

THE "NOVA" HIJACKING CAPER:
ANOTHER ATTACK FROM THE POLITICAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS

THE "NOVA" PROGRAM ON "MYSTERY OF THE FIRST AMERICANS:" A 10,000 YEAR OLD SKELETON EMBROILS SCIENTISTS IN A DEBATE OVER NORTH AMERICA'S FIRST INHABITANTS. Nova # 2075

This program will be broadcast here in northern California at 8 p.m. on December 10 on channel 6 (KVIE). Perhaps it will also be shown at the same time in other locations.

I am very concerned about this program because PBS often shows programs on Native People put together by white, eurocentric scholars without any Indigenous involvement. Frequently, PBS shows videos about Mayas, Zoques, Incas and other First Americans without the use of any scholars of Maya, Inca (Andino), or other native background, and often these shows have controversial features which are contested by native authorities.

I fear that this program may be of the same kind.

The publicity states that: "For fifty years our picture of prehistoric America has rested on the premise that the earliest inhabitants of the Americas were East Asians of mongoloid stock, THE ANCESTORS OF TODAY'S NATIVE AMERICANS. (CAPS ADDED). But the discovery of the Kennewick Man, along with several other startling finds in recent years, has thrown that once widely accepted idea into question. Tune in as NOVA follows the efforts of paleoanthropologists to decode the story in the bones of people who died 10,000 years ago."

In my opinion, that type of language indicates that the NOVA producers have bought hook, line, and sinker the current myths of a group of anti-American Indian archaeologists who, fundamentally, are trying to sell the preposterous notion that the First Americans were somehow NOT THE ANCESTORS OF NATIVE AMERICANS but were some kind of lost people who just disappeared.

Let's see if Vine Deloria or any other native scholar is interviewed! I know that I was not contacted even though I have an article on Kennewick on my web site and have had versions of that article published in Native newspapers, as well as other articles on Ancient America and an entire section in my book on NATIVE AMERICANS OF CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA.

Here's the picture: to my knowledge no Native Americans have ever pushed the idea that we are of "Mongoloid" race. Our traditions simply do not speak of race, nor do we attempt to classify Native People into lineages based upon physical appearance, although most of us have long been aware of a great deal of diversity among First Americans. In fact, since I started teaching in the early 60's or late 50's I have been teaching that American Indians are NOT Mongoloid, and, in fact, that modern science and empirical evidence rejects the notion of groups called Mongoloid, Negroid, Caucasoid etc.

It is a group of anthropologists and archaeologists who have come up with the East Asian-Mongoloid idea in the first place, a stupid idea given the tremendous variations found among all human populations and the specific appearance of many American groups such as the Delaware, Hopi, Iroquois, Pueblos in general, and numerous Meso-American and South American groups, all of which have a tendency to look rather intermediate between Europeans and Asians, or between Pacific peoples and some southeast Asians, etc. I have, in fact, suggested in my lectures and writing that American groups may well represent an ancient stock from which others, such as Europeans and Asians, have branched off.

Other scholars have also suggested over the years that First Americans include many ancestral stocks. For example, IBARRA GRASSO in his LOS HOMBRES BARBADOS EN LA AMERICA PRECOLOMBINA gives many examples, not only of bearded Indians but of scholars who saw this diversity in the First Americans. THUS THERE IS NOTHING NEW IN SUGGESTING THAT WE HAVE HAD A HISTORY OF PHYSICAL DIVERSITY IN AMERICA. In fact, it has been the majority of archaeologists who have created the "PALEO-INDIAN" and the idea of Mongoloidism, in spite of the physical evidence to the contrary.

But now the new attack on Native American "PRIMACY" IS COMING FROM A FRINGE of archaeology who are seeking to suggest the OXYMORONIC notion that the idea of diversity is a new concept and THAT THE DIVERSE ELEMENTS (of alleged SOUTHEAST ASIAN TYPE, OF EUROPEAN TYPE, OF AINU TYPE, OR WHATEVER) ARE NOT OUR ANCESTORS.

In other words, they are trying to get around NAGPRA by claiming that early skeletons do not belong to our ancestral pool. But at the same time, they are giving support to the notion that our ancestors were not the first people here, which helps to weaken the arguments for recognition of Native rights, in some people's eyes. I will never forget the pleasure displayed by a white female commentator on one

of the major news shows when she talked about the idea that Caucasians were here first!!

In any event, I hope that you will critically watch this show and then let NOVA and PBS know what you think about it! Maybe, it will be balanced?? Jack Forbes

P.S. I managed to watch the show, and it was as bad as predicted. Dr. Bea Medicine was interviewed as the only native scholar and she did a good job, but she did not speak about the issues referred to above. All of the other "authorities" were white and their opinions were exactly as I had anticipated. One young Native girl was put in the show to prove that some Indians are pro-archaeology but she was not confronting any of the key issues at all. It was carefully engineered to support the white archaeologist's views about early skeletons being essentially "non-Indian," an oxymoronic intellectual concept which was never challenged. Jack Forbes [March 12, 2003]