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Creating America; Creating Americans

In the eastern woodlands of North America in the twentieth century Cherokee people still preserved a fairly detailed account of how they arrived in America. Its pragmatic and undramatic language provides a little-known account of what may have been the first migrations to America.

> . . . the old country in which we lived . . . was subject to great floods . . . the tribe held another council and concluded to move out . . . they journeyed for many days and years and finally came to a country that had a good climate . . . The emigration continued for many years, never knowing that they crossed the great waters. In the course of time the old pathway which had been traveled by the clans was cut by the submergence of a portion of the land into the deep sea. This path can be traced to this day by the broken boulders.[1]

Is this how the first people arrived in America? Scientists agree that humans first came to America as migrants from somewhere else. But they puzzle over the date of their arrival (having pushed it back from 10 to 15 and possibly even 50,000 years ago) and they sharply disagree about the origins and pathways the newcomers took.[2]

Still, many scientific findings confirm the details of this Cherokee oral account, identifying the "old country" as Asia and the pathway to America as a tenuous land bridge between Siberia and Alaska. Called "Beringia," this passage opened as the glaciers of the long Ice Age lowered sea levels; it disap-

peared again with the subsequent warming of the earth's climate.

Unlike scientists, however, and much more like recent immigrants, Cherokees seem less interested in the exact arrival date, or whether or not their ancestors were the first Americans or not. They seem interested instead in their ancestors' motives and in the outcome of their move. Note that the Cherokee story emphasizes a successful, communal search (for a better climate) and satisfaction with their new home (in what is now the southeastern United States).

As the Cherokee account suggests, humans migrated to America centuries before the date that marks the beginning of most American histories, including most histories of American immigration. If, in fact, the ancestors of the Cherokee crossed the land bridge from Siberia into Alaska, they did not enter a land called America. There were no people there calling themselves Americans, and there was, of course , no Ellis Island to record their arrival as immigrants. In all likelihood, the earliest residents of America called themselves simply "humans." And while they gave many names to their home territories, "America" was not one of them. Only in 1507 did a German cartographer affix the first name of a Florentine explorer, Amerigo Vespucci, to a landmass that Columbus (from Genoa) had claimed for the Spanish crown but thought was the Indies, in Asia. When this European cartographer first "imagined America," not a single European lived in what is now the territory of the USA.

The landmass he labeled America was – and it remains today – an enormous expanse of two vast adjoined continents, the home to many peoples. Furthermore, writing America on a map in 1507 did not automatically make anyone "American." For two centuries, Europeans as often called the indigenous peoples of America "Indians" or "heathens" as Americans. Few Europeans in British North America claimed the term American for themselves until the mid-eighteenth century. Then, in 1776, as they created an independent country, the United States of America, the country's new citizens did so with considerable vigor, and attached the broad label

American to their own small nation. Even today, residents of the USA refer to themselves and their history as American; few realize how much this annoys their equally American neighbors in Canada, the Caribbean, and Mexico.

Beginning our examination of migration to America before the arrival of the English and before the revolution that created the USA has many advantages. One is that it broadens our understanding of who Americans are and where they came from. It also helps us to see that the roots of all Americans may very well be in Africa.

From Africa to America

Did "Eve" the common genetic ancestor of all *Homo sapiens* living today die in East Africa some 60,000 years ago? Scientists agree that the earliest humans appeared there as many as two million years ago, and that these earlier human groups migrated in waves into Europe and Asia. Most then died out, and how long it took the migratory *Homo sapiens* to reach America is disputed. But by the time the ancestors of the Cherokees reached Beringia, humans had probably walked more than half way around the world. By the year 10,000 BCE, humans lived from Alaska to the tip of South America. These were small groups, hunting small animals and gathering edible plants; seasonal migrations remained a key feature of their lives, ensuring their survival.

Beginning around 5000 BCE, agriculture transformed human life in America as it did also in Asia, and somewhat later in Africa and Europe. It encouraged people to abandon their seasonal migrations and to build towns and cities near their cultivated fields. In the Old World, the first large-scale agricultural civilizations developed in broad river valleys but in America they appeared first in the central highlands and coasts of Mexico and the mountains of western South America.

In what is now the southwest of the USA, the Anesazi formed the northernmost periphery of Mexico's early agricultural civilizations; they eventually moved from their flatland towns into

dense cliff dwellings in order to defend themselves from newly arriving migratory hunters from the north, who preyed on the wealth their agriculture produced. The later Aztec empire of Mexico's central valley – with its large cities, complex religious and state institutions, written language, astronomical science, and sophisticated arts – never conquered territory anywhere near the Rio Grande. Still, the religious rituals and beliefs of southwestern cultures, and the pottery and ceremonial cities of eastern mound-builders in the Mississippi Valley document centuries of long-distance trade exchanges and cultural influence emanating from central Mexico. By 1000, for example, most people living east of the Mississippi River cultivated the corn that had originated there.

Corn cultivation created only a modicum of cultural homogeneity in North America. In the years between 1000 and 1500, over 600 indigenous peoples, speaking variations on 12 mutually incomprehensible languages lived in what would later become the United States and Canada. Sun worshipers prevailed in some areas; corn worshipers in others; elsewhere, animists saw the power of great spirits throughout the natural world.

In the southwest, Hopi and Zuni villages had been cultivating corn for centuries but lived in such a harsh environment they were forced to irrigate in order to grow it. Nomadic hunters later called Apache – recently migrated south from Alaska – also still preyed upon, and traded with, them. Along the Pacific, men and women worked together in small migratory bands to gather acorns or fish for salmon and they took their identities – Yuki, Hupa, Miwok, Makah – from the places they lived. On the central plains, hunter-gatherers were the ancestors of Blackfoot, Sioux, Crow, and Cheyenne peoples. In the northeast, women cultivated corn during the summer months, while men devoted themselves to hunting, warfare, and the creation and maintenance of federations among related groups. Largest of these alliances was the Ganonsyoni ("The Lodge Extended Lengthwise") of Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas, and Senecas; their usual enemy were the Algonquians to the north. In the southeast, large corn-

raising villages also supported federation among the Cherokee, the distant relatives of the Ganonsyoni.

By 1500, it is possible that more people (estimates range from 8 to 100 million) lived in America than in Europe. Of these, only four or five million resided north of the Rio Grande, however, and only about 700,000 occupied the east-coast regions that would become the 13 British colonies. On the other side of the Atlantic, roughly 84 million Europeans lacked the dependable plant foods of America – notably corn – and their cities were smaller and arguably poorer as a result. What Europeans possessed in abundance were iron, wheels, weaponry, and large domesticated animals, such as horses and oxen. Europeans' discovery of America in 1492 quickly sparked a migration of conquest.

Migration and Empire-building

At least since the advent of agriculture, military campaigns by autocratic empire-builders had been among the most important generators of human migrations. Europe's invasion of America was only the most recent of many eras of empire-building but it was the first in centuries to emerge from Europe. In the years between 1000 and 1300, the soldiers of Catholic Europe, and the monarchs of Portugal, Spain, and France, were pushing earlier Islamic invaders out of the Iberian and Italian peninsulas back into Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. They had launched a crusade against Moslems to capture the Christian "Holy Lands" of Asia. Their expansion into America was an extension of these Old World campaigns.

In going to war with the Moslem world, Catholic empire-builders had unintentionally destroyed their access to highly valued products – notably spices and silks – first introduced into Europe by Arab traders from the older and more advanced civilizations of India and China. Merchants and mariners employed by Portugal and Spain, many of them from Italy, then ventured out into the Atlantic to find a new sea path to

Asia. At first they traveled south, around Africa, then westward. Discovering islands in the Atlantic, they introduced sugar – a food of the Islamic world popular also in Europe – and bought slaves from Africa to cultivate it. And they kept sailing westward.

For 200 years after Columbus's voyages to the Caribbean, America north of Mexico remained as peripheral to Europe's new American empires as it had been to the Aztecs. Spanish and Portuguese campaigns focused on the conquest of the richest, most advanced civilizations of Central and South America, murdering their leaders, soldiers, and people in large numbers. Where populations were dense (Peru and Mexico), the European invaders forced defeated peoples to work in their mines, producing gold and silver for them. Where conquest or disease destroyed sparser local populations (as in Brazil and much of the Caribbean), but where the climate was warm, Spain and Portugal introduced sugar cane. They purchased laborers in Africa from local chiefs and crammed them onto boats for the "Middle Passage." From 1500 to 1760, two-thirds of the 6 to 10 million who crossed the Atlantic were from Africa, en route to the warmest regions of America. They traveled in chains as slaves, the largest forced migration in human history.

Still looking for wealth, Spain's soldiers and missionaries pushed from Florida into the Carolinas and beyond the Rio Grande in the 1540s, and established a first Spanish fort in St. Augustine, Florida in 1565. In 1598, 500 Spanish-speakers from central Mexico invaded the territory they called "New Mexico," but were able to establish only a small string of Catholic missions and forts, scattered around Santa Fe. No gold was found, no sugar could be cultivated: northern America seemed economically useless to the Spanish.

The ambitious but poorer rulers of Protestant England, Sweden, and the Netherlands, and Catholic France sought advantage where their competitor lost interest. Trading with the indigenous peoples for fish, timber, and furs along the Atlantic coast and exploring North America's largest rivers provided the initial incentive for them to claim colonies in

northern America. In quick succession, France established trading posts in Port Royal in 1605, Quebec in 1608, and Montreal in 1642; the Dutch in New Amsterdam and Fort Orange (Albany) in 1626, and the English, after failing on Roanoke Island in 1587, established Jamestown in Virginia in 1607 and Plymouth in Massachusetts in 1620. Each explorer from Europe was accompanied by some acculturated servants and sailors from African ports. But with no obvious way to generate wealth, the future of these newer colonies in northern America remained uncertain until 1700.

From Europe and Africa to North America

Far more than Europe's other empire-builders, England's rulers saw in North America a potential "New Europe" where Europeans might settle. By the time English explorers ventured across the Atlantic, England had already conquered Ireland and termed its Catholic residents the "wild Irishmen." They had encouraged Protestants from Scotland (the "Scotch Irish") to resettle its northern districts, consolidating English rule. England had itself also undergone a violent Protestant reformation and was about to enter a wrenching era of rapid urban and industrial growth. In the 1600s, its population of rural poor grew particularly quickly even though religious conflicts among Catholics, Protestant dissenters, and members of the established, church-supported, Church of England still provoked periodic armed conflicts. A civil war initiated by Puritan religious dissenters after 1642 deterred migration temporarily while the restoration in 1660, and the subsequent consolidation of England, Wales, and Scotland into a militantly Protestant "Great" Britain, seemed to open the floodgates.

More important, perhaps, the seventeenth-century English planters' successful experiments with profitable cash crops for export to Europe – tobacco, indigo, and rice – began to generate an insatiable demand for labor. North American ports quickly became important places for trade among the scat-

tered colonies of Britain's expanding American empire. While fewer than 10,000 Frenchmen journeyed to New France 1608–1760 (and migrants to Spanish North America were even fewer), well over half a million newcomers arrived in England's colonies after 1600.

Many of the European migrants who crossed the Atlantic, even in the 1600s, were not conquerors. But neither were they just like later immigrants to the USA; many exercised little control over their individual destinies or destinations. We do not know much of the earliest illiterate slaves and the English indentured servants or about their motives, dreams, or satisfactions, however. The first laborers from Africa were brought to Virginia from the Caribbean in 1619; perhaps as many as 10,000 had been imported by 1700. By 1670, roughly 50,000 men and a few women servants from Europe went to Virginia and the Chesapeake to clear land and cultivate tobacco. Thereafter, the balance changed, as did the experiences of slaves and servants. After 1700, 278,000 slaves outnumbered servants from Europe and new migrant groups – notably 84,000 from Germany, 66,000 from the south of Ireland, and 42,000 from the north of Ireland, outnumbered the 44,000 newcomers arriving from England during the same years. In addition, migrants from Scotland almost equaled the numbers of English newcomers in the eighteenth century.

In the 1700s, new slaves from Africa outnumbered the servants arriving from Scotland, Ireland, and Germany. Fairly typical of those forced out of Africa was a boy, later known as Venture Smith, who was born in 1729 near Dukandarra, Guinea, in West Africa. Raised in a family of sheepherders and farmers, Smith was captured when warriors armed with European guns invaded his homeland from the coast in 1735. After demanding tribute, they pursued the fleeing villagers, killing Venture's father and taking the six-year-old boy, whom they marched along with other captives toward Anamabo, an English fort on the coast. After being stolen by another group of warriors, Smith was then imprisoned in Anamabo before he was put on a boat headed for Barbados along with 260 others – most of them men.

In many respects, Venture Smith's subsequent life as a migrant and slave was unusual – that is why we know his story. For one thing, unlike 60 of his companions, Venture survived; death rates on slave ships often reached 30 percent. Unlike Venture, most slaves destined for North America after 1700 traveled there directly from the west African and Angolan interior. And they went south. By then, European owners of rice plantations in the Charleston area had even learned to purchase slaves from Africa's rice-growing regions. While the majority on his ship from Africa were sold in Barbados, Venture Smith remained onboard to be sold as a servant, first in Rhode Island, and then in Connecticut. Most unusual of all, Venture Smith eventually purchased his own freedom and became a small businessman who himself purchased slaves.[3]

Death rates among migrating servants from Europe were also very high in the 1600s but at least most of these migrants chose to risk the voyage. The German Gottlieb Mittelberger tried unsuccessfully to discourage his poorer compatriots from swarming to the port city of Hamburg, where they heard myths spread by "soul sellers" or "newlanders" of a prosperous New World. These labor recruiters paid for servants' passages and then sold their contracts or indentures to ship captains. Mittelberger warned of the inedible food on shipboard and reported "there are so many lice, especially on the sick people, that they have to be scraped off the bodies." The fate of those who survived was that of Rosina Dorothy Kost, born in Waldenberg in what is now Germany – who was sold in Philadelphia "at public action."[4] Six or seven years of hard labor followed.

By the eighteenth century, the even larger numbers of indentured servants traveling to America typically shared the fate of Venture Smith, and gained release from the bondage ("indenture") they had entered temporarily in exchange for passage across the Atlantic. Those who survived diseases endemic in hot, humid climates like those of the Carolinas and Virginia commonly became laborers in port cities; others tried to acquire land and transform themselves into farmers. While most servants were young and male, more people now also

traveled as "redemptioners" (people borrowing smaller sums for their passage) and in family groups. Still, the Scottish John Harrower, a particularly well-educated servant who arrived shortly before the American Revolution, observed that in Virginia traders called "soul drivers" still purchased servants to "drive them through the country like a parcell of Sheep untill they can sell them to advantage."[5]

In the 1600s, religious refugees more often chose their own destinations and more often traveled as parts of organized communities. Wishing to separate from the state-supported Church of England, the fabled Pilgrims arrived in Massachusetts in 1620 after a temporary sojourn as a community of exiles in Holland. Prior to the English Civil War, North America also offered English Puritans their best hope to "purify" English Protestant practices, free of the harassment of the Church of England. In the 1630s, 21,000 Puritan dissenters from England also settled together in Massachusetts during their own "great migration." And in 1634, a small group of English Catholics followed Lord Baltimore to Maryland where he had received royal permission to establish a colony. After 1685, Protestant Huguenots from France passed through England before settling in and around the coastal cities of Charleston and New York. And small numbers of Jews fleeing the anti-Semitism of Catholic reformation in the Spanish and Portuguese colonies made New Amsterdam, Charleston, and Philadelphia their new homes.

Although religious conflict declined after the formation of Great Britain in the 1700s, the country's Protestant rulers nevertheless remained eager to expand the wedge they had created between the Catholic empires of Spain and France in America. To attract settlers, they welcomed Protestants regardless of national origin and allowed them to acquire British nationality through a process called naturalization; their children were British if born on colonial soil. Simultaneously, colonial law sought to prevent settlement by Catholics from New France, Ireland, or Germany. Nevertheless, religious diversity among Protestant newcomers in the eighteenth century remained impressive. Many of the new English arrivals

were Quakers; German-speaking Pietists shared the Quakers' opposition to established religions and viewed faith as a private, not public, matter. Scottish Presbyterians (from both Scotland and from Northern Ireland) and Anglicans were also numerous among seventeenth-century migrants.

New migrations from Africa and Europe thus augmented the diversity of North America as Europeans killed or pushed out natives and carved their lands into colonies. On the eve of the American Revolution, the new arrivals and their children constituted roughly half the European-origin population, a proportion never to be reached later in the USA. Already home to diverse indigenous populations, divided into several competing empires, and attracting newcomers from many cultures and two continents, North America was to become, and it has long remained, a land of sharp regional contrasts.

American Regions: Encounters and Transformations

On the east coast in 1633, a hopeful Wicomesse spokesman reminded the new English governor of Maryland "since that you are heere strangers and come into our Countrey, you should rather confine yourselves to the Customes of our Countrey, then impose yours upon us."[6] In a way, his comment was prescient: Europeans would not annihilate local cultures and instead adopted some of their habits. But further west, a Lakota proverb – "our tradition is a tradition of change" – offered a better recipe for all the peoples involved in colonial encounters.[7] The result was "new worlds for all." First obvious in New Spain, cross-cultural exchanges nevertheless followed distinctive regional paths in the Catholic and Protestant empires.

The Catholic empires

For many indigenous peoples of North America, the first cross-cultural encounters were not with the European conquerors

themselves but with the germs they carried. The Spanish invaders of Mexico in the sixteenth century were surely cruel. But they were also few in numbers, and their diseases – smallpox and influenza – had already decimated the Aztecs of Mexico, ensuring their eventual conquest. European diseases then spread as the Spanish explored northwest and northeast Mexico. They traveled still farther north and inland into North America along local trade routes and with the native survivors who fled from spreading epidemic outbreaks.

Although weakened by disease, indigenous peoples met invaders from Europe on relatively equal terms in both Spanish and French North America. With the onset of European expansion, Pope Paul III in Rome had proclaimed the worthiness of the souls of the human "heathens" of the world and charged Europe's Catholic monarchs with their conversion. Catholic missionaries – "Black Robes" or Jesuits in New France, Franciscans in Florida and New Mexico – succeeded in building missions but faced an uphill struggle to attract local converts. In both empires, soldiers built forts to dominate and defend lands claimed by distant rulers. Often they did not so much defeat local peoples or occupy their lands as try to force or lure them into delivering food, tribute, and trade goods to sustain the few Europeans among them.

As this suggests, most of the migrants in both Catholic empires were men. While missionary brothers sought converts, traders and soldiers had more earthly concerns, and wanted wives and consorts. Having left a Mediterranean world where people from Asia, Europe, and Africa had long traded and intermarried, the Spanish found indigenous women to be desirable partners. Spain's and France's rulers hoped, furthermore, that the European men who married local women facilitated their conversion. Just as often, however, influence traveled in the opposite direction with fur traders from France becoming adopted members of the indigenous communities of their wives.

Indigenous populations were especially large and powerful in the southwest where small numbers of Spanish-speaking missionaries, farmers, and soldiers lived far from the center of

Spanish imperial and military power in Mexico City. There, agriculturalists exhausted by decades of forced labor to raise food for the Catholic missions and tribute for Spain's soldiers and enraged with pressure to abandon their own religious rituals for Catholicism actually forced Hispano (Spanish-speaking but American-born) soldiers and European missionaries to flee temporarily in 1680.

Despite these conflicts and within a century, however, the residents of New Mexico also idiosyncratically blended the cultural traits of two worlds. Hispano soldiers, missionaries, and farmers had learned to eat the corn dishes and peppers of the locals, while abandoning the use of olive oil; they had also adopted adobe-building techniques. Local people adopted the pigs and lard as well as the fruit trees, wheaten baked goods, and horses introduced by the Spanish. A few became Catholics and learned Spanish. Others, like the Navajo, maintained their autonomy and languages but abandoned their lives as migratory hunters to become herders of new European animals and weavers of woolen blankets; they learned even to drink milk and make cheese – foods unknown to the indigenous peoples of America.

In Quebec, along the St. Lawrence River and especially in the Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley, French traders, missionaries, and farmers were also outnumbered, for example by the politically well-organized Algonquian peoples. Algonquians were rarely much impressed with the newcomers, and wondered why they had made such long journeys if, as they claimed, France was so superior. In New France, a Micmac announced himself "astonished that the French have so little cleverness," and asked why French men measuring five feet needed the tall houses they boasted about in France. Lecturing a French listener, he summed up the superiority of his tribal ways, for "Indians . . . carry their houses and wigwams with them so that they may lodge wheresoever they please, independently of any seignior whatsoever."[8]

Conflict and accommodation in British North America

Relations between natives and newcomers seemed distinctive from the very onset in British North America. A Powhatan living near Jamestown in 1609 concluded "we perceive and well know you intend to destroy us."[9] The English intention to settle made conflicts over land – communally used by the eastern woodlands peoples but privately owned by the British – inevitable and violent, even though 90 percent of North America's original population may already have been dead by the time the English arrived. In the Chesapeake in 1622, five groups united under the chief Opechancanough attacked English newcomers; another war followed in the 1640s, shortly after the Pequot War wracked New England. Battles with local peoples moved westward and inland with European settlement in the eighteenth century. Warfare was the most feared interaction between Europeans and local peoples, and the two groups continuously borrowed weaponry, battle strategies, and styles of combat from each other, seeking to gain advantage.

Trade provided a more peaceful, and common, form of intercourse. The peoples of North America had long been trading among themselves; they treated only their earliest exchanges with the newly arrived English as gifts, and they quite rapidly set prices for food, furs, and hides. While they acknowledged, "We want Powder and Shot & Clothing," (along with the beads and iron cooking pots of the Europeans), they also complained, that the Europeans "first give us a large cup of Rum."[10] Seventeenth-century English and Dutch traders did exchange large quantities of alcohol for furs and skins. As the men of the Carolinas specialized in delivering these export products to Europe's traders, local women also cultivated more corn to sell to them.

Ultimately, the exchange of food and furs for alcohol and iron pots most benefited the newcomers. By 1700, 225,000 people with roots in Europe and another 25,000 originating in Africa outnumbered the 100,000 remaining indigenous

peoples. Ninety thousand Puritans had created a "New England," in the north. A roughly equal number of poorer and richer English and about 10,000 slaves from Africa, lived around the Chesapeake, in the south. The remaining 60,000 – mainly English, Dutch, and Swedes, with small numbers from Africa – lived strung along rivers connecting port cities to agricultural hinterlands. The subsequent explosion of migration across the Atlantic in the 1700s further complicated these nascent regional differences.

New England

Table 1.1 reveals the considerable diversity of British North America in the eighteenth century while also pointing to the uniquely homogeneous population of New England – the only region where settlers of English descent actually predominated.

Table 1.1 The population of the new USA, by region, in 1790

	*New England**	*Middle states***	*Inland south****	*Coastal south*****
Black	2%	6%	24%	40%
English	71%	41%	49%	39%
Scotch	4%	7%	10%	6%
Northern Irish	3%	7%	5%	4%
Southern Irish	2%	3%	4%	3%
German	–	18%	4%	5%
Other White	18%	18%	4%	3%
TOTAL	1,009,371	1,017,226	504,096	1,398,959

* New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Vermont
** New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware
*** North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee
**** Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, Georgia

Source: Calculated from data in Thomas J. Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History* (New York: Free Press, 1983), p. 25.

Not only had New England's earliest settlers believed, conveniently, that "God is English," they had also assumed he was a Puritan. Near Boston, where an English newcomer reported that the natives had "died on heapes as they lay in their houses," Puritans often concluded their God was clearing out the heathens to make room for them.[11] Settlers had quickly "established" their Puritan church and required all residents of the colony to support it financially. They excluded English Quakers who refused and they banished Protestant dissidents like Roger Williams to Rhode Island (which after 1663 became the only British colony apart from Maryland officially tolerating religious practice by Catholics).

In the 1630s, Puritan settlers such as John Winthrop had believed that "the eyes of all people are upon us" as they sought to build the model community in Boston that he called a "city upon a hill."[12] But it was mainly Puritans that found New England attractive even in the seventeenth century. With few exports and poor land, New England became important mainly as a center for imperial trade and shipping. Despite its relative prosperity, it attracted relatively few newcomers after 1700.

Until the Revolution, the settlers of Massachusetts persisted in their exceptional and self-conscious traditionalism and in their devotion to reproducing European ways rather than adopting local customs. Populations of the original inhabitants continued to fall and intermarriage between natives and newcomers was exceedingly rare. Europeans adopted local place names, learned to cultivate Indian corn (but prepared it, European-style, as pudding or bread), and to enjoy pumpkin (which they baked into pies). Overall, however, they preferred the roasted meats, along with the rye and wheat breads and bean pottages of Europe, and they adopted many fewer features of local housing or dress than their counterparts in the Spanish southwest. New England seemed a completely appropriate name for their new homeland.

The coastal south

Elsewhere in British North America, the English were politically and economically powerful, but a numerical minority. In the coastal south, a relatively small planter class dominated a large population of slave and indentured laborers from Africa and Europe, supplying indigo, rice, and tobacco to Europe and sending food, lumber, and hides to British sugar colonies in the Caribbean. Compared to the spiritually oriented and self-consciously English settlers of New England, the settlers of the Chesapeake glorified material gain but pursued it by exploiting the labors of others.

Forbidden in Great Britain, slavery was legal throughout colonial North America. But the presence of large numbers of slaves from Africa literally made visible the regional distinctiveness of the coastal, plantation south. Within 40 years after the first Africans arrived in Virginia, the planter owners of large tracts of land were writing laws that institutionalized slavery and differentiated it from European servitude by making it permanent and heritable across the generations. Slavery shaped the English planters' relations even with natives. In the Carolinas, planters unconsciously emulated the many competing rulers of Africa, and sought to intensify rivalries among local groups by offering to purchase men and women captured and enslaved in their wars with each other. And a vigorous slave trade, along with the institution of slavery, structured every interaction of migrants from Africa and Europe.

It was a violent encounter. Although his family had owned slaves in Nigeria, Olaudah Equiano's first meeting with long-haired and light-skinned European slave traders in Africa nevertheless evoked great fear on his part. Once captured and sold to a European trader, he assumed he would be killed, and he wished only to die. Upon arrival in the Caribbean, he feared he would be eaten until told otherwise by slaves speaking a language that he understood. Equiano's story highlights the beatings and physical violence European planters used to force labor from the demoralized servants and slaves who out-

numbered them.[13] Even in Rhode Island and Connecticut, where Venture Smith was transported and eventually earned money to purchase his freedom, his owner had smashed him in the head with a huge club and the two had battled physically, resulting in the shackling of the slave.[14]

Surprisingly, migrants from Europe also seemed to fear those they enslaved and dominated. Unlike the Spanish and Portuguese, the English confronted dark-skinned people for the first time during the slave trade. Comparing them to devils and animals, they associated their physical darkness with dirt, disease, and sin, and they feared contamination by them.[15] The Scottish indentured servant John Harrower wrote of meeting "a Black" only two weeks after his arrival in Virginia. Because he worked as a tutor, Harrower lived apart from field laborers, and reported to his wife in a letter "how many blacks young and old the Lord only knows for I belive there is about thirty". Within a year he had observed an overseer strip an enslaved blacksmith and give him "39 laches with Hickry switches that being the highest the Law allows at one Wheeping."[16]

By 1700, the institutionalization of slavery prevented even heavily unbalanced gender ratios from facilitating intermarriage in the coastal south. Around the Chesapeake and in Virginia, the earliest English planters had used first physical violence and then law to monopolize their access to scarce women, regardless of skin color, while blocking competition from male slaves and servants. British colonial law soon forbade the marriage of Europeans to Africans (although not to indigenous peoples) and even religiously sanctioned marriages between slaves had no legal standing whatsoever. Slavery guaranteed that the child of a slave mother remained a slave, while pregnancy lengthened a European servant woman's term of servitude. Masters thus had every incentive to force enslaved and indentured women to submit to their passions while denying their offspring any access to their privileges.

Yet despite slavery, cultural transformations were far more extensive among the peoples of the coastal south than in New England. While Europeans in the plantation south began to raise and eat Indian corn and to cook it as natives did – as

hominy, grits, meal, bread, and mush – their most important exchanges were with the enslaved migrants from Africa who outnumbered them. Servants and planters adopted the work routine – beginning early and working at a measured pace – of African laborers long accustomed to tropical climates. In the Carolinas, slaves not only knew how to cultivate and irrigate rice, they also taught planters from Europe how to prepare, process, and eat it. They introduced the peppery flavors, fishing nets, basketry, and building styles of Africa. West African herding techniques also soon spread through coastal Carolina. And in Virginia, John Harrower reported his master playing a fiddle and then inviting a "Niger come and play on an Instrument call'd a Barrafou."[17]

Migrants from Africa changed too, although perhaps more in response to each other than to their masters from Europe. Planters pressured slaves to learn enough English to follow orders but they were ambivalent toward slaves' conversion to Christianity, fearing it created grounds for slaves to claim their freedom. Where migrants from Africa were the majority, slaves from a wide variety of origins developed their own pidgin languages and religious practices. Gullah, a mixture of African and English languages developed in coastal Carolina; throughout the south, slaves blended their diverse oral traditions and religious practices into a new slave culture even as they adopted elements of European everyday life.

The upland south and middle colonies

A particularly diverse group of migrants from Europe had arrived in the middle colonies and the upland areas of Virginia and the Carolinas. Slavery existed in both places, and only in the 1760s would the Quakers of Pennsylvania become the first among Europeans to oppose the institution, yet slaves remained everywhere a small minority. Together these two regions became the "best poor man's country" for servants and redemptioners only by constantly pushing natives farther west; free from the competition of enslaved labor, humble Europeans

sought modest economic improvements. The independent, small-scale, yeoman farmers so common in these regions lived far more simply than planters; at most they exported grain and imported a few finished products (cloth, iron goods, and rum). With no established churches, the middle colonies and upland south also provided a better "American asylum" than New England for religious dissenters.

Scottish, German, and Scotch-Irish newcomers feared but also learned from the natives among whom they lived in both regions. Visitors from the coast often expressed astonishment at finding "indianized" European frontiersmen with skin clothes, living by hunting and fishing, eating corn dishes like hominy grits and hoecake, and dosing themselves with local herbs and barks. At the same time, however, the Cherokees of the southern mountains adapted many elements of European agriculture and animal husbandry, developed a written alphabet for their language, and even purchased slaves. Groups that fled inland to escape settlers from Europe generally took along their iron cooking pots, rifles, and pigs. Slaves escaping from the plantations of the coastal south joined the retreating natives on the inland frontiers (when they did not head for Spanish Florida). There, in "maroon" communities, they intermarried equally with runaway indentured servants and with indigenous peoples.

If interactions between newcomers from Africa and Europe marked the south as distinctive, the middle colonies and upland south instead brought together Europeans of sharply differing cultures. Port cities were particularly cosmopolitan places; in New Amsterdam, Dutch had jostled Swedes, English, Africans, and Germans, and a dozen languages were heard on the streets. Capturing the city from the Dutch in 1664, and renaming it New York, the British soon ate Dutch cookies and built gable-ended buildings on Dutch models but their campaigns to anglicize the language and political habits of New Yorkers were otherwise surprisingly successful.

A diverse population of religiously dissident newcomers also especially welcomed the religious toleration promised by William Penn, the Quaker founder of a colony in Pennsylvania in 1681. (Pennsylvania's religious toleration extended

even to natives: Tuscaroras from the south also relocated to Pennsylvania after warring with other settlers from Europe.) By 1744, in one Philadelphia tavern, Dr. Alexander Hamilton would report finding Scots, English, Dutch, Germans, and Irish; religiously their company included Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Quakers, "Newlightmen," Methodists, "Seventh day men," Moravians, Anabaptists, and a Jew.

Religious diversity did not prevent men in cities from drinking and eating together. But in the countryside it often limited intermarriage among newcomers, even though colonial law nowhere prohibited it. In fact, the Frenchman Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur seemed fascinated when he discovered a New York family "whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations."[18] In this family, de Crèvecoeur claimed to find the first real Americans, dismissing any claims Indians might make to the term as natives of the land. To most residents of the middle colonies, however, such intermarriage remained invisible and uncelebrated. Even migrants from Europe instead more typically feared each other and they avoided conflict with each other by separating in private even as they became culturally more alike.

Groups in Formation; Colonial Identities

In 1492, the residents of Africa, North America, and Europe had scarcely known of each other's existence. Over the next three centuries, they learned of and emphasized differences among themselves. To a surprising degree, colonial laws and assumptions shaped the formation of new groups and group identities. By 1776, there were "reds," "blacks," and "whites," "heathens" and "Christians," and "Indians," "Britons," "Natives," "Pennsylvania Dutch," "Virginians," and "Africans" all living in North America. Few resembled modern ethnic groups, yet they created the diversity the USA would inherit from Britain even as it separated from it.

Native nations

The indigenous peoples of North America were neither subjects, colonists nor citizens of British North America. Completely unlike modern ethnic groups in the USA, they were independent nations with their own governments. And the European invaders generally saw them as that, too. Great Britain and France repeatedly signed (and also repeatedly violated) treaties with Indian representatives, detailing land ownership and use and alliances of mutual defense. If, in 1492, the identities of indigenous peoples had reflected their trade, wars, and differences with each other, over the next centuries they increasingly emphasized their differences from newcomers, defining themselves as natives of the land. While Europeans sometimes called them Americans, they rarely called themselves that.

Newcomers and natives alike saw physical traits (notably skin color), gender and family relations, and religious practices as important markers of their differences. Natives commented on the pale skin, eyes, and hair of some Europeans; Europeans saw the natives as "tawny" or "red." Natives laughed when Christians' prayers failed to work but British settlers like the Reverend Thomas Mayhew went further in describing natives as the opposite of the Protestant settlers – heathens were "mighty zealous and earnest in the Worship of False gods and Devils . . . abounding with sins."[19] Cotton Mather also attributed to the natives the traits he most feared in his fellow Protestants, insisting "They are lying wretches, they are very lazy wretches; and they are out of measure indulgent unto their children." Spanish, Dutch, and English alike deemed Indian men lazy because women were the main cultivators among them; to native eyes the European men who worked in the fields seemed effeminate. For Europeans, the ease of divorce and matrilineal customs of the Iroquois seemed telling proof of their inferiority and Mather even concluded, "there is no family government among them."[20]

To Dutch, English, and French explorers, diplomats, and

generals, indigenous people were not so much a single group of natives but "heathens," "savages," "Indians." With time, the Spanish learned to distinguish settled agriculturists (whose names they translated as Pueblo, "the people") from migratory hunters. In the east, the English began to call the Ganonsyoni the "Iroquois" – the name used by their traditional enemies. For their part, the Iroquois quickly recognized the French, English, and Dutch as imperial competitors, and they negotiated with all three empires to gain any possible advantage for themselves.

Responding to precipitous population declines and constant pressure from settlers from Europe, natives also increasingly united as natives. Their hostility to the newcomers made them North America's first nativists, opposing migration of more newcomers. By 1750, the British in North America faced not hundreds of separate independent nations but five pan-tribal alliances or federations – Iroquois, western Delaware, Shawnee, Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw. Each federation negotiated independently with the European empires, but within each group voices called for unity of all to end Europeans' incursions. Thus in 1723, Antoine Le Page du Pratz appealed "Before they came, did we not live better than we do, seeing we deprive ourselves of a part of our corn, our game, and fish, to give a part to them?"[21] For Pratz "we" were the nations of Natives, "they" were the European newcomers, and the interests of the two groups could not be reconciled.

Blacks or Africans?

Unlike the natives of America, slaves transported to North America became the property of, and thus the most subordinate of subjects of the British Empire. Denied most of the rights even indentured servants took for granted, slaves turned to each other for support and sustenance – Olaudah Equiano, for example, expressed discomfort when forced to work in Virginia among indentured servants from Europe. From simple preferences like his, a sense of shared community emerged

among slaves. But it did so only gradually because slaves had to bridge considerable divisions – among Moslems, Christians, and animists and among Yoruba, Edo, Bantu, Igbo, and Mandingare. Fear of slave revolts, such as the Stono rebellion in South Carolina in 1739, indicate that planters recognized their slaves' developing sense of community without understanding how their violence and ostracism toward slaves contributed to its strength.

In English eyes, physical difference eventually trumped religion as the boundary dividing slaves from themselves, especially as slaves became Christians in the 1700s. But while John Harrower called slaves "blacks," he never referred to himself as white, and slaves too more often called men like Harrower "Boccarora" or "Buckra" than white. Just as Mather attributed to Indians the sins he most feared in his Protestant neighbors, planters in the south claimed special horror at the "boisterous passions" of their slaves. Women hardened by fieldwork symbolized to planters the absence of female virtue and delicacy – traits attributed instead to their wives and daughters – among the slave women they had themselves often violated.

Europeans lumped together all slaves, regardless of cultural background, language, or religion, as "blacks" but they failed to impose that identity on them. Newcomers from Africa instead disparaged the English-speaking culturally assimilated "salt-water Negroes" they first encountered in America while increasingly calling themselves Africans. In coastal cities as far north as New York, the free descendants of the first arrivals from Africa confirmed their choice, naming their first segregated cemeteries and churches not Black but African. Venture Smith too also regularly referred to himself as an African, distinguishing himself from white "gentlemen."

European cultural diversity

Unlike natives, Protestant migrants from Europe were all subjects of the British Empire; unlike slaves, they either were or

could become naturalized as British Colonials. Until the 1760s and 1770s, few of the newest arrivals recognized this commonality as important, however. Cultural difference, not racial or cultural unity, characterized group life among recent arrivals from Europe in British North America.

Newcomers from Europe were divided by sharp class and cultural differences. John Harrower saw indentured servants from the British Isles shackled, beaten, and in chains during his own far more comfortable passage to Virginia. In Pennsylvania, the English-speaking Benjamin Franklin, fearing that a colony founded by the English would become a "Germanized" colony of "aliens," castigated his German neighbors for their "tawny" skins. But the difference newcomers most feared among their European neighbors was religious. Franklin's outburst was fuelled in part by Pietist Germans' opposition in the Pennsylvania colonial assembly to requirements for political oaths and militia service among voters. Armed conflict over religious differences were fresh in the memories of many recent migrants from Europe; separation in private life and religious liberty in public life provided an American solution to European religious battles. But it also provided the basis for group formation, and considerable segregation, among Europeans.

Group formation along religious lines was especially evident in the countryside of the middle colonies and upland south where families spoke differing languages, and where German Moravians, Mennonites, Dunkards, Schwenkfelders (or other Anabaptists), Reformed Calvinists, and Lutherans settled apart from English and Scottish Presbyterians, Quakers, and Anglicans. Any traveler could see cultural differences in the barns, houses, and crops of British, Dutch, and German settlements. While the English roasted meats on an open fire, the Germans ground their meats, ate sausage, or cooked meats in "dutch ovens." Migrants from Germany spoke their own dialects at church and at home; they also published and purchased newspapers and books in German.

In their private lives, too, newcomers separated along cultural lines. Thus, even the cosmopolitan cities of British North

America were in some ways religious mosaics. In Charleston, French Huguenots and German, Scotch-Irish, and English Protestants built their own churches and burial grounds, separating themselves even more firmly in death than in life. Sephardic Jews formed their own communities and burial societies, even where they did not build synagogues. The earliest ethnic societies also appeared in port cities, usually to provide aid to newcomers and to widows and orphans. Scots formed the first in Boston in 1657; in the eighteenth century "Die Deutsche Gesellschaft," the "Friendly Sons of St. Patrick," "La Société Française de Bienfaisance de Philadelphie" also appeared. In Philadelphia, where they were a minority, even the English formed a mutual aid society. Much like churches in colonies with no established religion, membership in mutual aid societies was voluntary and many newcomers chose to ignore them.

The formation of distinct but voluntary cultural groups suggests that among migrants from Europe, too, new identities, unique to America, were replacing those of the past. There was no country of Germany in Europe in the 1700s, but there were already "deitch" (Deutsch, usually written by English-speakers as "Dutch") in Pennsylvania. For their part, the Pennsylvania Dutch (like the newcomers from the Netherlands in New York) usually referred to all English-speakers, regardless of origin, culture, or religion – including the Scots and even the Irish – as "Englishmen" rather than as Britons.

Still, settlers from Europe – regardless of religion or origin – also rather quickly adopted common identities defined by colonial governance. Colonial assemblies were an important place where Europeans of many backgrounds met; slaves and Natives had no place there. Already in the early seventeenth century, newcomers from Europe regularly referred to themselves as Colonials or – taking the British name for their colonies – as New Yorkers, Pennsylvanians, Virginians, and Carolinians. New England instead generated a powerful regional colonial identity; to this day, residents of Massachusetts call themselves New Englanders, not Massachusettians. Even in the realm of identity, then, politics and governance molded European diversity into a broadly shared "Colonial"

identity. That the new identities of British North America – Colonials, Africans, and Natives – differed so sharply from those of New Spain and New France suggests the considerable influence of imperial policies and governing institutions on the formation of all American identities.

"In-between" peoples: the Catholic alternative

With their expectations of conversion and intermarriage, New France and New Spain also generated new identities in North America. But these usually bridged or confused rather than highlighted skin color or physical differences between peoples from Africa, Europe, and America, creating a multitude of racially "in-between" peoples. In New France, the children of French traders and Indian women were called "metis" ("halfs"). In New Spain and French Louisiana, people of European descent but born in America were "criollos" (creoles) or "hispanos," distinguishing them from mestizo ("mixed") persons born to Spanish or creole men and native (india) women. Spain's rulers even created a complex legal system of classification and registration for the products of intermarriages among Spanish or creole, Indian and African (called moros or negros) and those of mixed (mestizo) blood – mulatos, moriscos, chinos, lobos, and cribaros.

British North America apparently feared "in-between" identities such as these. Among newcomers from Europe there, cultural and even religious variation was no barrier to Colonial status. But identities distinguishing cultural difference among Africans – "saltwater Negroes," for example – disappeared, just as sharp cultural differences among the local residents seemed increasingly irrelevant. Divisions among Natives, Colonials, and Africans became sharper as these three pancultural identities, reflecting the very different status of each group in the British empire, and their distinctive physical characteristics – notably skin color – solidified in law and in perception.

Thus, in British North America the term "mulatto" (for the

child of African and European parentage), while used, remained highly pejorative because it linked an individual socially and sometimes legally to slave origins. Perception of African physical characteristics could do the same. Meanwhile, the few native converts to Protestantism in New England, called "praying Indians," lived segregated in farming villages, apart from their European neighbors, and settlers often feared the "white Indians" who had gone to live among them and to adopt their customs. In the south, too, planters regarded the maroon communities formed by servants, run-away slaves, and Indians as places of rebellion and even treason (since racial mixing was more common in the territory of their Spanish enemies in Florida).

Over the course of 200 years, ethnic groups, regional cultures, and new identities unique to America had emerged from the cross-cultural encounters that followed Europe's invasion of America. These new identities obscured some differences that had mattered in Africa, Europe, or North America while emphasizing new differences among settlers or Colonials, Natives, and the enslaved Africans.

In British North America, Iroquois and Choctaw became Natives and nativists or (in Europeans' eyes) Indians; Swabians became Germans (or, in the eyes of their English-speaking neighbors, Dutch); English and Scots became British Colonials and Ibos became African or, in the eyes of whites, blacks. For those newly arrived from Europe, encounters with natives and with Africans encouraged them to think of themselves as morally superior Christians. Among Europeans, cultural diversity persisted but their legal status as members of the new British nation also increasingly united them as Colonials.

As subjects of Great Britain, those with recent origins in Europe faced troubling questions about their identities in the years after 1750. Were they to remain Colonials – as "British in America"? It would take a revolution to answer this question, and that revolution created a nation of Americans of European descent in North America. The American Revolution in turn forced these new Americans to define what distinguished them as a nation from Britain, from their American

neighbors in New Spain, from the increasingly hostile and nativist Natives who lived among them, and from new waves of newcomers they would soon call the "aliens."

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