

A Historically - Correct First Thanksgiving

BY JOY RAMOS

For almost a century, we've been taught the "sugar-coated" half-truths about the First Thanksgiving. Its history has been blatantly romanticized, mythed and stereotyped. Why?

Thanksgiving was declared a national holiday in the late 1800's as part of a socialization program. Our country was trying to pull together with so many diverse peoples into a common national identity. Public education began and the first Thanksgiving fellowship was chosen as a symbol of Christian charity and interracial brotherhood for youths.

Pilgrims were used as the exemplary immigrants. Their White Anglo Saxon Protestant values became the preferred moral standard imposed on all new citizens. The grand effect has left many of us to either accept it as truth OR seriously question what it means to be a "real" American.

The following notes are historically-correct versions of the First

Thanksgiving that are first-hand written accounts and contributions by historians.

* The Puritans were considered outcasts and political aggressors in England. They staged an uprising that completely overthrew the King and Parliament in 1649 and willfully imposed their "Rule of Saints" (strict Puritan orthodoxy) on the rest of the British people.

After being forced from England, the Pilgrims (a sub sect of Puritans) headed for North America on the Mayflower and a hundred other ships. Their sole purpose was to establish their prophesied "Holy Kingdom" by

taking lands away from the Native people. Based on the Bible's book of Revelations, they saw themselves as the "Chosen Elect" to "purify" anyone not aligned with their beliefs. Their means of religious conversion was through deception, treachery, torture, war and genocide.

* The Pilgrims encountered the Wampanoag Indians, a confederacy of Algonkian-speaking peoples known as the League of the Delaware. They held a basic mistrust of Whites and were guarded in showing charity and hospitality towards the settlers.

* Captain Miles Standish, the leader of the Pilgrims, invited Squanto,

Samoset, Massasoit (leader of the Wampanoags) and their immediate families to the Thanksgiving celebration. The true reason for the invite was to negotiate a treaty that would secure the lands of the Plymouth Plantation for the Pilgrims.

Traditionally for Puritans, a day of thanksgiving is a day of prayer and fasting. The Pilgrims felt blessed in having a bountiful harvest of barley (for beer) and Indian corn. In 1627, fifty Pilgrims and ninety Wampanoag Indians gathered for three mid-day dinners mixed with leisure and recreation.

Wild turkey was abundant in New England but was not the main fare. The

Wampanoag Indians offered five deer, ducks, geese and swans for the occasion.

* Unfortunately, Thanksgiving did not become a yearly tradition. One generation later, the children of the First Thanksgiving clashed in a genocidal conflict known as King Phillip's War. Many of the surviving Indians were sold into slavery in the Carolinas. This practice was so lucrative that several Puritan ship owners in Boston began raiding the Ivory Coast of Africa for Black slaves to sell in the South, thus founding the American-based slave trade.

Despite the brutally honest facts

given, it wasn't done to provoke anger at a racial injustice. My point was to present the truth about our shared history. It is more of a bittersweet account that shouldn't make Thanksgiving less meaningful.

Thanksgiving is still a grand opportunity to be with family as a gesture of true presence, if not loving, then friendly. It's also a reminder to keep the heart-center open in full gratitude. We are ultimately all interconnected by cords of love. In realizing this, we can be in Thanksgiving at every moment.

Special credit goes to Chuck Larsen for his research help.

Drug Free Zone May Expand

CONTINUED FROM FRONT
Commissioner Erik Sten voiced similar concerns when he voted against the previous zones last year. "I have fewer concerns with the way it's being handled now, with the exclusions made by a judge rather than the police," Sten says. However, he says, he still wants to see how the existing zones are working.

According to Hayden, they are working well, with arrests for drug sales and possession in the Alberta zone cut nearly in half from the year before. However, public defender Alan Norris told the Eliot Association that the ordinance is used to harass suspects, who disobey it out of ignorance because it is not explained to them properly. David Fidanque, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, complains that police sometimes exceed the restrictions imposed by judges.

"You're not allowed to short-circuit the bill of rights," Fidanque says. "It isn't supposed to operate for the convenience of the police."

Such issues were also raised in Woodlawn, Radmilivich says. "This isn't perfect, but no one has proposed an alternative," he says. "We have a lot of drug dealing here, we have shootings, we have at-risk youth who are getting caught up in these things, and we're tired of it."

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