

In Case You Missed...

Some of our special stories in January, focusing on Election 2012, a possible new war with Iran, the economic degradation of America's middle class, missteps on climate change and more.

["Cain Kills Abel: the First Class War"](#) by Rev. Howard Bess, tracing the history of class violence to Biblical tales. (Jan. 1, 2012)

["Iran/Iraq 'Defectors' and Disinformation"](#) by Robert Parry, suggesting caution when hearing tales about an enemy. (Jan. 2, 2012)

["Triangulations of Christopher Hitchens"](#) by Sam Husseini, exposing the dark side of the late and much acclaimed writer. (Jan. 2, 2012)

["Why Mr. Hardball Found JFK Elusive"](#) by James DiEugenio, critiquing Chris Matthews's shallow biography of John Kennedy. (Jan. 3, 2012)

["A Betrayal of the Founders"](#) by Ray McGovern, noting how President Obama ducked a fight over civil liberties. (Jan. 4, 2012)

["Fleecing the Angry Whites"](#) by Robert Parry, describing how Republicans are again playing the race card to manipulate prejudiced whites. (Jan. 8, 2012)

["NYT 'Clarified' Santorum's Black Quote"](#) by Robert Parry, recalling the contrast of how a Times reporter handled quotes by Al Gore and Rick Santorum. (Jan. 10, 2012)

["Herding Americans to War with Iran"](#) by Robert Parry, explaining how the war propaganda is working again. (Jan. 12, 2012)

["Ron Paul's False Founding Narrative"](#) by Robert Parry, challenging the libertarian view of America's founding. (Jan. 13, 2012)

["Turning America Into Pottersville"](#) by Robert Parry, projecting how Right's policies would work out for the average person. (Jan. 14, 2012)

["Will Obama Resist Push for Iran War"](#) by Marjorie Cohn, questioning the President's determination to stand up to Israeli demands. (Jan. 18, 2012)

["Web Sites Protest Anti-Piracy Bills"](#) by Lisa Pease, reporting on an unprecedented Web reaction to restrictive proposals. (Jan. 18, 2012)

["How Not to Celebrate Liberty"](#) by William Loren Katz, remarking on the irony of honoring principles of freedom with acts of repression. (Jan. 19, 2012)

"Israel Tamps Down Iran War Threats" by Ray McGovern, observing changes in Israeli rhetoric. (Jan. 19, 2012)

"Getting Rid of 'Anti-Israel' Presidents" by Robert Parry, recalling the trouble U.S. presidents can encounter when they cross Israel. (Jan. 21, 2012)

"Reagan's Hand in Guatemala Genocide" by Robert Parry, linking the late president to a Guatemalan dictator facing human rights charges. (Jan. 23, 2012)

"The Fiscally Reckless Mitch Daniels" by Robert Parry, exposing the real history of a supposed GOP deficit hawk. (Jan. 24, 2012)

"US/Israel: Iran NOT Building Nukes" by Ray McGovern, revealing that U.S. and Israeli intelligence agree that Iran has not decided to build a bomb. (Jan. 24, 2012)

"What Kind of Christianity Is This?" by Gary G. Kohls, questioning the bloody record of official Christendom in contrast to Jesus's teaching. (Jan. 25, 2012)

"Selling the Supply-Side Myth" by Robert Parry, exploring how Ronald Reagan's "supply-side" economics hurt the American middle class. (Jan. 27, 2012)

"The Founders' True Foresight" by Robert Parry, noting how the Constitution gave America a unity that Europe has lacked. (Jan. 28, 2012)

"Reagan's Road to Climate Perdition" by Sam Parry, tracing America's lost way on alternative energy to Ronald Reagan's mistakes. (Jan. 29, 2012)

"The Ugly Words of Newt Gingrich" by Robert Parry, reflecting on how Newt Gingrich devised nasty language to poison the U.S. political process. (Jan. 30, 2012)

"No Justice for Haditha Massacre" by Marjorie Cohn, reporting on the aftermath of military trials over an infamous Iraq slaughter. (Jan. 30, 2012)

"Murdoch's WSJ Misleads on Climate" by Sam Parry, looking at the Wall Street Journal's distortions on global warming. (Jan. 31, 2012)

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The First American Freedom Fighter

A half millennium ago this Feb. 2, the Spaniards felt they had put an end to the first major resistance to the European/Christian conquest of the Americas by executing Hatuey, an Indigenous freedom fighter who fought them on Hispaniola and Cuba. But Hatuey's spirit of independence survived, as William Loren Katz notes.

By William Loren Katz

Little is known about Hatuey, a Taino Cacique [leader], not his date of birth, nor exactly when he first led his forces into battle. But key elements of his story have come down to us from Bishop Las Casas, the Dominican priest who became Spain's "Defender of the Indians." On Feb. 2, 1512, Las Casas was in Cuba when Hatuey died at the hands of the European invaders.

Hatuey's armed resistance had begun on the island of Hispaniola [today's Haiti and the Dominican Republic] during the age of Columbus and probably increased after 1502 when a fleet of 30 Spanish ships brought over the new Governor Nicolas de Ovando along with hundreds of Spanish settlers and a number of enslaved Africans to pursue Spain's search for gold.

But oppression rarely goes as planned. Before the year was over Governor Ovando complained to King Ferdinand that the enslaved Africans "fled among the Indians, taught them bad customs, and could not be captured."

The last four words reveal more than his problem with disobedient servants or his difficulty of retrieving runaways in a rainforest. Ovando is probably describing the formation of the first American rainbow coalition: Hatuey and his followers are greeting and embracing the runaway Africans as allies.

In 1511, after about a decade of armed resistance in Hispaniola, Hatuey and 400 of his followers climbed into canoes and headed to Cuba. His plan was not escape but to mobilize fellow Caribbean islanders against the bearded intruders, their lust for gold, and the slavery, misery and death their invasion brought.

In Cuba, Hatuey's clear message was recorded by Las Casas: the intruders "worship gold," "fight and kill," "usurp our land and make us slaves" For gold, slaves and land, "they fight and kill; for these they persecute us and that is why we have to throw them into the sea."

Hatuey's forces had no sooner begun to mobilize Cubans when well-armed Spaniards under Diego Velázquez landed in Cuba. (One was Hernán Cortés who would conquer

Mexico.) Hatuey's strategy to attack in guerrilla fashion and then retreat to the hills and regroup for the next attack kept the Spaniards pinned down at their fort at Baracoa for at least three months.

But finally a Spanish offensive overwhelmed Hatuey and his troops. On Feb. 2, 1512, Hatuey was led out for a public execution. Las Casas described the scene:

"When tied to the stake, the cacique Hatuey was told by a Franciscan friar who was present something about the God of the Christians and of the articles of Faith. And he was told what he could do in the brief time that remained to him, in order to be saved and go to heaven.

"The Cacique had never heard any of this before and was told he would go to Inferno where, if he did not adopt the Christian faith, he would suffer eternal torment. [He] asked the Franciscan friar if Christians all went to Heaven. When told that they did, he said he would prefer to go to Hell."

Hatuey was then burned alive.

As the first freedom fighter of the Americas, Hatuey not only united Africans and Indigenous people against the invaders, but in bringing his fighters from Hispaniola to Cuba, he initiated the first pan-American struggle for independence from colonialism.

Today a statue in Cuba celebrates Hatuey as a national hero, its first great liberator. He was more than that. He was the first of the heroic American freedom fighters whose contributions led to 1776, to the revolution in Haiti, and to Simon Bolivar who also sought to liberate all of the Americas from Spain.

One could argue that Hatuey was the first to have ignited a spirit of liberty and independence that would circle the globe for the next 500 years.

William Loren Katz adapted this essay from his just published and updated edition of *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*. His website is: williamlkatz.com

How Not to Celebrate Liberty

American history can be described as an endless tension between the nation's ideals and its practices, with hypocrisy often winning out over principle – and those contradictions are most obvious when the nation celebrates its liberties while betraying them, both today and in the past, William Loren Katz notes.

By William Loren Katz

When the National Defense Authorization Act cleared Congress on Dec. 15, 2011, some critics noted the irony of the date, the 220th anniversary of the ratified Bill of Rights.

Instead of celebrating those old promises of “speedy” trials and no “cruel and unusual punishments,” Congress sent a bill to President Barack Obama with language authorizing him and his successors to order indefinite detentions under draconian conditions. (Obama signed the NDAA into law on Dec. 31, though expressing “serious reservations” about those provisions.)

But it was not the first time that the United States has desecrated the anniversary of a founding document. A similar defiling of American principles occurred in 1876, during the centennial year celebrating the signing of the Declaration of Independence with its lofty commitment to “self-evident” truths, that “all men are created equal endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.”

In that celebratory year of 1876, powerful figures of the U.S. government sided with an unholy alliance of northern railroad builders and land speculators, unrepentant former southern slaveholders and assorted white supremacists, and their obedient lobbyists and media.

What followed was a severe and simultaneous assault on the basic rights of Native Americans and African-Americans, sending the country careening in a new direction.

This fateful change began in late June 1876 as Americans prepared a massive coast-to-coast July Fourth celebration. But as the bunting went up, as bands rehearsed and as corks began to pop, shocking news arrived from the Little Big Horn, a remote area in what is today southeastern Montana.

A force of about 2,000 Lakota and Cheyenne commanded by Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse and Rain In the Face had surrounded Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer and a contingent of 226 men in his Seventh Cavalry. In a battle that became known as Custer’s Last Stand, not one Bluecoat survived.

Though the U.S. reaction to Custer’s annihilation was one of righteous fury, the truth was that the dashing, brilliant and somewhat arrogant officer was not ambushed while on some peaceful mission. Instead, he was seeking to open the Black Hills of South Dakota to gold prospecting by whites. Custer also was set on teaching the Indians a lesson and making a media splash during the summer’s Presidential nominating conventions.

If facts and reason had ruled, the reaction of U.S. government officials would have been anger toward Custer. On his own, he chose to ignore the U.S. Treaty of 1868 stating that “no white person or persons shall be permitted” to “enter” the Black Hills.

Custer knew the Lakota loudly proclaimed this was their sacred ground. He was aware that President Ulysses S. Grant publicly pledged, “it is secured to the Indians.” Yet, Custer chose to ignore Sitting Bull’s flat warning, “If the whites try ... I will fight.”

The dashing officer whom Native Americans called “Long Hair” relied on what he called “Custer luck.” And his “luck” may have survived the battle even though he didn’t. Instead of censure for his flouting of treaties and other government promises not to mention his exceptionally poor military judgment U.S. political leaders embraced Long Hair as a martyr to Indian savagery.

U.S. government officials rose not to castigate Custer but to demand revenge for this defeat of national power. Politicians cagily added, for the benefit of land-hungry easterners, it was time for Indians to surrender their lands. In the centennial Fourth of July celebrations, public grief mixed with greed, anger and glorification, and behind closed doors, leading politicians and generals planned to complete the grim work Custer had begun.

By mid-July, War Department orders nullifying the Treaty of 1868 sent General William Sherman riding off with a mandate to treat Lakota reservation families as belligerents or prisoners of war. By mid-August, U.S. officials demanded the Lakota surrender their Black Hills and Powder River lands. U.S. troops began a march that would not stop until the Wounded Knee massacre in December 1890.

Sitting Bull seemed to sense the inevitable outcome in 1877 when he spoke to fellow commanders at the Powder River Council. He began by recalling the earliest white invaders as “small and feeble when our forefathers first met them, but now great and overbearing.”

Then he began to speak of the whites’ character, explaining: “Strangely enough, they have a mind to till the soil, and the love of possession is a disease in them. These people have made many rules that the rich may break, but the poor may not. They have a religion in which the poor worship, but the rich will not!

“They even take tithes from the poor and weak to support the rich and those who rule. They claim this mother of ours, the Earth, for their own use, and fence their neighbors away from her, and deface her with their buildings and their refuse.”

Sitting Bull reached a despairing conclusion: “We cannot dwell side by side.

Only seven years ago we made a treaty by which we were assured that the buffalo country should be left to us forever. Now they threaten to take that from us also. My brothers, shall we submit? Or shall we say to them: 'First kill me, before you can take possession of my fatherland!'"

End of Reconstruction

With some minor alterations Sitting Bull's words could have been addressed to African-Americans of that era. In the southern states, African-Americans faced a powerful planter class committed to white supremacy and to regaining control of those they had recently enslaved.

Determined to cast off northern Reconstruction which had deployed federal troops to protect the rights of African-Americans, the plantation owners saw their chance in November 1876 when a disputed presidential election left the country in turmoil. A special federal commission equally divided between Democrats and Republicans reached a "bargain" that forever changed racial relations.

The commission awarded the White House to Republican candidate Rutherford Hayes who, in turn, promised to recall the last federal troops from the South. In that simple decision, the party of Lincoln which had emancipated the slaves and enacted three new constitutional amendments guaranteeing the rights of African-Americans handed the welfare of the former slaves back to their former masters.

Southern legislatures swiftly moved to install new rules of white supremacy that effectively nullified emancipation, made a mockery of the new amendments, and locked free women and men into a new form of slavery. For generation after generation and through two world wars a regional one-party white dictatorship governed the states of the old Confederacy. Black families were reduced to landless peasants.

Southern bigots who controlled the Democratic Party also used their political clout to advance white supremacy nationally. Southern politicians made sure no national anti-lynching bill passed Congress. A policy of official terror reigned. Night riders killed black leaders, attacked schools, churches and communities.

U.S. presidents after 1876 made no significant effort to ensure that the constitutional rights of people of color were enforced in the southern states (until the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s).

Native Americans suffered a similar fate. The U.S. Supreme Court declared Indians "wards of the state" who must bow to rule by the U.S. cavalry and accept a culture imposed from outside. President Chester Arthur's Secretary of the Interior indicated what was on the way when he announced that his plan for

Native Americans would outlaw customs deemed "contrary to civilization" and ban traditional ceremonies, dances and songs.

In 1887, Congress mounted a multi-pronged attack on Indigenous life through Sen. Henry Dawes's General Allotment Act. First, the law mandated the largest American property transfer in history. In less than half a century, Indigenous Americans lost two-thirds of what they still owned 90 million acres of land. Many became landless peasants in the home of their ancestors. Though some plots passed to eager white homesteaders, the largest gainers were railroad builders and unscrupulous speculators.

Sen. Dawes claimed to be speaking for a superior, wiser and triumphant Christian nation when he explained that his aim was to civilize and reform the "savages." Indians had to "learn selfishness" and this meant "cultivate the ground, live in houses, ride in Studebaker wagons, send children to school, drink whiskey, and own property."

In the name of a grand march toward white, Christian ideals and the sanctity of private property, the Dawes Act declared its goal of assimilation and education by requiring the end of Native American identity, religion and society.

The Act authorized placement of Native children in schools run by Protestant missionaries. In those schools, brother was separated from brother, sister from sister, and children were kept from those who spoke their language. Contacts that reinforced their parents' heritage were banned. Severe punishment awaited anyone speaking a Native American language. Far from home and family, children were taught to embrace the values of Christianity and private ownership.

Lest pupils slip back to "Indian ways" with their parents during summers, they were apprenticed to Christian families in order to practice hard work, discipline and "American values." In Indian schools or white homes, children often suffered abuse that was largely unreported and rarely corrected.

By 1889, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas Jefferson Morgan exultantly announced a great victory over Native Americans their "socialism destroyed." Then he offered new goals and new threats:

"The Indians must conform to 'the white man's ways' peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must. They must adjust themselves to their environment and confirm their mode of living substantially to our civilization. ... They cannot escape it, and must either conform to it or be crushed by it."

As the Bureau of Indian Affairs moved to control Native American life in the West, southern planters pursued a similar path regarding African-Americans. The tools were legally imposed segregation and discrimination laws passed by state

legislatures.

These laws were buttressed by a new form of slavery known as the “convict lease system” in which courts sentenced thousands of innocent men to labor for southern planters, mine companies, railroads and local governments. In addition, there was the extra-legal terror of lynching.

Southern legislatures quickly moved to deny African-Americans the right to vote, hold office, bring suit or testify against whites in court, serve on juries, or exercise other human rights. Independent farmers lost their land, communities lost schools, and the skilled and professional people of color were restricted to their own communities. Families and the young began to lose hope.

Then in 1896 in the Plessey case, the Supreme Court voted 8-1 to make segregation the “law of the land.”

In 1903, Justice Edward White, forever proud he rode with the Ku Klux Klan, wrote the majority opinion in the Lone Wolf (Kiowa) case. Indian treaties could be broken by Congress, he proclaimed, “if consistent with perfectly good policy toward the Indians.” Seven years later, White was elevated to Chief Justice where he lived out his life deciding what was legal and constitutional. He died in 1921.

Beginning in that fateful year of 1876, African-Americans and Native Americans learned again that the words of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution did not apply to them.

One of the gifts I received as an historian was an attractively encased red, white and blue Centennial banner. In it, 1776 appears on the top left with 1876 on the top right, and a large “United We Stand” is the center. What irony!

This essay is adapted from William Loren Katz’s landmark book, *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* [New York, Atheneum Publishers, the revised and expanded 2012 edition] His website is WILLIAMLKATZ.COM

What Christmas Owes to Abolitionists

From the Archive: In the pre-Civil War years of the United States, Abolitionists and other social reformers transformed Christmas into a season for addressing the abuses of slavery and mistreatment of children, creating symbols and traditions that endured, writes William Loren Katz.

By William Loren Katz (Originally published Dec. 19, 2010)

Before Christmas emerged as a commercial success, it led a checkered social life. In the 13 American colonies and the early days of the United States, it was known as a festival of heavy drinking and brawling.

But as the struggle over slavery heated up in the 1830s, a band of Christian women abolitionists guided it into a holiday devoted to the prince of peace and emancipation.

In 1834, members of William Lloyd Garrison's newly formed Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society African-Americans and whites, men and women saw Christmas as an opportunity to expose a hypocritical republic that proclaimed liberty for all yet held millions of African men, women and children captive in slavery.

Women assumed the lead in this endeavor, boldly defying a society that denied them the vote and much of a public voice. To finance the abolition cause, these women organized Christmas bazaars that sold donated gifts and trumpeted anti-slavery messages.

Because women were prominent in this effort, the media of the day labeled abolitionist gatherings "promiscuous assemblies" and denounced male supporters as "Aunt Nancy men." Yet, even in the face of verbal and physical attacks, anti-slavery men and women persisted. After some meetings, women linked arms, black and white, and surrounded their men to protect them from angry mobs.

Women abolitionists also took the lead in confronting a Northern public that felt the degradation of enslaved women and children was too sensitive and immodest a subject for public discussion. With clear language and vivid images, the women abolitionists used their Christmas fairs to publicize the brutality and rapes suffered by their enslaved sisters.

To penetrate the Northern conscience, the women also compared the common practice of whipping children as discipline, which was beginning to gain widespread disapproval, to the brutal whipping of enslaved men, women and children, which the media largely had hidden from public view.

The women turned the Christmas holiday into a time for generous gift-giving that rewarded children. By emphasizing this kind treatment of children, the women asked Americans to accept that enslaved people, who had even fewer rights than children, deserved Christian care and generosity, too.

At least one early Massachusetts anti-slavery fair featured an interracial children's chorus known as "the Boston Garrison Juvenile Choir." It sang such popular holiday songs such as "The Sugar Plums." The women who conducted these

Christmas fairs also used attractive symbols, such as the evergreen shrub. By the end of the 1830s, Christmas fairs had become the primary source of abolitionist fundraising.

Bazaar sponsors replaced the small green shrub with a tall, full-grown evergreen tree, an idea inspired by Charles Follen, a German immigrant who was a children's rights advocate and a professor of literature at Harvard University. He was fired in 1835 because of his anti-slavery activities.

That Christmas, popular British author Harriet Martineau visited Follen's home and became entranced by his towering evergreen. Martineau enthusiastically described Follen's "Christmas tree" in one of her books and the public became enthralled, too. The Christmas tree stood as a kind of tall green freedom flag.

In those days, the women anti-slavery crusaders and their male allies were confronting a powerful slave-holding elite that treated millions of men, women and children as property, as well as a political system dominated by Southern states controlling many policies of the three branches of the federal government.

Yet, to expose the country's great crime of slavery, this daring interracial band of women transformed what had been an antisocial, rowdy festival into a humane Christmas celebration that promoted freedom for all.

To shine a light on the sin of human bondage and demand emancipation on Christmas and the other 364 days, these anti-slavery crusaders beat hard on closed doors, using intellectual creativity and moral strength. Eventually their crusade not only liberated their Southern brothers and sisters but gave birth to the Suffrage movement that decades later achieved political rights for all women in the United States.

Their use of Christmas to dramatize the cause of anti-slavery also handed down many endearing symbols of Christmas, including its emphasis on children, the gift-giving and the evergreen tree. And, by strengthening freedom, these women gave American democracy a Christmas gift that never stops giving.

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A Black/Indian Victory for Freedom

History, as we receive it, is usually the narrative of the victors over the vanquished what those in power want us to think. But the truth can sometimes be ascertained, as William Loren Katz demonstrates in this story of resistance by an alliance of Africans and Native Americans against the U.S. military.

By William Loren Katz

Christmas Eve marks the anniversary of one of the least known battles for freedom and self-determination fought in North America. In 1837, in what had become the state of Florida less than a generation earlier, the freedom fighters were members of the Seminole Nation, an alliance of African slave runaways and Native American Seminoles.

They faced the strongest power in the Americas, the combined armed forces of the United States Army, Navy and Marines, whose goal was to crush the bi-racial alliance and return its African-American members to slavery.

The battle lines were drawn where they were, in part, because an early expedition by Ponce De Leon had claimed the Florida peninsula for the Spanish monarchy but Spain lacked the means to govern the large territory.

So, during the colonial era, escaped slaves from the Carolinas built a new home in ungoverned Florida. Since 1738, Africans had been establishing prosperous, self-governing communities, and around 1776, they welcomed Seminoles fleeing ethnic persecution by the Creek Nation.

The Africans taught their new friends the methods of rice cultivation they had learned in Sierra Leone and Senegambia. On this basis the two peoples of color built an agricultural-based society with a military force prepared to meet threats to their community, to their right of self-determination and to their liberty.

By the War of 1812, the Florida alliance was facing repeated attacks from American slave-hunter posses. There was also an occupation by an armed white militia force known as "Patriots," who since 1811 enjoyed covert support from President James Madison. He hoped the Patriots would seize Florida for the United States.

Driving this campaign against Florida's African and Seminole inhabitants were U.S. slaveholders who saw this successful bi-racial alliance as a clear and present danger to their southern plantation system. They had a point, since each week runaways crossed the border to find freedom in Seminole villages.

During one U.S. invasion in 1816, Army Lt. Col. Duncan Clinch, reported: "The American negroes had principally settled along the Apalachicola river and a number of them had left their fields and gone over to the Seminoles on hearing of our approach. Their corn fields extended nearly fifty miles up the river and their numbers were daily increasing."

In 1819, repeated invasions from the growing giant to the North persuaded Spain to sell Florida to the United States, leading to a 41-year-challenged U.S. occupation known as the "Three Seminoles Wars."

In 1837, the best-informed U.S. officer in the field, Major General Sidney Thomas Jesup, reported: "Throughout my operations I have found the negroes the most active and determined warriors; and during conferences with the Indian chiefs I ascertained they exercised an almost controlling influence over them."

Citing the dangers his men faced, he said, "The two races, the negro and the Indian, are rapidly approximating; they are identical in interests and feelings. Should the Indians remain in this territory the negroes among them will form a rallying point for runaway negroes from the adjacent states; and if they remove, the fastness of the country will be immediately occupied by negroes."

U.S. forces destroyed crops, cattle and horses, violated agreements, and seized women and children as hostages, but the Seminole alliance, even as they protected their families and homes, ran circles around the technologically and numerically superior invaders. U.S. tactics aimed at racially dividing the Africans and Seminoles also failed.

The day before Christmas 1837, U.S. Colonel Zachary Taylor, determined to defeat his wily foe, marshaled more than 1,000 troops in pursuit of about 400 Seminoles under the command of Wild Cat and his sub-chief, African Seminole John Horse.

As Taylor's 180 Missouri riflemen, 800 soldiers from the U.S. Sixth, Fourth, and First Infantry Regiments and 70 Delaware (Native American) scouts approached, Seminole commanders positioned their marksmen in trees and tall grass in the northeast corner of Florida's Lake Okeechobee.

The Delaware, sensing danger, hesitated, and then fled. Next, the Missourians broke and ran. Taylor ordered his regular Army forward, and later had to report that pinpoint Seminole rifle fire had brought down "every officer, with one exception, as well as most of the non-commissioned officers" and left "but four untouched."

On Christmas morning, Taylor found the Seminoles had fled in canoes. He counted 26 U.S. dead and 112 wounded, found less than half a dozen slain Seminoles and captured no prisoners.

This battle took place during the Second Seminole War (1835-1842), which involved U.S. Naval and Marine units, at times half of the Army, and cost 1,500 military deaths and U.S. taxpayers \$30 million [pre-Civil War dollars].

After his decimated army limped back to Fort Gardner, Zachary Taylor won promotion by claiming, "the Indians were driven in every direction." Later, using his reputation as an "Indian fighter," Taylor won election as the 12th President of the United States.

The Seminole alliance at Lake Okeechobee delivered the Army's worst defeat in decades of Florida warfare. However truth about the battle and the three wars long remain buried, hidden or distorted.

For example, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. in *The Almanac of American History*, wrote of Taylor defeat: "Fighting in the Second Seminole War, General Zachary Taylor defeats a group of Seminoles at Okeechobee Swamp, Florida." Not exactly.

The Seminoles conducted a sustained and heroic resistance to the new American Republic's first foreign invasion of foreign soil, and created one of liberty's proudest moments on the North American continent. We who cherish the long fight in our country for independence and freedom deserve to know this story.

William Loren Katz is the author of *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*, from which this essay was adapted. A newly revised edition is to be published in early 2012. The author of 40 history books, Katz has been affiliated with New York University since 1973, and his website is WILLIAMLKATZ.COM.

In Case You Missed...

Some of our special stories in November explored the meaning of the Occupy Wall Street protests, examined the new case for heightened tensions with Iran, explained some lost history of Richard Nixon and J. Edgar Hoover, and more.

["Modern-Day Hooverville with Hope"](#) by William Loren Katz, giving his historical perspective on Occupy Wall Street, Nov. 1, 2011

["End of the Reagan Narrative?"](#) by Robert Parry, wondering if the Occupy protests finally will bring the Reagan era to a close, Nov. 2, 2011

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[“The GOP’s History of Hostage-Taking”](#) by Robert Parry, reflecting on Republican hard-ball politics over the past decades, Nov. 6, 2011

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[“An Iraq-WMD Replay on Iran”](#) by Robert Parry, observing how some of the usual suspects from the Iraq fiasco are back pushing a conflict with Iran, Nov. 8, 2011

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[“Iran Nuke Report: Little New, Big Impact”](#) by Paul R. Pillar, noting the absence of much new in much-touted allegations about Iran, Nov. 11, 2011

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“Next Challenge for the Occupy Protests” by Danny Schechter, laying out what the movement needs to do next, Nov. 28, 2011

“Clint Eastwood’s Dishonest J. Edgar” by James DiEugenio, filling in the many historical gaps of the new movie on J. Edgar Hoover.

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The Real Thanksgiving Day

From the Archive: On Thanksgiving Day, the United States celebrates the tradition of Pilgrims and Native Americans sitting down together in Plymouth, Massachusetts, in 1621 to celebrate each other as friendly neighbors. But the reality was not so pleasant, as historian William Loren Katz recalled.

By William Loren Katz (Originally published on Nov. 12, 2009)

Thanksgiving Day remains a most treasured holiday in the United States. Work comes to a halt, families gather, eat turkey, and count their blessings. A presidential proclamation blesses the day.

But we must never forget that the holiday pre-eminently serves political ends.

Remember in 2003 when President George W. Bush flew into Bagdad on Thanksgiving Day to visit and celebrate with U.S. troops. He stayed a few hours and brought in a host of media photographers to snap his picture bearing a glazed turkey. No one ate the turkey, of course. It was cardboard, a stage prop.

However, this exploitation of joyous thanksgiving began almost four centuries ago, with a mythology that dates back to the first Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving Day memorializes the Pilgrims’ survival of their first winter in New England. One hundred and forty-nine people had arrived in November 1620

aboard the *Mayflower* and were saved from starvation and disaster because the Wampanoug nation brought them corn and meat and taught them wilderness survival skills.

This truly was an effort worthy of gratitude. And in 1621, Governor William Bradford of Plymouth proclaimed a day of Thanksgiving not to the Wampanougs but to his fellow Pilgrims and their omnipotent God.

In Bradford's view, the Christians had staved off hunger through their devotion, courage and resourcefulness. And to this day American politicians, ministers and most educators would have the people see it this way.

Bradford's fable is an early example of "Eurothink" a grotesque lie encased in arrogance. To Europeans, native people and other humans who were neither Christian nor white no matter how much they helped were considered undeserving of recognition. The heroic scenario of determined and righteous European settlers overcoming hardships and travails had no room for the others.

Bradford's tale has his Pilgrims inviting the Native Americans as guests to celebrate the Europeans' victory over famine, an act of Pilgrim generosity as the settlers and their Wampanoug friends sat down to dine on bread, turkey and other treats. Since the colonists classified their dark-skinned, "infidel" neighbors as inferiors, they were asked to bring and serve not share the food.

As the English pursued their economic goals in the 1620s, they increasingly turned to outright aggression against their Native American neighbors and hosts.

Matters came to a head one night in 1637 when Governor Bradford, without provocation, dispatched his militia against his Pequot neighbors. With the Pilgrims seeing themselves as devout Christians locked in mortal combat with infidels, the officers and soldiers made a systematic assault on a sleeping Pequot Indian village.

Bradford described the night of fire, pain and death: "It was a fearful sight to see them frying in the fire and the streams of blood quenching the same and horrible was the stink and stench thereof. But the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice and they [the militiamen] gave praise thereof to God."

The colony's famous minister, Reverend Increase Mather, rejoiced and called on his congregation to give thanks to God "that on this day we have sent six hundred heathen souls to hell." Mather and Bradford are still celebrated in school texts as colonial heroes.

The 1993 edition of the authoritative *Columbia Encyclopedia* states of Bradford, "He maintained friendly relations with the Native Americans." [p. 351] The

authoritative *Dictionary of American History* states of his rule: "He was a firm, determined man and an excellent leader; kept relations with the Indians on friendly terms; tolerant toward newcomers and new religions." [p. 77]

The views of Native Americans were not recorded, but can be imagined.

The *Mayflower*, renamed the *Meijbloom* (Dutch for *Mayflower*), continued to make notable voyages. In May 1657, it carried a crucial message to Amsterdam that the new Dutch colony of South Africa needed supplies as Europeans sought to gain control of another piece of the world.

Along coastal Africa, the renamed *Mayflower* also became one of the first ships to carry enslaved Africans to the West Indies.

For these and other reasons, those opposed to oppression and favoring democratic values in the Americas have little to celebrate on Thanksgiving Day. It stands as an affirmation of barbaric racial beliefs and actions that soon shaped the world's most unrelenting genocide.

What is worth giving thanks to is the alliance between Native Americans and Africans that sprang forth to resist the English, Spanish and other foreign invaders.

In 1619, a year before the Pilgrims' arrival in Massachusetts, 20 Africans were unloaded in Jamestown, Virginia, and traded for food and water. They were sent out to work in the colony's tobacco fields as unpaid laborers.

Enslaved and persecuted together, people of color fought back together, and often united in armed maroon colonies beyond the white settlements that dotted the coastline. But above all, this alliance initiated an American tradition of resistance to tyranny, a demand for self-rule and equality.

Those ideas would appear centuries later written on a parchment celebrated on July 4, 1776.

Copyright 2009 by William Loren Katz and adapted from his *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*. His website is: www.williamlkatz.com

Modern-Day 'Hooverville' with Hope

The response to Occupy Wall Street is personal for many participants and visitors alike. For historian William Loren Katz, the iconic protest in Lower Manhattan was a reminder of Depression-era "Hoovervilles" – but with a youthful

optimism.

By William Loren Katz

On Saturday, my wife and I visited Occupy Wall Street to see history in the making, and to donate two of my relevant books to the OWS library. The entrance point on Broadway of Zuccotti Park, formerly called Liberty Plaza, stops one cold.

You face a dozen or so men and women of various ages holding large, hand-written signs telling how job loss, lack of decent pay or no affordable health care brought poverty and/or tragedy to their door. Only one or two signs are overtly political.

Entering the encampment reminded this historian of the 1930s Great Depression "Hoovervilles", but with a clientele that was energetic, intellectual, eager to talk. It was an odd mix as international and American tourists pushed into the OWS crowd of young and old, men and women of all classes and races.

Jostling together were jobless workers, union members, students with large college repayment loans and others of various ages who either landed at the bottom of a sinking economy, or thought they were headed that way. Establishing a beachhead to challenge Wall Street seemed to cancel any morbid sense of victimhood from what I could see.

These mainly young people quickly found they are hardly alone or uncared for. Restaurant donations led to an extended food counter of gourmet and ethnic choices including a fancy Greek spinach pie and a classy Bavarian fudge cake. Men and women periodically arrived to donate home-made muffins and other baked goods.

Casually dressed OWS residents and better dressed visitors crowded the chow line. If "class warfare" was on anyone's mind it was absent at ground level. Nobody seemed to mind the presence of visitors who looked like the 1 percent.

Good cheer ruled. An energetic trombone and tuba band blared catchy tunes as a few young men and women improvised a dance of sorts.

Hoping their time had come, representatives of traditional socialist groups handed out printed screeds. Far more numerous and impressive were the young people handing out personally scribbled Xeroxed statements detailing their political complaints, pointing to those responsible for the financial disaster, or decrying war. Many people pleaded for a new and loving community. Words were soft-spoken and politeness was common.

People of all ages and both sexes swept the grounds and cleaned up for the live-ins and tourists. One sign pointedly said, "Take care of your own stuff!" Another woman's sign demanded, "No more photographs!" One sign announced specific times for "nonviolent training" and another told when and where in Zuccotti Park people would gather to celebrate the upcoming Jewish holiday.

In several corners, circular groups were engaged in earnest debate about new models of thought, political strategies, and public policies, or how to keep the park policed, neat and livable.

Here in a one block park ringed by towering skyscrapers and a nearby quiet, unsettling, and largely ignored police presence, was a community trying to plant peaceful roots.

Perhaps if we can demonstrate a warm, neighborly model, they seemed to say, the world will know there is a better way than overseas wars and feeding Fat Cat capitalism. Society, their presence said, needs to control the corporations that now own it and get to select the wrecking crew that runs it. Voters need to take government back. Maybe a new system is required.

If President Bush suddenly appeared, a few might rush to arrest him for war crimes, but I felt many more would parade him proudly into their models of peaceful living. A Tahrir Square courage and tenacity laced by youthful American optimism marks this occupation. It may not get where it wants, but not for lack of effort, and neither is it leaving its new home.

The OWS failure to issue specific demands does not signal a lack of basic agreement. They agree current U.S. wars should end, the rich should pay their share, jobs must be created. They insist Wall Street greed has not only produced poverty, militarism and income inequality, but has blocked the march to a just and democratic society. And they are ready and eager to march.

My wife and I began to leave pushing our way through residents, visitors and those clearing and cleaning the park. One middle-age man paused, looked up from his broom and thanked me for coming. I thanked him for being there.

William Loren Katz is the author of *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage* and forty other books. His website is: www.williamlkatz.com, where this article first appeared.

In Case You Missed...

Some of our special stories in August explored stubborn conflicts raging from Libya to Afghanistan, reported on social upheavals within Western societies, reflected on the hypocrisy of Christian violence, and more.

["Norway's Christian Killer"](#) by Gary G. Kohls, exploring the madness behind the massacre of scores of young people in the name of Jesus. (August 1, 2011)

["Mocking the Gaza Flotilla"](#) by Ann Wright and Hagit Borer, responding to public attacks on a humanitarian mission. (August 1, 2011)

["Obama on the Backs of the Poor"](#) by Ray McGovern, noting the damage to the poor from President Barack Obama's surrender to Republican blackmail. (August 3, 2011)

["Beyond the Debt Limit Fiasco"](#) by Phil Rockstroh, examining what needs to be done to reshape the American political/media structure. (August 3, 2011)

["Spain's Battle Against Austerity"](#) by Pablo Ouziel, giving a front-line look at what's in store for Western societies as banks are pampered and people pay the price. (August 7, 2011)

["More US Soldiers Die in Vain"](#) by Ray McGovern, recognizing the harsh reality in the mounting death toll from America's two misbegotten wars. (August 7, 2011)

["Nuking Japan's Christian Center"](#) by Gary G. Kohls, recalling the fateful decision to destroy Nagasaki, home of Japan's strongest Christian community. (August 9, 2011)

["US Lost Its Way From Omaha Beach"](#) by Robert Parry, reflecting on how America's bravery in liberating Europe has been betrayed by subsequent actions. (August 10, 2011)

["Wisconsin GOP Hangs onto Senate"](#) by Lisa Pease, drawing lessons from a grassroots campaign against Republican extremism. (August 10, 2011)

["Life in an Age of Looting"](#) by Phil Rockstroh, contemplating the violent breakdown of Western civilization. (August 12, 2011)

["Keeping a Curious Bush Secret"](#) by Robert Parry, reporting on the Bush Library's refusal to release an October Surprise secret on George H.W. Bush's whereabouts. (August 12, 2011)

["The Dangerous Reagan Cult"](#) by Robert Parry, tracing modern-day Republican

extremism back to the anti-government rhetoric of Ronald Reagan. (August 16, 2011)

"Did Tenet Hide Key 9/11 Info?" by Ray McGovern, looking back at what CIA Director George Tenet knew and what he shared. (August 16, 2011)

"Truth Still a Casualty at Dieppe" by Don North, reflecting on the press propaganda that surrounded a World War II catastrophe. (August 18, 2011)

"Making Airport Screening Saner" by William John Cox, proposing ways to improve the sometimes crazy screening process at U.S. airports. (August 23, 2011)

"Orange Jumpsuits / Double Standards" by Robert Parry, contrasting the harsh treatment of London looters with benign neglect of UK/U.S. war criminals. (August 25, 2011)

"New War Rationale: Protect Civilians" by Robert Parry, questioning the rationale for NATO's "regime change" intervention in Libya. (August 27, 2011)

"NATO's Orwellian Twist in Libya" by Craig Murray, exposing the hypocrisy behind NATO's protecting some Libyan civilians and killing others. (August 29, 2011)

"Rise of Another CIA Yes Man" by Ray McGovern, tracing the history of the CIA official who will guide retired Gen. David Petraeus. (August 29, 2011)

"Time Finally Ran Out for Atiyah" by Robert Parry, reporting on the death of the Libyan al-Qaeda terrorist who oversaw the plan to bog the U.S. down in Iraq. (August 30, 2011)

"The Clash over Dr. King's Legacy" by William Loren Katz, wondering if Martin Luther King Jr.'s message of social justice will be watered down. (August 31, 2011)

"In Libya, a Bloodbath Looms" by Robert Parry, warning that NATO's "victory" might end in a bloodletting of Muammar Gaddafi's supporters. (August 31, 2011)

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For a donation of \$100, we will send you a gift, autographed copy of *Neck Deep* (or another book by Robert Parry, either *Lost History* or *Secrecy & Privilege* or Don North's DVD "Yesterday's Enemies" just tell us your choice).

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The Clash Over Dr. King's Legacy

The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial is fittingly located between the monuments to Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln. But historian William Loren Katz asks which version of the martyred civil rights leader will be remembered, the gentle advocate for racial tolerance or the fierce activist for peace and justice.

By William Loren Katz

It has taken a hurricane to postpone the dedication of the long-awaited monument to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Washington – the first monument on the Mall for an individual who is not a president, not a white man and not a war leader.

King repeatedly proved he was not frightened by forces packing the power of hurricanes. He calmly faced many human storms before he was assassinated in April 1968.

However, since major corporations contributed to the monument, how will Dr. King's message and courage be presented to the American public and remembered by children?

In 1964 when Dr. King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, frightened by King's popularity since his 1963 March on Washington, called him "the most notorious liar in the country" and ordered the FBI to increase its surveillance and of the man and his movement.

A more recent assessment of King was offered this Jan. 13 when the Pentagon commemorated Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day with [an address](#) by the Defense Department's general counsel, PenJeh C. Johnson, who insisted that King would understand why the United States was at war today.

Speaking to Defense Department officials, Johnson frankly acknowledged that King, in the final year of his life, became an outspoken opponent of the Vietnam War. But Johnson hastily added that today's wars are not out of line with the Nobel Peace Prize winner's teachings.

"I believe that if Dr. King were alive today, he would recognize that we live in a complicated world, and that our nation's military should not and cannot lay down its arms and leave the American people vulnerable to terrorist attack."

Really?

According to civil rights veteran and noted feminist scholar and author Jo Freeman, who worked for King's SCLC beginning in 1965, King repeatedly opposed U.S. intervention in Vietnam before small gatherings, and only reluctantly and temporarily stopped when he warned that President Lyndon Johnson might withdraw the "war on poverty" if King continued.

But King's conscience, and Johnson's escalation of the war, drove him into a full-blown, highly public denunciation of the war in 1967. On April 4 at the Riverside Church in New York City, Dr. King delivered his speech, "Declaration of Independence from the War In Vietnam."

It was not only eloquent and passionate but also carefully reasoned and as unambiguous in its message as its title.

Dr. King's call for U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam was also hard to ignore. That spring, he and Stokely Carmichael led a massive peace march to the United Nations building.

King's war opposition also brought challenges from his enemies both to his leadership and to his moral purpose. There were more death threats and less government protection when he needed it most. He expected all that.

In 1967, King was denounced by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and other parts of the liberal and the mainstream media. He was even challenged by some civil rights allies.

King had dared to speak at a time when U.S. officials from the president on down, warned that communism's triumph in Vietnam would lead to victories across Asia and beyond. They used this "domino theory" to make Americans as fearful of communism as they are of today's Middle Eastern terrorists.

But King was resolute and unmoved. "A time comes when silence is betrayal," King said. He minced few words, referring to "my own government" as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today."

Has much changed today when the U.S. boasts the largest military budget in history, one larger than all other countries combined? The United States has untold bases across the globe, and its armed forces have been kept in Iraq and Afghanistan longer than in World War II.

Weekly we hear of the drone strikes in Libya, Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere and how the U.S. government is contemplating air strikes against Iran's nuclear building sites. U.S. casualties are rising in the Middle East,

and there seems no end in sight for U.S. occupation and war.

Would Dr. King have called for withdrawal from Vietnam and, had he lived, not called for a withdrawal from Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya? Would he have failed to see parallels that are as obvious as they are frightening?

In his Riverside address, Dr. King pointed out that “our leaders refused to tell us the truth” about the war in Vietnam. Can we ever forget that the U.S. attack on Iraq was initiated to destroy weapons of mass destruction that didn’t exist, and retaliate against a Saddam Hussein and Iraq that had no part in the 9/11 attacks on the United States?

In the name of “Iraqi freedom,” American leaders ordered the torture of prisoners, even sending some to other countries or U.S.-run “black sites” for torture; to assure “democracy,” the U.S. supported corrupt leaders who lacked popular support.

The people of Vietnam, King said, “must see Americans as strange liberators.”

In Afghanistan today those who suffer from drone attacks directed from afar, and from deadly night ground searches for terrorists, do not see Americans as liberators. They see a distant, imperial power occupying their country, killing innocent civilians, and as doomed to fail as earlier invaders of Afghanistan.

“The madness of Vietnam,” Dr. King said in 1967, will “totally” poison “America’s soul.” He told how U.S. involvement in Vietnam “eviscerated” its war on poverty begun by President Johnson, and instead had its “funds and energies” and “men and skills” drawn into a war “like some demonic, destructive suction tube.”

What happens to “America’s soul” as the U.S. fights three Middle Eastern wars, its budget spins out of control, and joblessness and hopelessness reach proportions known only during the Great Depression?

Dr. King emphasized how the Vietnam War was “devastating the hopes of the poor at home” and “sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight in extraordinarily high proportion relative to the rest of the population.”

In 2011, a volunteer army draws even more heavily on the poor, those without jobs, men and women losing hope of finding meaningful work. Dr. King said then “I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the poor.”

Would the man who organized a Poor People’s March on Washington before his assassination be silent now?

Toward the end of his address at the Riverside Church, Dr. King said:

“Somehow this madness must cease. I speak as a child of God and brother to the suffering poor of Vietnam and the poor of America who are paying the double price of smashed hopes at home and death and corruption in Vietnam ...

“The great initiative in the war is ours. The initiative to stop must be ours.”

Was not Martin Luther King, Jr. reaching beyond Vietnam when he warned of “approaching spiritual death” and called for “a significant and profound change in American life and policy” and insisted “we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values.”

Was he only speaking of Vietnam when he said, “War is not the answer?”

We the people have to make sure it is neither the J. Edgar Hoover spin or the Pentagon version, but the real legacy of Dr. King that is acknowledged and celebrated. We owe that to future generations.

William Loren Katz, author of 40 books on American history including *Black Indians: A Hidden Heritage*, is a visiting scholar at New York University, his university affiliation since 1973. His website is williamlkatz.com. For Dr. King’s entire Riverside Church speech, [click here](#).
