

Cultures of Respect

Re-Righting History



Martin Brokenleg and Larry K. Brendtro

Cultures of Respect in a Polarized World

2025 Reclaiming Youth Seminars
Larry K. Brendtro

Our Inspiration for *Cultures of Respect*





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The Evolution of Respect

A Collision of Cultures

Europe Colonizes the World

Re-Righting Our History

EPOCH ONE

THE EVOLUTION OF RESPECT



Living in Harmony is in Human DNA



Our brains like those 35,000 years ago equip us to thrive in cultures of cooperation.

PETER GRAY



Indigenous cultures view children as sacred beings.



Without respect, no society, no
civilization can flourish for long.
Without respect, humanity is
doomed, and so is the earth,
sustainer of all life.

INGE BOLIN
RITUALS OF RESPECT



Indigenous knowledge was preserved in oral history.



Educating the young became the top cultural priority.

Egalitarian Power Leveling



Indigenous peoples sought to prevent power-hungry persons from gaining dominance.

CHRISTOPHER BOEHM

Teaching Values

Generosity replaces dominance.

Good-natured Teasing

Humor corrects arrogant behavior.

Withholding Attention

Ignore persons who pursue power.



Relationships of Respect Build Democratic Values

The Roots of Democracy



Today: Canada, New York

The Iroquois Confederacy dates
to the solar eclipse of 1142

“We the People”

The Iroquois Great Law of Peace



- ◊ Leaders are servants
- ◊ Women share power
- ◊ Decisions are by consensus



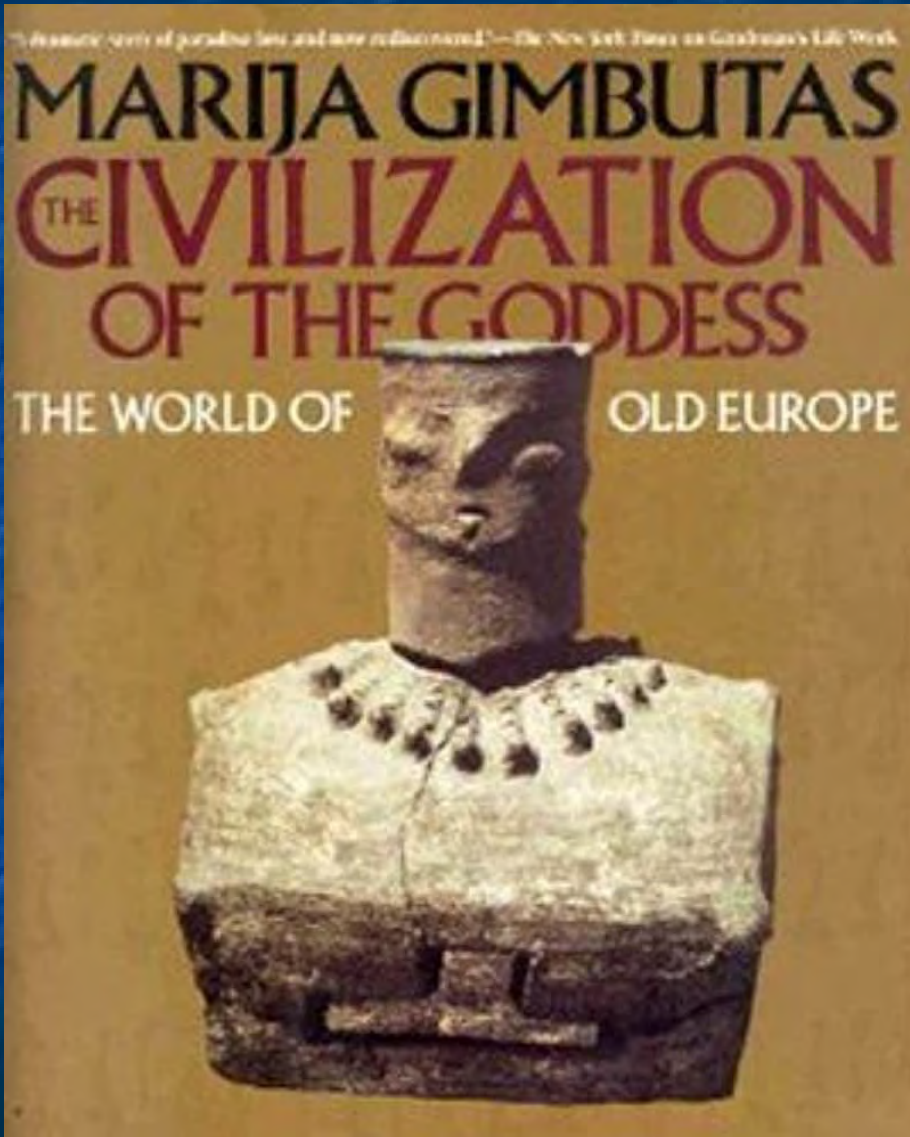
Clan Mothers chose chiefs and could remove them from power. The Iroquois Confederacy was founded by Mother of the Nations Jigonhsaseh along with the Great Peacemaker and Hiawatha.

Women are Sacred in Indigenous Cultures

In religions native to North America, the heroes are women. For example, in Lakota culture, White Buffalo Calf Woman saved her people. But the major religions that originated in the Middle East have male heroes.



Until 4,000 BC, Indigenous Europeans also had Egalitarian communities.



MARIJA GIMBUTAS (1921-1994) was a Lithuanian-born American archeologist and anthropologist and the leading scholar on “Old Europe.”



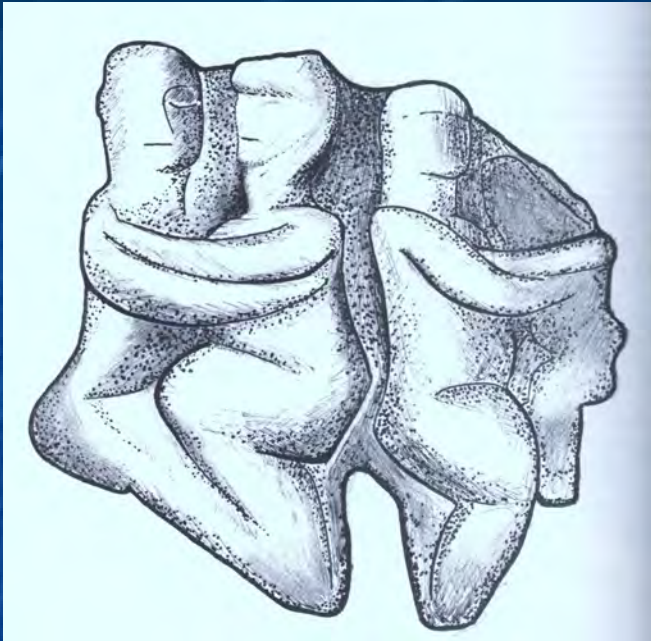
Her Lithuanian culture was closely connected with Nature and female mythology. Gimbutas recounts a tradition of kissing mother earth each morning and evening.

Women were revered in Old Europe.

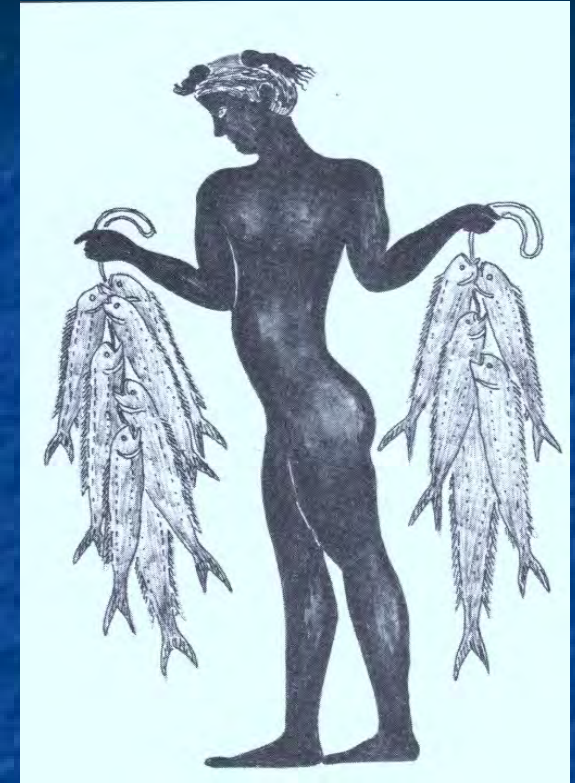
The most prominent art objects show pregnant women described in sacred mythology as the bringer of life.



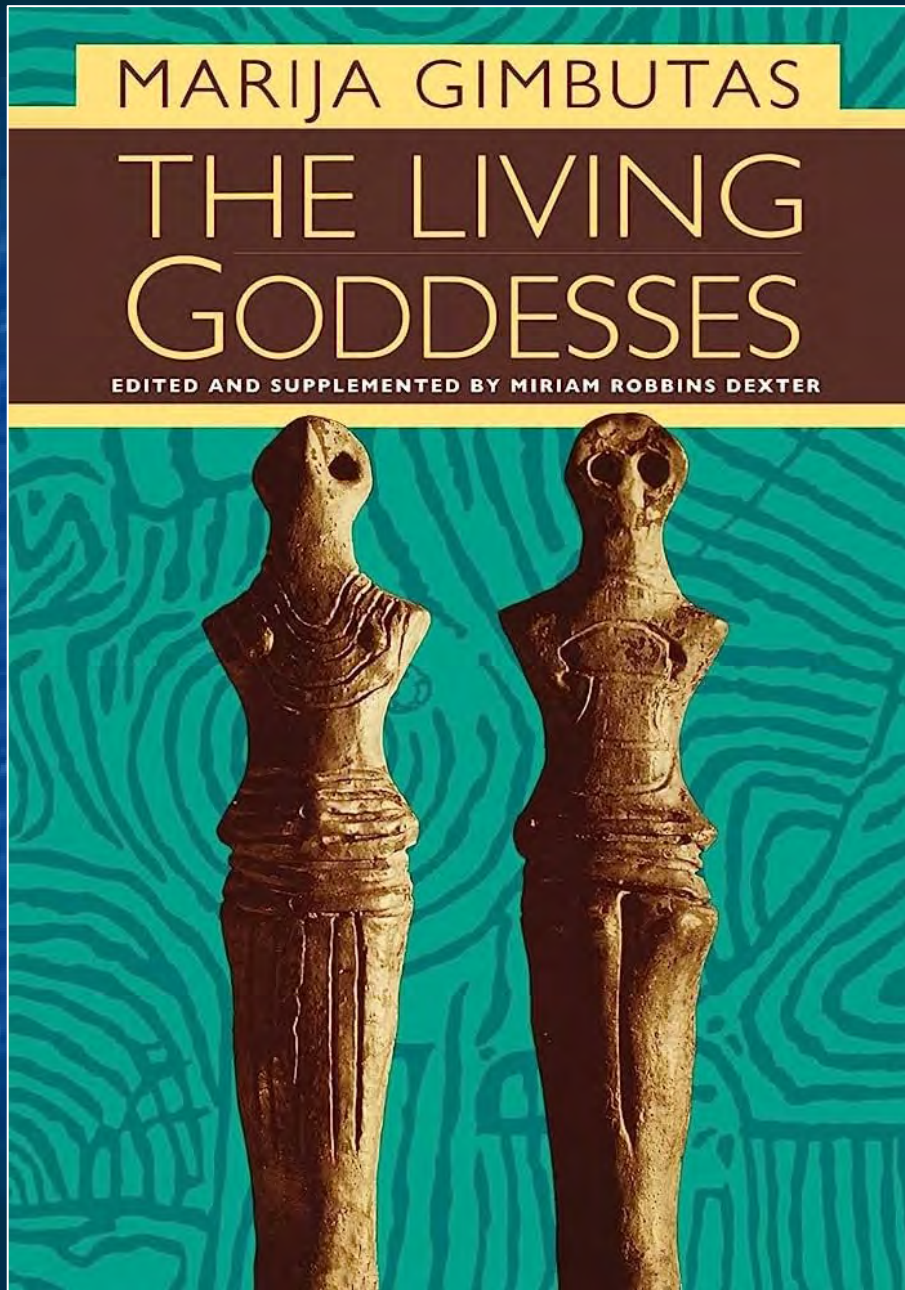
Art in Old Europe
shows life in harmony
with others and nature.



Sacred Marriage 6,000
BC carved in bluish stone
shows a couple in love
and the result, the sacred
mother - child bond.



The Natural Male
provides for his family.
There were no images
of male dominance.



Old Europe was an Advanced Civilization
Citizens lived peaceably in well-designed
agricultural communities. These were
matrilineal cultures with equality of sexes.

Artists made beautiful artifacts using metallurgy
and pottery. A written language was emerging .
There were no weapons of war.

While Europe would be overrun by patriarchal
warriors, like a marble cake, it would preserve
elements of the earlier peaceful civilization.

MARIJA GIMBUTAS



A Dramatic Paradigm Shift

Gimbutas challenged the myth that men have always dominated women with a wealth of evidence from linguistics, religion, archeology, and anthropology.

Her theory of Indigenous “Old Europe” as an advanced egalitarian civilization was initially ignored by scholars locked in the patriarchal mindset. But as her theories gained credibility, she encountered vicious criticism and ridicule from conventional academics.

Thomas Kuhn describes the *paradigm shift* as old notions collapse and a new science is born. Years after her death, DNA research would validate her theory of Old Europe.

The Patriarchy Myth: Men Have Always Dominated Woman



The Gimbutas Maxim: It takes women to tame men and boys.

EPOCH TWO

A COLLISION OF CULTURES

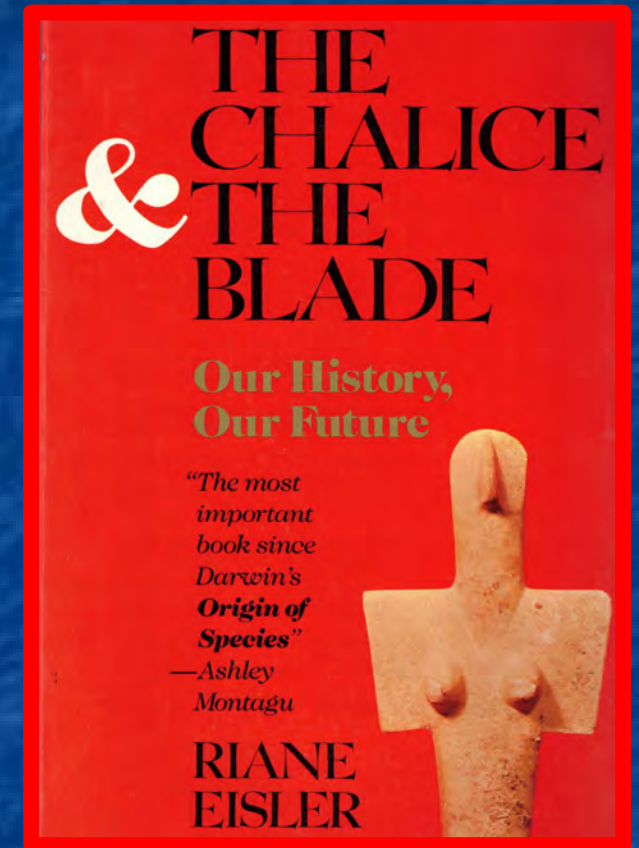


There are two types of human societies.



Cultures of Respect
for others and nature
have marked the long
history of humanity.

Cultures of Domination
arose in Europe about
4,000 BC, prevailing until
the rise of democracy.





The First Horse Warriors changed the course of human history. (Nova PBS)



Kurgan Invasions circa 4000 BC

“Kurgan” is the Russian name for the burial mound of a powerful male warrior entombed with weapons of war, sacred horses, and sacrificed humans.

From the steppes of southern Russia came fierce nomadic warriors, mounted on horses and wielding weapons of war.

Waves of violent invaders from bronze age Yamnaya cultures overran peaceful Old Europe.

The Proto-Indo-European tongue of the intruders replaced original European languages.

KURGAN INVASIONS



Whoever has the youth has the future. —ADOLF HITLER

To join the war-band was to die to one's old self and be reborn a creature of war.

INDO-EUROPEAN MYTHOLOGY

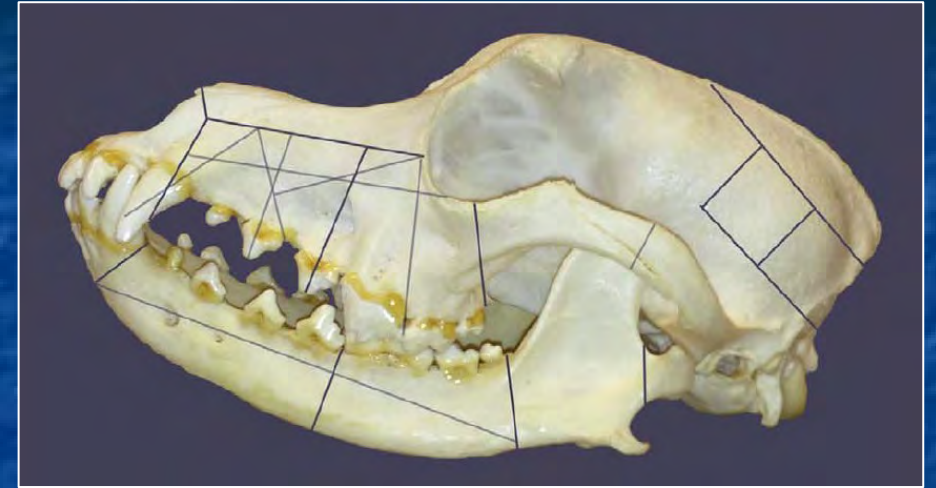
Youth War-Bands Ravaged Europe

In nobility, the eldest son received the family inheritance—younger sons joined war-bands.



In an initiation ceremony, wolves or dogs were killed, roasted, and eaten as boys became wolves. They joined a war-band led by an experienced male.

Youth were now free to rape and pillage so long as they didn't attack their own tribe. They became heroes by waging war, abducting women, and bringing home bounty. At age 20, they left the war-band to marry and begin a family.



Archeologists excavate wolf and dog bones at the site of war-band initiations on the Russian steppes. The canine skull was cut into pieces as shown by lines traced here, to be worn as ornaments by boy warriors.

DAVID ANTHONY AND DORCAS BROWN
(2017)

The Science of Ancient DNA (aDNA)



David Reich of Harvard is the leading researcher on decoding ancient DNA in human remains. This new science is rewriting our human ancestry.



The Gimbutas Kurgan theory is vindicated.

New ancient DNA research on the male Y chromosome shows the Kurgan invasions virtually wiped out Europe's male population (the sanitized term is *male displacement*). To this day, most males of European descent have significant Kurgan DNA. Women survived but bore the children of the invaders. COLIN BARRAS, 2019



Democratic Traditions End

Raw power became the measure of progress – elevating powerful males above women and weaker men.

Scholars labeled Old Europe “barbarism” and believed that patriarchal power was “civilization.”

MARIJA GIMBUTAS



Dominator Cultures
Devastate Old Europe

Violence, crime and war
rise to extreme levels.

Powerful males abuse
women, children, slaves.

“Our ancestors made
childhood a nightmare.”

LLOYD DEMAUSE
The History of Childhood

Indigenous Cultures of Respect



Egalitarian communities
Male/female partnership
Peaceful, little violence
Heroes as protectors

Western Cultures of Domination



Authoritarian leadership
Male domination
War and violence prevail
Heroes as conquerors

EPOCH THREE

EUROPEANS COLONIZE THE WORLD





After Kurgan invasions, Europe was marked by continual warfare. At first these were regional warlords, and later empires arose and fell.



For over a thousand years,
the Holy Roman Empire
Linked Politics and Religion

The Empire began in 800 AD with
the coronation of Charlemagne.
It ended in 1806 with Napoleon's
victory over Austria.

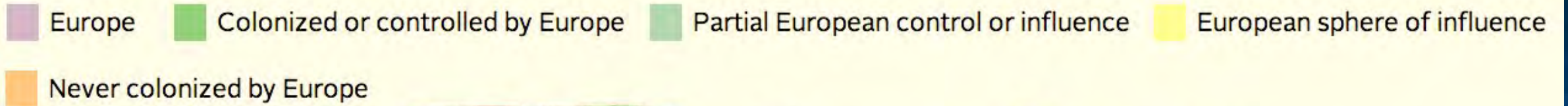
Christianity, Judaism, and Islam
were all strongly influenced by
Cultures of Domination.

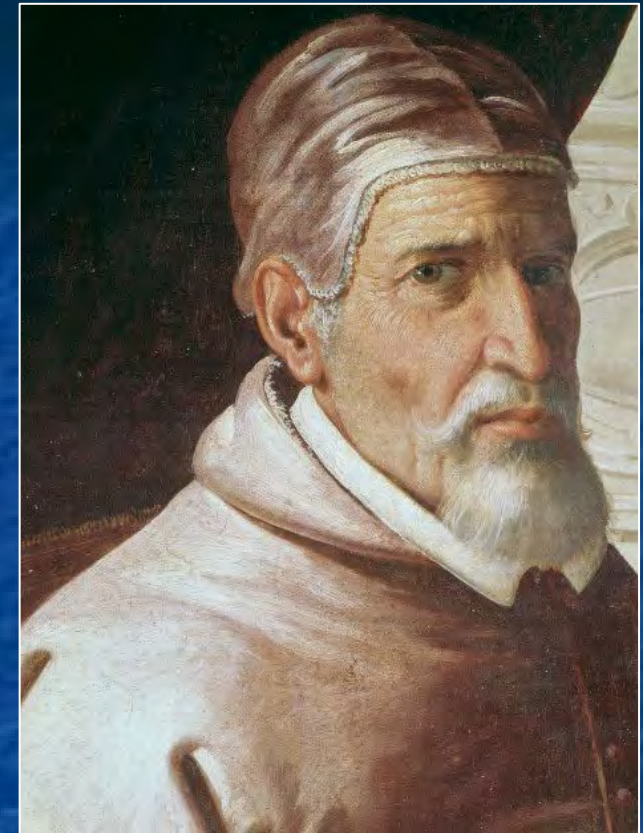


Inventions for Global Conquest

The Kurgans used mounted horses and deadly weapons to conquer Old Europe.

Then European monarchs used ships and cannons to enslave peoples in the Americas, Africa, Australia, Asia, and Pacific Islands.





1095: Pope Urban II
launches Crusades
against Muslims that
will last 200 years.



Colonizing Africa: The Papal Bull of 1455

Pope Nicholas V granted Portugal rights to enslave Muslim and African people. He called for non-Christian peoples to be invaded, captured, vanquished, and reduced to perpetual slavery to Christian monarchs. This fueled the slave trade.



1492: Columbus blew in and the New World changed.



1493: Columbus Describes “Indians” in Letter to Spanish Authorities.

Generous, kind, loving, extra-ordinarily timid, ingenious, men of commanding stature, with no weapons of war, carrying on inter-island commerce in canoes longer and faster than Spanish 18-oared galleys.



Colonizing the Americas: The Papal Bull of 1493

Pope Alexander VI gave this land to Christian monarchs because of the “inferior character of native cultures.”

He authorized explorers and military leaders to convert, torture, enslave, or kill to seize the lands unless the foe was a “Christian prince” in which case he could keep the land.



Terra Nullius:

Latin for *empty land*

While millions lived in the Americas, the Pope used the legal fiction *terra nullius* to give title of land to Europeans.



CHIEF JUSTICE JOHN MARSHALL

The Doctrine of Discovery

1823: The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that European nations had an absolute right to the lands they “discovered” and colonized because of the “character and religion” of Natives and “superior genius” of Europe.

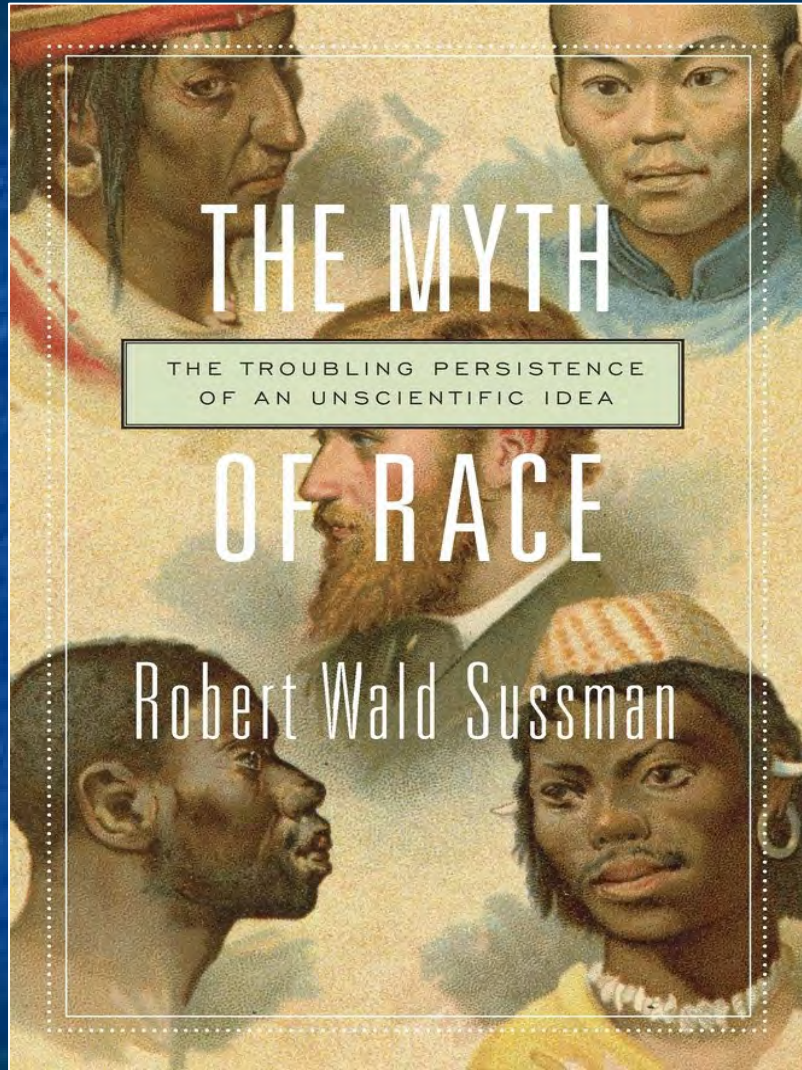
This law is treated as valid since it was legal when discovery countries made their claims. (It applies in Africa, Asia, and the Americas)



Manifest Destiny

The rallying cry for westward expansion: "God intended for superior Europeans to control North America."

American Progress painting by John Gast, 1872



For centuries, the white racial supremacy myth was used to justify domination of peoples worldwide.

But there is no biological basis for race.



The Roots of “Scientific” Racism

In 1767, Swedish biologist Carl Linnaeus invented the fiction of biological *race* by classifying humans based on appearance and personality.

Europeanus

White, gentle, inventive

Asiaticus

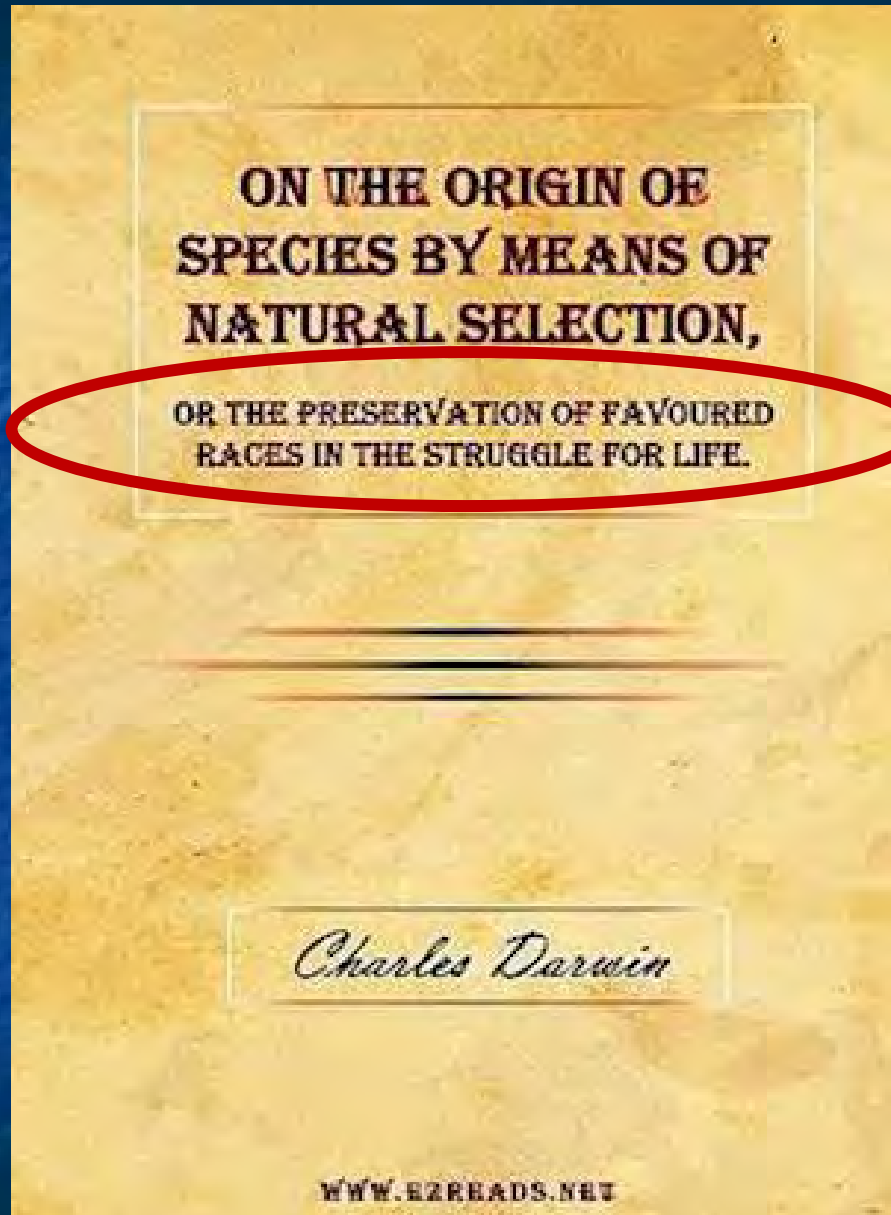
Yellow, melancholy, greedy

Americanus

Red, ill-tempered, subjugated

Africanus

Black, impassive, lazy



1859: Natural Selection

Darwin's *Origin of the Species* described plants and animals seen in his travels. He did not discuss human evolution.

By *races*, Darwin meant species of organisms. This subtitle was removed after it began to be used to justify racial superiority.

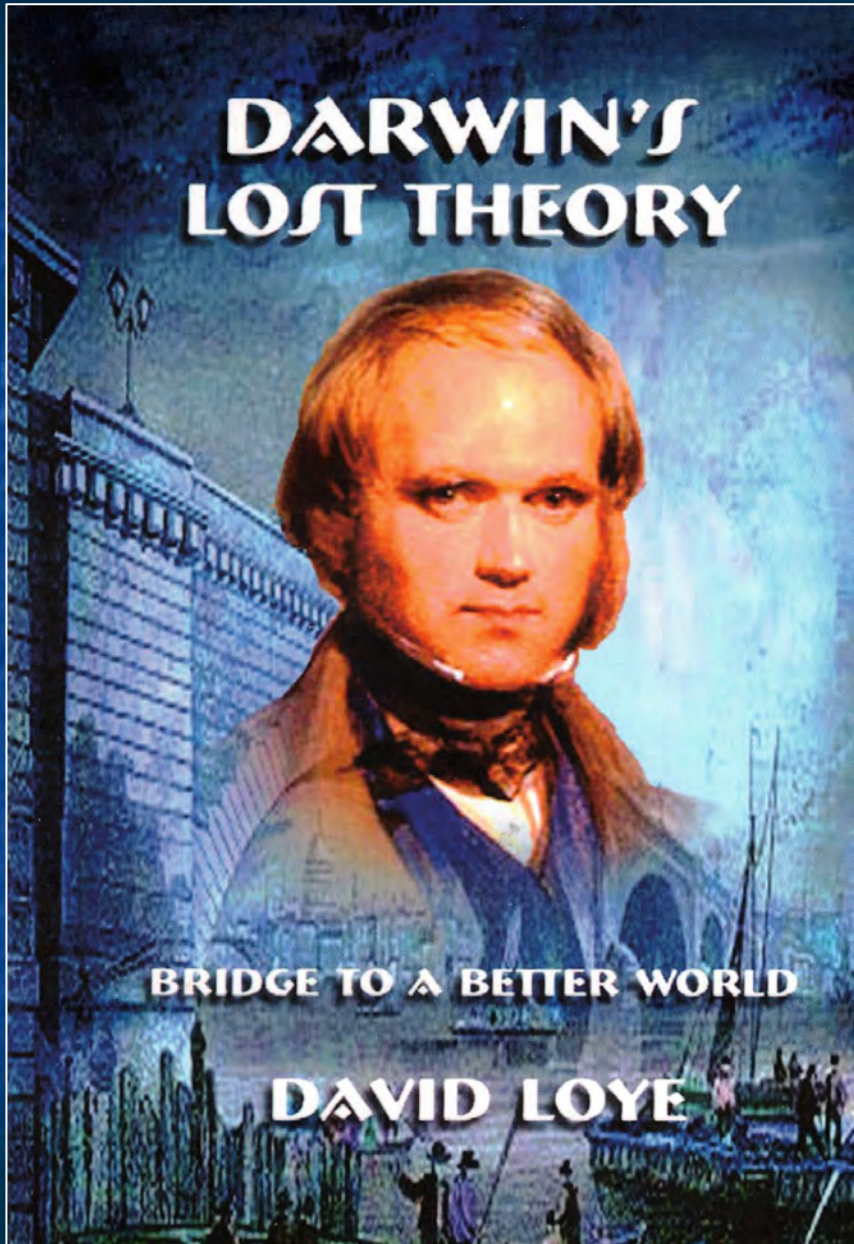


1864: Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer used the slogan “Survival of the Fittest” to corrupt Darwin’s theory of evolution, fueling white superiority myths:

- *Superior races should dominate inferiors.*
- *Policies to help those less fit (like the poor, uncivilized, disabled) breed inferior races.*
- *Only eugenics will preserve racial purity.*

Such views justify slavery, colonialism, global domination, and genocide to this day.



Darwin tried to change this mindset in his 1871 book on human evolution, *Descent of Man*. Darwin speaks 95 times of “love.” In contrast, he only mentions “survival of the fittest” twice as he criticizes this false view of evolution.

His book was ignored by a science justifying violence which can only lead towards human extinction. The real Darwin was silenced, the one who wrote of “the ennobling belief in God” and provided the science supporting core religious beliefs of “love thy neighbor.”

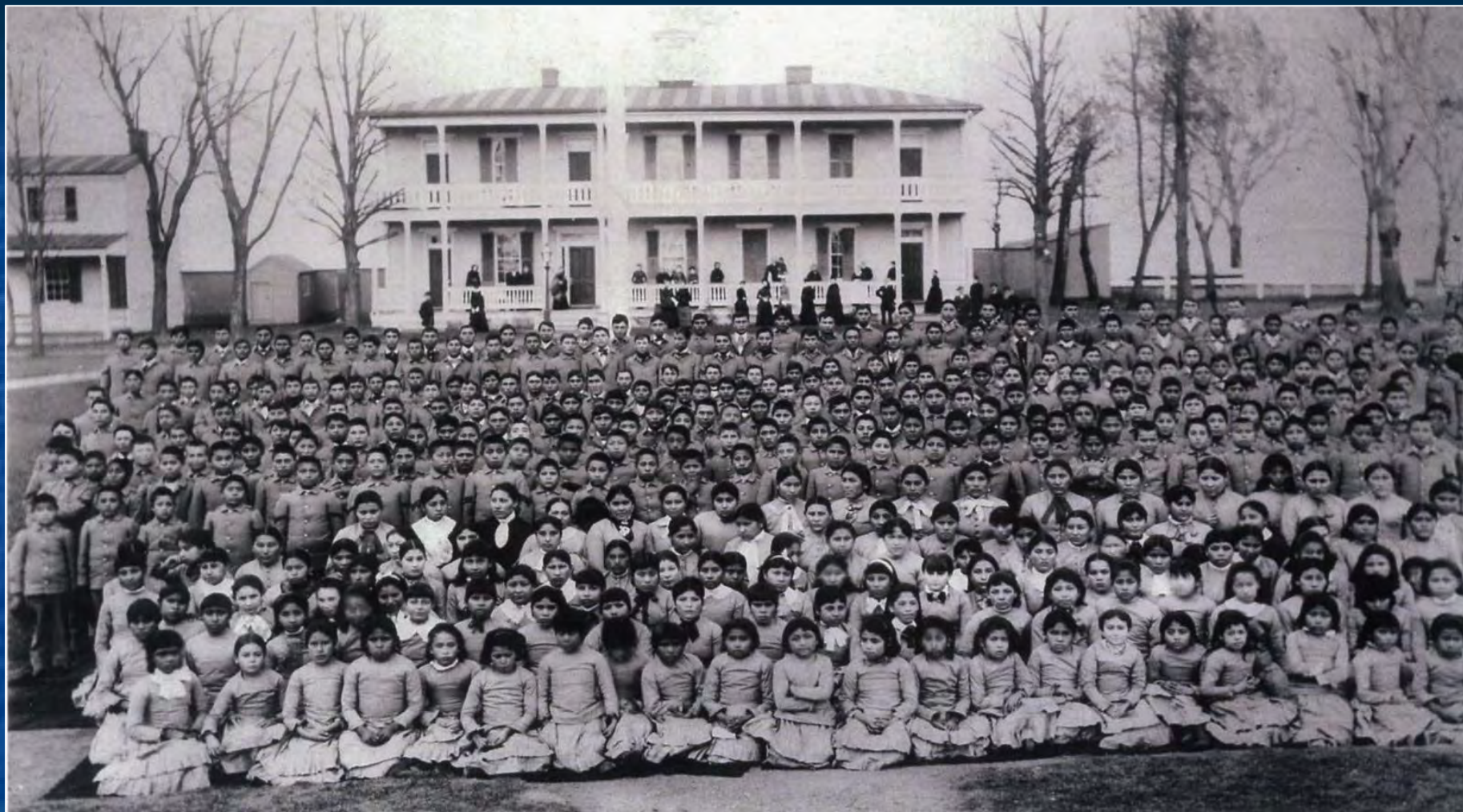


Survival of the ~~Fittest~~ Most Compassionate

CHARLES DARWIN

When his ten-year-old daughter died of TB, Darwin concluded that compassion for those we love is the strongest instinct in most humans.

He reasoned that groups with more sympathy would strengthen this trait through natural selection.



1879: Education became a Weapon to Destroy Native Culture
“Kill the Indian and save the man.” Captain Richard Pratt, Carlisle Indian School



Missionaries brought a “love thy neighbor” message which resonated with Native peoples. What they got were abusive boarding schools.

JANNA BRENDTRO & MARTIN BROKENLEG

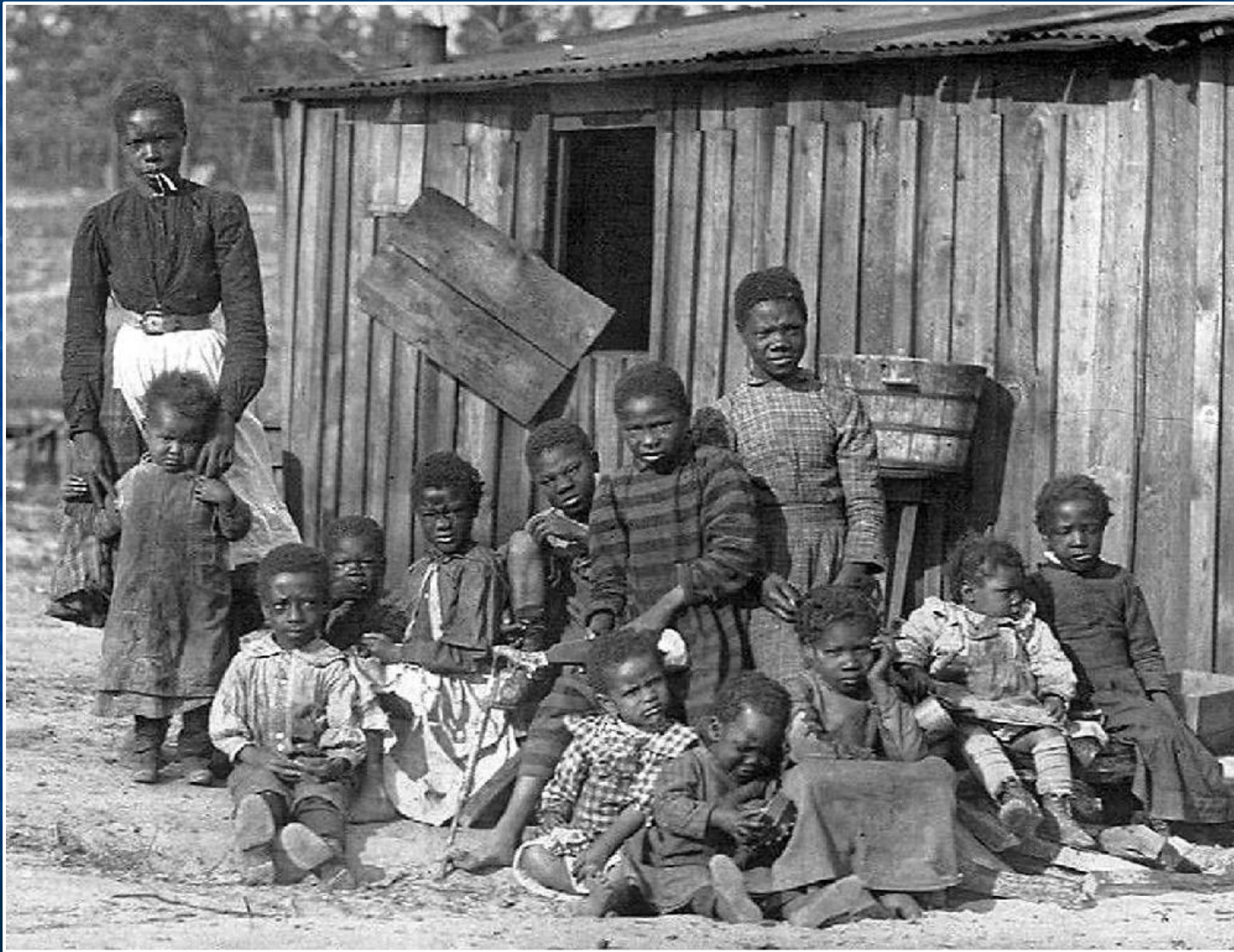




Historical Trauma of Colonization at Pine Ridge
Cultural oppression results in cumulative emotional wounds across generations.

MARIA YELLOW HORSE BRAVE HEART

Intergenerational Trauma in Dominator Cultures



African Slavery and Poverty
Australian Stolen Generation
British Colonization of India
The Maori in New Zealand
Natives of the Americas
Pacific Island Nations
Hitler's Holocaust



I want young people to
be violent, authoritarian,
fearless, and cruel.

ADOLF HITLER
Mein Kampf

Authoritarian Character

The tendency to regard most human beings either as superior—to be feared, bootlicked, and admired; or inferior—to be scorned, humiliated, and dominated.

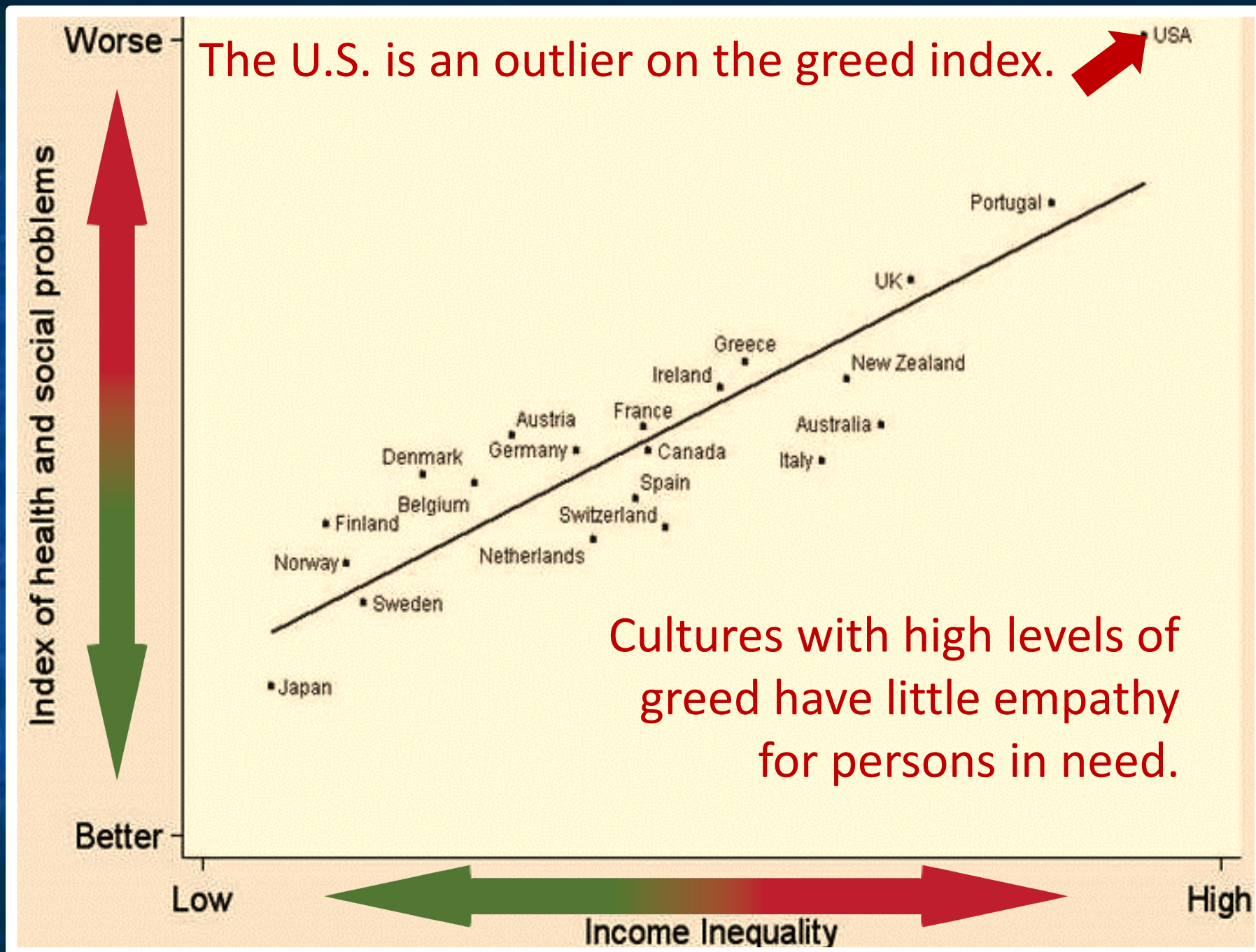
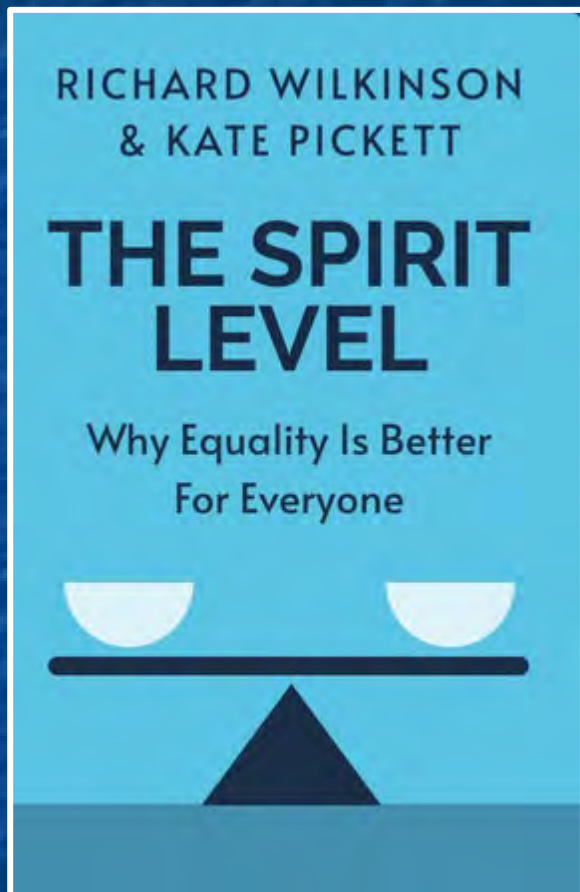
ABRAHAM MASLOW, 1943

(Inspired by his Blackfoot visit in 1938)

- Constantly feels threat—the world is a jungle.
- Instead of respect and love, seeks to be feared.
- Has an insatiable drive for power and prestige.
- Kindness is weakness, cruelty shows strength.
- Men dominate women who are seen as weaker.
- Targets hostility with outgroups as scapegoats.

Health and well-being are disrupted by cultures of greed.







Our world is mismatched to how we are biologically designed to live.

The result is a breakdown in health and emotional well-being.

We can't alter our genes but we can change our environments.

PETER GLUCKMAN
University of Auckland

EPOCH FOUR

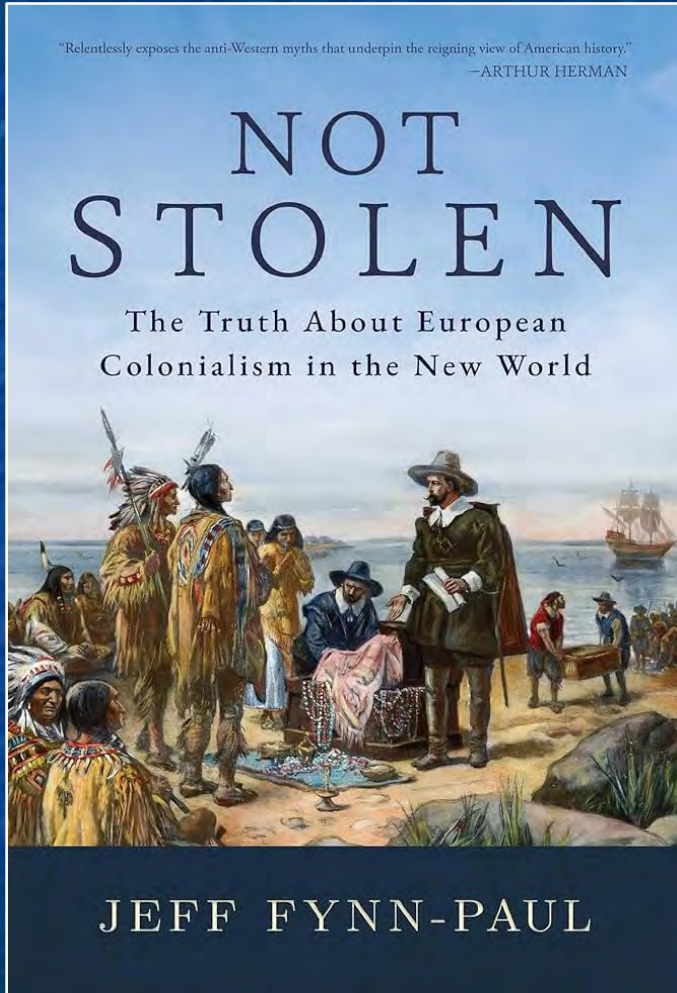
RE-RIGHTING OUR HISTORY



Let us put our minds together to see what kind of life we can build for our children.

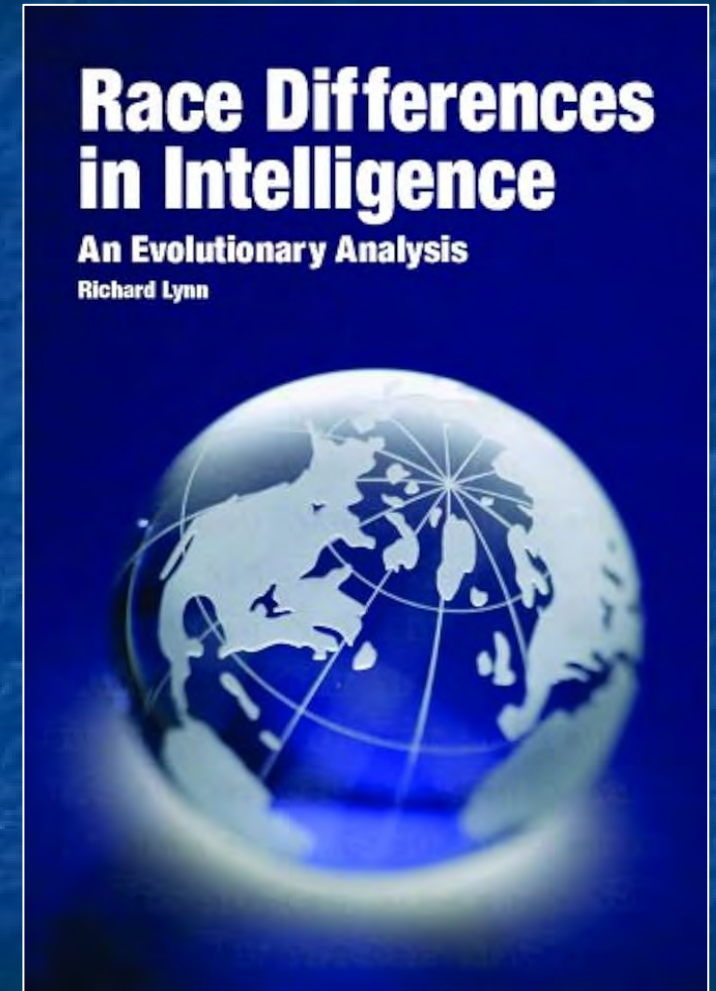
SITTING BULL

White supremacists seek to rewrite history and repress science.



A new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up familiar with it.

MAX PLANCK, 1858-1947





Reclaiming Spiritual Truths

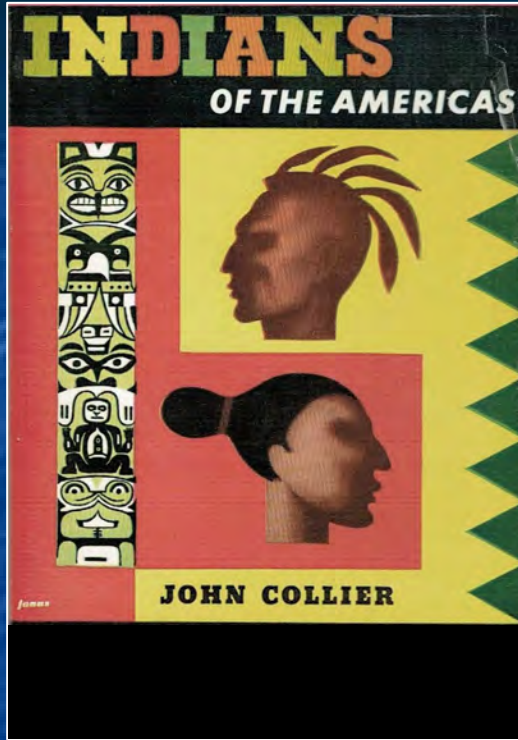
Cultures warp religion toward violence but peacemaking is a core value in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Pursuing peace within ourselves and between people is the *overriding message* of the Qur'an.

OMAR IRFAN, Muslim Scholar



If I am not for me, who will be?
But if I am only for me, what good am I?
That which is hateful to you, do not do
to your fellow. That is the whole Torah;
the rest is explanation.

HILLEL THE ELDER, Born 110 BC



They had what the world has lost. They have it now. What the world has lost, it must have again Be it now or a hundred years from now, or a thousand — so long as the race of humanity shall survive — the Indian keeps his gift for us all.

JOHN COLLIER
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1933-1945



DECOLONIZING DISCIPLINE

CHILDREN, CORPORAL PUNISHMENT,
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIES, AND RECONCILIATION

*Edited by
Valerie E. Michaelson and Joan E. Durrant*



Indigenous people have always had the knowledge and skills necessary to survive in good times and bad. All societies need this ancient knowledge now more than ever.

MARTIN BROKENLEG

Building Secure Cultures

People in some cultures are *insecure* and *surly*. But members of other cultures are *secure* and *peaceful*. What makes the difference?

Those in **Insecure Cultures** strive to dominate one another. Those in **Secure Cultures** seek to meet needs of both individuals and the group.

RUTH BENEDICT, 1941

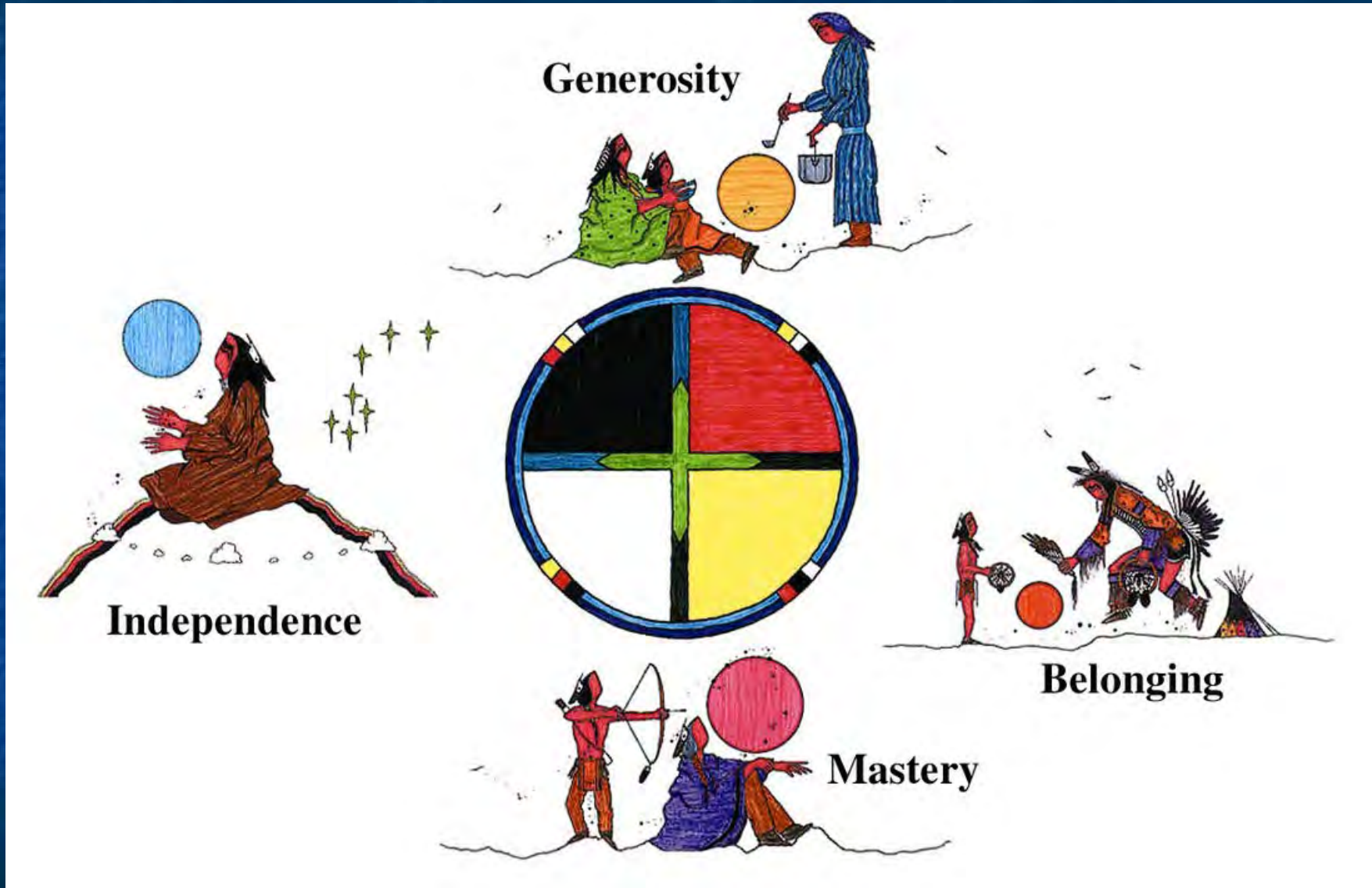


Focusing on Universal Needs



Abraham Maslow observed that meeting developmental needs is the path to well-being. Most emotional problems result from unmet needs.

The Circle of Courage: Universal Human Needs



First Nations Youth Bring this Message for Pope Francis at Mass





Pope Francis with Indigenous Leaders in Canada

The Vision of Martin Luther King, Jr.

The arc of the moral universe bends toward justice.



The New York Times

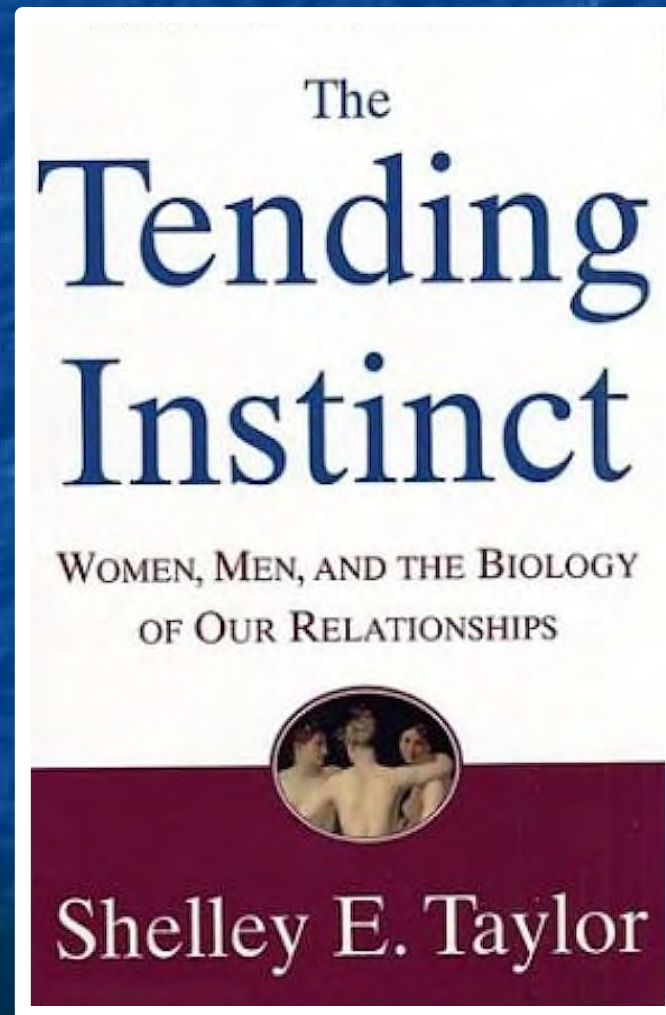
March 30, 2023

The Vatican Repudiates the
'Doctrine of Discovery'
used to Justify Colonialism.

Female Influence is Necessary to Prevent Toxic Societies

Male Stress Response

A Surge of Adrenalin →
Fight or Flight Behavior



Female Stress Response

A Surge of Oxytocin →
Tend & Befriend Behavior

Balancing Male and Female Morality

CAROL GILLIGAN



Female Moral Judgement
Based on the Ethic of Care



Male Moral Judgement
Based on the Ethic of Justice



Cultures of Respect begin with our young.



Making decisions that will sustain seven generations.



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