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HRS 168

21 July 2023

Requerimiento Unraveled

The Requerimiento, written in 1513 by Juan Lopez de Palacios Rubios, was a significant document that goes through the socio-political landscape of the colonial era in its early ages. This document illustrates the justifications that were used by the colonizers in order to assert their authority over the native people that were encountered during the Spanish exploration of the Americas. The Requerimiento sheds light on the practices of the Spanish and outlines their right to conquer and convert the indigenous people. Through a detailed analysis of its content, historical context, the author's credentials, its symbolism in American culture, and personal reflection, this essay will disentangle the ethical dilemmas and complexities of the Requerimiento. Giving us insights into the dynamics that were held by the Spanish power and religion, and its long-lasting implications on the native people.

The Requerimiento was a document produced by the Spanish Monarchy. Its intended audience were the native people encountered by the Spanish during their expeditions. The purpose of the Requerimiento was to establish Spanish authority and justify their actions in claiming territories and subjugating the indigenous populations. It begins by referring to the kings and lords as the rightful rulers of the territories. The

document states that others that have been conquered by the Spanish have read the document and have accepted Their Highnesses as kings. Referring to areas like the Caribbean, Puerto Rico, etc... have accepted the Spanish as their king and queen. Also stating that the previous people have agreed to this without resistance, and they want the native people to do the same. The document makes it crystal clear that the native people are to fully understand the contents and fulfill the demands listed. Further on, the Spanish are imposing a new religion onto the natives when they state for them to not only recognize the king and queen but also the pope and the church as the superior power of the lands the natives reside on. In the last paragraph, the Spanish list out the stakes if the native is to deny this or retaliate against them. They refer to the use of force and war with threats like taking their children and wives for enslavement. Killing the men while taking all their personal property. All this while stating that this harm will be their own to blame. The fault will be fully of those that retaliate, not of the Spanish monarchs. The author makes it seem like they are more asking while the text serenely seems like they are being forced with all the consequences they will face if the Spanish are met with any type of resistance. The authors indisputably believe that the Spanish are bringing a service to the native people, doing them well, and helping them.

1513, a pivotal period. European powers were “driven by the belief in their divine right to conquer and convert non-Christian territories”(Israeli) into Christian territories. The papal backed Spain up and labeled the native population as “infidel”, legitimizing the claim of the Spanish monarchs even more. Spain set out to exploit new discoveries of land for its gold and silver which influenced the colonial project. And the place with an

abundance amount those elements was the Americas. This led to the encounter of the Spanish and the natives in intercultural exchanges with both conflict and cooperation using the Requerimiento written by a person from Spain.

While looking at the author, we gain a look into his background and see the expertise that formed the Requerimiento. Juan Lopez de Palacios Rubios understood Spanish law very well and in dept which added with “a reward for suppressing an Indian mutiny”(Britannica) positioned him to be an authority that would draft documents for the Spanish. Rubios had a tremendous amount of influence within the Spanish bureaucracy, in which he gained access to a much more prominent role as the administration for the new territories that the Spanish were expanding to. The author's legal expertise provides him with the credibility to write the Requerimiento. But, his bias and loyalty towards the Spanish also helped shape the document into what we read today.

During the early colonial era, the Requerimiento offers insights into both the American and colonial culture of that time. It symbolizes the legacy of the cultural remains left by the Spanish powers. Since it exemplified the religion and beliefs of the Spanish, it tore out and erased the cultural identities of the natives. Despite all the threats and consequences that the native would be met with, some groups fought “to preserve their cultural heritage, traditions, and spiritual beliefs”(Israeli). This resistance shows the strength and stronghold of the native people for them to defend their culture and beliefs.

Upon the initial read, the Requerimiento stirs up a mix of emotions and thoughts with its disturbing but true events of history. As I was attached to this document for the past week, It left me in disbelief at how the Spanish asserted their authority into the land of the native people. With the amount of audacity they had to snatch their freedom while saying the fault will be theirs If they tried to resist against it. It was disheartening to see the Spanish see the native people and their beliefs as unworthy and made inferior. The Spanish Monarchs' interest in power and wealth led to the suffering of numerous native communities. Their drive in this matter left a trail of devastation in each colonization attempt. This historical context intensifies my reflection on the impact this had on the native people. This document also provides a reminder of how history happens to be shaped by the perspectives of those in a higher power. This was a thought-provoking experience that enlightens more questions about the darker chapters of history and its effects on the native people and culture. For the history aspect, I liked the document since it showed how harsh humans can be on other humans. Besides that, this document is something that should never exist. A person shouldn't have to be forced upon a different religion with their kids' lives as threats. There was nothing persuasive about the text in the document, which can be clearly understood as the demands are followed by numerous amount of threats to compel the natives. Even with everything about the Requerimiento, I did like the document as it was an important part of history and helps me understand the nature of people.

In conclusion, the Requerimiento presents itself as a reminder of the various complexities of history and our duty to understand its narratives to shape our present. Showing us the power and religion that was the Spanish Empire. This analysis of the Requerimiento provides us with a more comprehensive understating of the historical significance that this document holds. From the article content to the credentials of the author, it is revealed how the Eurocentric mindset was in the colonial era. This document initiates mixed emotions, confronts us with uncomfortable truths, and recognizes the suffering of the native people. Let the future be guided by the lessons we learn from the past for a better future.

Works Cited

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The Requerimiento, 1513