

Outgrowing the United States Theology of Progress & [Exceptionalism](#)

The History of the United States is a History of Settler Colonialism Driven by Genocide and Land Theft

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An 1872 painting by John Gast called “American Progress” shows a white woman floating across the plains of the United States. The female figure is a depiction of Columbia. She wears the Star of Empire on her forehead, carries a School Book under her right arm, and is the herald of [techno-logic perceptual reality](#), driving Indigenous people, bison, and other animals out of the picture and into oblivion. Historian [Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz](#), writing in [An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States](#) (Beacon Press, 2014), describes the significance of the Columbia persona:

The Columbus myth suggests that from US independence onward, colonial settlers saw themselves as part of a world system of colonization. “Columbia,” the poetic, Latinate name used in reference to the United States from its founding throughout the nineteenth century, was based on the name of Christopher Columbus. The “Land of Columbus” was—and still is—represented by the image of a woman in sculptures and paintings, by institutions such as Columbia University, and by countless place names, including that of the national capital, the District of Columbia.

Within the theology of Western civilization’s industrial progress—and belief in its intrinsic goodness that indoctrinated generations of Europeans—rests the justification for the wanton

destruction of the great civilizations existent in the Western Hemisphere long before the arrival of Columbus. Throughout her book, Dunbar-Ortiz explores the driving process of settler colonialism that was and continues to be the global foundation of this destruction and how “To learn about this history is both a necessity and responsibility to the ancestors and descendants of all parties.” From the Introduction:

Under the crust of that portion of Earth called the United States of America—“from California ... to the Gulf Stream waters”—are interred the bones, villages, fields, and sacred objects of American Indians. They cry out for their stories to be heard through their descendants who carry the memories of how the country was founded and how it came to be as it is today.

It should not have happened that the great civilizations of the Western Hemisphere, the very *evidence* of the Western Hemisphere, were wantonly destroyed, the gradual progress of humanity interrupted and set upon a path of greed and destruction. Choices were made that forged that path toward destruction of life itself . . . To learn and know this history is both a necessity and a responsibility to the ancestors and descendants of all parties.

What historian David Chang has written about the land that became Oklahoma applies to the whole United States: “Nation, race, and class converged in land.” Everything in US history is about the land—who oversaw and cultivated it, fished its waters, maintained its wildlife; who invaded and stole it; how it became a commodity (“real estate”) broken into pieces to be bought and sold on the market.

US policies and actions related to Indigenous peoples, though often termed “racist” or “discriminatory,” are rarely depicted as what they are: classic cases of imperialism and a particular form of colonialism—settler colonialism. As anthropologist Patrick Wolfe writes, “The question of genocide is never far from discussions of settler colonialism. Land is life—or, at least, land is necessary for life.”

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. . . .

Writing US history from an Indigenous peoples’ perspective requires rethinking the consensual national narrative. That narrative is wrong or deficient, not in its facts, dates, or details but rather in its essence. Inherent in the myth we’ve been taught is an embrace of settler colonialism and genocide. The myth persists, not for a lack of free speech or poverty of information but rather for an absence of motivation to ask questions that challenge the core of the scripted narrative of the origin story. How might acknowledging the reality of US history work to transform society? That is the central question this book pursues.

The above excerpts are reprinted with permission from [An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States](#) by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Beacon Press, 2014, pages 1-2 and 4.

It is of critical necessity to understand how cultivated and complex were the Nations of Indigenous Peoples across the North American continent long before the arrival of Europeans. Francis Jennings, in his 1976 historical account of [The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest](#) (New York: W.W.Norton), underlines what he explains as the myth that “America was virgin land, or wilderness, inhabited by nonpeople called savages”:

European explorers and invaders discovered an inhabited land. Had it been pristine wilderness then, it would possibly be so still today, for neither the technology nor the social organization of

Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries had the capacity to maintain, of its own resources, outpost colonies thousands of miles from home. Incapable of conquering true wilderness, the Europeans were highly competent in the skill of conquering other people, and that is what they did. They did not settle a virgin land. They invaded and displaced a resident population. This is so simple a fact that it seems self evident. (p. 15)

In the above, Dunbar-Ortiz quotes Patrick Wolfe when referencing the specific form of colonialism that defines the history and nature of the United States. The citation for the quote is, Wolfe, Patrick. "[Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native](#)." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 45 (December 2006): 387-409, p. 387. In this article Wolfe describes the dynamics of settler colonialism that cast civilizations of human beings living on the North American continent for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans not as owners of the land but as *Indians*.

... Indigenous North Americans were not killed, driven away, romanticized, assimilated, fenced in, bred White, and otherwise eliminated as the original owners of the land but as *Indians*. Roger Smith has missed this point in seeking to distinguish between victims murdered for where they are and victims murdered for who they are.^[4] So far as Indigenous people are concerned, where they are is who they are, and not only by their own reckoning. As Deborah Bird Rose has pointed out, to get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home.^[5] Whatever settlers may say—and they generally have a lot to say—the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element.

The logic of elimination not only refers to the summary liquidation of Indigenous people, though it includes that. In common with genocide as Raphaël Lemkin characterized it,^[6] settler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions. Negatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively, it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base—as I put it, settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event.^[7] In its positive aspect, elimination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence. The positive outcomes of the logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism.

4. Roger W. Smith, "Human destructiveness and politics: the twentieth century as an age of genocide," in Isidor Wallimann and Michael N. Dobkowski, eds, [Genocide and the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death](#) (New York: Greenwood Press. 1987), pp 21-39, at p 31.

5. Rose, [Hidden Histories: Black Stories from Victoria River Downs, Humbert River and Wave Hill Stations](#) (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press 1991), p 46.

6. "[O]ne, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor. This imposition, in turn, may be made upon the oppressed population which is allowed to remain, or upon the territory alone, after removal of the population and colonization of the area by the oppressor's own nationals." Raphaël Lemkin, [Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress](#) (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1944), p 79.

7. Wolfe, [Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology](#) (London: Cassell 1999), p 2; "Nation and miscegenation: discursive continuity in the post-Mabo era," *Social Analysis*, Vol 36, 1994, p 96.

Speaking about the book in December 2014, Dunbar-Ortiz describes connections between the centuries-long genocidal program of the settler-colonialist regimen and the US military today. It is critical to understand the continuity between the unrelenting frontier wars that began in the early seventeenth century and which moved overseas after the Wounded Knee Massacre in December 1890, symbolizing the end of Indigenous armed resistance in the continental US.

The next chapter is called "Bloody Footprints" and it's about how the U.S. Army was formed in

the wars against native people east of the Mississippi. This is a quote from a [military historian, John Grenier](#), in a book called *The First Way of War*:

For the first 200 years of our military heritage, then, Americans depended on arts of war that contemporary professional soldiers supposedly abhorred: razing and destroying enemy villages and fields; killing enemy women and children; raiding settlements for captives; intimidating and brutalizing enemy non-combatants; and assassinating enemy leaders. . . . In the frontier wars between 1607 and 1814, Americans forged two elements—unlimited war and irregular war—into their first way of war. [[The First Way of War, American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814](#), John Grenier, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 5, 10]

I make throughout the book, connections between the U.S. military today and its foundation in these unrelenting wars that actually went up through 1890 and then moved overseas to the Philippines and the Caribbean with the same generals in the Philippines who had been fighting the Sioux and the Cheyenne in the Northern Plains. And interestingly enough, also, who were called in (one division of them) to fight striking workers in Chicago. So I think there [are] very interesting interconnections with the use of the military in the United States that we don't always put together.

The Second Amendment and the irregular warfare, these were mostly settler militias who could organize themselves. Andrew Jackson started that way as the head of the Tennessee Militia. [For] his militia's war against the Muskogee Creeks, driving them out of Georgia, he was made a Major General in the U.S. Army. So it was a career builder as well to start a militia. But these were also used, especially after U.S. independence, as slave patrols, these militias, self-appointed militias. These militias would form to police – free – they weren't paid to do it – and we still see the ghosts of this performing, actually today.

Recording of Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz at Green Apple Books in San Francisco on 4 December 2014. Produced by [Time of Useful Consciousness Radio](#) in Parts [One](#) and [Two](#).

Detailing the ways in which the conquest of lands that are today called the United States came to be claimed and owned by European men, reveal the processes and characteristics of settler colonialism. This specific brand of colonial usurpation is founded upon institutionalizing extravagant violence through unlimited war and irregular war. Extreme violence was carried out by Anglo settlers against civilians to cause the utter annihilation of the indigenous population. The goal of this extermination was to enable the settlers's total freedom to acquire land and wealth.

To say that the United States is a colonialist settler-state is not to make an accusation but rather to face historical reality. (p. 7)

Settler colonialism, as 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 processes. Euro-American colonialism ... had from its beginnings a genocidal tendency. (p. 8)

In the beginning, Anglo settlers organized irregular units to brutally attack and destroy unarmed indigenous women, children, and old people using unlimited violence in unrelenting attacks. During nearly two centuries of British colonization, generations of settlers, mostly farmers, gained experience as “Indian fighters” outside any organized military institution. Anglo-French conflict may appear to have been the dominant factor of European colonization in North America during the eighteenth century, but while large regular armies fought over geopolitical goals in Europe, Anglo settlers in North America waged deadly irregular warfare against the indigenous communities....

The chief characteristic of irregular warfare is that of the extreme violence against civilians, in this case the tendency to seek the utter annihilation of the indigenous population. “In cases where a rough balance of power existed,” observes historian John Grenier, “and the Indians even appeared dominant—as was the situation in virtually every frontier war until the first decade of the nineteenth century—[settler] Americans were quick to turn to extravagant violence.”

Many historians who acknowledge the exceptional one-sided colonial violence attribute it to racism. Grenier argues that rather than racism leading to violence, the reverse occurred: the out-of-control momentum of extreme violence of unlimited warfare fueled race hatred. “Successive generations of Americans, both soldiers and civilians, made the killing of Indian men, women, and children a defining element of their first military tradition and thereby part of a shared American identity. Indeed, only after seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Americans made the first way of war a key to being a white American could later generations of ‘Indian haters,’ men like Andrew Jackson, turn the Indian wars into race wars.” By then, the indigenous peoples’ villages, farmlands, towns, and entire nations formed the only barrier to the settlers’ total freedom to acquire land and wealth. Settler colonialists again chose their own means of conquest. Such fighters are often viewed as courageous heroes, but killing the unarmed women, children, and old people and burning homes and fields involved neither courage nor sacrifice. (p. 58-9)

US history, as well as inherited indigenous trauma, cannot be understood without dealing with the genocide that the United States committed against indigenous peoples. From the colonial period through the founding of the United States and continuing in the twenty-first century, this has entailed torture, terror, sexual abuse, massacres, systematic military occupations, removals of indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories, and [removals of indigenous children to military-like boarding schools](#). The absence of even the slightest note of regret or tragedy in the annual celebration of the US independence betrays a deep disconnect in the consciousness of US Americans. (p. 9)

From the [Introduction and Chapter 4, Bloody Footprints](#), pp. 7, 8, 58-9 (and [also for pages 9 and 59](#)), of [An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States](#).
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Grenier’s *First Way of War* is one of more than 250 works cited in *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*. At the end of Chapter Ten, “Ghost Dance Prophecy,” Dunbar-Ortiz cites a passage of Grenier’s book in the context of the five major US wars conducted since WWII, those of Korea, Vietnam, Iraq in 1991 and 2003, and Afghanistan, within the historical continuity of the massacres in Jamestown, the Ohio Valley, and Wounded Knee, and how “a red thread of blood connects the first white settlement in North America with today and the future”:

U.S. people are taught that their military culture does not approve of or encourage targeting and killing civilians and know little or nothing about the nearly three centuries of warfare—before

and after the founding of the U.S.—that reduced the Indigenous peoples of the continent to a few reservations by burning their towns and fields and killing civilians, driving the refugees out—step by step—across the continent.... [V]iolence directed systematically against non-combatants through irregular means, from the start, has been a central part of Americans' way of war. (*The First Way of War*, pp. 223-24)

Dunbar-Ortiz references Grenier's *First Way of War* to a significant extent. Many US Americans today believe the purpose of the Second Amendment was to ensure people have the right to bear arms. However the point is made that starting in the early 1600s the founding of the United States and its way of life was dependent on the dispossession, killing, and counterinsurgency warfare practiced by colonial settlers and militias (and in time commissioned rangers and the Army) against the hundreds of nations and thousands of communities of people living on this land long, long, long before the arrival of Europeans. As she relates [in a radio interview](#) on *The Real News*, October 28, 1024:

DUNBAR-ORTIZ: [John Grenier is] a military historian. He's actually a professor of military history at the Air Force College. I couldn't believe they allow their people to write these things. But that book came out just in time for me. I knew all this stuff, but it's very small and dense and well-researched. And it has that perspective. And it was the first time I had those arguments where it's also connected up with the present. His whole point is that what we see in Afghanistan and Iraq, what we saw in Vietnam, what we saw in all of these U.S. interventions is a playing out again of this American way of war that was forged before the United States was even a state, with the colonial settlers. Being a settler state, it was the colonial militias. That's why they were so adamant about putting the Second Amendment in. Those colonial militias were to kill Indians.

STEINER: Let me stop you for a minute, because this is a really important piece. And we've talked about it on my program a number of times, the Second Amendment, because we look at the Second Amendment often as coming from the slaveholder South. They could have state militias to ensure [crosstalk] But what you're adding here to this is an element that affected native people and why they had militias, which I think is critical to the Second Amendment.

DUNBAR-ORTIZ: You know, of course, they were used in the whole colonial era and the early republic and invented for Native Americans. But it wasn't until the really closed plantation, the cotton kingdom, that they started patrolling. They had—all white men were basically police over all African-Americans. So they didn't necessarily have to have, until the cotton kingdom, when freedom was in the air, the abolitionist movement and people were leaving and marooning in the peripheries of the plantations, that they really started developing formal militias to guard the peripheries of the plantations. But that practice was already practiced for two centuries with native communities. And by that time they had removed all the native people from the southeast, to Oklahoma, to Indian territory, brutal forced removal, to develop the plantation, expand the plantation system into Mississippi and Alabama.

This formative process of terrorizing civilians—non-combatants, women and children and elders—is deeply rooted in what became the United States. At the end of Chapter 4, “Bloody Footprints,” General George Washington is quoted instructing Major General John Sullivan to take preemptory action against the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) in the Anglo separatists war with Britain. Sullivan was advised “to lay waste all the settlements around...that the country may not be merely *overrun* but *destroyed*.... [Y]ou will not by any means, listen to any overture of peace before the total ruin of their settlements is effected.... Our future security will be in their inability to injure us...and in the terror with which the severity of the chastisement they receive will inspire them.” Sullivan wrote back, “The Indians shall see that there is malice enough in our hearts to destroy everything that contributes to their support.” [Washington and Sullivan quoted in Drinnon, Richard. [Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building](#). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980, p. 331.]

This sentiment of the future first President of the United States, that “our future security will be in their inability to injure us” expresses a mindset wherein only the total ruin of Native nations will produce the requisite security for the settler colonists. What does it say about the psychological makeup and consciousness of George Washington that he framed the intention to lay waste to the nations of people called the Haudenosaunee by directing a severity of terror against them? Washington’s clear acknowledgment that terror is the most effective weapon to extirpate people who simply were in the way by virtue of living on land the settlers wanted to steal indicates how such a way of war and a way of life caused settler colonialism to spread across the continent and then across the planet.

There is a vast psychological dimension to the shadow side of settler colonialism. A staggering degree of psychological projection was employed by generations of Anglo settlers in order to commit the unspeakable level of violent, blood-drenched murder of Indigenous peoples that spanned centuries. Under the heading of “Projection, Psychology” *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines “Defense mechanism” as “3. *Projection is a form of defense in which unwanted feelings are displaced onto another person, where they then appear as a threat from the external world. A common form of projection occurs when an individual, threatened by his own angry feelings, accuses another of harbouring hostile thoughts.*”

Robert Williams is an author, legal scholar, and member of the Lumbee Indian Nation. In his 2012 book, [Savage Anxieties: The Invention of Western Civilization](#) he discusses the anxiety-producing imagery of the “savage” from the time of Greek colonizers to its influences today. Anglo settlers projected their own inner savagery outside themselves onto Indigenous people whose way of life was perceived to be so different that they could be branded as “other” and then destroyed. One instance of the savagery practiced by Anglo settlers was in the way scalp hunting came to be practiced. The roots of scalp hunting pre-date the Settler Colonialism project in North America.

During the early 1600s the English conquered Northern Ireland, and declared a half-million acres of land open to settlement; the settlers who contracted with the devil of early colonialism came mostly from western Scotland. England had previously conquered Wales and southern and eastern Ireland, but had never previously attempted on such a scale to remove the indigenous population and “plant” settlers. The English policy of exterminating Indians in North America was foreshadowed by this English colonization of Northern Ireland. The ancient Irish social system was systematically attacked, traditional songs and music forbidden, whole clans exterminated and the remainder brutalized. A “wild Irish” reservation was even attempted. The planted settlers were Calvinist Protestants, assured by their divines that they had been chosen by God for salvation (and title to the lands of Ulster). The native (and Papist) Irish were definitely not destined for salvation, but rather the reverse, both in the present and hereafter.

The “plantation” of Ulster followed centuries of intermittent warfare in Ireland, and was as much the culmination of a process as a departure. In the sixteenth century, the official in charge of the Irish province of Munster, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, ordered that:

The heddes of all those (of what sort soever thei were) which were killed in the daie, should be cutte off from their bodies and brought to the place where he incamped at night, and should there bee laied on the ground by eche side of the waie ledyng into his owne tente so that none could come into his tente for any cause but commonly he muste passe through a lane of heddes which he used ad terrorem...[It brought] greate terrour to the people when thei sawe the heddes of their dedde fathers, brothers, children, kindsfolke, and freinds. [Francis Jennings, [The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest](#) (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), 168.]

Bounties were paid for the Irish heads brought in and later only the scalp or ears were required. A century later, in North America, Indian heads and scalps were brought in for bounty in the same manner. Native Americans picked up the practice from the colonizers. The first English colonial settlement in North America had been planted in Newfoundland in the summer of 1583, by Sir Humphrey Gilbert.

From "[The Grid of History: Cowboys and Indians](#), Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Monthly Review*, 2003, Volume 55, Issue 03 (July-August).
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In Chapter 4 Dunbar-Ortiz explains more about how scalp hunting became routine amongst Anglo settlers starting in the mid 1670s and cites John Grenier making the point that with settler authorities offering bounties for scalps, "they established the large-scale privatization of war within American frontier communities." Understanding the savagery visited upon the nations and communities of Indigenous peoples at the hands of Europeans bent on taking their lands by extirpating them provides a more holistic understanding of how the commonplace violence expressed today throughout the United States has its historical roots in the founding centuries of this settler colonialist state.

Indigenous people continued to resist by burning settlements and killing and capturing settlers. As an incentive to recruit fighters, colonial authorities introduced a program of scalp hunting that became a permanent and long-lasting element of settler warfare against Indigenous nations. [Grenier, [First Way of War](#), pp. 29-34, 36-37, 39.] During the Pequot War, Connecticut and Massachusetts colonial officials had offered bounties initially for the heads of murdered Indigenous people and later for only their scalps, which were more portable in large numbers. But scalp hunting became routine only in the mid-1670's, following an incident on the northern frontier of the Massachusetts colony. The practice began in earnest in 1697 when settler Hannah Dustin, having murdered ten of her Abenaki captors in a nighttime escape, presented their ten scalps to the Massachusetts General Assembly and was rewarded with bounties for two men, two women, and six children. [Taylor, Alan. [American Colonies: The Settling of North America](#). New York: Viking, 2001, p. 290.]

Dustin soon became a folk hero among New England settlers. Scalp hunting became a lucrative commercial practice. The settler authorities had hit upon a way to encourage settlers to take off on their own or with a few others to gather scalps, at random, for the reward money. "In the process," John Grenier points out, "they established the large-scale privatization of war within American frontier communities." [Grenier, [First Way of War](#), pp. 39-41.] Although the colonial government in time raised the bounty for adult male scalps, lowered that for adult females, and eliminated that for Indigenous children under ten, the age and gender of victims were not easily distinguished by their scalps nor checked carefully. What is more, the scalp hunter could take the children captive and sell them into slavery. These practices erased any remaining distinction between Indigenous combatants and noncombatants and introduced a market for Indigenous slaves. Bounties for Indigenous scalps were honored even in absence of war. Scalps and Indigenous children became means of exchange, currency, and this development may even have created a black market. Scalp hunting was not only a profitable privatized enterprise but also a means to eradicate or subjugate the Indigenous population of the Anglo-American Atlantic seaboard. [ibid. pp 41-43.] The settlers gave a name to the mutilated and bloody corpses they left in the wake of scalp-hunts: redskins.

This way of war, forged in the first century of colonization—destroying Indigenous villages and fields, killing civilians, ranging and scalp hunting—became the basis for the wars against the Indigenous across the continent into the late nineteenth century. [ibid. p 52.]

From [Chapter 4, Bloody Footprints](#), pp. 64-5, of [An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#).

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It follows that the commonplace violent nature of today's culture in the United States would have as its roots, generations of US Americans who were raised within a tradition of killing Indian men, women, and children as part of the genesis of a shared American identity as well as the shared experience of engendering profitable privatized enterprises resulting from such extravagant violence.

Providing an integrated understanding of the origin of the term "redskins" is one instance of the quality of illumination and expanding consciousness Dunbar-Ortiz provides throughout *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Such understanding is profoundly liberating to all who are concerned about the current state of humanity and are seeking constructive paths to more fully acknowledge the reality of US history as a means towards transforming society.

A primary rationalization conjured up to steal the land of human beings outside Europe was the "Doctrine of Discovery," based on a series of late-fifteenth century papal bulls. The driving justification of what came to be enshrined in the credo of Manifest Destiny had its antecedent in the Doctrine of Discovery. As Dunbar-Ortiz writes:

In 1801, President Jefferson aptly described the new settler-state's intentions for horizontal and vertical continental expansion, stating: "However our present interests may restrain us within our own limits, it is impossible not to look forward to distant times, when our rapid multiplication will expand itself beyond those limits and cover the whole northern, if not the southern continent, with a people speaking the same language, governed in similar form by similar laws." This vision of manifest destiny found form a few years later in the Monroe Doctrine, signaling the intention of annexing or dominating former Spanish colonial territories in the Americas and the Pacific, which would be put into practice during the rest of the century.

Origin narratives form the vital core of a people's unifying identity and of the values that guide them. In the United States, the founding and development of the Anglo-American settler-state involves a narrative about Puritan settlers who had a covenant with God to take the land. That part of the origin story is supported and reinforced by the Columbus myth and the "Doctrine of Discovery." According to a series of late-fifteenth-century papal bulls, European nations acquired title to the lands they "discovered" and the Indigenous inhabitants lost their natural right to that land after Europeans arrived and claimed it. [See Watson, Blake. [Buying America from the Indians: Johnson v. McIntosh](#) and the History of Native Land Rights. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012; and Robertson, Lindsey G. [Conquest by Law: How the Discovery of America Dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of Their Lands](#). New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. For a list and description of [each papal bull](#), see [The Doctrine of Discovery](#).] As law professor Robert A. Williams observes about the Doctrine of Discovery:

Responding to the requirements of a paradoxical age of Renaissance and Inquisition, the West's first modern discourses of conquest articulated a vision of all humankind united under a rule of law discoverable solely by human reason. Unfortunately for the American Indian, the West's first tentative steps towards this noble vision of a Law of Nations contained a mandate for Europe's subjugation of all peoples whose radical divergence from European-derived norms of right conduct signified their need for conquest and remediation. [Williams, Robert. [The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest](#). New York Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 59.]

From the [Introduction](#), pp. 3-4, [An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#).
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The Doctrine of Discovery continues to be cited in US Supreme Court rulings as an established principle of US law. In response to demands from Indigenous peoples, a number of religious institutions—including the Unitarian Universalist and Episcopal Churches as well as the World Council of Churches—have declared opposition to the Doctrine of Discovery.

In its yearly meeting in 2012, the New York Society of Friends (aka Quakers) [produced a document](#) repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery asserting that, “We cannot accept that the Doctrine of Discovery was ever a true authority for the forced takings of lands and the enslavement or extermination of peoples.” An accompanying fact sheet, “[What is the Doctrine of Discovery? Why Should It Be Repudiated?](#),” states unambiguously: “Elements of the Doctrine have rationalized heinous behaviors against Indigenous peoples through the centuries.” Among its many useful citations and references, the document underscores examples of United States rationalizations regarding claims of sovereignty over Native nations including these US Supreme Court cases:

1823: [*JOHNSON & GRAHAM'S LESSEE v. M'INTOSH*](#) (21 U.S. 543) made “discovery doctrine” explicit in US law. The court denied individuals permission to buy land from American Indian tribes [nations]. Under the doctrine, the court assumed only a sovereign United States could acquire the land, should the Indians choose to sell. In this decision, Indians were given a limited right of “occupancy” without full title to their own land, and could thus lose their land if they could not prove continuous occupancy. The doctrine was reframed in secular terms, in which the criterion for sovereignty became “cultivators of land” instead of “Christians.”

1995: [*TEE-HIT-TON INDIANS v. UNITED STATES*](#) (348 U.S. 272) relied on the doctrine of discovery. The court ruled that because “Tee-Hit-Tons were in a hunting and fishing stage of civilization” they had only a limited right of occupancy, and therefore the US was not required to reimburse the Tee-Hit-Ton for timber harvested from their land.

2005: [*CITY OF SHERRILL V. ONEIDA INDIAN NATION OF N.Y.*](#) (544 U.S. 197) relied on doctrine of discovery to limit the Oneida Nation’s sovereignty. The Oneidas had documented their sovereignty through US treaties. The court ruled that due to an interval of nonoccupancy, land in question was not sovereign Oneida territory.

Dunbar-Ortiz also cites the [2012 Responsive Resolution](#) on the Doctrine of Discovery by the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) as being a “particularly powerful and an excellent model.”

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the delegates of the 2012 General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association, repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery as a relic of colonialism, feudalism, and religious, cultural, and racial biases having no place in the modern day treatment of indigenous peoples; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the Unitarian Universalist Association and its member congregations to review the historical theologies, policies, and programs of Unitarianism, Universalism, and Unitarian Universalism to expose the historical reality and impact of the Doctrine of Discovery and eliminate its presence in the contemporary policies, programs, theologies, and structures of Unitarian Universalism; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the Unitarian Universalist Association to invite indigenous partners to a process of Honor and Healing (often called Truth and Reconciliation), and if one or more partners agree, to undergo such a process about Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist complicity in the structures and policies that oppress indigenous peoples and the earth; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the leadership of the Unitarian Universalist Association to make a clear and concise statement repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery and its current use in U.S. laws and regulations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage other religious bodies to reject the use of the Doctrine of Discovery to dominate indigenous peoples, and that the UUA collaborate with these groups to propose a specific Congressional Resolution to repudiate this doctrine; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that we call upon the United States to fully implement the standards of the [U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) in the U.S. law and policy without qualifications.

An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States provides examples of how US exceptionalism and rationalizations for how it was necessary to steal the land from its original inhabitants as well as destroy them and their societies and cultures, has not only been extolled by government officials, military authorities, entrepreneurs, and historians, but is also evident in US poets and writers.

“[I]t is the manifest destiny of the English race to occupy this whole continent and to display there that practical understanding in matters of government and colonization which no other race has given such proof of possessing since the Romans.”

—James Russell Lowell, 1859,
quoted in Robert Johannsen, [To The Halls of the Montezumas:
The Mexican War in the American Imagination](#),
Oxford University Press: 1985, p. 218.

“The nigger, like the Injun, will be eliminated: it is the law of the races, history.... A superior grade of rats come and then all the minor rats are cleared out.”

—Walt Whitman, 1846,
quoted in David S. Reynolds, [John Brown, Abolitionist:
The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War,
and Seeded Civil Rights](#), Vintage Books: 2006, p. 449.

“The Pioneer has before declared that our only safety depends upon the total extirmination [sic] of the Indians. Having wronged them for centuries we had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up by one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth.”

—Frank L. Baum, author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*,
3 Jan 1891, writing in the [Saturday Pioneer](#),
a weekly newspaper in Aberdeen, S.D.

“Ever since Daniel Boone took his first excursion over Cumberland Gap, Americans have been wanderers.... With a continent to take over and Manifest Destiny to goad us, we could not have avoided being footloose. The initial act of emigration from Europe, an act of extreme, deliberate disaffiliation, was the beginning of a national habit.

“It should not be denied, either, that being footloose has always exhilarated us. It is associated in our minds with escape from history and oppression and law and irksome obligations, with absolute freedom, and the road has always led west. Our folk heroes and our archetypal literary figures accurately reflect that side of us. Leatherstocking, Huckleberry Finn, the narrator of *Moby Dick*, call are orphans and wanderers; any of them could say, ‘Call me Ishmael.’ The Lone Ranger has no dwelling place except in the saddle.”

—Walter Stegner, 1992,
*Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs:
Living and Writing in the West*,
New York: Random House, 1992, pp. 71-72.

At the beginning of Chapter Six, “The Last of the Mohicans and Andrew Jackson’s White Republic,”

Dunbar-Ortiz quotes Prussian Otto von Bismarck, founder and first chancellor (1871-90) of the German empire in observing, “The colonization of North America has been the decisive fact of the modern world.” From its outset, possession of the land has been the driving force and overriding imperative of settler colonialism.

The essential history of the United States is never truly confronted by the mainstream culture. How could it be? Any explication of the Unspeakable in this context must integrate and acknowledge “the fact that the very existence of the country is a result of the looting of an entire continent and its resources” (p. 5) as well as “that the great civilizations of the Western Hemisphere, the very *evidence* of the Western Hemisphere, were wantonly destroyed, the gradual progress of humanity interrupted and set upon a path of greed and destruction.” (p. 1) Understanding the factual history of the theft of land from sea to shining sea encapsulates the creation and existence of the United States.

The particular mode of U.S. colonization, or expansion of its capitalist system, required the taking of Indian lands, which were flooded with European and Anglo-American settlers. From that base, states and institutions were formed. The [Land Ordinance of 1785](#) propagated a national land system and was the basis for its implementation. The [Northwest Ordinance of 1787](#), albeit guaranteeing Indian occupancy and title, set forth a plan for colonization establishing an evolutionary procedure for the creation of states in the order of military occupation, territorial status, and finally statehood. Statehood would be achieved when the count of settlers outnumbered the Indigenous population, which in most cases required forced removal of the Indigenous inhabitants.

The United States created a unique land system among colonial powers. In this system, land became the most important exchange commodity for the primitive accumulation of capital and building of the national treasury. In order to understand the apparently irrational policy of the U.S. government toward the Indians, the centrality of land sales in building the economic base of the U.S. capitalist system must be the frame of reference.

From the [Introduction](#), [Roots of Resistance: A History of Land Tenure in New Mexico](#), by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2007)
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In the book’s Conclusion, “The Future of the United States,” are two sections demonstrating the historical arc, as John Grenier describes ([above](#)), of how “violence directed systematically against non-combatants through irregular means, from the start, has been a central part of Americans’ way of war.” The first, headlined “The Return of Legalized Torture,” describes how assistant US attorney general John Yoo employed the historical precedent of the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1873 opinion in *Modoc Indian Prisoners* as part of the justification in 2003 for creating the never before known in the annals of Western warfare designation of “unlawful combatants”.

The Return of Legalized Torture

Bodies—tortured bodies, sexually violated bodies, imprisoned bodies, dead bodies—arose as a primary topic in the first years of the George W. Bush administration following the September 2001 attacks with a war of revenge against Afghanistan and the overthrow of the government of Iraq. Afghans resisting U.S. forces and others who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time were taken into custody, and most of them were sent to a hastily constructed prison facility on the U.S. military base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, on land the United States appropriated in its 1898 war against Cuba. Rather than bestowing the status of prisoner of war on

the detainees, which would have given them certain rights under the Geneva Conventions, they were designated as “unlawful combatants,” a status previously unknown in the annals of Western warfare. As such, the detainees were subjected to torture by U.S. interrogators and shamelessly monitored by civilian psychologists and medical personnel.

In response to questions and condemnations from around the globe, a University of California international law professor, John C. Yoo, on leave to serve as assistant U.S. attorney general in the Justice Department’s Office of Legal Counsel, penned in March 2003 what became the infamous “[Torture Memo](#).” Not much was made at the time of one of the precedents Yoo used to defend the designation “unlawful combatant,” the US Supreme Court’s 1873 opinion in *Modoc Indian Prisoners*.

In 1872, a group of Modoc men led by Kintpuash, also known as Captain Jack, attempted to return to their own country in Northern California after the U.S. Army had rounded them up and forced them to share a reservation in Oregon. The insurgent group of fifty-three was surrounded by U.S. troops and Oregon militiamen and forced to take refuge in the barren and rugged lava beds around Mount Lassen, a dormant volcano, a part of their ancestral homeland that they knew every inch of. More than a thousand troops commanded by General Edward R. S. Canby, a former Civil War general, attempted to capture the resisters, but had no success as the Modocs engaged in effective guerrilla warfare. Before the Civil War, Canby had built his military career fighting in the Second Seminole War and later in the invasion of Mexico. Posted to Utah on the eve of the Civil War, he had led attacks against the Navajos, and then began his Civil War service in New Mexico. Therefore, Canby was a seasoned Indian killer. In a negotiating meeting between the general and Kintpuash, the Modoc leader killed the general and the other commissioners when they would allow only for surrender. In response, the United States sent another former Civil War general in with more than a thousand additional soldiers as reinforcements, and in April 1873 these troops attacked the Modoc stronghold, this time forcing the Indigenous fighters to flee. After four months of fighting that cost the United States almost \$500,000—equal to nearly \$10 million currently—and the lives of more than four hundred of its soldiers and a general, the nationwide backlash against the Modocs was vengeful. Kintpuash and several other captured Modocs were imprisoned and then hanged at Alcatraz, and the Modoc families were scattered and incarcerated on reservations. Kintpuash’s corpse was embalmed and exhibited at circuses around the country. The commander of the army’s Pacific Military Division at the time, Lieutenant General John M. Schofield, wrote of the [Modoc War](#) in his memoir, *Forty-Six Years in the Army*: “If the innocent could be separated from the guilty, plague, pestilence, and famine would not be an unjust punishment for the crimes committed in this country against the original occupants of the soil.” [Quoted in Byrd, Jodi A. [The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism](#). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, pp. 226-28.]

Drawing a legal analogy between the Modoc prisoners and the Guantánamo detainees, Assistant U.S. Attorney General Yoo employed the legal category of *homo sacer*—in Roman law, a person banned from society, excluded from its legal protections but still subject to the sovereign’s power. [Reference: Agamben, Giorgio. [Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life](#). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.] Anyone may kill a *homo sacer* without it being considered murder. As Jodi Byrd notes, “One begins to understand why John C. Yoo’s infamous [March 14, 2003, torture memos](#) cited the 1865 *Military Commissions* and the 1873 *The Modoc Indian Prisoners* legal opinions in order to articulate executive power in declaring the state of exception, particularly when *The Modoc Indian Prisoners* opinion explicitly marks the Indian combatant as *homo sacer* to the United States.” To buttress his claim, Yoo quoted from the 1873 *Modoc Indian Prisoners* opinion:

It cannot be pretended that a United States soldier is guilty of murder if he kills a

public enemy in battle, which would be the case if the municipal law were in force and applicable to an act committed under such circumstances. All the laws and customs of civilized warfare may not be applicable to an armed conflict with the Indian tribes upon our western frontier; but the circumstances attending the assassination of Canby [Army general] and Thomas [U.S. peace commissioner] are such as to make their murder as much a violation of the laws of savage as of civilized warfare, and the Indians concerned in it fully understood the baseness and treachery of their act.

Byrd points out that, according to this line of thinking, anyone who could be defined as “Indian” could thus be killed legally, and they also could be held responsible for crimes they committed against any US soldier. “As a result, citizens of American Indian nations become in this moment the origin of the stateless terrorist combatant within U.S. enunciations of sovereignty.”

From the [Conclusion](#), pp. 222-24, [An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#).
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The second section of the Conclusion describing a central part of US Americans' way of war lists some of the Indigenous peoples throughout the world who have suffered theft of their ancestral lands and displacement at the hands of a voracious US appetite for military bases from which to pursue further exploitation of labor and resources in service to a now globalized corporate empire.

Ramped-Up Militarization

The Chagos Archipelago comprises more than sixty small coral islands isolated in the Indian Ocean halfway between Africa and Indonesia, a thousand miles south of the nearest continent, India. Between 1968 and 1973, the United States and Britain, the latter the colonial administrator, forcibly removed the indigenous inhabitants of the islands, the Chagossians. Most of the two thousand deportees ended up more than a thousand miles away in Mauritius and the Seychelles, where they were thrown into lives of poverty and forgotten. The purpose of this expulsion was to create a major U.S. military base on one of the Chagossian islands, Diego Garcia. As if being rounded up and removed from their homelands in the name of global security were not cruel enough, before being deported the Chagossians had to watch as British agents and U.S. troops herded their pet dogs into sealed sheds where they were gassed and burned. As David Vine writes in his chronicle of this tragedy:

The base on Diego Garcia has become one of the most secretive and powerful U.S. military facilities in the world, helping to launch the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq (twice), threatening Iran, China, Russia, and nations from southern Africa to southeast Asia, host to a secret CIA detention center for high-profile terrorist suspects, and home to thousands of U.S. military personnel and billions of dollars in deadly weaponry. [Reference: Vine, David. [Island of Shame: The Secret History of the US Military Base on Diego Garcia](#). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 2.]

The Chagossians are not the only indigenous people around the world that the US military has displaced. The military established a pattern during and after the Vietnam War of forcibly removing indigenous peoples from sites deemed strategic for the placement of military bases. The peoples of the Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific and Puerto Rico's Vieques Island are perhaps the best-known examples, but there were also the Inughuit of Thule, Greenland, and the thousands of Okinawans and Indigenous peoples of Micronesia. During the harsh deportation of the Micronesians in the 1970s, the press took some notice. In response to one reporter's question,

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said of the Micronesians: “There are only ninety thousand people out there. Who gives a damn?” [Kissinger quoted in *ibid.*, p. 15.] This is a statement of permissive genocide.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the United States operated more than 900 military bases around the world, including 287 in Germany, 130 in Japan, 106 in South Korea, 89 in Italy, 57 in the British Isles, 21 in Portugal, and 19 in Turkey. The number also comprised additional bases or installations located in Aruba, Australia, Djibouti, Egypt, Israel, Singapore, Thailand, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Crete, Sicily, Iceland, Romania, Bulgaria, Honduras, Colombia, and Cuba (Guantánamo Bay), among many other locations in some 150 countries, along with those recently added in Iraq and Afghanistan.

From the [Conclusion](#), pp. 225-26, [An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#).
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Speaking in 2001 about “[What It Means To Be A Human Being](#),” John Trudell articulates a profound understanding of what respecting and serving Life’s needs encompasses.

I mean this is the purpose of techno-logic civilization. They call it techno-logic for a very specific reason. This isn’t an accident, okay? You know, it truly isn’t. But the purpose of the civiliz[ation] – and so one of the civilizing processes is to erase memories. Alright?, to erase memories. Because we have ancestral memory. It’s encoded in the DNA – it’s a *genetic* memory.

You look at how techno-logic civilization – and everywhere that it goes, the longer it’s there, the more isolated the human beings – but they’re not called human beings, they’re workers and citizens, etc., alright? Alright? But the more isolated they feel, they no longer – you know, maybe they remember their grandparents or their great grandparents.

But see, you’ve got *all* that ancestral knowledge that’s encoded in the DNA, but it’s been *cut off*. So it can’t activate because if we’re not conscious that it’s there then we can’t – it just makes [things] difficult. See this is the memory that it’s very important for them to erase. Alright, and it’s about who we are – it’s memory of identity and self-reality.

So anyway, we, because we are, we come from where we come from, every one of us is the descendant of a tribe. Every person in this room is a descendant of a tribe at some point in our ancestral evolution. Common, collective, genetic memory that’s in there, you know, that’s encoded, like I say, in the DNA.

And for every individual, encoded in our individual DNA, alright?, is the experience of our lineage from the very beginning. Whose whole perceptual reality was what I was just saying: all things have being, we’re made up of the Earth – all my relations, pray to spirits. See, and they didn’t pray to *man* or *human* form. The closest they came to it was they prayed to spirits that were called *ancestors*.

Alright? And because they were praying to those ancestors for help and guidance, they understood that we were borrowing today from the past *and* the future. We’re borrowing it from both places.

So they had this understanding of reality. So they knew that to *keep the balance* was the purpose. That was the purpose. The reason for being was to keep the balance.

So this was like, you know, what I will call a *spiritual* perception of reality. And so because of the spiritual perception of reality they understood that life was about *responsibility*. It wasn’t about the abstraction of freedom – it was about responsibility. That life was about responsibility.

In the Introduction quoted at the beginning of this, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz articulates the

imperative that “To learn and know this history is both a necessity and a responsibility to the ancestors and descendants of all parties.” John Trudell submits that responsibility is the liberator’s word, “because then we are taking direct action with our intelligence.... [and t]hat means to activate and respect our intelligence and activate the thinking process so that it’s going the way we want it to be because that’s why it was given to us.”

Studying *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* has been, for this writer, a process of waking from a long-term incoherent dream of sugar-coated stories about the land of the free and the home of the brave, otherwise known as the founding and progress of the United States. While the victors write the history handed down from prior generations, there is here a sourcebook compilation of many of the elements forming a more complete, holistic exposition of how “[c]olonization,’ ‘dispossession,’ ‘settler colonialism,’ ‘genocide’ ... drill to the core of US history, to the very source of the country’s existence.” (p. xiii)

Each of us possesses an intrinsic intelligence that is ours to engage and express as we so choose. In every moment we have the ultimate power to choose to interpret what we perceive in precisely the way we *choose* to do so. Learning more about and acknowledging the actual history of the United States offers the possibility of altering the future timeline away from further domination and oppression and toward living as one human family sharing this irreplaceable home some still relate to as Grandmother Earth. The choice is for each of us to make.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz interviews about / speaking on *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* on the internet include:

- [Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz Twitter Postings](#)
- [Book Discussion Indigenous Peoples’ History | Video | C-SPAN.org](#), recorded at BookPeople Bookstore, Austin, Texas, (1:19:48) Sep 15, 2014
- [From Indigenous Socialism to Colonial Capitalism, Examining Native History of a Settler State](#), with Laura Flanders, *Truthout*, (25:00) 14 Oct 2014
- *The Real News*, October 24 & 28 2014
 - [Part 1 of 3](#) (32:50): discusses growing up and getting involved in the radical movements of the 1960s
 - [Part 2 of 3](#) (12:23): explores the colonial roots and the foundational myths of the United States
 - [Part 3 of 3](#) (18:44): discusses the racism of some of America’s storied poets and scholars
- [American Cultures Book Series](#), UC Berkeley, (1:27:45) October 30, 2014
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 communities and nations comprising nearly three million people. These individuals are the descendants of the once fifteen million people who inhabited this land and are the subject of the latest book by noted historian and activist Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. In *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, Dunbar-Ortiz challenges the founding myth of the United States and shows how policy against the indigenous peoples was genocidal and imperialist—designed to crush the original inhabitants. Spanning more than three hundred years, this classic bottom-up history significantly reframes how we view our past. Told from the viewpoint of the indigenous, it reveals how Native Americans, for centuries, actively resisted expansion of the US empire.
- [Time of Useful Consciousness Radio](#) Parts [One](#) (29:00), and [Two](#) (29:00), Green Apple Books, San Francisco, December 4, 2014
In part re-writing the official history of the US, Dunbar-Ortiz is looking for reasons why the founding ideology of the US proved so deadly for the indigenous peoples living here. She explains how the early settlers considered themselves to be the chosen people and claimed a covenant with god that is later expressed in the US constitution.

Part One includes a description of North America before invasion, the emergence of the US concept of a chosen people, the development of the role of the US military as a force for genocide that seamlessly transitioned into the US foreign wars, the role of militias, a brief history of the American Indian Movement (AIM), and the consequences of the Gold Rush in California.

Part Two includes a description of an earlier book by the author, [The Great Sioux Nation - Sitting in Judgement on America](#). Published in 1977, it came out of the 1974 Wounded Knee trials where Dunbar-Ortiz was an expert witness. She evoked the history of the armed takeover of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement and the 71-day siege by federal forces that encircled them. Also the memory of the 1890 massacre of Wounded Knee of Lakota women, children and elders. Several hundred Native Americans were arrested and stood trial in one of the most remarkable proceedings in judicial history. U.S. District Judge Warren K. Urbom presided and allowed testimony by traditional medicine people and Lakota chiefs. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz prepared a history of the once Great Sioux Nation from the court records.

"[The Great Sioux Nation](#) records what the Sioux people, the scholars, and the attorneys for the Sioux attempted to bring to the attention of the federal courts, the administration of that year, and the American people concerning the nature and status of the Sioux Nation.... If the moral issues raised by the Sioux people in the federal courtroom that cold month of December 1974 spark a recognition among the readers of a common destiny of humanity over and above the rules and regulations, the codes and statutes, and the power of the establishment to enforce its will, then the sacrifice of the Sioux people will not have been in vain." —Vine Deloria Jr.

"The oral history in this book represents some of the last documentation from the Lakota point of view, on the [1868 Fort Laramie Treaty](#) in these modern times. Almost all of the individuals quoted in the book have passed on and their oral history was only one generation removed from the actual Treaty signers. The entire hearing in front of Judge Urbom was a turning point in U.S. Law, as this was one of the few times in history where Lakota interpreters were used in U.S. Federal Court to express the meaning of the Fort Laramie Treaty from Lakota Peoples to the Judge and the Federal Court. Another highlight in this historic book was turning the words of the late Henry Crow Dog into poetry which made his wisdom understandable to future researchers, Indian and non-Indian. —Bill Means, Lakota, co-founder, International Indian Treaty Council

"[The Great Sioux Nation](#) transcends its time and place and speaks to the present as much as the past." —Amanda Lynch Morris, *Journal of American Culture*

- [World Issues Forum](#), Fairhaven College, Bellingham, WA, (1:12:20) December 2014

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. I will discuss this history, based on my new book, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, in which I challenge the founding myth of the United States and radically reframe US history, tracing US aggressive militarism and imperialist foreign wars to the earlier wars of conquest and land-theft against Indigenous nations.

- [Majority Report with Sam Seder](#), (42:45) December 18, 2014

Historian and author of *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz explains how the settler colonial history of the United States defines it. Why the US Military is rooted in wars and mass killings against Native Americans. The Indian wars and our policy and history of never ending war. Slavery and genocide of the Native American population and the mentality of white supremacy. Also what we can learn from "Indigenous socialism". How labor was organized in Pueblo City States. Why the great "inventions" of the United States came from the first Americans, the core myths that justify the genocides that created America. Also why you need to understand Andrew Jackson to understand America...

And portions of the book:

- [Introduction](#), pp. 2-5.
- [Redskins](#), pp. 64-65.
- Parts of the [Introduction & Chapter 4, Bloody Footprints](#)
- [Greed Is Good](#), pp. 157-161.
- ["Indian Wars" as a Template for the United States in the World](#), pp. 192-195.
- [The Doctrine of Discovery](#), pp. 197-201.
- [Conclusion - The Future of the United States](#), pp. 218-231.

Books by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz:

- [An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#), Boston: Beacon Press, 2014
- [Blood on the Border: A Memoir of the Contra War](#), Cambridge, MA.: South End, 2005
Read the [Prologue](#)
- [Outlaw Woman: A Memoir of the War Years, 1960-1975](#), SF California: City Lights (2001), University of Oklahoma Press (2014) revised with a new afterword
About [Outlaw Woman](#)
- [James Joyce and the tradition of anti-colonial revolution](#), Pullman, WA: Dept. of Comparative American Cultures, Washington State University, 1999

- [Red Dirt: Growing up Okie](#), London; New York: Verso (1997), University of Oklahoma Press, 2006
Read [Chapter One](#)
- [Roots of Resistance: Land Tenure in New Mexico, 1680-1980](#), Chicano Studies Research Center. Univ. of California Los Angeles (1980); revised The University of Oklahoma Press, 2007
Read the [Introduction](#)
- [The Miskito Indians of Nicaragua](#), London: Minority Rights Group, 1988
- [Indians of the Americas: Human Rights and Self-Determination](#), New York: Praeger, 1984
- [The Great Sioux Nation: Sitting in Judgment on America: An Oral History of the Sioux Nation & Its Struggle for Sovereignty](#), (1977) republished by Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, with new Foreward, 2013
Read [2013 Forward & "Rations Not Fit for Human Consumption"](#), pp. vii-ix & 153-156 respectively

[The Historial Arc, Past and Present, of](#)
[United States Settler Colonialism](#)
[Colonization, Dispossession, Genocide Forms the Core of US History, the Very Source of the Country's Existence](#)
 Will It Be The Future As Well? The Choice Is Ours

The History of the United States is a History of
 Settler Colonialism Driven by Land Theft & Genocide
 Outgrowing the US Theology of Progress

"Let all that is Indian within you die."
 —Carlisle Indian School commencement speech




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"To civilize the Indians...immerse them in our civilization... and when we get them under...hold them there until they are thoroughly soaked."
 —General Richard Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian School

"Real freedom will come only when we free ourselves of the domination of Western education, Western culture, and the Western way of living."
 —Mahatma Gandhi

"THE AMERICAN FLAG HAS NOT BEEN PLANTED IN FOREIGN SOIL TO ACQUIRE TERRITORY BUT FOR HUMANITY'S SAKE."
 William McKinley
 campaign poster, July 2, 1900

