

Lecture 2.6: Imperialism: Indigenous Conflict

Settlement and Reservations:

- US has already expanded bc of GR, mex-am war, etc
- We want natural resources!
 - Don't even stop wars with indigenous people during the CV
- In 1862:
 - Lincoln signs the Homestead Act → gives 160 acres of "Federal" land to any citizen willing to improve the land for 5 years
 - Building a house, farming on it
 - "improving land" → like nothing was happening on it before
 - But where does this land come from? Indigenous people
- Building transcontinental RR (1863-69) → also on indigenous land, getting way more land than they need
- Us gov is pushing indigenous people in a variety of ways → shoving indigenous people onto reservations
 - Usually through a treaty
 - If you move into a reservation, we will give you an annual amount of money (annuities) in return
 - All well and good as long as you delivered
 - But, on federal and state level, many people who are supposed to deliver keep that money for themselves (corruption)
 - So what do you do about it? Indigenous people are now starving (no money and no supplies that were promised)
- Many indigenous people who were trying to cooperate ended up desperate

CV clashes:

- This means, during the CV, there are lots of clashes
- But, most people are fighting in the CV
- So, Lincoln calls for volunteers
 - Idea is that you sign up locally to police and protect the population
 - But there is very minimal oversight (no rules that you have to follow, no supervision) → Lincoln isn't looking at local areas, says "you handle it"
- 1862: desperate, starving Dakota Sioux warriors attack in Minnesota
 - For what they were promised
 - Response is disproportionate:
 - Put down quickly by volunteers
 - 307 of the Dakota people are sentenced to death and executed for this
 - Sure, fight back, but maybe you don't execute them?
- 1864: Sand Creek Massacre:
 - Group of Cheyenne indigenous people who were waiting on peaceful treaty negotiations
 - Instead, the state militia attacks and kills 150+ mostly women and children and old people

Post CV Expansion:

- Still investing in settlement, RRSs, for natural resources
- Land: farming and ranching
- Timber → for railroads, homes
- Mining: 1872 General Mining Act: if you find minerals on federal soil you have the right to dig them up and keep them → want them to be digging and mining for resources
 - Environmental damage
 - Pushing indigenous people out of their land
- Most people are doing this out of economic opportunity
 - Including group of Black people Exodusters
- This life is really hard, so people aren't very successful
- Big corporate farms and land speculators are the ones who are successful
- People moving westward

Grant's Peace Policy:

- When cv ends, US can start talking about the "Indian Problem:
- President Grant sets up Peace Policy to try and end conflict
 - Tries to reform Bureau of Indian Affairs
 - Trying to get rid of people who are corrupted and taking all the money
 - Appoints Ely S. Parker (a Seneca person)
 - Parker replaces corrupt officials with Christian missionaries
 - Grant has to choose priorities → chooses settlement and progress over wellbeing of indigenous people → to the point where Ely resigns
 - Key marker of this: 1871 Indian Appropriations Act
 - Congress decides to not make treaties with NA anymore
 - Won't recognize them as independent groups with which they can make treaties with
 - Treaties only signed with sovereign countries
 - Doesn't throw away existing treaties, but allows Congress + president to make laws about NA life without asking them
- Doesn't do a lot to protect indigenous people
- Lots of clashes with US military/NA

Total War in the West:

- War against everything and everybody involved
- Cv ends, lots of veterans (lots in the north), most of them don't have a good job
- Some of them stay in the military, and they are sent West
 - Including Black segregated units
- Send people fresh from war into new land, they won't suddenly become peaceful
- William Tecumseh Sherman → king of total war in charge
- Set out to destroy the buffalo population → why? Buffalo are main source of food and materials for a lot of NA groups
- Indiscriminate killing → don't care what you were doing, I'll kill you
- Women, children, young, old, warrior, not a warrior

Carlisle Indian Industrial School:

- War is not the only approach
- Use of indigenous boarding school as another way of solving “Indian Problem”
 - Idea behind this → “Kill the Indian and save the man”
 - Not killing them literally, killing their culture
 - Assimilation tactic → “make them civilized”
- Scientific racism applies to indigenous people as well
- If they are viewed as lesser, they need to be “civilized”
- Gov or missionary run schools designed to “civilize”
 - Off-reservation → could be sent far away from your family and culture on purpose
 - To separate them from NA culture
 - All of these schools ban native languages, religions
 - Enforcing Christianity, White dress/manners → trying to turn them into White people
 - Lots of harsh punishments for resisting assimilation → results in trauma
- Some of these children to assimilate
- But they are not well-equipped to do so by schools
- NA people who don’t know their own culture and don’t fit into White culture either
- Lost between cultures → even if they go back, they don’t fit, can’t fit in White culture either
- This counts as genocide

Dawes Act, 1887:

- Pushing for NA assimilation
- Congress wants to break up the way that they deal with land
- Divides NA land into 160 acres allotment per family
 - Breaking up reservations essentially
- A lot of NA groups did not have private property like the way that we do now
 - Everybody shared the land
- Two catches:
 - But, had to renounce your religion/culture
 - Land would be held in trusts by US gov for 25 years
 - At the end of those 25 years, we’ll give you US citizenship and ownership
 - Anything leftover from those 160 acres per family, we’ll sell off that land
- Losing a way of life → no shared community land, your society isn’t communal
- Sometimes, NA families were given the worst land and did not have right equipment to create a life on the land (no plow, no money, no horse to pull the plow, etc) → how do you even learn how to farm a crop?
- NA families struggle
- Meanwhile, people who buy up that excess land are making lots of money
- This undermines tribal leadership → every man for themselves, undermines leadership, undermines community, undermines economic structures (if you were structured around hunting, fishing, farming, etc, this is huge culture shift)
- 1881 → 155 million acres of NA land

- 77 million by 1900

Ghost Dance:

- Some form of resistance that freaks out White people
- Turn to ghost dance to resist assimilation
- Ghost dance is a religious practice, which many indigenous people believed would return the world to the way it was before colonization (restore, return buffalo, protect NA people)
 - Ceremonial/ritualistic dance
- The dance is completely peaceful, but White people see it as a threat and a form of resistance
- Because of this, White people try to stamp it out and prevent it from happening
- But NA people see it as a form of hope, so they do it anyways
- Here's one thing we can do to provide hope
- Mostly in the Plains
- Gov trying to stamp this out → they arrest and murder the Chief of the Lakota Sioux → trying to get leadership out of the way

Massacre at Wounded Knee, 1890:

- Military leaders issue arrest warrants for other NA leaders not on reservations to stamp out Ghost Dance
- Big Foot and 350 Lakota Sioux surrender to US troops, are taken into an army camp at Wounded Knee creek
- During a weapons search, a soldier tries to take a rifle away, and in the process the rifle goes off
- The 7th Cavalry open fire with machine guns
 - They kill 300 Lakota Sioux
 - And 25 US soldiers
- Becomes known as massacre at Wounded Knee
- US gov gives 20 US soldiers medals of honor for this
- NA people are like what? We tried to surrender and we still failed, there's no point in violently resisting
- So this becomes a symbolic end of armed resistance
- The same year, the US census bureau announces the "closing of the frontier" → we've settled in the frontier enough that all the land in the frontier is ours now. They're all gone.