**Slavery and the Academy**

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Charters and deeds were created by English Royalty to give ‘rightful ownership’ to European settlers to lands that were already occupied by indigenous people (Wilder, 2013). Geographical displacement of native peoples played a role in the eradication of native people. Indigenous peoples relied on the location of their settlements for resources and religious affiliation. Indigenous peoples were violently displaced of their lands to establish English settlements and institutions of higher education (Wilder, 2013). Early colleges were used to convert native children or as settlers called them, “infidels” (Wilder, 2013, p. 21). Settlers civilized indigenous people through Catholicism, so that they would adopt an English way of life (Wilder, 2013). Indigenous children were schooled academically and socially to behave like Englishmen (Wilder, 2013). These boys would later return to their tribes to promote the benefits of English ways (Wilder, 2013). They would later become mediators between the settlers and tribe, which would lead to faulty negotiations of lands and more displacement of native tribes (Wilder, 2013). English settlers established power through the military tactics and education of indigenous children, who were strategically held hostage in colleges and used as leverage against native tribes (Wilder, 2013).

*“Ultimately, about twenty Native children were being held on campus-including the sons and daughters of the chiefs of the Nottoway, Pamunkey, and Meherrin- and other Tuscarora were held there for more than a year” (Wilder, 2013, p. 44).*

Education was weaponized by English settlers during their conflicts with native tribes (Wilder, 2013). Conversion tactics via education erased native customs and culture from younger generations, which threatened native cultural persistence. Moreover, eradication of cultural capital amongst native youth prevented native traditions from being passed down generationally. English settlers used native youth as a source of labor and knowledge on native ways (Wilder, 2013). Settlers were able to reap monetary benefits from the lands that were stolen and from the enslavement of indigenous people (Wilder, 2013). In all, eliminating the cultural capital of future generations, conversion through education, and displacement allowed English settlers to alienate indigenous people from their way of life. This allowed English settlers to occupy already tended lands English settlers created a perception of being all-knowing and powerful, which conceived a narrative of inferiority towards indigenous people and slaves.

Institutions of higher education were funded by the slave trade and plantation economy (Wilder, 2013). “Slaveholders became college presidents...Profits from the sale and purchase of human beings paid for campuses and swelled college trusts” (Wilder, 2013, p.77). As Wilder (2013) mentions plantation owners became the governing body and main source of income of institutions like Harvard and Brown. The sons of wealthy plantation owners were constantly recruited and became the prime student population of institutions (Wilder, 2013). These students were able to learn subjects and trades within these institutions, which allowed them to carry on their family enterprises regarding slavery and trade in the Caribbean (Wilder, 2013). Institutions of higher education created alumni associations tied together through the slave trade (Wilder, 2013). Faculty and staff within institutions practiced the selling and trading of human beings (Wilder, 2013). Oftentimes institutions were given slaves as monetary contributions or gifts (Wilder, 2013). Institutions of higher education morally, politically, and economically facilitated the slave trade, because these profits allowed for the growth of the university. “The charter funded the College of William and Mary from the profits of slave labor, assigning a duty of penny per pound on tobacco exported from Virginia and Maryland to support a president and professors” (Wilder, 2013, p. 42). Without the profits of slave labor, institutions would not have had the funds to hire professors, tutors, or build institutional facilities. Not having a slave trade would have resulted in a lack of institutions and universities throughout the United States. This means that there would not have been professionals to promote the social, economic, political, and educational growth of the country.

It is important to put into perspective that without the lands of indigenous peoples and the slave trade there would be a lack of institutions of higher education. Enslaved peoples, indigenous and African, built the most acclaimed institutions of the United States. However, this side of history is not openly presented across the country. Even though the circumstances in which these institutions were built were fundamentally wrong and are demeaning to humans of indigenous and African ancestry, this oppressive narrative needs to be analyzed and not just by published scholars. Professionals in this field need to consider the damage that was done and evaluate the history of institutions towards historically marginalized groups. Professionals in the field of higher education can use their influence to work with students and institutions to unpack this history. Oftentimes students are not aware of who laid the bricks of their institution, they are only aware of the privileged individuals who founded the institution. Higher education practitioners along with other faculty and college administrations, should aim to normalize that students learn all facets of the history of their institutions. There is no way to undo what was done in the past, but there are ways to move forward in a conscious way. The goal should be to use this knowledge base to create accessible opportunities for individuals of historically marginalized groups to attend institutions of higher education. There needs to be more of an effort to acknowledge wrongdoing and work with it instead of sweeping it under the rug.

References

Wilder, C. S. (2014). *Ebony and ivy: Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*. Bloombsbury.