

“Cursed is one who displaces his neighbor’s boundary marker” (Deuteronomy 27:17).

These Jamestown settlers had a terrible start with the Indians. Going well beyond the intermittent harshness that the English showed the Indians in the earlier short-lived Roanoke Colony,¹ the Jamestown settlers saw themselves as superior to the Indians and treated them with much deceit and often with violence for years. The cocky, pugnacious John Smith personified that attitude.

To be fair, Smith was only reflecting the attitude many English leaders felt about our Native Americans. King James himself in 1604 described Native American people as “these beastly Indians, slaves to the Spaniards, refuse to the world, and as yet aliens from the holy Covenant of God.”²

Smith and Chief Powhatan played, as historian Timothy Stiles says, “a deadly game of smiling deceptions and open attacks”³ between the colony and the Indians. But remember that we have to judge the colony by God’s holy standards—not the culture of the day to find out the roots of sin that began there.

Both sides gave as much as they received, but the English, always more desperate initially, even violated the basic rules of Powhatan warfare by destroying entire villages—including the women and children—like the village of Paspahegh.⁴



"C. Smith takes King of Pamunkey
prisoner, 1608" near Jamestown

These English atrocities only escalated the tensions and intrigue between the Indians, whom the English supposedly came to Christianize, and the very vulnerable colony. This picture depicts Smith in battle with a local tribe to steal their food— a very common event in the early years of the colony.⁵ The treachery of the Indians in the 1622 massacre of the colony may seem more justified in light of these many years of English war crimes, predations and deceptions.

Modern Abuse of Virginia's Tribes

The Racial Integrity Act

Woe to those who enact evil statutes and to those who
constantly record unjust decisions (Isaiah 10:1).

These abusive and deceitful attitudes towards our Native Americans have carried down to modern Virginians—as spiritual DNA often does!

In the August 11, 2003 edition of the *Virginian-Pilot* on page A10, there was a story outlining the continued legal fight of Virginia's remaining eight tribes to get federal recognition. **Virginia waited until 1983 to officially recognize them as Native American tribes.** The Federal government waited until **2018 to officially recognize** seven Virginia tribes: the Pamunkey, Chickahominy Providence Forge, Eastern Chickahominy, Upper Mattaponi (Formerly called Adamstown Indians ⁶), Rappahannock, Nansemond and Monacan. Several other Virginia tribes are still seeking federal recognition, including the Mattaponi on the Mattaponi Reservation⁷ near West Point, Virginia.

This was a tragedy for those seven tribes. **Over 550 other tribes in America had federal recognition and all the financial benefits that go with it for over 150 years.** The federal delay was due to an obscure *British law* from the 1600s which was finally overruled by the US Congress in 2018.

In fact, unlike many other states with Native American populations, Virginia has tricked and deprived its Native Americans repeatedly. The *Virginian Pilot* newspaper wrote that Virginia has:

Long denied education and employment opportunities to Indians. Later, the Virginia General Assembly tried bureaucratically to eliminate Indians by passing the **Racial Integrity Act of 1924**. The law mandated that only two races be recorded on state birth records: **White and Negro**.

The Act also would not allow anyone to get a marriage license until they could prove what race they belonged to. Therefore, it was easy to force Indians to claim being Negro since they often could not prove their Native American roots on paper. Somehow, many of the courthouses where those Native American records were kept had *burned down over the years*.

This infamous Act also prohibited whites from marrying Indians or any other racial group.

It shall hereafter be unlawful for any white person in this State to marry any save a white person or a person with no other admixture of blood than white and American Indian.⁸

This was a **very hypocritical law** for a state that prides itself on the marriage of Pocahontas to John Rolfe!

The Racial Integrity Act was zealously enforced by a devout Presbyterian named **Walter Ashby Plecker**, Virginia's first Registrar of the Bureau of Vital Statistics, who, "starting in 1912, forced Indians to classify themselves as black," He worked with a vengeance.



Plecker was a white supremacist and a zealous advocate of eugenics—a now-discredited movement to preserve the integrity of white blood by preventing interracial breeding. “Unless this can be done,” he once wrote, “we have little to hope for, but may expect in the future decline or complete destruction of our civilization” The tribes, according to Plecker, had become a “mongrel” mixture.⁹ “Plecker’s icy efficiency as racial gatekeeper drew international attention, including that of **Nazi Germany**. In 1943, he boasted: “Hitler’s genealogical study of the Jews is not more complete.”¹⁰



Pamunkey Museum in Virginia

Plecker systematically changed the race recorded on many birth, death and marriage certificates from “Indian” to “Negro” until his retirement in **1967** when the Racial Integrity Act was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court. But by then, it was too late for thousands of Native Americans to recover their real identity and the benefits that went with it. The State of Virginia, with a great deal of help from Plecker, committed ethnic cleansing of Native Americans by systematic, massive identity theft.

As one Native American who lost her identity as an Indian through Walter Plecker remarked, “I thought Plecker was a devil...I still do.”¹¹ If he could have responded to her, Dr. Plecker might have quoted a line he wrote in a 1925 essay, “Let us turn a deaf ear to those who would interpret Christian brotherhood as racial equality.”¹² One of his co-workers said of Plecker, “I don’t know of anyone who ever saw him smile.”¹³ Small wonder.

“We were victims of statistical genocide,” said William P. Miles, chief of the Pamunkey.¹⁴

Virginia Congressman Jim Moran confirmed this shameful treatment of Virginia tribes in his June 2004 article in the Falls Church News Press:

During our country's early history, the Virginia tribes were subdued, pushed off their land, and up through much of the 20th Century, denied full rights as U.S. citizens. In more recent times, racial hostility culminated with the enactment and brutal enforcement of Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924...To call yourself a "Native American" in Virginia was to risk a jail sentence of up to one year. Married couples were denied marriage certificates and were even unable to obtain the release of their newborn child from a hospital until they changed their ethnicity on the state record. For much of the 20th Century, admission to public school education was denied. These and other indignities are part of a shameful legacy experienced in our lifetime.¹⁵



The Virginian-Pilot article continues to tell of the “devastating impact” this law had on the Indians who could now not prove who they were. They were, consequently, not able to get the federal assistance that all the other tribes in America do for food, shelter and school scholarships.

What can we learn? The early European settlers mistreated the very people whose native ancestors kept our Jamestown settlers alive with donations of food. Virginians broke many treaties with them and stole their land.



Then, Virginians stole their identity to deprive them of the very benefits our state and federal government might have given them for taking their land away from them. What appalls me, even more, is that **many other Virginia politicians and pastors knew of it...**for over 40 years! This is a great shame on Virginia! Sins of massive discrimination like these have probably brought **God's curses** on Virginia.

Native American Anointing

Many Christian leaders agree with what well-known prophetic leader, Chuck Pierce¹⁶ has said about the huge importance of Native Americans in God's plans for America and the world. God is already using Native Americans to reach the world with the Gospel in places where other racial groups would not be easily accepted. Native Americans also carry a special anointing from God as the Host People of North America to evangelize the immigrants who came here in the last 400 years! The Church needs our Native Americans to bring full revival to America!

Few Native Americans Are Christians

While in Washington, DC in 2004 for the opening of the National Smithsonian Museum for Native Americans, my wife and I met some wonderful native Americans from all over the Western hemisphere. It was the largest gathering of native peoples in the history of our hemisphere: Aztecs from Mexico, Incas from Peru, Hopi, Navaho, Apache, Sioux, and others from North America. It was thrilling to see them so honored and so sad to hear their stories as we talked to them while watching the parade that warm October day on the Mall. I am proud that our family name is engraved on the walls inside the museum as a contributor.



Native Americans at the Dedication of the National Museum of the American Indian in 2004

These once great people are still being treated shamefully by our government *into the 20th century*. One older gentleman from California told me that **his mother had been taken from her family by the Federal government** and forced to attend a school for whites far away, and against the will of her parents. She never saw her parents again. “Why did our government do that to Indian children?” I asked. “Because they wanted to break up the Indian way of life and force them to assimilate into white America,” he quietly replied. I was amazed at his gentleness and apparent forgiveness to whites for such ruthless behavior by our federal government—even in the last 100 years.

After 400 years of exposure to the white man’s churches and “Christian” government, only about **3 %** of Native Americans are born-again Christians!

Could our treatment of Native Americans—past and present—have anything to do with that? I think so!

There is still time for the Church to confess, repent and make restitution for the crimes our government and our Church have committed against them. As current Indian leaders declare, “It has been said that America will never be right until they right themselves with the American Indian.”¹⁷ The full blessing and protection America longs for may depend more on securing the blessing of our Native Americans than we realize!

Again, II Samuel 21 is instructive: If Christians break covenants— even with unbelievers— God is not pleased and will often punish that land for those broken treaties and covenants.

Could there be just *curses on America from God* because America, and especially on the Church in America who should have known better, has not dealt honestly and lovingly with our Native Americans? The silence of the American Church on these injustices is *deafening*.

It cannot be overstated that America needs the blessing of its native tribes for God to heal America!

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Discussion Questions

1. Describe how King James I and Capt John Smith viewed the Powhatan natives?
2. Why do you think our Christian forefathers in the colony treated the natives so harshly?
3. How could our ancestors in the colony have loved the natives as their neighbors, as God commands?
4. How did the racial Integrity Act damage Virginia’s tribes?
5. What does Isaiah 10:1 warn us not to do?
5. Name the seven Virginia tribes that were finally recognized by the federal government in 2018.
5. What does II Samuel 21 tell us about how God views the breaking of treaties by His people?
6. What specific sins of our forefathers against our Virginia tribes do we need to confess to break God-given curses that may be on Tidewater, Virginia and America due to those sins?

7. How can we appeal to the tribes of Virginia to forgive and bless Virginia and America despite all that they have endured at the hands of our Christian forefathers?

1. Harriot, 28.
2. <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/james/blaste/blaste.html>
3. Stiles, T.J., ed *In their Own Words: The Colonizers*
4. Marty O'Rourke, "Community Transformation" (Unpublished paper for Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA, 2001), 19.
5. <http://npshistory.com/publications/colo/moretti-langholtz/appa.htm> (17 March 2020)
6. <https://accessgenealogy.com/virginia/adamstown-indians-upper-mattaponi-band.htm> (29 Dec 2022)
7. <https://www.mattaponination.com/> (29 Dec. 2022)
8. http://www.vcdh.virginia.edu/lewisandclark/students/projects/monacans/Contemporary_Monacans/racial.html (1 Dec. 2022)
9. Warren Fiske, *The Virginian-Pilot*, *The black-and-white world of Walter Ashby Plecker*, August 18, 2004, including the picture of Plecker.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid
14. *Virginian-Pilot*, 10
15. https://www.legistorm.com/stormfeed/view_rss/385983/member/386.html (19 March 2021)
16. Healing America's Wounds Video Series, Part Two, starting at 1:21 minutes
17. See Appendix A. Also, the entire Healing America's Wounds Video Series says this many times.