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His 103 Final

Throughout our study of American history, time and time again we have discussed issues that still remain relevant in some way to today's America. Modern historians use many different methods such as memes and social media, to educate and spread awareness about the issues of America's past that persist today. From the oppression of Indigenous peoples, to slavery, to past and current elections, America's history is interconnected and can be used as a tool to help us understand, correct, and avoid the mistakes of the past.

The first example of American history being used to understand modern issues is seen in the following meme:



This meme is, obviously, referring to the creation of the constitution, and its famous words that “All men are created equal”. However, as we have seen throughout American history and even still today, America has failed to live up to that standard. The next 100 years of American history following the creation of the constitution were centered on one major issue: slavery. Slavery was an abomination and, literally, tore the country into two. Today, institutional racism lives on in the form of police brutality, educational discrimination, employment discrimination, and mass incarceration. This meme helps demonstrate how a document like the constitution is still so relevant today. When the constitution was created, minorities were not even lawfully recognized as humans. This exclusion from Jefferson’s description of all men was evident throughout the antebellum era, as debates raged over slavery resulting in legislation such as the Missouri Compromise and three fifths compromise. This meme demonstrates how obvious it is that minorities rights were not taken account into the constitution, a fact that movements such as Black Lives Matter have been trying to educate the country about recently.

Another example of modern historians using early American history to understand current issues comes in the form of a tweet from Steve Vladeck, retweeted by Heather Cox-Richardson. The tweet ([https://twitter.com/steve\\_vladeck/status/1335585742060474369?s=20](https://twitter.com/steve_vladeck/status/1335585742060474369?s=20)) is in response to another twitter user who was claiming that the dates of December 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> are not real deadlines for the electoral college, and that the 2020 election should not be considered over as it is still disputed. Vladeck uses American history to clear this up and help people understand the law better. He states that it is in fact a law that all elections be regulated by these dates, and it is especially important that this is applied to disputed elections in order to protect the voice of the people. This act was brought into existence by congress in response to the

election of 1876, which was a very contested election as the United States was searing for direction in the reconstruction era. With the Civil War completed and slavery abolished, the election of 1876 was an especially important one, and its subsequent legislation is as relevant as ever today. This demonstrates how modern historians can use American history to help us better understand the law today.

The final example of modern historians using American history to discuss topics relevant today comes in the following meme:



Pre-Columbian America is a very misunderstood time. Recently, education on this topic has become more relevant, as different groups have tried to inform the public about the mistreatment of Indigenous peoples who were the original inhabitants of America. This meme uses humor to

discuss this point, as obviously a territory cannot be discovered if somebody has already “got” it. European imperialists displaced, murdered, and enslaved (through the encomienda system), the Indigenous inhabitants of America. The best-known example of this is Christopher Columbus and the Spanish expansion into America. Unfortunately, for decades our public education system has made Columbus out to be somewhat of a hero who discovered America and established the Columbian exchange. Our system has failed to educate us on the genocide of indigenous peoples that allowed Europeans to settle in America. This issue has come to a head recently however, as Columbus Day has been replaced with Indigenous people’s day and an appreciation of Native American oppression has begun to grow. Thus, meme uses Pre Columbian-American history to make fun of the miseducation that has occurred for so long and helps to educate us on the real story of early American history.

By using the technology at their disposal, modern historians are able to reach a large platform to educate people not only on Americas history, but on its relevance to issues today. Humorous memes as well as not so humorous tweets, for example, draw on events from the past that correlate directly to topics today. American history should not be viewed as events written in stone, with the ink dry. Rather it should be seen as ongoing and everchanging thing, a tool with which we can attempt to forge a better country than the one we have studied thus far.