

Example of racism and genocide against the native north americans research paper

[Parts of the World](#), [Europe](#)



Very similar attitudes were used to justify the trade in African slaves. They were not Christian and were “ uncivilized” from a European point of view because of their lack of what Europeans could recognize as a culture and a social system. Slavery and even barbaric transportation were justified because at least the slaves would be converted to Christianity and saved from hell in the afterlife. The same attitude informed white American attitudes to the Native Americans, as Carroll and Noble put it: the English settlers “ required the ‘ barbarous heathen’ to reject their traditional cultures, live in ‘ praying villages’ and adopt an English lifestyle” (75). The attitude to both Africans and Native Americans is the same: any native survivors of wars between the settlers and the Native population which broke out sporadically in the late seventeenth century and the whole of eighteenth century were enslaved, sometimes in America, but sometimes shipped off to other parts of the British Empire to provide slave labour there. The colonists according to Carroll and Noble “ well understood the material advantages of treating human beings as items of commerce to be demystified and exploited, like the land” (76).

Once independence had been won from Great Britain, the expansion of the white colonies along the eastern seaboard accelerated into the nineteenth century, causing much conflict with the Native Americans. Bloxham and Moses (111) provide a good summary:

Standing in the path of a republican settler colonial empire that stretched from the Atlantic to the Pacific were the Native American communities of the south, southwest, the Great Plains and the West. American explorers, ranchers, settlers, and gold-seekers took to the United States’ frontiers their

hopes and dreams for a better life, and a moral repugnance for indigenous peoples that expressed itself as the “beastilization of the Native Americas.

Such beastilization was a necessary justification for subsequent acts of genocide. The pattern remained the same as the westward movement into the interior continued. Treaties were made determining land rights and giving the Native Americans some land. But, as Carroll and Noble point out, “white settlers seized tribal lands with impunity, penetrated traditional hunting grounds, and debauched the natives with alcohol.” (169) Any attempt at resistance met with forceful military intervention to protect the white settlers - no matter what they had done - and so racism against the Native Americans started to become - almost - official government policy. In any case, the Native Americans’ resistance always had the effect of reinforcing the stereotype that they were barbaric, violent savages. Any survivors of such military action were enslaved like the Africans. At the same time, it became common practice for runaway black slaves to head west and become members of native American tribes - united, increasingly, against a common enemy. According to Carroll and Noble, “When American slave hunters crossed the border [into Spanish Florida] in search of runaway blacks, Native Americans joined with the slaves to resist the white invaders” (171).

Westward expansion slowed somewhat during the Civil War but on May 19th, 1869 the final spike was driven in to the final rail on the first transcontinental railroad. It was the beginning of the end for Native Americans - those who had been forced west of the Mississippi and those who already lived there.

By now the Native American tribes were aware of the pattern of European colonization: the tribes

had made treaties with the white man and surrendered much of their territory in exchange for a guarantee that that they would have perpetual title to a small portion of their land. Then as the white man continued his westward advance, the treaties had been broken, all the land had been taken and tribal survivors had been moved westward. (Carroll & Noble 232)

Realizing their fate was inevitable, the Plain Indians, led by chiefs whose names are now famous - Sitting Bull, Geronimo, Crazy Horse - decided it was better to die with dignity by resisting the white man's advance than to live in effective slavery. He was right to a certain extent. Jaimes (34) summarizes the tactical position of the American government at this time:

For the US government, however, there was an easier solution than military intervention. In 1868 the government had signed a treaty with Red Cloud who had led a combined force of Arapaho, Cheyenne and Sioux against General Patrick E. Connor who had been sent into the plains in 1865 (as soon as the Civil War ended) to defeat the Plains Indians. Connor had not succeeded. The treaty recognized the tribes' right to their land. However, almost immediately the US government planned to break the treaty - if they could not win a war against fierce guerrilla fighters, they would slaughter the buffalo on which the Plains Tribes " depended for their very existence" (233). Carroll and Noble quote US army general, Philip Sheridan, who in 1868 stated, " Let them kill, skin and sell until the buffalo is exterminated as it is the only way to bring about lasting peace and allow civilization to advance" (233). " Them" were the US army and white buffalo hunters; " civilization" is

white European civilization. In 1870 it is estimated that there were around fifteen million buffalo west of the Mississippi; in ten years they had disappeared. This was a cold-blooded act of indirect genocide and in this respect at least African Americans were better treated – they had an economic value through their work. Native Americans, by contrast, were the victims of systematic genocide.

It did not end with the slaughter of the buffalo. The Battle of the Little Big Horn gave the tribes their day of glory, but it was short-lived. Even Sitting Bull surrendered in 1877, and by then all Native Americans were living on reservations. But still the US government was not happy: it passed the Dawes Act in 1887 which gave 160 acres to the head of each Indian family – they had been concerned that by grouping the Native Americans in villages they were perpetuating the tribal culture which was so different from European culture. . As Carroll and Noble (235) put it

In confining the natives to the reservations, white Americans were merely extending their definition of social deviance. They believed that the Plains tribes had to be segregated because they could not accept the dominant values and laws of white society.

We might note that at exactly the same moment in history African Americans were strictly segregated, because they too, presumably, could not accept the dominant values of white society.

In 1970 the unemployment rate amongst Native Americans was 40%; the infant mortality rate was three times higher than the national average; the suicide rate amongst teenagers was one hundred (yes, 100) times the national average! Racism against Native Americans lives on, because from

the very beginning of settlement white settlers have wanted Native Americans to conform to their expectations and to conform to patterns of behavior and culture. In 1973 members of the militant American Indian Movement took up armed occupation of the site of Wounded Knee Creek, site of the last major Native American massacre at the hands of the American military. Their grievances, according to Lyman (vii) were “ grinding poverty, and sub-standard housing to the ignoring of treaty rights, the robbing of Indian-owned natural resources, lack of protection from discrimination and prejudice, [and] Bureau of Indian Affairs Corruption and neglect.” Let me end this paper with the words of Black Elk, reflecting on the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890:

I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream. The nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.

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