Hello, my name is John Evans and you are listening to my podcast on The American Paradox Theory.

So The American Paradox is a theory founded by Edmund Morgan which states that American freedoms were bought at the expense of African freedoms. It is a well grounded argument that points to economic and social shifts as proof. However, I believe this theory can be taken a step further. I believe that not only did African oppression serve to purchase American liberties, but the oppression of Natives Americans served to outline those liberties. In other words, American Liberties would have never been realized if it weren't for the oppression of Native Americans. This podcast will be broken up into two parts. First I'm going to discuss the amalgamation of the Cherokee. Then I will discuss the Iroquois Great Law of Peace.

The Cherokee were originally 30 to 40 separate tribes. Each had their own laws and culture. However the colonists did not distinguish between these different tribes. This meant that if one man from some small, obscure tribe attacked a colonist every Cherokee would suffer the consequences. Because of this the tribes had to band together and form one large coalition tribe. This new super tribe became the Cherokee.

Combining lesser entities to form greater entities when threatened by powerful external force is something the colonists would imitate later. In his book Guns, Germs, & Steel, Jared Diamond was quoted saying, “the White American colonies themselves, one of which (Georgia) had precipitated the formation of the Cherokee state, were impelled to form a nation of their own when threatened with the powerful external force of the British monarchy.”

Another cool similarity between the Cherokee and The United States is their gradual centralization and increase to federal power. When the Cherokee were originally formed punishment would be dished out by the lawmen of the individual tribes from which the criminals belonged to. As time passed and this method was proven to be inefficient the Cherokee began electing a head council and chieftain to serve as lawmen for the entire tribe.

Similarly, as the independence of the states was proven to be inefficient and the Articles of Confederation had been disregarded. The United States drafted the U.S. Constitution - increasing centralization and granting more power to the federal government. This allowed for a smoother running government.

The Iroquois taught a much different lesson. Now if you don’t know anything about the Iroquois tribe they are basically an alliance of minor tribes. This differs from the Cherokee because the Iroquois tribes still saw themselves as independent from one another. What served as a backbone to this alliance was something called the Great Law of Peace. The Great Law of Peace was a law written on Wampum belts and stated the main tenants of the tribe. Some of these included freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and separation of powers. Sound familiar? In fact, the Great Law of Peace had such an impact on the U.S Constitution that the
Iroquois were later formally recognized for their influence via Resolution 338.

The Iroquois also had a federal court. Theirs was known as the Women’s Court as women were the ones who most prominently served as lawmakers and intelligentsia for the Iroquois. The U.S created the Supreme Court to fill this void. Clearly America was not yet ready for the idea of Women’s Rights presented by the Iroquois

I believe a scholar by the name of Felix Cohen best summarized the purpose of my podcast - “(historians) have seen America only as an imitation of Europe," but "the real epic of America is the yet unfinished story of the Americanization of the white man."

Well that’s my podcast. Please feel free to share among your friends and family. I hope you enjoyed listening to it and at the very least you should take away one lesson. If there had been no Native Americans to show us what Democracy looked like then there would have been no America to embrace it.

Bibliography:

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