

The Real Story of Thanksgiving

As the Thanksgiving Day Holiday approaches, I am reminded of what we have historically been taught and, now, subsequently believe about the national holiday. Like many of you, I remember an elementary school teacher asking us to trace our hands in an effort to draw turkeys. The turkey would symbolize the wonderful dinner we were to have with family and friends in the coming days. This dinner, in theory, is representative of a feast that took place in 1621 between Native Americans and pilgrims to celebrate the first harvest of a burgeoning New England colony. In fact, in some of those same elementary school classrooms mentioned above, instead of tracing our hands to draw turkeys, some of us may have been asked to dress up as Native Americans and pilgrims. Again, these gestures were all done in an effort to pay homage to a celebratory gathering that took place between some of America's earliest immigrants and our native brothers and sisters. While I don't doubt that a gathering took place, the gathering was not emblematic of what most Native Americans were experiencing and have, since, experienced. As well, the gathering did not signal a long-lasting legacy of respect shared between the two groups. In fact, quite the opposite took place. Actually, what I would describe as *Native American Betrayal* had been going on for centuries before, dating back to the so-called Founding of America in 1492. Some historians believe that Christopher Columbus, on his first day on American soil, captured Native Americans to serve as his servants. So again, Thanksgiving as we know it today, grossly diverts from the reality of what was happening to the majority of Native Americans during that time in our country's history.

While the holiday's themes of food and gratitude resonate with me, as I have a lot to be thankful for and eating is one of my earliest hobbies☺, we do ourselves a great disservice by attempting to ignore the real and accurate history of our country's beginnings. As you prepare for your various gatherings with family and friends, I encourage you to use this year's holiday as a springboard to deeper discovery about what the country really was like around the time of the first gathering. And as constituents of "*The Critical Thinking College*", I encourage you to lean into the facts that you find, remembering that 'facts aren't frightening' as Dr. MacLeod Walls often reminds us. In fact, I see your newfound discoveries as part and parcel of the work we're doing on campus to be "*Radically Inclusive*". A part of being inclusive involves knowing as well as disseminating true and accurate information. So, again, if you haven't started your journey of discovery and truth about our country, let this Thanksgiving be your start. I deeply encourage this journey as it, not only invokes critical thought, it also aligns with Jewell's mission to prepare students to be "reflective citizens". In the end, Thanksgiving calls us to remember. It, too, invites us to an on-going pursuit of racial equity and social justice for all.

Have a wonderful holiday break!

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