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 sentences 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 the 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 🡪 tying 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.