

► **on faith**

Reflection on the October holiday

By **Marrton Dormish**

If you're like me, you grew up learning a sanitized American history of an "intrepid (European) explorer" who "sailed the ocean blue in 1492," discovered an "untamed" new world, and claimed it for God and country. Of course, that left millions of indigenous people, hundreds of distinct communities and the resource-rich territory they inhabited as mere objects to be exploited and extracted from the land so that the benefits of "civilization" could be fully realized.

White settlers of what we now call Massachusetts and Virginia adopted a similar narrative in the early 1600s.

Fast-forward two-and-a-half-centuries to 1858, before the advent of the Colorado Territory, and it's "next verse, same as the first." Prospectors with experience in the gold fields of Georgia and California helped discover



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what we now call the Front Range, ignoring the provisions of the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie by, among other things, homesteading land that the Hinono'eino' — known more commonly as the Arapaho people — called (and still call) "home."

In 1860, the Arapaho and their epidemic-weakened Cheyenne allies numbered perhaps 10,000 people total.

In the late summer of 1864, a company of volunteer settler-militia of the 3rd Colorado Cavalry mustered and trained at Fort Chambers in nearby Boulder to rid Colorado territory of "hostile Indi-

placers deposits on Little Dry Creek, Ralston Creek and Cherry Creek. Within one year, nearly 100,000 fortune-seekers flooded

ans." A few months later, a prominent Christian minister-turned-Colorado military commander named John Chivington ordered these and other cavalrymen to attack peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho camps along a prominent bend of Big Sandy Creek in Eastern Colorado.

The result: soldiers murdered more than 230 people — mostly women, children and the elderly. Survivors of the massacre at Sand Creek fled in the snow, some of them wounded, some on foot, some without warm clothing. They soon faced forced corporate displacement from their Colorado homelands to reservations in Montana, Wyoming and Oklahoma, where most Arapaho and Cheyenne people live today.

This is not a pleasant story, but stick with me, it gets worse.

My maternal great-grandfather Andrew Stengel escaped

conscription into the army of Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1891 (or 1892) by immigrating to east Boulder, where his half-brothers had settled in the 1880s. Together, they farmed 62 acres between Baseline and Arapahoe, within a few miles of where, one generation earlier, Arapahos under the leadership of Nawath (also known as "Niwot" or "Left Hand") regularly camped. My grandfather grew up on the family farm, and my mother and her family often visited the farm from their home on Arapahoe and Folsom.

Today, other descendants of Andrew Stengel and I live on the Front Range, while the Hinono'eino', as a community, does not. You likely can point to a similar story in your own family tree, whether it's set in Colorado or another state.

Injustice sucks in general, but it especially sucks when it's literally close to home, or more precisely, when we

embody it by living in our homes.

So, where does that leave us?

When residents of Twisp, Wash., came to a similar realization about their local history, they chose, among other things, to acknowledge the injustices of the past and to get to know the indigenous people of their area. See the documentary "Two Rivers" to learn what this new kind of faith accomplished.

Our neighbors who live in Denver, Boulder, Longmont and Lafayette have begun a similar journey by establishing sister city relationships, issuing official proclamations, organizing celebrations of Indigenous Peoples' Day and much more. It's time Broomfield joined them!

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