

Dan Leahy's Book Outline:

***An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz (2014)**

Central Question. How might acknowledging the reality of US history work to transform society? The essence the US history narrative is wrong. The settler state's intentions were seen in the Northwest Ordinance, the Monroe Doctrine, the Doctrine of Discovery. The form of colonialism was modern from the beginning: expansion of European corporations, backed by government armies, into foreign areas with appropriation of land and resources. Settler colonialism is a genocidal policy. This book tells the story of the United States as a colonialist settler-state.

America is an Ancient, not a "new world." Of the seven areas in the world that domesticated plants, three are in the Americas. Unlike any other continent, American agriculture based on corn. About 100 million population in the hemisphere at end of fifteenth century, 2/5th in North American, including Mexico. The Mayan, Olmec, Toltec in Mexico; the Anasazi, Dine and Apaches in the SW. The Mississippi Valley had one enormous city state, Cahokia, in the 12th century. "North America in 1492 was not a virgin wilderness, but a network of Indigenous nations, people of the corn." It was not, as the settler claimed, the land of the "wandering Neolithic hunter." (30-31)

Conquest Culture. Colonial conquest was practiced in Europe before crossing the Ocean to the Americas. Forcing the European peasantry off the commons, privatizing the land, suppressing women and reducing all to labor had taken place. "The ideology of white supremacy was paramount to neutralizing the class antagonisms of the landless against the landed and distributing the land"...of the Irish in Ulster or of the Native American or African peoples. (37). The principal reason for the transfer of land in the Americas to Europeans was not "bacteria" or "lack of immunity" or "natural" causes, it was due to three centuries of settler-colonial warfare, butchery and slaughter. "The systems of colonization were modern and rational, but its ideological basis was madness." (44)

The Calvinist Covenant Story. The US origin story is one of exceptionalism. Like covenant states of Israel and South Africa, the US was created by sacred covenant which John Locke turned into the social contract whereby individuals sacrifice their liberty only through conquest. The model for the US conquest was the British invasion of Northern Ireland using the Scots-Irish Protestants as settlers in the six counties of Ulster in the early 1600s. Here they perfected scalping for bounty using the Irish as victims. In the 1700s, 250,000 Scott-Irish left for British North America as cash-poor and indentured servants to become the soldier-settlers, the foot-soldiers turning the Land into private real estate for the ruling class-English patricians, slave owners, land barons and export traders.

Birth of a Killer Nation. The British Crown transferred ownership of all the land east of the Mississippi and south of the Great Lakes to the U.S. in 1783. Indigenous nations resisted this occupation of their land but also accommodated to it. Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution

said the US could regulate commerce with “the Indian Tribes” which led to treaties. Nevertheless, there was total genocidal war throughout this entire area. D.H. Lawrence’s statement that the “essential American soul” is a killer. (94). MLK, Jr. wrote: “Our nation was born in genocide... We are perhaps the only nation which tried as a matter of national policy to wipe out its indigenous population.”

Western Expansion. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase from Napoleon Bonaparte all land west of the Mississippi to the Continental divide from the Dakotas to Louisiana. The chief cause of this expansion was not superior technology or the overwhelming number of settlers, but rather the “colonialist settler-state’s willingness to eliminate whole civilizations of people in order to possess the land.” (96). The Cherokee nation’s “trail of tears” in 1838 from Georgia and Alabama to northeastern Oklahoma. Half of the 16,000 perished on the march...” all a part of the Indian removal. The origin story and civic religion that justifies this still persists, as invoked by Obama’s Inaugural address in 2009. (115). “The affirmation of democracy requires the denial of colonialism.” (116)

Sea to Shining Sea. Walt Whitman: “the nigger, like the Injun, will be eliminated; it is the law of races, history... a superior grade of rats come and then all the minor rats are cleared out.” (117-118). It was the historical destiny of the frontier settlers to replace the native peoples. The Mexican War was not the US’s first “foreign war.” By 1846, the US has invaded, occupied and ethnically cleansed dozens of foreign nations east of the Mississippi. Standing tall through military victory over a weak country; it was not Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush’ idea. The tradition is as old as the United States.” (131)

Indian Country. In 1860, six of the military’s seven departments were stationed west of the Mississippi. In the west, the military was the primary government institution. Indigenous nations in Indian Country were more directly affected by the Civil war than anywhere else. Some fought with the CSA and some against it. In Minnesota in 1862, the infamous largest mass hanging in US history of 38 Dakota Sioux.(136). The 1864 300 mile march of 8,000 Navajo to southeastern desert of New Mexico; only allowed to return to homeland in 1868. (138). 371 treaties in the US’ first century, but Congress halted formal treaty making in 1871. The Indian Wars were fought by African Americans (Buffalo Soldiers), Irish and German immigrants. The war imperative was “annihilation unto total surrender.” The Carlisle Indian Industrial School established in 1879. The Pine Ridge slaughter of 300 Sioux in December 1890 symbolized the end of Indigenous armed resistance in the US.

The Triumph of White People. Theodore Roosevelt in 1909 heralded these past four centuries of expansion by white people – “lasting benefit to most of the peoples already dwelling on the lands over which the expansion took place,” while Black Elk in 1930, referencing Wounded Knee, “A people’s dream died here. It was a beautiful dream... the nation’s hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead.” The Bureau of Indian Affairs invested the funds from land sales and royalties into Trust fund. Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. The Indian Reorganization Act of 1935 – called for tribal governments and ended allotments. The Indian Claims Commission of 1946 received 850 claims between 1946 and 1952. The Termination Act of 1953 ended trust protection and transfer payments guaranteed by treaty and by 1960 more than 100 nations had been terminated. The 1956 Indian Relocation Act gave rise to large Native urban populations, In

1944 the National Congress of American Indians had formed and by 1961 had stopped the government from enforcing termination.

Resurgence. Ghost Dance Prophecy. A Nation is Coming. Taos Pueblo's 64 year effort to reclaim Blue Lake led to first restitution: 48,000 acres returned in December, 1970. The National Indian Youth Council formed in 1961. The Survival of American Indians Association formed in PNW led to the Boldt decision in 1974 validating the right to 50% of fish in the "usual and accustomed places." Occupation of Alcatraz in 1969 claiming for all American Indians by "right of discovery." AIM founded in 1972 led a two and a half month occupation of the Wounded Knee massacre site beginning in February 1973. In 1970, Dee Brown's *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee*.

Doctrine of Discovery. Originating in various Papal bulls from 1455 on justified the taking of non-Christian land by Christian monarchies. Thomas Jefferson in 1791 said this Doctrine to be international law. Chief Justice John Marshall in *Johnson v McIntosh* in 1823 confirmed the law was in effect in the British colonies and also the US. Discovery gives title to the government and consummated by possession. Native nations were "domestic, defendant nations." AIM formed the International Treaty Council in 1975 which led to the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN General Assembly. The UN Study on Treaties in 1999 also reinforced the treaty language in the US Constitution, Article IV and Article 1, section 8. This led to vast claims for Repatriation of lands acquired by the US outside valid treaties. Also the *Cobell v Salazar* lawsuit filed in 1996 and settled in 2011 with regard to mismanagement of trust funds, a \$3.4 billion dollar settlement. The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988: \$26 billion industry, 300,000 workers, operating in half of the 564 federally recognized nations. "The Doctrine of Discovery is dissolving in light of these profound acts of sovereignty." (217).

The Past and Future of the US. The architecture of US world domination was designed and tested by this period of continental militarism and extended overseas to new "Injun Country" with its commitment to total war, as in the War on Terror. The US Army's defining moment was fighting the "Indians" and John Yoo, in his Torture memo, used a US Supreme Court opinion in 1873 on *Modoc Indian Prisoners* to define "unlawful combatants" and, just like Indians, could be killed without being guilty of a crime. (222-224). A settler society that has not come to terms with its past affects the assumptions and behaviors of living generations. The legacy of settler colonialism can be seen in the endless wars of aggression and US' worldwide militarism. Living persons are not responsible for what their ancestors did but they are responsible for the society they live in which is a product of the past. The process starts by honoring the treaties, restoring sacred sites, reparations for reconstruction and expansion of Native nations and extensive education and active participation of descendants of settlers, enslave Africans, colonized Mexicans and immigrant populations.

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