

The Disclosure of *Sagoyewatha v Parish, Jones and Crane*:
Or the Pending Case of *The Native Americans v The U.S.*

By Daniel Distante

Howard Zinn, historian and author of *A People's History of the United States*, points out the flaws of historical representation are its domination held by the more powerful figures of societies as well as its bias nature on account of the authors' tendency towards serving their own personal interests or larger agendas.¹ This minute fraction of the population dominates the documentation and wide-spread distribution of their own interpretations of history while the views of the weaker or victimized populations are generally left out of sight of the public's view. This is especially true of the Native Americans who were severely victimized by the European immigrants, to the extent of near extinction. This would help explain the strong emphasis on Germany's responsibility for the Jewish Holocaust in the study of modern history juxtaposed with U.S. historians' excessive disregard for their own genocide of the Native Americans within the U.S. One example of such biased historical interpretations can be found in the more commonly espoused explanation offered today as to the near annihilation of the roughly twenty-five million original inhabitants in North America alone, as an unintentional biological consequence resulting from the Native Americans' lack of immunization to European diseases. While this may have been a significant factor in many Native American deaths, it does not acknowledge or address the quite possibly more prevalent component to the Native American disappearance, which was the very deliberate and intentional ethnic cleansing of this first major obstacle to the European's God-ordained mission of conquest and domination.

¹ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States: 1492 – Present*. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1995), 8.

There are those, nonetheless, who while belonging to the victimized groups, stand out as beacons in the dark, as leaders and voices for their otherwise oppressed and voiceless people, and help in serving to offset the misbalance of power and influence. Sagoyewatha, or, as he is more commonly known in the U.S., Red Jacket, is one such figure who served as a leader and spokesperson to his Seneca Nation and was known foremost for his powerful oratory skills and speeches. His numerous influential speeches were predominately concerned with the defense against the gradual degeneration of his people, land and culture by the enculturation and encroachment of the White Man. One of his lesser known or published speeches consists of Sagoyewatha's defense against a written allegation against him, signed by Jasper Parish and Horatio Jones, two friends/agents/interpreters of the Seneca, as well as five Seneca from its Christian Party, accusing him of being drunk for two days during a Great Indian Council held at Tonawanta. At this prior Council, Sagoyewatha was asking that land he accused Jones of cheating his fellow chief, Little Beard, out of be returned to Little Beard's son. Another better known speech Sagoyewatha made in 1805 was a response to Mr. Crane, a missionary from the Boston Missionary Society, and his insisted 'offering' of Christianity to the Seneca. Both of Sagoyewatha's 1822 and 1805 speeches serve as metaphors of the conflicting relationship between the Native Americans and the European immigrants, in which Sagoyewatha stands as a symbol of the honor and loyalty of his Seneca tribe and Native Americans altogether through his stern advocacy of their way of life, culture and religion, while Jasper Parish, Horatio Jones and Mr. Crane, the discredited interpreters, agents and missionary, represent the hypocrisy, avarice and deception of the U.S., seen specifically in its methods of land acquisition and Christianization.

Sagoyewatha's position and prestige as civil chief, diplomat and orator reflected the honor and dignity of the Seneca Nation through its implication of their own civil government. His name, Sagoyewatha, was given to him upon his election as a civil chief, or sachem, for the Seneca Nation. It means 'he keeps them awake' or 'cause of a wakeful spirit,' an appropriate name for an orator of such influence and persuasion.² He was elected in the traditional fashion, in which the hereditary leading clans women nominated candidates they feel will serve their interests and will, and then ratified by the councilmen.³ As civil chief, Sagoyewatha's main objective was the peace, preservation and internal protection of his people, as opposed to the war chiefs, whose duty was, of course, war and conquest. According to the Iroquois tradition, the civil chiefs were prohibited from fighting in battle, and would have to vacate their office if they chose to do so.⁴ Therefore, a civil chief's most effective weapon was his voice, in which Sagoyewatha was a master. Oration was a dignified skill among the Natives: a combination of intellect and art, elegance and force, an inherent gift and skill developed. Despite their written eloquence, Sagoyewatha's speeches, suffering the distortions of translation and verbal diction in which they were originally presented, may not even do the orator service of his actual skill. Nonetheless, Sagoyewatha's talents, as even Horatio Jones specifically points out, "were among the noblest that nature ever conferred upon man."⁵

Sagoyewatha addressed the honor the Seneca had for him in referring to his influence and persuasion over them, both in his ability "to excite their love or indignation for their white brethren," as well as, "to abide by or breach the treaties made by us with the people of the U.S."⁶

² J. Niles Hubbard, *An Account of Sagoyewatha or Red Jacket and his People* (New York: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1886), 36.

³ Arthur Caswell Parker, *The History of the Seneca Indians* (New York: IRA J. Friedman, INC., 1967), 30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 12.

⁶ The Buffalonian, "Red Jacket's Speech [Communicated.] -1822"; available from <http://www.buffalonian.com/history/articles/1801-50/1822-redjacketspeach.html> ;

Where this might have played out was during the period directly following the American Revolution when there commenced a huge uprising of the Indigenous people in response to the unjust encroachment on their lands and unfavorable treaties imposed. An influential Mohawk war chief named Joseph Brant, under the auspice of their British ally in Canada, was organizing a huge Native alliance to ward off white domination and promote Native independence and autonomy.⁷ While considering this path of resistance due to his frustration over his people's unfavorable position, Sagoyewatha persuaded the Seneca against joining in the uprising and instead advocated peaceful negotiations, even if unsatisfactory, with the U.S.

In addition to his own people, Sagoyewatha went on to express the honor and respect granted him by key white figures as well. He addresses the favor bestowed upon him by George Washington, evident in the 'silver plate' given to him as a token of his respect and the peaceful partnership with the fellow leader of a nation.⁸ His Europeanized name, Red Jacket, was acquired during the American Revolution, in reference to the gift he received, "a beautifully ornamented jacket of scarlet color," by a British officer as a token of his admiration and services received.⁹ Jasper Parish and Horatio Jones, the very focus of Sagoyewatha's consternating rebuttal, always spoke highly of him, and the latter of whom complimented his friend, "For the great men of our own and of other times, have become so by education; but Red Jacket was as Nature made him. Had he enjoyed their advantages, he would have surpassed them, since it can hardly be supposed that they, without these, would have equaled him."¹⁰

The setting of the 'Great Indian Council,' attended by the whole Six Nations of Indians at Tonawanta- one of the few remaining tracts of Seneca reservation left where the initial

⁷ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 85.

⁸ The Buffalonian, "Speech."

⁹ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 34.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

accusations took place- illustrates the contrast of this once grandiose Nation.¹¹ The Seneca were the fifth, and most powerful and populous Nation to join the Iroquois Confederacy, or League of Six Nations, even before the arrival of the Europeans in their country.¹² They were the westernmost nation in this confederacy, which spread out like a ‘Long House’ through modern day New York. The Seneca were the guardians of the ‘western door,’ while the Mohawk were those of the east.¹³ This powerful alliance granted them security and dominance over their respective domain in the Northeast, at least prior to the European onslaught, making them the most powerful and expansive Native Confederacy in North America. By the time of Sagoyewatha’s 1822 Speech, Tonawanta would be one of the last few remaining reservations in which this once grand Nation would be reduced to live.

In addition to their own government was their noble way of life, which Sagoyewatha referred to and so cherishingly recollected in many of his speeches. Their way of life was intimately connected with the earth and the natural world, guided by the overseeing and benevolent creative force in the universe, the Great Spirit. Their livelihood was dependent upon their immediate environment, and therefore self-sufficient and sustainable. Sagoyewatha illustrated this in his speech when he talked of the many animals the Great Spirit provided them for food and clothing, as well as the corn, which “he had caused the earth to produce.”¹⁴ The Seneca practiced a combination of hunting and gathering along with crop cultivation, which was partaken in communal fields.¹⁵ Traditionally, they lived in bark lodges, otherwise known as ‘long houses,’ which could hold large extended families; and all their utensils, tools, weapons,

¹¹ The Buffalonian, “Speech.”

¹² Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 20.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Americans.net, “Red Jacket (Sagoyewatha or Sahu-ya-what-hath – Keeper-Awake)”; available from <http://www.americanindians.com/RedJacket.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 Nov. 2006.

¹⁵ Parker, *Seneca*, 71.

etc. were made of natural materials including antler, bone, shell and wood.¹⁶ With the European onslaught the Seneca, voluntarily or not, gradually abandoned their own articles and methods for those of the Europeans; though the relinquishment of their own self-sufficient ways meant the loss of their own culture as well as a growing dependence upon the Europeans. Furthermore, the combined loss of their culture and land equaled the dissolution of their Nation.

Much of the nobility of the Iroquois, as well as all Native People in general, can be accredited to their own autonomous religion, which Sagoyewatha spoke of and defended throughout his speeches. Contrary to what the Christians and missionaries wished, or at least tried to convince themselves to believe, the Natives had their own functioning and valid religion which they were happy with and suited their own culture and way of life. In fact, the three aspects were inseparable and, again, centered in their high regard and close connection with the natural world in which they lived. Central to their religion was their gratitude for all the Great Spirit provided them, which was their version of prayer and worship. Sagoyewatha explains this in his 1805 speech: “We worship that way. It teaches us to be thankful for all the favors we receive; to love each other, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion.”¹⁷ The Iroquois strove to live in peaceful harmony and coexistence with Nature, as opposed to the White Man who viewed Nature as an evil to divorce themselves from and an obstacle to overcome and dominate. The White Man’s attitude and behavior towards Nature is indicative of those same manners towards the Native Americans, whose life was inseparable from the earth, while the effects of such insensible dealings were equally correlative.

Sagoyewatha’s logical defense of his native religion was actually a reflection of the same principles of ‘freedom’ and ‘autonomy’ upon which the U.S. is founded. He beautifully

¹⁶ Ibid., 87.

¹⁷ Americans.net, “Red Jacket.”

illustrated, through his much resorted use of natural imagery, the fact that all creatures and elements of the earth: plants, animals, elements, as well as people, possess their own ways and nature, and that just as the birds or the fish cannot change their nature, “we can’t change our religion or custom, because they are fixed by the great good Spirit, and if we attempt to do it we shall offend our Great Spirit and he will punish us for it.”¹⁸ Sagoyewatha found evidence for this by referring to the tribes whom he had observed as a result of being Christianized and sent to live on missions, who turned out as a “poor, worthless, lying, ragged, miserable and degraded set of beings...”¹⁹

The Iroquois religion portrays a very noble characteristic, in that it grants autonomy and freedom to its individuals, as Sagoyewatha served as an example in his speech. Unlike Christianity that withholds religious authority to certain vested and privileged individuals, religious freedom and autonomy is granted to all Iroquois, as long as it does not conflict with long-standing taboos.²⁰ Everyone is granted direct communion with the spirit world and Great Spirit, through what Sagoyewatha refers to as “a certain monitor” which the Great Spirit “has placed within the Indian bosom and the White man’s bosom [...] which regulates our conduct, which promotes us to do good, and makes us sensible to our crimes when we do wrong...”²¹ This monitor, or what we might call- conscious or inner voice, was what propelled Sagoyewatha to acknowledge his ‘crime’ of drinking, which he emphasized was only partaken in his private life, and reveal the truth of the accusations presented. He was honoring the upheld notion of the

¹⁸ The Buffalonian, “Speech.”

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Parker, *Seneca*, 76.

²¹ The Buffalonian, “Speech.”

Natives, following their respect for Nature, that it was natural, and therefore honorable, to be truthful and cowardly to lie.²²

On the other hand, as Sagoyewatha pointed out in both his 1822 and 1805 speeches, there tended to be much hypocrisy and discrepancy with Christianity and the claims made by the missionaries. One of the more ludicrous of these was the notion of there being “but one way to worship,” or in other words, one true religion.²³ This was a very hypocritical stance considering the key circumstances spurring the European migration to the New World. As Sagoyewatha explains, “They told us they had fled from their own country for fear of wicked men and had come to enjoy their religion.”²⁴ Sagoyewatha pointed out the ready contradiction of this blatant claim in one of his 1805 speech, in which he responds to a missionary: “If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it?”²⁵

Another such claim of the missionaries, or Black Coats, as the Natives referred to them, was their profession of selfless service for the love and goodwill and betterment of these lost souls. The context of his 1805 speech, which was a response made by Sagoyewatha to a missionary by the name of Mr. Crane illustrates this discrepancy. Crane was sent to the Iroquois on behalf of the Boston Mission Society, to speak at a Council for the purpose of gaining the Councilmen’s approval and support for the Christian movement that had already been taking place among their people, whom, according to him, “never worshiped the Great Spirit in a manner acceptable to him, but have all [their] lives been in great errors and darkness.”²⁶ He added and encouraged that the chiefs, according to Sagoyewatha, “speak [their] minds freely.”²⁷

²² Parker, *Seneca*, 89.

²³ The Buffalonian, “Speech.”

²⁴ Americans.net, “Red Jacket.”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*. 231.

²⁷ Americans.net, “Red Jacket.”

Sagoyewatha, of course, took this most opportune moment of making this very profound speech, not only validating the Native's own ways and worship, but also addressing the hypocrisies and inconsistencies of Christianity. His main point being- he wished for his people the same as the Christians wished for themselves upon arrival to the New World, stating: "We do not wish to destroy your religion, or take it from you, we only want to enjoy our own."²⁸ Now, if there was any truth to Mr. Crane's claim of selfless offering and open discussions of the subject, it would not explain his harsh reaction to Sagoyewatha's honest and sensible decline to his offer, by which Mr. Crane refused his parting handshake- saying that there was no fellowship between the religion of God, and the works of the devil.²⁹ The chiefs, upon receiving the interpretation of his brazen reply, simply "smiled and retired" from the Council.³⁰

Horatio Jones' claim, expressed by Sagoyewatha in the 1822 speech, that "the Indians are opposed to Jones and Parish because they are friendly to the Christian religion," is as inconsistent as the missionaries' claims of goodwill and benefit for the Native Americans.³¹ Jones' assertion is directly shot down by one of his prior comments, recollected by Sagoyewatha: "The Black Coats did us more harm than good, and that we ought to drive them away."³² He also pointed out the consistently perceived characteristics of the missionaries as "dishonest, [...] ignorant [and] idle set of creatures, incapable of getting a living amongst their white brethren and therefore sent amongst us to get a living."³³ These and other instances partaken by the missionaries support his very likely theory: "It is not because the White Men love the Indians that they went to make them Christians, it is because they want to cheat them out of their

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 237.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The Buffalonian, "Speech."

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

property,” an understandable assumption considering how their lands would persistently disappear with the appearance of the Black Coats.³⁴

In order to acknowledge the nobility and generosity of the Seneca as well as the ingratitude and betrayal of Jasper Parish and Horatio Jones, it is important to understand the context of their relationship together. Both Parish and Jones were war prisoners of the Seneca during the American Revolution, taken at the ages of eleven and sixteen, and were incorporated and adopted into the Seneca Nation. While gaining the favor and admiration of their adopted family, they heartily took to their new life, all the while learning the Seneca language, Parish learning five different dialects.³⁵ They were both granted their freedom many years later according to the stipulations of the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1784, but soon returned to their adopted family, who gave them both land to settle on with their families, this time as government appointed interpreters and agents employed in business related to the welfare of the Native Americans.³⁶

To further express their appreciation and high regard for their friends, Farmer’s Brother, in a formal council meeting, made an elegant speech and appeal to the Legislature of New York that these two men be given a confirmation of the title to the land given them by the Seneca equaling two square miles.³⁷ They were made to appeal in such a manner for the transfer of their land because the Seneca were prohibited from doing so without the permission from the government.³⁸ They made this generous offer in the midst of their lands being erratically sold out from under them.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Parker, *The Seneca*, 148.

³⁶ Ibid., 149.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 202.

It is the very same Horatio Jones, and his sale of the land gifted to him on Little Beard's Reservation, which was the original complaint addressed by Sagoyewatha at the Tanawanta Council, illustrating the ingratitude and likely duplicity of the White Men. In that Council, Sagoyewatha had accused Jones of cheating Little Beard out of his land and asked for it to be returned to his son. While there is a documented treaty that notes the X-marked signatures of this sale in 1802, Sagoyewatha's included, there is no readily available documentation on the circumstances and conditions upon which the treaty was made that would shed light on Sagoyewatha's suggestion of foul play.³⁹ What is suspicious about the situation is the peculiar manner in which Jones responded to the accusations. Rather than defend himself of the charges made against him, he went ahead and made written accusations of Sagoyewatha being drunk for two days during the said Council, a surefire way of discrediting and defaming Sagoyewatha. It was well known that Sagoyewatha was an avid opponent of ceding of any more of the Seneca land, as opposed to those belonging to the Seneca Christian Party, who were more than willing to give their support.

The fact that Christianity played such a central role in the 1822 accusations begs the question as to the validity of the claims made, as well as the real intentions behind them. The Seneca had a deep schism between their Christian and Pagan Parties- the later of which recognized Sagoyewatha as their leader.⁴⁰ Sagoyewatha strongly opposed the Christian Party, not only for the abandonment of their culture but more so for their ready relinquishing of their land and support of the land developers.⁴¹ It would be the Christian faction that would attempt,

³⁹ Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, "Treaty with the Seneca, 1802"; available from <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/Vol2/treaties/sen0062.htm>; Internet; accessed 8 Nov. 2006.

⁴⁰ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 339.

⁴¹ History of Buffalo, "High Hopes: The Rise and Decline of the Buffalo." Available at <http://freenet.buffalo.edu/bah/h/redj/>; Internet; accessed on 8 Nov. 2006.

though unsuccessfully, to depose of the aging sachem in 1827.⁴² Coincidentally, the signatories of the accusation, besides Jones and Parish, were five Seneca from the Christian Party, whom Sagoyewatha points out “hold no place in our Councils.”⁴³ These factors and incidences support Sagoyewatha’s theory that: “Black Coats were simply advance agents for the land speculators,” and that they used their Seneca Christian converts to create tribal division and dissent to their advantage.

Sagoyewatha, in his humble defense of these accusations, portrays the honesty and sincerity of the Seneca, the very honorable qualities of the Native American. He admitted to his habit of intolerance, suggesting perhaps that he drinks ‘too much for his own good,’ and went on to acknowledge the ‘crime’ of doing so in the eyes of the Great Spirit, as well as the bad example he set before his Red Brethren; though he also insisted upon his innocence at the Council in which he was accused and that his drinking was a *private* matter that did not interfere with his *public* life and conduct.⁴⁴ He invited of his audience, “Examine my public life, and see if you can find one blot or one stain to blacken my character,” and went on to ask if he had ever broken any treaty in which his name was signed.⁴⁵ In acknowledging his innocence, as well as his guilt, Sagoyewatha exemplified the strength and his humility of the Seneca, which is more that can be said about Horatio Jones. Despite our inability to prove or disprove Sagoyewatha’s accusations, the road to such deceitful and cunning maneuvers to usurp the Native land was paved long before, and would continue to stretch across the land.

The end of the American Revolution, while a victory for the newly emancipated European Americans, marked the beginning of the end for the Seneca and Native Americans

⁴² Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 339.

⁴³ The Buffalonian, “Speech.”

⁴⁴ The Buffalonian, “Speech.”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

altogether. With the colonists' victory came their proof of Providence that the land was theirs to inhabit, regardless of who had resided there for thousands of years. While the manner of ethnic cleansing in the northern hemisphere may not have taken quite as conspicuous or blatant a one as had the Spanish and Portuguese in the southern hemisphere, it was equally barbarous and inhuman in its massive eradication of a whole population of people. North America's just took a more deceitful and duplicitous form. While there was outright slaughter of Native people, from distribution of disease-ridden blankets to self-initiating and severely disadvantageous wars, the colonists discovered the much more effective and less repercussive method through psychological manipulation, such as: loaded treaties and sales, tribal divisions, trickery and bribery.

The Iroquois were bombarded on every side by those who wished to buy, cheat or steal the land they felt entitled to: the settlers, many of whom they fought directly during the American Revolution, the wealthy businessmen and commissioners whose desire was for profit of the land, and the government itself, holding all these motives, but also serving as mediator between all contending parties. In the ensuing battles between the Iroquois and U.S. that commenced at the end of the war, it was Washington who convinced his people that through winning the esteem and confidence of the Natives, it would be better and easier to win their lands when needed, by means of conciliation and purchase, rather than by war and conquest.⁴⁶ This was to become the primary strategy of usurping Native land.

Following the war were a series of treaties and sales that gradually relinquished the once pervasive lands of the Iroquois, in less than noble or honest fashion. While they initially insisted upon independence, the U.S. assertively denied them this, proclaiming supreme authority over all conquered land. The first of all treaties between the newborn U.S. and a Native nation was the

⁴⁶ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 58.

Treaty of Fort Stanwix. This was basically a treaty of peace with the Six Nations by which a huge portion of Seneca land was taken from them.⁴⁷ While Sagoyewatha, along with a majority of Seneca chiefs found it to be exorbitant and unjust, it was nonetheless signed without a majority consent, which the Seneca continued to resent as unjust.⁴⁸ It also set ineffective boundaries between the separate Nations and the U.S.

Following the initial land grab was a series of ‘sales,’ starting in 1788; though, in reality, they more accurately resembled compensated requisitions, since they were not negotiable. The Natives were allowed to live and were even considered owners of their allotted land, though they were obligated, in case of a sale, to relinquish of it.⁴⁹ These ‘sales’ were also executed in the context of such abject conditions, as a result of such devastating campaigns such as Sullivan’s, and Washington’s decreed scorched-earth tactics in which whole villages including food sources were destroyed.⁵⁰ As a result, the Iroquois were half-starving and in no position to negotiate.

This still was not enough to satisfy the land-hungry White Men who engaged in land seizures and blatant slaughter of the Iroquois, within their stipulated boundaries, setting off a series of bloody revolts between the two parties. The Iroquois, surprisingly enough, enjoyed many victories. It was in response to the Iroquois grievances over these unjust land seizures, though more likely due to the successful battles of the Iroquois, which motivated the U.S. to summon the Canandaigua Treaty, emphasized by Sagoyewatha in his 1822 speech. It was one of the numerous treaties in which he asked his audience “if I have ever broken any agreement made by me in these treaties or any treaty made between the Indians and the President of the United

⁴⁷ Parker, *The Seneca*, 130.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 72.

⁵⁰ Parker, *The Seneca*, 126.

States, wherein my name was signed [...] or my faith was pledged for any tribe or any Nation of the Six Nations of Indians.”⁵¹

The Canandaigua Treaty signed in 1794, in theory, solidified peace between the two Nations. It firmly set the bounds of each Nation’s allotted land and granted that it was “to remain theirs, until they chose to sell the same to the people of the U.S.”⁵² It also promised “non-disturbance” and “free use and enjoyment thereof.”⁵³ This treaty was signed in good spirits of the Iroquois, for its seeming protection and stability of their lands for “as long as trees grow, and waters run.”⁵⁴

The seeming goodwill between the Iroquois and the U.S. would not last, though nor, it could be argued, was it ever intended, evident in the ensuing Treaty of Big Tree in 1797, only three years after the Canandaigua Treaty. This treaty exemplified the deceit and duplicity of the White Man, similar to that shown by Horatio Jones, though on a much larger scale. This land purchase was actually being schemed even before the Canandaigua Treaty by a man named Robert Morris who had bought the rights of the remainder of the Iroquois land in western N.Y. in 1791.⁵⁵ His plan to sell the entire deed to the Holland Land Co. was postponed until he was able to acquire the consent from the Iroquois to sell their land. Thus began his mission, with the assistance of his son, Thomas Morris, to prepare the way for future negotiations with the Iroquois.⁵⁶ Much like Horatio Jones, Thomas Morris was adopted into the Seneca Nation and was admired and respected so much that Sagoyewatha bestowed upon him his own birth name,

⁵¹ The Buffalonian, “Speech.”

⁵² The Seneca Nation of Indians, “The Canandaigua Treaty of 1794”; available from <http://www.sni.org/treaty.html>; Internet; accessed 8 Nov. 2006.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 275.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 166.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 92.

‘Otitiani,’ meaning, ‘Always Ready.’⁵⁷ Morris’ anticipated day came to fruition, six years later, when he was granted a Council, known as Big Tree, in which he made his desire known to buy the remaining tracts of land in N.Y., with the exception of some small reservations to live upon.

Morris’ manner of duplicity and manipulation in the Treaty of Big Tree is representative of the overall conduct of the U.S. to the Native Americans. Not only did he actively take advantage of his benevolent relations with the Natives, he used manipulative strategies to swindle them into selling their land, such as internal divisions and bribery to evade popular consent and sabotage traditional civil methods. Sagoyewatha, speaking for the Civil Chiefs, proclaimed, “they do not wish to part with any more land,” and, due to annoyance and frustration over the unexpected request, hastily put out the Council fire. Learning from Farmers Brother that it was uncustomary for one to put out the council fire who did not light it and, furthermore, that while the civil chiefs held sway over issues of treaties, it was the women and warriors who had authority over issues of land, Morris set out to win his case. He did this by shamelessly bribing the women with “beads, blankets, silver brooches and various other ornaments of which the Natives were particularly fond of,” as well as promises of such huge annuities that they would never be in need again.⁵⁸ The Council reconvened, and this time, under the direction of the war chiefs and the women, the treaty was signed, leaving them ten-thousand dollars (less than a third of a cent per acre) and only five reservations on the Niagara Frontier.⁵⁹ Though, despite the prospect and promises of annuities, the reality was that the transactions meant trading in their hunting grounds and life by the chase for dependence upon the white man’s benevolence, which proved not enough to not live in a state of utter starvation and poverty.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 181.

⁵⁹ History of Buffalo, “High Hopes.”

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Despite these demeaning maneuvers by the White Man, Sagoyewatha continued to prove his loyalty to them. In 1810, in the midst of the prospecting Indian Confederacy uprising engineered by Tecumseh and his brother Elskawata, rather than joining in or encouraging the rebellion, Sagoyewatha instead urged his people against it and informed the U.S. government of the hostilities which were conspiring.⁶¹ Furthermore, in the advent of the War of 1812, despite the U.S.'s advising of the Seneca to remain neutral, Sagoyewatha insisted and encouraged participation.⁶² His motives, however, were probably more self-serving than anything- in defense of the Seneca land that had already been attacked by the British- and possibly to gain the respect of the U.S. by proving the Seneca as equal partners. Whatever his intentions, his acts of loyalty to the U.S. did not alter their oppressive behavior towards them.

The U.S. again illustrated their appreciation to the Seneca through their one final and persistent attempt beginning in 1819 of ousting them once and for all from their native land in New York. This final attempt at usurpation by the Ogden Land Co., and subsequent relocation to a reservation in Green Bay, Wisconsin would be the highly volatile context in which Sagoyewatha would make his 1822 speech, as well as battle for the remainder of his life.⁶³

The helpless advancement of degradation onto his people, culture and land was directly correlative with the waning of Sagoyewatha's condition and influence of his people. Sagoyewatha had watched the hopeless relinquishment of his peoples' lands, livelihood and culture, as well as the helpless subservience of his people to the over-dominance of the U.S.'s influence and coercion. With the last remaining bit of land at stake, Sagoyewatha resorted to what a large portion of his people did in such a dejected state- alcohol. He also became more and more critical of the U.S.'s unfulfilled claims of advancement for his people: technology,

⁶¹ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 243.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 247.

⁶³ History of Buffalo, "High Hopes."

Christianity and education. The later was used against him by the Christian Party, with their accusal that Sagoyewatha opposed the advancement and benefit of his people. Sagoyewatha, instead, made the sensible argument, referring to the so-called benefactees of the Seneca youth:

“The arts they have learned are incompatible with the chase, and ill-adapted to our customs. They have been taught that which is useless to us. They have been made to feel artificial wants, which never entered the minds of their brothers. They have imbibed, in your great towns, the seeds of vices, which were unknown in the forest. They become discouraged and dissipated,- despised by the Indians, neglected by the whites, and without value to either,- less honest than the former, and perhaps more knavish than the latter.”⁶⁴

Though Sagoyewatha was up against tremendous odds in this battle against national genocide, he lived a noble life, true to his convictions, to the very end. The fact that in 1821 Sagoyewatha’s oldest son partook in the first Christian wedding ceremony ever held on a reservation, as well as his wife, three years later, converting to Christianity, illustrates the overwhelming influence Sagoyewatha was up against.⁶⁵

The final portion of his life serves as a final metaphor to the contrasting characteristics between Sagoyewatha and the White Man. Sagoyewatha had come to an acceptance of Christianity during the final years of his life, due mostly to his wife’s adamant conversion. In his last days, Sagoyewatha, with his decline in health and end near, was to make one final speech with the intention of bringing about reconciliation between the Pagan and Christian Parties, though he would fall ill and would not be able to make the address.⁶⁶ He brought this desire with him to his deathbed as his final wish was to see and speak with the missionary, who was not able

⁶⁴ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 225.

⁶⁵ History of Buffalo, “High Hopes.”

⁶⁶ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 347.

to make it in time.⁶⁷ Sagoyewatha died and was buried in 1830 under his strict request in the mission cemetery among his own people, for if the Christian theory turned out valid, he proclaimed that he wished not to rise with the White Men, but instead with his own Red Brethren.⁶⁸

The U.S., on the other hand, exemplified their ignoble manner with their final indignation of Sagoyewatha. In direct contradiction to Sagoyewatha's specific wishes that "no white man dig his grave," he was exhumed at the request of the Buffalo Historical Society in 1884 and moved to Forest Lawn Cemetery, ironically enough, as a way expiating the guilt of the past.⁶⁹

Sagoyewatha, and his struggle, as portrayed in his 1822 speech, was the epitome of the Native American: noble and honorable, though helpless against the inexorable might and greed of the White Man. The baseless accusations made against him by Horatio Jones and Jasper Parish, and the duplicity and dishonesty of Mr. Crane, were reflective of the same deceitful manners by which the white people used in manipulating the Natives out of their rightful land: through the fruitless promises of Christianity, technological advancement, and education, through the trickery and bribery of land purchases and treaties, through coercion and murder. Sagoyewatha never swayed from his loyalties and deep-rooted convictions, which were the protection and preservation of his people, of their land and culture. His noble and determined battle and dejected end personified that of the Native Americans altogether. Appropriately enough, although he would not live to see it, the Ogden land deal, which he had successfully held at bay the last ten years of his life, would pass in 1838, basically eliminating the vast Native presence that had inhabited there only decades earlier.⁷⁰ Sagoyewatha beautifully illustrates his

⁶⁷ Ibid., 350.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 348.

⁶⁹ History of Buffalo, "High Hopes."

⁷⁰ Ibid.

plight and that of the Native Americans: “We stand a small island in the bosom of the great waters. We are encircled, - we are encompassed. The evil spirit rides upon the blast, and the waters are disturbed. They rise, they press upon us, and the waves once settled over us, we disappear forever. Who then lives to mourn us? None. What marks our extermination? Nothing. We are mingled with the common elements.”⁷¹

Jasper Parish, Horatio Jones and Mr. Crane, the proclaimed benefactors of the Iroquois, and subsequent contributors to the relinquishment of their land, culture and people, represent the deceit and hypocrisy of their parent nation. While espousing such noble ideals as freedom and equality, these apparently were not meant to include the Native inhabitants of this country. Is it surprising, then, that it is this domineering population of people which is responsible for scant and under-acknowledged documentation of their degraded predecessors? The White Man’s predominating and widely held view of the Native Americans can be summed up by one director of the same Buffalo Historical Society that was responsible for Sagoyewatha’s exhumation: “Why attempt to civilize the Indians, or ameliorate their supposed condition? Only teach them with the strong hand of power to fear our superior race and let them alone in their rapid decay, until like the bison of the western prairies they are obliterated from the earth, as one of the ancient, traditional races of men.”⁷²

Many may protest that the unearthing and analysis of such distant historical occurrences, especially those dealing with the Native Americans, is irrelevant today and only serve in stirring up unnecessary bitterness and shame. I would argue that it is highly relevant today for two main reasons: 1) Without acknowledging the points of view of the oppressed and victimized populations, there cannot be an accurate understanding of history nor the current situation, and 2)

⁷¹ Hubbard, *Sagoyewatha*, 208.

⁷² History of Buffalo, “High Hope.”

The same covert and oppressive mentalities and methods upon which this country is founded has continued to direct its relations with foreign nations and nationalities to this very day. It is prevalent of what is happening specifically in the Middle East today. The Native American predicament is almost identical to what has been happening to the Palestinians in Israel for almost a century now, which, by the way, has the full political backing and financial support of the U.S. In addition, the same self-justifying claims and motives for conquest and decimation of whole nations of people, mainly: economic, political and religious superiority, are being used today in Iraq. This superior mentality has driven the U.S.' colonial exploits, only today it has evolved into a world-wide imperialistic system, otherwise known as globalization, or more benignly referred to as 'free-trade.' Manifest Destiny is not a thing of the past; it is alive and rampant today.

What becomes apparent in studying history is that nothing changes: the same power dynamics have always and continue to play out today, with the wealthy and powerful fraction exploiting and oppressing everyone else. The only differences today are the global scale on which it takes place, the vast level of complex and covert methods used, and the manipulative ways in which these are hidden from public view. We are predisposed to the biased view of the elite, whose main objective is the maintenance of the status-quo, through the eschewed exaggerations of their Nation's virtues in combination with the exacerbated vices or lack of regard for the Nations they wish to maintain dominance over. While the U.S. tends to portray itself as the champion and pioneer of liberty and freedom, a little scratching under the surface of mainstream doctrine reveals this as not exactly the case. Though on a more positive and optimistic note, we live in an era when vast amounts of knowledge including a wide variety of points of view are readily available to us on an unprecedented scale. If only we take the time to

look outside the box, it is here we will find the voices of Sagoyewatha and other spokespersons of the oppressed and victimized, which will help lead us towards a more balanced and honest interpretation of the world in which we live, by which we may be better equipped to affect peace and justice.

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