

"Unearthing the Genocide of Native American Children: Reflective Essay

Group 7: Rajon Lupe, Marrius Ivins, Carmello Narcisco

The Pulitzer Center's poignant article, "Unearthing the Genocide of Native American Children," illuminates the grim history of Native American boarding schools, where countless Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities with the goal of erasing their cultural identities. In our reflection, we delve into the historical trauma inflicted by these institutions and examine their continuing impact on Native communities today.

Established in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Native American boarding schools embodied the cruel policy of "kill the Indian, save the man." These institutions were instruments of a broader strategy of cultural genocide, aimed at systematically stripping away Indigenous languages, practices, and beliefs. Children suffered under harsh discipline, compelled to abandon their traditional attire, hair, and even names, which were central to their identity and heritage.

The Pulitzer article meticulously recounts the discovery of mass graves at several former school sites, a chilling testament to the physical and psychological abuse endured by the children. It brings to the forefront the deep wounds inflicted on entire generations, wounds whose impact is not confined to the past but continues to ripple through today's Indigenous populations.

As we absorbed the haunting narratives detailed in the article, we found ourselves reflecting on the concept of intergenerational trauma — the transference of emotional, physical, and social pain from one generation to the next. Families of survivors often grapple with unresolved grief, which manifests in various facets of community life, including struggles with identity, loss of language and culture, and a range of mental health challenges.

This historical backdrop casts a long shadow over current social dynamics within Native communities, often contributing to issues like substance abuse, depression, and a pervasive sense of loss. Understanding this link is crucial for addressing the root causes of these challenges rather than merely the symptoms.

Reading about the efforts to uncover the truth of these atrocities, as described in the Pulitzer article, reminded us of the power of truth and reconciliation processes. These

efforts are vital not only in acknowledging the wrongs of the past but also in facilitating healing and restoration for Native communities. The acts of uncovering graves and repatriating remains, though painful, are essential steps in the journey toward acknowledging and healing from the genocidal practices of the past.

The dialogue around these schools and their legacies also raises important questions about how we, as a society, remember and learn from this painful history. There is an undeniable need for education reform to include a more comprehensive narrative about Native American histories and experiences — one that does not shy away from the uncomfortable parts of our past.

The revelations brought forth in "Unearthing the Genocide of Native American Children" serve as a somber reminder of our collective responsibility to confront and address historical injustices. This reflection process should compel us to support ongoing efforts within Native communities to reclaim their history, culture, and rights. It's about more than just making amends; it's about fostering an environment where future generations can thrive without the burdens of past traumas.

As we reflect on the dark legacy of Native American boarding schools, let us commit to an ethos of remembrance, restitution, and, most importantly, respect. In doing so, we affirm our collective humanity and contribute to building a more just and compassionate world.