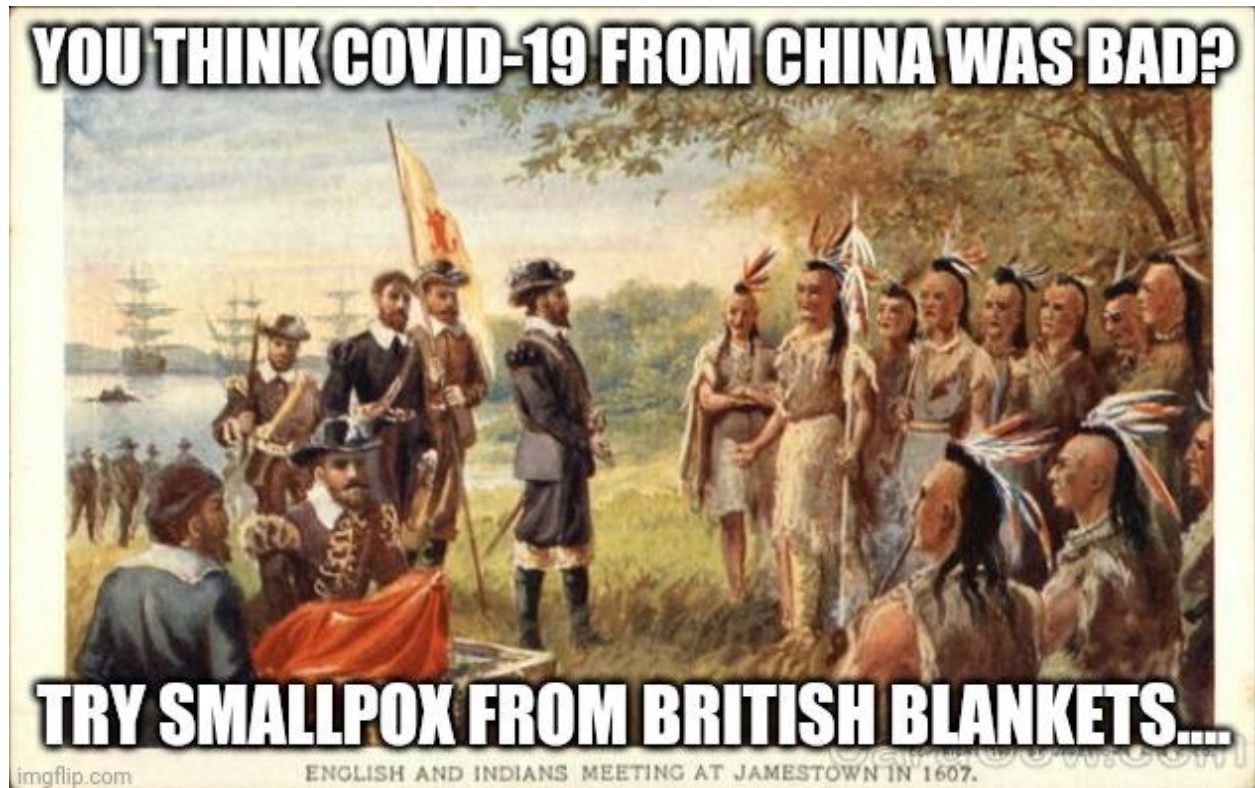


Throughout this turbulent and chaotic year that the world has faced, historical events and precedent have been used to comment on ongoing issues. Especially in the United States, which has gone through a unique election process this year, has had a comparatively worse response to Covid-19, and a number of other cultural and societal troubles. While the future remains increasingly uncertain, there are numerous historical examples to draw from which could provide insight into how America might precede. Current internet culture has proven to be a unique resource for the exploration of opinions and ideas, memes in particular have provided a means for individuals to express their “take” of current events. With a select few of these memes, the authors use historical events to criticize or comment on current issues, with varying degrees of success.

The most impactful event of this year, and possibly the decade, was the Covid-19 Pandemic. While the cultural significance of the Pandemic is still uncertain as it is still taking place, there are parts of the initial cultural response that can be examined. During the initial outbreaks, Asians and Asian Americans faced a new wave of racism and prejudice. While the cause for this is clear, as racism stills haunts American culture and the Pandemic did begin in China, there were many reasonable Americans who criticized this prejudice. One particular individual expressed their opinion on this issue through a

meme:



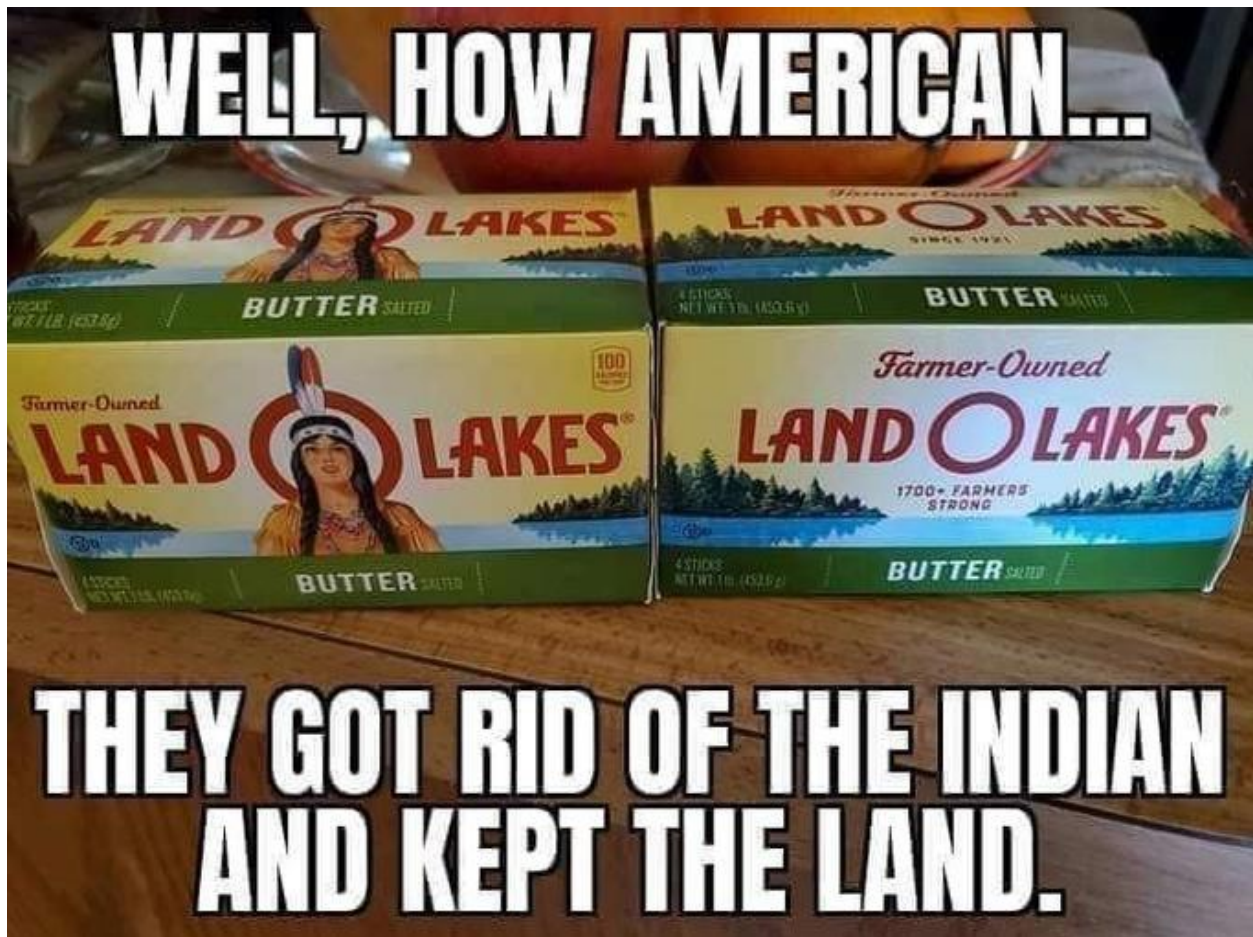
This meme uses the introduction of Europeans to the Americas, and the subsequent decimation of Indigenous Peoples by disease, to criticize racism against Asians, or the Chinese specifically. While it is certainly true that individuals or groups should not be blamed for disease or epidemics, the parallel is somewhat flawed. Indigenous Peoples in the Americas lacked immunity from diseases that existed throughout the Old World, and so when Europeans first interacted with Native Americans, the Europeans exposed them to a plethora of new diseases that they did not have protection from. In this case, any European would represent a danger to Native Americans, as the two groups had been separated for thousands of years. This is in contrast with the current Covid-19 Pandemic, as not every person from China was a danger to America, in fact many early outbreaks in the US could be traced to travelers from Italy or other European countries.



This Venn diagram compares President Trump to his predecessors. Trump is uniquely placed, being the only president who has been impeached, lost the popular vote, and has only served one term. While Trump could in the future run for office again, possibly winning the popular vote, as it stands Trump has unique company among US Presidents. The two previous presidents which have the most in common with Trump could be said are John Quincy Adams and Andrew Johnson. While similarities between their personal philosophies or political beliefs might be wildly different, the legacy these presidents remain similar. One part of Adams' legacy that remains is his successful bid for presidency in the 1824 presidential election. Similarly to Trump, he lost the popular vote and then went on to lose in the next election as incumbent. While the cultural and political impact of the 2016 and 2020 elections have yet to be fully seen, the similarities remain. A president that has maybe more in common with Trump would be Andrew Johnson, whose contentious time in office eventually led to his impeachment. Both presidents have this in common, being impeached but not removed from office, however the impact of Trump's impeachment has still yet to be seen. While this diagram's purpose is simply to present factual information about US presidents, there are conclusions about Trump's legacy that can be drawn from his placement in the center of the diagram.

As well as the major events that captured American culture this year, there were numerous other issues brought up, all with different amounts of importance. One such issue was a decision by Land O'Lakes inc to remove its mascot, an Ojibwa woman, from its packaging. The Ojibwa are a Native American people who lived throughout Eastern Canada and Northern Minnesota prior to the arrival of Europeans. Still present

today, there were many Ojibwa who celebrated the decision to remove the mascot, citing it as the removal of a racist caricature. However there were a number of people who took offense at the removal, notably from the artist's son, himself an Ojibwa, who found pride from seeing an Ojibwa woman on the package of a famous product. However as insignificant a decision as this was, there were still a number of people who found the situation humorous, and more who were able to find humor from the removal.



This meme highlighted the humor that some felt, but also raised an interesting point about the historical and current factors surrounding Native American culture. The land that the Ojibwa once inhabited was taken over time and through coercion or violence. Similar to many other Native Americans peoples, the American westward expansion,



and the movement of European American settlers west had been one of the causes that led to the removal of Ojibwa from their ancestral lands. The removal of an Ojibwa mascot drawn by an Ojibwa artist without the artist's consideration raises a question about the amount of autonomy that Native Americans today have about their legacy. While the parallel between the ethnic cleansing of Indigenous Peoples and decision of a dairy co-op to remove a butter mascot is arguably fine at best, and problematic at worst, that seems to be the point of the meme. However it is more likely that the creator intended the meme to poke some fun at Land O'Lakes for their decision, not to imply that the removal is as terrible as the removal of Native Americans from their land.

While the longevity of the cultural impact of these events are unknown, it is certain that through the use of memes and other media, issues that would be relatively unknown become significant to more and more people. Certain issues like the pandemic, or the election could potentially capture the zeitgeist of the 2020's, while others, like the Land O'Lakes' mascot, become relevant to the wider culture for days at a time. However it is clear that historical events, even ones from hundreds of years ago, will still be used to comment on these current issues.