

Columbus, indians and human progress essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

When Columbus reached land in the Bahamas he was greeted by the Arawak's who were without clothing. They greeted Columbus and his men with gifts of food and water. Columbus instantly knew that he and his men could subjugate them and make them do whatever they want. The Arawak's were remarkable for their hospitality and their beliefs in sharing which, were not present in the Europeans. The reasoning for Columbus' voyage to the Americas was because Spain was expanding incredibly fast and it came to a point where 2% of the population owned 95% of the land. The Spaniards sought gold because it was more useful than land for it could buy anything. There was thought to be gold in Asia along with other goods such as silks and spices and a Western sea route was needed. Spain decided to take the risk and send their men across an unknown ocean. Columbus was promised 10% of what was found along with governorship over newfound lands and fame. Columbus was a merchant's clerk from the Italian city of Genoa. He was an expert sailor and set out with three ships. The Santa Maria was the largest at the time. It was 100ft long and contained 39 crewmembers. Columbus miscalculated and ended up thousands of miles farther than he had calculated. On October 12, a man named Rodrigo saw the first bits of land and shouted out.

They had landed on an island in the Bahamas. Supposedly the first person to see land was entitled to a yearly 10, 000 maravedis for life. Rodrigo never got it because Columbus had claimed he had seen a light the evening before so Columbus then got the reward. On the island Columbus and his men had made a fort out of the timbers from the Santa Maria. This was the first European base in the Western Hemisphere. The Arawak Indians had

developed crops such as corn, yams, and cassava they could spin and weave but had no domesticated work animals. The Indians wore tiny gold ornaments in their ears, which led Columbus to take them as prisoners and force them to show him the source of the gold. Columbus sailed to modern day Cuba then Haiti and finally the Dominican Republic. As the gold became harder and harder to find Columbus took more and more prisoners. When he had asked the Indians to trade as many bows and arrows as his men wanted and the Indians refused so two of the Indians were sliced with swords and bled to death. The report back to Spain was that Columbus had reached Asia and some island off the coast of China. His descriptions were part fact and part fiction. In his report he explained how easily the Indians could be taken advantage of and informed the Majesties that he could bring them back as much gold as they wanted along with as many slaves as they wanted.

Because of this exaggeration the second expedition was given 17 ships and 1200 men. The aim of the second expedition was now clear: slaves and gold. The men roamed the island in gangs looking for gold and taking women and children and making them slaves for sex and labor. In 1495 they went on a great slave raid and captured 1500 Arawak men, women, children were put up in pens like wild animals and guarded by Spaniards and dogs. The best 500 specimens were picked and shipped off the en route to Spain. Two hundred died on the trip there. Back on the island all people over the age of 14 were ordered to collect a certain quantity of gold every three months. The task of finding gold was next too impossible since the only source of gold were small flakes found in the river. The Indians tried to flee but were hunted down with dogs and killed. Bartolome de las Casas was a young priest who

described the things he witnessed the Spanish do to the Indians. He compared their ways of life to those of the Spaniards and the differences were drastic. The women in Indian society were treated so well it was a shock to the foreigners.

Marriage laws were non-existent; they could choose their life partner and leave them as they please. The Indians were extremely generous with their possessions but expect the favor to be returned with the same degree of liberty. Total control led to total cruelty. After about six to eight months of work a third of the men died. Husbands and wives were together only once every eight or ten months, since they were so exasperated they ceased to procreate. The mothers were overworked and could not give their babies a healthy life. In about 3 months 7,000 children had died. Mothers killed their own children because they could not be cared for and spared them the pain and grief of growing up.