

Grace Hull

December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020

History 103: America to 1876

Final Project

### History Through Modern Eyes

Like most people say, history repeats itself. What we as Americans have seen in the past are almost reliving it all in the present. Almost any current event can be connected back to a period of time in American history. Some events in the past could even be a precursor to what is occurring right now. As we look at some recent current events such as the election, it could be a reminder of how democracy got started in America or connecting Donald Trump's actions on the coronavirus pandemic to Ronald Reagan's actions with the AIDS epidemic. It seems as though history marks reminders for current day scenarios or even something to learn from in many ways.

The meme of a Native American talking about immigration brings out current issues of immigration policies under the Trump administration and relating it back to when people came to America. The Native Americans were almost invaded by the pilgrims and were taken advantage of. To have people in modern day talking about immigrants and how they are stealing things from American-born citizens. It seems as though this event has already occurred in history, but many people don't take into account of the plight of Native Americans by those original immigrants. These American citizens who are complaining about immigrants taking things from

them and stealing their opportunities are ancestors of the same immigrants that took from Native Americans. In order to understand the joke of this meme, you must understand the history behind it.

Many Native Americans were stripped of their culture and their lives when Europeans came to America. Disease and violence were rampant. Native Americans lost so much in the times of colonization and gave so many resources to the Europeans. “Despite the diversity of Native populations and the existence of several strong empires, Native Americans were wholly unprepared for the arrival of Europeans. Biology magnified European cruelties. Many died in war and slavery, but millions died in epidemics...All told, in fact, some scholars estimate that as much as 90 percent of the population of the Americas perished within the first century and a half of European contact...Though ravaged by disease and warfare, Native Americans forged middle grounds, resisted with violence, accommodated, and adapted to the challenges of colonialism, and continued to shape the patterns of life throughout the New World for hundreds of years. But the Europeans kept coming.” (Locke & Wright, ch. 1) They tried to fight for their land back, but it was taken over by the Europeans. Today, there are policies revolving around immigration which tends to upset many Native Americans. Some Americans agree with Trump’s policies on immigration and in which illegal immigrants should not be allowed in the country, when they themselves are descendants of immigrants. Native Americans feel bad for immigrants being deported and those in dire situations as they feel for them. It is horrible to continue to see such naïve outlooks on people coming into a country for a new life and being kicked out by those who basically also came to this country illegally.

Hamilton the musical, has been a modern historical sensation among many children and adults alike. As it made its way to Disney Plus this year, its popularity grew. This modern

musical introduces the beginning of America and democracy through the story of Alexander Hamilton. This rap battle, Cabinet Battle #1, contains the debate of Hamilton's National Bank and the development of the American economy. The battle is between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton who represents federalists versus the democratic-republican parties where both are defending their side of the debate. Jefferson felt that Hamilton's bank would have too much power. Him and other democratic-republicans, like James Madison shown in the rap battle, that the national bank was unconstitutional because of where the government's power lies.

Hamilton argued that this national bank would help to create and boost the economy, while releasing the nation of its debts. "Thomas Jefferson and other Republicans argued that the plan was unconstitutional; the Constitution did not authorize Congress to create a bank. Hamilton, however, argued that the bank was not only constitutional but also important for the country's prosperity. The Bank of the United States would fulfill several needs. It would act as a convenient depository for federal funds. It would print paper banknotes backed by specie (gold or silver). Its agents would also help control inflation by periodically taking state bank notes to their banks of origin and demanding specie in exchange, limiting the amount of notes the state banks printed." (Locke & Wright, ch. 6) Washington supported Hamilton's side in the debate. One of the biggest debates in the early days of our nation, leads to the development of democracy and the nation's economy.

This can also connect to the ideas of states' rights where Hamilton wanted the federal government to take over states' debts which are mainly from the cost of the Revolutionary War. It seems nowadays through the rise of conservatism and the beliefs in small government and individualism. Republicans today have some similar views to Jefferson on the National Bank with the idea of states' rights and protecting their laws and policies like when Jefferson said that

their debts were already paid. Jefferson also said why tax the South when they're made in the shade. "Hamilton's system seemed to reinforce class boundaries and give the rich inordinate power over the federal government." (Locke & Wright, ch. 6) This reminds me of conservatives' beliefs of tax cuts and trickle-down economics where the rich and big corporations get a break, and the money is expected to just make its way to the middle-class and the poor and limited government regulation. As you learn more about the history, Hamilton's plan leads more towards a similar idea. There is the continuation of a divided country between political parties in policy and action, from Federalists versus Democratic-Republicans, to Democrats versus Republicans.

The article discusses the current issues with Republicans and states' rights dating back to the civil war influence and the switching between political parties. The argument of slavery becoming a threat to democracy among the democratic party in the 1800s. They believed that slavery was wrong and a sin. Therefore, the anti-slavery movement began. Actions needed to be taken in order to pursue a free nation, as violence and war became necessary.

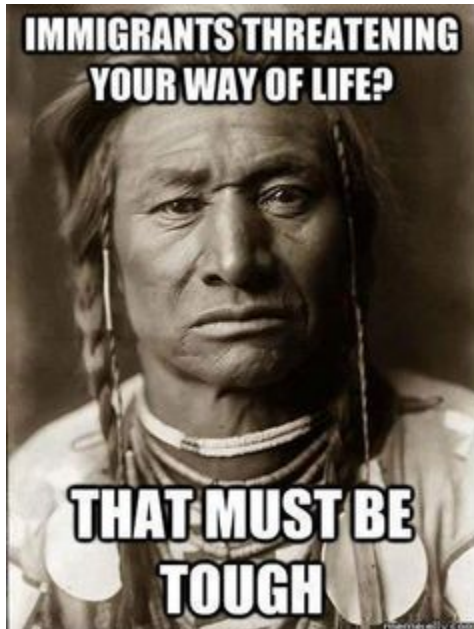
In the time of manifest destiny, there was the debate of whether or not the country should expand west and bring slavery with it. This division among Americans is very common. Going back to the idea of states' rights and having individual control where Americans in the Antebellum era relied heavily on state's rights to preserve any ounce of say they had in slavery as the country inched closer to the nation's division turning into war. The Missouri Compromise and the sectional crisis were the triggering for this tense division. Party politics even becomes confusing as some whites were not truly against slavery and making blacks full U.S. citizens despite advocating for anti-slavery and changing parties. The fight over slavery and black Americans rights had only truly just begun.

This reminds me of how many Americans in the conservative movement switched from the Democratic party to the Republican party where the Republican party was reshaped. It's when their values and beliefs did not match up and many of these Americans wanted to maintain this "old America" or traditional American values. They thought that the democratic party did not line up with the policies in which they wanted enacted. Many such as Ronald Reagan has done this to keep whites and the privileged in power rather than support integration and help the oppressed. We've seen much of this political party division throughout history and is continued to 2020. Just look at the 2020 election for example. We see a lot of one-sided politics where Americans are rooted in certain beliefs.

As days move by and our country keeps changing, we are constantly reminded of our history. We understand that America has changed drastically over the last hundreds of years and will continue to change. With the growth of media, we are exposed to millions of articles, images, videos, etc. every single day. We see claims that may not have factual evidence or a funny response. But as our country grows and develops and we are exposed to the many perspectives of history in the making; we must be knowledgeable of the history, where it all started, and remember how that can influence what we live through and experience in our own lives right now.

*Works Cited*

Locke, Joseph L., and Ben Wright. *The American Yawp: A Massively Collaborative Open U.S. History Textbook*. Stanford University Press, 2019.



Hamilton The Musical Cabinet Battle #1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mhsxd3NUat0>  
(New Nation, Hamilton's National Bank)

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/07/14/never-trumpers-will-want-to-read-this-history-lesson-219006> (Civil War Era)