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Our America-SOC147

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### Our America

The United States of America has become a nation that represents all kinds of different cultures and ethnicities. America has been the beacon of light for a lot of families in search of opportunities and in need of a better quality of life. Although this sounds wonderful and America has become a salad bowl of people because of it, there are still some really dark and shameful things that the people of America have done to these people with different ethnicities. America has a dark history concerning certain groups of people. This is something that I didn't learn until I had gone to college. But how do those events that occurred all those years ago affect today? They affect today because of the fact that our nation is broken because of the mistakes the people before us made.

For years, children have been taught that Christopher Columbus discovered America. The nation even has a federal holiday for this event. The story is the same, Columbus discovered America and made friends with the Native Americans. That's the story children are told. However the real story is far from that. In fact I am not even sure how something can be discovered if there's already people there. Native Americans have been here before any of us. Yet they have experienced pain and suffering at the hands of the "American" people.

Today, nothing has changed. I visited the American-Indian Museum in New York and was really fascinated and upset with what I had seen. Not only were the Native Americans slaughtered and nearly wiped out. But today people have to prove that they are Native. Native Americans have to carry a blood quantum card on their person. This card states the percentage of Native the person is. In order to be considered Native, the blood quantum needs to be above a certain percentage.

We live in a world where you could be whatever you wanna be and we live in a country that allows that. So it was shocking to me that Native people have to prove that they are Native and have to be enough of it on top of that. It really caused me to step back and realize that even though something doesn't affect me directly that doesn't mean people aren't hurting.

African Americans have endured so much throughout history. For years they've been victims of racism and police brutality. These things still happen today. There is such division in the country. I personally feel like racism is the root of the issue. African Americans have been through so much because it's like the hate that they receive is never ending.

Dr. Charles Galbreath spoke on the black church. He called it an "Invisible Institution" because the black church was started by slaves and they had to keep it a secret. "For the slaves the black church was the sole source of personal identity and community"(The Black Church 28:43). This quote alone caused me to really reflect on the U.S. Slaves were beaten and sexually assaulted. In such a terrible situation, they managed to find a sense of identity and community in church. This caused me to understand that community is important when it comes to anything, including christianity.

I am a part of the Latino community. Latinos come in all different shades. Some of us are dark skinned with dark hair, and others have blonde hair and blue eyes. That's something I've always loved about my culture. People in the Latino community have also been victims of racism and police brutality. The division in the country has been in the country for a while. One of the many things that I had learned about the Latino community was that they didn't get along with the Italian people for a while (Bishop Ray Rivera). My father grew up in Spanish Harlem and had confirmed what Bishop Ray Rivera had said. This caused me to think about how much division the country had back then, and how that division is still around today.

Out of all the groups I had learned about this semester, Asian Americans was the group that broke my heart. This is because I hadn't learned about any of this until recently. I watched the PBS docu-series *Asian-Americans*. One of the things the documentary discussed was the United States would have exhibits specifically dedicated to asian people. They'd have asian people wear certain things and be "entertainment" for white people that came to see. Looking at them seeing savages not people. Laughing and gawking at these people, making fun of them and treating them like animals. When I saw that some people of the asian culture that lived in America were treated like that I was deeply disturbed. I also found out that they were the first race that had to prove their citizenship. Asian people also helped build railroads in the U.S. However they did not receive credit for their work and were paid very little to do so.

Learning about these groups has taught me so much. It has caused me to look at my country through a different lens. As much as I do think and agree that there are things about America that make the nation good, I still believe that there is room for improvement. Our nation will never be perfect, just like everything else. What I learned in this class and about these

people is that whatever happens to one person, affects all of us. We are truly not in this together but we should be. Now people only care about themselves. It's all about what benefits them, How will things affect them. But as a society if we continue to do that, our world will grow colder. To the point where humanity may very well be questioned.

Looking at the big picture can be very overwhelming and stressful. So the best way to make a difference is to change how we look at things. I cannot control other people's behavior but what I can control is how I react to things and what I believe. I know that the chances of there being peace and no division is slim to none due to the corruption of the world. But if I just focus on how I act and how I treat people that can help make a difference. All it takes is one person to be kind to restore someone's faith in humanity. There are always going to be bad people but there's also a whole lot of nice ones. That's what we were created to do. We were created to love each other as Christ loves us.

The best way to inspire change or do better is to learn the history of this nation. This way we can learn from our mistakes. It's important to make a change for future generations. We wanna do better so we must be better. The generations after us will pay for our mistakes if we do not begin to have a conversation about how we can go about change. Although I do believe things can change, if we try. The chances of it actually happening are slim to none because we live in a fallen world and unfortunately a lot of people do not embrace change. The enemy lurks on the Earth and is always looking to steal, kill, and destroy. That's why it's crucial to stay close to God.

I'm not going to offer false hope and say that things are bound together. I know that God is more than capable of making that happen if it's in his will. However if it's not then all we can do is our part. Everytime I think about the racism, hate and the brokenness that consumes our

society, I am reminded of a quote from Dr.Suess: “Unless someone cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better.It’s not.” This quote crosses my mind constantly when I see something in the news. There is so much truth behind it and I think that my perspective on these groups of people has shifted and I have so much more respect for them. This respect comes from the recognition of their sacrifice.

In closing it’s dangerous hearing one story, especially when you’re young and impressionable. This class has taught me that. Growing up, everything was white. I had no one to relate to. This is hard for a young girl to grow up with because my whole life I had compared myself to the white girls I had seen on the television. I tried to fit myself into their narrative and when that didn’t work I got discouraged and felt insecure in my own skin. That is something that no one should have to deal with, especially at such a young age. I truly believe it is high time that we have a conversation about how to do and be better. Not just for us but for our future and grandchildren. It’s crucial to do our best every single day. To be different and do what God has called us to do...Love.

#### Works Cited

The Black Church feat Dr. Charles Galbreath

The American-Indian Museum

PBS Docu-Series Asian Americans

Bishop Ray Rivera

[https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_ngozi\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story/comments](https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/comments)