

Howard zinn chapter one



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Columbus has always been portrayed as an enlightened, peaceful explorer who “discovered” a new world, and became friends with the native people. Howard Zinn’s view on Columbus’s encounter with the natives is an entirely different perspective. Zinn describes Columbus as a man who is willing to torture and kill others to be able to accomplish what he wants; in this case he wanted to obtain gold and other resources to take back with him to Spain.

When Columbus and his men arrived to the islands, he noticed that the natives were generous, and accommodating because they willingly traded everything they owned and brought them such things like: food, water, and gifts. Since the beginning the natives offered all of their hospitality to Columbus and his men. Columbus believed that the natives were ignorant because they had no weapons for self defense; when he showed them a sword, they had no idea how to use it and ended up cutting themselves.

Columbus was more than certain, that he could take control over the natives, and captivate them as slaves. In his writing he wrote, “They would make fine servants.... With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want.” (Zinn, 3) This attitude led to enslavement, feeling superior, and genocide by Columbus and his men towards the natives. Columbus had persuaded the king and queen of Spain to finance an expedition to the lands, and the wealth; he expected to be at the Indies and Asia.

Columbus would receive ten percent of all the goods collected, governorship over new-found lands, and the fame that would go with a new title: Admiral of the Ocean Sea. Columbus believed the natives could lead him and his men to where the gold was, to be able to take it back to the King and Queen so he

took many of them as prisoners on his ship. He also wanted to take them back to Spain as slaves and be able to make them do whatever they wanted them to do. Columbus took advantage of the ignorance of the natives, and made them do hard labor for him and his men.

Columbus believed that there were huge fields of gold, in the province of Cicao on Haiti. He became desperate to pay the dues back to the king and queen, so he order every native older than fourteen to collect a certain quantity of gold by three months. Once they had collected the amount, they would receive a copper to put around their neck, those without it had their hands cut off and bled to death. Many felt it was impossible to do this, and tried escaping but were always found and killed.

When it was finally clear that there was no gold left, they took them all as slave labor to huge estates which are called encomiendas. Columbus's big plan for Hipiola since the beginning was to take advantage of the natives and take their land, and the gold he believed was located there. He built the first fort in the Western Hemisphere, and left some of his men to find and store gold there. Columbus had to ask for a little more help from their majesties, he convinced them by saying he would take them " as much gold as they need ... nd as many slaves as they ask" (Zinn, 6) Columbus's plans affected the natives, in many ways; first of all they were going to lose their land, and also they were going to be taken captive for slave labor. Howard Zinn not only introduced a new perspective on Christopher Columbus, but he changed the way I viewed things. I never knew how much killings, and torture was put upon the natives in the searching of the " New World". I learned how the hero I thought Columbus was, in reality was more like a villain. He didn't care

what he had to do as long as he got what he wanted, even if it dealt with murders and torturing the natives.