

Who was to blame for
wounded knee?



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On that terrible day, December 29, 1890, a little gun conflict sparked the saddest event in Indian history. The veterans of the 7th cavalry were blinded by excitement. Warriors, squaws, children, dogs or even friendly soldiers all went down alike before the flailing fire. An infant dropped onto the ground from its mother embrace as the gushing blood from her lung's bullet wound splashed across its innocent face. Even after the commotion ended, the soldiers called out to survivors promising them safety. The moment a boy came out of his hideout, he was butchered by bullets from over ten men. 250 unarmed Indians were killed mercilessly. That day, there was no battle or honor, only a shameful massacre at the Wounded Knee. Those to blame for the massacre were The US government for their indifference as well as bias toward the cavalry's action, the 7th cavalry for their cruelty and Colonel James W. Forsyth for his commands as well as placement of troops.

To begin with, the US government and the 7th cavalry had no right to interfere with the Indian. There was a treaty protecting these Indians. Even though the government used the Ghost dance as a reason, the Ghost dance was less like a solid reason and more like an excuse to send troops into the reservation

First, consider treaty of Fort Laramie. The Treaty of Fort Laramie or the Sioux Treaty of 1868 was an agreement between the United States and the Miniconjou, Oglala, and Brulé bands of Lakota people signed on April 29, 1868 at Fort Laramie in the Wyoming Territory, guaranteeing the Lakota ownership of the Black Hills, as well as hunting rights and further land

in South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming. The Powder River Country or the reservation area as a whole was to be “closed to all whites”.

Pine Ridge reservation was part of the treaty promised Indian land. The 7th cavalry intercepted Spotted Elk's band of Miniconjou Lakota and Hunkpapa Lakota near Porcupine Butte and forced them to move to Wounded Knee Creek. Both Porcupine Butte and Wounded knee creek were in Pine Ridge reservation. Hence, the 7th cavalry was violating the treaty statement that the land would be “closed to all whites”

Consider the US government and the 7th Cavalry excuses that the Ghost dance could cause troubles and uprising. The Paiute prophet Wovoka simply used Ghost Dance as a dream in which the Indians could dwell in. They danced and experienced visions of loved ones returning, of their ancestors and of the buffalo that once thrive but now no more in the plains, and of the disappearance of oppressive whites. The Ghost Shirts were believed by some to deflect the bullets of the whites, but most danced because they dreamt of renewal and an end to the reservation system. The Ghost Dance doubtlessly frightened many whites in the region, and created many rumors. However, there were no incidents of raiding outside the newly established reservation boundaries; The U. S. government's response by sending over half the entire U. S. Army to the reservations including the 7th cavalry was without doubt groundless and unjustified.

Next, the 7th cavalry's and Colonel James W. Forsyth's intentions were clearly not peaceful. While there was conflict and tension during the event prelude to the massacre, the soldiers were well trained and prepared for

necessary retaliation. However, evidence pointed out that they over-retaliated on purpose. The supporting evidences were that the 7th cavalry was scarred by Indian force before, the placement of Hotchkiss guns was for mass-murder and the battle was initiated in close range

Consider the background of the 7th cavalry; in 1873 the 7th Cavalry moved its garrison post to Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory. Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer was killed at the Battle of the Little Bighorn on 25 June 1876 with 211 men of the 7th Cavalry. The Nebraska State Journal on December 10, 1890, under the headline “The Redskins Retreat—War Cloud Grows Darker,” claimed that the Seventh Cavalry was fairly itching for a fight. “These are the same Indians who mercilessly shot down the gallant Custer and 300 of the Seventh Cavalry on that memorable day of June 25, 1876 ... and it is safe to say the Sioux will receive no quarter from this famous regiment should an opportunity occur to wreak out vengeance for the blood taken at the battle of the Little Big Horn.

The 7th cavalry was obviously setting the scene for the battle. Troopers escorted the Lakota about five miles westward from the original open plain to harder to escape from Wounded Knee Creek where they made camp. Later that evening, Col. James W. Forsyth and the rest of the 7th Cavalry arrived, bringing the number of troopers at Wounded Knee to 500. In contrast, there were 350 Indians: 230 men and 120 women and children. The troopers surrounded Spotted Elk's encampment and set up four rapid-fire Hotchkiss-designed M1875 Mountain Guns. The guns were placed on higher spot in all

directions to guarantee that no Indian would escape from Wounded Knee creek.

After the battle initiated, it was fought at close range; fully half the Indian men were killed or wounded before they had a chance to get off any shots. Some of the Indians grabbed rifles they had been hiding and opened fire on the soldiers. With no cover, and with many of the Lakota unarmed, this phase of the fighting lasted a few minutes at most. While the Indian warriors and soldiers were shooting at close range, other soldiers used the Hotchkiss guns against

Black Elk(1863–1950); medicine man, Oglala Lakota:

“ I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people’s dream died there. It was a beautiful dreams... the nation’s hope is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.” [25]

Finally, the US government and Forsyth openly supported the inhumane action of 7th cavalry. James w. Forsyth praised the massacre as a success. The US government awarded the men of 7th cavalry with Medal of Honor and the promotion of James W. Forsyth. The Indian war came to an end. The massacre was also praised by public. Perhaps, many white people at that time were also to be blame for the massacre.

Colonel Forsyth was oblivious to any problem. His report, written on New Year's Eve, expressed his admiration for " the gallant conduct of my command in an engagement with a band of Indians in desperate condition, and crazed by religious fanaticism."

The secretary of war evidently agreed with Forsyth, and Forsyth was reinstated, later rising to the rank of major general. U. S. approval of the action was further emphasized by awards of the Medal of Honor to three officers and fifteen enlisted men for their heroism at the " Battle of Wounded Knee Creek."

The American public's reaction to the battle at the time was generally favorable. Many non-Lakota living near the reservations interpreted the battle as the defeat of a murderous cult; others confused Ghost Dancers with Native Americans in general. In an editorial response to the event, the young newspaper editor L. Frank Baum, later the author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, wrote in the *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer* on January 3, 1891:

The Pioneer has before declared that our only safety depends upon the total extermination of the Indians. Having wronged them for centuries, we had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth. In this lies future safety for our settlers and the soldiers who are under incompetent commands. Otherwise, we may expect future years to be as full of trouble with the redskins as those have been in the past.[32]

Soon after the event, Dewey Beard, his brother Joseph Horn Cloud and others formed the Wounded Knee Survivors Association, which came to include

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descendants. They sought compensation from the U. S. government for the many fatalities and injured. Today the association is independent and works to preserve and protect the historic site from exploitation, and to administer any memorial erected there. Papers of the association (1890–1973) and related materials are held by the University of South Dakota and are available for research.[33]It was not until the 1990s that a memorial to the Lakota was included in theNational Historic Landmark.

In conclusion, the “ massacre” at Wounded Knee creek was to be blame on the US government, the 7th Cavalry and James W. Forsyth. The US government broke the treaty using the Ghost Dance as an excuse and awarded these murderers openly. James W. Forsyth and the 7th Cavalry also deliberately planned and executed the massacre. Draw correlation between Wounded knee and the holocaust + other holocaust. People will do everything in their power to destroy minority. US land of freedom and diversity also have stigma of mistreating and massacre of the minority, Indians until today. The Problem of tyranny of majority occur in all level Country global personal the conflict of majority is in us. Will we let the voice of others or majority kill the minority like the Elkwood we be bland and One dimensional enjoy the diversity and color of lives.