**The Doctrine of Discovery and its Disastrous Role in the Genocide of the Indigenous Peoples of the Continental United States**

Robert V. Anderson Jr.

*Erasing or ignoring history is one of the main tools of colonialization. This helps the colonizers to idealize their own history and support the idea that their values are better and greater than those who they colonized. That’s why they don’t teach us our history in schools.*

Social Justice Resource Center.

INTRODUCTION

The following is about 95% compiled from the book *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* © 2022 by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. Rather than write an academic paper for publication, with the numerous citations, I chose this route, giving full credit to Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz with further references provided, and some clarification or additional information by myself. The book provides an outstanding understanding of the why and how of the European conquest of what is now the United States. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz provides an excellent recommended reading list, and because this paper does not go into the detail that is found in the book, please purchase the book for substantial more information.

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The history of the United States originated with settler colonialism. This settler colonialism is based on the ideology of white supremacy, African slavery, genocide, and land theft. Free land, regardless of the fact that no European nation actually owned the land, but was free to take by any European settler, is what drew these settlers to what was to eventually become the United States. Many were slave owners, and saw the land as a limitless opportunity for lucrative cash crops. Astonishingly, these early settlers were Puritans that believed that God gave them the right to take the land as theirs, which was supported and reinforced by the Doctrine of Discovery.

What is the Doctrine of Discovery? In the late 15th century, the pope provided a series of papal bulls, which were official documents or edicts, that gave European nations title to the land they discovered, while at the same time, the indigenous people occupying the lands lost their natural right to the land once the Europeans arrived and claimed it.1 The key to the land theft was economic dependency. The European settlers and Euro-American colonial powers created a power structure in which the Indigenous peoples’ survival were contingent upon trade (imbalanced against them), goods, influence (often pitting indigenous nations against each other), and controlled them indirectly as protectorates, with Christian missionaries and alcohol. These English settlers considered the indigenous populations as children of Satan and servants of the devil who deserved to be killed.2 The European settlers, Euro-American colonial powers, and eventually the United States committed genocide against the Indigenous people through the 21st century. This entailed torture, terror, sexual abuse, massacres, systematic military occupations, removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories, and removal of Indigenous children to military-like boarding schools.

The culture of conquest and colonialism began in the 11th century through the 13th century with the European Crusades. The European Crusades was conducted to conquer North Africa and the Middle East, and resulted in significant wealth for a few people, and this profit-based religion was the deadly key element that European merchants brought to the Americas. The papacy directed mercenaries, toward the end of the 13th century, to crush domestic enemies, mostly pagans and commoners, especially women (as ostensible witches), and heretics. Consequently, knights and noblemen could seize land, and force the commoners (those who lived on, and cultivated the land, for their subsistence) into servitude. These domestic crusades terrorized poor people, while at the same time enlisted them in the lucrative business of furthering the accumulation of wealth for the very few, in the name of religion. The commoners were forced off their land, and no longer had access to the means that provided for their welfare, so all they had left was to sell their labor. This contributed to the rise of the modern state in western Europe through the accumulation of wealth by exploiting human labor and displacing millions of subsistence producers from their lands.

The privatization of the commons in 16th century England was used for commercial sheep production, with wool as the main domestic and export commodity. The commoners who originally farmed the land now worked in miserable textile factories, or became available to serve as settlers in the North American colonies, working mainly as indentured servants, with the promise of free land once they served their indenture. The export of these settlers to the colonies served two purposes. The first purpose was a steady supply of settlers for the colonies. The second purpose was an escape valve for England because the impoverished conditions could lead to uprisings of the exploited.

The Christian colonizers had a belief in white supremacy. Two merging events developed this core ideology for modern colonialism, and its justification for genocide. The first was the Christian Crusades in Muslim-controlled territories. The Crusades in the Iberian Peninsula, comprising today Spain and Portugal, led to the expulsion of Jews and Muslims. During the 17th century, England conquered Ireland, and declared 500,000 acres of land in the north open to settlement. The settlers mostly came from western Scotland, and totally displaced the original inhabitants. In order to remove the inhabitants, England offered paid bounties for Irish heads, which later required only scalps or ears. The Irish, under British colonial rule, were regarded as biologically inferior, and some English scientists in the mid-19th century proposed the theory that the Irish, and all people of color, descended from apes. These same scientists theorized that the English were descendants of man who was created by God in his own image. Thus, these two events merged to form the geopolitical and sociocultural makeup of the U.S. society.

When the European settlers began their conquest of North America, the indigenous population was estimated at 100M, declining over time by 90% to only 10M. Disease is often misconstrued as the culprit placing the blame on the lack of immunity the indigenous people had against white diseases. Disease did play a role as a result of nutritional decline and environmental disruptions that led to increased disease susceptibility.3 Disease developed only after traditional diets and lifestyles were compromised. Euro-settlers did not report diseases among the indigenous population until the mid-18th century after the introduction of sugar, white flour, coffee, tea, and alcohol weakened the health of the indigenous population. There were, however, other equally, or greater, causes of the population decline. These causes include military warfare between European and Indigenous nations, pitting one Indigenous nation against another, with European allies aiding one or both sides, overwork in mines, frequent outright butchery, malnutrition and starvation from the breakdown of Indigenous trade networks, subsistence food production and loss of land, loss of will to live or reproduce, deportation, enslavement, alcohol, and the disruption of Indigenous social structures.

The Euro-settlers in America had no professional military. They organized irregular units to brutally attack and destroy unarmed Indigenous women, children, and old people using unlimited violence in unrelenting attacks. The purpose was to destroy the will of the Indigenous nations, or their capacity to resist. Initial leaders of the colonialization of the British colonies in North America were military men, mercenaries who fought in the Christian Crusades against the Muslims. They were experienced in burning towns and fields, and killing the unarmed and vulnerable. They employed these same tactics in early Virginia and New England.

The first Jamestown settlers lacked a supply line and proved unable or unwilling to grow crops or hunt for their own sustenance. This is in contrast to the numerous movies, TV shows, romanticizing the Indigenous culture, and the deliberate, or simply ignorant publications promoting the harmonious relationship with the Pilgrims and Indigenous people. Instead, these Jamestown settlers forced the Powhatan Confederacy, comprising 30 groups, that lived in the area, to provide them with food. The military leader of the Jamestown settlers, John Smith, threatened to kill all the women and children if the Powhatan leaders did not feed and clothe the settlers, and provide them with land and labor.

The leader of the Powhatan confederacy, Wahunsonacock, offered assistance if the colonists came with love rather than with swords and guns. This, however, was to no avail, as John Smith initiated war against the Powhatans in August 1609, leading to continuous conflict ending in 1646, in which followed three decades of peace. There only remained a few Indigenous families inferring that total war and expulsion worked, and the Indigenous families were under the absolute dominance of the English. The English tolerated the Indigenous families within and near their settlements as long as they neither saw nor heard them.

As the Euro-settlers and Euro-colonial settlers expanded across Virginia, the Susquehannock people resisted resulting in war in 1676. The Virginia House of Burgesses organized a militia of 125 men to range through a particular cluster of Indigenous villages to overcome the resistance. Nathan Bacon wanted all the Indigenous people driven out of Virginia, and when the Colonial Governor, William Berkeley, refused, Nathan Bacon led a rebellion of thousands of Virginians that included African slaves, indentured servants, and various races to slaughter Indigenous farmers and take their land. Although not completely successful, it did result in Virginia law making greater distinction between indentured servants and slaves, and codified the permanent status of slavery for Africans.

The majority of fighting during the 15-year settler’s war for independence from England, especially in the Ohio Valley region, in which the Ohio River flows through Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky, and western New York, was directed against Indigenous resisters. Even though a professional U.S. Army was established in the 1810s, irregular warfare was the method of the U.S. conquest of the Ohio Valley and Mississippi Valley regions. Irregular warfare is characterized by extreme violence against civilians, and in the case of the Indigenous population, their complete annihilation. This extreme violence of unlimited warfare, in which there was no national unity in control, fueled race hatred. Consequently, the killing of Indigenous men, women, and children became a military tradition, and therefore, a part of a shared American identity, that of being a white American.

The superior technology and overwhelming number of settlers was not the catalyst for the birth of the United States. Instead, the chief cause was the settler-states’ willingness to eliminate whole civilizations of people in order to possess their land. This trend of extermination became common in the 20th century as the United States seized military and economic control of the world, capping 500 years of European colonialism and imperialism.4 Thomas Jefferson was its architect, and Andrew Jackson was the implementer of the final solution for the Indigenous peoples east of the Mississippi. In 1792, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson claimed that the Doctrine of Discovery was international law applicable to the newly established United States. In 1823, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the Doctrine of Discovery was also the law of the United States. Andrew Jackson, as its implementer, signed the Indian Removal Act, in which 60,000 Indigenous people, or those that actually survived, were forcibly relocated to Indian Territory between 1830-1850.

From the 15th century to the mid-20th century, most of the non-European world was colonized under the Doctrine of Discovery. Christian European monarchies promulgated to legitimize investigating, mapping, and claiming lands belonging to peoples outside Europe. It originated in a papal bull issued in 1455 that permitted the Portuguese monarchy to seize West Africa. Following Columbus’s infamous exploratory voyage in 1492, sponsored by the king and queen of the infant Spanish state, another papal bull extended similar permission to Spain. The Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494 clarified that only non-Christian lands fell under the Doctrine of Discovery.

**NOTES**

1. *Introduction*, Note 5. See Watson, *Buying the Americas from the Indians*, and Robertson, *Conquest by Law*. For a list and description of each papal bull, see *The Doctrine of Discovery*, <http://www.doctrineof> discovery.org.
2. *Culture of Conquest*, Note 7. West, *Contested Plains*, 300-301.
3. *The Link Between Nutrition and Native Immunity* by Sally Fallon Morell, as a published Dr. Mercola article, June 13, 2024. media.mercola.com.
4. *The Last of the Mohicans*, Note 3. See Anderson and Cayton, *Dominion of War*.

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**About The Author**

Robert (Bobby) Anderson has more Native American (Indigenous) DNA than any other world population (see below). Born and raised in a white culture, he does not claim any cultural affiliation with the three Indigenous U.S. recognized nations that make up his Indigenous DNA. As he grew older, and is often the case, he started asking questions about his background. He was always told his maternal grandfather was Indigenous, though what nation was never revealed, and now anyone with any knowledge, are deceased. His maternal grandfather, born in Inez, Kentucky, the traditional hunting grounds of the Shawnee, passed away when Bobby was 5 years old, and he has zero remembrance of his grandfather, as his grandmother picked up her 9 children, and moved to Columbus, Ohio, leaving behind her husband, when his mother-to-be was still a child. There is a picture of Bobby sitting on his grandfather’s lap, and it is quite obvious that his grandfather has all the facial characteristics of an indigenous people.

Perhaps it was meant to be, but Ed McGaa, an Oglala Sioux, was the catalyst for Bobby setting up Native Buffalo Spirit, and eventually exploring his Indigenous roots. This led to a DNA test with DNA Consultants, the only DNA company in the world that has a Native American database. The results indicate that, for illustrative purposes only, since percentages are not provided by the company, that Bobby has about 48% Shawnee DNA, 2.5% Chippewa, and .5% Mdewakanton Sioux. This puts him over 50% Indigenous or Native American. Furthermore, he has equal Maya DNA as he does Shawnee (the rest is .99% European, and .01% Filipino). The United States recognizes over 500 Indigenous nations as Native American within the boundaries of the United States, but Maya, Inca, and Aztec are Native Americans as they are descendants of the people living in the Americas (North, Central, and South) before 1492, but the United States lumps them as Hispanic. The United States does not recognize the Indigenous people of its territories, such as the Tainos of Puerto Rico. Consequently, when adding Maya to the 3 Indigenous nations recognized by the United States, Bobby has about 96% Indigenous DNA.

Based on his DNA composition, Bobby is identifying as basically half Shawnee, half Maya. Most Indigenous people take no issue with this, but there are some who think that a person must be 100%, or raised in the culture, to claim Native American. That presents a huge problem, as every Indigenous nation has its own requirements for tribal enrollment, with Cherokee having the most lenient membership requirement, and thus, there is no universal reconciliation for those who are recognized with a very small blood line compared to those who have a very high blood line. Bobby knows a lot of Cherokee proud to be Cherokee, but grew up the same as him, in a white culture. The point is it does not matter. They have the blood line, and are thus, Native American. In conclusion, An Indigenous Plains Indian stated to Bobby: “So you’re Native American. It doesn’t mean anything”. Well, it does mean something to Bobby. It gives him an identity, and a reason to explore, particularly, Shawnee history and culture.

*If your world does not include enough access to different people, and their world does not provide access to you, you are speaking from ignorance.*

John Stewart

Hi Robert,

Wow! You got Shawnee enrolled at #2! That is amazing! We seldom see anyone that matches any enrolled population that high. And you have a lot of other Native matches as well. Much more than most get.

We cannot give you a percentage, but your Shawnee is at least as strong as your NA Choles (of Mayan stock) since they are ranking #1 & #2.

How our tests work: a scientist tests a reference population for the unique genetic markers for that population from any other in  a research study ( the N reference # which might take 40 or 4,000 people before it is discovered), so this research accounts for admixture. They publish this information in forensic databases we match your unique genetic profile to. We are analyzing some 100 ancestral lines all at once ( like mother's father's mother), so we can't really tell you exactly where you got a match from or the exact strength of any match as we do not know if it was from your ggg grandmother or your great grandfather. All we can you tell you is that these are very strong matches out of some 550 world pops you could have matched and means you have ancestors from these tribes and tribal regions within the last few generations.

To discover where you got a match from, I would suggest, if available, having a parent take the same test. If your mother does not get a match to Shawnee, for instance, you got it from your father ( etc. with your other matches).

You can also upgrade and discover more with the mid-upgrade to the NA DNA Plus ( on sale through the 17th for $119 or when not on sale you can use a forever 10% discount code dnaplus for $134.10 ).

<https://dnaconsultants.com/product/our-tests/mid-upgrade/>

You might also consider doing professional genealogy ( perhaps to locate your most recent Shawnee ancestor). If interested, please contact Sue at [suel@dnaconsultants.com](mailto:suel@dnaconsultants.com) before ordering.

<https://dnaconsultants.com/?s=genealogy+services>

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