



**TOPIC: 1904 World's Fair - Exhibition of the Igorot People**

**GRADES: 9-12**

### **BACKGROUND ESSAY**

At the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair (also known as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition) visitors attended to explore exhibits on science, art and new inventions, like the earliest automobiles and X-ray machines. One of the most horrifying of these exhibits, however, was an anthropological exhibit that was like a human zoo.

The St. Louis World's Fair was an opportunity for America to demonstrate its strengths to the world and be seen as an imperial power. After the Philippine-American War ended in 1902, the U.S acquired the Philippines as its newest colony. Future president and current governor-general of the Philippines, William Howard Taft, was interested in a way to introduce this newest colony to fellow Americans.

The Philippine Exposition attracted many visitors with an exhibit that included over 130 buildings on 47 acres of fairground and 1,100 Filipinos from over 30 tribes. This exhibit presented four diverse ethnic villages of Philippine culture, including the Igorot, Negrito, Visayan and Moro, with the most popular village the one that featured the Igorot village.

Americans became fascinated by the natives of the newly acquired territory which led to the development of anthropological exhibits showcasing what life was like in the Philippines. During this period, anthropologists adopted an evolutionary perspective rooted in the superiority of whites and their culture. One of the exhibits featured the Igorot people who anthropologist Albert Jenks believed were the most uncivilized tribe in the Philippines. These exhibits were like human zoos and sparked the creation of negative stereotypes of the Igorot people and the

Filipino community. The United States government spent over \$1.5 million transporting Filipinos to the World's Fair and paid each Filipino \$15 a day to participate. Some of these participants were lied to, unaware of where they were ultimately headed.

The exhibit sought to make the claim that whites were more superior and that the U.S. needed to make the Philippines a colony because of their uncivilized ways. By colonizing the Philippines, the U.S. would then have access to the Pacific for export, military and other strategic purposes.

One of the Igorot people featured at the St Louis World's Fair was twelve-year-old Antero Cabrera. Antero understood the true nature of the exhibit but willingly participated in it long after the culmination of the Fair. In pursuit of the American Dream, Antero sought to create a better life for himself and his descendants and was able to travel the world and achieve both economic and social status through his participation in these anthropological exhibits.

Today, the term "savage" has now evolved to mean someone who has displayed an incredible amount of bravery or accomplished an extraordinary feat; however, the history of this term is much more complex. During imperialism, those deemed as "savages" were conquered, colonized, and forced to assimilate into the American way of life. Immigrants from these territories faced a tremendous amount of prejudice and discrimination in their new lives in America, solely due to the color of their skin.

### **VOCABULARY**

- **Racial Hierarchy:** A system of classification based on the belief that certain racial groups are inferior or superior to others.
- **Anthropology:** The study of the scientific elements in humanity, ranging from biology and the evolution of humans, to the different features of culture and society, that enable humans to be distinguished from other animal species.
- **Savage:** A person from a primitive society.
- **Colonization:** The process of settling and taking over a place or domain of the indigenous people who originally reside there.
- **Native:** A person who is born or associated with a specific place

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- Have you ever been treated differently due to your race or physical appearance? What might be the dangers of treating people differently based on their physical features or perceived race?
- What role did anthropology play in the creation of racial hierarchies in America?
- Is America's hierarchy still organized by race or is there another classification system currently in place? Explain.
- Are Asians the "savages" that U.S. politicians made them out to be during the time of Pacific expansion?
- How did the acquisition of territories in the Pacific have an impact on America's standing in the world at that time?

## **ACTIVITIES**

### **Activity 1: Primary Research of the Igorot People**

Have students dive in deeper and learn about the Igorot people, who were a part of the 1904 World's Fair. Individually or in groups, have students seek out 1 - 2 primary resources about the Igorot people in the time period of the early 1900s.

- What was life like for the Igorot people?
- What were their customs?
- What was the way of life for the Igorot people in the Philippines?
- Inferring, what do you presume this experience of visiting the World's Fair might have been like for those people selected to attend?
- What kind of effect might this exhibit at the World's Fair have had on the perception of the Igorot people?

### **Activity 2: Historical Essay - 1898: Birth of an Overseas Empire**

After the Philippine-American War ended in 1902, the U.S acquired the Philippines as its newest colony. On the United States House of Representatives History, Art & Archives site, have the class read the essay [1898: Birth of an Overseas Empire](#) which explores America as it expanded into the Pacific.

After students read the text, engage in a classroom discussion, citing evidence from the essay in their answers:

- Did all Americans feel that expansion of the United States was a good idea?
  - What were arguments in favor of expansion?
  - What were arguments opposed to expansion?
- What were some of the moral and legal issues that Congress had to wrestle with as a result of expansion?
- Racist laws in the United States at this time sought to deny rights to many. An example is the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that prohibited Chinese immigration. How would the U.S. government reconcile with these immigration laws in light of the annexation of Hawaii in July 1898?
- What did some people see as a threat of annexing Hawaii at this time?
- How did the acquisition of territories in the Pacific have an impact on America's standing in the world at that time?

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

- "[1898: Birth of an Overseas Empire](#)" *History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives.*
- "[Progress Made Visible](#)" *University of Delaware Library*



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