

# Excerpts from **Stop Saying This is A “Nation of Immigrants”**

Misrepresenting the process of European colonization of North America, making everyone an immigrant, serves to preserve the “official story” of a mostly benign and benevolent USA, and to mask the fact that the pre-US independence settlers, were, well, settlers, colonial settlers, just as they were in Africa and India, or the Spanish in Central and South America. The United States was founded as a settler state, and an imperialistic one from its inception (“manifest destiny,” of course). The settlers were English, Welsh, Scots, Scots-Irish, and German, not including the huge number of Africans who were not settlers.

Buried beneath the tons of propaganda — from the landing of the English “pilgrims” (fanatic Protestant Christian evangelicals) to James Fennimore Cooper’s phenomenally popular “Last of the Mohicans” claiming “natural rights” to not only the indigenous peoples territories but also to the territories claimed by other European powers — is the fact that the founding of the United States was a division of the Anglo empire, with the US becoming a parallel empire to Great Britain. From day one, as was specified in the Northwest Ordinance that preceded the US Constitution, the new republic for empire (as Jefferson called the US) envisioned the future shape of what is now the lower 48 states of

the US. They drew up rough maps, specifying the first territory to conquer as the “Northwest Territory,” ergo the title of the ordinance. That territory was the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes region, which was filled with indigenous farming communities.

Once the conquest of the “Northwest Territory” was accomplished through a combination of genocidal military campaigns and bringing in European settlers from the east, and the indigenous peoples moved south and north for protection into other indigenous territories, the republic for empire annexed Spanish Florida where runaway enslaved Africans and remnants of the indigenous communities that had escaped the Ohio carnage fought back during three major wars (Seminole wars) over two decades. Anglo settlers with enslaved Africans seized the indigenous agricultural lands for plantation agriculture in the Southern region. Many moved on into the Mexican province of Texas — then came the US military invasion of Mexico in 1846, seizing Mexico City and forcing Mexico to give up its northern half through the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Texas were then opened to “legal” Anglo settlement, also legalizing those who had already settled illegally, and in Texas by force. The indigenous

and the poor Mexican communities in the seized territory, such as the Apache, Navajo, and Comanche, resisted colonization, as they had resisted the Spanish empire, often by force of arms, for the next 40 years. The small class of Hispanic elites welcomed and collaborated with US occupation.

Are “immigrants” the appropriate designation for the indigenous peoples of North America? No.

Are “immigrants” the appropriate designation for enslaved Africans? No.

Are “immigrants” the appropriate designation for the original European settlers? No.

Are “immigrants” the appropriate designation for Mexicans who migrate for work to the United States? No. They are migrant workers crossing a border created by US military force. Many crossing that border now are also from Central America, from the small countries that were ravaged by US military intervention in the 1980s and who also have the right to make demands on the United States.

So, let’s stop saying “this is a nation of immigrants.”

**By Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz**

