

History essay sample

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



After arriving on Hispaniola, Columbus discovers that the only wealth of the Americas lay in its human inhabitants, who could be made to work as slaves either in Spain or at home. He identifies the natives as cheap sources of labor to work in the sugar and tobacco plantations. Columbus begins to gather the indigenous people to take back to Spain to sell in the slave markets. He describes the indigenous people as the “ best and gentlest people in the world” . He marvels about the health and well-being of the people. He finds sources of gold used in an ornament given to him by one of the local Native Indian Chiefs, and immediately impressed Arawak men to work in the mines. Columbus describes the indigenous peoples as “ poor in everything” .

Batolome de Las Casas, a Spanish priest writes in his letters about the brutality of the Spaniards . He mentions that they slit a man or cut off the head or opened the bowels, and describes how the Spaniards pulled away the babies from their mothers and smashed their heads against rocks .

Batolome also explains that the Spaniards hanged the natives or burnt them alive. On the other hand, Alonso Zuazo mentions in his letter that several indigenous people died of hunger as they wandered over the mountains. He writes that the quarrels among the settlers themselves and the ill treatment of the indigenous peoples, especially the women led to the exploitation of the people. The gentle nature of the indigenous peoples provided an opportunity for the Europeans to suppress and enslave them.

The European Christianity made it impossible for the Europeans to view the Indians in a way that allowed a fair or equitable negotiation due to their black skin color. The Europeans saw the indigenous peoples as savages, as a

people without a culture, valuable only as a source of slave labor . Moreover, the indigenous peoples had a treasure of gold on their islands, which allowed the Spaniards to put them to work panning for gold or working in mines in the mountains. The indigenous peoples were also skilled boat builders and navigators conducting trade throughout the Greater Antilles and Lesser Antilles, which inspired the Spaniards . The inhabitants of the western hemisphere had no immunity to the diseases brought by the Europeans. They began to die of the tens of thousands as they could not withstand the diseases brought to them by the Europeans, due to lack of immunity.

On Columbus' next visit with 17 ships and over thousand colonists and soldiers, he witnesses the death of 180, 000 natives . Spanish violence and cruelty was incomprehensible to the natives. Village after village swept away by the epidemics of measles, scarlet fever and chicken pox. In addition to killing people, the epidemics shattered political cohesion and disoriented established rituals. Natives had no cure for the diseases and their leaders were powerless in the face of death. The declining numbers of the indigenous peoples intensified the extraordinary cruelty of the Spaniards, who insisted the natives to supply the colonists and soldiers with food . Most of the indigenous peoples killed themselves and their children rather than submit to the Spanish. Some others rebelled against the Spaniards.

Without natives to do the work, the Spanish could not support themselves or realize the profit they expected to extract from their new colonies. Within a few decades, the Spanish supplemented the declining indigenous peoples with African slaves in chains. The Europeans shipped over 10 million African black slaves to the plantations of the New World, with another two to three

millions dying on the way . The reason for choosing African slaves is that they were immune to most of the European diseases, such as small pox, measles and chicken pox. They did not have any source on the Americas that could assist them escape or resist enslavement. Moreover, the enslaved Africans provided a permanent source of labor. They already worked on plantations on their native lands and much familiar about the task on the farms . Also, the Africans were cheap source of labor readily available in abundance.

References

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