

“Cruel Fiends of Hell”: Slaughter at Sand Creek in the Name of Manifest Destiny

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Abstract

“‘Cruel Fiends from Hell’: Slaughter at Sand Creek in the Name of Manifest Destiny” Author: Christopher Swain (KSU Student)

Throughout the study of American History, the story of the United States is seen in a relatively positive light through the rebellion against the oppressive British, freeing of the slaves to the unsympathetic Confederate slaveholders, and saving the world from Germanic tyranny in both world wars. However, little is known within the affairs of the nation regarding white settlers and the fate of the Native American. In American cinema, Indians are seen as the savage, cruel, and interfering race that hinders and scares the “white-man” into defending their family and community from impending attack. In contrast to this belief, upon further investigation through multiple primary documents such as newspaper articles, journal entries, and territorial and federal government documents, it appears that in actuality, the roles are switched. The ruthless white settlers impeded on the nomadic lifestyle of the Natives, creating hostile intentions, which led to the slaughter of thousands. In the instance of the Sand Creek Massacre, the conclusion has been drawn that the Native Americans were the victims as white territorial leadership such as Governor Evans, Colonel Chivington, and Major Anthony possessed Manifest Ideology ideals, which led to the horrendous actions. This study is to present a fair light on American history in regard to the Indian plight against their white counterpart. Due to the evidence, the underlining hatreds and objectives of the expanding Americans were not only surprising but also disturbing.

On the cold, winter morning of November 29, 1864, in the valley of Sand Creek in Colorado, “there was a little child, probably three years old, just big enough to walk through the sand. The Indians had gone ahead, and this little child was behind following after them. The little fellow was perfectly naked, traveling on the sand. I saw one man get off his horse, at a distance of about 75 yards, and draw up his rifle and fire – he missed the child. Another man came up and said, ‘Let me try the son of a bitch; I can hit him.’ He got down off his horse, kneeled down and fired at the little child, but he missed him. A third man came up and made a similar remark, and the little fellow dropped.”ⁱ

The account was given by an unknown soldier of the 3rd Colorado Cavalry, better known as the “Bloodless Third,” as he recounted in his journal the atrocities plagued upon the Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians at Sand Creek. With the image of barbarity set by the soldiers, the Joint Committee of the Conduct of the War presented their own conclusion of the trial in 1865 expressing a scene of barbarity and murder as:

Men, women, and children were indiscriminately slaughtered. In a few minutes all the Indians were flying over the plains in terror and confusion. A few who endeavored to hide themselves under the bank of creek were surrounded and shot down in cold blood, offering but feeble resistance. From the sucking babe to the old warrior, all who were taken were deliberately murdered. Not content with the soldiers indulged in acts of barbarity of the most revolting character; such, it is to be hoped, as never before disgraced the acts of men claiming to be civilized.ⁱⁱ

Nor did the committee absolve the officers of the militia, finding that, “no attempt was made by the officers to restrain the savage cruelty of the men under their command.”ⁱⁱⁱ However, instead of being the civilized individuals to which their profession called them to be, “they stood by and witnessed these acts without one word of reproof... it is difficult to believe that beings in the form of men, and disgracing the uniform of the United States soldiers and officers, could commit or countenance the commission of such acts of cruelty and barbarity as are detailed in the

testimony.”^{iv} Not only are the clues of Manifest Destiny discovered by modern day historians like Alvin Josephy and Hugh Reilly, but primary documents from territorial leaders and the Coloradan populace of the time support the ideology of the time as well.

A famous editor from the *New York Morning News*, John O’ Sullivan, asserted that it was the white man’s “[Manifest] Destiny to overspread and possess the whole continent which Providence has given us for the great experiment of liberty.”^v With individuals of the time expressing the dangerous attitudes of the civilized man, it became easy for modern day historians like Duane Schultz to express that “nothing could stop such a people possessing such a drive and aggressiveness and perhaps, above all else, their straining, bulging, bursting belief in their own greatness and in their God-given right to dominion over all the land and everything on it. The land, the grass, the trees, the mountains, the animals, the sky above belonged to them.”^{vi} A perceptive miner of Colorado wrote in the summer of 1859 in his journal that he was, “wondering what the Anglo-American race [was] approaching, and concluded that a universal triumph and conquest was its destiny.”^{vii} These ideals were not only imbedded into the minds of the governing parties, but also of the common populace within the territory. The Sand Creek Massacre was the result from popular sentiment and US territorial government policy driven by Manifest Destiny.

Throughout the majority of the 19th century, white settlers began to stretch their expansionary arm westward into the Kansas and Colorado territories, which were rich in Indian populations and native hunting grounds. Due to the conflict of “civilizing” the west, a treaty was formed in 1851, which “promised the tribes of the Great Plains that if they allowed free passage to settlers crossing their lands, they could continue their nomadic lifestyle without interference.”^{viii} However, as time went on, tensions increased between the white settlers and

Indians as isolated incidents of murders occurred in the early 1860s. The governor of the territory of Colorado, Governor John Evans, had ulterior motives for the Indian nation. In 1862, “he expected to do more than merely keep the Indians quiet; he wanted them out of the way... [and] the rest of the territory belonged to whites, to the miners and farmers and ranchers.”^{xix} The governor whole heartedly, “believed it was his duty to clear the Indians off the land so that it could be developed, farmed, and mined as God had intended.”^x Therefore, with the justification of his position, Governor Evans would prove to be a powerful force in westward expansion.

Therefore, he requested for “the federal government to [send] him more troops... rather than sending them to eastern battlefields, he needed them to thwart Confederate invaders from Texas and Indian raiders.”^{xi} With a swift denial of federal troops by the War Department to support the governor’s war aims, Evans acted quickly to “exploit and aggravate the undercurrents of suspicion and distrust,”^{xii} of the people of Colorado towards their Indian counterparts. Instead of primarily continuing with his pursuit of aid from Washington, he needed not only a standing militia to defend the people around him, but a reason to go to war as his motivation was, “to force a situation which would enable him to clear Indians from all settled regions of Colorado territory. If the Indians’ hostility could be proved, military actions against them could be justified.”^{xiii} In order to establish these goals, he requested from legislature to pass a law authorizing him to create a militia whenever the need may arise. In order to justify his actions, he pleaded that he was surrounded by savage Indians and under the threat of the Confederate army from Texas.^{xiv}

With the possibility of a standing army in place, all he needed was a reason to agitate the natives and make them look like the aggressors. Therefore, he issued a proclamation “authorizing all citizens of Colorado, either individually or in such parties as they may organize,

to go in pursuit of all hostile Indians on the plains, to kill and destroy, as enemies of the country, wherever they may be found, all such hostile Indians...^{”xv} Governor Evans continued in his proclamation that the people should not only pursue and kill but, “to take captive and hold to their own private use and benefit, all the property of such hostile Indians, that they may capture, and to receive for all stolen property recovered from said Indians such reward as may be deemed proper.”^{”xvi} Evans blatantly furthered the cause of Manifest Destiny by calling all good citizens to engage the hostile savage that endanger their way of life. In order to ensure the fear of the “feral” natives, he spread word that the Indian nation would rise up against the white populations even though the “Indians continued to live, almost obstinately, in peace.”^{”xvii}

He proceeded in agitating aggression from the Indians as Evans prepared a statement for the Cheyenne chiefs informing them that “the great father at Washington has enough men to drive all the Indians off the plains and whip the [Confederates] at the same time. Now, the war with the whites is nearly through, and the great father will not know what to do with all his soldiers except to send them after the Indians on the plains.”^{”xviii} With both white settler and Indian population agitated, it was only a matter of time before the two paranoid factions collided. As both populations engaged in a state of paranoia, Evans sought aid from the Commanding Officer in the territorial region, General Curtis stationed in Fort Riley, Kansas. The Governor insisted that “we are at war with a powerful combination of Indian tribes pledged to sustain each other and drive white people from the country... in the name of humanity [do not withdraw troops].”^{”xix} As his pieces were set in Colorado, he attempted once more to secure assistance from the federal government in Washington by claiming that, “the alliance of Indians... is now undoubted... a large force, say 10,000 troops, will be necessary to defend the lines and put down hostilities. Unless they can be sent at once we will be cut off and destroyed... We are in danger

of destruction both from attacks by Indians and starvation, it is impossible to exaggerate our danger.”^{xx} However, even as his false pleas for help were on the way to the Federal Government in Washington and General Curtis, his true motives were revealed when he spoke with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and confessed that, “I am now satisfied that the tribes of the plains are nearly all combined in this terrible war... it will be the largest Indian war this country had [seen]...”^{xxi}

In May of 1964, Governor Evans got exactly what he needed to spark the conflict in his territory. A local Colorado farm family, the Hungates, were killed in an Indian attack and the “battered bodies of the... family [were taken] into Denver and placed... on public exhibition in a box in a downtown store... whether deliberate or not, the sight of the bodies, especially the two little blond-haired girls... hardened the hatred of everyone who saw them.”^{xxii} As historian Duane Shultz has argued, “[they were seen as] martyrs, a focal point, a rallying cry and symbol. And, as symbols often do, they led to greater outrages on both sides.”^{xxiii} With white hatred directed towards the Indians due to the displaying of the girls in downtown Denver, the justification for war was complete. Evans’ new goal was to divide and conquer the native people to ensure a swift victory. He expressed to the Cheyenne and Arapaho that “[the Great Father] desires to protect and take care of them. For this purpose I direct that all friendly Indians keep away from those who are at war, and go to places of safety,”^{xxiv} he wanted to create tension among the native culture of those sympathetic to the whites and those not.

Not only were Governor Evans intentions purely derived from the ideals of American imperialism, but also the common people felt the same resentful hostilities toward the “savages” to clear out the land. The loudest calls for war came from the newspapers, especially the *Rocky Mountain News*. One exuberant writer, William Bryers, wrote of the Hungate family incident

arguing that “such outrages have gone quite far enough... it is time the redskins learned to behave themselves; they are paving the way for extermination faster than nature requires.”^{xxv} The same newspaper declared, “the fears and expectations of the white population appeared to be confirmed, and Chivington was called upon to do his duty as a commander of the Military District of Colorado.”^{xxvi} Therefore, in order to quell the fears and alarms of the people, territorial government officials stepped in with their support against the savage beasts of the Great Plains.

With the newfound hero of Colorado here to save the people, the *Rocky Mountain* newspaper flaunted his successes as “he [had] saved the lives of four whites, which in my estimation, were better than the lives of a thousand savages! He, with one hundred and twenty men, went into the heart of the Indian country in the midst of five thousand hostile Indians and it was a scratch that we ever got out of it.”^{xxvii} Territorial agents began to express their own opinions on the matter. Indian Agent, Sam Colley, suggested to Washington that “a little powder and lead is the best food”^{xxviii} when it came to dealing with natives. Even the federally appointed Chief Justice, Benjamin Hall, revealed his own assessment of the age-old American debate between civilization and savagery when he stated “it is high time that this Indian business be conducted with more care for the interests of civilization.”^{xxix}

Once he possessed the support of, not only Governor Evans but also the entire Colorado population, Chivington appeared on the scene as a conquering hero to the people and as an answer to their prayers. Historian Duane Schultz noted that this former pastor answered the call of Governor Evans and led his men with “the fury, the righteousness, the powerful swift sword of the Old Testament, and he lived his creed.”^{xxx} Chivington saw himself as a blue-blooded American whom not even God himself could hinder his patriotism as he declared, “I am a man of

lawful age and full size and was an American citizen before I became a minister. If the church had required me to renounce any of my rights of manhood or American citizenship before I could become a minister, I should have very respectfully declined.”^{xxxix} Clearly, Chivington was a man who placed his nation and their ideologies ahead of his own personal faith and practices.

With Chivington’s fire and brimstone character, it’s difficult to argue why he was not the best candidate for the plot Governor Evans had planned for. With the brutal qualities of the colonel, he married ideologies of hatred and lust to clear out the native savages from his beloved homeland as he actively spoke out that “there is but one course for us to pursue, to make them behave or kill them, which latter it now seems we shall have to do... look out for them and kill them.”^{xxxix} Not only had the colonel wished to pursue and drive out the savages, but this supposed “Man of God” felt that “the only way to deal with the savages... was to kill and scalp all, little and big. Even papooses [Indian children] should be killed because they would grow up to become warriors...”^{xxxix} He pressed on to express that “now, if these red rebels can be killed off by one another, it will be a great savings to the government, for I am fully satisfied that to kill them is the only way to have peace and quiet.”^{xxxix} As he wanted to turn the Indians against themselves, he was not against ordering his men to kill the papooses who, as Colonel Chivington later coined the phrase, “nits make lice.”^{xxxix}

With imperialistic and Manifest Destiny ideologies imbedded in the leader of the forces in Colorado, the men fighting under his command tended to share the same brutal characteristics as their commanding officer. However, it should be noted that these men were not regular federal troops but “most [were] volunteers [who] were physically and mentally superior to the men of the peacetime army... they were more knowledgeable about frontier life and the ways of the Indians.”^{xxxix} Schultz pointed out that “the most important difference between these volunteers

and the regulars – and what ultimately led to Sand Creek – was the attitude of the volunteers towards the Indians. It was simplistic and unforgiving: They believed in fighting rather than in negotiating.^{xxxvii} Historian R.M Utley compliments Schultz’s position and presented that less frequently did the volunteer army take the Indian side of a dispute, discriminate between shades of guilt, seek solutions other than by hostile intentions, or restrain tendencies toward “barbaric excesses”. The new militia provoked more hostilities than it quelled, but with the attitudes that shaped it came more effective fighters than the Indians had ever seen before.^{xxxviii}

However, even with the imperialistic ideologies of the acting leaders, general populace, and militia, a significant number of officers within Chivington’s own command stepped up to express their discontent for the situation of how it was being handled. With the lack of federal aid from Washington and the poor training and equipment of the local militias, “if the Cheyenne and Arapaho had wanted war with the whites, this was their best chance. Never again would they hold such a commanding advantage in numbers over those small garrisons.”^{xxxix} However, in contrast to white belief “the Indians took no action... they roamed with the buffalo instead of staying fenced up on the reservation... but they did not make war.”^{xl} Even though the natives, as a whole, were relatively peaceful, the majority of the population refused to believe this. In the previous months to the massacre, a letter was sent from Chief Black Kettle of the Cheyenne people living in the shadows of Fort Lyon, where Colonel Chivington and his men were stationed. Within his dictation he made the point that “we received a letter... wishing us to make peace... all came to the conclusion to make peace with you, providing you make peace... We have seven prisoners of yours which we are willing to give up, providing you give up yours... we want true news from you in return.”^{xli} Expressing non-hostile intentions and willingness to trade prisoners, the peaceful Indians showed civility to their white counterpart.

The acting commander of the fort at that time, Major Edward Wynkoop, saw that he had no other alternative and needed to retrieve his men from the “savage beasts”. With himself and a company of men, they cautiously made their way into the native camp, preparing for an ambush to occur. Wynkoop even brought a native lesser chief with him to act as a shield who “appeared to be perfectly satisfied and said he was willing to sacrifice his life if his tribe did not act in good faith toward [Major Wynkoop].”^{xlii} By the time the major and his men returned to the fort, he wrote in his journal that night that “[I] was bewildered with an exhibition of patriotism on the part of the two savages and felt myself in the presence of superior beings; and these were the representatives of a race that I heretofore looked upon without exception as being cruel, treacherous, and bloodthirsty without feeling or affection for friend or kindred.”^{xliii} The natives who were belittled and called “uncivilized” and “savage” by their white counterpart displayed the superiority that is expressed in the ideology of Manifest Destiny. From what appeared to be an anti-imperialistic view held by Major Wynkoop, created a better relation with the natives where both parties respected and trusted one another in the time directly before the massacre.

With a newfound trust between the major and Indians camped at Sand Creek, a flood of letters arrived from the chiefs of the tribes which asked, “that we may have peace with the whites. We want to hold you by the hand. You are our father... understand that we are for peace, and that we have made peace, that we may not be mistaken by them for enemies.”^{xliv} This letter from Chief Black Kettle showed the willingness and humility of the “primitive” culture to trust in their “Great Father” and be at peace with them, hand in hand. Even with such great trust from the chiefs, another letter from Chief White Antelope expressed his desire for peace, but also a cautious mistrust for the local militia as he conveyed that, “I have called all white men as my brothers... [but] now the soldiers do not shake hands but seek to kill me. I fear these new

soldiers who have gone out may kill some of my people.”^{xliv} Even though the chiefs of the Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes were both at a momentary peace with the whites and vigilantly alert at the intentions of the militia at the same time, they knew that they were “under Wynkoop’s protection, the protection of the American flag. The Indians knew it, Wynkoop knew it, Evans and Chivington knew it.”^{xlvi}

As the Cheyenne and Arapaho leadership expressed their peaceful intentions toward their white counterparts, American leadership thought differently. General Curtis’s second in command, Major B.F. Henning, stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas believed that Major Wynkoop had acted against military policy and Henning had “received what he called ‘disturbing rumors’ that Wynkoop had been issuing food and other supplies to hostile Indians, another violation of regulations.”^{xlvii} Due to the actions of Major Wynkoop, Major Henning created orders relieving him of command of Fort Lyon and directing him to the district headquarters at Fort Riley. There, he would be tried and expected to defend his conduct to the “savage culture” while Major Anthony would take the place of Wynkoop temporarily. All of this was done without the knowledge of General Curtis who began composing his own military orders to Chivington on the rules of engagement directed to the Indians.

On the morning of April 8, 1864, the orders were given from Curtis to Chivington, which expressed that, “I heard that Indians have committed depredations on or near the Platte River. Do not let District lines prevent pursuing and punishing them. Give Col. Collins and General Mitchell your full co-operation and information.”^{xlviii} The orders advanced from not letting district lines prevent the pursue of hostile Indians, to potentially full-fledged warfare as in September 28, 1864. They demanded that, “I shall require the bad Indians delivered up, restoration of equal numbers of stock, also hostages secure. I want no peace until the Indians

suffer more... No peace must be made without my directions.”^{xlix} These orders played perfectly into the new commander of Fort Lyon, Major Scott Anthony, as he was a “master of duplicity” in appeasing Major Wynkoop that all was well while deluding General Curtis that the Natives “pretend that they want peace, and I think they do now, as they cannot fight during the winter... I do not think it is policy to make peace with them now, until all perpetrators of depredations are surrendered up to be dealt with as we may propose.”^l Major Henning, Major Anthony, and Colonel Chivington had set the stage flawlessly for the massacre of the century.

On the cold, winter morning of November 29, 1864, Chivington’s 3rd Colorado Cavalry set out for the Indian camp at Sand Creek. Upon approaching the encampment, Chivington stopped and turned towards his men in a heroic fashion, and declared:

Off with your coats, men. You can fight better without them. Take no prisoners. Remember the slaughtered white women and children. Remember the Hungates. I don’t tell you to kill all ages and sex, but look back on the plains of the Platte, where your mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters have been slain, and their blood saturating the sands on the Platte.^{li}

As he turned around, the men heard him yell in a blood-curdling shout, “remember the murdered women and children on the Platte. Take no prisoners.”^{lii} As he charged toward the natives he added, “scalps are what we are after... I long to be wading in gore.”^{liii}

Thus the infamous Massacre at Sand Creek began. The intentions of Chivington since the beginning had been clear. He was not interested in taking prisoners and wanted to mutilate the bodies of the Indians to set an example for all who crossed the white man’s path. As the men of Fort Lyon charged, Chief Black Kettle raised not only a white flag symbolizing they did not mean harm, but also an American flag which was given to him in 1860, proving they were friends of the whites and did not want conflict. As Kettle raised the flags, he continually reassured his people that no harm would come to them and this was a misunderstanding. The

only ones who misunderstood were the natives who received the sharp sword and crack of fire from the Coloradan Cavalry. They fired indiscriminately into the encampment, killing men, women, and even children while artillery fire blasted any who tried to run to safety. One account from a soldier confessed what he saw on that horrific day,

I saw five squaws under a bank for shelter. When the troops came up to them they ran out and showed their persons to let the soldiers know they were squaws and begged for mercy, but the soldiers shot them all. I saw one squaw lying on the bank whose leg had been broken by a shell; a soldier came up to her with a drawn saber; she raised her arm to protect, when he struck, breaking her arm; she rolled over and raised her other arm, when he struck, breaking it, and then left her without killing her. There were some 30 or 40 squaws collected in a hole for protection; they sent out a little girl about six years old with a white flag on a stick; she had not proceeded but a few steps when she was shot and killed. I saw a little girl about five years of age who had been hid in the sand; two soldiers discovered her, drew their pistols, and shot her, and then pulled her out of the sand by the arm. I saw quite a number of infants in arms killed with their mothers.^{liv}

Historian Alvin M. Josephy described how, “for hours, the frenzied Coloradans, in an orgy of brutality and hate, went over the battlefield, murdering the wounded and scalping and mutilating the dead.”^{lv} A surviving Cheyenne, William Bent, remembered that, “[we] all began running, but they did not seem to know what to do or where to turn. The women and children were screaming and wailing, the men running to the lodges for their arms and shouting advice and directions to one another.”^{lvi} Another soldier gave an even more gruesome account:

One old squaw wondered sightless through the carnage. Her entire scalp had been taken, and the skin of her forehead fell down over her eyes to blind her. Several troopers got into a quarrel over who should have the honor of scalping one body. The issue could not be decided; so all took scalps from the same carcass.

A group of soldiers paused amid the firing to take turns profaning the body of a comely young squaw, very dead. Indians’ fingers were hacked away to get their rings as souvenirs. One soldier trotted about with a heart impaled on a stick. Others carried off the genitals of braves. Someone had the notion that it would be artistic to slice away the breasts of the Indian women. One breast was worn as a cap, another was seen stretched over the bow of a saddle.^{lvii}

It was a horrendous sight on that grim day for the Cheyenne and Arapaho as the boys of Colorado physically displayed their hatreds from the ideology of Manifest Destiny. Chivington's men became the very thing they wanted to destroy as Schultz concluded that they "were a mob – Primitive, unrestrained, crude, barbaric – stripped for that time of even the thinnest veneer of civilization."^{lviii} Major Anthony confessed that he had, "never saw more bravery displayed by any set of people on the face of the earth than by these Indians. They would charge on the whole company singly, determined to kill someone before being killed themselves. We, of course, took no prisoners."^{lix} Reports from John Smith showed that a mere seventy warriors held off Chivington's forces, allowing the majority of the Indians to escape into the countryside.

Only one regiment of men chose to take the high ground and stay on the sideline. Captain Silas Soule, who was opposed to the slaughtering of innocent Indians chose to have peaceful relations with the whites, commanded his men not to engage the non-hostile Cheyenne and Arapaho. Instead, he rode along the south bank of Sand Creek keeping his men away from the conflict.^{lx} The next day, Chivington's men stayed in the camp to loot, pillage, and kill any remaining survivors. On December 1st, 1864, Chivington and his men, returned to Fort Lyon.^{lxi}

On the home front, in a *Rocky Mountain News*, article titled "Big Indian Fight" reported that "the 1st and 3rd regiments have had a battle with the Indians on Sand Creek, a short distance northeast of Fort Lyon. Five hundred Indians are reported killed and six hundred horses captured. Captain Baxter and Lieutenant Pierce are reported killed. No further particulars. A messenger is hourly expected with full details. Bully for the Colorado boys!"^{lxii} Not only had the ideologies been carried out on the battlefield, but also the seed had been sown back home to gain support for the "brave men" of the Bloodless Third.

When Soule confronted Major Anthony about the impending attack, he was astonished to hear that, “[Anthony] was in for killing all Indians, and... had been only acting friendly with them until he could get a force large enough to go out and kill them all.”^{lxiii} Soule tried to remind the major about the promise made to the peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho, but Major Anthony would have none of it. Major Soule was warned by Major Anthony to stay away from Colonel Chivington and not to propose any alternative to the slaughter. When Soule sent a letter to the commander to express his disapproval, it was promptly returned unopened.

Lieutenant Joseph Cramer, expressed that, “I was perfectly willing to obey orders, but that I did it under protest, for I believed that he directly, and all officers who accompanied Major Wynkoop to the Smoky Hill indirectly, would perjure themselves both as officers and men; that I believed it to be murder to go out and kill those Indians, as I felt that Major Wynkoop’s command owed their lives to this same band of Indians.”^{lxiv} Unlike Soule, the young lieutenant had the courage to stand up to the Colonel, face to face, and conveyed that, “I feel that you are placing us in a very embarrassing circumstance by requiring us to fight the same Indians that saved our lives.”^{lxv}

The response from Colonel Chivington was not as generous to the lieutenant as it was to Major Soule. The colonel turned to the young officer, red in the face, and shouted, “the Cheyenne nation has been waging bloody war against all whites all spring, summer, and fall, and Black Kettle is their principal chief. They have been guilty of robbery, arson, murder, rape, and fiendish torture, not even sparing women and little children.”^{lxvi} The livid colonel then turned to the rest of the officers in the room and explained, “I believe it right and honorable to use any means under God’s heaven to kill Indians who kill and torture women and children. Damn any man who is in sympathy with them... Damn any man who is in sympathy with an Indian!”^{lxvii}

Even in the voice of sympathetic reasoning by these two courageous men, the ideals and hatreds of Manifest Destiny overcame any sort of logical justification to a peaceful solution. All that was left was to see how the territory of Colorado and the nation would react to this atrocity in the name of civilization.

On the military side of the reaction, Major Wynkoop openly opposed Colonel Chivington as Wynkoop spoke with the Joint Committee on the Conduct of War as he expressed that, “since the last horrible murder by Colonel Chivington, this country presents a scene of desolation. All communication is cut off with the States except by sending large bodies of troops, and already over 100 whites have fallen as victims to the fearful vengeance of these betrayed Indians.”^{lxviii} Wynkoop continued with his recount assuring that, “all this country is ruined. There can be no such thing as peace in the future but by the total annihilation of all the Indians on the plains. It will take many more troops to give security to travelers and settlers in this country.”^{lxix} Not only had lowly majors and lieutenants, like Wynkoop and Cramer, expressed their strong discontent with the massacre, but General Curtis gave his concerns as he “[feared] that Colonel Chivington’s assault at Sand Creek was upon Indians who had received some encouragement to camp in that vicinity under some erroneous supposition of the commanding officer at Lyon that he could make a sort of ‘city of refuge’ at such a point.”^{lxx} Colonel Chivington, whether in order to clear his own name of the atrocities or to express his sincere discontent for the slaughtering of innocence, continued that, “however wrong that may have been, it should have been respected, and any violation of known arrangements of that sort should be severely rebuked... I abominate the extermination of women and children... [the] popular cry of settlers and soldiers on the frontier favors an indiscriminate slaughter, which is very difficult to abhor the style, but so it

goes from Minnesota to Texas.^{lxxi} The colonel justified his actions using the civilians' cries for help as the cause of the merciless massacre.

As expressed by Major Wynkoop and General Curtis, even though the military leadership saw the repercussions of the massacre and began denouncing it the very day it occurred, the general populace saw the events not as a curse, but as a gift from God. The newspapers got hold of the battle reports and began printing articles of their heroic victors.

The people of Colorado will see renewed cause of thankfulness that they did not send Col. Chivington to Congress since he appears to have again turned his attention to military matters. One more such blow, as of the avenging angel, inflicted upon the Devil's own sons of the Plains, will quite reconcile us to Col. Chivington... Two more such blows will make us warm admirers of the Methodist Colonel and if by any happy chance of fortune, he should be able to inflict three more, making in all a neat sum of 2,000 killed, the Journal will become his best friend and support him for any office within the gift of the people of Colorado, at any time in the future for he will be worthy to be called her temporal savior.^{lxxii}

The newspapers did not stop there, articles from the *Rocky Mountain News* and *Daily Mining Journal* flourished and showed the imperialistic support of the people of the Coloradan territory. Even in a time of civil war throughout America, the newspapers were bold enough to claim, "the 'Bloodless Thirdsters' [have] gained the greatest victory, west of the Missouri, over the savages..."^{lxxiii} They continue to show their support and justification as, "we have completely broken up the tribe and think the settlers will not be further molested by them. Our boys are well supplied with Indian plunder and perfectly satisfied to renew the attack with any tribe."^{lxxiv} The *Rocky Mountain News* continued their song of praise as headlines declared, "The Savages Dispersed! 500 Indians Killed... All did nobly," obviously exaggerating the bloodshed to quell the hungry populace.^{lxxv} No greater appreciation, not even from the newspapers, could be expressed than by the ladies of Colorado, "as the 'bold [soldier] boys' passed along, the sidewalks and the corners stands were thronged with citizens saluting their friends. The fair sex

took the opportunity, wherever they could get it, of expressing their admiration for the gallant boys who donned the regimentals for the purpose of protecting the women of the country by ridding it of redskins”^{lxxvi} The returning victors were treated like kings to the Coloradan populace as they gave them exactly what they wanted, Indian blood.

When word of military and federal dissatisfaction with Colonel Chivington’s command at Sand Creek reached the citizen population, journalist rose up in his defense and responded, “let ‘sorehead’ cowards say, or write to Washington, what they will.”^{lxxvii} Colorado wouldn’t tolerate any of it as the territory was united behind the killing of the Indians and liberating the territory from them. When asked about the massacring of Indians, the *Daily Mining Journal* responded that, “on the question of killing these miserable, cruel fiends of hell, who murder and mutilate our women and children, who steal our stock, burn our homes and destroy us by cutting off our communication with the States, the people of Colorado are united as one,”^{lxxviii} showing the unity of the white population in this cause. When it came to negative reactions from the federal government, the people rallied together and claimed,

Colorado is saddled with a lot of uneasy spirits, among them these ‘high officials,’ who would drag her down to hell, if by so doing they could further their own political ambition, or put money in their pockets. Their hate is as vindictive as their consciences are unscrupulous. They will take desperate chances upon forever damning themselves, to work a temporary injury to those who differ with them upon questions of public policy... They would blast the prospects of the Territory for years to come, and for what? Solely and simply to vent their spite upon two or three men against whom they have personal animosities, or whose power and popularity they envy and fear.^{lxxix}

Nothing, not even the federal government, would stop Manifest Destiny the people of Colorado, especially these “cruel fiends” who stood in the of expansion westward. The populace argued and defended Chivington, their “rough diamond of Colorado,” against the onslaught of attacks and believed that, “for killing Indians he deserves the praise and not the censure of Colorado.”^{lxxx}

However, the cry for blood only intensified as the attacks against Chivington from government sources increased. A proper, yet sarcastic, request placed in the *Rocky Mountain News* suggested that, “a small and select battalion of ‘high officials’ be permitted to go down [instantly] to pacify the devils.”^{lxxxix} In contrast to the sarcastic remarks in the *Rocky Mountain News*, a cry for help came from a concerned elderly lady on February 8, 1865 pleading, “how long, O God should we have endured and suffered in silence? Day by day the murderous tomahawk and rifle were thinning our sparse settlement; night after night the flames of burning homesteads and moving trains of goods, lighted up the eastern horizon, or gleamed along the Platte and Arkansas.”^{lxxxix} When the federal government cracked down on all military and territorial government actions, the *Rocky Mountain News* responded, “they tell us it was wrong to strike a blow in return. The first punishment given to the enemy – not half or quarter equaling their own barbarity – is called a ‘massacre.’ The officers and men who did it were maligned. High Officials misrepresent the facts, to blot and disgrace the fair name of our territory, and yet we are commanded to ‘suffer and be still.’”^{lxxxix}

As for the federal reaction to this ‘heroic battle,’ a joint resolution was passed in the Senate denouncing the events at Sand Creek as a massacre. However, once the resolution was voted on within the House of Representatives to remove Governor Evans and Colonel Chivington, it was struck down and the newspapers got hold of the scheme Washington was trying to instigate. The public reaction from the *News* retaliated with, “they went into the session to remove the governor, implicate the Secretary and disgrace the colonel commanding; they came out of it as meek as sucking doves and gentle as lambs.”^{lxxxix} The Federal Government, “demanded an investigation into the conduct of Indian affairs because we believed it would appear that an Indian war had been encouraged rather than averted, and because the Indian war

brings ruin to us, the nearest way to peace was the removal of those men who had brought it on, and in whom the Indians had lost confidence.”^{lxxxv}

As the trial began on March 13, 1865, John W. Wright wrote to the *Rocky Mountain News* that, “an Indian war is on the country. Every effort has been made for two years to produce it, and the Indian has suffered outrage and wrong by the hand of the white man... you... indorse the author of this proclamation and the leader of the Fort Lyon massacre as philanthropists and as distinguished for their religion... where is thy blush?”^{lxxxvi} On the other side of the spectrum, to defend the ideologies of Manifest Destiny, a letter from the Secretary of the Interior observed that, “we have reached a point in our national history when, it seems to me, there are but two alternatives left us as to what shall be the future of the Indian, namely swift extermination by the sword, and famine, or preservation by gradual concentration on territorial reserves...”^{lxxxvii}

On March 14, 1865, Major Anthony took his seat in front of the jury to give his testimony. Anthony recalled his strategic justification that, “the only way to fight Indians is to fight them as they fight us; if they scalp and mutilate the bodies we must do the same. It is the general impression of the people of that country that the only way to fight them is to fight as they fight; kill the women and children.”^{lxxxviii} Anthony paused to reflect on what he said and confessed, “at the same time, of course, we consider it a barbarous practice.”^{lxxxix} Ironically, Anthony sought to justify his actions even as in the same breath he confessed how savage they were.

The next day, Governor Evans took the stand and presented himself as a distinguished politician of the Territory of Colorado. Upon being questioned if the actions had been justified, he responded cautiously with, “as a matter of course, no one could justify an attack on Indians while under protection of the flag... I have heard, however – that is only a report – that there was

a statement on the part of Colonel Chivington and his friends that these Indians had assumed a hostile attitude before he attacked them.^{»xc} In order for the governor to appear impartial and ignorant of the actions taken by his “rogue colonel” he continued, “I do not know whether this is so or not. I have said all I have to do with them...”^{»xci} The governor concluded his testimony declaring, “I would rather not give an opinion on the subject until I have heard the other side of the question.”^{»xcii} By trying to claim ignorance, the governor could justify his actions and Manifest Destiny ideologies while escaping any sort of repercussion from the judicial system.

The last man to defend his actions and present his justification was Colonel Chivington. He blatantly lied by declaring that, “the first shot is fired by [the Indians]. The first man who falls is white. No white flag is raised. None of the Indians shows signs of peace, but flying to rifle pits already prepared, they fight with a desperation unequalled, showing their perfect understanding of the relations that existed as regards peace or war, as forty-nine killed and wounded soldiers too plainly testified.”^{»xciii} He then continued to justify his actions by professing that the “Indians had been killing and burning for months ... the character of Indians in the western country for truth and veracity, like their respect for the chastity of women who may become prisoners in their hands, is not of that order which is calculated to inspire confidence in what they may say.”^{»xciv} The colonel knew he possessed the public’s support, but he still needed the support of the jurists.

The Marshal for the District of Colorado, A.C. Hunt, countered the testimony of the members of the territorial government, offering that their intention was, “to kill them all... I was entirely satisfied that his motive was not a good and virtuous one. We regarded those Indians on the reservation as safe, and ought not to be attacked.”^{»xcv} On the military side, two commanders, Smith and Colley, testified against the attacks with Smith who stated that, “...the whole Indian

war had been brought on for selfish purpose. Colonel Chivington was running for Congress in Colorado and I understand he had this Indian war in view...^{xcvi} After revealing the intentions of Chivington, Colley supported Smith's claim sharing that, "I have thought for more than a year that [Chivington] was determined to have a war with these Indians... I was acquainted with all the chiefs who were there, and I know they had all tried hard to keep peace. All the chiefs who were killed by Colonel Chivington have labored as hard [as] men could to keep peace between the whites and Indians."^{xcvii}

Even though the official trial was held in Washington, the congressmen on the committee had not taken it seriously as many failed to uphold their responsibilities. As many eastern civilians were sympathetic to the cause of the Indian plight, not many were passionate enough to act upon the atrocities. On the first day, only three of the nine members appeared for duty, on the third and final day only one was in attendance. One congressman from Ohio, Benjamin "Honest Ben" Wade, confessed he had not gone to any of the hearings.^{xcviii} Still, they came to the conclusion that Governor Evans was "characterized by such prevarication and shuffling as has been shown by no witness they have examined during the four years they have been engaged in their investigations."^{xcix} A month later, the Secretary of State sent a letter to Governor Evans which read, "Sir: I am directed by the President to inform you that your resignation of the office of Governor of Colorado Territory would be acceptable. Circumstances connected with the public interest make it desirable that the resignation should reach here without delay."^c Any future political career Evans desired for was now forfeit.

But, the full wrath of the congressmen was saved for Colonel Chivington:

Your committee can hardly find fitting terms to describe his conduct. Wearing the uniform of the United States which should be the emblem of justice and humanity; holding the important position of commander of a military district, and therefore having the honor of the government to that extent in his keeping, he

deliberately planned and executed a foul and dastardly massacre which would have disgraced the veriest savage among those who were the victims of his cruelty. Having full knowledge of their friendly character, having himself been instrumental to some extent in placing them in their position of fancied security, he took advantage of their inapprehension and defenseless condition to gratify the worst passions that ever cursed the heart of man. [He] surprised and murdered, in cold blood, the unsuspecting men, women, and children on Sand Creek, who had every reason to believe they were under the protection of the United States authorities, and then returned to Denver and boasted of the brave deeds he and the men under his command had performed.^{ci}

In spite of this judgment, the colonel escaped relatively unscathed. He resigned from the military, preventing any sort of lawful justification to proceed with a hearing in a military court. The only punishment he endured was the destruction of any political career he may have desired, as this would forever haunt Chivington and any public figurehead position he may have coveted.

Colonel Chivington retained the support of the populace, until April 23, 1865. A drunken brawl broke out that night in the Denver bar district as Captain Soule and his new wife were going for a walk nearby. He responded and was shot by a soldier of the Second Colorado. Most believed Chivington had arranged the assassination, as he never denied the allegations.

The congressional committee had adjourned on May 30, 1865 finding that there was, “no conclusion, no judgments of guilt or innocence... leaving only a paper trail of murder, deceit, and treachery.”^{cii} The Federal Commission, which concluded the investigation of the massacre at Sand Creek, summed up the imperialistic ideologies behind the attack and the struggle between civilization and savagery:

If the lands of the white man are taken, civilization justifies him in resisting the invader.” However, “civilization does more than this: it brands him as a coward and a slave if he submits to the wrong. Here civilization made its contract and guaranteed the rights of the weaker party. It did not stand by the guarantee. The treaty was broken but not by the savages,” as Anthony suggested in his trial on the irony of the white justification. “If the savage resists, civilization with the Ten Commandments in one hand and the sword in the other demands his immediate extermination. These Indians saw their former homes and hunting grounds

overrun by greedy populations, thirsting for gold. They saw their game driven east to the plains, and soon found themselves the object of jealousy and hatred. They must go.^{ciii}

As the trial concluded in Washington, the white population believed they had done their part in properly punishing the perpetrators and bringing them to justice. The same could not be said about their Native American counterpart. They had been betrayed and slaughtered just like the animals in which the white settlers identified them with in their propaganda. The peaceful Indians of Sand Creek would be avenged as they brought out the pipe made of the bone of an antelope to signal the coming of war.^{civ} The chiefs gathered for their ceremony as one Indian confirmed, “the white man has taken our country, killed our game, was not satisfied with that, but killed our wives and children. Now no peace. We have now raised the battle-axe until death.”^{cv} The Native American had finally given the imperialistic Americans and former Governor Evans the war they craved. The ideals of Manifest Destiny had not only been the cause of the slaughter of innocent women and children, but also created the “savage beast” in which the white man had propagated.

Endnotes

57. ⁱ Massacre of Cheyenne Indians (Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1865),
- ⁱⁱ Reilly, *The Frontier Newspapers and the Coverage of the Plains Indian Wars*, 28.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ^{iv} Ibid.
- ^v Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 22.
- ^{vi} Ibid, 39.
- ^{vii} Abbott., op. cit., 61.
- ^{viii} Reilly, *The Frontier Newspapers and the Coverage of the Plains Indian Wars*, 17.
- ^{ix} Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 63.
- ^x Ibid.
- ^{xi} Reilly, *The Frontier Newspapers and the Coverage of the Plains Indian Wars*, 17.
- ^{xii} Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 62.
- ^{xiii} Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 169-170.
- ^{xiv} Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 63.
- ^{xv} Wright, *Chivington Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians*, 2.
- ^{xvi} Ibid.
- ^{xvii} Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 64.
88. ^{xviii} *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians* (Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1865),
- ^{xix} Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West*, 300.
- ^{xx} Ibid, 303.

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- xxi Ibid, 303.
- xxii Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 51.
- xxiii Ibid.
- xxiv *Sand Creek Massacre* (Report of the Secretary of War, 1867), 167.
- xxv Perkin, *First Hundred Years*, 261.
- xxvi Reilly, *The Frontier Newspapers and the Coverage of the Plains Indian Wars*, 19.
- xxvii Reilly, *The Frontier Newspapers and the Coverage of the Plains Indian Wars*, 19.
- xxviii Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 85.
- xxix Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West*, 297.
- xxx Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 46.
- xxxi Mumey, *Roundup*, 6.
- xxxii Berthrong, *Southern Cheyennes*, 180.
- xxxiii *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians* (Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1865)
71.
- xxxiv Ibid.
- xxxv *Kaiti Kane, Nits make Lice: Drogheda, Sand Creek, and the Poetics of Colonial Extermination*, 1.
- xxxvi Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 51.
- xxxvii Ibid, 51-52.
- xxxviii Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue*, 217.
- xxxix Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 51.
- xl Ibid.
- xli Bent, *Frontier*.
- xlii Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 96.

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- xliii Hoig, *Sand Creek Massacre*, 99.
87. xliv *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians* (Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1865), 87.
- xlv *Ibid*, 87.
- xlvi *Ibid*, 88.
- xlvii Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 116.
- xlviii Chivington, *To the People of Colorado*, 7.
- xlix *Ibid*, 7-8.
89. ¹ *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians* (Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1865), 89.
- li *Ibid*, 116.
- lii Reilly, *The Frontier Newspapers and the Coverage of the Plains Indian Wars*, 21.
- liii *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians* (Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1865), 117.
- liv *Ibid*, 96.
- lv Josephy, Jr., *The Civil War in the American West*, 311.
- lvi Hyde, *Life of George Bent*, 151-152.
- lvii *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians* (Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1865), 96.
- lviii Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 137.
- lix Grinnell, *op. cit.*, 172.
- lx Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 136.
- lxi Reilly, *The Frontier Newspapers and the Coverage of the Plains Indian Wars*, 21.
- lxii *Rocky Mountain News* 5, no 92. (December 7, 1864), 2.

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- lxiii Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 130.
- lxiv *Sand Creek Massacre* (Report of the Secretary of War, 1867), 116.
- lxv Craig, op. cit., 186.
- lxvi Ibid.
- lxvii Ibid, 186-187.
- lxviii *Massacre of Cheyenne Indians* (Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, 1865), 83-84.
- lxix Ibid.
- lxx Ibid, 75.
- lxxi Ibid.
- lxxii *Daily Mining Journal* 11, no. 7 (December 8, 1864), 2.
- lxxiii *Rocky Mountain News* 5, no. 96 (December 12, 1864), 2.
- lxxiv Ibid.
- lxxv *Rocky Mountain News* 1, no. 35 (December 14, 1864), 2.
- lxxvi *Rocky Mountain News* 1, no. 37 (December 30, 1864), 2.
- lxxvii *Rocky Mountain News* 1, no. 38 (January 4, 1865), 4.
- lxxviii *Daily Mining Journal* 2, no. 30 (January 5, 1865), 2.
- lxxix *Rocky Mountain News* 1, no. 38 (January 4, 1865), 4.
- lxxx *Rocky Mountain News* 1, no. 141 (February 4, 1865), 4.
- lxxxi *Rocky Mountain News* 6, no. 39 (January 11, 1865), 2.
- lxxxii *Rocky Mountain News* 1, no. 43 (February 8, 1865), 1.
- lxxxiii Ibid.
- lxxxiv *Rocky Mountain News* 2, no. 103 (March 31, 1865), 2.

^{lxxxv} *Daily Mining Journal* 2, no. 177 (June 29, 1865), 3.

^{lxxxvi} Wright, *Chivington Massacre of the Cheyenne Indians*, 6.

^{lxxxvii} Letter of the Secretary of the Interior, 5.

^{lxxxviii} *A Documentary History*, 26.

^{lxxxix} *Ibid.*

^{xc} *Ibid.*, 42-43.

^{xc} *Ibid.*

^{xcii} *Ibid.*, 44.

^{xciii} Chivington, *To the People of Colorado*, 6.

^{xciv} *A Documentary History*, 104.

^{xcv} *Ibid.*, 46.

^{xcvi} *Ibid.*, 14.

^{xcvii} *Ibid.*, 15.

^{xcviii} Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 164.

^{xcix} *A Documentary History*, iv.

^c *Ibid.*, v.

^{ci} *Ibid.*, v.

^{cii} *Ibid.*, 174.

^{ciii} Tebbel and Jennison, *American Indian Wars*, 238.

^{civ} Schultz, *Month of the Freezing Moon*, 9.

^{cv} Grinnell, *Cheyenne Indians*, 75.

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