

Essay on cultural differences between european americans and indians

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



CUL 210

Assignment Week 5

After the Civil War, a large number of European Americans moved to the West because of various reasons. This action was to, objectively, ease social conflicts, expand domestic demand, and promote economic development. In essence, there would be no United States if there was no Westward Movement. However, this great movement was constituted by grabbing land, and deceiving Indians. According to the European Americans and Indians' behavior, it exposed the greedy and cruel character of European Americans, and the exalted and friendly character of Indians.

European Americans believed the land was immensely beneficial for human livelihood, which meant wealth. During that era, most of the European Americans were poor and did not have land. After they had migrated to the Great Plains, they concluded that there was no owner of that land. In fact, the Indians had been already living on the Great Plains for many years. Thus, the government would use the land as a reward to the settlers who developed the West. For many people, this was a non-miss opportunity which could thoroughly change their lives. Ownership of land could give a person vast amounts of wealth and rights.

Indians believed that the land did not belong to any individual because it was a gift from their god. Indians also believed that everyone could live in the Great Plains and feed their family. They were living in nature. Therefore, they understood the natural ecology and did not want to change the law of nature; they just wanted to let nature serve them better. Hence, they switched their habitat every few years, which allowed the land to be

followed. In addition, this allowed the number of their animals to increase. Privatization of land was incomprehensible for the Indians. They believed that this also privatized the airs and clouds, an act they considered ridiculous because of their belief that the land belonged to everyone. Year after year, European American's population was constantly growing, and they had occupied more and more land. They cut the trees, built fences, blocked the humans and beasts outside, and required the indigenous people, the Indians, to stay away from their land.

In the beginning, the European Americans did not consider the Indians as their equals. In the European Americans' eyes, the Native Americans were alien, an absurd and uncivilized inferior race. In this view, the European American of course would show a different attitude towards such an inferior race, and Indians as an inferior race were doomed to be conquered and enslaved by the European Americans. However, the Indians just wanted to coexist with White man, peacefully. They never thought to invade the land that did not belong to them. They always thought that the Whites' demands were limited, and if they met the Whites' requirements they would satisfy them. Consequently, the Indians got deceived repeatedly.

The Black Hills, which are in the State of South Dakota, was the sacred mountain for the Indians. In order to protect the Black Hills, Indians encountered many conflicts with the European Americans. Finally, the European Whites promised that they would not set foot into the Black Hills area without the Indians' permission, and agreed that the Indians could have the Black Hills forever (Ambrose 306). However, the European Americans breached the agreement they had signed with the Indians when they

discovered gold in the Black Hills. Some people said that European Americans should not be blamed for the breach because they had already tried to communicate and negotiate with the Indians in order to access the gold. Conflict arose when they said Indians were uncivilized for not understanding the value of the land, and were unwilling to accept the government's exchange price for the land. The government became helpless, and in order to save the country's crisis and protect the citizens' life from the negative impact of mining, it had to mobilized the army and fight with Indians.

Furthermore, most European Americans were devout Christians. They considered Jesus Christ as their only religion. They believed that the entire world's people ought to have faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently, they forced the Indians to believe in Christianity when they encountered non-Christian Indian people in the Great Plains. The European Americans treated the Indians who did not believe in Christianity as pagans. Thus, they did not stop the invasion and destruction of the Black Hills when they learned that it was the holy place for the pagans.

For the Indians, the value of the Black Hills could not be measured by money. It was considered as a clean, pure, traditional and natural place that was used to stage various blessing rituals and think of ancestors. The devout Indians believed that the invisible gods lived in nature; the blessing ritual was their way of communicating with the gods. In addition, most of the items in the Black Hills were documented in their culture and saved their missing of relatives. Thus, Indians hoped the environment of Black Hills had the ability to, permanently, preserve generation to generation. However, the

large of European Americans influx into the Black Hills and extensive mining caused the server damage on the Black Hills' environment. This unwarranted infringement, constantly, hurt the cultural inheritance of Indians and thoroughly, destroyed their faith.

In conclusion, the migration of European Americans to the West received different reactions from the Native American communities. These reactions were not negative at the beginning. They accepted the European Americans in their community they believed that the land belonged to everyone, and there was no sole ownership for it. The differences between the European Americans and the Native Americans, however, arose when the European Americans decided to explore the Black Hills for gold, a place considered as holy grounds by the Indians. They went against the initial agreement they had with the Indians that they would not set foot upon the Black Hills. This breach of agreement together with their forceful way of converting the Indians to be Christians and their regard for the Indians as a superior, primitive race, led to the differences between the two races. Eventually, the Whites started mining the Black Hills, with the help of the government, and destroyed the Black Hills, consequently destroying the faith of the Indians.

Reference

Ambrose, Stephen E. (1996) *Crazy Horse and Custer: The Parallel Lives of Two American Warriors* New York: Anchor Books. Print.