

**"With Such People I Want No Peace"**

Acuera (Timucua, c. 1540)

*In 1539, about twenty-five years after Juan Ponce de Leon had "discovered" Florida and enslaved south Floridan tribes, Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto and an army arrived in Florida. When de Soto sent a few Native Americans he had captured to ask Acuera to meet him, the Timucua chief had this to say.*

  Others of your accursed race have, in years past, poisoned our peaceful shores. They have taught me what you are. What is your employment? To wander about like vagabonds from land to land, to rob the poor, to betray the confiding, to murder in cold blood the defenceless. No! with such a people I want no peace—no friendship. War, never—ending war, exterminating war, is all the boon I ask.
  You boast yourselves valiant, and so you may be; but my faithful warriors are not less brave, and this too you shall one day prove; for I have sworn to maintain an unsparing conflict while one white man remains in my borders—not only in battle, though even thus we fear not to meet you, but by stratagem, ambush, and midnight surprisal.
  I am kirig in my own land, and will never become the vassal of a mortal like myself. Vile and pusillanimous is he who will submit to the yoke of another when he may be free. As for me and my people, we choose death—yes! a hundred deaths—before the loss of our liberty and the subjugation of our country.
  Keep on, robbers and traitors: in Acuera and Apalachee we will treat you as you deserve. Every captive will we quarter and hang up to the highest tree along the road.

*SOURCE: Francis S. Drake. The Indian Tribes of the United States. Volume 2. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1884. 34.*[*Back To History Is A Weapon's Front Page*](http://www.historyisaweapon.com/indextrue.html)

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| The degree of civilization in a society can be judged by entering its prisons.—Doestoevski |

AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

Keith E. Whittington

Supplementary Material

Chapter 7: The Gilded Age – America and the World

*Chief Sitting Bull*, **Prison Interview** (1882)[[1]](#footnote-1)

*Sitting Bull was a Lakota Native American chief who fought with American troops across the mid-nineteenth century and became a feared warrior for his tribe at an early age. He was born in what is now South Dakota during the Jacksonian era. By the time of the Civil War, U.S. troops and American settlers were encroaching into Lakota territory. Although several tribal leaders in the region reached agreements with the U.S. government and moved to reservations, Sitting Bull was among the leaders of the resistance and across the 1860s and 1870s he led several battles between intertribal coalitions and the U.S. army. In 1881, he finally surrendered, and was sent to Standing Rock Reservation. His military prowess earned him both the enmity of the U.S. military and celebrity in American popular culture. In 1885, he spent a few months travelling with Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show (where President Grover Cleveland came to see him). In 1890, as hostilities were again building between a number of Great Plains tribes and the U.S. government, Sitting Bull was killed during a gun battle between his supporters and a group of Lakota policemen who had come to arrest him.*

*James Creelman was a celebrated adventurer-journalist in the late nineteenth century. His book of reminiscences of his travels included a purported interview with Chief Sitting Bull, conducted while the Lakota chief was being held as a prisoner of war in Fort Randall in the Dakota territories. Creelman portrayed Sitting Bull as a heroic figure of a familiar American type. According to Creelman, Sitting Bull “knew the supreme lesson of history . . . that nothing can compensate men for the loss of liberty, and that everything else can be endured but that.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

I have lived a long time, and I have seen a great deal, and I have always had a reason for everything I have done. Every act of my life has had an object in view, and no man can say that I have neglected facts or failed to think.

I am one of the last chiefs of the independent Sioux nation, and the place I hold among my people was held by my ancestors before me. If I had no place in the world, I would not be here, and the fact of my existence entitles me to exercise any influence I possess. I am satisfied that I was brought into this life for a purpose; otherwise, why am I here?

This land belongs to us, for the Great Spirit gave it to us when he put us here. We were free to come and go, and to live in our own way. But white men, who belong to another land, have come upon us, and are forcing us to live according to their ideas. That is an injustice; we have never dreamed of making white men live as we live.

White men like to dig in the ground for their food. My people prefer to hunt the buffalo as their fathers did. White men like to stay in one place. My people want to move their tepees here and there to the different hunting grounds. The life of white men is slavery. They are prisoners in towns or farms. The life my people want is a life of freedom. I have seen nothing that a white man has, houses or railways or clothing or food, that is as good as the right to move in the open country, and live in our own fashion. Why has our blood been shed by your soldiers?

There! Your soldiers made a mark like that in our country, and said that we must live there. They fed us well, and sent their doctors to heal our sick. They said that we should live without having to work. But they told us that we must go only so far in this direction, and only so far in that direction. They gave us meat, but they took away our liberty. The white men had many things that we wanted, but we could see that they did not have the one thing we liked best,--freedom. I would rather live in a tepee and go without meat when game is scarce than give up my privileges as a free Indian, even though I could have all that white men have. We marched across the lines of our reservation, and the soldiers followed us. They attacked our village, and we killed them all. What would you do if your home was attacked? You would stand up like a brave man and defend it. That is our story. I have spoken.

1. Excerpt taken from James Creelman, *On the Great Highway* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1901), 299-302 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. James Creelman, *On the Great Highway* (Boston: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1901), 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)