SOMETHING ELSE
ON BEING INDIGENOUS AND INVISIBLE IN AMERICA

WHAT IS INVISIBILITY?

Invisibility is one of the strongest tools working against Indigenous people in America. Invisibility is the utter lack of or inaccurate representation of Indigenous peoples in fields such as legislation, media, entertainment, pop culture, education, institutional leadership and governance, census and other social demographics, economic development, and more.

Invisibility is the result of bias against Indigenous peoples and can take the form of stereotypes and mystical caricature and is perpetuated by misconception, misinformation, social ignorance, and racism.

WHEN THEY DON’T SEE US, THEY DEHUMANIZE US, AND WE DON’T EXIST.”
CRYSTAL ECHOHAWK

WHY IS INVISIBILITY PROBLEMATIC?

Key issues hurting Indigenous communities are overlooked. Indigenous peoples are adversely impacted by issues such as police brutality, domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking, and suicide.

Mystical caricatures of Indigenous peoples as beings of the past, romanticized, exoticized, and as savages, steals from Indigenous peoples ability to speak for and represent themselves.

Invisibility leads to erasure. Erasure of Indigenous peoples from history and education causes the general public to know little or nothing about Indigenous people, often times accepting that they no longer exist.

Invisibility fuels racism against Indigenous peoples.

27 states make no mention of a single Native American in K‐12 curriculum

(Stereotypes 1. Dennison, 2020)

0.4% or less of primetime TV and films include Native American characters


90%+ of Native American voters in democratic counties of key states flip states in favor of Biden/Harris deemed “something else” in exit poll

(Klepper, 2019)

(High Country News, 2020)

WHERE DOES INVISIBILITY COME FROM?

Invisibility's historical roots originate in settler colonialism

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is an attempt at genocide and cultural destruction with the intent of building space for White privilege and capitalism

Logic of Elimination

Tools of colonialism used to eradicate Indigenous cultures
- outright genocide
- forced removal and land allotments
- blood quantum: racializing Native people with the intent to dilute 'Native blood' (still legal and actively used today)
- attempted assimilation
  - outlaw Indigenous language and cultural and spiritual practices
  - boarding schools and incarceration

(REPRESENTATIONS 1. Dennison, 2020.)

REFERENCES

Klepper, 2019.


DEFEATING INVISIBILITY

Just like assimilation, invisibility is only an attempt to erase Indigenous people. It is not successful.

- Indigenous Peoples Day is replacing and abolishing Columbus Day in cities nationwide
- Indigenous peoples are revitalizing their languages and cultural and spiritual practices
- Indigenous peoples are being elected as government officials to represent Native peoples on a national level
- tribal governments are engaging in truth and reconciliation processes with their local settler government (Dawnland, 2018)
- Indigenous peoples are repealing racist mascots across the country
- Indigenous researchers are collecting data and closing information gaps which exclude critical Indigenous representation
- Indigenous peoples are innovating economic development in renewable resources and sustainable production

“SOMETHING ELSE”

AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES 102

INFOSEET #1

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