MANIFEST DESTINY QUOTES

1. In 1845, a democratic leader and influential editor by the name of John L. O'Sullivan gave the movement its name. In an attempt to explain America's thirst for expansion, and to present a defense for America's claim to new territories he wrote:

*".... the right of our manifest destiny to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federaltive development of self government entrusted to us. It is right such as that of the tree to the space of air and the earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth."* ([Brinkley](http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/essays/1801-1900/manifest-destiny/references-cited.php#brink1) 352)

2. Senator Thomas Hart Benton on Manifest Destiny (1846)

It would seem that the White race alone received the divine command, to subdue and replenish the earth: for it is the only race that has obeyed it-the only race that hunts out new and distant lands, and even a New World, to subdue and replenish . . . .

The Red race has disappeared from the Atlantic coast; the tribes that resisted civilization met extinction. This is a cause of lamentation with many. For my part, I cannot murmur at what seems to be the effect of divine law. I cannot repine that is this Capitol has replace the wigwam-this Christian people, replaced the savages-white matrons, the red squaws . . . . Civilization, or extinction, has been the fate of all people who have found themselves in the trace of the advancing Whites, and civilization, always the preference of the Whites, has been pressed as an object, while extinction has followed as a consequence of its resistance . . . .

The van of the Caucasian race now top the Rocky Mountains, and spread down on the shores of the Pacific. In a few years a great population will grow up there, luminous with the accumulated lights of the European and American civilization. There presence in such a position cannot be without it influence upon eastern Asia. . . .

The Mongolian, or Yellow race is there, four hundred millions in number spreading almost to Europe; a race once the foremost of the human family in the arts of civilization, but torpid and stationary for thousands of years. It is a race far above the Ethiopian, or Black-above the Malay, or Brown, (if we admit five races)-and above the American Indian or Red; it is a race far above all these, but still far below the White and like all the rest, must receive an impression from the superior race whenever they come in contact . . . .

The sun of civilization must shine across the sea; socially and commercially the van of the Caucasians, and the rear of the Mongolians, must intermix. They must talk together, and trade together, and marry together. . . . Moral and intellectual superiority will do the rest; the White race will take the ascendant, elevating what is susceptible of improvement-wearing out what is not. . . . And thus the youngest people, and the newest land, will become the reviver and the regenerator of the oldest . . . .

It is in this point of view, and as acting upon the social, political, and religious condition of Asia, and giving a new point of departure to her ancient civilization, that I look upon the settlement of the Columbia river by the van of the Caucasian race as the most momentous human event in the history of man since his dispersion over the face of the earth.

3. Manifest Destiny became a disputed philosophy. The following are two examples of the different views of the American people. This is evidence of the opposing attitudes towards the Manifest Destiny ideology. In a 1837 letter to Henry Clay, William E. Channing wrote:

*"Did this county know itself, or were it disposed to profit by self-knowledge, it would feel the necessity of laying an immediate curb on its passion for extended territory.... We are a restless people, prone to encroachment, impatient of the ordinary laws of progress... We boast of our rapid growth, forgetting that, throughout nature, noble growths are slow..... It is full time that we should lay on ourselves serious, resolute restraint. Possessed of a domain, vast enough for the growth of ages, it is time for us to stop in the career of acquisition and conquest. Already endangered by our greatness, we cannot advance without imminent peril to our institutions, union, prosperity, virtue, and peace..... It is sometimes said, that nations are swayed by laws, as unfailing as those which govern matter; that they have their destinies; that their character and position carry them forward irresistibly to their goal;....*

*that ... the Indians have melted before the white man, and the mixed, degraded race of Mexico must melt before the Anglo-Saxon. Away with this vile sophistry! There is no necessity for crime. There is no fate to justify rapacious nations, any more than to justify gamblers and robbers, in plunder. We boast of the progress of society, and this progress consists in the substitution of reason and moral principle for the sway of brute force....We talk of accomplishing our destiny. So did the late conqueror of Europe (Napoleon) ; and destiny consigned him to a lonely rock in the ocean, the prey of ambition which destroyed no peace but his own."* ([Blum](http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/essays/1801-1900/manifest-destiny/references-cited.php#blum) 276)

4. As an example of the opposing attitude and the attitude that was voiced by the majority of Americans at the time, the following article appeared in the Democratic Review in 1845.

*"Texas has been absorbed into the Union in the inevitable fulfillment of the general law which is rolling our population westward.... It was disintegrated form Mexico in the natural course of events, by a process perfectly legitimate on its own part, blameless on ours.... (its) incorporation into the Union was not only inevitable, but the most natural, right and proper thing in the world.... California will, probably, next fall away from...Mexico.... Imbecile and distracted, Mexico never can exert any real governmental authority over such a country.... The Anglo-Saxon foot is already on its borders. Already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon it armed with the plow and the rifle, and markings its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting houses. A population will soon be in actual occupation of California, over which it will be idle for Mexico to dream of dominion... All this without agency of our government, without responsibility of our people- -in natural flow of events, the spontaneous working of principles, and the adaptation of the tendencies and wants of the human race to the elemental circumstances in the midst of which they find themselves placed."* ([Blum](http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/essays/1801-1900/manifest-destiny/references-cited.php#blum) 277)