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Amber L. Gray

# Carceral Conversion: How Incarceration was used to Convert Eastern Woodlands Indigenous Americans to Christianity

MEMOIRS  
OF  
THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF  
**REV. JOHN ELIOT.**

APOSTLE OF THE N. A. INDIANS.

BY MARTIN MOORE, A. M.  
PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN NATICK, MASS.

“Not a whit behind the very chiefest  
apostles.”—PAUL.

BOSTON:  
PUBLISHED BY T. BELLINGTON,  
Flagg & Gould, printers.  
1822.

SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT ON INDIAN EDUCATION.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
OFFICE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
Washington, December 1, 1889.

SIR: I respectfully submit herewith a supplement to the foregoing report, in which I have outlined a plan for Indian education. When the regular annual report of this office was submitted, I had not at hand the data necessary for formulating such a plan and hence could not present it at that time. This plan, of course, is subject to modifications, as experience may show them to be desirable.

T. J. MORGAN,  
Commissioner.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION FOR INDIANS.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

The American Indians, not including the so-called Indians of Alaska, are supposed to number about 250,000, and to have a school population (six to sixteen years) of perhaps 50,000. If we exclude the five civilized tribes which provide for the education of their own children and the New York Indians, who are provided for by that State, the number of Indians of school age to be educated by the Government does not exceed 35,000, of whom 15,000 were enrolled in schools last year, leaving but 20,000 to be provided with school privileges.

These people are separated into numerous tribes, and differ very widely in their language, religion, native characteristics, and modes of life. Some are very ignorant and degraded, living an indolent and brutal sort of life, while others have attained to a high degree of civilization.

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Ascension of Jesus.

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ALPHABET.

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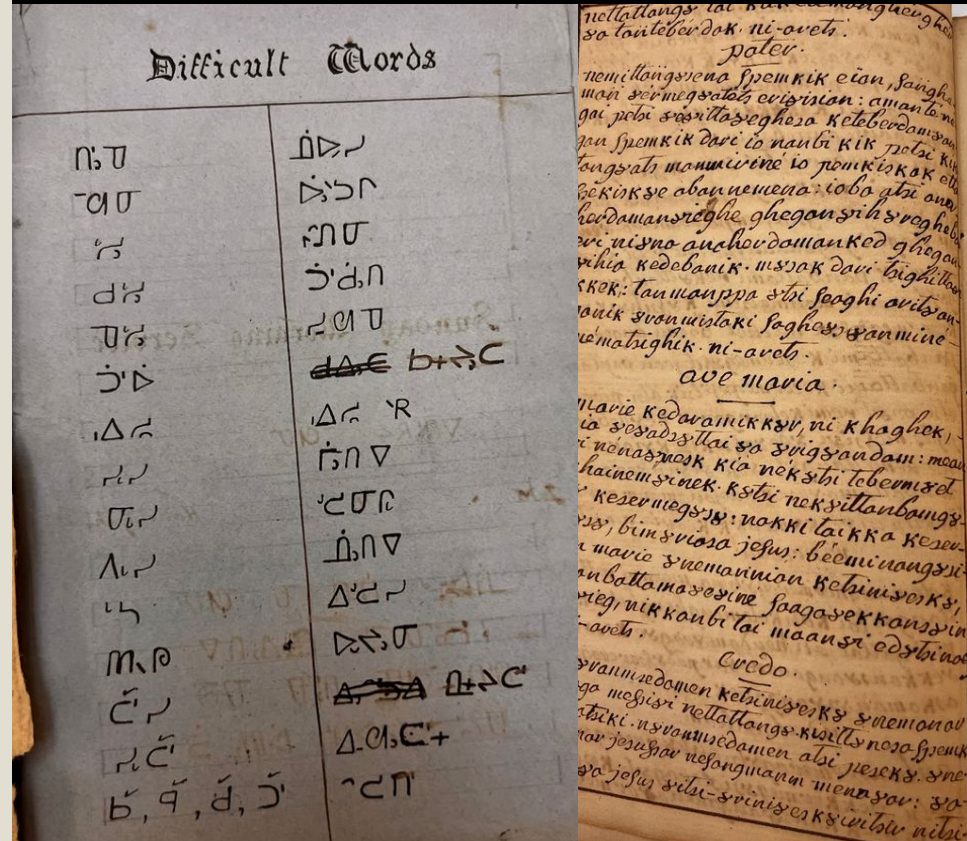
# Disclaimer and Land Acknowledgement

It is not lost on me that I, a white woman, am giving a presentation on the genocide of Indigenous people, including people local to this area. I feel it is my responsibility to acknowledge that, in the future, the College should prioritize admitting indigenous students. I must also acknowledge that we are on land lived on, nurtured by and utilized by Saukiog, Poquonok, Podunk and Tunxis peoples for centuries and millenia prior to white-settler occupation and genocide. I hope that this project sheds light on an element of this genocide in a respectful, clear way.

# The Project's Origins

This project did not begin with Indigenous Histories. Originally, this was a project attempting to conduct oral history interviews with currently incarcerated women, however, after several meetings with the CT Department of Corrections, the project shifted, and has taken on a new goal. By attempting to investigate indigenous women's histories, the project had to take yet another turn, as the archival record I examined did not return substantive stories on indigenous women.

My interest is with incarceration and how it was used to compel people toward Religious conversion. By expanding the definition of incarceration to include reservations, boarding schools and "praying indian" towns, we can approach the issue of Indigenous people's conversion from a refreshing lens, and better understand American carceral systems in their settler-colonial contexts.



# Redefining Incarceration

- **Incarceration typically defined within narrow boundaries (Prisons, Jails, other judicial means of holding individuals)**

Woolford and Gacek (2016)

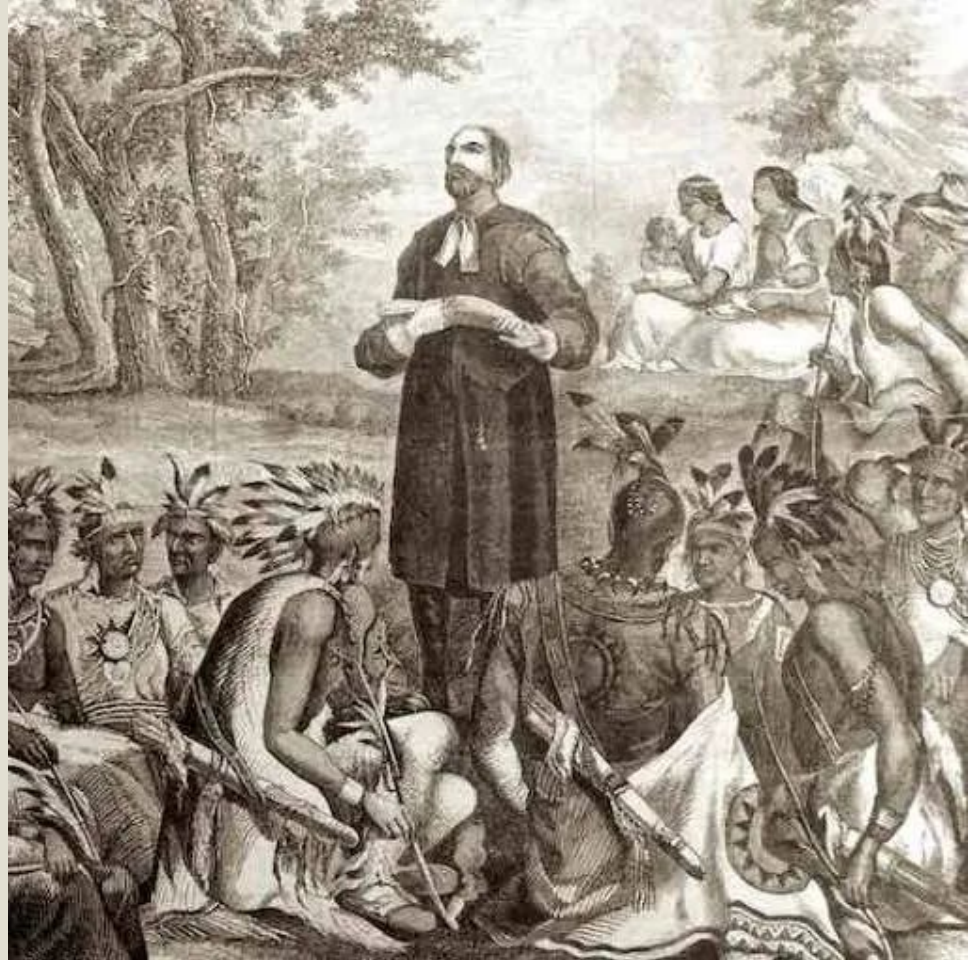
- "Genocidal Carcerality" - Residential schools are apart of settler-colonial carceral system, imprisoning indigenous people on the basis of their indigeneity alone.
- Foucaultian notion of carcerality being non-uniform, but generally focusing on alienation from society, deprivation of life, punishment over rehabilitation.

Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish (1975)

- Panopticon acting as security through surveillance, forcing people to live under constant observation. Foucault posits that society is panoptic in its own right, but the carceral society is the most panoptic
- Extending panopticism to boarding schools and reservations produces a more accurate inclusion of these carceral methods into the redefined definition of incarceration

# Daniel Gookin, Cotton Mather & John Eliot, Arbiters and recorders of Compulsory Conversion

- Daniel Gookin
  - Founder of Worcester, MA
  - Member of the English Colonial Elite
  - Ran several "praying Indian" towns throughout MA and Northern CT
- Cotton Mather
  - Documented history of King Philip's War, a colonial war that was fought between the rapidly expanding settlers and the indigenous Nipmuc and Wampanoag nations
- John Eliot
  - Founder of Roxbury Latin School in 1645
  - Produced many letters regarding his proselytizing to the indigenous people of the Massachusetts Bay Colony



# Case Study 1: Kateri Tekakwitha

- A daughter of a Mohawk chief and Algonquian woman who was originally a white settler
- Converted by Jesuits around the age of 11
- Kateri's history is told through the eyes of French Jesuit white settler, Jacques Gravier, who centers Kateri's Catholicism, and notably using her French name "Catharine" to refer to her
- Kateri was probably converted coercely and abusively (Shoemaker, 1995), with her posthumous sainthood appointment in 2012 an attempt to rectify the church's dark history



# Case Study 2: “Praying Indian” Towns

- “Praying Indian Towns” were first the idea of John Eliot, with the creation of his Roxbury latin school, and the creation of several small towns in MA and CT dedicated to the conversion of indigenous peoples.
  - This includes: Natick, MA, Punkapog, MA, Nashoba, MA, Auburn, MA, Oxford, MA, Uxbridge, MA, Dudley, MA and Woodstock, CT (Woodstock is about 45 miles from Trinity)
- Towns functioned like reservations, but with settlers and indigenous “praying indians” living side by side, though it should be of note, the “praying indians” were absolutely a secondary citizenry to the white settlers. Laws and individual remarks demonstrate the genocidal rhetoric of the time.



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To the other Greenberg Fellows, thank you for your ideas and comments week-to-week.

It has been lovely working with all of those mentioned above, each of my coworkers, mentors and professors are wonderfully intelligent and driven individuals. Thank you for being an inspiration, all of you.