CHAPTER 3: THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FIRST THANKSGIVING.

In this chapter Loewen explains that the popular notion of Thanksgiving is based on "feel good" history that has little to do with the facts. Moreover, most history textbooks choose not to mention any of the possible controversies that surround how the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth versus the establish colony in Virginia. This of course would represent what is currently occurring in historical circles. Instead, textbooks tend to pick one theory and push this theory on to the students. Thus, not only is the information inaccurate but it is also boring.

However, the most interesting information Loewen includes in this chapter revolves around the idea of disease transmission. In short, he explains how many Native American tribes and villages were destroyed by European diseases. In many places about 95% of the Native American population died as a result of contact with European diseases. Loewen provides fascinating information pertaining to why the Native Americans did not have immune systems capable of coping with these diseases. More interesting is the explanation that the only reason Europeans were able to settle and occupy the Americas with such a dominating force is because of the lethal nature of their diseases. With 95% of the population dead or dying, settlers were able to take over Native American towns, plant crops on already cleared field and meet no resistance from Native tribes. This helps to explain why Europeans were able to dominate the Americas so quickly where as in other places in the world (Asia, Africa) they were able to dominate trade but not the land itself. Simply put, the diseases brought by Europeans to the Americas effectively removed the majority of the population and provided a means for the Europeans to not simply survive but dominate.

This perspective argues against European exceptionalism and helps to dispel, from the onset, the mythical ideas of Manifest Destiny that are an important part of the American mindset. In short, this country is here because the people who originally settled the land were killed of by deadly diseases developed in the dense population centers in Europe and Africa. Without these diseases, which many European settlers were immune to, the American colonies would have grown much more slowly and met greater resistance. It is possible that, like Asia, Africa and the Middle East, European colonies would never have grown to dominate the country and the Native Americans would have eventually won their independence from European oppressors.