



February 2020

Breaking Point: The 1969 American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island

Thomas Kahle
Coe College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr>

Recommended Citation

Kahle, Thomas (2020) "Breaking Point: The 1969 American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island," *Penn History Review*. Vol. 26 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol26/iss2/4>

This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/phr/vol26/iss2/4>
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

BREAKING POINT: THE 1969 AMERICAN INDIAN OCCUPATION OF ALCATRAZ ISLAND

Thomas Kahle, Coe College

Introduction

On November 10, 1969, a young Mohawk Indian named Richard Oakes stood thronged by San Francisco news reporters and television cameras. The location of this media frenzy was the then-abandoned Alcatraz Island, and Oakes, a tall, dark-haired twenty-seven-year-old was pressed against the side of a pick-up truck answering reporters' questions. "So what's this 'nation' that you want to establish out here?" was the first question audible over the crowd's ruckus.¹ Oakes replied, "An Indian nation."² The next inquiry, "[Well] why Alcatraz?" was received with equal brevity, as Oakes, struggling to contain his confidence, subtly grinned as he remarked: "Because everyone can see it."³ Then, while answering another question concerning the soon-to-be-built "Indian nation," Oakes found himself interrupted by one of the reporters: "Mr. Oakes, this is Mr. Hannon from the General Services Administration (GSA)."⁴ Recognizing the significance of the crowd's newest and rather serious-looking member, Oakes exclaimed: "Mr. Hannon, hi! I have a proclamation that I'd like to read to you."⁵ In less than five minutes, Oakes read the GSA representative a document entitled "The Alcatraz Proclamation to the Great White Father and His People" a statement whose condemnation of U.S.-Native American relations was as noteworthy as its claim that Alcatraz now belonged to a group called "American Indians of All Tribes" (IOAT).⁶ Mr. Hannon, who chewed gum and nodded along as if to expedite the speech, posed the following query after being handed Oakes' statement: "So, Richard, what are your plans now?"⁷ When Oakes shrugged

and replied, "I guess we can go home," Mr. Hannon quipped at the young Mohawk, "Need a lift?"⁸ Oakes, not masking his satisfaction, beamed and responded: "Sure do!"⁹ Grinning as the crowd dispersed, Mr. Hannon likely thought that he had just witnessed the end of a publicity stunt dubbed a day later as "Alcatraz's Indian Invasion."¹⁰ Unbeknownst to the GSA representative, November 10, 1969, proved to be just the beginning of one of the most monumental protests in Native American history. The protest ushered in a decade of indigenous activism and marked the end of decades of silent confusion, dejection, and frustration.¹¹

In the late hours of November 20, 1969, less than two weeks after Richard Oakes proclaimed the founding of a new "Indian nation," two boats deposited approximately eighty Native American men, women, and children onto Alcatraz.¹² The island's "Indian Invasion," which Bay Area reporters had interpreted as a media "gimmick" just ten days prior, was fully ablaze and soon characterized by powwows, national television coverage, and a nineteen-month stand-off with the U.S. Coast Guard. The events of November 10, while perhaps amusing to Mr. Hannon and San Francisco news crews, were anything but an impulsive "joke" to the fourteen Bay Area students who orchestrated the return "invasion."¹³ "We were obsessed with the idea of taking Alcatraz," remarked Al Miller, a military veteran and Seminole Indian, who, in 1969, was serving as vice president of San Francisco State University's Student Coalition of American Natives (SCAN).¹⁴ Along with Oakes, who had been voted SCAN's president, Miller and the twelve other Indian students who envisioned the island's settlement belonged to a "new urban generation" of Native Americans.¹⁵ Harvey Wells, a member of this new generation who led three hundred Indians onto the island, offers the first of many revealing insights regarding the occupiers: "I guess we got our idea [i.e. reclaiming Alcatraz] from [older Indian leaders], but they were reluctant to operate in this manner...We just decided that it [was] time for us to govern

[our own] destiny.”¹⁶ This decision to assert Native Americans’ autonomy over their own livelihood stemmed, in other words, not from the impulses of a few irritated college students, but from sentiments long-present in Indigenous communities.

As the above statements indicate, the students who organized Alcatraz’s November 10 takeover, as well as many of the Indians who followed them back onto the island ten days later, had become “fed up” with what they perceived as the federal government’s ongoing and “publicly sanctioned” abuse of American Indians.¹⁷ Although Oakes was civil in his meeting with Mr. Hannon, John Trudell, a Sioux Indian who emerged as one of the takeover’s primary spokesmen, captures the sentiment of the occupiers best: “To put it *mildly*, we were pretty upset.”¹⁸ “Upset” was indeed an understatement of the occupiers’ disposition, and Trudell, commenting as if to ensure that the American public would not mistake IOAT’s motivations, asserted in June 1971: “We were tired of the last fifty years [of government treatment]...Someone mentioned to me that America has an Indian problem. America doesn’t have an Indian problem, Indians have an American problem.”¹⁹ The “American problem” that Trudell alludes to is, to say the least, a complex one, rooted in centuries of Native American mistreatment by the federal government.²⁰ Although the exploitation of American Indians constitutes an expansive area of study, an analysis of the inspirations for Alcatraz’s takeover and their intensification in the years prior to 1969 is both feasible and this paper’s objective.

In examining the underlying grievances responsible for Alcatraz’s 1969 occupation, it is worthwhile to consider the takeover’s logistics as well as the historical discourse that has surrounded the event. With regard to the occupation’s organization, Alcatraz’s November 10 takeover was not the first instance where the island became the subject of Indigenous controversy.²¹ On March 9, 1964, five Sioux Indians occupied Alcatraz for four hours, claiming the Rock on the basis of the Sioux Treaty of 1868.²² Citing a treaty provision which held that

any surplus federal property would revert back to Native American ownership, the occupants attempted to obtain Indian rights to Alcatraz in federal court only to have their case struck down.²³ The idea of reclaiming the island was resurrected in 1969 by the Bay Area college students, who, in the wake of an October fire that destroyed the San Francisco Indian Center, saw an opportune moment to begin building the “Indian nation” mentioned by Oakes.²⁴ Using the Indian Center’s destruction as justification for seizing the island, the ’69 occupants argued that the former prison could serve as a new Indigenous cultural campus, encompassing an all-Indian university, spiritual center, ecology center, and vocational rehabilitation program.²⁵

While the seizure of Alcatraz would retain potent symbolic power, it would not lead to permanent Indian possession of the island. In November 1969, IOAT’s Thanksgiving celebration drew some four to six hundred demonstrators to the island, but logistical support and activist turnout steadily declined from winter 1970 to June 1971.²⁶ Conjunction between the U.S. Coast Guard and General Services Administration (GSA), the federal agency then entrusted with Alcatraz’s administration, worked effectively to undercut the energies of the protest.²⁷ In November ’69, the GSA accused the occupiers of trespassing, a charge which the Coast Guard enforced by cutting off utilities to the island a month later.²⁸ This, as well as a partial Coast Guard blockade, left the occupiers entirely dependent on donations, which surged in November and December 1969, but then dwindled as the takeover faded from front page headlines.²⁹

By spring 1970, sustaining the takeover, let alone winning title to Alcatraz, became exceptionally difficult for IOAT. Sporadic access to food, water, and medical supplies undermined the protestors’ cohesion, with confrontations breaking out between the occupation’s architects and later arrivals.³⁰ Oakes, accused of being a “sellout” devoted to soliciting funds from white sympathizers, distanced himself from the takeover following his twelve-year-old step-daughter’s death in January 1970.³¹ With the face of the

occupation gone, activists such as LaNada War Jack and John Trudell attempted to maintain some semblance of order and continuity, negotiating with federal representatives and serving as permanent members of an IOAT committee in charge of the island's day-to-day affairs.³² The U.S. government, however, remained firm in its refusal to relinquish Alcatraz, and talks between the two sides went nowhere throughout 1970 and into early 1971.³³ Although always wary of government intentions, the occupiers grew more convinced in the succeeding months that federal authorities would seize any opportunity to end their protest altogether.³⁴ By the summer of 1971, only fifteen protestors remained on the island.³⁵



Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, Alcatraz Indian Occupation Slides, c. 1970, GGGA 18488, 001

Alcatraz dock entrance during the Indian Occupation in 1970

Ultimately, a June 1971 fire brought the demonstration to a close when it destroyed five of the island's buildings and a lighthouse.³⁶ Citing the need to restore the lighthouse as well as prosecute the supposed sale of six hundred and eighty dollars' worth of copper wire from the island, the GSA employed thirty-five U.S. marshals to remove Alcatraz's remaining Indians on June 11, 1971.³⁷ The marshals' intervention effectively ended Indian claims to "the Rock," but could not erase the takeover's success

in capturing the nation's consciousness.³⁸ Innumerable American Indian protests preceded Alcatraz's occupation, but none received the widespread news coverage of the Bay Area takeover did, a disparity which historian Sherry L. Smith describes as Alcatraz garnering "more attention than all the Indian struggles of the [twentieth century] combined."³⁹

Grace Thorpe, a Sac and Fox Indian, Indigenous activist, and daughter of the legendary athlete Jim Thorpe, describes Alcatraz as "the most important event in American Indian movements to date. It made me put my furniture into storage and spend my life savings."⁴⁰ Although Thorpe's sentiment may not be representative of all Native Americans, historians Sherry L. Smith, David L. Milner, Thomas King, Troy Johnson, and Joane Nagel have understood Alcatraz's '69 takeover as perhaps the "catalyst" or "turning point" in twentieth century Indian activism.⁴¹ Smith, in particular, points out that, amid anti-Vietnam War protests, clashes between college students and law enforcement officials, and the Black Civil Rights Movement, Native Americans existed "well below the radar screen of [1960s] national consciousness."⁴² Emerging in an era when the federal government seemed determined to eliminate Indian tribes as "legal, political, and cultural identities," the Alcatraz takeover, according to Milner, may be viewed as a kind of "clarion call" for a more confrontational and sustained period of native protest.⁴³ As King explains, the events that the '69 occupation ushered in (which are commonly grouped under the moniker "Red Power") brought national attention to the harsh realities of "Indian [life and] country."⁴⁴ Native activists' 1972 seizure of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the 1973 occupation of the town of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, for instance, profoundly "struck a chord" with non-indigenous Americans who had already grown weary of the American War in Vietnam.⁴⁵ According to Johnson and Nagel, the American public, which had become captivated by images of overmatched Indians carrying hunting rifles against armored carriers at Wounded Knee, needed to look

back only two years to understand the genesis of the unfolding Indian insurgency.⁴⁶ “[It] all began on Alcatraz,” is the consensus of the aforementioned historians, who view the ’69 takeover and the events that followed as forcing the American public to contemplate, or at the very least, acknowledge, twentieth century Indians holding firm to their cultural identity.⁴⁷

By contrast, historians Bradley Shreve, Carolyn Strange, Tina Loo, and Paul Rosier contextualize Alcatraz in a larger history of Indian activism, and in doing so, challenge Alcatraz as the genesis of twentieth century Indian resistance. Shreve, for example, mentions that highlighting the ’69 takeover as the commencement of the Red Power Movement obscures how Indigenous activists followed in the footsteps of earlier generations.⁴⁸ Broadly expanding on this point, Strange and Loo stress that “Indian discontent and mobilization for change” did not begin with Alcatraz but “had been brewing for a decade prior to the occupation.”⁴⁹ Likewise, Smith, albeit generally, claims that Indigenous frustration was especially made manifest in Northwest Pacific Indians’ fight for fishing rights in the 1960s, a struggle that was gradually turning national attention to the plight of American Indians, only to have Alcatraz “secure” that attention in 1969.⁵⁰ Ultimately, however, these historians offer only a limited analysis of the takeover’s roots in earlier decades.

Altogether, the inspirations for Alcatraz’s occupation and are referenced but hardly explained in these historical narratives. The Indian frustration responsible for the Alcatraz takeover emerged amid a pervasive challenging of American politics’ “status quo,” and thus remains shrouded by the broader upheaval of the 1960s.⁵¹ As Rosier explains, mid-twentieth century Indigenous activists, Black Civil Rights leaders, feminists, and labor organizers all reacted against American Cold War conformity, while being indiscriminately grouped together.⁵² Yet, Alcatraz’s occurrence in an era characterized by Black Power, the Chicano Movement, feminism, and Third World Liberation Front strikes should not hide the deeper roots of specific Indian

grievances, for Alcatraz was anything but an “accident.”⁵³ In fact, the occupation’s conception came from a combination of long-developing motivations and the spirit of the age, and, as such, is better seen as the breaking point for twentieth century Native American activism, rather than a starting point.⁵⁴

With contemporary scholarship largely glossing over the ’69 takeover’s inspirations, this paper explicitly identifies Alcatraz as the culmination of Native American grievances specific to mid-twentieth century Indigenous welfare. In particular, it argues that the motivations which drove the occupation derived from the socio-economic status of Native Americans and the struggle of Indigenous peoples to maintain their culture of “Indianness.”⁵⁵ Alcatraz’s occupiers, in effect, viewed destitute Indian reservations, their “termination” through 1950s federal policy, and the relocation of Indigenous peoples in urban areas as being at the very center of Native American social and economic woes. Meanwhile, they attributed the dying of Indigenous culture to a white American society that was, at best, indifferent to the survival of Indian lifeways. Imbued with these convictions, Alcatraz’s Indian occupiers administered “the Rock” in a manner that prioritized the flourishing of Indigenous customs while dismissing white American influence. All this considered, recognition of the Alcatraz occupation as simply the moment which roused Native Americans to protest their treatment by the federal government is, in effect, shortsighted.⁵⁶ Alcatraz’s 1969 takeover not only marks the beginning of an era of confrontation towards the status of Indigenous peoples, but the climax of twentieth century American Indian discontent.

In explaining Alcatraz as the culmination of Indian disgruntlement, this project draws on a wide range of primary source materials. First are thirty-seven Native American newspaper articles written between 1960 and 1971 and archived on the Newberry Library’s American Indian Histories and Cultures Database. A valuable insight into Indian sentiment regarding the socio-economic status of Native peoples as well American

government and culture, these articles are used to gauge the attitudes of indigenous peoples both in the lead up to and during the Alcatraz occupation. Second, six government censuses and surveys as well as two series of BIA relocation records are used to assess the social status of twentieth century Native Americans, conveying the hardships of Indigenous communities both before and during the '69 takeover. Third, thirty-four news footage broadcasts, nearly all of which contain interviews of the Alcatraz occupants, have been attained via San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive. In addition to providing visual references of an Indian-administered Alcatraz, these broadcasts reveal the occupiers' motivations for taking the island and their translation into the Rock's Indigenous government. Finally, publications of the *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* newsletter and an additional fifty-two participant interviews serve a purpose similar to that of the broadcasts. These interviews have been attained through various sources: the University of New Mexico's American Indian Historical Research Project; the Doris Duke Oral History Project at the University of Utah; Troy Johnson's *The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Red Power and Self-Determination*; *American Indians*, a compilation of primary and secondary source materials pertaining to Indigenous studies; *The Thunder Before the Storm: The Autobiography of Clyde Bellecourt as told to Jon Lurie*; Heather Rae's 2005 documentary, *Trudell*; a 1994 interview of Wilma Mankiller conducted through the University of Washington-Seattle; a 2017 interview of LaNada War Jack conducted through the California Historical Society; War Jack's "Reflections of Alcatraz" published in the University of California-Los Angeles' *Gathering Native Scholars*; and, lastly, the 2014 documentary *We Hold the Rock* and Footage World, an online library of stock media footage.

As Milner, Johnson, Nagel, and King have noted, the '69 takeover "effectively ended" long before U.S. Marshals forced the remaining occupants off the island on June 11, 1971.⁵⁷ In a manner ironically mirroring centuries of white-Native relations,

national news and Bay Area reporters insisted on designating “spokesmen” for the occupation just as European colonists demanded that Native tribes delegate “chiefs” or “chieftains.”⁵⁸ As already referenced, the occupation faltered when later arrivals of activists verbally and physically confronted those Indians who had planned the early stages of the takeover and had since been declared its leaders by the media.⁵⁹ LaNada War Jack, John Trudell, Al Miller, Adam Fortunate Eagle, Stella Leach, Joe Bill, Ed Castillo, Ross Harden, and, of course, Oakes himself (the so-called “mayor of Alcatraz”) were among those who the press repeatedly interviewed concerning the occupation’s planning and sustainment.⁶⁰ Consequently, the voices of these participants are disproportionately heard in the takeover’s coverage as well as in the scholarly literature that has since followed. Yet, this fact and there being no definite record of the number of Indians who passed through occupied Alcatraz, does not render these individuals’ testimonies any less valuable.⁶¹ The aforementioned activists were, after all, the occupation’s original organizers and many played central roles in the island’s administration.⁶² Rather, it is simply unfortunate that the experiences of so many of the occupiers have never been recorded, as activist Peter Blue Cloud once remarked: “We [i.e. the occupiers] came everywhere from reservations and urban settlements, government boarding schools, street gangs, giant plains, and desert, horse people, sheep herders, fishermen of the coastal rivers, [and] hunters of the frozen north.”⁶³ With these voices lost, this study and all others concerning the ’69 occupation remain at a disadvantage in capturing the Alcatraz occupation’s true nature: that of a nationwide Native American movement composed of similar, but also markedly distinct, peoples.

Lastly, discussion of the motivations cited as inspiring Alcatraz’s 1969 takeover assumes an order which demonstrates the emergence of a breaking point for Indigenous peoples. Offered first are historiographical accounts of Indian reservations, federal Termination policy, and the Employment Assistance Program.

Following these are the Alcatraz occupiers' opinions, which explain each factor's contribution to the '69 takeover. Afterwards, a section devoted to the dying of "Indianness" addresses another defining aspect of 1950s/60s Indian welfare. Attention is given to Black Power's influence on the occupiers before discussion turns to the BIA's oversight of Indian education, IOAT's encouraging other Indigenous protests, and IOAT's implementing a "white ban" on Alcatraz. As before, historiographical accounts of these events precede the Alcatraz occupiers' opinions of each. In the end, these sections aim to explain Native Americans' social and economic woes and frustration over their fading culture as creating a "do or die" moment in the struggle to salvage Indian livelihood. It was at this particular moment that Alcatraz's occupiers acted with the conviction that the very existence of Indigenous peoples was at stake.

Motivations Part I: Native American Homelands, Termination, and Urban Relocation

In turning to the grievances that led to Alcatraz's 1969 occupation, the socio-economic status of twentieth century Native Americans first warrants consideration. First, discussion of the Alcatraz occupiers' frustration with American Indian welfare will always entail some reference to the "special [pieces of] land" known as "reservations."⁶⁴ Established a full century before policies such as termination and relocation, reservations constitute territories set aside by the federal government to house Indians displaced by white westward expansion.⁶⁵ Although instituted as a kind of compensation for tribes deprived of their ancestral homelands through fraud, theft, or war, the often forcible grouping of Native Americans onto reservations proved to be a "watershed experience for [Indigenous peoples], the consequences of which proved devastating for Indian culture and psychology."⁶⁶ As evidenced, the Alcatraz occupiers' discontent over the lack of social and economic mobility then available to Native Americans tended to revolve around these tracts of land, be it in their poverty, their "termination," or Indians' relocation away from them. For decades, reservations' remoteness kept "[Indigenous peoples] out of sight and out of mind of...non-Indian [Americans]" in addition to

one another.⁶⁷ However, the diminishment of Indian homelands and the movement of their inhabitants to urban areas eventually concentrated the anger needed to make Alcatraz's occupation possible.⁶⁸ By 1969, activists such as Joe Bill, an Inuit and central organizer of the '69 takeover, had come to the conclusion that "a real understanding of the problems [facing American Indians]" requires "living the life of an Indian," an experience inextricably linked to reservation life and the difficulties of escaping it.⁶⁹

An understanding of reservations as a "breeding ground" for the frustration behind the '69 occupation begins with the "uncanny resemblance" between the physical conditions present on Indian homelands and those on "America's Devil's Island."⁷⁰ In "The Alcatraz Proclamation to the Great White Father and His People," the November 10 statement read by Richard Oakes, the takeover's organizers facetiously cited the following characteristics as rendering the former prison "more than suitable" to serve as another American Indian reservation:

1. It is isolated from modern facilities, and without adequate means of transportation.
2. It has no fresh running water.
3. It has inadequate sanitation facilities.
4. There are no oil or mineral rights.
5. There is no industry and so unemployment is very great.
6. There are no health-care facilities.
7. The soil is rocky and non-productive, and the land does not support game.
8. There are no educational facilities.
9. The population has always exceeded the land base.
10. The population has always been held as prisoners and kept dependent upon others.⁷¹

A rather frank and forthright critique of the conditions present on American Indian homelands, the above "justifications" for

taking over Alcatraz in particular stemmed from the fact that nearly non-existent water supplies, health care facilities, schools, and job opportunities had long constituted reservation life.⁷² In a 1935 survey commissioned by the South Dakota Relief Agency, state labor and health inspectors ruled that nearly all of South Dakota's ten reservations existed in an "absolute state of want."⁷³ Characterized by schools that offered little more than a fifth grade education, one-room tar paper houses without plumbing or access to clean water, and a prevalence of disease described by the commission as "dire," these native communities were declared, to little surprise, "wholly dependent on the state...for subsistence."⁷⁴ Yet, if these descriptions are not startling enough, it is one of the survey's initial statements that is perhaps the most alarming: "Living conditions on these [South Dakota] reservations are characteristic of those on most Indian reservations."⁷⁵ Of course, this survey was not intended to address the conditions of the over three hundred reservations then-present in the United States. Its assumption that the "deplorable state of affairs" present on South Dakota's reservations could not be that different from the rest of the nation's reservations is, to say the least, disturbing.⁷⁶

In retrospect, the findings of studies such as that of South Dakota's 1935 Emergency Relief Administration seem hardly exaggerated. National surveys conducted in succeeding decades attest to minimal socio-economic progress on reservations, conditions which inspired activists such as Joe Bill to remark: "We [Native Americans]...have been broken down and separated [and] forgotten for the last seventy years!"⁷⁷ For IOAT, the widespread destitution of Indigenous homelands was a resounding testament to the federal government's neglecting Indian economic woes and the lack of means needed to escape them. Born into environments where Indians could supposedly survive both financially and culturally, Alcatraz occupiers ranging from John Trudell to Wilma Mankiller to Richard Oakes came to view their takeover of the desolate Bay Area island as a fitting representation of the barren lands more conducive to keeping

Native Americans in poverty than removing them from it.

At the age of seventeen, John Trudell volunteered to serve in the United States Navy, and was later stationed on a destroyer along the coast of Vietnam. Although willing to joke to interviewers that he made the right choice joining the navy because the Vietnamese didn't have any ships of their own, Trudell never kidded about his motivations for enlistment: "The only reason I [joined] the military was because I needed to get away from where I was. It wasn't about politics, patriotism, or anything else – it was about survival."⁷⁸ Trudell grew up on the impoverished Santee Reservation in Nebraska, where he lost his mother at the age of six and failed to finish high school.⁷⁹ Confronting the adversities of reservation life was, however, an experience hardly unique to Trudell, as Wilma Mankiller also wrestled with poverty on the Oklahoma Cherokee Reservation. One of eleven children, Mankiller and her family relocated to San Francisco in 1956 after having no food, electricity, or plumbing on their Oklahoma farm.⁸⁰ Despite the distances travelled by Trudell and Mankiller, the experience of having to overcome poverty on their homelands proved inescapable. As a junior high student in the Bay Area, Mankiller felt surrounded by "children from another planet" when she observed white school children "[riding] bicycles...roller skating...[using] a telephone, or [doing] all the things [we'd never done before]."⁸¹ Mankiller terms what she and other relocated Indians experienced a "cultural shock" that gradually transformed into an "awakening" when a young generation of Native Americans began contemplating the juxtaposition between reservation life and that of mainstream America.⁸²

For the Alcatraz occupiers, coming to grips with the seemingly endless disparities between reservation life and comfortable urban living, a status which Indians more often glimpsed than attained, proved to be a painstaking but well-understood process by 1969. As a child, Richard Oakes not only spent time on the St. Regis Reservation in upstate New York,

but also in Brooklyn where his father worked as an ironworker.⁸³ Exposure to an abundance of wealth in New York City left a young Oakes wondering if there was “something [he] could do for [his] people [on the reservation].”⁸⁴ Having no solution in his youth, Oakes would carry this question to the Bay Area in 1968, where, joining other Indians, he would discuss why many Americans could know materialism while Indigenous peoples could not.⁸⁵ The contrast between reservation poverty and the prosperity present off Indian homelands was, in other words, a dizzying experience for Alcatraz’s occupiers. However, only a transition this disorienting could have produced a response of Alcatraz’s magnitude as Mankiller explains: “All [Indian] tribes have endured periods of upheaval...[but leaving the reservation and participating in the occupation] was [itself] a watershed experience.”⁸⁶

Although disorienting at first, relocation to urban environments worked to heighten Trudell, Mankiller, and other Alcatraz occupiers’ understanding of reservation poverty by 1969. No longer internally wrestling with life on the “Rez,” IOAT activists gradually developed the confidence to contest reservation conditions outright, with one twenty-one year-old Yakima occupier going so far as to denounce Indian homelands as American “concentration camps.”⁸⁷ LaNada War Jack, employing less evocative language but possessing much of the same sentiment as her Yakima counterpart, remarked that one of the occupation’s major inspirations was the desire to “focus attention on [the fact] that Indians on reservations throughout the nation...were living in poverty and suffering great injustice.”⁸⁸ War Jack’s comment later found a voice in a collective statement issued by IOAT, which described the Alcatraz occupiers as having grown “concerned” not only about their “own livelihood” but about “what was happening on the reservations.”⁸⁹ According to Cree activist Linda Aranaydo, the events taking place on reservations constituted none other than “the destruction of what [cultural] identity Indians have [left].”⁹⁰ For Aranaydo, “white men” had “proved successful to

a certain extent” in eliminating the Indian’s “sense” of him- or herself as “Indian” by isolating Indigenous peoples in “prisoner of war camps,” their own reservations.⁹¹ Alcatraz’s occupation, however, represented an attempt to “salvage” that identity by revealing reservations as “oppressive spaces” paralyzing “[Indians’ efforts] to rise economically as individuals.”⁹² Channeling this thought, Alcatraz’s occupiers presented their cause as not only ending the spatial and personal “division” that reservations had created amongst Native Americans, but drawing attention to a means of living rendering the Indian no more than a “useless entity” both to him/herself and his/her community.⁹³ The ’69 occupation, in other words, reflected both a weariness with reservations’ lack of socio-economic development and the cycle of impoverishment that such stasis produced. For IOAT, ignorance of this cycle, especially among Indigenous peoples, guaranteed that reservations would continue functioning in the manner they always had: worsening Native American financial woes and crippling Indians’ inability to effect their own cultural and economic survival.

When Indian activists staked their claim to America’s Devil Island in November ’69, they offered an unmistakable parallel to the bleak plots of land where Indigenous peoples had been holed up for generations. For nineteen months, Alcatraz’s occupiers tied themselves to a rock as inextricably as other American Indians found themselves bound to their reservations. The San Francisco Bay island effectively became the axis around which IOAT’s cause revolved just as reservations, regardless of Indian wishes, constituted Indigenous “homes...heritages...and [everything Native Americans had].”⁹⁴ From IOAT’s perspective, reservations were not working to preserve American Indian autonomy, but isolating Indigenous peoples and denying them the resources needed to ascend economically. In 1970, Navajo Indian and Alcatraz activist La Rayne Parrish affirmed this position with the statement: “A lot [of the occupiers] have experienced reservation life; they know what it is like, they know what the feeling is when

their parents have to live on [government] welfare, when they have to depend on...government services, just for a job, just for a livelihood to exist.”⁹⁵ Indeed, some of the activists who have become most synonymous with the '69 takeover never lost sight of their upbringings on reservations, ultimately carrying their experiences with them into cities and onto Alcatraz itself.

Born figuratively and literally outside the consciousness of non-Native Americans, the occupiers that Parrish describes were raised in spaces that, by 1958, Soviet propaganda had adopted in discrediting its rival superpower, claiming that the U.S.'s management of reservations would lead to “the gradual extinction” of Indigenous peoples.⁹⁶ A rather bold statement, 1968 national surveys seemed to award credence to the Soviet claim when they indicated that Americans were grossing \$170 million from agricultural products and charging up to \$0.75 per board of lumber.⁹⁷ These sales should have corresponded with a substantial growth in wealth for the 764,000 Indians nationwide, as lumber and agriculture comprised two of the primary industries within reservation communities.⁹⁸ Instead, as if to confirm a Euro-centric stereotype that Native Americans were incapable of embracing market capitalism, reservation agriculture accounted for only \$16 million of the \$170 million grossed, while reservation lumber sold at a paltry \$0.18 per board.⁹⁹ When asked to explain these discrepancies, Indians themselves attributed this absence of economic growth not to a failure to engage market forces, but an inability to overcome factional divisions.¹⁰⁰ The divisions, sown into reservation life through decades of poverty, were the result of Indians battling one another over what few resources were available.¹⁰¹ Feeling compelled to abandon collective efforts in favor of individual survival, generations of Native Americans, including those responsible for Alcatraz's occupation, found themselves becoming further entrenched in an endless cycle of impoverishment.¹⁰²

By 1969, an upbringing in what some Indians termed America's own “concentration camps,” where poverty not only

threatened individual welfare but communal unity, led War Jack and fellow occupier Marilyn Miracle to assert that few Alcatraz occupiers “just jumped in and joined [the takeover].”¹⁰³ Rather, participation in the occupation represented “a lifelong thing,” an inspiration that “came from way back, back from the reservation.”¹⁰⁴ Simply put, Indian frustration over impoverished reservation conditions did not arise suddenly in the fall of 1969, but had been kindling within the Alcatraz activists and other Indians since childhood. In the later half of the 1960s, IOAT’s members, although driven from their homelands in desperation, succeeded in finding one another and channeling their anger into a common cause. These activists, recognizing that all Indians had endured decades of neglect and financial ruin, envisioned a protest on America’s most infamous prison-island as a fitting representation of the destitution which Indigenous peoples had come to know so well.¹⁰⁵

* * * * *

While reservation conditions may have first stoked the ire of the Alcatraz occupiers, it was the federal government’s 1950s Termination policy that further incensed American Indians bonded together in urban environments. Broadly defined, Termination was the federal government’s forced assimilation of Native Americans into mainstream American culture, be it legally, socially, or economically.¹⁰⁶ Since 1934, the tribal governments that administered reservations were recognized as having some version of sovereign power over their lands and tribal members.¹⁰⁷ Congress, in other words, treated Indian tribes as “domestic, dependent nations” possessing everyday civil and criminal jurisdiction.¹⁰⁸ These powers afforded Indians the right to organize their own governments, legislate and adjudicate, determine tribal membership, levy and collect taxes, and oversee the development of Indigenous land.¹⁰⁹ With the advent of Termination, however, over a hundred Native

American tribes were stripped of their title as “sovereign entities,” exposing them to a host of federal regulations to which they were unaccustomed.¹¹⁰ Primary among these were the application of state, income, property, and sales taxes, and states’ ability to assume control of reservation resources.¹¹¹ In addition, Native American tribes found themselves deprived of the “special services” once administered by the federal government, including health, education, and welfare assistance not available to the non-Indian population.¹¹² Termination, in effect, rendered obsolete the trust relationship that previously existed between tribes and the federal government and afforded Native Americans some degree of autonomy.¹¹³ From the early 1950s until 1970, Indians, who had briefly been recognized as self-governing, were liable to being treated no differently from any other citizen living in a particular state.¹¹⁴

The emergence of Termination was, in many ways, a continuation of the federal government’s almost century-old policy of Indian assimilation, one which Indigenous activists were condemning outright by 1969.¹¹⁵ As early as 1871, the formal end of the “treaty period” between Indian tribes and the federal government, Congressional factions began advocating the disregard of tribal leaders.¹¹⁶ With this came calls to break up tribal estates via allotting reservation land to individual Indians.¹¹⁷ In 1887, these pressures culminated in the Dawes or General Allotment Act, which ordered the dividing of reservations into individual plots to be farmed and owned by Indians.¹¹⁸ Had the allotment policy been carried out successfully, it would have ended the reservation system altogether, and individualized relations between Indians and the federal government.¹¹⁹ Instead, the Dawes Act’s efforts faltered when Indians were awarded barren lands and given little instruction in farming.¹²⁰ “[Land] hungry white settlers” ultimately preyed upon Indian unfamiliarity toward homesteading and wrested control of almost two-thirds of Indigenous land, an event which the federal government attempted to curtail via the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act

(IRA).¹²¹ Although calling for an end to allotment and a return to Indian communal or “home rule,” the IRA encouraged the revitalization of tribal organizations only so far as it might lead to Indians’ eventual assimilation.¹²² By the late-1940s, the notion that strengthening tribal institutions might serve as “preparatory steps” for assimilation had succumbed to congressional calls for more rapid Indian integration.¹²³ Termination, in effect, emerged as the answer to these calls, replacing Native Americans’ jurisdiction over their lands with that of states’, and inspiring the indignation of Indians who came of age in the policy’s aftermath.

The impetus for Termination and their subsequent effect on the nation’s American Indian population stemmed from a wide range of motives, albeit all contributing to what IOAT perceived as a wholesale assault on Indian sovereignty.¹²⁴ Rosier, for one, identifies Termination as an example of the “Cold War imperative of ‘ethnic integration,’” arguing that the congressional discourse surrounding it mirrored that of the international standoff between the United States and Soviet Union.¹²⁵ In other words, congressmen spoke of Termination as if corresponding with the American effort to “liberate the enslaved peoples of the world,” peoples which “included Indians ‘confined’ in...socialistic environments [i.e. reservations].”¹²⁶ Ulrich and Burt, meanwhile, consider Termination as resulting from the emergence of a conservative bloc of western American congressmen in the postwar era.¹²⁷ In addition to viewing traditional Indian communal structures as too similar to “dreaded Soviet ones,” these congressmen were searching for new sources of revenue amidst a tremendous economic boom in the farming, stock raising, lumber, mining, manufacturing, and service industries.¹²⁸ Indian land, with federal protections prohibiting its sale and subsequent development, found itself at the forefront of congressional calls to be “properly taxed” as early as 1944.¹²⁹ By 1953, terminationist congressmen were frequently referencing the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, which granted U.S. citizenship to Native Americans, as warranting Indians’

treatment as individuals rather than as members of discrete social and political groups.¹³⁰ For terminationists, the separate governmental and land-holding status of reservations were a violation of the very economic politico-economic system of the United States; that is, one of individual property rights and private enterprise.¹³¹ In the end, these attitudes culminated in the federal government's massive withdrawal from Indian affairs and services, which, regardless of its true intentions, was hailed by some congressmen as allowing Indians to enjoy the freedoms of competing in an unfettered marketplace.¹³²

Yet, while motives for Termination may have ranged significantly among congressmen, the federal government's formal decision to revoke tribes' sovereignty while discontinuing "special services" for Indians was especially influenced by the low regard with which the BIA was held.¹³³ Shared in concert with the belief that reservations were economically unsalvageable, criticism of the BIA was largely financial and based on the premise that the agency was tending to idle Indians.¹³⁴ By 1946, the department was popularly described as bloated "with personnel whose salaries and travel expenses drain...the vast sums that Congress [already] appropriates for...Indian tribes."¹³⁵ It was at this time that the Senate Committee on Civil Service "zeroed in" on the BIA as one of several federal agencies possessing an excess of employees. The committee encouraged elected officials and the BIA's own commissioner, Dillon Myer, to describe the Bureau as needing to "get out of the [Indian] business as quickly as possible."¹³⁶

Meanwhile, a series of blizzards which struck the Navajo and Hopi reservations in 1950 provided the opportunity for western congressmen to justify their claim that only states, rather than Indians themselves, could properly manage reservation resources.¹³⁷ The blizzards proved so devastating that the affected tribes required rescuing via airlift, a response which inspired Congress to investigate the conditions which allowed for such havoc to ensue.¹³⁸ Upon finding that the Navajo territory had housed an excess of 20,000 inhabitants, terminationists in

Congress seized on the revelation and declared the Navajo and Hopis' situation to be indicative of Indian homelands at large.¹³⁹ These congressmen argued, in effect, that no reservation possessed the land base needed to support its population, and that any and all rehabilitation efforts toward Indian land would prove futile.¹⁴⁰ This argument, or "surplus population theory," served to validate western congressmen's stance that Native Americans would only find adequate work off their reservations, and that responsibility for tribal land should pass into states' jurisdiction.¹⁴¹ In 1953, congressional consensus over BIA dysfunction and reservations' economic futility culminated in House Concurrent Resolution 108 (HCR-108), which, in addition to existing legislation, initiated what IOAT denounced as the unjustified passage of some 2,595,414 acres of land out of Indian hands.¹⁴²

While the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the nation's perhaps most formidable outlet for Indigenous grievances, managed to halt the continuation of Termination legislation in 1957, the widespread passage of land out of Indigenous hands continued to rankle American Indian sentiment throughout the 1960s.¹⁴³ Prior to IOAT's emergence, the NCAI, in a 1960 letter to over four hundred constituents, decried Termination as the "final negation" of what it considered to be the federal government's primary commitment to Native Americans: "[Indigenous] education, in the broadest sense of the word, and [the establishment] of an efficient educational agency, devoting its main energies to the social and economic advancement of...Indians."¹⁴⁴ Termination had, in the NCAI's opinion, worked to the complete opposite of this principle by allowing for the removal of "already inadequate [Indian] resources," of which Native Americans themselves could be "the instigators and planners."¹⁴⁵ At its conclusion, the NCAI letter declared that if any means still existed to reverse the trend of "poverty and lack of social adjustment which had [come to] dominate [studies of Native Americans] for more than thirty years," a National Indian Commission needed establishing to protect Indian resources and

Termination needed outright abandonment.¹⁴⁶

In the nine years that separated the NCAI letter and Alcatraz's takeover, American Indian condemnation of Termination not only persisted, but assumed an increasingly antagonistic tone. Throughout the 1960s, the NCAI worked within existing political systems to lobby the federal government to reverse Termination.¹⁴⁷ The organization's 1957 success in halting Termination legislation served to strengthen its conviction that Indian reform could be affected by working in conjunction with the government rather than protesting against it.¹⁴⁸ In 1967, the NCAI went so far as to encapsulate this belief with the statement, "Indians Don't Demonstrate," a remark pointedly aimed at younger cohorts of Native Americans, who were not only criticizing Termination, but the officials dictating Indian policy.¹⁴⁹ Poor reservation conditions, as well as Termination's diminishment of Indian land, were responsible for concentrating these younger Indians in urban areas where their frustration and confusion could coalesce. In what Indigenous historian Alvin M. Josephy labels "termination psychosis," Native Americans displaced by reservation poverty or the federal government's attempt to terminate Indian homelands exhibited "an all-pervading suspicion of government motives in Indian Affairs."¹⁵⁰ Trudell, Mankiller, and Oakes are just a few Alcatraz occupiers who belonged to this class of Native Americans, experiencing confusion and anxiety perhaps deserving of the term "psychosis." However, these Indians' joint immersion in the Bay Area allowed them to find one another, and, in doing so, embolden their understanding of Termination's motivations and their willingness to demand the policy's repeal.

In the lead-up to the Alcatraz occupation, LaNada War Jack was one activist especially willing to confront Termination, even losing her job in the process. Poverty on the Fort Hall Reservation (ID) inspired War Jack's relocation to the Bay Area in 1965, after which she took a job alongside another future Alcatraz activist, Lehman Brightman, at San Francisco's

American Indian Center.¹⁵¹ Although not personally spurred to move by Termination, War Jack, while directing the American Indian Center's newspaper, became absorbed in a Bay Area Indian community that had experienced the policy.¹⁵² Alongside Brightman, who served as the paper's editor, War Jack drew the ire of the center's older members when her publications began "making too much noise."¹⁵³ Due to its criticizing Termination and urban relocation, the center's elder directors condemned War Jack and Brightman's work as straying beyond the accepted realms of petition and reform into outright defiance.¹⁵⁴ While fired for breaking an unspoken rule that "Indians don't protest," War Jack and Brightman came to exemplify Wilma Mankiller's observation that "poverty without community is very different from poverty where there is a group of people who share a... common history...and some sense of responsibility for one another."¹⁵⁵ Termination, to be sure, allowed states to assume Native American land, and, in doing so, worked to thrust already poor Indians into foreign environments. However, once concentrated in these environments, Indians such as War Jack and Brightman began to recognize Termination, like reservation poverty, as a shared transgression among Indigenous people.

Many other Alcatraz occupiers, over the course of the 1960s, came to understand Termination as depriving Indians of their already-limited land and resources. An adolescent Richard Oakes, for instance, was observant of the palpable "fear" that set in on the St. Regis Reservation after its inhabitants realized that Termination could allow for their arrest, trial, and prosecution in racially biased New York courts.¹⁵⁶ Although a deeply "disruptive" event in Oakes's youth, Termination did not become a driving force in the young Mohawk's political life until bartending in 1960s San Francisco revealed a host of stories regarding Termination's effect on "[Indian] communities...homes... and families."¹⁵⁷ Much of the same applies to Adam Fortunate Eagle, whose involvement in numerous Bay Area Indian organizations facilitated his understanding of Termination as a

masked government effort designed to “wipe out” reservations, abrogate the remaining treaties between Native Americans and the United States, and reduce funding for the BIA.¹⁵⁸ Finally, Wilma Mankiller’s exposure to the Bay Area’s atmosphere of “social and political revolution,” which had “everybody [thinking that] everything was possible,” also inspired her to reflect more critically on Indian policy.¹⁵⁹ Upon realizing that Termination was none other than another “government [policy]...designed to make sure that Indians...no longer kept [their] language...cultural identity...and most importantly [their] land and natural resources” Mankiller was left alarmed, and searching for an outlet to express her dismay.¹⁶⁰

In January 1970, the Alcatraz occupiers, then fully immersed in the Rock’s takeover, issued a newsletter exemplifying their recognition of Termination as not only a common Native American experience, but one jeopardizing the welfare of all Indigenous people. Claiming that ownership of the prison was “but little to ask” from a government which had engaged in centuries of “systematically stealing Indian lands...polluting air and water...and ripping open the very bowels of the earth in senseless greed,” the newsletter identified Termination as none other than the most recent federal policy of “theft, suppression, and prejudice” toward Native Americans.¹⁶¹ In doing so, the newsletter resembled earlier Native American critiques of Termination, particularly that of the 1960 NCAI letter, as threatening Indian livelihood. However, the publication’s use of the terms “stealing,” “prejudice,” and “senseless greed” illustrate a distinct shift in rhetoric, one that perhaps manifests itself most in the statement’s description of Termination as a disguised government effort “to annihilate the [country’s] many Indians.”¹⁶² In explaining this stark change in tone, John Trudell describes a realization among Indians that Termination treated Indians more like “statistics” than people.¹⁶³ According to Trudell, this recognition lay not just in the fact that Indians came to see themselves as “unemployed and disenfranchised,” as they had “always been.”¹⁶⁴ Rather, it resided in Native Americans’

increasing capacity to recognize themselves as poor and becoming *increasingly* poorer via Termination's transfer of Indigenous land and their resources out of Indian hands.¹⁶⁵

At its inauguration in the late-1940s and early-1950s, Senator Arthur Watkins, a Republican from Utah, hailed Termination as "following in the footsteps [of] the Emancipation Proclamation."¹⁶⁶ Yet, for the Alcatraz occupiers and the American Indians who experienced Termination's effects, being forced into mainstream society inspired attitudes that hardly mirrored Watkins' rhetoric. While Watkins supposedly saw Termination embellishing the words "THESE PEOPLE SHALL BE FREE" over the heads of American Indians, Native Americans largely came to view the diminishing of their homelands as an introduction to a "meat grinder...called [American] democracy."¹⁶⁷ Although terminationists lauded HCR-108 as being in the best interests of Native Americans, Indigenous newspapers' description of such legislation attests to it being anything but. By 1969, publications such as the *Akwesasne Notes* were claiming it impossible to find an Indian leader who had not rejected Termination, a policy which wrested control of Indians' sovereignty as if they were "children... [unable to] think for themselves...decide for themselves...[or] act for themselves."¹⁶⁸

By 1969, the perception that Indigenous people needed to be assimilated into American society found itself passionately rejected by IOAT. For almost two decades, Native Americans denounced Termination under the premise that it deprived Indians both of the raw materials needed to make socio-economic gains and the few spaces where they could continue living as distinct "tribal peoples."¹⁶⁹ Yet, as more and more Native Americans found themselves driven from their homelands in the 1950s and 60s, Indian rhetoric toward Termination turned increasingly confrontational. While criticisms such as the 1960 NCAI letter first presented Termination as patronizing Indians' ability to manage their resources, later 1960s activists such as Adam Fortunate Eagle went so far as to denounce Termination

as “the most insidious federal project of the twentieth century.”¹⁷⁰ Fortunate Eagle and other IOAT members constituted a group of Native Americans which, despite being coerced into abandoning their communal homelands, came to view themselves as a collective. The irony of these activists finding one another and assuming the representation of all Indigenous peoples cannot be understated given Termination’s explicit effort to notify Indians that “some day they [are] going to reach the age of 21, and [will have to] prepare themselves for [responsibility].”¹⁷¹ Of course, IOAT activists more than shouldered the challenge of acting as an all-inclusive voice for Native Americans, as they channeled two decades of Indian aversion toward Termination into taking a nationally recognized icon.

* * * * *

As Termination exacerbated the destitute realities of reservation life, American Indian frustration continued to grow after the Employment Assistance Program’s (EAP) false proclamation as the “final solution” to Indian poverty.¹⁷² As the BIA’s urban relocation program, the EAP induced some 30,000 Native Americans to move to cities in the 1950s and almost three times that number during the 1960s and 70s.¹⁷³ Although established with the stated intention of providing reservation residents with vocational training and jobs, the EAP worked more to dislocate and disintegrate Indigenous communities.¹⁷⁴ “An undeniable force of transformation for Native peoples,” urban relocation had the inadvertent effect of “confusing, depersonalizing, and [ultimately angering]” an entire generation of Indians, among whom included the Alcatraz occupation’s architects.¹⁷⁵ By the mid-1960s, however, this once nameless generation of Native Americans had managed to transform confusion into coalescence, emerging as an “increasingly organized urban...population” intent on communicating Indian experiences on reservations and in cities.¹⁷⁶ For Al Miller, the

impetus for this search and their culmination in Alcatraz's takeover were none other than Indians "wising up" to the logic behind their resettlement: "The policy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to relocate Indians out of the reservation [and] assimilate them into greater society backfired."¹⁷⁷ In the end, it was at Alcatraz, according to Miller, that Indians unequivocally denounced relocation and asserted that Indigenous welfare would continue to decline so long as it remained outside the control of Indians themselves.¹⁷⁸

Even before Termination's institution in 1953, the federal government was formulating the EAP as encouragement to Indian people to move away from their reservations.¹⁷⁹ As a kind of appendage to HCR-108, Congress devised a series of vocational training initiatives based on the 1930s Navajo-Hopi work program as an alternative to the nearly non-existent employment opportunities on Indigenous homelands.¹⁸⁰ The program's final 1962 version provided Indians with a one-way bus ticket to one of six relocation centers (Chicago, Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Los Angeles, or San Francisco), supplementary income for household necessities, and job counseling for a year after arrival.¹⁸¹ To encourage Native American participation, BIA field offices distributed materials that sported the supposed luxuries of city living.¹⁸² A collection of these advertisements spanning from 1955 to 1975 depict well-dressed American Indian families sitting in modern apartment living rooms and dining in kitchens with the era's latest electronic appliances.¹⁸³ As if these images were not appealing enough given the privation of reservation life, the BIA often supplemented their marketing materials with commentary highlighting a relocated family's employer, local schools, and church groups.¹⁸⁴ In mocking these advertisements, Fortunate Eagle describes BIA officials ecstatically proclaiming to reservation Indians, "Come out and sign up for relocation, we're going to get you an apartment to live in, we're going to ship you free of charge, you and your family [and] grandma and grandpa if [they] want to come along too!"¹⁸⁵ The kind of

cynicism represented by Fortunate Eagle's ridicule soon became commonplace in the lead-up to 1969, as relocated American Indians encountered living conditions entirely different from government-promised ones.

Although many Native Americans viewed relocation as a "desperate last resort" to escape reservation poverty rather than a choice "between various life alternatives," few avoided a sense of shock upon arriving in their new communities.¹⁸⁶ Millie Ketcheshawno, a Muskogee Creek Indian and one of the Alcatraz occupation's architects, recalls being astonished after reaching Oakland on a BIA-sponsored bus: "[I] got off in a poverty-type area, and said [to myself], 'oh my gosh this is just what I came from!'"¹⁸⁷ Yet, Ketcheshawno's surprise does not even begin to capture the bewilderment that Indians experienced upon learning that the government had little intention of providing the "retention-based services" that it had promised.¹⁸⁸ Initially assured monthly stipends and the vocational training needed to obtain steady work, relocated Native Americans often had any and all financial assistance cut off after finding a job, which, for most, entailed easily replaceable unskilled or semiskilled labor.¹⁸⁹ The rat and roach-infested housing that relocated Indians frequently found themselves in only further contradicted the BIA's glorification of city living, as did the agency's lack of a concerted effort to resettle tribal members near one another.¹⁹⁰ With limited survival counseling in a non-Indian urban environment, including "how to use a city map, call on a telephone, use a checking account, or purchase goods at a supermarket," relocatees found themselves feeling "hemmed in in a thousand ways."¹⁹¹

The sense of fear and trepidation that Native Americans often experienced upon arriving in cities is given particular expression in a 1969 article for the Native American newspaper *The Indian*. This piece, which is also entitled "The Indian," describes a relocated Lakota Sioux family as "huddled together in [an] apartment...unable to look beyond themselves to the terrifying white world...because they don't have the skills,

cultural or technical, to cope with it.”¹⁹² “Left in an almost inhuman situation,” urban Indians often turned to alcoholism or to confiding in one another in trade schools, apartment hallways, or “Indian bars,” to express their frustration and sense of isolation.¹⁹³ In the end, it was in finding other Indians that relocated Native Americans recognized their anger, loneliness, and, at times, consequent drunkenness as both a shared experience and one exaggerating their socio-economic woes.

Finding one another was, however, a phenomenon that evolved over a near two decades for urban Indians, and specifically the occupiers themselves. No relocatee/occupier exemplifies this better than Fortunate Eagle, whose success as a Bay Area termite exterminator obscured his understanding of just how “confused,” “lonely,” and desperate for cultural affinity, let alone employment, that Indians were.¹⁹⁴ In fact, it took Fortunate Eagle almost ten years to awaken to the frustration facing other relocatees and Indians in general when, participating in a series of powwows in Golden State Park, he became fully immersed in the Bay Area’s burgeoning Indian community.¹⁹⁵ Throughout the early and mid-1960s, the eventual occupier had taken his family on trips to his former home, the Red Lake Reservation (MN), in an effort to maintain some kind of connection to his Chippewa heritage. Oftentimes, these trips led Fortunate Eagle to question whether white Americans and Indians themselves were more inclined to view Indigenous nations as “souvenirs” from some bygone era than as people facing overwhelming economic woes.¹⁹⁶ This insecurity laid latent within the future activist until his involvement in the powwows and a number of Bay Area Indian organizations exposed him to a pervasive sense of abandonment at the hands of the federal government and the mindset that Indians, working together, could do more for themselves than any government agency could.¹⁹⁷ In other words, a decade of listening to and discussing the economic and cultural obstacles plaguing Indians from all over the country encouraged Fortunate Eagle to look beyond what had once been his personal quest for a “Cadillac [and] comfortable [Bay Area]

house.”¹⁹⁸ By 1969, the Chippewa Indian, who once wondered whether Indians would be rendered “caricatures” of some distant past, became convinced that a decade’s worth of communal and political organizing in the Bay Area had made large-scale protest only a phone call away.¹⁹⁹

Early November 1969 proved Fortunate Eagle’s inclination true when LaNada War Jack, then head of UC-Berkeley’s Native Student Organization, received a phone call from Oakes, who was serving as president of San Francisco State University’s SCAN.²⁰⁰ Like Fortunate Eagle, it had taken both War Jack and Oakes months and, in some cases, years after relocating to grasp the extent to which all Indians were struggling to survive financially and culturally. For War Jack, it was taking up residence in a boarding house of some thirty Indian woman in 1965 that sparked her interest in “looking up” what was “going on with Indians [at large] in the Bay Area.”²⁰¹ By the time she gained acceptance to UC-Berkeley in 1968, War Jack was deeply disturbed by her finding that most Bay Area Indians, much like herself, had been “dropped off” in San Francisco and left to fend for themselves with hardly any support from the BIA.²⁰² Oakes’s experience proved all too similar when, after moving to San Francisco in 1968, he obtained work in the Bay Area’s Mission District.²⁰³ During his aforementioned time bartending, Oakes became immersed in Native American “politics of the time, [be they concerning] relocation or termination, and [these policies’ effects]” on Indians from across the country.²⁰⁴ The former ironworker from upstate New York, who once grappled with the realities of Termination on his own homeland, gathered the stories of these other Indian relocatees and realized that his anxieties extended well beyond himself.²⁰⁵ So when rumors of a casino being built on Alcatraz surfaced in the fall of 1969, Oakes did not hesitate to reach out to War Jack, who, through the networks already established among San Francisco Indians at Bay Area colleges, knew she would reciprocate his feelings. When both agreed that a casino on Alcatraz meant “breaking a treaty right...in [Indians’] faces,” a consensus about how to respond

was immediately reached: “Enough talk. Let’s just do it.”²⁰⁶



Copyright: Chuck Warner. Image courtesy of Outdoor Gear USA, Park Architects, Alcatraz Indian Occupation Photo, GGA 11411 010

Indian activists on Alcatraz on Thanksgiving Day, 1969

When the almost eighty Indian activists arrived on Alcatraz on November 20, 1969, it became clear that they had not only managed to find one another amidst relocation, but that their frustration toward resettlement had far from subsided. As if to encapsulate this, Stella Leach, a spokesman for the occupation, answered the following when asked if the takeover could solve the problems facing Bay Area Indians: “In my mind it [i.e. the occupation] does, especially [regarding] the isolation that we’ve been experiencing.”²⁰⁷ This notion of relocation as “isolating” serves as just one grim conception, as Vine Deloria Jr., former director of the NCAI, cites the EAP as misguidedly assuming “that you could take an Indian family into the city, give them employment training, help them find a house, and [that] they would succeed, which is a definition of a human being only in economic terms.”²⁰⁸ Fortunate Eagle echoes Deloria’s condemnation of relocation as callous, claiming that the federal government was essentially “through with” the Alcatraz’s activists after they moved to the city, found some kind of work, and received their first paycheck.²⁰⁹ These assertions are, to say the least, far from unfounded, especially considering the number of services promised to Indians and never made available upon relocation.

Meanwhile, there are few instances that better illustrate

American Indian animosity towards urban resettlement than a December 1969 newscast, in which Richard Oakes, speaking with representatives of the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) and Department of Labor, describes many of the Alcatraz occupiers as “dependent on the relocation program [for survival].”²¹⁰ When one of the visiting officials retorts that the BIA has “other programs of use [for the relocatees],” a female occupier passionately exclaims: “Once relocated...you are not Indian anymore. They [i.e. the BIA] think you don’t have [the] health problems that they [i.e. Native Americans] have on the reservation. No one wants to deal with you. You just keep getting referred back to the BIA.”²¹¹ War Jack echoes this conviction that Indians were being left to fend for themselves in environments equally if not more disadvantageous than reservations, asserting that “all types of problems [experienced] on relocation” left Alcatraz’s occupiers trapped at “the bottom” of the socio-economic ladder.²¹² One especially alarming problem that War Jack cites is Indians being left with only two choices in urban slums: “kill yourself and get it over with...or try to go all the way up [in terms of wealth and social status], [but] this is almost impossible.”²¹³ Together, these statements reflect both an increasing level of weariness and disgruntlement among the Alcatraz occupiers, whose movement aimed to end the isolation facilitated by relocation.

At the conclusion of the Alcatraz takeover, the EAP had overseen the resettlement of some 100,000 Native Americans, but not without provoking an already aggravated demographic.²¹⁴ Activists such as Mankiller and Fortunate Eagle are among those Indians who came to identify relocation, as well as its predecessors, reservation confinement and Termination, as “just one more policy in a long list of policies” aimed at “destroying” American Indian livelihood.²¹⁵ Assured by an end to the economic destitution they had come to know intimately well on reservations, relocated Native Americans were fortunate if they received a fraction of the social services promised by the BIA. These Indians, many of whom included Alcatraz’s future

occupiers, often “jumped” to relocate, seeking some alternative to their homelands’ non-existent employment opportunities.²¹⁶

In the end, seclusion in “skid row” housing and a near total lack of BIA aid, be it cultural or monetary, convinced Alcatraz’s occupiers that relocation was but “another insidious [means]” of depriving Indians of their lands and resources.²¹⁷ Today, inadequate statistics concerning the number of Indians who opted to return to their rural homes rather than remain resettled inhibit a complete understanding of relocation’s failures and the anger they produced.²¹⁸ However, it remains evident that the EAP frustrated and then consolidated a new urban generation which would come to serve as the vanguard of an emerging confrontational approach to Indian activism.²¹⁹ Ramona Bennett, a Puyallup Indian, relocatee, and participant in the Nisqually fish-ins, affirmed relocation as a “planned” federal effort to “alienate Indians and [their] land” during a 1970 visit to Alcatraz.²²⁰ Ironically, the alienation of Indians, first on reservations and then in cities, resulted in a unification of Indigenous activists who sought an end to the socio-economic destitution that had come to characterize their lives.

Motivations Part II: Dying “Indianness”

“Wake up Injun! Wake up!” serves as the introduction to Yvonne Chapela’s 1968 article “Red Awareness.”²²¹ Published in the Native American newspaper *The Warpath*, the succeeding lines of Chapela’s work criticize twentieth century Indigenous peoples for abandoning their “Indian culture” to gain acceptance in a “white man’s” world:

YOU, learning German when you don’t even know
Navajo or Sioux or Chippewa!

YOU, thinking you’re a success when you marry a whitey!

YOU, putting on a tweed suit when attending a pow-

pow with mostly all whites dancing!

YOU, taking a whitey on a tour of your reservation. Look what happened when you first toured the pilgrims!

Wake up Injun! Wake up!

YOU, celebrating Thanksgiving!

YOU, saying “Oh I have a drop of Indian blood in me, but I’m mostly French!”

YOU, cutting and bleaching your hair to hide what you are!

YOU, kissing the white man’s ass!

Wake up Injun! Wake up!

YOU, thinking the BIA is really helping you!

YOU, believing all that shit written about Indians in history books!

Wake up Injun! Wake up!

**WAKE UP! RISE! SCREAM! YELL! JUMP! ACT!!
BECOME AWARE!!!!!!!!!!!!...Before you turn around and never hear the word “Indian” again.²²²**

The article’s final line, that of “never [hearing] the word ‘Indian’ again,” may first appear as an exaggeration, especially given how American Indians numbered 764,000 at the time of the piece’s publication.²²³ Yet, the notion that Indians were, in fact, abandoning their Indigenous heritage to “make it” in mainstream American society was as pressing a concern for 1960s Indigenous

activists as the socio-economic status of Native Americans.²²⁴ By 1969, the fear that Indigenous heritage would be extinguished amidst a larger and ill-disposed white American society had reached its pinnacle. In taking Alcatraz, IOAT asserted that, if Indigenous peoples were to salvage their remaining traditions and ways of life, they needed to break with a white culture that had been expecting them to sacrifice their own for “over four hundred years.”²²⁵ Inspired in large part by the Black Panther Party, this mindset translated into an administration of Alcatraz that prioritized the flourishing of Indigenous lifeways while dismissing white ones.²²⁶ Evidence for this reality remains especially visible in IOAT’s all-Indian education program, its encouragement of other Native American activist movements, and its banning of white Americans from the island.

During Alcatraz’s November 10 takeover, one of the fourteen Native American students present described the former prison as nothing but a monument to a “sick society.”²²⁷ This remark, coupled with a succeeding statement that the activists “we’re going to change [Alcatraz] into... a good society... A society for Indians” may be seen as foreshadowing IOAT’s administration of the Rock.²²⁸ For the occupation’s instigators, a “society for Indians” represented not only widespread Indian rejection of, but a solution to, the federal government’s persecution of Indigenous people. Yet, the notion that Native Americans needed to collectively wrest control of the forces shaping their welfare and dictating their sense of Indianness was not one that IOAT independently devised.²²⁹ Rather, the urgency, theatricality, and unapologetic condemnation of white society with which IOAT carried out its occupation was very much an adaptation of “Black Power” tactics.²³⁰ At a time when War Jack, Fortunate Eagle, and Oakes were still searching for a solution to the plight of Native Americans, Black Power, as embodied by the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, was taking the Bay Area by storm and providing a valuable model for the Rock’s future occupiers.

“Am I under arrest? Am I under arrest? Take your hands off me if I’m not under arrest!” were the shouts of an impassioned

Black Panther Party member being escorted out of the California state capitol building on May 2, 1967.²³¹ This activist, along with twenty-nine other black men and women, had come to the state assembly to protest a recent gun-control bill aimed at denying Black Panthers the right to arm themselves while following police cars.²³² In a fashion that would be almost exactly replicated by IOAT, these activists read a statement condemning the bill on the steps of the Capitol Building, and then marched into the legislative chambers' visitors' gallery toting the very weapons that the assembly was debating taking away.²³³ The demonstration's main instigator, Huey P. Newton, had planned these events with the utmost attention to detail, taking every precaution in the weeks prior to ensure their legality.²³⁴ Perhaps not surprisingly, the protest still resulted in the arrest of the activists present, but not before achieving its desired end: nearly every police officer, reporter, and TV cameramen in the area flocked to the disturbance.²³⁵ Despite the efforts of the California Legislature, Newton and Bobby G. Seale, cofounder of the Black Panther Party, not only succeeded in making their frustrations heard, but further advanced the public's knowledge of their cause. The Black Panthers, like the IOAT activists who would follow in their footsteps, had no intention of abandoning the spotlight until the struggles of black Americans received the attention they were due.

By the time the Alcatraz occupiers were familiarizing themselves with the logistics of public disobedience on college campuses, the Black Panther Party (BPP) had become the talk of the Bay Area.²³⁶ Founded in October 1966 by Newton and Seale, the BPP was initially formed in response to police brutality against black civilians, but quickly became an outlet for black Americans disgruntled with the Civil Rights Movement's emphasis on nonviolent protest.²³⁷ Under Newton and Seale, the party published a ten-point platform entitled "What We Want, What We Believe," the dark irony of which would later be matched by IOAT's "Proclamation to the Great White Father."²³⁸ Issuing demands ranging from employment to "decent housing,

fit for the shelter of human beings” to the exemption of black men from military service, the BPP sought everything by way of the federal government’s long “overdue debt of forty acres and two mules.”²³⁹ Yet, perhaps the party’s most unbending demand was that African Americans serve as the architects of social reform, a condition the Panthers claimed as having been repeatedly denied to generations of blacks under racist pretenses.²⁴⁰ For the BPP, the current civil rights movement was moving at too slow a rate and utilizing too passive a stance to halt the economic and cultural assault being launched against black Americans.²⁴¹ This perception, coupled with the belief that the federal government was adopting civil rights rhetoric but not putting it into practice, translated into the BPP enacting its own reforms.²⁴² The party’s police patrols became arguably its most notable, but the Panthers’ overarching conviction that only black people could redefine their status in American society proved an influential precedent for Indigenous activists to come.²⁴³

When War Jack and Oakes encountered the potential of large-scale protest, Black Power had become so prominent in the Bay Area that other social movements had begun defining themselves in relation to it.²⁴⁴ Upon War Jack’s establishment of the Native Student Organization at UC-Berkeley, her and other activists’ adoption of “Red Power” as a kind of calling for Indigenous reform was something she attributed to the example set by the BPP: “We didn’t really [come up with the name] ‘Red Power.’ That was just something already on campus because there was ‘Black Power’...[confrontational Indian activism] was difficult for some [Indigenous] people [to understand] because [we were still trying] to reestablish [a] link to our cultural identity.”²⁴⁵ Of course, for War Jack and the other instigators of the Alcatraz takeover, the concept of a shared struggle to maintain Indianness was much easier to grasp having “drunk deeply from the well” of protest present on college campuses.²⁴⁶ The Panthers’ presentation of themselves as “never making an unprovoked attack but defending ferociously whenever attacked” struck a profound chord with student activists, especially “New Leftist”

ones participating in the Third World Liberation Front at UC-Berkeley and San Francisco State University.²⁴⁷ This organization, which recruited both Oakes and War Jack, viewed the absence of ethnic studies departments as an affront to “the rights of all oppressed peoples,” and launched strikes so extensive in 1968-69 that they drew the response of Governor Ronald Reagan and the California National Guard.²⁴⁸ Influenced by a party that demanded social reform immediately rather than at some indeterminate point in time, the Third World Liberation protests caught the attention of disgruntled young Indians such as Oakes and War Jack, while teaching them “all the [protest] tactics” they needed to know.²⁴⁹



Painted on a wall at Alcatraz, 1970

By November 1969, Oakes, War, Jack, and other Indian activists who once internally wrestled with the struggle to maintain their cultural identity had become seasoned observers of demonstrations taking place on college campuses or in Bay Area streets. The Black Panther Party had, in the later half of the 1960s, broken with the existing Civil Rights Movement in advocating a more assertive approach to social reform, one that soon worked its way onto the campuses of future IOAT members.²⁵⁰ If Bay Area Indians did not observe the BPP's influence on events such as Third World Liberation strikes, they heard the party condemn the federal government for promising blacks socio-economic advancement without establishing any kind of set time frame. They also witnessed the Panthers' calls for young African Americans “to take a look at themselves,” and

realize that white Americans had, and always would, allow for the subjugation of blacks so long as it was economically profitable.²⁵¹ For Panthers such as Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, a nonviolent approach to civil rights, which had since characterized black activism, represented an approach that “black people [could not] afford and a luxury that white people [did not] deserve.”²⁵²

While alarming to mainstream America, the Black Panthers’ blatant disregard for the existing social structure and the insistence that a persecuted people collectively take hold of their identity could not have been more relatable for the architects of the Alcatraz takeover. In a manner closely resembling the Panthers, occupier Lehman Brightman recalls: “I saw what the [BIA] was doing to [Indian] peoples. [It] was screwing them around...I saw all the goddamn problems that Indians had in urban areas...and I wanted to do something badly [but] there was no way [at first]...[So] we [started protesting] for one specific reason: just raise goddamn hell! And we raised a hell of a lot of hell!”²⁵³ The “hell” which Brightman references found ultimate expression in Alcatraz’s 1969 occupation, albeit retaining much of the boldness, confidence, and demonstrativeness that the Black Panthers had exhibited just two years earlier in the California State Assembly. In fact, the confidence with which Oakes dictated the “Proclamation to the Great White Father” on November 10, 1969, may be seen as almost exactly mirroring Newton’s reciting the California Penal Code to encroaching swarms of Sacramento law enforcement and reporters.²⁵⁴ In the years that separated the two demonstrations, Oakes and other IOAT activists awoke to needing to “rise,” “scream,” “yell” in defense of Indigenous culture.²⁵⁵ Their awakening was, however, due in large part to observing another group of activists possessing the audacity to proclaim to black Americans that “[white men] would whisper a prayer, give [their] wives a pill, deny [their] daughters medication, put [their] sons on the front lines, and piously blow [their] brains out.”²⁵⁶ Shown a model of protest that demanded immediate reform while criticizing larger American society, IOAT launched

its 1969 occupation as a signal to Native Americans that it was now time to “close ranks” between their culture and that of white Americans.²⁵⁷

* * * * *

After observing and adopting many of the BPP’s attitudes, the Alcatraz occupiers insisted upon the creation of an all-Indian educational complex, one that would serve to distance Indigenous culture from the “polluting” effects of white influence.²⁵⁸ During a conference between Alcatraz’s spokesmen, the OEO and Department of Labor, Stella Leach commented that improvements in Indian education were foremost among the reforms that the occupiers hoped to achieve.²⁵⁹ The Indian education system’s failure to train Native Americans “to return to their [reservations] and be of some use to them” proved especially problematic to IOAT, and resulted in the group’s demand that a cultural complex run and staffed by Indians be constructed on the island.²⁶⁰ This institution, in addition to teaching Indigenous peoples the technical skills needed to improve their reservations, was to educate Indians of all ages concerning their oppression “at the hands of white [men].”²⁶¹ The present situation of Indian education was, according to the occupiers, “indoctrinating” Native Americans with BIA-sponsored “propaganda” aimed at concealing centuries of subjugation by “Uncle Sam.”²⁶² Echoing Oakes’s comment that a “dual sense of justice” existed towards American Indians, Alcatraz’s occupiers asserted that, if Indians were not awarded control over their education, their economic destitution and suppression by the federal government would only continue to constitute “sad facets of history.”²⁶³

While Indians’ dissatisfaction with their education reached a climax in 1969, disgruntlement towards federal administration of Indigenous schools has its origins in the beginning of the twentieth century. It was during this period that the federal government sanctioned the forced removal of Native American children from their families to be educated in white boarding

schools.²⁶⁴ Although the stated intention of this action was to “guide [Indians] in the proper way of living,” later Native American generations and activists such as Mankiller and Fortunate Eagle came to view the boarding school policy as possessing the same aims as Termination and relocation: the destruction of Indigenous people’s culture or sense of “Indianness.”²⁶⁵ Approximately fifty to sixty years after the decline of Indian boarding schools, the conviction that an Indian educational system overseen by the U.S. government would continue to cause Indians to forsake their culture remained prevalent.²⁶⁶ In an article published just months before Alcatraz’s occupation, *The Warpath* declared the BIA, the agency entrusted with administering Indian schools, as woefully incapable of understanding “Indian failures and wasted lives.”²⁶⁷ Citing the bureau’s employment of 22,000 employees, over half of which were non-Indians, and staffing of ninety-five percent of its top executive positions with white Americans, the article denounced the BIA as not only ignorant of the problems endemic to Indigenous communities, but wrongfully claiming the authority to address them.²⁶⁸

Meanwhile, another article published by *The Warpath* awards further credence to the claim that federal oversight of Indian education was figuratively, and sometimes literally, killing an Indian’s sense of him or herself. This piece, which details the journey of the president of an Indian parent-teachers organization to an Indigenous junior high school in Ponca, Oklahoma, is nothing short of alarming.²⁶⁹ Over the course of one day, Mrs. Martha Grass observes both the school’s passing of children who are unable to read to the fourth and fifth grades and permitting seventh and eighth grade students to “sniff glue and paint [in class].”²⁷⁰ The sight of Indian children with their “eyelids puffed closed” and “lips hanging” ultimately leaves Mrs. Grass pleading for “something...to be done about our [Native American] children...[They] need help!”²⁷¹ With these realities familiar to the occupiers themselves, IOAT both rejected a BIA-controlled Indian education system and demanded “insulation” from a white society out-of-touch with Indigenous struggles and

complacent in letting them persist.²⁷²

Convinced that American Indian culture was bound to expire under BIA oversight, Alcatraz's occupiers sought the development of a complex that would teach everything from engineering to Indigenous medicine to tribal dances and songs.²⁷³ The overarching purpose of this complex was to produce generations of Native Americans who, unlike their predecessors, would maintain their American Indian identity while recognizing the federal government's continual "manipulation" of Indigenous peoples.²⁷⁴ In order to encourage Indians to maintain their "Indianness," Alcatraz's educational complex sought the flourishing of tribal lifeways by teaching subjects that ranged from Indigenous "arts and crafts" to "religious and sacred healing ceremonies" to traditional "music [and] dance."²⁷⁵ The impulse for doing so stemmed from the perception that the BIA had long educated Indians without any acknowledgement of their cultural past, a practice more inclined toward "teaching Indian youth to be ashamed of [their Indianness]," rather than proud of it.²⁷⁶

In a 1970 statement, IOAT extended its critique of the BIA's education curriculum to the American university system, which, although including a small but gradually increasing number of Native Americans, offered hardly any courses concerning Indigenous history or culture.²⁷⁷ The sense that the isolation present on reservations and in urban areas was following Indian students to college campuses fueled the conception of the complex and its incorporation of an all-Indian vocational school.²⁷⁸ The stated intention behind the school's founding was that of enabling Native Americans to return to their reservations and address their lack of industrial development.²⁷⁹ While recognizing the need for Native Americans to "equip themselves with the weapons" needed to survive financially, IOAT discouraged full immersion in a culture believed to be a "façade which Indians [should learn to] hate."²⁸⁰ Rather, IOAT saw "standing outside the American mainstream" as something to be valued, precisely because it entailed the maintenance of one's own Indian lifeways instead of assuming "shallow white ones"

that included an obsession with wealth and willingness to wage war.²⁸¹ The continuation of skills such as traditional Indian dance, language, crafts, and medicine all constituted a larger effort to encourage Native Americans to see themselves not as a “pitiful” demographic, but as descendants of “once great peoples” whose “nobility” and “sovereignty” should and could be resurrected.²⁸²

In addition to restoring a sense of honor in claiming Native American heritage, Alcatraz’s educational complex sought to inform its students of the perils of dealing with an indifferent and, at times, hostile federal government. Vital to this effort was the complex’s inclusion of an American Indian Museum, which, according to Oakes’s November 20 Proclamation, would feature Native American “cultural contributions to the world” as well as “some of the things white men [had] first given to...Indians”: “disease, alcohol, poverty, and cultural decimation.”²⁸³ With the museum focusing on the earliest encounters between Indigenous peoples and white Europeans, the remainder of the complex intended to teach facets of American Indian history “concealed” by BIA curriculum.²⁸⁴

Foremost among the “sad historical facets” to be displayed by IOAT’s museum was the U.S. government’s longstanding use of “divide and conquer techniques.”²⁸⁵ Be they in the form of reservations, Termination, or relocation, these policies were to be denounced as keeping Indians physically separated from one another and incapable of unifying in opposition of federal policies.²⁸⁶ Having revealed these techniques as geared towards outright American Indian “genocide,” Alcatraz’s cultural complex would educate its students concerning the many hardships endured by Native Americans, hardships that, although “censored” by the BIA, included “surrendering an entire continent” and making treaties in return for “basic services like health care” that were never received.²⁸⁷ Decades of overlooking the federal government’s mistreatment of Indigenous peoples were, in the occupiers’ opinions, over, and it was the explicit intention of the Rock’s complex to see this change in Indian education through.

Furthermore, Alcatraz’s cultural complex sought to ensure

that American Indian youth would reject the lure of “middle-class white status,” as was the supposed intention of “white oriented university machinery,” in exchange for becoming counselors and elders within their own Indigenous communities.²⁸⁸ It was within these leadership positions that graduates of the complex could maneuver disputes between the federal government and their peoples, conflicts that, encompassing everything from land ownership rights to those of religious practice, could determine whether Indigenous lifeways would subsist or be eradicated.²⁸⁹ Of course, these struggles, as described by Harvey Wells, could never be won unless Native Americans were first instilled with the sense that they, rather than the “non-Indians running the BIA,” could govern their own futures.²⁹⁰ Therefore, the ultimate “mission” of Alcatraz’s educational complex was not only to encourage a sense of pride in being Native American, but also to reveal that such pride had long been under siege by a white society intent on “cramming” its own lifeways “down [Indians’] throats.”²⁹¹ From IOAT’s perspective, white American influence had spent decades, and in many respects, centuries, eroding Indians’ conviction that they themselves could affect change in their lives and communities. The decision to occupy Alcatraz and establish a cultural complex represented a long latent desire to reverse this trend, ultimately presenting itself when the dismal state of Indian education became too much to bear.

* * * * *

While the development of an all-Indian educational complex reflected a desire to salvage Indigenous culture, Alcatraz’s occupiers’ public support for other Native American resistance movements also illustrates a passion for the survival of Indian culture over white society’s caustic influence. In a 1970 “manifesto” published by IOAT, Alcatraz’s occupiers declared that “All Indian problems, whether of an individual or tribe, must be shared by all. To separate now at this great potential time of unity, is to become extinct.”²⁹² Convinced that most Indigenous

movements devoted themselves to Indian unity only to “fade, die, or become entangled in bureaucratic manipulations,” IOAT viewed its motivations as not only resembling, but directly paralleling those driving other contemporary American Indian protests.²⁹³

The glaring difference between Alcatraz and other unfolding Indigenous movements was, however, a lack of media attention, an element which the Rock’s holders sought to provide. Irene Silentman is one activist who references this intention, positing in February 1970 that “[Alcatraz], if handled right, [could] bring the problems of Indians to the attention of the average American... If the average American picks up a newspaper and reads about Pyramid Lake... it doesn’t concern [him/her]... but Alcatraz... that concerns everybody.”²⁹⁴ “Pyramid Lake” was among a number of Native American protests occurring at the time of Alcatraz’s holding, and its success according to IOAT constituted a larger struggle over whether “Indians would once more be responsible for their destinies.”²⁹⁵ Clyde Bellecourt, an Ojibwe Indian and co-founder of the American Indian Movement (AIM), was just one activist who affirms this mindset, describing Alcatraz’s “legacies” as “many” but believing that its encouragement of the “long, [shared] Indian fight” emerged foremost among them.²⁹⁶

Imbued with the sense that the federal government had long kept Indians and their struggle to maintain their identity divided, IOAT made its unequivocal support for other Indigenous movements of its era known through publicizing protests at Pyramid Lake, Round Valley, and Washington State. Through its *Indians of All Tribes* newsletter, radio broadcasts, and interviews with local and national media, IOAT not only aimed to highlight the injustices being levied against Indians at these sites, but also to encourage its Native American audience to join the movements themselves. Evidence for this is first seen in IOAT’s coverage of the resistance movement then taking place at Pyramid Lake (NV), and its encouragement of Native American activists to align themselves against a common adversary: “never

satisfied and greedy” white farmers and ranchers.²⁹⁷

By 1970, Pyramid Lake, which refers both to the reservation that houses the Paiute Tribe and the thirty by eight mile lake which has served as the tribe’s sacred fishing territory, was drying up thirty to fifty inches a year due to its being diverted away from the reservation.²⁹⁸ Specifically, the state was using the lake’s water to nourish the cattle of the aforementioned farmers and ranchers as well as create ponds for white duck hunters “to play in.”²⁹⁹ With the Paiutes protesting the diminishment of their sacred lake, Alcatraz’s occupiers’ saw one of the “first opportunities” to carry out the “dream” embodied by their cultural complex.³⁰⁰ Through the second and third publications of its newsletter, IOAT organized and then related the experiences of a caravan of forty Native American activists to Pyramid Lake, describing their journey as “furthering the cause of Indian unity” against “a blind government” and preserving “the magic” that takes place when Paiutes are able to “roam their ancient shorelines.”³⁰¹ Equally as prominent in these publications is the caravan’s description of Sparks, Nevada, a casino town passed on their trip, as a white man’s “spell,” characterized by “flashing neon and pink-eyed slot machines...plastic entertainment...visions of fortune won and re-won in nightmare nirvana...[and] sad greeds that blow the mind to hate.”³⁰² Unrelenting in its criticisms of the “white men” responsible for Pyramid Lake’s depletion, IOAT’s administering Alcatraz in a manner aimed to preserve Indian sovereignty is on full display in its covering the Paiute protests.

Just as IOAT undertook efforts to circulate the events at Pyramid Lake, the group’s publicizing of the Indigenous resistance movement unfolding at the Round Valley Reservation (CA) is another instance of its wanting to protect Native American culture from the federal government’s unwelcome presence. While the protests at Round Valley may have been reaching a climax in the midst of the Alcatraz occupation, IOAT and the various tribes housed on the reservation declared the struggle rooted in an “old [U.S. government] trick.”³⁰³ Although the Army Corp of Engineers assured that the construction of the

Dos Rios Dam over Round Valley would leave the Indians there “better off than before,” the reservation’s inhabitants viewed the federal government as employing the same deceitfulness used to manipulate the Seneca Indians into surrendering their reservation land just a decade prior.³⁰⁴

When the Round Valley Indians publicly questioned the Army Corps’ assertion that their reservation needed to be flooded to supply Southern Californians with water, IOAT’s newsletters denounced the Dos Rios Dam as the conception of “white barons” aiming to grow federally subsidized groups, add to the food surplus, and grow richer.³⁰⁵ Although promised that the dam’s building would facilitate tourism in the southern half of the state, the profits of which would supposedly be extended to the Indians themselves, the Round Valley residents dismissed guarantees of wealth from resorts and tourist sites as empty as those once made to the Seneca tribe.³⁰⁶ Echoing these claims in its third newsletter publication, IOAT emboldened the Round Valley Indians’ objection to the dam by declaring it a “conspiracy” orchestrated by the Army Corp and the “good old” BIA.³⁰⁷ Adamant that if attention and action were not soon drawn to the conflict, IOAT asserted that “water would flow” over the Round Valley Reservation and that “grass would grow over the bones” of its inhabitants, just as the flooding of the Seneca Reservation had erased the land’s sacred Cornplanter burial grounds.³⁰⁸ Concluding that the fight of the Round Valley Indians was the same fight that Native Americans had always been waging against a government more loyal to profits than honoring Indigenous lifeways, IOAT warned that it would soon be too late to salvage the Round Valley Indians and tribes faced with similar predicaments.³⁰⁹

In a manner mirroring its broadcasting of the Round Valley protests, IOAT undertook significant efforts to present the Native American resistance movements taking place in Washington State as longstanding fights against forced assimilation into white society. As mentioned earlier, Native American protests in Washington State had been inaugurated decades before Alcatraz’s

takeover by activists such as Billy Frank and Bob Satiacum.³¹⁰ By 1969, Native American fishing rights, particularly as they pertained to the Nisqually, Puyallup, and Muckleshoot tribes, had emerged at the forefront of Indigenous resistance movements in the state.³¹¹ Due in large part to the efforts of Hank Adams, a Sioux-Assiniboine activist, the aforementioned tribes began participating in “fish-ins” in 1963 to protest their barring from traditional fishing grounds being used to accommodate white sportsmen and fisheries.³¹² With their protests well underway by 1969 but struggling to garner attention outside the Pacific Northwest, IOAT publicized the Washington Indians’ struggle and welcomed Al Bridges, a Nisqually “fish-in” organizer, to sell “freedom fish” at San Francisco’s Pier 40.³¹³ After meeting Bridges and traveling to confer with Adams in Washington, the *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* editorial staff praised the Pacific Northwest activists for refusing to surrender their “Indian way of life...to be...assimilated into white society,” and encouraged readers to make donations to the fish-ins.³¹⁴

In addition to praising Indigenous activists such as Adams, IOAT also promoted the traveling of other Indians to partake in the Washington protests. In March 1970, IOAT’s newsletter denounced the arrest of 77 activists who, mirroring the Alcatraz occupiers, invaded the U.S. military’s Fort Lawton under the title “United Indians of All Tribes” (UIAT).³¹⁵ Hailing the invasion as a necessary step towards maintaining Indians’ “basic livelihood and survival,” IOAT expressed no remorse for opposing the “greedy, white-controlled fisheries” considered to be the cause of the controversy.³¹⁶ In a resounding testament to its conviction that the continuation of Native American culture was under assault by white society, IOAT concluded its coverage of the Washington State protests with the statement: “We must once more live in dignity and take the responsibilities of our own destinies...THERE WILL BE NO MORE COMPROMISES!”³¹⁷ Alcatraz’s occupiers, in effect, viewed compromise as contributing to the federal onslaught against Indian property and the Indigenous heritage tied intimately to it.

Centuries of cooperation with impersonal and white-controlled institutions had, in IOAT's opinion, created a crisis concerning Indians' sovereignty over their education, homelands, and distinct identity as Native Americans. For Alcatraz's occupiers, a crisis of this magnitude had long warranted drastic action, not only through one Indigenous demonstration but the sustainment of countless others.

* * * * *

Although less advertised than IOAT's proposed all-Indian educational complex and encouragement of other Indigenous movements, the Alcatraz occupiers' banning of white Americans and, at times, white cultural norms is another reflection of the toxicity they attributed to mainstream American society. IOAT's forbidding white Americans seems to have been both ideological and practical, especially considering the nineteen-month stalemate between the occupiers and the U.S. Coast Guard.³¹⁸ By 1970, the Coast Guard in collaboration with the GSA had cut off all utilities to the island and placed a barricade around it, thereby inducing numerous confrontations between patrolmen and Indigenous activists attempting to breach the barrier via speedboat.³¹⁹ Although federal authorities were under orders to refrain from removing the occupiers altogether, IOAT remained convinced that the Coast Guard and GSA were waiting for some kind of "slip up" that would warrant the activists' arrest.³²⁰ John Trudell captures this conviction best in a June 1970 interview, when, after being questioned over whether authorities would find reason to remove Alcatraz's occupiers, replied, "The [federal government] has been stopping Indians' [protests] on technicalities for a hundred years. Why should they change now?"³²¹ The fear that the passage of whites, be they Indigenous sympathizers or ordinary civilians, to and from the island could serve as one factor among many justifying the occupation's end undoubtedly fostered IOAT's belief that insularity amongst the resistance group was integral to its cause. However, there

was also an unmistakable sociopolitical component to the ban, as Alcatraz's occupiers viewed the survival of Indigenous culture as requiring literal separation from the white society and bureaucracy encroaching on it. Instilled with the belief that mainstream society had and always would treat Native Americans "differently" and "separately," IOAT concluded that its movement and the flourishing of Indian lifeways naturally required "remaining separately."³²²

Within just days of their November 20 takeover, Alcatraz's occupiers manifested their mistrust towards white culture and conviction that it was eroding Indigenous identity at a Thanksgiving celebration. This festival was funded entirely by donors, many of whom were white, and characterized by peace pipe smoking, rock music, and a fall-oriented feast, all considered shared Indian practices, be they past or present.³²³ Publicized by IOAT as open to Indians across the country, the festival proved to be as antagonistic towards white society as encouraging towards Indian unity.³²⁴ On the eve of the occupiers' second Thanksgiving in 1970, LaNada War Jack declared that IOAT's previous celebration and its upcoming one sought to reclaim an aspect of Native American history that had been perverted by mainstream American society.³²⁵ Asserting that Indians had practiced fall harvests for hundreds of years, War Jack denounced the so-called "first Thanksgiving" between whites and Native Americans as the result of "white people starving" after arriving in America, and celebrating with Indians only because they "had to."³²⁶ In an effort to no longer let white Americans "live a lie," War Jack rebuked any donations made under the pretense that they would be preserving some long-standing goodwill between Indians and whites.³²⁷ This remark, as well as War Jack's affirmation that whites would again be barred from the festival, reveal both an effort to reclaim a well-established Indian custom while distancing Indian lifeways from the distorting influence of white society.

In addition to IOAT's banning white participation in the occupiers' Thanksgiving celebrations, the group's insistence that

white Americans be barred from the island altogether is another reflection of its desire to divorce itself from mainstream American culture. In a February 1970 interview, Stella Leach insisted that the occupiers had “one very simple rule” regarding outsiders: the only non-Indians allowed to visit Alcatraz would be the press and doctors and lawyers representing the activists themselves.³²⁸ With doctors and lawyers administering much needed medical care and legal advice in the midst of a government barricade, the permitting of news reporters was meant to keep national attention on the occupiers’ cause.³²⁹ Media access to the island flooded news broadcasts with images of an Indian-controlled Alcatraz that, in its year and a half duration, sported signs and graffitied buildings with one particularly unmistakable message: “Indian Land: Keep Out!”³³⁰

Keeping white Americans off Alcatraz proved to be a position that the occupiers meant quite literally, as in March 1971, John Trudell revealed to Bay Area media that IOAT was growing frustrated with tour boats circling the island trying to catch a glimpse of the unfolding “Indian spectacle.”³³¹ Teeming with white passengers, Trudell crossly denounced these Bay Area boat rides as treating the occupiers like curiosities in a “zoo.”³³² For IOAT, the “sightseeing” denounced by Trudell only strengthened a laden conviction that white society and the institutions it entrusted with managing Indian affairs were simply incapable of understanding the plight of Native Americans and thus the aims of the occupation. Although the intentions of Alcatraz’s holding were deeply personal to IOAT and other non-participating Indians, the sense that white Americans viewed the movement as “fun” or “entertainment” confirmed perceptions that Indigenous peoples would never escape a labeling that, at best, deemed them “symbols” of some great but bygone American era.³³³ Such depreciation toward IOAT’s cause not only overlooked the fact that the occupiers’ were, at least at the outset of their movement, well-organized, but offered resounding affirmation that Native American lifeways were bound to dwindle in a society unwilling to respect them.

Less than three weeks after Alcatraz's November 20 taking, Kim Robertson, San Francisco's regional GSA representative, led an aforementioned party of OEO and Department of Labor representatives onto the island to "visualize the problems underlying [the occupation]." ³³⁴ Smoking a pipe and strolling at the head of the group, Robertson answered reporters in a manner so vague that many of the media personnel present struggled to figure out who he or the organization he represented was. "I am the current regional council [of] this group [that] you see here of the essentially organized federal agency that has resources available for employment, training, housing, education, health, and similar matters" was among Robertson's first statements to reporters, an announcement so unclear that one of the journalists interrupted him with the remark, "So you're the regional council of what exactly?" ³³⁵ As if this declaration was not ambiguous enough, Robertson followed his introduction by declaring that he might be able to respond to the occupiers' demands, "assuming they [were] viable concepts," "through various national headquarters [in the form] of a coordinated response." ³³⁶ Clearly content with his answers, Robertson, with his fellow representatives on his heels, proceeded to make his way toward the building where the meeting would be held, inspiring another journalist to exclaim, "Wait, what did that guy even say his name was?" ³³⁷

Although it is ungrounded to presume that Robertson had little intention of addressing the occupiers' grievances, the unimpressed looks and responses that he proceeded to draw from Oakes and other IOAT representatives at their December 10 meeting suggest that the occupiers saw him as the embodiment of the very thing that they were protesting: an indifferent, uninformed, and impersonal federal bureaucracy. ³³⁸ It was this bureaucracy, controlled by white Americans as ignorant as those who tried to catch a glimpse of Indian-controlled Alcatraz on tour boats, that the Rock's occupiers' viewed as having "sat around" with Indians for centuries, talking about reforms for Indigenous peoples but "getting nothing done." ³³⁹ A reflection of a society that cared little for Indian lifeways and, at times, encouraged

their eradication, the federal government and its administration of Native American welfare were nothing short of a “national disgrace” for Alcatraz’s occupiers.³⁴⁰

Therefore, be it in Uncle Sam’s oversight of Indian education or suppression of Indigenous resistance movements, Indian culture, was, in IOAT’s eyes, dying, and needed to be salvaged before it was completely forgotten. In a refusal to “just sit back” and watch their culture vanish, the Alcatraz occupiers sought the founding of an all-Indian educational complex, encouraged other Indigenous protests, and unapologetically restricted white Americans from visiting the island.³⁴¹ Declaring in the second publication of its newsletter that non-Indian society had long “cloaked the Indian in complete darkness,” IOAT proclaimed that its actions had removed the “shroud” that once surrounded Native Americans.³⁴² Now, according to the Alcatraz occupiers, Indians were “shouting their grievances to the world,” and they would be heard whether Americans wanted to listen or not.³⁴³

Conclusion

On June 11, 1971, Alcatraz’s remaining fifteen occupiers found themselves apprehended by over thirty U.S. marshals, brought back to the California mainland, and herded onto a school bus headed for a San Francisco law office.³⁴⁴ Upon arriving at the office, a teenage activist’s exclamation “power to the Indian people!” drew the attention of one of the marshals, who, although his response is not entirely audible, seems to have instructed the young protestor to “calm down.”³⁴⁵ The activist’s reply all but encapsulates the attitude that the Alcatraz occupiers exhibited towards federal authority: “Shut the hell up!”³⁴⁶ Perhaps a fitting last remark for a movement that, for nineteen months, rejected almost all of “what [white] civilization [had to] offer,” Alcatraz’s 1969 takeover deserves recognition as the culmination of decades of Native American discontent.³⁴⁷ Occupier Harvey Wells’ aforementioned remark that the Alcatraz occupiers belonged

to a generation of Indians who, rather than conceiving the idea of resistance, adopted it from their predecessors and put it into practice could not be more accurate.³⁴⁸ As described by activist George Horse Capture, Alcatraz's occupation was far from some spontaneous protest spurred by the disgruntlements of a handful of college students. Rather, Alcatraz was an event which came to fruition when Indians, "instead of passively withdrawing" from an era of national upheaval, "stepped forward...and [made it] known that they were...proud, and [that] their present situation must and would change."³⁴⁹ The Alcatraz occupiers, in other words, arrived on the island on November 10, 1969, with an "idea," a concept whose aims of shedding light on years of American Indian suppression were goals that the Rock's holders had every intention of seeing through.³⁵⁰

Of course, it is worthwhile to recognize that, despite a steadfast nineteen-month holdout, IOAT's struggle against the federal government was doomed from the outset, especially as it pertained to winning outright title to Alcatraz. Although activists such as Joe Bill promised "a good fight" in the event that the federal government tried to expel the occupiers, IOAT's takeover was, from its beginning, operating on borrowed time.³⁵¹ As explained by Brad Patterson, special assistant to President Richard Nixon, federal authorities were "never going to build a university on Alcatraz or give [the occupiers] \$300,000 for a cultural [complex] or even give them title to Alcatraz...This was not anything [they] were going to do."³⁵² Mr. Hannon, who, although having jested with Oakes during their November 1969 encounter, awards credence to Patterson's position in a December 1969 interview, where he coldly describes himself as "not at all" willing to let the Alcatraz activists remain on the island.³⁵³

Yet, even with the U.S. marshals' 1971 intervention, Indians' discontent with federal oversight and the quality of life that came with it had reached an unmistakable breaking point. In an ironic precursor to the 1969 invasion, a citizens' coalition in San Francisco declared that same year that Alcatraz's sale would lead to its commercialization and end as one of the "true

gems in...[the] Bay Area.”³⁵⁴ When questioned as to why it had taken the group over two years to form, the coalition’s spokesman asserted that resistance movements “never form until a crisis point is reached.”³⁵⁵ For Alcatraz’s Indian occupiers, the crisis point for Native American livelihood had been mounting decades if not centuries prior to November ’69. The events of November 10 and 20, 1969, do not, in other words, reflect some newfound aversion to the injustices being imposed on Native Americans. Rather, they are indicative of the sense that Indigenous welfare and culture would grow unsalvageable so long as there wasn’t large-scale action. A “dead rock” so far as it remained owned and operated by white Americans, Alcatraz represented an ideal means for Native Americans to “reexamine their acquiescence to the non-Indian world” in the event that they could build upon it.³⁵⁶ In never receiving title to the Rock, IOAT’s hope of transforming America’s Devil Island into a symbol of Indian prosperity fell by the wayside, but its passion for Indigenous pride would be repeatedly resurrected in the years that followed.

The resurgence of IOAT’s call for Native American advancement presented itself early and often in the 1970s, beginning with a press conference on the eve of the last fifteen Alcatraz occupiers’ removal. It was here that John Trudell, after being asked whether the protestors’ arrest meant defeat for Indian activism, broadly smiled and exclaimed: “Nah, man, there is no such thing as defeat! We’re going to bandage up the bruises and stand up again. [The government] didn’t beat us!”³⁵⁷ Trudell’s comment could not be more accurate given how, just a little more than a year after the takeover’s end, approximately five hundred Indian activists occupied the BIA building in Washington D.C. for six days.³⁵⁸ Organized in part by Clyde Bellecourt, who had communicated with Oakes concerning the Alcatraz occupiers’ security, the building’s taking spawned from the caravanning of Native Americans to D.C. to protest poor Indigenous living conditions and unwanted federal influence in Indian affairs.³⁵⁹ Then, only a few months after the BIA occupation, some two hundred Native American activists occupied the town of

Wounded Knee, South Dakota, out of disgust for corruption on the Pine Ridge Reservation and the failure of the U.S. government to respect treaties made with Indigenous peoples.³⁶⁰ Although succumbing after seventy-one days to a coalition of FBI officers and U.S. marshals, the Wounded Knee occupation was far from the final Indigenous protest of its era as over five thousand Indian activists participated in the 1978 “Longest Walk” on Washington D.C.³⁶¹ Launched in opposition to legislation jeopardizing Indian land and water rights, the march on Washington began with an inaugural ceremony on Alcatraz, the site where Indian activists had promised the beginning of a “new Indian life and philosophy” based upon uniting Indigenous voices and making them heard.³⁶² As described by Bellecourt, Alcatraz, regardless of IOAT’s failure to secure ownership of the island, remains indisputable in providing the model and networks needed to mobilize Indians in 1972, ’73, and ’78.³⁶³ Alcatraz’s reclamation by the federal government may have ended Indian activism on the Rock, but IOAT’s move against a political system slow to respond to Indian needs ignited a movement which activist Peter Blue Cloud promised would “encompass the world.”³⁶⁴

The Alcatraz occupation’s legacy as the event which inaugurated a decade of Native American Red Power is certainly fitting but, at times, emphasized to a fault. Unapologetic in their critiques of the federal government and their willingness to translate them into action, Alcatraz’s occupiers became an inspiration to Indians disillusioned with their lowly status, but uncertain over whether to challenge it. Yet, the very fact that the occupiers and the activists who followed in their footsteps were experiencing anger and confusion prior to their protests affirms Wilma Mankiller’s description of Indian pride as “a very low flame” that, although contained for decades, was relit by Alcatraz.³⁶⁵ The ‘69 takeover indeed ignited an era of Indian pride and resistance, but the kindling upon which it raged is too often forgotten in examining the upheavals it created. While historians such as Shreve, Strange, Loo, Rosier, Smith, Johnson, and Nagel have been sure to acknowledge Alcatraz’s occupation

as not having arisen spontaneously, the motivations that fueled the protest are too often glossed over and described as broadly as “brewing for decades” or “[going back] quite some time.”³⁶⁶

Instead, the grievances which inspired a protest of Alcatraz’s magnitude deserve recognition as specific to mid-twentieth century Indian welfare, encompassing both the socio-economic status of Native Americans and the seemingly endless struggle of Indigenous peoples to maintain their Indianness. As it pertains to socio-economic status, Alcatraz’s occupiers viewed destitute Indian reservations, their termination through federal policy, and the relocation of Indigenous peoples in urban areas as central to their financial and social struggles. The dying of Indigenous culture, meanwhile, was attributed by IOAT to a white American society that was, at its mildest, apathetic to the survival of Indian lifeways. Adopting much of the Black Panther Party’s rhetoric and resistance tactics, the Alcatraz occupiers took specific aim at the BIA’s oversight of Indian education, the overwhelming odds that tribes faced against state and federal governments, and white Americans’ patronization of Indigenous culture. These critiques, which stemmed from the conviction that Indigenous lifeways would wither if exposed to mainstream American society, led IOAT to administer the island in a manner encouraging of Native customs and dismissive of white influence. All this considered, discussion of the ’69 takeover and the era of Indian activism that it ushered in grows increasingly one-dimensional without sufficient mention of the activists’ motivations. Alcatraz’s occupation may be the beginning of a large-scale movement, but it’s culmination of decades of silent American Indian frustration is equally irrefutable.

In a December 1989 episode of *Bay Sunday*, a San Francisco talk show hosted by Barbara Rodgers, former Alcatraz occupier Sacheen LittleFeather affirms the ’69 occupation as an event whose inspirations were not only complex but mounting steadily in the years preceding the Rock’s takeover.³⁶⁷ The piece, which features the two women in a well-furnished studio, shows LittleFeather responding to whether a certain “rallying cry”

inspired her to participate in the takeover.³⁶⁸ Likely aware that such a question could not be answered so specifically let alone in the course of a five-minute interview, LittleFeather opts to explain a Hopi prophecy which describes Native Americans receiving a “sign of Red Power” in the Pacific ocean.³⁶⁹ This sign is to mark the beginning of a new era of Native American prosperity, but before Indians can observe it, they have to be driven all the way from the East Coast of the United States to the West Coast.³⁷⁰ Not surprisingly, LittleFeather identifies Alcatraz as this symbol and thus the fulfillment of the prophecy, but her mentioning the tribulation that Indians have to endure beforehand alludes to the ’69 takeover’s lead-up being as far-reaching as its aftermath.³⁷¹ Just as the Indians in the Hopi prophecy encounter hardship before revival, those responsible for Alcatraz’s takeover were plagued by a wide range of misfortunes leading up to their movement. Although LittleFeather does not mention the struggles that this work cites as primarily responsible for the occupation, her fellow occupiers and other Indigenous activists repeatedly do. These grievances brought Native American activism to unprecedented heights in the 1970s, but the effort to salvage Indian livelihood that began in San Francisco Bay would never have taken place had Indigenous peoples not been driven there out of desperation. Alcatraz’s occupation is, in other words, as two-fold as LittleFeather’s prophecy, and no understanding of the event’s outpouring of Indigenous pride will ever be complete unless one considers how it arrived there in the first place.



Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, Alcatraz Indian Occupier Slides, c. 1970, COCA 8488.003

Indian activists on Alcatraz in 1970

Notes

- ¹ Richard Oakes, interview by San Francisco Media, *The Education Archive*, November 10, 1969.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Oakes, interview by San Francisco Media.
- ⁶ Oakes, interview by San Francisco Media; “The Alcatraz Proclamation to the Great White Father and All His People,” *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 1 (January 1970): 1.
- ⁷ Oakes, interview by San Francisco Media.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Troy Johnson and Joane Nagel, “Remembering Alcatraz: Twenty-Five Years After,” in *American Indians*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 255-256.
- ¹¹ Rosalie McKay-Want, interview by Troy Johnson and Joane Nagel, in “Remembering Alcatraz: Twenty-Five Years After,” 250.
- ¹² Kent Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom: Richard Oakes, Alcatraz, and the Red Power Movement* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 154.
- ¹³ “Alcatraz Taken Back,” *Akwesasne Notes*, The Newberry Library’s American Indian Histories and Cultures Database, November 1969.
- ¹⁴ Al Miller, interview by Troy Johnson, December 22, 1970, in *The American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Red Power and Self-Determination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 119.; Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 140.
- ¹⁵ Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 11.
- ¹⁶ Harvey Wells, interview by Jay Newburn, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, November 30, 1969.
- ¹⁷ “The Angry American Indian: Starting Down the Protest Trail,” *Akwesasne Notes*, The Newberry Library’s American Indian Histories and Cultures Database, April 1970.
- ¹⁸ John Trudell, interview by KQED News, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, June 14, 1971.
- ¹⁹ John Trudell, interview by Troy Johnson, April 1970, in *The American Indian Occupation*, 130.; Trudell, interview by KQED News.
- ²⁰ Johnson and Nagel, 253.
- ²¹ Ibid, 254.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “The Alcatraz Proclamation,” 1.

²⁶ “Indians at Alcatraz Feast, Dance in Holiday Festival,” *Akwesasne Notes*, The Newberry Library’s American Indian Histories and Cultures Database, November 1969.; Johnson and Nagel, 258.

²⁷ David Milner, “‘By Right of Discovery’: The Media and the Native American Occupation of Alcatraz, 1969-1971,” *Australasian Journal of American Studies* 33, no. 1 (July 2014): 80.

²⁸ Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like A Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 67.; Milner, 80.

²⁹ Smith and Warrior, 77.

³⁰ David Treuer, *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2019), 299.; Smith and Warrior, 61. As Smith and Warrior explain, the occupation’s architects had spent ample time immersed in the daily life of tribal communities and could “speak quite eloquently about horrid boarding school experiences or the crimes of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.” However, most of the island’s population came to consist of Indians who were the “second-generation product of relocation and urbanization” and simply did not have an “experiential base” concerning the experiences of older Native Americans.

³¹ Treuer, 299. Oakes’s step-daughter, Yvonne, died by falling down a flight of stairs.

³² Treuer, 300.; Smith and Warrior, 70-71.

³³ Johnson and Nagel, 258.

³⁴ Smith and Warrior, 79, 96-97. In August 1970, Nixon advisors Leonard Garment and Brad Patterson sought to end the takeover by sending in federal agents and tracking the occupiers down one by one. However, the *San Francisco Chronicle*’s Herb Caen learned of the plan and detailed it in his popular column, thereby delaying the protest’s end.

³⁵ Milner, 80.

³⁶ Ibid, 81.

³⁷ Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 142.; Milner, 80.

³⁸ Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, & The Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 86.

³⁹ Smith, 86.

⁴⁰ Grace Thorpe, interview by Troy Johnson and Joane Nagel, in “Remembering Alcatraz,” 250.

⁴¹ Smith, 111.; Milner, 73.; King, 143.; Johnson and Nagel, 251.

⁴² Smith, 18.

⁴³ Milner, 73-74.

⁴⁴ King, 138.; Johnson and Nagel, 251.

⁴⁵ Robert Warrior, "The Indian Renaissance, 1960-2000," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Indian History*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 141.

⁴⁶ Warrior, 141.; Johnson and Nagel, 251.

⁴⁷ Troy Johnson, "Alcatraz Island," in *Encyclopedia of American Indian Civil Rights*, ed. James S. Olson (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997), 26.; Milner, 74.; Smith, 18.

⁴⁸ Bradley Glenn Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Indian Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 3.

⁴⁹ Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, "Holding the Rock: The 'Indianization' of Alcatraz Island, 1969-1999," *The Public Historian* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 57.

⁵⁰ Smith, 111. As Smith explains, the protests of the Pacific Northwest Indians managed to attract national media attention after Assiniboine activist Hank Adams enlisted actor Marlon Brando to participate in the tribes' "fish-ins" (21-22).

⁵¹ Paul C. Rosier, "'They Are Ancestral Homelands': Race, Place, and Politics in Cold War Native America, 1945-1961," *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (March 2006): 1301-1302.

⁵² Rosier, "'They Are Ancestral Homelands,'" 1301-1302.

⁵³ Johnson and Nagel, 252.; Smith, 85. The Third World Strikes were a series of mass student demonstrations at San Francisco State University and UC-Berkeley. Occurring in 1968-69, the protests largely centered on the demand that colleges and universities establish ethnic studies departments. For additional information, see: Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 132.

⁵⁴ Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 11.; Johnson and Nagel, 254.

⁵⁵ Earl Livermore, interview by Troy Johnson, April 8, 1970, in *The American Indian Occupation*, 121.

⁵⁶ Kent Blansett, interview by the California Historical Society, "Exploring Red Power in the 1960s," December 4, 2017. Historian and Richard Oakes's biographer Kent Blansett claims that, while researching Oakes and the '69 occupation, he frequently encountered historical works that analyzed Alcatraz takeover as if "sprung out of the thin air overnight." As Blansett argues, this discussion of the '69 occupation overlooks the multiple factors which led to the takeover and arose years prior.

⁵⁷ King, 142.; Milner, 82.; Johnson and Nagel, 257.

⁵⁸ Milner, 82.; Johnson and Nagel, 257.

⁵⁹ Ed Castillo, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, *We Hold the Rock*, October 7, 2014.; Treuer, 299. As alluded to on page 6, "later

arrivals” refers to those activists who came to the island in late-1970 and early-1971. According to Treuer, the occupation’s architects, “in the egalitarian and anarchic spirit of the times,” eschewed a leadership structure only to find that such a structure “didn’t work.” Although eventually agreeing to a leadership council, the activists’ jockeying for power and position became more commonplace as the occupation progressed.

⁶⁰ King, 143.

⁶¹ John Trudell, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, *We Hold The Rock*, October 7, 2014. Trudell claims that close to fifteen thousand Indians passed through an Indian-controlled Alcatraz. However, as it pertains to the existing scholarly literature and documentation concerning the takeover, there can be no verification of this number.

⁶² Trudell, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

⁶³ Peter Blue Cloud, interview by Troy Johnson, in *The American Indian Occupation*, 117.

⁶⁴ Thomas L. Sloan, “The Indian Reservation System,” in *Red Power: The American Indians’ Fight for Freedom*, ed. Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. (New York: American Heritage Press, 1971), 21.

⁶⁵ Sloan, 21.; S. Lyman Tyler, *A History of Indian Policy* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 1973), 72-73. Tyler notes that reservations were not intended to be permanent Indian homelands. Rather, it seemed “obvious” to contemporary Americans that the only “practical and humane answer to the Indian people was to assimilate [them] into Anglo-American culture.”

⁶⁶ Larry Wayne Burt, “United States Expansion and Federal Policy Toward Native Americans, 1953-60” (PhD diss., University of Toledo, 1979), 1.; Todd Benson, “The Consequences of Reservation Life: Native Californians on the Round Valley Reservation, 1871-1884,” *Pacific Historical Review* 60, no. 2 (May 1991): 222.

⁶⁷ Sloan, 21.; Benson, 222.

⁶⁸ Sloan, 21.; Benson, 222.

⁶⁹ Joe Bill, interview by John Trudell, *Alcatraz Pacifica Program*, December 23, 1969.

⁷⁰ Strange and Loo, 60.

⁷¹ “The Alcatraz Proclamation,” 1.

⁷² LaNada War Jack, “Reflections of Alcatraz,” in *Gathering Native Scholars: UCLA’s Forty Years of American Indian Culture and Research*, ed. Kenneth Lincoln (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 327.

⁷³ South Dakota Emergency Relief Administration, *1935 Survey of Indian Reservations* (Arlington: University Publications of America, 1979).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* It should also be noted that the survey describes drunkenness as “a common sight among both men and women” on these reservations. The

jail on the Sisseton Reservation is said to “house many inebriates,” many of whom refer to the prison as “a good warm place for sleeping and eating.”

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Bill, interview by John Trudell.; Joseph G. Jorgensen, “Indians and the Metropolis,” in *The American Indian in Urban Society*, ed. Jack O. Waddell (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), 83. These studies also attest that, throughout the 1960s, the average annual income on reservation was \$1,500 per family, while \$1,350 higher for urban Indian families.

⁷⁸ *Trudell*, dir. Heather Rae (PBS, 2005), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIcmTeCcbME>.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Wilma Mankiller, “A Modern Pioneer in the Cherokee Nation (Wilma Mankiller)” (Seattle, WA: UWTV Classic Presentation, 1994), video. In 1985, Mankiller became the first female principal chief of an Indian nation (Cherokee). Her brother also participated in the 1969 Alcatraz occupation.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 86.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 102, 104.

⁸⁶ Mankiller, “A Modern Pioneer in the Cherokee Nation (Wilma Mankiller).”

⁸⁷ Yakima occupier, interview, *Akwesasne Notes*, November 1969.

⁸⁸ War Jack, “Reflections on Alcatraz,” 331.

⁸⁹ Indians of All Tribes, 1970, statement in Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 98.

⁹⁰ Linda Aranaydo, interview by Irene Silentman and Anna Boyd, *The University of New Mexico’s American Indian Historical Research Project*, February 5, 1970.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Aranaydo.; Rosier, “‘They Are Ancestral Homelands’,” 1307.; Harvey Wells, interview by Jay Newburn, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, March 23, 1970.

⁹³ War Jack, “Reflections on Alcatraz,” 327.; Irene Silentman, interview by Irene Silentman and Anna Boyd, *The University of New Mexico’s American Indian Historical Research Project*, February 1970.

⁹⁴ Marie Potts, statement obtained by Paul C. Rosier, in “‘They Are Ancestral Homelands’,” 1324.

⁹⁵ La Rayne Parrish, interview by Troy Johnson, February 5, 1970, in *The American Indian Occupation*, 128.

⁹⁶ Rosier, “‘They Are Ancestral Homelands’,” 1307. In analyzing the Cold War’s influence on Native American race and politics, Rosier explains that

the Soviet Union cited Indian poverty as part of its denunciation of American capitalism. U.S.S.R. propaganda, in effect, claimed that capitalist ideals worked only to exacerbate the poor socio-economic standing of minority groups.

⁹⁷ *Population of American Indians, by sex and age: 1910-1990* ed. C. Matthew Snipp (Cambridge: Historical Statistics of the United States).; Jorgensen, 83.

⁹⁸ Paul C. Rosier, "Surviving in the Twentieth Century, 1890-1960," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Indian History*, ed. Frederick E. Hoxie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 117.; Jorgensen, 83. Rosier cites mining as the other primary industry found on reservations.

⁹⁹ Rosier, "Surviving in the Twentieth Century," 118.; Jorgensen, 83.

¹⁰⁰ Rosier, "Surviving in the Twentieth Century," 118.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ LaNada War Jack, interview by Troy Johnson, December 24, 1969, in *The American Indian Occupation*, 104.; Marilyn Miracle, interview by John Trudell, *Alcatraz Pacifica Program*, December 23, 1969.

¹⁰⁴ War Jack, interview by Troy Johnson.

¹⁰⁵ La Rayne Parrish.

¹⁰⁶ Larry W. Burt, "Roots of the Native American Urban Experience: Relocation Policy in the 1950s," in *American Indian Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (Spring 1986), 86.

¹⁰⁷ Michael C. Walch, "Terminating the Indian Termination Policy" in *Stanford Law Review* 35, no. 6 (July 1983), 1182.

¹⁰⁸ Walch, 1182.; James E. Officer, "Termination as Federal Policy: An Overview," in *Indian Self Rule*, ed. Kenneth R. Philp (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986), 123.; "Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia: John Marshall 1831," *AMDOCS: Documents for the Study of American History*, April 6, 2019.

¹⁰⁹ Walch, 1182.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1188.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1189.

¹¹² Charles F. Wilkinson and Eric R. Biggs, "The Evolution of the Termination Policy," in *American Indian Law Review* 5, no. 139 (1977), 142.

¹¹³ Christopher K. Riggs, "American Indians, Economic Development, and Self-Determination in the 1960s," in *Pacific Historical Review* 69, no. 3 (August 2000), 433.

¹¹⁴ Walch, 1189. In July 1970, President Richard Nixon formally and successfully petitioned Congress for the repudiation of HCR-108, the act that ushered in the Termination era. For more on this petition and its additional requests for the restoration of Indian autonomy, see Tyler 221-222.

¹¹⁵ Tyler, 151.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. As Walch explains, treaties made between Native Americans and the federal government had always acknowledged the sovereignty of Indian tribes and dealt with them accordingly (1182).

¹¹⁸ Tyler, 95.; Wilkinson and Biggs, 144. According to Wilkinson and Biggs, the Dawes Act culminated in the passage of approximately 86,000,000 acres of land out of Indian hands.

¹¹⁹ Tyler, 95, 151.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 98.

¹²¹ Wilkinson and Biggs, 142. Burt, "United States Expansion and Federal Policy," 5.; Tyler, 97. As Burt explains, the Dawes Act was supposed to ensure that title to Indians' individual plots of land would remain in trust with the U.S. government for twenty-five years. This provision was designed to protect Indigenous peoples from losing their lands in deals with more experienced white farmers. However, as Tyler details, relatively few Native Americans actually farmed their allotments. When federal authorities observed Indians' struggles homesteading, the Dawes Act was revised to allow Indians to lease their land, albeit at a fraction of the price they could have made by farming it. Tyler also mentions that "hungry white settlers" seized upon the Dawes Act's provision.

¹²² Wilkinson and Biggs, 145.; National Congress of American Indians, "The New Frontier in Indian Affairs: Policy and Program for the Sixties," letter to NCAI constituents, The Newberry Library's American Indian Histories and Cultures Database, December 1, 1960. It should be noted that Collier's Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) did not go uncontested amongst Native Americans. A 1960 letter authored by the National Congress of American Indians praises the act as giving "full statutory support" to Indigenous educational reform, but acknowledges some of its ideals and procedures as "not customary to [Native American] practice." Forefront among these was the act's assertion that American Indian nations incorporate the idea of "majority rule" into their tribal constitutions.

¹²³ Wilkinson and Biggs, 145.

¹²⁴ Rosier, "'They Are Ancestral Homelands,'" 1319.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 1301.

¹²⁷ Roberta Ulrich, *American Indian Nations from Termination to Restoration, 1953-2006* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 10-11.; Burt, "United States Expansion and Federal Policy," 8.

¹²⁸ Ulrich, 11-12.; Burt, "Roots of the Native American Urban Experience," 87.

¹²⁹ Ulrich, 12.; Burt, "United States Expansion and Federal Policy," 8.

¹³⁰ Burt, "Roots of the American Indian Urban Experience," 86.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid, 86-87.

¹³³ Burt, "United States Expansion and Federal Policy," 12.; Wilkinson and Biggs, 145.; Officer, 119.

¹³⁴ Burt, "United States Expansion and Federal Policy," 12.; Wilkinson and Biggs, 145.; Officer, 119.

¹³⁵ Officer, 119-120.

¹³⁶ Officer, 119.; Ronald R. Holt, *Beneath These Red Cliffs: An Ethnohistory of the Utah Paiutes* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2006), 63.; Wilkinson and Biggs, 146. As Wilkinson and Biggs explain, William Zimmerman, Jr., Acting Commissioner of the Senate Civil Service Committee, identified tribes' readiness for termination according to four criteria: degree of acculturation; economic resources and condition of the tribe; willingness of the tribe to be relieved of federal control; and willingness of the state to assume jurisdiction (146). In addition, Holt explains that Myer also served as director of the War Relocation Authority (WRA) during World War II. As WRA commissioner, Myer oversaw the removal of 110,000 Japanese-Americans from the West Coast to interior concentration camps (63).

¹³⁷ Burt, "United States Expansion and Federal Policy," 11.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Burt, "United States Expansion and Federal Policy," 11.; *Federal expenditures for American Indians in urban and reservation areas: 1950-1980*, ed. C. Matthew Snipp (Cambridge: Historical Statistics of the United States).

¹⁴¹ Burt, "United States Expansion and Federal Policy," 12.

¹⁴² Burt, "Roots of the American Indian Urban Experience," 88.; National Congress of American Indians.

¹⁴³ Rosier, "'They Are Ancestral Homelands,'" 1319.; National Congress of American Indians. For more on the NCAI and the motivations behind the organization's founding, see Tyler 145-146.

¹⁴⁴ National Congress of American Indians.; Tyler, 174. As Tyler explains, Termination also received resistance from white Americans as early as 1954. Residing in areas with significant Native American populations, these citizens advocated a "more gradual, planned" withdrawal from Indian affairs out of fear that their states were financially ill-equipped to assume responsibility for Indigenous populations (174).

¹⁴⁵ National Congress of American Indians.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Dean J. Kotlowski, "Alcatraz, Wounded Knee, and Beyond: The Nixon and Ford Administrations Respond to Native American Protest," in *Pacific Historical Review* 72, no. 2 (May 2003), 204.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 204-205.

¹⁵⁰ Special Subcommittee on Indian Education, *Indian Education: A National Tragedy – A National Challenge*, 90th Cong., Senate Resolution 165 (Washington, DC, 1969).

¹⁵¹ LaNada War Jack, interview by California Historical Society, “Exploring Red Power in the 1960s,” December 4, 2017.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Mankiller, “A Modern Pioneer in the Cherokee Nation (Wilma Mankiller).”

¹⁵⁶ Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 73.

¹⁵⁷ Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 59-60.; Blansett, “Exploring Red Power in the 1960s.”

¹⁵⁸ Adam Fortunate Eagle, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, *We Hold the Rock*, October 7, 2014. Fortunate Eagle’s involvement in Bay Area Indian organizations is awarded further attention in the succeeding paragraphs.

¹⁵⁹ Mankiller, “A Modern Pioneer in the Cherokee Nation (Wilma Mankiller).”

¹⁶⁰ Wilma Mankiller, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, *We Hold the Rock*, October 7, 2014.

¹⁶¹ “We Hold the Rock,” *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 1 (January 1970): 1.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Trudell, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Rosier, “‘They Are Ancestral Homelands’,” 1301.; Holt, 63. Holt identifies Watkins as Termination’s “legislative strawboss.” Holt as claims that Watkins drew his attitudes toward Native Americans from his Mormon background and youth, “spent in the shadow” of the Uintah Ouray Reservation.

¹⁶⁷ Rosier, “‘They Are Ancestral Homelands’,” 1301.; Trudell, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

¹⁶⁸ *Akwesasne Notes*, “The Angry American Indian Starting Down the Protest Trail.”; National Congress of American Indians.

¹⁶⁹ Mankiller, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

¹⁷⁰ Fortunate Eagle, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

¹⁷¹ Tyler, 178.; Philleo Nash, “Before the City Club of Portland, Oregon” (Portland, OR: United States Department of the Interior, July 26, 1963), speech. Tyler attributes Termination’s affiliation with Indians’ “coming-of-

age” to 1958 BIA Commissioner Glenn L. Emmons. Philleo Nash, Emmons’ successor, offered a much different conception of Termination in 1963, when, in a speech before the City Club in Portland, Oregon, he conceded that the “Indian people...place a high value on...Indian trusteeship [of lands]. In the main, they do not wish it to come to an end, but regard it as a necessary and desirable relationship which is due to them in return for lands ceded and promises made long ago.”

¹⁷² Rosier, “‘They Are Ancestral Homelands,’” 1319.; Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 7.; Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 112.

¹⁷³ *Population of American Indians in selected metropolitan areas: 1890-1990*, ed. C. Matthew Snipp. Cambridge: Historical Statistics of the United States.; Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 8.; Burt, “Roots of the Native American Urban Experience,” 85.

¹⁷⁴ Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 115.; Burt, “Roots of the Native American Urban Experience,” 91.

¹⁷⁵ Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 11.

¹⁷⁶ Johnson and Nagel, “Remembering Alcatraz,” 254.

¹⁷⁷ Al Miller, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, *We Hold the Rock*, October 7, 2014.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 8. Tyler, “A History of Indian Policy,” 159. As Tyler explains, the first program offering job placement services for Native Americans was established in 1948, particularly to meet the needs of the Navajo Indians. In the fall of 1950, the BIA decided to extend this program to other Native Americans “who wished to seek permanent employment opportunities away from reservations.”

¹⁸⁰ Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 7-8.

¹⁸¹ Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 7-8.; Ulrich, *American Indian Nations*, 19.; Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 112.

¹⁸² The Bureau of Indian Affairs, “Relocation Records: Series 1,” 1936-1963, 13.; The Bureau of Indian Affairs, “Relocation Records: Series 2,” 1955-1975, 2-3.

¹⁸³ The Bureau of Indian Affairs, “Relocation Records: Series 2,” 1955-1975, 2-3.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 9-10.

¹⁸⁵ Fortunate Eagle, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

¹⁸⁶ Burt, “Roots of the Native American Urban Experience,” 89.; Rosier, “‘They Are Ancestral Homelands,’” 1325.

¹⁸⁷ Millie Ketcheshawno, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, *We Hold the Rock*, October 7, 2014.

¹⁸⁸ The Bureau of Indian Affairs, “Relocation Records: Series 1,” 1936-1963, 13.; The Bureau of Indian Affairs, “Relocation Records: Series 2,” 1955-

1975, 2-3.; Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 112.

¹⁸⁹ *Occupation of American Indian workers, by sex: 1950-1970.*; Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 112.; Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 10.

¹⁹⁰ Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 10.

¹⁹¹ Burt, "Roots of the Native American Urban Experience," 90.; "The Indian," *The Indian*, The Newberry Library's American Indian Histories and Cultures Database, May 15, 1969.

¹⁹² "The Indian."

¹⁹³ "The Indian."; Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 13.; Warrior, 132.

¹⁹⁴ Adam Fortunate Eagle, "Urban Indians and the Occupation of Alcatraz Island," in *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18, no. 4 (1994), 34.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35-36. In 1961, Fortunate Eagle assisted his friend and fellow Chippewa Indian Cy Williams in establishing the United Bay Area Council of American Indian Affairs, Inc., a kind of umbrella organization for a multitude of San Francisco Indian clubs (i.e. the Pomo Club, Navajo Club, Haida-Tlingit Club, Chippewa Club, United Paiutes, Four Winds Club, Intertribal Dancers, Haskell Alumni, Radio-Electronics Training School, Sports Committee, Intertribal Friendship House, and American Indian Culture Group). The purpose of these groups as a whole was to provide a space for Indians to continue practicing their Indigenous culture, while also supplying much of the job and social support promised by the BIA.

¹⁹⁸ Fortunate Eagle, "Urban Indians," 33.; Kent Blansett is one historian who claims that the dynamics of San Francisco's 1960s Indian community, specifically regarding the Native American clubs that pervaded it, have not received sufficient scholarly attention. For more on his critique see: Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 107.

¹⁹⁹ Fortunate Eagle, "Urban Indians," 34.

²⁰⁰ War Jack, interview by California Historical Society.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Blansett, interview by California Historical Society.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* Blansett states that Dean Chavers, a Bay Area Indigenous activist, described the bar where Oakes worked (Warren's Slaughterhouse) as arguably the "roughest [Indian] bar" in San Francisco. He also claims that it was at this particular bar that Russell Means, a prominent member of the American Indian Movement, first learned of Termination's effects on Native American tribes.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

- ²⁰⁶ War Jack, interview by California Historical Society.
- ²⁰⁷ Stella Leach, interview by Troy Johnson, February 4, 1970, in *The American Indian Occupation*, 124.
- ²⁰⁸ Vine Deloria Jr., interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, *We Hold the Rock*, October 7, 2014.
- ²⁰⁹ Fortunate Eagle, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.
- ²¹⁰ Richard Oakes, interview by KQED News, *San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive*, December 10, 1969.
- ²¹¹ Ibid.
- ²¹² LaNada War Jack, interview by Kent Blansett, in *A Journey to Freedom*, 112.
- ²¹³ Ibid.
- ²¹⁴ *Population of American Indians, by sex and age: 1910-1990*; Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 112.
- ²¹⁵ Mankiller, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.; Fortunate Eagle, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area..
- ²¹⁶ War Jack, "Reflections on Alcatraz," 327.
- ²¹⁷ War Jack, "Reflections on Alcatraz," 327.; Johnson and Nagel, "Remembering Alcatraz," 253.
- ²¹⁸ Burt, "Roots of the Native American Urban Experience," 92. Burt cites the BIA as criticizing the United States Comptroller General for not properly keeping statistics concerning the number of Indians who decided to return to their reservations.
- ²¹⁹ Milner, 74.
- ²²⁰ Ramona Bennett, "Activism and Red Power," in *Indian Self Rule: First-Hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan*, ed. Kenneth R. Philip (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1986), 236.
- ²²¹ Yvonne Chapela, "Red Awareness," *The Warpath*, 1968.
- ²²² Ibid.
- ²²³ Chapela.; *Population of American Indians, by sex and age: 1910-1990*.
- ²²⁴ Gerald Clifford, "Indians Speak Up."
- ²²⁵ Unnamed representative of the Alcatraz occupation, interview by KPIX News, *San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive*, January 15, 1970.
- ²²⁶ Smith and Warrior, 19.
- ²²⁷ Unnamed Alcatraz occupier, interview by KPIX News, *San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive*, November 10, 1969.
- ²²⁸ Ibid.
- ²²⁹ Smith and Warrior, 19.; Treuer, 296.
- ²³⁰ Treuer, 296.
- ²³¹ "Armed Black Militants Protest At The California Capitol, May 2, 1967,"

YouTube Video, 1:34, posted by “ChiTownView,” July 7, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KD3uemBXG74>.

²³² Philip S. Foner, “Introduction,” in *The Black Panthers Speak*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970), xx-xxi.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid, xxi.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Foner, xviii.

²³⁷ Foner, xvi.; JoNina M. Abron, “The Legacy of the Black Panther Party,” in *The Black Scholar* 17, no. 6 (1986), 33.

²³⁸ Huey P. Newton and Bobby G. Seale, “What We Want, What We Believe,” in *The Black Panthers Speak*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 2-3.; Oakes, interview by San Francisco Media.

²³⁹ Newton and Seale, 2.

²⁴⁰ Foner, 45.

²⁴¹ Abron, 33.; Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1967), 50-51.

²⁴² Carmichael and Hamilton, 53.; Foner, xvi.

²⁴³ Foner, xvii.

²⁴⁴ War Jack, interview by California Historical Society.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Smith and Warrior, 19.

²⁴⁷ Foner, xv.; Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 132. Blansett notes that the Third World Liberation strikes were preceded by the by the controversial firing of an African American faculty member, George Murray, at San Francisco State University. Murray was believed to have personal ties to the Black Panther Party.

²⁴⁸ Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom*, 132.

²⁴⁹ War Jack, interview by California Historical Society.

²⁵⁰ Abron, 33.; Smith and Warrior, 19.

²⁵¹ Carmichael and Hamilton, 158.; Huey P. Newton, “Functional Definition of Politics,” in *The Black Panthers Speak*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 46.

²⁵² Carmichael and Hamilton, 53.

²⁵³ “UNA International President Lehman Brightman on The Real History of the Alcatraz Take Over 1969-1971,” YouTube Video, 1:34, posted by “ChiTownView,” November 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyntBGEMyho>.

²⁵⁴ Oakes, interview by San Francisco Media.; “Armed Black Militants Protest At The California Capitol, May 2, 1967.”

²⁵⁵ Chapela.

²⁵⁶ Evette Pearson, "In White America Today," in *The Black Panthers Speak*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970), 25.

²⁵⁷ Carmichael and Hamilton, 44.

²⁵⁸ Gerald Clifford, "Topic of Seminar: Indian Power," *The Indian*, The Newberry Library's American Indian Histories and Cultures Database, May 15, 1969.

²⁵⁹ Stella Leach, interview by KQED News, *San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive*, December 10, 1969.

²⁶⁰ Leach, interview by KQED News.; "The Alcatraz Proclamation," 1.

²⁶¹ "The Alcatraz Proclamation," 1.

²⁶² Leach, interview by KQED News.; Tyler, 234. As Tyler explains, BIA officials stated in 1972 that, "as a matter of BIA policy," it was "important to become truly responsive to the needs of Indian children and parents." Writing five years removed from this statement, Tyler suggests putting this responsiveness into practice by awarding Native Americans' surveillance over the use of the Johnson O'Malley. Tyler also posits that BIA schools should seek input from Indigenous school boards.

²⁶³ Oakes, interview by KQED News.; Indians of All Tribes, 1970, statement in Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 98.

²⁶⁴ Mankiller, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.; Fortunate Eagle, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.; Tyler, 88.; As Tyler mentions, the federal government made "a serious attempt" to assume control of Indian education in the lead-up to the 1887 Dawes Act. Prior to the act's passage, the idea of education had long been a part of the federal government's "general program" for Indians, but administering Indians' schooling was a task largely left to the churches which operated missions among tribes. Between 1879 and 1887, the U.S. government increased its Indian education budget from \$140,000 to \$1,226,415 while overseeing the enrollment of nearly 10,000 more Indians in federal-run schools.

²⁶⁵ Mankiller, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.; Fortunate Eagle, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

²⁶⁶ Tyler, 227. According to Tyler, the 1960s were a "period of intense of examination of educational programs for American Indians." Indians' powerlessness in administering their own education became increasingly recognized in government circles, although definitive reform rarely followed.

²⁶⁷ "BIA Rules by Fear, Intimidation & Blackmail," *The Warpath*, The Newberry Library's American Indian Histories and Cultures Database, Fall 1969.; Tyler, 229. Tyler explains that, of the 200,000 Indian children of school age from reservation communities during the 1969-1970 school year, some 141,000 attended public schools and approximately 52,000 were enrolled in

BIA schools. Meanwhile, 11,000 Indian youth attended mission and other private schools. Of the 212 BIA schools in operation, 135 were day schools and 77 were boarding schools.

²⁶⁸ “BIA Rules by Fear, Intimidation & Blackmail.”

²⁶⁹ Martha Grass, “Ponca, Okla. – Education,” *The Warpath*, The Newberry Library’s American Indian Histories and Cultures Database, Fall 1969.

²⁷⁰ Grass.; Everett D. Edington, “Review of Recent Research on American Indian Students: Academic Achievement,” in *Journal of American Indian Education* 8, no. 3 (May, 1969), 11-12. Edington asserts that, in 1969, American Indians were indisputably “the most disadvantaged group of youth” in the nation’s schools. First, Edington explains that Indians arrive at school “at least one year behind” behind white students in virtually all subject matter. As Indians progress through school, this gap in achievement widens until Indigenous youth are nearly “five years behind” their white peers by the time they reach high school. Edington also notes that, just a decade prior to his study, the BIA reported that less than forty percent of the Indian youth who entered high school stayed to graduate. Therefore, Edington concludes that none of the nation’s educational systems are adequately preparing Indians for economic success.

²⁷¹ Grass.; Stephen L. Bayne and Judith E. Bayne, “Motivating Navaho Children: Teachers’ Views of the Problems And Recommendations for Improvement,” in *Journal of American Indian Education* 8, no. 2 (January 1969), 1. In 1967, Bayne and Bayne interviewed seventy-six teachers at twenty-five schools (almost all of which were operated by the BIA) across the Navajo, Papago, and Hopi Reservations. Although claiming to have met “some young, dedicated” professionals intent on teaching Indian children “in the best and most sensitive ways possible,” Bayne and Bayne recall encountering several teachers who “denigrated [Indigenous] culture and their students’ intelligence,” and whose “basic philosophy was to adapt Indian children as quickly as possible to Anglo culture and society.”

²⁷² Unnamed Alcatraz occupier, interview by KPIX News, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, December 2, 1969.

²⁷³ Indians of All Tribes, 1970, statement in Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 98.

²⁷⁴ Indians of All Tribes, 1970, statement in Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 98.; Patrick E. Graham and Judson H. Taylor, “Survey – Opinions of Indian Upward Bound Students on: Reservations and Tribal Customs, History and Language,” in *Journal of American Indian Education* 8, no. 3 (May, 1969), 25-26. In 1969, Graham and Taylor surveyed seventy-three high school Indian students enrolled in Arizona State University’s “Upward Bound Project.” While recognizing their survey as “quite small” and “limited

in scope,” they present two findings regarding Indian education: first, many elements of Native American heritage remain present in the lives of Indigenous students; second, Indian students are prone to experience a profound “state of confusion” as their level of education progresses. This confusion results when Indian youth, although lacking a close affinity with their more traditional parents, feel compelled to maintain aspects of their heritage, and hesitate to “fully conform to the predominant culture.”

²⁷⁵ “The Alcatraz Proclamation,” 1.

²⁷⁶ Aubrey Grossman, “Indianize the B.I.A.!,” *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 3 (1970): 11.; Bayne and Bayne, 4. In their 1967 study, Bayne and Bayne describe some reservation educators as denouncing BIA-issued Scott-Foresman textbooks as “detrimental to the development of...Navaho children.” According to these teachers, Indian children, upon encountering their textbooks’ images of “idyllic suburban lifestyles,” experience “boredom,” “distaste,” and a sense of “incomprehensibility.”

²⁷⁷ War Jack, “Reflections on Alcatraz,” 331.; Indians of All Tribes, 1970, statement in Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 98.

²⁷⁸ War Jack, “Reflections on Alcatraz,” 328.; Indians of All Tribes, 1970, statement in Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 98.; King, 138.

²⁷⁹ “The Alcatraz Proclamation,” 1.

²⁸⁰ Indians of All Tribes, 1970, statement in Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 98.; Clifford, “Indians Speak Up.”

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ “The Alcatraz Proclamation,” 1.

²⁸⁴ “Manifesto,” *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 3 (1970): i.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Wilma Mankiller, interview by Troy Johnson, November 27, 1991, in *The American Indian Occupation*, 128.

²⁸⁸ Indians of All Tribes, 1970, statement in Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 98.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Indians of All Tribes, 1970, statement in Johnson, *The American Indian Occupation*, 98.; Harvey Wells, interview by Jay Newburn, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, March 23, 1970.

²⁹¹ Lehman Brightman, interview by KQED News, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, December 1, 1969, video.

²⁹² “Manifesto,” i.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Irene Silentman, interview by Irene Silentman and Anna Boyd.

²⁹⁵ Clyde Bellecourt and Jon Lurie, *The Thunder Before the Storm: The Autobiography of Clyde Bellecourt as told to Jon Lurie* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2016), 85.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Turtle's Son, "Pyramid Lake, Nevada: A Challenge to Indians of All Tribes," *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 2 (February 1970): 1.; Martha C. Knack, "A Short History of Pyramid Lake, Nevada," in *Ethnohistory* 24, no. 1 (Winter, 1977): 53-43, 58. According to Knack, tension between the Paiute Tribe and Nevada whites has roots as far back as the 1860s. Although 1860 marks the only year of armed Paiute resistance, the tribe frequently sought the eviction of whites squatting on the Pyramid Lake Reservation between 1860 and 1870. The Paiutes also found themselves struggling to ward off white ranchers and fishermen, who, in the later half of the nineteenth century, demanded that the Paiutes lease their land while fishing illegally on Pyramid Lake's shores and islands.

²⁹⁸ Andrew W. Carey, "Questions of Sovereignty: Pyramid Lake and the Northern Paiute Struggle for Water and Rights" (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2016), 8-9.; Turtle's Son, 1.; William C. Scott, "The continuing Saga of Pyramid Lake: Nevada v. United States," in *Natural Resources Journal* 24, no. 4 (October 1984): 1068-1070. As Scott explains, the Paiute struggle over water rights is one that extends well beyond the late-1960s and early-1970s. In 1902, the Newlands Reclamation Project sought to irrigate Nevada lands by redirecting water from the Truckee River, which runs along the lower reaches of the Paiute Reservation. Concern over the project's potential to damage Paiute lands prompted a legal struggle between the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District (TCID), the organization representing the project, and the federal government, which represented the Paiute Tribe. The conflict lasted until 1935 when a settlement allowed for the diversion of a substantial amount of water into the Carson River Basin. The end result was the destruction of much of Pyramid Lake and its fishery.

²⁹⁹ Turtle's Son, 1.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Carey, 8-9.; Turtle's Son, 1.

³⁰² Turtle's Son, 1.

³⁰³ "Round Valley: Are Army Engineers & BIA a Conspiracy?," *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 3 (1970): 10.; Kevin Adams and Khal Schneider, "'Washington is a Long Way Off': The 'Round Valley War' and the Limits of Federal Power on a California Indian Reservation," in *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 4 (November 2011), 557-558. As Adams and Schneider explain, controversy involving the Round Valley Reservation and federal government dates back as early as 1887. It was at this time that a "coterie of

wealthy and influential trespassers” seized more than ninety percent of the 102,000-acre territory claiming that the executive-order reservation simply did not exist. When BIA Commissioner John D.C. Atkins requested federal troops to evict the citizens, the trespassers filed an injunction, and barred federal troops from retaking the reservation. Local papers dubbed the stand-off the “Round Valley War.”

³⁰⁴ “Round Valley,” 10.; Will Parrish, “The Reservoir Stops Here,” *Anderson Valley Advertiser*, October 15, 2015. Parrish explains that the dam’s proposal was unveiled in 1967 and called for the flooding of a 40,000-acre area. Had the project reached fruition, all twenty-four acres of the Round Valley Reservation would have been flooded.; Aaron D. Purcell, “The Engineering of Forever: Arthur E. Morgan, the Seneca Indians, and the Kinzua Dam,” in *New York History* 78, no. 3 (July 1997), 310. Between 1956 and 1966, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers appropriated land for the construction of the Kinzua Dam in northwestern Pennsylvania. The federal government’s decision to build the dam led to the inundation of over nine thousand acres of the Seneca nation’s reservation. In doing so, the U.S. government not only oversaw the destruction of Seneca ancestral homes, farms, burial plots, and hunting and fishing grounds, but overruled the Pickering Treaty of 1794, which had protected Seneca land ownership for over 160 years.

³⁰⁵ “Round Valley,” 10.; Will Parrish.

³⁰⁶ “Round Valley,” 10.; Will Parrish. Parrish mentions that, by 1969, an opposition campaign led by Richard Wilson, a white Mendocino County resident, had dissuaded California Governor Ronald Reagan from supporting the dam’s construction. This “underdog victory” against the dam marked a “stunning defeat for the California water industry.” In 1972, the California Wild & Scenic Rivers Act formally prohibited construction of new dams on the Smith, Klamath, Scott, Salmon, Eel, Van Duzen, and American Rivers.

³⁰⁷ “Round Valley,” 10.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³¹⁰ Smith, 21.; As Smith explains, Washington State’s Native American Resistance Movements can be traced to the governorship of Isaac Ingalls Stevens, who served as the state’s territorial governor from 1853-1857. During Stevens’ time in office, the tribes of the Pacific Northwest ceded “huge swaths of property,” while being promised the right to continue fishing in “their usual and accustomed places.” When white sportsmen and fisheries barred these tribes from their traditional fishing grounds, the Indians protested on the basis that their treaty rights were being violated.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² Smith, 21.; Ramona Bennett, “Ramona Bennett: Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project,” (Seattle, WA: The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor

History Project, 2016), video. A Puyallup activist, Bennett notes that white Washington farmers and the company Tacoma Boat Building also played roles in facilitating a crisis over traditional Indian fishing grounds. Both farmers' fertilizers and the lead scraped off Tacoma Boat Building's boats were harming the spawning areas of fish caught by the Nisqually, Puyallup, and Muckleshoot tribes.

³¹³ Al Bridges, interview by KPIX News, *San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive*, October 12, 1970.

³¹⁴ "Nisqually Washington," *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 3 (1970): 2.; Blair Paul, "Blair Paul: Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project," (Seattle, WA: The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, 2016), film. A lawyer for the United Indians of All Tribes, Paul recalls that many of the activists who participated in the Fort Lawton invasion were from the Bay Area and had ties to the Alcatraz occupation. In describing these protestors, Blair references them as a "cross between Indians, hippies, juvenile delinquents, [and] thoughtful people."

³¹⁵ "United Indians Invade Fort Lawton," *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 3 (1970): 1.; Bernie Whitebear, "Taking Back Fort Lawton: Meeting the Needs of Seattle's Native American Community Through Conversion," in *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 4, no. 4 (Spring-Summer 1994): 4. Whitebear explains that UIAT, originally known as "Kinatchitapi" (Blackfoot for "All Indians"), first approached Seattle's city leaders about setting aside a portion of Ft. Lawton for Indians in 1969. It was at this time that Ft. Lawton was declared surplus federal property, and Seattle's city council expressed an interest in buying the army base. When UIAT presented its proposal to Seattle's city administration, the Indian group was instructed to submit its request to the BIA. In the months that separated UIAT's petition to Seattle's city council and the March 1970 invasion, UIAT Indians increasingly entertained the idea of taking Ft. Lawton by force. Whitebear claims that this thought received added emphasis following Richard Oakes and Grace Thorpe's 1970 visit to Washington State and demonstrations by Native American servicemen at Fort Lewis (WA).

³¹⁶ "United Indians," 1.; "Nisqually Washington," 2.; Jeffrey C. Sanders, "The Battle for Fort Lawton: Competing Environmental Claims in Postwar Seattle," in *Pacific Historical Review* 77, no. 2 (May 2008): 204. As Sanders explains, the grievances and demands of the Ft. Lawton protestors almost exactly mirror those of the Alcatraz occupiers. In fact, a statement released by UIAT on the day of its invasion employs language directly taken from the "Proclamation to the Great White Father": "We the Native Americans reclaim the land known as Fort Lawton by the right of discovery...[this fort] is more suitable to pursue an Indian way of life...By this we mean 'this place does not resemble most Indian reservations.' It has the potential for modern

facilities, adequate sanitation facilities, fisheries research facilities and transportation.” UIAT also contrasted its vision for a “livable Indian city” with Seattle, where there was “no place for Indians to assemble and carry on Tribal ways and beliefs in the white man’s city.” The protestors thus presented plans to develop a “Center for Native American Studies,” a “Great Indian University,” and an “Indian Ecology Center” to “train and support” Indian youth in “scientific research and practice to restore [Indian] lands and waters to their pure and natural state.”

³¹⁷ “United Indians,” 1.; Paul. According to Paul, Garry Bass, an Indigenous lawyer representing UIAT, and Bernie Whitebear, one of UIAT’s primary leaders, did not expect the 1970 invasion to win them title to all of Ft. Lawton. Instead, Bass and Whitebear hoped the invasion might lead to a compromise with federal officials, whereby UIAT would be awarded partial title to the territory. Bass and Whitebear believed that a victory of this nature, albeit limited, would please Washington State’s Indigenous communities.

³¹⁸ Johnson and Nagel, 257-258.

³¹⁹ Al Miller, interview by KQED News, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, November 26, 1969.; Shirley Guevara, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, *We Hold the Rock*, October 7, 2014.; Johnson and Nagel, 257-258.

³²⁰ John Trudell, interview by KQED News, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, June 8, 1970.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Richard Oakes, interview by KQED News.

³²³ “Indians at Alcatraz Feast, Dance in Holiday Festival.”

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ LaNada War Jack, interview by KQED News, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, November 25, 1970.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Leach, interview by Troy Johnson.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ KQED News broadcast (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive, June 16, 1970), video.

³³¹ John Trudell, interview by KPIX News, *San Francisco State University’s Bay Area Television Archive*, March 25, 1971.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Clifford, “Indians Speak Up.”; Milner, 78, 80-81. According to Milner, the U.S. government opted to intervene and end the occupation precisely when it “ceased being fun” for the American public. At the protest’s outset, reporters portrayed the event in a favorable light, evidencing a kind of sympathy that appeared in sync with “emerging progressive attitudes toward

race.” However, as the takeover persisted, Milner references the media as abandoning its early images of “noble red men...restoring life to Alcatraz” in favor of negative racial stereotypes which presented the occupiers as “hostile” Indians “making [the island] worse.”

³³⁴ Kim Robertson, interview by KPIX News, *San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive*, December 10, 1969.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ KPIX News broadcast (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive, December 10, 1969), video.; Clifford, “Indians Speak Up.”

³³⁹ Brightman, interview by KQED News.

³⁴⁰ Grossman, 11.

³⁴¹ Earl Livermore, “A Message from our Co-ordinator (Earl Livermore),” *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 1 (January 1970): 5.

³⁴² “Alcatraz: The Idea” *Alcatraz Indians of All Tribes* 1, no. 2 (February 1970): 2-3.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ KPIX News broadcast (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive, June 11, 1971), video.

³⁴⁵ KPIX News broadcast, December 10, 1969.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ “We Hold the Rock,” 1.

³⁴⁸ Harvey Wells, interview by Jay Newburn, *San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive*, November 30, 1969.

³⁴⁹ George Horse Capture, interview by Troy Johnson, 1991, in *The American Indian Occupation*, 129.

³⁵⁰ Peter Blue Cloud, *Alcatraz is Not an Island* (Berkeley, CA: Wingbow Press, 1972).

³⁵¹ Bill, interview by John Trudell.

³⁵² Brad Patterson, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area, *We Hold the Rock*, October 7, 2014.; Treuer, 299. Although unwilling to cede Alcatraz in its entirety Treuer describes President Nixon as “something of a friend to ‘the Indian.’” Treuer attributes Nixon’s sympathies toward the Alcatraz occupation and the plight of Native Americans as a whole both to the president’s Quaker upbringing and time at Whittier College. The Quakers, explain Treuer, have a “long history of supporting Indian causes,” while Nixon’s football coach at Whittier was a full-blooded Luiseno from the La Jolla Reservation (CA). Nixon wrote about his coach: “I think I admired him more and learned more from him than any man aside from my father.”

³⁵³ Thomas Hannon, interview by KPIX News, *San Francisco State Univer-*

sity's Bay Area Television Archive, December 2, 1969.

³⁵⁴ Citizen's coalition spokesman, KPIX News broadcast, (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive, October 31, 1969), video.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ John Trudell, interview by KQED News, *San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive*, August, 25, 1969.; Horse Capture, interview by Troy Johnson.

³⁵⁷ John Trudell, interview by KPIX News, *San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive*, June 11, 1971.

³⁵⁸ Bellecourt and Lurie, 84-85.; Mavis Richardson, "The BIA Occupation: The Media Frames A Native American Struggle to Gain Control" (paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Annual Conference, Denver, CO, August 2010), 4.

³⁵⁹ Bellecourt and Lurie, 84-85.; Richardson, 4.

³⁶⁰ Warrior, 141.

³⁶¹ Warrior, 141.; Terri Poppe, "Off Our Backs," *Off Our Backs, Inc.* 8, no. 8 (August-September): 4.

³⁶² Poppe, 4.; "Manifesto," i.

³⁶³ Bellecourt and Lurie, 84.

³⁶⁴ Peter Blue Cloud, *Alcatraz is Not an Island*.

³⁶⁵ Mankiller, interview by Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

³⁶⁶ Strange and Loo, 57.

³⁶⁷ *Bay Sunday* (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive, December 10, 1989), video.

³⁶⁸ Sacheen LittleFeather, interview on *Bay Sunday*, (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco State University's Bay Area Television Archive, December 10, 1989), video.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

Images

Page 61: "001 Alcatraz Indian occupation slides," originally uploaded to Flickr by Golden Gate Park Archives on August 27, 2013, accessed on January 27, 2020 via Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/goga_parkarchives/9621026137/.

Page 88: "Thanksgiving Day on Alcatraz, Copyright Chuck Warner," originally uploaded to Flickr by Golden Gate Park Archives on August 27, 2013, accessed on January 27, 2020 via Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/goga_parkarchives/9624263124/in/photostream/.

Page 95: "Images of the Alcatraz Indian Occupation," originally uploaded to Flickr by Golden Gate Park Archives on August 27, 2013, accessed on January 27, 2020 via Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/goga_parkarchives/9621026663/in/photostream/.

Page 115: "003 Alcatraz Indian occupation slides," originally uploaded to Flickr by Golden Gate Park Archives on August 27, 2013, accessed on January 27, 2020 via Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/goga_parkarchives/9621026741/in/photostream/.