

# Cruelty of columbus: fact or fiction?



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In David A. Stannard's book, *American Holocaust: Columbus And the Conquest of the New World*, Stannard discusses the cruelty he says Christopher Columbus inflicted upon Native Americans and how it was comparable to the genocidal acts of World War II. This debate arose roughly thirteen or so years ago, and before then people thought Columbus could not have possibly done something so horrific. However, there is evidence to support the claims, and the idea that Columbus may have been crueler than previously believed is becoming less and less taboo. Stannard accuses Columbus of being a religious fanatic with an obsession of eliminating non-Christians, by means of murder, conversion, or at the very least, enslavement. He claims that Columbus was in search of personal wealth and fame, one who was willing to step over others – or even kill them – to achieve it. On the other hand, the Captain's log of Christopher Columbus talks about how friendly he was to the Indians, and how kind they were to him. It's not hard to imagine that Columbus may have used more force than he admitted to, as Spain had said to not treat natives poorly. Furthermore, the whole fact of two different races, with different looks, languages, and culture suddenly bumping into each other would certainly strike up some fear and it would only be natural for the natives to defend themselves against what seemed as an invasion. Though, when analyzing these documents, the log presented by Christopher Columbus is actually a first hand account, instead of a book written in 1992. It's very possible that Columbus's men had been the ones that inflicted the carnage (it's also believed that they nearly committed mutiny while on the ship) and he was just the one that received the blame, much like the President receives the blame (or praise) for the policy set by the Legislative branch. According to <https://assignbuster.com/cruelty-of-columbus-fact-or-fiction/>

Columbus, he warned his men against taking advantage of the natives, as he had planned to eventually convert them to Christianity, and the old saying that you catch more flies with honey than you do with vinegar applied.

However, there are other first hand accounts' accusing the Spaniards of inflicting cruel acts upon the Native Americans. One such article is by Bartolome de Las Casas', In Defense of the Indian. De Las Casas was a Spanish priest who traveled to Hispaniola to help convert the natives to Christianity. When he arrived he was appalled to witness horrible acts of cruelty being inflicted upon those he came to help. He accuses the Spaniards of having a rule of extraordinary cruelty, in such a way as to make the Indians feel as if they were less than human. The Spaniards, he said, would essentially torture Indians in order to prove a point to the Indian chiefs. Many Indians ended up dying from starvation, disease, or simply being overworked. Another example of this is an article, Travels in Quivira, by Francesco Coronado. Coronado and his men explored what is now Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado in search of the legendary seven cities of gold. Coronado claims to have been nothing but respectful and pleasant to everyone he came in contact with, including his native guides. However, the guides later confessed that they had been misleading him, in an attempt to get him and his force lost in the desert to eventually die. It was said that the guides had been advised by local tribes to do this, due to the past cruelty of the settlers. We may never know if Columbus himself ordered or witnessed the acts of cruelty upon the native people he encountered. It may have very well have gone on without his approval, or after he had sailed home for Spain and left others in charge. Whether he is to blame or not, those that are propelling the Spanish cruelty argument are plastering him as their

scapegoat. Hopefully one day, we will uncover substantial evidence to either prove or disprove the Black Legend, or at least clear Columbus' name, if he is in fact innocent.