

Essay on alcoholism in the native american society

[Health & Medicine](#), [Alcoholism](#)



Sherman Alexie, in his book *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, reflects on alcoholism as a social problem that has faced and is still facing the Native American Society today. He conveys alcoholism as a source of domestic conflicts, Loss of potential and lives, and the disintegration of the moral fabric within the Native American Society. He also conveys alcoholism as generic and is hence passed from generation to generation among Native Americans.

Sherman Alexie conveys alcohol as a key source of domestic conflicts throughout his book. One of the places where alcohol is conveyed as being a source of domestic violence is where Victor's mother and father cannot live together in harmony. They keep on quarreling. The main reason for their quarrels is Victor's father drinking habits. His drinking habits are not appealing at all to Victor's mother and since she cannot put up with it, she cannot help quarreling with him (Alexie, 1993, p. 34). Over time, quarrels intensify to a point that Victor's father now prefers to stay away from home. He goes for rides on his motorbike so as to get away from home and avoid quarrels with Victor's mother. In the end, he decides to leave his family and goes to live in Phoenix alone (Alexie, 1993, p. 35). His action of running away from home breaks the family ties that exist between him, his wife and his son Victor. From this incidence, it is clear that when marriages break as a result of domestic violence, children are affected yet they do not take part in the domestic violence. This is the reason as to why Victor keeps on remembering the day that his father left home and waved at him as he stood on the window. In fact, those memories instill a lot of pain in his heart. This is the reason why he tries to console himself by using his father's quote which

states “ If you don't like the things you remember, then all you have to do is to change your memories”(Alexie, 1993, p. 34). Due to this incidence, Victor has to live without his father’s love because he has fled from home. From this example, Sherman is trying to convey the message that alcohol often results in marriage breakages that often hurts innocent kids in these families.

Sherman Alexie also conveys alcohol as a source of wasted potential within the Native American society. One of the places where this is shown is where Julius WindMaker, a young prominent basketball player starts to engage in alcohol. Before he starts to engage in alcohol, he is the favorite of the whole reservation due to his great skills in the game. He is greatly admired for his jump-shots. Alexie explains that some of the people in the reservation often said that he had “... fingers like goddamn medicine man” (Alexie, 1993, p. 45). However, after he starts to engage in alcoholism he completely deteriorates. “ He misses shots and throws dumb passes” (Alexie, 1993, p. 51). Alexie explains that after he starts to perform badly in his basketball career, “...a basketball game feels like a funeral to the reservation”(Alexie, 1993, p. 51). This is because their only reservation hero Julius WindMaker cannot deliver anymore. People in the reservation now begin to talk about the young upcoming players and who shows any signs of being a good player in the future. This is because they do not have any more hopes left in Julius Windmaker. Alcohol has completely ruined not only his potential it has also shuttered the happiness and pride of the reservation in winning basketball matches. This is the important message that Sherman Alexie is trying to convey.

Sherman Alexie also conveys alcoholism within the Native American society as a source of the disintegration of the moral fabric. One of the places where this comes up is where Victor explains that he was conceived as a result of the drunkenness of his parents. Victor explains that he was conceived as a result of his " father's whiskey sperm" and his " mother's Vodka egg" (Alexie, 1993, p. 27). This reveals that when people are drunk they do not have control over what they are doing. They can do things that they had no planned to that can eventually hurt them. In this case, his parents had not planned to have a child at this time but alcohol caused them to assume a new responsibility of raising a child that they had not intended to have. Another place where immorality is shown is where there is a party in Victor's house and everybody is drunk. Alexie points out that " soon everybody from the party was out in the lawn ... fucking in the snow" (Alexie, 1993, p. 10). This shows that there are some elements of immorality that is taking place on the snow due to the drunkenness of the people who are present in the party.

In conclusion, due to the incidences of domestic conflicts, loss of potential and lives, physical violence, and the disintegration of the moral fabric that Sherman Alexie brings up in his book, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*, it is reasonable to conclude that alcohol has purely negative social impacts to the Native American Society. In addition, the idea that alcoholism is an inheritable trait within the generic system reduces our hopes of the possibility of ending alcoholism within the Native American Society. To sum it all, it is clear that Sherman Alexie's book is a clear reflection of the problem of alcoholism that has faced and is facing the Native American society today.

References

Alexie, S. (1993). *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.