

# Indians and indian policy

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Indians & Indian Policy Inserts His/Her Inserts Grade Inserts 20th April,  
Introduction American Indians have a long history that dates back to pre-colonial America. These Indians lived freely and owned land in America up until the white race came to America. White people in America took over control of land and administration in US and they eventually clashed with the indigenous Indians. Several policies were initiated either to recognize Indian sovereignty or alienate Indian land or civilize the Indians. Most of these actions had different effect on the lives of Indians. Several authors have documented the treatment and relations between the Indian people and their government. This essay will explore and review three works on the Indians and policies applied to them. Overview One of the policies that were used against the Indian was the Indian termination policy which greatly changed the lives of Indians living in the United States of America. The US government in 1943, decided to assimilate all Indians into normal Americans. According to Philip, in his book on the termination policy, he talks of the effect of the policy on native Indians. This is because the living condition of Indian tribes in reserves was worse and the government had to find a way to change the lives of Indians into normal lives. The termination policy took long to enforce and eventually it gave way to recognition of indigenous Indians as Americans<sup>1</sup>. One of the people involved in change of policy was the then American President, Harry Truman who wanted Indians to be recognized as Americans. However, this was not the only policy that affected the Indian Americans in the United States since other policies were effected on American Indians. Cynthia Cumfer in her book explains the experiences that the Cherokee and the Tennesseans underwent in the USA. For instance, the refusal by Indians to be civilized led to the white administration

colonizing their lands for different uses. During the presidency of Andrew Jackson, the government wanted to engage the Indians in a manner that could ensure equal rights were awarded to Indians. According to Jackson, Indians were naturally liberal and that they could not be considered as primitive and uncivilized. This is because he thought that if Indians could be taught on civilization then they would enjoy equal rights and privileges as the white Americans<sup>2</sup>. As a result, the government saw the need for integration of the Indians into main stream American societies. This policy ensured that economic equality and education handed to the Indians at the expense of Indian traditions and culture<sup>3</sup>. Another text that offers information on the Indian policy and way of life is by Claudio Katz who elucidates on Thomas Jefferson's presidency and anti-capitalism. Jefferson taught of giving Indians equal opportunity. However, he also was of the idea of giving white Americans land inhabited by the Indians since this would lead to economic growth. His ideas led to the policy of exclusion of Indians from different economic activities and this alienated the Indians further<sup>4</sup>. This is because the Indian land was given to white farmers while Indians were integrated into white civilization at the expense of their culture. Different texts/books on American Indians paint a picture of improper application of governmental policies on Indian. Successive US administrations had an idea of civilizing the Indians and they went about using different strategies. However, from the text we witness that their efforts led to the discrimination of Indians and furthermore it eroded the culture of the American Indians<sup>5</sup>. For instance, the termination policy gave Indians the opportunity to be educated and have equal opportunities as white people. However, due to the slow and improper implementation of the policy, Indians were further

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marginalized and their lands taken away. These texts are accurate since they give a detailed view of the policies applied on the Indians and the net effect of these policies<sup>6</sup>. For example, in Cynthia's book, we witness how the Cherokee people were tricked into surrendering their land to American administration. Governor Sevier was an agent of the government who was used in luring Indians with goods in exchange for their lands. In my view, the above three texts are accurate since they show the transition from Indian being free to them living in reserves and integration into society through the termination policy. Conclusion The American Indians have been faced with turbulent history in the past and this affected their way of life. Different texts suggest that the Indians have been discriminated and marginalized by successive American governments. For instance, the Indian termination policy was a good idea but it was not shared with the Indians and thus it ended destroying their lives. The above texts correlate with the events that shaped the Indian history and way of life.

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