

Impact of Contradiction of US Government towards Indians

Introduction

The arrival of Europeans in North America severely damaged the culture, economic systems, and social structures of Native Americans. The Europeans used ideologies based on Social Darwinism and paternalism to justify their treatment of Native Americans. More specifically, Europeans felt that they had the right to impose their own culture, economy, laws, and religion upon any “interior” person. For example, Native Americans were expected to give up their land, children, beliefs, and, in some cases, their lives (O'Brien, 1503). Laws were passed that forbade the practice of ceremonies, and children were taken from families and placed in boarding schools by Europeans to assimilate the children into the dominate culture. In addition, reservations were created to protect Native people from both whites and also from themselves. Finally, Native American women were subject to forced sterilization in order to prevent the continued propagation of “savages” (Geisler, 56). This in itself showcases the hypocrisy by the United States government in their dealings with the Indians.

Discussion

After the Revolutionary War, the U.S. government was left with the “Indian Problem”. This problem dealt with the Native American lands that were deemed desirable to the settlers. The government concluded that the best course of action was to remove the Native American nations from the east to the west, moving them from their sacred lands to the foreign lands west of the Mississippi. Native Americans attempted to fight the government based on the constitutional decree that “once treaties are ratified they are the supreme law of the land”. They

held that if these treaties were the supreme law, the government must recognize the past treaties granting Native Americans specific rights to the land they possessed. The government claimed that as discoverers of the new land, their rights superseded those of the Native Americans. It was at this point that the United States began breaking treaties and taking Native American lands until the passing of the Indian Removal Act of 1830 (O'Brien, 1504).

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 provided the legal basis for the isolation of tribes to reservations. As the Anglo population continued to travel westward, the tribes west of the Mississippi were forced to give up much of the land that had been granted to them by the government. One basis for taking the land was John Locke's theory that man's right to land stems solely from his use of it; the government reasoned that Native Americans lost all rights to the land because they had failed to cultivate it. The reservations they received in exchange were often placed on land that had few natural resources and were long distances from urban areas. One of the strongest illustrations of the result of this Indian Removal Act was the "Trail of Tears" (Fixico, 125).

In the 1955 case of *Tee-Hit-Ton Indians v United States*, the Supreme Court held that the United States may lawfully take the land and other property of Indian and Alaskan Native tribes without due process and without compensation. In 1978, *Oliphant v. Suquamish Indian Tribe* held that due to a tribe's domestic, dependant status, Native American government does not have jurisdiction over non-Indians. Finally, in 1990, *Duro v. Reina*, the Indians were denied jurisdiction over other tribes as well (Fixico, 128).

Conclusion

All in all, at no time has the U.S. government issued a comprehensive, official acknowledgment or apology for transgressions committed against Native Americans by citizens and government officials. Disputes to the facts continue, with those who defend the repression and annihilation of Native Americans due to ruthless attacks by “blood-thirsty savages against “innocent settlers” who were forced to use violence to defend themselves and their families. And throughout the country, we continue to see monuments and statues that praise the heroism of settlers against the “savages.” It is clear that the effects of past abuses of human rights continue to both oppress and marginalize Native American people.

Works Cited

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