John Lawson was born in 1674 in England, he was a British explorer, naturalist and a writer.¹ In late December 1700, John Lawson and a group of eight Englishmen and Native Americans set off on a 500 mile, two month journey into the Carolina backcountry. Although at this time the backcountry had not been officially explored, it was inhabited by both natives and European newcomers. Along this journey Lawson paid special attention to his contact with distinct Indian tribes. For the first time, his presentation of Native Americans was remarkably candid and relatively free of assumptions of racial superiority and his portrayal of the natives were that they were generally friendly and accepting of European colonization. Lawson returned to England in 1709 and published his journal under the title *A New Voyage to Carolina*, were it would eventually become regarded as a classic of early American literature. John Lawson died in 1711 but his portrayal of North Carolina’s Native American population lives on as amongst the most accurate and perceptive of any produced by white authors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this short excerpt from *A New Voyage to Carolina*, Lawson is writing both descriptively about the past and present, and prescriptively about the future. But the central question that arises is, according to Lawson, who had changed more, who was changing more, and who should change more, in response to the encounters between Europeans and Native Americans in the Carolinas.

To begin, according to Lawson, the Native Americans were the ones that had changed more in response to the encounters between Europeans and Native Americans. Lawson states that, “They have learnt several Vices of the Europeans, but not one Vertue”, by this he means

that since the English colonization many Natives have learned and been introduced to many things that they did not have in their society, some of which have had negative effects.\(^2\) One negative vice that was introduced to the Natives was that of Drunkenness. Lawson explains that, “We have furnished them with the Vice of Drunkenness” and “Drunkenness was a stranger, when we found them out”.\(^3\) Lawson means that before the Natives had contact with the English alcohol and drunkenness was not a part of their society, it was only after their encounters that drunkenness became apparent in Native American society. This had a negative effect on their society by Lawson’s statement that, “They never fight with one another, unless drunk”.\(^4\) Another vice he describes is swearing and the English language. Before contact with the English Natives had no knowledge of the existence of this language, but through encounters some Natives had begun learning to speak English which wasn’t a part of their society in the past. Also, he describes that, “Swearing their Speech cannot express; yet those that speak English, learn to swear the first thing they talk of”, meaning that before contact with Europeans swearing was not a part of their society.\(^5\)

Lawson goes on to express the change in the Native American society by the clothes that these people wear. He describes that women’s normal clothing is a white deer-skin Flap but through the encounters with the European women have begun wearing blue and red Flaps made of Bays and Plains, which they buy from the English. Although the style of clothing is the same, due to the encounters with the Europeans, Native women are dressing in different colors rather than the traditional white deer-skin. Lawson goes on the state that, “We have some Indians, that are more civilized than the rest, which wear Hats, Shooes, Stockings, and Breeches, with very

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tolerable Linnen shirts, which is not common amongst these Heathens”. Now using interpretation, based on his description of the other Natives dress being a loan cloth, one could argue that these more civilized Natives learned to make these articles of clothing and obtained the Linnen through contact and trade with the Europeans. In conclusion, it was the Native Americans, according to Lawson, that had changed more through encounters with the Europeans by changes in their society concerning drunkenness, the learning of English, and the change in clothing.

Secondly, according to Lawson, it was the Native Americans who were changing even more in response to encounters with the Europeans. These changes Lawson describes were happening do to the English trying to assimilate them into their society. One major thing that Lawson states is learning of English handicrafts and trades by the Native Americans. Lawson explains that, “I have also known several of them that were slaves to the English, learn Handicraft-trades very well and speedily” and “I have known an Indian stock Guns better than most of our joiners, although he never saw one stock’d before”. This statement by Lawson means that the English were teaching the Natives handicrafts and trades they did not know before which was altering their society by introducing technology, for example guns. According to Lawson, the Natives were fast learners and could be very skilled with help from the Europeans, therefore the Europeans introduced trades to the Natives in hopes of them being able to acquire young Natives as apprentices and eventually assimilate them into English society.

Another major change that was happening with the Native Americans was their removal from their land as the English expanded west. As the English expanded their colonization they essentially took over and removed Natives from their tribes forcing them to uproot their tribes

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and find new land to settle, which eventually changed the Natives attitude toward the English for the worse. Also with increased encounters with the English the Natives began to be infected with European diseases, such as small pox, which could kill of tribes and large numbers of the Native American population which caused a drastic change on their once peaceful lives before they had contact with the Europeans. So in conclusion, the Native Americans were the ones constantly changing due to the English trying to assimilate them into their culture by teaching those handicraft-trades, their forced removal from their land, and the exposure of European diseases that killed of many of the Natives.

Finally, according to Lawson, it is the English that he feels should change, in response to the encounters between the Europeans and Native Americans in the Carolinas. Lawson’s main argument in this excerpt is that in order for the Native Americans to change, the English must first be the one to change in the way they act and treat the Natives be showing them justice, virtue, and respect. Lawson states that, “but I am of the Opinion, that such Inclinations in the Savages should meet with Encouragement, and every Englishman ought to do them Justice, and not defraud them of their Land, which has been allotted them formerly by the Government; for if we do not shew them Examples of Justice and Vertue, we can never bring them to believe us to be a worthier Race of Men than themselves”. 8 This statement by Lawson means that the Europeans need to first change their attitudes and treatment of the Natives by not stealing their land in order to set the good example of Justice to show the Natives that they are the worthier race which will urge the Natives to change and become a part of English society. He also goes on to state that, “As we are in Christian Duty bound, so we must act and behave ourselves to these savages, if we either intend to be serviceable in converting them to the knowledge of the

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Gospel”.⁹ By this he means that in order for the Natives to convert to Christianity it is the English who must change their ways and act as good Christians in order to set the good example for how the Natives should live their lives.

Throughout this excerpt Lawson complements the Natives on their skillful physical ability along with mental capabilities of fast learning, it is in the last paragraph of this excerpt that he concludes his argument on why the English need to change the way they act and their treatment of the Natives. Lawson states that, “the whole Body of these People would arrive to the Knowledge of our Religion and Customs, and become as one People with us. By this Method also, we should have a true Knowledge of all the Indians Skill in Medicine and Surgery…where by their Assistance, greater Discoveries may be made than has been hitherto found out…we might civilize a great many other Nations of the Savages, and daily add to our Strength in Trade…we might be sufficiently enabled to conquer, or maintain our Ground, against all the Enemies to the Crown of England in America, both Christian and Savage”.¹⁰ By this long statement Lawson describes that if the English were to change their treatment of the Natives by encouraging them and treating them with justice the Native Americans would unite with the English as one people and work together to achieve greatness and with each other’s help they union would become the most wealthiest and powerful country in the entire world. In conclusion, in this excerpt Lawson is encouraging the English to change their attitudes and treatment of the Natives in order for them to see that the English are the better race to encourage the Native Americans to assimilate into the English society.

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