

The United States Appropriating the Name America

Byron A. Ellis, Ph.D. – July 17, 2026



In 1507, the German cartographer Martin Waldseemüller used the term America to refer to lands that Europeans claimed to have discovered in the “new world,” even though those lands already had indigenous names and non-European peoples lived on them for generations. Nonetheless, he created a world map in honor of Amerigo Vespucci and applied the name America to the land that is now Brazil.

By the 1530s, cartographers like Gerardus Mercator extended the name to the entire Western Hemisphere. However, the Mercator map projection was imbued with landmass distortions and inaccuracies. For instance, he projected Africa as a small landmass.

Thus, the Mercator projection reinforced colonial and imperialist worldviews, or to put it bluntly, lies. It enlarged Europe and North America while minimizing the Global South.

The Americas are two continents, North and South America, with the Central America isthmus and many Caribbean islands.

However, many United States citizens who are unfamiliar with geography believe that the United States is America.

[Sing](#) (2025) noted, “When the thirteen British colonies in North America declared independence in 1776, they needed a name that reflected their political structure and unity. Thus, the term “United States of America” was chosen to describe a federation of individual states located in the Americas, emphasizing both their union and their geographic location.”

Therefore, the term America for the United States is an appropriated name. In truth, it refers to the American continents and not to the United States of America, because all who are born in the Americas are Americans, not only United States citizens.

Beckles Willson noted that after 1898, “the best speakers and writers,” feeling that the United States no longer captured the nature of their country, switched to America ([Daniel Immerwahr](#), 2019).

Thus, the United States of America appropriated the name of the American continents for itself. But in truth, the United States is not America; it is merely another lie. Rather, the United States, Mexico, and Canada are part of the North American continent.

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