

Colonialism Has Been an Equal Opportunity Oppressor

The New York Times' 1619 Project seeks to recraft America as a nation with an explicitly racist past, founded on the principles of slavery. In reading articles such as these, it's important to remember that slavery and other buzzwords are not the catchalls for racism that they are presumed to be.

Colonialism is one example of this.

While colonialism is most frequently referenced in regard to European conquests and expansions into Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Americas, such exercises in power are not solely the crimes of white Europeans against people of color.

History is ripe with examples of white on white colonialism.

England, for example, first established a foothold on Ireland in the [12th century](#). Reasserting and consolidating control beginning with Henry VIII, they finally achieved total control of the Emerald Isle in 1607 after the [Flight of the Earls](#).

From there a series of [government orchestrated "Plantations"](#) saw land confiscated from the Irish owners, with thousands of British Protestants imported in an attempt to alter the demographic makeup of Ireland. This was often accompanied by brutal suppression of Catholicism under a series of laws that barred Catholics from public office and serving in the army. Under Oliver Cromwell thousands were [forcibly deported to the West Indies](#).

This is to say nothing of the Potato Famine, which the English government's policies [exacerbated](#), even rejecting aid from foreign countries.

Finland has also been subject to a series of colonial masters

in its troubled history. The country was [incorporated into the Swedish Empire](#) in the 14th century following a number of crusades and Swedish immigration. The Finnish language was derided and Swedish favored instead.

Sweden's rule of Finland lasted over 500 years until a conflict between Sweden and Russia, its fellow empire, saw the Grand Duchy of Finland [transferred to Russian rule](#). Under Czar Nicholas II, Russia engaged in a [deliberate campaign of Russification](#) in Finland. [Policies included](#) promotion of the Russian Orthodox Church at the expense of Lutherans, instituting Russian as the country's administrative language, and the transfer of Finnish soldiers into the Russian army. Many of these changes were forced under threat of invasion, ignoring the alleged powers of the Finnish Diet.

Russia, and later the Soviet Union, also engaged in Russification campaigns in the Ukraine. This included the Holodomor, another manmade famine that dwarfed the Irish one. Conservative death toll counts [estimate the Holodomor caused the death of 3.9 million Ukrainians](#).

The most infamous example of white on white imperial ambitions is that of Nazi Germany and its [Generalplan Ost](#). Had the Germans won World War II, this plan called for genocidal actions against the vast majority of [eastern European peoples](#), including Russians, Estonians, Lithuanians, Poles, and Ukrainians.

While *Generalplan Ost* was only partially carried out, the extent of German atrocities that did occur need no recounting here. The Holocaust and its associated horrors are well known in our histories.

Asian empires have also engaged in atrocities and colonialism. The [horrors delivered by Japan](#) during World War II may not be as well-known as those of their German counterparts, but it's unlikely the peoples of Korea, China, Mongolia, and the vast

majority of southeast Asia have forgotten the hard boot of their imperial masters.

Death toll estimates under Imperial Japan range as high as [20 million to 50 million people](#) in China. The [Nanking Massacre alone](#) killed up to 300,000 Chinese. Muslims throughout Asia were targeted, sex crimes were rampant, and atrocities extended to torture and human experimentation, the latter in much the same thread as the German's Josef Mengele.

The point of recounting these pieces of history is not to glorify one people, nor to denigrate any other. These are all horrid examples of the worst of history, and there are far too many others that could have been included in this list.

No, the point is merely this: every human, regardless of race, religion, language, or status is capable of inflicting great evil, just as they are capable of promoting great good.

It is up to each one of us to choose the good, and to ensure our children know the horrors that result from choosing the evil.

At some point, we all need to pray that the world continues to fall away from such acts of barbarism and hope that "never again" really means just that.

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