

RENATA SMOLAK

Colonisation of North America
(For Barack Obama, the first African President of the US)

Kolonizacja Ameryki Północnej
(Barackowi Obamie, pierwszemu afroamerykańskiemu prezydentowi USA)

The British colonisation of North America was made possible by the discoveries of Christopher Columbus. On 12th October 1492 Christopher Columbus, financed by the Spanish court, crossed the Atlantic and discovered the New Indies. It was a new land from the European point of view, though Indians had lived in America for at least 14 000 years. Amerigo Vespucci (1454–1512) was also sent by the Spanish court to check the Columbus route. A German mapmaker in 1507 gave the name 'America' to the newly discovered land to commemorate Vespucci and his trip. The Spanish thought they had the right to rule over the new land; Portugal and Spain dominated the sea at that time. The British colonisation of America would have been impossible without the English victory over the Spanish fleet in 1588. Triumph over the Spaniards brought about establishment of British naval superiority and mastery over the Atlantic Ocean.

This essay will investigate a process of colonisation in North America, in order to shed light upon both complicated history of racial segregation and social conditions of varied cultures in a multinational society of the 20th century US. The most often recurring word in Barack Obama's presidential campaign was 'hope'; the slogan caught on, because America needs better future in many areas of life. African Americans especially are convinced that Obama's presidency will change their situation. Nearly one half of Americans believe that the election of Obama will improve race relations in their country. What do Afro-Americans still have to hope for more than 40 years after the Civil Rights movement? Do their issues

stand a greater chance of being addressed by the first black President in American history?

For England the sixteenth century was the age of the English Renaissance; it was also an epoch of overseas expansion. The end of feudalism, the growth of trade, manufacturing and the reformation of religion transformed an average English person's way of life. The most famous voyage at that time was the circumnavigation of the globe by Sir Francis Drake in 1577–1580. Drake and his companions became national heroes, whose example and adventures influenced many other daredevils to sail to distant lands. They were supported by English merchants and statesmen, who wanted to take advantage of these voyages by investing and doing business in the New World. These enterprising people were new elements in British society during the Elizabethan age and they influenced the whole country.

The reign of Queen Elizabeth gave birth to English colonialism and the next epoch evolved into real exploration. At the beginning of the seventeenth century the British people had the resources to become more involved in the New Indies. The reign of James I, at the beginning was feeble, but his pacifism after the Elizabethan wars resulted in the flow of English colonialism. The development of the navy during the reign of Charles I permitted a safe movement to the new colonies. The expedition of 1607 initiated successful colonisation in Jamestown (Virginia), a business venture to produce goods and return them to England. During 1622, 10 000 people arrived, but over 15 years only 2000 survived. The colony in Virginia was growing because of new products which were explored in great quantities. Religious sects also travelled to America because they were free there; in the New Indies there was no king, no rules, so they wrote a little constitution *The Mayflower Compact* in 1620. Consequently, new colonies came into being by private enterprise, financial, commercial, agricultural and politico-religious groups.

The discovery of remote lands and the colonisation of the New World were reflected in literature of those times. Christopher Columbus during his voyage wrote *The Journal*, his log-book, a diary of six and a half months of journey and the very first text of colonial literature. He also wrote a letter (1493), in which he summarized this memorable voyage. *The Journal*, describing his adventures on the Caribbean islands, influenced other writers. Indians in English literature were presented in unfavorable ways. For example, Richard Eden translated Sebastian Munster's *Cosmographia* with a title *Treatise of the New India*. Writers like Dionysus Settle, George Best or John Davies described natives as Cannibals, Anthropophagi, Amazons or Gryauntes.

Although American natives were described in such negative ways, some writers still tried to encourage English mariners to explore unknown and distant lands. Encouragement for Elizabethan imperialism was expressed by the learned

astrologer John Dee in his series of volumes named *General and rare memorials pertaining to the Perfect Arte of Navigation 1576*. There were practical tables for sailors as well as ideas how to establish a strong navy both to defend the country and to develop sea expansion. The most influential writer of a travel literature in the Shakespearean epoch was Hakluyt, author of *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English nation*. This author described the discoveries, adventures and deeds of English seamen. His *Discourse of Western Planting*, written in 1584, encouraged the Queen to extend her patronage over the Atlantic exploration of the New Lands.

Queen Elizabeth did her best to support a development of the Navy and sea voyages.

She also proclaimed freedom in colonisation of the New Indies. The stories of distant sailings were next described by writers both in England and on the new continent. John Smith was the first American writer. He wrote *A true Relation of Virginia* in 1608 and *The general history of Virginia* in 1624. Smith's books described Indian customs, he also wrote about himself in *Pocahontas*. The first American colonial poet published in England was Anne Bradstreet. Her poetry volume *Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America* was published in London in 1650. Bradstreet did not write about voyages, wars or natives, but she described her family, husband, children and love.

An average British colonist was not yet a town resident or a specialized workman. The inhabitant of seventeenth century England still knew something about both agriculture and manufacture. This knowledge helped the first Englishmen to survive hard conditions in the New Land, to build villages and form a society. However, these self-sufficient pioneers knew very little about the native inhabitants of America. An encounter, or rather the collision of completely different cultures brought about great changes in the lives of colonists as well as of native Americans. The first meetings with Indians were complex, but rather friendly, based on compromise and the needs of both sides. Englishmen tried to organise different festivals to entertain Indians and to remove distrust between both sides, they also hoped to develop a profitable trade with natives. At the beginning colonists were interested in provisions, food, firewood, fresh water or furs, secondly in the Indian aid in the exploration of the land. Natives mainly wanted metal objects of practical use such as kettles, hooks, knives, axes and so on. What struck European traders immediately was the fact that Indians willingly exchanged valuable things and precious objects for such trifles as mirrors, clothes, combs or ornaments as beads, bells and incusted cords.

Indians very much liked trinkets and sometimes treated white men as gods. This created the belief that they were childish, irresponsible and easy captured. However,

when it turned out that Europeans came there to stay, natives' attitudes towards white people changed completely. They recognized Englishmen as invaders and started to attack them on a large scale. Consequently for the colonists the picture of an average Indian changed into that of a mortal enemy and a rival. Not only did newcomers want to conquer natives, but also tried to plant their culture on the New Land. Thus, Indians constantly rejected English rule and culture. The most vivid example of Indian opposition to British territorial expansion was a so-called "Indian Massacre". Natives attacked Jamestown and destroyed most of it, killing a great number of white people on 22nd March 1622. Paradoxically, the colony survived only because several Indians who helped their white friends.

At the very beginning, the pioneers of Virginia were sure a source for labor to plantations could be supplied by American natives. Despite the fact that Indians did sometimes help the colony and their people to survive, they refused to work as laborers for white masters. Nevertheless, the profitability of the tobacco trade developed and British colonies seriously needed a workforce. Finally, colonists became aware that it would be impossible to make Indians agricultural workmen. The men seemed to be devoted to hunting or fishing and the women were responsible for agriculture. It was easier to import Negro slaves from Africa than to turn Indians into workmen.

1. SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF RACISM

Slavery is a condition in which one human being is owned by another. An African slave in colonial law was considered as property and was deprived of most rights held by Europeans. Slavery has existed in various forms throughout almost the whole of human history. Free laborers were obtained in many ways, such as capture in war, kidnapping, slave trading, punishment for criminal acts, payment for debts, direct sale, or a transfer from one master to another. Children of slaves usually, but not invariably, became dependent men themselves, freedom could be gained only by the decision of a master or governor of the land.

The Spanish were the first who arrived in the Americas in the late 15th century. They forced Indians to work in their mines and fields. However, Indians were not accustomed to harsh working conditions and were also not immune to European diseases. Therefore, Spaniards began importing slaves from Africa in 1517. One hundred years later, in 1619, first African Negroes arrived at the English colony of Virginia in North America. Large, profitable plantations of tobacco and sugar cane required strong manpower. As the number of slaves needed to work in fields increased and colonists had problems with 'idle' Indians, they started the trade in black men from Africa. Before the 1660s number of Negroes in the West Indies

was small, also the price of servants from England was increasing and their supply was in a decline. What is more, African natives turned out to be the easiest and cheapest workmen.

Although the first consignment consisted only twenty blacks, about five thousand were delivered every year in the second half of the 17th century. Moreover, in 1663 Charles II made a patent to allow English merchants to trade with Negroes. Africans worked hard, they were inhumanly exploited, humiliated and insulted, this state of affairs led to their horror and suffering. The colonial society was marked with injustice which predominated over the country for many years. As slaves were treated barbarously by their masters, they fled to jungles, where gathered together and waged guerrilla warfare against white planters for decades. Cruelty against black slaves decreased slowly and at last finished in several lands at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Slavery was permanently ended in the United States in 1865 with the 13th Amendment to the American Constitution.

According to *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*: "Racism, also called Racialism, the theory or idea that there is a causal link between inherited physical traits and certain traits of personality, intellect, or culture and, combined with it, the notion that some races are inherently superior to others".¹ The phenomenon of racism is closely connected to slavery and is an after-effect of the colonial activity of European conquerors in the New World. The origin of racist thinking is difficult to establish definitely, but one of the most important on this theme was Joseph-Arthur Gobineau, who wrote *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* in the middle of the 19th century. According to Gobineau the white race is superior to all other species and Aryans are supposed to reach the heights of civilization. Houston Steward Chamberlain, an Englishman who spent most of his life in Germany, was Gobineau's most important follower. He published *The Foundations of the 19th Century* in 1899. Chamberlain believed in the superiority of Teutons, who were a Nordic type being tall and fair.

First Spaniards arriving to America were supplied with Francisco de Quevedo's and Juan de Sepulveda's racial theories, which helped them to take the land away from Indians and to treat them as inferior human beings. Englishmen also developed an imperialism propaganda in their colonies, which was expressed in literary writings of Thomas Carlyle, James A. Froude, Charles Kingsley and most strongly in those of Rudyard Kipling. Besides, the French also used imperialist propaganda to justify the existence of their colonial empire. All those European

¹ Gwinn, Robert P. Chairman, Board of directors, Norton, Robert B., President Philip W. Goetz, Editor in chief, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropaedia*. Chicago; Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1991, p. 880.

invaders maintained that their duty was to bring civilization to members of other races and backward people of the world.

People like Franz Boas in anthropology and Gunnar Myrdal in social sciences helped to destroy much of mythological aspects of race. Meanwhile, new countries came into being, many of them were former colonies composed of "coloured peoples". Nowadays, they have an independent voice in international affairs and are treated respectfully, even by their former colonisers. Nevertheless, there were some certain striking exceptions in this trend away from racial segregation.² The US government took some steps to minimize the effects of racism, to provide greater equality for all ethnic groups. One of the after-effects of this tendency was a decision by the US Supreme Court in 1954: the segregation of black schoolchildren in certain states was inconsistent with the principles of the US constitution.

Africa during colonial times was full of savage tribes and was deprived of any traits of civilisation, in Europeans' eyes. Therefore, primitive and barbarous negroes brought to America were thought to benefit from being in contact with white civilisation. As pointed out by James M. McPherson: "slavery was a «school» in which the black man learned the superior ways of the white man. Without the schooling of slavery (and the latter impact of Western imperialism in Africa) blacks would have remained illiterate, naked savages and Africa would have remained a backward, benighted continent".³ Thus, white men of the New World were sure slavery was the best institution for African savages. Treating blacks as an inferior race, exploiting them, forcing them to do the hardest work and humiliating them were quite normal to their colonial masters. However, new studies on archaeology, anthropology and history proved that African peoples had rich and complex cultures before the Europeans arrived to exploit them.

Virginia colonial society and especially the development of anew capitalist economy based on plantations, required a great number of cheap workmen. Slaves brought from Africa guaranteed a permanent work force and helped to lower costs of producing tobacco, rice, indigo and other colonial products. Such obvious economic advantages of slavery caused a quick disappearance of moral concerns

² Namely, in the Republic of South Africa, separation of ethnic groups increased from 1948, but the black people of this country were fighting for their rights. Nelson Mandela, who founded the African National Congress (ANC), became a symbol of frustrated aspirations South Africa's black majority. He fought apartheid for all his early years and was imprisoned for life in 1962, because of his political activities. Twenty years later in 1982, a huge "Release Mandela" campaign started and finally he left prison in 1990, after nearly twenty-eight years. Nelson Mandela became a first elected black leader of the South African people in 1994.

³ M. McPherson, James. *Blacks in America*. New York; Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971, p. 25.

and black slaves were considered as property, not even human persons. What is more, white men enslaving blacks regarded them with suspicion and fear, so the colonial period was marked by growing racism among whites. Especially the English believed black men to be evils, soil, dirty, foul, horrible, lustful, wicked and white only purity. Europeans described Africans as beasts and for a long time colour of their skin defined the relationship between blacks and whites, consequently influencing racial attitudes. Segregation of races at the beginning of its existence in the New World evoked enormous cruelty in the United States between years 1885 to 1915 and ended nearly permanently with the wave of the Civil Rights Movement in 1945 to 1970.

A belief in negro inferiority grew gradually during the 19th century, as well as contempt for American oldest residents — Indians. Intolerance to other races was manifested not only in violence and brutality, but also in social and economic discrimination. Consequently, the blacks benefited less from progressive reforms than any other group in American society. However, many northern progressives, particularly in Boston and New York, were actively connected with civil rights and founded the NAACP in 1909 also the Urban League in 1911. Racial bigotry was most intensely directed against ethnic minorities, especially black Americans. The end of slavery did not mean whites' stereotypes changed much; newspapers, speeches and the stage described Negroes as lazy, childlike and even beasts. White Americans also called blacks, "niggers", "darkies" and "coons", some racists linked Negroes to apes and scarcely considered them as human beings. A book with the title *The Negro a Beast*, was very popular in the early 20th century.

Racist demagoguery pervaded even the highest levels of government, for example, John T. Morgan, the Alabama's United States senator, in 1902 spoke in the senate: "negro suffrage ... has been one unbroken line of political, social and industrial obstruction to progress and a constant disturbance of the peace in a vast region of the United States".⁴ Therefore, the blacks were not treated as equal residents by the white Americans. Moreover, even president Theodore Roosevelt expressed bigoted theories, in 1906 he wrote: "Now as to the negroes! I entirely agree with you that as a race and in the mass [they] are altogether inferior to the whites".⁵ It hardly needs mentioning that such opinions written by the head of the country evoked racist attitudes, especially in the south of America. Almost every area of human activity there was marked by segregation of races. Legislation known as "Jim Crow's Law" was widespread throughout the region. Firstly, "Grandfather clauses" allowed men to vote if their grandfathers had been eligible

⁴ Dinnerstein Leonard, Nichols, L. Roger, Reimers, M. David. *Natives and Strangers*, New York; Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 228.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

to vote. Secondly, poll taxes and literacy tests helped to eliminate blacks from the electoral process. American society segregated schools, railroads, streetcars, steamboats, restaurants, drinking fountains and many other public facilities, as well as neighborhood.

Native Americans, Indians, experienced far less racial segregation and no race riots only because they lived far away from whites. However, tribesmen suffered much from bigotry and racial attitudes, especially during the 19th century. American government policy was to move Indian tribes into reservations. The violence against red men was not only evoked by the government, but also among individual citizens. Especially in the west, tribesmen were considered to be the worst mortal enemies. One Nevada newspaperman claimed: "... the only way to end Indian hostilities was throughout the total extermination of every redskin from the [Canada] to the Mexican frontier".⁶ Such views prevailed throughout the west and the relationship between the white population and their Indian neighbours was marked by hatred and violence.

The first attempts to improve the status of racial minorities in the US were taken in the middle of the 20th century, in the early 1940 s. The World War II and the participation of black soldiers in battles showed the irony of racial segregation in America. Racial discrimination became a diplomatic embarrassment to the United States, so black Americans had new economic opportunities and political chances at these times. James M McPherson has noted: "Blacks had not only important new power, but also heightened racial pride, growing out of their war service and reflecting the movements for African independence. All of these factors provided an important impetus for action in behalf of equal rights".⁷ Consequently, blacks and their white supporters formed a foundation for the modern civil rights movement.

Despite the fact that Truman's administration passed no civil legislation, the President made a significant decision concerning the de-segregation of the army and of the federal civil service in 1948. Dwight D. Eisenhower preferred state to federal action against racism; nevertheless, he made some civil rights proposals to Congress in 1965. President John F. Kennedy also gave his support to civil rights during his presidency. For instance, he prohibited discrimination in federally supported regions in 1962 and proposed some civil rights legislation to Congress in 1963, e.g. the guarantee of equal access to public places. President L. B. Johnson, finally backed the Twenty-fourth Amendment to the American constitution prohibiting poll taxes in federal elections in 1964. After the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968, Congress passed another civil rights act. Martin Luther King

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁷ M. McPherson, James. *op. cit.*, p. 303.

was a major figure in the civil rights movement and his writings provoked important events in the history of American civil rights. King's most popular works are *Why We Can't Wait* (1964), with his famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail", *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community* (1967) and *The Trumpet of Conscience* (1968). Martin Luther King in these books presented his civil disobedience campaign against poverty and racial segregation in the United States of America.

2. THE SYSTEM OF BRITISH COLONIALISM

The first generations of European explorers realised an abundance of the North and South Americas. As pointed out by Leonard Dinnerstein: "Moreover, the continents of the Western Hemisphere fit nicely into the evolving mercantilist economic theory of that day. According to this view each government tried to organize and regulate its national economic activities to strengthen itself. Thus, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Spain, Portugal, France, Sweden, Russia, the Netherlands and Great Britain established trading posts and colonies around the world. Those that flourished provided riches such as gold, silver and precious gems, which the rapidly growing national governments needed to pay their debts".⁸

Great Britain was successful in North America and eventually gained control over a great part of the continent. However, the British North America colonies had almost no instant wealth like the Spanish colonies in South and central America, with immanence of gold and silver. Nevertheless, precious metals were too heavy to transport them through the Atlantic Ocean and very often were robbed by pirates. Consequently England colonies organized agricultural enterprises which often rivaled with the mother country economy. What is more, Industrial Revolution in Europe at the turn of 18th and 19th centuries, caused the growing interest for colonies because of their richness in raw materials. Great Britain was ahead of European countries in the development of industry, therefore the English government was the first one to bring raw materials; pirates did not need them and started intense settling in their new lands all over the world. English colonies needed a large number of people to work as servants, simultaneously cheap labourers for their plantations and factories, for this reason as mentioned previously, the procedure of importing black slaves from Africa started.

The first Virginia colonists who arrived in 1607, on the 'Susan Constant', the 'Godspeed' and the 'Discovery', not only gave an origin to the colony, but they also brought customs and foundations for the future American society. First of

⁸ *Ibidem.*

all, they carried with them the sense of English racial and cultural superiority, which can be expressed in the words of one cleric who said in 1558 that “God is English”. They regarded Protestantism as the one true Christian faith and believed in strict puritan practices. From the very beginning of the settlement, economic profits motivated most Englishmen in the New World. Their commercial capitalistic attitudes, connected with the territorial expansion became one of the most important forces in the early American history.

At the end of the Civil war colonial population increased up to about two and one-half million. Most of newcomers, settled along the Atlantic coast and on the east of the Appalachian Mountains. Rural activity, plantations and manufacture were the main ways of making living for new settlers, less than 10 percent of the population lived in towns. However, during the colonial era, the Englishmen shaped future patterns of social and economic growth of the US. The South planters invested their capital in the land and slaves in order to raise export of tobacco, rice and indigo to Europe. Northern colonies had a more various economy, depending on industry and business commercial class. Urbanisation and fast developing cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston and New Port, were more important in the North, than plantations in the South of America. These towns started transformation of the American society from agricultural, to the large industrial activities characteristic to the modern US.

Although most of the residents in colonies were of the English descent, many ethnic groups established aid societies to help new immigrants. The first immigrant aid society in America the “Scots Charity Box” was founded in Boston 1657. These benevolent groups expanded considerably in later centuries, improving conditions of newcomers. Consequently, a large number of the foreigners having provided food, clothing, shelter and employment arrived and settled in America; beginning the large-scale immigration in the 19th century. This ethnic mixture of the northern colonies caused tensions between English protestants and other nationalities. Nevertheless, the non-English provided labor, skills and they seemed to accept American values based on British principles, as they were generally loyal to the Patriot Course. Consequently, during the 17th and 18th centuries, isolated settlements along the Atlantic coast gradually transformed into the United States, with deep transplanted English culture. Even the most cosmopolitan town of the US, established by other nationalities, had distinctive English traits — language, laws, social customs and economic patterns.

North America’s newcomers quickly met with native American-Indians who inhabited much of the continent; the population of Indians before the colonial era was about four to eight million. Red men had no domestic animals except dogs, no industry, no vehicles and no written language, but they were skilled in farming,

gathering, hunting and fishing. Native Americans lived in villages of comfortable wigwams and were organized within family relationships into clans; several clans formed a tribe, often called a nation by the English. According to Vine Deloria: "Because the British chose to treat Indians as citizens of a foreign sovereign, the question of status of their land and person could be addressed without having to decide their rights within the framework of common law. When the United States government sought to address the question of the status of Indian tribes in the context of its judicial system, it had to choose between the British view of tribes as nations and the Spanish view of Indians as citizens".⁹

The Virginia colony, based on the agricultural settlement, needed more and more fields for cultivation and the land could only be gained from Indians. However, natives were determined to keep their grandfathers' territories. It hardly needs mentioning that the growing number of newcomers provoked red men to defend their lands. They fought with European pioneers in fierce guerilla wars for many decades. The first total and well organized attack of Indians in 1622 caused death of one third of the Virginia colony. However, the second war in 1644 they failed and the colony grew quickly, forcing American natives to move westward.

What is more, English leaders, especially in Carolina, aggressively sought Indian slaves. They stimulated intertribal wars by rewarding their allies with gems and other goods in exchange slaves. Wars against Westo (1680–1683), Savannah (1707–1708), Tuscarora (1712–1713) and Yamasee (1715–1716), provided thousands of slaves. Not only did these wars weaken the nearby tribes, but also opened vast regions for white settlers. Battle conflicts led Carolina's tribes to a nearly total destruction, simultaneously producing hundreds of active slaves for the English trading system; in 1708 the Carolina colony had 1.400 Indian and 2900 Negro slaves. However, natives often escaped from slavery and caused many troubles for their owners by conspiracies, insurrections, rapes, thefts and other crimes. Thus, several New England colonies prohibited Indian slavery in 1715.

Continuing relations with Europeans shifted American natives from being politically free and self-sufficient, to a heavy and complete dependence upon the white invaders. Trade with the British made their life more comfortable, but the cost was the expansion of English settlement, frequent land surrenders and increasing cultural breakdown among tribesmen. What is more, four colonial wars between Britain and France evoked suspicion and hatred among the races. During fights with the Iroquois it was popular to toast: "Civilisation or death to all American savages".¹⁰ Indian leaders like Cherokee, Choctaw and Chickasaw wanted to

⁹ Deloria, Vine. *American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century*. Oklahoma; University of Oklahoma Press, 1985, p. 66.

¹⁰ Dinnerstein, Leonard, Nichols, L. Roger, Reimers, M. David. *op. cit.*, p. 11.

stabilize relations with whites, within the specific limits of tribal boundaries. Therefore, they signed several treaties bringing peace in 1780, but they failed again because advancing pioneers continued seizing the Indian lands. A reservation system was created in the middle of 1800 s and American natives were considered to have some kind of sovereignty within their tribes of self-governing units. However, the American government's policy in about 1870 changed from alienation of Indians toward their assimilation into the American political system.

The Dawes Act in 1887 established the law under which the government offered the land to individual Indians rather than to the traditional tribal structures. This trend of the American government's Indian policy during the end of 19th century, as pointed out by Vine Deloria was to: "...further minimize the functions of tribal leaders, tribal institutions and to continually strengthen the position of the government representative, his subordinates, also improve the effectiveness of their programs to break down traditional patterns within the Indian communities".¹¹ Thus, an attempt was made to make tribesmen free holding farmers and to assimilate red men into white American civilization. However, this government policy proved to be the deepest threat to the Indians. They were not even citizens, or residents, but were instead members of the alien systems — tribes, which should be totally and completely annihilated. The Civil War in 1861–1865 and Reconstruction were periods of rapid revolutionary racial and economic changes which ended with the triumph of industrial forces, as well as with the abolition of slavery in North America. Meanwhile, four million black slaves were freed by force of arms and granted equal civil and political rights by the government of the US. Nevertheless, the promise of racial equality was never fully obtained, even during Reconstruction and negroes lost many of their hard-won rights after 1870.

President Abraham Lincoln had conservative views on segregation and he believed in the racial supremacy of whites, even radical abolitionist criticism failed to change the President's attitude. However, the beginning of a Civil War was not successful for the North. Military failures had changed Lincoln's and the federal government's attitudes toward slavery: they decided to enlist black troops into the Union army. Firstly, President Lincoln and Congress abolished slavery in the District of Columbia in the summer of 1862. Secondly, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation which freed slaves fighting in the army in January 1863, but finally slavery permanently disappeared with the end of the Civil War won by the North. The former slaves, fighting black men, contributed to a large extent to the North Union victory; about 180 000 of them fought as northern soldiers and another 25 000 served in the Navy. Moreover, thousands of freed

¹¹ Deloria, Vine. *op. cit.*, p. 87.

blacks worked as cooks, laborers, scouts and spies for the Union. Negroes made up about 10 percent of the Confederacy army and without question had helped to win the biggest war in the nation's history. Their performance in battles also played an important role in the achievement of emancipation and in creating equal rights during Reconstruction.

Thousands of black men fought within Union lines, but the majority of negroes remained in the fields and factories of Virginia. Blacks constituted about one third of the Confederacy's population and their labour was vital to the southern war effort. However, the black slaves were the Achilles' heel of the Confederacy, as many of them were well aware that the North was fighting for their freedom, while the South wanted to preserve slavery. Though most slaves remained at work, thousands of blacks ran away to the Union army and helped to destroy the Confederacy. The Civil War ended in April 1865, and it became necessary to form appropriate federal legislation which could help former slaves in adapting productively to the new society. Consequently, Congress enacted the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the Constitution. James M. McPherson maintains: "The Fourteenth Amendment conferred equal citizenship upon the freedmen; the Fifteenth Amendment prohibited states from denying blacks the right to vote. These two reconstruction amendments were more laxly enforced and widely evaded than any other part of the constitution for three quarters of a century, but in the 1950s and 1960s they have become the basis for Supreme Court decisions and civil rights legislation for the black of our own times".¹² Thus, the three amendments enacted during Reconstruction respectively protected civil rights, allowed black men to vote and influenced desegregation in the contemporary United States.

As pointed out above, these amendments were really the origin of legal equality, but insufficient education, lack of land redistribution and racism thwarted the progress of black Americans in attaining equal rights. Racial segregation often evoked violence during Reconstruction; blacks became politically powerless and in general were employed by the white planters as workers on the southern farms. Although Afro-Americans did not win equal rights, Reconstruction period gave the chance for development of a black bourgeoisie in the South. The black family, which had no legal status during slavery, could be legally sanctioned. Therefore, thousands of freedmen legalized their marriages, searched for separated children and other members of parted families. After the Civil War, thousands of freedmen left the slave galleries in the churches of their former masters and organized the all-black Baptist, Methodist and Holiness churches. They functioned politically by

¹² M. McPherson, James. *op. cit.*, p. 123.

choosing black leaders, especially after the elimination of black Americans from southern politics in the 1890 s. The black churches aside from political activity provided also a place for the spreading of their culture; through religious music freedmen expressed feelings and hopes of a troubled existence. Afterwards, the spiritual music was replaced by gospels, which emphasized the sorrows of this world, but also promised hope for the future. For example:

The Lord will provide
 The Lord will provide
 Sometimes another, the Lord will provide.
 It may not be in my time,
 It may not be in yours,
 But sometimes another, the Lord will provide.¹³

Of course, not all Afro-American culture developed in the black churches. Negro workers sang songs about life and love, to provide a rhythm during work and humour for their troubled existence. Moreover, black Americans invented musical forms like jazz, soul, blues and reggae in the nineteenth century, which spread throughout the United States and became popular all over the world in the twentieth century.

3. THE ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE 20TH CENTURY US

Asian, European immigrants and their descendants form the largest percentage of ethnic groups in the US. However, in the 20th century black Americans, Hispanics and Indians constituted the most deprived minorities in American society. After the Civil War, blacks started moving to cities of the North, the *Great Migration* which began in 1915, shaped the character of black American population in the northern towns. In the space of three years about 400 000 blacks moved northward. The increasing number of freedmen in the northern cities formed an urban racial ghetto, which became a distinct feature of the 20th century US.

Living in the ghetto has always been connected with many deprivations, according to James M. McPherson: "Conditions which we associate with black life in the urban ghetto-slum housing, drastic limitation of employment opportunity, large numbers of working mothers, inferior education, lack of police protection and sanitation services, high incidences of crime and delinquency, disease and infant mortality — also prevailed in varying degrees among blacks in northern cities at the beginning of the twentieth century".¹⁴ Although residences in the US

¹³ Dinnerstein, Leonard, Nichols, L. Roger, Reimers, M. David. *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁴ M. McPherson, James. *op. cit.*, p. 188.

greatly improved during the building boom after World War II, blacks and other immigrants still had problems with their homes.

Houses in the ghetto were often rat-infected, with falling plaster, malfunctioning heating and broken windows, thus the government decided to improve ghettos housing in the 1930 s.

The Federal Housing Administration and the Veteran's Administration helped millions of people to purchase their own homes. However, the majority of these buildings were too expensive for the poor minorities. Besides, in the 1930 s slum-clearance programs began which replaced many old, decaying buildings with expensive apartments and expressways. Other various programs called "Negro Removal", destroyed more houses for the poor than had been built. Not only did residents of the ghettos have problems with appalling dwelling conditions, they also suffered from poor health, drug addiction and high crime rates.

Black Americans improved their medical services in the 1940 s and 1950 s, but they still visited physicians and dentists less frequently than the white people. Receiving adequate medical care was a problem because it often cost too much. Criminal acts were more frequent in the ghettos than elsewhere; the police patrols were not able to stop the growth of crime. What is more, presence of the police caused many misunderstandings and conflicts; the armed men's brutality and the impossibility of proper communication led to numerous riots in the 1960 s. Consequently, the American ethnic ghettos formed a low-class in the society of the 20th century US. Harlem was seen as a 'temple of pathologies' caused by family instability, crime, violence and widespread use of drugs. However, black Americans' formation of their own urban ghettos raised ambitions and self-confidence of black intellectuals. Sociologists, historians, poets, novelists and artists, launched a movement named "Harlem Renaissance" in the 1920 s. This period produced a great number of anthologies, memoirs and intellectual achievements of black Americans culture.

During the late 1960 s, an increasing number of sociologists and anthropologists began to proclaim that the ghettos contained many positive values. The black struggle to survive in the white world made them form their own unique subculture. They invented new forms of music, dance, entertainment, dress, language, humour, food and also their own expressive life-style, which was often named 'soul'. The soul trend emphasized feeling, honesty, spirituality and contrasted with the coldness, hypocrisy and lack of emotion in white middle-class society. Currently, it seems that the black society has turned its negative stereotypes into self-proclaimed virtues. Black Americans do have more rhythm, sensuality, are proud of their music and have a strong sense of black identity. Indeed, Harlem culture has its mystique and unique values which cannot be fully shared and un-

derstood by white people. Simultaneously, some features of the ghetto life-style have influenced other nations' cultures; black music especially is popular among young people in the world. Many expressions from black American slang have taken roots into the American language, for example: "square", "cool", "nitty-gritty", "jiving", "rapping", "hang-up", "put-on", "chicks", "cats", "bust", or "grass".

Of course, not all Afro-Americans lived in the ghettos, after World War II many of them managed to join the middle class. Actually, only 2 percent of the black families earned \$ 15 000 a year in 1964, but a decade later 13 percent did. In the same time, the number of blacks couples with an income of \$ 10 000 a year, increased from 9 to 31 percent. These rich black Americans constituted the so-called "Black Bourgeoisie", with Negro business, endless parties, balls, gambling and conspicuous consumption. These black elites produced their leaders and organisations like the National Urban League and the NAACP, which fought for negroes' Civil Rights at the beginning of the 20th century. After World War II, American policy made blacks increasingly visible in American politics. As pointed out by James M. McPherson: "Voting right legislation, intensive voter education, registration campaigns, legislative reapportionment and continued urbanization have all contributed to the growing power of the black vote, North and South. Many black leaders consider the ballot the most important weapon for the future advancement of their race. Black politicians have risen to national prominence, and black voters hold the balance of power in several important states and major cities".¹⁵ Thus, black politicians tended to work on the race relations programs to improve living conditions and to promote black Americans' rights more rapidly.

However, neither the federal government nor black politics eliminated poverty among negroes. Therefore, many black men began to lose faith in the legal and nonviolent approach to solve their problems. Those who were living in the ghettos were sure that the law would not feed the hungry, educate the poor, or provide jobs for the unemployed. During the 1960 s, it became obvious that the civil rights movement failed to achieve an equality of races. Simultaneously, the blacks' hopes changed into shattered dreams, so anger and frustration increased in the ghettos, evoking a wave of fierce racial riots. It was certain that the civil rights movement of the 1960 s and the black power movement had failed to achieve racial equality in the US by the end of the 1980 s. Consequently, about 33,1 percent of black American families lived below the government poverty line, compared to 10,5 percent of the white families in 1987. Black poverty is caused especially by the structure of the negro family and the economic plight of women. Almost two thirds of all black families living in poverty during the late 1980 s were headed by

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

women, who often faced the double discrimination of both sex and race. Before the civil rights movement, black Americans were not allowed to vote and their political life did not exist. Nevertheless, since World War II, black politicians have risen to national power. Specifically up to 1988 The Political Office of the US had 303 black mayors, 89 black senators and 311 representatives. Unfortunately, despite the emergence of numerous political leaders, black Americans were still discriminated against politically. No black American sat in the US senate, nor did one serve as the governor of the one of fifty states in the 1990 s. Collin Powell was the first black senator and Secretary of State in the US government of George Bush Jr., the next was Condoleezza Rice, also Secretary of State. The most important time for the black nation at last became a reality; in February 2009 the first African President of the United States, Barack Obama was elected, to whom I dedicate this article.

Living conditions in Indian reservations resembled an inconvenient dwelling of blacks in their ghettos. What is more, by the end of the nineteenth century the government's efforts to destroy the tribal culture and the old Indian customs took their toll. The mixture of various tribes in a reservation's small area caused intertribal exchange of habits and ideas. At the beginning of the 20th century, those white Americans who thought "the only good Indian is a dead one" should have been satisfied. Diseases, poverty and malnutrition in reservations led to a high death rate of tribesmen. Only 200 000 of them, dwelt in the closed areas in wretched conditions after 1900. The government policy was to assimilate natives into typical American life and to civilize them.

Nevertheless, since World War II, the American government's attitude toward Indians has changed. The whites introduced the New Deal program which encouraged tribesmen to preserve their different cultures during the 1940 s. Moreover, the government in 1950 launched another program "Termination", to remove its power over the reservation society. Congress passed several termination bills, which guaranteed tribes nearly total independence. Paradoxically, these programs nearly triggered a disaster for Indian societies. Namely, without government supervision, tribesmen were handed over to the local officials, traditional enemies of the Indian interests. As a result, the Menominee of Wisconsin lost much of their tribal land, which was sold to outsiders; the Klamath in Oregon were nearly deprived of their vast timber holdings. Fortunately, the Secretary of the Interior stopped "Termination" in 1958 and this policy had been rejected by 1970.

The most evident example of white American policy to assimilate tribesmen is seen in their governments. According to Vine Deloria: "In the United States, most Indian governments have written constitutions based on the American ideals of representative democracy. The powers and duties of elected tribal officers cor-

respond to the functions of national, state and local administrators, managers and legislators. Under the Constitution tribal authority is vested in legislative, executive and oftentimes, judicial branches of government".¹⁶ Consequently, government policy forced Indians to accept the judicial system of the white people. Tribesmen also tried to combine their customs with the new ideas and practices learned from the rest of American society. For example, the Papago tribe from a reservation in the southern Arizona desert, supports itself by hunting, rising livestock, harvesting cactus fruit, or selling baskets to tourists, while some of Papago's tribesmen have jobs in Arizona communities.

Young, educated Indians organised the National Indian Council (NIYC) in 1961, which had aspirations to represent the interests of all Indians. In 1968 Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which contained the Indian Bill of Rights. This act was introduced to protect individual tribesmen from the arbitrary power of white or tribal officers. The other civil rights group formed in 1972 was the American Indian Movement (AIM). Their most spectacular activity was the take-over, occupation and siege of Wounded Knee, South Dakota in 1973. The event was presented by national headlines, had extensive television news coverage and was the origin for Dee Brown's best-seller *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.

Although the AIM failed to achieve its goals of overthrowing the elected tribal leaders at the Pine Ridge reservation, or obtaining for tribes the right of independent nationhood, the popularity of their activity has strengthened Indian culture. Moreover, they were defending the traditional aboriginal identity and the tribal aspirations. They were also encouraging tribes to take control of their own schools and in many places Indian children have bilingual instructions. Nineteen tribally-controlled colleges have been organized, with a current number of 5000 Indian students between 1968 and 1979. The BIA started a process of gaining tribal recognition in 1978 and since then 111 groups have applied for an independent status. Only 11 had been successful by 1988, the remaining groups are somewhere in the process and it is difficult to predict how many will be legalized. Since the 1940 s the number of Indian people has increased, as well as their skill in dealing with the other American nations. Although they have better education, health care and more than half of them have moved off reservations, tribesmen have not gained an equal position in Americas society as a whole. As a group Indians ranked at the bottom of economic, social and health lists by the end of 1989. Today, they continue to insist on the right to have their own aboriginal culture. This fact troubles the other Americans and the US government gives few indications it will accept all tribal differences.

¹⁶ Deloria, Vine. *op. cit.*, p. 135.

* * *

This article analyses the process of colonisation in North America and is dedicated to Barack Obama, the first African President of the United States. I have presented also the institution of slavery and racism, the system of British colonialism and the ethnic groups in 20th century America. These historical and social backgrounds are closely connected with a complex mechanism of European overseas invasions. Slavery is the cruel and inhumane method of treating other men as inferior races, exploiting and humiliating them. The colonial times are characterised by horror of slavery, racial demagoguery, the social inequality of many nations and varied cultures. Slavery was permanently ended in the United States with the 13th Amendment to the American Constitution in 1865.

The British colonisation of North America began in 1607, when the first European pioneers arrived in Virginia. The Industrial Revolution in Europe caused the growing interest in distant lands at the turn of 18th and 19th centuries. Great Britain especially, was industrially advanced and needed the raw materials of the colonies. The English system of colonialism from the very beginning was marked by a need for economic profits. Englishmen's commercial attitudes, connected with their territorial and economic expansion, became one of the most characteristic features of British colonialism. Living in the ghetto has always been connected with many deprivations, as well as dwelling conditions in Indian reservations. Not only did the residents of ghettos and reservations have problems with inferior dwellings, they also both suffered from poverty, oppression and political isolation. The Harlem culture has its mystique and unique positive values which cannot be fully shared with the other nations. Tribesmen improved their relations with the rest of American society since 1940 s, thus Indians have not gained an equal position in the political and general social hierarchy.

Although about fifty years have passed since Martin Luther King delivered his famous speech "I have a dream", it seems there is still a space for the equality of rights activity. The new leader Barack Obama, in his speeches to Afro-Americans, promised to create better educational opportunities by supporting innovations in high-minority classrooms. He also ensured, he would sign legislation to help all Americans have affordable health care. Nevertheless, it remains an open question whether the ethnic groups' concerns will be given priority during the current economic climate in the United States.

NOTES

- Deloria, Vine. *American Indian Policy in the Twentieth Century*. Oklahoma; University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.
- Dinnerstein Leonard, Nichols, L. Roger, Reimers, M. David. *Natives and Strangers*. New York; Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Gwinn, Robert P., Chairman, Board of Directors, Norton Robert B., President Philip W. Goetz, Editor in Chief. *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropaedia*. Chicago; Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1991.
- Hulme, Peter. *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean 1492–1797*. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Mazur, Zbigniew. *Settlers and Indians — Transformation of English culture in Seventeenth-Century Virginia*. Lublin; Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 1995.
- M. McPherson, James. *Blacks in America*. New York; Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971.

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł analizuje procesy kolonizacji Ameryki Północnej. Oparty jest na przeglądzie literatury współczesnej. Dedykowany został prezydentowi USA Barackowi Obamie. Część pierwsza nawiązuje do historii mechanizmów niewolnictwa i rasizmu, charakterystycznych dla pionierskich czasów europejskich podbojów zamorskich. Część druga przedstawia system kolonializmu brytyjskiego, demagogię segregacji rasowej, walkę o równouprawnienie oraz skomplikowane relacje Indian amerykańskich z kolonistami europejskimi. Część trzecia prezentuje grupy etniczne XX wieku na terytorium Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki Północnej. Atmosfera afroamerykańskiego getta oraz funkcjonowanie rezerwatów Indian należą do stałych elementów kultury, polityki i zróżnicowanej historii Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki Północnej.