

The History and Psychology Behind Racism in Pennsylvania

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William Penn

- When the US was first being formed, Penn established Philadelphia, the city of Brotherly Love.
- Although his peaceful beliefs were shared by many, racism was, and still is, very much alive.

Psychology

- Racism is not to be associated with mental illness, however there are proven mental factors.
- These include, but are not limited to: fear, projection, and the need for love and belonging.
- Although these themes are few of many, they are present in many cases of racism throughout history, and are still present today.



The Walking Purchase

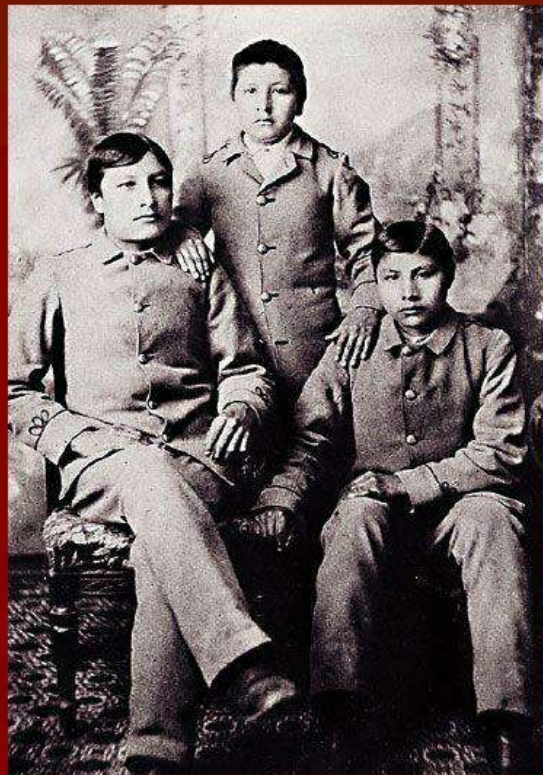
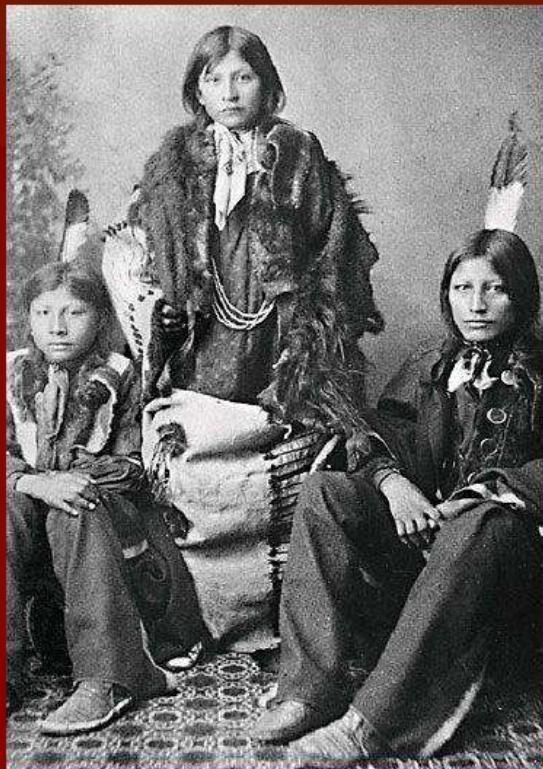
- The Walking Purchase is a perfect example of racism, because it involves the mistreatment of Natives benefiting the colonists.
- After his death, Penn's sons wanted more land, so they bargained with the Delaware tribe.
- The tribe agreed that they could have the land a man could walk in a day and a half. This seemed fair, however the Penn brothers had mapped out land prior and had hired runners.
- This caused the Delaware to lose around 1,200 square miles in land.
- The Natives later joined the French in the French and Indian War to fight against Pennsylvania.

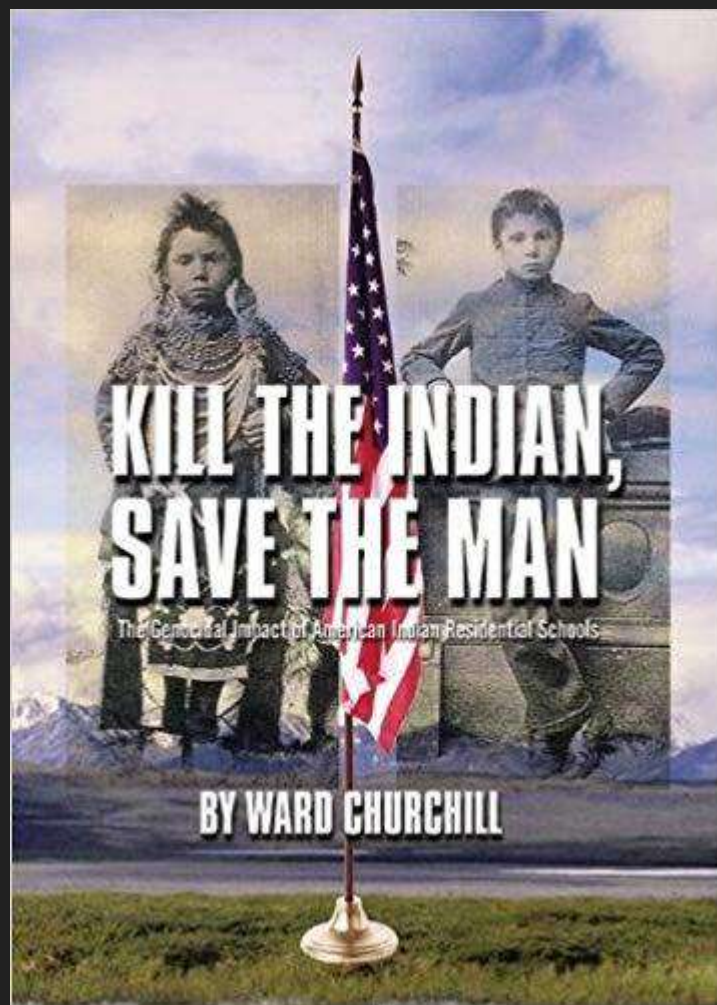


“Kill the Indian, Save the Man”

- Racism is a term first coined by Richard Henry Pratt in 1902.
- This man founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, a Pennsylvanian boarding school designed to convert Native Americans to behave as though they are white.

“Kill the Indian, Save the Man”





Factor I: Fear

- This comes from the primitive survival mechanism of avoiding danger, or fearing anything that appears different.
- When someone feels fear in response to a different race group they will create exaggerated images or beliefs to justify their own actions in attempt to secure their own safety.
- Some evidence to support fear as a factor is the white genocide theory.
- Many white supremacists believe a Jewish conspiracy is to blame for trying to destroy the white race.
- Fear is a natural instinct that humanizes us, however it's no excuse to act in hate or violence.

Factor II: Projection

- Projection is another natural instinct. It distracts us from our own flaws by allowing us to project them onto others.
- Often times, the things people hate about others are things they fear within themselves.
- The main thought process here is, “I’m not terrible, you are.”
- Some scholars argue that much of the dominant white community alleviates itself of the shame about the history of slavery by projecting self-perceptions onto the African-American community.

Factor III: The Need for Love and Belonging

- Ironically, some of Penn's ideals are carried out today, but not in the way he would have wanted or predicted.
- For people who have difficulty forming genuine social relationships, joining extreme hate groups, such as Neo-Nazis, is a way to do so.
- Members begin to have an “us-versus-them” mentality, making them feel closer to their fellow group members.
- This is obviously an extremely skewed view of what healthy social support should look like, however it is a view shared by many.

The Valley Swim Club Incident

- The camp leaders of the Creative Steps Daycare signed a contract with the Valley Swim Club to have a private swim.
- The students of the Daycare consisted of forty-six African-Americans and ten Hispanics.
- Upon arriving at the club for their swim, the students report to have been harshly criticized, and say they could even hear racial slurs being used.

The Valley Swim Club Incident *continued*

- The Swim Club asked the students to leave and refunded their money.
- Three months following the incident the Pennsylvania Human Resources Commission found probable cause that the club's actions were motivated by racism, although the club argues otherwise.
- They said the reason for this was not having enough lifeguards on duty.
- The Creative Steps Daycare won \$1.1 million in the case and it was to be split between all students and teachers.



Skewed Samples

- While the findings are obviously important, they aren't always exact.
- Individuals from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and Democratic societies make up about 80% of research participants.
- These people only make up about 12% of the world's population.

Significance

- Upon reading facts like this, one can get a feeling of hopelessness, almost like racism will never be abolished.
- Perhaps that is true to an extent, but there are things we can do not only as a nation, but as individual citizens to make the world a better place.
- For example, one easy solution is to just think before we act. The act of hating is human, however we don't need to project these feelings.
- It is important to acknowledge that different doesn't always mean bad, we as people should be more open to change.

Sources

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