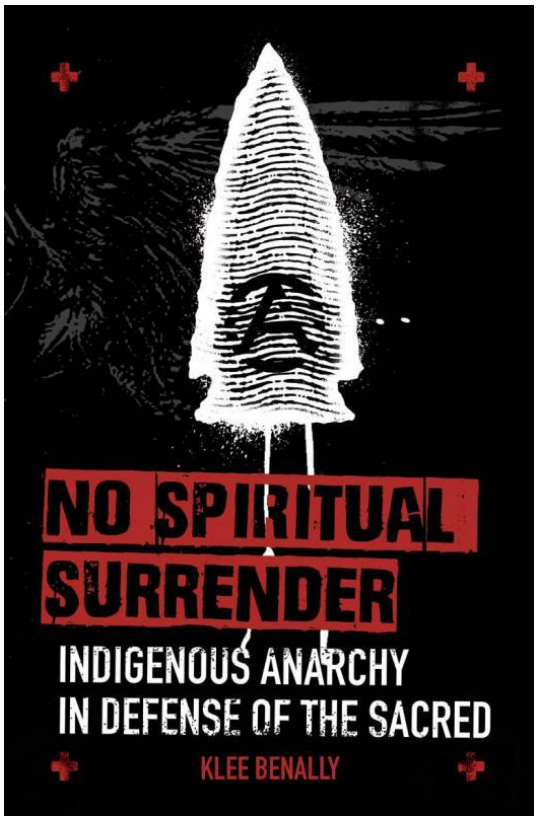
No Spiritual Surrender

Indigenous Anarchy in Defense of the Sacred

Klee Benally



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For you, who also despairs.

Acknowledgments and brief note


BIA
DONT
KILL ME
I'M 3

Yá'át'ééh shik'éí dóó shidine'é, shí éí klee benally yinishyé, Todichiini bashishchiin, Nakai Diné' dashinalí, shí ma ei bilagaana ado bilagaana dashicheii. Ákót'éego diné nishłį́. Dził Yijiin déé' naashá ndi Kinłani kéédahasht'į́.

This book is a tension of experience and cultural teachings. It has been both torment and fanatical joy to write. This process has been a conflict with the challenges and blessings of my upbringing through ceremony, and malignant antagonisms with academia and leftist politics that have led me to what I have reluctantly embraced as an anti-colonial anti-politics.

As I've written and reviewed my previous work and growth (or disintegration) I realized how much—most likely from a lesson imparted by some of my elders—I've resisted the urge towards a fixed point. You will find me intentionally belligerent and elusive here and there. I don't apologize for any of it. What I have learned about life I have learned through ceremony. What I have learned about politics I have learned from politics' many violences and through organizing to intervene by both reactive and proactive means. I tend to drift far outside of and away from the scorched Earth texts of scholarly terrain. If my conclusions from this experience frustrate you (which I anticipate that they will for many), I suggest that whatever you can gather from consultations with your elders, through ceremony, and critically sifting through the failures of progressive activism would be just as useful—if not more. Some will be quick to dismiss this work as "ethnocentric" but that's just lazy. You will find no propositions or assumptions of ethnic superiority here. I'm mixed-Diné raised with Tádídíín K'eh Atiin and a lot of practical experience in frontline sacred lands struggles naming what is fucked up in this world from my bitter perspective (I am born for Tó dích'íi'nii after all).

This book has become somewhat more autobiographical than I originally intended, which is odd as I typically have a slight disdain for such storycraft. In writing this, I kept reflecting on certain experiences that seemed prudent to share, be they good, bad, and the in-between. In rereading literature that I found inspirational at one point in my life, going through old zines, and new polemics online and off, and in the process of reviewing my growth as an antagonist and writer, it is hard for me not to notice how the contradictions in those texts protrude that much more. I try to tend to what matters, embrace the imperfections—and I probably don't take some things as seriously as you may read them to be here.

You will find redundancies and inconsistencies with the text, mostly attributed to some of the pieces being written at different stages in my life and subsequent growth. I've amended some previously written pieces, left others intact, and added some notes. There are also points where I switch from I to wemostly that's contextual, but I've never been fond of "I." "We" has always felt to be the most appropriate of invitations, and some pieces have been written collectively. I also invite you to read this work non-linearly (in and out of order).

I speak of the sacred, but I am measured regarding what I share, so you will not find an "exploration of Diné spiritual knowledge" here. I was brought up with the sensibility that sacred knowledge should not be committed to pages, words, recordings, and should not be translated. That might sound contradictory in a book about defending the sacred, and it is. The desire to be "a part of the sacredness" is a fucked-up anthropological colonial New Age desire. Fetishist autopsies of Indigenous desacralization fill bookshelves, museums, auction houses, trading posts—and bank accounts. If you came here for such a validating performance I am happy to disappoint you. If you've read this book and found ways to improve your activism, then you've read it wrong. When I speak of liberation, it is not to foment yet another social justice project, it is an inclu-

sive and fervent agitation against domination and exploitation of existence, for the liberation of Mother Earth is liberation of all existence.

More than anything this is for you, dear traveler against settler time who listens to whispers of ancestral voices and is torn apart in the space between nightmare and dream that comprises this brutalized existence. By desiring something more or perhaps out of concern, curiosity, boredom, or whatever impulse has brought you to these words, here we are.

If you came here looking for answers you might find a bit of teasing underlaid with agony. I've written mostly in that profane and narrow space between invocation and provocation, that disorienting space where the process of healing also lives. This is a story within and without a time, along a path upon which I am also a traveler.

Sit a moment, grab some tea. I have a bit of a mess to tend to—of words that are now crystalized that once were so many shards of glass.

I wish to thank the amazing, fierce, fabulous, daring, smart, and just plain solid people who have backed me up in the writing of this book: My heart and fire, Princess Benally; my family (who may not appreciate the bitterness of some of these words and agitations but who are why I am who I have become, after all); the attentive and respectful friends who offered edits, some who have elected to remain anonymous; those who encouraged, nurtured, and inspired my writing when I was finding my voice: particularly Mary Sojourner (so it is befitting that she has helped edit this book), Marley Shebala, Brenda Norrell—especially Anthony Choice-Diaz as many of these ideas would not be developed without his insight, inspiration and agitation. I thank Bonn Baudelaire, Keithan Richards, Amrah Solomon, Alex Soto; and everyone in and out of the Indigenous Action crew over the years who have kept their claws sharp and dug deeply. I am grateful to the Kinłani Mutual Aid Crew: ShannonLynn Chester, Mo Dayton, Calvin, Naalzhee', Malene, and Karen Begay. And all the fierce Indigenous Anarchists/autonomists who helped me locate these words first through action and hard conversations: Amanda Lickers, Mano Cockrum, Roland Begay, Gigi, and the wildest storyteller himself Aragorn!. Without A! many of these ideas and words would have taken much longer for me to shape. A! continues to shed a brilliant light on many ideas even after his passing. Then there are the tumultuous Little Black Cart family—Leona and Ariel. The elders of Big Mountain resistance who raised the spirit to fight within me. All those who battled with us in the Save the Peaks Coalition—and especially Protect the Peaks when shit got real (way too many people to mention and some I'm sure would prefer not to be).

And, all of you who put up with my shit when I was younger and carried the un/necessary baggage of conflicted politics (my younger self would have hated this book as I would have hated any book I would have attempted to write back then).

I honor those badass troublemakers who hold it down, to name a few but not all: Leona Morgan, Bobby Mason, Louise Benally, Morning Star Gali, Gigi, Garrick Ruiz, and Elouise Brown.

Finally—though perhaps in this work there is no "finally"special thanks to Detritus Books for the production of this book.

Immense thanks to my dearest patrons (many of whom are close friends). Without you I would not have the material support to have produced the book you now hold in your hands: Shea and Natasha Sandy, Theo Koppen and Christine Prat, Ryan Fletcher, Jules Marsh, Marcello Federico, Dianna Cohen, Rupa Marya, Andy Wombat, crystal u, FARIHA HURIYA, Mason Runs Through, Jennifer Whitney, Crystal Zevon, 1314 Bloc Productions, Roland Herrmann, Desier Galjour, saetha evans, Marco Amador, Kim Brendel, Mary Valdemar, Nadya Sanchez, Dara, Ryan

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The settler world needs more antagonists.

Ahe' hee' nitsaago',

—Klee

T’ÁÁŁÁ’Í — To Rage in Beauty

Chapter One: To Rage in Beauty

The first memories i hold are wrapped in stories held by cedar tree hands, by the deft, worn, cracked winding fingers of a storyteller and healer who endured the forced labor of tradition brutally subsumed by "progress." Brown sinewy fingers cradled memories bound together with wild herbs, ‘tádídíín (corn pollen), eagle feathers, sheep shit, mortar and gasoline.

My dad was in his early twenties when he was stolen away from Dzilł Ntsaa’ (Big Mountain in what is called northern Arizona) and taken to Sherman Institute in the occupied Payómkawichum lands of so-called Riverside, California. Boarding school "educators" attempted to scar civilization through colonial literacy into his skin.

My father had grown up traveling by wagon and herding sheep through viridescent sagebrush hills. Until he and his brothers and sisters were kidnapped by Bureau of Indian Affairs agents and sent to be "civilized" in boarding schools. English was a challenge but he was old enough to be sure of who he was and able to care for and protect younger ones who didn’t fully comprehend the suffocating terror of *old and new blankets* imposed by colonizers who split the Earth in half. Civilization versus savagery, progress versus tradition. A war of *two-worlds*. Boarding schools like Sherman were established to eradicate Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of being. They forced a brutal, multi-generational process that the singular word "assimilation" barely covers.

My father never read books to us when we were children. He read stories written in the language carved deep as ochre canyons twisting through scarred, sacred lands. He gave us songs with even deeper stories dressed in echoes, singing the powerful chorus of ancestry. Hayíiłką. He sang the dawn.

In bitter nights when the persistent rumblings of this world became dulled by blankets of wet snow, he tugged the hand spun yarn of a rug over us to wrap and calm fears that were just coming into being. The harsh northern Arizona winds would shake and rattle the handmade wooden bunkbeds in our small home in Silver Saddle trailer park (just outside of so-called Flagstaff). I knew that monsters slept just outside the door. I held my breath as they exhaled nightmares. Sometimes they breathed the same smoke as that from my mother’s cigarettes. Two-packs a day. Red embers always glowing, burning my eyes. Sometimes burning my skin. But beneath the darkening shadow of Dook’o’ooslííd, my father’s stories slowly became me, and I could sleep.

In my fever dreams that were the consequence of a life always moving in the direction of conflict, I would sense my father was preparing herbs and tobacco. Long before we could understand, he taught myself and my brother and sister to arm ourselves with the spiritual weapons necessary for life in this world. He would say, "This is a spiritual war." Then our fevers would break and offerings would be made. The World cannot be unseen when it is revealed this way.

My Russian/Polish high school dropout runaway beatnik mother thrived in rebelliousness. She emerged from the folk music scene in occupied-Lenape lands of "New York" in the heyday of the Greenwich Village scene. Her songs were stories of defiance.

As children she taught us how to say, "Fuck you" as soon as we could speak. My brother, sister, and I were close enough in our ages, myself in the middle, to have each others' backs, even when it didn't seem like we didn't—or couldn't.

I only learned that my hair was not right when I went to school. I was told to cut it or I couldn't learn. My mom told the teachers to fuck off, and when they wouldn't, we seemed to keep moving. Like the songs she finger-picked on her Gibson acoustic by Ramblin' Jack Elliot, Peter Lafarge, Ewan MacColl, Woody Guthrie, Richie Havens, but most of all, her own political verses, she was a raw and unrelenting storyteller and more than anything a fierce protector.

My father and mother met in the unlikely world of "Hollywood." He was silversmithing and working to support relatives on Black Mesa. Her vehicle broke down. They connected. She dropped out of the fiery anti-war and folk scene of the 1960s–70s and left her work at a political music club called the Ashgrove to make a home with my father on reservation dirt floors with no running water or electricity. This is where my first memories and my umbilical cord are buried.

The border town of so-called "Flagstaff," or Kinłani, became a factor in their lives only through the material access it marginally and reluctantly offered for survival. My dad worked maintenance and carpentry and other trades that he was inculcated with at boarding school (which to this day, he still calls "knowledge factory"). We moved when we had to. Always in orbit of Dził Yijiin. We couldn't migrate too far from its scarred and conflicted landscapes, for the longing to return is the enduring burden of refugees, of the internally and externally dispossessed.

My siblings, my cousins and I grew up in the crucible of the asymmetric slow burning war of resource colonialism. Not without resistance. When I was three-years-old I remember holding a sign my mom and relatives painted that read, "BIA Don't Kill Me, I'm Only 3" at a protest outside of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) "Relocation Office" in occupied-Kinłani.

I recall the cold concrete and stone of the old "Ice house" building where the office was. My hands clutched the sign in front of me so I could hide while my grandmothers and aunts rallied. This was 1978 and I still wore cowboy boots. A news photographer pressed a shutter and the mechanism clicked to imprint the moment. A press clipping. A moment in a flowing movement that documented Indigenous resistance and desperation.

This was but one flashing point in the midst of decades of family gatherings and anti-Relocation meetings, rallies, and prayers.

The year before I was born, the "US" Congress passed PL93-531, the so-called "Relocation Act," and with the stroke of a pen, more than 20,000 Diné were forced to move from our ancestral homelands. As the land was cut and divided by heavy gauged steel barbed wire for the "Joint Use Area," so was our family. On one side those who resisted, and on the other—within the same grounds—those who capitulated due to the agonizing political processes and ongoing threats of forced removal. "Relocation" was and still is a war of division and attrition.

Conquer and divide, divide and conquer, the distinguished strategies of colonial conquest, punctuated my youth. The entire conflict was orchestrated to maintain the Navajo Reservation as a resource colony so golf courses could be watered and lights would come on in cities hundreds of miles away. The Central Arizona Project (CAP) being perhaps one of the most blatant examples of exploitation. The scheme built coalmines, power plants, and massive transmission lines all to provide electricity for growing settler populations throughout the occupied Southwest. Part

of CAP's primary role was to pump 1.5 million acre feet of water annually to growing settler populations in central and southern so-called Arizona. It's beyond ironic that Diné politicians so eagerly sold sacred lands and their own people in the name of progress over forty years ago and some of my relatives still don't have running water and electricity to this day. Coal, oil, gas, uranium, water. As long as I can remember the horizons of home on Diné Bikéyah have always been shackled by the heavy steel cables of power lines.

I was given a way to name my rage when some neighbors of ours who lived in Tusayan (a shithole town created for tourists and those who served them) gave my brother, sister, and me a mix tape featuring Subhumans, The Exploited, Sex Pistols, and the Ramones.

I'd fall asleep deep in the warmth of hooghans trying to keep up with the pulsing rhythm of all night Hatáál with Hózhóójí songs. I'd wake and press play on my tape recorder and watch the analog tape sweep past magnets, amplifying the distorted defiance on my second hand walkman.

By day my dad worked maintenance at Grand Canyon Camper Village, which was owned by Joe Babbitt (the Babbitts were one of the early settler ranch families who built wealth in the region on stolen lands). In the early evenings my brother and sister and I would perform traditional Diné and pow-wow dances for tourists who were ravenous for an authentic "Indian" experience. The audiences were always fascinated and would laugh at my dad's semi-ironic humor as he would MC. He would hoop dance to a tape recorder until we were old enough to drum and sing for him. He'd joke about too many chiefs and not enough Indians. We learnt how to survive from performance or "Indian trinkets" we would make. I'd paint rocks and sell them to tourists who bought them out of pity. I'd buy candy or ice cream with my brother and sister and our friends (children of other tourist service industry workers) at the Babbitt's store. We rode bikes and played in ditches. My sister started taking bass lessons, my brother was into drums, and I wanted to play guitar. This was the vibrant 1980s, MTV played actual music videos, and I was about 10.

Our trailer rattled in the thunder of storms we couldn't see. So many nights were filled with fits of violence and screams from my mom or neighbors or both. We'd face the occasional scares when my dad's brothers would stop by in the evening asking to stay or for some food. My mom would scream at them to stay away due to the white dust covering their clothes. I later learned this was uranium dust from their work at the nearby Canyon (now Pinyon Plain) mine.

I was never allowed to touch my mom's guitars, so I managed to save up enough to buy my own at a Las Vegas pawnshop for $40 (it came with a shitty little no-name amp that was naturally distorted). The money came from dancing and painted rocks. I scratched the names of punk bands into the guitar and pressed bar chords into the high action on its twisted neck. I didn't give a fuck about precision; I wanted to connect to that noise capable of drowning out the crashing world around me.

In just weeks, my sister, brother, and I started a band we named "Blackfire." All the anger and rage and truth mixed with spit and distortion was what we needed to breathe amidst the suffocating silence of burning coal that enveloped us.

The Black Mesa struggle was heavily propagandized against those who resisted forced relocation by coal mining interests and the Tribal politicians kept in their pockets. My relatives were always the most dignified outlaws, taking over the mine, forcing fence workers off their lands, and herding sheep. They were cast as the villains of a narrative framed as resolution and progress.

The aggression of punk and its political agitations (with particular inspiration from the Subhumans and Dead Kennedys) was a natural outlet for me and my sibs. We wrote songs that spoke

to the discord we lived, we told our stories through punk. We moved deeper into and celebrated this conflict.

When internalized anger claws its way to the surface and aligns with aesthetics, social conflict is inevitable. I was in awe of this aspect of old school/Cold War punk for the uncomplicated "fuck you" spirit against injustice and authority. Through our music, we began to rage in beauty.

We quickly outgrew life at the Canyon. Perhaps it was my dad calling the cops on my mom for smoking pot when so-called "Arizona" was deep in the trenches of the "war on drugs." Perhaps it was the trouble my brother and I were quickly getting into as the brown-skinned-black-clothes-wearing-skateboarding-Ramones-listening deviants. But we were propelled out of our orbit around Black Mesa back to so-called Flagstaff.

This autobiography mostly stops here because what happened next isn't that useful for the purposes of this book. Though to be clear, the point of this partial backstory is to illustrate a jagged path and give the following words and tellings of actions a better sense of context and more accessibility. This should be read as a raw provocation and urging so it will be messy and unkempt at (most) times. I don't have, and have never desired, an academic pedigree as I was content to be a failure of the education system.

As much as they've gravitated towards me, I've gravitated towards the mediums and spaces of creative expression that are tense, conflictual—and as a punk-spirited antagonist—wherever it makes most sense to say, *fuck you*.

I toured for most of the decades of my life and far more enjoyed punk squats than large festivals and crowds. Incessant smoke. Bass pounding, bleeding through walls. Getting lost in Amsterdam. Late night political debates. Sleeping against anarcho-nights with vegan food my father refused to eat.

I could never stand the American Indian Movement (AIM) celebrities and pseudo-rock stars that I grew up around, taking their assigned seats on the pedestal of the colonial gaze, constantly martyring themselves for greater recognition. You never forget how much your shit stinks when you grow up having to use an outhouse on cold nights. Or how fractured your world is when your drunk uncles fight until the brown dust they're covered in becomes dark clouds and your naalii's voice cracks thunder and the tremors stop.

Not for me is lingering at the precipice of the *End of the Trail*. The spectacle of the warrior and the victim, the perpetual dances with metaphors. In much of my life I've played my role in that theatrical conflict of activism too, though relatives would peel my eyelids back to make sure I would witness the brutal trails in front and behind the AIM actors, those paths littered with those that the "Super Red Radicals" callously fucked over.

Whether with traditional dances or as Blackfire (sometimes both), the more I would perform at galleries, exhibits, museums, and various stages throughout the world, the more something kept wearing thin. Just beneath the surface: fetishists, anthropologists, and the curious tourists extracted our "authenticity." Even when we danced for our own people, there was a factor of separation from what was being shared in the present. I mostly felt like an artifact, a neo-Western sideshow stuck in time with Buffalo Bill's petrified corpse plucking banjo strings from beyond the mass grave some call history.

If we are to continue and deepen this part of the conversation, let's have it over tea that's gone tannic because we got lost in our musings. Some honey might fix it? I'll share glimpses of the strange and wonderful darkness I grew up in between two trailers conjoined at their sliding glass doors. I'll ruminate on small town anti-social decay. Perhaps around the acrid smoke of

an evening summer fire or between puffs of your fancy rolled tobacco whatever, I'll feel more sentimental. For now, I've grown more fond of the most bitter medicines, and besides, my memory isn't *that* good.

What you should know and what I will share are elements and offerings illuminated by slivers of a harsh light that casts long and strange shadows, always in ragged motion. They are mostly the refraction of grace and despair that I was steeped in—the sheltering memories of my grandmothers, Zonnie Benally and Roberta Blackgoat. Particularly those of Roberta whose nature was so powerful that even when her voice was nearly inaudible, a room of a thousand people would fall silent (I witnessed this on more than one occasion). Who, as Diné elders and weavers with their weathered rock sage hands, also filled my heart with the stories that have become me. Stories of the place where you can count every star, and barbed wire splits dreams into nightmares. The place that is and is not home. The place where the cage of colonial politics was imposed on my elders, yet they never allowed their spirits or lifeways to be imprisoned.

I love riding on the dirt roads of Black Mesa. My memories are filled with a chorus of traditional songs augmented with the natural vibrato created when the vehicle suspension system pushes rapidly against the small bumps in the road. Enhancing them with their adjustments, making the ridges more defined. Two incompatible forces, one grinding against the other. The Earth pronouncing a subtle unwelcoming that over time wears down and destroys the motorized vehicle mechanisms that are supposed to make the ride smoother.

We drive faster, accelerating the damage, past the colonial scarecrows marking the landscape of our hearts and imaginations. Past the "End of the Trail" silhouette of an Indigenous warrior with spear on horseback. To the edges of trading post gallery Indian marketed enclosures. Capitalizing traders selling us that the Indigenous fight is lost because Western civilization has won, might as well make a dream catcher. Pressing the gas through the story of conquest and control retold in the classroom sweatshops of academic factories that reproduce its ideals. It is the narrative of every movie and book covered in the dust and blood of the "Wild West."

We drive though the mythology that settlers have to tell themselves to sleep at night. Otherwise our ancestor's children might rise from the mass graves of day-to-day mundanity, as in Wavoka's vision, to bring to bear the consequences of such a vicious and prolonged brutality.

We stop for a selfie at the crossroads between fetishists and martyrs. Between millenarians and chic materialist revolutionaries.

I serve up these nourishing memories like the warm intestines of a freshly slaughtered sheep being wrapped around its fat. I always keep a sharp knife for butchering. I've dug a hole and wrapped the head in a wet paper bag and placed it beneath the coals. It will be ready around midnight, when the stories are deep as Dził Yijiin stars. We'll listen to the ground shifting beneath our feet and lick the ashes of our contradictions from smoke filled eyes. We'll share bitter coffee and spit the grounds along with coarse words between the sarcasm and laughter that cut any assumptions of the post/pre/existent of who others think we are supposed to be. We'll fall asleep mid-sentence, perhaps wrapped in protest banners, when it's too cold or when the dawn reminds us; we'll keep moving, raging in beauty, always in the direction of conflict.

My spirit is a washboard road.

Drive faster.

Chapter Two: The Illiteracy of Settler Colonialism

> "No new hunting-grounds remain, and the civilization or the utter destruction of the Indians is inevitable. The next twenty-five years are to determine the fate of a race. If they cannot be taught, and taught very soon, to accept the necessities of their situation and begin in earnest to provide for their own wants by labor in civilized pursuits, they are destined to speedy extinction."
>
> —John Q. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1875 through 1877.

Though its etymology is disputed, at some point in the span of 300 years of war the name "Navajo" came to mean knife in Spanish.

We call ourselves Diné, or more completely Nohookáá' Diyin Dine'é which translates to *Holy Earth Surface People*. Many people say Bila'ashla'ii Diné (Five-fingered people) which—when attending culturally rooted meetings—you will hear as an emphasis on a type of interconnected individualism and the ability for Diné to work hard and be self-sufficient. It never fails at such events that my dad Jones (his "government name") turns towards me and says with a glint in his eye, "We have ten fingers."

From the late 1500s until the 1840s, Spanish (then Mexican) invaders attempted to conquer Diné, a brutal colonial project they failed to fulfill. Remnants of that war haunt our language and culture today. "Beso" means money. "Alóós" means rice, etc.

If we look just a few generations back, we can find that silver jewelry and smithing came to us first as a war craft. The "precious metal" was traded, and liberated, then later (in the 1860s it is reported) re-forged with stone and fire and worn, not just as adornment, but as spiritual armor.

Diné have a distinct affection for turquoise and silver. Dootł'izh is a sacred stone and béésh łigai is a protective element. My father learned silversmithing from his elders. When I was very young (perhaps 11 or 12) my dad showed me how to operate an acetylene tank and said, "Don't burn yourself."

Today our jewelry along with weavings and other "cultural products" are the basis for an exploitative economy constituted by a snarled conspiracy of trading posts, pawnshops, and high-end galleries that dominate the scenic landscape. To prove we're not just victims of the hallmark commodification of existence that is capitalism, there are signs ensuring settler safety that we won't rip you off (even though we should) at roadside jewelry stands. The assuring reminder is neatly painted plainly on plywood, "Nice Indians behind you."

Most travelers can't (or won't) read between the lines as they navigate the same beaten scarred paths as conquistadors, with a new *Requerimiento*. Its schemes are the violent unending spread of human progress towards civilization, through colonialism.

Civilization is socially constituted violence against the Earth.

Civilization has always been the mission of colonizers. It is carved deeply throughout the text of their laws and into our flesh. The imposed literacy of settler violence is the way we learn to read and tend to the scars that track this chronology of colonial conquest named *history*. These are the unhealed and partly healed wounds spreading in all directions that map the specter of abuse that are documented as the progression of religion, capital, democracy, and civilization. It is unwritten in cultural knowledge buried in a shallow boarding school mass grave located in the vacuous space between mythology and sin. This literacy is what sanctions the destruction and desecration of the sacred. It declares, "I'm wearing this headdress because I appreciate your culture." It declares, "The wastewater we're spraying on your sacred site is clean enough to drink." It insists, "That was in the past, I'm not responsible for the actions of my ancestors."

It admonishes, "They're on the street because they're lazy." It contemplates "poor and angry Indians contrasted with respectable ones." It declared utopia while slaughtering and enslaving millions. It wrote in blood and pus, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian." It declared, "Tradition is the enemy of progress." It shifts phrases and dresses the meaning in newly ironed clothes that smell of starch, piss, and appropriation.

It asserts and justifies itself advising the worth of all things. As it has so benevolently graced us with a cross, bible, and tried to kill the living spirits of the Earth. It incessantly reminds us of our place in the value of things (usually on the scale of most victimized) through gritted teeth, through its dispossessions, through its dehumanizations. The literacy of settler violence is what haunts those who are overcome by their pain and succumb in the silence of the slow terror that eats us from within. It is codified in laws that make sleep a crime. It is the recurring nightmare that is drowned in a bottle that is shattered on the roadside, its millions of green and crystalline shards reflecting the compounded horrors possessing the dispossessed. In this glittering world, it is only ever with more brutality that the dazzling literacy of settler violence is enforced. Colonial occupation is the constant promise of settler violence.

In our struggle to protect the Holy San Francisco Peaks from resource extraction and a severely destructive recreational scam we've been forced to ask, "What part of sacred don't you understand?"

It is a question that is a tooth twisted and wrenched from our mouths. We spit blood and words to compose a dignified and deserving response. We scramble translations to fulfill an untenable standard. Pulling bony pieces out of the drain, forcing them back into the cavities they once filled.

When we have no more teeth, we cannot bite the hand that feeds. Our jaws and metaphors are empty. Our hands outstretched begging for the dim light of recognition and acknowledgment to touch us. To fill the emaciated sentence with an equality of meaning. But those that control and demand don't give a shit about reflections or fairness. They chew the tough reality of our meaning into a vile slurry and spit it into our faces. Our metaphors bleed into fetishized fragments of pasts and we starve.

Drive your electric vehicle down these paved roads through the tourist attraction ruins of our hollowed chests, we live in a food desert after all. Here there are nice "Indians." Here there are *bad Indians*.

The commercial invention of *Nice Indians* is a necessary surgical manipulation. It requires rudimentary instruments and can be done with even the dullest knife.

It is this blade that slowly pierces our skin and punctures our heart and culture. It is double edged; on one side desecration, on the other depravation. We cannot be slit and slashed without being less, or "Bad Indians." We've even learned to adeptly wield this knife on ourselves.

The violation of the sacred, the persistent desecration of that which heals us is directly linked to homelessness. It is directly conjoined with the epidemic of stolen women, girls, trans, and two-spirit relatives. It is the paraded indignity of mascotry. It is the mass scale ecological devastation due to a legacy of resource extraction that has left hundreds of radioactive abandoned uranium mines that poison the air, water, and land that we depend on. It was Black Mesa coal, desertification, and forced relocation. It is the 2,500-square mile methane cloud hovering over Diné Bikeyah. Whether we're "Nice" or "Bad," we are predisposed to suffer more during this pandemic, but let's be clear: that disposition is a consequence of our dispossession from unpolluted existence.

That politicians can perform a "Land Acknowledgement" or mark Indigenous Peoples' Day while simultaneously perpetuating and profiting from ecological devastation and cultural genocide, demonstrates the extreme dissonance of settler cognition. Our struggles and existence are celebrated in theatrical expressions of sympathy, of settler pity. These acknowledgments further victimize. They are the words inscribed above the gates to our open-air prison camps, that settler recognition and our victimhood will *make us free*.

And what of those of us who refuse to stick feathers up our asses and dance? What use are we other than skeletal victims ripe for anthropological examination as living dead artifacts? Yes. We are the bitter Indians, the unforgiving. We are the Bad Indians.

In an interview conducted by Indigenous eco-advocate and former vice presidential candidate Winona LaDuke, the AIM poet John Trudell said, "This thing called technologic civilization wants every human being—it tries to break the spirit so the mind will surrender. We aren't put here for that. Everything that happens in our life is a series of experiences. If we understand that, maybe we can truly learn something from those experiences. What I do know is that I come from a culture that is deeply rooted in the whole idea and reality of the continuation of life. And I'm dealing with another culture whose perception is a reality of death."

In our refusal to surrender, we are the audacity of Indigenous existence persisting against the killing of nature.

In 2006, the San Francisco Peaks were at the center of a legal battle that would determine the fate of many other sacred places throughout the so-called US. Bucky Preston, a Hopi spiritual runner, took the stand during the bench trial in the case known as *Navajo Nation v. US Forest Service*. I had been organizing daily vigils and protests outside the Federal Courthouse in so-called Prescott, Arizona on stolen Yavapai-Prescott lands. Our crew was coordinating with friends at the Catalyst Infoshop and we had refused to enter the courthouse, affirming that was not where our power was. It wasn't until Bucky testified that we decided to go inside. He refused to respond to questions interrogating the Hopi spiritual relationship to the Peaks. He was not hostile, he merely stated that the courtroom was not the proper place for such a discussion of profound nature. He refused to answer the aggressive questioning of the lawyers representing the US government. They asked where he gathered sacred herbs, where he prayed. He defied them and simply responded, "The whole mountain is sacred." Bucky knew, as with many other traditional people in attendance, that the colonizer's laws and "justice" were not going to protect the holy mountain. He negated their questioning and the terms it was presented on. His belligerence was defiantly sacred.

In an interview about her resistance to forced relocation on Black Mesa, my grandmother Roberta Blackgoat once stated, "They are like gods; they try and be the Creator. This one man I went to tell him something about how the Earth was cracking from all that mining (The Black Mesa Coal strip mine). He said 'I didn't know that.' I said 'The way you're sitting behind the desk

like you know everything, how come you don't know that? You act like the Creator.' The Creator is the only one who can relocate me."

She was 84 when she passed on while traveling to speak out against the ongoing attempts at relocation and resource colonialism causing the colonially controlled Tribal regimes to fight over the land. In a spiteful political act, the Hopi Tribal government denied requests from my aunts to have her buried in the land she was born. They threatened to have Tribal police prevent her body from being transported to her home if our family defied their authority. These proxy colonial forces were terrified of her even in her passing.

There is an illegible recalcitrance in the understanding of the way spirit and nature are interrelated. But the philosophizing of the spirit goes against my intentions. Too many disassociated and "enlightened" contemplations have left so many sleeping rocks overturned, land unearthed, and trails of dead and bloodied mysteries in the cartography that has mapped the mythology of Western history.

With the most modest examination of literacies of domination and exploitation, it's plain that coercion and control are the foundations of institutions that perpetuate colonial social order and knowledge production. This is why "decolonizing academia" is a fallacy. Writing Indigenous knowledge systems into Western academic frameworks (aka "Indigenizing") is a form of pedagogical syncretism that makes great careers for Indigenous academics (Who else could specialize?) while implicitly preferencing and furthering capitalist modes of knowledge sharing. This kind of "decolonial" salvage work intellectually hunts the very contradictions that it's premised on, but it's shooting rhetorical arrows at its own shadow. It spends more time studying and quoting long-dead Europeans like Marx than embracing the wisdom of our elders, medicine keepers, and the land.

This is the illiteracy of Settler Colonialism; it cannot envision itself anywhere but at the center of the progression of human understanding and meaning. It cannot truly speak of justice or freedom without vomiting the half-chewed bones of forests, extinct species, and generations yet to come.

It convulses in cognitive distortions, it demands quantifications and quotas as it cries out "climate justice" while its breath carries the stench of oil and methane. It constructs "sustainable prisons" and demands lithium and uranium to maintain the world that it is burning.

On these lands it appears that no other history exists but that which justifies occupation. So we either live as translucent characters in colonial fantasies, or outside of the temporal constraints of settler time, where we are most whole. There is no real in-between (because if you're caught in that deadzone, it tears you apart from the inside). This is the meticulously constructed myth of progress asserted as modernity. Its putrefying gaze fixated on positioning experiences in its limited zones of *post* and *pre*. It is both the consequence and goal of what it proposes as an order to dominate and homogenize all ways of being, this proclaimed garishly as civilization. A fevered monster that rabidly consumes its own flesh. It has not ceased destroying long enough to sense that the land suffers, that the land holds trauma and there are consequences. Refusing to read the sunsets. Not listening to the ground. Spruce bows beckoning to commune, it does not see.

This is the illiteracy of Settler Colonialism.

Who did you consult with? Did you confer with the yucca? Did you ask for consent?

When I would gather herbs with my father he would always caution, "We don't just go pick herbs at random. We have to know their names and make an offering. Otherwise it's like saying 'Hey you!' at someone. You might pick a fight."

He worked at the government-run Indian Health Service clinic in so-called Winslow, Arizona for nearly twenty years. He had a special hooghan built, secretary, and system for treating patients. Allopathic doctors attempted to undermine his work at nearly every turn. When they saw results that they themselves could not accomplish they wanted to document and contain his knowledge. He defied them. Asserting that his herbal treatments were patient specific and gathered with prayers, he told them they could not just take the plant medicine without those understandings. He would make light of how the doctors, which he would often call "butchers," just treated the symptoms and couldn't understand how he worked with nature. In one situation (among many) he was formally reprimanded for working on a patient that was scheduled to have a limb amputated, the patient came to him, was treated, and the limb was saved. The doctors at the clinic threatened my father with legal action but the patient was unwilling as he had gotten well. Ultimately, heavy constraints the doctors attempted to impose on his practice led to him leaving his work at the hospital.

The imposed assumption of discursive occupancy is the unrelenting violence of settler colonialism. Indigenous cultural (as in knowledge and ways *of* and *with* the land) literacies have been displaced by the so-called literacies weaponized in the chronological hierarchy of the colonial sciences of its material history: namely archaeology and anthropology. Indigenous social literacies have been superimposed by what has been prescribed as "Tribal sovereignty." A politic rendered legible by violent imposition of settler authority and temporality in service of civilization. Indigenous autonomy is illegible to the civilized progressive because we are of antiquity, backwardness, primal, barbaric, tradition, the past, the uncivilized. Colonizers are fond of pronouncing temporal fascism, *What? Do you want to go back to the Stone Age?!*

Modernity is composed in neat typeface written on every surface imaginable as a container of dominance in this temporal arrangement. So I offer this belligerent rhetoric, these bitter words as collections of writings against time on the bathroom walls, alleyways, and dumpsters amidst the ruins of settler progress.

We cannot empathize our way out of this athenaeum of dehumanization and depravation.

This is not a speak-and-spell cast for acts of solidarity or more settler pity. Sympathy is not literacy and this kind of awareness sinks to its lowest depths without action, particularly accountability and transformation. Knowledge is power, but that power isn't realized without action.

In 2014 I wrote and published an essay in zine form with friends I work with through Indigenous Action called *Accomplices Not Allies*. It was an intervention against the commodification of solidarity and the institutionalization of the ally as an identity. Drew, one of the "good bad whites" (as we Indigenous agitators like to call him) in occupied-Phoenix, and I were casually airing our frustrations regarding parachuting activists who were imposing their brand of white anti-racism on every space they invaded when he said, "we need accomplices not allies." I started writing and instantly felt overwhelmed and unqualified, most of my scrappy texts up until that point were in the form of short, scattered zines, song lyrics, poetry, and press releases. I mentioned the project to a radical, academically-oriented friend who wrote prolifically and stated that I felt like the draft needed work because it lacked citations and a formal framework, they offered me the single sentence that opened the floodgates for my writing, "Just make it a provocation." I reached out to organizer friends who had the same critiques of (predominantly) white self-imposed allies rushing in to frontline struggles to *save the day*. And we collected our festering thoughts.

From my experience, exploitative solidarity was the well-worn path in the geographic commodity of Indigenous resistance on Black Mesa. Millions of dollars had been extracted from the

regional struggle, not just by the transnational coal mine or corrupt Tribal politicians, but from endless lines of non-profits and some form of non-governmental organization (usually driven by a white "savior" individual) with their hands out and filling their pockets. From my naalii's (grandmother's) name being forged on checks, to countless benefits raising untold sums that somehow never made it to the hooghans. From self-appointed white anarchist gatekeepers and managers who used movement credibility or social capital as their currency advertised as patches or in black and white zines. Solidarity was always a commodity. It was resistance, colonized. *Accomplices* was an urge against this transactional identity. In many ways it was a settler literacy project that was sown from the stinking compost heap of both nourishing and poisonous relationships in The Struggle.™

As I share elsewhere in the pages of this book, part of the burden of diagnosis is in how it is bound to prescription. *Accomplices* was a widespread influential component of this, but it was also coopted and made legible to settlers seeking to justify their roles as producers and distributors of solidarity.

Since a state of literacy alone does not result in liberation (though academics would most likely contend this is the point of Paolo Freire's oppression pedagogy) the question rings in our ears and bitterly persists. It is also the sound of spontaneous bursts of grief, anger, and rebellious joy in the face of state violence. It is the sound of a burning cop car. It is the sound of hunger strikes. It is the sound of metal grinding against metal and sparks flying from an angle grinder cutting through a lock box. It is the sound of hastily spray-painted words against despair. It is the sound of slow walks on rock-filled paths to sacred springs. It is the sound of tear gas and pepper spray. It is the sound of oil pumping through pipelines rupturing and flooding sacred waters. It is the sound of an elder softly weaving hand-spun wool. It is the pulsing sound of open arteries bleeding into the streets. It is the pressure from street medics that stops the hemorrhaging. It is the sound of growing corn. It is the unsettling discourse of millions of shattered windows.

A reverberating despair echoes through dry canyons and off distant concrete walls filled with ancestral subversions, it is the far crying conspiracy of anti-colonial dissonance. It is the conflict of Settler cognition in discord with itself, resonating against its contours and contradictions. It is the overbearing sound of desperation and failure weaponized into a pedagogy of negation.

Our defiances, our subterfuges, our anti-colonial antagonisms all have a natural resonant frequency.

This is the indelicate strategy of breaking glass with sound. This is part of how we make sense of this world, again.

Indigenous academics are fond of quoting Patrick Wolfe in his assessment that settler colonialism is a "structure not an event." Here I offer fragments of glass, bone, and thought that are ground together to make an illegible poultice. I offer that it is the responsibility of those who wage anti-colonial struggle to break the static infrastructures of settler colonialism and make it become an event.

Liberation is painted in red ochre on steep canyon walls. It is both radical reconnection and settler destruction made legible through its own cognitive distortions. This is to say that it should be made into a moment that we can place within the pictograph constellations of ancestral memory.

Bad colonizers, behind us.

NAAKI — Defending the Sacred

Chapter Three: Defending the Sacred

> You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you are going to dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains, on the hills, and under every leafy tree.
>
> —Deuteronomy 12:2

On december 6, 2012, the same day that secretary Tom Vilsack of the "US" Department of Agriculture (USDA) issued his final report on sacred sites and an inter-agency memorandum to work towards sacred sites protection, the US Forest Service, which is managed by the USDA, filed federal charges against myself and three others: Dawn Dyer, James Anders, and Evan Hawbaker. I was held for five hours in a holding cell with my feet shackled, chain around my waist, and wrists handcuffed to links in that steel chain.

For our role in delivering a letter in a protest three months earlier, the four of us were being charged with "Threatening, resisting, intimidating, or interfering with any forest officer engaged in or on account of the performance of his official duties in the protection, improvement, or administration of the National Forest System." One of our friends was facing a "terrorism enhancement" charge and investigators were still trying to identify others that were part of the action.

It was rather ironic that the USDA and Forest Service draft sacred sites policy report stated:

> The history of Native Americans in America after European contact and colonization is a history of trauma: degradation of Native American populations and cultures from disease, appropriation of and removal from traditional lands, forced disuse of native languages and native subsistence lifeways, separation of families through boarding schools and adoption, suppression of Native American religions, and outright genocide. These actions and others by the Spanish, French, English, and, later, the Government and citizens of the United States, left a legacy of trauma that continues to plague Native American communities. We recognize that the policies of self-determination and self-governance are intended to help remedy some of that harm. We also recognize that the continued existence of and access to Native American Sacred Sites is an important component to necessary healing. To disregard the value of Native American Sacred Sites would perpetuate the cycle of trauma.

On September 21, 2012, more than a dozen people delivered letters at the Coconino National Forest Service office in a theatrical action in so-called Flagstaff to address the USDA's policy review on sacred places. Some of us were wearing hazmat suits and held signs "quarantining" the office. We were specifically addressing the Forest Service's role in permitting ski area expansion and treated sewage snowmaking on the San Francisco Peaks, a site in northern Arizona managed as "public lands" and held holy since time immemorial by more than thirteen Indigenous Nations.

It seemed to be no coincidence that two weeks after our arrests, the privately owned Arizona Snowbowl ski resort, was set to become the first and only ski area in the world to make snow from 100% treated sewage.

The charges we were facing were revealed to our crew by a journalist (as the warrants were sealed) before US Marshals could conduct multiple raids they had been planning. Myself, Dawn, and Jim, stole their thunder and turned ourselves in under advice of a lawyer. Evan was out of town, which apparently was why they hesitated on raiding to arrest us. When our crew and supporters showed up at the small federal courthouse lobby, the Marshals told us to come back in about 30 minutes because they weren't ready for us. We rallied for a moment outside then walked through the doors and they put cuffs on, led us upstairs to holding cells, and then put us in chains. After a while they pulled us individually into an interview room where investigators attempted to interrogate us. We had prepared for this and said nothing.

As I stood before the Federal judge, the prosecutor repeatedly requested that myself and others facing charges be banned from going anywhere on the San Francisco Peaks and the entirety of the Coconino Forest Service as a condition for release. They attempted to characterize me as a leader and stated that they were concerned about the possibility of further protests. I had been working with a pro-bono attorney named Matthew Brown for a previous case and he drove up from so-called Phoenix to represent me. He argued that my religious practice was directly connected to the San Francisco Peaks and restricting my access to the Holy Mountain would be akin to preventing me from going to church. The judge agreed not to ban me from the Peaks but cautioned that if I broke any laws and used my spirituality as "an act of subterfuge," I would be imprisoned until trial. After the ordeal, we walked outside and rallied with our friends and relatives.

After months of legal proceedings, our crew ended up being coerced into accepting a plea deal to mitigate the terrorism enhancement our friend was facing over the charges.

The action was among many taken by myself and friends to intervene in ongoing cultural genocide perpetuated through desecration of Doko'o'osliid (the San Francisco Peaks), which are one of six holy Mountains in Diné cosmology.

For Diné there is no dichotomy between spirit and nature, we are of this Earth, and so where there is an environmental crisis there is also a social crisis. No one can live without clean air, clean water, or clean land, these are the most basic terms of what it means to be "people of the Earth," or Indigenous. We share the responsibility to care for and protect Nahasdzáán (Mother Earth).

There are many attempts by colonizers to define sacred sites in legal, anthropological, and sociological terms, but their nature remains elusive and unintelligible to Western understandings. This illiteracy of the sacred is not for lack of equivalent references or study, it is in the cosmological dissonance that is of a way of *unbeing* of materialism that is rooted in domination, control, and exploitation.

While Indigenous Peoples can say the whole Earth and existence is sacred because there is a spiritual relationship with creation, we can also identify specific locations or areas (mountains, waterways, burials, features, etc.) that are places of spiritual distinction.

While Indigenous contexts are diverse regarding what constitutes a sacred place, most specifically they are places (a region including viewscapes) or specific sites of emergence, home of deities, offering site(s), a place where herbs are gathered that can't be gathered elsewhere, home or origin to certain species, and much more. They are places that figure centrally in the relation-

ships that Indigenous Peoples have with creation. Most often they are places of healing, guidance, and renewal.

The defense of lands held holy by Indigenous Peoples are the frontlines in the struggles for our existence. If we desire to exist, we must continue to defend the sacred and liberate Mother Earth. Defending the sacred means fighting back to protect Mother Earth, which is to say existence itself.

From the holy San Francisco Peaks, Black Mesa, Red Butte, and beyond, the history of colonization is scarred into the sacred landscapes that I've grown up around. The edifice of western "civilization" is still being carved out and through sacred lands with acts of desecration that perpetuate spiritual invasion, occupation, and conquest. They are the targets of individuals and corporations who see Mother Earth as not a living entity but only for resources that can be exploited for material gain.

Every sacred site that is currently being threatened with desecration faces some form of resource extraction. Whether it's coal beneath Black Mesa/Big Mountain, gold at Mount Tenabo, copper under Oak Flat, oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, natural gas at Chaco Canyon, uranium at Red Butte and Mount Taylor, geothermal energy exploitation at Medicine Lake, telescopes on Mount Graham and Mauna Kea, freeway expansions through South Mountain and Petroglyph National Monument, rock climbing at Bear Lodge, lithium mining at Thacker Pass, border wall construction at Quitobaquito Springs, recreation at the San Francisco Peaks, or oil transportation from the Bakken Formation through Lake Oahe; these sacred places are threatened by forms of resource or extractive colonialism that are all due to the commodification of nature.

Spiritual War

"US" policies towards Indigenous Peoples have been a systematic process of physical, social, and spiritual annihilation.

These policies are rooted in mass racial and gendered religious violence as the genocidal spreading of "civilization" through these lands starting in 1492 and continuing to this day. In 1493 the Papal Bull "Inter Caetera," was issued by Pope Alexander VI. The document established the "Doctrine of Discovery" and was central to Spain's Christianizing strategy to ensure "exclusive right" to enslaved Indigenous Peoples and lands invaded by Columbus the year prior. This decree also made clear the Pope's threat to forcibly assimilate Indigenous Peoples to Catholicism in order to strengthen the "Christian Empire."

This doctrine of dominion/domination and civilization led to successive generational patterns of genocidal and ecocidal wars waged by European settler colonizers against Indigenous lives, lands, spirit, and the living world of all of our relations.

The religious violence of Spanish "conquerors" was codified in their *Requerimiento* of 1510 that was ritualistically pronounced as they invaded Indigenous lands, built missions, and killed or enslaved peoples who refused to be conquered.

The *Requerimiento* served as a threat to Indigenous Peoples to either submit to the religious authority of the Roman Catholic Pope and the political authority of Spain or be destroyed:

> …with the help of God, we shall powerfully enter into your country, and shall make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and shall subject you to the

> yoke and obedience of the Church and of their Highnesses; we shall take you and your wives and your children, and shall make slaves of them, and as such shall sell and dispose of them as their Highnesses may command; and we shall take away your goods, and shall do you all the mischief and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey, and refuse to receive their lord, and resist and contradict him…

Indigenous resistance to the terror of Spanish invasion was ongoing and exemplified in a failed uprising led by Toypurina in 1785 and the powerful Pueblo Revolt of 1680 one hundred years prior.

Toypurina was a Kizh medicine woman responsible for planning and leading a rebellion against the brutal Spanish Mission San Gabriel in so-called California. Toypurina mobilized Kizh villages to join in a coordinated attack against the mission. She was captured along with others and put on trial when one of her own people betrayed her plans.

In *Sources of Rebellion: Indian Testimony and the Mission San Gabriel Uprising of 1785*, Steven Hackel shares that when Toypurina was questioned about the attack, she said that

> "[she hated] the padres and all of you, for living here on my native soil, for trespassing upon the land of my forefathers [sic] and despoiling our tribal domains…I came [to the mission] to inspire the dirty cowards to fight, and not to quail at the sight of Spanish sticks that spit fire and death, nor [to] retch at the evil smell of gunsmoke—and be done with you white invaders!"

In the 1670s, the Spanish governor of "New Mexico" executed and tortured Ohkay Owingeh medicine practitioners for their refusal to assimilate to Catholicism. A survivor of the torture named Po'Pay coordinated an armed revolt with other Pueblos in a mass attack against Spanish forces that successfully drove the colonizers out of the region for more than a decade.

In the book *Sacred Violence in Early America*, Susan Juster makes clear that "…England's North American colonies were designed in large part to be weapons of religious war—frontier outposts that would halt the spread of Catholic empires and establish a toe-hold for the Protestant cause in the New World."

When those colonists rebelled against their monarch oppressors (initiated with the profane act of dumping tea, a colonial product, and Indigenous cosplay), they perpetuated genocide in tandem with enslavement of Indigenous African relatives, to build the wealth that created the empire we now face today.

In 1823 the "Doctrine of Discovery" was written into US law as a way to deny land rights to Indigenous Peoples in the Supreme Court case, *Johnson v. McIntosh*. In a unanimous decision, Chief Justice John Marshall wrote that Christian European nations had assumed complete control over the lands of "America" during the *Age of Discovery*. And in declaring independence from the Crown of England in 1776, he noted that the US had in effect and thus by law, inherited authority over these lands from Great Britain, "notwithstanding the occupancy of the natives, who were heathens…" According to the ruling, Indigenous Peoples did not have any rights as independent nations, but only as tenants or residents of the US on their own lands.

Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church, issued a formal statement on March 30, 2023 condemning "acts of violence, oppression, social injustice and slavery, including those committed against indigenous peoples." The preeminent religious patriarch stated that the Church "…repudiates those concepts that fail to recognize the inherent human rights of indigenous peoples,

including what has become known as the legal and political 'doctrine of discovery.'" The Pope's sentiments, no matter how sincerely prepared, do nothing to denounce and end the ongoing global Christian missionizing of Indigenous Peoples. The political and military legacy of the Doctrine remains and *Johnson v. McIntosh* has not been overruled. This repudiation is more than 500 years too late.

Indigenous resistance has always been a matter of both spiritual and military warfare.

The Shawnee leader Tecumseh was well known for his political and military acumen as well as his younger brother Tenskwatawa who, as a spiritual practitioner, prophesied an end to colonization by the European "children of the evil spirit" through a return to culture and complete rejection of their ways.

Samuel G. Drake quotes Tecumseh in *The Book of the Indians; or, the Biography and History of the Indians of North America, from its first discovery to the year 1841*,

> The being within, communing with past ages, tells me that once, nor until lately, there was no white man on this continent; that it then all belonged to red men, children of the same parents, placed on it by the Great Spirit that made them, to keep it, to traverse it, to enjoy its productions, and to fill it with the same race, once a happy race, since made miserable by the white people, who are never contented but always encroaching. The way, and the only way, to check and to stop this evil, is for all the red men to unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land, as it was at first, and should be yet; for it never was divided, but belongs to all for the use of each. For no part has a right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers—those who want all, and will not do with less.

In 1876 resistance to protect sacred Paha Sapa (Black Hills) from resource colonialism intensified as settlers rushed to the area searching for gold. The Battle of the Greasy Grass and killing of General Custer was prophesied by Hunkpapa Lakota spiritual leader Tatanka-Iyotanka (Sitting Bull) during a Sun Dance ceremony. Tatanka-Iyotanka reportedly had a vision of "soldiers falling into his camp like grasshoppers from the sky." The prophecy was fulfilled.

On December 29, 1890, 300 Lakota men, women, and children were massacred by the US Army's 7th Cavalry, fearful that an Indigenous uprising was underway, they attacked a peaceful Ghost Dance at Wounded Knee in what is now called South Dakota. From 1889–90, the Ghost Dance movement, established by Northern Paiute spiritual practitioner Wovoka, spread like wildfire to many Indigenous Nations. Though Wovoka was reportedly influenced by some Christian beliefs, he prophesied that,

> …the white man, my children, will soon be no more. Now you must not hate the white man. This will only delay his end. But if you will do the dance that I will teach you, all the ancestors will return. And the buffalo will be renewed. And you shall all live forever. Forever in the freedom that we as Indian people once knew.

The Ghost Dance was a spiritual ceremonial movement to unify Indigenous Nations and reject colonial invasion.

Two weeks prior to the Wounded Knee massacre, Tatanka-Iyotanka (Sitting Bull) was targeted by US colonial forces as an instigator of what settler invaders feared was a Ghost Dance uprising.

While being arrested, a conflict broke out and Sitting Bull, along with several of his relatives, were shot and killed. While Wovoka's vision had inspired prayerful resistance in the face of genocide, in many ways, Wounded Knee was a symbol of that defeat and many Ghost Dances were forced underground with some continuing to this day. Twenty medals of honor were given to the "US" soldiers who participated in the mass slaughter.

After the Wounded Knee massacre, US policy against Indigenous Peoples shifted from outright annihilation to forced assimilation. As part of the shift in strategy, army General Richard Pratt created the first government-funded off-reservation boarding school with the mission to, "Kill the Indian, save the man." Pratt and other colonizers at the time were clear that this was a project of civilization, Pratt stated, "Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit." Boarding schools were a tactic of violent assimilation based on the "civilizing" of Indigenous Peoples into the social, political, and economic order. In 1885, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hiram Price stated "…it is cheaper to give them education than to fight them." Another colonial politician named Carl Schurz clarified the economics behind the strategy stating that, "…it would cost a million dollars to kill an Indian in warfare, whereas it cost only $1,200 to school an Indian child for eight years."

Starting in 1860, "US" and "Canadian" governments established spiritual warfare policies that led to assaults on entire generations of Indigenous children. Initially, children brought into the open-air prison of an agency, reservation, or reserve with their families were not wards of the state but hostages to be assimilated. Borrowing from the centuries old Spanish and French colonial models, the first step was to establish on-site mandatory schooling. European language systems were imposed and the schools were run by Christian missionaries or clergy. Feeling that such a system failed to provide the kind of total assimilation outcomes desired, it was later on either supplemented, replaced, or modified to outright include a system and institutional policy of kidnapping Indigenous children from their families. Forcibly confining them far from their homes, held abroad in completely alien environments in boarding schools, in which they were abused physically, sexually, and emotionally. Held subject and inescapably housed to an unrelenting and inescapable cultural bombardment. Boarding schools known as Residential Schools in "Canada," were designed to brutally assimilate Indigenous children into white settler society. Control, obedience, compliance, and cultural erasure were the order of the day and violently imposed. Children were systematically punished for practicing their spirituality or even speaking their language.

To this day thousands of Indigenous children lay buried in mass and anonymous graves on former school grounds through "Canada" and the "US."

The white supremacist colonial school system was explicitly designed to violently impose Christian and capitalist values to produce productive members of the civilized order. These violent military and Christian institutions of separation, forced assimilation, and extreme physical and sexual abuse were so effective, the strategy was replicated by other colonial forces, including so-called Canada to "Australia" and beyond.

The system that settler invaders designed to annihilate Indigenous knowledge and replace it with their own is still in operation. We used to be forced to go to the colonizer's schools to learn their ways and participate in their project of civilization. Today we go willingly into its halls, sit in its classrooms and further our social status in the capitalist colonial order.

Though proclamations are made to "decolonize" academia, we have Indigenous scholars who continue to fulfill the dreams of colonizers such as Pratt. The institution of colonial higher educa-

tion is designed to produce an elite managerial class within Indigenous communities that shapes and subdues cultural knowledge systems to fulfill colonial economic and political expansion. This is the curse of the song "Go My Son" (an infamous composition that's occasionally performed at Indigenous graduations) that was written by Mormons to encourage auto-assimilation through neo-colonial education systems.

From the forced assimilation strategy of "kill the Indian and save the man" in boarding schools, to the tactics of language prohibition, denial of histories, land theft and enclosure, disruption and criminalization of ceremony (through restriction of the use of peyote, control of the use of eagle feathers, etc.), to the desecration of sacred places, the legacy of white supremacist settlers and resource colonialism has been perpetrated in the systematic destruction of Indigenous lifeways across an entire hemisphere in the form of a sustained policy and practice of ecological and cultural genocide.

The brutal progression of what constitutes modernity has been both constant physical and spiritual war.

No Justice on Stolen Land

In the American epoch from the 1800s up until the passage of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) of 1978 by the "US" Congress, Indigenous Peoples in the occupied-US had no religious rights and traditional ceremonies were banned and made illegal.

In 1892, Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas H. Morgan reissued a statement clarifying that:

> Any Indian who shall engage in the practices of so-called medicine-men, or who shall resort to any artifice or device to keep the Indians of the reservation from adopting and following civilized habits and pursuits, or shall adopt any means to prevent the attendance of children at school, or shall use any arts of a conjurer to prevent Indians from abandoning the barbarous rites and customs, shall be deemed to be guilty of an offense, and upon conviction thereof, the first offense shall be imprisoned for not less than ten nor more than thirty days…

The hypocrisy of the "US" constitutional foundation of "religious freedom" is most apparent in the struggle to protect Indigenous sacred places. Today, Indigenous Peoples have no guaranteed legal protections for threatened sacred places, which are largely located on so-called "public lands."

When it comes to sacred lands defense, Indigenous Peoples have no meaningful recourse in the US legal context. We are forced to seek creative means to protect sacred places with strategies that are often a mix of the following categories:

1. Administrative: permitting, public processes, comment periods, hearings, co-management agreements, etc.
2. Litigation: lawsuits and appeals.
3. Economic: boycotts, divestment, buyouts, etc.

4. Direct Action: blockades and occupations.

5. International Appeals: typically through the United Nations.

In many ways the entirety of this book is a response to the limitations of these aforementioned strategies. I've intentionally left out "Awareness" from this list, as it is not what organizers would categorize as a "strategic vehicle" for change (though external communications, propaganda, framing, etc., are elements of any strategy). I've been directly involved in the organizing and support for over two-dozen sacred lands struggle campaigns which have applied all of these strategies with mixed, and mostly failed, results. Most of the following sections and chapters will antagonize these limitations.

In 1978, the primary congressional sponsor Senator Abourezk stated, of AIRFA,

> Representatives of traditional Indian religious societies have sought to protect their rights, to have access to sacred religious sites, to make use of a variety of natural substances and wildlife in the practice of their religion and to secure privacy for sacred ceremonials. Infringement of these rights have consistently occurred due to enforcement of conservation laws which [have] simply failed to take into account their impact on such Indian religious and cultural practices.

This law was originally intended to protect all forms of Indigenous spiritual practices, but the law failed to protect sacred sites in subsequent court tests such as *Wilson v. Block* (1983) and *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association* (1988).

Wilson v. Block was a suit filed to halt ski area development on the San Francisco Peaks. As the first sacred sites case to test AIRFA, the judges ruled, "AIRFA requires federal agencies to consider, but not necessarily to defer to, Indian religious values. It does not prohibit agencies from adopting all land uses that conflict with traditional Indian religious beliefs or practices."

In *Lyng*, the Supreme Court considered the matter of First Amendment protections as applied to sacred sites. The US Forest Service had attempted to clearcut trees and build a roadway through "Chimney Rock," a sacred place for Karok, Tolowa, and Yurok Nations in an occupied area known as the Six Rivers National Forest. Although the Forest Service's own Environmental Impact Statement stated that Chimney Rock would be irreparably damaged, the proposed developments were approved. In response, a group called the Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association filed suit. The Supreme Court of the "US" ultimately ruled that unless there was specific governmental intent to infringe upon a religion or the government's action coerced individuals to act contrary to their religious beliefs, that the First Amendment provided no protection against governmental action which impacted upon, or even destroyed, a sacred site.

Along with *Wilson v. Block*, the *Lyng* decision further established that AIRFA was not available as a mechanism for judicial protection of sacred sites. As a result of the *Lyng* decision where a governmental action threatens a sacred site, an Indigenous spiritual practitioner has no enforceable First Amendment protections based upon any religious freedom claim. In the Supreme Court's ruling on *Lyng*, legal justification for destruction of Indigenous sacred lands and cultural genocide was established:

> …Incidental effects of government programs, which may interfere with the practice of certain religions, but which have no tendency to coerce individuals into acting contrary to their religious beliefs, do not require government to bring forward a compelling justification for its otherwise lawful actions…Even assuming that the Government's actions here will virtually destroy the Indians' ability to practice their religion, the Constitution simply does not provide a principle that could justify upholding respondents' [Indigenous Peoples] legal claims.

Court cases such as *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association*, *Wilson v. Bloc*, and *Navajo Nation v. US Forest Service*, clearly demonstrate that no legal mechanism exists—not the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, not the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, or the US Constitution—for protection of sacred lands. So litigation remains a tenuous and potentially disastrous option in that negative precedence can inform judicial decisions in other cases regarding sacred land conflicts.

Indigenous scholar and author Vine Deloria, Jr. summarized the failures of AIRFA and overall legal protections for Indigenous sacred places in the essay *Sacred Lands and Religious Freedom*:

> At present, legal remedies for Indian [sic] religious practitioners are limited to those procedures provided by various environmental and historic preservation laws which, in some circumstances, may provide an indirect means for protection of sites. The only existing law directly addressing this issue, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, is simply a policy statement with "no teeth." While it has led to some administrative regulations and policies providing for limited additional opportunities for input, it provides no legal cause of action to aggrieved practitioners.

As a Federal administrative mechanism to evaluate environmental impacts of actions, The National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) was passed in 1970. NEPA categorizes sacred places as "cultural resources." The law has proven inconsistent and insufficient as a federal agency can make a determination to approve a destructive development regardless of cultural impacts found in their assessment or impact statement processes. For example, the Washoe Nation partnered successfully with the Forest Service who approved a ban of rock-climbing activities desecrating "Cave Rock" in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) following NEPA guidelines, yet the same agency has worked against Indigenous interests in protecting areas such as the San Francisco Peaks and Mount Graham in southern "Arizona." In the court proceedings over Cave Rock, where the Forest Service was sued by rock climbers, judges in the case upheld the Forest Service's decision not because the site is sacred, but due to its historic and natural properties.

In 1996 then-president of the so-called "US" Bill Clinton established Executive Order 13007 regarding sacred sites. The order requires federal land management agencies to accommodate access and use of sacred sites. It also requires agencies to develop procedures for consultation of impacted Indigenous Nations.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) requires federal agencies to assess any actions that impact "historic properties." The act clarifies that properties of traditional religious and cultural significance to an "Indian tribe or Native Hawaiian organization" may be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

The aforementioned policies have proven insufficient as consultation is most often viewed as a formality, considerations are limited to "federally recognized tribes," and Executive Order

13007 restrictively defines sacred sites and leaves the interpretation for application of the order up to federal agencies.

Federal land management agencies' inconsistent applications of NEPA, varied interpretations of 13007, and view of consultation as a formality to be check-boxed, demonstrates the hostile design of the administrative architecture of "justice" for Indigenous Peoples' lifeways relating to sacred lands. If a Christian church and a sacred mountain are intentionally destroyed, one is morally and judicially decried as terror while the other is considered progress. This is what is meant when we assert, "No Justice on Stolen Lands." Colonizer laws are constructed to benefit settler society.

From mass-scale industrial mining projects devastating whole shrines, to the traditional practitioner looking over their shoulder worried that armed Forest Service cops may question them while gathering herbs for ceremonies, these laws mean very little when the sacred is juridically desecrated. In 2012, medicine practitioners from the Indigenous Elders and Medicine Peoples Council gathered at the base of Dook'o'ooslííd and maintained a ceremonial fire, while the Forest Service imposed burn and camping restrictions. A small ember was kept for the ceremony but the Forest Service determined it was such a threat that they mobilized multiple armed officers with a K-9 unit to surround the spiritual gathering and douse the smoldering ember with water. They threatened anyone who intervened with arrest and one person was ultimately cited. The traditional practitioners stated,

> We feel great sadness for the Forest Service as they have given the Indigenous Elders and Medicine Peoples Council no choice. The choice to violate our own cultural protocols or face legal implications is not consistent with creating a working relationship with Indigenous Peoples. The holy/sacred fire will continue. We refuse to participate in this atrocity; it is up to the Forest Service to determine whether they will disrupt these prayers.

With no viable administrative and legal options available, Indigenous Peoples are forced to subject our cultural survival to a process that is inherently antagonistic and apply alternative strategies to gain limited protections for sacred places.

The Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition has successfully lobbied for National Monument designation with co-management administration. This same strategy is being considered by the San Carlos Apache for protection of sacred Oak Flat near "Globe, Arizona" which is threatened by mass-scale copper mining. Yet even these designations only provide indirect relief from spiritual violations and by nature have a narrow impact limited to a specific area. They do not guarantee "free exercise of religion."

In some instances such as the San Francisco Peaks struggle, developers threatening sacred sites have offered "buyouts." Spiritual practitioners have categorically rejected these offers recognizing that they would amount to paying ransom to developers for threatening sacred lands and further support a market for such threats.

Other economic strategies for sacred site protection can be articulated simply: make the business of killing the Earth bad until it stops. Most often economic campaigns (which are initiated in tandem with administrative and legal strategies) are focused on boycotts and divestment targeting banks, contractors, and other stakeholders. These campaigns have impacts limited to the material resources and inclinations that Earth-killing developers may have (I offer more critique on this strategy in chapter six).

The principle of "justice" based on legal, economic, or social equity and fairness is a mirage on a horizon of desecrated landscapes. This is why we can't reconcile religious hypocrisies through economic or political reforms, it means so long as colonial occupation and resource extraction exists on these lands, the sacred will always be threatened and those threats will invariably be sanctioned. Civil, religious, and human "rights" violation-based campaigns argue for inclusion and equal treatment of Indigenous Peoples in settler society. This is part of the fallacy of "democracy," notions of economic and political "justice" further colonial domination and captivity, there can never be "justice" on stolen lands.

International Appeals: The Dead End of UNDRIP and the "Rights" of Nature

The struggle to protect the Peaks and other sacred places had become contentious enough that in 2011 the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recommended that the

> United States Government engage in a comprehensive review of its relevant policies and actions to ensure that they are in compliance with international standards in relation to the San Francisco Peaks and other Native American sacred sites, and that it take appropriate remedial actions.

When domestic political options have been exhausted, Indigenous Peoples have been compelled to seek audience on the international level. On March 2, 2015 the Navajo Nation filed a complaint against the United States with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, alleging violations of the Diné rights to practice our religion and culture regarding desecration of the San Francisco Peaks. Yet even the lawyer who filed the complaint on the Navajo Nation's behalf was not very optimistic, "No government ever changes its policy because an international body says to," stated Robert Williams, who is also professor of law and faculty co-chair of the University of Arizona's Indigenous Peoples Law and Policy program, "The Navajo know very well that the US doesn't have to listen to the report, but we hope that it feels obligated to change its conduct."

Hope is a terrible tactic.

In 2007, after decades of advocacy by Indigenous organizers, the United Nations passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Though much fanfare was dedicated to its completion, it stands as a non-binding resolution with no enforcement mechanisms. UNDRIP is merely a symbolic gesture that serves as a signpost declaring "we care" in front of the ecological and social crises that nation-state signatories perpetuate.

In 1999, while on tour with my band in Switzerland, I was asked by Indigenous advocates from the International Indian Treaty Council to testify before the UN General Assembly as they were discussing articles of the initial UNDRIP draft. They quickly briefed me on the topic and I wrote a short statement about sacred lands desecration, forced relocation at Big Mountain, and how there is no redress for these grievances in the US. It was an absurd spectacle, hundreds of minor political officials and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) coordinating testimony and pushing for articles they had painstakingly drafted to remain intact. I was standing right behind the US delegation who were shifting uncomfortably as I spoke.

We were there in Geneva with some French anarchists who had helped organize our tour. They waited outside and quipped between cigarette puffs after the speech, "…so what can you expect from the UN? Right now they're dropping bombs on the people of Kosovo."

At the time I felt that any action was better than nothing so it couldn't hurt. It took me some time to shed that delusion.

Flash-forward a decade later when, after all administrative and legal options to stop desecration of the San Francisco Peaks had failed, I was at a UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues event in the occupied-Lenape lands of so-called New York City. I asked one of the presenters—who was also an attorney and had helped craft much of the language of UNDRIP—this question, "Bulldozers are starting to desecrate our sacred mountain which is holy to thirteen Indigenous Nations. What can UNDRIP do to help us stop this desecration?" The NGO representative responded, "Carry a copy of UNDRIP in your pocket. If you get arrested let them know it's in violation of various articles particularly number 12." With our cultural survival in peril, that was no consolation. We had numerous meetings after that and I even co-filed an international complaint with the International Indian Treaty Council to the UN Committee to End Racial Discrimination. Nothing meaningful ever came from it. Nothing from the immense amount of resources that had been dedicated over decades of international organizing for Indigenous rights could offer us any amount of protection or material support in our fight. We had a moral position reinforced by a global political entity that has an army of nearly 100,000 "peacekeepers." We had a few press clippings that amounted to bad public relations that the "US" didn't care about. This was a time when I still concerned myself with the framework of "human rights" which was exemplified in our appeals written on banners, "Protect Sacred Sites, Defend Human Rights." Carrying a piece of paper with the UN's words printed on it doesn't stop bulldozers, I've tried.

I failed to hear the lessons of my elders, that the political concerns of human authority were inconsequential to nature. I had not fully realized their assertions of "no justice on stolen lands." And so I was disillusioned with the failure of our international efforts, it was clear that we were on our own. Desecration was imminent. Police forces were either constantly surveilling our crew or throwing charges at people. We faced absurdly high bail amounts. We had exhausted all formal "civil" and international options.

After focusing lifetimes on petitioning the UN to pass the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the same Indigenous activists shifted their focus to establish the "legal rights" of nature.

In 2008, politicians in Ecuador wrote into their constitution that the "State shall give incentives to natural persons and legal entities and to communities to protect nature and to promote respect for all the elements comprising an ecosystem." In 2010, politicians in Bolivia passed a law that designates Mother Earth the character of "a collective subject of public interest." In 2014, the Te Urewera park in Aotearoa (so-called "New Zealand") became the first natural feature to be recognized as a "legal person." In 2016 the Constitutional Court of Columbia found that the Atrato River basin possesses rights to "protection, conservation, maintenance, and restoration."

While the question of legal personhood of nature had been entertained since the 1970s, it had not been effectively implemented on such a scale before.

In 2017, New Zealand passed a law granting *personhood status* to the sacred Whanganui River, which had suffered extreme industrial pollution since the 1800s. Now if threatened, the river can sue. It also means it can own property, enter contracts, and be sued itself. Because natural features

cannot represent themselves in court, a "guardian" is selected that can act on the entity's behalf to protect it. As of this writing, damages and liabilities have largely been untested.

The obvious question is, "Why impose and extend political bureaucracies onto the natural world?" Another way of asking this question is, "Why extend colonial systems of authority over Mother Earth?" Particularly when the process reifies the material extreme of colonial logic? This process is the total legal colonization of natural existence. Under this legal doctrine, the Earth is a ward with Indigenous Peoples (or qualifying entities) becoming, "natural resource trustees." This becomes a question of allegiances as the "personhood" or "rights" of nature severs Indigenous allegiance *to* nature and folds it into a preferenced legal framework of coloniality. To envelope Mother Earth into the legal structures of civilization with the "Rights of Nature" is an act of dominion or domination, it is the apogee of domestication.

The limited practicality of the strategy is to stop corporations from ravaging the land and water, but why double down and entangle the natural world further with colonial legal and economic architectures?

The fallacy of the rights of rivers and nature is one as mundane as the imaginary lines called borders between nations or the fences marking private property. They only exist within the context of the State and require enforcement, which means that the legal "personhood of nature" reinforces State violence. Those wishing to protect nature through laws inadvertently attach the brutality of the enforcement mechanisms of the state. Those champions of the rights of nature also become the State police of the ecosystem.

Confining nature—the domain of spirits and ancestry—in a legal administrative domain (with the same legal personhood reserved for corporations and ships) is using the master's tools to reinforce the overall structures of the master's house (à la Audre Lorde).

The legal objectification of sacred sites is an act of desecration. With impositions of the "Rights of Nature" the sacred is not liberated, it is enclosed as a legal subject within the boundaries of colonial society. It is subordinating the sacred to "rights" to be litigated in the courts of the colonizers. Nature does not exist in accordance to civil authority, so why should it be constrained within its laws?

Chapter Four: Dookʼoʼoosłíid and the Politics of Cultural Genocide

> Look at this mountain here, Dook'o'ooslííd, the San Francisco Mountains. Look at, and think about it and know, and understand that it is not just a chunk of rock. It is not just a huge pile of dirt or a mountain. Think of it as a being, as a living, breathing, thinking being. In there it has a consciousness. Try and think of it in that way. It does not stand there as a commodity to be used or as something there to be enjoyed as entertainment.
>
> —Norris Nez, Diné Hataałii

Dook'o'ooslííd, also known as the San Francisco Peaks, are located just outside of the small occupying settler city of so-called Flagstaff (what we call Kinłani, which means "many houses"). The "Peaks" as they're called by locals, are held holy by more than thirteen Indigenous nations.

Since 2012 approximately 130 million gallons of treated sewage each year have been pumped through a pipeline to a small ski resort operating on the mountain through a special use permit provided by the US Forest Service. The ski area, called Arizona Snowbowl, sprays the effluent on the slopes for skiing on the holy Peaks because as it is, their business of winter recreation is operating in the high desert and natural snow has never been guaranteed.

It's an odd and uncomfortable irony that I grew up performing traditional Diné dances for the tourist economy of the region that so-called Flagstaff benefits from. I even danced in a promotional video advertisement for the city, a paid gig of course. I learned quickly that our cultures are only accepted when we are contained, consumable, and when we embrace the covert and overt violences of settler existence.

Up until the 1960s there were signs up at Flagstaff businesses that read "No Indians or Dogs Allowed." It's not known when the last sign came down. That's part of the history this town keeps buried while they celebrate haunted tours. The celebrity spooks roaming hotel hallways are nothing compared to the ghosts buried under the not-so-distant weight of the "conqueror's" history. The unwelcoming white sentiment of "Indians" remains on the streets. It's exemplified with the disproportionate number of Indigenous People arrested each year.

According to annual reports from the Flagstaff Police Department, the City of Flagstaff arrests an average of more than 3,000 Indigenous People every year, yet only 7,000 Native people call Flagstaff their home. Half of the total annual arrests are Indigenous yet we comprise less than 10% of the population of 70,000. While the majority of these arrests are reportedly comprised of unsheltered relatives, if you do the basic math it breaks down to one in two Indigenous Peoples living in Flagstaff face arrest each year.

The anti-Indigenous sentiment of this small town persists with the extreme criminalization of unsheltered relatives who I've worked with over the years at Táala Hooghan Infoshop. They are continually denied basic services and face the intensities of racism everyday. In 2006 The National Coalition for the Homeless named the City of Flagstaff the 10th "meanest" city in the US due to policies targeting the unsheltered population.

We can step back and see the way the streets of "Flagstaff" are a microcosm of the larger reality: approximately 1 in 200 Indigenous People in the so-called US are unsheltered, compared to 1 in 1,000 in the overall population of the so-called US. Though "American Indians and Alaska Natives making up approximately 2 percent of the US population."

In 2018 unsheltered community members rose up and held a rally in the center of downtown Flagstaff, about sixty people who were living without shelter attended, and less than two-dozen

community members. The cops, which nearly outnumbered housed supporters, surrounded the rally. Shane Russell, one of the organizers of the rally stated, "Before 1492 we were never homeless, we always had a place to live."

While some consider "Flagstaff" to be a "border town," a term used for predominantly white settlements near reservations, Flagstaff is stolen lands that comprise many contested spaces. I don't use the term "border town" as the colonial borders are settler fiction reinforced with narratives that bury Indigenous memory and realities. Nowhere is that more evident than with the struggle to protect Dook'o'ooshłíid, or what was called "San Francisco Peaks" by Spanish invaders nearly 300 years ago, the sacred mountain that many unsheltered people I've worked with over the years call their "Mother" and who have said, as they stay with her under the stars, that they are *home*.

It becomes lost on so many, even our own people, how the desecration of this sacred place is a significant factor in the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples on these lands. There's so much trauma we hold in our bodies, there's so much trauma in the land (a matter addressed in a later section). While we are bound together with the land in desecration, so is our healing.

On this mountain, the Arizona Snowbowl ski area, Coconino National Forest Service, and the City of Flagstaff are committing cultural genocide. They are desecrating the most revered holy site in the region.

Dook'o'ooshłíid is one of six holy mountains in Diné cosmology. The Peaks represent one of four pillars that uphold our universe. They are home to deities, an offering site, and a place where we gather herbs that cannot be gathered elsewhere. They are integral to the existence and wellbeing of Diné. I grew up learning of the unique relationship that we have to this holy mountain from my father, Jones Benally, who is a recognized traditional medicine practitioner and Arizona "Living Treasure." As an extension of these teachings and ceremonial practices, a major part of my life has been focused on education and building awareness of the environmental and social conflict regarding the Peaks while advocating protection of this holy place.

Most conspicuously I've done this volunteer work through initiating a campaign when I was in high school that led to stopping an initial ski area expansion proposal in 1996 and ending a mining operation on the Peaks in 1999, helping to establish the Save the Peaks Coalition in 2004, organizing meetings, demonstrations, and actions, directing a feature documentary about the issue, and organizing an ongoing direct action effort called Protect the Peaks.

A Brief Narrative of Peaks Resistance

Though Indigenous Peoples of the region never willfully consented to the imposed jurisdictions of Spain, Mexico, or the US, the latter seized Spanish and Mexican "land grants" when it signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. The treaty, which marked the end of the US-Mexico war, granted the US lands comprising what is known today as California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, most of Arizona and Colorado, and parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Wyoming.

In 1898, the "San Francisco Mountain Forest Reserve" was established and it wasn't until 1908 that the Coconino National Forest was created and assumed authority over the region, which includes Dook'o'ooshłíid. The Diné treaty with the US signed in 1868, which marked the end of Diné mass incarceration and the end of the so-called Navajo Wars, was negotiated under duress with the Diné holy mountains as a basis for the lands of the present day reservation.

During treaty negotiations at the concentration camp known as Fort Sumner, military representatives of the US proposed that Diné would be relocated to what was then called "Indian Territory" (in so-called Oklahoma). Diné warrior and medicine practitioner Hástiin Dághá (Barboncito), who co-led armed rebellion against the US to resist forced relocation of Diné to Fort Sumner, said

> Bringing us here has made many of us die, also a great number of our animals. Our Grandfathers had no idea of living in any other place except our own land, and I don't think it is right for us to do what we were taught not to do. When the Navajo were first made, First Woman pointed out four mountains and four rivers that was to be our land. Our grandfathers told us to never move east of the Rio Grande River nor west of the San Juan River…I hope to God you will not ask me to go anywhere except my own country.

While the 1868 treaty formally ended Diné anti-colonial armed resistance, the legacy of the fight to protect Diné homelands continues to shape the underlying political and social narratives in defense of sacred places throughout the region.

Resistance to violations of the holy Peaks have been ongoing for generations. Most notably in 1969 when an initial proposal to build a mega-resort with hotels, shopping centers, and massive ski infrastructure was proposed on the southwestern slopes of the mountain. This plan was fiercely resisted by Indigenous People, environmental groups, and others residing in and around the settlement of "Flagstaff." At one public meeting regarding the proposed development, more than 3,000 people attended. Nearly all were vehemently opposed to the proposal. Due to the mass pressure, the County Board of Supervisors re-zoned the area preventing the mass scale development.

In 1977, new owners of Snowbowl came back with a scaled down proposal on 777 acres of the mountain. This plan was once again resisted but the US Forest Service sanctioned it after completing an Environmental Impact Statement. This administrative action triggered the lawsuit (mentioned in the previous section) known as *Wilson v. Block* (1979). When the lawsuit ultimately failed, a group calling themselves the Evan Mecham (the fascist governor of so-called Arizona at the time) Eco-Terrorist International Conspiracy took direct action and hiked up the mountain with an acetylene torch and sabotaged ski lifts effectively shutting down the resort. The action took such a financial toll that the ski resort owner was forced to sell the infrastructure. After changing hands two more times, a real-estate developer from so-called New Jersey named Eric Borowski purchased the failing ski business in 1994 for $4 million dollars (which is basically the cost of one lift at comparable ski areas in the region).

A Renewed Threat

In 2002, multimillionaire Snowbowl owner Borowski crafted a plan to expand the ski area with new runs and lifts, and build a 14.8-mile pipeline from the City of Flagstaff to a 10 million gallon storage pond to spray 180 million gallons of treated sewage effluent to make fake snow. The plan couldn't happen without support from the City of Flagstaff, so after two council meetings a decision was quickly rendered to sell treated sewage effluent to Snowbowl. Although the

treated sewage had been found to contain pharmaceuticals, hormones, and anti-bacterial resistant genes that pose a potential risk to human health, City officials cast off those concerns stating that the Forest Service would determine whether or not those threats were significant. Every Indigenous voice and every person who expressed concern for culture, environment, public health, or animals was ignored.

In 2004, after a half-hearted Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, Nora Rasure, then Coconino Forest Service supervisor, approved the ski area expansion while admitting adverse cultural impacts that were "irreversible" and "irretrievable" and would "contaminate the spiritual entirety of the San Francisco Peaks." She spoke at a meeting of elders, medicine people, and political leaders from the thirteen Indigenous Nations who hold the Peaks holy. "But, you have to remember," she said, "I also have to protect the rights of the skiers."

The EIS generated under her regime had stated,

> Snowmaking and expansion of facilities, especially the use of reclaimed water, would contaminate the natural resources needed to perform the required ceremonies that have been, and continue to be, the basis for the cultural identity for many of these tribes. (Final Environmental Impact Statement Vol. 1, pp. 3–18)

In the Final EIS Daniel Peaches, member of the Diné Medicine Man's Association stated,

> Once the tranquility and serenity of the Mountain is disturbed, the harmony that allows for life to exist is disrupted. The weather will misbehave, the ground will shift and tremble, the land will no longer be hospitable to life. The natural pattern of life will become erratic and the behaviors of animals and people will become unpredictable. Violence will become the norm and agitation will rule so peace and peacefulness will no longer be possible. The plants will not produce berries and droughts will be so severe as to threaten all existence. (Final Environmental Impact Statement Vol. 1, pp. 3–27)

Joe Shirley, then President of the Navajo Nation stated, "To Diné, the sacred mountain of the West represents life itself. Dook'o'ooslííd is one of our strengths. It is our essence. It is us." While in office Shirley declared the Snowbowl expansion an "act of cultural genocide."

The City of Flagstaff and the Chamber of Commerce were delighted at Rasure's decision. They saw the dollars pouring into Flagstaff from dirty snow. In their minds, the marginal seasonal economic gain from a single for-profit private business outweighed the interests of thirteen Indigenous Nations—and the ecological integrity of the mountain. Although the Navajo and Hopi Nations argued that they contributed more significantly to the economy of Flagstaff (a contribution that has yet to be fully studied) and their cultures were a significant draw for tourists from throughout the world, they were ignored. Of course, part of the message in the dominant culture is that so long as Indigenous cultures are safely on a shelf, in a book, in a museum, or in the form of entertainment, they are valid, accepted, and celebrated.

According to the Forest Service's own report, "It is unrealistic to think that the Snowbowl would be a significant driver of tourism activity or the economy" (Draft Environmental Impact Statement, pp. 3–121). The EIS continues, "In contrast with a number of other ski resorts in the Rocky Mountain region, the Arizona Snowbowl is not a dominant driver of growth and the economy in its host community." (Coconino Forest Service Draft Environmental Impact Statement, pp.

3–71) and "… even a cursory examination of the scope of the ski area operation in comparison with the full scope of the Flagstaff area economy makes it clear that the ski area is of insufficient size to be a dominant driver of trends in tourism or the broader economy." (Coconino Forest Service Draft Environmental Impact Statement, pp. 3–113)

Yet Arizona Snowbowl continues to mislead the community of Flagstaff by overstating their financial contributions to the economy by 130%, according to a report titled "Economic Significance of Arizona Snowbowl to the Flagstaff and Coconino County, Arizona Regional Economy" by Bioeconomics, Inc. The report states, "The incremental impact of the Snowbowl expansion plans is estimated to account for less than two-tenths of one percent of county economic activity, and only nine one-hundredths of one percent of labor income in the county."

The Forest Supervisor stated that although severe adverse cultural impacts were identified, nothing in the law required her to make a determination against the proposed development. Recreation and limited economic exploitation—the "rights" of skiers and business owners—were ultimately worth the consequence of cultural genocide. The municipal and federal administrative processes functioned as they were designed; serving colonial economic interests while sacrificing Indigenous spirituality and existence.

The Save the Peaks Coalition

In January 2004, as the Forest Service was contemplating approval of the proposed expansion and snowmaking with treated sewage, my sister Jeneda called for a meeting to see how we could organize to fight the threat of desecration.

The meeting was held at the local Sierra Club chapter's office and more than twenty-five people showed up. It was a powerful mix of environmentalists, liberals, anarchists, elders, healers, young people, and more.

Jeneda proposed forming a coalition of groups to leverage political power. The Forest Service had previously stated to us in a meeting that they had no obligation to individual Tribal members but they did have a trust responsibility to meet with Tribal officials. The initial strategy of the coalition was to compliment the organizing force of "grassroots" people with environmental justice orgs, spiritual practitioners, and partner—when appropriate—with Tribal officials, particularly through their Cultural Preservation offices. Since we knew the Tribes didn't have the capacity to dedicate personnel to the fight, the logic was that we could supplement the necessary work through an informal collective that would share information, political strategies, and resources if appropriate and as necessary. Tribes weren't formally part of the coalition so their bureaucracies wouldn't get in the way. This made for an effective campaign that mobilized a broad effort that reached and activated thousands of people.

The Coalition, which was collectively coordinated by volunteers, would be responsible for research, outreach, mobilization, sharing resources, and more. Multiple summits were held which included official Tribal leadership of nearly all impacted Indigenous communities, spiritual practitioners, lawyers, autonomous organizers, and even the Forest Service at times. This allowed for the overall strategies to be contemplated thoroughly and informed by a broad range of "stakeholders" rather than just Tribal and State bureaucrats. The Save the Peaks Coalition mobilized everything from letter writing parties, educational events, prayer gatherings, and protests draw-

ing hundreds of people to public hearings, marches, and other events. It had become an influential force beyond the Peaks struggle in addressing sacred sites issues throughout the so-called US.

When the Forest Supervisor ultimately made her decision to approve the development in 2004, the Coalition shifted gears to support court proceedings while preparing contingency plans that focused on international appeals and direct action.

A Youthful Force for the Peaks

The momentum generated with the sacred sites movement to "Save the Peaks" spread throughout our communities. We saw prayer runs and solidarity events being organized. Elders were organizing caravans to support our efforts. Families would travel around reservation communities distributing our outreach literature.

To me, one of the most impactful and inspirational forces was a small group of young Indigenous high school students who shook the social and political foundations of "Flagstaff."

In 2004, I was invited to screen a documentary called *The Snowbowl Effect* I had just made about the struggle to protect the Holy San Francisco Peaks at a local high school. A small crew of Indigenous youth had invited me to present the film and talk. Leading up to the film screening, posters the young folks put up around their school were being torn down and school administrators threatened to cancel the event. The young folks were undeterred and the film was well attended with a lively Q & A session. Those in attendance were eager to get involved and asked a lot of questions about organizing so I invited them to a Save the Peaks Coalition meeting. After several meetings that grew with youth participation, they expressed the need to organize themselves and reached out to their friends. They formed a group and called themselves "Youth of the Peaks." It was led by fierce and powerful young Diné women with the average age of about fifteen.

The crew met after school in a classroom and later started meeting at a public library. As their numbers grew they decided to organize protests calling on local politicians with the Flagstaff City Council to stop the sale of wastewater to the ski resort. At their first vigil they had about 200 people attend, mostly youth with incredible energy. Youth of the Peaks (YOTP) built on this momentum.

I attended a couple of meetings when I was invited but they were autonomous with little mentorship support except when requested.

One evening they staged a protest during a city council session that drew over 300 people, again mostly youth. This time they were masked and wearing camouflage. They had created a powerful identity taking inspiration from the Zapatistas and other movements. They stated:

> The bulldozers came that day wanting, they came to the place where the evening light stayed, where memory, ceremony, imagination, the sacred, and the snow forever remained. They came that day and I pleaded with their greed…Please do not take my home away, my heart lives here. I am youth of the Peaks, this is where my ancestors and I pray. Awake and arise again! Shake the dust from the nightmare and declare that you are not willing to compromise. Realize that you are a Youth of the Peaks!

In 2005, at the height of their organizing, the local Flagstaff police gang task force known by their absurd acronym "GITEM" went to the high school where the youth were primarily organiz-

ing and pulled two young people involved with YOTP out of their classrooms to question them. One young person looked at the cops, who were wearing tactical gear, and said, "No comment. I'm going to remain silent," and they moved on. The other two organizers, both 15-years-old at the time, were questioned in an administrator's office without their parents or other school officials present. The cops asked questions like, "How are you organized? Who is leading your group?" and expressed concern about another upcoming screening of *The Snowbowl Effect* that they had organized as a fundraiser.

They felt intimidated and after their parents were informed about the situation, some were pressured to leave the group.

Most of the YOTP members, who organized collectively with consensus, decided to stand up against the intimidation tactic and demand an apology. Several of their parents and other organizers in the community supported them.

During this time the young organizers realized they needed to be able to get their side of the story out there. As I had experience with media production and independent media (which was in full effect with the Indymedia movement at the time), I offered to host a youth media training. We held the first training as a partnership between Indigenous Action Media (which I had formed in 2001) and Native Movement, a local non-profit Indigenous justice organization.

The training was so effective that YOTP helped to organize more workshops. We talked about media literacy and media justice. We talked about Cop Watch. We held "know your rights" trainings. Participants made everything from skateboarding videos, werewolf mockumentaries, to videos covering their protests for the Peaks.

YOTP organizing culminated into a teach-in that was completely organized by the high school students. It was a three-day event held at a community space called The Hive. It featured workshops on language preservation, cultural significance of the Peaks, know your rights, taking action, and more. Attendance was strong and drew young Indigenous organizers from throughout the region. At their height, YOTP collaborated with MeCHA to organize a demonstration through the streets of Flagstaff that drew more than 1,000 people. Local papers tried to ignore their ability to mobilize while criminalizing them every chance they could.

Their fierce militant and unapologetic position was a force in the community.

They focused part of their organizing on demanding an apology for the GITEM action against them and they got it. As a concession, GITEM also agreed not to wear tactical gear into schools.

Local and national non-profits salivated over some of the lead organizers and gave them opportunities to travel to conferences to represent their issue. This dynamic led to a split in the group that had the more direct action militants challenging the spotlighting and exploitation of their efforts. The cooptation fragmented the group and it lost momentum.

Reaching the Limits of Litigation

In response to the Forest Service decision to approve Snowbowl expansion in 2005, Indigenous Nations and environmental groups filed lawsuits addressing religious freedom and environmental violations in a case known as *Navajo Nation v. USFS*.

The groups that took legal action included, The Navajo Nation, Hopi, Hualapai, Yavapai-Apache Nation, White Mountain Apache, Sierra Club, Flagstaff Activist Network, DNA People's Legal Services, and the Center for Biological Diversity.

The suit was based on allegations that the USFS decision violated the Endangered Species Act, snowmaking would violate the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, the decision had disproportionate adverse effects on Indigenous Peoples, it violated the National Historic Preservation Act and that the National Forest Management Act had not been followed.

In 1993, US Congress passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) which until *Navajo Nation v. USFS* had not been applied to Indigenous sacred places. RFRA states that the US government shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion, unless it furthers a *compelling government interest*, and the action proposed is *the least harmful method* of proceeding.

In 2006, the District Court ruled against the Tribes and environmental groups, in 2007 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned the lower court's ruling, then in 2008 an en banc case before the full Ninth Circuit of eleven judges was heard in Pasadena, California. The court decided,

> The only effect of the proposed upgrades is on the Plaintiffs' subjective, emotional religious experience. That is, the presence of recycled wastewater on the Peaks is offensive to the Plaintiffs' religious sensibilities…the diminishment of spiritual fulfillment—serious though it may be—is not a 'substantial burden' on the free exercise of religion."

The Court dismissed Indigenous religious beliefs referring to them as "damaged spiritual feelings."

In this case, the courts affirmed its anti-Indigenous bias and concluded that our deeply held beliefs are merely an "emotionally subjective experience."

In the same decision, three judges filed a dissenting opinion stating that the ruling "misstates the evidence…misstates the law under the [Religious Freedom Restoration Act], and misunderstands the very nature of religion."

In 2009 the *Navajo Nation v. USFS* case concluded with the Supreme Court denying a final appeal. Howard Shanker, the attorney representing the Navajo Nation, Havasupai Tribe, White Mountain Apache Nation, Yavapai-Apache Nation, and three environmental groups stated,

> In a country that supposedly values the free exercise and accommodation of all religion, it is unconscionable that Native American religious and cultural beliefs have essentially been relegated to second-class status by the federal government.

I helped plan support and actions when the court case was initially heard at the district level in so-called Prescott, at the Ninth Circuit in occupied-Ohlone lands of "San Francisco," and at the full Ninth Circuit in the occupied-Kizh lands of Pasadena, California. We mobilized hundreds on caravans to courthouses, fed them with donated foods (including LA Food Not Bombs feeding 500 people at a church in Pasadena), and marched with hundreds through the streets of San Francisco and Pasadena.

We knew the court case would fail and international intervention was more or less a PR tactic.

It's important to note that at the very first trial in Prescott, the federal attorneys stated in their opening arguments that a ruling against them in this case would open up millions of acres of public lands for protection by Indigenous Peoples because millions of acres of public lands

held sacred sites. The government lawyers asked for summary judgment based on the argument that if they lost, Indigenous Peoples would (rightfully) take our sacred lands back.

In September 2009 the Save the Peaks Coalition and nine plaintiffs filed a new lawsuit addressing the 2005 Forest Service decision approving artificial snowmaking at Snowbowl. The suit asserted that the Forest Service failed to conduct a thorough analysis if humans were to ingest snow made from treated sewage.

When the collective effort that comprised the Save the Peaks Coalition entered into litigation against the Forest Service, the group's mobilizing potential was internally suppressed. I didn't agree to litigation and so I backed out of organizing with the Coalition. My focus was always on cultural and community power to protect the Peaks and I knew being tied to another lawsuit would be prohibitive of necessary actions to come.

From 2009–2010, the City of Flagstaff held secret meetings with the USDA to find another "less controversial" source of water (which ended up only adding to the controversy). At that point USDA Secretary Vilsack sent a letter that announced he would not sign a permit to allow reclaimed wastewater for snowmaking at Snowbowl. Instead it would be from an "expanded" source. Snowbowl stood to benefit from the deal by receiving an $11 million government subsidy and access to Flagstaff's drinking water.

In 2009, US Senator John McCain vowed to block Obama appointees to the three positions in the USDA if wastewater snowmaking at Snowbowl wasn't immediately approved. McCain stated,

> I find the department's conduct in this matter to be most troubling and disingenuous. It is wholly inappropriate that without any legitimate explanation the Department can claim the right to delay an approved Forest Service action upheld by the Supreme Court. Quite frankly, every public land user and Forest Service permittee should be deeply troubled by the Administration's actions.

The USDA initiated listening sessions in 2010 to address policy issues with sacred places. The draft policy review stated, "The Forest Service is committed to restoring our forests and the vital resources important to our survival, while wisely respecting the need for a natural resource economy that creates jobs and vibrant rural communities. Respecting, honoring, accommodating, and protecting Native American Sacred Sites must be part of that commitment." (*USDA and Forest Service: Draft Sacred Sites Policy Review*, page 3). In the midst of the comment period for input on the draft policy, the Obama administration's USDA gave the green light to Snowbowl to desecrate the holy Peaks.

At the same time in 2010, Snowbowl owners offered to sell the ski area infrastructure to the Navajo Nation for $52 million. By comparison Snowbowl had purchased the ski area in 1992 for only $4 million. Spiritual practitioners unanimously rejected the proposal due to the implications of the investment and concerns over paying what amounted to ransom for a sacred place.

In August of 2010 the Hopi Tribe filed suit against the City of Flagstaff arguing that the use of reclaimed wastewater for snowmaking would harm the environment, be a public nuisance, and infringe upon the use and enjoyment of the area around Snowbowl as well as infringe on Hopi water rights.

Leroy Shingoitewa, Hopi Tribal Chairman at the time, was quoted in a local newspaper article stating, "The health and safety of the Hopi people is indistinguishable from the health and safety

of the environment—protection of the environment on the San Francisco Peaks—is central to the Tribe's existence. The use of reclaimed sewage on the San Francisco Peaks as planned by the City of Flagstaff and Snowbowl will have a direct negative impact on the Hopi Tribe's frequent and vital uses of the Peaks."

In 2011, after years of legal battles—including the Save the Peaks Coalition suit still under judicial review—Snowbowl started clearcutting 74 acres of rare alpine habitat for new runs and lifts and constructing a 14.8-mile buried pipeline to transport treated sewage to make artificial snow on 205 acres.

Protecting the Peaks

On June 16, 2011, six land defenders chained themselves to heavy machinery desecrating the Holy Peaks. They issued the following statement:

> PROTECT THE PEAKS—STOP DESTRUCTION & DESECRATION NOW!
>
> Today we take direct action to stop further desecration and destruction of the Holy San Francisco Peaks. We stand with our ancestors, with allies and with those who also choose to embrace diverse tactics to safeguard Indigenous People's cultural survival, our community's health, and this sensitive mountain ecosystem.
>
> On May 25th 2011, sanctioned by the US Forest Service, owners of Arizona Snowbowl began fu ther destruction and desecration of the Holy San Francisco Peaks. Snowbowl's hired work crews have laid over a mile and a half of the planned 14.8-mile wastewater pipeline. They have cut a six foot wide and six foot deep gash into the Holy Mountain.
>
> Although a current legal battle is under appeal, Snowbowl owners have chosen to undermine judicial process by rushing to construct the pipeline. Not only do they disregard culture, environment, and our children's health, they have proven that they are criminals beyond reproach.
>
> Four weeks of desecration has already occurred. Too much has already been taken. Today, tomorrow and for a healthy future, we say "enough!"
>
> As we take action, we look to the East and see Bear Butte facing desecration, Mt. Taylor facing further uranium mining; to the South, Mt. Graham desecrated, South Mountain threatened, the US/Mexico border severing Indigenous communities from sacred places; to the West, inspiring resistance at Sogorea Te, [Mauna Kea] facing desecration; to the North, Mt. Tenabo, Grand Canyon, Black Mesa, and so many more… our homelands and our culture under assault.
>
> We thought that the USDA, heads of the Forest Service, had meant it when they initiated nationwide listening sessions to protect sacred places. If the process was meaningful, we would not have to take action today.
>
> More than thirteen Indigenous Nations hold the Peaks Holy. The question has been asked yet we hear no response, "what part of sacred don't you understand?"

For hundreds of years resistance to colonialism, slavery, and destruction of Mother Earth has existed and continues here in what we now call Arizona.

The United States recently moved to join the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, evidently the US has not currently observed and acted upon this declaration, otherwise we would not be taking action today. This document informs our action, we also assert that UNDRIP supports the basis for our action.

"Article 11, 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artifacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature."

"Article 11, 2: States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs."

"Article 12, 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains."

"Article 25: Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard."

For nearly four decades, resistance to desecration and destruction of the Peaks has been sustained. Prayer vigils, petitions, lobbying, protests, and many diverse tactics have been embraced. Historic court battles have been fought.

We continue today resisting Snowbowl's plan to spray millions of gallons of wastewater snow, which is filled with cancer causing and other harmful contaminants, as well as clearcut over 30,000 trees. The Peaks are a pristine and beautiful place, a fragile ecosystem, and home to rare and endangered species of plants and animals.

Our action is a prayer.

We invite those of you who could not join us today and who believe in the protection of culture, the environment and community health to resist destruction and desecration of the Peaks:

- Join us and others in physically stopping all Snowbowl development!
- Honor and defend Indigenous Peoples' inherent right to protect Sacred Places
- Resist colonialism and capitalism! Embrace diverse tactics to end Snowbowl's and all corporate greed
- Demand USDA end Snowbowl's Special Use Permit

- Demand that the City of Flagstaff Mayor and Council find a way out of their contract to sell wastewater to Snowbowl
- Demand that Arizona Department of Environmental Quality change its permission allowing wastewater to be used for snowmaking.

— Protect the Peaks! —

Early on in the struggle to protect the San Francisco Peaks, we understood the political and legal limitations and knew our tactical shortcomings. We crafted dual-pronged strategies; one that engaged the administrative, economic, and legal processes, while the other focused on ceremonies, mobilizations and direct actions that we knew were inevitable. It was one thing to discuss and plan for the failures of the courts and crisis of desecration, and another to face it head on. The coalition of official Tribal representatives, medicine practitioners, Environmental Justice groups, and autonomous organizers, who had attempted economic tactics such as sanctions, divestment, and purchasing the ski area, who had mobilized thousands in various protests demonstrating a powerful united front, who had massive prayer gatherings with spiritual leaders from throughout the region, had all the momentum deflated in the anticipated failure of the legal fights. Even the Youth of the Peaks faced internal division, with some young forces identified by local Indigenous non-profits as "spokespeople" and flown to meetings and conferences. The dissonance split the group and diffused their powerful energy.

While the Save the Peaks Coalition case was underway, they were denied an injunction by the presiding judge to stop Snowbowl's machinery from cutting into the sacred mountain for the wastewater pipeline. I asked some of the plaintiffs (which included my close family members) about supporting direct action plans and they responded by stating that they "didn't want any actions to interfere with and undermine the court proceedings."

In June 2012, when contractors working for the ski resort started their excavators and bulldozers up, a small group of us decided to take action under the banner "Protect the Peaks." We felt that an organization would be too restrictive for our call for action. We mobilized a loose-knit decentralized effort that initiated a wave of interventions to shut down the desecration. We put calls for action out throughout the region and organized workshops, direct action trainings, and prepared to mobilize (particularly operating out of Táala Hooghan Infoshop). When an affinity group activated and locked themselves to excavators and inside the pipeline trench, a local fascist newspaper printed the story with a photo on the front page, above the fold. The caption read, "Members of the Save the Peaks Coalition took action…" I received an angry call decrying how harmful the misleading caption was to the Coalition's ongoing court case. Although I called the newspaper to clarify, the Coalition representative said the "damage was done."

While Protect the Peaks waged a range of actions that summer, from a months-long encampment, teach-ins, mass protests throughout "Flagstaff," and an assortment of escalating actions utilizing all creative resources we could, the support we had initially built for years began to wane. There were also concurrent anonymous actions such as tree-spiking, sabotage of construction equipment, and mass waves of graffiti spread throughout the town. The actions were effective enough that the US Forest Service banned camping on a majority of the mountain around the ski area expansion. To a degree it most certainly was the nature of the actions being "too radical" for some, but the underlying political force that had propelled the movement just wasn't there to back us up. Protect the Peaks did what it could but we had limited material support and capacity.

The Ninth Circuit Court ruled against the Save the Peaks Coalition in 2012.

Another legal complaint filed by the Hopi Tribe (in 2010) against the City of Flagstaff over the sale of treated sewage also failed in 2012.

The City of Flagstaff aggressively fought the Hopi Tribe in court to the point of delegitimizing Hopi religion. City attorneys stated in a 2017 filing to the court, "While the Hopi may enjoy the Peaks in different manner than hikers, photographers, bird watchers, hunters, or other uses, the use and enjoyment of the Peaks which they claim is no different than that of any other group or the public at large."

When the ruling was made by the Arizona State Supreme Court, Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, former cultural preservation director for the Hopi Tribe stated,

> I'm disappointed and I'm frustrated but I think indigenous people like Hopi people are always going to be at a legal disadvantage when they put something like that in a white man's court.

While we were on the ground in the fight, we didn't foresee how the divergent strategic impulses were contrary to the point of fracture. We couldn't maintain cohesion because the processes became mutually exclusionary. Everyone talked about respecting diversity of tactics but the non-profits and respectable Indigenous organizers didn't want to include radical autonomous actions they had no control over. When facing tens of thousands of dollars for bailing out our friends for felonies and federal charges and increasingly high costs of "restitution" being punitively imposed by judges in court cases, we didn't have the resources or people to sustain further actions.

Although we had a strong foundation of traditional practitioners supporting us, popular support was also undermined by divergent opinions amongst traditional practitioners, we were denounced publicly by some and supported by others.

Direct actions against Snowbowl, the City of Flagstaff, and businesses that support the ski resort continue. Every year since fake snow has been made with treated sewage (until the start of the pandemic of 2020) groups of people have intervened in Snowbowl's opening day.

What Part of Sacred Don't You Understand?

If you want to understand what the "sacred" and "spirit" means to Diné, you need only peer into any Route 66 gift shop on your way to the Grand Canyon. You can also peruse the voluminous pages of any Tony Hillerman book or for those who wish to be less encumbered by the word and desire to be exposed to more *authenticity* many of his cop-loving novels have been adopted into movies and even a TV series. Why consult with the living when anthropologists and white fiction writers have scavenged and scraped through dust, bones, and our memories to tell us who we are?

Ruins of homes abandoned due to sicknesses spread by colonizers, by droughts, or some other conflict, have been picked clean by temporal extractivists capitalizing off of Indigenous death. A sacred item makes more money on the auction block.

Desecration of the sacred is the professed legacy of colonialism that casts a shadow of trauma so profound that it ravages our very beings for generations with its slow insidious force.

We can ask, "How can it be that today, Indigenous Peoples have no guaranteed protection for religious freedom?" Particularly as it is an obvious grave hypocrisy if we are to believe the myth celebrated every November that the "United States" was established by immigrants seeking refuge from religious persecution.

As evidenced in the aforementioned past and present court battles over sacred sites, this system and its laws were not created with our interests in mind or to benefit us.

As protests against ski area expansion and treated sewage snowmaking waged on, we were able to summarize our frustrations with one question, "What part of sacred don't you understand?"

Why isn't it enough for Indigenous Peoples to state that a place is sacred and should be respected? Why should we be forced to justify our deeply held beliefs on terms that are not our own?

Perhaps the challenge was not expected in an answer to the question, but in addressing the point where we are continually forced to plead or beg with colonizers to stop the violence that their social order is built upon. The order of the civilized is threatened by the sacred. It refuses to understand and offer any measure of thoughtfulness because it has killed its own spirit and spiritual practitioners in mass waves of femicide and genocide to feed its unending hunger.

We've been forced to metaphorize the sacred on settlers' terms; *It's like building a skateboard park on the Sistine Chapel and replacing the holy water with piss. It's like mining the Notre Dame.* The narrative imaginary is a moral appeal to an absence.

In 1982, testifying in *Wilson v. Block*, Abbott Sekaquaptewa, then tribal chairman of the Hopi tribe, stated,

> It is my opinion that in the long run if the expansion is permitted, we will not be able successfully to teach our people that this is a sacred place. If the ski resort remains or is expanded, our people will not accept the view that this is the sacred Home of the Kachinas. The basis of our existence as a society will become a mere fairy tale to our people. If our people no longer possess this long-held belief and way of life, which will inevitably occur with the continued presence of the ski resort…a direct and negative impact upon our religious practices [will result]. The destruction of these practices will also destroy our present way of life and culture.

When we were shutting down a mine extracting volcanic pumice stone from the northeastern side of the Holy San Francisco Peaks (so named by Spanish colonizers in the 1600s for their patron saint of ecology) in 1999, my dad was part of a delegation of medicine practitioners who held a private ceremony before the politicians and bureaucrats held their media conference.

A local activist and journalist was present and after the ceremony was concluded, he asked about something my dad had said, "What do you mean this rock has feelings?" The response, "This rock has a spirit. It's happy right here with the sun on it. If you move it, it could be confused and unhappy. We work with nature, we communicate."

Vine Deloria, Jr. attempted to diagnose this disconnect in his essay "Sacred Lands and Religious Freedom":

> The Indian [sic] community passes knowledge along over the generations as a common heritage that is enriched by the experiences of both individuals and groups of

> people in the ceremonies. Both the ceremony and the people's interpretation of it change as new insights are gained. By contrast the non-Indian communities establish educational institutions which examine, clarify and sometimes radically change knowledge to fit their needs. Knowledge is the possession of an exclusive group of peoplethe scholars and the professionals who deeply believe that the rank and file of their communities are not intelligent enough to understand the esoteric truths of their society. Basic truths about the world are not expected to change, regardless of the experiences of any generation, and "leading authorities" are granted infallibility based on their professional status alone.

Deloria clarified the legal and institutional disconnect:

> In denying the possibility of the continuing revelation of the sacred in our lives, federal courts, scholars and state and federal agencies refuse to accord credibility to the testimony of religious leaders, demand evidence that a ceremony or location has always been central to the belief and practices of the tribe, and impose exceedingly rigorous standards on Indians [sic] who appear before them. This practice does exactly what the Supreme Court avows is not to be done—it allows the courts to rule on the substance of religious belief and practice. In other words, courts will protect a religion if it shows every symptom of being dead but will severely restrict it if it appears to be alive.

Deloria, in spite of his liberal optimism, knew that we are pleading into a void when calling on a colonial system to respect the sacred. The dead spirit will not respond, we hear our own echoes and those of sympathizers who interlope in our slow spiritual deaths. This genocide has no witnesses. The promise of assimilation and historization of "tradition" (as the enemy of "progress") makes desecration of the sacred a near perfect victimless crime committed by colonizers.

When I would travel by the western side of Dook'o'ooshłíid with my clan grandmother and Big Mountain relocation and coal-mining resistor Roberta Blackgoat, she would speak of the desecration in these terms, "The ski runs are scars on our Mother, she needs to heal."

In 2016, amidst the fervor of popular support for Standing Rock resistance in true farsighted liberal fashion, the City of Flagstaff proposed a resolution supporting the Standing Rock fight against resource extraction. A handful of us went to the council chambers and confronted the hypocrisy. That Flagstaff politicians would consider supporting a remote sacred sites battle when their police attack mountain protectors and they continue to profit from and sanction the ongoing destruction of the San Francisco Peaks was too much not to address. We undermined their duplicity and killed their resolution, though the undead hubris of settler illiteracy is a much harder force to slay.

What part of sacred?

None of it.

Chapter Five: Under Standing Rock

The sacred confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri Rivers in so-called North Dakota is known as Lake Oahe. For Lakota, this site is where a whirlpool created large spherical sandstone formations known as Sacred Stones. This sacred place is now submerged by the fourth-largest human-made reservoir in the so-called United States.

The lake was artificially created in the 1960s when Oahe Dam was built by the US Army Corps of Engineers. The dam was dedicated August 1962 by "US" President John F. Kennedy Jr. who declared, "Water is our most precious asset, and its potential uses are so many and so vital that they are frequently in conflict." It was part of a massive national infrastructure project. The dam now provides 2.8 billion kilowatts of electricity annually (the estimated needs for approximately 259,000 homes) for much of the north-central "US." More than 160,000 acres of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation and 300,000 acres of the Cheyenne River Reservation were flooded by the project that destroyed homes and burial sites.

In March 2016, Energy Transfer Partners (ETP), announced a change to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) proposed route from an area north of the occupied area of "Bismarck" to a point about 1,500 feet north of the Standing Rock reservation border at the edge of Lake Oahe. Although DAPL's primary path was on private (stolen) lands, the areas where it crosses rivers and lakes, such as at Oahe, are under federal jurisdiction.

In July 2016, a group of youth from the Standing Rock reservation ran 2,000 miles to occupied-Piscataway lands of "Washington, DC" to deliver a petition opposing Energy Transfer Partner's pipeline, a 1,172-mile-long infrastructure project capable of transporting approximately 750,000 barrels of fracked shale oil per day. The young Indigenous folks, who initially came together as the *One Mind Youth Movement* which organized primarily against youth suicide, called their campaign "Rezpect Our Water" and urged then "US" President Barrack Obama to stop the destructive pipeline. The group was sponsored and trained by Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) climate justice organizers who also informed their strategy. They pled, "As the native children of this country, we are asking you to stand with us on August 6, 2016 at Lafayette Square and help us fight the Dakota Access Pipeline. Enough has been taken away from our people. We want to thrive and we want a bright future. One that embraces our cultural heritage and our deep communion with our lands. By helping us fight for our water and for our ancestral lands, you confirm our common humanity and dignity. This is what we ask for."

Obama ignored their pleas to protect sacred lands and water.

Initially the fight against DAPL had been confined to legal filings and court proceedings against the Army Corps of Engineers. In addition to a legal complaint against the project by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe for lack of "meaningful consultation," one of the additional legal instruments that the group Earthjustice used (who was representing the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe), was the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this specific law along with the entirety of available applicable sacred sites legal architectures, had previously failed in the struggle to protect the Holy San Francisco Peaks.

The fight shifted when a small prayer camp established earlier in April by the same Indigenous youth (now organizing as the International Indigenous Youth Council), began to escalate their tactics and utilize social media to document police violence and the bulldozing of known burials. The attention grew on September 3, 2016 when a march confronted ETP bulldozers and Leighton Security Company forces (hired by ETP) attacked demonstrators with pepper spray and dogs. *Democracy Now!* journalist Amy Goodman was onsite and documented the assault. David Archambault II, Standing Rock Sioux Chairman at the time, decried the destruction as "devas-

tating" in an article published by *Indian Country Today*. He said, "These grounds are the resting places of our ancestors. The ancient cairns and stone prayer rings there cannot be replaced. In one day, our sacred land has been turned into hollow ground."

Momentum for DAPL resistance grew fast due to the media coverage. The youth established prayer camp swelled massively, drawing hundreds of Indigenous Nations with thousands of water protectors and land defenders who came willing to risk their lives to protect the Lakota sacred site from oil pipeline desecration. These events had triggered what many have proclaimed as a "new awakening of Indigenous resistance," and with it the correspondent reactive violence necessary to maintain settler dominance and sustained colonial occupation.

Climate Justice organizers had previously been correlating resistance to oil pipeline infrastructure projects with the Lakota *Black Snake prophecy* and identifying as *Water Protectors* rather than activists as a re-framing tactic to assert a cultural narrative. In a recorded video addressing DAPL, Lakota spiritual leader Arvol Looking Horse—who is the 19th keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe and Bundle—shared that,

> In our prophecies it says that the Black Snake would come across the country. When it dives into the ground that's where it is going to bring much sickness. To us, they're laying that Black Snake in there. They're going under the Missouri River and that's why we're trying to stop the Black Snake.

The initial camp was named Sacred Stone Camp and co-established by LaDonna Brave Bull Allard on her family's ancestral lands. Brave Bull Allard was a former Standing Rock Tribal Historic Preservation officer and historian. The largest camp, which was initially overflow from Sacred Stone, was called Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires) and was primarily coordinated by Phyllis Young, a co-founder of Women of All Red Nations, American Indian Movement member, and former Standing Rock tribal council member (2012–2015). Young was officially appointed by the Standing Rock tribal council as liaison to the DAPL resistance movement.

Throughout the DAPL resistance, from Sacred Stone camp to the massive Oceti Sakowin camp (which was really a camp of many camps including Oceti Oyate Camp, Red Warrior Camp, and the Youth Council Camp), and nearby Rosebud camp, this "new awakening" was complex and diverse in participation and tactics. Groups grappled with the logistics required to coordinate and sustain camps on such a large scale and the underlying tensions of the clear task at hand: *How to stop the pipeline?* Indigenous climate justice non-profit groups such as Indigenous Environmental Network led by Tom Goldtooth and Honor the Earth, which is led by Winona LaDuke, embedded themselves in the camps and structured the political campaigns in alignment with their pre-existing strategies. Even though they tried, they couldn't contain all the tendencies. Various expert groups parachuted in to employ their theories and practices, including Greenpeace and the Ruckus Society's Indigenous direct action progeny Indigenous Peoples Power Project (IP3). Some actions were deemed "too radical" for some and so the spiritual groundings of prayerful action became tools of pacification. At some point Sacred Stone camp became a site where hippies would roam smudging everything and everyone and was maintained by white security as a gated area.

In a brief discussion on Media Hill I asked Tom Goldtooth what the strategy was, he plainly responded, "There is none."

There were many sacred fires burning, from the groupings of tents along Tribal lines (Diné, Haudenosaunee, etc.), to the small handful of tents that initially comprised the hyper-

marginalized two-spirit camp within Oceti Sakowin, to the media camp with Govinda's pirate radio bus and Brenda Norrell reporting for Censored News, and the dispersed autonomous agitators, to the IP3 camp complete with shiny white teepees and a massive meeting tent just outside the secure gates of Red Warrior Camp. On any night around one fire you'd have White Mountain Ndee' singing and dancing with Havasupai relatives and Hopi sharing pikki bread, around another fire you'd have conspiratorial young forces planning their next daring action, at another you'd have would-be white saviors imposing themselves. After the scheduled daily march to the frontline, you could play LaCrosse with Haudenosaunee. The social power was undeniable, everyone could feel it suspended in the tense air. It was embodied in the smoke and prayers that coalesced into a haze above the scene, and it was rightly celebrated.

The cultural revelry was contrasted by the intensity of conflict (both external and internal), extreme state repression, constant surveillance, underlying paranoia, and contradictions of nationalism that were on display with the Tribal flags flying over the main entry road into the larger camp. The Navajo Nation flag, which had been delivered directly by then Navajo Nation President Russell Begaye just weeks before my visit, waved in extreme irony with its oil derrick placed unironically in the center. The flag was pulled down and the resource colonial iconography crossed out with a bold black marker.

On September 9, 2016, US District Court Judge James E. Boasberg denied a request by the Standing Rock Sioux tribe to stop further construction of DAPL. Judge Boasberg stated,

> The risk that construction may damage or destroy cultural resources is now moot for the 48 percent of the pipeline that has already been completed. As the clearing and grading are the clearest and most obvious cause of the harm to cultural sites from pipeline construction, the damage has already occurred for the vast majority of the pipeline, with the notable exception of 10 percent of the route in North Dakota, including at Lake Oahe.

On November 5, 2016 delegations from the Seven Council Fires of the Oceti Sakowin gathered to relight a sacred fire, an act of unification, which had not occurred since the late 1800s. Medicine people from all over were invited to participate and offer prayers.

There are many ways we can understand Standing Rock: as a cultural phenomenon (in terms of the historic social force), as a political battle for Indigenous rights and sacred sites (in terms of the legal and administrative fights), and as a culmination of historic Indigenous resistance actions and movements. We can also explore the post-action environment and look to the further possibilities the overall moment created.

While it's challenging to understand all the political, social, and economic dynamics and nuances in operation at Standing Rock, this is not entirely necessary to critically address the strategies and tactics, both good, bad, and in-between. What compels me to write this piece is that a lot of us—myself and radical Indigenous friends who were long-term on the ground or on the sidelines for various reasons—all experienced the liberatory possibilities of Standing Rock materialize and be foreclosed upon in ways that paralleled our experiences with sacred lands and water struggles in our own communities. We also saw the context and cycles repeating themselves that clearly demonstrated that malevolent specters of lessons not learned from Indigenous resistances past were still haunting us. With the largest mass mobilization of Indigenous resistance in recent memory, *how did we not win?*

Sage Against the Machine

The discordance of tactics at Standing Rock was remarkable: from run of the mill symbolic protests, "nonviolent direct action" lockdowns, to tire fire road blockades. The discord flared up as proclamations to respect diversity of tactics would often deteriorate into frontline conflicts resulting in confusion, disorientation, dispiriting, and disorganization. Smudging a line of cops with sage while shaking hands with them and burning barricades to stop them from raiding camps are two entirely different and conflictual actions.

Certain tactics against DAPL had faced blanket repudiation as violence, both by the State, Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council, and non-profit organizations involved in the overall resistance. Which of course is something to take issue, as our resistance itself is sacred, if for no other reason than we actively recognize it and our own sacredness.

As Morton County Sheriff's department attempted to criminalize ceremony by alleging that peace-pipes were pipebombs, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Council, non-profits, and some elders, established themselves as colonial proxies, or "movement police," aiding the cops by working against actions employed by the people. They removed barricades, doused fires, and physically blocked acts of resistance on the frontlines.

In early December 2016, after Morton County Sheriff's Department issued a request for community donations, representatives of the International Indigenous Youth Council dropped off water, batteries, and snacks and prayed and sang songs for the cops. Thomas Lopez Jr., a member of the Indigenous Youth Council was quoted by KFYR-TV stating, "As American citizens, as the good American citizens that we are, we went ahead and we supplied them with that. We gave them water because water is life."

Morton County Sheriffs posted the following note on their Facebook page after they received the gifts, "Thank you to the members of the International Indigenous Youth Council who stopped by with gifts of supplies and snacks for our employees. Your kindness and support is very much appreciated!"

When Indigenous and non-Indigenous non-profits and others donate supplies and collaborate with the very police that continue to systematically attack us, they directly enable the violence of the State.

The tactic of respectable appearances is a lateral degradation and in its passive distancing, becomes its own violence; it offers the flesh of Black Lives (who showed up in official and unofficial delegations to Standing Rock) and those bad Indians (militants, queers, etc.) in hopes of convincing the State that they are less disposable, they are the good Indians.and some elders, established themselves as colonial proxies, or "movement police," aiding the cops by working against actions employed by the people. They removed barricades, doused fires, and physically blocked acts of resistance on the frontlines.

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Police exist to uphold and enforce colonial rule of law. Their institution, which is steeped in a history of white supremacy, has only served those that seek to desecrate and exploit sacred land and water. They murder Black and brown people with impunity, they protect corporations who commit acts of cultural genocide and ecocide. They shake hands with armed white militia occupiers and shoot rubber bullets, tear gas, concussion grenades, and arrest prayerful elders.

Further trouble comes when the vulgarity of violence perpetrated and perpetuated by a situation of ever present colonial occupation is reduced into feuding moral equivalencies based upon a false understanding of the situation, or worse yet, an intentional distortion of history. A situation in which an open declaration of "nonviolent resistance" in the form of prayer and direct action is instead represented as a strategy of violence by the very invaders themselves, such as paramilitary private security forces, militarized police, up to political interventions directly from the Obama administration. These invading and occupying forces actively employed a tactical monopoly on vulgar, or direct, violence in the form of hundreds of arrests, dog attacks, water cannons, explosive ordinance, and live ammunition.

Water protectors faced the full force of heavily militarized Morton County Sheriffs, accompanying federal agents, and TigerSwan mercenaries hired by Energy Transfer (who were not licensed to operate in "North Dakota"). TigerSwan utilized "military-style counterterrorism measures" to suppress resistance to DAPL. TigerSwan heavily surveilled water protectors and gave information to prosecutors to build cases against them. The hyper-militarized mercenary crew (with veterans who had combat experience in the invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan) characterized the Standing Rock resistance as "an ideologically driven insurgency with a strong religious component" that operated along a "jihadist insurgency model."

A mass arsenal of weaponry including tear gas, pepper spray, water cannons, Long Range Acoustic Devices (LRAD), drones, bean-bag shotguns, concussion grenades, and guns were all used against those taking action. A well-documented case of FBI infiltration was also uncovered when Red Fawn Fallis was arrested in October 2016 when hundreds of cops raided a camp at Standing Rock. Red Fawn was accused of firing three shots from a revolver after being tackled by several officers. During the court proceedings journalists with the *The Intercept* discovered that Red Fawn Fallis' boyfriend, Heath Harmon was a paid FBI informant. He reportedly received $2,000 for his role in attempting to bait people into taking more risky actions and arming themselves at the camp. The gun she allegedly fired belonged to him. Red Fawn ultimately pled guilty to felony counts of civil disorder and *possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.* As part of a plea deal, prosecutors dropped the most serious charge, which could have carried a life sentence.

She was sentenced to 57 months in prison.

Immediately after Red Fawn was arrested, Standing Rock Tribal chairman Dave Archambault issued a statement decrying radical actions, "We also call on the thousands of water protectors

who stand in solidarity with us against DAPL to remain in peace and prayer. Any act of violence hurts our cause and is not welcome here."

In all a reported 750 people were arrested in resistance actions against DAPL.

Several 10 by 14-foot chainlink enclosures were set up in the unheated garage of the Morton County Detention Center as temporary holding cells for captured water protectors. Some reported that they were held in 40-degree temperatures on cold concrete floors with identification numbers written in ink on their forearms. Out of 800 criminal cases half were thrown out mostly for lack of evidence. There were a total of 170 convictions that mostly were from plea deals. Seven water protectors, including Red Fawn, faced federal charges.

This is what Mi'kmaw warrior Sakej Ward identifies as a "new political environment." The State has developed and deployed advanced forms of technological surveillance, militarized enforcement, and since the Al-Qaida attacks on the Word Trade Center in 2001, the aptly named "PATRIOT Act" to repress social uprisings.

What we're talking about though are not simply generalities, but trajectories of the historically particular, the open wounds of pride and sorrow both resurfacing. To speak of Standing Rock, to speak of the "Sioux," to speak of Indigenous Resistance is to speak of the legacy of the Lakota like Oglala Tashunka Witko (His Horse is Enchanted/Spirited aka Crazy Horse), and Hunkpapa's Tatanka-Iyotanka (Sitting Bull) and Phizí (Gall). It is to speak of the triumph and tragedy of places like Wounded Knee, and the Battle of the Greasy Grass (Little Big Horn). For us, the "Indian Wars" never ended, and the historical trauma of our ancestors, that memory carried in the land, comes head to head with the attempted Destiny Manifest in the white supremacist colonial project called America.

Indigenous agitator Zig Zag questioned the overall efficacy of the strategy at Standing Rock in a critique titled *Will Prayers and Ceremonies Stop the Dakota Access Pipeline?* Zig Zag incisively observed:

> …the process of pacification that is being spread through this myth that peaceful prayer and ceremonies are all that is required to gain victory…is a serious concern regarding [Dakota Access Pipeline] resistance…at this point [late December 2016], over 92 percent of the pipeline has already been built, and only the last section—scheduled to go under Lake Oahe—has been delayed. While we can admire the courage and determination of those who stood against the police repression, which included pepper spray, less-lethal projectiles, water cannons and baton strikes, we should not dismiss the fact that, until the US Army Corps of Engineers announcement on December 4, 2016 (that they would not allow the easement for the DAPL to cross under Lake Oahe without further study), the protest movement was having minimal impact on construction.

So when nonviolence and prayer alone is espoused, it is done so as ritual of ahistoric fetishism for everyone but the culturally and historically aware who see such a path clearly as a dead end of Indigenous existence, because that is what the invaders have always wanted. We can hold our hands out with hope that those holding political power will remove the chains, or use protection prayers and fight back on our own terms. Both have ceremony behind them, but prayer is not simply what we do, it's who we are. Nonviolence and violence have never defined that, that's the words of our oppressors who desire nothing more than us to be "good respectable civilized Indians."

Zig Zag furthered their critique,

> There is certainly a lot that people can learn from employing a respect for diversity of tactics. The problem arises when people believe their way is the only way, and in this case it is the pacified protests and prayer circles which are promoted, while those that attempt more militant actions are undermined and denounced.

It should be noted that the movement rapidly grew after young Indigenous forces took direct action and faced extreme police aggression. The momentum grew when the spectacle of colonial violence was so explicitly displayed and young people wouldn't back down. We have to ask: *Do Indigenous sacred lands and water struggles only merit outrage and mass mobilization when the suffering is most severe (when we are most victimized)? How can it be that that same movement became hostile towards youth when they became organized and dared not to be victimized, but fought back with proportionately confrontational means?*

We witness and experience the redwashing of our hostility and criminality by our own who wash their hands of those who fight back.

The pacification of Indigenous rage does not lessen State violence, it upholds the status quo, which is to say it perpetuates the violence of colonialism.

Spiritually, mentally, physically pacifying the rage against colonial violence only serves to move us further into a neo-colonial dead-zone of historical trauma. That can't be healed or undone by pretending to be "good Indians." Nor can colonialism simply be wished away or healed when its violences and violations are dispersed and constant.

The perpetuation of Indigenous Peoples as passive victims has been a colonial role that upholds conquest narratives and undermines Indigenous autonomy and spirit. That so many "allies" rushed to Standing Rock only after witnessing extreme State violence on behalf of a corporation speaks to a need for a deeper and more meaningful anti-colonial solidarity. The conditions to act in solidarity should not be based upon our victimhood. Casual interloping outrage against the machinery means little when we face its violences every day.

On December 4, 2016, the Army Corps of Engineers denied an easement for construction of the pipeline under the Missouri River. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribal council welcomed the announcement with Chairman Dave Archambault expressing his gratitude to Obama, "The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and all of Indian Country will be forever grateful to the Obama administration for this historic decision." The Seven Council Fires of the Oceti Sakowin, which had been kept for one month was to be extinguished. Arvol Looking Horse explained in a statement,

> Our prayers were answered when the permit was denied…As time went on, we were told in ceremony that we needed to put the sacred fire out. Some of the people wanted to keep it going, but we were told in Yuwipi ceremony. A lot of people don't understand the significance of the ceremony—we have no choice. We got our answer to put the fire out. The message was to take the ashes back to the four directions. Our prayers from Standing Rock are everywhere.

Indigenous militants refused to celebrate and back down, they knew that Obama couldn't be trusted. All of the repression they had faced, the pipeline administrative decisions, and legal battle occurred under his Democratic watch. If he had the power to do so at any time prior, why wait until the last minute?

Just one month after the reprieve issued by Obama, his predecessor, Donald Trump immediately reversed the decision and greenlit DAPL. Pipeline construction was completed April 2017 and oil started flowing.

By mid-January 2017 those remaining water protectors at Standing Rock numbered a few hundred people, this was attributed primarily to the halt on construction work and intense winter weather. During this time the Standing Rock Tribal Council turned against water protectors and voted unanimously to close the camps and issued a notice of eviction. Hundreds ignored the order and kept their sacred fires burning. On February 22, 2017, after a powerful seventy-one days, the site was cleared in a massive police raid supported by the Tribal council. Many water protectors left voluntarily but ten people were arrested. On February 23, National Guard and other law enforcement agencies evicted those who remained. Thirty-three more people were arrested. The remaining camps were bulldozed with some structures set aflame including a hooghan. It was reported by the *Seattle Times* that the cost of policing the pipeline protests in North Dakota had surpassed $22 million.

The resistance that was started in prayer was left desecrated, smoldering in ashes, and piled in massive garbage bins.

Since 2017, in the aftermath of Standing Rock, twenty US settler colonial states passed laws criminalizing protests of "critical infrastructure" including pipelines and oil refineries. The laws share the same template and give prosecutors authority to charge anyone who conducts an "unauthorized and overt act intended to cause…substantial and widespread interruption or impairment of a fundamental service rendered by the critical infrastructure" with a felony and fines up to $100,000.

These systems will continue to delegitimize, criminalize, erase, exploit, and destroy any and all Indigenous lives and lands that stand in their way.

Colonial violence won't be "saged" away.

"Go Back to Camp"

The statement "Go back to camp" shook a lot of Indigenous youth, particularly those from other Indigenous communities and urban environments, that wished to honor elders and local protocols yet were faced with confrontation and control. Some elders would police the frontlines and physically stop radical actions. This form of what is identified as *movement policing*, or the direct pacification of escalations and militant resistance, is easy to dismiss when it's a white liberal saying "stay on the sidewalk" or stopping mailboxes or dumpsters from being dragged into the streets during a march (clearly they don't understand the tactical purpose of creating obstacles so vehicles can't simply plow through the crowd). It's much more challenging to contend with when it's a person who is assigned cultural respect and power due to their age and understandings of sacred principles in our communities.

This kind of movement policing, particularly in the midst of such heightened conflict, puts people at risk by making them more vulnerable to State repression and other forms of colonial violence.

At Standing Rock, many individuals, affinity groups, and larger organizing circles were confronted with the real questions of diversity of tactics, denouncing, lateral violence, State collaboration, respecting those whose lands you're on, and accountability. Discussions around certain

fires asked, *How do we respect all elders when what elders are saying is contradictory? Do we selectively listen to those elders that only confirm our biases?*

It is broadly known within many Indigenous communities that an elder is someone who has influence and trust by virtue of age, cultural knowledge, and experience. Their influence is established through respect they have earned by providing guidance, knowledge sharing, advocacy, defense, and other achievements. Broadly speaking, elders are held in high regard because they represent the customs and standards (principles) for our ways of life. But not every older person in community and movement spaces is an elder. While elders make mistakes, those who reach old age yet impose their influence over and attempt to control others are what those in circles I organize with call "olders." This is not a new contention as the legacies of abusive movement elders (particularly some associated with AIM), exploitative medicine practitioners, and sell-outs are well known in our circles.

While it is challenging to hold *olders* accountable (especially if their peers and family members enable them), it is not impossible. Their power and influence is given to them by the community, so it can be taken away by the community (and community means a lot of things). Respect attributed to elders is not divine or above critique. To act as such is irresponsible, elders can be predatory too. The distinction between olders and elders is guidance. If they're attempting to police the frontlines, that's control not guidance. There are far better places (particularly than in front of lines of police in riot gear) and other meaningful ways that strategic and tactical choices can be addressed. An elder would be welcomed in, and could be holding those spaces if they are part of the fight and not just there to "tell people what not to do." Age should not be a weapon used against your own people, this is a critical understanding when facing internalized colonialism and intergenerational trauma to end colonial violence. Perhaps most importantly, it is the conflicting strategies and tactics that may require being sorted out before calls to action are even made.

We have differing strategies and tactics and we will not "go back to camp" until we are ready to rest.

Close to the Fires

I initially refused to go to Standing Rock for a range of reasons, most of which was that according to my friends who were on the ground since the beginning of the small encampment, a lot of shit was going sideways. I was on the phone and messaging them daily. From the reports of internal drama between larger organizations pushing their campaigns, direct action non-profit cooptation, fights over funding, lack of full support for diversity of tactics, movement personalities capitalizing on the spotlight, lateral violence, known abusers freely going from camp to camp, the stream of endless #iwasthere selfies (including that white guy with dreads burning sage and giving out crystals), and pervasive crowdfunding campaigns ($10,000 for a weekend in a tent on the frontlines, really?), it most certainly was going to be a glorious shitshow.

After discussing the necessity to contextualize sacred lands battles and address tactics particular to the nature of these fights, my friend and sacred sites defender Morning Star Gali, myself, my partner, and a trusted Environmental Justice organizer decided to travel to so-called North Dakota. Our motive was to explore the cultural (and political) opportunity to propel a larger strategy and necessary movement for protection of *all* sacred places.

In November 2016, we made our way though the militarized checkpoints in our rental vehicle. Our token white environmentalist friend was driving so things went relatively smoothly.

When my partner and I first arrived at Standing Rock, we met with a lot of familiar faces. Between Morning Star's and my connections, we knew most all the organizers on the ground.

While I won't share the details of my experience as it's inconsequential for the purposes of this book, the most pressing matters to analyze regard strategy, tactics, and lessons that still have not been learned from the past 40–50 years of mistakes made in Indigenous movements. I see this as an opportunity to critically look inward to move forward in more effective and less fucked up ways.

In the handful of days I camped at Standing Rock, I met with and interviewed several elders who had been part of the occupation of Alcatraz in the 1960s and AIM figureheads such as Dennis Banks. It became immediately clear that no one was meaningfully consulting with them regarding strategy and tactics.

As my partner and I were walking to Red Warrior Camp from our spot at the base of Media Hill, we saw Banks. He was eased back in a folding chair with his bead-brimmed black hat. I had worked with him and his daughter Tanisha organizing media and a range of other forms of support for the Longest Walk 2 in 2008, so we had a bit of history. I asked, "With your decades of experience, what do you think could or should be done strategically to ensure this movement here is effective?" His answer was one I anticipated, "We should stay until the work is done." When I asked if anyone else was consulting with him and other movement veterans about strategy and tactics, his answer was stark, "No."

For all the discussion of intergenerational movement building, the real-time disconnect was profound but not entirely surprising. Perhaps this was due in part to the "olders" intervening in radical actions. On one hand veteran movement elders and their decades of experience were being ignored, and on the other, some were weaponizing cultural positions against fierce young people who wanted to fight back.

In a devastating moment, after meeting with Dennis for lunch with a crew at the Prairie Knights casino (which was a de facto filter of social status and class), Morning Star stopped at a table where a lone visibly distraught elder was sitting. It was Dr. LaNada War Jack, one of the primary leaders of the occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969. She was a vital force that ushered in a new era of Indigenous resistance. She had held it down longer than Richard Oaks at Alcatraz and had tirelessly continued her movement work since. Her personal journey is documented in her book *Native Resistance: An Intergenerational Fight for Survival and Life*.

War Jack shared that she was told there was a meeting in one of the casino's conference rooms regarding media coordination between camps. When she was looking for the room and asked a prominent cis-male organizer where it was, he told her, "the meeting had started and would be over soon." He closed the door and left her standing in the hallway. She said that in 40 years, "Nothing had changed, the sexism that existed back in the [19]60s hasn't changed to this day."

That War Jack, a powerful movement veteran with decades of deep experience, was shut out of a strategy meeting was extremely disturbing. In our conversation she shrugged and said, "It's not surprising."

In some ways it's also not surprising that incidents like these aren't recorded in War Jack's book, which she updated and re-released with a chapter on her experiences at Standing Rock. In it LaNada does share her experiences with Indigenous men who viewed her as competition and alienated her along with other Indigenous women during the occupation of Alcatraz. While

her writing isn't focused on the systemic ways Indigenous men at the occupation were replicating gendered colonial power, she notes, "…this was all turning into a copy of the White man's patriarchal system. Indian men did not want me to represent Alcatraz."

Our movements have come far from Alcatraz, but how far?

Alcatraz Became an Island

From the occupation of the former US prison at Alcatraz Island in 1969 to the armed occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973, the Indigenous uprisings known as the "Red Power Movement" of the 1960s and '70s forced the US to reconcile and shift its policies regarding Indigenous Nations.

The Alcatraz occupation was a watershed moment that established precedent for Indigenous liberatory organizing in the occupied-US. Alcatraz and the movements that followed are also a study of extreme State violence and repression. From the late 1950s until 1971, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) initiated a covert war on revolutionary movements, including Indigenous-led fights, known as COINTELPRO. The program's purpose was to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, neutralize, or otherwise eliminate" these movements and especially anyone they identified to be in leadership.

The Indigenous youth (mostly young college students, families, and some children) that liberated Alcatraz in 1969 initially took the island spontaneously with little preparation. They learned as they went and, after an initial failed attempt, held the island for 19 months. They proclaimed, "Alcatraz is not an Island" as they desired to proliferate Indigenous resistance beyond their occupation. They didn't want to be an exception but an example of what was possible when Indigenous Peoples dared.

The occupation of Alcatraz had its share of issues; the tragic accidental death of Yvonne Oakes who was just 13-years-old, prevalent substance use, internal gendered power struggles, a suspicious fire, limited resources such as water and electricity on the island, diminishing public support, and the Ohlone (the original Indigenous Peoples of the area) had formally denounced the action.

The occupation ended on June 11, 1971 when US forces raided and removed a remaining small group of resisters. The action was hailed as a success and from it flowed a succession of other Indigenous actions that spread throughout the so-called US like wildfire.

Alcatraz gave a group of urban Indigenous Peoples organizing as the American Indian Movement (AIM) in Minneapolis the fuel for its flames. AIM was initially formed to document and prevent police violence against Indigenous Peoples in 1968. In 1972, powered by momentum from the Alcatraz occupation, AIM and a range of other Indigenous groups organized the "Trail of Broken Treaties."

The groups planned a mass caravan to "Washington DC" to address treaty, land struggles, and social issues. Organizers of the convergence presented twenty demands including the abolition of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), a series of treaty-based reforms, and "protection of religious freedom and cultural integrity." On November 3, an unplanned occupation of the BIA building in DC was initiated. More than 500 people took part in the 6-day action, which resulted in the liberation and destruction of thousands of government documents with an estimated $2.28 million in damages and "theft." Police were prepared for a heavy assault and AIM was ready to respond with Molotov cocktails. The occupation ended when AIM negotiated for the Nixon administra-

tion to provide $66,000 in transportation funds in return for a "peaceful end" to the takeover. The administration also agreed to appoint an Indigenous person to the BIA. AIM's actions were at their apogee during the 71-day armed occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973. Though centering treaty grievances, Wounded Knee—where Ghost Dancers were massacred by US forces just 83 years earlier—became a new symbol of militant Indigenous anti-colonial struggle.

As the intensity of the Red Power movement receded (particularly due to State and internal violence), Alcatraz ultimately became the island its raging youth resisted. Today it's a tourist attraction where historic anti-colonial graffiti is not only on display, it is ironically protected by the State.

In 2012, the National Park Service spent $1.5 million restoring a 250,000-gallon tank and 103-foot steel tower and meticulously matched paint to fix the occupation's welcome sign that reads, "Indian Land. Peace and Freedom. Welcome. Home of the Free Indian Land."

Every year, anniversary prayer gatherings are held attracting thousands of movement tourists snapping selfies with invited celebrities. The resistance is honored, but it is also ritualized as historic spectacle. While sacred fires of resistance are still burning, the movement precipitated from Alcatraz has become a spectacular artifact, crystalized in a historical moment of exception. Books and documentaries have been made, some less glorifying than others. War Jack's account being plainly honest and straightforward.

The historicization of our *living conflicts* render those powerful moments as artifacts. Intergenerationality is severed when moments are separated from the temporal existent. Radical momentum is no longer a fugitive or existential threat: its captivity in the ritualized historic is the death of movement.

So much gets sanitized in the distant retellings, which can be both sentimental and righteously romanticized, but if we're not honest with where we come from (especially our failures and disappointments), how will we ever be accountable for our actions? What kind of continuance (future) can we expect?

The legacies of AIM, Alcatraz, and the many frontlines before and beyond are living and they should not remain as islands.

From the murder of Anna Mae Aquash, imprisonment of Leonard Peltier, to the trials of John Graham and Arlo Looking Cloud, there are lessons of State repression, cis-heteropatriarchy, and AIM's organizational turmoil experienced throughout the past 40 years that bear not repeating.

We're missing an incredible opportunity if we're not considering where this moment is situated in the context of the experiences of Indigenous resistance and liberation. Where will this current moment and movement will place us 40 years from now?

Standing Rock is Not an Island

The failure to recognize and own the strategic and tactical failings of the multitudes of resistances that comprised the months-long battle of Standing Rock, is a devastating disconnect of accountability to sacred responsibilities and relations. It is also a statement of the myopic desires to celebrate our cultural and social victories regardless of the sacrifices. Though there were tens of thousands of people mobilized on the ground and much more virtually. Though top environmental justice Indigenous organizations such as Honor the Earth and Indigenous Environmental Network, and the International Indian Treaty Council were guiding the momentum. Though ex-

pert lawyers were arguing the case. Though the attention of global press agencies was hanging on nearly every moment. Though the spiritual force of the Seven Fires Council was guided by Arvol Looking Horse and prayers were offered from nearly all Indigenous nations throughout the so-called US and with those from throughout the world. The pipeline was not stopped and Lake Oahe was further desecrated. The movement at Standing Rock failed to stop the pipeline.

These failures aren't unique. They've been reflected on different scales at other frontlines before and after Standing Rock. From Oak Flat where a known abuser was defended by prominent organizers to Winnemucca, where cultural and social divisions forced supporters to choose sides while facing lateral violence, there are a constellation of Indigenous resistances crumbling from the inside (and out) due to interpersonal conflicts, substance use, sexual violence, infiltration, cooptation, exploitation, and more. In some spaces, cultural grounding provides direction through and healing occurs, in others (most typically) the wounds are untended except by isolated factions within factions. If defending the sacred doesn't also mean being accountable *to* and *with* the sacred and healing our wounds, something is deeply wrong with our understanding of *the sacred.*

This is not necessarily the argument of taking care of yourself before taking care of others (which makes sense but is not a prerequisite), it's the assertion that cultural degradation of that which heals us is being harmed (desecrated) and we must be very careful and intentional in these places where spiritual damage is inflicted. To defend the sacred we must be spiritually prepared.

When you're on the ground fighting riot cops and managing day to day camp upkeep and swarms of media, its hard to step back and manage any real-time analysis. Many activists conduct months of training before waging larger scale mass mobilizations and actions. Groups like Indigenous Peoples Power Project (IP3), Greenpeace, and Ruckus Society are supposed to provide the expertise, experience, and resources to guide them. Yet how is it with all the training, planning, professional staff, and resources, these groups don't appear to be efficient or effective? Is it that they just don't have enough resources or not enough grants? Or perhaps, the overall institutionalization of progressive activism is a part of what failed at Standing Rock (and beyond)?

The struggle at Standing Rock against the Dakota Access Pipeline, particularly the Red Warrior Camp formation, was a historic snapshot of 21st century resistance to resource colonialism. It's a powerful picture with tear gas and water cannons, with brave water protectors marching, then posed with makeshift shields deflecting rubber bullets. It's a moment framed and hung in galleries where eyes don't sting from unknown chemical agents and clothes don't perpetually smell of smoke from sacred fires. The tension captured, paused, and appreciated under stark white lights by (or for) the white gaze. In its framing and with this light that leaves no room for shadows, it's easy to miss how those celebrated moments were also fraught with dead-end politics, exhausted tactics, interpersonal abuse, and other cycles repeated due to lessons that have gone unlearned from previous movements and sacred lands mobilizations.

To view Standing Rock, or any of these moments as an exception, or as an island, decontextualizes powerful urges and forces of living resistance to colonial violence, occupation, and exploitation and forecloses liberatory possibilities. In the captivity of exception, the moment(s) becomes isolated, institutionalized (particularly through academic examination and capture), and benign. These moments and movements are stretched out onto a linear timeframe that marks ruptures and spectacular events. Organizers and academic intellectuals pick over the remnants of living memories and render them artifacts and commodities. This temporal institutionalization kills living fights. When cyclical ways are dispossessed, the experiences of Alcatraz, Wounded

Knee, Save the Peaks, Mauna Kea, Mount Graham, Oak Flats, and Standing Rock, stand alone as spectacular distant islands. They also stand as cautionary stories of scars and ash from those close to the sacred fires.

Between Gendered Colonialism and Gendered Resistance

When we first arrived at Oceti Sakowin camp we went to the kitchen area where announcements were being made, we instantly recognized all the women working there. Most of them were my relatives; the Herder family from Black Mesa who have been organizing land and water protection work for decades, Amanda Blackhorse who is a powerful anti-mascot organizer also from Black Mesa (and was party to the lawsuit against the Washington NFL team), and Radmilla Cody who is a well known musician and advocate against intimate partner violence. All these powerful Diné women organizers were in the kitchen. They were making frybread and demonstrating that the machinery of the camp apparently operated with gendered divisions of labor. While they had volunteered and the solidarity of the fire and food was palpable, the dynamics were hard to ignore. I asked others who had been volunteering for much longer if this was a typical scenario in this kitchen, they all replied affirmatively. I helped make some bread while some updates were given and speeches were made. The Black Mesa crew joked and laughed (as kitchens are always the most lively of movement spaces). When I asked how it came to be that all these powerful Diné Asdzą́ą́ ended up cooking, a relative said it was because when they registered at the Oceti camp check-in and said they were Diné, they were told to "go to the kitchen." Feeding resistance is ceremony, but any resistance that replicates gendered norms imposed by colonial society has already failed.

In *As we have Always Done*, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson asserts,

> A large part of the colonial project has been to control the political power of Indigenous women and queer people through the control of our sexual agency because this agency is a threat to the heteropatriarchy, the heteronormative nuclear family, the replication and reproduction of (queer) Indigeneity and Indigenous political orders, the hierarchy colonialism needs to operate, and ultimately Indigenous freedom. Indigenous body sovereignty and sexuality sovereignty threaten colonial power.

But what is assessed in academia, doesn't necessarily work its way to the frontlines. The distance between such necessary analyses seems farther than the distance between now and the occupation of Alcatraz.

A common response to the obvious gender dynamics at Standing Rock was, "This is Lakota land so we must respect their cultural ways." But it is not an unreasonable expectation to go to a camp as an invited guest and have your own cultural ways also respected. As Diné we are not expected to become Lakota even though we're guests in their lands, but we are expected to respect their customs. Gendered colonial divisions of labor have no place at action camps. Though plenty exist, we should not need historic examples to justify that position.

As we visited all the camps and sat in on meetings, it was clear that Indigenous women were leading and represented strongly in all the circles. LaDonna Brave Bull Allard had established Sacred Stone Camp and was leading the efforts there, Phyllis Young who had co-founded the Women of All Red Nations in the 1960s was one of the lead organizers of the Oceti Sakowin Camp, Michelle Cook was holding it down with the Water Protectors Legal Collective, Kim Smith, Mama Julz Richards, and Kanahus Manuel among many others were holding it down with Red Warrior Camp.

When we first entered Red Warrior Camp it was assuringly clear their security protocols were taken very seriously, this was expected considering the intensity of actions and risks that were being taken. As I arrived, one of my relatives who had been holding it down invited me to assist with a workshop for white allies. We had published the zine *Accomplices Not Allies* a couple years prior and although it may have made sense under different circumstances, I declined. I wasn't there to help manage white people.

With all the security measures at Red Warrior, the single most critical matters expressed (at the brief time we were there) were issues of gender-based violence. Sexual predators and known abusers were widespread amongst many of the camps.

The question came from one of the coordinators who was also handling security, "What can we do about known abusers?" The recommendations we made were to publicly remove any known abusers immediately, halt actions temporarily and focus on developing accountability and responsibility processes based on appropriate cultural frameworks. Part of the thinking was: *How would things be different with AIM if they had taken that approach 40–50 years ago?* So why not apply that practice now so that Indigenous struggles 40–50 years from Standing Rock could have a better reference point? Not one, as with AIM, that permitted the production of movement celebrities who continually cashed in on their roles while perpetuating abuse of women, children, and elders in our communities.

It was also clear that cis-heterosexual men at the camps weren't actively addressing gender roles and violence. Without building processes to deal with such issues in and beyond frontline camps, we risk replicating the same patterns of harm we're resisting.

A lot of the post-Standing Rock rear-view gender awareness amounts to, "Oh and there was a two-spirit camp too." But acknowledgment of presence is not meaningful involvement and inclusion. Attempts to make queer space in the larger camp were an intervention, yet demonstrated the extreme lack of attention, care, and voicing for those forces. When the initial two-spirit camp was first established, the organizer expressed to us that their requests for support were dismissed by the larger camp. Later, Candi Brings Plenty held an "official" grand entry blessing "to bring visibility for our arrival."

But visibility and recognition are only part of the matter, the cultures of resistance we build *between* the sensational moments are where the focus for action is necessary, otherwise it's just another tokenizing and pacifying checkbox. The problems at frontlines will continue to pile up there if they're not meaningfully addressed in between the actions. *The frontline is everywhere in ending cis-heteropatriarchy and gender violence.*

Post-Standing Rock other frontline camps were established intentionally centering Indigenous queer forces, in particular the Line 3 resistance. It appeared that lessons from Oceti were informing a more critical dis-orientation of frontline sacred lands defense.

Women and Queer/Two-Spirit Resistance at Line 3

In 2020 and 2021, four years after Standing Rock, women, queer, and two-spirit led direct action camps in Mníssota

(the occupied lands called Minnesota) were established to fight a massive transnational pipeline expansion project by "Canadian"-based company Enbridge.

The Line 3 pipeline, which stretches over 1,031 miles, was established in 1968. Enbridge announced plans in 2014 to replace it and increase transportation capacity to nearly 800,000 barrels of oil per day.

At the end of 2020, Minnesota state and federal regulators granted Enbridge permits to construct the last section of the Line 3 pipeline.

A resistance camp was organized by Honor the Earth, Winona LaDuke's non-profit. The effort was named Giniw Collective and was coordinated by Tara Houska, a lawyer, Honor the Earth campaign director (2016–2019), and former Native American adviser to "US" politician Bernie Sanders. Houska organized Giniw as "an Indigenous-women, two-spirit led collective focused on reconnecting to and directly defending the Earth." Private land was purchased by Honor the Earth to establish Camp Namewag, the base of operations for Giniw.

The second notable camp established was founded by Taysha Martineau called Camp Migizi, they described their effort as, "an Indigenous two-spirit led collective of mostly queer anarchists who stand for Indigenous rights and BIPOC solidarity." An acre of land was purchased for the camp in early 2021 with a $30,000 crowdfunding campaign.

The overall resistance to Line 3 followed the same strategic and tactical patterns employed at Standing Rock and most every other formal Environmental Justice campaign waged by formal and informal coalitions of non-profits and non-governmental organizations over the past three decades:

1. Corporation proposes development/expansion which triggers an,

2. Administrative process (actions include: petitions, public awareness, media outreach, Tribal consultation, hearings, decision by local agencies, protests, appeals, etc.), which usually fails and triggers:

3. Litigation (more petitions, injunctions filed, rulings issues, legal appeals, administrative appeals to regional and national agencies, petitions, protests escalate), which is a rollercoaster of inconsistent decisions but ultimately fails (with an occasional rare win) so that triggers:

4. International appeals (UN complaints, testimonies, declarations, etc.), which are non-binding and unenforceable (usually this is all about PR anyway), and concurrent boycott or divestment campaign, which inevitably escalates into:

5. Nonviolent direct action (NVDA) (trainings and workshops, protests escalate, arrests, media campaigns ramp up, more petitions, bail fundraising, arrestees face court, etc.). While NVDA tactics shift, they typically are comprised of sporadic blockades and occupations with good photo-ops. Which results in mass arrests and drawn out criminal proceedings.

> The underlying strategy of an NVDA oriented campaign usually centers on targeting a decision maker (or decision making body) to change the rules that enabled the development or expansion but most often ignore the protests, so the focus shifts to:

6. Legislative proposals such as amendments or new laws (political campaigning, lobbying, more protests, media, etc.), which is entirely dependent on a handful of sympathetic politicians and all too often becomes mired in colonial bureaucracy,

7. Mix and match, then repeat as needed.

In the six years since Enbridge first applied for permits for Line 3, thousands of people have attended public hearings, participated in protests, and signed petitions. According to LaDuke, 70,000 public comments were submitted to the Minnesota Public Utilities commission, of which 94% were against the pipeline.

In November 2015, seventy-five water protectors occupied Enbridge's Minnesota office demanding an end to the pipeline. Seven people were arrested. In April 2018, water protectors converged in the tiny community of "Automba" to protest Line 3 at a site where pipes were being stored. Some chained themselves to gates and equipment and were arrested.

To make things more complicated, organizers were facing two Indigenous Nation's Tribal Councils, Fond du Lac Band and the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe that had agreed with Enbridge not to oppose the pipeline. They were paid undisclosed amounts for allowing the development to proceed.

In January 2021, The Fond du Lac Tribal Council sent a letter along with monthly per capita checks to Tribal members stating,

> In 2021 the Band will continue to make its per capita payments in the amount of $400.00 per month. The Band will continue to make these payments using Enbridge funds that were deposited in trust with the Department of the Interior.

In November 2020, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, final approval for the pipeline project was given and construction began. In anticipation of protests, Enbridge poured millions of dollars into an escrow account that law enforcement agencies could draw on for attacking water protectors. It effectively made cops paid security for protecting the corporation's pipeline.

Line 3 resistance strategies focused on disrupting pipeline development to convince the Biden administration to revoke or suspend the project's federal clean water permit. Actions were also taken targeting banks and other pipeline stakeholders to pressure them to divest in the project.

More than 1,000 arrests were made during the nine months of Line 3 resistance, most being misdemeanor charges. According to the Pipeline Legal Action Network, there have been at least ninety-one felony charges filed against eighty-nine water protectors. Prosecutors attempted to further criminalize those arrested by charging some with felony "theft" for locking themselves to construction equipment. The charge carries a maximum 10-year prison sentence. In July 2021, two water protectors crawled inside a pipe in Aitkin County, they were charged with "felony aiding attempted suicide," though no one was harmed and the protectors took a range of safety measures. Bonds had been as high as $30,000 for some who were captured by the State.

It was reported that Enbridge paid police nearly $3 million for costs associated with arresting and surveilling water protectors, the Aitkin County Sheriffs billed 4,800 hours to Enbridge.

In October 2021, after nearly seven years of resistance from Indigenous communities and climate activists, 760,000 barrels per day of tar sands oil began flowing from so-called Canada through Line 3.

Indigenous non-profits and climate justice organizations shifted their fight and targeted politicians in so-called Washington, DC, with concentrated actions such as the "People vs. Fossil Fuels Mobilization," in 2021. Joye Braun, a water protector who had established one of the first camps at Standing Rock, spoke on behalf of the Indigenous Environmental Network, "With the power of a pen, President Biden could stop these pipeline projects. He promised he would listen to us. He's not listening. We're coming every day of this week to tell Biden: Stop this madness."

More than 500 Indigenous People and climate activists marched. There were approximately 650 arrests during the overall actions. On October 14, a brief occupation was held at the Department of the Interior building with fifty-five people being arrested. As the rest of the group attempted to enter the building they had confrontations with police at the door that resulted in several climate activists injured and one cop hospitalized. Demonstrators initiated a sit-in in the lobby and demanded to speak to Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, though she was reportedly not in DC at the time.

The organizations delivered nearly 1 million signatures petitioning the US Army Corps of Engineers North Atlantic Division Office for a full Environmental Impact Statement on Line 3. Talking points included, "Climate justice. Better jobs. Green economy. Just transition. Treaty rights." The only distinction from the white liberal dominated Climate Justice points being the focus on treaties. (They even started declaring their white allies to be "Treaty People" in the Line 3 resistance.) The non-profit chorus called on Joe Biden to "declare a climate emergency and stop approving fossil fuel projects." They were particularly inspired as one of Biden's election sales pitches was that he would be the "climate president." He never responded to any of their demands.

To make climate catastrophe and ecological matters worseor more abundantly clear on how neo-colonialism operateson June 9, 2023, the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nations announced the purchase of an inactive Enbridge oil pipeline. Tribal officials celebrated the purchase as the creation of "generational wealth."

The Fort Berthold Reservation has more than 2,640 oil and gas wells producing close to 150,000 barrels of oil per day. The 31-mile pipeline will connect the Tribe's oil facilities to Enbridge's international distribution system that covers the "US" and "Canada." When in operation, the pipeline will transport approximately 15,000 barrels of oil a day.

Winona Laduke's book *To Be a Water Protector* (2020) provides great research and background to the pipeline struggles, yet it becomes a call to action for an economic proposal called the "Green New Deal" and a "Just Transition" towards a green economy. It's less instructive and more reflective, which says a lot about the overall strategy of the movement. It reads like she wrote it not wanting to piss off white allies ("Treaty People") and funders. The powerful assertion of Indigenous women and queer leadership in contrast to the cis-heteropatriarchal character of many sacred lands frontline struggles was critically undermined when it was revealed that for nearly a decade, Laduke and Honor the Earth (HTE) staff disregarded and retaliated against a former staff member for addressing sexual harassment within the organization. After years attempting to address the situation through community-based means, the former staff member

filed a civil lawsuit in 2019 that HTE aggressively fought in court. In early April 2023, HTE was found guilty on all counts filed by the survivor and the court imposed a $750,000 fine. Laduke (and her non-profit's board of directors) dismissed the court decision as racist and complained that the fine was disproportionate. In the upheaval it was revealed that LaDuke had a pattern of dismissing concerns regarding allegations of sexual assault. After the ruling she immediately stepped down from her role as executive director of Honor the Earth.

Laduke's call *To Be a Water Protector* is premised on an Indigenous eco-feminism not only constrained by the limitations of the non-profit industry and liberal political aspirations, but by ongoing complicity in deeply embedded gendered violence that continues to poison our communities. The frontlines are everywhere, so is the toxicity that also drives the colonial machinery of the very *Black Snakes* we fight.

As with Standing Rock, the Line 3 resistance failed to *kill the Black Snake*, it did not stop the pipeline.

These movements appear to be marching in larger and larger circles regardless of who is at the forefront. More "bodies" are condemned to the carceral State while we're urged to beg politicians to stop the corporations operating the infrastructure that their system is powered by. More bodies are scarred by traumas hidden by organizers to maintain appearances, control, and power.

A February 2022 article posted to the Stop Line 3 website punctuates how the Climate Justice agenda works. In the article "The Fight Against Line 3 Isn't Over Yet," a movement organizer states,

> Much in the same way that all the oil companies learn from every fight, from Keystone to Standing Rock to Line 3…we're also doing that as well. Maybe we didn't win this one, but we're going to be better situated to win the next one.

This is movement interloping colonial logic that reduces Indigenous survival to campaign tasks. For some of us the matter of "moving on" is not a consideration because our existences are so deeply connected to the fate of the land we are on. As long as this kind of logic, including that of exploitative non-profit capitalists, informs our strategies, whether it's at Standing Rock, resisting Line 3 in Mníssota, or the "next one," soon enough there won't be any more battles to lose.

What else can be expected when we commit to strategies that reinforce colonial systems of power?

If we understand how movements such as Standing Rock and Line 3 have been lost and come to terms with the limitations of the strategies of colonial activism and politics, then perhaps we can break from that which keeps us marching in ever expanding circles?

Chapter Six: Profaned Existence

To desecrate a sacred place it has to be objectified—stripped of any and all living spiritual meaning and relations. Desecration, or the killing of the living being and spirit of the land, cannot easily occur while Indigenous belief systems exist, because people and other beings tend to fight back when their existences are threatened. When outright murder, forced removal or relocation of Indigenous Peoples is not politically or publicly palatable, the first act of desecration is erasure of identity, cultural memory, and any relation to the land by violently stripping it away through the imposition of a new meaning by the colonizer. This spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically violent process occurs through the systematic delegitimization of deeply held living Indigenous belief systems. The political strategy of Indigenous delegitimization is institutional. This has been employed through various means from non-recognition of Indigenous Peoples to ensure that our relationships to sacred lands are severed, to the systematic attacks and ongoing alienation of queer Indigenous relatives from sacred cultural roles.

Dehumanization by the settler state promotes settler violence while simultaneously producing an amnesiac and ahistoric institutional, social, and legal framework in which the state can continually absolve itself of any culpability, while also being the sole arbiter of any formal attendant objection that might be raised by Indigenous People in their own defense.

When we are viewed as less than human (externally and internally), whether in the form of racist mascots or other acts of cultural exploitation, our abuse is not an exception, it's expected, it's in fact the rule and far too often, the law. The trauma induced by these violations, particularly when unnamed and unaddressed, becomes historically compounded and deeply embedded in our beings. Colonization kills the *idea* of us being a people.

Intrinsically, sacred sites cannot be desecrated without the delegitimization of Indigenous knowledge systems. As scholars attempt to define Indigenous sovereignty via colonial terms, and as US government instituted Tribal Governments grasp at agreements that were never intended to be kept, it must be understood that the US political relationship to Indigenous Peoples is a condition of domination that can only exist through violation of Indigenous sovereignty and the sacred. No treaties can be established in that inimical arrangement that would ever meaningfully honor the integrity of Indigenous lifeways. There can be no self or collective determination in a system of perpetual desecration.

In other words, settler societies cannot kill the land without total erasure of Indigenous ways of being. The social structures of colonial courts provide the "legitimate" pathway of doing so, after all, they are anti-Indigenous by design. While force of law in the form of legalized violence sustains this legitimacy, white supremacy in the form of a sense of permanent entitlement, physical occupation and vigilante terror by the settler population against Indigenous peoples provides the illegitimate one. So while verbally and even legally condemned, prosecution and even law enforcement upon the settler population and its agents remains virtually nonexistent. Simply put, nothing they do is wrong or illegal, because it's the settler who's doing it. They are ensconced and ingratiate, held righteous even, while Indigenous Peoples are made to appear backward, su-

perstitious, and out of sync with the time, place, and manner of those who have invaded, and desecrated their homes and most sacred of places.

Desecration of the land is also desecration of our bodies.

Amanda Lickers, of the Seneca Nation identifies *Land Trauma* as,

> The embodied feelings of breached consent on our lands and bodies. The emotional and spiritual suffering experienced by Indigenous peoples as a result of physical attacks on our lands and waters and speaks to the emotional and spiritual experiences of loss of land and identity. This also includes feelings of loss as we witness other living relations suffer or disappear as a result of these attacks, such as buffalo, wild rice, salmon, etc. Land trauma can also refer to feelings of grief and pain that have been inferred or absorbed through our lands and waters. Land trauma is different for each person as our Nations have different histories of contamination and displacement and the severity can vary depending on what part of our heritage/identity has been violated (i.e. desecration of an origin place).

The trauma is exacted at the point of destruction and overt violence upon the Earth with clear cutting, strip mining, pipeline trenches, fracking wells, dams, and held up in the sustained violence found in the contaminated medicines, contaminated springs, the animals who drink the water, and in the invasive corruption or interruption of the balance of an overall eco- and spiritual-system that is part of the lifeline that is a foundation of who we are as Indigenous Peoples. The trauma extends through our social and cultural relations and directly interferes with prayers, ceremonies, and medicines to the point where we cannot heal. It is a colonial weapon designed to violently intervene in our mutuality with existence. As Amanda Lickers further illustrates,

> If you're destroying and poisoning the things that give us life, the things that shape our identity, the places that we are from and the things that sustain us, then how can you not be poisoning us? How can that not be direct violence against our bodies, whether that be respiratory illness or cancer or liver failure, or the inability to carry children.

Colonizers weaponize gender as a strategy of sustained domination through brutal impositions of cis-heteropatriarchal and capitalist social order and the extraction of resources to maintain that order. Contentious academic author Andrea Smith articulated in her powerful work *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*, "The project of colonial sexual violence establishes the ideology that Native bodies are inherently violable—and by extension, that Native lands are also inherently violable."

The dimensions of gendered colonial violence are made devastatingly clear in the movement for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two-Spirit, and Trans relatives.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) is a campaign that was initiated in so-called "Canada" to address extremely disproportionate and unreported violence against Indigenous women. The movement has since extended throughout the so-called "US" and been expanded to include the specific ways girls, two-spirit, and trans relatives are also attacked (+G2ST).

MMIW campaigns initially focused on connections between resource colonialism and gender-based violence, as the majority of initial reports of missing and murdered Indigenous women

were located near areas where the extractive industry had established "man camps." These man camps are temporary sites at large-scale extractive industry projects where cis-male workers are clustered in temporary housing encampments. Due to the geography of resource colonialism, most of these sites are located in areas close to reservations.

MMIWG2ST is a systemic issue, meaning that Indigenous women, girls, trans, and two spirit people are not at increased risk of violence because of individual behaviors, but due to institutionalized systems of oppression. Sexual violence has been used as a weapon of colonizers to wage genocide. Christian missionaries violently imposed colonial gender roles and norms upon our communities while Tribal governments were established by the US with a strategy that outright suppressed the role of Indigenous women, trans, and two-sprit relatives.

Most current campaigns to address this crisis treat it as a criminal issue, so proposed solutions are based on pleading that the colonizer's forces offer further funding for more reservation policing and legislation.

More police, more people in prison, and more laws won't meaningfully address these matters because cis-heteropatriarchy is a pillar of the colonial capitalist state. The fight to end sexual assault and interpersonal and gender-based violence in our communities will not end by creating more colonial laws and their enforcement or "awareness days" proclaimed by colonial rulers.

Community based autonomous groups like Arming Sisters, who organize Indigenous women's self-defense workshops, recognize that anti-colonial action and defense are necessary to heal and restore Indigenous relations from the cascading impacts of intergenerational gendered violence.

Too many cis-gendered Indigenous movement men decry #MMIW (rarely adding +G2ST) but won't address their movement brothers who are known abusers, yet this matter is necessarily our shared struggle. This myopic posturing even has some more concerned with policing women's bodies and gatekeeping dress codes at ceremonies than holding rapists accountable and upholding and reinforcing boundaries around consent.

Author Leanne Betasamosake Simpson makes it clear in her poignant analysis, "Hierarchy had to be infiltrated into Indigenous constructions of family so that men were agents of heteropatriarchy and could therefore exert colonial control from within."

As long as we don't address these behaviors at home and in our communities, it's obvious that they'll persist and undermine frontline camps. This is feminist and anti-colonial because it simply means meaningfully challenging and changing with the way we perpetuate and normalize gendered colonial bullshit.

If *violence against the land is violence against our bodies*, both the land and our bodies must be defended with the same intensity.

In July 2019, Ariel Bryant was reported missing by her family. Though it was alleged by her partner that she was "suicidal," her friends who had talked with her frequently said that was not the case. According to them, her partner was abusive and they were concerned for her well being so they organized search parties as soon as it was reported she was missing. Her friends were told by local sheriffs not to look for her, and although they had communicated where they thought she could be, were also ignored. Ariel was found days later deceased in the area her friends thought she might be.

We held a small memorial with Ariel's friends and family at Táala Hooghan Infoshop because she was part of our community of Indigenous radicals. She had been part of Youth of the Peaks and was part of the crew that had founded the infoshop when she was still in high school.

She fought fiercely to protect the Holy San Francisco Peaks. As a murdered Diné mother, she now unrests with ancestors at the base of our desecrated sacred mountain.

This report back was shared in 2021 from an Indigenous Peoples' Day of Rage demonstration in downtown Kinłani:

> The streets of downtown "Flagstaff" looked overrun by angry ancestors emerging from the smoke chanting "Fuck Columbus, fuck the police!" It felt like the nightmares of colonizers coming to haunt the futures they have stolen. By pumping millions of gallons of recycled shit water on the sacred San Francisco Peaks. By attacking Indigenous unsheltered relatives and leaving them to freeze in the winter months. By arresting what amounts to half the Indigenous population every year. By doing absolutely nothing when Indigenous womxn have gone missing or were murdered, Vanessa Lee. Ariel Bryant. Nicole Joe. We screamed their names and asserted our rage. We weren't there to debate, plead, or negotiate as the pacified Natives who tried to make rooms in their chains for us. We were there to celebrate our dignified rage (as the Zapatistas have so beautifully named this anger that is a powerful component of the centuries of resistance against colonialism). Another busy intersection was taken and a round dance ensued. Some colonizers yelled something and were quickly told to "Fuck off." There was a moment when the marching stopped in a central part of downtown, a relative who had been there every fierce step of the way spoke, (pieces of her words from memory here): "Ariel Bryant was my best friend. She went missing and the cops told me not to look for her. She was found dead and nothing has been done. I'm here for all missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, trans, and two-spirit relatives."

The rage echoed against the red brick façades of this shitty tourist town. It felt like they could so easily crumble to ruin. Our spirits felt strong sharing our pain and rage together throughout the streets. I wouldn't call what occurred a march, there were no political demands and the crowd spited the typical activist selfies, it was an ambiguous queer cathartic anti-colonial procession that nourished our spirits in a moment that was at the nexus of despair, joy, and rage in defense of the sacred.

The land holds trauma, the land also holds rage.

The Enemy of Mother Earth

From Mother Earth to our bodies, in a capitalist system everything that can be reduced to a commodity will be. As long as it can be sold, bought, or otherwise exploited, nothing is sacred. So long as the lands (and by extension our bodies) are viewed this way we will have conflict, as capitalism is the enemy of Mother Earth and all that we hold to be sacred.

In its base definition, capitalism is an economic and political system based on an unregulated or "free" market, private property, competition, and limited government intervention. But the definition obscures the reality that capitalism is based upon extreme social exploitation and dispossession, ecological destruction, hyper-individualism, and materialism and its history is rooted in white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy, genocide, and slavery.

To be anti-capitalist is not enough, anti-capitalist propositions rooted in industrialism and extractivism are just as invested in ecocidal (therefore anti-Indigenous) economies. Killing the Earth is killing Indigenous existence. Colonizers must religiously convince themselves and others that the world is already dead to justify their ongoing violence against the Earth and existence. In the face of global ecological ruin, some attempt to further convince themselves that killing the Earth *just a little bit less* is an appropriate response.

This is exemplified with climate justice movement organizing, where grand proposals of a "green economy" or a less ecologically devastating form of capitalism is the means to achieve human survival with a habitable planet.

"Big Green" non-profit corporations and so-called non-governmental organizations (yes even the smaller Indigenous ones too) set the terms for dissent and triage this crisis to the point where we can see the future coming back at us, but what else can be expected from marching in circles? After all, in the recycling of capitalism into climate justice, we still end up scrubbing their palaces green, resting our heads in green prisons, and sustaining unsustainable lifestyles.

"Just transition" is a strategy of economic redemption to further preserve ways of being that are unsustainable by design, you can't lobby away colonialism and capitalism, no matter how hard you try.

The "Green New Deal," like its parent "Green Economics" are meant to sustain the US settler colonial project and the capitalist relations whose interest lay within the specificity of continuing the ongoing exploitation (destruction) of the whole of the Earth, while cashing in of course. In the case of the Green New Deal, which in many ways begat its own child, that of the Red New Deal, who aside from outright plagiarizing, fronting, and co-opting long-term Indigenous Climate Justice work, the Red Nation's "Red New Deal," proposes an anti-capitalist and woefully limited anti-colonial response that not only reinforces industrialization but ultimately leads to the ongoing participation in capitalism proper, just "renamed" and "reformed" under a "transitional" Socialist Rubric, that leads to their Marxist organization's propositions for a "decolonized" authoritarian worker-run state as the best solution. So while we're collectively dying from the air we can't breathe, the water we can't drink, or both priced out of accessibility in the here and now, we are meant to await the building of yet another Socialist Utopia. A utopia built upon the current dystopia of growing wastelands and climate disasters on every continent. From deadly nuclear power to lithium and rare Earth mineral mining, and the privatization of water, the greening of any economy is still a war against Mother Earth and all existence.

In a report released in 2021 by the Indigenous Environmental Network, they calculated that Indigenous resistance to twenty fossil fuel projects has "stopped or delayed" carbon emissions equivalent to approximately 25% of "US" and "Canada's" annual overall emissions. While non-profit climate activists who wrote the report reveal the power of direct action, they also assign their campaigns more credit than is due. Particularly by citing significant losses such as DAPL and Line 3 projects in their reports, this statistic tends towards a deluded climate optimism that we view as a path fraught with peril and death. Again, if we're not being honest with and about the failings of our movements, what does shifting tactics, and more importantly adjusting our overall strategies, toward the end of yet more changing statistics matter? We're not convinced about making this a numbers game to celebrate the disrupting of 25% of an industry, when we've lost over 98% of the battles in a war with such high stakes. Particularly when those activist campaigns have spent hundreds of millions of dollars with thousands of our relatives jailed and dragged through racist court systems.

The proposition of unplugging from a "dirty" power source and plugging into a "green" one does nothing to address the underlying power relations. It reinforces them.

"Green energy" sustaining a Green Economy still demands resource colonialism. From sacred Oak Flat in so-called Arizona where San Carlos Apache are resisting a massive mine that is estimated to contain enough copper ore to produce 275 million electric vehicles, to sacred Thacker Pass in so-called Nevada where Shoshone are resisting lithium mining, which is necessary for electric vehicle and "green" energy battery production. A single car lithium-ion battery pack contains nearly 18 pounds of lithium. To electrify every vehicle throughout the world, an estimated 10.4 billion tons of lithium is needed, that is approximately 13 times existing lithium reserves. The Thacker Pass lithium mine is estimated to produce 60,000 tons annually. The proposed project spans approximately 28 square miles that would hold an open-pit mine and a sulfuric acid processing plant to extract lithium from mined ore.

The operation is estimated to release 152,713 tons of carbon dioxide annually and 500,000 gallons of water is required for each ton of lithium, meaning it will use 1.7 billion gallons annually. The Thacker Pass sulfuric acid processing plant will convert sulfur to leech lithium from raw ore, trucked in from sources such as the Alberta tar sands, which are 1,500 miles away. The tar sands, located in so-called Canada, are known as the world's most destructive oil operation.

The devastation of nuclear colonialism, which permanently destroys Indigenous communities throughout the world, is outright ignored by some of the most devout climate justice advocates. They claim nuclear energy production is also a green solution to the climate crisis. More than 15,000 abandoned uranium mines are located within the so-called US, mostly in and around Indigenous communities, permanently poisoning sacred lands and waters with little to no action being taken to clean up their deadly toxic legacy. There are currently ninety-three operating nuclear reactors in the so-called US that supply 20% of the country's electricity. There are 60,000 tons of highly radioactive spent nuclear waste stored in concrete dams at nuclear power plants throughout the country with the waste increasing at a rate of 2,000 tons per year. In 1987 the "US" Congress initiated a controversial project to transport and store almost all of the US's toxic waste at Yucca Mountain located about 100 miles northwest of so-called Las Vegas, Nevada. Yucca Mountain has been held holy to the Paiute and Western Shoshone Nations since time immemorial. In January 2010 the Obama administration approved a $54 billion taxpayer loan in a guarantee program for new nuclear reactor construction, three times what Bush previously promised in 2005. In April 2022, the Biden administration announced a $6 billion government bailout to "rescue" nuclear power plants at risk of closing. A colonial government representative stated, "US nuclear power plants contribute more than half of our carbon-free electricity, and President Biden is committed to keeping these plants active to reach our clean energy goals." They, along with Climate Justice activists cite nuclear energy as necessary to combat global warming, all while ignoring the devastating permanent impacts Indigenous Peoples have faced. There is nothing clean about energy produced from nuclear colonialism. From its weapons (including depleted uranium) to its mining and its waste; Indigenous bodies, lands, and waters continue to be sacrificed to heat water with radioactive materials which creates steam that moves generators to charge batteries made from lithium extracted from other Indigenous sacred lands so Teslas can move you forward into a "just" climate future.

A green economy sustains and advances colonial progress, which means mitigated selective and ongoing destruction of Mother Earth.

Though they declare opposition to nuclear energy and "C02lonialism," the Indigenous-based green economies promoted by Indigenous Environmental Network and Honor the Earth are congenial with and enable settler futures. The framework for the climate justice agenda is Indigenized, in other words, it's simply given a makeover that tokenizes relationality with the Earth.

How can we expect mutuality or solidarity from conciliatory activists whose reformist campaigns are built behind closed doors with massive NGOs while they cash-in on multimillion-dollar grants?

The Climate Justice movement's strategies and tactics are circumscribed by liberal obsessions with emphatic political lobbying (on national and International levels) and media coverage. The underlying framework marches towards further inclusion in, and progression of, settler society. But what can be expected by appealing for damage control by way of political and economic reforms to the very forces that create, maintain, and profit from this crisis in the first place? Although the systemic issues of capitalism and colonialism make appearances in press releases and banners on the streets, the underlying strategic aims rest on the reconfiguration of the dominant social order towards a more ecologically oriented environmentally conscious polity. Do we really want a more ecologically friendly form of settler colonial capitalist domination, or do we seek to abolish its very existence?

To epitomize the tunnel vision of the Climate Justice movement, in 2019 the group Extinction Rebellion (XR) organized an action they called "Red Handed Rebellion." Where they delivered petitions, painted their hands red, and marched to a police station to turn themselves in:

> …we are holding our hands up high in open rebellion against the UK Government. We are accountable for our actions and are willing to be caught red handed.
> Just as cavemen did through their negative hand prints, we too are marking our connection with the Earth.
> On Wednesday, we delivered letters to 18 Government departments by hand demanding they produce their plans for addressing the Emergency by mid-November…
> We will raise our red hands, taking responsibility for our actions—we all have blood on our hands. We march in admission and recognition of the part we play in the injustice of this emergency, and the ongoing suffering of thousands of people around the world due to climate and ecological breakdown.
> …At the police station, we can take pictures of ourselves with red hands, posting on social media with the hashtag #redhandedrebellion. This will additionally force the police into a dilemma situation, as people line up waiting to turn themselves in.

It couldn't be clearer that in XR's hyperbolic "rebellion" there is no meaningful analysis of systemic interconnections of global warming and they don't take state violence seriously. Professing "accountability" while marching into the hands of the police is another dead end of privileged theatrical activism. The spectacle of victimhood reaches its apogee in performative martyrdom.

Climate Justice strategies are also centered on challenging carbon industry corporations at their pocket books.

Contemporary climate justice based divestment campaigns are premised on "responsible capitalism." They are composed of three primary tactics: consumer withdrawals, mutual fund divestment (stocks and bonds), and withholding lines of credit.

According to the group Mazaska ("money" in Lakota) Talks, which organizes with the slogan, "Kill the funding, kill the pipeline," more than $5 billion "has been committed to be withdrawn

from the banks funding DAPL." In 2017 the city of occupied-Seattle was the first municipality to pass legislation to withdraw their funds held in Wells Fargo bank over the issue, about $3 billion, but in 2018 they reversed the decision due to a lack of an alternative financial institution to hold its money. Wells Fargo is one of the largest financial contributors of DAPL, investing $467 million in loans and credit.

Although Citibank has internal corporate responsibility policies on "Indigenous, human, and environmental rights," they were among the primary banks offering credit for development of the Dakota Access pipeline. In response to pressure from an intensified campaign due to pipeline resistance at Standing Rock, Citibank issued a formal letter stating they were reviewing their policies and consulting with Indigenous Peoples. Citibank weathered mass protests and occupations of their offices, they weren't compelled to divest.

On February 17, 2017, Bill de Blasio, then-mayor of New York City, which is occupied-Lenape lands, wrote to Wells Fargo and other DAPL funders urging them to rethink their investments. De Blasio cited climate change, green jobs and stated,

> I am writing to express my deep concern about your involvement, and the involvement of other banks, in financing the Dakota Access Pipeline…This project could have negative consequences for the people of Standing Rock, for the well-being of your bank and for the health of this planet. Therefore, I urge you to withdraw your financing, or failing that, to use your position as a lender to press your client to negotiate a reasonable resolution that removes the threat to the tribe's concerns.

The letter contained no commitment to remove funds and no actions followed.

At a rally in 2019 De Blasio attacked another anti-colonial divestment campaign led by Palestinians called the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. He stated,

> Democrats and Republicans with equal fervor need to say—Israel must exist so the Jewish people know they are always protected. And maybe some people don't realize it, but when they support the BDS movement, they are affronting the right of Israel to exist and that is unacceptable.

The BDS movement was established as a comprehensive economic effort to end international support for Israel's colonial occupation of Palestine. While thirty "US" states have banned the implementation of BDS measures, the efficacy of the movement outside of public relations is hard to quantify. An Israeli state research center found that Israel's merchandise exports to the European Union had nearly doubled since the start of the BDS campaign.

Although states have long weaponized economic force through various means, divestment was popularized as an activist strategy against the colonial apartheid regime of South Africa in the 1980s. Divestment was not the only factor in ending apartheid, the combination of decades of militant resistance, escalating colonial violence, and political campaigns all are attributed to its demise. It has been documented that due to sanctions on oil imports, South Africa built on Nazi technology and commercialized a process to convert natural gas and coal into liquid fuels. Sasol, a state-operated company that was privatized, is now the seventh largest coal company in the world and their Secunda CTL synthetic fuel plant has been documented as the world's single largest emitter of greenhouse gasses, releasing 56.5 million tons of CO2 per year into the

atmosphere. The most effective divestment campaign in history led to the development of the single most polluting fuel plant in the world.

Climate Justice divestment strategies reinforce market logic. When shares are divested they are sold. There's still a market and incentive for buyers to push for returns. Investments are shifted from carbon polluting industries to so-called green ones (while nothing meaningful about the lifeways that are precipitating the crisis change). Boycott and divestment actions treat symptoms and are premised on appealing to an assumed "good will and conscience" of capitalists. They are negotiations that frame bad investments versus good alternatives. The strategy of moralizing and shifting investments maintains the socio-economic order of capitalism.

While it makes strategic sense to deny the necessary resources an opponent requires to operate, the endgame of negotiated financial risks is not the abolition of capitalism, it is the salvaging of it through agreeable reforms.

The industries that are at the front-end cause of global warming have long waged war against sacred places and our bodies with impunity. Strategies informed by the logics of the enemies of the Earth do not threaten colonialism and capitalism.

Unless the root ideologies and structures that precipitate this crisis are confronted and done away with, we condemn ourselves and future generations to non-existence.

Global warming is a consequence of the war against Mother Earth, sacred places are integral to maintain balance with the natural world.

To fully stop these pipelines, mines, and other devastating industries ravaging Mother Earth, we have to stop the political machinery and progression of the systems that generate them.

Land Back or Cash Back?

The slogan "Land Back" became popularized during direct actions against resource colonial violence in so-called Canada

during the Caledonia "land dispute" uprisings in 2020. Vehicles (including a bus that had a car placed on top of it) were used to blockade a liberated roadway renamed 1492 Land Back Lane. The slogan wasn't conceived there, as it has been a rallying cry of dispossessed communities for generations, but grew to viral ubiquity due to the social media savvy of those on the ground. The assertion of Land Back requires no elaboration: *End colonial occupation, restore ancestral relationships with the land.*

As a slogan, "Land Back" has been oriented and claimed by those with differing political, economic, and social aims. Indigenous liberals apply reform-based approaches which include: purchasing land and placing it in trust, donations of land by existing property owners, or through negotiations with State authorities for co-management and preservation (as a practice that mirrors liberal practices of land conservation, which have been historically a racist recreational enterprise). The latter generally includes an administrative arrangement of public lands (as with the Bears Ears) or establishing trust status for the land. Indigenous communities that are not federally recognized, such as the Ohlone in so-called San Francisco, tend to employ these strategies with varying effect depending on the sympathies of local authorities. In 2022, the city of Oakland created a cultural conservation easement that gives the Sogorea Te' Land Trust stewardship over a 5-acre park, now named Rinihmu Pulte'irekne, "in perpetuity." The city of Oakland remains the official property owner, so the designation is more managerial and symbolic.

The slogan Land Back was readily coopted by non-profits who cashed in on the trend and turned it into branding for real estate driven campaigns. Non-profits were motivated by an Indigenous capitalist manifesto written by Edgar Villanueva, a Lumbee who is a self-described "southern Christian boy." Villanueva's first philanthropic job in his early 20s was to distribute $25 million from a tobacco industry tax shelter foundation to whomever he thought needed it. In his book *Decolonizing Wealth*, Villanueva absurdly states, "Money, used as medicine, can help us decolonize." The author is plainly cashing in on "decolonialism" to preserve and further capitalism. As stated in his book he took his first philanthropic job because he believed it was a good place for him to "do god's work." The author, a graduate from Jackson College of Ministries with a Pentecostal upbringing is more comfortable quoting the Bible than his elders in a book invoking "decolonization."

At 28, the author was working for the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust making a six-figure salary.

Villanueva considers himself a "healer" through preaching capitalism and oddly states that it was at an Indian Health Service conference where he received an "Indian name" from an Ojibwe medicine man. He states, "When I got into philanthropy, it felt like I gained access to a significant power to heal people." He then sold "#decolonizer" shirts at his ticketed book launch.

The Non-profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) is a system of relationships designed by colonial and capitalist forces to manage and neutralize effective radical organizing. The NPIC was established to manage social and environmental groups with the same structure as corporations.

Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) co-opt movement momentum into campaigns they manage to control and capitalize off of. Based on a charity model, NPOs focus their resources on building organizational power and not community power thereby stripping essential resources from frontline radical liberatory organizing, while reproducing or prolonging inequality and social hierarchies. Wealthy families, individuals, foundations, owning classes, and corporations use the NPIC to shelter their wealth from having to pay taxes. These capitalists grant millions but save many millions more by profiting off of tax breaks. They have no sincere motivation to end the injustices that they often perpetuate and benefit from.

Non-profit managers and staff are milking philanthropists and massive foundations (such as Amazon's Jeff Bezos that granted a group called the NDN "Collective" over $10 million) to get their salaries paid from profiteering off of "Land Back." It's not a "steal from the rich give to the poor" strategy either; the non-profit industry is established to keep wealth inequality intact, and undermine social unrest.

Land Back political and economic strategies are further complicated and undermined due to the Marshall Doctrine which established that Indigenous People's lands (particularly reservations) are held in federal trust. Under the doctrine, Tribal sovereignty is non-existent as Indigenous Nations are "domestic dependent nations." So any land that is negotiated "back" by Tribal entities remain a state resource managed by its wards.

Rearranging state or private property through real estate transactions or state grants in the form of trusts, monuments, and protected areas, are economic and bureaucratic maneuvers that subjugate Mother Earth to the realm of social and economic regulations, someone somewhere holds "title" to the land.

If we interrogate the promises of Land Back, we are brought back to an ancestral perspective that the land belongs to no-one but itself. Land Back then becomes a question of unmapping "legal" terrain, tearing down walls, and cutting through fences. It becomes an undoing of the

forceful imposition of the capitalist idea of private property and the colonial/capitalist impulse to declare dominion or domination over Mother Earth and existence. To realize Land Back means to end the ways humans have profaned all of existence and imposed their will upon the land and reasserting that the land belongs to no one.

From 1492 Land Back Lane to Big Mountain on Black Mesa and beyond, Indigenous resistance has held autonomous regions free from State authority. In some moments these acts of liberation have lasted longer than others, and in the case of Big Mountain for over forty years as the Sovereign Diné Nation.

Exploited from without and within

For some time, Black Mesa was also the poster child site of non-profit Indigenous climate justice organizing that was particularly focused on shutting down coal mining and power generation operations. Upwardly mobile Diné carved out their own space of the resistance ecosystem and focused on coal, energy, and water. While some powerful organizing was expressed through direct on-the-land projects such as restoring natural rainwater harvesting systems and traditional foods, the salaried positions and massive grants never seemed to add up to the work on the ground. My critique of the non-profit industry was shaped through the many frictions of these dynamics. While non-profit leaders were enjoying bloated salaries and would throw money at organizing problems, my relatives who lived on the frontlines in the Big Mountain area were asking to borrow funds for gas or selling mutton to cover travel expenses to protests and other events across the country. The relocation issue wasn't in the purview of the non-profit organization's campaign, so it didn't merit full support.

A few moments provided the clear break for me from non-profits, particularly when relatives cashed-in on the Peaks sacred site struggle, when multiple community organizers told me, "If we're not getting a paycheck why would we be here?" and hosting the Longest Walk 2 in 2008.

More than 125 people joined American Indian Movement leader Dennis Bank's call in 2008 to revive the original purpose of the 1978 Longest Walk. In 1978 the Walk was held from California to Washington, DC to draw attention to Indigenous rights struggles. Some of those on the walk organized small listening sessions (some very informal) to hear what the concerns were of the communities they traveled through. Their testimonies were collected and presented in a manifesto calling for political change, treaty honoring, and as a rallying cry for Indigenous self-determination. The 2008 walk started with a ceremony at Alcatraz Island which was the site of the wellknown 1969 occupation that was a watershed moment for Indigenous uprising throughout the so-called US.

We had offered to mobilize support in so-called Flagstaff and organized for months with an informal coalition of professional and not-so-professional activists. We planned things out meticulously and all the non-profit workers applied their workshopped skills with ardent fervor. As the Walk approached occupied-Flagstaff, Dennis told us that the schedule had to be shifted, but since we had big plans including a benefit concert, press conference, panel discussion, and protest, we couldn't be so flexible. The call was made by Dennis to arrive earlier and stay longer in "Flagstaff" so we didn't have to change plans but that meant more time hosting those who were walking. The non-profits refused to pivot and accommodate while 125 people (some with serious illnesses) needed places to sleep and meals. The autonomous crew I worked with at the time all stepped up.

We had started Táala Hooghan Infoshop the year prior and had a solid network already providing resources for other actions. This created a massive divide between the non-profit managers and resourceful independent troublemakers. We coordinated all the housing, meals, and healthcare while salaried movement managers only fulfilled the tasks that they had scheduled. The events and actions were powerful and helped propel the Walk for the rest of the journey. After the dust had settled we held a coalition debrief where I was accused of "micromanaging." Our crew was accused of making the non-profit managers "feel bad" for not stepping up more, we all walked away from that meeting with a commitment that we wouldn't collaborate with local Indigenous non-profits again.

Our rabid autonomous crew worked with the Walk for the duration of its intended journey and I traveled to DC with a friend to coordinate other aspects of the effort (I stepped up to be media coordinator there). We learned that due to internal politics and abuse, the Walk had fallen apart with part of the group splintering off. The celebrity dynamic of Dennis Banks and the harsh reality of walking amidst contradictions broke the unity of the effort. I contacted a local anarchist friend to see if they could provide housing for about forty people including elders who were forced off of Dennis' walk and had started their own path. He quickly coordinated a place and food.

While in occupied-DC I was offered more of a role with the overall Walk's effort but the medicine was troubled.

There was a small pow-wow and lots of press work. Revolutionary socialists would randomly show up grasping for legitimacy with slick flyers about how much they supported political prisoner Leonard Peltier. Some Congress members were at the final news event saying some bullshit I don't remember. The last act of media coordination I offered was some radical talking points my friend Morning Star Gali and I created, one point was "celebrities and politicians aren't going to save us." No one read the line and aside from those who worked tirelessly on it, as far as I know no one read the new Longest Walk manifesto. All those voices speaking towards silence, like a relative forgotten, giving birth to a child in a trailer and passing from this existence. I don't even think that it would be fully comprehended even if it was read. The contents were so much more than transcriptions. I quietly stepped aside from the activist revelry, movement performances, and traveled back to my home beneath the sacred mountain.

In 2015, when the Save the Peaks Coalition was active and mobilizing forces to resist Snowbowl, our crew got an email from the Ruckus Society, a large non-profit dedicated to spreading knowledge of direct action tactics (which would conceive Indigenous Peoples Power Project). The email was to a general list calling on their supporters to donate money to their organization with a list of struggles they were supporting, including the San Francisco Peaks. During the Ninth Circuit Court hearings in occupied-Ohlone lands where Ruckus is based, we were shut out of their office though they had offered support. They had offered their staff to handle media support, then days before we arrived we were told they had a staff retreat. All the pressure fell onto our crew of volunteers who were already organizing many other tasks. At the time we were concerned that if we couldn't have basic support with media and resources, how could we expect support in serious actions? And then they sent the email soliciting funds for work they were doing for the Peaks.

The coalition formally responded telling them not to exploit sacred places for organizational gain. They just moved on to fill their pockets from other struggles.

We maintain to this day that when we organize and fight for sacred sites, no one gets paid.

The profanity of wealth amassed from ecocide, genocide, and slavery can never be decolonized. Economic systems imposed by colonizers aren't sacred.

Chapter Seven: The Politics of Frybread

The Northern Navajo Fair at Tsé Bit'a'í (Shiprock, New Mexico) has been held for more than one hundred years. It's a celebration of harvest and marks the change of seasons with the beginning of our winter ceremonial cycle. The cold dusty nights are lit by the neon glow of a carnival, the pounding voice of a distant MC narrating every move at the rodeo, Intertribal dancers from throughout the region camped out all around the pow-wow grounds. The nine-night Yeii Bíchei ceremony contrasts the scene. Juniper fires burn and families gather on the final nights when dancers from throughout the Rez come to participate and bring about the blessings for the patients.

All of this revelry is held right on Uranium Boulevard just a couple of miles from a massive 105-acre radioactive dump containing 2.5 million tons of radioactive waste on a site that was a former uranium mill (which is just 600 feet from the San Juan River).

I had attended the fair many times before, sharing traditional dances or performing with Blackfire at side events, and even riding on floats and horses in the fair's extravagant parade. The miles-long procession features Diné children marching in JROTC military fatigues with wooden guns, the Navajo Nation Marching Band, political candidates making their first and often last appearance in the community, traditionally themed floats, and massive energy corporations showcasing how much they give (and hiding what they take from) the community. My partner's family is from the area and each year (pre-pandemic) they've held a wonderful reunion, so my participation in and around the fair has been much more frequent.

It's a powerful connecting time of mutton grease, dust, sugary treats, dust, laughs, more dust, and intergenerational shenanigans.

Some years ago we even organized a worker-coop pop-up coffee stand we called "Dibé Biccino" featuring fair trade organic coffee to fundraise the purchase of Táala Hooghan Infoshop.

Back in 2009, as the world was concerned with mass economic collapse, my partner and I were walking the Indian Market (where it is to be seen and see!) and stopped to watch an Aztec Danza group.

The MC representing the danza exclaimed, "You know, we Indians are going to survive the economic crash, you know why? Because we have frybread!"

Of course all the greasy faces laughed and cheered.

You see, we hunt frybread like a primordial beast. Our instincts attuned to the smell of a specific brand of grease. We can also just tell its provenance and quality by the look. Is it too brittle? Has it been sitting too long and just soaked in grease? Is it light, fluffy, and made just the way your best auntie, uncle, naali', or mom makes it?

Every food booth is known by who has the best frybread. My partner's cousins usually come together to compare notes then plan on descending on the best offering. We live up to the semi-nomadic reputation of the ravenous hunter-gatherers we are anthropologically claimed to be. We become loyal to whatever temporary wooden tarp-covered shack that holds the secret to the food that comforts like the deepest memories nestled in a deep fried pillow of satiated dreams.

Frybread is composed of white flour (Bluebird milled in so-called Cortez, Colorado being the undisputed best), baking powder, salt, and water. Some folks add in powdered milk for good soft measure. Slap it out and deftly lay it into a big pan filled with hot grease (not towards you, or you may end up with a tiny burn and facial scar like I have on my forehead from making frybread when I was about seven), typically lard (Crisco for the discerning). Fry it up, and serve it sweet or savory. Salt or powdered sugar.

Obviously it is not the healthiest dietary choice on the menu.

So why would we survive capitalism's decay with frybread?

Today, according to Navajo Nation statistics 43% of the 180,000 Diné Bikeyah residents live below the federal poverty line. Unemployment stands at 42%. Nearly 32% of homes lack plumbing. Needless to say, self-sufficiency, or as some would say "frybread power," is not factored into these numbers.

So why is frybread such a powerful symbol of survival?

If we talk about frybread, we have to talk about Hwéeldi.

Diné had waged more than 350 years of anti-colonial resistance against Spanish invaders until the 1840s when the "US" invaded our sacred lands. Colonel Kit Carson, waged a devastating scorched Earth campaign to destroy our cultural food systems and starve us out of our homelands. This brutal military campaign forced many (though not all) to surrender. Some were told they could get food for their families at military forts but were immediately imprisoned. More than 10,000 Diné faced fifty-three different forced marches between August 1864 and the end of 1866. The destination of the 300-mile "Long Walk" was to a military fort turned prison camp called "Fort Sumner" or Hwéeldi.

Brigadier General James Carleton was responsible for building the prison, he intended to conquer and assimilate Diné with this strategy he outlined in 1863:

> …gather them together little by little, on the reservation away from the haunts and hiding places of their country, and then to be kind to them; there teach their children how to read and write; teach them the arts of peace; teach them the truths of Christianity. Soon they will acquire new habits, the ideas, new modes of life; the old Indians will die off, and carry with them all the longings for murdering and robbing; the young ones will take their places without these longings; and thus, little by little, they will become a happy and contented people, and Navajo wars will be remembered only as something that belongs entirely in the past.

Carleton commanded Lieutenant Colonel Kit Carson who adjusted the strategy to wage a vicious military campaign. Carson was unrelenting in the brutality of his campaign. At Fort Sumner, one out of four Diné perished and remain buried in unmarked graves.

In narratives shared by family, an elder relative once said, "Though many were lost, there were no orphans [at Fort Sumner] because Ké' helped us survive." Ké' is the Diné clan system that establishes kinship and teachings of mutuality and collective care.

During the 1864–1868 internment, the US government issued rations in the form of coffee beans, flour, salt, and lard.

Salt. Flour. Lard. Water. The makings of frybread.

During Hwéeldi, the single most important ingredient was survival.

It was in the "US" military's attempt at ethnic cleansing that the recipe for frybread was born. It is a recipe embedded with the atrocities of colonial idealism and utopianism, or Manifest Destiny. Part of its glutinous composition is inseparable from the expansion of so-called civilization and "democracy."

The Diné experience is not unique. Frybread recipes are coveted by many Indigenous nations. Handed down like heirlooms from generation to generation. Feeding our souls and hearts, killing our bodies. We pray and eat knowing that frybread tastes sacred only because it was and still is a means of survival.

One slice of frybread has 700 calories and 25 grams of fat, this according to the "US" Department of Agriculture.

Indian Country Today columnist and founder of the Morning Star Institute, Suzane Shown Harjo once wrote,

Frybread is emblematic of the long trails from home and freedom to confinement and rations. It's the connecting dot between healthy children and obesity, hypertension, diabetes, dialysis, blindness, amputations, and slow death… [Frybread has] (n)o redeeming qualities. Zero nutrition.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that has no cure. It compromises immune systems and makes those who live with it more susceptible to other diseases and viruses such as COVID-19. According to the American Diabetes Association,

> People with diabetes do face a higher chance of experiencing serious complications from COVID-19. In general, people with diabetes are more likely to experience severe symptoms and complications when infected with a virus.

According to the National Diabetes Educational Program, "… about 16.1% of American Indians and Alaska Natives ages 20 years and older who are served by the Indian Health Service have diagnosed diabetes." There was a 68% increase in diabetes from 1994 to 2004 in Indigenous youth aged 15–19 years. We have a three times higher death rate due to diabetes compared with the general "US" population. One in three Diné are diabetic or pre-diabetic, in some regions, health care workers have reported diagnosing diabetes in every other patient.

Gila River O'ohdam located near so-called Tucson, Arizona has the highest rate of diabetes in the world. About 50% of their people between the ages of 30 and 64 have diabetes.

Mario Saraficio, Gila River O'odham, was defiant in his devotion to frybread in an *Indian Country Today* article, "Those things are awesome. It's bad, but it's good. If the doctor told me I had to give it up, I'd say probably not." I've made hundreds of pieces of frybread for unsheltered relatives, it never goes out of demand.

The trajectory of the diabetes epidemic in Indigenous communities has long been considered a plague harbingering the doomsday for Indigenous existence. Then why are we so unwilling to give up frybread?

What I heard and felt in the midst of the poetically dark Indigenous humor of the Danza Azteca MC at Shiprock Fair was that we will survive the ongoing brutalities of capitalism because it cannot fully extinguish Indigenous collective- and self-sufficiency. This is what is meant when Indigenous Peoples proclaim "frybread power." Frybread is nostalgic like any food that you grow up with that is culturally unique and what is most distinct is in how it is centered around survival.

It is most noticeable for those who've been away from home for a while and frybread scented their dreams. Somehow a product of historical trauma soothes the personal ones. Perhaps it's because—regardless of the ingredients—frybread is made with inter-generational love. Frybread was never intended to supplant customary foods yet it is what *brings our people together*.

Ultimately it's a colonial punchline of a pop-cultural end to Indigenous life.

"But will there be frybread?" In our assertions of food sovereignty and security by sowing ancestral seeds and breaking corporate dependence (the new fort rations), or what some call "decolonizing our diets," we reconnect and restore that which feeds our People's minds, bodies, and spirits and no, there won't be frybread.

Frybread is also the perfect metaphor for colonial politics: it may help us survive for a moment but if we keep consuming it will ultimately kill us. Left and Right wing are two sides of the same piece of deep-fried dough.

The Leftovers of Leftism

There's a monolithic assumption about Indigenous politics. Particularly that we all care about the Earth. This assumption establishes Indigenous identity as a virtue. But there are Indigenous fascists, capitalists, conservatives, socialists, anarchists, nihilists, extractivists etc. Some spend more time than others (particularly academics) mired in arguments of what system is best for Indigenous "futurity" or "survivance." Largely ignoring that the origin of the assumption must be contended: the imposition of colonial politics. Anthropological and social assertions of Indigenous "politics" steeped in the stench of the progressivisms of modernity, have dominated how we think about social organizing today. Indigenous organizations measure their accomplishments based on how well they're recognized, funded, and included in colonial order.

Though there is much room, there is not much oxygen left to breathe between the suffocating patriarchal legacy of the American Indian Movement and the overbearing liberal nonprofit trading post activists (Indigenous capitalists) of today.

Most Indigenous activists graft academic studies and colonial politics onto their ancestor's fights. This back to the future anthropological nonsense drives them into the distraction of an Indigenous futurism premised on settler utopic modernity with most offerings amounting to Star Wars cosplay with Indigenous decor. Their past-time is re-appropriating the imaginations of colonizers to re-imagine Indigenous futures. Indigenous futurity is rendered as a captive fantasy.

They regurgitate some dead white guy's thoughts like leftovers eaten from a bad batch of ironic stew made from free-range buffalo and Ivy League degrees. The idea of "struggle" is an attractive commodity (and not as in Government Cheese). It is attached to daydreams of wannabe revolutionaries who had a charismatic professor or two during their graduate classes that romanced Marx, his intellectual progeny, and slipped them a little Mao on the side. They objectify themselves (an obligation of identity politics) on the not-sosacred altar of leftism in the assigned categorical safe space of Social Justice and essentialized environmentalist assumptions. The role and value ascribed to their institution and how it reinforces colonial politics no matter how much they chant "decolonize the academy" is never questioned because, "look at all the shiny post-modern things," and most clearly, if they critique too deeply, they risk critiquing themselves out of a successful career.

Leftism is one part of the whole that composes colonial power. So long as we subscribe to its political factions we also chain ourselves to its ultimate aspirations. When we address "politics of " regarding modern colonialism (the sum of colonial pasts), why is it so hard for us to imagine Indigenous Peoples outside of the left?

I circle back to this question throughout this book, as I believe this dynamic is a vicious constraint suppressing Indigenous liberation.

And yet we keep eating frybread even though we know it's killing us. Will we just "carry on," with the ghostly appearance of survival? A greasy apparition continuing the slow death march as portrayed by that detestable fetishist Edward S. Curtis' camera in 1904, his *Vanishing Race*?

It wasn't frybread or settler politics that brought our ancestors back to walk among the sacred mountains from Hwéeldi, it was ceremony and action. As my elders caution, "The Long Walk has never ended for us."

TÁÁ’ — Expect Resistance

Chapter Eight: Indigenous-Rooted Direct Action

I've been conflicted with how to approach writing this section for a number of reasons; primarily due to the ways I've outgrown activism (or it's outgrown me?). On any given Indigenous resistance timeline, a point is inevitably reached where the futility of petitioning and making demands that colonizers end their violence becomes unmistakably clear. Perhaps this is an anti-colonial critical consciousness, but I have become preoccupied with the urges of my ancestors to be ungovernable. I punctuate many of the following essays with assertions of three ideas that mean the same thing to me: direct action, attack, and anti-colonial struggle. I initially was planning on writing a separate field guide on this topic with practical tips for organizing and various tactics, but the more I thought about it the more I felt it was very distant from my focus in these pages. Plus, there is already a range of resources for direct action tactics out there, though some more succinct than others. While I may still publish the field guide as a supplementary zine, my hesitation relates to my tension with what constitutes activism as a whole, most all of which amounts to; large non-profits commodifying and exploiting issues, narrowly focused "winnable" campaigns pleading politicians for limited reforms, performative solidarity and identity politicking, young "bodies" sacrificed to the carceral State in sensational arrests as public relations stunts, and progressive activist drones working to "hold the system accountable" while surviving the mundanity by constantly telling themselves, "It's better than doing nothing."

For more than two decades I've participated in and organized various types of actions, from prayer vigils, marches, banner drops, blockades, and brief and long-term occupations. All in a range of communities from occupied-Ohlone lands in so-called San Francisco to occupied-Piscataway lands in "Washington, DC," and in other parts of this world (particularly during the anti-globalization movement).

In the early 2000s I started conducting Direct Action (DA) training and strategy workshops with friends who comprised an affinity group. We built on skills from experience, working with other crews, and attending other workshops and training camps. We followed the theater of direct action activism and oriented others with the familiar formula: Form an affinity group (or join a coordinated one comprising of around 3–15 people), select tactics with the considerations of tone, escalation, risk, and timing, go over roles (arrestees, action support, legal observer, media support, police liaison), exercise possible scenarios, research possible charges and bail amounts, do the action, get a cite and release or get hauled to jail and either bailed out right away or released on your "own recognizance," do media, go to court, plea out, or get stuck with the charges and then do the whole thing over and over again. We found ourselves re-organizing entire campaigns because groups (some very well established) had no basic understanding of strategy. Their tactics were driving their strategies (which typically results in constant reactionary posture) and they were focused more on outputs than outcomes. They approached direct action as an insti-

tution (which has become quite the business) and treated it as a contingency plan when other appropriate means inevitably failed.

The activist institutionalization of direct action approaches it as theatrical tactics to fulfill an organizational strategy. But if direct action is only viewed as a set of tactics or a *means*, its most beautiful offering is neglected; it is both a *means and an ends*.

In its most raw definition, direct actions means that instead of getting someone else to act for you like a politician or institution, you act for yourself. It can be applied individually, in small groupings like a couple of friends, families and collectives, and in larger communities.

As a well-established core principle of anarchism, direct action is also articulated as a way of life. Direct action, as unmediated expression of individual or collective desire, challenges the dependencies, dispossession, and alienation created by hierarchy.

The nature of direct action compels us to get at the root-cause of any problem we might be facing. As a principle it urges us to constantly dig deeper and ask, *What do we get from this system that we cannot directly provide for ourselves? What ways can we direct our energy, individually and collectively, into efforts that have immediate impact in our lives and the lives of those around us? How can we live our lives unmediated by authority?*

The more I've contemplated direct action, the more progressive activism becomes a repetitive deadening sound of flesh against brick as heads bang against walls expecting them to crumble (or to be allowed within them to have a "seat at the table"). Why do Indigenous organizers continue to mirror social justice "Nonviolent Direct Action" strategies and tactics centered on *civil* acts of disobedience that have largely remained the same since their development in the 1960s?

These outdated formulas communicate that it only matters if you are peaceful, you get arrested, and the media coverage is good. Why is it a point of veneration to subject more of our people to the police, court, and prison system (aka the carceral State)? Don't get me too wrong, I'm all for escalation, risk, and preparedness, but there has to be a good reason to submit to capture (unless it's really, really inconvenient for the pigs). I appreciate those who spend as much time thinking through and rehearsing arrest scenarios while *also* planning on *getting away with it*. Any strategy that begs politicians to enact change through mass arrest should be ferociously scrutinized. Perhaps it's branded as "direct action," but it's really just aggressive martyr/victim complex lobbying. In the context of liberal social and environmental justice organizing, Indigenous suffering (and death) is a tactical resource, we are valued as the dignified victims, objectified as the ecological, manifest; ripe for extraction (there's a good audience and packed house for this performance). Our mouths stuffed with carbon copy agendas and talking points. Our teleological agency is colonially circumscribed (even if it feels like we have set the terms. The spotlight *feels* good though, doesn't it?). The game of colonial activism is rigged. It plays a politics that no matter the side you're on, colonialism always wins. And so, why do we continue to play this game? Those that rule and profit from and through colonialism and capitalism will never be morally persuaded to make decisions to benefit anyone but themselves. Those that stand for the Earth and existence will always be in their way. This is an "absolute" that continues to be written in the blood of Indigenous Peoples throughout the world.

How do we contend with the violences of settler colonial power? Certainly not through strategies informed by logics and frameworks that reinforce it.

What is Indigenous-rooted direct action?

The following section is the architecture for an Indigenous-rooted direct action that I've established with friends and through challenging experiences over the years.

Indigenous-rooted direct action (IRDA) is a framework to develop strategy and tactics to intervene in and end colonial violence against the land and all our relations. We assert that our cultures are our first framework for action and that our power comes from our relationships with the natural world. We organize in cycles not campaign timelines. IRDA does not rely on colonial political systems or institutions and fiercely rejects and challenges the non-profit and ally industrial complexes. IRDA is informed, guided, and supported by Indigenous cultural knowledge and is a continuation of the deep history of Indigenous resistance to colonial domination. IRDA is interrelational (see the section on "Decolonial Solidarity") and recognizes that colonialism is facilitated by white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy, and capitalism. IRDA directly challenges and disrupts the ideas, institutions, and behaviors that maintain colonial power. IRDA is about directly (without a mediating entity) asserting and maintaining Indigenous lifeways and power to inform and shape the relationships and narratives that impact our ways of being. Additionally, IRDA:

- Empowers cultural communication methods.
- Is culturally and spiritually appropriate and accountable.
- Challenges all assumptions of victimhood.
- Recognizes that Indigenous Peoples are not monolithic but incredibly diverse.
- Does not perpetuate recolonization, invisibilization, or direct colonialism of other Indigenous People's lands.
- Seeks to address and heal land trauma.
- Does not use ceremony or spiritual practices as publicity, theater, or a prop.

Other points that have been added at times:

- IRDA is responsible to ancestors and future generations. It cultivates cultures of resistance and liberation.
- Is about asserting and maintaining Indigenous power (power *with* and *of* the Earth) and lifeways to inform and shape power relationships and narratives impacting our ways of being.
- Facilitates warrior morale and power for fighting forward and back.
- Asserts that security culture must also mean adopting culturally informed proactive processes of transformative and restorative justice (or more plainly accountability and responsibility).

There are cultures of direct action that are informed by those establishing the theories, critical analysis, and most important by those who implement them. They've set the terms, which in many instances shape the over and underlying narratives, this is why an Indigenous-rooted direct action is necessary: If we have an end to any system of oppression without the conclusion being Indigenous liberation on these lands, it just amounts to a reorganization of our domination.

The organizing framework we utilize is based upon Diné iiná (our life/lifeways). So it goes beyond activist interventions and tactics and applies to how we live our lives. We start with Ké' (our relations/connection) and organize around the four primary directions that are situated within the cosmology bounded by our sacred mountains: Nitsáhakees (thinking, intention, prayer), Nahat'á (planning, coordination and logistics), Iiná (living our plan and intention, action, implementation), and Siihasin (outcomes, review, debrief). It is non-linear and so once an action is completed, the cycle can be renewed. There are lifetimes of teachings that relate to ceremonies and medicines within these teachings.

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When we assert these contextual frameworks, we build on the understanding that action is our prayer when we live our lives in accordance with our beliefs, or our reverence with the sacred. This means we intimately operate with the spiritual dimensions of our fights as well as the material, emotional, and psychological. We affirm that our power is rooted within our mutuality with existence, with the sacred.

Indigenous-Rooted Direct Action means being a force of Nature.

Beyond Civil Disobedience

Do we wish to be civilly obedient to a settler colonial system established and maintained on genocidal and ecocidal violence? The matter of civil obedience might appear to be questioned in the famed assertion that, "What is legal is not synonymous with what is right." But that statement assumes an agreeable morality of and in settler colonialism, its liberal synonymizing reinforces the State. It is a rallying cry of settler inclusion.

The relationships of power that comprise what is "civil," demand obedience. They demand tactics and a politics that confine them to be respectably included (what is called *respectability politics* in activist speak). Their escalations are a fervor not to undermine and abolish, but to be a part of the club.

If you've been to any direct action training, the first terms defined are "nonviolent direct action" (NVDA) and "civil disobedience" (CD). These terms establish a framework that has been in use since it was created in the 1960s by Christian civil rights activists. They intentionally built an implicit consensus around nonviolence and contrasted their tactics to those of the Black Panthers, AIM, Weather Underground, Symbionese Liberation Army, and other militant formations that sought to abolish the US empire.

In the last fifty plus years, very little has changed in this organizing framework that continues to shape strategies and tactics used by activists throughout the world. At their core they are temporary interventions in social and political power relations that appeal—through varying degrees of pressure—for justice to be bestowed by the State. This model is not only the status quo in social and environmental justice organizing, it is also embraced by the State and capitalists as it reinforces and reproduces their underlying relationships of power.

The NVDA position speaks through activist managers in a moral binary of violent (bad)/nonviolent (good). It fails (by design) to understand that violence exists on a spectrum (structural, lateral, direct, etc.). This binary fiction of violence/nonviolence, which is the preferred fantasy of liberals, normalizes the State's monopoly on violence in declarations of demonstrations and principles as nonviolent. It alienates radical possibilities and the militant legacies of anti-colonial struggle. The question of nonviolence and violence has never defined Indigenous resistance, it has always been a more practical consideration of, *what works?*

Outside of the historical movement parentheses, the limitations, failures, and underlying power relationships of these fights aren't discussed and examined enough. This is due, in part, to the overall ways that direct action has been institutionalized by non-profit managers and self-imposed "allies." The criticisms aren't new, as anti-political analyses from the Earth and Animal Liberation Fronts, to Bash Back, to Conspiracy of Cells of Fire, and other militant strains of what can be called resistance have long pushed against the narrowly prescribed economy of action in the milieu of what is cynically dubbed The Struggle.™

Outside the parenthetical containers of sanctioned struggle are voices that distance and denounce actions as *violent* or *extreme*. After all, the context of their notions of disobedience is confined to the *civil*. Their moralism constricts their lineage to nonviolent martyred icons that the State also embraces such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. It dissects the violence of abolitionists slitting the throats of those holding whips and keys to cages. It delicately separates the disfigured entrails of bloody liberation movements and moments that have underscored how power is imposed and disposed of in this world. It declares a monopoly of social

transformation that is steeped in its utopic colonial imaginary. The liberal philosophies and ideologies of struggle have colonized and commodified social transformation.

Gord Hill bites at this tendency in his powerful antagonism, *Smash Pacifism: A Critical Analysis of Gandhi and King*, where he acutely observes that:

> Pacifism must be challenged and discredited as an acceptable doctrine for resistance movements. To promote nonviolence is to disarm the people psychologically and to dampen their fighting spirit. This is even more so when the population is already largely pacified, as is the case in North America. Pacified not through state repression, but through apathy and hopelessness, and when these are broken, by the preaching of a pacifist doctrine that claims to be morally, politically, and tactically superior to all other forms of struggle.

Peter Gelderloos' book, *How Nonviolence Protects the State* offers an extraordinary study. Gelderloos asserts, "Only a people trained to accept being ruled by a violent power structure can really question someone's right and need to forcefully defend herself against oppression."

Indigenous warriors and warrior culture are perversely fetishized by the white historic gaze, yet the intensity and brutality of these complex resistances are sanitized for colonial consumption. But ours is the contradiction of the "noble" and the "savage." And while I'll dig into Indigenous inclusion and "civility" in later chapters (particularly "Voting is Not Harm Reduction," and the whole last section), I want to emphasize that for the duration of the "Indian Wars" and most all history of colonial invasion, Indigenous spiritual and physical resistance was regarded as illicit terrorism against civilization. Most (we had our scouts and collaborators for sure) of our ancestors weren't concerned with legitimacy of their tactics and their moral implications. Broadly speaking, spirit and the sacred were their frameworks for action and they responded how they could with whatever worked, *outside* the enclosures, or reservations of dissent sanctioned by their enemies.

The fascinating instability of ongoing Indigenous dissent and disobedience is in its contentions of legitimacy and criminality. The "criminalization of dissent" becomes an invitation to embrace the anti-settler criminality of our ancestors in order to overwhelm colonial society's abilities to function. There is no need for activism in a world where collective- and self-defense is a way of life. There is no need to stay enclosed on reservations of resistance. Settler civility should always be undermined and contended.

Above and Below Terrains of Struggle

Above ground direct actions (lock downs, defensive occupations, blockades, etc.) have very different consequences to consider than with underground actions (sabotage, offensive occupations and blockades, property redecoration, arson, etc.).

If above and below ground strategies and tactics stay siloed, they risk immobility (the idleness that Idle No More rose against). As previously mentioned, aboveground strategies are limited by design; they are most often reformist and at great risk of recuperation by the State or capitalists (primarily through the NPIC). Above ground organizers, at their worst, descend into careerists capitalizing (socially and economically) on "struggles" and collaborating with the State acting as informally (sometimes formally) deputized movement police turning against those deemed "too radical" or "violent." They tend to loosely cast the term "outside agitators" at anyone not in

alignment with their campaign strategies. Outside agitators are a settler fiction designed to vilify, marginalize, and regulate dissent. Fascist scapegoaters and liberals denouncing actions that don't comport with their idealized moral activities apply this term sensationally. Settler colonizers as an occupying force are the definition of "outside" agitation.

Below ground strategies and tactics face their particular limitations as well; they are esoteric by design (to elude capture by the State), are subject to extreme repression (post-9/11 anti-domestic terrorist response), and often face rapid diffusion (which isn't necessarily a pitfall).

There have been brilliant flash points when above and below ground actions intentionally connect in complimentary ruptures. This has been particularly well-implemented and documented during anti-globalization mass mobilizations. Mass permitted marches provided necessary cover for the spectacular recreational activities of black blocs and other more subterranean forces. Yet while the grandeur of mass-protests is fascinating, the scale doesn't matter so much as creativity and hostile opportunism. When the State is anemic (in intelligence, attention, resources, mobility, etc.), further below ground action becomes possible. As the State's predictable repressive capabilities are diminished (clogged, distracted, etc.) further liberatory possibilities are *brought to the surface*. Synthesizing radical *above* and *below* points of contact break the binary. This point is the aggregation and compounding of social, political, and economic destabilization towards liberation. Moreover, above ground activism (the pastime of reformists tending toward social, political, and economic progress) should constantly consider self-destruction. Its degeneration is also necessary for liberation.

Since the mid-1990s the Earth Liberation Front has wreaked havoc against Earth-killing projects throughout the world. From the burning of multimillion-dollar eco-system killing developments to the sabotage of mining equipment, their anonymous, autonomous, cell-based, or at times "lone-wolf," actions have resulted in substantial material losses. Their primary tools have been rudimentary incendiary devices comprised of something as simple as a plastic gallon jug filled with gasoline, a kitchen sponge soaked in gas and kerosene (gas evaporates too quickly) then placed in the handle, and a handful of large incense sticks placed sticking out of it. Other devices were only slightly more sophisticated and included a modified mechanical kitchen timer attached to a road flare attached to a 5-gallon (or smaller) bucket filled with an accelerant (see the zine *Arson-Around with Auntie ALF*). These devices were then placed in areas that had good airflow and as close to combustible materials as possible (sometimes pallets were stacked). While other slightly more complicated devices were made (or improved on), these simple tools and a hyper-vigilant and extreme level of security have brought massive industrial projects to ashes.

This is just for illustrative purposes and I would never advocate for anyone to engage in the construction or use of such devices. There are other less risky ways to bring down machinery and developments. In one account that was shared publicly by an Indigenous agitator who is no longer walking with us, a cordless power tool was used to cut through power line bolts but not all the way. Months later when strong winds came, the power lines were toppled. Sometimes the force of nature just needs a little help. The point is: you don't need to understand how a machine functions to destroy it.

A Red Powered Past-tense

Colonial technologies of power are designed to rule over the body, mind, spirit, temporality, and environment of those it

claims as its subjects. Colonial power is implicitly and explicitly articulated through constant coercive force. Its pillars of political and economic power malignantly rest on genocide, slavery, alienation, and ecocide.

The dominant social order's Machiavellian enforcement and justifications contrast sharply against liberatory calls for *power with*, not *over*. Without coercion through external and internalized violence (the cops and the cops inside your head), those who rule and the rules they seek to impose are all but meaningless.

The unambiguous assertion of *power with* is an expression that aligns with cultural knowledge systems that have existed before (and in spite of) colonial rule on these lands. In sometimes awkwardly contorted ways (due to leftists staking claims of how power is concentrated and distributed), it has also oriented much of what is considered as social justice movement organizing in the so-called US.

Most "progressive" activist campaigns are centered in uncomplicated attempts at moral persuasion of *those above* in the dominant social, economic, and political hierarchy. They're concerned with "target" audiences, demographics, and most often voters and building support (or a base) within those communities so they can influence decision makers (usually politicians).

They study their target audience, choose tactics they believe will persuade them to pressure their primary target (the decision maker), and work to get attention (while documenting the effort for their funders).

Their influence tends towards capacity building, which is how they perceive organizational power is built. It requires more funding for staff, which requires a steady stream of grants, which requires accountability to the foundations and philanthropists that they become dependent on to maintain and cultivate their ever-expanding capacity. Eventually those foundations look down upon radical actions and emphasize tactics that focus on services and non-confrontational forms of political persuasion. They economically emphasize tactics of refusal (like strikes, boycotts, divestments, etc.) and passivity (not doing something you are supposed to be doing).

They accept mild threats so long as they don't conflict with their own positions and proximity to economic and political power. The insular and myopic world of non-profit activism is maintained as such by design. This dynamic is incisively confronted in the book *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* by INCITE! (2007).

They also join a leftist chorus calling for *counter-power* (or the term Lenin coined "dual power" in some spaces), which is proclaimed as "building a new world in the shell of the old." Strategies range from community gardening to independent media, housing and business co-ops, schools, clinics, etc. And while alternative infrastructures are necessary to end corporate and State dependencies, counter or dual power on stolen land is neo-colonial. For all the Indigenous-centering and lip-service to Land Back, leftists have a lot of modern hangups. Ziq also assails how the idea of dual power as revisionism of "authoritarian ideology" in their brief polemic, *Shut up about 'dual power', tool*, they caution against the "corrupting force of all power."

Most anti-imperialists and anti-capitalists are locked into the logic of fighting empire on empire's terms; building a revolutionary force on the scale of the empire to fight the empire.

While intervening is critical, autonomous anti-colonialists also focus their attacks on where the empire draws its power from. This offers a much more varied asymmetric and amorphous possibility of intervention that requires a whole lot less complicated revolutionary theorizing. You don't need enlightened professional organizers or a vanguard to lead the way. Sometimes you just need a bad idea, the wherewithal to try it, and the meticulous attention to detail to ensure you get away with it.

Indigenous power is often reduced to visibility (or recognition) as exemplified with the slogan that so many Indigenous activists and artists embrace, "We are still here." But this is an incomplete statement of survival, shouldn't we also be concerned with *where* we are and how intact or whole the *we* part actually is?

When first proclaimed in the 1960s, *Red Power* was a compliment to the ethnic and gender power movements of the day, particularly Black Power which either proposed distinct nationalisms based on revolutionary communist ideas, or equality and inclusion into settler society through civil reforms. The expressedly revolutionary aspects of the "civil rights" era fixated on the strategy of building the power of the people to overturn one system of power to replace it with another.

The Red Power manifestos and statements of the era focused on protest and mobilization towards the idea of Indigenous self-determination, which comprised treaty rights, economic development, education, and cultural preservation. Red Power was issued as a demand of colonial power and as such was progressively negotiated or assimilated into the US colonial polity. Certain rights were granted by colonizers as concessions to contain the extreme militancy of Indigenous, queer, feminist, Black, Xikan@, ecological, and other uprisings.

As part of the history of the "US" civil rights movement, these struggles had primarily been forced to operate under the terms of and within the confines of colonial oppression to negotiate what "rights" and "legal privileges" could be distributed to subjugated "Indians." While radical Indigenous analysts within proximity to the American Indian Movement and its concomitant forces understood that sovereignty by definition cannot be practiced under the authority of another political entity, and their tactics were hostile and militant, most of the Red Power movement's immediate goals were based in reforms.

As I previously state, there are many lessons to learn and unlearn with how the State reflexively counter-attacked the militancy of the 1960s and '70s. Systems of social management and control were also built through the development of social justice organizing. These state-sanctioned models still inform and heavily influence how activism is done today. Concessions turned into political conformity and merchandising, select revolutionary actors of the era built political careers, some went in and out of retirement circulating on unending speaking tours, many got PhDs and wrote books which established their authority of The Struggle™, and many others went from hippy to yuppy to boomer in a couple of generational steps. From bad parodies of outdated revolutionary clichés, non-profit profiteering, and the adoption of "nonviolent direct action" as the status quo in organizing, the *Power of the People* was largely subsumed or rendered inert by the State and its collaborating capitalist forces.

Red Power, like Land Back, means different things depending on who you talk to or what book you read, but ultimately inspired and reactivated powerful multi-generational resistance.

My elders assert that power is *a spiritual source and responsibility that is shared with all of creation. Our medicine is power. Our power is medicine.*

The AIM Song of Anguish

Though my family was skeptical of and kept AIM at a distance, I grew up singing the AIM song. I've sung it at actions throughout the world, my grandma Roberta would always want to sing it, her barely audible voice at the drum belying her fierce power, I've sung it with both Russell Means (confronting the racist Columbus Day parade in Denver) and with Dennis Banks (too many times to recall) and faceless and nameless warriors on many frontlines. Though its provenance is not known, the story I recall was that it was a spiritual gift to rally AIM warriors during the liberation of Wounded Knee.

In analyzing Indigenous power and direct action, it's vital to examine the context of strategies, tactics, and State repression that comprises the ongoing legacy of Indigenous resistance, particularly with the historically vital force of the American Indian Movement (AIM).

Though there are many examples, Leonard Peltier's false imprisonment for the alleged murder of two FBI agents in 1975 and the clouded assassination of Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash are important markers.

Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash, a strong Mi'kmaq warrior with AIM, was found murdered in 1975 in Wanblee on the Pine Ridge reservation in "South Dakota." Pictou-Aquash is also a symbol of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans, and Two-Spirit movement today.

Accusations of her murder first pointed to the FBI and later, as AIM members revealed how paranoia of infiltrators had gripped the leadership intensely, rumors surfaced that AIM leaders had her killed. This was a time when bad-jacketing (making someone look like a snitch or informant even though they aren't) tactics by feds as part of COINTELPRO was proving to be an effective tactic against revolutionary groups. In 2003, after multiple grand jury hearings, AIM members John Graham and Arlo Looking Cloud were targeted and controversially named as killers of Anna Mae. Others such as Thelma Rios and Vine Richard (Dick) Marshall were also charged in association with her murder.

A 2006 article by Billie Pierre, who was part of Native Youth Movement (NYM) and a founding member of the radical Indigenous youth project *Redwire Magazine*, addressed the charges against Looking Cloud and Graham:

> In the past few years, the memory of Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash—an American Indian Movement (AIM) leader from the Mi'kmaq Nation in Nova Scotia, Canada—has been reduced to that of a helpless woman who was murdered by her own allies. In reality, her murder is part of a ruthless campaign waged by the US government—a campaign that, far from being ancient history, is still unfolding today… There is no credible evidence linking either man to the crime, and their prosecution seems like nothing more than an effort to destroy what little remains of AIM…Graham says that the FBI started to visit him in the Yukon during the mid-1990s. On four separate visits, they offered him immunity and a new identity if he testified that any of the former AIM leaders had ordered Pictou-Aquash's execution. He refused. On their last visit, they stated that this would be his final chance to cooperate; if he would not testify, they would charge him with her murder.

Pierre also addressed how COINTELPRO operated at the time:

> This tactic of the FBI's Counter-intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) undermined valuable members of a group by casting them in suspicious situations. Wherever Pictou-Aquash went, arrests would follow. She'd be released, while other AIM members were slapped with charges and high bail. In September 1975, FBI Agent David Price attempted to force her to sign an affidavit implicating Peltier for the murder of the two FBI agents. She refused to cooperate, and Price promised her that she wouldn't live to see the year's end.
> They quickly arranged for her to be buried as a Jane Doe. After this cover-up came to light, the FBI released a statement announcing that Pictou-Aquash was not a government informant. As intended, this statement insinuated that AIM might have believed Pictou-Aquash to be an informant and murdered her.

In the book *Lakota Woman*, Mary Crow Dog and Richard Erdoes shared this prophetic quote by Anna Mae in 1975,

> [The FBI] offered me my freedom and money if I'd testify the way they wanted. I have those two choices now. I chose my kind of freedom, not their kind, even if I have to die. They let me go because they are sure I'll lead them to Peltier. They're watching me. I don't hear them or see them, but I know they're out there somewhere. I can feel it.

The Vancouver chapter of the NYM issued this statement regarding Graham and Looking Cloud case:

> If, as alleged, her killing was ordered by AIM's leadership (under the pretext she was an informant), those ultimately responsible for her death are US government officials, including the FBI—for it was under their orders that a deadly counter-insurgency campaign was waged against AIM, which included portraying genuine movement members as informants. This strategy was used to create paranoia and division, to turn members against one another (just as the FBI had done against the Black Panther Party). Anna Mae was herself the target of an FBI "bad jacket." FBI agents had threatened to kill her in the year prior to her death. When her body was found, despite being on an FBI wanted list, agents had her hands cut off for fingerprint analysis. During the first autopsy, the government coroner determined the cause of death to be exposure, somehow missing the bullet hole in the back of her head.

Darlene "Kamook" Nichols who had been married to Dennis Banks, received $42,000 from the FBI to spy on AIM and help build the case against Looking Cloud and Graham. Kamook subsequently married the US Marshal who re-opened the case.

The voluntary state-collaboration of John Trudell against Graham and Looking Cloud also became a flashpoint. John Graham's extradition from so-called Canada would not have been possible without Trudell's identification of him to the FBI.

Though Looking Cloud confessed, he later recanted it stating that he was coerced with drugs given to him by State agents.

In 2003 Leonard Peltier issued this statement regarding the John Graham trial,

> When we talk of sovereignty, we must be willing to solve our own problems and not go running to the oppressor for relief…We have been and still are at odds with the most dangerous, well-funded, strongest military and political organization in the history of the world [the US government]. Whatever the result of any trials conducted in the court rooms of our oppressor—the same ones' ultimately responsible for Anna Mae's death—we will continue to advance in our movement towards victory, inspired by her memory and her spirit.

As Billie Pierre stated in her defense of Graham and Looking Cloud, "A basic principle of any resistance movement is non-collaboration with our enemy."

The context of extreme State repression and consequential internal paranoia and divisions within movements and how it impacts ongoing struggles today is necessary to study. AIM and their Indigenous feminist counterpart Women of All Red Nations, have lessons unlearned that should be studied, challenged, and confronted outside of settler colonial state narratives that continue to undermine and attack Indigenous resistance. There are also serious reasons many young Indigenous People are wary of AIM, from the toxic misogynistic legacy that has remained unaccounted for, to the imposition of force in frontlines where they have tended to overbear local organizers. Though they've maintained leadership with their "Grand Council" over scattered semi-autonomous chapters, AIM's contemporary presence has depended on its legacy. It's largely an institution that dwells on its past achievements. Though those achievements may be great, this doesn't provide much opening for reflection and necessary transformation to be relevant to young folks who have grown up in what we might consider a "post-Red Power, post-AIM" world. As AIM has aspired to be "a catalyst for Indian Sovereignty," the terms have only grown muddied with the actions of their celebrities. From Russell Means abusing a Diné elder, then attempting to dodge accountability by attacking Navajo Nation tribal sovereignty, to the trails of women used and abused by him, Dennis Banks, and the other personalities that still comprise AIM's celebrity forces.

This anguishing resentment of AIM and their ongoing impositions, is part of what motivated a young Indigenous person to cut down the AIM flag that was flying over a sacred fire at the Winnemucca Community Resistance Camp in so-called Nevada in 2021.

AIM has been extraordinarily gloried but they weren't the only radical Indigenous organizations operating then; communities with forces such as Janet McCloud fighting for fishing rights in so-called Washington, Corbin Harney resisting nuclear colonialism in so-called Nevada, grandmothers Katherine Smith, Pauline Whitesinger, and Roberta Blackgoat fighting coal mining and forced relocation on Black Mesa, and so many more have fought for decades to protect sacred lands and waters. Occasionally AIM would be there alongside those struggles and sometimes they would not be welcome. In spite of this, the AIM song still echoes and invokes the spirit of resistance in Tulalip, Western Shoshone, and Diné frontlines, and far beyond.

Insecurity Culture

Divide and conquer tactics are not new but they are hard to contend with when they take root. Revolutionary movements throughout history are replete with examples of state informants and infiltrators breaking down effective organizations with extremely serious consequences; from the Black Panther Party for Self Defense, the Evan Mecham Eco Terrorist International Conspiracy,

to the more recent attacks on Earth Liberation Front cells through the FBI's coordinated attacks known as the "Green Scare."

Security culture has long been established by radical groups to counter State surveillance and repression. It's a dynamic practice with a shifting array of modules that are critiqued and adjusted to keep ahead of insidious attacks waged by the State.

The 2001 zine *Security Culture: a handbook for activists* identified security culture as, "A culture where people know and assert their 'rights.'" The CrimethInc. zine *What Is Security Culture?* offers this concise definition, "A security culture is a set of customs shared by a community whose members may be targeted by the government, designed to minimize risk." Security practices become a "culture" when a group makes security violations unacceptable within the group.

As anti-globalization resistance reached a fever pitch in 2010, the G20 summit in "Toronto, Canada" served as a clear picture of the police state in full operation. Radical groups were infiltrated and while security culture mitigated some impacts, it also exacerbated others. The lessons learned from the experience are well documented in a 2012 zine, *The Charges and How They Came to Be*, published anonymously and attributed to the Toronto G20 Conspiracy Group:

> The legal system is a weapon used against anarchists and against any group that poses a threat to the social order. Rather than just be outraged, let's focus on the many lessons to be taken from this experience about how to organize more safely and effectively in the future…
> The law is a weapon and nothing else—and it is not our weapon. Groups that believe they have nothing to hide make the easiest targets, and the state's agents are skilled at creating the story they want to find. Good security culture practices are necessary for ALL political organizing.

In an anonymously written zine called, *Confidence. Courage. Connection. Trust.*, the author(s) challenge the pitfalls of security culture:

> When we talk about security culture, people tend to have one of two kinds of experiences. The first is of building walls and keeping people out, the second is of being excluded or mistrusted. Both of these come with negative feelings—fear and suspicion for the former and alienation and resentment for the latter. I would say that they are two sides of the same coin, two experiences of a security culture that isn't working well.
> I want to be welcoming and open to new people in my organizing. I also want to protect myself as best I can from efforts to disrupt that organizing, especially from the state but also from bosses or the far-right. That means I want to have the kinds of security practices that allow me to be open while knowing that I've assessed the risk I face and am taking smart steps to minimize it. Security culture should make openness more possible, not less.

In my experience what doesn't get emphasized enough (aside from in the zine Why Misogynists Make Great Informants) are the ways that in order to be more comprehensively effective, those who wish to implement a "secure culture" must also address the insecurities of shit behaviors like transphobia, white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy, etc. At places like Standing

Rock and other movement frontlines, the same issues constantly surfaced regarding sexual predators and abusers. Perhaps this dynamic has in part been due to the toxic legacy of AIM men that has not been accounted for? But it persists in nearly every movement space, this is why queer- or women-only spaces have been necessary. Most often organizers compartmentalize security culture into a binary of State repression versus activist safety. They overlook that sexual and interpersonal violence are just as much of a threat to our communities and consequently tend to be reactionary when such issues occur. Even the tendency of "safe spaces" puts people at risk by establishing an illusory boundary that oppressive behaviors and forces are outside of the environments we operate in. This is why many years ago, while contemplating the idea of safe spaces and simultaneously dealing with abusers in transformative and restorative justice processes, the active collective of Táala Hooghan Infoshop at the time determined that we should assert ourselves as a threatening space to all forms of abusive and coercive behaviors. We proclaimed that, "we are not a safe space, but a threatening space" and that we "invite everyone to reinforce those necessary boundaries." We felt that this was the most honest and proactive way we could address the security of our autonomous space.

More advanced technological communications including social media and multimedia recording and streaming devices, particularly cell phones, tablets, artificial "intelligence," and drones, offer organizing advantages, they also come along with dangerous complications with the State and corporations. While expedited and decentralized communications mean more instantaneous mobilizations, public relations, and rumor control (which is essential on any frontline as it can be the difference between panic and strategic maneuvering), they also facilitate extreme surveillance that can and has meant serious long-term consequences. With Stingray cell tower spoofing and geo-fencing, where law enforcement agencies can retroactively access tracking data for everyone with an unsecure cell phone in a specific area (like a protest, building that was looted or burned, etc.), cell phones put everyone at risk. Groups such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation offer some great counteractive resources for enhanced security, but keep in mind that every phone is a potential cop and snitch.

As with AIM and Anna Mae Aquash, infiltration and paid informants are always a looming threat over any radical movement, organization, or individual's head. At times fear and paranoia paralyzes groups and they devolve into serious infighting. Some groups who operate above ground are open and challenge that, "infiltrators will be wasting their time washing dishes and managing the compost like the rest of us." They are most often not so benign though. They have been known to start long-term relationships and even have children with those that are their "targets." Ultimately they look and talk like our friends but they are agents of the State or at least working for them with either a financial or legal incentive (reduced sentences etc.)

In 2004, a young woman who frequented anarchist gatherings named "Anna" manipulated and set-up three green anarchists in a plot to bomb targets in so-called northern California. It turned out that "Anna" was actually Zoe Elizabeth Voss and was working for the FBI. Voss convinced the reluctant group to plan bombings, she taught them how to make explosive devices, suggested targets, convinced them to follow-through when they were reluctant, rented a cabin for their planning, and acquired all the necessary supplies. Two of the co-defendants ultimately pled guilty and testified against their friend Eric McDavid for reduced sentences, McDavid was convicted and sentenced to twenty years in prison. Voss received more than $65,000 for her role in the set-up. In 2015, McDavid was released after the FBI admitted it withheld thousands of documents that could have been used for his defense.

A 2015 *Intercept* article "Manufacturing Terror" stated, "At the time of [Eric McDavid's] conviction, the FBI had built a network of more than 15,000 informants like Anna and the government had classified eco-terrorism as the number one domestic terrorism threat—even though so-called eco-terrorism crimes in the United States were rare and never fatal."

On December 7, 2005 the FBI conducted raids as part of "Operation Backfire" throughout the country and arrested seven people who they charged with actions labeled as "eco-terrorism." Two people were arrested in so-called Arizona with one being a friend named Bill Rodgers. I had met Bill at the Catalyst Infoshop in so-called Prescott. He assisted with a range of efforts while the Save the Peaks Coalition and Indigenous Nations faced federal trial to stop desecration of the Peaks.

When he was arrested, the FBI alleged that between 1996 and 2001 Bill was the "mastermind" of an ELF cell that started fifteen fires burning everything from ski resorts to fur farms across the West. I will never forget his face while being arraigned in the "Flagstaff" courthouse, it was both a look of defiance and of acceptance. Bill was found dead in his jail cell on the Winter Solstice December 21, 2005, he left the note:

> To my friends and supporters to help them make sense of all these events that have happened so quickly: Certain human cultures have been waging war against the Earth for millennia. I chose to fight on the side of bears, mountain lions, skunks, bats, saguaros, cliff rose, and all things wild. I am just the most recent casualty in that war. But tonight I have made a jail break—I am returning home, to the Earth, to the place of my origins. Bill, 12/21/05 (the winter solstice.)

Just the year before, on June 11, 2004, I performed with Blackfire at an awareness event for Jeffrey "Free" Luers in so-called Eugene, Oregon. This was billed as the first international day of solidarity with all eco-prisoners. The event prompted the FBI to issue a national security warning of eco-terrorist attacks across the nation. Jeff had been arrested in 2000 with an accomplice after they had allegedly set fire to three vehicles at a car dealership in Eugene to protest climate change. He hadn't realized that he was under investigation and surveillance by a counter-terrorist unit; he was arrested and ultimately received a sentence of 22 years and 8 months. It wasn't only white anarchists who were targeted; Yaqui agitator Rod Coronado (who famously sank a whaling ship) faced heavy state repression as well as many others.

In 2008, an organizer named Brandon Darby was identified as an FBI informant. In 2005 Darby helped co-found the Common Ground Collective, which provided mutual aid in so-called New Orleans in response to the devastation by Hurricane Katrina. While it is still unclear how long he was working with the FBI, he informed on two people he traveled with to protest the 2008 Republican National Convention. Darby had not only provided information to the FBI that they had homemade riot gear (which was seized by the feds), he told them the crew had prepared molotov cocktails. The two were arrested and faced up to ten years in prison. In the affidavit against the two, it was uncovered that the case was built on information provided by "Confidential Human Sources." Darby was quickly identified even though the documents relating to the case were redacted. Initially Darby was defended by well-known anarchists and people who had worked closely with him, even though others also made it clear that they had vocalized concerns over Darby's behaviors in the past and nothing was done to hold him accountable due to his stature in the organizing community. For some the betrayal was ground shaking, for others it

came as no surprise. Today Darby advises the FBI on investigations and works for right-wing publications.

These stories are brief examples of the lengths the State will go to undermine and attack movements.

Part of the challenge and contradiction of security culture is that while we wish to be welcoming and open to all, we also have to be vigilant about the ever-present threats of State surveillance and violence. Some groups grow extremely exclusive due to an abundance of security culture, others are way too open and become predatory grounds for cops and abusers.

The types of actions your crew is taking and what risks are entailed will determine the level of security culture you should implement.

By nature, groups with open meetings doing aboveground work are more easily prone to infiltration, the cops see these groups as just as much of a threat as underground groups and want to take them down all the same.

Connection and Trust

Security culture is an underlying practice for any individuals or groups engaging in above or below ground organizing. More than anything, security culture is about trust. If you plan actions with long-term consequences, can you trust that the people you're taking action with will keep their commitments long-term? What follows are tips from some friends and other sources for establishing and maintaining cultures of security.

Trust is built through experience and familiarity, consider planning actions that build in escalation while limiting possible harm if your crew is compromised. Be wary of those pointing fingers at others and sow drama (which can be a tactic of diverting attention and suspicion away from themselves). Always be wary of those urging towards extreme violence out of nowhere and to pay for everything or provide all the necessary equipment. Create vouching systems but recognize that even those can be compromised (Toronto G20 Conspiracy Group for example). Pay attention to red flags in peoples' suggestions and behaviors and trust your instincts. Don't discuss anything you might have done with anyone associated with an action that might be bringing discussions about the details up years later (as with the Green Scare). While none of these tips are guaranteed to work, it's important to be informed of how we can establish solid cultures of security in the face of state repression.

From the zine *Profiles of Provocateurs* (2020), by Kristian Williams:

> The conclusions ought to be commonsensical: Know the people you do political work with. The more risky the work, the better you need to know them. Be realistic about your skills, experience, understanding, and limitations—and those of the people you work with. Use your own judgment in deciding what sort of work to pursue, what tactics to adopt, and the level of risk to accept. Don't let yourself be bullied, guilt-tripped, or baited into anything that seems to you like a bad idea. And don't shrug it off if something seems wrong.

In *Confidence. Courage. Connection. Trust.*, the author(s) share this example of their experience in so-called Canada and adaptation with security culture:

In a pipeline campaign where I live, we wanted to emphasize mass direct actions targeting oil infrastructure. We decided that our risk for the early stages of that campaign as we focused on outreach and research was very slight and that we could safely involve many people in that work and share information about it openly on any platform. As we began planning symbolic protest actions, this consideration didn't significantly change, but when we began planning things like blocking roads or picketing a police station, the element of surprise became a larger consideration. Regardless of possible criminal charges, our actions would simply be less effective if they were known in advance. So we stopped using public or easily surveilled means to communicate and began asking that people only share details to trusted individuals who intended to participate.

Soon after this phase of the campaign began, a national-level policing apparatus called a Joint Intelligence Group (JIG) came together around defending pipelines, involving many levels of police and intelligence services. JIGs and configurations like them are a specific threat to struggles of all kinds, since they aim vast resources directly at disrupting organizing. So even though our actions didn't change, we revisited our conversation about risk and decided to insulate the organizers of actions from possible conspiracy charges by doing the planning in a small, opaque group. We could invite people to participate who we trusted, and we might take steps to build up that trust, like doing identity checks of each other. But we would no longer plan actions openly in the larger network of people interested in the education and outreach work. This shift meant that when we moved on to shutting down critical infrastructure, we just had to scale up from this organizing node we had formed and encourage other crews to organize similarly, coordinating through a meeting of representatives from vouched groups to take on different roles.

Tips from Zig Zag's *Security and Counter-Surveillance Manual* (2009):

- Establish security guidelines appropriate for your group's level of activity. No collaboration with police or Intelligence agencies is a good starting point. No discussion of illegal activities in any public meeting or space. Keep control of access to keys, files, funds, equipment, etc. within the hands of trusted members.
- Make duplicates of important files/info, etc., and store at a safe and secret location. Set up a group of trusted members who others can go to with concerns about security, police infiltration, informants, etc.
- Deal openly and directly with the form and content of what anyone says or does, whether the person is a suspected agent, has emotional problems, or is simply naïve.
- Be aware of Agents Provocateurs and criminal elements who constantly advocate risky illegal actions, and who may also have access to weapons or other resources they want to share with the group. Many groups in the 1960s–70s clearly compromised basic principles in order to accommodate this type of infiltrator.
- Don't accept everything you hear or read as fact. Check with the supposed source of the information before you act. Personal communication between estranged members could have prevented or limited many FBI operations in the 1960s–70s.

- Do not pass on harmful rumors about others—talk to trusted friends (or group members responsible for dealing with covert intervention). Avoid gossip about others, especially over telecommunications.
- Verify and double-check all arrangements for housing, transportation, meeting rooms, etc., to ensure they have not been cancelled or changed by others.
- Document all forms of harassment, burglary, assaults, raids, arrests, surveillance, attempts to recruit informants, etc. to identify patterns and targets. These can also be used for reports and legal defense.
- Do NOT talk with any police or intelligence agents. Do NOT allow them into any residence without a warrant. Try to get [photos] of agents involved. If naïve members do engage in conversations with police or agents, explain the harm that could result.
- Alert others if police or intelligence harassment increases, (hold meetings, make press releases, etc.). This makes other groups aware of repression and can limit further harassment through exposure.
- Prepare group members to continue organizing if leaders are arrested, etc. This includes sharing knowledge and skills, public contacts, etc.

Tips from CrimethInc's *What Is Security Culture?*:

- When you're planning an action, begin by establishing the security level appropriate to it, and act accordingly from there on.
- Learning to gauge the risks posed by an activity or situation and how to deal with them appropriately is not just a crucial part of staying out of jail; it also helps to know what you're not worried about, so you don't waste energy on unwarranted, cumbersome security measures. Keep in mind that a given action may have different aspects that demand different degrees of security; make sure to keep these distinct. Here's an example of a possible rating system for security levels:
- Only those who are directly involved in the action know of its existence.
- Trusted support persons also know about the action, but everyone in the group decides together who these will be.
- It is acceptable for the group to invite people to participate who might choose not to—that is, some outside the group may know about the action, but are still expected to keep it a secret.
- The group does not set a strict list of who is invited; participants are free to invite others and encourage them to do the same, while emphasizing that knowledge of the action is to be kept within the circles of those who can be trusted with secrets.
- "Rumors" of the action can be spread far and wide through the community, but the identities of those at the center of the organizing are to be kept a secret.

- The action is announced openly, but with at least some degree of discretion, so as not to tip off the sleepier of the authorities.
- The action is totally announced and aboveground in all ways.

Additional tips:

- Never talk about your or someone else's involvement in activity that risks being criminalized. Never talk about someone else's interest in criminalized activity.
- Don't put others (and yourself) at unnecessary risk.
- Never turn people over to cops.
- Don't interfere in or denounce others' actions.
- Don't allow anyone to force you into an action you do not feel comfortable with.
- Stay calm, grounded, and avoid panic.
- Research radical self and collective-care practices.
- Establish cultural support with prayers and ceremony.
- Your phone is a cop. If people are intent on recording an action remind them to film the cops not their friends. Intervene if necessary.
- Emphasize face-to-face meetings in secure spaces.
- Adopt and be transparent about verification and vouching processes.
- Enable full-disk encryption on your devices.
- Remove fingerprint unlock and Face ID.
- Use services or software that offer end-to-end encrypted texting and voice and video calls.
- Dress for anonymity and safety with nondescript clothing and cover any identifying features (hair, tattoos, etc.).
- Scrub metadata on photos and blur out faces and any identifying characteristics. Destroy the original photos.
- Be aware of abusive behaviors.
- Be aware of substance abuse.
- Build trust through experience.
- Always be wary of those urging towards violence in above ground groups, pay attention to red flags in people's suggestions.

Tips for underground or more risky actions include:

- Use a prepaid, disposable (burner) phone.
- Don't leave a trail: credit card use, gas cards, cell phone calls all leave a record of your motions, purchases, and contacts.
- Be aware of Automated License Plate Reader Systems when planning transportation routes.
- Be aware of payment methods or transit cards that are linked to you when using public transportation.
- Be careful about what your trash could reveal about you. If you must destroy physical items (documents, clothing, etc.) do so at a private location that only you know.
- Create a cell: maintain a tight crew and don't extend the circle beyond that.
- Don't link cells.
- If your actions are "lone wolf," don't brag (even to your closest friends or family) and be aware of any patterns that could lead investigators to you.
- If manifestos or communiqués are issued: use a VPN or Tor system on a public network (be aware of surveillance cameras) and a temporary (burner) email provided by an encrypted service. Write plainly in language not used in your everyday vocabulary and other writings. Do not send attachments like photos without verifying that the metadata has been wiped.
- There are no guarantees that such communications can't be traced, some groups opt not to issue such statements.
- If leaving a spray painted message, write right to left or use your non-dominant hand as graffiti styles have been used to connect people to actions.
- When making or producing more risky devices, establish a temporary "clean room" by either renting a hotel room with cash or using another more secure space and setting up a new tent. Wear a disposable Teflon suit (hazmat or painters) with boot covers and gloves (nitrile gloves within other gloves as the nitrile will imprint finger prints and could hold DNA). Cover hair completely and wear a mask. Scrub any devices down with rubbing alcohol and place within two secure bags (the outside one to be used for transportation and disposed of). All items used in the production must be disposed and destroyed.

Sources: *What is Security Culture* by CrimethInc., 2009, *DigitialDefense.noblogs.org*, *Confidence. Courage. Connection. Trust.*, and Electronic Frontier Foundation.

Chapter Nine: A Decolonial Solidarity

The logic of solidarity is the principled calculation of strength in numbers against an overwhelming force. The contentions usually lie not so much in the purpose, but how those that comprise the numbers are managed or controlled. In leftist politics, this is implied when the *Power of the People* is invoked.

Solidarity looks like everything from protesters holding signs, banner drops, dock worker strikes, shutting down freeways, formal alliances, shared resources, burning industrial equipment, vegan bake sales, a Christian anti-abortion program's windows smashed, guns brought to the frontlines under the cover of darkness, and much more. "Solidarity means action" is a succinct anarchist aphorism.

The principle of Mutual Aid asserts *solidarity not charity*, which translates to struggling alongside and supporting each other (building and deepening relationships) rather than perpetuating material dependencies (hand-outs etc.) and hierarchies. Superlatively, solidarity is nontransactional.

Solidarity can feel like a lot of things especially when it's an emergency response to a distant crisis. Solidarity expressed symbolically can feel just as effective as material support, particularly for those captured and held by the State. When solidarity speaks it is the solace, "You are not alone in your fight."

On its veneer the varied expressions of solidarity transcend political borders, under closer examination there are a range of factors that determine for who solidarity is extended to and what it actually means.

While there is much to be addressed regarding this topic, my focus here is on two distinct currents that comprise the activist architectures of solidarity: *internationalism* and *intersectionality* (for an antagonism against allyship see *Accomplices Not Allies*, 2014).

I am always hesitant to use the term "decolonial" as it has been co-opted and fashioned into a fiat political and lifestyle token (more on that in the chapter *Uprooting Colonialism*). I take the risk applying it here with the disclaimer that I am certain the provocation will also be dispossessed of its intent. This was a lesson with the term *accomplices* (that was predicted) as we attacked the *Ally Industrial Complex*. I am hesitant to name this provocation anti-colonial solidarity (the obvious substitute), as I believe the notion is more complex and should be offered more consideration than negative hyphenation (though that is an informative dimension).

As a product of the Enlightenment and humanism, leftist solidarity cannot seem to escape its anthropocentric hangups (which green anarchists would argue is a condition of civilization, and they wouldn't be wrong). When calculating qualifications for solidarity, Indigenous Peoples are categorized by default into areas of environmental concern and most often rendered as victimized human props in public relations campaigns for policy development and ecological management programs. How we qualify for support and what that support looks like is usually not on our terms, but when the chanting begins it's hard not to get caught up in the excitement, "This is what solidarity looks like."

This dynamic is on full display when organizations that comprise the Climate Justice movement excessively pronounce variations of a talking point developed by the reports on climate issues created by the World Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The report states, "Although they comprise less than 5% of the world population, Indigenous peoples protect 80% of the Earth's biodiversity in the forests, deserts, grasslands, and marine environments in which they have lived for centuries." This point has become a rallying cry to center *diminishing* Indigenous Peoples against the overwhelming global threat of climate catastrophe. But what is missed is that *ideally* Indigenous Peoples protect *all* of existence—not just percentages. Indigenous Peoples also perpetuate and profit off of the destruction of the Earth. Monolithic myths of Indigenous identity as virtue are good for public relations, but we are not immune from neo-colonialism and greed. The performance of Indigenous identity isn't what protects nature; it is in and through deep responsibilities of distinct sacred relationships with existence that compels action.

To reduce complex ways of being and threats to Indigenous existence to campaign talking points, only to prove we qualify for solidarity and deserve "a seat at the table" is not solidarity. It's "Change" through arithmetic by way of better self marketing, branding, and advertising. The politics of solidarity embedded in these terms are intended to "center," yet amount to paternalistic tokenism. The fervent rallying cry also becomes code for settler inclusion. It's essentially a corporate survival strategy; removing the colonizer/capitalist from the "center" yet not the logics that got us into this mess in the first place.

The assertion that we protect 80% of the world's biosphere has become a twist on the colonial idea of the "white man's burden" which propelled early colonist's white supremacist global mission to spread civilization. The concept was based on a colonial poem written in 1899. The racist essence of it establishing the presumed responsibility of white men to civilize the "unwilling savage." The propaganda of this "burden" was used to justify European colonialism.

For neo-liberal climate activists, the core sentiment of the white man's burden has been flipped to the burden of the colonized; *saving the world the colonizers fucked up.* It appears sincere yet the push for green capitalism and sustainable settler colonialism demonstrate the underlying danger of such compromise; to fulfill the vision of a green energy future, further resource colonialism for rare Earth materials and nuclear colonialism are necessary. Apparently green futures are still dead futures for Mother Earth. When the anonymous authors of *Rethinking the Apocalypse: An Indigenous Anti-Futurist Manifesto* (2020) ask, "Why can we imagine the ending of the world, yet not the ending of colonialism?" They provoke us to think beyond green myopia and dismantle the underlying systems of domination and exploitation that uphold civilization. Stop imagining settler (dead) futures, start imagining and embodying Indigenous liberation. It doesn't matter that Indigenous Peoples are at the center, included at some table, and making decisions if the agenda is preset, the script is prewritten, and we're just furthering forces that are killing the Earth. The alienation and sacrificing of distant Indigenous lands, peoples, and beings is what neo-colonial solidarity looks like.

If we start considering "necessary sacrifices" and "harm reduction" in the face of ecocide and genocide, we've already lost.

Aside from liberal impositions and institutions of allyship, internationalism and intersectionality inform the contours of ecological and social justice solidarity in the "US" organizing milieu today.

Internationalism is a principle that advocates greater political or economic cooperation between national social movements. It urges unity across national, political, cultural, racial, and class boundaries to advance a common struggle. The response of anti-imperialists to nationalism is internationalism amongst agreeable entities.

In the most conventional meaning of the term, internationalism is based on the existence of sovereign states and political entities vying for positions of national power within those states. Even when it is pried apart from such a restrictive convention, the ideological baggage of nationalisms tends to underscore the conditions and essentializations implied. Since organizations of national character have their selective dictates or agendas, there are usually unspoken conditions (obscured agendas) to be found. These arrangements tend towards either exploitative and tokenizing public relations maneuvers or they are flat out manipulative and patronizing. The conditional homogenization of our desires into political "points of unity" deadens passions and sucks momentum out into what mostly ends up as the solidarity of the greatest common denominator, or in some spaces, the most persuasive dominator (particularly if following un-modified consensus methodology).

We like to feel like we're all on the same side against a common threat, but what happens when those threats are entangled in the logics, and on the terms of, those who also pronounce allyship? Lateral decomposition can tear apart radical urges and mutuality more than the process of homogenetic unifying can build. There are some (for good reason) we may not wish to be in kinship or alliance with.

The posture of internationalisms can be examined with a range of leftist groups like the Revolutionary Communist Party, Party for Social Liberation, Democratic Socialists of America, etc. and their strategies of pronouncing solidarity with causes célèbre as a recruitment tactic. Without material backing and meaningful relationships, those proclamations of solidarity are hollow. They're the "thoughts and prayers" consolations that mark those who wish to be close to the front in any struggle (or as close as their privileges will allow), but not *too* close unless it's their project. Leftist appearances do require a certain amount of upkeep. The premise of this account of solidarity is towards political alignment in a unified effort that can "take empire head-on." Which is a recipe for authoritarianism (as with the aspirational revolutionary vanguard) and abject defeat. Leftist history informs that sometimes fronts that are united, are easier to smash.

In *Accomplices Not Allies* we asserted that,

> There exists a fiercely unrelenting desire to achieve total liberation, with the land and, together. At some point there is a 'we', and we most likely will have to work together. This means, at the least, formulating mutual understandings that are not entirely antagonistic, otherwise we may find ourselves, our desires, and our struggles, to be incompatible. There are certain understandings that may not be negotiable. There are contradictions that we must come to terms with and certainly we will do this on our own terms. But we need to know who has our backs, or more appropriately: who is with us, at our sides?

Non-State based Indigenous internationalisms have largely been ignored, and when they have been examined, the lens they have been engaged and studied through has been clouded by colonial political and scientific chauvinism.

These internationalisms of and with the Earth are flattened by anthropological speculators, embraced as pan-indigenism by the left, and articulated as pseudo-sovereignties in the spheres

of the neo-colonial puppets that comprise Tribal political governance. The fixation on treaties and "treaty rights" (which I address in other sections) is also a preoccupation of Indigenous internationalisms predicated upon the colonial (political, legal, organizational, social, etc.) structures that compose them. The flags flying at Standing Rock represented a patriotic display of "federally recognized" Tribal inter-nationalisms, while the celebrations and food sharing around the sacred fires represented the direct ways our communities related to each other, they became *interrelated* through those exchanges which didn't require bureaucratic declaration.

We'll return to the notion of interrelations at the end of the following section and the promises of solidarity in other chapters, for now let's turn towards *intersectionality*.

Beyond Intersectionality

In 1989 legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw identified intersectionality in her essay, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A black Feminist Critique of Anti-discrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." While the essay was focused on reformist legal strategy, her analysis established the grounds for intersectionality to be further developed into a widely adopted "analytical framework for understanding how aspects of a person's social and political identities combine to create different modes of discrimination and privilege." In her original analysis Crenshaw asserted:

> The point is that Black women can experience discrimination in any number of ways and that the contradiction arises from our assumptions that their claims of exclusion must be unidirectional. Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination… In addition, it seems that placing those who currently are marginalized in the center is the most effective way to resist efforts to compartmentalize experiences and undermine potential collective action.

In 1991 Crenshaw built out the analysis with a piece titled, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." Crenshaw referenced their initial work and stated,

> I build on those observations here by exploring the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color…I should say at the outset that intersectionality is not being offered here as some new, totalizing theory of identity.

Amidst the tendency for political identities to coalesce into siloed institutions, intersectionality has become the default tool for social and environmental justice activists to navigate such complex organizing terrains. Quite often, unchecked authoritarian tendencies replicate hierarchies of oppression and play them out in what has often been described as "oppression Olympics."

The competing narratives of who is most oppressed (therefore sets the terms for liberation) has mostly been abated by sincere ways intersectionality has been engaged, particularly as interventions in spaces heavily mired in reductive class-war politics.

The limitations of intersectionality lie not where conservatives apply their critiques in imagined hierarchies of victimhood, but in the overall business of leftism and identity politics (which typically invokes rancor from both the left and right).

Although intersectionality is an assistive tool to address the multilayered and complex ways we are subjugated by dominating forces, the competition around centering and de-centering continues to reproduce micro-aggressive hierarchies. This dynamic becomes amped to a fever pitch, particularly with social media attention-based economies that trade in the social capital of identity politics.

In 2011, while the Occupy movement—a mass movement of protest camps against global capitalism—was at its height, multiple "Occupations" were challenged by Indigenous organizers to drop the term "occupy" and use "decolonize" instead. This matter was confronted in *Decolonization is not a metaphor* (Tuck & Yang, 2012):

> …for many Indigenous people, Occupy is another settler re-occupation on stolen land. The rhetoric of the movement relies upon problematic assumptions about social justice and is a prime example of the incommensurability between "re/occupy" and "decolonize" as political agendas. The pursuit of worker rights (and rights to work) and minoritized people's rights in a settler colonial context can appear to be anti-capitalist, but this pursuit is nonetheless largely pro-colonial. That is, the ideal of "redistribution of wealth" camouflages how much of that wealth is land, Native land.

The conflict was on full display in occupied-Ohlone lands of so-called Oakland, California (this is also documented by Tuck and Yang in their essay) when the established occupiers were hostile to proposals by Indigenous Peoples from the area. The prevailing arguments at the general assembly stated that such an action would alienate Occupy Oakland from the larger movement. Morning Star Gali, a long-time local Indigenous organizer stated in an interview, "It's nauseating to hear the word 'occupy' over and over again. We need to occupy this, we need to occupy that. It's the modern day colonial language." For her efforts, Morning Star was slandered and accused of being an infiltrator by those refusing to give up the brand. While Occupy had their growing pains and eventually shifted, their expressed solidarities were narrowly reserved for popular tendencies. Intersectionality apparently has limitations when the intersection is located on stolen lands.

In 2020, as Black communities rose up in response to the murder of George Floyd by racist police—as police precincts burned and corporations were looted—many found solidarity in indignant rage against State violence. Amidst the corporatization of Black Lives Matter, movement policing, conflictual tactics, and liberals commiserating with cops (kneeling, praying, etc.), the expressed solidarity became strained. There were also co-optations of the moment including "Native Lives Matter" and accompanying narratives competing for who was most victimized by the State. These side arguments obscured shared struggles (mainly as excuses for inaction) and failed to recognize that ongoing police terrorism our communities face originates from the same systems of oppression.

Police and policing exists to uphold and enforce colonial rule of law. The institution of policing, which is steeped in a history of white supremacy, has only served those that seek to desecrate

and exploit sacred land and water. Police murder and judges cage Black and brown people with impunity, they protect corporations while they commit acts of cultural genocide and ecocide. Cops shake hands with armed white militia "occupiers" and shoot rubber bullets, tear gas, concussion grenades, and arrest water and land defenders.

According to Eastern Kentucky University professor Victor E. Kappeler, in their essay "A Brief History of Slavery and the Origins of American Policing":

> New England settlers appointed Indian Constables to police Native Americans (National Constable Association, 1995), the St. Louis police were founded to protect residents from Native Americans in that frontier city, and many southern police departments began as slave patrols. In 1704, the colony of Carolina developed the nation's first slave patrol. Slave patrols helped to maintain the economic order and to assist the wealthy landowners in recovering and punishing slaves who essentially were considered property.

Beyond pleas for a system rooted in genocide and slavery to recognize that our lives matter, our communities and movements can learn from each other and build together towards lasting ways to defend ourselves, neighbors, lands, and to resolve issues we face in more just and healthy ways. Rather than ritually protesting and marching in circles or kneeling with cops, it means taking the opportunity to engage or deepen the relationships we have.

In 2016, Frank B. Wilderson III authored an essay titled, "Afro-pessimism and the End of Redemption" where he pits two poets against each other, one Indigenous and one Black, for an intellectual battle that is supposed to provide evidence that Blackness is the penultimate oppressed existence. He declares that the Oscar Grant murder, when a 22-year-old Black man killed by Bay Area Rapid Transit police on New Years day in 2009, was worse than the Sand Creek Massacre where hundreds of Cheyenne and Arapaho were killed by the Third Colorado Cavalry in 1864, two-thirds were women and children with human fetuses and male and female genitalia cut out and worn by the soldiers as "trophies." For some unidentified reason Wilderson selected Simon Ortiz as the champion poet for the representative of Indigenous oppression. As Wilderson plainly states, "Civil society…does not want Black land (as it does from Native Americans), or Black consent (as it does from workers), it wants something more fundamental: the confirmation of human existence," or what he names as the irredeemable social death of Black folks.

He dismisses classism, colonization, and gender struggles, "…the dust-up is not between the workers and the bosses, not between settler and native, not between the queer and the straight, but between the living and the dead."

If there was an intersection here, Wilderson like many who champion a politics of extreme victimhood, chose to supersede it. There are points Afro-pessimists make that resonate powerfully, particularly around redemption, but solidarity can't be imagined and projected out from the confines of academia any more than it can be pronounced and imposed out of nowhere. Identity politic based social relations tend towards projects of multicultural inclusion into the power structures that comprise the State. It's hard to imagine how far we can get when we're focused on how bad we've suffered and arguing to determine who has suffered the most. What prize awaits those declared the "winner," especially when it's already clear who and what to attack? Solidarity can't be forced through competitions concocted by social theorists.

It must also be noted that documentation of the Sand Creek Massacre has been contended with by noted anarchist Bob Black in an essay he wrote titled, "Up Sand Creek Without a Paddle."

Black selects an essay by controversial academic Ward Churchill from his book *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema and the Colonization of the American Indian*. Black states, "If non-Indian Americans are engaged in genocide, they're not very good at it." He disputes Churchill's narratives of Indigenous genocide as exaggeration and shares the UN's definition of genocide as evidence. Black casually claims scalping as "an Indian invention" (a disproved notion) and proceeds to assail Churchill by pronouncing that Indigenous on Indigenous violence occurred pre-colonization. Black's arguments regurgitate settler nationalist apologia of the "pre-colonial savage." This dangerously dehumanizing trope has been used since invasion to justify settler domination and the violent process of civilization.

While Wilderson uses the Sand Creek Massacre to contrast the "greater" violence facing Black existence, Bob Black parrots settler nationalists to attack Churchill's identity and dubious friendships. There is utterly no useful critical point for academics to semantically brawl over the massacre of Indigenous Peoples other than intellectual grandstanding.

To be clear, anti-Blackness perpetuated in Indigenous communities has absolutely no defense. The historic manipulations (the Treaty of Dover, "Five civilized Tribes," blood quantum, to Buffalo Soldiers and beyond) that have pitted Indigenous Peoples stolen from Africa and those whose lands were/are invaded and stolen for further exploitation and occupation is well documented terrain. There are also much deeper shared legacies of anti-colonial and anti-enslavement resistances (like that of Souanaffe Tustenukke and the Seminole wars from 1817 to 1858), that should not die as academized sociological artifacts, but should inform and give breath to the living spirit—as embodied through Afro-Indigenous assertions—of anti-coloniality today.

Breaking from colonial literacies and political strictures means to assert new/old vocabularies with which we can interact in this world, together. It is not merely a project of semantics to deconstruct the terms that establish political containers for how we engage in this world; it is a project of recovering how we can be better relatives to each other, the Earth, and all beings.

I offer that the term *interrelationality* considers these dimensions whereas *intersectionality* is anthropocentric (concerned with human social power relations) and *internationalism* is too loaded with the political baggage from conflicts of old world ideas and new world ideologies and doctrines. This is not to diminish the Black feminist brilliance and genealogy of intersectionality, but to offer an extension of its considerations beyond gendered colonial (identity) politics.

Interrelationality is free from such dilemmas because it is predicated on building and tearing down direct spacial and temporal relationships.

Overall it doesn't matter what term that's used, and I'm not intending this to be another tool in the activist toolbox for progressive social transformation. The interests I have for these terms regard not their promises, but their limitations. We're not just Nations and sects/sections, so why attach such limitations to the ways we can connect, share, and attack?

Indigenous Peoples have long used other deeply inclusive terms for this dynamic. For example Diné use ké', which is our relationality to all existence, while the Lakota worldview of interconnectedness is expressed as mitákuye oyás'iŋ, and so forth.

Interrelationality opens up a more comprehensive space to engage with relations beyond human societies, it urges us to meaningfully consider non-human beings, spirits, and Mother Earth. To put this another way: *the sacred does not live in the intersections of human political domination and exploitation, it is expressed in and through our relationality with existence.* The question of land and coloniality inevitably arises when contemplating belonging on stolen lands with non-Indigenous People of color and Black folks. It feels like a contention at times as much

of the thinking is in response to colonial impositions and terms. The teachings of my elders offer an uncomplicated response, "Do you have the consent of the land? Do you have consent of the people of the land? If not, how do you establish that?" How is kinship established?

It is not just the politics of common enemies and leftist unity; it is an anti-political recuperation of who and how we are, with each other and existence, in this world.

Interrelationality compels us to turn our solidarities inward, to directly address how we are and how we are not relating in harmony with existence. It means we must also face and contend with how our own cultural knowledge has been manipulated and weaponized against our relatives. The ways we've been poisoned by cis-heteropatriarchy, ableism, and white supremacy that comprise the progressive machinery of the civilized. If we don't welcome our relations who have faced the intensity of colonial religious and gendered violence back into our circles, we will never be whole, which means we can never fully heal.

This also requires reflecting more on the concept of Indigenous nations (which I dig further into in other sections). In her book *As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, an Indigenous scholar and activist, establishes the distinction between nation-states and Indigenous nationhood to break from such political trappings. For Simpson, nationhood is articulated as "a radical and complete overturning of the nation-state's political formations."

As the Haudenosaunee's "confederacy" and two-row wampum demonstrate how Indigenous agreements (what some also call treaties) existed before those made with paper and pen, the Haudenosaunee contested how invading settlers proposed to relate as "Father" and "Son," instead they proposed to weave (not write) a story of their agreement that would carry forward with three principles: "friendship, peace, and forever." The Haudenosaunee made considerations of the relationships beyond the terms of white settlers who sought to impose their political will and ideologies.

Solidarity *with* the sacred is to bring human beings back into the circle of existence so our shared responsibilities transcend the dead-endings of political preoccupations. We also pronounce the de-centering of humanity when we pronounce liberation.

This does not mean we will not conflict openly. It is also not a cry for homogeneity or the hollow dichotomy of collectivism versus individualism (not everyone wants to or should work together). Interrelationality sets a point of connection that offers the opportunity for agreement and disagreement (and participation and withdrawal). These arrangements can offer the necessary space for accountability and responsibility to be taken when intra- or extra-community harm is perpetrated. The space that is opened up with this kind of meaningful relationality is the space where healing occurs. This means possibilities of reconciling *through* and *with* (rather than a reconciling *of*). We can reconcile the shitty actions in our pasts and present (a temporal transformative possibility) through restoring (or building) our relationships.

Possibilities of Transformative Justice

The State's solution to MMIWG2ST as proposed by puppet politicians such as Deb Haaland—Secretary of the Interior under Joe Biden as of this writing—is more colonial violence and people in cages. It's no mistake that her political proposals all call for further policing and prosecution of Indigenous communities while her department sanctions and furthers resource colonial attacks

in places like Willow Bend, Thacker Pass, and Oak Flat. For the machinery of Western progressive democracy to function, the Earth and Indigenous existence must be consumed.

We don't have to accept the ways that colonizers have reorganized society. We don't have to accept the corporate slavery of private prisons. We don't have to accept militarized police forces occupying our communities, killing our relatives, and protecting corporate/capitalist interests. Since the State will not bring our people justice, we have to make sure we are organized to respond directly to serious issues and address root causes. Whether it's due to undocumented status, histories of police violence and incarceration, outstanding warrants, etc., many communities have established (mostly informal) alternatives to calling the cops. There is an uncharted, but evident correlation between strong communities (which usually just means enough people know and care for each other), cultural cohesion, and not relying on the enforcers of colonial laws.

Addressing and resolving conflict without the State through direct action is not unfamiliar ground, though most Indigenous memories of specific practices have been systematically dispossessed. What has come to be embraced (and critiqued) as "Transformative and Restorative Justice" is a practice that is older than "America." According to some neo-colonial social justice organizers, the practice is new and evolving, but Indigenous peoples have long developed and practiced methodologies that inform community-based justice outside of the confines of the State. We don't need the baggage of social justice organizing to tie it down and manage it either.

The well-documented Diné practice of Hózhóji Naat'aah or "peacemaking" has been studied and replicated throughout the so-called US. The relatively uncomplicated ceremony is also formally integrated into the judicial code of the Navajo Nation government, though it's most often invoked as an alternative.

At its core, transformative and restorative justice are mechanisms for *accountability*, *responsibility*, and *consequence* (the latter often omitted) when harm is committed in our communities. In general, the transformative element is focused on the *transformation* and healing of the person who caused harm (which in its best applications also addresses root causes). The *restorative* aspect focuses on the person who was harmed and restores the damage (a process of healing and material restoration depending on the violation). The *consequence* component is determined based upon the severity of the harm. For Diné we have employed this as ceremonial practice since time immemorial. The process occurs largely through prayer and dialogue and can involve more than just two entities. Sometimes whole families or other community members participate as well. As a non-adversarial and non-coercive process, there is actually *no mediation* or arbitration and all participants including the "peacemaker" act as relatives through ké' (Diné kinship). The ceremony is loosely translated as "peacemaking" but it is perhaps more appropriately translated as *speaking/restoring the way of harmony*. Part of the essence of the Hózhóji Naat'aah, and arguably the entire matrix of Diné ceremonies, is cultural cohesion. The commitments to transform and restore aren't as effective if the responsibilities and principles that guide the process are not reinforced, especially if ké' or relationality is not an underlying part of the process.

Of all the transformative and restorative justice processes I've been part of, few have actually been sustained and could be considered effective. I have direct experience facilitating, being on the side called into accountability, and the side calling for accountability. Some were uncomplicated discussions, some much more formal, and others were years long processes (with some still ongoing), but the ones that did work were profound. The most important component to them all has been a clear process guided by a strong cultural framework. I've also witnessed the

weaponization of transformative and restorative justice, with some processes providing cover for personal attacks or simply adversarial, and others that were solely punitive. No matter how solid we feel our processes and praxis are, there are immense challenges, and outcomes often do not work out the way we desire them to.

As Leonard Peltier once cautioned from his prison cell, "We must not go running to the colonizers to solve our problems." It is up to us to restore, adapt, create, continue, and modify, justice as ceremony. These ancestral practices and possibilities of what we call *transformative and restorative justice* are older than the prisons, police, courts, and the laws that establish the colonial order.

This also means engaging in these practices as a way of life so that when these matters inevitably flare up and shit starts to fall apart, we have the actions necessary to face the threats. These practices also do not preclude attack (as sometimes transformative justice means exclusion or kicking someone's ass). Just as we have ceremony for peacemaking (or re-establishing harmony), we also have ceremonies for war.

This means also addressing spiritual harm, which can be very deep and very long-term. The possibilities of "retrospective transformative and restorative justice" also offer opportunity for intergenerational healing.

Indigenous Peoples still have reference points for social life without police and prisons. The fierce calls for abolition of these colonial institutions are also calls to restore our cultural ways of addressing harm in our communities. Carrying these practices forward while smashing the State is also a decolonial solidarity.

Chapter Ten: Táala Hooghan: From Infoshop to Conflict Infrastructure


TAALA HOOGHAN~
OPEN 3 TO 9
PERMACULTURE
WORK SHOP
JUNE 19 & 9

In 2007 there was a powerful fervor of anti-capitalism and autonomism celebrated in the momentum of the anti-globalization movement. Excitement around autonomous spaces was high and infoshops (anarchist information distribution and organizing hubs) started springing up all over. After three years of organizing with Outta Your Backpack Media (OYBM, the all-volunteer collective that started from Youth of the Peaks), the crew decided they needed their own space to hold workshops. At one of our meetings I proposed pairing the media project with an infoshop. I'd been involved with local infoshops before on a limited basis and had organized with a crew of people to start a new one that never materialized.

After a few meetings with other radical organizers in the community, OYBM decided they would find a space and build from there. A couple other badass organizers joined in and we found a small retail spot for $850 a month. We signed the lease and paid the deposit. After a month of planning in the space, my father offered the name Táala Hooghan (translating to *Flat Top Roof Home*), which was a place of trading between Indigenous communities not far from the current colonial settlement of Flagstaff. He said it was a way to reconnect our stories as they are interwoven with the land. And plus, our first location was right next-door to his favorite restaurant. We established infrastructure to organize media and wage actions from. In a place of contested sacred spaces, this small Hooghan grew resistance.

The most influential and informative experience I have with direct action and mutual aid has been with the complicated life of Táala Hooghan Infoshop. While I provide an overview of its founding with militant Indigenous youth in chapter four, the project was also initiated as an antagonism against white anarchist-dominated spaces.

For the past sixteen years the core operating collective has come and gone, some on good terms and others mutually hostile. Those of us still holding it down manage the extraordinary highs and lows that come with the sordid efforts of such marginalized spaces. What started as a youth media center and infoshop has transformed into an assertion of *conflict infrastructure* in so-called Flagstaff that persists to this day.

It's important to contextualize the social and spacial constraints this project has operated within as well. Flagstaff has a population of about 70,000 people and according to the most recent census 10% of residents are Indigenous. AntiIndigenous racism underscores the overall politics even though this small municipality touts a liberal facade. To be anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and anti-authoritarian and challenge white space invaders has meant that sometimes our collectives would exist on the bleeding edge of the larger community.

The space gave crews that flowed in and out of it some flexibility to take risks and experiment. In the infoshop's prime, we offered the typical menu of anarchist events and resources such as radical books, zines and a zine archive, a lending library, performance space (where we hosted tons of shows), silk-screening, movie nights, DIY art nights, banner making, gardening, discussion groups, workshops, small conferences, and much more over the years. Thousands of meals have been served to unsheltered relatives and countless resources continue to be distributed as mutual support and solidarity with those on the streets. We still offer some events and most of these resources, but a lot has changed due to our re-orientations over the years and particularly due to the COVID pandemic.

For about five years the project thrived in the midst of and by creating what some would call "generative" conflict. The opportunity was presented to purchase the building (our third space the project moved into) and after serious consideration everyone involved agreed to make that happen.

Beginning in 2011–12 the collective started facing serious community and interpersonal conflicts. When a volunteer was sexually assaulted by a community member (not at the space), the active collective rallied and initiated a fierce process to support the survivor. While transformative and restorative justice practices were ongoing for months, the process was undermined by those who chose to enable the alleged abuser (ultimately the alleged abuser weaponized the court system against collective members). The issues were compounded when another assault occurred in the community, this time between two former collective members. The response was immediate and forceful in directly threatening the abuser and creating boundaries in the community, but the collective was severely strained and due to a range of other personal issues and political attacks, began unraveling. Those remaining with the project held their ground and assertively upheld boundaries against all abusers while white "allies" interfered and undermined where they could. The collective at the time was conflicted over some matters but had consensus over how seriously they took the matters of sexual violence. We made it clear we would not enable or support known abusers and took actions that were consistent with the project's and our individual principles. We kicked known abusers out of our space and every space we could, and we didn't tolerate apologists or personal attacks.

The mounting interpersonal matters were severe and painful to address, deep friendships were breaking and family was being ripped apart. In the midst of personal threats and attacks, the collective stopped functioning. The issues were largely unresolved. It was left in a storm of abuse, distrust, and failed processes.

The young folks with OYBM kept the space moving but the infoshop was mostly shut down. A small crew of us followed through with the purchase of the building amidst ongoing turmoil.

Community members that were not pleased with the decision to bar one abuser from the space, waged a campaign to undermine the youth project by spreading disinformation and interfering with critical material support. While others and myself centered survivors, we faced a barrage of further disinformation through ongoing personal attacks (including from family members). Years of work developing and implementing transformative and restorative justice processes fell apart in a crashing nexus of interpersonal violence, substance use, white paternalism, liberal impositions, unending accusations and scapegoating. The fallout was the end of long-term projects, local resistance organizing, long-term friendships, my band Blackfire, and more.

When the infoshop started, the collective proclaimed that it was a "safe space" until it was clear that we could not guarantee anyone's well-being, or pretend that our space was a zone exempt from the systems of oppression outside the doors. The position crystalized into the assertion that the infoshop was a "threatening space" to all systems of oppression and oppressive behaviors. The collective invited everyone who came through the doors, into the Hooghan established in ceremony, to uphold, enforce, and have each other's backs.

This is a statement that marked the infoshop's 10th anniversary:

> When we initially started on 4th St, the nature of the size kept everything visceral and we outgrew the space very quickly. At times our collective was two people, at others it was sixteen, but we kept the embers going. When we moved downtown briefly (11 S. Mikes Pike for a four month spell) the dynamics changed as all the folx who have viewed the east side of Flag as "undesirable" finally came through our doors, but being rooted on the eastern part of Kinłani was always where our hearts

have been.

We've been at 1704 N 2nd St. for seven years and though the infoshop collective ceased to function in 2014, Outta Your Backpack Media collective, the initial driving force of the infoshop, and a small crew of volunteers has kept the fires burning. We've re-oriented the infoshop as a kind of conflict infrastructure, and held it down with a focus on empowering Indigenous folx and accomplices with direct action skills and resources. We've continued to provide essential gear for unsheltered relatives on the streets, benefit concerts, produced zines, and open doors for organizations in need of the resources we still provide: meeting space, action & art materials, our massive lending library and zine archive, and much, much more. We are still only open when we feel like and may at some point grow another collective when the time is right. But for now we operate with the same intention and ferocity as when we started and we have no plans on stopping.

In the downtime after the collective composted itself (which is the best way I can describe it), Táala Hooghan shifted and transformed. Select events were held, it was a base of operations for actions, and most consistently a shelter for many Indigenous youth who were fleeing from abusive homes or just had nowhere else to go. From this point we developed our orientation more towards the idea of conflict infrastructure, a concept proposed after Aragorn! had done a talk at our space on a speaking tour about the practice. We were still an infoshop but tended more towards being an autonomous direct action resource center. This meant we focused on ways to grow our abilities to generate and wage anti-colonial and anti-authoritarian conflict.

In 2016, after Standing Rock was raided and the encampment violently cleared, a lot of young Indigenous radicals from the area returned to homes they didn't feel they were grounded in. As they would organize and interface in and around the space, their presence also renewed efforts to fight Snowbowl. The infoshop gained a different life, militant Indigenous youth were running the space again, and bringing their fight from Standing Rock back home to protect sacred lands. This was happening as Trump was elected so the anti-fascist and anti-colonial fervor was red hot. Anti-fascist demos took the streets continually. They culminated in an anti-fascist and anti-colonial gathering that gained the attention of the FBI's Fusion center (these centers are an intelligence and resource sharing program that brings together state, Tribal, and federal authorities to monitor and address threats) with alerts that were issued regarding "state-wide anarchist extremism" that named Táala Hooghan as a target for an undercover operative.

We also became an organizing space for unsheltered Indigenous relatives. A small crew from the streets would volunteer to cook and serve meals every Wednesday (and whenever they felt like it).

One day two unsheltered Diné were talking about having a talking circle for their community. I asked if anyone had experience hosting one, as I didn't, they replied, "Let's just try." What followed were powerful sessions where relatives would talk through their trauma and build strength from the vulnerability and expressed needs to heal. In unplanned synchronicity medicine practitioners would stop by and sit with the circle. More than fifty people would attend every Wednesday. Many of the experiences they shared, particularly regarding State violence, were all too familiar. At one of the circles someone said, "Let's protest this. Let's stand up and fight for our rights." They organized the only rally held by Indigenous unsheltered relatives I've been aware of. It was a powerful display of solidarity and action. Copwatch-style patrols were organized.

"Know Your Rights" pamphlets were circulated. The state criminalizers backed off for the time being as our relatives on the streets took the streets.

There were problems with volunteers relapsing, violence between folks on the streets, and windows of our space being smashed by local fascists who didn't like to see all the "drunk Indians" hanging out. Some windows were also smashed by our relatives without shelter. We handled everything without cops. The Hooghan as everyone called it, was their space. They gardened and harvested the food and pooled EBT cards when we didn't have enough funds. Donations would come in from all over for necessary winter gear, sleeping bags, and other items.

Then 2020 hit with the pandemic and Táala Hooghan shifted from Indigenous youth shelter, unsheltered center, direct action resource space, to mutual aid.

On March 14, 2020, inspired by the amazing mutual aid mobilizations throughout the so-called US, I sent a message to a local street medic crew to see what organizing was being done or if anyone had interest in initiating a localized project. Only two people initially responded but that was the spark we needed. I blasted out a call to my network and checked with a friend with "DC" Mutual Aid, which had already been organized for weeks in response to the pandemic. The basic framework for pandemic response mutual aid groups was already established and running, we just needed a model to draw from and to recruit and build from there. It happened organically and fast.

We established a social media group and before we could add any details people started joining. It took a few days but we got an online form up for volunteers and support requests. We borrowed from the DC Mutual Aid framework of establishing a hub to coordinate volunteers and requests, a storage/supply site, and delivery with volunteers. We scoured the web for the best protocols, met with other groups virtually, and compiled enough information and resources to safely spring into action.

Since then Kinłani Mutual Aid (KMA) has grown to host multiple mutual aid projects and has provided support throughout the region. Through Indigenous Action, KMA helped launch a national network of radical Indigenous mutual aid projects called Indigenous Mutual Aid.

Without the infrastructure of Táala Hooghan, we wouldn't have been able to operate fluidly and on the scale we did at the beginning of the pandemic. We had semi-trucks delivering hundreds of tons of food, we had pallets and pallets of bottled water, we bottled 16,000 hand sanitizers. All while providing space to feed more than a hundred unsheltered relatives every Sunday.

What started as a spontaneous Indigenous youth project and infoshop propelled into a force of mutual aid and defense that it continues to wage. Not everything about its memory is celebrated, and it would be dishonest to paint it as such. Those that have come to organize in the space are aware of its limitations and challenges. We've held ceremonies in the space to address some of those wounds.

Just as our strongest medicines are those that are most bitter, sometimes our greatest lessons are our deepest scars.

At this point Táala Hooghan has survived for 16 years (which is ages amidst radical projects) as a fiercely autonomous space that radically redistributes resources and organizes conflict without any formal or consistent funding sources. Everyone who comes in to volunteer is oriented with this invitation, "There are no leaders here, we invite you to take the initiative." The dirty dishes get done and the trash gets taken out, eventually.

Chapter Eleven: No Allegiance


THE USA
IS AN ILLEG
SETTLER
COLONY
ON STO

> *The Indian as a savage member of a tribal organization cannot survive, ought not to survive, the aggressions of civilization, but his* [sic] *individual redemption from heathenism and ignorance, his transformation to that of an industrious American citizen, is abundantly possible.*
> — The Second Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the Indian Rights Association. (1885)

> *I simply cannot see how Indigenous Peoples can continue to exist as Indigenous if we are willing to replicate the logics of colonialism…*
> — Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*

I have refused to participate in settler colonial electoralism for more than six full election cycles in the so-called US. When colonial power apologists hear this they tend towards a range of exaggerated responses, from "If you don't vote you don't get to complain" to "By not voting you're allowing the bad people to win and make decisions for you." The reasons I provide are generally met with great contempt and a range of emotional condemnations. Most often, my abstention is always presumed as passivity and apathy.

I came to the decision not to vote after years of immersive civic engagement. Every two years my band Blackfire would field constant invitations to participate in or organize "get out the vote" concerts and we obligatorily did. We were among very few Indigenous political musical groups at the time, we even were featured in a short documentary called "Rez Rock the Vote." My radical and liberal contradictions were on full grotesque display.

Since I was raised with a healthy exposure to radical movement organizers including traditional Diné relatives who decried participating in the *white man's system*, I already had a healthy skepticism of electoralism. A lot had to do with basic research in how the Electoral College operated and influences of corporate lobbying, but I was more energetic and bound by the excitement of the concept of a diversity of tactics (what Malcolm X named "By Any Means"). My political identity was shaped experientially and so there were crisscrossed lines between radicalism and liberalism. As I mention elsewhere, I organized campaigns to pass legislation, I met with dozens and dozens of congressional representatives over the years and even presented alongside them. I worked with local city council members and advocated for and against ordinances. So while some of my more radical critiques were left on the cutting room floor of the Blackfire voting documentary (which again was built from years of voting outreach, registration drives, etc.), my justifications for voting were informed by Thoreau,

> Cast your whole vote, not a piece of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless when it conforms to a majority; but is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men [sic] in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose.

I argued with critics of voting then as much as I argue with electoral proselytizers today.

Eventually the radical anti-statist critiques and actions made more and more sense as I experienced the rampant co-optation, tokenization, victimization, and outright political exploitation, particularly that waged by the Democratic Party. It took some time for me to realize that when being caught between two evils, there are many more options rather than siding with the one

least inclined to fuck you over. The shiny optimistic veneer wore off the more I saw first hand how devastatingly hollow election campaign promises actually were. In all the cycles of electioneering it wasn't just that nothing had changed, it was that assumed political allies exacerbated cultural and ecological crises. Sacred sites would still be desecrated and uranium mines still left abandoned. A Dził Yijiin relative cautioned, "The more we participate, the more they just use us to justify their political authority." Resource colonialism was and continues to be a bi-partisan effort.

Andrew Jackson, the seventh president of the "US," was perhaps one of the most notorious political perpetrators of mass violence against Indigenous Peoples. His politics were branded, "Jacksonian democracy" and, as an owner of enslaved African Peoples, he opposed policies to outlaw slavery. Jackson led years of brutal campaigns of settler invasion against Indigenous Peoples such as the Creeks and Seminoles in so-called Georgia and Florida. His policies of Manifest Destiny and Indian Removal led to the 5,000-mile forced march of terror known as the Trail of Tears. Tens of thousands of Indigenous Peoples were forcibly displaced and many thousands murdered. Jackson is also celebrated as one of the first presidents representing the Democratic Party.

How much distance is there between Jacksonian politics and Obama's deportation of more migrants (primarily Indigenous) than any "US" president in history? What degree of party difference is there when Obama conducted ten times more air strikes (primarily drones that took hundreds of lives) than his Republican predecessor George W. Bush? It was Obama who refused to take action and stop development of the Dakota Access Pipeline. He remained silent when state and private security forces attacked Water Protectors with military equipment provided courtesy of his administration. He waited until the last minute and intervened temporarily, then passed the issue off to the next administration. In the context of US imperialism and colonialism, political parties are nearly indistinguishable, they all perpetuate and uphold the same institutions of globalized state violence and are all fueled by the same Earth destroying industries. When concessions are occasionally made, they usually are low stakes issues that don't significantly impact the US's critical energy infrastructure.

I used to write my grandmother's name in the presidential ballot and debate about voting in local, Tribal, and regional elections, but this felt more and more disingenuous over the years. The more I studied the Red Power movement's militant pathways and the more I experienced the captivity of inclusion in settler political, social, and economic order, the more I couldn't reconcile any active participation. I recall being at a meeting of elders on Dził Yijiin and someone pleading that if everyone at the gathering formed a voting bloc, that was the only way change could happen. I remember studying the elder's declaration of silent refusal, they simply walked away. They would have surely been amused if desperate Indigenous liberals audaciously declared that "voting is sacred," as they attempt to do today. The proposal then was just as disingenuous as when Chase Iron-Eyes attempted to turn the Standing Rock camps into a voting bloc for his failed congressional bid. Settler colonial authority is an anti-Indigenous force premised on the destruction of the sacred, sanctioning that authority sanctions settler violence.

The settler will never willingly grant justice on Indigenous People's terms. If "Every right that we have, we've had to fight for," why fight for settler inclusion and equal access to the "benefits" of settler society? Why not fight to end the entirety of their violent global project? Why not fight for liberation?

Frederick Douglass asserted in a powerful 1857 speech addressing emancipation of enslaved people in west India some decades prior, that "Power concedes nothing without demand." Though celebrated as a reformist, Douglass extolled the violence of enslaved peoples against their colonial oppressors, "The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress." In his desperate and sober analysis, he glorified acts of infanticide, suicide, and armed defense in the face of a future of slavery:

> …every mother who, like Margaret Garner, plunges a knife into the bosom of her infant to save it from the hell of our Christian slavery, should be held and honored as a benefactress. Every fugitive from slavery who, like the noble William Thomas at Wilkes Barre, prefers to perish in a river made red by his own blood to submission to the hell hounds who were hunting and shooting him should be esteemed as a glorious martyr, worthy to be held in grateful memory by our people. The fugitive Horace, at Mechanicsburgh, Ohio, the other day, who taught the slave catchers from Kentucky that it was safer to arrest white men than to arrest him, did a most excellent service to our cause.

While he acknowledged that a range of factors contributed to the end of colonial enslavement in India (including economic and public pressuring of the British government, he contended:

> Nevertheless a share of the credit of the result falls justly to the slaves themselves. 'Though slaves, they were rebellious slaves.' They bore themselves well. They did not hug their chains…There is no doubt that the fear of the consequences, acting with a sense of the moral evil of slavery, led to its abolition… Insurrection for freedom kept the planters in a constant state of alarm and trepidation. A standing army was necessary to keep the slaves in their chains. This state of facts could not be without weight in deciding the question of freedom in these countries.

Indigenous/enslaved despair and hostility agitate colonizer/ enslaver anxiety into crisis.

When those who have been dispossessed of all freedom have nothing left to concede, what then but to implode or detonate? To beg enslavers/colonizers for less harmful or "safer" forms of violence is sheer delusion.

Indigenous Delusions of Settler Inclusion

Sacred lands will continue to be destroyed to feed colonial machines while our hearts and minds are enveloped into the patriotism of their social order. Their power cannot be fully justified until Indigenous existence is either assimilated or destroyed. The expectation of civil participation is not an expression of Indigenous sovereignty or power, it is Indigenous integration into settler order, a reifying of settler authority. Accepting the promised future of settler progress is to concede the existence our ancestors died for. In the contended spaces of Indigenous existence, there is no more room unless the condition of inclusion into civility or an agreement to civilization is made. The door is then opened; there is a seat at "the table." Uncontended assimilation into these spaces fulfills their genocidal and ecocidal designs. Our ancestors didn't solicit to be qualified managers at the new forts; they desired to burn them to the ground.

Under settler colonial hegemony, electoralism is the dead end of Indigenous autonomy. It really doesn't matter what party, what single politician (and what their identity is), law, or what local ordinance you vote for, it is the act of participation by voting (and governing), that sanctions colonial authority and progress. Democrats and Republicans are both allegiant managers of settler authority. That engagement in the theatrics of occupation is even debated amongst Indigenous Peoples is evidence of the near fulfillment of colonial domination. Greater inclusion and internalization of the State does not decrease the violence precipitated by its institutions. This is political fiction that is tended to every election cycle with billion dollar fantasies spent on the favorable team amongst a monopoly of two parties. Capitalism seeks inclusion and exploitation, white supremacy and cis-heteropatriarchy seek control and exclusion, and the State maintains the parameters of domination (through legal and moral impositions and enforcement via the cops, military, education systems, courts, etc.). These contradictions that underlie the structures and technologies of so-called American democracy, comprise the overall chauvinism of civilization. They're both the reasons of disenfranchisement and the cause of assimilation; they expose the powers that constitute and contextualize modern civilization. What is always presumed through civic participation is allegiance to the dominant civil order. This means the more we're "enfranchised" the more we're assimilated. In terms of Indigenous existence, to put it more bluntly: *no matter who you vote for settler colonialism wins.*

I wrote the following piece and published it in zine format in 2020. It was more of a project born from frustrations of years of arguing with liberal Indigenous organizers (primarily aspiring academics) and settlers about "US" electoral politics. I found myself constantly citing resources that were largely disconnected from an Indigenous analysis of electoralism and was particularly dismayed with the misplaced use of the term "harm reduction." There's a lot more that should be criticized regarding liberal settler colonial apologisms and reformist maintenance of the State, and I look forward to more agitations and debates.

While I didn't update the initial piece for this book, I decided to address part of a recurring argument here. Most of the reaction to the following piece has been, "If you're not voting then you're promoting apathy." Those who are not civically engaged may have more reasons than lack of care or indifference. To assume so and demand justification is paternalistic and reveals how unstable the idea of "democracy" is. Policing civic engagement through shame and victim-blaming is a debasing tactic. Many who refuse to or cannot vote due to political sanction take meaningful and amazing forms of direct action everyday, but it shouldn't be that people's worth is based upon some perceived measure of their civic or activist productivity. This is the worst kind of capitalist and ableist logic. The argument also establishes voting as a virtue; the highest duty of those tending to the ideal of "democracy." It assumes that the act of selecting rules and rulers to represent your interests and desires is of greater value than the dissatisfied "do-nothings" who refuse. The argument additionally neglects those who cannot participate in elections due to legal restraints or exclusions (age, immigration status, criminality, mental health, etc.). Nevertheless, the choice is made for them. I'd much rather propagandize the active (or passive) apathetic degradation of the "American" political system than get wildly passionate about being on the side of the majority under colonial rule.

As voting sanctions colonial power and progress, acts of refusal (for whatever reason) are powerful in and of themselves. Voting is further mythologized particularly by Indigenous liberals with a revisionist history of ancestors fighting for "civil rights." As I write in the following piece, this is an ahistorical and disingenuously revisionist perspective. Putting words in the mouths of militant ancestors to justify colonial political engagement is an absurd justification for settler inclusivity. This is the arrogance of settler apologism; to deny acts of historic and ongoing Indigenous refusal is to deny the impulse of Indigenous resistance and aspirations of, and for, liberation. Settler apologists promoting "democracy" just dig themselves deeper into mass graves where the heart of Indigenous existence and resistance used to beat. To paraphrase Afro-Indigenous anarchist Lucy Parsons, "We should never be deceived that colonizers will allow us to vote away their power." In this spirit and the spirit of my ancestors, I pledge no allegiance to setter colonial authority.

Chapter Twelve: Voting is Not Harm Reduction


WHOEVER THEY VOTE FOR
SA
WE ARE UNGOVERNABLE

When proclamations are made that "voting is harm reduction," it's never clear how less harm is actually calculated. Do we compare how many millions of undocumented Indigenous Peoples have been deported? Do we add up what political party conducted more drone strikes? Or who had the highest military budget? Do we factor in pipelines, mines, dams, sacred sites desecration? Do we balance incarceration rates? Do we compare sexual violence statistics? Is it in the massive budgets of politicians who spend hundreds of millions of dollars competing for votes?

Though there are some political distinctions between the two prominent parties in the so-called US, they all pledge their allegiance to the same flag. Red or blue, they're both still stripes on a rag waving over stolen lands that comprise a country built by stolen lives.

We don't dismiss the reality that, on the scale of US settler colonial violence, even the slightest degree of harm can mean life or death for those most vulnerable. What we assert here is that the entire notion of "voting as harm reduction" obscures and perpetuates settler-colonial violence, there is nothing "less harmful" about it, and there are more effective ways to intervene in its violences.

At some point the left in the so-called US realized that convincing people to rally behind a "lesser evil" was a losing strategy. The term "harm reduction" was appropriated to reframe efforts to justify their participation and coerce others to engage in the theater of what is called "democracy" in the US.

Harm reduction was established in the 1980s as a public health strategy for people dealing with substance use issues who struggle with abstinence. According to the Harm Reduction Coalition (HRC) the principles of harm reduction establish that the identified behavior is "part of life" so they "choose not to ignore or condemn but to minimize harmful effects" and work towards breaking social stigmas towards "safer use." The HRC also states that, "there is no universal definition of or formula for implementing harm reduction." Overall, harm reduction focuses on reducing adverse impacts associated with harmful behaviors.

The proposition of "harm reduction" in the context of voting means something entirely different from those organizing to address substance use issues. The assertion is that "since this political system isn't going away, we'll support politicians and laws that may do less harm."

The idea of a ballot being capable of reducing the harm in a system rooted in colonial domination and exploitation, white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, and capitalism is an extraordinary exaggeration. There is no person whose lives aren't impacted everyday by these systems of oppression, but instead of coded reformism and coercive "get out the vote" campaigns towards a "safer" form of settler colonialism, we're asking "what is the real and tragic harm and danger associated with perpetuating colonial power and what can be done to end it?"

Voting as practiced under US "democracy" is the process with which people (excluding youth under the age of 18, convicted felons, those the State deems "mentally incompetent," undocumented folx, and permanent legal residents), are coerced to choose narrowly prescribed rules and rulers. The anarchist collective CrimethInc. observes, "Voting consolidates the power of a whole society in the hands of a few politicians." When this process is conducted under colonial authority, there is no option but political death for Indigenous Peoples. In other words, voting can never be a survival strategy under colonial rule. It's a strategy of defeat and victimhood that protracts the suffering and historical harm induced by ongoing settler colonialism. And while the harm reduction sentiment may be sincere, even hard won marginal reforms gained through popular support can be just as easily reversed by the stroke of a politician's pen. If voting is the

democratic participation in our own oppression, voting as harm reduction is a politics that keeps us at the mercy of our oppressors.

While so many on the left—including some Indigenous radicals—are concerned with consolidation of power into fascists' hands, they fail to recognize how colonial power is already consolidated. There is nothing intersectional about participating in and maintaining a genocidal political system. There's no meaningful solidarity to be found in a politics that urges us to meet our oppressors where they're at. Voting as harm reduction imposes a false solidarity upon those identified to be most vulnerable to harmful political policies and actions. In practice it plays out as paternalistic identity politicking as liberals work to identify the least dangerous candidates and rally to support their campaigns. The logic of voting as harm reduction asserts that whoever is facing the most harm will gain the most protection by the least dangerous denominator in a violently authoritarian system. This settler-colonial naivety places more people, non-human beings, and land at risk than otherwise. Most typically the same liberal activists that claim voting is harm reduction are found denouncing and attempting to suppress militant direct actions and sabotage as acts that "only harm our movement." "Voting as harm reduction" is the pacifying language of those who police movements.

Voting as harm reduction is the government issued blanket of the Democratic Party, we're either going to sleep or die in it.

To organize from a position that voting is an act of damage limitation blurs lines of the harm that settler and resource colonialism imposes.

Under colonial occupation all power operates through violence. There is absolutely nothing "less harmful" about participating in and perpetuating the political power of occupying forces. Voting won't undo settler colonialism, white supremacy, hetero-patriarchy, or capitalism. Voting is not a strategy for decolonization. The entire process that arrived at the "Native vote" was an imposition of US political identity on Indigenous Peoples fueled by white supremacy and facilitated by capitalism.

The Native Vote: A Strategy of Colonial Domination

Prior to settler colonial invasion, Indigenous Peoples maintained diverse complex cultural organizations that were fairly unrecognizable to European invaders. From its inception, the US recognized that Indigenous Peoples comprised distinct sovereign Nations. The projection of Nation status was committed on the terms of the colonizers who needed political entities to treaty with (primarily for war and economic purposes). As a result, social organizations of Indigenous Peoples faced extreme political manipulation as matriarchal and two-spirit roles were either completely disregarded or outright attacked. The imperative of the US settler colonial project has always been to undermine and destroy Indigenous sovereignty, this is the insidious *unnature* of colonialism.

In 1493 the Papal Bull "Inter Caetera," was issued by Pope Alexander VI. The document established the "Doctrine of Discovery" and was central to Spain's Christianizing strategy to ensure "exclusive right" to enslaved Indigenous Peoples and lands invaded by Columbus the year prior. This decree also made clear the Pope's threat to forcibly assimilate Indigenous Peoples to Catholicism in order to strengthen the "Christian Empire." This doctrine led to successive generational patterns of genocidal and ecocidal wars waged by European settler colonizers against Indigenous

lives, lands, spirit, and the living world of all of our relations. In 1823 the "Doctrine of Discovery" was written into US law as a way to deny land rights to Indigenous Peoples in the Supreme Court case, *Johnson v. McIntosh*. In a unanimous decision, Chief Justice John Marshall wrote that Christian European nations had assumed complete control over the lands of "America" during the "Age of Discovery." And in declaring "independence" from the Crown of England in 1776, he noted, that the US had in effect, and thus by law, inherited authority over these lands from Great Britain, "notwithstanding the occupancy of the natives, who were heathens…" According to the ruling, Indigenous Peoples did not have any rights as independent nations, but only as tenants or residents of the US on their own lands. The genealogy of the Native vote is tied to boarding schools, Christian indoctrination, allotment programs, and global wars that established US imperialism. US assimilation policies were not designed as a benevolent form of harm reduction, they were an extension of a military strategy that couldn't fulfill its genocidal programs. Citizenship was forced onto Indigenous Peoples as part of colonial strategy to, "kill the Indian and save the man."

There was a time when Indigenous Peoples wanted nothing to do with US citizenship and voting.

Katherine Osborn, an ethnohistorian at Arizona State University states,

> [Indigenous] polities hold a government-to-government relationship with the United States. Thus, their political status is unique, and that means that they are not just another minority group hoping for inclusion in the US political order. For indigenous communities, protecting their sovereignty as tribal nations is the paramount political concern.

When the US Constitution was initially created, each state could determine who could be citizens at their discretion. Some states rarely granted citizenship and thereby conferred the status to select Indigenous Peoples but only if they dissolved their tribal relationships and became "civilized." This typically meant that they renounced their tribal affiliation, paid taxes, and fully assimilated into white society. Alexandra Witkin writes in *To Silence a Drum: The Imposition of United States Citizenship on Native Peoples*, "Early citizenship policy rested upon the assumption that allegiance could only be given to one nation; thus peoples with an allegiance to a Native nation could not become citizens of the United States." The preference though was not to respect and uphold Indigenous sovereignty, but to condemn it as "uncivilized" and undermine it through extreme tactics of forced assimilation.

When the 14th Amendment to the US Constitution was ratified in 1868, it granted citizenship only to men born or naturalized in the US, this included former slaves but was interpreted to not apply to Indigenous Peoples except for those who assimilated and paid taxes. The 15th Amendment was subsequently passed in 1870 to ensure the right of US citizens to vote without discrimination of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude" but was still interpreted to exclude Indigenous Peoples who did not assimilate. In some ways this was an act of disenfranchisement, but more clearly it was a condition imposed upon Indigenous Peoples facing scorched-Earth military campaigns and the threat of mass death marches to concentration camps. The message was clear, "assimilate or perish."

In 1887, Congress passed the General Allotment Act, more commonly known as the Dawes Act, which was designed to expedite colonial invasion, facilitate resource extraction, and to further assimilate Indigenous Peoples into the colonial social order. The Dawes Act marked a shift

from a military strategy to an economic and political one where reservations were separated into individual lots, with only male "heads of households" to receive 160 acres with any remaining lands put up for sale to white invaders who flocked in droves to inherit their "Manifest Destiny." Indigenous Peoples who accepted allotments could receive US citizenship, and although this was the first congressional act to provide the status, it came at the expense of sacrificing Indigenous People's cultural and political identities in many ways, particularly by further fracturing the integrity of Indigenous matriarchal societies. Under the Dawes Act, Indigenous lands were reduced from 138 million to 52 million acres. In 1890, the overall Indigenous population was reduced to about 250,000 from tens of millions at the time of initial European invasion. In contrast, the colonizers' US population had increased to 62,622,250 the same year.

The legal destruction of Indigenous sovereign nations was fulfilled in Supreme Court decisions by Chief Justice John Marshall, who wrote in 1831 that the Cherokee Nation was not a foreign nation, but rather that "They may, more correctly, perhaps, be denominated domestic dependent nations…Their relationship to the United States resembles that of a ward to its guardian."

The US' genocidal military campaigns known collectively as the "Indian Wars" supposedly came to an end in 1924. That same year Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act (ICA) which granted citizenship to Indigenous Peoples but still allowed for states to determine if they could vote. As a result, some states barred Indigenous Peoples from voting until 1957. Until passage of the ICA, which was a regulatory action approved with no hearings, Indigenous Peoples were considered "Domestic Subjects" of the US government.

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy completely rejected imposition of US citizenship through the IAC and called it an act of treason.

Joseph Heath, General Counsel of the Onondaga Nation, writes,

> The Onondaga Nation and the Haudenosaunee have never accepted the authority of the United States to make Six Nations citizens become citizens of the United States, as claimed in the Citizenship Act of 1924. We hold three treaties with the United States: the 1784 Treaty of Fort Stanwix, the 1789 Treaty of Fort Harmor and the 1794 Treaty of Canandaigua. These treaties clearly recognize the Haudenosaunee as separate and sovereign Nations. Accepting United States citizenship would be treason to their own Nations, a violation of the treaties and a violation of international law…

They rejected the ICA and

> resisted its implementation immediately after its adoption, because they had the historical and cultural understanding that it was merely the latest federal policy aimed at taking their lands and at forced assimilation.

Heath further adds,

> For over four centuries the Haudenosaunee have maintained their sovereignty, against the onslaught of colonialism and assimilation, and they have continued with their duties as stewards of the natural world. They have resisted removal and allotment; they have preserved their language and culture; they have not accepted the dictates of Christian churches; and they have rejected forced citizenship.

It's important to note, and paradoxical, that the colonizing architects of the US Constitution were influenced heavily by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Zane Jane Gordon of the Wyandotte Nation critiqued the ICA at the time it was passed,

> No government organized…can incorporate into its citizenship anybody or bodies without the[ir] formal consent…The Indians are organized in the form of 'nations,' and it has treaties with [other] nations as such. Congress cannot embrace them into the citizenship of the Union by a simple act.

In *Challenging American Boundaries: Indigenous People and the "Gift" of US Citizenship*, Kevin Bruyneel writes that Tuscarora Chief Clinton Rickard, who strongly opposed passage of the ICA, "was also encouraged by the fact that 'there was no great rush among my people to go out and vote in white man's elections.'" Rickard stated,

> By our ancient treaties, we expected the protection of the government. The white man had obtained most of our land and we felt he was obliged to provide something in return, which was protection of the land we had left, but we did not want to be absorbed and assimilated into his society. United States citizenship was just another way of absorbing us and destroying our customs and our government…We feared citizenship would also put our treaty status in jeopardy and bring taxes upon our land. How can a citizen have a treaty with his own government…This was a violation of our sovereignty. Our citizenship was in our own nations.

Haudenosaunee also voiced opposition to imposition of US citizenship policies due to separation of their Nation by the Canadian border. These impacts are still faced by Indigenous Peoples whose lands are bisected by both the Canadian and Mexican borders. The imposition of citizenship has politically segregated their people along colonial lines.

Perhaps one of the clearest illustrations of assimilationist strategies regarding citizenship and voting comes from Henry S. Pancoast, one of the founders of the Christian white supremacist group, the Indian Rights Association (IRA). Pancoast stated, "Nothing [besides United States Citizenship] will so tend to assimilate the Indian and break up his narrow tribal allegiance, as making him feel that he has a distinct right and voice in the white man's nation."

The IRA's initial stated objective was to "bring about the complete civilization of the Indians and their admission to citizenship." The IRA considered themselves reformists and successfully lobbied Congress to establish the boarding school system, pass the Dawes Act, reform the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and pass the Indian Reorganization Act of 1834.

US citizenship was imposed to destroy Indigenous sovereignty and facilitate mass-scale land theft. To this day, the "Native vote" is bound to assimilationist conditions that serve colonial interests.

Assimilation: The Strategy of Enfranchisement

Historic acts of voter suppression appear to contradict the strategy of assimilation, after all, if white settler politicians desired so much for Indigenous Peoples to become citizens, why then would they actively disenfranchise them at the same time? This is the underlying contradiction

of colonialism in the US that has been articulated as the "Indian Problem," or more bluntly, the question of annihilation or assimilation?

As previously mentioned, it wasn't until 1957 that Indigenous Peoples could vote in every US state.

According to Katherine Osborn,

> Some states borrowed the language of the US Constitution in Article 1, Section 2, which bars 'Indians not taxed' from citizenship and used it to deny voting rights. Legislators in Idaho, Maine, Mississippi, New Mexico, and Washington withheld the franchise from their Indigenous citizens because those who were living on reservation lands did not pay property taxes. In New Mexico, Utah, and Arizona, state officials argued that living on a reservation meant that Indians were not actually residents of the state, which prevented their political participation.

Osborn adds,

> Article 7, Section 2, of the Arizona constitution stated, 'No person under guardianship, non-compos mentis, or insane shall be qualified to vote in any election.' Arizona lawmakers understood this as prohibiting Indians from voting because they were allegedly under federal guardianship on their reservations.

Early US citizenship policy regarding Indigenous Peoples was clear; disenfranchisement would remain until we assimilated and abandoned our tribal statuses. Disenfranchisement was and is a strategy that sets conditions for assimilation. Suppression of political participation has historically been the way the system regulates and maintains itself. White supremacists that controlled the politics of areas where large Indigenous populations feared that they would become minority subjects in their own democratic system. They often subverted enfranchisement in violent ways, but this was never really a threat due to how embedded white supremacy has been in the totality of the US settler colonial project.

It's not that settler society has capitulated to Indigenous interests, it's that Indigenous Peoples—whether through force or attrition—have been subsumed into the US polity.

Perhaps no place is this more clear than through the establishment of Tribal Councils. For example, in 1923, the Navajo Tribal Council was created in order to legitimize resource extraction by the US government. According to a report filed by the US Commission on Civil Rights, the tribal council was "created in part so that oil companies would have some legitimate representatives of the Navajos through whom they could lease reservation lands on which oil had been discovered. The Navajo Nation Oil and Gas Company's website states, "In 1923, a Navajo tribal government was established primarily for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to approve lease agreements with American oil companies, who [sic] were eager to begin oil operations on Navajo lands."

In order to fulfill and maintain colonial domination and exploitation, colonizers shape and control the political identity of Indigenous Peoples. Capitalists facilitated and preyed on the dissolution of Indigenous autonomy. The cost of citizenship has always been our sovereignty, the conditions of citizenship have always been in service to white supremacy.

That Indigenous Peoples were granted the right to vote in 1924, yet our religious practices were outlawed until 1979 is one of many examples of the incongruency of Indigenous political identity in the so-called US.

Suffrage movements in the US have fought for equal participation in the political system but have failed to indict and abolish the systems of oppression that underpin settler-colonial society. After decades of organizing, white women celebrated suffrage in 1920, which was granted in part as a reward for their service in World War I. Hetero-patriarchy was not dismantled and Black folx were purposefully disregarded in their campaigning.

Lucy Parsons, an Afro-Indigenous anarchist was among many who critiqued suffrage at the time. Parsons wrote in 1905,

> Can you blame an Anarchist who declares that manmade laws are not sacred?…The fact is money and not votes is what rules the people. And the capitalists no longer care to buy the voters, they simply buy the "servants" after they have been elected to "serve." The idea that the poor man's vote amounts to anything is the veriest delusion. The ballot is only the paper veil that hides the tricks.

Black folx suffered decades of white supremacist "Jim Crow Laws" that enforced racial segregation and were designed to suppress their political power. These racist laws didn't end until the powerful mobilizations of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The US government handed down legislation in the 1950s and '60s, including the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which was critiqued by revolutionary Black Nationalists such as Malcolm X,

> The ballot or the bullet. If you're afraid to use an expression like that, you should get on out of the country; you should get back in the cotton patch; you should get back in the alley. They get all the Negro vote, and after they get it, the Negro gets nothing in return.

Radical movements have either faced extreme State violence and repression or have been systematically assimilated into the US political milieu. The non-profit industrial complex has operated as an unspoken ally of US imperialism in efforts of suppression and pacification (see *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* by INCITE!). Perhaps this is the US political machinery's method of reducing harm or impact from effective social and environmental justice movements. If they can't kill or imprison the organizers, then fold them into the bureaucracy or turn their struggles into businesses. At the end of the day, not everyone can be white supremacists, but everyone can be capitalists.

So long as the political and economic system remains intact, voter enfranchisement, though perhaps resisted by overt white supremacists, is still welcomed so long as nothing about the overall political arrangement fundamentally changes. The facade of political equality can occur under violent occupation, but liberation cannot be found in the occupier's ballot box. In the context of settler colonialism voting is the "civic duty" of maintaining our own oppression. It is intrinsically bound to a strategy of extinguishing our cultural identities and autonomy.

The ongoing existence of Indigenous Peoples is the greatest threat to the US settler colonial project, that we may one day rise up and assert our sovereign position with our lands in refutation of the Doctrine of Discovery.

In *Custer Died for Your Sins*, Vine Deloria Jr. idealized "Indigenous peoples not as passive recipients of civil rights and incorporation into the nation-state but as colonized peoples actively demanding decolonization."

You can't decolonize the ballot

Since the idea of us "democracy" is majority rule, barring an extreme population surge, Indigenous voters will always be at the mercy of "good intentioned" political allies. Consolidating the Native vote into a voting bloc that aligns with whatever settler party, politician, or law that appears to do less harm isn't a strategy to exercise political power, it's Stockholm Syndrome.

The Native vote also seeks to produce Native politicians. And what better way to assimilate rule then with a familiar face? The strategy of voting Indigenous Peoples into a colonial power structure is not an act of decolonization, it's a fulfillment of that same colonial power. We have a history of our people being used against us by colonial forces, particularly with assimilated Indigenous Peoples acting as "Indian Scouts" to aid the enemy's military. In only one recorded instance, Ndee (Cibicue Apache) Army Scouts mutinied against the US when they were asked to fight their own people. Three of the Ndee scouts were executed as a result.

No matter what you are led to believe by any politician seeking office, at the end of the day they are sworn to uphold an oath to the very system that was designed to destroy us and our ways of life. The oath for members of Congress states,

> I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God.

Even if we assume that their cultural values and intentions are in line with those of the people, it is rare that politicians are not tied to a string of funders. As soon as they get elected they are also faced with unrelenting special interest lobbying groups that have millions and millions of dollars behind them and, even if they have stated the best intentions, are inevitably outnumbered by their political peers.

Today we have candidates that were elected making promises to stop the mass scale kidnapping and murdering of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people and what do they propose? They don't indict the resource colonizers destroying our lands whose very industry is precipitating this crisis of human trafficking and extreme gender violence. They don't propose ending capitalism and resource colonialism. They propose laws and more cops with more power to enforce those laws in our communities, so although we have an epidemic of police violence and murders against our peoples, Indigenous politicians address one violent crisis by making another one worse for our people. It's the fulfillment of the assimilationist cultural genocide of "killing the Indian to save the man." With that vote, the willful participation and sanctioning of the violence of this system, you kill the Indian and become "the man."

Tribal, local, and regional politics are situated in the same colonial arrangement that benefits the ruling class: politicians are concerned with rules and ruling, police and military enforce,

judges imprison. Regardless of who and on what scale, no politician can ever represent Indigenous lifeways within the context of a political system established by colonialism.

A less harmful form of colonial occupation is fantasy. The process of colonial undoing will not occur by voting. You cannot decolonize the ballot.

Rejecting settler colonial authority, aka not voting.

Voting in the colonizer's elections keeps Indigenous Peoples powerless.

Our power, broadly speaking, does not come from non-consensual majority rule top-down man-made laws but is derived in relation with, and in proportion to, all living beings. This is a corporeal and spiritual power that has been in effect since time immemorial and is what has kept Indigenous Peoples alive in the face of more than 500 years of extreme colonial violence.

The late Ben Carnes, a powerful Choctaw advocate, is quoted in an article about the Native vote by Mark Maxey stating,

> My position is that I am not a citizen of a government who perpetuates that lie that we are. Slavery was legal just as well as Jim Crow, but just because it is law doesn't make it right. We didn't ask for it, the citizenship act was imposed upon us as another step in their social and mental conditioning of Native people to confiscate them of their identity. It was also a legislative method of circumventing the 'Indians not taxed' clause of the Constitution, thereby justifying imposing taxes. The US electoral system is a very diseased method where candidates can be purchased by the highest corporate (contributor) bidder. The mentality of voting for the lesser of two evils is a false standard to justify the existence of only a two-party system. Checks and balances are lacking to ensure that public servants abide by the will of the people. The entire thing needs to be scrapped as well as the government itself.

Voting will never be "harm reduction" while colonial occupation and US imperialism reigns. In order to heal we have to stop the harm from occurring, not lessen it. This doesn't mean simply abstinence or ignoring the problem until it just goes away, it means developing and implementing strategies and maneuvers that empower Indigenous People's autonomy.

Since we cannot expect those selected to rule in this system to make decisions that benefit our lands and peoples, we have to do it ourselves. Direct action, or the unmediated expression of individual or collective desire, has always been the most effective means by which we change the conditions of our communities.

What do we get out of voting that we cannot directly provide for ourselves and our people? What ways can we organize and make decisions that are in harmony with our diverse lifeways? What ways can the immense amount of material resources and energy focused on persuading people to vote be redirected into services and support that we actually need? What ways can we direct our energy, individually and collectively, into efforts that have immediate impact in our lives and the lives of those around us?

This is not only a moral but a practical position and so we embrace our contradictions. We're not rallying for a perfect prescription for "decolonization" or a multitude of Indigenous Nationalisms, but for a great undoing of the settler colonial project that comprises the United States

of America so that we may restore healthy and just relations with Mother Earth and all her beings. Our tendency is towards autonomous anti-colonial struggles that intervene and attack the critical infrastructure that the US and its institutions rest on. Interestingly enough, these are the areas of our homelands under greatest threat by resource colonialism. This is where the system is most prone to rupture, it's the fragility of colonial power. Our enemies are only as powerful as the infrastructure that sustains them.

The brutal result of forced assimilation is that we know our enemies better than they know themselves. What strategies and actions can we devise to make it impossible for this system to govern on stolen land?

We aren't advocating for a State-based solution, redwashed European politic, or some other colonial fantasy of "utopia." In our rejection of the abstraction of settler colonialism, we don't aim to seize colonial State power but to abolish it.

We seek nothing but total liberation.

Chapter Thirteen: Uprooting Colonialism


STOLEN
LAND

Indigenous Peoples' Day of Tokenism

In 2015, former city council member Eva Putzova asked me what I thought of a proposal to formally declare an Indigenous Peoples' Day (IPD) in occupied-Flagstaff. I expressed that considering the city's role in the desecration of the San Francisco Peaks, attacks on unsheltered Indigenous people, and extreme racial profiling, the attempt to declare IPD in "Flagstaff" was simply hypocritical and that serious work around accountability might be possible but would be a very challenging process. We agreed to meet and I invited some friends including local university professors, other Indigenous advocates, and respected community members that I figured might care more about the political prospects.

I had a history of hosting "Abolish Columbus Day" events and actions with various groups over the past two decades in the city, and though I was extremely skeptical it felt like an opportunity to attempt a different approach. I proposed a conditional accountability process for the city with a concurrent independent community driven component to ensure the matters were meaningfully addressed.

The idea was to host a series of forums on critical topics and have two reports generated: one prepared by city staff to advise policy changes, and the other would be community sourced with autonomous initiatives. The community component wasn't just oversight, it was designed to empower Indigenous action beyond the settler politics.

The initial forums held were powerful and although city officials were present, our informal organizing group barred them from speaking. The idea was to have them listen to the dialogue and concerns and silence their impulses to grandstand and play politics. We had to address the issues on our terms. I also advocated that the group spearheading the effort not formalize into an organization. Unsurprisingly, the process was ultimately co-opted by liberal Indigenous handlers who struck every radical proposition and even the basic elements of accountability out of the process. It became a formal organization that still operates as a proxy to city politics when it needs token Natives to voice their grievances. With my skepticism affirmed, I left the group and never looked back.

In 2018 the occupied-City of Flagstaff announced that it would mark the second Monday in October as IPD. Predictably, no reports were issued and no responsibility was taken for ongoing injustices. There was absolutely no accountability.

The same day a crew of us held an "Indigenous Peoples' Day" march to reject the "empty" proclamation and celebrate Indigenous resistance. More than sixty people marched through the streets, blocking traffic and intersections for hours. The rally quickly turned into a march through the streets stopping to blockade various intersections in downtown Flagstaff. There was a heavy police presence throughout the night, including cops assaulting some of the demonstrators. After the march ended, approximately twenty uniformed cops surrounded the remaining crowd, surveilling and trying to identify people. People were careful to "de-bloc" (change clothing under the cover of the crowd or large banners) and use the buddy system, but cops still followed some people to their cars and took pictures of their license plates.

Nearly a dozen "Flagstaff" cops used body cameras to monitor and document the demonstration, then launched a weeks-long investigation. They scoured social media posts including

Facebook tags as well as the event's guest list to identify people. They also cited an unidentified informant. They ultimately filed criminal charges of "Obstructing a Public Thoroughfare" (a misdemeanor) and singled out a mom who had her child with her during the march, with felony "child endangerment." Through the legal challenge, we found that targeted political attack was a result of extensive online surveillance and use of an undercover operative by the Flagstaff Police Department's (FPD) "Selective Enforcement Unit" and the "Gang and Immigration Intelligence Team Enforcement Mission" (GIITEM) both before and after the event. A total of eleven people were initially charged on November 11, 2018. Seven agreed to a plea deal (as a pressured condition to reduce the felony charge) with the option of 40 hours of community service or paying a $150 fine. Three of us, including myself, fought the charges, which were ultimately dropped in 2020 during the pandemic.

In 2019 the city decided to hold an official "cultural celebration" to mark IPD.

I had initially called for a boycott but decided not to organize a protest as it was clear they would anticipate one. Instead I dressed in my cultural attire, hand-painted a banner, and walked into Flagstaff City Hall. There was a larger than usual police presence. Numerous patrol cars were parked outside, some driving the streets, and there were multiple cops inside and outside, they were clearly expecting something to happen.

I sat outside the Council Chambers on a bench next to a local photographer and waited for an opportunity to intervene. The moment came when then-Mayor Coral Evans (who previously stated that the Peaks struggle was a "dead issue") started to read the City's IPD proclamation. I walked in and stood in front of her and the entire council and unfurled a banner that read, "Indigenous Peoples' Day Flagstaff, Hypocrisy. No justice? No celebration." I blew my eagle bone whistle as she read the proclamation.

It was clear the attendees, including Tribal officials, traditional dancers, and service providers that were all part of the "celebration" didn't know how to respond.

Evans gestured to two cops that were approaching me to stand down while I disrupted the spectacle.

When she was done reading I said something to the effect of,

> The City of Flagstaff hypocritically wanted to celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day while every other day of the year they perpetuate & profit from the killing of Indigenous cultures. Indigenous Peoples' Day is first and foremost about justice. Why then do we allow and support politicians that are flat out denying Indigenous justice and benefiting from the destruction of the land and suffering of our people? If they deny us justice, how dare they pretend to celebrate and honor us?

I challenged those in attendance to hold the City accountable and not let this be a hollow declaration that allows the City to look good while they violate our existence. More cops gathered around me and I decided it was time to leave. A couple of my relatives followed me outside while the rest of the bewildered crowd (including organizers I'd worked with off and on over the years) stayed for the remainder of the "celebration" of settler inclusion.

My action was not a political intervention (though some would absolutely call it activism), it was a spontaneous spiritual confrontation. I stood up because no one really speaks for the Mountain anymore, and if they even listened, it's clear that they don't really care enough to confront the forces perpetuating and profiteering off of desecration. It's the same with unsheltered relatives; they're dehumanized into non-existence. State violence against them is not exceptional, it's

expected. "What part of sacred don't you understand?" is a question that demands responsibility. When we must also ask ourselves this question, we have lost ourselves and the sacred has lost all meaning.

Uprooting Colonialism: The Limitations of Indigenous Peoples' Day

The following was written and published in zine format titled Uprooting Colonialism: The Limitations of Indigenous Peoples' Day *in fall of 2017 by myself and collaborators at Indigenous Action, with edits by K'in Balaam.*

Declarations, Disconnect, and Decolonial Recuperation

As momentum has accelerated for occupying forces to issue declarations of "Indigenous Peoples' Day" (IPD), we can't help but feel disconnected from the revelry.

Aside from psychic solace, if the State dismantles these statues and proclaims Indigenous Peoples' Days, what do we actually achieve if the structures and systems rooted in colonial violence remain intact? Is it merely political posturing or window dressing to diminish liberatory agitations? Our senses are heightened as most re-brandings of Columbus Day into IPD appear to whitewash ongoing colonial legacies.

The statistics are all too familiar: Indigenous Peoples in the "US" are the ethnic group that faces the highest police murder rate, the highest rates of incarceration, homelessness, and sexual violence.

So yes, we have very good reason to be skeptical of symbolic gestures.

We're all for removing colonial symbols and nationalistic myths, so long as structures such as colonialism and racism go along with them. Problem is, they are not. These edicts are readily embraced by their advocates as "steps in the right direction" for Indigenous interests, yet—as we'll assert here—only serve to calcify colonial rule. What else are we to glean from superficial declarations handed down by occupying governing bodies?

Decolonial aspirations are stunted with liberal cosmetology if nothing concrete is done to address historical and ongoing anti-Indigenous brutality. This is an insidious conciliatory process of decolonial recuperation that is rooted in cultural and symbolic change primarily fixated on transforming social stature. It fails to meaningfully confront and transform social power.

To illustrate, nearly all recently passed IPD declarations use the same template with some minor variations:

> *Reaffirmation of "commitment to promote the well-being and growth of _____'s American Indian and Indigenous community."*
>
> - *Recognizing "that the Indigenous Peoples of the lands that would later become known as the Americas have occupied these lands since time immemorial; and*

- *_____recognizes the fact that _____ is built upon the homelands and villages of the Indigenous Peoples of this region, without whom the building of the _____ would not have been possible; and"*
- *Valuing "the many contributions made to our community through Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, labor, technology, science, philosophy, arts and the deep cultural contribution that has substantially shaped the character of _____; and*
- *_____has a responsibility to oppose the systematic racism towards Indigenous people in the United States, which perpetuates high rates of poverty and income inequality, exacerbating disproportionate health, education, and social crises; and*
- *_____ promotes the closing of the equity gap for Indigenous Peoples through policies and practices that reflect the experiences of Indigenous Peoples, ensure greater access and opportunity, and honor our nation's indigenous roots, history, and contributions;*

and so forth...

IPD traces its roots back to 1977, when a delegation of Indigenous Peoples proposed replacing Columbus Day at the United Nations International Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Amerikas in Switzerland.

The momentum picked up in July 1990, when representatives from more than one hundred Indigenous Nations gathered to organize for the "500th anniversary of Native resistance to the European invasion of the Americas." A resolution was passed to transform Columbus Day, 1992, "into an occasion to strengthen our process of continental unity and struggle towards our liberation."

One year later, after the formation of a committee called Resistance 500 in occupied-Ohlone lands, aka "Berkeley, California," the city council became the first in the "US" to declare October 12 Indigenous Peoples' Day. The resolution called for a day of "ceremonies, cultural events and speakers, participation from the schools and an informational procession."

In the "global south" our relatives elicited a CIA threat advisory stating that,

> The US intelligence committee assess that there is an increased potential for terrorist violence in selected Latin American countries in conjunction with the October 12 observance of the 500th year of Columbus' arrival in the New World.

Attacks included bombings of US targets such as churches, banks, and the US ambassador's house in Chile. The United Press International office in Peru was liberated for a radio broadcast denouncing Columbus' invasion.

Contemporarily in the "US," IPD—at its worst—has absorbed decolonial tendencies and transformed them into annual state-sanctioned cultural marketplaces. With non-profit or self-appointed managers holding it down: it's all pow-wow and no rage, with zero mention of accountability or liberation. We're all too familiar with the machinery of these kinds of "celebrations" as "Native American Heritage Month" is already marked with dances, sales, and a range of other essentialized commodities. This is just an expression of the intimate structural

partnership of capitalism and colonialism, it's IPD™ with all rights reserved. A holiday on stolen land.

To focus on abolishing one day that celebrates genocide of Indigenous Peoples is to ignore the 364 others that are also entrenched in the ongoing occupation and exploitation of Indigenous lives and land.

Amrah Salomon J., Mexican and O'odham, states,

> The practices of naming and celebrating are important ways of normalizing genocide and colonialism. Naming places and days of celebration after horrific killers like Cristoforo Colombo (Columbus), is a way of creating social acceptance for his crimes: rape, torture, invasion, genocide, and being the architect of mass incarceration and the chattel slave trade (that carried Native American slaves to Europe and African slaves to the Americas). Seeing these names celebrated around us elicits deep historical trauma for Black and Indigenous peoples and functions as a form of racial microaggression.

Salomon continues,

> So yes, it is important to remove these offensive names from our everyday geographies, end holidays, and remove monuments that celebrate slavery, colonialism, and genocide.
>
> But addressing public representations that glorify colonial and racial violence is not enough, we must also end ongoing acts of colonial and racial violence for these representational measures to have any kind of lasting social significance. If the statue of Columbus and the genocide celebration of Thanksgiving are gone, there is still a myriad of other acts of colonial violence happening every single day that need to be addressed. Rectification with colonialism can only be achieved through decolonization. Rectification with racism can only be achieved through the abolishment of white supremacy as a structuring institution and social system, not only as a practice of individual bigotry. Rectification with heteropatriarchy can also only be achieved through abolition.

Beyond Recognition

As Charlie Sepulveda, Tongva from occupied lands of "Los Angeles" states,

> Changing Columbus Day for Indigenous Peoples' Day, while appropriate, is nothing more than a politics of recognition. It isn't justice. It doesn't give land back. It doesn't move the Tongva toward decolonization or strengthen our ability to be sovereign. It allows LA to recognize Indigenous people without having to do anything to radically affect the hegemonic order of settler colonialism. Sorry to rain on your parade.

Sepulveda further adds,

> I am grateful to those who worked on abolishing Columbus Day. It is important. Yet, Tongva desperately need more than a symbolic name change. And it is Tongva land, not 'Indian' land.—I hope that was clear [with the declaration of IPD]? If not, then why not? We are still here.

The politics of recognition are important to understand in terms of strategy and tactics. If the goal is for Indigenous autonomy, liberation of the land, people, and other beings, than why plead with our oppressors to merely acknowledge or recognize our existence?

Glen Coulthard, Yellowknives Dene, states in his essay "Indigenous peoples and the politics of recognition" that, "… colonial powers will only recognize the collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples insofar as this recognition does not obstruct the imperatives of state and capital." Coulthard further asserts in his book *Red Skin, White Masks* that,

> …in situations where colonial rule does not depend solely on the exercise of state violence, its reproduction instead rests on the ability to entice Indigenous peoples to identify, either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly asymmetrical and non-reciprocal forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the settler state and society.

This is not to state that attacks on Indigenous identity regarding racist mascots, stereotypical depictions in movies, in advertising, hipster appropriation, and so forth, are not at all damaging.

As Charles Taylor notes in the book *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*,

> …often by the misrecognitions of others…a person or a group can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning one [in] a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.

Understanding how the politics of recognition functions can elucidate pitfalls of cooptation and pathways of greater resistance.

Even the practice of "Land Acknowledgments" or "recognizing the Indigenous Peoples whose lands we are on" disembodies Indigenous identities. It is extremely different to stand with and honor protocols and customs for being a visitor or guest on Indigenous lands, than to merely recognize their existence. Putting this into perspective: most all current movements to establish IPD have originated in urban settings without meaningful engagement of the original peoples on those lands. This re-colonization perpetuates the very erasure that IPD is scripted to address, this is a glaring example of lateral violence.

Coulthard emphasizes how

> …the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend.

Dehumanization can be mitigated by actions that reclaim and re-assert Indigenous identity, but we're urging to go beyond recognition towards what Frantz Fanon offers in *The Wretched of the Earth*: "…it is precisely at the moment [the colonized] realizes [her] humanity that s/he begins to sharpen the weapons with which s/he will secure [her] victory."

liberalism or liberation?

while it has been argued that ipd "is a step in the right direction," we ask, "but what direction?"

To claim Indigenous Peoples' Day as an act of decolonization is a failure of liberal assimilationists.

Symbolically ending Columbus' legacy while continuing to perpetuate and benefit from the violence of the "doctrine of discovery" is just one more dead-end direction of Indigenous liberalism. If we understand that colonization has always been war, then why are we fighting a battle for recognition and affirmation through colonial power structures?

Bettina Castagno, mixed Kanien'kehá:ka, states,

> Those in all good intention think they are helping but don't know that these 'holidays' are still a dominant culture deciding what is to be celebrated. Those days eventually become a consumer capitalist driven celebration, taking on the value system of the dominant greed cultures with christian euro-centric values and behaviors.

Castagno further states,

> In this day and period of 'US' hxstory, no it is not enough to throw us a holiday. Revisit hxstory: after throwing warm blankets, commodity foods, poison hidden in alcohol bottles, sterilization of Indigenous women, uranium poisoned land, substandard medical care and education, broken treaties, stolen land, a mere holiday is insulting. We are not free because we are told we are free, we are not free because it is printed on paper or stamped on a coin, we are only truly free when there is not a dominant entity or other culture making the decisions for our people, our land, our medicines, livestock, food, water, education and health.

Consider that their constitution still does not guarantee Indigenous Peoples protection for religious freedom relating to sacred sites. Sacred places are our shrines, or "monuments" of the relations we have maintained since time immemorial and integral for our continued existence. Yet they are constantly profaned and attacked by the very political forces that now decry select facets of their past transgressions. The sacred Black Hills in occupied-South Dakota—which celebrates "Native American Day" not Columbus Day—have been desecrated by resource extraction and the blasphemous monument to slave owning genocidal presidents, were fiercely fought for and reclaimed multiple times by the American Indian Movement in the 1970s. There are telescopes, ski resorts, pipelines, mines, skyscrapers, and other effigies of oppression that are either desecrating or threatening to violate countless other sacred places right now.

In 2015, riding the wave of IPD declarations, the City of Flagstaff in Arizona proposed to follow suit. Due to their role in maintaining a contract to sell millions of gallons of wastewater to Arizona Snowbowl ski resort for desecration of the Holy San Francisco Peaks, a group of folks shut the process down. The group asked "How does this action stand to benefit Indigenous people more than appease white guilt?"

They issued an initial statement that expressed how,

> We desire to see Columbus Day abolished in all of our lands and can see how others would jump at the opportunity to support this gesture, after all, trust and healing are

> needed and many other communities have struggled hard with their own campaigns to change the name. Perhaps a meaningful process can be brought forward that includes; addressing historical trauma from settler colonialism, that operates from an understanding that Flagstaff is not a 'border town' but occupied stolen Indigenous lands, that immediately ends the Snowbowl contract, that ends racial profiling, police violence, and criminalization of our relatives on the streets, that protects Mother Earth and nurtures healthy and just communities. A process that moves beyond rebranding how our oppression is recognized and restructures our power relationships towards abolishing white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and settler colonialism.

Alternately the group proposed a comprehensive process to materially address the social and political conditions due to ongoing anti-Indigenous policies maintained by the city. While the framework was promising, ultimately the initial process was co-opted by liberals who allowed the accountability and community power-building components to fall by the wayside. In becoming a liberal project that served to improve the functioning of the occupying governing forces, it became a process perpetuating colonial violence.

When the City of Phoenix declared IPD, Alex Soto, Tohono O'odham, stated,

> If the City of Phoenix really recognized Indigenous peoples, it would have also motioned and passed a resolution against the South Mountain Freeway." Alex further adds, "The politics of settler recognition (IPD) in no way ensures our existence. If anything it re-enforces the notion that we are a conquered people. I rather put my energy into burning the table if insincere gestures of acknowledgment and respect are offered by settler colonial institutions. Basically, whatever effort we put into IPD should be at the least be put into actual campaigns that protect local Indigenous culture. If not, what's the point?

As Phoenix readies to celebrate its first IPD, the echoes of dynamite blasting through the sacred South Mountain will most likely be drowned out by the revelry.

Andrew Pedro, Akimel O'odham from Gila River, brings the points home,

> Indigenous People's Day in Phoenix continues to be a facade of Indigenous resistance. Just south of Phoenix, Moadag (South Mountain) is being desecrated by a construction of the Loop 202 extension. This is 21st century colonization by the state but we should still be grateful that the state changed the name of a holiday? I could support it more if the holiday itself wasn't the end goal. The name change is a symbolic victory. Use the struggle as a platform to make demands on behalf of our sacred places but this is not what's happening. It appears that liberal organizing is what's in the way of any real substance coming out of the victory. Rather than attacking 21st century colonization they choose to celebrate what the colonizers give them.

These infrastructure threats to Indigenous existence are generated by the very systemic forces that drove Columbus' genocide of the Taino.

Defending the sacred is nothing new, it's as old as resistance to Columbus and other not-so-well-despised colonial invaders, so why celebrate the hollow gestures of politicians? What about supporting and celebrating the ongoing struggles for liberation of our Mother Earth?

Put this into perspective that folks rushed to support #nodapl resistance yet perpetuate erasure of sacred lands and water struggles right where they live. This isn't to say Lake Oahe (the sacred confluence of the Cannonball and Missouri River) didn't warrant critical support, but to contextualize the larger struggles to defend the sacred and protect water. Anti-colonial struggle necessitates an understanding that the frontline is everywhere. It measures and calculates how colonial power operates. If we don't build these understandings into our struggles, we risk the momentum ebbing right where Idle No More left its watermark. Without meaningfully engaging in sacred sites defense at once as struggle against capitalism and colonialism (add racism and cis-heteropatriarchy to boot), we risk a not so distant future where we'll have people driving hybrids through South Mountain on Loop 202 to ski on shit-snow at Arizona Snowbowl on the sacred Peaks while wearing #nodapl or "Defend the Sacred" t-shirts they bought at an Indigenous Peoples' Day event weeks prior. This particular brand of superficial activism and anti-colonial posturing has become more prevalent post-Standing Rock.

Indigenous Peoples' Day, as a process of collusion with occupying state forces, risks becoming a colonial patriotic ritual more than anything that amounts to liberation.

Breaking from Anti-colonial Posture

We'd like to take a moment to address what we mean by "anti-colonial posture."

This position seeks to justify and legitimize itself as loudly as possible, at times purposefully and at others by virtue, drowning out any critical Indigenous voices. Usually with the familiar din of delegitimizing and dismissive rhetoric through one-on-one in-person private meetings (with no greater accountability), white- or academicsplaining (sometimes both) or online statements (which means we're going to do what we want anyways, we have just "heard" you), or the most used disingenuous tactic of the "invitation to present your concerns." You want us to present at your event to express how problematic it is, yet do nothing to functionally change what it is that you are actually doing, really? There's nothing anti-colonial about that.

This is the realm of the fascism of settler/white allyship, it is in actuality, anti-Indigenous. This form of radical posturing craves its validation so much so that it aggressively seeks those who are agreeable, and when it finds them it objectifies and capitalizes off their participation. This is no form of solidarity, it is viciously exploitative. This is where the false allyship of settler colonizers intersects with capitalism. To be clear, anti-colonial posturing upholds white supremacy and capitalism.

The most basic attempts at whitewashing anti-colonial colonialism result in a redfaced facade. As it is, there will always be some wolves ready to dance and where there is a chance to gain social position/power by proximity to whiteness, out come the dances with wolves.

Anti-colonial posturing thrives off of lateral violence. Radical posturing and silencing of those disagreeable is how white supremacy navigates the perpetuation of itself. We are familiar with this as radical/anarchist/anti-capitalist/anti-authoritarian Indigenous Peoples as we've already been its subject and we constantly suffer its blows. Of course we continue to face how disposable we are every day. Radical communities and spaces are no exception unless they are our own, or the long-term hard work to configure relationships in the fight, to truly become accomplices not allies, has occurred. And still, how meaningful that relationship is will never be determined by white settlers. Never.

uprooting colonialism

colonialism is not a static event but a structure built on ideas (a la Patrick Wolfe).

Assuming that colonial power structures will bend to moral arguments is a position that accepts the idea that colonial power can be absolved, we believe that it cannot be. It must be destroyed and the conditions that precipitate it must also be uprooted from these lands. As anti-colonial abolitionists, we seek the total dismantling and systematic erasure of colonial domination and exploitation from these lands.

We desire an unmapping of colonial geography, and see how the dismantling of hxstoric documentation and iconography is an integral part, but we assert that such gains should be wholly in the hands of the people and not the State.

When unsanctioned and unmediated Indigenous and/or accomplice hands strike down or at these statues, monuments, and days of recognition, the process towards destabilizing the colonial death grip on our humanity is loosened.

These kinds of attacks against markers of colonial power can break away at its legitimacy.

Amrah Salomon J., states,

> Abolition and decolonization, along with collective self-determination, require concrete actions. Actions that may begin with taking down a statue or ending a holiday, but that certainly cannot end there, as removing a monument does nothing to address mass incarceration or police brutality, and ending a holiday does nothing to address the disposability of Indigenous life or the desecration of sacred sites. Yes, racist statues need to come down and racist holidays need to be abolished, but the cynical renaming of holidays and statues into some kind of feel-good celebration of inclusion (arguments for diversity and inclusion are really about cultural assimilation to settler colonialism, not a deep reckoning with our politics of difference) is being allowed by the State because it can be reduced to a mechanism for settler society to allow the actions of colonialism and racial terrorism to continue while washing their hands of the responsibility to do anything about it. We reject this.

We can and must simultaneously critically engage and attack the ideas and structures of white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism. After all, people in communities from occupied Ute lands in Denver and beyond have been fighting for years to transform Columbus Day and tear down glorifications of conquistadors and other brutal colonizers while simultaneously organizing efforts to heal suffering from historic and intergenerational trauma.

Anti-colonial struggle means attack

K'in Balaam states,

> Anti-colonial assaults are decisive strikes that aim to achieve one of three things, 1) expropriate resources for our own survival, 2) materially alter the conditions of power relations and geographic control, or 3) actively sabotage and undermine the continuity of colonial power, resources, culture, and control. In short, it's something measurable, not simply a sentiment, or word game constituting an agreement in word not deed, easily forgotten and ignored tomorrow. We're not trying to join in with the settler block party. Or even to take it over.

Balaam further adds,

> To be Anti-colonial means to act and attack. It's not just a bunch of solidarity photo-ops and masked up defensive actions with junior settlers driven by their colonial guilt during their weekend warrior adventure. For the Colonized, life is war, we are under occupation and siege from all sides at all times. Even the would-be accomplice is and always has been, yet another contingent potential traitor. Just as much so, we the colonized all have the potential to collaborate in our own genocide. The difference is not a matter of what position we take. Genocide is always the situational condition of our struggle and we are forced to respond accordingly. We don't get a second chance at making mistakes, because fundamentally either we are an existential threat or they are. It's their cabins or our teepees ablaze but one way or another way something is burning.

Enshrined in genocide and slavery at the brutal hands of white supremacy, is its banks, its skyscrapers, its statues, its names over streets, schools, currency, and other institutions, all standing in monolithic celebration as a physical threat of the violence our violators are still very capable of. Because like many other nation-states the "US" on the whole stands a monument to the ongoing legacy of colonial violence of an entire civilizational order. Our work is to dismantle this order and shatter these monuments of colonial violence, like this one called "America."

Indigenous Peoples' Day of Rage

In 2020, during the height of the pandemic and propelled by the momentum of the George Floyd Uprisings, a call was

anonymously put out for an "Indigenous Peoples' Day of Rage."

The call to action read:

> As the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately ravages Indigenous communities, we cannot ignore the reality that the plague of colonialism has made our peoples more susceptible to this virus. From the fracking and poisoning of our water, mining and burning of coal, oil pipeline spills, abandoned uranium mines, garbage incinerators, building of apartheid walls, the damming of rivers, and continuing ecological devastation, our health is intrinsically tied to the health of our sacred lands. Colonizers are coming to terms with global warming, yet we have been on the front lines of this war against Mother Earth since the first colonial invasions of our lands.

We have grown frustrated with the uninspired assimilationist politics of Indigenous Peoples' Day. Indigenous non-profit corporations and organizations attempt to pacify and assimilate our Peoples further into settler colonial politics. They attempt to police our rage and stifle movements of liberation (as they did at Standing Rock). They are content with hollow land acknowledgments and empty gestures that do nothing to challenge and change the actual conditions of suffering our people face. We do not believe that we can vote our way out of this crisis. We will not beg politicians to reform the very system that is predicated on our genocide and destruction of our Earth Mother. We urge for something more effective towards the undoing of colonialism in our lands.

> We have celebrated and supported the rage of spontaneous and powerful Black Lives Matter uprisings that have brought down monuments to colonizers, and brought racist institutions like the racist Washington NFL team to their knees. In this spirit and in the spirit of our militant ancestors who attacked colonial ideas and institutions, we call on all those who share our frustrations and our rage to join us. For missing or murdered Womxn, Girls, Trans and Two-Spirit relatives. Against resource colonialism. Against colonial borders. Against the settler colonial police state. For total liberation.

Nearly one hundred actions were reported, ranging from banner drops, wheatpasting, militant marches, and attacks on colonial symbols and institutions, including numerous statues that were either redecorated or completely torn down. In so-called Portland, Oregon, anti-colonial demonstrators broke windows and tore down statues of Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln, leaving behind slogans such as "Stolen Land" and "Dakota 38," a reference to thirty-eight Dakota that Lincoln approved to have hanged in the largest mass execution ever in the so-called United States. Roosevelt once stated, "I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are…"

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler denounced the "anarchic behavior" of the "obscene" acts, while Trump called on the FBI to crackdown, which was directly followed by the FBI and DHS making several arrests. In so-called Santa Fe, a three-day occupation ended with a colonial statue being torn down. In Kinłáaní, so-called Flagstaff, around 100 took to the streets in a militant anti-colonial and anti-capitalist march. In so-called Utica, New York, a rally was held connecting the genocide enacted by Columbus and the 2013 death of a local Native teen at the hands of local police. In so-called San Mateo, California a statue of Junipero Serra, an 18th century Roman Catholic missionary, was attacked and vandalized.

In 2021 a renewed call for an Indigenous Peoples' Day of Rage was issued with the note, "Round Two."

The following action report was written by collaborators of Indigenous Action:

> From up north in so-called Edmonton, Alberta down to "Tampa, Florida" and spanning Turtle Island from Sacramento, California to Washington DC—resisters everywhere threw down on Sunday, October 10, 2021 (plus few days before and after) for Indigenous Peoples Day of Rage (Against Colonialism)—Round Two.
>
> We saw banner drops, militant marches, paint attacks on settler institutions, and a lot of discomfort on colonizers faces before the day even began. Apparently, the politicians including mayors of cities hit hard by last year's IPDR actions penciled in overtime for their thinning blue lines while members of the clergy peeked out of windows with trepidation as they sat in round-the-clock vigils anticipating their comeuppance. It was indeed a good day to be Indigenous—not so great of a day to be a colonial relic, as evidenced by Washington DC's statue of the infamous genocidal maniac Andrew Jackson in Lafayette Park which had "EXPECT US" spray painted on its base in reference to the classic slogan of Indigenous resistance, "Respect us or expect us."
>
> As monuments to colonizers around the globe have been vandalized, smashed, and/or ceremoniously thrown into rivers over the past couple years—it was great to see

Andrew Jackson inducted into the club! Along with the Columbus statue in Tampa, Florida and Abraham Lincoln's statue in so-called Bennington, Vermont.

The rubble that is the Third Precinct, burned to the ground in 2020's George Floyd protests, was decorated with an "Avenge Indigenous Children" banner to acknowledge the thousands of lives lost in boarding schools and residential schools across the continent during late 1800s through mid-1900s.

The Southwest saw militant marches demanding No More Stolen Sisters on behalf of the #MMIWG2ST campaign and a rally calling out the mascotization of Native images used by a longtime racist ass business in Durango, Colorado. In occupied Kinłani ("Flagstaff, Arizona"), a rally and march led to the shutting down of major intersections for a radical round dance that ensnarled traffic. A colonial statue was vandalized and smoke devices were set off throughout the downtown for some anti-colonial mayhem.

Meanwhile, over on the West Coast, freeway overpasses hosted banner drops from occupied California and up through KKKanada. Folx in occupied San Rafael demanded that the city drop the charges of Protectors/Defenders (check out ip5solidarity.org) while signs on roadways in Sacramento declared "Columbus Was Lost," "Indigenous Sovereignty NOW!" and, "No Justice on Stolen Land!" Our relatives to the north, in Amiskwaciwaskahikan ("Edmonton, Alberta") reminded drivers that there is "No Pride in Genocide."

Speaking of stolen land, this year (2021) held one very resounding cry. Whether it was splashed across barriers in public spaces of so-called Las Vegas, Nevada, or etched brazenly on a wall under the gaze of the ever-present eyeball surveilling "Asheville, North Carolina's" city hall; whether it was created in a more urban setting in the colorful handstyle of anonymous; or dressed up with the good ol' circle A in flat black across Diné Bikeyah ("The Navajo Nation")—the writing on the wall is clear: LAND BACK.

Signage at colonial institutions were not spared. In Portland, Oregon, Lewis and Clark College had "CHANGE NAME" not so subtly suggested. And the recently opened Tesla dealership and service station in Nambe Pueblo, New Mexico didn't escape the rage at the betrayal of the Pueblo's decision to climb in bed with Elon Musk and become green capitalists.

Understandably, there were many other actions that went down that couldn't or wouldn't be documented, such as sabotaged rail lines in the so-called Pacific Northwest; excavators threatening sacred lands in the "Midwest" that were rendered useless; the Catholic Church in "Denver, Colorado" that allegedly had their truths displayed for the world to see with bright red paint on their walls, and the relatives up in "Portland, Oregon" who struck like ghosts in the night, leaving only footage of clean-up crews sweeping up glass and colonial tears the following day in their wake. Some of the strongest statements are made quietly, as some of our actions have become a silent warcry—an ever present threat. Making colonizers clutch their pearls and pocketbooks, in recognition of an Indigenous resistance that is alive, untamed claws-out, rabid, and growing. It cannot be neatly confined to one designated calen-

> dar day, our anti-colonial agitation is year-round and we celebrate that ANY WAY we damn well please.
>
> This year the justifications for our rage felt more acute, particularly in the so-called US with the colonial authority proclaiming "Indigenous Peoples' Day." We've seen the farce of this politics of recognition for what it is and this is why we rage; to undermine their co-optation and white/redwashing. We emphasized that arrests weren't the point this year especially considering how performative Nonviolent Direct Actions have fed so many of our people into the hands of the police state. We don't want our people and accomplices locked up ever, especially during a pandemic. We're not out to beg politicians, negotiate treaties, and we will not make concessions—we fight for total liberation. To radicalize, inspire, empower and attack—this is what anti-colonial struggle looks like and we are everywhere.
>
> With Love and Rage—May the bridges we burn together light our way.

A radical militant spirit of autonomous Indigenous Resistance has been re-growing. Its appetite is voracious. Who knows what the next cycle will bring?

DĮ́Į̓ — Indigenous Anarchy

Chapter Fourteen: COVID-19, Resource Colonialism and Indigenous Resistance

> "*It is really because of Divine Providence that these Indians have diminished because of the continuity of epidemic diseases, for among such a multitude of different characters there are many restless, haughty and seditious elements.*"
> — Spanish Missionary Father Luis Velarde, 1716

Diné Bikéyah (The Navajo Nation) has faced and endured a higher rate per-capita of COVID-19 cases than any settler colonial US state.

As this respiratory virus wreaks havoc through these lands, mainstream media has again anointed our people as the mascots of poverty and victimization. The statistics are pounded loudly to evoke settler pity: approximately 33% of our people have no running water or electricity. We live in a "food desert" with thirteen grocery stores serving nearly 200,000 residents. Diné Bikéyah has approximately 50% unemployment. While these facts are not wrong, the solution is not more fundraisers for the "poor Indians."

Has this pandemic impacted our people so disproportionately simply because we merely lack power lines and plumbing? Is it just because there aren't massive corporate stores on every corner of our reservation? Would we really be that much more immune from this disease if every member of our tribe just had a job?

Dehumanizing narratives have always been part of the scenery here in the arid Southwest. If you blink on your way to the Grand Canyon, it's easy to miss the ongoing brutal context of colonization and the expansion of capitalism. We live here and we don't even see it ourselves. We're too busy putting up that "Nice Indians Behind You" sign.

As Navajo Nation politicians impose strict weekend curfews, prohibit ceremonial gatherings, and restrict independent mutual aid relief efforts. As notoriously racist so-called reservation "border towns" like "Gallup, New Mexico" dispose of infected unsheltered relatives and initiate "Riot Act Orders" to restrict the influx of Diné who rely on supplies held in their corporate stores, the specter of the reservation system's historical purpose haunts like a neglected ghost, pulling at our every breath, clinging to our bones.

What is omitted from the fever-pitched spectacle of COVID-19 disaster tourism, is that these statistics are due to ongoing attacks on our cultural ways of life, autonomy, and by extension our collective- and self-sufficiency.

While economic deprivation and resource scarcity are realities we face, our story is much more complex and more powerful than that, it's a story of the space between harmony and devastation. It's the story of our ancestors and of coming generations. It's a story of this moment of Indigenous mutuality and resistance.

The Navajo Resource Colony and covid-19

Colonial violence and violence against the Earth has made our people more susceptible to viruses such as COVID-19.

While the COVID-19 virus spreads unseen throughout our region, a 2,500-square mile cloud of methane is also concealed, hovering over Diné lands here in the "Four Corners" area. NASA researchers have stated, "The source is likely from established gas, coal, and coalbed methane mining and processing." Methane is the second most prevalent greenhouse gas emitted in the so-called "United States" and can be up to 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

Two massive coal-fired power plants, the San Juan Generating Station and the Four Corners Power Plant, operate in the area. If regarded as a single entity, the two plants are the second largest consumer of coal in the "US." Most of the generated power is transmitted right over and past reservation homes to power settler colonies in "Arizona, Nevada, and California."

It's not news that over time, breathing pollution from sources such as coal-fired power plants damages the lungs and weakens the body's ability to fight respiratory infections. US settler universities and news outlets have acknowledged that exposure to air pollution is correlated with increased death rates from COVID-19. At the same time, the EPA has relaxed environmental regulations on air polluters in response to the pandemic, opening the door for colonial imposed resource extraction projects on Diné lands to intensify their efforts.

According to a recent report titled, "Exposure to air pollution and COVID-19 mortality in the United States," COVID-19 patients in areas impacted by high levels of air pollution before the pandemic are more likely to die from the virus than patients in other parts of the "US"

The New York Times published an article on the report stating that, "A person exposed to high levels of fine particulate matter is 15 percent more likely to die from the coronavirus than someone in a region with just one unit less of the fine particulate pollution."

The report further states that,

> Although the epidemiology of COVID-19 is evolving, we have determined that there is a large overlap between causes of deaths of COVID-19 patients and the diseases that are affected by long-term exposure to fine particulate matter.

The report also noted that,

> On March 26, 2020 the US [Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)] announced a sweeping relaxation of environmental rules in response to the coronavirus pandemic, allowing power plants, factories and other facilities to determine for themselves if they are able to meet legal requirements on reporting air and water pollution.

According to Navajo Nation Oil and Gas Company's (NNOGC) website,

> In 1923, a Navajo tribal government was established primarily for the Bureau of Indian Affairs to approve lease agreements with American oil companies, who [sic] were eager to begin oil operations on Navajo lands.

Arguably, nearly every economic decision that the tribal government has made since then (with few exceptions) has facilitated further exploitation of Mother Earth for profit.

For every attack on Mother Earth waged by colonial entities, Diné have organized fiercely to protect Nahasdzáán dóó Yádilhil Bits'áádéé Bee Nahaz'áanii or, the Diné Natural Law.

Groups like Diné CARE have been mobilizing since the late 1980s to confront ecological and cultural devastation. Adella Begaye and her husband Leroy Jackson organized to protect the Chuska Mountains from logging by the Navajo Tribal government. They formed Diné CARE and challenged the operations. Jackson had reportedly obtained documents that showed Bureau of Indian Affairs officials were underhandedly working to get the tribe exempt from logging restrictions designed to protect endangered species in the area. He was found murdered shortly after. In defiance of efforts by Diné environmental groups such as Diné CARE to stop coal mining and power plants in the face of global warming, former Navajo Nation Council Speaker Lorenzo Bates declared, "war on coal is a war on the Navajo economy and our ability to act as a sovereign Nation." At the time, the coal industry was responsible for 60% of the Navajo Nation's general revenues. Bates stated that "These revenues represent our ability to act as a sovereign nation and meet our own needs."

At the cost of our health and destruction of Mother Earth, politicians on the Navajo Nation have perpetuated and profited from coal-fired power plants and strip mines that have caused forced relocation of more than 20,000 Diné from Black Mesa and severe environmental degradation.

For forty-one years Peabody Coal, which operated two massive strip mines on Black Mesa, consumed 1.2 billion gallons a year of water from the Navajo aquifer beneath the area. Although the mines are now closed and the Navajo Generating Station (NGS) coal-fired power plant they fed is also shuttered, the impacts to health, the environment, and vital water sources in the area have been severe. The NGS project was initially established with the purpose of providing power to pump water to the massive metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson. For decades, while powerlines criss-crossed over Diné families' homes and water was pumped hundreds of miles away for swimming pools and golf courses, thousands of Diné went without running water and electricity.

Diné environmental groups such as Black Mesa Water Coalition and Tó Nizhóní Ání', who have long resisted resource colonialism on Dził Yijiin (Black Mesa), recently celebrated the shutdown of NGS while the Navajo Nation scrambled to keep the outdated power plant operating, arguing that it was "vital" to the Navajo economy. What was ignored in the melee was that the owners and operators of the coal-fired power plant were motivated to shift towards natural gas that has become cheaper due to fracking.

In 2019, the Navajo Nation further doubled down on coal by purchasing three coal mines in the Powder River Basin area located in so-called Wyoming and Montana. Approximately 40 percent of the so-called US' coal comes from the area, contributing to more than 14 percent of the total carbon pollution in the "US" The deal also forced the Navajo Transitional Energy Company (NTEC) to waive its sovereign immunity as a condition to buy the mines from a company that had just declared bankruptcy.

In June 2023, Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland announced a withdrawal of more than 336,400 acres of "public land" around a sacred area and National Park called Chaco Canyon in so-called New Mexico. The action imposed a 20-year moratorium on new oil and gas proposals and new mining claims in a 10-mile area surrounding the park. While Diné and Pueblo environmental advocates celebrated the federal action, Diné land allotment residents of the area protested. The allottees, who were granted land under the Dawes Act of 1887, blocked the road to

the Chaco Canyon park the day Haaland was intended to celebrate the withdrawal. Siding with Diné allottees, Navajo Nation President Buu Nygren stated,

> The Secretary's action undermines our sovereignty and self-determination…Secretary Haaland's decision impacts Navajo allottees but also disregards the tribe's choice to lease lands for economic development. Ultimately, this decision jeopardizes future economic opportunities, while at the same time placing some 5,600 Navajo allottees in dire financial constraints.

Supporters of the monument designation denounced Nygren and decried that the Navajo Nation police wouldn't protect them from threats of violence made by allottees.

The Dawes Act was explicitly designed to facilitate mass colonial invasion and assimilate Indigenous Peoples into settler society. It resulted in the theft of over 90 million acres of Indigenous lands from 1887 through 1934. Under the act, only male Indigenous "heads of households" could accept the individual allotments, with the condition that they were to become US citizens. The act also produced the idea of blood-quantum to identify who was and—most importantly—who was not, Indigenous, with preferences of larger parcels of land given to those who were part white. The US senator who crafted the legislation sought to impose capitalism and Protestant individualism, "[When] the individual is separated from the mass, set up upon the soil, made a citizen…a positive good, a contribution to the wealth and strength and power of the nation." In outlining his strategy of Indigenous inclusion, Dawes admitted frustrations that Indigenous Peoples persisted in spite of genocide, "We thought we would exterminate him if we could not civilize him." While proclaiming Navajo sovereignty, Navajo Nation President Nygren and Diné allottees not only compromise sacred lands for profit, they fulfill the ecocidal and genocidal legacy of Dawes.

In contrast to the divide at Chaco Canyon, a sacred area known as Bears Ears in southeastern "Utah" was designated by Obama (under the "Antiquities Act") as a national monument in 2016. The 1.35-million acre monument was implemented to protect the area from grave robbing and mining, oil, and gas threats. The monument was reduced by more than 1.1 million acres by Trump in 2017 and then restored by Biden in 2021. The Navajo Nation not only celebrated the initial federal designation, it is one of five Indigenous Nations co-managing the protected area with the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.

Today there are currently more than 20,000 natural gas wells and thousands more proposed in and near the Navajo Nation in the San Juan Basin, a geological structure spanning approximately 7,500 square miles in the Four Corners. The US EPA identifies the San Juan Basin as "the most productive coalbed methane basin in North America." In 2007 alone, corporations extracted 1.32 trillion cubic feet of natural gas from the area, making it the largest source in the United States. Halliburton, who "pioneered" hydraulic fracturing in 1947, has initiated "refracturing" of wells in the area. Fracking also wastes and pollutes an extreme amount of water. A single coalbed methane well can use up to 350,000 gallons, while a single horizontal shale well can use up to 10 million gallons of water. As I've mentioned previously, this is a region with approximately 30 percent of households without access to running water.

The San Juan Basin is also viewed as "The most prolific producer of uranium in the United States." Uranium is a radioactive heavy metal used as fuel in nuclear reactors and weapons production. It is estimated that 25% of all the recoverable uranium remaining in the country is on Diné Bikéyah.

During the so-called "Cold War," Diné lands were heavily exploited by the nuclear industry. From 1944 to 1986 some 30 million tons of uranium ore were extracted from mines. Diné workers were told little of the potential health risks, with many not given any protective gear. As demand for uranium decreased the mines closed, leaving over a thousand contaminated sites. To this day none have been completely cleaned up.

In 1979, the single largest accidental release of radioactivity occurred on Diné Bikéyah at the Church Rock uranium mill. More than 1,100 tons of solid radioactive mill waste and 94 million gallons of radioactive tailings poured into the Puerco River when an Earthen dam broke. Today, water in the downstream community of "Sanders, Arizona" is poisoned with radioactive contamination from the spill.

Although uranium mining is now banned on the reservation due to advocacy from Diné anti-nuclear organizers, Navajo politicians recently sought to allow new mining in areas already contaminated by the industry's toxic legacy.

In 2013 Navajo Nation Council Delegate Leonard Tsosie proposed a resolution to undermine the ban, his efforts were shut down by Diné No Nukes, a grassroots organization "dedicated to create a Navajo Nation that is free from the dangers of radioactive contamination and nuclear proliferation." There are more than 2,000 estimated toxic abandoned uranium mines on and around the Navajo Nation. Twenty-two wells that provide water for more than 50,000 Diné have been closed by the EPA due to high levels of radioactive contamination. The recent push for nuclear power as "clean energy" has made the region more vulnerable to new uranium mining, including an in situ leach mine (which uses a process similar to fracking) right next to Mount Taylor, one of the six Diné holy mountains.

Exposure to uranium can occur through the air, water, plants and animals, and can be ingested, breathed in, or absorbed through the skin. Although there has never been a comprehensive human health study on the impacts of uranium mining in the area, the EPA states that exposure to uranium can impair the immune system, cause high blood pressure, kidney disease, lung and bone cancer, and more. An ongoing effort called the Navajo Birth Cohort Study has also detected uranium in the urine of babies born to Diné women exposed to uranium.

In the book *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute*, Roberta Blackgoat, my grandmother and a matriarch of Diné resistance to forced relocation on Black Mesa, stated,

> The Coal they strip mine is the Earth's liver. The Earth's internal organs are dug up. Mother Earth must sit down. The uranium they dug up for energy was her lungs. Her heart and her organs are dug up because of greed. It is smog on the horizons. Her breath, her warmth, is polluted now and she is angry when Navajos talk of their sickness. The coal dust in winter blows in to blanket the land like a god down the canyons. It is very painful to the lungs when you catch a cold. The symptoms go away slowly when dry coal dust blows in from strip mining. The people say the uranium can dry up your heart. No compassion is left for the motherland. We've become her enemy.

Diné elders who have resisted forced relocation on Black Mesa have faced constant attacks on their ways of life, particularly through confiscation of livestock. The systematic destruction of Indigenous subsistence lifeways throughout Diné Bikéyah has been a strategy waged since the

beginning of colonial invasions on these lands. This devastation has been profitable to Navajo politicians who seek to maintain our role as a resource colony.

In 2015 the EPA accidentally released more than 3 million gallons of toxic waste from the Gold King Mine into the Animas River. The toxic spill flowed throughout Diné communities polluting the "San Juan" river which many Diné farmers rely on. Crops were spoiled that year. As a measure of relief for the water crisis, the EPA initially sent rinsed out fracking barrels. Chili Yazzie, the former Chapter President of Shiprock stated,

> Disaster upon catastrophe in Shiprock. The water transport company that was hired by EPA to haul water from the non-contaminated San Juan River set up eleven large 16,000 gallon tanks throughout the farming areas in Shiprock and filled them up with water for the crops. As they started to take water from the tanks for their corn and melons, the farmers noticed the water from some of [the] tanks [were] rust colored, smelled of petroleum and slick with oil.

Food Deserts: A Project of Colonial Violence

Our health has been broken by nutritionally-related illnesses imposed by colonial attacks on our cultural food systems. Diné Bikéyah wasn't a "food desert" until colonization. According to the American Diabetes Association,

> People with diabetes do face a higher chance of experiencing serious complications from COVID-19. In general, people with diabetes are more likely to experience severe symptoms and complications when infected with a virus.

One in three Diné are diabetic or pre-diabetic, in some regions, health care workers have reported diagnosing diabetes in every other patient.

In 2014, Diné organizer Dana Eldrige published a powerful report on Diné Food Sovereignty through the Diné Policy Institute. In the report, the concept of the Navajo Nation as a "food desert" was contextualized as a process of colonialism and capitalism.

The report identified a Food Desert as

> an area, either urban or rural, without access to affordable fresh and healthy foods. While food deserts are devoid of accessible healthy food, unhealthy, heavily processed foods are often readily available… [Food Deserts] are linked with high rates of nutritionally-related illness. For rural communities, the United States Department of Agriculture has defined rural food desert as regions with low-income populations, the closest supermarket is further than twenty miles away and people have limited vehicle access…Diné people with limited or no income are limited in their food choices, and since healthy, fresh foods are of greater cost, people with limited financial resources often have no other option than to purchase low-cost, heavily processed, high calorie foods which lead to the onset of nutritionally-related illnesses.

The report found that a majority of participants from Diné communities who participated in the study had to travel at least 155 miles round trip for groceries while others regularly drove up

to 240 miles. There are thirteen full service grocery stores in the Navajo Nation, according to the report one of the stores contained 80% processed foods.

The report further stated

> An examination of the Navajo Nation food system reveals that our current food system not only does not serve the needs of the Navajo Nation, but also negatively impacts the wellbeing of the Diné people. These issues include epidemic levels of nutritionally-related illness including diabetes and obesity, food insufficiency (high rates of hunger), significant leakage of Navajo dollars to border towns, disintegration of Diné lifeways and K'é (the ancient system of kinship observed between Diné people and all living things in existence), among other issues; all while the Navajo Nation grapples with extremely high rates of unemployment, dependence on Natural Resource extraction revenue and unstable federal funding.

Our homelands didn't become a "food desert" by accident or lack of economic infrastructure, the history of food scarcity in our communities is directly correlated with a history of violent colonial invasion.

After facing fierce Diné resistance in the mid-1800s, "US" troops invaded and attacked Canyon De Chelly in the heart of Diné Bikéyah. They employed "scorched Earth tactics" by burning homes along with every field and orchard they encountered. "US" Colonel Kit Carson led a campaign of terror to drive Diné on what is called "The Long Walk" to a concentration camp called Fort Sumner hundreds of miles away in eastern "New Mexico." The report states:

> Carson's scorched Earth campaign, including the slaughtering of livestock, burning of fields and orchards, and the destruction of water sources. This scorched Earth policy effectively starved many Diné people into surrender. Word reached those who had not been captured that food was being distributed at Fort Defiance. Many families chose to go to the fort to alleviate their hunger and discuss peace, unaware of Carleton's plans for relocation. Upon arrival at the fort, the Diné found they could not return back to their homes and were captives of the United States military…Due to failure of crops, restrictions on hunting, and the unavailability of familiar native plants, the Diné had to depend on the United States military to feed them, marking a major turning point in the history of Diné food and self-sufficiency. Food rations were inadequate and extremely poor in nutritional content, consisting primarily of salted pork, cattle, flour, salt, sugar, coffee and lard.

When colonizers established military forts while waging brutal wars against Indigenous Peoples, they would also provide rations as a means of pacification and assimilation.

The book *Food, Control, and Resistance: Rations and Indigenous Peoples in the United States and South Australia* illustrates how food rationing programs were a tool of colonization and worked alongside assimilation policies to weaken Indigenous societies and bring Indigenous Peoples under colonial control. Once Indigenous Peoples became dependent on these food rations, government officials deliberately manipulated them, determining where and when the food would be distributed, restricting the kind and amount of foods that were distributed, and determining who the foods would be distributed to. Starvation was weaponized materially and politically.

The strategy of settler societies was to destroy the buffalo, sheep, corn fields, water sources, and anything that fed Indigenous Peoples to diminish our autonomy and create dependency.

As colonial military strategies increasingly focused on attacking Indigenous food systems, liberation and redistribution of resources was not unfamiliar to our ancestors, they effectively raided colonizer's supplies and burned their forts to the ground. But clearly the scorched Earth strategies were devastatingly effective.

Starting in the 1930s the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) ordered a reduction of Diné livestock herds. BIA officials killed the herds "and left them to rot, all in front of Diné families. Some herds were even driven off cliffs, while others were doused with kerosene and burned alive."

This mass killing of animals seriously impaired the self-sufficiency of Diné. Many had to rely on government rations and a growing trading post economy to feed their families. Although the political justification for the extreme reduction was to mitigate soil erosion, the report illustrates that other factors such as "desertification and deteriorating rangeland, such as climatic change, periodic drought, invasion of exotic vegetation, and a drop in water table," were the primary issues.

In 1968 the first grocery store opened on the Navajo Nation in Tséghádzání (Window Rock, "Arizona").

The report illustrates that:

> …the impact of these grocery stores and the decline of Diné foods were documented in nutritional research. By the 1980s, soda and sweetened drinks, store bought bread, and milk were commonplace in the Navajo Diet, while fry-bread and tortillas, potatoes, mutton, and coffee continued as staples. Although many Navajo families still farmed (corn, squash, and melon reported as the most cultivated crops), gardens were generally small and no longer appeared to be a major source of food for many families…In addition to dietary changes, the shift in Diné life and society also include the breakdown of self-sufficiency, Diné knowledge, family and community, and detachment from land. These changes did not occur by chance, but were fostered by a series of American interventions and policies (the process of colonization); namely forced removal, the livestock reduction, boarding schools, relocation, and food distribution programs, along with the change from subsistence lifestyles to wage based society and integration into American capitalism…Prior to American efforts of colonization, Diné people operated in a food system that was not only integral to our culture, but one in which Diné people actively produced and collected the food needed to feed their communities. This meant that Diné people did not depend on outside governments and systems for food. Not only did the people ensure that quality and nutritious food was provided, but they did so without operating under the authority or governance of these outside entities.

In the conclusion of the report, the Diné Policy Institute recommended, "revitalizing traditional foods and traditional food knowledge through the reestablishment of a self-sufficient food system for the Diné people."

In typical fashion, the colonial government and Navajo politicians have deepened the assimilation process through their efforts to reform the food desert issue, by starting a farming initiative that purchases seed from Syngenta and Monsanto and that uses tax incentives to make healthy food more affordable, furthering Diné people's dependence on commodified food.

Although the Navajo Tribal Council established a massscale farming initiative called "Navajo Agricultural Products Industry (NAPI)," the farm has stated on its website that it plants genetic hybrid corn seed purchased from "Pioneer Seed Company, Syngenta Inc., and Monsanto companies." In 2014, in an attempt to "curb" the diabetes epidemic, the Navajo Nation Council created a law that raised the sales tax for cheap junk foods sold on Navajo Nation and another removing sales tax from fresh fruits and vegetables. Economic pressure on those already struggling while not addressing the root causes and environmental degradation is par for the course for the colonial government and Navajo politicians.

Instead of directly feeding ourselves and communities, we have become dependent on businesses and corporations that are more concerned with profits than our health and well-being. The boarding schools were replete with capitalist indoctrination to forcibly assimilate Diné children into colonial society. The curriculum was designed with a clear lesson: To feed our families we needed jobs. To have jobs we needed to be trained. To be trained we needed to obey. To not have a job means you're poor. To employ other workers is to build wealth. To build wealth means success.

The process of destroying Indigenous collective- and self-sufficiency is an ongoing process of capitalist assimilation. Starvation is still weaponized against our people.

We cannot talk about economic deprivation and lack of resources without talking about history, we cannot address the COVID-19 crisis without addressing the crises of capitalism and colonialism. The disappearance and annihilation of Indigenous People has always been part of the project of resource extraction and colonialism.

A Virulent Faith

on march 7, 2020 in the small remote community of Chilchinbeto in Diné Bikéyah, a Christian group held a rally and "Day of Prayer" in response to the coronavirus outbreak. According to one report a pastor was coughing during his sermon. On March 17, the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed on the reservation with Chilchinbeto as the epicenter of a growing outbreak. On the 18th the Nation closed itself to visitors. On March 20, as confirmed COVID-19 cases doubled then tripled, the Navajo Nation issued a shelter-in-place order for everyone living on the reservation and imposed a curfew ten days later.

As schools were closed in response to the crisis, the Rocky Ridge Boarding School—located on Black Mesa just near lands partitioned in the so-called Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute—stayed open. Staff at the school had participated in the Chilchinbeto Christian rally and roughly a hundred students were exposed to the virus.

This is not the first time that Christians and boarding schools have exposed our lands and Indigenous Peoples to a pandemic. COVID-19 is not the first virus our people have faced.

From measles, smallpox-infected blankets, to the influenza epidemic of 1918 (when an estimated 2,000 Diné perished), Indigenous Peoples have long been familiar with the colonial strategies of biological warfare. Some estimates state that approximately 20 million Indigenous People may have died in the years following the first wave of European invasion due to diseases brought by colonizers—up to 95% of the population of the so-called "Americas." The colonization of the "Americas" was a christianizing strategy codified in the 1493 Papal Bull "Inter Caetera" to ensure "exclusive right" to enslave Indigenous Peoples and take their lands.

As documented heavily in 1763, during an ongoing siege on the colonial military outpost called "Fort Pitt" led by Obwandiyag (Odawa Nation, aka Pontiac), British invaders used smallpox-infected blankets as a biological weapon. The British General Jeffrey Amherst had written, "Could it not be contrived to send the smallpox among those disaffected Tribes of Indians? We must, on this occasion, use every stratagem in our power to reduce them."

In 1845, John Louis O'Sullivan declared the "American" belief in the "God-given mission" of the so-called United States as "manifest destiny." This idea accelerated the colonial violence of "American" expansion.

Under the so-called "Peace Policy" of "US" President Grant, reservations were to be administered by Christian denominations which were allowed to forcibly convert Indigenous Peoples to Christianity. By 1872, 63 of 75 reservations were being managed by Christian religious groups. The "Peace Policy" also established that if Indigenous Peoples refused to move onto reservations, they would be forcibly removed from their ancestral lands by US soldiers. These white supremacist Christian policies led to laws passed by "US" Congress in 1892 against Indigenous religions. Any Indigenous Person who advocated their cultural beliefs, held religious dances, and those involved in religious ceremonies were to be imprisoned.

Total assimilation was also the ultimate goal of the violently dehumanizing "US" boarding school project. It was a religiously based white supremacist process to "kill the Indian and save the man," with the goal of "civilizing" or compelling Indigenous people to be "productive" members of settler society. Every menial job skill of the subsequent assimilation era represented a rung on a ladder that our people were compelled to climb, for their "higher" education took them farther away from our cultural knowledge systems and collective/self-reliance further into a system of economic exploitation. It was also a strategy to fulfill land theft through erasure of Indigenous connections and reliance on our lands.

Capitalism is an economic and political system based on profit motive, competition, a free market, and private property, and is characterized by extreme individualism. Its genealogy is rooted in slavery, genocide, and ecocide. Resource colonialism is the systematic domination and exploitation of Indigenous lands and lives to benefit the attacking non-Indigenous social order. This is different from settler colonialism, which is the invasion, dispossession, and/or eradication of Indigenous lands and lives with the purpose of establishing non-Indigenous occupation of those lands.

To this end, economic development models to address "poverty" in our communities only mean our people will continue to be dependent and ultimately solidify the arrangement that was established through colonial and capitalist domination of our lands and peoples. The process of "indigenizing" or "decolonizing" wealth in this context only makes us that much more complicit in our own genocide.

The colonial project is largely incomplete as our cultures are incompatible with capitalism. There is no duality of Indigenous and capitalist identity, they exist diametrically opposed as natural and unnatural enemies. Ultimately only one can exist while the other must perish.

In the midst of geopolitical battles for minerals, oil, and gas in the Navajo Nation resource colony, environmentalists have cried for a "just transition" into a "green economy." By urging for "new deals" to make capitalism more eco-friendly and sustaining unsustainable ways of life through solar or wind energy, all while the underlying exploitative power relationships remain intact. This arrangement doesn't seek to end colonial relations with resource extractive industries, it red/greenwashes and advances them.

In this way both Navajo Nation politicians and non-profit environmental groups (and even some proclaimed radical ones) are in the same business of fulfilling the expansion of capitalism on our lands.

Throughout our lands of painted deserts, our bleeding is obscured by red ochre sunsets kissing rough brown skin. This is where gods are still at war in the minds of those obsessed with words in books that are not our own. Everything is desecrated. Everything is for sale.

From Mother Earth to our bodies, in capitalism everything has been reduced to a commodity. As long as it can be sold, bought, or otherwise exploited, nothing is sacred. So long as the lands (and by extension our bodies) are viewed this way we will have conflict, as capitalism is the enemy of Mother Earth and all which we hold to be sacred.

Missionizing Charity and Allyship

Diné families in the remote region of Black Mesa on Diné Bikéyah—in particular those impacted by forced relocation—have long been the perpetually "impoverished" fascinations of aspiring white saviors. Self-appointed allies, ranging in political spectrum from anarchists to Christian missionaries have rushed to provide support through "food runs" and other forms of charity. They keep a tidy arrangement providing for some families and leaving others out, building long-term relationships that fill accounts somewhere, all the while providing maintenance to the very system of rationing and control that was set in place during the so-called "Indian Wars."

This brand of "charity" continues to be a strategy of colonial societies to control Indigenous Peoples throughout the world. Non-profit industry operatives (allies and Indigenous non-profits) missionize capitalist and colonial dependency, all while starving our people of their autonomy. They functionally are the new forts of the old wars.

Settler and resource colonialism and capitalism have been and continue to be the crisis that has dispossessed Indigenous Peoples throughout the world from our very means of survival.

From scorched Earth campaigns that intentionally destroyed our fields and livestock and forced us to rely on government and missionary rations, to the declarations of our communities as perpetually "impoverished" disaster zones by Christian groups, non-profit organizations, and even some radical support projects, our autonomy has consistently been under attack. This is exacerbated today by those who perpetuate and benefit from cycles of dependency veiled as acts of "charity."

In its obscene theater, ally-politics have nearly become a characterization of *Dances with Wolves*. Whether it's self-discovery and guilt-distancing decolonial projects or groups such as Showing Up for Racial Justice and the Catalyst Project parachuting to the frontlines of Indigenous struggles (from Big Mountain to Standing Rock), the fetishist settler gaze rarely sees beyond the periphery of its own interests and comfort. In endless workshops and Zoom meetings, it centers understandings of resistance and liberation on its own terms. This is most obvious when these false friends chase another social justice paycheck or abandon us when things get hard. The ally-industrial complex is in the process of colonizing Indigenous resistance. "Allies" are the new missionaries.

Settler society is grappling with how to understand and respond to this crisis, but for that to fully occur they have to come to terms with how their ways and understanding of the world has been built on a linear timeline, and how that timeline is coming to an end. Instead of fetishizing

this ending with fantasies of apocalyptic survival and savior scenarios, this is the time of dirty hands, it's a time of direct action, meaningful solidarity, and critical interventions. It's a time of solidarity and ceremony. If we are to have true solidarity and not charity on stolen lands, we must establish reciprocal terms that have a deep understanding of ongoing legacies of colonial violence.

Indigenous Mutual Aid is Necessary

In early March 2020 mutual aid proJects started mobilizing in Diné Bikéyah. As of this writing more than thirty groups are coordinating emergency relief in various forms of direct actions throughout our communities.

The idea of collective care and support, of ensuring the well-being of all our relations in non-hierarchical voluntary association, and taking direct action has always been something that translated easily into Diné Bizáad (Navajo language). T'áá ni'ínít'éego t'éiyá is a translation of this idea of autonomy. Many young people are still raised with the teaching of t'áá hwó' ají t'éego, which means "if it is going to be, it is up to you. No one will do it for you." Ké', or our familial relations, guides us so that no one would be left to fend for themselves. I've listened to many elders assert that this connection through our clan system, that established that we are all relatives in some way so we have to care for each other, was the key for survival of those who were imprisoned at Fort Sumner. It's important to also understand that Ké' does not exclude our non-human relatives or the land.

Indigenous Peoples have long established practices of caring for each other for our existence. As our communities have a deep history with organizing to support each other in times of crisis, we already have many existing models of mutual aid organizing to draw from.

This has looked like a small crew coordinating their relatives or friends to chop wood and distribute to elders. It has looked like traditional medicine herbal clinics and sexual health supply distribution. It has looked like community water hauling efforts or large scale supply runs to ensure elders have enough to make it through harsh winters. It has looked like unsheltered relative support through distribution of clothing, food, and more.

Any time individuals and groups in our communities have taken direct action (not by relying on politicians, non-profit organizations, or other indirect means) and supported others—not for their own self-interests but out of love for their people, the land, and other beings—this is what we know as "mutual aid."

When we recognize that we're all in this together, that no one is better than anyone else and we have to take care of each other to survive, this is what anarchists have come to call, "Mutual Aid." It's a practice that anarchist author Peter Kropotkin wrote about in his book published in 1902 called *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. His analysis was established in large part by observing how Indigenous communities cooperated for survival in contrast to existing European notions that attempted to assert that competition and domination were "natural" human behaviors. Kropotkin understood mutual aid as a law of nature, that when you observe and listen to nature, you understand that life thrives not by struggling for existence or the shallow notion of survival of the fittest, but through mutual support, cooperation, and mutual defense. We never needed and still don't need dead white men from Europe to instruct us on how to live.

Indigenous Mutual Aid organizing challenges "charity" models of organizing and relief support that historically have treated our communities as "victims" and only furthered dependency and stripped our autonomy from us. We organize counter to non-profit capitalists who maintain neo-colonial institutions and we reject the NGO-ization and non-profit commodification of mutual aid.

While solidarity means actively and meaningfully supporting each other, it also doesn't mean blind illusions of "unity" or that we must flatten out the diverse cultural and political ways and views that each of us maintains. There are some necessary tensions and factions in our communities and in radical Indigenous politics. Some Indigenous non-profits such as the NDN "Collective" and Navajo and Hopi Families COVID-19 Relief Fund (NHFCRF) have made millions of dollars from relief efforts in response to this pandemic. Relief has become big business while root causes are reinforced and further entrenched. To illustrate the disconnect of analysis, the NHFCRF started distributing coal for Diné and Hopi families to burn to stay warm in the cold depths of winter. Others are proposing a "revolutionary Indigenous socialist" agenda in an academic vanguard charge to proletarianize Indigenous ways through redwashed Marxism. This re-contextualizing of Marx and Engels' political reactions to European capitalism does nothing to forward Indigenous autonomy. The process inherently alienates diverse and complex Indigenous social compositions by compelling them to act as subjects of an authoritarian revolutionary framework based on class and industrial production. Indigenous collectivities and mutuality exists in ways that leftist political ideologues can't and refuse to imagine. As to do so would conflict with the primary architecture their world is built on, and no matter how it's re-visioned, the science of dialectical materialism isn't a science produced by Indigenous thinking. Colonial politics from both the left and the right are still colonial politics.

As the pandemic of COVID-19 wreaks havoc on our communities and threatens those most vulnerable such as our elders, those with existing health conditions due to colonial diets, ecological devastation, and polluting industries, immunocompromised, unsheltered relatives, and others, there is a clear need for organized mutual aid. Considering the cultural contexts, needs, and especially the history of colonial violence and destruction of our means of collective- and self-sufficiency, a distinct formation of Indigenous Mutual Aid and Mutual Defense, is necessary.

Indigenous Mutual Aid is not just about redistributing resources, it's about radical redistribution of power to restore our lifeways, heal our communities, and the land.

Prophecy and Medicine

Just two generations after The Long Walk and mass imprisonment at Fort Sumner, Diné Bikéyah was faced with the influenza epidemic of 1918. Before the outbreak of the flu, my grandmother Zonnie Benally, who was a medicine practitioner, was given a warning when a saddle spontaneously caught fire. After praying she understood that a sickness would come correlated with a meteor shower, and that by eating horse meat she could survive. Zonnie Benally spread the word and urged people to prepare by going into isolation. The sickness also came after a total solar eclipse, which medicine people warned would bring harm to our people.

Dook'o'oosłíid is one of six holy mountains for Diné, we were instructed to live within the boundaries of these pillars that uphold our cosmology. Arizona Snowbowl ski resort has been pumping millions of gallons of treated sewage from the City of Flagstaff to make fake snow on

these sacred slopes. Since the Forest Service "manages" the sacred mountain as "public lands," they sanction this desecration.

When the initial proposal was made to desecrate the mountain, medicine practitioners testified in court that this extreme disturbance and poisoning of the mountain would have severe consequences for all peoples. Their testimony was prophetic.

Daniel Peaches, member of the Diné Medicine Men's Association stated,

> Once the tranquility and serenity of the Mountain is disturbed, the harmony that allows for life to exist is disrupted. The weather will misbehave, the ground will shift and tremble, the land will no longer be hospitable to life. The natural pattern of life will become erratic and the behaviors of animals and people will become unpredictable. Violence will become the norm and agitation will rule so peace and peacefulness will no longer be possible. The plants will not produce berries and droughts will be so severe as to threaten all existence.

In 1996, two holy people visited an elder near Rocky Ridge where the Black Mesa outbreak occurred. They had been visiting and sharing messages for some time, and when Sarah Begay, the daughter of the elder came home one day, she saw the holy beings. All of the messages that had been shared were verified by Hataałiis (medicine practitioners). It became a situation because the family's ancestral lands were claimed in a constructed "land-dispute" with the Hopi tribe. Albert Hale, then Navajo Nation president (who has recently passed due to COVID-19) even declared a "day of prayer." Their message was prophecy. It spoke of the elders and times we live in now. There were conditions set and what they spoke has unfolded.

The Diné Policy Institute Food Sovereignty Report also found prophecy in their study,

> "…it is said that the Holy People shared with the Diné people the teachings of how to plant, nurture, prepare, eat, and store our sacred cultivated crops, such as corn. The importance of these teachings to our well-being was made clear in that the Holy People shared that we would be safe and healthy until the day that we forgot our seeds, our farms, and our agriculture. It was said that when we forgot these things, we would be afflicted by disease and hardship again, which is what some elders point to as the onset of diabetes, obesity, and other ills facing Diné people today."

In response to ongoing attempts to remove her from her land and confiscate her livestock, Roberta Blackgoat stated,

> This land is a sacred land. The man's law is not our law. Nature, food, and the way we live is our law. The plans to disrupt and dig out sacred sites are against the Creator's law. Our great ancestors are buried all over, they have become sand, they have become the mountains and their spiritual presence is still here to guide us…We resist in order to keep this sacred land in place. We are doing this for our children.

Pauline Whitesinger, a Diné matriarch in the resistance against forced relocation on Black Mesa once said, "Washington DC, is the cause of a lot of hardship and disaster. It's like a human virus with side effects."

When I asked my father Jones Benally, a medicine practitioner, what he thought of this current crisis he said, "I've been telling you to prepare for this." And he has, especially since another recent solar eclipse. He said, "The government won't take care of us. They're part of the reason nature is attacking."

We have survived massacres and forced marches, we have endured reservations and boarding schools, we have faced forced sterilizations and national sacrifice zones. We have resisted attacks on Mother Earth as we have long held that the balance and harmony of creation is intrinsically tied to our wellbeing and the health of all living beings. Our immune systems are compromised due to colonial diets and ecocide. From abandoned uranium mines poisoning our lands and waters, to coal mining, fracking, oil pipelines, and desecration of our most sacred sites, we have become more susceptible to this and other diseases due to capitalism and colonialism.

Our prophecies warned of the consequences for violating Mother Earth. Our ways of being have guided us through the endings of worlds before. We listen now more than ever to our ancestors, the land, and our medicine carriers. In these times we care for each other more fiercely than ever. We are living the time of prophecy. The systems that precipitated this disharmony will not lead us through or out of it, they will only craft new chains and cages. As the sickness ravages our lands, we must ask ourselves, "will we continue to allow this empire to recuperate?"

I've grown up in a world of ruins. We have teachings and prophecies of the endings of cycles, but that's always how it's been here, in this world of harmony and disharmony and destruction. Diné teach this as Hózhóji and Anaaji.

An anti-colonial and anti-capitalist world already exists, but as my father says, "There aren't two worlds, there is just one world with many paths." Colonial and capitalist paths are linear by design. In this space between harmony and devastation, we listen to these cycles, we listen to the land, and we conspire. If the path of greed, domination, exploitation, and competition doesn't accept that it's reached its dead end, then it is up to us to make sure of it.

Chapter Fifteen: Unknowable: Against an Indigenous Anarchist Theory

> This land is a sacred land. The man's law is not our law. Nature, food, and the way we live is our law.
>
> — Roberta Blackgoat, Diné matriarch from Big Mountain

The Unraveling

My actions are clumsy and deft. My hands are shaking. I have a fever. These are the convulsions of bitter medicine and the spirit.

We have become entangled in words that are not our own. They cut our tongues as we speak. They eat our dreams as we sleep. This is a reluctant offering.

A thread that weaves a story, pulled gently at first. So focused on the line that we become disoriented in the delicate tension. When we remember to breathe. When we step away from these stars and into constellations, we see new symbols have emerged.

The idea of "civilization" was translated to Diné bizaad, as it was in many other languages of the land, in the brutal and fractured words of imposition that were spread through a multitude of ruptures throughout the world and refined in Europe. This is not an evaluation of what has proceeded as the depths of its telling has been surveyed acutely in other spaces. Though it is important to speak of its stark shadow as it was announced in the eclipsing language of domination, control, and exploitation. And when it consumed and it did not swallow us whole, it voraciously welcomed us into its folds. Our ancestors knew this was the language of non-existence, they attacked it.

When we ask the question "What does civilization want?" we are visited by the ghosts of our children. The specters of a dead future. Emaciated skeletons buried beneath vulgar stories of conquest upon conquest upon conquest. Civilization has no relatives, only captives. Breathing dead air and poisoned water, it owns the night and creeps towards distant constellations. Its survival is expansive unending hunger, a hunger that has been named colonialism; a vast consumption that feeds on spirit, and all life. It fashions its years and seconds into an anemic prison. It has shaped time into the most exquisite of weapons, obliterating memories, killing cycles. Its essence is time. The temporal and spacial imposition of awareness is the oblivion that is modernity and linear, or one-way time. When we name the genocidal fulfillment of a colonized future, civilization pronounces itself as The Existent. This is what is meant by "modernity." It is authoritarian temporality. We name this consuming of existence, this assertion of "superiority," as a war of wars against Mother Earth.

Capitalism is the alimentary tract of this monster, it is a transmuter. Recoiling onto itself to keep its accumulations from others, only moving when there is something to be gained. It speaks

between acrid breaths, "the air is mine, the water is mine, and the land is mine," as it carves the Earth and draws lines, "even the night, is mine." We cannot even sleep without a payment to exist within its expansive nightmare.

Everything can be transmuted into commodity; this is what is meant when the words "free" and "market" are conjoined. Whether driven by capitalist expansion or other political and economic means, industry demands resource. It covets them and produces a hierarchy of existence, or power, through a vulgar alchemy. It fragments our lives into manageable tasks. To produce. To make. To grow. To serve. To build. To move. To gain. It cultivates food not to eat. It builds pipelines through sacred rivers to fuel industries, to benefit those who believe in its "order," its adherents, its devout believers, those who name themselves "capitalists." The lights are left on. The fridge is still cold. The water flows down the drain to somewhere. Our lands are left ravaged by open sores where they were scraped and dug for coal, uranium, lithium, metals, glistening stones…

When they shit we are left to live and feed on the wastes.

That we cannot live freely from the land is the ultimatum of capitalism, it is the banner waving over the death march of progress across the world. That the Earth has been scorched so we submit, that our children were stolen so we forget. It has not solely been that our existence is what has been the target of civilization though, in terms of commodities and productivities; we can exist with the condition that our world ends within us. So long as we shed our skin and unravel that which has been woven since time immemorial.

Na'ashjé'ii Asdzáá taught us how to weave (and guided the warrior twins).

Each thread has memory and recoils towards its restoring. When it is so tightly woven it holds water, that is how familiar, how deep our mutuality is. Place, beings, each other, ourselves, this depth is beyond the reaches of memory.

It is what has always made us a threat.

Civil (Dis)Agreements

Civilization's urge is to constitute itself in ways to manage, or govern, by a range of means, i.e. divine right, social contract, etc., its people and resources; it has come to articulate this arrangement in the form of the State. However it has been organized, we can understand the State plainly as centralized political governance. Its characteristics have always been the same: a privileged group makes the decisions for everyone else and upholds those decisions with military and police forces, the judiciary, and prisons. Whether it is constituted in a religious, class, hereditary, or ethnic authority, there is nothing voluntary, or consensual, about the State except within the ranks of its elite privileged groups. The "rights" of the governed can be granted or taken away.

Max Weber offers this candid and most useful definition of the State as, "a polity that maintains a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence."

Its violences are most often obscured (because some form of agreement is necessary to maintain power) but always upheld through some combination of implicit and explicit institutional brutality.

In the political theater of "democracy," that obscurity is maintained through the symbolic act of voting. Voting is ritual agreement of the legitimacy of the State and its mandate over society.

It only ever resolves the question of rules and rulers. Decolonization will never be on the ballot, yet Indigenous captives continue to play out their roles and vote for their colonial masters.

The process of bringing people and lands that have not been civilized into civilization is the essential and vicious role of colonialism. When a State has consumed its available resources it is compelled to look elsewhere and to others. This is the etymology of colonialism; it is the language of domination, coercion, control, exploitation, assimilation, and annihilation. It expands and contracts in between breaths of unending wars, it colonizes memories to justify itself, this is what it calls History. Its corroded conscience constructs a national identity out of its insecurities: stories of greatness, of the world before and the world to come. It emerges entitled and assembles against its persistent enemies, the menace of those who refuse captivation, those fluctuating threats it names as "others." The maintenance of this internalized violence is its nationalism. When it becomes so pervasive that it has no need to pronounce its dominance and authority, this is what we also call "fascism."

The settler colonial State has always meant war against Indigenous Peoples in so-called North America. The military designs of reservations were open-air prison camps. Treaties were negotiations of the terms of our surrender. The strategy of "Tribal sovereignty" was planned as a temporary management project towards total assimilation. That Indigenous Peoples have been politically corralled into the colonial designation of "domestic dependent Nations" is antithetical to the very concept of sovereignty (in terms of self-governance). From the Doctrine of Discovery to the Marshall Trilogy (three Supreme Court cases that form the basic framework of federal "Indian law"), these acts are the formal legal basis of ongoing genocide, ecocide, and slavery on these lands. Indigenous politicians (those that aren't outright colonial puppets) are still sentimental for the fantasy of "Tribal sovereignty" under colonial occupation. Their strategies are social and political suicide.

While Indigenous scholars and activists like Vine Deloria Jr. and members of the American Indian Movement have focused on the goal of an Indigenous sovereignty "without political and social assimilation," this objective has been limited and ultimately reinforced the Euro-colonial, or more precisely the Westphalian, system, of nation-state sovereignty. "Tribal sovereignty" is not possible while colonial authority exists, and perhaps a more pressing concern is that it is fundamentally a colonial political concept. While calls to "honor the treaties" on one hand could be viewed as assertions of Indigenous political authority, on the other, they are a myopic urge to revisit forced negotiations made under duress to benefit the colonial order. The strategy of colonial expansion was not designed to sustain treaties with Peoples that invaders planned to assimilate into their order. The US government had absolutely no problem breaking every treaty it marked its name on. From the colonizer's perspective treaties were always temporary; they were a concession to captivity, an agreement to civilization. They were merely a symbolic and political formality of capitulation. Treaties are dead words on dead pieces of paper that were negotiations of the surrender of our ancestors.

In its simplest terms, settler colonialism is violent dispossession, appropriation, and imposition. Resource colonialism is only differentiated in that it is oriented to enslave and exploit. Both forces of colonialism are most often imposed in tandem; always depending and shifting based upon the benefits sought by the colonizer. In its mapping of existence, colonialism dispossess all life. Its first discreet violence is discovery, the brutal act of making "knowable," the unknown. It then imposes one way of living, one way of time, and one way of knowing, over another. What has been called "manifest destiny"—More's utopian impulse—is the mass-death march of settler

futurity. Always towards a temporal hegemony. Its power coalesces in spacial moments by its adherents. As it breathes it is scalable; it is at once the State, the monarchy, the church, the colony, and the empire. For those that continue to reap the rewards of colonization, it is a "civil" agreement they silently make and uphold everyday.

Nature Negates the State.

As we trace tree rings and dust turned stone carved by powerful waters into vast canyons, we are comforted with the unknowledge that nature has always negated the State. As it controls and consumes existence to sustain and build itself, the State, as a constitution of civilization, exists against nature.

For Diné, our lives are guided in relation to six sacred mountains that are the pillars of our cosmology. Each of these mountains is adorned in sacred elements and presents a teaching of how we maintain and restore harmony as we exist in this world. Through our ceremonies and prayers we maintain a living covenant (physically maintained as *Dził Leezh*, or mountain soil bundles) to exist in harmony with nature.

At points in our existence, a collective social process called Naachid (to gesture in a direction) has been implemented to address significant matters facing our people. Naat'aáni (the one who speaks) have been misinterpreted by colonial anthropologists as "leaders" of Diné, yet their role, as those responsible for the medicine bundles for their families, was ceremonial and not absolute or coercive. This way of being is incompatible with any form of centralized governance. It is incoherent to the State.

Throughout the world Indigenous Peoples live their mutuality on varied terms in complex (and sometimes conflictual and contradictory) social relationships. The cosmology of existence, the continually emergent worlds and manifestations of being and becoming, are all outside of "civilized" order and the State. They are *unknowable*.

Yet the settler anthropologist wants more evidence, more rationale, more comparison, more information, and more justification to feed itself on the unknown. It scavenges for barbarity to justify its own violent social urges: "this is how it's been, this is why we dominate and destroy." The living world is sacrificed and consumed on the altar of progress; this is the sacrament of Darwin.

Perhaps to also clear their genocidal consciences, European invaders have been fascinated with projecting "enlightened" ideals of social management (like calling even the slightest agreeable political cohesion a "democracy"), hierarchies, and power relationships to justify their ongoing march of "modernity." Anthropologists have nearly dissected everything they can about who we are and how we relate to each other. As we'll discuss later, it is no surprise to see radical leftists calculate their existence on that same path, with similar projections.

Ours is a continually emergent world, our existence and our future is continuous manifestation, and we are always in the process of becoming.

To unmap Indigenous social relations from the colonial political geography means to become unknowable again. When we restore or heal ancestral living knowledge, we become a remembering against time. Indigenous memories are anti-history and anti-future. Indigenous physical and mnemonic resistance is the rejection of colonial temporal "awareness," it is the negation of oblivion. Our mutuality with existence has always occurred outside of time.

Our existence is organized in cycles that have rejected coercion into the static geography of settler-colonial understandings. We find more affinity with the juniper and sage that grow through impossible sandstone. We locate ourselves in the springs where our ancestors' footprints have worn a path like an umbilical cord. We know the land and the land knows us. Where and who we are mean the same thing. This is an understanding that is cultivated through generations upon generations of mutuality. This is where our thinking comes from. It is a place where no government exists. Indigenous liberation is the realization of our autonomy and mutuality with all life and the Earth, free from domination, coercion, and exploitation. This is also an anarchist assertion, so we locate a connection.

The anarchist position is one that locates the fundamental oppression and power in society in the very structure and operations of the State. Although autonomy and anti-authoritarianism didn't originate in Europe, as a political idea, Anarchy was named through hundreds of years of resistance to domination by the State, monarchs, capitalists, and the Christian church. For those who assert themselves as anarchists, any form of state power is an imposition of force. They fundamentally reject and critique political authority in all its forms. In its early expressions, those now considered "classical" anarchists such as Bakunin and Kropotkin, found anarchism in what they observed as a "natural law" of freedom and sought harmony in its order. Though there is some interesting ancestry with Lewis Henry Morgan (who fetishized the Haudenosaunee) and William Godwin, and the influences of the products of their fascinations with Indigenous Peoples in the so-called Americas, we're not interested in the pedigree of anarchism. They drew from our blood and we kept bleeding. In their distillation they separated out our matriarchy, our queerness, and that which made us whole, so what would they have to offer except a vague essentialization?

When anarchism speaks we locate an affinity in our hostility towards those who have imposed themselves upon us. But we resist to be reduced to political artifacts, so this has also made us hostile towards anarchist identity, though not entirely to anarchism.

When it is asked, "how can we locate an Indigenous Anarchism" and "how can we heal and live our lives free from colonial constraint?" our first response is an extension of our hostility; there is no Indigenous anarchist theory and perhaps there never should be.

Against an Indigenous Anarchist Theory

Theory proposes to map who and what we are into the awareness we reject; to make us known and formulate a position through the cartography of settler knowledge. But what use do we have for political ideologies that have been imposed through colonial relations?

Political science theories are established through substantiation, explanation, and justification. The reference points for these standards are Euro-subjectivities that inherently delegitimize and dispossess Indigenous knowledge. Those who aspire to be scholars, by design of their institutional careers, most often are placed in the position of ideological authority.

The contours of the existent political geography have been over-mapped by intellectuals, academics, and armchair revolutionary theoreticians who desire to flatten our Earth-view into categories that are too stifling for the complexities of our desires. Their pastime is building walls within walls of concrete structures where they can hang their accolades and intellectually manage those of us below. Their affinities are shaped within the same halls of other "sciences" that

are reductive fascinations born of, benefit from, and ultimately serve to perpetuate a materialist culture of domination, exploitation, and death.

After a political theory is solidified, a banner is waved, a flag is planted, and allegiance is due.

We do not seek that our ways of knowing, being, and acting ever be wrapped up into a fixed belief and presented as a pitiful rag. We do not wish that Indigenous anarchism ever be a flag that is planted anywhere on Mother Earth. The calcification of an Indigenous anarchist theory would precipitate all the merchandizing that relegates other political theories to banal dramaturgy, and we fanatically reject these conditions.

Indigenous autonomy needs no theoretical foundation to justify itself.

As an anarchist who was also an Indigenous person, Aragorn! identified this rejection, "Anarchism is the term used to describe an open ended theory that will not be set in stone. Anarchy isn't named after a man, it is named after negation."

The modern leftist political urge towards unified (centralized) revolutionary struggle, with meticulously identified "points of unity" and check box manifestos outlining programs, are all propositions of philosophical, ideological, and political homogeneity. This is a tendency that the Zapatistas—who are romanticized ad nauseam for their particularly wonderful sustained insurrection—were very aware of. Much to the frustrations of leftists seeking legitimacy and to have their political theories confirmed, the Zapatistas were intentionally elusive about their politics due to the trappings of modern leftist political projections. While it was clear that the assertion of Zapatismo by Ch'ol, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Tojolobal, Mam, and Zoque people embodied autonomous, anti-capitalist, anti-colonial struggle, land back, and mutual aid, the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee-Zapatista Army of National Liberation asserted,

> Zapatismo is not a new political ideology, or a rehash of old ideologies. Zapatismo is nothing, it does not exist. It only serves as a bridge, to cross from one side, to the other. So everyone fits within Zapatismo, everyone who wants to cross from one side, to the other. There are no universal recipes, lines, strategies, tactics, laws, rules, or slogans. There is only a desire—to build a better world, that is, a new world.

Leftists have excessively applied "post-modern" (a concept that placed them farther along their linear timeline) anthropologism and studied their uprising (while almost always neglecting struggles of Indigenous Peoples whose lands they occupy), but their rebellion is incomprehensible without understanding the Indigenous heart (through language, ceremony, cosmology, etc.) at the center of their struggle. We appreciate and desire to build on this negation of comprehensibility. We do not fetishize Zapatismo because it does not exist.

We also reject the proposition that any political ideology could comprehensively represent the desires, aspirations, resistance, autonomy, and social organizing of all Indigenous Peoples throughout the world. When we say Indigenous, we mean *of the land*. That means who we are is specific to a place. This is something Aragorn! explored from a position of dispossession in *Locating an Indigenous Anarchism*,

> An indigenous anarchism is an anarchism of place. This would seem impossible in a world that has taken upon itself the task of placing us nowhere. A world that places us nowhere universally. Even where we are born, live, and die is not our home."

Aragorn! reflected past those of us who are still rooted in place and not in the location that, "…is the differentiation that is crushed by the mortar of urbanization and pestle of mass culture into the paste of modern alienation." But this is the beauty of this conversation. When we start talking about our relationships to place, we draw out the tensions, the exclusions, the conflicts and contradictions. (Perhaps we should also be asking or proposing, "how can we weaponize our alienation?") Our aspirations are already well articulated by our original (living) teachings; no theory or postulation can substitute. This is not to say that our ways are rigid, but to break the dams imposed by colonial stunting and let the rivers of our ways of being flow. Without breaking those barriers, we face stagnation of any political aspiration in the tepid waters of theory. Our existence is guided but it is also fluid and as such, no river should live as a lake if its waters were born to flow.

The disharmony of Anarchist identity and solidarity.

There is a push by settler leftists, particularly by those entangled in the academic industry, to define an Indigenous Anarchism. They come as inchoate anthropologists with their half-chewed hypotheses in their mouths, speaking for us before we have spoken. Perhaps the impulse is a moment to celebrate for some, as the alternatives are to continue the status quo towards our social death and the fulfillment of a colonial future or to compete for equal access to coercive power through "revolutionary" leftist propositions. But settler sciences and politics can only define what we are not. Their reference point is European thought that slaughtered their own Indigenous understandings long ago. For the better part of its articulated existence, anarchism has been a response to power in the context of European cycles of social domination, exploitation, and dehumanization. And so the expectation for Indigenous Peoples to answer with a clear ideological and political response is in many ways, a project that (unintentionally) serves to justify settler colonial identity and existence. It is an insidious survival strategy, veiled as an overture of political solidarity. So why should Indigenous Peoples join the chorus of this death rattle when the killing of a settler colonial future is what we mean when we pronounce "Indigenous Liberation"? The project of politicizing Indigenous identity produces Indigenous actors assuming roles in a political theater that ultimately alienates our autonomy. But if we study civil movements in the so-called US, apparently this is how we qualify for solidarity.

It would appear that we would naturally find affinity with those asking and answering the question, "How can we live our lives free from authoritarian constraint?" Yet the terms of affinity or solidarity have almost always been skewed towards the pursuit of a settler colonial future. Indigenous Peoples constantly have had to justify our existence in political terms to be suitable for support.

This false solidarity has never been mutual; it has existed as an instrument of settler colonial assimilation. It seeks to justify itself through captivating Indigenous Peoples rather than examining how it is itself a product, perpetuator, and benefactor of settler colonial domination. There is nothing more contradictory than an autonomous settler asserting a standard for which Indigenous autonomy should be justified.

To make this point clear, early "American" anarchists never declared war against colonialism.

One of the most prominent representatives of the early anarchist tendency on these lands, Voltairine de Cleyre, celebrated colonial violence against Indigenous Peoples in her 1912 essay

"Direct Action." That it has never, in all of these years of study, come to the attention of students of anarchism to address her example as settler colonial defense against Indigenous Peoples, is a glaring reality of the blind spot that European descended anarchists continue to maintain. In her essay De Cleyre stated,

> Another example of direct action in early colonial history, but this time by no means of the peaceable sort, was the affair known as Bacon's Rebellion. All our historians certainly defend the action of the rebels in that matter, for they were right. And yet it was a case of violent direct action against lawfully constituted authority. For the benefit of those who have forgotten the details, let me briefly remind them that the Virginia planters were in fear of a general attack by the Indians; with reason. Being political actionists, they asked, or Bacon as their leader asked, that the governor grant him a commission to raise volunteers in their own defense…I am quite sure that the political-action-at-all-costs advocates of those times, after the reaction came back into power, must have said: 'See to what evils direct action brings us! Behold, the progress of the colony has been set back twenty-five years;' forgetting that *if the colonists had not resorted to direct action, their scalps would have been taken by the Indians a year sooner* (emphasis added), instead of a number of them being hanged by the governor a year later. In the period of agitation and excitement preceding the revolution, there were all sorts and kinds of direct action from the most peaceable to the most violent; and I believe that almost everybody who studies United States history finds the account of these performances the most interesting part of the story, the part which dents into the memory most easily.

De Cleyre, like most early anarchists in the US, critiqued authority, domination, and coercion, yet glorified the brutality of colonial conquest as an exemplary unmediated act. The deeper story of Bacon's 1675–1676 "rebellion" is that this colonial invader went against British authority and manipulated Occaneechi warriors to assist in his attack against the Susquehannock who were defending their homelands. After their raid, Bacon's white militia immediately turned on their Occaneechi allies and massacred men, women, and children. That this analysis has remained unchallenged is remarkable considering that thirty years after this "rebellion," settler militias like Bacon's transformed from Black slave and "Indian" patrols into the first police forces in "America."

We can also look to Cindy Milstein's 2010 book *Anarchism and Its Aspirations* for more recent examples of settler colonial advocacy. While the majority of the book succinctly states what anarchism is about, in the section on Direct Democracy Milstein states, "…we forget that democracy finds its radical edge in the great revolutions of the past, the American Revolution included." For Milstein, settler colonial violence was a reconcilable complication,

> This does not mean that the numerous injustices tied to the founding of the United States should be ignored or, to use a particularly appropriate word, whitewashed. The fact that native peoples, blacks, women, and others were (and often continue to be) exploited, brutalized, and/or murdered wasn't just a sideshow to the historic event that created this country. Any movement for direct democracy has to grapple with the relation between this oppression and the liberatory moments of the American Revolution.

Milstein then states, "At the same time, one needs to view the revolution in the context of its times and ask, in what ways was it an advance?" and later calls for "a second 'American Revolution.'"

We can also recall Bob Black's essay where he used the Sand Creek massacre to attack Ward Churchill's dubious claims of Indigeneity (who perhaps deserves it, but not from the likes of Black). Black sensationally claimed propositions of Land Back would mean white "holocaust." Black also renders Indigenous Peoples as non-living artifacts in his essay, *Justice, Primitive and Modern: Dispute Resolution in Anarchist and State Societies*. But this is nothing exceptional; most anarchist resources referencing Indigenous Peoples are either rooted in fetishism or anthropological examinations and remunerations on pre-colonial statelessness and savagery. Self-serving, epistemological, colonial grave robbing persists.

Settler colonialism by definition is involuntary association. Colonizers who are anarchists still maintain an implicit position of domination over Indigenous Peoples and Lands, which is unmistakably contrary to anti-authoritarianism. This has been incongruously apparent in "primitivist," green anarchist, and rewildling tendencies that have been wrought with cultural appropriation, fetishism, and erasure. Without consent, without meaningful relationality with Indigenous Peoples, settler colonizer anarchists in the so-called US will always have to face this deep contradiction. Anarchism, or any other political proposition for that matter, simply cannot be imposed or "rewilded" on stolen lands.

While settler colonizer anarchists preserve the idea of "America" in their revolutionary imaginary, Black anarchists such as Ashanti Alston, Kuwasi Balagoon, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin in the so-called US have long articulated their deep concerns with anarchism's lack of racial analysis while struggling with propositions of Black statist nationalism. In *As Black As Resistance: Finding the Conditions of Liberation*, William C. Anderson and Zoé Samudzi dig directly into this matter by asserting, "We are not settlers. But championing the creation of a Black majoritarian nation-state, where the fate of Indigenous people is ambiguous at best, is an idea rooted in settler logic." They observe that,

> Black American land politics cannot simply be built on top of centuries-old exterminatory settler logic of Indigenous removal and genocide. Rather, the actualization of truly liberated land can only come about through dialogue and co-conspiratorial work with Native communities and a shared understanding of land use outside of capitalistic models of ownership.

The solidarity of stolen people on stolen lands is built through mutuality, consent, and breaking the manipulations of colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy that have dispossessed all of us from Indigenous ways of being.

That "American" anarchist history and contemporary analysis is devoid of meaningful anti-colonial analysis and action speaks volumes to this concern. For all its aggressions towards the State, there are no excuses for its lack of implication of the overlying function of the first violences that compose "America" and from which the continuity of its power flows to this day.

Anarchism, as with all settler produced or adjacent political ideologies, has a compatibility issue with settler colonialism.

In the recent past, settler colonizer anarchists continually excused themselves out of solidarity for Indigenous struggles. From denouncements that "Indigenous struggles are nationalistic,"

which really is a projection by fragile settlers of national identities that have absolutely no correlation with Indigenous social organizing (other than with the likes of Republican Russell Means), to outright attacks on the spiritual basis of Indigenous relationality, if solidarity matters, settler colonizers have to confront their hang-ups. This is not to argue that Indigenous Peoples should be considered solely as candidates for political alliance, this goes beyond solidarity, it is an assertion that any liberatory impulse on these lands must be built around the fire of Indigenous autonomy. Whether its performative allyship through land acknowledgements or adopting the label "accomplice," settlers need to implicate themselves fully into the destruction of their social order. Otherwise we end up satisfied that It's Going Down and CrimethInc. check boxed anti-colonial as part of their politic and feature the occasional Indigenous story that they share affinity with. It's meaningless unless it is a position that informs every part of their analysis and actions, not just when a radical Indigenous moment occurs and they can attach their own analysis to it.

We reject the identifier of "anarcho-Indigenous" for this reason. We are not an appendage of a revolutionary ideology or strategy for power for someone else's existence. We do not seek to merely be acknowledged as a hyphen to anarchism or any liberation or resistance politics only to be subsumed into its counter movement against a dominant culture.

The question of Indigenous Anarchism isn't one that we arrived at as corollary of, or due to, the shortcomings of white or settler anarchism—it isn't "what it wasn't doing for us"it is a question arrived at in relation to the existence of the State, of the ongoing brutalities of civilization, of colonialism, capitalism, cis-heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy, and the desire for an existence without domination, coercion, and exploitation.

From capitalism to socialism, the conclusion towards an affinity with anarchism is in part made due to the anti-Indigenous calculations of every other political proposition.

Marxism's theoretical inadequacy as a strategy for Indigenous autonomy and liberation lies in its commitment to an industrialized worker-run State as the vehicle for revolutionary transformation towards a stateless society. Forced industrialization has ravaged the Earth and the people of the Earth. To solely focus on an economic system rather than indict the consolidation of power as an expression of modernity has resulted in the predictions of anarchist critics (like Bakunin) to come true; the ideological doctrine of socialists tends towards bureaucracy, intelligentsia, and ultimately totalitarianism.

Revolutionary socialism has been particularly adept at creating authoritarians. Anarchists simply see the strategy for what it is: consolidation of power into a political, industrial, and military force pronouncing liberation to only be trapped in its own theoretical quagmire that perpetually validates its authoritarianism to vanquish economic and social threats that it produces by design.

To be required to assume a role in a society that is premised on colonial political and economic ideology towards the overthrow of that system to achieve communalization is to require political assimilation and uniformity as a condition for, and of, revolution. Marxist and Maoist positions demand it, which means they demand Indigenous People to reconfigure that, which makes them Indigenous to become weapons of class struggle. The process inherently alienates diverse and complex Indigenous social compositions by compelling them to act as subjects of a revolutionary framework based on class and production. Indigenous collectivities exist in ways that leftist political ideologues refuse to imagine, as to do so would conflict with the primary architecture of "enlightenment" and "modernity" that their "civilized" world is built on.

This is why we reject the overture to shed our cultural "bondage" and join the proletariat dictatorship. We reject the gestures to own the means of production with our expectant assimilated role of industrial or cultural worker. Any social arrangement based on industrialization is a dead end for the Earth and the peoples of the Earth. Class war on stolen lands could abolish economic exploitation while retaining settler-colonialism. We have no use for any politics that calculates its conclusion within the context of these kinds of power relations.

As Indigenous Peoples we are compelled to go deeper and ask, what about this political ideology is of us and the land? How is our spirituality perceived and how will it remain intact through proposed liberatory or revolutionary processes? As any political ideology can be considered anti-colonial if we understand colonialism only on its material terms as colonized forces versus colonizer forces (by that standard the "American Revolution" was anti-colonial). When the calculation is made; all other propositions such as Communism, revolutionary socialism, and so forth become obsolete in that the core of their propositions cannot be reconciled with Indigenous spiritual existence. Anarchism, with its flawed legacy, is dynamic enough to actually become a stronger position through the scrutiny; this is primarily due to the matter that as a tension of tensions against domination, anarchism has the unique character of resisting urges towards intransigence. It has been developed and redeveloped as a dynamic position that strengthens with its contortions. Anarchists have constantly looked inward and convulsed with (and even celebrated) their contradictions.

Dislocating an Indigenous Anarchism

If anarchism doesn't make us more whole, what use do we have for it?

When we ask the question, "What do our cultures want?" the response for Diné is hózhó, or harmony/balance with existence. This is expressed and guided through Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Házhóón.

The idea of collective care and support, of ensuring the wellbeing of all our relations in non-hierarchical voluntary association, and taking direct action has always been something that translated easily into Diné Bizáad (Navajo language). T'áá ni'ínít'éego t'éiyá is a translation of this idea of autonomy. Nahasdzáán dóó Yádiłhił Bitsąądęę Beenahaz'áanii (the natural order of Mother Earth and father sky) is the basis of our lifeway. Many young people are still raised with the teaching of t'áá hwó' ají t'éego, which means "if it is going to be, it is up to you, that no one will do it for you." Ké', or our familial relations, guides us so that no one would be left to fend for themselves, it is the basis for our mutuality with all existence, not just human beings.

Our culture is our prefiguration.

I only share this to assert that the principles of anarchism are not at all unfamiliar to Indigenous ways of being: a harmonious life without coercion based upon mutual aid and direct action.

Anarchism is among the few (anti-)political propositions that can be configured through our teachings and remain intact. This is perhaps why some Indigenous Peoples have either identified as anarchists or drawn connections through affinities with anarchism. We can look to the autonomous collectives and anti-authoritarian actions of Indigenous Peoples throughout the world and list an incredible amount of brilliant examples. We could easily calculate the principles of anarchism and compare, but we resist that urge, simply because they need not be justified by comparison to any fixed political ideology. Though we could explore texts, historical documents, and

oral histories and tease anarchisms out from within them, we reject this kind of anthropological political tourism.

Overall, in many ways anarchism appears to be what we're already doing. So what use do we have for developing a formal affinity or a political identity of it?

Although we can review the genealogy of leftist political propositions such as anarchism and Marxism and unveil limited Indigenous inspirations for those ideologies (Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* being a prime example), there have been only a handful of Indigenous thinkers and writers who have articulated their positions linking Indigenous ways and anarchism more formally. Out of the range of texts that relate to Indigenous Anarchism, only Aragorn!'s two essays: *Locating an Indigenous Anarchism* (2005) and *A Non-European Anarchism* (2007), and Taiaiake Alfred's 2005 book *Wasàse: indigenous pathways of action and freedom*, offer a more direct naming of an Indigenous anarchism.

While Aragorn! offered first principles of Indigenous Anarchism: "Everything is Alive, The Ascendance of Memory, and Sharing is Living," he rejected a pinning down of an Indigenous Anarchist position and challenged the ways academics, particularly anthropologists, have attempted to domesticate an Indigenous Anarchism in their scholarship.

In his 2005 book, *Wasàse: indigenous pathways of action and freedom*, Taiaiake Alfred spoke of "anarcho-Indigenism." In explaining why he felt this term is appropriate to identify a "concise political philosophy." He stated, "The two elements that come to mind are *indigenous*, evoking cultural and spiritual rootedness in this land and the Onkwehonwe struggle for justice and freedom, and the political philosophy and movement that is fundamentally anti-institutional, radically democratic, and committed to taking action to force change: *anarchism*." He further observed,

> …strategic commonalities between indigenous and anarchist ways of seeing and being in the world: a rejection of alliances with legalized systems of oppression, nonparticipation in the institutions that structure the colonial relationship, and a belief in bringing about change through direct action, physical resistance, and confrontations with state power.

Both Aragorn!'s and Alfred's analysis emerged at the same time with different conclusions. Alfred fetishized nonviolence and called for revolutionary change through spiritual resurgence, while Aragorn!, who was an anarchist without adjectives, proposed patience.

In the aftermath of these openings, other articulations have been made, some less clear than others.

In 2007 Táala Hooghan Infoshop was established (myself being one of many "founders") as an anti-colonial and anti-capitalist space by Indigenous youth in occupied-Kinłani (Flagstaff, Arizona) with the statement, "We are an Indigenousestablished, community based and volunteer-run collective dedicated to creatively confronting and overcoming social and environmental injustices in the occupied territories of Flagstaff and surrounding areas." In 2013 I helped host Fire at the Mountain which was an anti-colonial and anarchist bookfair. This is also the location where we (a small temporary collective of sorts) held the 2019 Indigenous Anarchist Convergence.

In *Anarchism is Dead! Long Live ANARCHY!* (2009), Rob Los Ricos, who maintains strong affinity with anti-civilization critiques, asserts that, "The greatest fallacy of Western ideology is that human beings are something apart from—and somehow superior to—the natural world," but he does not offer an Indigenous perspective. He articulates what he thinks anarchism should

be "for" (one race, Earth-centric, etc.) and cautions anarchists to be wary of progress, "If the Enlightenment view of progress can be interpreted as an ideology of the annihilation of life on Earth in the pursuit of monetary gain, then anarchism can only be seen as a more democratic form of worldwide genocidal-euthanasia."

In 2010, an anti-authoritarian bloc was called for to intervene in a march against a fascist cop named Joe Arpaio organized by liberal migrant justice groups in occupied Akimel O'odham Pi-Posh land (Phoenix, Arizona). It was named the Diné, O'odham, Anarchist Bloc due to its composition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous anti-authoritarians. The call for the bloc stated,

> We are an autonomous, anti-capitalist force that demands free movement and an end to forced dislocations for all people…We categorically reject the government and those who organize with its agents. And we likewise oppose the tendency by some in the immigrant movement to police others within it, turning the young against movement militants and those whose vision of social change goes beyond the limited perspective of movement leaders. Their objectives are substantially less than total liberation, and we necessarily demand more. Also, we strongly dispute the notion that a movement needs leaders in the form of politicians, whether they be movement personalities, self-appointed police, or elected officials. We are accountable to ourselves and to each other, but not to them. Politicians will find no fertile ground for their machinations and manipulations. We have no use for them. We are anti-politics. We will not negotiate with Capital, the State, or its agents.

The bloc was singled out and severely attacked by police and five people were arrested. Unsurprisingly non-profit migrant justice groups denounced the bloc as "outside agitators," they claimed that the bloc had brought the violence upon themselves. These so-called "outside agitators" were elders and youth Indigenous to the area and their accomplices.

In 2011, Jacqueline Lasky compiled a collection of essays building on Alfred's work, titled *Indigenism, Anarchism, Feminism: An Emerging Framework for Exploring Post-Imperial Futures*. Lasky offered that

> …anarch@indigenism attempts to link critical ideas and visions of post-imperial futures in ways that are non-hierarchical, unsettling of state authorities, inclusive of multiple/plural ways of being in the world, and respectful of the autonomous agencies of collective personhood.

In a 2012 essay, Cante Waste expressed their interest in an Indigenous Egoism,

> I recognize no authority figure over me, nor do I aspire to any particular ideology. I am not swayed by duty because I owe nothing to anyone. I am devoted to nothing but myself. I subscribe to no civilized standards or set of morals because I recognize no God or religion…Egoist anarchists have declared war on society, war on civilization.

The transcription of a powerful talk in 2018 by Tawinikay was published into a zine, titled *Autonomously and with Conviction: A Métis Refusal of State-Led Reconciliation*, that offered,

> Anarchism is a political philosophy—some might say a beautiful idea—that believes in self-governed societies based on voluntary association with one another. It advocates for non-hierarchical decision making, direct participation in those decisions by affected communities, and autonomy for all living persons. Furthermore, it leaves space for the valuation of non-human entities beyond their monetary worth or usefulness to human beings. My Indigenous teachings have communicated to me that our communities are important, but so are we as individuals. Traditional ways saw decision making as a participatory process, based on consensus, where communities made choices together. My teachings tell me that the land can offer us what we need, but never to take more than that. I see these ideas as fundamentally compatible. I'd like to see an anarchy of my people and the anarchy of settlers (also my people) enacted here together, side by side. With an equal distribution of power, each pursuing healthy relationships, acting from their own ideas and history. Just as the Two Row imagined. I would like to see the centralized state of Canada dismantled. I'd like to see communities take up the responsibility of organizing themselves in the absence of said central authority.

While there are many other examples and actions to list, such as the Minnehaha Free State of 1998 and the Transform Columbus Day actions throughout the 1990s in so-called Denver, many of those were alliances with anarchists rather than assertions of Indigenous anarchy.

While Indigenous anarchists have long articulated themselves in urban displaced contexts where anarchism is expressed in various forms, primarily as a counter-cultural phenomenon in spaces such as infoshops, Food Not Bombs, punk shows, squats, guerrilla gardens, mutual aid collectives, direct action affinity groups, etc., we also find them in the mesas, the canyons, the corn fields, and the sacred mountains.

We offer these select aforementioned expressions of Indigenous Anarchism as a connection to an ongoing conversation that is much more interesting than anything we could offer in the texts of this essay or that we could expect from any books on the subject.

This is a sentiment that was shared by many after the 2019 Indigenous Anarchist Convergence in occupied-Kinłani, as an anonymous Diné wrote in their report back *Fire Walk with Me*,

> …the Indigenous anarchism I saw was kind of unfamiliar and mostly unappealing…I believe people will grow this indigenous anarchism. An ideology succinct enough for Instagram stories, 280-character limit tweets, and vibrant screen-printed art, excuse me, memes. A movement global enough to essentialize a racial, humanist, and material struggle of indigeneity so others will comfortably speak for any absent voice. A resistance so monolithic the powers that be could easily identify then repress all indigenous anarchists."

They added,

> The potential I have discovered at the convergence is the particulars of Diné anarchy…I suggest that Diné anarchy offers the addition of a choice to attack. An assault on our enemy that weakens their grip on, not only our glittering world, but the worlds of others. An opportunity for the anarchy of Ndee, of O'odham, and so on,

> to exact revenge on their colonizers. Until all that's left for Diné anarchists is to dissuade the endorsements of the next idol expecting our obedience.

As Aragorn! stated in *A Non-European Anarchism*,

> The formation of a non-European anarchism is untenable. The term bespeaks a general movement when the goal is an infinite series of disparate movements. A non-European anarchism is the thumbnail sketch of what could be an African anarchism, a Maquiladora anarchism, a Plains Indian anarchism, an inner-city breed anarchism, et al. A category should exist for every self-determined group of people to form their own interpretation of a non-European anarchism.

We anticipate the deeper exploration of Indigenous Anarchism to go two ways: one way will be by activist scholars (both Indigenous and settlers) from an anthropological and philosophical perspective that is totally out of touch with those closer to the fires of autonomy in our lands (and clearly this is the path we reject), the other way will be messy, bold, fierce, experimental, full of contradictions. It will be shared in smoke around fires, speaking dreams. It will be found between shutting down pipelines, smashing corporate windows, and ceremonies. It will be in hooghans and trailer parks. It will be something that refuses with all its being to be pinned down, to be brought into the folds of the knowable, to be an extension of the colonial order of ideas and existence. It will make itself unknowable.

It is in this spirit that we offer the following provocations, assertions, thoughts and questions, not as a conclusion but as an invitation to further this discussion if we are to orient ourselves as Indigenous People who are also anarchists.

An Ungovernable Force of Nature

Indigenous Anarchists are an ungovernable force of Nature. We maintain that no law can be above nature. That is to say, how power is balanced and how we organize ourselves socially is an order that flows from and with Nahasdzáán (Mother Earth). This is to what we are accountable and to what we hold ourselves responsible to. Our affinity is with the mountains, the wind, rivers, trees, and other beings, we will never be patriots to any political social order.

As a force, we defend, protect, and take the initiative to strike.

Our project is to replace the principle of political authority with the principle of autonomous Indigenous mutuality. To live a life in conflict with authoritarian constraint on stolen occupied land is negation of settler colonial domination.

This is also a negation of settler impositions and social mappings of gender, gender roles, ability, who is and who isn't Indigenous, borders, religion, tradition (as a temporal constraint and not the in living cultural sense of the term), education, medicine, mental health, and so forth.

Before colonial invasion on these lands Indigenous societies existed without the State. While inter-Indigenous conflicts of various intensities and scales occurred, we embrace the negative implications regardless of "cultural relativisms." Where people of the Earth have tended towards domination, there are powerful stories and ceremonies that have brought them back into the circle of mutuality.

We offer that in the incompatible brilliance between understandings of anarchism and Indigenous existence, a space is revealed where we can shed the poisoned skin of formal political entanglement in the dominant social order.

In this way we view anarchism as a sort of dynamic bridge. A set of radical (as in total negation) ideas that are a connecting point between anti-colonial struggle and Indigenous liberation. A practice that expresses and asserts autonomy with respect to the context of where it is located (place). It is an antagonistic connection between the point of where we are dispossessed and ruled over, to a point towards liberation and autonomy. As a rejection of all systems of domination and coercion, it is the utility anarchism has for Indigenous liberation of which we are interested in. And most specifically, it is in its indictment of the State and total rejection of it that we find the greatest use. Indigenous anarchism is a commitment to the destruction of domination and authority, which includes colonialism, white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy, capitalism, and the State.

We think beyond the solidarity of nationalisms (as this is what internationalism is predicated upon) and ask our relatives to consider the solidarity of mutuality with the Earth and all beings. That our solidarity is projected out from our relationship with the Earth. Our solidarity focuses on more than just intersections, it is centered on interrelationality.

We do not seek to "indigenize" anarchism, or to turn that which is not our thinking into something that works for us. This kind of appropriation is relative to assimilation, and we see no use in it. We do not seek to "decolonize" anarchism simply because we do not share its ancestry. What we would like to offer is that we have already pronounced and located an Indigenous Anarchism, and it doesn't, and should not, exist. Indigenous Anarchism presents the possibility of attack; it is the embodiment of anti-colonial struggle and being.

Our project isn't to translate anarchism into Indigenous languages, as so many other ways of thinking have been missionized, but to build ways with which we can end coercive relations in our everyday lives. Leftist political ideologies are an unnecessary step towards Indigenous liberation. We offer no allegiance to colonial politics.

The question of anti-authoritarianism also pulls us farther beyond the trappings of pan-Indigeneity. When we critically ask, "What hierarchies exist in our distinct ways of being?" and "What traditions or cultural knowledge deprives people in our societies of their autonomy?" we resist anthropological temporal trappings that seek to preserve social artifacts to a fixed point.

The notion of life without authoritarian constraint doesn't belong to a group because it found itself in compounded utterance of dead greek words, neither does it due to the succession of thinkers and practitioners in its beautiful and troubled genealogy. It belongs to no one and thus to everyone. It has been on the tips of our tongues so long as anyone has tried to dominate, control, and exploit our being and others. It has flowed from our thoughts and contracted our muscles to reflexively pull or push back.

Our social relations have had little distractions between what we want and how we live for generations upon generations.

We assert that every formation and theorized political matrix is at its core comprised of manipulation, coercion, and exploitation. Our existence is unmediated by any dominating force or authority. We're not interested in engineering social arrangements, we're interested in inspired formations, agitations, interventions, and acts towards total liberation.

We are not preoccupied with the imposition of an identity or social category, our enemies may call us whatever they want until their world crumbles around them. It is not our pastime to

convince them of anything, it is our intention to do everything possible by whatever means is effective to end the domination of our Earth-mother and all her beings.

If anarchy is the "revolutionary idea that no one is more qualified than you are to decide what your life will be," then we offer that Indigenous Anarchists consider how deeply the "you" or "we" is as part of our mutuality with all existence.

The Re-Bundling/Weaving Again

Ours is a radical incoherence.

Only by experience will you understand what is taking place in ceremony.

When we ask, "why and how are we dispossessed and by what forces?" it is natural that what follows is the question, "what can be done?"

Civilization and the State are myths colonizers keep telling themselves and forcing others to believe. It is their ritual of power, their prayer is time. The settler imaginary, the civilized mind, is always haunted by everything in them that they have killed. Their State, their entire civilization, exists on the precipice of rupture. Their instability is possibility that can be made to spread. When their spirit is attacked and corrupted, they fail. When we shed the language of nonviolence and embrace our dispossession, it becomes more clear how to precipitate that vital failure. When their imaginary cannot justify itself against its brutalities, it becomes so vicious and fearful that it attacks and consumes itself.

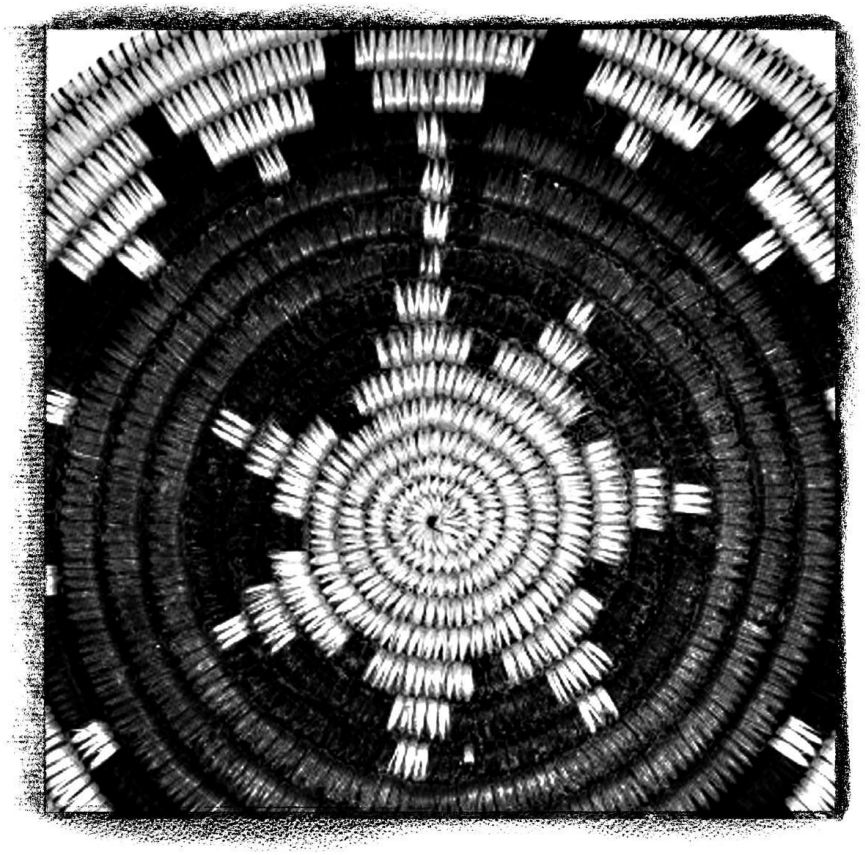
The myth ends in powerful unraveling disbelief.

Na'ashjé'ii Asdzáá still speaks. She shared her fascination and we began to weave, she said if we have forgotten, she will teach us again. The restoration is itself a ceremony. We pull at the thread and unbind ourselves and each other. We unravel one story and reweave. This is the pattern of the storm, it is carried by sacred winds.

As it blesses us and our breath mixes with the breaths of our ancestors, we are rewoven and bundled into its beauty. We are reminded, "There is no authority but nature."

Hwee'díí'yiń déé' haazíí'aanii, éi' ńí'hxéé' bééhaazíí' áánįį aat'eeh. Baalagaana, Bíí' Laah' Áshdlaa'ii, bééhaazíí' áánįį bíí'jíí' niinii, éi' dóh' áálįįdaa'.

Chapter Sixteen: Sacred Autonomy



It is often asserted by Diné that Dził Nataanii (the sacred mountains) are our leaders. They represent the living covenant materialized in *Dził leezh*, or *mountain soil bundles*, that we are guided by. Our existence flows with the momentum of their cyclical teachings, which compel us towards Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóó (onward towards harmony in old age). This of course is adversarial to the imposition of the cis-heteropatriarchal Navajo Tribal government that was solely established as a business council in 1923 to facilitate resource colonialism.

The nation-state structure is incompatible with Diné autonomy. Diné disposition against centralized governance (to the great frustration of colonial forces) is well documented going back along the invader's chronology. This is clearly observed in the book *The Navajo Political Experience* by David E. Wilkins:

> From a Western European political perspective, the Navajo Nation was nonexistent as a representative political body until the 1920s. The Navajo people were, of course, cohesive in that they had a common linguistic and cultural heritage, lived within a well-defined territory, and referred to themselves as Diné. But their political organization, in general, did not extend beyond local bands which were led by headmen [sic], or Naataanii. We will soon discuss a political/ceremonial/economic gathering known as the Naachid which did, in fact, wield a more regionalized sphere of influence, but it is important to remember that even this body had no coercive powers and apparently never represented all Navajos. To put it another way, before the arrival of the Americans in the nineteenth century, the Navajo people did without a tribal-wide representative government that resembled the governments of the United States or Western European countries.

In the book *Navajo Sovereignty* (edited by Lloyd Lee 2017), Diné activist, scholar, and farmer Larry Emerson, offers that Hozhoojí Naat'á (peacemaking) "Offers us a distinct non-Western, Indigenous-centered way to engage and Indigenize the sovereignty concept." He shares,

> There is no point in trying to decolonize the Navajo government—it was not right for us from the start. Its structure and process is a replica of the American system, and the American system appears to be edging toward the possibility of failure, like the great Roman Empire.

Through a conversation with Chili Yazzie and Hasten Dííl Bi Nálí, Emerson concludes that "Instead of a sovereignty rooted in conquest, control, power, manipulation, and wealth, we read of a sovereignty rooted in harmony and balance intrinsic in Diné traditional language, teachings, and stories." he adds,

> We can never understand the epistemic violence of colonial sovereignty and democracy until we exercise the use of the k'é and hózhó lens to do so, and until we relearn to practice a compassionate, loving, interdependent way of relating to each other, as well as the so-called ecosystem.

Indigenous political sovereignty was manufactured by colonial forces with the specific intent of containing, controlling, and civilizing. The imposition of colonial politics has been a violently hierarchical and gendered process. From the first treaties where agreeable Diné hastiin (men)

were selectively chosen and the voices of Diné asdzą́ą́ (women), Nádleehi (non-binary-feminine), and Dilbaa (non-binary-masculine) were systematically undermined by colonial political forces, to contemporary Navajo elections where conservative politicians contort traditional teachings in manipulations against women in leadership roles and to attack queer relations (as with the Diné Marriage Act of 2005 banning gay marriage). Diné relationships to gender and sexuality exist outside of colonial cis-heteronormativities. They exist outside of settler literacies. Ancestral memory of the roles of Nádleehi and Dilbaa have been largely torn from our existence but are still carried forward in ceremony and with young people who are defiantly reconnecting today.

To understand Diné defiance to centralized authority we can further look to elders resisting coal mining and forced relocation on Dził Yijiin (Black Mesa).

Pauline Whitesinger, a Diné elder of Big Mountain (an area located on Black Mesa), once said, "In our traditional tongue, there is no word for relocation. To relocate is to move away and disappear and never be seen again." Her life was a powerful testimony of resistance against resource colonialism. She struggled alongside hundreds of other Diné families and supporters for decades to stop coal mining, sacred sites desecration, and forced relocation induced by US law PL93-531, the so-called Relocation Act. This law, passed in 1974, was challenged in court (*Manybeads v. United States*) but ultimately more than 20,000 Diné have been forcibly relocated. A scattering of families continue to resist, asserting that they will not leave their ancestral lands, that Diné autonomy is sacred and by extension, so is its defense.

In 1979, Diné of Dził Nitsaa' (Big Mountain) declared themselves sovereign from Tribal and "US" governments stating, "The sacred laws of the Diné give no authority for the federal government and its related agencies to intrude and disrupt the sacred lands of Big Mountain." They held that no man-made law can be above nature.

In 1977, during heightened tensions while the relocation fence was being built, then Navajo Nation chairman (an office that was restructured to "president" in 1990) Peter MacDonald met with a representative from the US government to address growing anger of people from Big Mountain. MacDonald explained:

> We can go to [Big Mountain residents] and say, "It's written here, the Congress says it or the courts say it." But they have no appreciation for anything that is on paper. Throughout all these years the only law they know is the law that has been handed down by the legends and the traditions of the culture in which they live. But when you say, "It's written down," they say, "Don't talk to me about it—tell me where it is in my culture and then I'll understand." It is a very difficult thing to go out to these communities and talk about the law, because they don't understand that. They say "Don't talk to me about the law, I don't understand it, I probably never will."

Roberta Blackgoat once testified before the United Nations asserting this defiant sacred autonomy:

> This land is a sacred land. The man's law is not our law. Nature, food, and the way we live is our law. The plans to disrupt and dig out sacred sites are against the Creator's law. Our great ancestors are buried all over, they have become sand, they have become the mountains and their spiritual presence is still here to guide us…We resist in order to keep this sacred land in place. We are doing this for our children.

In the book *Bitter Water: Diné Oral Histories of the Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute*, a powerful documentation of Big Mountain voices by Malcolm Benally (2011), Mae Tso expresses her frustrations with the settler dissonance of Diné existence,

> We explain our beliefs as a natural law, an order of ceremony; as the laws we walk with, live with, and breathe in. It is inside us. A Blessing Way ceremony is done for a renewal of yourself. You breathe again. You can be strong. The bloodstream is strong and after a ceremony you can go again.

Big Mountain resisters spoke firmly about protecting the Holy San Francisco Peaks and resisting forced relocation at a forum held in so-called Flagstaff in 2005. The topic focused on the Black Mesa struggle in relation to corporate globalization and Indigenous cultural survival.

Elder Rena Babbit Lane spoke the most clear and direct analysis of the disharmony of life and the sacred inflicted by settler colonialism:

> …this white government, their laws, it's a law that doesn't care about life. It affects life, instead of caring for life. It affects the old people, instead of making them live longer. It affects your dreams, instead of sleeping peacefully at night, and having your rest. So it affects everything in every way. The relocation, the desecration of the Mountain here. The Mountains are important to the Diné people. When it's abused, that's abuse to our Prayers, our Way. Just as it has been said, they have been digging into our Sacred Medicine Bundles, our belief system. They're digging in there and disrupting the order of our Ways. The reason why this mountain is special to us, is that we make offerings to the Mountain. That we call her our Mother. And also, she represents the Mother Earth. This rain, the moisture for the Earth, for the land, we need to all see, be on the same level, realize that we all need Her. We all live on top of Her. Underneath Her. That She nourishes us, all of us. She does not discriminate. She provides everything for all of us. All the rain drops and all the rain is provided for everybody. And then in turn, we live off that nourishment. We grow crops. We gather medicines from this. And some day, all our children will be needing all these resources, all these connections, to the Mountain.

The autonomous and ungovernable tendencies of Indigenous resistances found on the sacred lands of Dził Yijiin are profound. While anti-colonial autonomous impulses have constantly been undermined from within and without, there has also been a constant refusal of superimposition and grafting of colonial politics onto Indigenous existence.

In the height of conflict with the San Francisco Peaks struggle, liberals from environmental justice non-profits policed the parameters of the fight on bureaucratic terms tokenizing the sacred. Indigenous liberals policed the resistance to obey and stay contained within the material and immaterial structures of colonial governance. While declaring support for diversity of tactics they threw autonomous Indigenous radicals under the treads of colonial machinery. Any sign of unsanctioned disruption was denounced as being *too radical*. Initially it was the intention of coalition efforts to bridge the many forces and ensure the spirituality was at the core of the fight. The difference became a separation of understandings and interpretations of what that actually meant. Liberal intentions were to proceed with tactics deemed legitimate on terms prescribed by the State and foreclose on autonomous urges of more direct forms of intervention and attack.

At Standing Rock, the ferocity of Red Warrior Camp was continually undermined by the colonially sanctioned Tribal Council, non-profit corporations, *olders*, and liberals who blamed radical agitators for *making things worse*. The colonial victim-blaming and apologism by movement police demonstrated the unseen desacralization of Indigenous autonomy and resistance.

These are the intellectual, political, and emotional trappings and reservations of liberalism (Indigenous and otherwise) that police the parameters of the open-air prison camp mindset. Liberal colonial politics cannot be separated from its genealogy of reformist strategies that comprise its anti-Indigenous progression. The inertia of the policies of annihilation from the "Indian Wars" to the assimilationist policies of boarding schools, the Indian Citizenship Act, Indian Reorganization Act, and subsequent "US" policies, is the progressive social death that is Indigenous politics today.

Indigenous settler collaborators act as neo-Indian scouts who, like good Rez lap-dogs, dance with the fascist wolves of colonial power. They manifest in people like Carlyse Begay (a former Arizona state senator) who rallied with "Natives for Donald Trump" and offered a Diné "blessing" at the 2017 presidential inauguration. The widely publicized gaffe was a meme-worthy embarrassment of performative Indigeneity. Begay walked down the aisle at the National Cathedral singing, "Hozho, hozho, hozho…níhízho" over and over, which is akin to saying something absurd like "Holy, holy, holy… we're holy…" Diné (even those who don't consider themselves traditional) were humorously shocked by the blatant display of cultural ignorance. When acting as Diné president in 2012, Ben Shelly proclaimed his support for Zionists and organized an agricultural collaboration with Israel. Shelly dismissed controversy surrounding his efforts clumsily wielding Tribal sovereignty as justification, "The Navajo Nation is a sovereign government and in order to exercise your sovereign government you need to reach out to other governments, so you get relationships and partnerships going like we did with Israel." Diné academics and activists responded with support of anti-colonial resistance in Palestine and derided Shelly. I highlight the disconnect in the previous chapter, but it must be reiterated that many contemporary Navajo politicians equate sovereignty with neo-colonial extractivism.

Colonial collaboration is the dead end of Indigenous autonomy.

In the book *Navajo Sovereignty*, academics and activists cogitate and lament on the contrasts of colonial governance and Diné lifeways while all proposing some configuration for compatibility and coexistence. Not a single essay considers Indigenous existence without the State. Larry Emerson is the only clear voice of anti-colonial irreconcilability yet he concludes that, "Diné ways of knowing will help resolve the schism between the Indigenous and the Western, the colonizer and the colonized, the natured and the denatured." Emerson affirmed the notion of "settler innocence" that Tuck and Yang raged against in *Decolonization is not a Metaphor*, "…incommensurability means relinquishing settler futurity, abandoning the hope that settlers may one day be commensurable to Native peoples."

As I'll claw into in the next and final section, the schism between nature and the people of the Earth against Western civilization is irreconcilable. We cannot choose to live against the Earth and not expect consequences.

My aunt Louise Benally—who resides at Big Mountain and continues to resist to this day—once declared,

> The natural laws and the Indigenous People were already here in a good relationship before the coming of the colonial society who draws law and boundaries. However,

> we Indigenous Peoples will always have ties with these lands, we will continue to live that way with nature and we will carry on.

The struggle at and around Big Mountain has been led and held down by strong and fierce Indigenous women (mostly elders) for more than 40 years. Though forced relocation has taken a very severe toll, the coal mines are now shut down and some of the scarred Earth is being reclaimed. The coal-fired power plants have been demolished. Though they continue to face removal, the remaining resisters to forced relocation have outlived the monster that was consuming our lands, stealing the water, and polluting our lungs. From when Pauline Whitesinger physically fought and evicted workers building the relocation fence in 1977 and whipped one with a rope, to 1979 when Katherine Smith shot her lever-action rifle at another fencing crew (an act that she was charged for, and later acquitted), elder women of Big Mountain have never been distracted by respectability and legitimacy of settler politics. They didn't live as victims pleading for colonizers to recognize and end their suffering. They were not compelled by State or ecclesiastical mandates. In their sacred defiance they asserted Indigenous autonomy, in spite of the State and Tribal authority.

There is nothing sentimental or performative about the sanctity of their lived autonomy in defense of the sacred.

Chapter Seventeen: Toward the Colonial Nothing: Settler Destruction is Ceremony

> Ultimately everything I do, every project, everything I build, every relationship I start is going to fail.
>
> — Aragorn!, *Nihilist Animism*

> Decolonization is a program of complete disorder.
>
> — Frantz Fanon

> Fuck Hope.
>
> — Chelsea Watego, *Another Day in the Colony*

"Tradition is the enemy of progress," is the stark manifesto of civilization's violent missionaries. In 1889, Thomas J. Morgan issued his first report as Commissioner for Indian Affairs affirming the "US" project of civilizing Indigenous Peoples:

> The Indians must conform to "the white man's ways," peaceably if they will, forcibly if they must. They must adjust themselves to their environment, and conform their mode of living substantially to our civilization. This civilization may not be the best possible, but it is the best the Indians can get. They cannot escape it, and must either conform to it or be crushed by it.

He expressed the ongoing strategy employed through capitalism and total assimilation:

> The tribal relations should be broken up, socialism destroyed, and the family and the autonomy of the individual substituted. The allotment of lands in severalty, the establishment of local courts and police, the development of a personal sense of independence, and the universal adoption of the English language are means to this end.

Just a handful of generations later, Morgan's strategy is now embraced and celebrated as Indigenous progress.

It is through the temporal violence of the process of civilization that Indigenous cultural knowledge has become fixed into the static point of *tradition*. This temporal enclosure (a spiritual reservation?) is a metaphysical constraint manifested in material destinies. Cultural knowledge and expression, in contrast to tradition, flows in cycles.

Colonial invaders are missionaries of civilization. They rip the Earth apart, separating the *old* from the *new* (a theme even echoed by progressive liberals today). They propagandized the idea of "two worlds" so they could destroy one: *the traditional versus the modern.* The dichotomy was established to either compel rejection, or justify annihilation, of those who refused to cross into their *New World.* In subtle teachings that followed the contours of sand paintings and emergence narratives, I was raised with the grounding, "There are not two worlds, there is just one world crossed by many paths."

When we look throughout this Earth we see one world littered with the scattered ruins of civilizations that were also once called "great." Some consumed by desert sands, others drowned beneath ocean waves. The Earth, folding a blanket of dust and ash over that which is called history. Muting kingdoms, generational power struggles, and rivers of blood, with the weight of a force greater than time. The fallacy of a totalized progression of civilization is in the hubris of permanence and mythology that it is the highest form of human development. Imprisoned Black freedom fighter Mumia Abu-Jamal observed, "…what history really shows is that today's empire is tomorrow's ashes; that nothing lasts forever, and that to not resist is to acquiesce in your own oppression."

As Nohoka Diyin Diné', our teachings share that many worlds have anteceded this one. When social justice activists proclaim, "A new world from the shell of the old," their prefigurative urge is utopic (and utopia is a colonial logic). It also translates peculiarly towards a new emergence. But this "new world" and how to get there, is conflicted space. Re-emergence has always been a destructive experience.

Diné Bahane' (our creation account) informs us that through destruction of that which harms us (naayéé', or monsters), balance with existence can be restored and generated. Destruction and creation is part of the cycle woven into the stories of these lands. We carry Hózhó ji' (way of harmony) in our right hand and we carry Anaaji' (way of protection/enemy way) in our left hand. When we urge towards Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóó, we are not choosing between siloed dichotomies, we are embodying the dimensions (which include the four directions, upwards, below, and within) of proceeding cultural augmentations that comprise existence.

Harmony, or balance isn't as simple as equalizing the positive with the negative, our cosmology isn't rooted in such antinomies. In this way I was taught not to pray against our enemies (as some do), but prepare with prayers, medicines, and ceremonies of protection as spiritual weapons. We have an aggregate of cultural taboos or what could be better understood as spiritual consequences that relate to hochxoo'ji' (way of evil), that which we do not casually discuss (do' jiniida') as it invokes disharmony. This is how we carry certain medicines and why we have a vital ceremonial structure of protection.

Many elements of Hashkéjí Nahat'á (War Way) have been largely erased from Diné collective memory with the exception of Ndáá' (enemy way ceremony). This ceremony is a living extension of the liberation of Diné Bikeyah from monsters that made early existence nearly impossible. The pathway of Naayéé' Neizghání (Monster Slayer) and Tóbájíshchíní (Born for Water) are still traveled within the ceremony itself. While somewhat documented and translated, its many complex teachings and medicines are not the romantic notion that can be translated into marketable phrases such as "Walk in beauty" and dressed in velvet and silver. Balance, or harmony with existence as it is, also means addressing the spiritual and corporeal dimensions of protection and attack. There are monsters, there are enemies, and there is correspondent violence to end their

threat. These are not historical artifacts, they are the complex pathways of life we still walk (as Holy Earth surface People) in this world.

While I will not disclose more than what has already been, I feel it important to note that within the Ndáá', the patient embodies Monster Slayer through ritual blackening with ashes. Ashes, within the context of the ceremony, negate spiritual harm.

As far as I know there is no way to positively translate colonial violence and the resistance to it in Diné Bizaad. This implies that there is primarily (though not exclusively) a negative way to engage it.

Liberation of the Earth and her beings has never been and never will be a progressive, peaceful, or positive proposition. These systems of conquest, domination, coercion, and exploitation will not cede or be receded. The warrior twins knew this of their enemies and so they sought the pathway of Jóhonaa'éí (the sun) to slay them (though some were left to maintain harmony).

There is an unpretentious intelligibility and beauty in an autochthonous dissonant pedagogy. It smells like gunpowder from the lever action rifle fired by Katherine Smith at government employed fence builders at Big Mountain. It smells of a freshly cut winter Tsé ch'il stalk being prepared to make a bow. It feels like white corn meal between your fingers and chįįh' being ground to the dust that we will use for spiritual armor.

The tendency to find warmth in positive attributes of domination fills the air with an acrid smoke that smells of burning plastic and sage purchased in a new age "home blessing" kit. It pronounces itself half-heartedly against the silence, "We are still here." The term "resilience" is its kin and when intoned, its optimism becomes the litany of Indigenous suffering. Like pity, it becomes its own celebration of survival simply due to its ability to endure. It pronounces Indigenous victimhood as virtue. Positivity, in this context, is an opaque masking smoke, hanging low, burning our eyes. We squint the post-*Indian* "survivance" of Gerald Vizenor and see faint apparitions that look something like generations to come. We have our own placating ageists rendering colonial futures, they keep dancing with delusions of "democracy."

We have resisted and survived generations upon generations of this material and cultural/social war called colonization. Yet the (stolen) ground gained at Standing Rock and in the streets during the George Floyd rebellions has largely been ceded to liberals contracting into their electorally-induced delusional safer terrains of *justice*. But what was to be expected from those so readily willing to kneel with cops and those who performatively decolonize their lifestyles? This is what democracy looks like.

In the midst of this pandemic of pandemics, neo-fascists rally and prepare to escalate towards the next major election cycle and beyond, fracking wells and oil pipelines poison sacred lands and waters, Indigenous women, girls, trans, and two-spirit relatives are stolen, families are ripped apart, deported, or left to die seeking refuge across colonial political lines, relatives on the streets go without shelter in the cold, we're locked up and killed by State forces with impunity, all while the existence our ancestors dreamt is being reshaped in the obscene nightmarish billionaire funded selfie-driven theater of trading post "decolonizers" waving "Land Back" flags cashing-in to "decolonize wealth" with their wokest hipster and celebrity settler allies.

For many rabid antagonists, catching our breaths between tear gas and pepper spray, taking up our shifts for COVID mutual aid deliveries, anti-state repression work, or shoplifting to keep the lights on, we cannot unsee the bloodstained writing on the walls of this settler colonial social order.

This is where the necessity of contrast and conflict regarding would-be movement managers is, their role is just as devastating as the corporations and State enforcers that attack our very existence.

Respectability politics and "generative" (which is code for progressive) conflict are both part of the same machine that seeks settler inclusion through appropriate channels. Progressive activist projects attempt to render positive or legitimate action towards a favorable resolution. Both liberal and radical conflict resolvers are enticed to recuperate and mediate with settler society. They refuse to shed the skin of the civil, of the respectable. They articulate their intelligibility as *generative* in order to make agreeable their brand of social management. They are the administrators and marketers of The Struggle.™ Their liberalism encodes domination. It is the politics of idealizing your captor and putting their clothes on. If this is the *new world* envisioned. It is utopic violence dressed in a sweatshop free organic cotton t-shirt emblazoned with the words *Democracy Now!*

For many reasons, including a revulsion at the homogenizing propositions found in leftist revolutionary politics (especially from authoritarian Indigenous Marxists), I have come to prefer principles rather than platforms, our elders' teachings rather than those of dead European men, autonomous attacks (which are a varied expression) rather than political campaigns, and I have more questions than answers.

The Seventh (De)Generation

The Seventh Generation principle is a Haudenosaunee teaching that resonates with the practices of many other Indigenous

Peoples. It informs that the decisions we make today should be in consideration of impacts for seven generations. This intergenerationality is often invoked with loaded romantic gestures. It sounds like what we need to hear, but its complications are intertwined with the conflict of responsibilities of those who tend towards progress, those who reject it, and those caught in-between. There have been more than seven generations of suffering, how many more generations until the cycles are broken?

We exalt coming generations but when desperate young voices speak, why is it that rampant apathetic dispositions are outright despised and condemned? Perhaps those who are disinterested and refuse to engage (in their own private recalcitrance) might have cause? The system, though we name its many machinations, is rarely indicted as root cause.

Perhaps it was because most of my friends and relatives (both on and off the Rez) were diagnosed and predisposed to apathy, that it became clear to us early on who and what was a "problem." And how that problem related directly to social factors including motivation (or lack thereof) towards success. It wasn't at all that they didn't care about anything (some were the most passionate people I've known), it was that authoritarian manipulations of the illusory promise of capitalist success (aka the "American Dream") were so farcically transparent that apathy and further anti-social behaviors were a natural response. My friends were running away from all forms of abuse, mostly from families that were products of a broken society. A society that alienated their existence as Indigenous, as queer, as poor, as disabled…and as the saying goes: "The system isn't broken, it was made this way," so why bother?

It's painfully apparent when someone is selling you a brand of hope that is a lie they tell themselves to maintain the appearances of social order; of a job they hate; of a life filled with a collection of regrets.

At the school assembly we're supposed to be inspired and driven by half-hearted cheerleaders of the apocalyptic who don't really give a shit themselves. How could young people not see through the charade? The dead end of colonial education is clear: Down the hall, the future utopia reeks of starched clothes and the stinking rotten hide that conceals its stillborn figure.

The "social contract" is an anointed debt of progression owed without having had a chance to consider or consent. Any attempt at withdrawal makes its many violences all the more clear. It's that acrid taste in our mouths that we get so accustomed to it becomes part of our senses.

If *apathy is a mask of anger* should we not get to the root to understand what makes us so angry? If apathy is really just a lack of "interest, enthusiasm, or concern" as most often defined, perhaps the paternalistic proclamation, "If you despair, hope!" should be turned inwards? Perhaps the unenthusiastic response and lack of concern is due to the translucence of so many dead ends?

The terror of apathy is not in what it does not do, it is in what it denies society the benefit it believes it deserves. After all, our sole purpose in civilization is to fulfill its progression.

This is also a gendered arrangement that anti-civilization anarchists and nihilist queer forces have exposed as part of the myth of progress.

In *baedan*, an anonymously authored "queer journal of heresy" they tear away the façade:

> To oppose reproductive futurism, and the reproduction of the social order through the endless succession of generations, is to signify the end of civilization as well as the subjects which comprise it. This destruction is to be found in the degeneration and disintegration of social structures into the queer formations which exist in constant pursuit of jouissance [excessive pleasure] and without a care for the future. The proliferation of these queer autonomous groups does not prefigure a better world; these groupings of desire can only confront civilization as a negative, anti-political, wild force.

A joyous confrontational degeneration of society to end civilization is not a positive political proposition; it is in its wild destruction.

In the book *Another Day in the Colony*, Chelsea Watego shares her experiences facing extreme racism and State violence in so-called Australia. She does not conclude her work with the expectant liberal positive affirmation of hope and requisite call to action, instead Watego embraces Indigenous nihilism and makes it clear and uncomplicated, "Fuck Hope." Watego confronts hope in brutal honesty:

> There is no mystery as to why suicide and self-harm are among the leading causes of death of our people. There is a present and ongoing impossibility of *being* Black in this place that they created. It is they who deemed us incapable of existing, of living, and of being authentically Indigenous in this place, in this time. Some might attribute suicide rates in our communities to the result of having given up hope, the endgame of being bereft of it. I would argue it's a result of our reliance upon it…
>
> …Hope is a most ridiculous strategy for Blackfullas in the colony precisely because it doesn't actually do anything—for us. It relies upon a false sense of respite from

> the reality of everyday racial violence in the colony; that we suspend all logic and cling to hope, a waiting for a future good while living in a permanent hell. It tells us to wait, that one day we will get our turn. It tells us that we aren't worth fighting for right now, but what it doesn't tell us is that day never actually arrives. Hope is a suspension of Black trauma in the midst of Black trauma, and a premature death sentence for those destined to be betrayed by it.
>
> Whenever I have spoken to colonisers about the retiring of hope, I have been met with indignation, outrage and patronising concern. Some people may think that calls to retire hope for nihilism are irresponsible. But what is irresponsible is to require us to maintain the status quo of keeping Black bodies connected to life support machines they've been deemed never capable of getting off.

Is it hope that feeds emaciated youth sexually abused by relatives who were themselves violated in boarding schools by "pious" Christians? Is it hope that consoles the two-spirit youth bullied and rejected by their conservative parents? Who become terrifying calculations added and subtracted as statistics (that is if they are even counted)?

Families gather and somberly ask themselves the same questions they'll ask at the next memorial, "What could we have done differently?" Never asking the questions that seem to matter the most.

Is it hope that pulls the unsheltered relative from the gutter who is facedown choking on their own vomit?

Is it hope that renews and restores the sacred?

Hope "it'll get better." And when it doesn't?

Hope is throwing a plastic bottle in the recycling bin knowing that it's going to a sorting facility and it will most likely be rejected. That it'll probably end up in the ocean and if its not, it'll be bundled and purchased and shipped thousands of miles away to be processed using more energy than it took to create, to be remade into something far less useful. Smashing the petroleum plant responsible for producing the plastics would be much more ecologically responsible in the long term, but that's not the sanctioned strategy for social transformation. That's not hope. Hope is that single-use dutifully recycled PET bottle that rolled out when a dolphin washed ashore, its distended stinking stomach cut open, and all colors of shiny plastic poured out, glistening putrescence on the beach. Hope is that big wet endangered rubbery piñata that you take a selfie with and hashtag that you care. It's so fucking bad out here, #recycle.

Hope is not a tactic, it's a marketing scheme for the biomachinery of civilization. It is spoonfed little by little to keep us going (progress), to keep enduring (resilience), to keep producing, to keep consuming. Hope preserves institutions of domination and exploitation from those who aren't distracted by its religions.

Hope maintains the imaginary confines of our servitude like an electric fence; we don't even know if it's on all the time. We become preoccupied by the fabulous sales pitch, "You too can become the master." Hope is progressive reform handed down from above, one link at a time it is the loosening of chains to make those enslaved believe that freedom is comfort in slavery.

As Alfredo Bonanno observed in *The Anarchist Tension*:

> We are not for more freedom. More freedom is given to the slave when his [sic] chains are lengthened. We are for the abolition of the chain, so we are for freedom,

> not more freedom. Freedom means the absence of all chains, the absence of limits and all that ensues from such a statement.

My hopeless relatives on the streets walk with the colonizer's poison to self-medicate, rejoicing in the indignity of their social decomposition between laughter and tears. They reflexively fight back by being worse at what they are expected to be. Some revel in their failings and in doing so they are the mirror of settler society's relentless war.

Whether it's substance use or mental health issues, all the relatives I've worked with on the streets have cited the source of their suffering as loss. They have been dispossessed of that which made them whole at one point in their lives (through family tragedy, incarceration, addiction, etc.). For many, the dynamic is largely self-inflicted. Some have made decisions and actions that have violated, destroyed, and confined them to incarceration. They're not all *good Indians*.

Though their community is centered on dispossession and loss, they indulge in despair. There is something to glorify in this exhibition of Vizenor's "survivance."

It is not in the preaching and condemnation. It is not in the court ordered behavioral health management classes, it is not in jail, it is not in church. It is in the spaces where they laugh and grieve and they are honest with their despair, that healing emerges. So many dizzyingly spin-cycle through symptom treating rehabilitation programs. The overtures feel like a setup: to re-assimilate into a society that sees nothingness in their presence except in their potential for wage economy productivity. They are the contemptible *worst of the Bad Indians*.

In between fermented breaths, many of my relatives have confided to me, "I don't want to stay in a house or have another job. I want to live free outside." Based upon the outright malice they face, it's hard not to conclude that settlers (and some of our own) have such disdain for those on the streets because they are the ones they didn't outright kill. They represent the incompleteness and failures of their genocidal social experiment, they are the ghost enemies dancing against civilization.

Better to put them in jail. Better to sweep their camps so the problem is unseen. Better to lock them out or lock them up. Better that they don't exist at all. They are the ones that failed at progress.

Fascists beat and kill them. Liberals, who must maintain good looks, say, "Better to give them housing and jobs," while not prioritizing and allocating necessary resources. What they're proposing is, "How do we make them *Nice Indians* without having to pay for it?" "How do we make the *problem* disappear?" Their violence is detached; it is less direct when it rests on the institutions. Their hands are just as bruised and bloody from their everyday acts of passive colonial violence. Disposing of those who fail at a standard of living that they have been abused into being, finalizes the acts of desecration against their existence. What sense does it make to advocate reform and equality in a society structured on the economic and political production of such misery? With the only option for unsheltered relatives assimilation for social stability towards "functionality," perhaps icy concrete and blurry stars on this spinning Earth is a much better view? A crude and contemptible reparation of the severed wild. *Bad Indians*, behind the dumpster.

According to the report *Assessment of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Housing Needs*, produced in 2017 for the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), approximately 1 in 200 Indigenous People in the so-called US are unsheltered. This is compared to 1 in 1,000 people in the population overall. Indigenous Peoples make up 1.5% of the overall population of 333.3 million. But we are all too familiar with the unshocking dead ends of

such equations. My friend and unsheltered relative Shane Russell says, "Before 1492 no one was homeless on these lands."

In 1973, 19-year-old Diné Larry Casuse and his accomplice Robert Nakaidine took the mayor of a small reservation "Border Town" hostage. The two walked into the city hall of so-called Gallup, New Mexico (which claims to be the "Most Patriotic Small Town in America") and pulled a gun on Mayor Emmett Garcia. Casuse took militant direct action to confront extreme exploitation and poisoning of Indigenous Peoples (primarily unsheltered) with alcohol. Garcia owned the Navajo Inn, which was one of the area's most notorious liquor stores. Indigenous Peoples would pass out in the gutter near the Inn, many would die of exposure, alcohol poisoning, or murder. Casuse and Nakaidine walked Garcia through the streets until they were cornered in a nearby store by cops. Larry was gunned down, the mayor and Nakaidine survived. Today Casuse is celebrated by young activists and exploited by academics. Buried beneath the clamoring over his legacy, it appears abandoned that this young Diné took autonomous insurrectionary action without a party, program, or manifesto, but out of extraordinary militant desperation. At the emergence of the Red Power movement Casuse unambiguously avowed, "My reason for being on this Earth is to tell mankind that we must now undermine all false persons who are destroying Mother Earth."

The brutalities of alcohol, that terrible distilled colonial weapon that consumes spirits from within, continues its maudlin violation of our ways.

"Whiteclay, Nebraska" is a small town two miles south of Pine Ridge Reservation. While the reservation maintains a prohibition on the sale of alcohol, four liquor stores in Whiteclay sold 4.9 million cans of beer in 2010. For years, a group called the Strong Heart Society organized to stop the white capitalist owners of the stores from profiteering and exploiting Indigenous Peoples. Desperate to stop extreme alcoholism on the Rez, the Society established blockades to shut the stores down. In an ill-considered effort, AIM figurehead Russell Means proposed acquiring a liquor license to compete with the existing stores and fund a treatment center in Pine Ridge. Julie "Mama Julz" Richards, an autonomous sober vigilante, grew up on Pine Ridge and fought the White Clay stores. Instead of waiting for the State or Tribal Officials to act, she has physically evicted bootleggers and meth dealers from her community. In her rage she declared, "A sober Native is a dangerous Native." In 2017, after decades of resistance, the exploiters were denied license renewals due to "inadequate law enforcement" in the area.

Here on the streets of stolen lands, beaten from without and within, are apparitions that dance themselves into settler-poison induced sleep. They are the children of White Shell Woman, they are also the children of *Seven Generations*.

Here in reservation and urban Indigenous homes internalized colonial violence implodes with children killing themselves at alarming rates. The dissonance and trauma of the coloniality of hope tears them apart from within. They are the ghostly lost children of Seven Generations denied the cycle of spiritual death and renewal through ceremony. When the "man" saved by "killing the Indian" is all that is left, Indigenous suicide is the terrifying fulfilment of civilization's genocidal promise.

In negating this progression, destroying internalized and external colonialities is ceremony.

Our invocation becomes a social death, or in other words, the auto-destruction (suicide) of the settler socialized self. We cannot ignore this as part of the calculations of 19-year-old Casuse, who embraced extraordinary Indigenous rage and vengeance in his final fanatical act to undermine dehumanizing and ecodical untruths.

Let us consider leaning into the space between rage and despair as a mechanism of settler-social destruction, intentionally failing settler society. In the spirit of Casuse, undermining the *untruths* with Indigenous rage and vengeance.

Chelsea Watego urges us not to meet failure with more hope, but suggests that we free our anti-colonial outrage from its sedation:

> For almost every condition for which there is data, we are more likely to get it, get sicker from it and die earlier because of it. Hope has not helped us. It is killing us because for too long we've invested in the idea of waiting for it. I'm no longer waiting on, or celebrating, incremental forms of progress, so-called well-intentioned steps in the right direction, which always seem to fail us. This failure, we are told, should be met with more hope, as though it is our fault for not having enough of it, as though one can wish oneself out of oppressive social structures. The truth is, hope sedates the logical response of anger and outrage that fuels Black insistence.

We navigate and survive through the violence imposed, turn it in on itself, and locate a dissonant harmony; an insistent anti-colonial dissonance. Our ceremonial offerings of hopelessness become the destruction of faith in the transformation of a social order manufactured on our destruction, in other words, a degeneration of settler colonial progress. The *most bitter medicines* are the strongest. We end despair by ending what is causing our suffering: destroying what destroys us. After all, anti-colonial means anti-settler society.

This consideration invites us to amend the responsibilities of the principle of *the seventh generation* with invocation of the seventh *DEgeneration*, which is to consider negation and unrestrained attack as a means of intergenerational liberation.

Anti-Social Distortions

I came into punk in the 1980s as it was dying. I found refuge in the electric signals reproduced by magnets in the Side A and Side B of tape deck riots. I found affinity against existential traumas in the circle pit. Angsty diatribes at 180 beats per minute shaped and defined my rejection of authority. The blunt "fuck you" manifesto of punk rock was readily cut and pasted onto the Indigenous resistance struggles I was born into. I was seduced by the subcultural force of punk by its degenerative, anti-social destructiveness: its anti-social distortions.

The killing of punk was mostly in its domestication, in the shaping of it as a commodified artifact. As it initially was an expression of class warfare, the threat it once posed had been bled out into shopping malls and superficial songs steeped in its own consumption. It had been rendered a perpetual lifestylist rebellion, never quite critical enough to personify the revolution it is attributed, and never quite "revolutionary" enough to finish the job and do itself in while taking the society it initially rejected along with it.

At its worst, punk revels in its white dominance, casual privilege, and profitability of its aesthetics. While it exists as a subcultural antagonism, it also exists as a reactionary working class fetish reinforcing the very institutions it professes to rebel against. But punk's initial appeal—its spirit—is a living dead force. *Punk is undead.*

Punk was a going against, an affinity of rages, a collectiveand self-destruction of the imposed identity of the social order that those who identified as "punks" were subordinate to. This ten-

sion has been expressed in the threat of spikes, patches, vibrant hair colors, anti-capitalist DIY exchanges, squats, naked aggression, irony, substance use, shoplifting, culturally appropriative mohawks and many other aesthetic and coded devices that had been all-out weaponized against society. Punk embraced and celebrated that its deviance was so despised, hated, and vilified. Part of its social force was due to its accessibility, as not much was needed other than three power chords, distortion, and a bit of despair. After all, it was first an implicit expression of social war: a direct threat to the ruling class. The fervor against punk by the fearful elite was mostly due to the matter that it was their own children rejecting the world they had so neatly built for them. It's no surprise that punk would proliferate in Britain considering their genocidal and ecocidal project of spreading civilization by attempting to colonize the world. The cacophony of capitalist society turning against itself gave birth to punk, in its most spectacular dramatic form, punk embodied raw anti-social expression.

This is what I lean into here, as Indigenous Peoples have already suffered many social deaths. Every morning we've dressed in the discordant order that settler colonial society sets out for us like boarding school uniforms or neatly folded Johnson O'Malley clothes. Respectable Indians following orders becoming what we were not. This is what civilization requires to clear its conscience of genocide. "Yes, they are still here…*see*?" And again, where exactly *are* we? The wild bodies of Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Queer, Trans, Two-Spirit are crimes to be locked in metaphorical and/or physical cages. With liberal programs of settler inclusivity and equality suspending us in perpetual spaces of non-existence. We catch glimpses of newspaper clippings lining our cages, the headlines read: *Indians have rights. Democracy is an Indian Idea. Indians: The Poorest Nation in the US. They Climbed the Ladder. Highest Enlistment Rate in the Military. Voting Rights Granted. Sacred Site Desecrated, Lawsuit Filed. Mascots Ended.* This cage smells of shit and piss like the gutters in the so-called border towns of Gallup, Farmington, and Flagstaff, but if you're in it long enough, you become so used to the stench it smells like *we are still here.*

Indigenous punks (or those with the "spirit of " which many an elder has) embody the rejection of settler conformity and authority. Theirs is the anti-politics of dis-respectability, it's the *fuck you* everyone else is thinking but they're too locked in the reservation mentality of respectful inclusions that they've become silenced by their fears.

Colonial collaborators continue laboring to "Indigenize" capitalist hierarchies and colonial systems of governance, but settler progress has never meant anything but Indigenous destruction. Social responsibility is an assumption of settler values and the perpetuation of colonial institutions. The tactic of casting the opposite of apathy as societal duty (with its imposed standards of morality and respect) undermines itself in the manipulation. Perhaps the strong and bitter medicines of desperation and of failure are needed to break this spell?

The settler world needs more irresponsible antagonists.

As climate catastrophe desperation compounds with increasingly militarized authoritarian repression tactics of the State, rabid antagonisms only grow. Located in the shadows of sporadic infrastructure attacks, industrial equipment sabotage, and ducking through alleyways in anti-police riots, these amorphous spirits are perhaps most antagonistically pronounced in anarchic ruptures of queer social negation.

The trajectory of queer inclusion and progress in capitalist society; rainbow cop cars, corporate rainbow-washing, and elitist class mobility, has been rabidly rejected and attacked with great fervor by gender nihilists.

In Jack Halberstam's 2011 book, *The Art of Queer Failure*, Halberstam not only argues against positive propositions for liberal progress, but to embrace failure:

> The queer art of failure turns on the impossible, the improbable, the unlikely, and the unremarkable. It quietly loses, and in losing it imagines other goals for life, for love, for art, and for being…We can also recognize failure as a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline as a form of critique. As a practice, failure recognizes that alternatives are embedded already in the dominant and that power is never total or consistent; indeed failure can exploit the unpredictability of ideology and its indeterminate qualities.

Indigenous peoples under capitalist colonial occupation are cast as failures by default. We were attacked and subjugated first, then impoverished second. Our failure is presumed because we are not good capitalists and, as *Terra Nullius* evidenced, apparently we were not good at existing either. Therefore, according to capitalists and colonizers, our colonial domination and exploitation was an eventuality.

The queer nihilist-anarchist authors of *baedan* antagonize:

> Activists, progressive and revolutionary alike, will always respond to our critique of the social order with a demand that we articulate some sort of alternative. Let us say once and for all that we have none to offer. Faced with the system's seamless integration of all positive projects into itself, we can't afford to affirm or posit any more alternatives for it to consume. Rather we must realize that our task is infinite, not because we have so much to build but because we have an entire world to destroy. Our daily life is so saturated and structured by capital that it is impossible to imagine a life worth living, except one of revolt.

Baedan urges against the progressive preoccupation of *building new worlds*.

In *Criminal Intimacy*, the Mary Nardini Gang are celebratory in their threat against society:

> Many blame queers for the decline of this societywe take pride in this. Some believe that we intend to shred-to-bits this civilization and its moral fabricthey couldn't be more accurate. We're often described as depraved, decadent, and revolting—but oh, they ain't seen nothing yet.

While Halberstam was animated with queer failure and negativity, *baedan* challenged their academic politicization of negativity as co-optative. Tegan Eanelli in *Queer Ultraviolence* went further with the charge that academics such as Halberstam are bandwagoning queer nihilism, "They take anti-social activity and use it to reproduce the Academy as a central engine of society itself…negativity and revolt are mere matters of image."

This pedagogy of despair, if that is what we can name part of it, is the frightful contemplation of desperation that becomes unrestrained attack. It is not the product, and therefore property, of intellectuals or institutions. It is autonomous compulsion against the poverty of resilience and mere survival. It is a reflex against what is said to be "hope" but has only ever felt like a captor spitting the saccharine and alcohol laced words, *it will get better*.

If there is power in words then there is power in the historized terror that is our dehumanization. Why then can we, as *merciless savages*, as *wagon burners*, also not turn the terrorization of this temporal debasement against itself?

In our aspirations of liberation, we can come to embody the destruction of that which maintains its systems of control and exploitation through domination. Instead of vying for seats at the table of a feast picking through the skeletal remains of assimilationist inclusion, we sharpen our claws on the rough edges of broken dishes and sandstone. We adorn ourselves with turquoise and spikes. In our rejection of colonial futures, the axiomatic punk two-word manifesto of "No Future" becomes, "No Settler Future."

Moving towards the total failure of settler domination means failing the promise of Indigenous inclusion, failing assimilation, failing institutionalized knowledge production, failing political sovereignty and democracy, failing to be *Good Indians*. In this way, these failures protect the sacred within.

All that civilized order detests and disposes is embodied within this deviance. It is the failure of its own progeny to comport. It is Indigenous resurgences and anti-colonial antagonisms. It is in the indomitable queerness of nature that rabidly grows after being cut back. As *baedan* intimated, "… any civilization will produce its own undoing." Between broken windows and burning police stations. Between mutual aid that provides direct healthcare based on cultural knowledge systems (when and as the system fails). Between plantings of ancestral seeds and harvest ceremonies. Between shitposts and wheat pasting. In between sex work and shoplifting. Between black blocs, pushing wheelchairs, setting timers, and pulling triggers. Between sips of black coffee and dumpstered cinnamon rolls. Anti-colonial deviance bleeds and sings and cries and thrives in its imperfections and weaponized apathy. It sleeps on ashes and dirt and conspires with raw and aching dreams. It revels in the spontaneous and contradictory space between destruction and creation with absurd abandon. It is convulsions of social disorder. It entertains acclivitous violent inclinations. It has no need for manifestos. It recognizes that vengeance takes less strategy than retribution. It can sort out the tactics and plan accordingly. Its legitimacy is irrelevant. It is not shy to pronounce an Indigenous anti-colonial villainy.

An anti-political apathy and destruction of the colonized self and society are natural expressions of anti-colonial liberatory hostilities. Instead of nursing illusory hope; weaponizing Indigenous despair. In the dissonance where anti-colonial desire and resentment are tearing us apart from within the colonial existent, we find that this specter called *political nihilism* is also *colonial negation*. But these affiliations taste like ash between my teeth and under my tongue. The semantics and theories are doused in a lineage of Nietzsche, Stirner, and other egoists, individualists, and -ists intellectually wandering the philosophical realms of nothingness and being.

Nihilism and its warriors such as Renzo Novatore (with his horrifyingly immaculate *Toward the Creative Nothing*) and contemporaries operating in Greece such as the Conspiracy of Cells of Fire are exemplary, but the overall tendency carries its own contradictions and troubles. The indiscriminate screechings of groups like the Individualists Tending Toward the Wild (ITS) have riled anarchists with their deadly lateral attacks within anarchic communities, particularly in so-called Mexico. ITS and their sort advancing an anti-civilization ultra-violent neo-warrior fetishism mediated through a bit of anthropology with elements inspired by Kaczynski (though he labeled ITS as "ignorant" and called them "adversaries.").

Nihilist warriors of such eco-extremism dress in Indigenous references yet their contexts place them, from this Diné's perspective, in the realm of those who work against their own,

which is a form of spiritual cannibalism not located within my teachings of the ways of warriors. The Ndáá' (Enemy Way ceremony) particularly speaks to this brief critique. It is in the purpose of the rite to bring those Naabaahii (warriors) facing spiritual harm from battle or affected by their contact with enemies, back into Hózhó. This of course is Diné context, and as previously mentioned, many warrior teachings have been stripped away and buried.

But this is an intentionally fragmented Diné understanding, certainly another Diné, or Hopi, Creek, O'odham, or other People would engage differently (as Aragorn! had with his explorations and sharings, particularly in *Nihilism, Anarchy, and the 21st century* and Anarchy and *Nihilism: Consequences*). Perhaps it's why Chelsea Watego in *Another Day in the Colony* so quickly marooned her declaration of nihilism?

This non-commitment is not for lack of interest, it's partially an aversion to the serious baggage of post-leftists (from Kaczynski, ITS, and everyone in and not in-between) but more for the limitations of further engagement in its theories. It's not that its practical tendencies or deeds are not entirely intriguing. Nihilism has primarily been shaped and adorned in other lands. There is only so much that nihilism can offer those whose existences are not broken by the same means. If nihilism is in essence a skeptical contemplation of human meaning, Indigenous Peoples already have our reference points. I am not so intrigued by nihilism as a position (which many argue it is not) but as a weapon. It is where nihilism ruthlessly tears apart positive social ideas and programs, that opens the space where anti-colonial and decolonial tensions can be synthesized into new/old weapons against settler existence.

Warpaintings

Hanging on a gallery wall, under Just the right light, a warrior poses, captured by the white gaze. An oil-painted existence, frozen in the space between then and now. It's a Remington? The gold filigree frames its importance. On well-polished floors, merchants carefully curate nightmares of invaders and fantasies of anthropologists twisted and blended into the narratives that contain the trauma and the rage of the land. The end of the trail for *bad Indians*.

Go to any pow-wow and you'll see veterans dancing the "US" flag into the arena, typically above a ceremonial eagle staff flanked by a state flag. Drumsticks pound the full rhythm of patriotism, it echoes like thunder through the cold metal bleachers for the *good Indians*. That Indigenous Peoples have the highest enlistment rate (based on ethnicity) in the "US" military should be of no surprise, particularly to those who understand Stockholm Syndrome and predatory recruitment tactics in impoverished communities.

Those venerated pawns of imperialism (yes including the Code Talkers), the new scout conscripts who have served in the colonizer's unending wars against Indigenous Peoples elsewhere, are not warriors, they are soldiers. The distinction being that they have sworn allegiance and subject themselves to the military hierarchy of the enemy. They execute the orders they are given. Warriors, on the other hand, are inspired to action based upon their responsibilities to land, people, and non-human beings.

Countless relatives on the streets I've worked with over the years talk about their warriorhood through alcohol-laced glorifications of fighting (mostly) their own. Many are veterans of the colonizer's ranks haunted by the terrible deeds they committed in the name of "freedom." Their stories are part of the tragic legacy epitomized by the *Ballad of Ira Hayes*. Hayes, who was

Akimel O'odham, was one of six Marines who famously raised the "US" flag on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima in February of 1945 during World War II. Just ten years later, after suffering intense post-traumatic stress disorder, his lifeless alcohol-poisoned body was found in a ditch a short distance from his home.

"Border town" alleyways are still littered with crushed aluminum cans and discarded veteran relatives who have not been welcomed back into mutuality through ceremony. So their ceremony is replaced with a ritual of deadly *medicine*. Their community is loss. They laugh and they survive and they pass from exposure. They talk of waiting (as Aragorn! noted). Where is the Ké'? Frozen in the temporal border between the civilized and uncivilized that they are constantly torn inside out of. Waiting for politicians to re-organize their priorities. Waiting for the night to be free again so they can rest in the hooghan of Diné Bikeyah, under the stars.

I've heard many Indigenous government soldiers of all genders attempt to reconcile their service to the enemy, "The land is the land, we will defend it regardless of who we are serving." I ask, "Where are you soldier when our sacred lands and spirituality is under attack?" they tend to look away. Believing that the "US" military is somehow defending Indigenous lands is extreme geopolitical myopia, they know this but they have to tell themselves these lies to keep nightmares from filling the darkness. While many veterans rushed to Standing Rock and brought necessary frontline skills and increased tactical force, they also brought obscured patriotism, conflicts over tactics, and the chains of command. Due to deeply internalized colonialism, the fight for some was over before they even arrived on the frontlines.

In times I've crossed paths with those who have been called warriors (most don't proclaim themselves), the conversations usually are storytellings that show the fire of fight and grief that tinges the flames (with those who have seen more seasons) and lots of laughter.

Many warriors show up to the frontlines at resistance camps. Some, particularly cis-men, bring confusion, insecurity, and harm, and they abuse themselves, others, and violate the sacred fires they come to protect. Occasionally there are those, of all genders, who are selfless without proclamations. With nothing to prove to anyone. It's those warriors you can rely on in the darkness to know what must be done. Who will not collaborate with the State if captured and will take all that must not be said with them into the next world. The question also gnaws at them in the darkness, like a quiet friend who has been keeping pace through the trees and up the starlit path towards the bulldozers that are left unguarded, what is it that makes a warrior?

The mythification and exploitation of 19th century Indigenous resistance has alienated continuance of warrior ways, they have also been largely subsumed into colonial militarism. The narratives attributed to Goyaałé (Geronimo), demystify the imposed iconography that turned him into a Wild West show tourist attraction. He admittedly was not a leader and relates that his role as a warrior was circumstantially established after facing a massacre of his village where his family was murdered by Mexican colonizers:

> I found that my aged mother, my young wife, and my three small children were among the slain. There were no lights in camp, so without being noticed I silently turned away and stood by the river. How long I stood there I do not know. When I saw the warriors arranging for a council I took my place.

In his uncomplicated account, Goyaałé's impetus and orientation as a warrior was his bitter desire for vengeance, he simply "took his place." His legacy is interpreted through

cis-heteropatriarchal narratives which intentionally erase that he was also guided by Lozen, a two-spirit Chihenne Nde.'

His last words were of regret and resentment, "I should have never surrendered. I should have fought until I was the last man [sic] alive."

Settler temporality captures and perpetually imprisons the iconic spirit of Goyaałé's resistance, which really was the wild resistance of all Ndé. The historization of Indigenous resistance attempts to render it an artifact, but the exaggeration and idealization also inspires. The deathly presence of consequence is the shadow cast on every colonial archive, from Hollywood westerns to anthropological publications. "US" history is a mass grave too small to conceal genocide and ecocide and not deep enough to contain ancestral rage. The threat of consequence and generational spiritual transference of that rage continues to precipitate colonial fear.

In 2011, after a decades-long international hunt, then president Barack Obama received a phone call, "Geronimo EKIA." EKIA is a military acronym for Enemy Killed In Action and *Geronimo* was the codename given to Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind retributive attacks against the "US" that occurred on September 11, 2001. The conflation of bin Laden and Geronimo was intentional. It is the vicious anti-Indigenous colonial conscious speaking its history of perpetual violences. From sports mascots and military weaponry, Indigenous identity is still paraded as a trophy of conquest. The term "Indian country" is still used today to describe territories hostile to invaders in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is how empire speaks.

Speaking of war does not make warriors. It is in the deep embrace that is the inner-relationship of being and *where* we are. It is in the spiritual emergence of the Só'taeo'o and Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) Hotamétaneo'o or *Dog Soldiers* who refused to submit to any treaty. It is also in spontaneous reactions of anger and righteous vengeance. Warrior teachings have roots in the living cultures that they come from. Some more complex and formal than others.

On November 29, 1864, more than 650 troops under command of Colonel John M. Chivington attacked a Cheyenne and Arapaho winter camp at Sand Creek in so-called Colorado. Chivington claimed 500 warriors were killed though other sources estimate it was closer to 150 people, about two-thirds of whom were women and children. In testimony about the massacre to Congress in 1865, John S. Smith recounted:

> I saw the bodies of those lying there cut all to pieces, worse mutilated than any I ever saw before; the women cut all to pieces…With knives; scalped; their brains knocked out; children two or three months old; all ages lying there, from sucking infants up to warriors…By whom were they mutilated? By the United States troops…

After the attack, "US" soldiers systematically killed and butchered those who were wounded. They took scalps and other body parts including genitalia and hung them on their weapons, hats, saddles, and other gear. They paraded through the streets of so-called Denver proudly displaying their heinous trophies.

A 23-year-old Heévâhetaneo'o or Southern Cheyenne woman named Mochi survived the brutal Sand Creek massacre, she dedicated her life to fighting colonial invaders.

In the article *Mo-chi: First Female Cheyenne Warrior* (2018), Mochi's great-great-grandson John L. Sipes shares her words, "This day, I vow revenge for the murder of my family and my people. This day, I declare war on *veho*—white man. This day I become a warrior, and a warrior I will be forever." He recounts, "Mochi sang her own songs, painted her own war shield, made her own medicine, all taught to her by the Old Ones…"

Mochi fought in numerous fierce battles for eleven years until she was captured and sent to St. Augustine, Florida. She was imprisoned for three years and eventually sent to Oklahoma where she passed on at the age of 41.

While there are many more stories we can collect and study—and many more that have intentionally been erased, especially of those two-spirit warriors like Lozen and OshTisch—I share the examples of Goyaałé and Mochi as two people who faced devastating loss at the hands of brutal colonizers, who were propelled by vengeance, and chose to attack. Their legacies are only esoteric due to the colonial enclosures of history and entertainment, that continue to imprison and dominate them and their meaning (and by extension our imaginings of Indigenous resistance and liberation). If *we are still here* because of the medicine of ancestral rage, we also must recognize that medicine still is alive within us. It is not due to the passive assertion of "Our existence is resistance."

We are still here at war because our spirit, which is the spirit of the land, has not yielded or been extinguished and because our enemies have not ceased their attacks. *We are still here* at war yet we are admonished and told not to fight. This is the constraint of *hope* imposed by those who wish us never to fight our way out of the death we were prescribed long ago. We fight or perish (most often in attrition). Nothing is ever too abstract in war except the politics of those who manipulate to gain. But that is not what has dragged us—wild claws and teeth gnashing—into this war. War has never made us *who* we are. When we talk of direct action and defense it is not to appease colonialism. When we talk of what we are protecting it is not to emphasize our capacity for greater victimhood. When we speak with the land we speak with Diyin Diné', and are urged to walk with the sacred. We speak with the desecrated land, "There is nothing left to reconcile because there is nothing left for them to take."

When we ask, "What made the Warrior Twins warriors?" ceremony responds with teachings. Prayer (intention) responds with vision (direction). These sacred lands are painted with the blood of monsters slain. Here is red Earth crushed to dust. It is our paint for battles within and without. Before sunrise we pray. Our first armor is our medicine. Our first weapons are those weapons of Nature. A call to ceremony is a call to action.

As we suffer a profound mythification and consequent reductionism in the idealization of the warrior, part of our first prayer/action is to destroy that myth.

Settler Destruction is Ceremony

The Question of social transformation (liberation, abolition, revolution etc.) is a question of power. It's a question that faces its primary expressions: economic (material resource), social (people), or political (systemic and institutional violence) power.

Most sociological revolutionary theories and experiments focus on replacing one power with another and challenging the State or its constituted forces directly. This is the inconvenient political baggage of leftists' questions of power. Revolutionaries are left waiting (or armchair theorizing) for the perfect conditions for action; containing spontaneous mobilizations because their campaign strategy doesn't allow for such deviation or risk; and clenching political programs with sciences of past efforts (with many excuses for their problems). Revolutionary technicians objectify *The People*. On their terms, mass mobilization requires mass manipulation. Engineers and architects are needed to build, technicians and administrators are required to manage. Peo-

ple as objects make good subjects. These leftist preoccupations keep people shining the lens of *authenticity* until there's some sort of twisted reflection. Waxing the historicity of heavily varnished triumphs, dreaming the vanguard to march the worker class further into the dark spiral of industry, civility, and modernity. Modern progressive industrial settler-styled and inspired revolutionary doctrines will continue to construct modern dogmas. It's the revolutionary science of fitting a square peg into a round hole; with a large enough hammer (and sickle) it'll most certainly fit, but with power as brute force, or what we can also name as authoritarianism, everything looks like a nail.

During a speech at the Black Hills International Survival Gathering in 1980, Russell Means assailed colonial politics. He attacked leftist orientations such as Marxism and anarchism in what he called "the same old song" and was credited with the declaration that, "For America to live, Europe must die." Means stated, "We don't want power over white institutions; we want white institutions to disappear. That's revolution…And when the catastrophe is over, we American Indian peoples will still be here to inhabit the hemisphere." Means' bombastic militancy withered with his path of occasional protest appearances, acting roles, interpersonal and elder abuse, and his declaration of, and attempt to govern, the "Republic of Lakotah."

In a 2013 essay Glen Coulthard rehashed Means' assertion with a class-based analysis stating, "For Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die. And for capitalism to die, we must actively participate in the construction of Indigenous alternatives to it." Means' assertion was much more confrontationally negative. An academic idiosyncrasy is that most are compelled to propose positive programs (like the "resurgence" movement in so-called Canada). Means' pan-Indigenous nationalism, Lakota chauvinism, and contemporary Indigenous scholars romancing "indigenized" interpretations of Marxism, are reactionary interplays of colonial subjectivities. All political imperatives mandate coloniality. Abolition of settler polity is anti-colonial anti-politics.

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang assailed the emptiness of decolonial rhetoric in their powerful treatise "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor" (2012). They asserted, "When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it re-centers whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future." The authors were concerned with the "domestication of decolonization." They clarified,

> [Decolonization] is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of 'helping' the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes…By contrast, decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice.

Tuck and Yang's diagnosis was widespread and incendiary, though it was not enough to fully deter the malignancy of liberal recuperation. Perhaps this can partially be attributed to the matter that where decolonization is most discussed and theorized (in the halls of academia) is not where those discussions are most needed. Additionally, in the process of de-metaphorizing decolonization, the distinction was missed regarding possibilities of anti-colonial struggle and attack.

Decolonization and anti-colonial struggle share the same implications, but the antagonisms have come into different (though not exclusive) meanings. Tuck and Yang skirt around the "question of violence" in their essay, particularly when they compare Frantz Fanon and Paulo Freire. Fanon is unmistakingly clear when he pronounces the direct violence of decolonization against colonizers.

While decolonization has now become merchandised into personal lifestyle projects, anti-colonialism is negation of colonialism, it does not lend itself to positive or progressive projects no matter how it's marketed.

If we can view decolonization as repairing or restoring (healing from colonial violence), then anti-colonial struggle is the intervening and destruction of that which makes it impossible for us to repair or restore.

If we understand that colonial economic, political, and religious power are imposed through domination and extracted from the natural world in an act of total desecration, then we can view the task of anti-colonial struggle as abolitionist liberatory degeneration and destruction. The task of decolonization would be radical reconnection and an assertion of interrelational autonomous mutualities. Destroy power over. Restore power *with*.

When we speak of the sacred we speak of our power, it is within the sacred mountains, sacred rivers, and places where we are most connected with the essence of existence and our cosmology. Those that hold coercive power don't care about notions of "truth" as with the idea of "speaking truth to power." When speaking with the sacred, we are speaking with and asserting that power.

A strategy for total liberation would necessarily consist of unrelenting tactics of destabilization and unsettlement. Beyond establishing Indigenous nationalisms and settler activist literacy projects, it would imagine and actualize every possible form of attack on that which comprises the material and immaterial colony. The frontlines everywhere before us are corporeal and metaphysical. The death of colonialism becomes inescapable in the face of internal hemorrhaging, through proliferation of atomized amorphous attacks and withdrawals. Bleeding out from within.

Coloniality is so closely bound to capitalism that the gravity of these collapsing forces continue to (slowly) compound upon themselves as a vortex of degradation, pulling everything rotten (like its gendered hierarchies) into their void, back to where it came from. The colonial nothingness, the emptiness which then leaves the ashes and ruins of its aspirations, dreams, and utopian fallacies. In negation, liberation.

There can be a powerful purpose in destruction, in the materialization of negation. The unlearning of settler knowledge is power, it is much more powerful in the act of unsettling. The beautiful harmony of refusal is in how liberating it is just to simply refuse. This is how despair becomes shaped as a spiritual weapon, it is effective, even (perhaps especially) when incomplete. There is nothing offered to negotiate with negation, there are no demands.

It is the most exquisite manifesto: destroy what destroys us. Indigenous despair and anti-colonial action are (de)generative settler destruction. Our dreams are filled with unrestrained temporal assaults on settler memory, capitalist property, and the critical infrastructure that sustains occupation. Through the cycle of fire and ash, they become regenerative. The ceremonial cycle of mutuality (mutual aid) and protection (mutual defense) to maintain harmony is a radical reconnection that has the deepest roots. But there is only so much we can build up through alternative systems while being stifled into non-existence. Tuck and Yang assail the urge towards settler innocence and preservation, and pronounce the antagonism with their conclusion that decolonization requires no colonial political justification,

> Reconciliation is concerned with questions of what will decolonization look like? What will happen after abolition? What will be the consequences of decolonization for the settler? Incommensurability acknowledges that these questions need not, and perhaps cannot, be answered in order for decolonization to exist as a framework.

> We want to say, first, that decolonization is not obliged to answer those questions—decolonization is not accountable to settlers, or settler futurity. Decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity.

Though I contend with the loaded notions of sovereignty and temporality, their anti-colonial obstinance is inspiring.

For practical purposes, the death of settler colonial occupation will largely have to be self-inflicted.

The colonial logic of futurity is only concerned with the reproduction of settler society. Hipster colonizers are fixated on "living off the land" and reproducing settler futures all while sustaining and mitigating their roles in ecological devastation and climate change. They're greening settler colonial occupation while reaping the rewards of their imposed presence by performing "land acknowledgments," hanging dream catchers made in sweatshops, and smudging whatever. Settler anxiety is a weapon. The temporal horrors call on its children to bring to bear its consequence, the burden they wear like traded skins and Pendleton blankets is to precipitate the crises that ushers it into non-existence.

It invites a strategic overture: to incriminate settler status as a destabilizing and undermining force waged within and without economic, political, and social order to unsettle these lands. Since settler identity only can exist without consent, it would follow that re-connecting through non-dominating means, or establishing interrelationality, would be the response. But the preconditions for agreement demand destruction of the settler self, all that it represents, and all that it upholds. The proposal of auto-settler destruction, which is another way of saying social war, is not a civil war or a revolution, but boundless social rupture. In other words, power *with* colonizers has reasonable prerequisites.

We can see the asymmetric microcosms of social war in the way neighborhoods become un-gentrified, or unsettled in terms of social strata. Increased crime, graffiti, stickers, posters, unrest, high-priced housing complexes burned, windows repeatedly busted, cars keyed, ATMs smashed, trash and debris neglected, and other acts of immoral indignation. When vibrant murals celebrating inclusivity are constantly defaced, when the hipster cafes can't turn a profit due to unrelenting "homeless intrusions," they have no choice but to cede to a social war that they cannot win (because the streets and the night are not theirs). Gentrifiers invoke the violence of the State and when that doesn't carve out a safe space for anxious settlers, they root themselves out. Social decline is a force against gentrification, it is also the possibility of an anti-colonial shadow strategy. It's a shame that the organic chocolate shop that just opened around the corner's windows keep getting smashed. *It's abhorrent the way that the pretentious art gallery that features themed exhibitions on social justice while calling the cops on unsheltered relatives is constantly tagged up.*

As these "quality of settler life" infrastructures are degraded, property is devalued and the social environment becomes unfavorable. While transposition of this "make business bad" strategy of ecological battles is nothing new, attacking critical infrastructure as asymmetrical anti-colonial strategy of unsettlement is a (less celebrated) path that has been traversed to spectacular effect (particularly in African anti-colonial struggles). Unsettling interventions target all points of critical colonial infrastructural operations (including machinery and institutions) and the resources that sustain them; from extraction (mining, drilling, clearcuts, etc.) to manufacturing (production sites, research facilities, etc.), power plants (coal, solar, wind, gas, etc.) and the

lines and hubs that connect them, communications towers, lines, digital and cyber infrastructure, transportation (trains, planes, airports, ships, docks, vehicles, pipelines, etc.), storage facilities, processing plants and supply and distribution warehouses, research and testing facilities, to water sources, dams, and reservoirs, and even the narrative terrain that upholds the underlying assumptions of colonial power.

Consider the possible scale of anti-colonial criminality. The potential coordination and pressing of advantage offered with the contours of the Earth's agitations that naturally destabilize these infrastructures. How *unsettling* those natural forces can be.

When we examine systems of domination, exploitation, and control, we can see what resources feed it, how it pumps those resources through various channels to process and produce. We can see what keeps it pumping, what it requires to turn certain gears. We've always known what it takes to slaughter such an unnatural entity. We've been raised so close we can see its vital organs and arteries left largely unprotected. The unnatural blood it offers from its transmission towers, pipelines, cell towers, and other machinations.

In 2014, *The New York Times* reported that the so-called US "could suffer a coast-to-coast blackout if saboteurs knocked out just nine of the country's 55,000 electric-transmission substations…according to a previously unreported federal analysis." The electrical grid is comprised of 450,000 miles of transmission lines, 55,000 substations and 6,400 power plants. Since 2020, the FBI has been investigating at least forty-one incidents of railway sabotage in "Washington" state reportedly connected to anti-oil pipeline resistance.

This is not a new consideration. The possibilities are *unsettling*.

We are forces of nature. If we also *move* with the forces of nature, we strike *when* nature strikes. What better coordination and affinity is needed? The eco-incited insurrectionary impulse comes with the storm and destabilizes chances of settler recuperation, of sustaining occupation.

Anti-settler society means amorphous unrelenting social war. It embodies all that settler respectability abhors. It is Fanon's earthly wretches embracing the terror their existence brings to settler rationality. Dysfunction, unyielding chaos, failing into itself to destroy what destroys us. This is cognitive dissonance manifesting against utopic destinies built upon genocide, ecocide, mass theft, enslavement, and forced assimilation.

It contemplates, *How can we accelerate internal and external settler colonial social, economic, and political ruptures and precipitate their ruin? What further provocations, interventions, and attacks can be devised to undermine and destabilize settler-colonial social order? What institutions, ideas, and infrastructure can we attack within our means? Can we get away with it?*

This is the specter of an Indigenous anarchism, an unsettling and ungovernable spiritual force of nature that makes colonizers afraid again.

The End of Settler Time

How can we heal if we do not face and end the sources of disharmony?

What kind of medicine and ceremony will it take to heal a wound as deep as history?

Civilization is a great spiritual and temporal terror. It has dreamt of atomic bombs and stinks of carbon monoxide and alcohol. It fantasizes precipitating *The End* to bring about the mythical and logical conclusion of its "preeminent" religion: the return of their holy godchild who will "save" them from their damnation. In the madness of sacral pursuits, they have already precipitated a

multitude of apocalypses. They celebrate climate catastrophe and the violent colonization of the world, from Big Mountain to Palestine.

James Watt, who as "US" Secretary of the Interior under Ronald Reagan pushed to subject 80 million acres of "public" lands for resource colonialism, stated in a 1981 *Washington Post* article that, "My responsibility is to follow the Scriptures which call upon us to occupy the land until Jesus returns." Beyond Watt, "dominionists," or authoritarian Christian nationalists, still dream of an apocalypse (which will precipitate the return of their "savior") while maintaining enough nuclear weaponry to actualize the end of existence on this world.

The apocalyptic urge is the stated fulfillment of civilization. The Christian death pact is no secret, it's the linear script of "revelations" that has been de-metaphorized and coded into the production of so many social and technological nightmares.

The development of the atomic bomb in 1945 was coded in Christian religious allegory. From the Trinity site in so-called New Mexico to the apocalyptic enthusiasm of the *power to end war* through the Cold War strategy of "mutually assured destruction," the civilized world is still coming to terms with their "revelations," urging towards their anticipated rapture.

After the successful detonation of the very first atomic bomb, Manhattan Project physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer quoted the Hindu scripture *Bhagavad-Gita*, "Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds." Barely a month later, the "US" dropped two atomic bombs devastating the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and more than 200,000 people were killed. Some of the shadows of those perished were burned into the streets. One survivor, Sachiko Matsuo, relayed their thoughts as they tried to make sense of what was happening when Nagasaki was struck, "I could see nothing below. My grandmother started to cry, 'Everybody is dead. This is the end of the world.'"

Western Shoshone lands in so-called Nevada, which have never been ceded to the "US" government, have long been under attack by the military and nuclear industries (what we call nuclear colonialism). Between 1951 and 1992 more than 1,000 nuclear bombs were detonated above and below the surface at an area called the Nevada Test Site on Western Shoshone lands which make it one of the most bombed nations on Earth. Communities in areas around the test site faced severe exposure to radioactive fallout, which caused cancers, leukemia and other illnesses. Those who have suffered this radioactive pollution are collectively known as "Downwinders." Western Shoshone spiritual practitioner Corbin Harney, who passed on in 2007, helped initiate a grassroots effort to shutdown the test site and abolish nuclear weapons. He once said,

> We're not helping Mother Earth at all. The roots, the berries, the animals, are not here anymore, nothing's here. It's sad. We're selling the air, the water, we're already selling each other. Somewhere it's going to come to an end.

Between 1945 and 1958, sixty-seven atomic bombs were detonated in tests conducted in Ṃajeḷ (the Marshall Islands). Some Indigenous people of the islands have all together stopped reproducing due to the severity of cancer and birth defects they have faced due to radioactive pollution.

This is the terrifying legacy of nuclear power that duplicitous climate justice activists advocate.

The settler/civilized will to power, the *destroyer of worlds*.

It's clear that some can't and won't stop imagining colonial futures. They only despise settler and resource colonialism in relation to how much they benefit from it.

In *Desert*, the anonymous author expresses a climate nihilism:

> Here I have tried to map present and plausible futures whilst calling for a desertion from old illusions and unwinnable battles in favour of the possible. I would hope that the implicit call throughout, for us to individually and collectively desert the cause of class society/civilisation, was clear. Yet I can already hear the accusations from my own camp; accusations of deserting the cause of Revolution, deserting the struggle for Another World. Such accusations are correct. I would rejoin that such millenarian and progressive myths are at the very core of the expansion of power. We can be more anarchic than that.

Desert urges us "individually and collectively" to drop the progressive burden of "Global Revolution" and "[Saving] the Earth." This text exploded onto the anarchist scene and agitated existing fissures. It revealed that even some green anarchists still carry the burden of postmodernity. *Do we just walk away? Do we strike back? Is it more or less complicated than that?*

In their essay "*Saving the world*" as the Highest Form of Domestication, eco-extremist aficionado Chahta-Ima offers this bitter and useful question,

But what if this urge to save the world, this urge to "overthrow tyranny" no matter what the cost, this itch to "fight for a better world" is just another hamster wheel, another yoke to be put on us, to solve problems that we didn't create, and to sacrifice ourselves for a better world which we will never see (funny how that works)?…Perhaps the only truly free response, the only one that escapes the cycle of domestication, is one that states firmly that this world is not worth saving, that its days are numbered, and the sooner the evil falls, the better.

The question of climate crisis and despair isn't a question we can ask of a world that manufactures the crisis.

When we converse with the sacred, we shed the dead skin of settler time.

We are compelled to ask, *What does the Earth teach us to do?*

This is both an unsentimental and unromantic notion. It is incoherently terrifying and unsatisfactory to those tending to scholarly and political terrains (settler literacies). When we demythologize and decolonize the ending of worlds, we see cycles of destruction and creation that we have been dispossessed of.

The anonymously authored piece, *Rethinking the Apocalypse: An Indigenous Anti-Futurist Manifesto* extends the assault on settler time:

> Why can we imagine the ending of the world, yet not the ending of colonialism? …Many worlds have gone before this one. Our traditional histories are tightly woven with the fabric of the birthing and ending of worlds. Through these cataclysms we have gained many lessons that have shaped who we are and how we are to be with one another. Our ways of being are informed through finding harmony through and from the destruction of worlds. The Elliptic. Birth. Death. Rebirth…The conclusion of the ideological war of colonial politics is that Indigenous Peoples always lose, unless we lose ourselves. Capitalists and colonizers will not lead us out of their dead futures.

The colonial nothing speaks: Apocalypse is the self-fulfilling prophecy of the civilized.

Anthropologists have their pet theories on why our ancestors abandoned, or deserted "ancient civilizations" and "vanished." In their obscene settler illiteracy, they project simulacrums

of civility while claiming the name Anasazi (our enemy's ancestors). They ignorantly omitted Níhisazi (our ancestors) and the "mysteries" of time were stamped into endless studies with calculated assumptions (like the debunked Bering Strait theory), delegitimizing ancestral memory and knowledge as "myth." In the hubris of modernity, an anthropological team once visited my naalii's hooghan on Black Mesa and took a large stone by a nearby wash she was using to clean clothes. My naalii Zonnie never spoke English, she spoke the language of the land. I grew up watching her world enclosed by progress. We'd sit and laugh while she wove, my dispossessed tongue failing to carry her language forward but in fragments. The ancestral memory of that stone now sits in some museum or university basement. The thieves of the cycles of life, have meticulously replaced natural rhythms and teachings with the exquisitely brutal cage of linearity.

The colonial nothing whispers: *You want to go back to the Stone Age? You can't just go back to how things were.*

These assumptions attempt to re-enslave us in linear temporality. As ignoble savages, we can go *back to many futures* regardless of any projected constraints of settler time or qualifying standards of indigeneity. If we desire to be present and whole, we have to exist on terms with natural cycles. Tradition, of and in the past, is a colonial abstraction.

Before the medical industrial complex and bio-colonialism and privatization of medicines, before industrial pollution precipitated diseases that consequently further exploitative technologies, before the commodification of treatment and consequent mass enslavement to debtors, Indigenous Peoples of these lands effectively healed our bodies, minds, spirits, and communities, with and through these sacred lands.

There is a reason that colonizers were so viciously fearful of Indigenous Peoples singing and Ghost Dancing. That their medicines were such a threat. Though fields were burnt and buffalo slaughtered, the invaders knew that they could never contend with the power of the force of nature. That Indigenous Peoples would not be fully defeated unless our spirits were severed from sacred ground. And so desecrations anteceded massacres. The unrelenting spirits of the land and our ancestors still live, and so our spirituality and sacred places are still under attack to this day. These are the places where medicines still grow. These are the places where creation still restores and renews.

Sacred waters also know how ruins were made.

Sacred winds blowing through ghost towns know how they collapsed upon themselves.

Sacred mountains know what causes states to fail.

The sun has risen and set on massive insurmountable empires that are now coruscant dust.

Settler time dies when we stop imagining its futures and histories. Indigenous cycles of existence continue. One path ends so that others can proceed. This is how the story of empire inevitably unravels: in ruins and ashes as a cautionary tale, a stoic myth we reserve for the most bitter of wintery nights.

The myth of modernity and its power is maintained through imagining its futurity. Instead of imagining Indigenous futures based on Euro-sourced sci-fi utopias, imagine a ceremony of unsettling colonial existence. Imagine the destruction of a machine as large as history. Leviathan? Nayee'? Imagine the end of settler time.

Tending Sacred Fires

Your eyes reflect the same stars and we sing. An unrecognizable song of mourning. Low, nearly unintelligible between clenched teeth that chatter in the frozen waters of our insecurities. The world before this one. Seeds were carried forward and planted. A familiar space that we've traveled through that someone rigidly said was "time." Our fingers held delicate needles with threads of stories weaving. We were given weapons adorned with lightning. A sacred fire was made.

Red ochre figures move, flickering in flame with shadows from meticulously arranged spaces on canyon walls. Guardians of abandoned silent stone ruins. Soft clay, iron rust, and smoke breath. In the fragments of memory without time, their stories have resisted decay. We open our eyes in the darkness of the ta'chéé' (sweatlodge), bitter herbs seep from our pores. Preparing for conflict, we adorn ourselves with red Earth.

One crystal night our ancestors (the Holy ones) spoke back to us from the darkness, "Embody settler colonial negation."

We responded.

We are the nightmares of colonizers coming to haunt the existence they have stolen. There are enemies that the progression of civilization cannot kill. We are unyielding anti-colonial spiritual weapons.

The answers from ceremony have always been found in the space between the sacred and the profane.

Here between these words and pages, they are simple, complex, varied, and purposefully incomplete because what we're already doing with radical education and interventions, mutual aid, community defense, and autonomous infrastructure is medicine.

There is deep affinity in this conflicting relationality that resonates within those that the Earth also claims to be of and with. There are agitating points strung together that comprise a constellation of liberated moments. The more we share and make these irrational and inconsequential possibilities grow, the less space between them there is until there's no space at all. From afar it looks like one fixed point. Up close, we breathe its atoms. It still feels incomplete (empty) so it is echoed, *What is to be done?* The response, *What is to be undone?*

We can see the varied liberal (and radical) strategies of progressive martyrdom that veer towards social-political legitimization. The trajectory ignores the arrangement but once seen, we cannot unsee how the colonizer's justice always upholds the colonizer's power.

As ziq inspirationally lamented in *The Futility of Struggle* and Aragorn! antagonized, "There are many anarchists who believe that the definition of anarchism is struggle, and I strongly disagree with that."

We study the contours of our emergence narratives. We trace the lines in the rough hands of our ancestors who guide and shape the frameworks for our actions. They instruct, "There is no perfect state of decolonization because there is no perfect state of human existence." They remind us to also celebrate our incompleteness. We trace footsteps back to gather sacred medicines. We patiently watch the light and the way the rains flow and collect so we know where to gently place the seeds so many hands have carried. We listen intently when the Earth shifts and the moon is

covered by the sun. And power takes another form. We reconcile the doing/undoing and what *works* through these sacred relationships. We welcome our relatives back into the circle, we do/undo *interrelationally*.

We warm our spirits on the sacred fires at frontlines throughout occupied lands. From those tended by Gidimt'en land defenders to those lit by elders resisting forced removal in Big Mountain, Winnemucca, and those tended by Indigenous trans and two-spirit youth at Camp Migizi. The sacred fire of Black rage that burnt down the Third Precinct police headquarters in so-called Minneapolis. The sacred fires that burnt military vehicles at Backwater Bridge. The sacred fire that burnt Vail to the ground. The sacred fires that made ashes of churches responsible for boarding schools. We nurture and carry the flames in our hearts (it will not be said that our vengeance did not have a heart).

We are still tending sacred fires.

As an autonomous anti-colonial agitator I've stopped vying to appeal to the sympathies and charity of settler alliances and I've weaponized my contradictions.

When we turn away from the strategies and tactics that lead us directly towards non-existence (the colonial nothing), it is not wholly defeatism or fatalism (though interestingly useful when weaponized: It will get worse, we will make sure of it), it is affirmation of the ancestral living agreements we nurture with creation. It is not justification or recognition, it is affirmation of the sacred. For Diné, the negative experiences and crises that precipitated the endings of worlds in Diné Bahane' made us whole, they brought us the living teachings of Są'áh Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóó. They inform that weaponized despair (which becomes an instrument of ceremony) is a transformative force. Deep mutuality (the expression of ceremony) is a restorative one. This colonial nihilism is an affirmation of the wondrous impulse towards harmonious existence, the harmonizing, or simultaneous embodiment, of affirmation and negation.

If history is written by the conquerors, it will be unwritten by those who refuse to be conquered.

The doing? The undoing.

To live a life in conflict with authoritarian constraint on stolen land is a spiritual, mental, and material proposition; it is the negation of settler colonial domination.

It is the embodiment of direct action as healing and as a way of life (we carry protection and healing medicines).

It is a restoration of, and continuance of, ancestral mutual aid.

It is a continuous ceremony of destruction and creation. It is the discourse of the unceded sacred against civilization. It is the heat washing over our skin from the rocks in the ta'chéé'. It is the quiet prayer crafted from spit and blood in the back of a cop car. It is two sacred middle fingers up. It is a soft cracking voice from and to the darkness that both comforts and torments. It is why you'll find me at the fire as it will not let me rest this night. From the beautiful darkness of negation it whispers,

"No spiritual surrender."

Klee Benally
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Indigenous Anarchy in Defense of the Sacred
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No Spiritual Surrender: Indigenous Anarchy in Defense of the Sacred is a searing anti-colonial analysis rooted in frontline experience. Klee Benally (Diné) unrelentingly agitates against colonial politics towards Indigenous autonomy and total liberation of Nahasdzáán (Mother Earth). — Detritus Books

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