



Document 1 - Excerpts from Richard H. Pratt, "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites."

Published in, *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian," 1880–1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 260–271.

Beginning in the late 19th century, the U.S. Government actively attempted to force Native Americans to participate in a program of "assimilation through education." Federal-run day and boarding schools, such as the Carlisle Indian School, founded by Col. Richard Pratt, were established both inside reservations and beyond their borders. Many young Native Americans were required to attend these schools. Between the 1890s and 1920s, thousands of young Native Americans attended such schools as far as 1,500 miles from their homes. Some attended willingly, however, many were forcibly removed from their families and required to attend.

Once enrolled, the process of "assimilation" was pursued through a systematic denigration and suppression of Native American culture. Students' hair was cut, their traditional clothing was confiscated, they were required to speak only English, and their musical traditions, considered "savage" by most whites, were forbidden. The letter below was published by Carlisle founder Col. Richard Pratt.

Col. Richard Pratt:

A great general has said that the only good Indian is a dead one ... In a sense, I agree with the sentiment, but only in this: that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.

It is a sad day for the Indians when they fall under the assaults of our troops...but a far sadder day is it for them when they fall under the baneful influences of a treaty agreement with the United States whereby they are to receive large annuities, and to be protected on reservations, and held apart from all association with the best of our civilization. The destruction is not so speedy, but it is far more general.



Col. Richard Pratt

Inscrutable are the ways of Providence. Horrible as were the experiences of its introduction, and of slavery itself, there was concealed in them the greatest blessing that ever came to the Negro race—seven millions of blacks from cannibalism in darkest Africa to citizenship in free and enlightened America; not full, not complete citizenship, but possible—probable—citizenship, and on the highway and near to it.

The Indians under our care remained savage, because forced back upon themselves and away from association with English-speaking and civilized people, and because of our savage example and treatment of them... We have never made any attempt to civilize them with the idea of taking them into the nation, and all of our policies have been against citizenizing and absorbing them.



It is a great mistake to think that the Indian is born an inevitable savage. He is born a blank, like all the rest of us. Left in the surroundings of savagery, he grows to possess a savage language, superstition, and life. We, left in the surroundings of civilization, grow to possess a civilized language, life, and purpose. Transfer the infant white to the savage surroundings, he will grow to possess a savage language, superstition, and habit. Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit... those advanced in life, even to maturity, of either class, lose already acquired qualities belonging to the side of their birth, and gradually take on those of the side to which they have been transferred.

The school at Carlisle is an attempt on the part of the government to do this. Carlisle has always planted treason to the tribe and loyalty to the nation at large. It has preached against colonizing Indians, and in favor of individualizing them. It has demanded for them the same multiplicity of chances which all others in the country enjoy. Carlisle fills young Indians with the spirit of loyalty to the stars and stripes, and then moves them out into our communities to show by their conduct and ability that the Indian is no different from the white or the colored, that he has the inalienable right to liberty and opportunity that the white and the negro have.



Carlisle Students, Before and After