

Spanish Exploration in North America



If you believe there were 200 million indigenous peoples in the area of the current United States before Europeans arrived, you are overestimating the historical population by a factor of four hundred or so. Credible estimates of the population of *the western hemisphere in 1492* range from fifty million to a hundred million individuals. The population of the *North American temperate zone*, roughly between the Rio Grande and southern Canada, may have been several million in 1492. These numbers were reduced by fifty to eighty percent by *disease* in the 16th and 17th Centuries.

The worse slaughters of "Native American Indians" historically are probably the Spanish campaigns of conquest against the Taino of Hispaniola and Cuba and later of the indigenous of Mexico and Peru, all of which involved the deaths of a few hundred thousand natives over campaigns lasting several years.

North of Mexico, there were smaller numbers of natives and the Spanish military campaigns led by De Soto and Coronado may have involved the deaths of a few thousand natives. The Spanish, English, French, and Dutch colonization of temperate North America was mostly for purposes of trade and founding farming villages. It never involved massacres at all if the settlers could help it. When such crimes did occur, the never more than a few dozen to a few hundred natives of any distinct nation or tribe were involved. The English, Dutch, and French were well aware of the brutality of the Spanish conquests of Central and South America and, regardless of their real evil deeds, sought to do less killing and destruction than the conquistadores.

If you want to learn of wars of conquest involving millions of deaths, you need to study the expansion of the Mongols and Turkish peoples in Asia and Eastern Europe, particularly in China and India. The population density there was vastly higher and the armies were vastly larger.