

# Diversity in america

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



Annie Walter Diversity Essay COR 150 E November 19, 2007 In an ideal world, humanity would understand that all mankind is created equally; that the underlying truth of each of us is goodness, and that through awareness, conscious choice and the willingness to create positive change, we could live in a world where diversity is celebrated. We would leave behind the substantial racist and oppressing patterns that exists in this world, specifically in the United States of America. It is said that the U. S. is a melting pot of cultures, and that we are a country of immigrants existing together as a new culture, living under the values of a democracy based on freedom, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Yet this policy is completely disregarding the fact that as immigrants, we brutally committed genocide to the Native Americans. The dominant race in the U. S. A. is made up of white Euro-centric people, and looking at the patterns that exist in this culture is important to examine the history, the ways in which racism is alive and how and who is affected. We all must look at how, as an individual and within a community, we can work towards positive change, healing and understanding. As a society, we have committed and perpetuated the oppression of different cultures specifically the Native Americans, the Native Africans and the many immigrants from different countries. In the early history of the U. S. government, it is clear that there was a systematic method that aimed to remove the Native Americans from the land that was desired by the colonists, with the malicious intention to commit genocide. The first example of the patterns of racism that were established is seen in the fabrication of stereotypes onto the Native Americans. It was said that the Natives were "barbarians" and that they would rape and murder women and

children and that they “ served the devil” (Tataki, 1993, p. 41). The whites held the belief that the Natives were occupying land that the colonists felt entitled to. “ White people also justified the genocide by saying that Native Americans died from diseases they were biologically unable to resist” (Kivel, 2002, p. 126). It is a known fact that smallpox were given to the Natives as a way to kill them. Multiple examples exist throughout the history of the whites murdering, raping and unjustly exploiting almost every aspect of the Native’s culture. After committing such horrendous violations we are left with the inability to change all that has occurred and a great sadness that produces guilt, blame and anger that often stagnates a healing process and increases denial and avoidance. The Native American population has almost completely been destroyed. “ At the time Columbus arrived in the West Indies there were approximately fifteen million indigenous people... today... the population of native Americans in the United States is around three million according to U. S. government census figures” (Kivel, 2002, p. 124) and the remaining Natives in America are mostly confined to reservations. This small fraction of designated land is no longer their original sacred land but it is being raped for natural resources. White settlers not only committed genocide but they also enslaved the Native Americans. This pattern of entitlement and abuse was continued with the legal capturing and enslavement of people of African decent with as much violence and oppression. The history of slavery in the United States that occurred through 1619 to 1865 began soon after the English colonists first settled in Virginia and lasted until the passage of the thirteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. “ Over the next twenty five years Virginia passed a series of

laws that legalized slavery, producing a radically subordinate and stigmatized class below that of all whites" (Kivel, 2002, p. 130). Although technically slavery was abolished in 1865, a lineage of abuse and inhumane treatment was installed and has been carried into this day and age providing a challenge to accept and comprehend the past. In an attempt in understanding black oppression, there are aspects that demonstrate this injustice. They are institutional racism, racist knowledge and power relations that are played out in our culture and in no way have anything to do with biology. Individuals and societies have created and used race as a means to oppress and overpower other groups of people. Racial oppression is when a group of people dominates another for their own benefit disregarding justice and respect through the use of violence and defining and discriminating racial differences. This dominant group receives various benefits although in the larger picture all sides lose for the continuation of a pattern of pain and injustice is insured through these actions. African-Americans are a case of this racial oppression. They were turned into slaves because of the color of their skin. It is shocking that it did not start this way and that through the power of the U. S. government slavery laws were passed that enabled the white masters to turn the blacks into slaves. This is an example of the institutional racism used to enslave the blacks. Because of this occurrence, we, as a society, must break down the residual stereotypes that have instilled fear, pain and disconnection between the races, and to change the model that exists even at this point in time. Another example of racism in the U. S. is seen in the treatment of immigrants. This subject is personal, for on my father's side of my family I am part of the first generation born in

American. My father's parents immigrated to the U. S., to escape the holocaust and I am sure shared the dreams of the majority of different immigrants who traveled to the " land of opportunity, " escaping places of war and economic devastation to begin and pursue a new and better life. Through the duration of attending a class studying the diversity in America I have gained painful yet poignant knowledge of the racism that is still perpetrated upon immigrants, specifically on Jewish people. I have recently learned that groups of neo-Nazis congregate and commit acts of violence against Jewish people and immigrating races. This is terrifying to me and feels unacceptable while we live under a constitution that allows personal expression but does not permit such distinct racist and violent behavior. I am grateful and saddened that because I was raised in a protected and privileged community I have rarely experienced oppression and hateful discrimination when it so readily exists in our culture. In the past few months I find myself cycling through heartbreak, anger and disbelief of the injustice that has and still occurs, and then to a yearning for healing and equality for all. I remain in a space of wonderment, questioning the fact that although laws have been installed to prevent the acts of racism, fear, ignorance and violence is bubbling hot under the surface of our society, and we are a long way from a complete shift in humanity that I crave. I do believe there is hope. I believe that in gaining the truth of the past and diminishing ignorance of the harm that was and still is being done we open a door that may aid in the battles that are still being fought. Although the brutality of racism is alive, the potential to fight for the rights of all the people who live upon this American soil is possible, but the truth of the history and the

attainment of awareness must be brought to fruition. Reference List Kivel, Paul, (2002). Uprooting racism: How White People Can Work For Racial Justice. Gabriola Island, BC VOR 1X0, Canada: New Society Publishers.

Takaki, Ronald, (1993). A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America. New York, NY: Time Warner Book Group.