



SIXTH EDITION

# AMERICA FIRSTHAND

VOLUME ONE

*Readings from Settlement to Reconstruction*

Robert D. Marcus • David Burner • Anthony Marcus

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Volume One

*Readings from Settlement  
to Reconstruction*

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# Preface

This sixth edition of *America Firsthand* continues to pursue the goal of previous editions: to give center stage to ordinary Americans who speak directly of their own lives. As much as possible, individuals speak in their own words and in selections long enough to be memorable, personal, and immediate. The accounts of indentured servants, Southern aristocrats, runaway slaves, Western explorers, civil rights activists, immigrants, and many others expose students to a wide range of American life and human experience.

In addition, this revision retains two features unique to *America Firsthand*, the Points of View selections and the visual portfolios. The part-opening Points of View sections pair counterpoint readings on a specific event or topic, exposing different viewpoints and offering opportunities for analysis. For instance, students encounter both British and colonial accounts of the Boston Massacre, as well as the contrasting testimony of an independent craftsman and a manufacturer on industrialism in the late nineteenth century. Critical-thinking questions help students sift through the evidence, make connections, and analyze the readings in relation to each other. The four visual portfolios in each volume provide students with the opportunity to extend historical analysis from text to images. Focusing on a theme such as “Slavery and Freedom” or “The Western Landscape,” each portfolio is accompanied by a short introduction, a brief narrative describing the images, and questions to help students make comparisons and draw inferences from the visual depictions.

The team of authors for this new edition was changed by the untimely death of Robert Marcus in October of 2000. Robert Marcus and his longtime collaborator David Burner brought the series into the world and developed it over five editions. Marcus was a scholar and educator whose lifelong commitment was, as he wrote in the preface to the fifth edition, to “include people from many groups whose experience has been, until recently, largely lost in mainstream history.” In attempting to uphold this commitment to inclusiveness

and pedagogical excellence, Robert Marcus's son Anthony Marcus joins David Burner in producing this sixth edition. Presently a lecturer in cultural anthropology, he has taught college students for over ten years and has published on race and ethnicity in Latin America and the United States. Anthony collaborated with his father once before on the two-volume documentary history of U.S. trials and court proceedings, *On Trial*.

This edition of *America Firsthand* features an entirely new final part in the second volume. With five new readings and a visual portfolio about September 11 and its aftermath, this section reflects the passing of post-World War II America and the arrival of a new set of challenges and historical problems in the post-cold war era. The opening Points of View selections offer the views of an Arab American woman who argues in favor of racial profiling at airports alongside those of an African American man who insists that racial profiling is an injustice. Part Seven also includes selections on undocumented Mexican immigrants, the Rodney King beating and riots, Matthew Shepard's death, and September 11.

The new Points of View readings at the end of the second volume join two new Points of View sections in the first volume. These include Bartolomé de Las Casas and Bernal Díaz del Castillo's conflicting views on European contact with natives of the Americas as well as views of the Mexican-American War from opposite sides of the battlefield. Like those Points of View pairings that were retained from the previous edition, these new selections present differing perspectives and offer opportunities for critical thinking.

This edition also includes three new visual portfolios, each connected to a number of the preceding selections and carefully annotated with background information and questions that link the images presented with the readings. The first volume incorporates a new visual essay on colonial architecture, and the second volume includes new portfolios on advertising in the 1920s and on September 11.

Throughout, we have retained readings that users wanted to continue teaching and dropped less successful ones. New selections in the first volume include a description of the Revolutionary War and its aftermath by an African American loyalist soldier; dispatches from an officer in New Mexico during the Mexican-American War; a presentation of everyday life on a nineteenth-century Connecticut whaling vessel in the southern Indian Ocean; the remarkable tale of Henry "Box" Brown, a slave who mailed himself to freedom; an account of a sixteen-year-old who helped John Brown free slaves in Kansas; and the correspondence of a black Civil War journalist who experienced the fall of Richmond in 1865. Fresh selections in the second volume include Jane Addams on industrialism and the Pullman Strike; Kate Richards O'Hare's statements in her own defense during a World War I sedition trial; the comments of a journalist at *The Nation* about the Scopes trial; remembrances by a member of the Puerto Rican radical group the Young Lords; and a memoir of being held hostage in the American embassy in Tehran in 1980.

As in previous editions, carefully written headnotes before the selections prepare students for each reading and help place personalities in their times and places. Questions immediately following the headnotes enable students and in-

structors to give attention to specific passages and issues that can provide points for discussion as well as material for testing or essays. Glosses within the accounts identify unfamiliar names or terms.

*America Firsthand*, Sixth Edition, presents the American experience through the perspectives of diverse people who have in common a vivid record of the world they inhabited and of the events they experienced. We hope that the readings will serve as fertile ground in which students can begin to root their own interest in history and deepen their understanding of the times in which they live.

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We also wish to extend great thanks to Jo Sanson, whose assistance enabled us to produce the best sixth edition possible. Cary Wintz and Timothy More also provided valuable research to the project. The many people associated with Bedford/St. Martin's who worked on the sixth edition need to be acknowledged as well: Joan Feinberg, Denise Wydra, Patricia Rossi, Jane Knetzger, Sarah Barrash Wilson, Rachel Safer, Amy Langlais, Elizabeth Schaaf, Arthur Johnson, and Donna Dennison.

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## PART ONE

# Indians and Europeans

## *New World Encounters*

The contact between two worlds, a “new” one and an “old” one, permanently changed the way people on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean lived and thought about themselves. For Europeans who had spent centuries in the impoverished western margins of the Old World, Christopher Columbus’s “discovery” of the New World afforded fresh opportunities to amass unimaginable fortunes in precious metals, exotic spices, and new intoxicants. (Christopher Columbus’s letter to the Spanish monarchs he sailed for allows modern readers to better understand how he viewed the new land and its peoples.) More importantly, the emerging European nations of the North Atlantic would eventually reconfigure the entire world, shifting its center away from the great civilizations in the East and building global empires from the land, labor, and high crop yields of the New World. This age of discovery, exploration, and conquest would touch off a scientific and commercial revolution, making Western Europe the cosmopolitan center of the world by attracting new ideas, new technologies, and new forms of wealth and redistributing them across the world.

For the native peoples of what would come to be called the Americas, “discovery” was a catastrophe. European settlers, soldiers, and missionaries, along with Africans, introduced new plants, animals, and technologies that disrupted and radically reoriented life in the New World. Within fifty years of contact, Old World pathogens like smallpox had killed some thirty million natives of the New World, taking advantage of their lack of immunity and the brutal disruptions of European conquest.

The Dominican friar Bartolomé de Las Casas’s report of the Spanish conquest of the West Indies— islands named by explorers who wrongly believed they had found a Western passage to Asia— captures the horrors of that first colonial encounter between Europeans and American Indians. This pattern of brutality, violence, and subjugation of indigenous peoples would be repeated many times over the following five centuries. Yet, as the Spanish soldier Bernal Díaz del

Castillo shows in his tale of the conquest of Mexico by Hernán Cortés, the campaign was not merely one of violence and slavery but also of politics and persuasion. For centuries following Columbus's voyage, various Indian nations played independent and sometimes powerful roles in the diplomacy of the Western Hemisphere. Their adaptations and cultural exchanges with one another and with European settlers continued, even while many tribes maintained distinct political and cultural identities into the present. The visual portfolio "New World Contact" (page 43) illustrates the way that Europeans viewed Native Americans and suggests some of the early transformations of the New World and its people.

The Pueblo Indians' accounts of their revolt of 1680 illustrate the Spanish empire's uneasy mix of Indian and European religions and interests. Captain John Smith's description of Virginia's Indians also shows cultural differences between Europeans and natives. And Father Paul Le Jeune, representing the French empire in the New World, suggests how little understanding existed even between friendly whites and receptive Native Americans.

Indians throughout the colonial era and well into the nineteenth century provoked fear and mystery. Stories about what happened when whites were captured by Indians, beginning perhaps with John Smith's account of his supposed rescue by Pocahontas, remained popular for more than two centuries, making captivity narratives among the first best sellers produced in this country. Mary Jemison's account of her captivity among the Seneca illustrates how Anglo-Americans domesticated their anxieties about Indians and wrapped them in an aura of romance.

## POINTS OF VIEW

### *Contact and Conquest (1502–1521)*

#### 1

### *Destruction of the Indies*

### **Bartolomé de Las Casas**

*Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), a Spanish colonist and later a Dominican friar, saw Christopher Columbus in 1493 when the explorer passed through Seville on his return to Spain after discovering the Americas the previous year. Las Casas's father and two uncles sailed that year on Columbus's second voyage. As news spread throughout Europe about what was believed to be a western route to the East Indies, rumors of an*

Francis Augustus MacNutt, *Bartolomew de Las Casas: His Life, His Apostolate, and His Writings* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), pp. 314–21.

abundance of gold, spices, and other valuables attracted adventurers and others in search of fortune. The Spanish built small colonies on the island of Hispaniola (now the Dominican Republic and Haiti). In 1502, Las Casas himself traveled to the New World to serve as an officer of the king. In exchange for his services, he was given an *encomienda*, an estate that included native people to labor for him. Several years later, he was moved by a sermon given by a Dominican priest denouncing the treatment of the Indians by the Spanish. Las Casas returned his serfs to the governor and probably was the first priest ordained in the New World.

Las Casas spent the rest of his long life attempting to protect the Native Americans against the massacres, tortures, slavery, and forced labor imposed on them by their Spanish conquerors. In 1515, Las Casas returned to Spain and pleaded before King Ferdinand for more humane treatment of the native people. His passionate defense of the indigenous Americans influenced Pope Paul III to declare the natives of America rational beings with souls. Las Casas traveled throughout Spain's new colonies and in the 1540s became bishop of Chiapas (now southern Mexico).

His powerful writings created the image of Spanish conquest often called the "Black Legend," a vision of destruction and cruelty until that time unparalleled. Most modern scholars accept the accuracy of Las Casas's shocking portraits of devastation, many of which he personally witnessed, such as the violent and bloody conquest of Cuba. Today, however, many view these horrors not as the outcome of some peculiar Spanish cruelty but as characteristic of the bloody "Columbian encounter" between Europeans and other cultures in the age of exploration and conquest. Las Casas wrote the following treatise in Seville in 1516.

### BEFORE YOU READ

1. Do you think Las Casas's view of the Native Americans was accurate?
2. Do you judge his criticism of the Spanish empire to have been fair and accurate?
3. Throughout his life Las Casas remained fiercely loyal to both the Spanish monarch and the Catholic Church. Can you reconcile these feelings with his condemnation of the Spanish empire's actions in the New World?

### SHORT REPORT OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WEST INDIES

The Indies were discovered in the year fourteen hundred and ninety-two. The year following, Spanish Christians went to inhabit them, so that it is since forty-nine years that numbers of Spaniards have gone there: and the first land, that they invaded to inhabit, was the large and most delightful Isle of Hispaniola [present-day Dominican Republic and Haiti], which has a circumference of six hundred leagues.

2. There are numberless other islands, and very large ones, all around on every side, that were all—and we have seen it—as inhabited and full of their native Indian peoples as any country in the world.

3. Of the continent, the nearest part of which is more than two hundred and fifty leagues distant from this Island, more than ten thousand leagues of maritime coast have been discovered, and more is discovered every day; all that



has been discovered up to the year forty-nine is full of people, like a hive of bees, so that it seems as though God had placed all, or the greater part of the entire human race in these countries.

4. God has created all these numberless people to be quite the simplest, without malice or duplicity, most obedient, most faithful to their natural Lords, and to the Christians, whom they serve; the most humble, most patient, most peaceful, and calm, without strife nor tumults; not wrangling, nor querulous, as free from uproar, hate and desire of revenge, as any in the world.

5. They are likewise the most delicate people, weak and of feeble constitution, and less than any other can they bear fatigue, and they very easily die of whatsoever infirmity; so much so, that not even the sons of our Princes and of nobles, brought up in royal and gentle life, are more delicate than they; although there are among them such as are of the peasant class. They are also a very poor people, who of worldly goods possess little, nor wish to possess: and they are therefore neither proud, nor ambitious, nor avaricious.

6. Their food is so poor, that it would seem that of the Holy Fathers in the desert was not scantier nor less pleasing. Their way of dressing is usually to go naked, covering the private parts; and at most they cover themselves with a cotton cover, which would be about equal to one and a half or two ells square of cloth. Their beds are of matting, and they mostly sleep in certain things like hanging nets, called in the language of Hispaniola *hamacas*.

7. They are likewise of a clean, unspoiled, and vivacious intellect, very capable, and receptive to every good doctrine; most prompt to accept our Holy Catholic Faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs; and they have as little difficulty with such things as any people created by God in the world.

8. Once they have begun to learn of matters pertaining to faith, they are so importunate to know them, and in frequenting the sacraments and divine service of the Church, that to tell the truth, the clergy have need to be endowed of God with the gift of pre-eminent patience to bear with them: and finally, I have heard many lay Spaniards frequently say many years ago, (unable to deny the goodness of those they saw) certainly these people were the most blessed of the earth, had they only knowledge of God.

9. Among these gentle sheep, gifted by their Maker with the above qualities, the Spaniards entered as soon as they knew them, like wolves, tigers, and lions which had been starving for many days, and since forty years they have done nothing else; nor do they otherwise at the present day, than outrage, slay, afflict, torment, and destroy them with strange and new, and divers kinds of cruelty, never before seen, nor heard of, nor read of, of which some few will be told below: to such extremes has this gone that, whereas there were more than three million souls, whom we saw in Hispaniola, there are to-day, not two hundred of the native population left.

10. The island of Cuba is almost as long as the distance from Valladolid<sup>1</sup> to Rome; it is now almost entirely deserted. The islands of San Juan [Puerto Rico], and Jamaica, very large and happy and pleasing islands, are both desolate. The

1. Valladolid: a city in northwestern Spain.