

## Anti-Imperialism Debate Resources

### Doc A: Casement Report on the Free State of Congo (1903)

*Irish-born British diplomat Roger Casement visited the Belgian-administered Congo in 1903 and produced a nearly 100-page report that was widely circulated among British and other European officials. The Casement report shocked the conscience of European nations, describing dozens of massacres, kidnappings and brutality by Belgian officials, "taxes" against rubber and foodstuffs that guaranteed native starvation, and massive population migration out of the colony.*

*The colony was being run as a private endeavor by the Belgian King Leopold II at the time of Casement's report. At first, the Belgian government denied virtually all of Casement's charges. But an official Belgian government inquiry eventually acknowledged that Casement's report was accurate.*

*Casement was widely praised for this report, which ripped the veil off Leopold II's atrocities, and was knighted by the British Queen in 1911 after a similar investigation of human rights abuses in Peru. Sir Roger Casement subsequently adopted the cause of Irish nationalism as part of his opposition to colonialism. Casement had his knighthood stripped and was later executed by the British for treason related to his efforts to recruit German assistance for the Irish independence movement during the First World War. He converted to Catholicism – the majority religion of the Irish people – on the day of his execution.*

"Then (in 1887) I had visited most of the places I now revisited, and I was thus able to institute a comparison between a state of affairs I had myself seen when the natives lived their own savage lives in anarchic and disorderly communities, uncontrolled by Europeans, and that created by more than a decade of very energetic European intervention. That very much of this intervention has been called for no one who formerly knew the Upper Congo could doubt, and there are to-day widespread proofs of the great energy displayed by Belgian officials in introducing their methods of rule over one of the most savage regions of Africa....

Perhaps the most striking change observed during my journey into the interior was the great reduction observable everywhere in native life. Communities I had formerly known as large and flourishing centres of population are to-day entirely gone, or now exist in such diminished numbers as to be no longer recognizable...Where formerly had stretched these populous native African villages, I saw to-day only a few scattered European houses, belonging either to Government officials or local traders. In Leopoldville to-day there are not, I should estimate, 100 of the original natives or their descendants now residing. At Kinchasa a few more more may be found dwelling around one of the European trading depots, while at Ndolo none remain, and there is nothing there but a station of the Congo Railway Company and a Government post. ...

On a Sunday in August, I saw six of the local sentries going back with cap-guns and ammunition pouches to [anonymous town] after the previous day's market, and later in the day, when in the factory grounds, two armed sentries came up to the agent as we walked, guarding sixteen natives, five men tied neck by neck, with five untied women and six young children. This somewhat embarrassing situation, it was explained to me, was due to the persistent failure of the people of the village these persons came from to supply its proper

quota of food. These people, I was told, had just been captured "on the river" by one of the sentries placed there to watch the waterway. They had been proceeding in their canoes to some native fishing grounds, and were espied and brought in. I asked if the children also were held responsible for food supplies, and they, along with an elderly woman, were released, and told to run over to the Mission, and go to school there. This they did not do, but doubtless returned to their homes in the recalcitrant village. The remaining five men and four women were led off to the maison des otages [house of hostages] under guard of the sentry.

An agent explained that he was forced to catch women in preference to the men as then supplies were brought in quicker; but he did not explain how the children deprived of their parents obtained their own food supplies.

### **Questions:**

1. When Casement sees a chain-gang of native hostages, what question does he ask the soldiers? What is the result of the question?

2. For what purpose do the Belgian officials engage in hostage-taking? Which gender, according to the Belgian soldiers, is more likely to result in getting Belgian "taxes" paid?

3. What evidence from this document supports the argument that European imperialism was overall a negative phenomenon?

a. Quote:

b. Quote:

c. Summarize main point

## **Doc B: Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League**

*The American Anti-Imperialist League was founded in 1899 to prevent retention of the new colonies in Cuba, Puerto Rico and Philippines by the United States. Prominent American supporters of the league included: Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, author and essayists William James and Mark Twain, Democratic politicians William Jennings Bryan and Benjamin Tillman (the latter opposing the colonization of the Philippines on the basis that too many non-whites could be admitted to the U.S.).*

We hold that the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends toward militarism, an evil from which it has been our glory to be free. We regret that it has become

necessary in the land of Washington and Lincoln to reaffirm that all men, of whatever race or color, are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We maintain that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. We insist that the subjugation of any people is "criminal aggression" and open disloyalty to the distinctive principles of our Government...

We hold, with Abraham Lincoln, that "no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. When the white man governs himself, that is self-government, but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government-that is despotism." "Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God has planted in us. Our defense is in the spirit which prizes liberty as the heritage of all men in all lands. Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves, and under a just God cannot long retain it."

We cordially invite the cooperation of all men and women who remain loyal to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States.

### **Questions:**

1. What reasons does the American Anti-Imperialist League give for opposing the Philippine colonization?

2. What evidence from this document supports the argument that European imperialism was overall a negative phenomenon?

a. Quote:

b. Quote:

c. Summarize main point

### **Doc C: Mark Twain's Commentary on Empire**

*American author Mark Twain (Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn) had left America on a world tour several years before the Spanish-American war, and arrived back in the midst of the post-war colonization of the Philippines. Although Twain initially backed the war against Spain, he quickly changed his mind and joined the American Anti-imperialist League at the end of the war, writing in the New York Herald, October 15, 1900:*

I left these shores, at Vancouver, a red-hot imperialist. I wanted the American eagle to go screaming into the Pacific. It seemed tiresome and tame for it to content itself with he

Rockies. Why not spread its wings over the Philippines, I asked myself? And I thought it would be a real good thing to do

I said to myself, here are a people who have suffered for three centuries. We can make them as free as ourselves, give them a government and country of their own, put a miniature of the American constitution afloat in the Pacific, start a brand new republic to take its place among the free nations of the world. It seemed to me a great task to which had addressed ourselves.

But I have thought some more, since then, and I have read carefully the treaty of Paris, and I have seen that we do not intend to free, but to subjugate the people of the Philippines. We have gone there to conquer, not to redeem...

It should, it seems to me, be our pleasure and duty to make those people free, and let them deal with their own domestic questions in their own way. And so I am an anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land.

**Questions:**

1. Why does Mark Twain say he changed his mind about the Spanish-American war and colonization of the Philippines?

2. How do the ideas Twain expresses here relate to the ideas of the Enlightenment?

2. What evidence from this document supports the argument that European imperialism was overall a negative phenomenon?

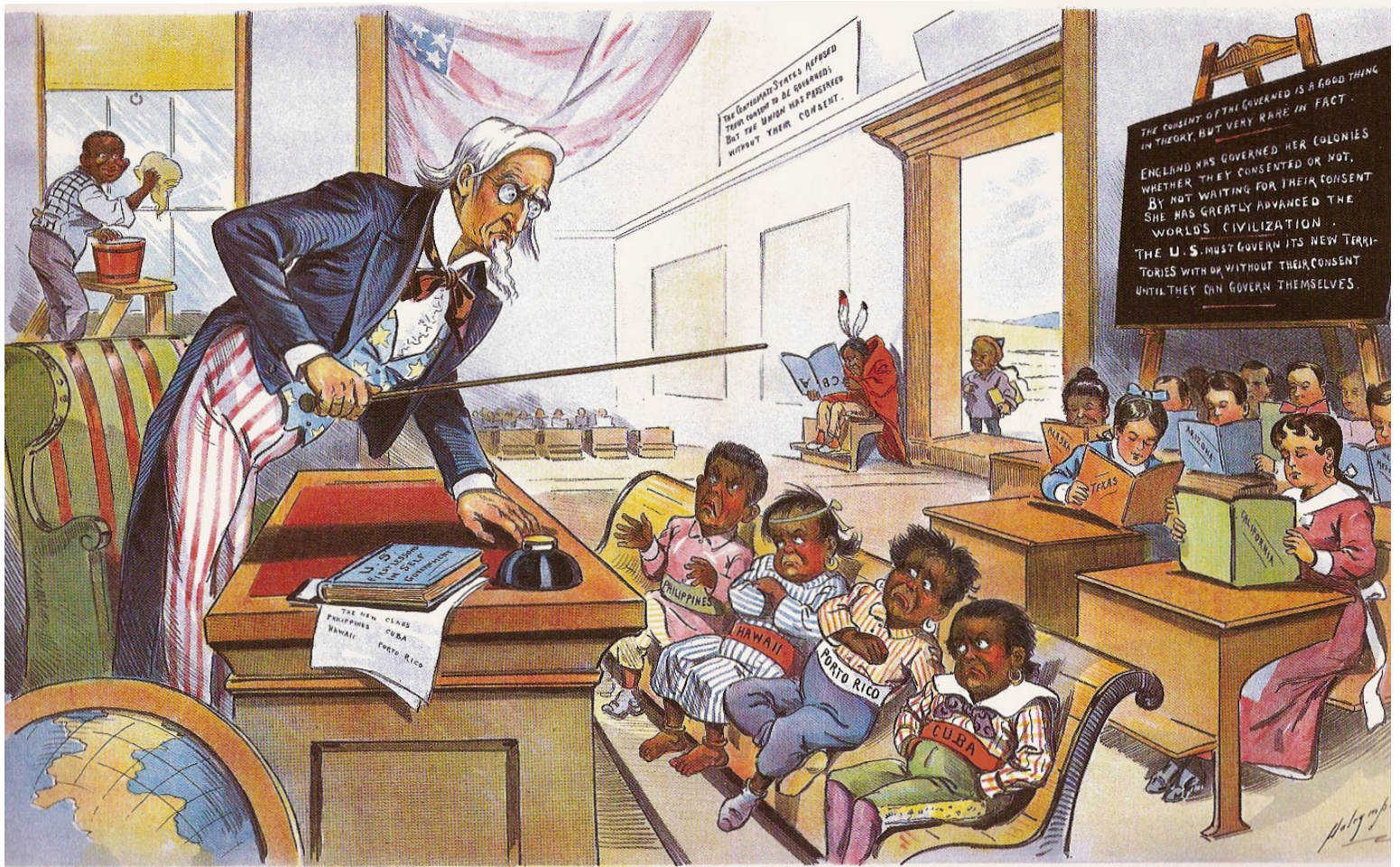
a. Quote:

b. Quote:

c. Summarize main point



Doc D: Political Cartoon, *Puck Magazine*, 1899



“SCHOOL BEGINS.”

“Uncle Sam (to his new class in Civilization)—Now, children, you’ve got to learn these lessons whether you want to or not! But just take a look at the class ahead of you, and remember that, in a little while, you will feel glad to be here as they are!”

What evidence from this document supports the argument that American imperialism was overall a negative phenomenon?

a. Quote:

b. Quote:

c. Summarize main point

## **Doc E: Was Colonialism Good or Bad for India?**

<https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2010/11/was-british-colonialism-good-or-bad-for-india/343366/>.

What evidence from this document supports the argument that European imperialism was overall a negative phenomenon?

a. Quote:

b. Quote:

c. Summarize main point