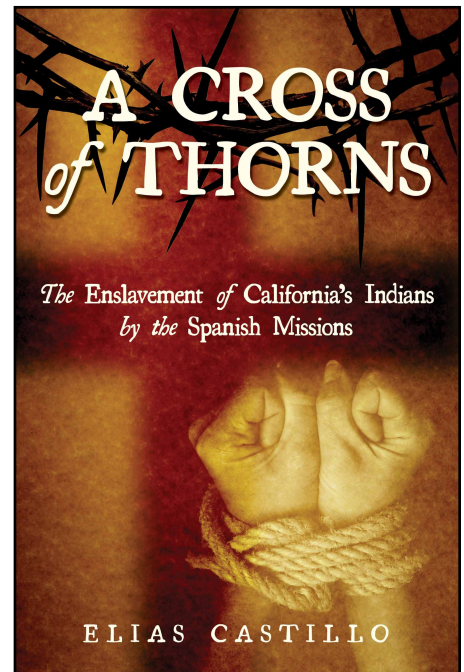
“*A Cross of Thorns* tells a story of which far too many people are simply not aware, the enslavement of California Indians under the mission system.” —Former U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse-Campbell

California’s Spanish missions are one of the state’s major tourist attractions, where visitors are told that peaceful cultural exchange occurred between Franciscan friars and California Indians. But the founding myth of California is a bitter lie — in truth, the missions were places of enslavement and deliberate cruelty.

The savage mistreatment of California’s Indian population by Spanish Missionaries from 1769 to 1833 — a chapter of California’s history that has been largely forgotten — is at last exposed to public scrutiny in the new book *A Cross of Thorns: The Enslavement of California’s Indians by the Spanish Missions* (Craven Street Books, February 2015).

The facts about Spain’s shameful colonial record in California have long been established by historians, but the truth is largely unknown to the general public and has been deliberately falsified by the state of California. In schools across the state, as required by the California State Board of Education, fourth graders are taught that life between the friars and the Indians was based on peace and mutual respect.

A Cross of Thorns challenges this mythologized history and presents the facts of the Spanish occupation of California and the cruel reality of mission life. Beginning in 1769, California Indians were enticed into the missions, where they and their descendants were imprisoned for 60 years of forced labor and physical punishment.



A Cross of Thorns documents the truth of the Spanish colonial record in California with little known church and Spanish government archives and letters written by the founder of California's mission, Friar Junípero Serra (who advocated the whipping of Mission Indians as a standard policy), and published first-hand accounts of 18th and 19th century travelers. While Serra has been long revered as a protector of the Indians and will soon be canonized by Pope Francis, *A Cross of Thorns* shows Serra's true character, blinded by the ignorance of his day and contemptuous of Indian rights and humanity.

A Cross of Thorns covers the full scope of Spanish colonization in California, from the initial conquests and the founding of the missions to the decay and destruction of the mission system under Mexican rule, describing in depth the state of the California Indians before Spanish intrusion, the structure of economic exploitation that supported the missions, and the shock of European travelers who witnessed the barbaric treatment of the Indians.

Bringing the story into the present day, *A Cross of Thorns* reports how the bitter conflicts among today's California Indians over tribal membership and benefits have their roots in the Spanish missions' destruction of Indian culture. Forcibly deprived of their lands by Spanish occupiers, often losing even their tribal names, many surviving California Indian tribes are not granted federal recognition by the U.S. government, and today's California Indians struggle to reclaim their Native American identity.

Tracing the history of Spanish colonization in California from its origins to its legacy of shattered Indian communities that still suffer today, *A Cross of Thorns* is one of the most thought-provoking books ever written on California history.

About the Author: **Elias Castillo** is a three-time Pulitzer Prize nominee and the winner of thirteen journalism awards. Born in Mexicali, Baja California, Castillo is a recognized expert on Mexico who led the first scientific exploration of Mexico's Copper Canyon and has advised the California Department of Investigation and the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement on the future of Mexico and its criminal organizations. Castillo holds two degrees from San Jose State University and is a former reporter for the *San Jose Mercury News* and the Associated Press.

Book Details:

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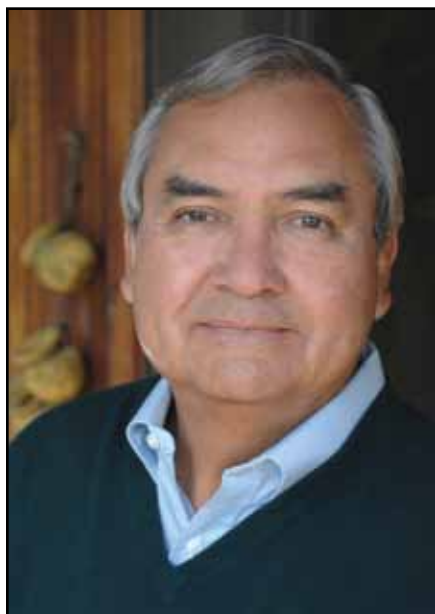
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About Elias Castillo

Author of *A Cross of Thorns*

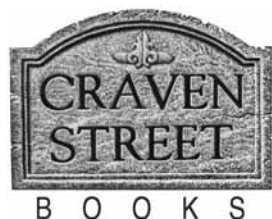


Elias Castillo is a three-time Pulitzer Prize nominee and has earned thirteen journalism awards in his career as a journalist. After working for the Associated Press and later the *San Jose Mercury News*, he left daily journalism in 1989 to devote himself to free-lance writing.

In 1991, under a grant from *National Geographic* magazine, he led the first scientific exploration of Mexico's vast Copper Canyon, a chasm that rivals the Grand Canyon in length and depth and is located in one of the most isolated areas of North America.

He is a recognized expert on Mexico and in 1997 was invited to speak before San Francisco's prestigious Commonwealth Club on Mexico and its future. He has also briefed California's Department of Investigation and the state's Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement on the future of Mexico and its criminal organizations.

Castillo was born in Mexicali, Mexico, where his stepgrandfather, Jose Severo Castillo, a renowned newspaper publisher, focused on exposing corruption in Baja California. After his stepgrandfather retired, Castillo's family moved to Santa Barbara. Castillo attended San Jose State University, where he earned a bachelor of arts in journalism and a master's degree.



For more information on *A Cross of Thorns* or to arrange an interview with author **Elias Castillo**, please contact Jaguar Bennett at Craven Street Books, (800) 345-4447, Publicity@QuillDriverBooks.com.

Praise for *A Cross of Thorns*

“Mr. Castillo tells a story of which far too many people are simply not aware, the enslavement of California Indians under the mission system.”

—**Ben Nighthorse-Campbell**, U.S. Senator, retired

“*A Cross of Thorns* pulls back the veil of lies, deceit, and cover-ups that has been perpetuated for nearly two hundred years.”

—from the Foreword by **Valentin Lopez**, chair of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band of the Costanoan/Ohlone Indians

“Reading *A Cross of Thorns* set my third chakra racing while my sense of moral outrage boiled over. Yet it is presented in subdued and sober terms, with fact after fact and story after story, building a sure case against the canonizing of Franciscan Friar Junipero Serra.”

—**Matthew Fox**, *Tikkun*

“Adds immeasurably to our understanding of a complicated and contested chapter of California’s history ... fascinating in its detailed accessibility.”

—**Jim Van Buskirk**, *San Francisco Examiner*

“A scholarly magnum opus ... a highly readable historical work, filled with battle stories and previously unchronicled narrative.”

—**Dan Pulcrano**, *Metro Silicon Valley*

“An extraordinary work of historical scholarship and a compelling read from beginning to end. As informed and informative as it is thoughtful and thought-provoking, *A Cross of Thorns* is an essential and highly recommended addition.”

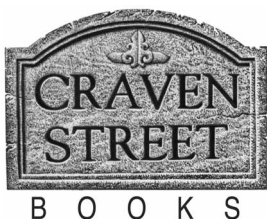
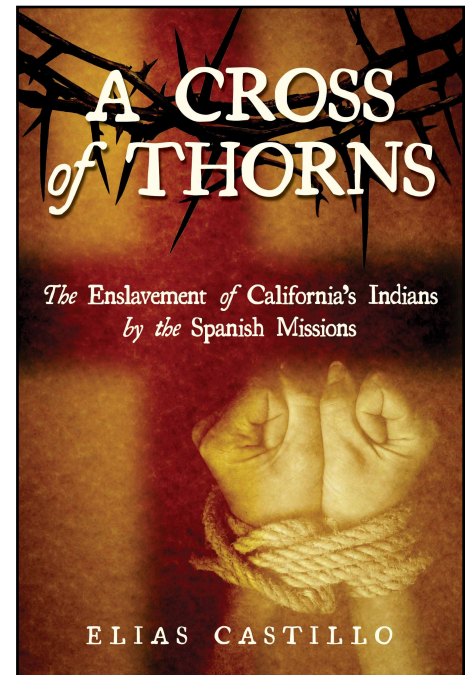
— **Paul T. Vogel**, *MBR Bookwatch*

“*A Cross of Thorns* is a substantial and needed contribution to California historical journalism revealing the backstory of the California Mission Indians and their suffering.”

—**William Briggs, Ed.D.**, Fullerton State University

“The missions and their treatment of Indians in early California deserves the critical eye that *A Cross of Thorns* brings in its exploration of the reality of a romanticized subject.”

—**Dan Bauer, Ph.D.**, Professor of Anthropology Emeritus, Lafayette College



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