

Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools

By Ward Churchill

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For five consecutive generations, from roughly 1880–1980, Native American children in the United States and Canada were forcibly taken from their families and relocated to residential schools. The stated goal of this government program was to “kill the Indian to save the man.” Half of the children did not survive the experience, and those who did were left permanently scarred. The resulting alcoholism, suicide, and the transmission of trauma to their own children has led to a social disintegration with results that can only be described as genocidal.

Ward Churchill is the author of *A Little Matter of Genocide*, among other books. He is currently a Professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

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Editorial Review

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This concise discussion is a continuum to Churchill's longer 1997 work, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas*. The author first analyzes the term *genocide* (coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944), stressing that the phrase covers not only physical extermination of a people but also biological genocide (policies to prevent births within a group) and cultural genocide. The Indian residential schools in both the U.S and Canada fall squarely into this latter category, which includes the forced exile of children and the prohibition of the use of a national language or religion. Churchill next turns his attention to the schools themselves, uncovering a host of grim details. In Canada, half of the children sent to residential schools did not survive because of rampant disease, near-starvation diets, and brutal labor. In fact, Churchill observes that survivors display a level of dysfunction similar to that exhibited by concentration camp survivors. Churchill presents a bleak yet utterly necessary history of a brutal system that was in effect until 1990. *Rebecca Maksel*

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About the Author

Ward Churchill has achieved an unparalleled reputation as a scholar-activist and analyst of indigenous issues. He is a Professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, a leading member of AIM, and the author of numerous books, including *A Little Matter of Genocide*, *Struggle for the Land*, and *Fantasies of the Master Race*.

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