

The Cruel, Unjust, and Immoral Treatment of American Indians

The American Indians inhabited present day America for centuries before Christopher Columbus's discovery of the new world; however, as progress continued, they were unjustly forced off their sacred homelands into reserved territories that the government had set aside specifically for the housing of Indians. The assimilation of Native Americans into white society was cruel in that the Natives lost their tribal cultures and sense of heritage, which, to some, was a fate worse than death. The white man tried to right the wrongs done against the Indians with the signing of treaties and acts, but, some treaties were nullified with new discoveries.

First, the removal of the Indians was unjust in many ways. When white settlers came to a tract of land that they wanted, they felt it was their god-given right to own it, and the Native people were savages that had to be dealt with, so the whites forcibly moved the savages to "reserved" territories far away from their homelands. The journeys to these territories were often fraught with sorrow and despair, The Trail of Tears is a great example (Roark, 467). Many Natives died on this journey from starvation, exhaustion, and disease. If, for any reason, the tribes decided to fight back against the whites, they were often countered with brute force, as is shown in the massacre of the village of Cheyenne (Roark, 467). The village was annihilated and the villagers, mostly women and children, were brutally killed, just for protecting their homes.

The assimilation of American Indians into white society was also cruel in its own way. While trying to force the Natives to join the white mainstream, Indian rights groups called for the dismantling of the reservations. This, as stated, was cruel because the

Indians lost their tribal culture and sense of heritage, which, to many, was a fate worse than death.

Treaties and acts were written and signed to right the wrongs done against the Indians, but treaties were broken and acts could not undo the damage that had been done. In the Treaty of Fort Laramie, The United States agreed to abandon the Bozeman Trail through the Black Hills, which was Indian Territory, but the treaty was jeopardized and then broken due to the discovery of gold in the Black Hills (Roark, 469). Chief Joseph's appeal to president Hayes brought no end to his strife. By the time his tribe had been moved, Chief Joseph's spirit had been broken as one can tell by his statement "I will fight no more forever" (Young, 36). The Dawes Act was not broken but, it still had a tinge of cruelty in it because it forced the Indians to lose what was left of their culture and assimilate further into white society. In it, the United States abolished reservations, and allotted land to individual Indians as private property, but the allotted lands were only a fraction of the amount of land on the reservations. The Act stated that the United States could sell the surplus land for a profit, but the Indians would not benefit from the sale of their reservation, the land that had become their sacred homeland.

In conclusion, the treatment of the Indians in the late 1800s was appalling in many ways. The removal and assimilation inflicted immense amounts of pain and anguish on the Natives, and the treaties and acts that were written did not help much because they were either broken or forced the Indians to assimilate more and lose their history completely. With these examples, one can see that the Indians were mistreated and in some ways abused. No matter how much the Dawes Act tried to right the wrongs committed against the Indians, some things can not be undone.