

Formal précis columbus the indians and human progress essay sample

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



This paper presents a summary of the first chapter of Dr. Howard Zinn's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *A People's History of the United States*. The Chapter is titled *Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress*. It deals with the subject of slavery and subjugation of the indigenous peoples in various parts of the world as events that have formed our understanding of the human civilization as it is today. The objective of the chapter is to question if events such as genocides are essential for the progress of humans. It also questions if history's approach of heralding certain people and events in spite of their fallacies is essential for the development of human civilization.

The chapter begins with a description of the Arawaks, the local people of the place now known as the Bahamas, giving a warm welcome to Columbus and his crew (1). Columbus is clearly represented as a man whose ambitions resulted in the death of several innocent people. The details of the atrocities committed and propagated by him toward the natives are then described (5-7). The chapter also provides an insight about the indigenous peoples' lifestyle, which was far more superior to that of the Europeans then in terms of quality of life, but lacked in terms of industrial development (5). Similar attributes of a rich culture were present among the indigenous people at other locations in the world (19-21). Conquerors in other parts of world, such as Cortes Pizarro, and Smith, and their actions and intentions are described and compared with that of Columbus (11-17). By recounting such events, the chapter declares that the book will retell history as it occurred without glorifying any incident in anyone's favor or disfavor (10).

The author firmly believes that the history of no country, in this case, the United States, is completely pleasant and glorious; rather nations' histories are marred by several unpleasant events and situations caused by conflicting interests (9). Harvard historian, Samuel Morison's work on the explorations of Columbus is criticized for the praise attributed to Columbus' travels and his navigational achievements in face of the inhuman crimes committed by him (7-8). Similarly, Henry Kissinger's work on nineteenth century Europe is also questioned for being in the same vein as that of Morison's (9). The question thus put forward by the chapter is, although it is known that Columbus was a great explorer, by focusing on his explorations and forgetting his exploitations, are unpalatable historical events being ignored purposely? Should such events and even other ghastly events such as nuclear bombings be considered an essential occurrence so that human civilization can learn and progress?

The author believes that even if it is assumed that certain sacrifices are necessary for the progress of humankind, the opinion of those being sacrificed should be considered (17). However, this is rarely done as the exploiters are those belonging to a higher stratum of the society or to "advanced" countries, and the exploited are the ones vulnerable to the societal disorders (17). The exploitation of the Indians in the Americas only earned Spain temporary glory that was soon lost in wars (17-18). Thus, progress gained by committing atrocities against a group of people is transient in nature. In the original America, the natives lived an egalitarian and peaceful lifestyle ungoverned by the farcical rules of the west, and

Columbus and his crew exploited them as well as abolished a superior living standard because of the native's lack of industrial progress. This is the bitter truth about the history of the United States.

Work Cited

Zinn, Dr. Howard. " Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress." A People's History of the United States. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2010. Print.