

Puritans and Cherokees: Shaping Today's Perception of the American Dream Essay Sa...

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The Puritans during the 1600s wanted change, they wanted to leave the ways of the Old World and set sail to a land of new beginnings and new ideals. After years of corruption and impurities set forth by the church in England, the Puritans began a quest for their own manifest destiny and ventured across the Atlantic Ocean, and established themselves in Massachusetts. John Winthrop, lead these Puritans to the Americas and wrote a speech " City Upon a Hill," (in 1630) that would mold the ideals of these purists, know as the Puritans. What Winthrop may not have anticipated is that this documentation would stand through the tests of time and carry some of those same ideals into the twenty first century. Through the readings of " City Upon a Hill" and Ties that Bind, by Tiya Miles; we can see how pieces of American history have helped shape today's ideals of the American dream. Winthrop believed that individuals who worked hard, had a strong sense of community and shared a sense of differed gratification would prosper to heaven.

The Puritans believed that hard work was the only way to live; if they didn't work hard then they would perish. By laboring together they thought they could make something of themselves and satisfy God, " Wee must be willing to abridge our selves of our superfluties, for the supply of others necessities," (Winthrop, 1630). The Cherokees held similar ideals, but instead of working hard to assure them a place in heaven, they worked hard to keep their spiritual balance. One example of how the Cherokee kept their spiritual balance was their relationship with animals. They didn't cage their animals, therefore they may have spent days tracking an animal, and instead of simply killing an animal for its meat, everything was used for

something and a prayer was said to the animal for sacrificing its body. Miles writes, "... animals played a sacrificial role in sustaining Cherokee lives," (Miles, 70). It would have been easy for the Puritans and Cherokees to take short cuts to reach their spiritual goals, but instead they worked hard by staying pure and following their long established rituals.

Puritans along with the Cherokee people valued a strong sense of community. Winthrop wrote, " Wee must uphold a familiar Commerce together in all meekenes, gentleness, patience and liberality, wee must delight in each other, make others Conditions our owne rejoyce together, mourne together, labour, and suffer together," symbolizing that their community needs to act as a whole in all aspects of life. The Cherokee valued community in several different ways. For example, Cherokee women relied on other women within the community to survive the day-to-day tasks. In Miles' book she referenced this kind of kinship between Clarinda and Doll, " They must have worked closely together in and around Shoe Boots' farmhouse, hauling water, gathering wood, tending the vegetable garden, cooking meals, spinning thread, sewing garments, and sharing in the care of Clarinda's three children," (Miles, 44). Both the Puritans and Cherokee believed that it took more than one's self to achieve peace and harmony, it took the help of an entire community to achieve their ultimate destinies.

Both the Puritans and Cherokees showed a great sense of differed gratification for their religion and their children. The Puritans set sail to the Americas to avoid religious persecution. Many lives were lost during the voyage, but in the Puritan's eyes that was worth the risk if there was a

chance for them to go to heaven. The Cherokees showed a great sense of differed gratification towards their children, by welcoming the missionaries to their towns. Even if the older traditional Cherokees did not agree with Christianity and the education of the Euro-Americans, they did believe that it would be in the best interest of their children to participate in such teachings. In Miles' book, she explains how Shoe Boots may not have believed in Christianity, but rather " wanted the children of his community to be best prepared for any test, even to the point of exposing them to ideas with which he may have disagreed," (Miles, 89). He also believed that learning the ways of the Euro-Americans would help educate Cherokee children in ways to protect the Cherokee Nation and defend themselves in the future.

Through the readings of " City Upon a Hill" and Ties that Bind, we can see how the Puritans and Cherokees shaped today's perception of the American dream. This country was established by groups of people who didn't shy away from hard work, coming together as a community and making sacrifices for the best interests of future generations to come.