

The Statues of White Supremacists. Why Were They Erected in the First Place? Take Them Down? Preserve the History of Their Ugly Past

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The only thing controversial about taking down statues of white supremacist US and other Western figures is why they were erected in the first place, and why it took so long for a campaign to remove them.

In Britain, over two dozen Oxford city councillors, students, and thousands more Brits called for removing the statue of Cecil Rhodes from Oxford University's Oriel College.

He's one of the most odious symbols of Britain's white supremacist, imperial, colonial past.

Founder of Rhodesia (today's Zambia and Zimbabwe), he once called Anglo-Saxons "the first race in the world."

He called for Britain to colonize new lands "to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and mines," praising the scourge of imperialism in the pursuit of this agenda at the expense of exploited people.

In Richmond, VA on Wednesday, the confederacy's former capital, protesters took down a statue of confederate president Jefferson Davis.

A statute of Christopher Columbus was removed in Camden, NJ, a statement by the city saying its presence "long pained residents of the (Farnham Park) community."

Overnight Wednesday in Boston's North End, a statue of Columbus was beheaded.

Other Columbus statues came down in Minneapolis, Richmond, VA, and reportedly elsewhere in the US.

The late historian, anti-war, anti-imperial activist Howard Zinn explained the "real Columbus" in his People's History of the United States, other writings, and public addresses.

His arrival with a crew of brigands chosen for plunder in what's now the Bahamas, then Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic), and Cuba over 500 years ago was followed by the mass slaughter of around 100 million indigenous people for centuries, an unprecedented genocide ignored or glossed over by establishment Western history.

Zinn explained the following:

“Arawak men and women...swam out to get a closer look at the strange big boat” they spotted.

“When Columbus and his sailors came ashore, carrying swords, the Arawaks ran to greet them, brought them food, water, gifts.”

They “were remarkable...for their hospitality, their belief in sharing” — polar opposite Western civilization’s ruling class.

Columbus sought gold, other riches and slaves for Spain. A second voyage followed the first. Native people were slaughtered throughout the Caribbean.

Scant gold was found, just hundreds of human beings taken captive, those surviving the journey to Spain sold like sheep or goats.

Zinn: “In return for bringing back gold and spices (to Spanish royalty, he was) promised 10 percent of the profits, governorship over newfound lands, and the fame that would go with a new title: Admiral of the Ocean Sea.”

“He was a merchant’s clerk from the Italian city of Genoa, part-time weaver (the son of a skilled weaver), and expert sailor.”

Heading to Asia from Europe, “he came upon...unchartered land...the Americas.”

He didn’t discover it as US school children are taught. It was there, inhabited by indigenous people for thousands of years before his arrival.

His first voyage was followed by a second one in search of gold and slaves.

There were plenty of the latter. “The only gold around was bits of dust garnered from the streams,” Zinn explained.

Columbus first arrived in 1492. By 1650, “none of the original Arawaks or their descendants were left,” said Zinn.

An estimated eight million people perished from overwork, neglect, and other forms of cruelty as slave labor.

Knowledge of what happened came Bartoleme de Las Casas, a “priest (involved) in the conquest of Cuba (transformed into) a vehement critic of Spanish cruelty.”

The Spaniards “thought nothing of knifing Indians by tens and twenties and of cutting slices off them to test the sharpness of their blades,” he wrote.

Indigenous people “suffered and died in the mines and other labors in desperate silence, knowing not a soul in the world to whom they could turn for help.”

“(M)ountains (were) stripped from top to bottom and bottom to top a thousand times.”

“They d(ug), split rocks, move(d) stones, and carr(ied) dirt on their backs to wash it in the rivers, while those who wash(ed) gold stay in the water all the time with their backs bent so constantly it br(oke) them.”

The women were “forced into the excruciating job of digging and making thousands of hills for cassava plants,” Zinn explained.

Separated for months and worked to exhaustion led to their deaths.

From Columbus’ arrival to 1508, “over three million people had perished from war, slavery, and the mines” — millions more in subsequent years.

“Who in future generations will believe this? I myself writing it as a knowledgeable eyewitness can hardly believe it,” said Las Casas.

Zinn: “What Columbus did to the Arawaks of the Bahamas, Cortes did to the Aztecs of Mexico, Pizarro to the Incas of Peru, and the English settlers of Virginia and Massachusetts to the Powhatans and the Pequots.”

“They used the same tactics, and for the same reasons — the frenzy in the early capitalist states of Europe for gold, for slaves, for products of the soil, to pay the bondholders and stockholders of the expeditions, to finance the monarchical bureaucracies rising in Western Europe, to spur the growth of the new money economy rising out of feudalism, to participate in what Karl Marx would later call ‘the primitive accumulation of capital.’ ”

It was the beginning of how the West and most other countries were run from the time of Columbus to today.

In his book titled “Columbus: His Enterprise,” Hans Koning said the following:

“For all the gold and silver stolen and shipped to Spain did not make the Spanish people richer.”

“It gave their kings an edge in the balance of power for a time, a chance to hire more mercenary soldiers for their wars.”

“They ended up losing those wars anyway, and all that was left was a deadly inflation, a starving population, the rich richer, the poor poorer, and a ruined peasant class.”

Zinn explained that “the European invasion of the Indian settlements in the Americas (was the) beginning (of) conquest, slavery (and) death.”

No “heroic adventure” by Columbus occurred, just “bloodshed,” plunder, and human misery, the legacy of so-called Western civilization.

History is told “from the point of view of governments, conquerors, diplomats (and) leaders.” No one speaks for victims.

Earlier belligerents had swords, then rifles and cannons.

Today they have WMDs and delivery systems able to end life on earth if used in enough numbers.

Humanity’s ability to kill and destroy has come a long way through the ages, scant attention paid to surviving the destructiveness of today’s super-weapons.

Nothing has been done to curb the rage of the powerful to dominate or to minimize mass slaughter, vast destruction, and human misery from their deadly pursuits.

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