

# The native american is no different history essay

[History](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Mail Box: #155Hood Theological SeminaryTHS 304 Spring 2013Liberation Theologies - Track IIDr. Eboni Marshall Turman, Ph. D. The Native American is no different from any other race of people found in the United States of America. They have been subject to hardships and adversity as with all of the races found in this melting pot called America. Author and environmental activist George E. Tinker, affectionately known as " Tink," acknowledges that the driving force in his book *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty*[1]is stressing the need for eco-justice in spite of European Christian Theology. Tinker takes a close look at the plight of the Indians as they cope with American Indigenous Theology. Tinker, a member of the ' Osage Indian Nation,'[2]understands firsthand the affects and suffering that encored from the colonization of their native lands by foreign inhabitants. The unified cry from all tribes was to protect the land. Nothing was more crucial than the land. American Indians live in a community and social structure that embodies a genuine spiritual philosophy that embraces nature and the proper care of the land. The younger people respected the wiser and older generations. The women in the tribes generally remained close to home and worked as gathers of plants and nurtures of the children. Nevertheless, the objective was the same, collect what is needed and to provide the land time to replenish itself. The environment, the land, and animals living in and on the land were the most crucial factors to the American Indian. Their beliefs and the practice of living included every aspect of nature. Their worship included Mother Earth, the giver and sustainer of health and life. Nevertheless, the American Indian paid the highest price when the Europeans colonized America. The cost that Tinker and so many others Native American activists speak of include the loss of <https://assignbuster.com/the-native-american-is-no-different-history-essay/>

identity and the constant abuse and raping of the environment. The European Americans or the white invaders that settled in the newly colonized areas of what formed the Americas saw the earth as large amounts of natural resources, coal ore, oil, gold, silver, diamonds, animals for hides, and individuals for labor. The colonizers arrived with an agenda, to live free from religious rule, however, in order to survive they had to build homes to live in and stripping the country by cutting down trees and mining for minerals may not have been the intent but it was the outcome. They saw the massive amounts of money that could be made from trades and exporting of goods. The mass efforts of mining and over-construction began and before long, parts of the country became depleted. Nevertheless, it was not enough. The government needed more money to keep the country out of debt. In order to pay its debts for the cost of wars against the British; America needed and still needs to learn more ways of finding money, which caused the government to renege on their promise to the natives. The new task was to carry them to reservations and living areas, they were not accustomed to residing in due to temperature differences or insufficient food resources. Along with the need for more land, there was also a need for resources to support the armies that would have to protect the settlers as they continued their western expansion, more territories, and richer farmlands all prompted the colonizers to want more and more at any cost. This action by the political body of this country causes the natives to travel further and further out of their comfort zones; driving them out of the area where their ancestors departed this life and joined the great spirits. Driving them to fight for what was originally theirs; driving them to rebel against governmental opposition. The natives banded together, and the Army in many cases, assembled to <https://assignbuster.com/the-native-american-is-no-different-history-essay/>

keep them at bay or drives them back to the reservations. This was not the only crime there was identity loss and degradation at the hands of the European settlers. The natives were forced into unoccupied locations, which were not conducive with that to which they were accustomed. The temperature difference caused illness, and sometimes the medication that the European doctors gave them caused more bacteria in many cases. The survivors became prey to the Jesuit Missionaries. These Christians came to instruct, train, and provide Eastern religion (Christianity) to the savages, (natives). Speaking in their native language, practicing their life styles form of worship, living freely on the land was all prohibited. Their traditional lifestyles were replaced with alcoholism, crime, unemployment, war, and suicide. Tinker would say that all of these things caused the slow demise of the once vibrant Indian nations. However, educator and writer James W. Perkinson has a different take on this situation. In his book, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* Perkinson explains white supremacy and white identity from a different angle. All liberation theology beginnings are based or build on theological perspectives. Perkinson, however, takes a different approach to explaining the actions of whites in American. After James Cone published his first book *Black Theology and Black Power*, Perkinson decided to reexamine what some Americas thought the meaning of supremacy was; he redefined America's idea of being privileged, or the superiority found in white society. Perkinson originally wrote *White Theology Outing Supremacy in Modernity* as a form of resistance to " Black Theologian James Cone's writings during the 1960s." [3] It seems at first that Perkinson is only addressing Cone; however, Perkinson is addressing society as a whole and any other writers who would take up the torch for black religion, the

<https://assignbuster.com/the-native-american-is-no-different-history-essay/>

womanist movement, or issues dealing with social justice. In his writing of *White Theology Outing Supremacy in Modernity* Perkinson gave a different meaning to the words white supremacy. According to Perkinson, supremacy is not defined by the dictionary definition as "the position of being first (as in rank, power, or influence)."[4] Perkinson redirects his reader to the fact that the power in America is very disproportionately distributed but the distribution is among not only whites and people of color, but also among whites and whites. Every individual that I know will admit that supremacy is defined as a group or an individual having power over another. Nevertheless, Perkinson's perspective, which is reflective of his upbringing, places the burden on a different source, which is an inward conflict between the white races itself. Perkinson understands firsthand the battle of his counterparts because of the area in which he was brought up. Perkinson once lived in a ghetto, or an area of impoverishment. He grew up experiencing the stereotypes of people of color, thus, his understanding of white society was at first different from that of the social elite found in Europe. Perkinson contends that Europeans are misunderstood. Many whites in America are actually obligated to those who built this vast nation. Many who struggled along with the blacks and other minorities that were working to shape and build the Americas into the great nation that it is now. The first colonists came to America as explorers in search of a new land, a new place to live, a new beginning. The first colonists were escaping from the treatment they encountered during times of spiritual hostilities in Europe, Spain, and Germany to name a few. The challenges that came with the migration west began with the first English colonists often disappearing; the death rate of the first arrivals was extremely high. Nevertheless, successful colonies were

<https://assignbuster.com/the-native-american-is-no-different-history-essay/>

established. European settlers came from a variety of social and religious groups; however, none of the original colonists were members of the elite of Europe. Primarily, the original inhabitants were mixed in their vocations, gender, age, and social constructs, religious, political and economic styles. Perkinson stated that he understood that our own eyes are a form of technology; unfortunately, they can be just as dangerous and destructive as the devastation that continues happening in most third world countries today. The people we see are not actually who we see. There are entire cultures that for centuries based their lives on what they saw only. They judged people by the color of their skin and not their ability. These actions caused years of wild and paralyzing effects on the poor people of all races. Perkinson asserted that we, society, are our worst enemies especially when it comes to progress. As people, we like what we see or what we think we see as progress at any cost. Sometimes this means at the expense of others no matter the race. This is one of the points that Perkinson is attempting to convey, that I totally agree with, there is "inability to account for whiteness, based on privilege, power, and property." [5] Whiteness or white privilege is more of a worldwide situation. Supremacy is not confined to individuals of Caucasian descent, or male in gender. Perkinson defines supremacy as a human structure that is socioeconomically driven. In other words, the power that is used to subdue an individual or a group of individuals is based on personal growth, race, or gender. Perkinson claims that one's beginnings may be limited as in his case growing up in an urban ghetto in Detroit; however, that should not determine whom you are and what you are capable of achieving. James Cone is a black man who has not allowed his ancestors' situation to determine his current situation today. Like many blacks who

<https://assignbuster.com/the-native-american-is-no-different-history-essay/>

lived in the sixties, he chose to change his life by requiring more and setting goals for how he would achieve these goals. Over the years, blacks have fought to liberate themselves and have the right to pursue endeavors such as education, real estate, operation, or becoming a public figure.

Nevertheless, Cone is not the only success story, George Tinker, himself who was born to a Caucasian Christian mother and a Native American father who was a member of the Osage Nation. Also, choose to pursue education to allow himself to grow from his meager upbringing. The Osage Indians are actually thriving and as a community; they are quite profitable. They did not allow the limitations and misplacement of their ancestors to restrain them in their growth potential. Tinker claims that the theft of land, loss of historical evidence, mass murders, forced language, religion, and deceit has caused them to fail in many areas where their Caucasian counterparts are excelling. Nevertheless, many Native Americans did not allow the negative treatment to keep them on reservations and imprison them into a life of unemployment and alcoholism. They in turn have used the resources that have been developed over two hundred years by white America to elevate themselves from a underserved status to a status of supremacy. It does not matter the socioeconomic background of the individual, if the individual wants to get better, the individual has to put forth the effort. This is why Perkinson contends, "'whiteness' both recoiled from and dissembled toward a position not merely opposite, but tangent, to its own fragmentary-ness." [6] The assumption that all Americans are better off by what our ancestors have done, depends on what you mean by "better off." If you mean economically or educationally or in terms of power, then I must disagree. If you mean in terms of human dignity, than I agree. Perkinson is correct in his

<https://assignbuster.com/the-native-american-is-no-different-history-essay/>

determination of this. In my own experience, I grew up in a neighborhood with a brother and sister who were adopted into a broken family. The father walked out and the mother had to make money by any means necessary. With just a high school education and poor job skills, that mother raised her two children with minimal help from the community. The two children grew up together and their lives are as different as night and day. The boy has excelled he received his master's degree, gotten married, and is living in Louisiana. There he is working for a national cooperation. Granted he did not start out this way, but hard work and dedication are allowing him to accept what is known as the American Dream. His sibling on the other hand did not share in his convictions. She choose to have children early, and even with help she did not complete school, nor is she able to stay employed for more than four months at a time. This example lets me know that destiny is controlled by the individual's will to change the past and not let the past to shape their future. Thus, a white child born to a wealthy family can become a murderer or an unemployed individual. I agree that almost any individual can excel with hard work and determination, and money is a powerful equalizer, but that does not entirely negate the social advantage or disadvantage conferred by notions of race and class in the United States. Individual identity is the key to evolving past your circumstances. Looking towards the future, an attempt to determine the viability of liberation theology in the 21st century church gives way to the understanding that liberation theology is not that old of a topic. Liberation theology began in the 1960s, and the growth has been monumental. Yet there are still areas that need improvement. At this time, the church seems to be fighting two difficult battles. One concern is the liberation of those who are considered " Queer"

<https://assignbuster.com/the-native-american-is-no-different-history-essay/>



(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning). The LGBTIQ community is being packaged in the same box as those who were once slaves, who were once seen as weak women or property, who were once misplaced Indians, who were once fleeing an oppressive religious community; these individuals are now finding their voice. The next issue faced in the church is the issue of immigration reform. In many ways, I see the issues that Tinker is fighting against slowly creeping into focus. The difference is that these individuals are voluntarily escaping from a depraved country. Coming into America illegally yet voluntary and living sometimes in poor communities in an effort to earn enough money so that they can provide a better way of life for themselves and their families. Every immigrant, that traveled to America came to this nation looking for what America has always in its constitution, the ability to have " Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." [7] Liberation theology will always have its origin in the church. As long as there are areas of injustice against a group or against individuals, there will be a platform for someone to fight for the least of these. The only problem that I find is that there is a limited number of willing individuals to stand and fight for the rights of others. With any plan there will be some type of risk. Nevertheless, we find ourselves living in a nation full of risk takers; but we will not stand-alone for a cause, no matter how the discrimination towards the people we are called to defend seems. Yes, we are guilty of many past atrocities, but it is these atrocities that have shaped us into the individuals we are today, no matter how confusing it maybe.