Morality In The Us Essay, Research Paper

Many things have influenced the United States in its history. Morality,one of these influences, has been both observed and ignored in this history. This essay will show different periods in history when the United States acted in a immoral fashion. The United States treated the Japanese Americans immorally in World War 2 and acted immorally toward Native Americans especially at Wounded Knee. Another of the immoral acts that the US has committed was the My Lai Massacre.

In 1940, the United States census found that there were 126,947 Japanese Americans in the United States, 79,595 of which were native born. On December 11, 1941, two days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, 1370 Japanese Americans were detained by the FBI for being “dangerous enemy aliens.” In 1942, the United States government relocated 110,000 Japanese Americans to internment camps. The United States did nothing to any other people in the country including the German Americans, the Italian Americans, and the Polish Americans. This may have been because the Japanese had attacked the United States on its own territory. The Japanese Americans who were relocated lost all their property and jobs during the internment.

In December, 1942, 2260 “dangerous persons” of Japanese ancestry were deported from Latin American countries by the US government in the hopes that they could be used against Japan as hostages. When World War 2 ended, 1400 were not allowed to return to their home countries. Over 900 of these people were deported to Japan.

After World War 2 ended, the Japanese Americans were released from their imprisonment in the internment camps. However, it was not until 1948 that the United States government passed the Evacuation Claims Act which authorized payment to Japanese Americans who suffered economic losses during their internment. However, only $.10 were paid for every $1.00 lost by the Japanese Americans.

The mistreatment of Native Americans has been occurring since the Europeans first arrived in North America. These early Americans expanded and began taking Native American land. One such case of this land taking occurred when Nathaniel Bacon picked a fight with the Susquehannock people. He led a rebellion to take the Native Americans’ land and actually burned Jamestown when Governor William Berkeley objected. The year after Bacon died, the Susquehannock were forced to sign a treaty which gave away much of their land to white settlers.

After the United States had become its own sovereign nation, it continued to take the American Indians’ land. In New York, the once mighty Iroquois were limited to reservations near the new towns of Buffalo and Syracuse. The Shawnee, who had led Native American resistance in the Northwest Territory until 1815, were scattered. Several tribes in the South were pressured by the United States government to sell away their land. Even after the Native Americans had sold much of their land, white settlers continued to simply move onto land that had not been ceded to them. The federal government did not do anything to stop this. James Monroe, who was elected at this time, said to Congress in his first annual message that the indigenous people who were still in the east be removed to new lands. This was in direct violation of the treaties that the federal government had signed that guaranteed the Native Americans what was left of their land. Southern states at this time believed that they had jurisdiction over the Native American lands in their borders and therefore the treaties did not apply.

By 1830 the situation had become a crisis. New president Andrew Jackson, a Tennessee plantation owner and a famous fighter of Native Americans, refused to exercise federal jurisdiction over Native American affairs, allowing southern states to find their own solutions. The Cherokee took the state of Georgia to court, and in 1832, in the case of Worcester v. Georgia, John Marshall, chief justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, ruled that Georgia’s extension of its authority over Cherokee land was unconstitutional. President Jackson simply refused to enforce the decision, allowing southern states to continue to encroach on Native American lands.

In 1830, Congress passed the Native American Removal Act which offered Native Americans land east of the Mississippi River. This land was federal land and therefore the federal government could protect them. After this act, Martin Van Buren sent the US Army to evict 20,000 Native Americans from the South and send them to Oklahoma. The US Army forced the Native Americans to march the whole way causing 4,000 to die. This march is now known as the Trail of Tears.

Although many Native Americans were forced out of the West, some remained to fight. In 1849, the Gold Rush caused whites to again encroach on Native American territory. Although the Native Americans fought the invading settlers, they were defeated and forced onto reservations.

For the next 50 years, the fighting continued to escalate. In the 1860s and 1870s, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Sioux. The most well known battle of these two decades was the battle of Little Big Horn. On June 25, 1876, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong led the 7th Cavalry Regiment to defeat against the combined forces of the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes. However, after this victory most of the

Sioux and Cheyenne surrendered. Other Native Americans fought on Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce in the late 1870s, Geronimo and the Apaches as late as the 1880s. The last military encounter between the United States and the Native Americans was the battle at Wounded Knee.

In 1888, a Native American named Wovoka, began preaching that an Indian Messiah was coming soon. A cult grew from his teachings, causing the federal government to become alarmed. US officials tried to suppress the new religion, in direct violation of the First Amendment, and finally sent in the 7th Cavalry Division. The soldiers killed 146 Sioux men, women, and children when the warriors would not surrender. This battle was not really in fact a battle, but a massacre. It was a prime example of the mistreatment of Native Americans in US history.

There were many immoral actions taken during the Vietnam War by both the Vietnamese and the United States. One of the most horrifying actions, was the My Lai Massacre. It was here that over 350 unarmed citizens, mostly women and children, were killed by American soldiers.

On March 16, 1968, Lieutenant William Calley led a unit of the US army Americal Division into a South Vietnamese hamlet called My Lai. Lieutenant Calley brought the troops in thinking that the village was a Vietcong stronghold. When they arrived in the village, Calley and his men proceeded to round up and murder over 350 civilians. This massacre remained unknown for over a year because the officers in charge of the attack kept it covered up, proving that they knew it was wrong. Several soldiers and officers were charged with murder and many other officers were charged with dereliction of duty for covering up the incident. Only five of these men were actually court-martialed and only Lieutenant Calley was convicted. However, although Calley was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of over 22 civilians, his sentence was reduced to 10 years and then in September of 1974, his conviction was overturned and he was set free. The United States government failed to punish Lieutenant Calley as he deserved. Calley knew that the murders were wrong because he attempted to cover up the incident. Calley was not the only guilty party, however. The soldiers with Calley knew it was wrong too, and yet they participated. Three of the soldiers who refused to participate and actually save Vietnamese lives at My Lai, were given the Soldier’s Medal in 1998.

My Lai was not an isolated event, however. There were many cases of war crimes committed, especially during the Vietnam War. Many of these crimes were covered up which is just as immoral as the actual crimes because the people who committed the crimes went unpunished. Vietnam seems to have had many of these war crimes, but that may be simply because they are the most recent. Whatever the reason, these crimes are immoral and inexcusable.

This essay is not meant to say that the United States is an immoral country. The United States has done some incredibly generous things in its time. However, the United States has done some horrible things and that is what this essay is trying to show. Although there were several immoral things done, the Japanese interment, the mistreatment of Native Americans, and the My Lai incident have been three of the worst. No country has been completely moral in its actions, and the United States of America is no exception.