

Manifest destiny vs native american culture



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Imagine being forced out of a place that you and your ancestors had considered home for thousands of years, having promises broken, being forced to act like the people taking your culture away from you, or being forced on to the smallest fractions of land with little resources to go around. For Native American tribes such as the Cherokee, Dakota, Chickasaw, and many others, this was the reality their culture faced, because of the belief of Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny was a term essentially used to justify any actions done during the western expansion under the name of God.

Some believe that Manifest Destiny does not justify the treatment of these Native American tribes, while others think that Manifest Destiny justifies the acts of the settlers because it helped to make the United States a very powerful country. Manifest Destiny was an excuse to take land away from areas that already were occupied, therefore, Manifest destiny does not justify the treatment of Native Americans because manipulated Native Americans and broke treaties, they killed thousands of innocent people, and they forced Native Americans to assimilate to the culture of the settlers.

Manifest Destiny was a term used from 1812-1860 and was a belief of United States settlers that they were 'destined' to move across North America. The term was also used to rationalize the removal of American Indians from their native homelands(SAAM-Manifest Destiny and Indian removal pdf). In 1803 the United States bought land from France, stemming from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, also known as the Louisiana Purchase. As the settlers started moving westward, they started to promote some concern of the Natives that were living in the west. To these white settlers, these Indian tribes were standing in the way of progress and America's Manifest Destiny

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(SAAM Manifest Destiny and Indian removal pdf). The white settlers also found the Native culture as inferior and believed they had outdated traditions. In 1830, Andrew Jackson enforced the Indian Removal Act which forced Native Americans to migrate away from the land of their ancestors or to assimilate to American culture. In return for the land, the United States gave them small pieces of land, reservations, and agreed to supply them with food and money and clothing for these tribes to survive but these expectations were never met, and thousands of Native Americans started to die. In efforts to remove the Native Americans off their land, the United States fought battles, signed treaties and used force migration. The Trail of Tears is one of the historically forced migrations during the time of Manifest Destiny. The Natives were forcefully removed from their land and were sent to the designated places for the Natives; however the supplies promised were never given to them, so many died from disease as well as starvation, an estimated 100, 000 of them died throughout forced migration. (SAAM- Manifest destiny pdf). As for the Natives that tried to assimilate to the culture, their children were sent to boarding schools. The schools attempt to remove and Native cultural traits, even going as far to try to make them look like white settlers. In Minnesota the Dakota war was fought after numerous broken treaties from the United States Government, the people were forced into internment and the aftermath of the war resulted in 300 men being sentenced as well as 38 executed which was the largest single execution day in American history. (University of Minnesota- holocaust and genocide studies- Dakota war 1862).

For most of the United States, the settlers and government [were] willing to do almost anything for the sake of Manifest Destiny (Frontier America- Sara McGill). The actions carried out throughout Manifest Destiny, were justified by the fact that God wanted them to, and it was necessary to make America a powerful country and North America democratic, and forcing the Native Americans off their land was for their well being. The belief in God wanting them to move westward was the main component for the justification of their expansion westward. Most settlers believed that God, blessed the growth of the American Nation and even demanded them to actively work on it, (HistoryNet- Manifest Destiny) and that even a spirit would guide them westward. During this time period many people would follow anything that God told them to do in fear of going to hell or sinning. The idea that God supported the removal of Indians and wanted to them to move westward would make people want to do these things. However if God encouraged them to move westward, it could have been achieved without harming thousands of innocent people. The United States also had important reasons on why they would need to expand westward. The United States government wanted these new lands to, strengthen national security, to spread liberty and democracy, to access more trade routes, and to have access to the Pacific Ocean(Vicky Nyoonyoon- Prezi- Manifest Destiny). These all were valid reasons to want to move westward because if the idea of Manifest Destiny never came about, America could have just been the original 13 colonies. The United States also would have suffered more diseases from over crowding in the urban cities which would have resulted in their culture not surviving. However, it does not justify the treatment of Native Americans. There were better ways of going about it rather than killing them or lying to

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them. The United States in this situation was looking out for the well being of their country and were oblivious to the fact that they killed off a nearly whole culture, which is why the idea of Manifest Destiny comes into play. This term changed the mindset of the settlers but a new mindset does not justify a genocide. The United States also thought that it was for the best interest of the tribes to move off the land because they wouldn't be able to assimilate into our culture. These beliefs under Manifest Destiny were all used to justify something that they knew was wrong. Had the United States wanted to help the Native Tribes, they would have done more then let most of them die out.

Manifest Destiny was an excuse to take land away from areas that already were occupied, and therefore does not justify the treatment of Native Americans because the United States, manipulated and broke treaties, they killed thousands of innocent people, and they forced Native Americans to assimilate to the culture of the settlers. In efforts to try to get land from the Native Americans, they created treaties where the Natives would give up hunting rights or parts of land in return for cash payment. Many tribes agreed to these cash payments because of the ultimatums were given.

Everything they used to get them to sign treaties, I think was illegal in a lot of ways- browbeating , brainwashing, and then on the other hand telling them ' If you sign this treaty, you're not going to ever have to work or hunt again; we'll take care of you' ' Everthing will be provided. Every year you'll get so much money to buy your needs, your pots and pans, but we'll also have food coming in every month, or once a year for you. The alternative is ' Were going to drive you all the way to the Rocky Moutains where you're

going to starve to death and we'll never have to worry About you again'[...] -
Dr. Elden Lawrence- Us-Dakota war (treaties)

These ultimatums that were given almost seemed like it was the obvious choice until they were signed and the food never came, or the money was never given to them. The United States government within the unfulfillment of these treaties killed hundreds of people, by leaving them starving. They also killed hundreds of people through forced migration. The Cherokee tribe traded with the United States government for new land and From 1838 to 1839 the army rounded up 13, 000 Cherokees and forced them to relocate to present-day Oklahoma, about 1, 000 miles away. Thousands of Cherokees died from the forced march, which became known as the Trail of Tears (Kathiann Kowalski- False Promises). The Trail of Tears involved thousands of innocent Natives dying from disease and starvation while not being given the necessities to survive throughout the journey. As for the Natives that did not want to move and wanted to assimilate into the culture, they sent children away to boarding schools. At these schools, School Administrators assigned new names to the students. They gave them western style clothing to wear and unfamiliar foods to eat. Long hair which was admired in native families was forbidden at the schools, Teachers and administration punished children for speaking their Native language or for practicing Native traditions or celebrations,(Pauline Bickford- Daune page 1). These schools restricted carrying on cultural traditions from American Indians and forced white settler beliefs on children. The way the settlers and United States government treated these people cannot be justified by a term that promotes westward expansion. The United States may have wanted more land, but they also

wanted Native Americans out of the picture because had they just wanted the land, they would have also tried to help the Natives and give them conditions that they can survive in.

Manifest Destiny was an excuse to take land away from areas that already were occupied, therefore, Manifest destiny does not justify the treatment of Native Americans because, manipulated and broke treaties, they killed thousands of innocent people, and they forced Native Americans to assimilate to the culture of the settlers. The belief of Manifest Destiny may have had a lot to offer the United States, but in no way does it justify the removal of nearly a whole culture. The land taken from the Native Americans could have been obtained without killing off a culture, or lying to them about what was being offered. Being interested in only the well being of the new settlers doesn't justify what the United States did to their cultures that had lived on the land hundreds to thousands of years before the United States came to be.

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