



An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

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2015 Recipient of the American Book Award

The first history of the United States told from the perspective of indigenous peoples

Today in the United States, there are more than five hundred federally recognized Indigenous nations comprising nearly three million people, descendants of the fifteen million Native people who once inhabited this land. The centuries-long genocidal program of the US settler-colonial regimen has largely been omitted from history. Now, for the first time, acclaimed historian and activist Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz **offers a history of the United States told from the perspective of Indigenous peoples and reveals** how Native Americans, for centuries, actively resisted expansion of the US empire.

In *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, Dunbar-Ortiz adroitly challenges the founding myth of the United States and shows how policy against the Indigenous peoples was colonialist and designed to seize the territories of the original inhabitants, displacing or eliminating them. And as Dunbar-Ortiz reveals, this policy was praised in popular culture, through writers like James Fenimore Cooper and Walt Whitman, and in the highest offices of government and the military. Shockingly, as the genocidal policy reached its zenith under President Andrew Jackson, its ruthlessness was best articulated by US Army general Thomas S. Jesup, who, in 1836, wrote of the Seminoles: "The country can be rid of them only by exterminating them."

Spanning more than four hundred years, this classic bottom-up peoples' history radically reframes US history and explodes the silences that have haunted our national narrative.

From the Hardcover edition.

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States Details

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From Reader Review An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States for online ebook

Danika at The Leslibrary says

This was a difficult read. The events covered are—of course--brutal, and there is so much to take in about the unimaginable cruelty of the white colonists of the Americas. Every time I read about colonization (which is ongoing), I learn it is somehow even worse than I previously thought.

This was also difficult in the sense that it is a ton of information to fit into one book, including a lot of numbers, names, dates, etc. There is so much covered, but here are some of things I took away from it:

- Just how much the indigenous peoples of the Americas had shaped and changed the land before colonists arrived--Dunbar-Ortiz argues that had North America been the untouched wilderness that is part of the white myth of colonization, European colonists wouldn't have been able to survive. They didn't know how to conquer wilderness. What they did know how to do is conquer people, and steal their cultivated land, buildings, trade routes, roads, etc from them.
- It's incredible that scalping is now associated with indigenous people, when it was indigenous people's scalps that were collected by white people for reward (including women and children).
- Dunbar-Ortiz does a great job in showing how the colonization of the Americas is connected with the colonization of other parts of Europe (like Ireland) as well as Africa (and the resultant slave trade). For instance, white colonist small farmers couldn't compete with plantations that used slaves, so they kept pushing into and squatting on indigenous land.
- The reason that colonists won so many of the initial battles against indigenous people was because they used already existing conflicts between indigenous nations and temporarily allied themselves with one group before turning on them when the conflict ended (especially in Central America).

Those are just a few bits of things that really stuck with me, but the effectiveness of this book is because of its broad scope, and showing how each individual story fits into the greater narrative of injustice and resistance.

Alice says

Not since David Stannard's "American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World" have I read such a clear history of the United States. In no way do I want to diminish from the great work of Howard Zinn's "A People's History of the United States" but that text did not stay with me or speak to me in the same way that Dunbar-Ortiz's book has. It is readable enough to assign to a high school audience, so if you are a parent trying to supplement the nonsense that generally passes for US history consider assigning this to your son or daughter. I plan to come back to this book every Thanksgiving so that I can better commit to memory some of stories and facts Dunbar-Ortiz raises to our attention, such as the story of the Ulster-Scots ("already seasoned settler colonialists" by the 18th century) using techniques already practiced on the Irish (such as scalping) on Indigenous Americans and the refusal of the Sioux Nation to accept hundreds of millions of dollars awarded in a 1980 Supreme Court case as reparations given their belief that "accepting the money

would validate the US theft of their most sacred land." In a political environment where US Americans can still use the term "illegal immigrant" without irony it would help to have as many people armed with the true facts of our settler colonial legacy as possible.

Amy Sturgis says

I received this book as part of the Goodreads First Reads program.

First, I should say that I recognize what a herculean proposition it would be to create a history of the United States as experienced by its Indigenous inhabitants; I greatly respect both Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz for accepting the challenge and Beacon Press for its foresight in publishing its ReVisioning American History series; and I think this book is an extremely important one. I hope it will have far-reaching ripple effects in the field.

Over and over again, I found myself nodding at Dunbar-Ortiz's critiques of past approaches hailed as innovative while, at their core, they were based on subtle evasions or outright dismissals of settler colonialism and the genocide on which it was/is founded. Perhaps this book can motivate a new generation of historians (and citizens) to deal more honestly with the past. If it does, its worth could not be overstated.

That said, I see fundamental flaws in this study.

For one thing, Dunbar-Ortiz apparently is untutored in and unwilling to consult specialists on economics or intellectual history, and this causes her to mislabel and misattribute key forces and movements that rest at the heart of her argument. This ensures that her work cannot speak to other survey works and texts, and that is a terrible shame. For instance, she makes the very basic error of calling the hoarding of gold and the exploitation of colonial resources capitalism, when this practice and its corresponding theory/philosophy was, in fact, mercantilism. (Theorists of the Scottish Enlightenment such as Adam Smith, who became leading minds of free-market capitalism, framed their arguments in opposition to and in order to discredit mercantilism, not in support of its practice. These aren't the same or even similar ideas.)

More troubling, however, is Dunbar-Ortiz's reliance on older secondary and tertiary sources that do not represent the latest understandings of the subjects she wishes to discuss. For example, she sets the stage for her discussion of "U.S. Triumphalism and Peacetime Colonialism" by offering a quote she attributes to Black Elk that says "the nation's hoop is broken and scattered." Yet it was proven some time ago (in 1984, by the anthropologist who founded and directed the American Indian Studies Research Institute at Indiana State University in Bloomington, and this has been the subject of much publication since) that Black Elk never said any of this at all; the entire passage is a complete invention, one of many, poetic license taken by Black Elk's white interviewer John G. Neihardt to meet Neihardt's own (white) agenda in storytelling. Black Elk's own words and opinions were quite different.

If Dunbar-Ortiz is claiming to represent the Indigenous perspective, and yet she is quoting as the authentic voice of a Native leader prose that was discounted decades ago as pure fabrication by a non-Native, shouldn't this give us pause? Several such examples of a lack of rigorous research struck me as undercutting Dunbar-Ortiz's entire project.

I wish this work had been pursued with more precision and discipline and attention to detail; that said, perhaps it will inspire those who follow to do a more thorough and rigorous job.

Johnny says

While I am in passionate agreement with the thrust of this book — that the United States is a “crime scene” founded on a systematic strategy of genocide — I found Dunbar-Ortiz to be an infuriatingly unreliable narrator. It’s unfortunate because I was excited to pick up this book and really, really wanted to like it.

Early in the first chapter she describes indigenous diets as “mostly vegetarian” and persists throughout the book to refer to various tribes as “indigenous farmers.” While it’s true that some of America’s native tribes possessed sophisticated systems of agriculture, it’s widely known that hunting was an integral part of life — animal protein was a prized and indispensable food source. Not only that, but many tribes were nomadic hunter-gatherers, something that the author scarcely acknowledges.

Is Dunbar-Ortiz trying to portray indigenous populations as more politically correct, thus sympathetic, for a liberal readership? Or trying to legitimize them as “civilized?” Whatever the case, one gets the feeling that the author is willing to play games with the truth in order to propagate her agenda.

Another eyebrow-raising moment comes later when she claims that Crazy Horse was killed trying to escape his reservation. On the contrary, it’s well-established that Crazy Horse was set up to be murdered by one of his own people — the culmination of a long-standing, petty, intratribal rivalry. He wasn’t trying to escape.

If one were to do a thorough fact checking, I suspect one would uncover similar distortions, omissions, and revisions of the true history. It’s a real shame because this should have been an important book.

Criticisms aside, I found myself cheering Dunbar-Ortiz throughout for her unflinching, scathing condemnation of the lies that made, and continue to make, America.

Donna says

Ahhh..I'm sad. This is nonfiction and because this was incredibly sad..it hurt my heart. I struggle with this topic, even when it is brushed over in fictional stories. I'm half native american and half European. So this book was about my people....both the massacred and the ones with guns. Every book has a slant and that is what I struggle with the most. I want this part of history in whatever story I'm reading the way I want cheesecake.....I want the whole thing and not just a piece.

I'm glad this book wasn't longer, but even with that said, there was still so much to be said. My ancestors left the reservation in the very late 1800's and early 1900's, and entered white society. Neither option was easy. This is an important part of U.S. history and I don't think enough can be said about it. So 4 stars.

David says

The epigraph and concluding quote in the final chapter of this book sum up why it's such an important read:

"That the continued colonization of American Indian nations, peoples, and lands provides the United States the economic and material resources needed to cast its imperialist gaze globally is a fact that is simultaneously obvious within - and yet continuously obscured by - what is essentially a settler colony's national construction of itself as an ever more perfect multicultural, multiracial democracy...[T]he status of American Indians as sovereign nations colonized by the United States continues to haunt and inflect its *raison d'être*."

- Jodi Byrd

"The future will not be mad with loss and waste though the memory will
Be there: eyes will become kind an deep, and the bones of this nation
Will mend after the revolution."

- Simon Ortiz

tout says

The NODAPL struggle in North Dakota over the last year has encouraged me to revisit and deepen my understanding of what it means to be indigenous in the US. Reading this book, wading through a history of genocide, offered a number of important reorientations for me. As far as I know, there aren't other comprehensive histories of the US from the perspective of indigenous people's, however this could have been much better. If anyone has any recommendations I'd be excited to look into them.

A few significant problems I had with the text:

-Early on in the book there is a brief summary of life before colonization. The author presents an argument against the idea that Native Americans were savages without civilization, government, etc , instead arguing that they constituted state-like structures and forms of organization in some ways different, but equally intelligent compared to those of the colonizers. Fundamentally, this form of argument is flawed since it is not a level of sophistication in governing men and "nature" that makes one unsavage, but how one relates to the world (i.e. not committing genocide on people and destroying the world). From this perspective, Native Americans were not inferior, but in so far as they did not reproduce the forms of power of Europe, were ethically far greater. (This is by no means meant to reduce all nations to the same, since they were not and many were also had their problems, but on an altogether different level than their colonizers).

-Too much of this history focuses on victimhood and horrific defeat, which in some way is part of the same reasoning behind the elders at Standing Rock hiring non-violent civil disobedience advisors and encouraging only non-violence actions in response to violence. Perhaps at Standing Rock this is primarily a strategic decision, but one must question why the warrior and resistance does not get as much space within this book and why a discourse of recognition and rights does.

-There's very little or no criticism given of seeking recognition and rights, especially given the history of broken treaties.

There were a number of interesting themes and concepts that are explored in depth despite the shortcomings. One is that the US military continues to refer to being in enemy territory as being in "Indian Country", which has more recently been shortened to "In Country". The book makes the argument that the genocidal war against the first nations forms the foundation of how the military has operated as an imperial power

throughout the rest of the world (especially in terms of counter-insurgency). Another is that the settler mentality, beating back the wild frontier, continues to form the core of American's idea of individual freedom and the idea of what it means to be American.

America has never been great. It's been hell from the beginning.

Kate Savage says

I've been having this feeling lately about anti-immigrant xenophobia: that if you were to dig past the hate and into the fear, and then even past the fear -- you'd find shame. A rotting, festering shame of what white settlers did and do to native people. An unacknowledged knowing: our ancestors were murderers, rapists, terrorists, thieves. Instead of speaking the words, we lash out violently against others who immigrate to this land, fearing they'll do what we've done and keep doing. We use the words for them that would rightfully be used for our ancestors and ourselves. I've been feeling that maybe healing only comes with a reckoning with history.

So books like this one feel very important.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz is up against an impossibility: to write all of U.S. history from the perspective of all of the indigenous nations it abused. And do it in 230 pages. So of course, everything is summarized and glossed-over. This book is no substitute for deeper study of any region, event, or people. But it's still a remarkable achievement.

It's not a history of indigenous people, but rather a retelling of the popular founding narratives from the perspective of indigeneity. I was surprised by the effort she makes to clarify that the weapons of settler colonialism were first used against the peasantry of what is now Great Britain. She also explores how the tactics sharpened in wars and massacres against the Indigenous people of this continent have been used by the U.S. to bludgeon people all over the world.

To give one tiny example: when John Yoo wrote the "torture memos" (which justify torture and prisoner abuse) he found legal precedent in the way the U.S. tortured and abused Indians. They were the first "unlawful combatants," without even the minimal rights given to prisoners of war.

And still after all the history of horror, she ends with these lines by Acoma poet Simon Ortiz:
*The future will not be mad with loss and waste though the memory will
Be there: eyes will become kind and deep, and the bones of this nation
Will mend after the revolution.*

J.M. Hushour says

Not so much a history of the Indigenous Peoples of North America as much as a re-telling of American history that actually includes their unfortunate role within it, which is way more prominent in ways you haven't imagined.

This is a succinct, powerful read whose basic premise, the US is a settler-colonial power, screams at you throughout.

The sections on the plight and horrific fate of the IPs are worth it alone, but the author does a helluva job revisioning America's history by showing the roots of militarism, racism, and warlust in the original Whitey conquest and slaughter of the continent's original inhabitants. Wonder why our culture is the way it is? You need not look too far back for the imperialist, militarist spirit informed pretty much our entire history. You might not know that, but it's only because this part of the tale typically gets left out. There's a reason why we're so good at killing people around the world: we had the Indigenous People to practice on first!

Malcolm says

One of the (many) things that unsettles me in my regular engagements with US history is the near total absence of any discussion, or seeming awareness, of the country as a colony of settlement. The country's indigenous peoples are barely considered in the national story or for that matter in most of the historical texts. We see it in the subtle (and not so subtle) language of US history – in the 'settlement' of the frontier; in the 'opening up' of the west, in the 'last' of the Mohicans, of the Californians and the overwhelming absence of images of indigenous Americans as contemporary figures in US popular culture (let's leave aside their exploitative and in many cases frankly racist images in elite sport – baseball and football, notably).

Yet, as Rozanne Dunbar-Ortiz shows in this engaging book, telling US history from 'the native's point of view' (to misappropriate Clifford Geertz) casts the country in a whole new light. From the outset, she is uncompromising, stating that the "history of the United States is a history of settler colonialism – the founding of a state based on the ideology of white supremacy, the widespread practice of African slavery, and a policy of genocide and land theft" (p2) and making clear that this is not a happily-ever-after kind of history, and that this is only 'a' native history; there will be others. This then is a history of dispossession, of being made alien at home, of being made marginal in the only place your people have been – that is, it is a story of colonisation of a mind we have seen in many other places – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, The Philippines, South Africa as well as throughout Central and South America and so on and so forth. As any historian of any of those places will say, yes they are settler colonies but they are all distinct.

It is this distinctness that adds the unsettling and unexpected second strand to Dunbar-Ortiz's argument: that the process of conquest and the military practice it spawned shaped and continues to shape not only its self-perception but also the contemporary form of US military engagement with the world. She paints the picture of conquest by total war centred on the targeting of civilians, the destruction of property and the basic requirements of life and continuing relentless assaults by both standing armies and 'special forces' (or Ranger patrols of irregular groups). It is a compelling case drawing on analyses of contemporary US military jargon and slang (where it remains common for enemy territory to be labelled Indian Country, or In Country) to reinforce the point. On reflection it is probably the sheer banality of contempt for the USA's indigenous peoples that makes the blindness about settler colonialism so unsettling.

There is a third sense in which Dunbar-Ortiz's narrative is unsettling. A key way that historian make sense of what we do it via periodisation, that is, our tendency to break the issues/period we study into distinctly labelled time periods – colonial, federal, ante-bellum, reconstruction and so forth through the 18th and 19th centuries in the USA. In the same way as other indigenous historians have shown (see, for instance, Ranginui Walker's *Ka Whauwhai Tonu Matou* dealing with Aotearoa/New Zealand) this indigenous history of the USA proposes a profoundly different, native-derived periodisation – and therefore different 'turning points' and historical nodes. Not surprisingly, it also offers a profoundly different reading of many of the key historical myths, stories and analyses that dominate the received versions of US history.

Finally, the key to the book is Dunbar-Ortiz's dual set of skills: first is her confidence with the material, with events and stories that are known well, those that are not, and her ability to marshal that material to build a compelling argument (which the best we can ask from any historian). Second, she does not shy away from labelling invasion, settler-colonialism and genocide for what it was – in a setting where the dominant view of settler society ranged between physical extermination of the indigenous (as encapsulated in the statement usually attributed to General Philip Sheridan, 'the only good Indian is a dead Indian') to the 'humane' view, as seen in the programme of Richard Henry Pratt and the subsequent Indian Schools movement, to 'kill the Indian and save the man'.

Most powerfully, she paints a picture of indigenous peoples who wish to continue to exist, whose struggles for economic self-determination on their own terms (not those under governance regimes imposed by the colonial state) are paying off and a setting where the narrative of dysfunction is offset by advances in indigenous self-defined struggles and improvements – although happening after the book was finished I can't help seeing the struggles over the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2017 as the kind of hopeful future Dunbar-Ortiz sees. Of course, any history from an indigenous point of view must also be highlight, as this does, the continuing adversarial context of, in this case, highly militarized settler-colonialism. In this world, where the state and phoney science is regularly arrayed against groups who have never surrendered their sovereignty there remains much that can go wrong. Dunbar-Ortiz is adept at highlighting these tensions, drawing on their historical foundation and contemporary circumstances.

This is a tale of nations constantly vying for land and power on the one hand and to defend their existence on the other; the boundaries are never consistent but in the long run there is a single narrative – the fundamental one written out of the received version of US history. In the blurb on the back, the historian of African-American struggle Robin D G Kelly describes this as probably "the most important US history book you will read in your lifetime": I'm often wary of blurb's marketing aspect, but in this case Kelly may well be right – and it he's wrong, it is certainly in the top five.

This challenge to the orthodoxy is well crafted, elegantly argued and fundamental to any approach to US history that deals with past in the country's present, and the oozing sores left by the unacknowledged costs of colonisation (usually benignly labelled nation formation). I cannot recommend this highly enough.

George says

"An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States" by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz is a good overview of U.S. history from the perspective of the Indigenous Peoples of North America.

This is an important book. This is not a pleasant book to read.

Dunbar-Ortiz demonstrates that the United States, since its founding, has been a colonial-settler empire. She discusses several popular, big concept myths that obscure the reality of the United States: The founding myth of the Thirteen Colonies breaking free from the British Empire; the myth of the Western Frontier; the modern myth of the ever more perfect union of multicultural, multiracial peoples living in a Melting Pot; the Nation of Immigrants.

Each of these myths obscures the reality that the founding and continued development of the United States coincided with (and continues to coincide with) the near complete destruction of North America's Indigenous civilizations and genocide of its peoples.

It's not a perfect book. It could have had some better editing to keep a tighter focus on the main topic - especially in the last third of the book.

The only complaint I have (and it's a minor complaint) is that Dunbar-Ortiz should have skipped the early section on Medieval Europe, Medieval Spain, and the Crusades. She is out of her depth on those topics. For example, she has it backwards when discussing Spain. The Moors were the colonial-setters and Ferdinand and Isabella were the leaders of the Indigenous resistance. As I said, she should have skipped this section entirely - it wasn't needed for the focus of her book.

Overall, I think this is an important book about U.S. History. I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in U.S. history, Indigenous Peoples, or colonialism.

Rating: 4 out of 5 stars

Notes:

Audiobook:

Narrated by: Laural Merlington

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Elizabeth Hall says

The United States understands genocide to be a terrible thing that other countries have done, or are doing. The eradication of an entire population—civilian women, men, and children—along with their culture and national sovereignty—is something we condemn in our media. When we see genocide happening elsewhere, we debate if and when we should step in with economic sanctions or military action—when it is time to put a stop to a crime against humanity. Rarely, if ever, do we examine our own history long enough to understand that the United States was created by people who committed genocide against the people who were already living here. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, in her book *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, gives us this truth in its fullness, showing us the history we have attempted to deny. She does so “...not to make an accusation but rather to face historical reality, without which consideration not much in US history makes sense, unless Indigenous peoples are erased (p. 7).”

A book of this nature could easily become so mired in pain that healing is impossible or so lost in names and dates that we forget it was—and is—lived in flesh and blood. Dunbar-Ortiz does neither: history lives in her words, as she unearths what we do not know and connects it to what we have learned. Our history is charted for us as our ancestors lived it, stolen territory by stolen territory. At a little over two hundred pages, this book is not only vital and revelatory, but a relatively quick read.

The author sets the stage by dispelling a colonialist myth—when we speak of Indians, we are not speaking of a monolithic culture: “Native peoples were colonized and deposed of their territories as distinct peoples—hundreds of nations—not as a racial or ethnic group (p. xiii).” She also dispels the notion that Indians were uncivilized: “In the founding myth of the United States, the colonists acquired a vast expanse of land from a scattering of benighted peoples who were hardly using it—an unforgivable offense to the Puritan work ethic. The historical record is clear, however, that European colonists shoved aside a large network of small and large nations whose governments, commerce, arts and sciences, agriculture, technologies,

theologies, philosophies, and institutions were intricately developed, nations that maintained sophisticated relations with one another and with the environments that supported them (p. 46)."

Ah, but what about all those stories of Indians sneaking into settlers' villages in the night and wreaking havoc? If the colonists were murdering, so too were the Indians, the story goes. Dunbar-Ortiz puts the story in perspective: "Settler colonialism, an institution or system, requires violence or the threat of violence to attain its goals. People do not hand over their land, resources, children, and futures without a fight, and that fight is met with violence. In employing the force necessary to accomplish its expansionist goals, a colonizing regime institutionalizes violence. The notion that settler-indigenous conflict is an inevitable product of cultural differences and misunderstandings, or that violence was committed equally by the colonized and the colonizer, blurs the nature of the historical process (p. 8)."

Dunbar-Ortiz walks us through that historical process: from the Northwest Ordinance to the Louisiana Purchase, from the Monroe Doctrine to the Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears, from the Long Walk to Wounded Knee. She exposes the heroes of our national lore—Kit Carson chief among them—as the leaders of a "scorched earth" approach to Indigenous peoples in which women, men, and children were massacred town by town, food sources were confiscated and eliminated, and nations of people were force-marched from their homes. She also discusses the pivotal role that authors played in the formation of our national myths, beginning with James Fenimore Cooper: "Cooper's reinvention of the birth of the United States in his novel *The Last of the Mohicans* has become the official US origin story (p. 103)."

As Dunbar-Ortiz replaces our mythical past with the real one, she describes the concrete forms and consequences of genocide, including broken treaty after broken treaty. Recognizing the validity of treaties shows us a path forward: "The central concern for Indigenous peoples in the United States is prevailing upon the federal government to honor hundreds of treaties and other agreements concluded between the United States and Indigenous nations as between two sovereign states (p. 203)."

Native activism, from the seizure of Alcatraz in 1969 and the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973 to many legal battles over land rights and broken treaties, has centered on this one idea: sovereignty. Dunbar-Ortiz details this activism, and what sovereignty means to specific nations: for example, the Sioux have sought the return of the Paha Sapa, or the Black Hills, since their seizure in 1876.

Dunbar-Ortiz's history of the United States asks us to face facts and move forward, respecting the goals of Native activism as we do so: a future that acknowledges the past must, by its very nature, be transformative. If we are to create this future, we must have a full understanding of our past—and I can think of no better way of gaining that understanding than reading Dunbar-Ortiz's book, which should become required reading in all US history courses.

Leftbanker says

Yet another example of how we have made calling everyone else racist the new goal of scholarship. Congratulations!

This book should be called "White People Are the Root of All Evil in the World" because it has little to do with the history of America's indigenous peoples. To even call this book a "history" is being extremely generous with that word as it is mostly her opinions or opinions of other people she happens to agree with. To take only one example, she completely discounts the role that infectious diseases played in wiping out

huge swaths of native people as European viruses entered into societies with no immunities. She takes the side of a few crackpots who claim that diseases only played a minor role and the true culprit was genocide. Unless you are saying that small pox was genocide which is completely stupid because European settlers didn't have any idea of what small pox was nor did they know the first damn thing about any of the diseases they faced. The author takes this stupidity one step further by comparing the death of indigenous people from diseases to the Holocaust.

The author also tries to paint the pre-Columbian era as some sort of Eden in which "man lived in perfect harmony with nature." This sort of mythology adds nothing to our understanding of Native Americans. I've already read *A People's History of The United States* so I know that our forefathers were pirates and this book adds zero to any further explanation of these peoples.

Laurie says

Reading this book was a life changing experience. So much history of which I was ignorant explained and documented. My mind was blown on every page. For instance: "Scalping" was a practice brought to the colonies by the Ulster Scots who had practiced it first on the Irish, and then on the Indigenous peoples occupying the colonies.

Brad says

I'll keep this simple: if you read this exceptionally researched and beautifully written book and still think the United States is great or has ever been great, you need to take a long hard look in your mirror, then ask your god for forgiveness.
