The Injustice That Surrounds The Americas Essay, Research Paper

OAC Philosophy INDEPENDENT STUDY UNIT

The Injustice that Surrounds the America s

saphrophyte n. someone who associates with a person or organization for the sole purpose of living at the expense of that person or group, without contributing anything to its or their well-being. (see also parasite)

- Webster s Encyclopedic Dictionary, 1988

Since the beginning of time man has always been an unjust creature with discriminatory laws and a greedy sense of justice. Man has been the virus that has taken and never given to this earth, except for one certain case, that of the Native Indians of the America s. Here is the one possible truth to a horrific and cruel demonstration of the tyrannical injustice and assimilation of a serene and fair people to cater the needs of the greedy. This is the story of three groups of Native Americans, the Aztecs, Incas and the Iroquois, and how their nations where destroyed.

The Aztec

Remove justice, and what are kingdoms but gangs of criminals on a large scale? A gang is a group of men in which the plunder is divided according to an agreed convention. If this villainy acquires territory, establishes a base, captures cites and subdues peoples, it then openly arrogates to itself the title of kingdom.

-Saint Augustine, City of God, c. 420

As Columbus s reign died there came to be a new power in the Spaniard conquest of the Americas, this man s name was Hernan Cortes. Cortes entered the New World with the intention of become a new ruler and take all the gold and riches that he could. Cortes did this in a time when there was a ruler be the name of Moctezuma who ruled most of the Aztec civilization, much the same as Julius Caesar ruled Rome or the way an Egyptian Pharos would have ruled Egypt. Moctezuma was the proud and strong ruler of what is now Mexico, but then it was a city of magnificent grandeur and with beautiful artwork and great power. Cortes first took control of the Toltec nation and was now the self-imposed ruler, of this once supposed peaceful nation. He did this loosing many men and feared the Aztec people, a much stronger people and known for being a powerful warrior nation. He felt them to be too strong and unattainable in his conquests. Cortes being an intelligent man used the Toltec and convinced them that they could be apart of the conquest of the Aztec people if they gave their warriors to fight in the battle. With the Toltecs doing so Cortes had amassed a large enough army to begin his ascent to victory.

When Cortes and the Spaniards arrived in the Aztec City he realized that he was mistaken for its size and it was much bigger than he had anticipated. Realizing this he chose to take a new approach to gaining power of the City, he took the role of a peaceful and friendly people and befriended the Aztec ruler Moctezuma. Doing so he gained access to the city and Moctezuma allowed Cortes and his men to live for eight months in his palace. At the end of the eight-month stay Cortes had begun to argue with Moctezuma about religion and he realized that the false friendship was beginning to show. His time was short and he needed to figure a plan that would allow him to take Moctezuma prisoner and captive. He did so by tricking Moctezuma into hiding in the palace that they were living in because of a possible invasion of another nation. After taking control of the city through taking Moctezuma hostage, Cortes was able to loot and plunder as much as possible. The people eventually became enraged and fought back but by this time Cortes had already befriended the Cuban invaders and had enough power to fight of the Aztec people. The Aztec fought as hard as they could amassing only a small amount of fighters, for the foreign invaders brought more than merely guns and swords to fight the Aztec people, they brought smallpox. With smallpox killing more than fifty percent of the Aztec people the surviving could not fight as strong as they had hoped and the last where killed off and the city set on fire and destroyed.

As time passed there were many attempts to rekindle the fire that breathed so powerfully within the heart of the Aztec people, but to no avail. The time of this once powerful nation had passed and was now owned by this gang of looting and rioting people from across the Great Sea. Their reign in a world so beautiful and tranquil had ended and would never again exist. The Aztec people knew that these conquistadors would destroy it and end a time of moderate peace and innocence.

To this day the small remaining groups of Aztec people have never forgotten this awful tragedy and are determined to remember their ancestors and the strong kingdom that their people once developed.

It is told, it is recounted here how the ancients the people of Aztlan, the Mexicans came to [build] the great city of Mexico-Tenochtitlan .

Never shall it be lost, never shall it be forgotten, that which they came to do, that which they recorded in their ink and in their paintings. Their fame, their renown, their remembrance will be kept in the ages to come . We shall always keep it, we who are their children, grandchildren their descendants, of their colour and their blood. And they shall tell it, they shall recount it, they who are not yet living, they who are not yet born: the children of the Mexicans.

-Tezozomoc, Cronica Mexicayotl

The Inca

His Catholic Majesty must know that we found these countries in such a condition that there were no thieves, no vicious men, no idlers We have transformed these natives, who had so much wisdom and committed so few crimes There was no evil thing, but today there is no good.

-Mancio Sierra (a conqueror of Peru), 1589

After the conquering of almost the entire northern section of what is now South America, the conquistadors could not subdue their desire for gold. They had heard stories about a large city paved with gold and silver. They heard about the great city of the Incas. What the conquistadors did not know was that the city they had heard of was really an empire that was 3,000 miles long and several hundred miles wide, stretching from southern Columbia to central Chile, from the pacific ocean to the Amazon forest. A Spanish man by the name of Pizarro, was the first to see the grand city that they had heard of, and was the one to bring the city of the Incas to a crumbling end. Pizarro left two of his soldiers in the city for two months while he went back to the colonized parts of South America and convinced 200 men that they would be given riches beyond their wildest dreams. When he returned, much like Cortes, he had brought more than a simple army of 200, Pizarro had brought smallpox.

The Inca, at this time, were much older than the other parts of Mesoamerica, in fact this area has temples which dated back to 2000B.C. The city, which they had thought was the entire Inca Empire, was really only the small city of Huanuco, which had a small population of 15,000. The entire Empire possibly had more than twenty million, but with the invasion of smallpox the Empire was cut to one quarter of the original number. The Inca had many qualities of the strong and well-developed nations of today. They had a type of welfare that was given to those who were poor or disabled and a bartering system that eliminated a monetary unit. The Inca where generally a peaceful people who allowed any city to join their great nation and those who wanted to leave could also do so, but would lose all ties with the Inca including food trading. The Inca were also such a large nation that they where never really challenged by any of the other major empires of that time. After the smallpox had conquered most of the empire, including their Emperor, Wayna Qhapaq and toppled the leadership, the Inca entered into a civil war to find a new ruler between Qhapaq s two sons. Qhapaq s two sons were named Atawallpa and Cusco and they became overrun with greed and started a civil war that led to the end of the Inca Nation. At this point Pizarro did nothing but let the two brothers battle until Atawallpa finally won and returned home to where Pizarro was staying. Atawallpa, seeing that the army of soldiers that Pizarro had brought was so small that he did not even attempt to fight. He merely laughed and let many of his soldiers go home. Pizarro realized the mistake that Atawallpa had made and amassed his army in a deserted part of the town and atop a large staircase. As Atawallpa s troops walked up the stairs in celebration of their recent victory, carrying nothing but a ceremonial daggers about the size of a pocketknife, Pizarro ordered his three hundred men, ninety of which were on horseback, to attack from their elevated position. In the end of the battle Pizarro had lost no men and all two thousand Inca soldiers had died. That was the end of the Inca reign, for after the battle there was no royalty who could keep the kingdom together and the cities eventually went on their own and where taken over one by one.

So fell Peru. We gave her greed, hunger, and the Cross: three gifts for the civilized life. The family groups that sang on the terraces are gone. In their places slaves shuffle underground and they don t sing there. Peru is silent a country, frozen in avarice.

- Peter Shaffer, The Royal Hunt of the Sun, 1964

All that is left in the twentieth century is a small but growing number of Inca population s numbering in the 20 million. The new main goal of the Inca people is much the same as the Aztec, to keep the memories of their great nation alive and tell the stories of their prosperity to their children. The Inca now also try to take salvation in knowing that with the growing number of tourists flocking to see the Inca ruins, their once great city might still be seen by many as a great monument to the history of South America.

Iroquois

We Six Nations of Indians feel we have potentially a superior social system to that of the United States. If only we were left alone, we could redevelop our society which was old in democracy when Europe knew only monarchs.

- Ernest Benedict, Mohawk, 1941

In the southern part of what is now Canada, once thrived a great nation. A nation so full of vitality and so advanced for its time that today s governments are modeled after it. The nation that thrived in this region is that of the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. The Iroquois Confederacy originally started with five nations, the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca, living in that order from east to west across the Great Lakes. Eventually the Tuscaroras were driven north by the British and Cherokee Nation to create what is now the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. This confederacy was not as large as the Inca per say, but they were still several hundred thousand strong.

Once again, the same as the Inca and the Aztec, white man not only brought war and broken promises, but also the strange disease that wiped out several nations years earlier. They brought smallpox. The pandemic that it caused severely hindered the Iroquois Confederacy at stabilizing a recognized government to the new European immigrants by wiping out the heads of the clans that formed the Six Nations. Without these heads of the Confederacy and the slow but progressive loss of land due to war and European colonization the Iroquois began to deteriorate. The deterioration of the Iroquois was prevalent from the spread of the smallpox. With people like Samuel de Champlain, Hernando de Soto and Jaques Cartier, colonizing and destroying the towns and cities built up by the Iroquois, it was only a matter of time before they became overlooked by both the British and the United States. For these two developing nations felt that their interests were much more important than those of the true people of these plains, and the Six Nations were becoming nations of the past.

As the nations where being overlooked there was a particular developing nation which was paying close attention to the Six Nations. That nation was the United States of America. Taking notes during a meeting of the Six Nations and the commissioners of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland, Benjamin Franklin, thirty eight, thought about the Iroquois example of a democracy. Franklin wondered how the seemingly savage people of this continent could ever run and create such a smooth running political system. It was at this time that this system was written into the United States Constitution and became the practical layout for what was then the ten developing states of the United States of America.

So it is that the eagle on the United States shield is the Iroquois eagle and the bundle of arrows in its grasp originally numbered five and not thirteen. The truth is that the settlers of America not only took the land from the Indians but also the concepts, to better themselves and their needs.

Philosophies of Hobbes and Nietzsche

Thomas Hobbes

Hobbes argued that people were originally in a state of nature and were controlled by the laws, drives, and impulses of nature. The state of nature was cruel and hard. People lived lives that were solitary, poor, nasty brutish and short. Hobbes believed that people remain tied to nature and are still cruel and self-interested.

Hobbes believed that all people want and deserve freedom. He defined freedom as a condition in which want is absent and all basic human needs are met. He believed that freedom could only be enjoyed if society is ordered and peaceful. Hobbes believed that people should give up all their rights to a sovereign who would control the selfishness of human nature to end the turmoil of the natural state.

Following this concept or theory that Hobbes proposed, he would be in agreement with the Spanish conquistadors taking over South America and destroying the civilizations that resided their in the beginning. Hobbes would have been in agreement with the monarchy type system that the Spanish had created. The one sovereign, being the King, and the subjects never asking questions and only following his orders. The Inca, Aztec, and Iroquois being considered possibly as in their natural state and in need of an ordered nature would prefer this type of system over their already supposedly crude democratic way of thinking.

Hobbes may have also proposed that the conquistadors were only acting on their natural state being selfish and crude, doing only what they could have done without an ordered and peaceful political structure. The Indians on the other hand could have been seen as having a structure already built that followed his idea. Having an Emperor who delegated the proper authority that was never questioned and always fair. In either case it would seem that a natural state, according to Hobbes needed to be met.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Nietzsche proposed a difficult concept in the 1800 s, that God was dead and/or dying. He proposed this because of the way that humans go about their everyday lives trying to increase their own power over people and objects to the point that we eliminate any boundary or reason for not doing so, even that of God. He proposed that humans have even gone to the point in which they have deemed themselves God. Nietzsche also states that there are two types of morality; one being slave-morality; and the other being master-morality.

Slave-morality is fashioned by weak groups that look to the entire group to be happy to find the proper answer to the dilemma. They would see sympathy from the stronger person towards the weak as being a helpful and redeeming quality. The Inca had a political structure that fit into this category. The Inca made sure that there was always enough food for the sick and injured. They felt that they were not better than the weak. They felt that everyone should be equal. They shared the land with the animals. The land and the Indian where all equal and on the same plane of existence.

On the other hand, the Spanish conquistador and the settlers of North America felt as though the land was there s to own and plunder. They felt as though they had the right to enslave the Indians and kick them off of the land. The settlers thought themselves to be superior to the Indians. Nietzsche would have said that the settlers had a master-morality which would prefer to develop the strong and forget about the weak. The weak would not be deemed able to provide enough strength to support the powerful. This type of morality appeals to the individual type nature of the white man .

Bibliography

Saphrophyte. Webster s Encyclopedia Dictionary. Canadian ed. 1988.

Velasquez, Manuel. Philosophy: A Text with Readings. 6th ed. Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997

Wright, Ronald. Stolen Continents: The New World Through Indian Eyes. Toronto: Penguin Books, 1993