

BOOK REVIEW

This paper is prepared and submitted by

(NAME)

In partial fulfillment of the course syllabus

HISTORY

Submitted on

(DATE)

Calloway, Colin. *First People: A Documentary Survey of American Indian History*. Bedford/St. Martin's; 3 edition (October 31, 2007)

Native Americans have been living in America centuries before the first European found the continent. It is a common historical fact that various tribes of Native Americans have crossed the land bridges some 20,000 to 30,000 years ago as indicated by the historical fragments collected over time. Sometime in the 17th century during the rise of navigation in the European continent, America was discovered accidentally by Christopher Columbus on his way to Asia. Christopher Columbus mistook the Native Americans for Indians and the name stuck since then. The colonization of America did not go about peacefully as Europeans' traditions, concepts of reality, values, practices, and outlook in life contrast that of Native Americans and how Europeans' colonial and modern mentality conflicts with the Native Americans' way of living. As a result, Europeans and Native Americans frequently repel each other and as the desire of the Europeans to conquer the American continent increased, the period that followed has been soaked in too much blood and violence.

History tells us that the post-Colombian era was a disaster for the Native Americans as they continuously endured persistent tribal wars, successive colonial pressure to change and adapt to European culture, epidemic diseases, constant European warfare, and socio-political and socio-economic pressures. In fact, historians characterized this period as an era driven by change and persistence. Native American historians have been very accurate in the details of their researches about the Indian Wars and how these wars have affected the lives of Native Americans. However, there is a major division among historians on their account of the response of Native Americans to

the issues that surrounds them during the period. One group argues that Native Americans resisted change especially those that are brought about by England colonizers. Among the many historians who support this view, Colin Calloway's First People is the most influential book to date.

Calloway's work has been very effective in its approach in writing his book. Now in its third edition, First Peoples is a comprehensive recollection of the struggle of the Native Americans since the colonizers came to the Americas. The book highlights the history of struggle from of the Native Americans from the Colonial Indians to the Wounded Knee and how these Indians were able to endure the harshness of the situation. Calloway is among the historians that adhere to the notion that the Native Americans did not resist the socio-political and socio-economic changes that are happening around them but instead welcome them wholeheartedly apart from the attempt to alter their culture. According to him, Native Americans were socio-politically confused and baffled by the many changes that occurs around them and that they (actually) are in desperate need of some external factors that could help them contain and alter the status quo. According to his arguments, the battles that raged during the period are brought about by the fact that the invaders are trying to rob them of their identities as a society which triggered the brute force in them to resist such changes. Disregarding that fact, Native Americans and Europeans could have mixed (in a manner of speaking) harmoniously as they coexist with each other.

Calloway provided many examples to support his claim that the Native American resistance to change is brought about by the fact that the Native Americans wanted peace more than they wanted war. According to him, the socio-political structure of Native

Americans is sensitive and is in danger of being swallowed by other relatively stronger tribes. The book contends that this can be seen by the fact that it took the native Americans a long while to be able to match the socio-political maneuver employed by the European colonizers. His book included examples of Indian chiefs that are strong willed, brilliant, and adamant not to take arms for reasons that can be solved by peaceful means.

The book shed light on the importance of the interplay of such factors as emotions, personality, political atmosphere, and socio-cultural pressures that prompted Native Americans to wage war. The book indirectly debunked the theory that the native Americans have never wanted the Europeans to come in the American continent but rather their aggression towards the colonizers is brought about by the fact that they (the colonizers) are trying to change their cultural perspectives. He presented the brutal history of the Native American history during the colonization from a newer, more different perspective in a clear, precise, and objective tone that connotes that he did his research very well.

One very good thing about this book is its manner of presenting Native American Indians. Later generations do not identify with the Indians as a part of the America's culture and knowing about how the Indians suffered in the hands of the colonizers is a great way to educate the younger generations. Native Americans should not, by any means, be classified as indigenous societies that have sensitive socio-political conditions. Native Americans have learned the battle pattern of Europeans and Europeans have managed to adapt to the Native American battle strategies. As a result, both of them have an equal footing in the war arena. Every battle fought by the Europeans are aimed to disperse the Native resistance while for the Indians, the battle they wage is for them to

keep their identities whole and to let the colonizers know that there has to be a boundary of sort for their rape of their land, culture, and society. However, the defeat of the natives was brought about by the failure of the natives to avail the same amount and degree of technological advances employed in the warfare and not on the unstable (or non-existing) socio-political structure that is an attribute of a savage society. As Colin Calloway puts it, "...the American Indians were a great and noble race..." which is an oversimplified truth about the American Indians during the colonization period.