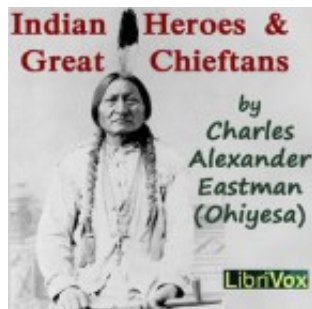


## **Sitting Bull's Speech Still Rings True**

**by Rev. Joe Dirt - Sunday, March 16, 2014**

<http://www.curmudgeon-alley.com/sitting-bulls-speech-still-rings-true/>



I was raised a military brat. I was born the year that Eisenhower started his presidency, and thus my early education was in the 50s and 60s. The result of the two was a deep pride of country, and an admiration of our history. As I grew older, as I studied more and as I read more I retained an admiration for our founding fathers. They were remarkable men alive at a pivotal point of history, but they were still men. Many things that happened then were the sausage of compromise. So much of our history after that point was colored by the institution of slavery and the genocide of the native populations. Those two, in my mind, make the history of the United States less than glorious. So much of our history from Vietnam onward is less than effluent. We have a sense of global empire that bothers me deeply. Our government has basically been hijacked by the corporations and the mega-wealthy. I would love to have a sense of pride and admiration in my country again, but it does not seem to be in the cards.

In my work commute of 54 miles round trip in big city traffic this week, I have been listening to the audio book, *Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains* by Charles A. Eastman (Ohiyesa). In this book he included a speech by Sitting Bull that rings true even today for our society. I have included it here with Eastman's introductory paragraph:

*His bitter and at the same time well-grounded and philosophical dislike of the conquering race is well expressed in a speech made before the purely Indian council before referred to, upon the Powder River. I will give it in brief as it has been several times repeated to me by men who were present.*

*"Behold, my friends, the spring is come; the earth has gladly received the embraces of the sun, and we shall soon see the results of their love! Every seed is awakened, and all animal life. It is through this mysterious power that we too have our being, and we therefore yield to our neighbors, even to our animal neighbors, the same right as ourselves to inhabit this vast land.*

*"Yet hear me, friends! we have now to deal with another people, small and feeble when our forefathers first met with them, but now great and overbearing. Strangely enough, they have a mind to till the soil, and the love of possessions is a disease in them. These people have made many rules that the rich may break, but the poor may not! They have a religion in which the poor worship, but the rich will not! They even take tithes of the poor and weak to support the rich and those who rule. They claim this mother of ours, the Earth, for their own use, and fence their neighbors away from her, and deface her with their*

*buildings and their refuse. They compel her to produce out of season, and when sterile she is made to take medicine in order to produce again. All this is sacrilege.*

*“This nation is like a spring freshet; it overruns its banks and destroys all who are in its path. We cannot dwell side by side. Only seven years ago we made a treaty by which we were assured that the buffalo country should be left to us forever. Now they threaten to take that from us also. My brothers, shall we submit? or shall we say to them: ‘First kill me, before you can take possession of my fatherland!’”*

Later on Sitting Bull and his band had fled to Canada to try to get some rest from the harassing American army. Canada was willing to allow them to be there, but could not or would help in any other way. American commissioners had followed them there and were trying to talk them into coming back to the United States. Sitting Bull asked a question that is still being asked today:

*Here, too, they were followed by United States commissioners, headed by General Terry, who endeavored to persuade him to return, promising abundance of food and fair treatment, despite the fact that the exiles were well aware of the miserable condition of the “good Indians” upon the reservations. He first refused to meet them at all, and only did so when advised to that effect by Major Walsh of the Canadian mounted police. This was his characteristic remark: “If you have one honest man in Washington, send him here and I will talk to him.”*

Indian societies before the invasion of the Europeans were not perfect, but there was a lot to be admired. They were truly a meritocracy. That is something we give lip service to in this country, but it is far from being a reality. The early Indians were, at least among their own tribe, very much socialistic. They realized that survival was a group effort. They realized that they had a responsibility to other tribe members. Our current politics is attempting to discount that duty.

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