

A Legacy We Have Tried To Coverup & Ignore

People are very good at finding ways not to deal with issues and situations that make them uncomfortable. One such issue is the treatment of the native Americans whose ancestors were already living in the land we now call home when our ancestors arrived here. Most of us learned in school that there were not many 'Indians' in America when Columbus arrived, and that the land was an 'untouched wilderness open for the taking'. Ongoing archeological study indicates that this understanding is not accurate.

It now appears that there were at least 3.8 million and probably closer to 12 million Native people in North America in 1492. Scholars do not have a firm count because there are no census records or other detailed records available. From the evidence that is available, it is becoming clearer that there was cleared land being farmed, large settlements, massive earthen works (like the serpent mound in southern Ohio), mining, irrigation systems and other land altering activities going on. It is also clear that by 1800 90% of the Native people were gone – largely because the arrival of Europeans killed millions of them with diseases brought from the 'Old World'. Native People had no resistance to these diseases. Some entire Native communities were wiped out across the Americas within just a few years after 1492. In all the Americas (north, central, & south), there were at least 53.9 million people in 1492. Already by 1650, 89% of them were gone. The 1650 population in all the Americas was only 5.6 million. Some of the earliest European settlers reported finding many empty villages with the bones of the former inhabitants still in the abandoned homes where they died.

Such a drastic population drop caused much of the evidence of the presence of Native People, especially in North America where stone and brick construction were not as common, to have disappeared by the time most Europeans arrived a couple hundred years after the first contact with

Europeans. Cleared and settled land returned to forest or appeared as prairie, earthen works took on the character of nondescript hills, and wooden structures decayed into oblivion by the time most European settlers arrived. The European's assumptions about how people 'should' live – namely like they did, made it easier for them to miss or ignore any clues about former inhabitation.

The idea that the land was 'wild' and 'unused' made taking it easily justifiable from the European perspective. There was little understanding that, for the Native People, the European concept of 'owning the land' was incomprehensible. They expected European style walls, fences, roads and the like, on land in use. They did not understand that land without these things was not just sitting unused or 'wasted'.

For most of the years after Europeans reached the Americas, the relationship between Europeans and Native People has been an adversarial one punctuated by warfare and atrocities by both sides. Due to overwhelming odds, the Native Americans were all but annihilated, and most survivors lost their homes and their way of life. The stated goal of many European Americans from the beginning was to kill all 'Indians' outright, push them off the land, or kill the Indian in them by destroying their culture, language, family ties, and religion – to make them 'fit' into white culture.



Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, the First in the U.S.

One of the most brutal and damaging parts of these efforts has been the treatment of native children. Between 1800 and 1902, at least 30,000 native children were forced from their homes into boarding schools in the U.S. as were thousands more in Canada. These schools were run by churches or the government. They were boarding schools to separate children from their families to make stripping them of their culture, language, and family ties easier. The goal was to assimilate them into white culture. Many of the schools were housed on former military bases which also affected the mood of the schools. These children were frequently abused, sexually assaulted, starved and otherwise mistreated at the schools where the goal was to “kill the Indian in them”. Many children were taken to the schools and their families never heard what happened to them. The right to return to their homes and families was denied many native children. Even their bodies were not returned to their families when they died.

Over the last few months, more than 900 unmarked graves of native children have been found at government & church run boarding schools in Canada. Investigators expect to find hundreds more. There are an undetermined number of graves at U.S. boarding schools. An effort to investigate burials at U.S. schools is underway.

It was not until 1975 that Native American tribes were finally given some control over the education of their children and a say in their own future. Many boarding schools were not closed until 2007. In that year, there were 9,500 native students in boarding schools. Most of the remaining schools were, by then, finally under the control of the tribes themselves.



In recent weeks, a group of Native American youth has been instrumental in arranging for the remains of 10 of the 189 children, known to be buried at the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania (the first of these forced boarding schools in the U.S.), to be returned to their families this summer.

All Native Americans have been touched by this tragic history. One young person involved in the Carlisle repatriation project pointed out, most children have playgrounds at their schools. Native children had graveyards. . . Pray for all those who must live with the pain of this tragedy, as well as those who are called to address the issues of responsibility & reconciliation involved.

See: William M. Denevan. *The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492*. Department of Geography, Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison, WI. 2002.

Our Concept of Patriotism

“[T]he highest welfare of our country must harmonize with the highest welfare of humanity everywhere. Our faith is in security through love, protection through goodwill; and for such we are willing to make the necessary sacrifice. We are opposed to war as a method of settling disputes because it is unchristian, destructive of our highest values and sows the seeds of future wars. We feel that we are true patriots because we build upon the eternal principles of right which are the only foundation of stable government in our world community.”

From 1936 tract on “Christian Patriotism” published by the Church of the Brethren’s Board of Christian Education (jointly developed with Friends and Mennonites at a 1935 Conference of the Historic Peace Churches in Kansas). Reprinted in the Messenger. June 2021. p.15

Anger Is Bad Enough – But There Is More to It

We seem to be in a time when many people are angry and willing to let their anger control their actions. For some, years of oppression or poverty (or both) have stoked the fires of anger and hopelessness that can make taking matters into one’s own hands seem appealing, even justified. Others believe they are ‘entitled’ and have a special status. When they think this is threatened, their resentment can be a powerful call to action.

The critical thing that seems to be lacking just now is a strong moral compass, a sense of community, and a Jesus inspired desire to work for

the common good – accepting the calling that we are our brother and sister’s keeper. When action is only anger and entitlement fed, violence and destruction are the result. Unfortunately, it is easy for someone, driven by their own motives and with a bit of hutzpah, to channel the destructive actions of others to meet their own personal ends. Their personal ends inevitably hurt other people, including the people whose self-centered anger fueled the driven individual’s quest in the first place. On the other hand, when people pull together, seek, and then work for changes that will benefit everyone, growth and stronger communities are the result. Jesus does not call us to ask, “what’s in it for me”, he calls us to ask, “what is God calling me to do with and for all of us.” Pray for his leading and accept his call to action!

Did you know: nonviolent protests are twice as likely to succeed as armed conflicts. It takes only 3.5% of the population. When such a handful gets actively and peacefully involved in calling for change, change always comes!

Gun Violence: 2020 Was A Very Bad Year

The year 2020 saw the largest rise in gun violence in the U.S. in 50 years. The national murder rate has jumped 25 to 30%, and the rate on nonfatal shootings is even higher since the pandemic began. It has doubled in some cities. These rates are still far below where they were in the early 1990s. The middle 1990s through 2014 saw these rates plummet, but 2014 saw the start of a slow but steady climb followed by the 2020 jump which is continuing in 2021. We do not fully understand why the numbers dropped or why they are now jumping up, but here is some of what we do know:

- We have had success lowering the level of violence many times. The difficulty has been sustaining low numbers.
- There is no one answer as to why. The pandemic and the current troubled relationship between communities and the police are certainly factors.
- History shows strong institutions, including churches, schools, and places of business help keep people connected to their communities, off the streets, and less violence prone.
- History also shows when these institutions collapse, people are more likely to feel estranged and disconnected. Inequalities are more pronounced, and the conditions that create violence increase.

- People who feel alienated from the police and do not trust them, are likely not to call them and try to deal with issues themselves perhaps by buying a gun. . .
- Gun sales in the last year have been record setting.
- Having guns in the home increases the likelihood of violence, and there is often more violence in the summer.
- Violence tends to build on itself – one shooting makes another more likely.
- Policing can make streets safer, but policing is not the answer alone. Police come with very high fiscal and social costs, and can make the situation worse without comprehensive reform. The militarization of police has made them less helpful and more violent.
- Policing must be combined with other things like tutoring to help children in school, opportunities for full employment with a living wage, and therapy when needed, even better lighting in neighborhoods.

Source: Noah Robertson. “US Saw Biggest Spike in Gun Violence in 50 Years. Don’t Panic Yet. *The Christian Science Monitor Weekly*. Aug. 2, 2021. p. 16-17

It should also be noted that the climbing murder and shootings rate is not the only type of violence that is on the rise. See the “Anger Is Bad Enough. . .” article as you consider the larger issue.

Worship Resources

Make Praying for Peace Part of Your Worship

When we pray for the people in need in our world, we are praying for peace. Peace is not just the absence of war, it is Shalom – living in harmony with each other and with God’s creation. Shalom means health, safety, tranquility, wholeness, and rest – the welfare and prosperity of all. Praying for the needs of others is an important first step in loving people as God calls us to. Next steps include using our time, talents, and resources to help others when disaster strikes, offering comfort in times of need, and working for change when the suffering of others comes from discrimination, persecution, exploitation, or abuse. When shalom does not exist for everyone, no one is fully at peace!

Remember in prayer:

1. **People dealing with COVID-19.** The dominant Delta variant is spreading very fast among the unvaccinated. Many places rushed to end safety

measures & 'return to normal', but are now facing the need to reinstate such measures to help stop the virus surging to near its highest levels. The number of vaccinated people is growing, but a considerable number of people refuse to get it. Many overseas have not had the opportunity. It is hitting poor countries harder now.

2. **People living with racism**, bigotry, or prejudice. We are reminded daily that we have not learned Jesus' lessons about how to treat each other, or the lessons from our past about the destructive power of fear & hate. Pray for those who live with the reality of racism & those who do not understand or acknowledge that they play a role in continuing it.
3. **Flooding in Europe & Asia**— Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, China & India. The death toll in some places continues to climb as flooding & landslides continues.
4. **Flooding & fires in western states**. This fire season is already unprecedented. Only the coming of rain may stop the largest fires. Other areas have had excessive rain & flooding.
5. **From Spain to Turkey** – people are dealing with massive wildfires in which lives have been lost.
6. **Afghanistan** – as they face the task of self-government.
7. **People in Lebanon**; the countries in chaos because of years of government corruption. 77% of the people do not have enough food or the money to buy it. Most have only a couple hours of electricity a day. Hospitals are running out of basic medications & people are dying as a result. Many people have lost everything & are homeless refugees in their own country.
8. **Those consumed by hate** & willing to use violence to get their way.
9. **South Sudan** – a church leader was murdered in May. Athanasus Unganga & other church leaders were held for questioning for nearly a month. They were not suspects & no charges have been filed. They have finally been released. The peace center Unganga overseas was robbed in their absence. Unganga's passport is still being held so he cannot return home to the U.S. where he is a citizen.
10. **Nigeria** – the country continues to be torn by violence. Mass atrocity crimes that violate the rights of innocent citizens, including regular kidnappings, attacks by Boko Haram & other armed groups, intentional destruction of farm produce, & increased difficulty in travel are common. Environmental damage by multinational oil companies is also an issue.
11. **People dealing with excessive heat**. Arctic ice is also melting at an unprecedented rate. On July 27th Greenland lost enough ice to cover the state of Florida in 2 inches of water.
12. **Places where political corruption & drastic economic inequality led to unrest & violence** – continue to remember South Africa & other countries

from Colombia to Thailand where desperation is growing among the people.

13. **People without the freedom to voice their views, raise issues or voice objections when they disagree with their leaders**. Also pray that people remember free speech is not a license to engage in hate speech that promotes discrimination or violence.
14. **Victims of gun violence & for those willing to commit such senseless acts**. The incidents of gun violence are increasing.
15. **Refugees & those displaced by violence** especially during the pandemic, & especially children. People do not flee their homes unless forced or because conditions there are far worse than the difficult conditions, they know they will face when fleeing. Church World Service & other groups continue to call on the government to 're-imagine' how the county relates to asylum seekers. They are asking congress to create "an effective, humane, & just immigration system that upholds the dignity of all asylum seekers, unaccompanied children, & immigrants." "The proposal would provide case management services & legal representation for asylum seekers & offer humanitarian assistance at community-based border shelters & respite centers, shifting responsibility from ICE & immigration enforcement to the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the Department of Health & Human Services." This recommended change highlights the critical need to stop assuming refugees are criminals and treating them as such.
16. **All people in this world who live with war**.
17. **Girls & Women** facing abuse & violence every day
18. **The people of Haiti**. Political unrest, kidnapping for ransom & human rights abuses are rampant there. Even so the U.S. continues to send families & children seeking asylum back to Haiti where their safety is far from certain. **Kidnapping for ransom is a growing problem in a number of countries including Nigeria**.



Peace Resources

See specific articles for related resource information.

Look for Peace & Reconciliation Resources on the Northern Ohio District Website.

For access go to: www.nohcob.org



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