

Why and How Europeans labeled Indigenous people "SAVAGE"

Spanish scholar Juan Gines de Sepúlveda argued that the Indigenous Natives might not even be human.

Major reasons offered why Indians were not human:

1. They seemed incapable of embracing European notions of [reason](#);
2. Their passions and brutality made them only slightly better than animals (as opposed to the passions and brutality of the Europeans, which were more civilized, or something like that);
3. They could not master the "Arts of civil Life & Humanity."
4. Their [sexuality](#) was "animalistic" (as compared to the plain-old missionary position procreative sex that Christian missionaries held up as an ideal)
5. They chose to [show a little skin](#), and not cover their bodies like "decent" God-fearing people.

Advantages that the Europeans had:

1. Christianity (i.e. a strong unifying ideology)
 2. Resistance to the diseases they brought with them
 3. Advanced agricultural techniques
 4. Technology
 5. Military might and power
 6. Sheer numbers (the formerly robust native populations were devastated by epidemics that generally preceded the coming of Europeans to a given part of the Americas)
 7. More domesticated animals (pigs, cows, and horses are all old world animals) - this is also related to point 2. if "[Guns, Germs, and Steel](#)" is to be believed
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The Puritans observed that they decorated themselves with barbaric ornaments and tattoos, their clothing made of the skins of reptiles, birds, and beasts and men had uncut long hair. They had a lack of social government or defined unity of Monotheistic religion. They must convert them and the quickest way to rid the land of savages was, either by conversion or death. The Puritans viewed any opposition to them in any fashion as a direct opposition to God, thus making the Native Americans minions of Satan himself.

The labels the Puritans gave the Native Americans came to a long list, from calling them beasts and inhuman to ungodly and demonic. The Puritans felt it was their Christian duty to reach out to the lost. Saving a Native American would mean saving a soul from Satan, and destroying a Native American meant destroying one of Satan's minions. Puritans sent missionaries to reach out to the Native Americans. The Puritans were careful not to fall prey to the way of life or thinking of the Natives; so far they were willing to cover the sides and windows of their wagons to block their view of the trees so they would not be tempted by paganism and savagism. The continuation of calling the Native Americans demonic had a huge influence on all types of people. Even civil rights activist Roger Williams (who also strove for savage rights) was revolted by Native Americans in their "hideous worships of creatures and devils.

Isolating Indians to reservations did not remove the fear, hatred, and bigotry towards them. On July 4, 1779 U.S. soldiers toasted to the phrase "Civilization or death to all American Savages.

"till their Priests and Ancients have their throats cut, there is no hope to bring them to conversion."-John Smith

There were several other obstacles facing missionaries, notably language. Christian words, based in Judeo-Christian and/or Greco-Roman culture had no direct parallels in many if not most Native Languages. Sin, Heaven or Hell are obviously nonexistent, but for most hunter-gatherer tribes, neither shepherd nor sheep had any relevance. King, kingdom, prayer, ark, redemption, sacrament, baptism all had to be defined, with some often amusing results. And of course, few if any tribes had anything close to monotheism.

In 1879 Chief Standing bear was first recognized in a court ruling that he was indeed "Human" and granted civil rights.

The Obvious Results –

If they were not even "Human", they could not own land, go free or practice heathen "witchcraft" for Religion. If any covenants or treaties were made, they could be "un made" because only one party was capable of civil government or rule of law.

Jesuits set up reserves for Native Americans and missionaries. The laws governing these reserves reflected Christian values, and punishments varied from whipping, payment, to even death for crimes of adultery, witchcraft, and worshiping any other deity than the Christian God. However, many Natives did not truly convert and became false Christians to avoid punishment, which only further angered the Europeans. Lesser punishments on the reserves were for the following crimes: powwowing, gaming, fornication, polygamy, mourning with loud noises (such as howling), body-greasing, and more.