

Blood Quantum, the end of the Native American race

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Research Question

My leading research question is what is Blood Quantum? To answer this question I also needed to answer the following; why was Blood Quantum created? How was blood quantum created? Who created the blood quantum?

Background

The Indian Blood Law AKA Blood quantum began in 1705 and was introduced by the colony of Virginia (Blood Quantum Blues, WeRNative). Blood quantum was created by white men who judged how “Indian” Natives were based on things such as how dark their skin was (Blood Quantum Blues, WeRNative). The amount of blood that a person had was based on the Rolls. The Base Rolls of the Blackfeet Tribe of 1935 holds the information required by the federal government to identify who was a member of the Blackfeet Tribe. The Blackfeet Tribes requires you to have a quarter of Blackfeet blood to be considered an enrolled member of the tribe. The last enrollable member of the Blackfeet tribe is predicted to be born in 2050 (Webber, 2020). When the base rolls of the Blackfeet tribe were being established, so were allotments of land. Over time the land is fractionated and divided up amongst family members, but only enrolled members of the family can become owners of the land. My father is an enrolled member of the blackfeet tribe. He owns a lot along the st.mary's lake. My youngest brother is the only person out of my fathers four kids and 17 grandchildren that can inherit the land because my brother is the only enrolled member of the blackfeet tribe. This creates issues amongst families because though you may have all been raised together and share the same genetics you are not equal because of the ideas of colonizers who no longer walk this earth, but have managed to keep their control over native americans.

Blood quantum is a misleading name for an idea that does not nor has it ever required blood. Our blood is not what makes us who we are even biologically, it is our DNA, our genetic makeup, therefore our ancestors made us who we are and their ancestors made them who they are, so on and so forth. My spirit and heart knows I am blackfeet, I can feel the emotions of my ancestors even writing this paper. Though the idea of colonizers many years ago made it possible for there to be a system that says I am not, I am Blackfeet. The sources for my research include a book written by a enrolled blackfeet member, an interview with a descendant as well as a liberans from the Montana archives, and a few online blogs run by Native Americans.

Introduction

Did you know that other than animals Native Americans are the only living being that needs a blood quantum to prove how "real" we are? I conducted two interviews to gather information for my research on blood quantum as well as doing online research and reading a book that pertains to my research topic. Blood quantum is a touchy subject in most native communities because those that are not enrolled, like myself, tend to be less prone to saying so in hopes to avoid the negative comments you receive by peers who are enrolled, such as "*half breed*" or "*are you jealous*" and the infamous "*so no percap for you uh?*" Those that have a higher blood quantum meaning they are "more" Native American tend to be opposed to changing the blood quantum laws, as it does not affect them, but blood quantum was created for the advantage of the white man, as long as blood quantum exists Native Americans will become a dying race.

Key points

- No benefits to Blood quantum
- Blood quantum is creating identity issues
- Blood quantum is ending the native american race

Limitations to study

In this study I will be focusing mainly on the Blackfeet Tribe, because the data of enrollment numbers and physical enrollment office are more accessible to me than other tribes, as most tribes do not have their records digitized.

Methodology

I conducted an over the phone interview with Mr. Robert Hall to collect the information he has about blood quantum and to get his opinion on the topic at hand. I chose to conduct an interview with Mr. Hall in particular because he is not an enrolled member of the blackfeet tribe, but he is a strong advocate for the Blackfeet language and is also a well known advocate against blood quantum. Although a over the phone interview is less personal I chose to do it this way as it was the most accommodating way for Mr. Hall to fit me into his schedule and present me with his knowledge and beliefs about blood quantum. My online research led me to finding a few native blogs that I didn't know existed. I chose to use Native run websites as it was information from other Native American tribes that I thought held the most value, as we are the ones that the blood quantum laws affect. From these websites I found that there is an identity crisis in Native communities that is most often related to blood quantum and whether or not you can be enrolled in a tribe. A trip to the Montana state Archives led me to

meeting Laura Ferguson who wrote her master thesis on blood quantum. Ferguson also found there to be slim to none positives to blood quantum for Native Americans.

Argument

Blood quantum was created to be able to control and limit the civil rights of Native Americans. Blood quantum was created by white men who judged how “Indian” Natives were based on things such as how dark their skin was (Blood Quantum Blues, WeRNative). The need for blood quantum came about when treaties were made between the US government and Native Americans. Free healthcare was one of the guaranteed services that was promised to Native Americans in the treaties. More than two million Native Americans depend strictly on facilities like IHS for their healthcare services (Affordable Care Act a hard sell for Native Americans, USA today 2013). Families including my own rely on IHS for healthcare needs like checkups, eye exams and dental care. Sources like IHS will be taken from Native Americans communities like mine when there are no longer enough qualified people to meet the blood quantum required to be enrolled in their tribes.

The Blackfeet Tribe, like many other tribes, requires you to be a quarter Blackfeet to be considered an enrolled member of the tribe. The last enrollable member of the Blackfeet tribe is predicted to be born in 2050 (Webber, 2020). The Tribes population numbers will only decrease from there and once there are no longer any more enrolled Blackfeet members, the US government no longer has to hold up their end of the treaty and provide things such as free healthcare, but the Blackfeet land we signed over to the government will still be government land.

In the year 2020 there were more deaths of enrolled Blackfeet members than there were births of new members (Blackfeet public enrollment records). A tribe's enrollment numbers determine the amount of funding they get. Eventually the enrollment numbers of the Blackfeet Tribe will be at an all time low but the population of Blackfeet people living on the Blackfeet reservation will be at high, because the numbers may say we are disappearing, but we are still alive.

“It is a concept rooted in the biologically false assumption that we humans receive our genetic make-up through our blood. We don't.” (Ferguson, 2022). Even if we did receive our blood quantum through physical withdrawal of blood it is not what makes us who are. Blood is the life-maintaining liquid that flows through the body (Facts about medicine, John Hopkins medicine). We do not receive equal parts of DNA from each parent and grandparent, that is why siblings don't look exactly the same because though they have the same blood they have different DNA. Children looking different from their siblings might not be a big deal now, but when base rolls and blood quantum were being established the color of skin was one of the traits Native Americans were judged on. One child might have had darker skin which was a bad thing because it meant you were less incompetent and if so their blood quantum would have been higher.

Research has shown the negative effects that come with Blood Quantum but there are still people like the Niisitpi group, The Real People, who are opposed to changing the blood quantum laws. This group is mainly made up of people who are considered “full bloods” or close to it. “It was created by white supremacists to make indigenous people fight themselves and to take over resources and limit them” (Robert

Hall, 2022) referring to blood quantum. Mr. Hall has been a strong advocate against Blood quantum. The group of “Real People” do not believe in opening up the Blackfeet tribal enrollment because they have the same view as the colonizers who put the Indian Blood Law into effect. “Well for some that number makes them feel good, but that comes at a cost, it means another Indian will be given a number that will be used against them” (Robert Hall, 2022). Blood quantum has made Native American people fight amongst each other because those that were lucky enough to be given a higher blood quantum don’t have the same issues as those who were not as fortunate, therefore those with a higher blood quantum either do not care or they do not want to let in too many “*Half Breeds,*” so they are opposed reforming the blood quantum requirement rules. It is this type of thinking that needs to change in order for there to be any form of change on the reservation. Our culture is being affected because of blood quantum. The Nisitipi group relies more on their blood quantum to determine their blackfeet identity than they do their actual blackfeet culture. Our culture is what makes us blackfeet.

Impacts to community

Blood quantum has created animosity against enrolled and non enrolled members of the Blackfeet tribe. Blood quantum only becomes an issue for enrolled members when their child or grandchild can not be enrolled due to blood quantum requirements. If we do not address the Blood quantum soon the Blackfeet tribe will be non-existent as there will be no more enrollable members by the year 2050(webber,

2019). No Blackfeet Tribe and no government funding could leave more than half of the reservation jobless, as well as homeless without any health insurance.

Conclusion

Through my research process I tried to stray away from creating a single story on blood quantum however I was not able to find a positive effect that Blood quantum has had for Native Americans. Even after consulting with another narrative source who has spent years researching the topic I have not found a benefit or a good reason to enforce Blood Quantum. Blood Quantum was and continues to be a curse for Native Americans.

Sources

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