

“There’s Money in Them”: General S. C. Armstrong’s Marketing Plan for the Hampton Indian Program, 1878-1893

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In the early morning hours of April 13, 1878, Helen Ludlow, a teacher at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, poured coffee for and helped a group of newly arrived students settle in. Ludlow’s new charges had just completed a long sea journey from prison cells in St. Augustine, Florida, to the sprawling campus on the Virginia peninsula. These seventeen new arrivals differed drastically from the teenage, rural-born, African Americans who normally made up the student body. Instead, the new arrivals averaged twenty-nine years old and bore “wild” names such as Etahdlush, White Bear, and Soaring Eagle. After the students settled in, the sight of the Comanche, Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Kiowa students exploring the campus wearing “Uncle Sam’s uniform” enamored Ludlow. The students’ orientation culminated at a worship service held in the campus chapel. During the service, white instructors led both black and Indian students in traditional Christian hymns followed by a few “Negro spirituals.” The service ended with the “shrill war-song of the

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Kiowas," which, according to Ludlow, concluded with "yells like the bark of a hundred coyotes."¹

The mixture of the "civilized" white, black "plantation," and "savage" Indian songs marked the inauguration of a four-decade chapter in Hampton Institute's history and the United States' Native American policy. Hampton's decision to admit Indian students came during a period when white northern reformers and the federal government were determined to "civilize" the "savages." A common belief was that Native Americans were a "wasting race" destined for extinction. Hope existed, however, for the doomed. To avoid extinction, they must choose to abandon savagery and accept the "white man's way." Many Americans viewed Christian education as the primary mechanism for helping Indians "abandon the blanket." Eventually, with enough time and effort, the Native Americans would be absorbed into the white race and survive for posterity.²

Although the romantic notion of saving a dying race weighed heavily in the decision to accept Indian students at Hampton, it was by no means the sole reason. Hampton's founder and chief administrator, General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, used his Indian program as a means to provide the institution with a steady stream of money. More precisely, Armstrong and the Hampton Institute developed a sophisticated, yet subtle, and successful marketing, publicity, and fundraising campaign around the imagery of the school saving an otherwise doomed race. Although a considerable amount of literature has been written about Hampton's Indian program, such as Francis Peabody's early, but biased, work *Education for Life* and Donal

¹ Francis G. Peabody, *Education for Life: The Story of Hampton Institute* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1919), 50; Donal F. Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute, 1877-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 30; Helen W. Ludlow, "Indian Education at Hampton and Carlisle," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, April 1881, 661; Richard H. Pratt, *Battlefields and Classrooms: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 190-193; and William H. Robinson, "Indian Education at Hampton Institute" in *Stony the Road: Chapters in the History of Hampton Institute*, ed. Keith L. Schall (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 1. Demographic information about the students is derived from U.S. Senate, *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior, in response to Senate Resolution of February 28, 1891, forwarding report made by the Hampton Institute regarding its returned Indian students. February 8, 1892--Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs, and the letter of transmittal ordered to be printed. February 9, 1892*, 52nd Cong., 1st sess., 1892. S. Doc. 31, Serial 2892, 38-40 [hereinafter cited as *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior*].

² For an in-depth discussion on the inevitable extinction of Native Americans, see Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).



Gen. S. C. Armstrong. From Edith Armstrong Talbot's *Samuel Chapman Armstrong: A Biographical Study* (1904).

F. Lindsey's more modern, and critical, study *Indians at Hampton*, Armstrong's use and portrayal of Native American students as a fundraising mechanism has not been fully explored.³

³Peabody's *Education for Life* paints Armstrong and Hampton as the Indians' saviors, mentioning fundraising only briefly. Lindsey acknowledges that the Indian program helped "keep the school financially solvent" but does not fully examine Armstrong's use of imagery; Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton*, 41. Robert Engs also recognizes the financial impact of Hampton's Indian program; Engs, *Educating the Disenfranchised and Disinherited: Samuel Chapman Armstrong and Hampton Institute, 1839-1893* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 117.

The fundraising campaign demonstrated Armstrong's keen understanding of how to attract public donations. First, he presented the Hampton model as the best, if not the only, way to bring Indians to civilization. Next, he identified his target donors—the United States government, anxious to settle the “Indian question,” as well as white, socially conscious, Christian northerners with deep pockets. With target donors in mind, Armstrong developed specific products that appealed to them and emphasized Hampton's uniqueness. Although Hampton, as an industrial school, did produce actual material goods for the market, such as foodstuffs, the products that Armstrong marketed were less concrete in nature. Hampton sought to market civilized Indians, Christianity, education, and Armstrong himself, the martyr willing to risk his own personal health to save the Indians.

Finally, Armstrong utilized specific marketing avenues to make his product available to the target market. Armstrong deployed a campaign of epic proportions, using celebrity spokespersons, having students write letters to Christian societies, and taking Indian students on extended fundraising tours through the Northeast and overseas. With the aforementioned information as a basic guide, each of the basic tenets of Armstrong's marketing plan merit more detailed analysis.

Before the first Native American students arrived in 1878, Hampton Institute and, more specifically, General Armstrong had developed a reputation as innovators in civilizing an “inferior” race. Hampton was born out of the turmoil and chaos that plagued the South after the Civil War. Thousands of African-American freedmen left their former masters' homes. Many wandered the countryside and often congregated at large refugee camps, including one in Hampton, Virginia. As the nation tried to develop plans for the freedmen, the camp at Hampton continued to grow. Well-meaning missionaries, led by Rev. R. C. Lockwood and the American Missionary Association (AMA), believed that the freedmen needed education and Christianity, organizing Sunday schools and churches. In 1867, Armstrong, the son of missionary parents, a Union veteran, and Freedmen's Bureau agent, proposed the creation of a “Negro College” designed to educate teachers and prepare the freedmen for civilization. Financially backed by the AMA and private donations, the

Hampton Institute opened its doors in April 1868 with twenty students and two teachers.⁴

By the 1870s, Hampton had built a reputation as “the most satisfactory and successful [school] in the whole country, perhaps, for the higher education of the blacks.”⁵ The press lauded Armstrong’s keen understanding of the “Negro character” and his tailoring Hampton to fit the race’s needs.⁶ Despite its growing reputation, Hampton was never able to achieve financial stability. The end of radical reconstruction and the beginning of “redemption” only added to the hardship as government funding and public support for programs benefiting freedmen began to decline. Hampton, operating solely for the benefit of blacks, needed a new income source.

As the “Indian Question” came to the forefront of national debate in the late 1870s, Armstrong thought that he could apply the same industrial education model, which had put the freedmen on the road to civilization, to the Indians. He also realized that the enrollment of Native Americans could help solve some of the school’s financial difficulties. As he told his wife, Emma, “There’s money in them, I tell you.”⁷

Several months before he accepted Hampton’s first Indian students, Armstrong wrote to his college classmate and United States congressman, Martin I. Townsend, marketing Hampton as the ideal place to educate Native Americans, with government funding. “We have just the system for these Indians,” he wrote, “Would not the experiment be worth trying?” Armstrong believed the Hampton system was the best way to educate and civilize the Indian. Armstrong estimated the cost to educate one Indian student at \$250.00 annually, which would greatly strengthen Hampton’s financial situation. Always the consummate salesperson, however, Armstrong did not want to appear desperate for money: “We don’t need this job. We are all right—but the Indians are not: we are in earnest to help them.”⁸

⁴Mary F. Armstrong and Helen W. Ludlow, *Hampton and Its Students* (1874; reprint, Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 15, 20-22, 40. Peabody wrote that Hampton opened with fifteen students and one teacher; *Education for Life*, 99.

⁵*Old and New* July 1871, 130.

⁶*New York Evangelist*, June 18, 1874, 8.

⁷Engs, *Educating the Disenfranchised and Disinherited*, 117

⁸Samuel C. Armstrong to Martin I. Townsend, December 3, 1877, Beinecke Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

In marketing Hampton, Armstrong capitalized on the fear, frustration, and general concern of those interested in the fate of the Native Americans. He marketed the Hampton system to a specific, targeted audience. For example, Armstrong did not propose educating Indians at Hampton to Martin Townsend because he was a friend and old college chum. Instead, he targeted Townsend because of his legislative power and access to the government coffers. Armstrong exercised masterful skills at determining potential donors, knowing what they wanted to hear, and keeping them happy. In marketing Indian education at Hampton, Armstrong developed a plan focused on two groups in particular—the United States government officials and white, northern, philanthropists.

During its first ten years of operation, Hampton, apart from a moderate amount of money from Virginia's Morrill Act funds, depended primarily on private donations to survive.⁹ As any non-profit operator would agree, maintaining an organization's financial solvency primarily through philanthropic income means walking a monetary tightrope. Facing fluctuating income and an enormous operating budget, Armstrong constantly looked for stable and consistent income sources. The federal government was one of the few institutions that could provide such support.¹⁰

For many years, the government had worked to civilize the Native Americans. The civilization process involved teaching Christianity, abandoning "savage costumes," and education in scholarly basics and agriculture. Congress allocated funds to accomplish these goals, and Armstrong was willing to accept a share. In defending the need for government-aided education, he argued, "We tell the Indians to take the white man's road and refuse to open it." Armstrong continued, "he is capable of citizenship, but is unfit to hold lands, or manage property till he can read and write."¹¹ He recognized the government's needs and presented the Hampton model as the best way to fulfill them.

Armstrong's efforts proved to be successful, and the government began to provide Hampton with substantial funding to expand its In-

⁹Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton*, 9.

¹⁰Engs, *Educating the Disenfranchised*, 117.

¹¹"Address of Gen. S. C. Armstrong," *American Missionary* December 1881, 404.



Indian students at Hampton. *Courtesy Library of Congress.*

dian program. With the arrival of the second group of Indian Students in the fall of 1878, Hampton received \$150 annually for each of its one-hundred Indian students amounting to approximately \$15,000 per year. The annual payment increased to \$167 per student in 1881, and, beginning in 1886, Congress authorized Hampton to accept twenty more students increasing the annual subsidy to approximately \$20,000.¹²

With Congress's purse strings loosened, Armstrong had to keep the legislators happy. In other words, he hoped to alleviate concerns the government had with the Hampton Indian program. During the fall of 1880, for example, the government became concerned with the high death rate among Indian students in eastern schools. Arm-

¹² *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior.* See also Engs, *Educating the Disenfranchised*, 126-127; Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton*, 41.

strong responded with zeal and calculated rhetoric. In an article in the *American Missionary* he argued, "The death rate at Hampton has been serious but not discouraging." He then blamed weakened Indian immunities on the governments' reservation policy. "The tribes gathered as they are in unnatural conditions at the agency, away from the chase and the fight, without action or buffalo beef, fed on government rations, weaken."¹³ Armstrong hoped to deflect any responsibility for student deaths away from Hampton.

Hampton defenders also blamed the Indians themselves for the illnesses. Booker T. Washington, a Hampton teacher and its most celebrated alumnus, wrote, "the trouble with their health comes not so much from a change in climate as from carelessness on their part." He continued, "The Indians are slow to learn that when they adopt the white man's dress, they must also adopt his health laws."¹⁴ Washington's rationale was in line with other nineteenth century thought. To many, Native Americans were an "infantile" race and needed guidance to move towards civilization.

Armstrong's and Washington's arguments deflected any blame from the Hampton Indian program and presented it as a solution to the problem. Hampton taught Indian students the skills necessary for self-reliance thus alleviating the need for government aid on the reservation. Furthermore, Hampton's program acted as a crash course in the "white man's way." According to Washington, "they will have to be carefully, instructed, watched, and helped in regard to their health."¹⁵ Hampton was just the place to instruct, watch, and help them.

Armstrong's defense proved effective, and the federal government continued to support the Hampton Indian program. Though the government subsidy was substantial and steady, Hampton could not operate solely on these funds. Instead, Armstrong relied heavily on the donations of white, northern philanthropists and focused much of his attention on gaining their support. Armstrong used many devices to attract potential donors, such as appointing trustees

¹³S. C. Armstrong, "Indian Education in the East," *American Missionary*, December 1880, 407.

¹⁴Booker T. Washington, "Incidents of Indian Life at Hampton," *Southern Workman*, January 1881, quoted in Louis R. Harlan et. al., *The Papers of Booker T. Washington* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 2:103.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

with access to northern money or hiring teachers because of their relationship to the elite.¹⁶ Yet, offering “products” that appealed to their social conscience proved most effective in attracting donations.

Many potential donors shared a common viewpoint in regards to Native Americans. They wanted to save the Indians from extinction through civilization, which only Christianity and education could accomplish. Additionally, they wanted to donate their money to an organization with a proven record of accomplishment and solid leadership. Armstrong marketed two specific “products” to his target audience—the civilized Indian through Christianity and education and Armstrong himself.

Armstrong had to demonstrate that the Hampton program corrected much of the savagery that many white Americans attributed to Native Americans. For example, many believed that Indians were incapable of learning, inherently dangerous, and possessed a “shady” character. In answer, Armstrong presented Hampton to the public as a place to correct these flaws, using newspaper and journal articles to shape public, and more importantly potential donors’, perceptions about both Hampton and Native Americans.

Armstrong, realizing this fact, invited press members to carefully staged demonstrations of Hampton’s civilizing effect on Native American students. Annual commencement exercises served this purpose perfectly. Graduation ceremonies consisted of more than the issuance of diplomas. Exhibits from each of the departments at the school greeted the press, dignitaries, and visitors. Students performed their recitations and annual examinations in front of on-lookers. Some students read original works, while others gave stirring speeches. Journalists wrote countless articles describing in detail the miracles occurring at Hampton. The imagery and language used, though often comical, clearly demonstrates Armstrong’s use of the “civilized” Indian to attract donations.

For example, one writer observing the 1888 graduation ceremonies commented, “How successful the work with these sons of the forest has been is shown by the fact that but four of them have been reported to the authorities here as ‘bad Indians.’”¹⁷ After attending the 1887 commencement exercises, Boston author Herbert D. Ward

¹⁶Engs, *Educating the Disenfranchised*, 152.

¹⁷*New York Times*, May 26, 1888.



The Hampton Institute stressed industrial education for both its Native American and African American students. *Courtesy Library of Congress.*

argued that the teachers working in the Indian department merited praise because “they take the ignorant natives as they come from the camp and drill them in English as well as the right habits of living and of studying.” He concluded that Hampton’s success with the Indians is best seen through observing the students’ physical demeanor. “Their faces soften and grow intelligent. Their shiftlessness leaves them, they walk straight and become willing and useful.”¹⁸

Articles written about Indian students defending white policies were even more convincing. In one such article, the author described a conversation between Sioux students at Hampton. The students argued back and forth about the merits of the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie. Some of the young boys, newly arrived to the institution, argued that the government had wronged the Indians and that they

¹⁸Herbert D. Ward, “Hampton’s Eighteenth Commencement,” *Independent...Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economics*, June 2, 1887 [hereinafter cited as *Independent*].

should fight back. One student cried out, "The Indians had only bows and arrows once—now they have guns." Another student, more than likely a veteran student, who had remained quiet throughout the heated discussion decided to speak out. "You're all talking nonsense," he said, "Fight with mind!" After the other students contemplated this challenge, the student continued, "How many think they have a better weapon than the white man's gun in the white man's thought?" In the article's dramatic conclusion, the author describes every student, including the original instigators, raising their hands in agreement.¹⁹

Hampton also marketed its Indian program to Christians as a way to bring the "heathens" to Christ. The press often reported, in dramatic detail, about communion ceremonies held at the Hampton chapel, where Indian students began the process of growing "into the beauty and glory of Christian manhood."²⁰ Armstrong presented Hampton as a place that could achieve "quality" conversions rather than merely converting a high quantity of Indian students to Christianity. In an article discussing Hampton's progress, one author was amazed at the conversion of eleven students "against each of whom there were charges of for plunder and plunder on file in the War Department." Armstrong declared that he "never saw a more radical change of life than appeared in these men." He continued, "They represented the worst stock in the Indian Territory—the class that the West declares cannot be educated any more than the buffalo."²¹ According to Armstrong, Hampton did the impossible, educating them and converting them to Christianity.

Potential donors readily "purchased" Armstrong's "product," the civilized Indian, by donating money to the institution. Many also donated, not because of what Armstrong could produce, but because of Armstrong, the man. Armstrong knew that in order to attract large donations philanthropists must be confident in the leadership at the institution. Therefore, Armstrong was constantly in the public eye, presenting himself as an expert in the education and civilization of the "darker races." The press bought into this and often portrayed Armstrong as a martyr, willing to sacrifice his own health and, if nec-

¹⁹"Indian Boys on Indian Wrongs," *Christian Union*, April 23, 1885.

²⁰"Communion Sunday at Hampton," *American Missionary* March 1881, 86.

²¹*New York Times*, June 18, 1881.

essary, his life for the cause of saving African and Native Americans. One writer remarked, "Such a man as General Armstrong and such a work as his is an inspiration to the century, a justification of Christianity."²²

Because the public perceived Armstrong as the key to Hampton's success, his personal health often acted as a commodity to attract donations. In particular, the press publicized and used two serious illnesses, 1886 and 1891, to gain support for Hampton. In the fall of 1886, doctors ordered Armstrong to rest after the discovery of a faulty heart valve. Many blamed the condition on his tireless efforts to raise money for Hampton. The *New York Times* reported, "Gen. Armstrong is simply worn out, not by the work of administration alone, but by his efforts to place the future of the institution beyond the insecurity of a human life." The last portion of the article read, "Money should be sent quickly (and every little bit helps)."²³ In other words, the best way to save Armstrong's life and lift him from his sick bed was to donate money. The *New York Evangelist* also argued that the time had come "to relieve its chief of a burden which, if not upon his hands, is still upon his heart. We believe that nothing would do so much to health as the assurance that all his wants were provided for."²⁴

Professional journalists were not alone in their call to lift Armstrong from illness through donations. One concerned reader devised a plan to provide Hampton with a permanent endowment "thus taking a burden off General Armstrong's mind." To raise \$50,000, his plan called for two-hundred people to each donate \$250. The writer, wishing to remain anonymous, continued, "I have recently sent \$200, but will gladly be one of two hundred to raise \$50,000." Demonstrating genuine concern, he closed the letter writing, "Unless the Lord raises up some one to fill General Armstrong's place, or opens the hearts and purses of people to give liberally, I don't see how Hampton Institute is to be sustained."²⁵

²²*Independent*, May 18, 1893.

²³*New York Times*, October 21, 1886.

²⁴*New York Evangelist*, September 2, 1886.

²⁵*Ibid.*, September 23, 1886.

Although the plan was not adopted, the calls for donations appear to have worked. As 1886 ended, Armstrong returned to full health and contributions to the endowment increased dramatically. Donations in 1886 totaled \$9,810.90, an increase of 279% from the previous years' total of \$3,505.19. In 1887, donations increased dramatically to \$36,182.75. From 1888 to 1891, however, donations, with the exception of a minor spike in 1889, steadily declined until reaching a near all-time low of \$3,153.75 in 1891.²⁶

The stress of decreased donations must have been too much for Armstrong to handle. On Thanksgiving Day, 1891, after the end of the fiscal year, a "paralytic shock" incapacitated Armstrong during a speech in Stoneham, Massachusetts. Again, the press attributed his illness to "the strain under which he has labored to carry on the work of the negro and the Indian."²⁷ According to one journalist, the Hampton Board of Trustees had often feared "What shall we do if General Armstrong should break down?" Now, he wrote their greatest fear had come to fruition. The only solution was for the public to open their wallets and provide a permanent endowment for the school.²⁸ Again, the plea for donations and the fear of Armstrong's death apparently worked. Donations for 1892 increased to \$148,524.26.²⁹

Clearly, Hampton had developed a strong marketing plan. The public accepted their "unique selling proposition"—that the Hampton model was the best way to educate and civilize Native Americans. The institution appealed to and alleviated the fears of their target "consumers"—the government and northern white philanthropists, and Hampton offered "products" that met the "consumers" needs, such as the civilized Indian and a martyr-like figure in General Armstrong. The most important element of the marketing plan, however, was the distribution methods used to present the Hampton plan to the public. Armstrong utilized three primary mechanisms to gain public support—celebrity endorsements, student correspondence, and fundraising tours.

²⁶"Increase of Endowment by Years" in Peabody, *Education for Life*, 360.

²⁷*New York Times*, December 20, 1891. The paralysis affected his entire left side, but apparently did not affect his speech or ability to think clearly; *Critic: A Weekly Review of Literature and the Arts*, December 5, 1891.

²⁸*Independent*, December 3, 1891.

²⁹"Increase of Endowment by Years" in Peabody, *Education for Life*, 360.

As most executives will agree, a celebrity endorsement is perhaps the most effective way to gain public approval. Armstrong realized this and was not reluctant to use celebrities to legitimize his institution. United States presidents, in particular, were some of his favorite spokesmen. Rutherford B. Hayes, in an address at Hampton's 1880 commencement exercise, argued that the relationship of the different races was one of the nation's greatest problems and that "Hampton was solving it."³⁰ Hampton scheduled the recently-inaugurated James A. Garfield, Armstrong's college classmate and a former school trustee, to lay the cornerstone for the Indian girl's dormitory and deliver a speech at the 1881 ceremonies. Due to his wife's illness, however, he was unable to attend.³¹ Besides presidents, Armstrong publicized Hampton through such figures as the Civil War general and founder of Howard University, Oliver O. Howard. Armstrong relied on their prominence and press coverage to gain support for the school.

Indian student correspondence served as another mechanism to publicize Hampton's program and solicit donations. The letters were usually advertised as being published, "as they were written," in broken English, with spelling and grammatical errors. Most of the letters followed a common pattern. They would usually be addressed to "My dear friend" then give a biographical account of the student's life as a "savage." The letters would end with the student describing how happy they are at Hampton and how much the program has changed their life.

James Murie, a sixteen-year old Pawnee who arrived at Hampton in November 1879, wrote his first published letter in March 1880. He provided details of his early life in Grand Isle, Nebraska, the bland diet of dried meat and witnessing Buffalo hunts. Murie ends by writing, "I am glad I went to Hampton School. I am trying to be good boy, and study all I can."³² On the surface, the letter seemed to demonstrate that the Hampton program had transformed a young "savage" into a civilized man in less than six months. Although Murie acknowledged attending school for four months prior to his arrival at Hampton, this was not a full disclosure of his educational back-

³⁰ *American Missionary*, July 1880, 206.

³¹ *New York Times*, May 23, 1881; *American Missionary*, July 1881, 202.

³² "An Indian Boys Letter," *American Missionary*, March 1880, 84.

ground. In reality, Murie had attended school for eight years, including a stint at Genoa in Nebraska.³³ It is impossible to determine whether Armstrong and Hampton purposely tried to mislead potential donors. It is undeniable, however, that the “perceived” success of the Hampton program, in its efforts to civilize Murie, might add credibility to the institutions claims.

The third mechanism for promoting the Hampton Indian program was fundraising tours throughout the north. Armstrong’s use of this mechanism began before Hampton accepted its first Indian students. In 1873, he created the Hampton Singers, a choral group comprised of the best singers at the school. Armstrong then took the singers on concert tours, where they performed plantation songs throughout the Northeast in an effort to raise money for the construction of a girl’s dormitory. The campaign proved successful, raising enough money to fulfill its goal. More importantly, however, the Hampton Singers captured the imagination of concert goers and donors and brought considerable recognition to the Institute. One observer remarked that the group “presented a spectacle no less vivid for its striking features than dramatic in its associations.”³⁴

When Hampton began accepting Indian Students, Armstrong reformatted the tours to include select Native American students. The earliest of these new tours did not include the Hampton Singers. Instead, Armstrong chose twenty to twenty-five Indian students to travel throughout the Northeast and act as living examples of the great work at Hampton. Usually held at large protestant churches, the meetings were advertised under titles such as “Civilizing the Indian” or “Higher Education for the Redman.” Audience members listened to speeches delivered by local clergy, “Indian authorities,” members of the Hampton faculty, and Armstrong himself. The highlight of the evening, however, occurred when one or two of the Indian students stepped to the podium.³⁵

This was usually a tense moment for the audience, not knowing what to expect. During the earliest tours, Armstrong often used students who had only recently arrived at Hampton, and their appear-

³³ *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior*, 66-67.

³⁴ “The Hampton Colored Students Concert,” *Oneida Circular*, April 28, 1873; Engs, *Educating the Disenfranchised*, 110-111.

³⁵ *New York Times*, January 23, 27, 1879.

ances did not always produce the desired result. One such incident occurred at a meeting in New York City in January 1879. After the local clergy and Armstrong delivered impassioned speeches, Col. Richard Pratt introduced a young Indian student. An onlooker described the event. "The Indian boy was led out before the congregation, coughed, fumbled with his hat, and gave other evidences of embarrassment, but in the meantime said nothing." After a few tense moments, a member of the stage party, in an effort to break the silence, stood and suggested that the boy wait to speak "until the spirit moved him." Both Pratt and Armstrong attempted to encourage the frightened student, but he continued to remain silent. Pratt apologized and blamed the large audience size for the student's stage fright. The incident did not deter audience members from their commitment to educate Indians. The meeting ended with a collection for Hampton.³⁶

Although this meeting proved successful, Armstrong did not want a recurrence. Over the next few years, he refined the fundraising engagements to maximize their effectiveness. Specifically, he only chose student speakers he could count on. Students with considerable education before arriving at Hampton became his primary spokespersons.

Thomas "Wildcat" Alford, for example, made a number of appearances in the North. Alford, an eighteen-year-old Shawnee, arrived at Hampton in 1879 with five years of education.³⁷ His speeches often had a common theme. In March 1882 at a speech in the Union League Theatre in New York, he shared the stage with Armstrong and spoke about "the necessity of education for the Indians."³⁸ Later in the year, he reinforced the argument by saying "that one educated Indian could do more for the benefit of his people in one year than a regiment of soldiers in ten years."³⁹

Throughout the rest of the 1880s until his death in 1893, Armstrong continued to tweak his fundraising tours. He eventually combined the Indian students with the Hampton Singers to perform grand exhibitions of Hampton's civilizing powers. In 1887, he took a

³⁶Ibid., January 27, 1879.

³⁷*Letter from the Secretary of the Interior*, 38-39, 66-67.

³⁸*New York Evangelist*, March 30, 1882; *New York Times*, March 18, 1882.

³⁹*American Missionary*, July 1882, 201-202.

combined group of students to London as examples of American life. Although the Indian students arrived “wearing civilized garb and behaving themselves in a perfectly decorous manner,” Londoners would have the chance to see “the native Tuscarora buck, squaw, and papoose . . . in all the glories of buckskin and porcupine quill.”⁴⁰ Regardless of where he staged them, Armstrong’s fundraising tours brought Hampton’s Indian program to the forefront of the public’s mind and attracted a considerable amount of private donations.

Alford and others chosen to represent the Indian program personified what Armstrong and Hampton hoped to achieve. Before graduating in 1882, Alford spent his spare time compiling an English-Shawnee dictionary because “his tribe had no such book, and one is greatly needed.”⁴¹ After leaving Hampton, he married a “white lady,” worked as a surveyor, and owned a farm with fifty acres and seventy-five cattle.⁴² George Bushotter, another of Armstrong’s favorite representatives, spent time working at the Bureau of Ethnology before he “became entangled in a love affair causing his dismissal.” He then married a white woman and settled in Hedgeville, West Virginia.⁴³

Armstrong’s choice of student speakers during fundraising tours was only a small part of his grand marketing scheme. Every portion of his publicity and fundraising plan centered on one theme—demonstrating that the Hampton Indian program would help bring an otherwise doomed race towards civilization. Armstrong marketed this agenda to his target donors, the United States government and Northern, white philanthropists. He presented himself and the “civilized” Indian as “products” that donors purchased through charitable contributions. Potential donors became aware of and excited about Hampton’s civilizing efforts through specific advertising mechanisms such as celebrity endorsements, student correspondence, and elaborate promotional tours through the North. Although sophisticated and well thought, ultimately, was this plan successful?

⁴⁰*New York Times*, December 31, 1887.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, August 1881, 237.

⁴²*Letter from the Secretary of the Interior*, 15.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 13.

Because “success” is quite subjective in nature, a better and more appropriate query might be: did Armstrong’s marketing plan attract donations? The answer to this question is quite simply—yes. After Native American students began attending Hampton Institute, charitable donations increased dramatically. In addition to small individual donations or collections raised at fundraising meetings, Hampton became the beneficiary to a number of prominent estates. In March 1888, the publisher A. S. Barnes, bequeathed \$25,000 to the Institute.⁴⁴ Others, such as Cornelius Irwin and Harriet Pond, left smaller amounts.⁴⁵

In one particular case, the press criticized a large estate for not leaving money to Hampton. In 1888, Samuel J. Curtis left \$750,000 to the Curtis Home for Old Women and Orphans in Meriden, Connecticut. A journalist reporting about the bequest, remarked, “A local orphan asylum needs no three-quarters of a million. We wish there might be a bureau to advise rich men how to bestow their goods. That sum would have been far more wisely given to Hampton Institute.”⁴⁶ This comment was indicative of the public’s perception of Hampton Institute. Armstrong’s marketing plan proved effective in gaining public support for the school’s efforts in civilizing Native Americans. This story’s importance, however, is not limited to finances. Rather, Armstrong’s fundraising efforts had a significant impact on Hampton’s future and the public’s perception of Native Americans.

When the first Indian students arrived at Hampton on that cold morning in 1878, Armstrong and the Hampton faculty regarded it as an experiment. They could not have predicted that Native American students would become a permanent fixture at the Institute. Because of Armstrong’s fundraising efforts and commitment to Indian education, the experiment grew into a practice that lasted nearly forty-five years until its end in 1923.

Finally, Armstrong’s fundraising efforts brought much needed attention to the Hampton model of Indian education. Armstrong was masterful at knowing what society wanted to hear and presenting

⁴⁴*New York Times*, March 8, 1888; *New York Evangelist*, March 15, 1888.

⁴⁵*Christian Union*, August 18, 1887; *Zion’s Herald*, September 14, 1887; *New York Times*, April 1, 1893.

⁴⁶*Independent*, February 2, 1888.

Hampton as the solution. As a result, the public bought into the idea of industrial education for Native Americans and pushed for increased opportunities for them to “abandon the blanket.” The public perceived Hampton as the cure for the otherwise inevitable extinction of the Indians.