

SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY

THE NAMIBIAN GENOCIDE: REFRAMING THE CONFLICT TO EXPLORE
INTERCULTURAL CONNECTIVITY, INCLUSIVENESS AND ACCURATE
MEMORIALIZATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
PROGRAM IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

BY

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PREVIEW



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GRADUATE STUDIES

This dissertation of Lamont Slater entitled 'The Namibian Genocide: Reframing the Conflict to Explore Intercultural Connectivity, Inclusiveness and Accurate Memorialization' submitted to the Ph.D. Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Salve Regina University has been read and approved by the following individuals:

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Preface

Growing up in the Bronx, New York, I recognized and identified my surroundings as continuous cycles of poverty, deprivation and despair. I have personally witnessed multiple generations of people repeating the same template as their ancestors. Of course, it was always mentioned by neighborhood elders that the lack of equity within the educational, criminal justice and banking systems contributed to the decline of our community. As I continued to examine the constant presence of inequality, I realized that the way that I would break this cynical cycle within my own family was through the educational process. But how would I break the cycle if education was part of the problem? At least, that is what was told to me while I was in my youth. My mother was able to send me to a private, Catholic school for most of my elementary years, and all of my years in high school. Ironically, I was able to go to St. John the Baptist H.S, as a result of the money that I received from my father's social security death benefit. My father was also a victim of the powerful social caldron that shows no remorse to those that are weak. My father's passing was a result of cirrhosis of the liver, which was brought on by his alcoholism. In a quest to find his own father, I believe that he drank himself into depression, and death. In a quest for knowledge, I started to read about many indigenous populations had problems with alcohol, like the aboriginal Australians and the Native Americans. I asked myself if this was coincidental, or part of a broader plan to cause direct harm to these groups. Later, I would begin to examine various African American communities from around the world and notice that socio-economic problems affecting African Americans, were reflected in parts of Brazil, South Africa, Basra, Iraq, among the Siddi people of India, etc. The pattern of poverty, poor educational systems, and crime was a

pattern that followed poverty. Areas in the United States with high concentrations of African Americans (i.e. New Orleans, St. Louis), appeared to have similar sociological trends as predominantly black cities in other parts of the world, such as Johannesburg and Cape Town. The links seem to connect with the history of colonization and imperialism. As I looked closer to minority groups that would be colonized by European oppressors, I started to see trends of abuse, torture, and forced enslavement of people of color. These examples would include the period of enslavement beginning in Jamestown, starting in 1619, forced labor of Cameroonian indigenous groups by German colonizers during the late 1800's, and current cases of slavery involving Blacks in Mauritania and trafficking victims of slavery in Syria. When I learned about the fate of the Nama and Herero tribes of Namibia, I would later discover that these groups would become a part of a genocide that would take place before the German Holocaust. In fact, the idea of the concentration camps would be used in Africa during the Boer Wars, long before the events in Nazi Germany. As my interest grew, I started to see possible correlations between events that occurred because of genocide, with regards to actions towards people of color, and their ability to thrive in society. During my college years, and beyond, this topic continued to take root, and I started to read more and more material on genocide around the world.

Today, there are several reasons for African Americans to want to know more about historical events that have appeared to lead to a great divide, both figuratively and literally. In South Africa and Namibia, the effects continue for black people because of first German rule and then South Africa's apartheid with the creation of Bantustans (separate homelands) in the 1940s. In the United States, there are remnants of the Jim Crow era that still plague the black community. Jim

Crow legislation of eighteenth and nineteenth century America mirrors Apartheid and the South African Group Areas Act, because they were laws that were passed on both the state and local level that enforced racial segregation and separation. It is too simple to point to a flurry of police killings and blame Jim Crow laws for the divide that continues in US society. There are many people that believe that this is a somewhat new phenomenon, however historical data suggests otherwise. In many geographical locations there is active targeting of the black community.

Within the African American community, I have personally related stories of police neglect within the communities, only to have people that were not from my community discount my account as an exaggeration. When I was still in high school, I remember reading about stories from members of the group MOVE, a liberation group based out of Philadelphia. The founder, John Africa and others constantly spoke about over policing of the neighborhood, but it would go unnoticed. In Ida B Wells' book called, *On Lynchings*, detailed the rise of lynching by civilians and law enforcement during the post slavery period. Wells documented these horrific acts, which usually alleged the rape of a white woman. Over time, shadowy allegations have continued to reshape black communities, however, as stated earlier, social media, the use of phone cameras and heightened surveillance has led to outrage from many members of the public, who now share a glimpse of what black people experience.

The indigenous African populations in Namibia and South Africa have suffered a similar fate to their cousins in the West, but the historical record of the brutality is lacking in both schools and in places of public memory. The story of the indigenous people in Namibia was a narrative of suffering at the hands of foreign occupiers, who limited their access to education, to fairness in the justice

system, and income from their labor. The black people of Namibia were purposefully separated into work camps, impoverished by the new owners, who believed as white Europeans in their superiority and therefore starved, beat and worked to death numerous groups of black tribal people.

I began to think of ways to introduce the Namibian genocide as a source of transformation in terms of academic enquiry. After much consideration, I realized this was a topic of passion, and something I wanted to explore more thoroughly. Was the treatment of American black people over the centuries similar to the certain aspects of genocide experienced by the peoples of Namibia? Is the current situation of poverty, imprisonment, and low paying jobs for blacks in America related to the ideas which motivated Europeans in their subjugation of the African people? In my research I hoped to find links to the ways in which black people in both countries experienced targeting based on their race that may have led to generations of social, political, and economic disadvantage. This dissertation is my entrance into that discussion.

Acknowledgements

There are several contributors to the final work that I have completed. Some of these contributors are completely unaware that they contributed in any way to my work, simply because I have not physically seen them in quite some time, however, the impact of the mentorship that these individuals provided is simply immeasurable and has instilled in me the drive and motivation to complete this work. I am grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work with during this project, and other related projects. Each of the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Susan Gunn, and Dr. Marian Mathison Desrosiers, provided me with extensive personal and professional guidance and continues to teach me a great deal about both research and life in general. I would especially like to thank Dr. Sean O’Callaghan, the chairman of my committee. As my teacher and mentor, he has taught me more than I could ever give him credit for here. He shows me, by his example, how a great professor impacts the lives of others.

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Lydia Kauari for their helpful insights, oral accounts, and interpretations of events surrounding the genocide in Namibia.

PREVIEW

Abstract

This study examines how technology used by the German colonizers of South West Africa affected native peoples during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. More specifically, the research shows how German attitudes and misclassification of native people, of not only the Herero and Nama tribes, but multiple tribes throughout Namibia, affected the levels of violence shown toward all the indigenous tribes, and not just the two listed in the official documentation of the 1904-1908 genocide. German theories about race, power, and civilization affected the actions of the colonizers toward each of the indigenous groups of people in what is today Namibia. Essential to the reframing of the German genocide of the Herero and Nama people to a broader application to include the San, Ovambo, and Damara tribes are the interviews with perpetrators, court reports, victim testimonies, and archival photographs from the National Archives of Namibia.

The author applies the framework of Michel Foucault's bio-power and Lonnie Athens' violentization theory to show the effects of a German imperial organization directing missionaries, settlers, and military in methods to control native tribes. The ensuing violence linked to the takeover of native lands, displacement of the people, and assignment to forced labor camps, with shackling, torture and mutilation accompanied by deaths of the innocent. This form of exploitation was completed under the guise of scientific racism, and was used to exploit precious minerals from the area. This study contributes new insights into the experiences of Namibian people subject to technologies applied by violence to attain power. Finally, the lasting legacy of the genocide is presented in the form of memorialization. Not only does the research show that different tribes have been

removed from the previous stories of the genocide, but in a literal sense, the names of the indigenous casualties have been removed from the historical record.

PREVIEW

Chapter I: Introduction and Historical Overview of the Namibian Genocide

Introduction

European colonizers participated in acts of destruction toward minority indigenous groups during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The value of their natural resources and extensive lands for settlement addressed the needs for lebensraum for potential German settlers and the need to boost a sputtering economy in Germany. The momentum generated from this incursion into South West Africa (Namibia) led to subjugation of indigenous people by the colonizers, who planned to utilize the wealth for potential world domination.

Research Methods

Phenomenology advanced by Edmund Husserl is best described as an attempt to describe experiences without theoretical assumptions. Husserl suggests that by segmenting the “natural attitude” that this brand of philosophy would become a science of consciousness instead of one based off empirical data. In the second publication of *Ideen* Husserl speaks about the connection between knowing and reality through phenomenology. Knowing often comes through in the form of direct quotes from individuals. The methodology presented will correspond with this philosophy when direct quotes and records are used.

Additionally, two philosophies pushed much of the agenda, which led to genocide. Eugenics as promoted by Francis Galton (1883) suggested that certain abilities are desirable in the humans and should be reproduced but undesirable traits

should not. Charles Darwin (1809-1882) believed that the foundation for natural selection is based on the probability that individuals will pass on their genetic material to the next generation.

Darwin believed that if the individuals of a population differed in one or more traits that selection will result will result in varied reproductive outcomes which may be harmful toward future generation. Darwin, who was an opponent of slavery, especially when he travelled to Bahia did not specifically single out blacks. However, future theorists like Oscar Schmidt and Emile Gautier would start to push theories of social Darwinism, which took on a racialized connotation, and which may have influenced the Germans that were in South West Africa. Social Darwinism ideology may have been quickly adapted by the German government because the philosophies of this movement started around the late 1870's, which would place it near the time of the Berlin Conference and the Scramble for Africa. According to the Social Darwinist perspective, there is both good and bad genetic material and that if the genetic material is bad that it should be eliminated. With the Nama tribe, theories would be applied when separating groups of captured Nama into those able to work on railroads, mines, or agricultural production, and those not able to work in any capacity except herding or horticulture. For many Nama designated "not able to work" unfortunately found themselves on Shark Island, where they would be destined to die from overwork and malnutrition.

The tragic events that occurred to the Namibian indigenous population between the years of 1904 and 1907 have been considered acts of genocide by many scholars, because they involved a forced removal of children, annihilation, and a

targeted removal of a culture. These events have been minimized to include only the Nama and Herero tribal groups. However, this research demonstrates that included groups that were included should be expanded, based on the document analysis approach, and by re-examination of these events, by looking at them in the context of how they transpired.

This research adapted a literature analysis, ranging from journal articles, case law, books, court testimony and academic scholarship on genocide. Additionally, I have decided that the best qualitative approach that would tie all the aspects of the research together would be the phenomenology method combined with a qualitative comparative analysis.

The phenomenology method is a method that is used when measuring people's subjective experience through the course of time, in either a specific setting or a comparative setting. Since phenomenology begins with a specific condition, the condition that will be examined in this paper will be genocide of the various Namibia populations during that period. By using census data, The Report on the Natives of South West Africa, journals, newspapers, and other primary source documentation that give specific information as to the nature of the native, settler, or army experience, the goal is to weave together the information into a theme. Under the phenomenology method, there is a subjective need to understand how humans view themselves and the world around them (Willis 53, 2007). This question speaks to one of the key questions of the program, and that question asks, "What does it mean to be human in the age of technology". The question will be addressed throughout the paper, as I examine these events using also the perspectives of Foucault and his concept of power and control.

From a critical examination of the historical information, using document analysis, it is clearly apparent that the government of Germany did not legally view the indigenous population of Namibia as human, but that does not mean that the enslaved population shared the German view of themselves. Much like American slavery, Namibia had elements that included the forced removal of a culture. This conformity was done by enslaving Namibian people in labor camps that would contribute to the introduction of infrastructure and other commercial enterprises. Through this indoctrination, groups of indigenous people would be constantly divided; men would be separated from their wives, tribes would be destroyed, religious leaders would be removed from their initial communities. All the constant stages of separation, I argue, would set the stage for genocide, with apartheid looming in the wings.

Under the phenomenology approach, the goal is to capture patterns and similarities from similar voices who shared experiences, to show that in fact, there was a genocide that took place, and that through these voices the reader can start to examine the initial factors in segregated societies that resulted in genocide. According to Campbell, a shared condition, such as comparing women that have been abused, falls under the criteria of a phenomenology method (Campbell, introduction to methods of qualitative research: Video series, 2001). The goal with this selected method is not to look at genocide as the actual phenomenon, but the experiences of the people in relation to the laws during a specific time period. According to Mark Bound, there are three types of phenomenology methods. The method of transcendental phenomenology will be employed throughout this study. The researcher analyzes the

data by reducing the information to significant statements, quotes, laws, and other elements into themes (Creswell 60, 2009). The goal is that out of these themes, a textual description will be fully developed.

Adding a qualitative comparative analysis will involve two theories about the Namibian genocide to determine if the event of genocide can be examined under both theoretical frameworks. The reason that the Foucault is used is to apply bio power dynamics against the Namibia genocide to see if these theories, when applied to the genocide, can shed light as to why this event has happened, and hopefully can determine whether preventative measures might eliminate the possibility of future attacks.

With regards to the violentization theory of Lonnie Athens, victim testimony will be compared against the theory, with the hopes of determining if the theory fits the event. When the results are presented, the goal will be to demonstrate that Violentization Theory is consistent with the data and provides an explanation of how the genocidal practices and beliefs evolved and were enacted.

Living in Namibia, I have learned that there is much debate surrounding the nature of the genocide. Even though historians have named it the Herero/Nama genocide, multiple groups in Namibia are living in silence, without adequate data to move forward to challenge previously stated oral reports and early writings with regards to the genocide. My entry into the dialogue will establish that more than just the Herero and Nama tribes were affected by the genocide, as a result of imperialism and dominance. As a result of the research, the future scholarship on the subject will

be referred to as the Namibian genocide, which will be representative of all of the affected indigenous groups.

The study will involve a comparative analysis between the violentization theory of Athens and Foucault's philosophy of bio-power, to see if these two theories had any part to play when comparing them against the backdrop of the Namibian genocide. If these theories align, it will establish the method to measure if other groups were indeed victims of genocide, or victims of individualized acts of murder.

Primary source information from the National Archives of Namibia has been used to show photographic evidence of other groups that were killed from 1904-1908, which is the period attributed to the genocide. Sworn court statements from witnesses of the genocide establish confusion concerning the use of the term Herero. For those that are Herero tribe members, it would be easy to identify another member of the tribe because they speak a common language; however, for many Europeans, the text, through the use of the phenomenology method, will establish inconsistencies with regards to identification and classification. Because many of the killings involved white men, the race has been established as a factor when comparing theory and what took place. Finally, the event commonly known as the Herero/Nama genocide is often not taken seriously as an act of genocide because the date of the event took place well before the 1948 genocide convention. Legal data will establish credibility to the claim of genocide.

Much of the work in this field primarily focuses on the Nama and Herero genocide. This work will be unique in the field of study, since it provides evidence as to the roles of other groups in the conflict.

Research Outline

Chapter one, provides the historical background of the genocide, with a review of the timeline and tribal groups involved over decades. A focus is past memorialization and reparations.

In chapter two, the literary review includes archival sources from Namibia, as well as an understanding of philosophies and theories of power and violence. Furthermore, the literature reflects on the history of indigenous people of Namibia years before the German troops arrived, and past the time that the last concentration camp closed in 1908.

In chapter three, Michel Foucault's theory of bio-power is explained in the context of the Namibian genocide. Bio-power is clearly defined, with example that states when bio-power was used during the conflict. Chapter three also addresses the program research question of "what does it mean to be human in the age of technology".

In chapter four, the theory of Lonnie Athens will be compared to court statements of victims, which will establish the stages of violentization among both German troops and civilians in German South West Africa.

Chapter five argues definitively that the Herero/Nama genocide should be reframed. With recent discussion regarding reparations, it would be an injustice, not to include other groups that are affected by the crimes that occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Finally, chapter six conveys the results and findings of the research, establishing how multiple indigenous groups in Namibia were affected by the

genocide. The research will create a welcomed addition to the curriculum of primary and secondary schools in Namibia. Due to the wide-spread lack of knowledge, the current research will assist a proper memorialization and representation in local textbooks regarding the Namibian genocide.

Historical Overview

In order to have a clear understanding of the origins of the events leading up to the genocide, it is imperative that an examination of events that would subsequently lead of to the genocide, be explained in detail, starting with the proto (first) -colonial period, and ending with the event leading to the removal of Germany in 1915. An examination of works written about, or by Rhenish and later Finnish missionaries in the region, gives an account into life in what would be known as German South West Africa, and later Namibia. For starters, if we review the lives of early missionaries, it would explain the tone that would be set for year to come. This is necessary to review, because it is easy to get confused with events that began in 1884, which signified the start of the Berlin Conference and the official scramble for Africa, which led Germany to acquire properties in Cameroon, German East Africa, German West Africa and Uganda. Specifically, one of the first missionaries on record was Carl Hahn, who was part of the Rhenish Missionary. According to a historical account written by fellow missionary and historian Hendrick Vedder, he states that Hahn arrived in Windhoek in 1842, which was 42 years prior to colonization in the territory. According to Vedder, he mentions that when he arrived in the area, he was well received by one of the warring tribes called the Orlam tribe, which was a sub-tribe of the Nama. Two years

later, the captain of the Orlam tribe, requested that Wesleyan missionaries come into the area, most likely to help negotiate peace between the Orlam and the Herero tribes (Vedder 1966, 1-525). Because of the conflict that was present, it would lead Hahn to move towards Damarland to avoid conflict between the warring tribes. According to Vedder, he states that in the beginning, Hahn's missionary work appeared to be unwelcomed and not well received. In 1953, Hahn travelled to Europe to garner support for the struggling mission in Southern Africa. For the purpose of the paper, this area will be called South Africa because it preceded German South West Africa. After meeting with German officials of the Rhenish Mission, he was ordered to return back to Ovamboland to convert Ovambos to Christianity (Vedder 1966, 1-525). From the initial introduction into the area in 1843 to 1870, conversion rates were very low, which attributed to some of the ill sentiment between the indigenous tribes and the missionaries. According to Steinmetz, Hugo Hahn's explicit aim in creating a European "mission colony" at Otjimbingwe in 1864 was to provide Ovaherero with positive behavioral models in what the missionary called a "civilizatory workshop." (Friedens –Congress in Damaraland). In a later chapter, a German text was interpreted, which uncovered human rights violations towards the San people.

According to Steinmetz, the mission encouraged the Ovaherero to become sedentary, plant gardens, wear cloth garments, exchange their traditional beehive shaped shelters for European-style housing, and stop coating their bodies with ocher and grease (Steinmetz 2007, 127). In today's time, the Himba, which is an off shoot of the Otjiherero, have seemed to preserve their style and culture. The missionaries accepted that this cultural transformation of the Ovaherero was a project for the very