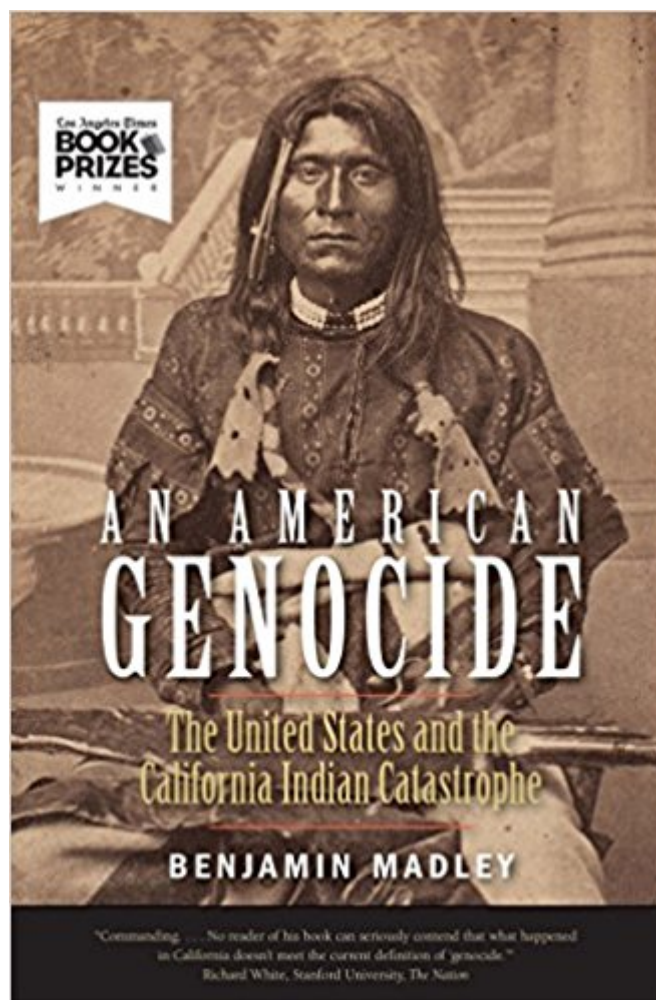


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# An American Genocide: The United States And The California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873 (The Lamar Series In Western History)



## Synopsis

The first full account of the government-sanctioned genocide of California Indians under United States rule. Between 1846 and 1873, California's Indian population plunged from perhaps 150,000 to 30,000. Benjamin Madley is the first historian to uncover the full extent of the slaughter, the involvement of state and federal officials, the taxpayer dollars that supported the violence, indigenous resistance, who did the killing, and why the killings ended. This deeply researched book is a comprehensive and chilling history of an American genocide. Madley describes pre-contact California and precursors to the genocide before explaining how the Gold Rush stirred vigilante violence against California Indians. He narrates the rise of a state-sanctioned killing machine and the broad societal, judicial, and political support for genocide. Many participated: vigilantes, volunteer state militiamen, U.S. Army soldiers, U.S. congressmen, California governors, and others. The state and federal governments spent at least \$1,700,000 on campaigns against California Indians. Besides evaluating government officials' culpability, Madley considers why the slaughter constituted genocide and how other possible genocides within and beyond the Americas might be investigated using the methods presented in this groundbreaking book.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"As Benjamin Madley writes in *An American Genocide*, by 1873, roaming bands of Indian-killers played a major role in reducing native numbers by more than 80 percent. . . . The mass murders

raise the question: Did they constitute genocide by official design? [Madley] thinks so. He thoroughly documents the extent of the killings and their horrific consequences. . . . Emphasizing intention and repetition; in the California massacres, Madley [underscores] the designing role of state and federal officials." — Alan Taylor, New York Times Book Review, "Editors' Choice" "Gruesomely thorough. . . . Others have described some of these campaigns, but never in such strong terms and with so much blame placed directly on the United States government." — Alexander Nazaryan, Newsweek "By removing any doubt that genocide against Native people took place in the most populous and prosperous state in the US, Madley is aiming for a profound revisioning of US history as a whole. . . . No longer will genocide be something that happened in some distant locale — Namibia, Germany, Cambodia or Rwanda. Instead, it took place in the same sunny clime that American culture has long celebrated with images of fun and frolic: Disney, Hollywood, the Beach Boys and surfers in search of the endless summer." — Karl Jacoby, Journal of Genocide Research "An American Genocide" has settled the issue on whether or not genocide occurred in California." — William Bauer Jr., Journal of Genocide Research "Madley has written an intensely disturbing and invaluable account of the genocide that white Americans carried out against California's Indian peoples. . . . Madley's book should move historians of the American West to consider genocide studies as a serious framework for analysing settler-Indian relations, and it should also compel genocide studies scholars to reconsider their understandings of genocide." — Margaret D. Jacobs, Journal of Genocide Research "[A] stellar example of an unflinching commitment to document and analyse . . . invasion's often horrific consequences." — Jeffrey Ostler, Journal of Genocide Research "Madley has documented his charge of genocide [with] prosecutorial ferocity. . . . [His] appendices are the most complete incident-by-incident tally ever compiled of Indian lives lost during this terrible period. This scrupulously detailed epilogue is the equivalent of a memorial wall that we are visiting for the first time." — Peter Nabokov, New York Review of Books "Madley moves with a scholar's care across a terrible landscape. . . . Essential reading." — Kirkus Reviews "This is the definitive account of California's genocide on which all future studies will be based." — Tony Platt, News from Native California "Commanding. . . . No reader of his book can seriously contend that what happened in California doesn't meet the current definition of 'genocide.'" — Richard White, Stanford University, The Nation "An American Genocide raises fundamental questions about how Californians and Americans think of themselves and tell their history. . . . An American Genocide provides a powerful tool for historians and Native peoples — including those who are the

descendants of genocide survivors to challenge the founding myths of California and United States history."

•Nicolas R. Rosenthal, Southern California Quarterly"[M]onumental . . .

•Michael Magliari, H-Net Reviews"Vividly written, this exhaustively researched, abundantly illustrated and mapped, 362-page narrative in nine chapters, which includes 200 additional pages in eight appendixes and an extensive bibliography and index, will become the standard study of the near-extirpation of California's Indians,

1864-1873."

•Choice"Comprehensively researched and well-written. . . . An American Genocide courageously challenges the status quo with primary sources about how the state and federal government were involved in the decimation of the California Indian tribes."

•True West"Madley has produced a towering book that will long endure as a landmark text in California history. Among its many achievements, this painstakingly researched and thoroughly documented work provides by far the most complete and detailed account ever written about the murderous campaigns waged against Native peoples by the US Army, the California state militia, local volunteer militia units, and irregular bands of self-appointed Indian fighters."

•Michael Magliari, California State University, Chico, Ethnohistory"An American Genocide provides one of the most detailed and stunning narratives of violence, murder, and state-sponsored genocide in North America, making this book a major achievement in the fields of both Native American history and Genocide Studies."

•Ned Blackhawk (Yale University), author of Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West"Madley has far exceeded previous scholarship in making a persuasive case for concluding that what happened to California Indians from 1846 to 1873 qualifies as genocide."

•Jeffrey Ostler (University of Oregon), author of The Plains Sioux and U.S. Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee"This book is a powerful contribution to the study of Native Americans, to California history, and to genocide studies as a whole. It should be read by every Californian."

•Norman Naimark (Stanford University), author of Stalin's Genocides"Benjamin Madley has changed the conversation on genocide and American Indians. After An American Genocide, it will no longer be possible to debate whether or not genocide took place. Instead we will need to confront the questions of how and why genocide against American Indians took place and what the United States owes its indigenous communities."

•Karl Jacoby (Columbia University), author of American Shadows at Dawn: A Borderlands Massacre and the Violence of History"Benjamin Madley's book is brilliant, unsettling, and necessary. It will change forever how we understand the history of California, and it will make historians of other places and periods wonder what they have missed. An American Genocide will have a long legacy."

•Pekka

HåfÅmÅfÅinen (Oxford University), author of *The Comanche Empire*

Benjamin Madley is associate professor of history, University of California, Los Angeles, where he focuses on Native America, the United States, and genocide in world history. He lives in Los Angeles, CA.

For the same reasons the country of Turkey refuses to admit their Armenian Genocide, the US may never admit to genocide within its borders. The book specifically deals with California. People have a general historic notion of the Gold Rush, "49ers", Missions, and a wild San Francisco, but little has been said and understood about the horrific treatment given to the indigenous populations, first by the Spanish and later the Americans. There were at times paid bounties for Indian scalps and more. It's a real eyeopener. I hope that many will read this quite accessible, well referenced book and understand the rest of the California state story. I live in a beautiful California forest interface area that was once Ohlone Indian territory. I love to go out in the brush to pick wild blackberries and love to see the terrain in the moonlight. It has dawned on me it wasn't all that long ago that Ohlone Indians enjoyed the area just the same way I do now until they were violently run off. I don't have any plans to give the property back, but the troubling thought is often in the back of my mind. When I pick the blackberries, I'm doing something an Indian once did in exactly the same spot.

Benjamin Madley's book *AN AMERICAN GENOCIDE* is breathtaking! I was born in California in 1935 and grew up there. I shutter to think I might have had an ancestor that participated in any way with the slaughter of 300 thousand California Indians just a century before I was born. Author Madley is a true historian, a scholar who knows how to do "sherlock-holmes" style of research. In 1769 there were ~310,000 Indians living in California. In 1846 there were ~150,000; in 1870 there were 30,000, and just ten years later, in 1880, census takers recorded the California Indian population at 16,277 (p.3). Every American adult should read this book. Read it and weep. Thomas Headland (December 2, 2016)

Ben Madley's book is an important one and highlights a period not often discussed in California history. He highlights key ways that the state of California sponsored violence, assault, and murder on indigenous/first peoples of California. It is a heavy read, but an important one!

This book provides definitive proof of the genocide of California Indians by California militia,

vigilantes and the US Army. Professor Madley provides details in chronological order for the genocide from 1846 - 1873. This is one of a few books that actually tells the truth about how white people treated California Indians. Please also read *Murder State* by Lindsay, *Freedom's Frontier* by Smith and *Strangers in a Stolen Land* by Carrico to learn more about the history of white racism against California Indians. You can also read *Estanislao - Warrior, Man of God* to learn the truth about how California Indians were treated in the Missions. It turns out that many of the white people we venerate as historical figures in California were terrible to the Indians.

Finally some truth about California's blood soaked past. Madley strips away the romantic notions of California's Mission and Gold Rush eras to reveal unspeakable horror, i.e., wholesale dispossession and murder on a grand scale. And these barbaric crimes were largely formulated and executed by state and federal authorities. The people of this state and nation should collectively hang their heads in shame for what we did to the Original People of California. The author's scholarship is beyond reproach. His well documented findings clearly meet the definition of genocide as described in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Dr. Madley's work should be required reading for every student of California and U.S. History.

I bought the Audible version of this book. It is a difficult listen. How much butchery and torture can my ears digest? It goes on like a devil's account book. I give it five stars because it is a sad, Sick and necessary piece of the American history book.

Anachronistic history as rebuke - this is the conundrum posed by the title of Benjamin Madley's comprehensive chronicle: *Genocide in America: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe*. The term genocide was first coined in 1943 by lawyer Raphael Lemkin to cover the Holocaust then underway across Europe. A full-blown legal definition appeared in 1948 with the United Nations' adoption of the Genocide Convention. Yet the horrific events described by the author transpired between 1846 and 1873. The "crime," as Madley notes, may be ancient, but legal condemnation is relatively modern. This contradiction highlights the two-pronged usage of "genocide" - one that is rigorously legal in nature, and a second in more general or popular contexts. Madley invokes the term in the latter sense using both powerful rhetoric and massive evidence. It is a record little-known and, moreover, largely ignored by scholars - at least up to now. Americans are indeed acquainted with the story of the Gold Rush in California,

followed by a vast westward migration led by pioneering

settlers. Little is understood, however, about the Native-American people who already occupied nearly every square foot of California from its remote deserts, to its oak-lined valleys, and nutrient-rich Pacific coast. The invaders quickly outnumbered the indigenous Indian population. And, for the most part, in their feverish quest for wealth, they were not inclined to act with restraint toward the natives, either by respecting rights of occupation, nor in the use of violent firepower. Madley meticulously describes from all available contemporary sources each deadly encounter, from "more than 1000 killed by the General John C. Fremont, to individual killings of Pit River Indians at the hands of George Crook's forces. Reading the volume becomes a wrenching experience. If one has to force oneself, it is with the knowledge that the alternative is a commitment to wilful ignorance. Mention of the name Fremont betokens the scope of the task, for according to the publication California Place Names (UC Press, rev. ed. 1998), the blood-stained general "is honored by more than a hundred place names throughout the West. The same mis-appellation is true of a host of others, from the well-known figure Mariano Vallejo to the three, lesser-known Kelsey Brothers (i.e., Kelseyville, Lake County). It was the killing of Andrew Kelsey, who ran his Big Valley Ranch through a reign of torture, rape, and murder, in an attack by Wappos and Eastern Pomos, that set off a wave of revenge that decimated the Indians of California's future wine center Napa Valley. Madley also reminds us that most of this record of depredation occurred before the end of chattel slavery in the U.S. While California entered the Union (in 1848) as a free state, the mentality that countenanced "unfree labor" (as Madley rather decorously phrases the practice) flourished nonetheless when it came to California's native population, further contributing to the conditions that would make genocide possible. Finally, the careful reader will note that Professor Ben Kiernan served as Yale dissertation advisor to the author, undoubtedly lending much in the way of wise counsel based upon his expertise on a genocide closer to our own time. (See, Kiernan, Benjamin, The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979, Yale Univ. Press, 1996.) Howard J. De Nike teaches cultural anthropology at the University of San Francisco

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