

*Indian school in Pennsylvania when he was a boy, but then returned to South Dakota and became an officer of the Indian boarding school in Rapid City.*

### “What Indians Must Do” by Carlos Montezuma

We must free ourselves. Our people's heritage is freedom. Freedom reigned in their whole make-up. They harmonized with nature and lived accordingly. Preaching freedom to our people on reservations does not make them free any more than you can, by preaching, free those prisoners who are in the penitentiary. Reservations are prisons where our people are kept to live and die, where equal possibilities, equal education and equal responsibilities are unknown . . .

We must do away with the Indian Bureau. The reservation system has debarred us as a race from acquiring that knowledge to appreciate our property. The government after teaching us how to live without work has come to the conclusion that “the Indians are not commercialists” and, therefore, “we (his guardian) will remove them as we think best and use them as long as our administration lasts and make friends.” The Indian Department has drifted into commercialism at the expense of our poor benighted people. So they go on and say, “Let us not allot those Indians on that sweet flowing water because there are others who will profit by damming it up and selling it out to the newcomers; that the Indians do not use or develop their lands; five acres of irrigated land is all that one Indian can manage, but in order to be generous, we will give him ten acres and close up the books and call it square; that their vast forest does them no good, before the Indian can open his eyes let us transfer it to the Forestry Reserve Department. Never mind, let the Indian scratch for his wood to cook with and to warm himself in the years to come; that the Indians have no use for rivers, therefore, we will go into damming business and build them on their lands without their consent. Pay? No! Why should we?” They give us “C” class water instead of “A” class. They have got us! Why? Because we do not know the difference.

“In this valley the Indians have too much land. We will move them from where they have lived for centuries (by Executive order in behalf of the coming settlers). Even if he had cultivated and claims more than that, we will allot that Indian only ten acres. If he rebels and makes trouble, we will put him in jail until he is ready to behave himself.” This poor Indian may try to get an Indian friend to help him out of his predicament. But right there the Indian helper is balked by the Indian Department and is told he is not wanted on the reservation. When an Indian collects money from among his tribe to defray expenses to Washington and back in order to carry their complaints, and to be heard and considered in their rights the

## 5. The Arguments of *The Quarterly Journal*

*By the early part of the twentieth century, many Indians believed that their people were facing cultural and psychological destruction. The loss of tribal lands, the boarding school experiences, and the condescension of nearly all white Americans threatened to eliminate people who defined themselves as Indians or who understood what it meant to be Indian. A number of educated Native Americans formed the Society of American Indians; they worked together to publish *The Quarterly Journal* in Washington, DC. In its pages were printed searing indictments of the world they knew.*

*These two selections were both published in 1914, one year after the founding of the journal. The author of the first was Carlos Montezuma. He was born a Yavapai but was taken prisoner by the Pima when he was 6 years old. Eventually, he was sold to an itinerant photographer named Carlos Gentile who treated him as a foster son and gave him the romantic Aztec name. Montezuma became a medical doctor. Later, he sought and found his birth family. The author of the second piece, Chauncey Yellow Robe, was a Sioux whose great-uncle was Sitting Bull. He was sent to the famous Carlisle*

superintendent with the aid of the Indian policeman takes this Indian, takes the money away from him and gives back the money to those who contributed, put[s] him in jail and brands him as a grafter . . .

The sooner the Government abolishes the Indian Bureau, the better it will be for we Indians in every way. The system that has kept alive the Indian Bureau has been instrumental in dominating over our race for fifty years. In that time the Indian's welfare has grown to be secondary and the Indian Bureau the whole thing, and therefore a necessary political appendage of the government. It sends out exaggerated and wonderful reports to the public in order to suck the blood of our race, so that it may have perpetual life to sap your life, my life and our children's future prospects. There are many good things to say about the Indian Department. It started out right with our people. It fed them, clothed them and protected them from going outside of the reservations. It was truly a place of refuge. Then they were dominated by agents; now they are called superintendents. On the reservation our people did not act without the consent of the Superintendent, and *they did not dare to think*, for that would be to rival, the Superintendent. Yesterday, today, our people are in the same benighted condition. As Indians they are considered non-entities. They are not anything to themselves and not anything to the world . . .

We must be independent. When with my people for a vacation in Arizona I must live outdoors; I must sleep on the ground; I must cook in the fire on the ground; I must sit on the ground, I must eat nature's food and I must be satisfied with inconveniences that I do not enjoy at my Chicago home. Yet those blood relations of mine are independent, happy, because they were born and brought up in that environment, while as a greenhorn I find myself dependent and helpless in such simple life. In order for we Indians to be independent in the whirl of this other life, we must get into it and used to it and live up to its requirements and take our chances with the rest of our fellow creatures. Being caged up and not permitted to develop our faculties has made us a dependent race. We are looked upon as hopeless to save and hopeless to do anything for ourselves. The only Christian way, then, is to leave us alone and let us die in that condition. The conclusion is true that we will die that way if we do not hurry and get out of it and hustle for our salvation. Did you ever notice how other races hustle and bustle in order to achieve independence?<sup>2</sup> Reservation Indians must do the same as the rest of the wide world.

<sup>2</sup> Most probably he is referring to African Americans, who were extremely active on their own behalf during the Progressive Era.

As a full-blooded Apache Indian<sup>3</sup> I have nothing more to say. Figure out your responsibility and the responsibility of every Indian that hears my voice.

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### “The Menace of the Wild West Show” by Chauncey Yellow Robe

. . . It is now more than four centuries since Columbus came to our shores and claimed the country and gave us the name of Indians, and at the same time inaugurated the first Indian show by importing some of the Indians across the water for exhibition before the Spanish throne, and to-day the practice continues to exist in the wild-west Indian shows.

Some time ago, Judge [Cato] Sells, the United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs, said: “Let us save the American Indian from the curse of whiskey.” I believe these words hold the key to the Indian problem of to-day, but how can we save the American Indian if the Indian Bureau is permitting the special privileges in favor of the wild-west Indian shows, moving-picture concerns, and fair associations for commercializing the Indian? This is the greatest hindrance, injustice, and detriment to the present progress of the American Indians toward civilization . . .

In some of the celebrations, conventions, and county fairs in Rapid City and other reservation border towns, in order to make the attraction a success, they think they cannot do without wild-west Indian shows, consequently certain citizens have the Indian show craze . . . We can see from this state of affairs that the white man is persistently perpetuating the [false idea of] tribal habits and customs. We see that the showman is manufacturing the Indian plays intended to amuse and instruct young children and is teaching them that the Indian is only a savage being. We hear now and then of a boy or girl who is hurt or killed by playing savage. These are the direct consequences of the wild-west Indian shows and moving pictures that depict lawlessness and hatred.

<sup>3</sup> Montezuma was Yavapai, but he usually described himself as Apache in public statements. The Apache were the best-known tribe of the southwest and were associated in the popular imagination with Geronimo. The Yavapai, on the other hand, were entirely unknown to most. Claiming his connection to them would not identify him in the minds of his readers. He insisted on being “full-blooded” because white commentators of the era frequently asserted that educated and articulate Indians were “half-breeds” who inherited their talents from their white ancestors.

Before closing the history of the nineteenth century an awful crime was committed in this great Christian nation. . . . A band of Sioux Indians, including women and children, unarmed, were massacred. The wounded were left on the field to die without care at Wounded Knee by the United States troops just because they had founded a new religion called "The Indian Messiah." This was a cowardly and criminal act without diplomacy. Twenty-three years afterward, on the same field of Wounded Knee, the tragedy was reproduced for "historical preservation" in moving picture films and called "The Last Great Battle of the Sioux." The whole production of the field was misrepresented and yet approved by the Government. This is a disgrace and injustice to the Indian race.

I am not speaking here from selfish and sensitive motives, but from my own point of view, for cleaner civilization, education, and citizenship for my race . . .

Source: *Quarterly Journal* 2 (1914), pp. 224-5 and 294-9, reprinted in Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001).

Study: Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

Further exploration: Students would do well to read other selections from *The Quarterly Journal* as published in *Talking Back to Civilization* (cited above) or in the original. There are, in addition, other published collections of material from this era, such as Daniel F. Littlefield, ed., *Native American Writing in the Southeast, 1875-1935* (University Press of Mississippi, 1995). Researching Carlos Montezuma in particular is possible because a collection of his papers is readily available on microfilm: John Larner, Jr., ed., *The Papers of Carlos Montezuma, M.D.* (Scholarly Resources, 1983). Montezuma was for a time engaged to a Yankton Sioux woman named Zitkala Ša, an extremely talented writer in her own right. Several of her works are in print, among them *American Indian Stories* and *Itkomi and the Ducks* (University of Nebraska Press, 1985 and 2004 respectively).