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Our America Final Paper

My experience in this class has been somewhat eye opening to say the least. I initially had no idea what I was going into when I signed up for this course last minute and I don't think anyone could have prepared me for some of the socioeconomic hurdles we've encountered through history. I don't know if I was surprised or a little disturbed by the things that I have learned.

Throughout the semester my eyes have been opened to many new concepts. Concepts like model minority, doctrine of discovery, manifest destiny, dehumanization, and the immigration act. I'll be giving brief but thorough explanations on these concepts.

Something I have learned recently is that while I don't typically know a lot of stereotyping, it's easy to unintentionally entertain stereotypes which can cause damage. One way which I have entertained this is saying that all my Asian friends do better in class than me. Saying this without realizing that the same stereotype had been used for years to bring other hardworking ethnic minorities down actually does do damage. And this is something I will not participate in anymore. Of course what I am referring to is something called the modern minority. This is a stereotype which has a significant negative impact for minority groups. It's used to create a hierarchy system of success among ethnic groups which perpetuates harmful stereotypes and undermines the realities of racism and discrimination.

Perpetual foreigner is a stereotype which is harmful toward ethnic minorities, particularly Asian Americans. It suggests that regardless of how long they or their ancestors have lived in the United States. These people are still seen as foreign or

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un-American. Over the years it has really caused a lot of harm over the years and has continued to have negative impacts on our country.

The Doctrine of discovery refers to legal and religious principles developed by European powers and fueled by westward expansion and the ideology. It was used as a justification to push territorial expansion westward. The key component for this was the belief that America was both superior both culturally and racially toward Native Americans.

Learning about all of the things which have been achieved by African Americans, Latino/a/x/ Hispanic, Asian Americans, Indigenous Peoples, undocumented/people Immigrants and other leaders from different minorities are the true people who have shaped and transformed America to become a strong nation. Some notable contributions to our society are in fields of science, general technology, art, and literature. Without the contributions of men and women from minorities we wouldn't have hit the same achievements which have shaped the country's cultural landscape.

Religion and being religious has been a foundation for a lot of America and civil rights leaders. In fact, many leaders of civil rights movements were pastors or other religious figures. The Founding Fathers believed religion to be an important and integral part of society and even government. For a lot of people from different backgrounds, religion offers a community, sense of purpose, hope and a lot of times the church helps shape experiences and identities for many individuals. Being a Christian gives you moral practices and a 'how to guide' (If you can call the Ten Commandments That), to be a decent human. In a way religion has been the country's founding principles to its laws and what we call social norms. However, The Black Church played a crucial role in

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shaping the experiences and identities of Black people in America. For many enslaved people, the church provided resilience in the face of oppression and even dehumanization. Oftentimes black churches were led by black ministers who had been educated and skilled in theology, philosophy and literature. This gave many ministers a platform and opportunity to teach literacy to their own congregations providing a pathway to personal and communal empowerment.

Visiting The Museum of the American Indian was an amazing experience because it gave me the opportunity to see the vast collection of Native American artifacts that gave me a glimpse into their lives and through these artifacts I was able to have a little understanding of their daily routines, cultural practices, and beliefs. After I experienced the museum and then applied what I had learned from class I felt pretty melancholy. It really ate away at me learning that Native American culture had been so brutally disrupted and then were forcefully made to assimilate into American culture by forcing them to adopt our values, religion, and lifestyles. "The histories of different groups in America are not separate but intertwined, and we must understand the ways in which they have influenced and affected one another."(Takaki).

Personally I think religion can play a unique role in the fight for racial justice and racial reconciliation. I think church is a good place to educate members of society on systemic racism after all church is supposed to be a safe place. This way you can form groups to talk about this and talk about christian parallels in the bible and work toward empathy and understanding using the bible as a guide. This would be a smart thing to do because this way the church can lead by example, making sure its own practices and policies reflect commitment toward racial justice and reconciliation as well as being

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a follower of Christ. "The call to follow Jesus is a call to resist the dehumanizing effects of the Doctrine of Discovery and to work for justice and reconciliation with all peoples, particularly those who have been most marginalized and oppressed." (Takaki)
Additionally people who are not christian who come to Jesus might feel more secure in a community which is loving of all members.

This class has forced me to ask questions about society and my experiences. Asking these questions have really helped reshape my way of thinking and understanding. As class was into its 2nd-3rd week I started to ask myself "why haven't I been taught some of these concepts, perspectives or principles before?" I believe this has been an intentional suppression of multiple perspectives on history. Additionally, I learned that my personal experience didn't really allow me to be exposed to a lot of diversity and limited my opportunity to absorb some of the key concepts which we have learned in the class Our America. "Our challenge as a nation is to acknowledge the diversity of our past and present, and to work towards a more inclusive and equitable future for all." (Takaki) My biggest takeaway is asking myself what I will do with this information with the remaining time I have now.

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Work Cited

Takaki, Ronald. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. Back Bay Books, 2008.

Rah, Soong-Chan. *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*. Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2019.

[Mark Charles - The spiritual price of the Doctrine of Discovery](#)

[Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: The danger of a single story | TED](#)

Museum Visit 1: National Museum of American Indian.