

American holocaust; the conquest of the new world essay



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American Holocaust; The Conquest of the New World was published in 1992. That was an occasion when Americans were celebrating the Quincentennial anniversary of Columbus' exploration of America.

In the midst of much work fashioned on the positive aspects of discovery and its triumphs, Stannard produced an illustrative work that tells the story of Americas from a different perspective.

The basic thesis of the book includes the four centuries of perpetuated mass killing of Native Americans by the European colonizers. Stannard is of the view that this was the most extensive type of holocaust that wiped away 97% of the Native American population from their habitats.

He further says Christianity proved an impetus to the holocaust as it did in the case of Nazi holocaust. Beside this religious phenomenon ethnocentrism and racial superiority were other factors that compelled the Europeans to eradicate the natives from the face of the earth.

This book portrays the American Indian's initial attitude toward European as friendly as early European settlers were limited in numbers and were not expelled or exterminated by the vast Indian population. He asserts that reciprocal behavior of the invaders were demonized, murdered and enslaved.

His based this thesis in the primacy sources and provided documentation of the founding fathers of the United States and credentials from Spanish missions. He further provides the scientific and historical evidence that supports hi assumption about the systematic killing of Native American.

For examples, he provides scientific evidence about deterioration of diet and health of Native Americans and says that systematic spread of plague was also a part of this campaign.

He develops his thesis in way that it seems proper in its perspective. He does not explain the plain facts but provides excellent analysis of every phenomenon. Sometimes his analysis lacks the objectivity that a historical work demands.

He devotes the first chapter to describe cultural richness and diversity Native American civilization. But some times, his scholarly works crosses the limits of knowledge and enters in the domain of exaggeration and fictitious idealism.

For example, his claim that native American culture was well established and advanced when European was trying to excel in socio-cultural life (p. 11) is supported by any historical evidence and it is a verified and verifiable fact that European were ahead of Native American civilization.

Book is full of such overstatement like “ the health and life expectancy of the native Americans had been far superior to that of European prior to the Columbian invasion.”

The second section of the book, named under the collective name of “ Sex, Race, and Holy War”, focuses on the mass genocide against naïve Americans by the Europeans.

But this section is also marked with some historical inaccuracies as it says that “ the totals exterminations of many American Indian peoples and the <https://assignbuster.com/american-holocaust-the-conquest-of-the-new-world-essay/>

near-extermination of others, in numbers that eventually totaled close to 100, 000, 000.”

This assumption seems historically incorrect as no historical evidence is provided. He further asserts that this population of 100 million was reduced by 95%. Stannard arguments are well-built but sometimes they surpass the limits of scholarly work.

He further elaborates how European ideals and socio-cultural structures of middle ages i. e. warfare, torture, slavery were brought to Americas where it has fatal effects. But he simply negates the other positive aspects of European culture that hitherto plays an important role in the progress and development of the Americas. So in this regard his thesis not only seems exaggerated but also equipped with intellectual prejudice and distortions of facts.

The strength of the books relies in its bibliography that mostly quotes the original and primary sources. Stannard does not draw on secondary works of other writers but he has researched the old chronicles and historical documents to produce his thesis.

Strength of the book is its lucid style. Stannard does not sacrifice the clarity of his arguments on the altar of verbosity but narrates the facts as plainly as possible.

He sometimes produces excellent comparisons, for example he compares the American holocaust with the German holocaust on the premise that both were motivated by the Christian values of purity and purgation. He further

compares the native songs i. e. Native American cultural manifestations with the European portraits i. e. cultural expressions of European culture and produces some excellent analysis.

While illustrating the pathos and miseries of the Native Americans, he does not blur it with sentimentality.

American Holocaust; The Conquest of the New World is a work of historical and intellectual. It paves the way for future scholars the work on its premise.

David Stannard destroys a number of historically popular and fabricated myths of fraternity, equality and brethren, and illustrates through American Holocaust that what actually happened on the American continents soon after the arrival of Columbus.

References

Stannard, David. (1992). American Holocaust; The Conquest of the New World. Oxford University Press. New York.