



BLOOD

for Pearls

*The Holocaust of the Sixteenth Century*



By: Peter Von Perle

# *The Pearl Coast*

*1498; the arrival of the Conquistadores and the discovery of the world's richest pearl beds create an unbreakable bond between enslaved native Charaima and African Dembe against the greedy and murderous European invaders.*

# GREED

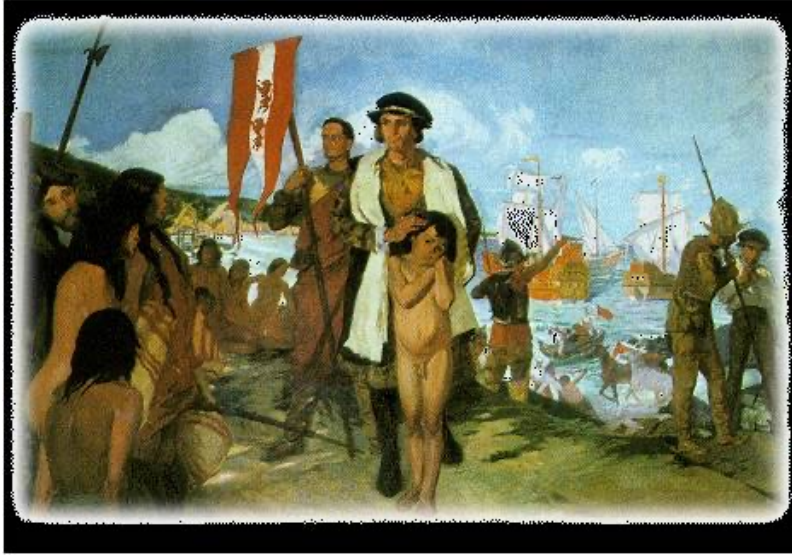
-In 1499 100 lbs. of pearls were shipped back to Spain, making it the first profitable voyage for the Crown.

-This led to the discovery of **“THE PEARL COAST”**

-Shipments of pearls exceeded all the other exports combined, including emeralds, gold, spices and slaves.

-At it's peak, there was such an abundance of pearls that even maids and slaves owned them.





## *Holocaust of the Sixteenth Century*

***“The life of those divers was no life at all, it was infernal death. These enslaved Indians, disfigured by their labor, looked like a “different race of men or monsters”. The pressure from the depth of the water frequently caused them to hemorrhage blood from their mouths and many died after only a few days of fishing.”***

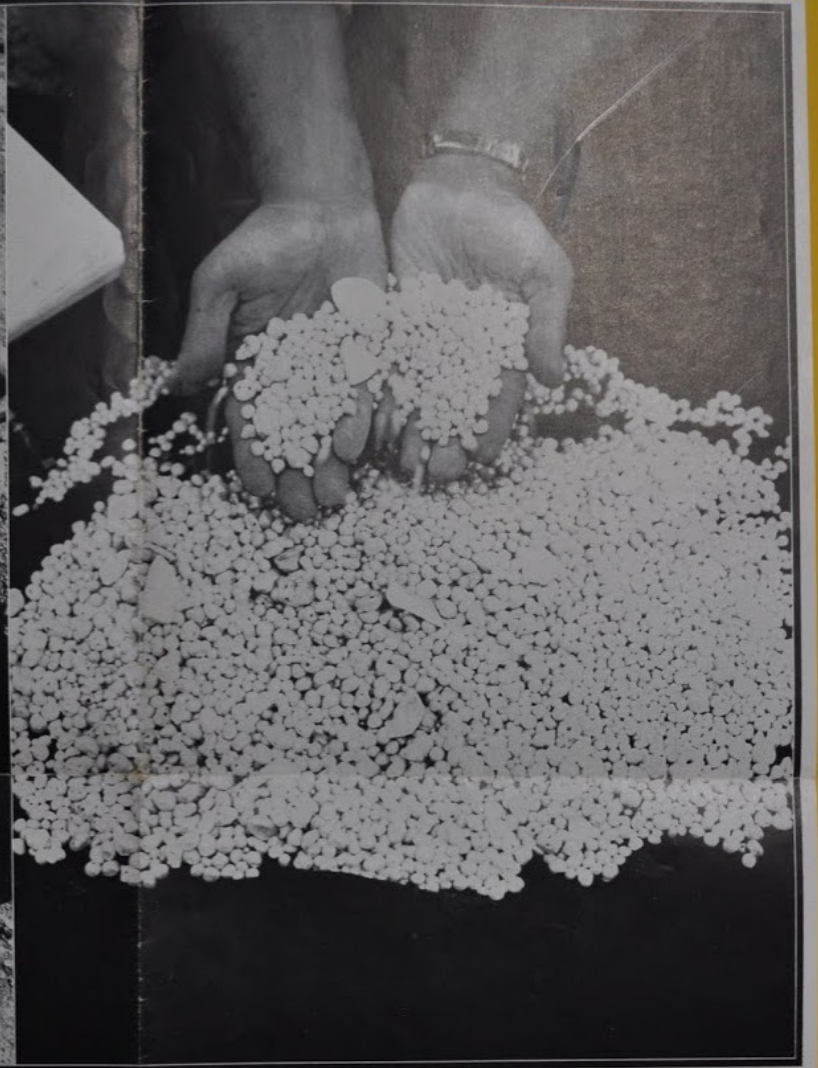
***“There is no hellish and hopeless life on this earth that may be compared with it.”***

*Letter from Bartolomé de Las Casas 1516 AD*

In less than five years, 95% of the native population was annihilated, either by harsh enslavement conditions or because of maladies brought by the Spaniards. Once there were not enough natives left, slaves from Africa were brought in. Rough estimates are that at least one million people were killed for the purpose of pearl fishing.

# 450 years later...

- *On the same island where all those historic facts took place and 450 years later, in the 1950's, a buried clay jar was unearthed filled with nine pounds of pearls and sealed with a honey-colored cloth, perfectly preserved despite the ravages of time.*



Photos by Hamilton Wright

...DI TREASURE

# NARRATIVE

**CHARAIMA (10)**, son of the Cacique is playing along the shoreline with his buddies when they see three large and strange ships approach. The members of the friendly Guayqueri tribe are fearful and excited. The Spaniards see the richly adorned natives with pearls and gold and start bartering. The Caciques wife takes her **PEARL NECKLACE** off her and gives it to one of the Spaniards in exchange of a piece of Valencian earthenware. Columbus exclaims excited: ***"We have arrived at paradise! The Indians have many pearls, and they don't wear any small ones, either because they have plenty of large ones or they don't know how to pierce them!...some pearls are as large as pigeon eggs others as small as mustard seeds..."***





# *A New World*

Columbus must return to La Hispaniola within days, but he leaves **PEDRO** a young and ambitious mariner with some of the crew and one ship to explore the surrounding areas. The tribes' men take the Spaniards to the tiny island that has those rich pearl beds. The natives dive for pearls and barter them for needles and glass beads. Soon tensions arise.

Later, **PEDRO** forcefully takes **CORA** as his concubine who was supposed to marry **CHARAIMA**.

# 1499

Within several weeks another ship arrives in the area. It is Peralonso Niño who encountered Columbus in Hispaniola and upon hearing of pearl beds sets sails South-East bound. Upon his arrival at CUBAGUA island his crew forces the natives to dive for the greatest number of pearls in the shortest period possible. Within a few days he sets sail to Spain with 200 pound of pearls. Upon his arrival in the port city of Cadiz, SPAIN, he sells half of the loot on the black market and takes the other half to **Queen Isabela** who is exhilarated. **This is the first profitable voyage for the Spanish crown.**





# *The Initial Years*

Caused by the sensational news about the pearls, many adventurers, and outcasts start arriving in Cubagua and the tensions with the natives become more intense. Slayings, beatings and the first signs of slavery start to emerge. CHARAIMA observes in horror how his father gets killed, his mother enslaved to forced labor. From dawn to dusk they are forced to dive without food and water and many exhausted natives die within days. PEDRO is a particularly cruel boat supervisor who beats and tortures all the slaves. For him, they are not humans and therefore will not be treated as such. Warrior CARIBS from nearby islands also come ashore and wage wars against the GUAQUERIES and CONQUISTADORES alike. They are fearsome cannibals.

# THE CLAY JAR

Once the desperate teenage **CHARAIMA** is enslaved as well, he takes an empty olive oil clay jar, buries it in a secret location and starts filling it up with pearls that he finds, hides or recovers from dead bodies. He continuously does this throughout the years and even before his death he entrusts the location of the clay jar to **DEMBE**, an African muscular and heroic slave who continues his labor of collecting as many pearls as possible without raising suspicion. **(This is the central plot of the film).**

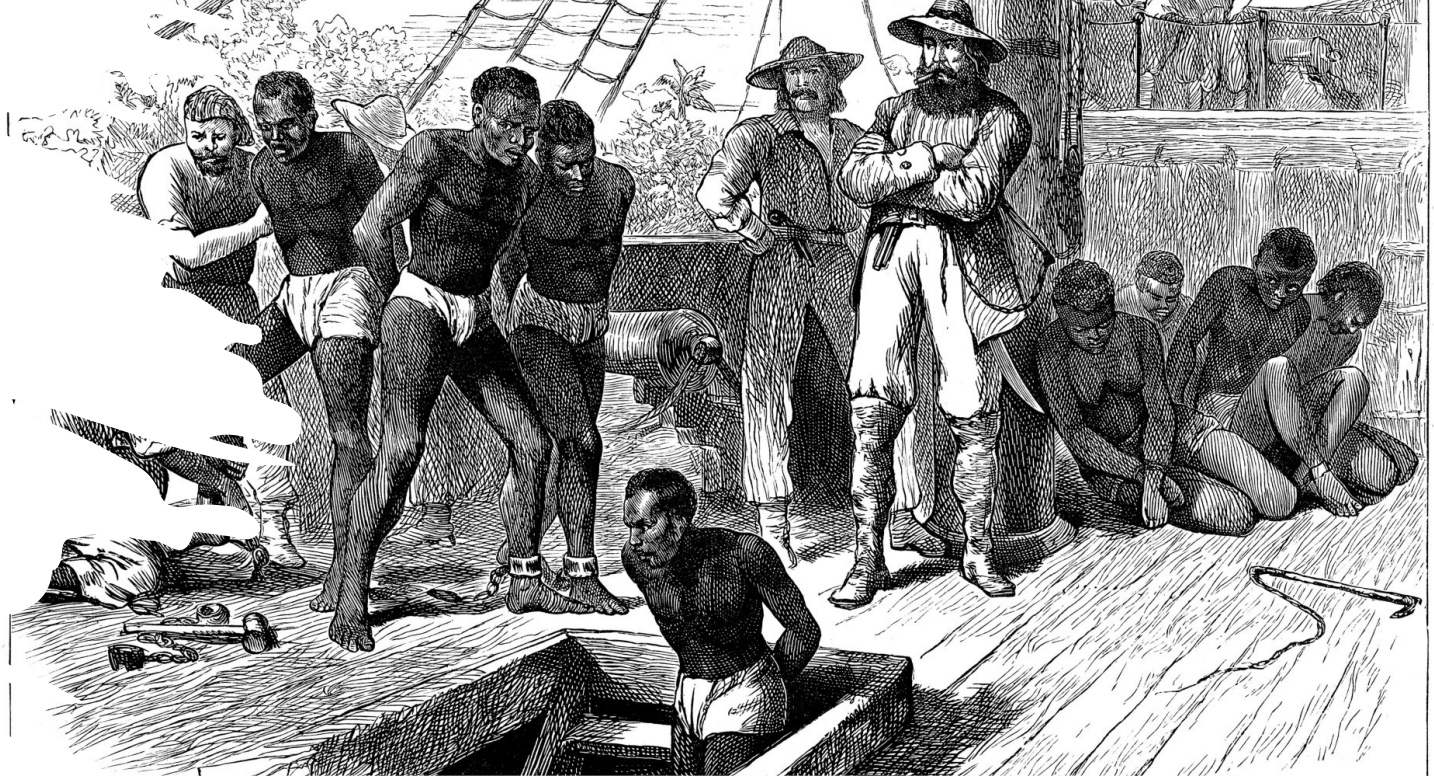


# Rise and Fall

With all the Natives killed, the Spaniards are forced to bring African slaves. Pearl fishing gets more and more difficult as the oysters in shallow waters have all been collected and divers have to reach depths of 30 to 40 feet increasing death and shark attacks.

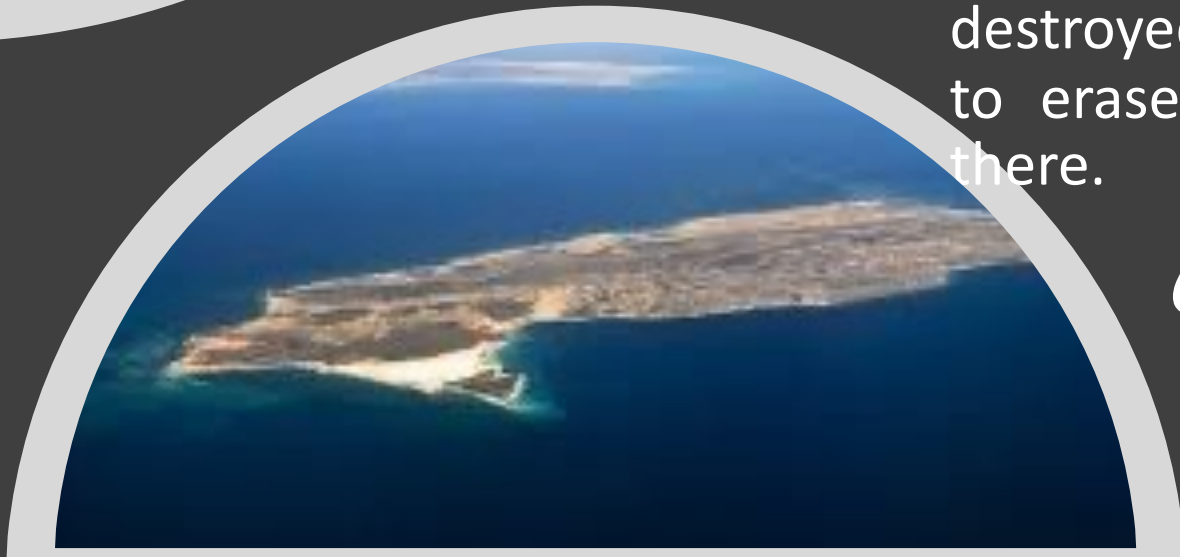
**DEMBE** pulls **PEDRO** into the water where he is attacked and killed by sharks.

As pirate attacks intensify, more and more settlers leave. Finally, a **HURRICANE** destroys what is left of the island and it remains deserted.





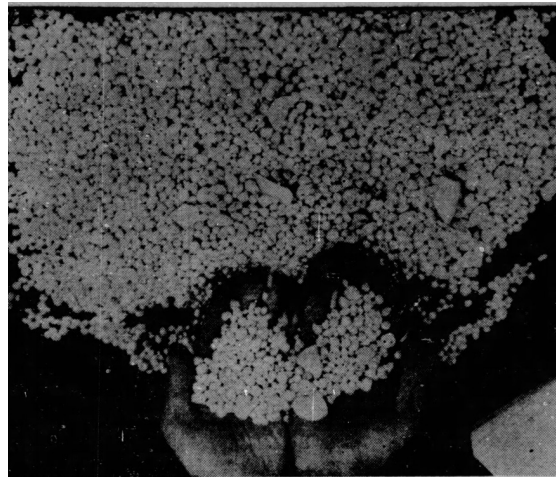
CUBAGUA island; with only 22 square kms filled with the richest pearl oyster beds was for 30 years the epicenter of European exploitation and genocide. The vast amount of riches that originated here changed the socio-economic landscape of Europe for decades during the sixteenth century. It's city, NUEVA CADIZ, which at its height had about 1800 inhabitants, 300 Europeans and the rest slaves was ultimately destroyed by Mother Nature as to try to erase all the evil that emerged there.



*CUBAGUA*

# Postscript Reel

After the end of the feature film and before the spectators leave, a brief 30 second black and white archival short film will be shown, where the actual buried clay jar is unearthed and emptied in front of the camera.



**TREASURE UNEARTHED**  
Cache of more than 3,000 pearls was  
and buried in jug on island of Cubango,  
Venezuela, amid ruins of village destroy  
by hurricane in 1534.

THE VENEZUELA, S. A.  
CALLE 3109 telefono 85383  
PO BOX 10000  
CARACAS VENEZUELA

**WORLD EV**

**FINDS PEARL TREAS**

# Peter Von Perle

Passionate and obsessed with the history of natural pearls. After many years of research and gathering historic and scientific evidence, **GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS®** awarded “**The Columbus Pearls**” with the world record for “**The Largest Collection of Pearls Discovered**” in NYC on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

Peter decided to write and publish the results of his research “**Blood for Pearls**” based on true events.

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