

Thanksgiving: Celebrating the Genocide of Native Americans

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The sad reality about the United States of America is that in a matter of a few hundreds years it managed to rewrite its own history into a mythological fantasy.

The concepts of liberty, freedom and free enterprise in the “land of the free, home of the brave” are a mere spin. The US was founded and became prosperous based on two original sins: firstly, on the mass murder of Native Americans and theft of their land by European colonialists; secondly, on slavery.

This grim reality is far removed from the fairy tale version of a nation that views itself in its collective consciousness as a virtuous universal agent for good and progress. The most recent version of this mythology was expressed by Ronald Reagan when he said that “America is a shining city upon a hill whose beacon light guides freedom-loving people everywhere.”

In rewriting its own history about Thanksgiving, white America tells a Disney-like fairytale about the English pilgrims and their struggle to survive in a new and harsh environment. The pilgrims found help from the friendly and extremely generous Native-American tribe, the Wampanoag Indians, in 1621. Unfortunately for Native Americans, the European settlers’ gratitude was short-lived. By 1637, Massachusetts governor John Winthrop ordered the massacre of thousands of Pequot Indian men, women and children. This event marked the start of a Native-American genocide that would take slightly more than 200 years to complete, and of course to achieve its ultimate goal, which was to take the land from Native Americans and systematically plunder their resources. The genocide begun in 1637 marks the beginning of the conquest of the entire continent until most Native Americans were exterminated, a few were assimilated into white society, and the rest were put in reservations to dwindle and die.

When Christopher Columbus “discovered” the Americas in 1492, on his quest for gold and silver, the Native population, which he erroneously called Indians, numbered an estimated 15 million who lived north of current day Mexico. It was, by all considerations, a thriving civilization. Three hundred and fifty years later, the Native American population north of Mexico would be reduced to fewer than a million. This genocide was brought upon the Natives by systematic mass murder and also by disease, notably smallpox, spread by the European colonists.

Columbus and his successors’ proto-capitalist propensity for greed was foreign to Native Americans. They viewed the land as tribal collective ownership, not as a property that could be owned by individuals. *“Columbus and his successors were not coming to an empty wilderness, but into a world which, in some places, was as densely populated as Europe, and*

where the culture was complex, where human relations were more egalitarian than in Europe, and where the relations between men, women, children and nature were more beautifully worked out than perhaps in any other places in the world.” wrote Howard Zinn in his masterful [A People’s History of the United States](#).



In many ways, the US’ celebration of Thanksgiving is analogous to setting aside a day in Germany to celebrate the Holocaust. Thanksgiving is the American Holocaust. The original crimes of genocide and slavery are not limited to US early history but have found an extension in the policies of modern-day US. The systematic assault on other nations and cultures still goes on under various pretenses or outright lies. United States wars of empire are going on today more than ever before. These wars have left millions of people dead across the world in the course of American history, and they are still fought for the same reasons behind the Native American genocide and slavery: namely, to expand the [wealth](#) of the US elite.

Defenders of Thanksgiving will say that whatever the original murky meaning of the holiday, it has become a rare chance to spend time with family and show appreciation for what one has. For most Americans today, however, it is hard to be thankful. As matter of fact, unless you belong to the 2 percent who represent the US ruling class you should not be thankful at all. How can you be appreciative for what you have if you have lost your house to foreclosure, don’t have a job and can’t feed your family? How can you be appreciative if you are a homeless veteran? How can you be appreciative when you are poor or sick in a society without social justice? On this Thanksgiving day, rich celebrities and politicians will make a parody of what should be real charity by feeding countless [poor and homeless](#). This will ease their conscience, at least for a while. Charity, however, should not be a substitute for social justice. Just to ruin some people’s appetites before they attack that golden turkey: keep in mind that today we are celebrating a genocide.

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