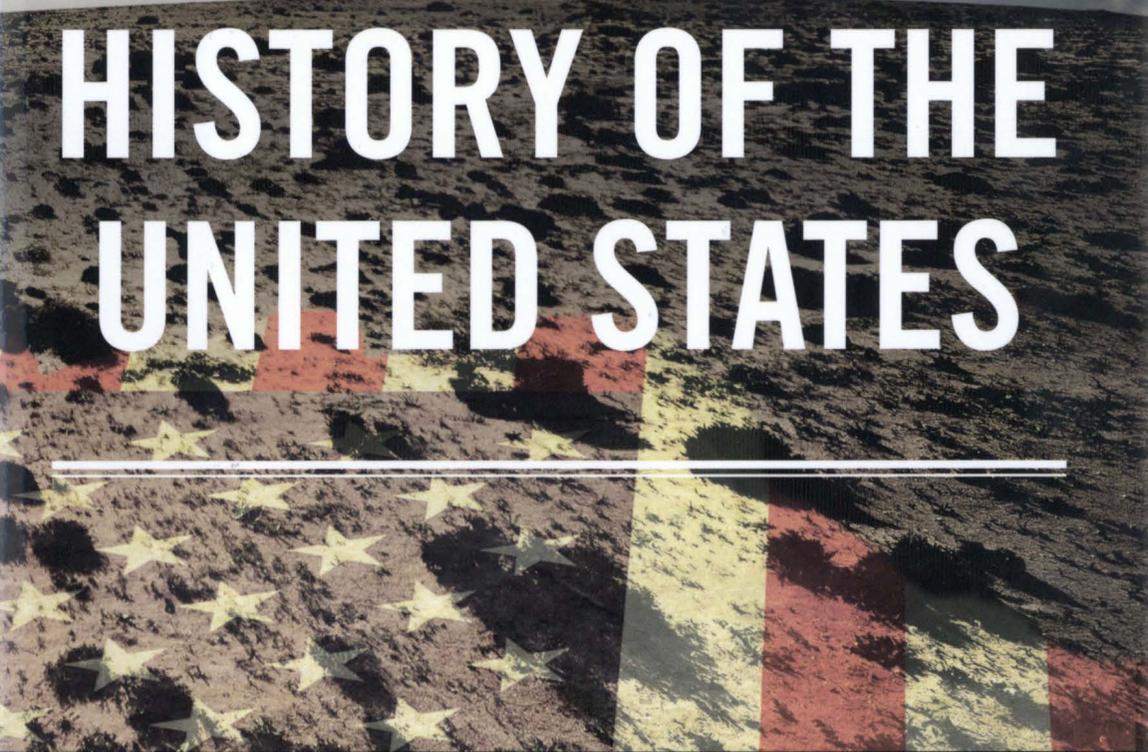


AN

**INDIGENOUS
PEOPLES'**

**HISTORY OF THE
UNITED STATES**



ROXANNE DUNBAR-ORTIZ

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GHOST DANCE PROPHECY

A NATION IS COMING

*The whole world is coming,
A nation is coming, a nation is coming,
The Eagle has brought the message to the tribe.*

—from the Lakota Ghost Dance song, “Maka’ Sito’maniyañ”

Little Wounded Knee is turned into a giant world.

—Wallace Black Elk, 1973

THE NEW FRONTIER

Seventy years after the Wounded Knee Massacre, when the conquest of the continent was said to have been complete, and with Hawai‘i and Alaska made into states, rounding out the fifty stars on today’s flag, the myth of an exceptional US American people destined to bring order out of chaos, to stimulate economic growth, and to replace savagery with civilization—not just in North America but throughout the world—proved to have enormous staying power.

A key to John F. Kennedy’s political success was that he revived the “frontier” as a trope of populist imperialism openly based on the drama and popular myth of “settling” the continent, of “taming” a different sort of “wilderness.” In Kennedy’s acceptance speech at the 1960 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, historian Richard Slotkin writes, the presidential nominee “asked his audience to see him as a new kind of frontiersman confronting a different sort of wilderness: ‘I stand tonight facing west on what was once

the last frontier. From the lands that stretch 3000 miles behind me, the pioneers of old gave up their safety, their comfort and sometimes their lives to build a new world here in the West. . . . We stand today on the edge of a new frontier . . . a frontier of unknown opportunities and paths, a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats.”¹

Kennedy’s use of “new frontier” to encapsulate his campaign echoed debates about US history that had begun more than six decades earlier. In 1894, historian Frederick Jackson Turner had presented his history-making “frontier thesis,” claiming that the crisis of that era was the result of the closing of the frontier and that a new frontier was needed to fill the ideological and spiritual vacuum created by the completion of settler colonialism. The “Turner Thesis” served as a dominant school of the history of the US West through most of the twentieth century. The frontier metaphor described Kennedy’s plan for employing political power to make the world the new frontier of the United States. Central to this vision was the Cold War, what Slotkin calls “a *heroic* engagement in the ‘long twilight struggle’” against communism, to which the nation was summoned, as Kennedy characterized it in his inaugural address. Soon after he took office, that struggle took the form of a counterinsurgency program in Vietnam. “Seven years after Kennedy’s nomination,” Slotkin reminds us, “American troops would be describing Vietnam as ‘Indian Country’ and search-and-destroy missions as a game of ‘Cowboys and Indians’; and Kennedy’s ambassador to Vietnam would justify a massive military escalation by citing the necessity of moving the ‘Indians’ away from the ‘fort’ so that the ‘settlers’ could plant ‘corn.’”²

The movement of Indigenous peoples to undo what generations of “frontier” expansionists had wrought continued during the Vietnam War era and won some major victories but more importantly a shift in consensus, will, and vision toward self-determination and land restitution, which prevails today. Activists’ efforts to end termination and secure restoration of land, particularly sacred sites, included Taos Pueblo’s sixty-four-year struggle with the US government to reclaim their sacred Blue Lake in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains of New Mexico. In the first land restitution to any Indigenous nation, President Richard M. Nixon signed into effect Public

Law 91-550 on December 15, 1970, which had been approved with bipartisan majorities in Congress. President Nixon stated, "This is a bill that represents justice, because in 1906 an injustice was done in which land involved in this bill—48,000 acres—was taken from the Taos Pueblo Indians. The Congress of the United States now returns that land to whom it belongs."³

In hearings held in the preceding years by the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Affairs, members expressed fear of establishing a precedent in awarding land—based on ancient use, treaties, or aboriginal ownership—rather than monetary payment. As one witness testifying in opposition to the return of Taos lands said, "The history of the land squabbles in New Mexico among various groups of people, including Indian-Americans and Spanish Americans, is well known. Substantially every acre of our public domain, be it national forest, state parks, or wilderness areas is threatened by claims from various groups who say they have some ancestral right to the land to the exclusion of all other persons . . . which can only be fostered and encouraged by the present legislation if passed."⁴

Although the Senate subcommittee members finally agreed to the Taos claim by satisfying themselves that it was unique, it did in fact set a precedent.⁵ The return of Blue Lake as a sacred site begs the question of whether other Indigenous sacred sites remaining as national or state parks or as US Forest Service or Bureau of Land Management lands and waterways should also be returned. Administration of the Grand Canyon National Park has been partially restored to its ancestral caretakers, the Havasupai Nation, but other federal lands have not. A few sites, such as the volcanic El Malpais, a sacred site for the Pueblo Indians, have been designated as national monuments by executive order rather than restored as Indigenous territory. The most prominent struggle has been the Lakota Sioux's attempt to restore the Paha Sapa, or Black Hills, where the odious Mount Rushmore carvings have scarred the sacred site. Called the "Shrine of Democracy" by the federal government, it is anything but that; rather it is a shrine of in-your-face illegal occupation and colonialism.

RESURGENCE

The return of Taos Blue Lake was not a gift from above. In addition to the six-decade struggle of Taos Pueblo, the restitution took place in the midst of a renewed powerful and growing Native American struggle for self-determination. The movement's energy was evident when twenty-six young Native activists and students founded the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) in 1961, based in Albuquerque, New Mexico. From twenty-one different Native nations, some from reservations or small towns and others from relocated families far from home, the founders included Gloria Emerson and Herb Blatchford (both Navajo), Clyde Warrior (Ponca from Oklahoma), Mel Thom (Paiute from Nevada), and Shirley Hill Witt (Mohawk). Cherokee anthropologist Robert K. Thomas mentored the militant young activists. Although primarily committed to local struggles, their vision was international. As Shirley Hill Witt put it: "At a time when new nations all over the globe are emerging from colonial control, their right to choose their own course places a vast burden of responsibility upon the most powerful nations to honor and protect those rights. . . . The Indians of the United States may well present the test case of American liberalism."⁶

In 1964, the NIYC organized support for the ongoing Indigenous struggle to protect treaty-guaranteed fishing rights in Washington State. Actor Marlon Brando took an interest and provided financial support and publicity. The "fish-in" movement soon put the tiny community at Frank's Landing in the headlines. Sid Mills was arrested there on October 13, 1968. Eloquently, he explained his actions:

I am a Yakima and Cherokee Indian, and a man. For two years and four months, I've been a soldier in the United States Army. I served in combat in Vietnam—until critically wounded. . . . I hereby renounce further obligation in service or duty to the United States Army.

My first obligation now lies with the Indian People fighting for the lawful Treaty to fish in usual and accustomed water of the Nisqually, Columbia and other rivers of the Pacific

Northwest, and in serving them in this fight in any way possible. . . .

Just three years ago today, on October 13, 1965, 19 women and children were brutalized by more than 45 armed agents of the State of Washington at Frank's Landing on the Nisqually river in a vicious, unwarranted attack. . . .

Interestingly, the oldest human skeletal remains ever found in the Western Hemisphere were recently uncovered on the banks of the Columbia River—the remains of Indian fishermen. What kind of government or society would spend millions of dollars to pick upon our bones, restore our ancestral life patterns, and protect our ancient remains from damage—while at the same time eating upon the flesh of our living People?

We will fight for our rights.⁷

Hank Adams with other local leaders founded the Survival of American Indians Association, which was composed of the Swinomish, Nisqually, Yakama, Puyallup, St. Illeguamish, and other Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest to carry on the fishing-rights struggle.⁸ The backlash from Anglo sport fishers was swift and violent, but in 1973 fourteen of the fishing nations sued Washington State, and, in a reflection of changed times, the following year US District Court Judge George Boldt found in their favor. He validated their right to 50 percent of fish taken “in the usual and accustomed places” that were designated in the 1850s treaties, even where those places were not under tribal control. This was a landmark decision for historical Indigenous sovereignty over territories outside designated reservation boundaries.

The NIYC saw itself as an engine for igniting local organizing, marshaling community organizing projects with access to funds from the Johnson administration's “War on Poverty,” the mandate of which was to implement the principles of economic and social equality intended by authors of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Interethnic alliances, including a significant representation of Native peoples, developed during the mid-1960s. These culminated in the 1968 Poor People's Campaign spearheaded by the Reverend Mar-

tin Luther King Jr., which consisted of community organizing and leading marches across the country. In the final month of campaign planning, Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968. Thousands of marchers arrived in Washington, DC, in the next month and gathered in a tent city, then remained there for six weeks.⁹

While local actions multiplied in Native communities and nations, the spectacular November 1969 seizure and eighteen-month occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay grabbed wide media attention. An alliance known as Indians of All Tribes was initiated by Native American students and community members living in the Bay Area. They built a thriving village on the island that drew Native pilgrimages from all over the continent, radicalizing thousands, especially Native youth. Indigenous women leaders were particularly impressive, among them Madonna Thunderhawk, LaNada Means War Jack, Rayna Ramirez, and many others who continued organizing into the twenty-first century. The Proclamation of the Indians of All Tribes expressed the level of Indigenous solidarity that was attained and the joyful good humor that ruled:

We, the Native Americans, reclaim the land known as Alcatraz Island in the name of all American Indians by right of discovery.

We wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land, and hereby offer the following treaty:

We will purchase said Alcatraz Island for twenty-four dollars (24) in glass beads and red cloth, a precedent set by the white man's purchase of a similar island about 300 years ago.

We will give to the inhabitants of this island a portion of the land for their own to be held in trust by the American Indians Government and by the bureau of Caucasian Affairs to hold in perpetuity—for as long as the sun shall rise and the rivers go down to the sea. We will further guide the inhabitants in the proper way of living. We will offer them our religion, our education, our life-ways, in order to help them achieve our level of civilization and thus raise them and all their white brothers up from their savage and unhappy state. . . .

Further, it would be fitting and symbolic that ships from all over the world, entering the Golden Gate, would first see Indian land, and thus be reminded of the true history of this nation. This tiny island would be a symbol of the great lands once ruled by free and noble Indians.¹⁰

Despite the satirical riff on the history of US colonialism, the group made serious demands for five institutions to be established on Alcatraz: a Center for Native American Studies; an American Indian Spiritual Center; an Indian Center of Ecology that would do scientific research on reversing pollution of water and air; a Great Indian Training School that would run a restaurant, provide job training, market Indigenous arts, and teach “the noble and tragic events of Indian history, including the Trail of Tears, and the Massacre of Wounded Knee”; and a memorial, a reminder that the island had been established as a prison initially to incarcerate and execute California Indian resisters to US assault on their nations.¹¹

Under orders from the Nixon White House, the Indigenous residents remaining on Alcatraz were forced to evacuate in June 1971. Indigenous professors Jack Forbes and David Risling, who were in the process of establishing a Native American studies program at the University of California, Davis, negotiated a grant from the federal government of unused land near Davis, where the institutions demanded by Alcatraz occupants could be established. A two-year Native-American-Chicano college and movement center, D-Q (Deganawidah-Quetzalcoatl) University, was founded, while UC Davis became the first US university to offer a doctorate in Native American studies.

During this period of intense protest and activism, alliances among Indigenous governments—including the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) led by young Sioux attorney Vine Deloria Jr.—turned militant demands into legislation. A year before the seizure of Alcatraz, Ojibwe activists Dennis Banks and Clyde Bellecourt founded the American Indian Movement (AIM), which initially patrolled the streets around Indigenous housing projects in Minneapolis.¹² Going national, AIM became involved at Alcatraz. With the rather bitter end of the island occupation, as Paul Smith and

Robert Warrior write: “The future of Indian activism would belong to people far angrier than the student brigades of Alcatraz. Urban Indians who managed a life beyond the bottles of cheap wine cruelly named Thunderbird would continue down the protest road.”¹³

With the Vietnam War still raging and the reelection of Richard Nixon in November 1972 imminent, a coalition of eight Indigenous organizations—AIM, the National Indian Brotherhood of Canada (later renamed Assembly of First Nations), the Native American Rights Fund, the National Indian Youth Council, the National American Indian Council, the National Council on Indian Work, National Indian Leadership Training, and the American Indian Committee on Alcohol and Drug Abuse—organized “The Trail of Broken Treaties.” Armed with a “20-Point Position Paper” that focused on the federal government’s responsibility to implement Indigenous treaties and sovereignty, caravans set out in the fall of 1972. The vehicles and numbers of participants multiplied at each stop, converging in Washington, DC, one week before the presidential election. Hanging a banner from the front of the Bureau of Indian Affairs building that proclaimed it to be the “Native American Embassy,” hundreds of protesters hailing from seventy-five Indigenous nations entered the building to sit in. BIA personnel, at the time largely non-Indigenous, fled, and the capitol police chain-locked the doors announcing that the Indigenous protesters were illegally occupying the building. The protesters stayed for six days, enough time for them to read damning federal documents that revealed gross mismanagement of the federal trust responsibility, which they boxed up and took with them. The Trail of Broken Treaties solidified Indigenous alliances, and the “20-Point Position Paper,”¹⁴ the work mainly of Hank Adams, provided a template for the affinity of hundreds of Native organizations. Five years later, in 1977, the document would be presented to the United Nations, forming the basis for the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Three months after the BIA building takeover, Oglala Lakota traditional people at the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation in South Dakota invited the American Indian Movement to assist them in halting collusion between their tribal government, formed under the terms of the Indian Reorganization Act, and the federal government

that had crushed the people and further impoverished them. The people opposed the increasingly authoritarian reign of the elected tribal chairman, Richard Wilson. They invited AIM to send a delegation to support them. On February 27, 1973, long deliberations took place in the Pine Ridge Calico Hall between the local people and AIM leaders, led by Russell Means, a citizen of Pine Ridge. The AIM activists were well known following the Trail of Broken Treaties Caravan, and upon AIM's arrival, the FBI, tribal police, and the chairman's armed special unit, the Guardians of the Oglala Nation (they called themselves "the GOON squad"), mobilized. The meeting ended with a consensus decision to go to Wounded Knee in a caravan to protest the chairman's misdeeds and the violence of his GOONs. The law enforcement contingent followed and circled the protesters. Over the following days, hundreds of more armed men surrounded Wounded Knee, and so began a two-and-a-half-month siege of protesters at the 1890 massacre site. The late-twentieth-century hamlet of Wounded Knee was made up of little more than a trading post, a Catholic church, and the mass grave of the hundreds of Lakotas slaughtered in 1890. Now armed personnel carriers, Huey helicopters, and military snipers surrounded the site, while supply teams of mostly Lakota women made their way through the military lines and back out again through dark of night.

WOUNDED KNEE 1890 AND 1973

The period between the "closing of the frontier," marked by the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre, and the 1973 siege of Wounded Knee, which marks the beginning of Indigenous decolonization in North America, is illuminated by following the historical experience of the Sioux. The first international relationship between the Sioux Nation and the US government was established in 1805 with a treaty of peace and friendship two years after the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory, which included the Sioux Nation among many other Indigenous nations. Other such treaties followed in 1815 and 1825. These peace treaties had no immediate effect on Sioux political autonomy or territory. By 1834, competition in the fur trade,

with the market dominated by the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, led the Oglala Sioux to move away from the Upper Missouri to the Upper Platte near Fort Laramie. By 1846, seven thousand Sioux had moved south. Thomas Fitzpatrick, the Indian agent in 1846, recommended that the United States purchase land to establish a fort, which became Fort Laramie. "My opinion," Fitzpatrick wrote, "is that a post at, or in the vicinity of Laramie is much wanted, it would be nearly in the center of the buffalo range, where all the formidable Indian tribes are fast approaching, and near where there will eventually be a struggle for the ascendancy [in the fur trade]."¹⁵ Fitzpatrick believed that a garrison of at least three hundred soldiers would be necessary to keep the Indians under control.

Although the Sioux and the United States redefined their relationship in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, this was followed by a decade of war between the two parties, ending with the Peace Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868. Both of these treaties, though not reducing Sioux political sovereignty, ceded large parts of Sioux territory by establishing mutually recognized boundaries, and the Sioux granted concessions to the United States that gave legal color to the Sioux's increasing economic dependency on the United States and its economy. During the half century before the 1851 treaty, the Sioux had been gradually enveloped in the fur trade and had become dependent on horses and European-manufactured guns, ammunition, iron cookware, tools, textiles, and other items of trade that replaced their traditional crafts. On the plains the Sioux gradually abandoned farming and turned entirely to bison hunting for their subsistence and for trade. This increased dependency on the buffalo in turn brought deeper dependency on guns and ammunition that had to be purchased with more hides, creating the vicious circle that characterized modern colonialism. With the balance of power tipped by mid-century, US traders and the military exerted pressure on the Sioux for land cessions and rights of way as the buffalo population decreased. The hardships for the Sioux caused by constant attacks on their villages, forced movement, and resultant disease and starvation took a toll on their strength to resist domination. They entered into the 1868 treaty with the United States on strong terms from a military standpoint—the Sioux remained an effective

guerrilla fighting force through the 1880s, never defeated by the US army—but their dependency on buffalo and on trade allowed for escalated federal control when buffalo were purposely exterminated by the army between 1870 and 1876. After that the Sioux were fighting for survival.

Economic dependency on buffalo and trade was replaced with survival dependency on the US government for rations and commodities guaranteed in the 1868 treaty. The agreement stipulated that “no treaty for the cession of any portion or part of the reservation herein described which may be held in common shall be of any validation or force against the said Indians, unless executed and signed by at least three fourths of all the adult male Indians.” Nevertheless, in 1876, with no such validation, and with the discovery of gold by Custer’s Seventh Cavalry, the US government seized the Black Hills—Paha Sapa—a large, resource-rich portion of the treaty-guaranteed Sioux territory, the center of the great Sioux Nation, a religious shrine and sanctuary. When the Sioux surrendered after the wars of 1876–77, they lost not only the Black Hills but also the Powder River country. The next US move was to change the western boundary of the Sioux Nation, whose territory, though atrophied from its original, was a contiguous block. By 1877, after the army drove the Sioux out of Nebraska, all that was left was a block between the 103rd meridian and the Missouri, thirty-five thousand square miles of land the United States had designated as Dakota Territory (the next step toward statehood, in this case the states of North and South Dakota). The first of several waves of northern European immigrants now poured into eastern Dakota Territory, pressing against the Missouri River boundary of the Sioux. At the Anglo-American settlement of Bismarck on the Missouri, the westward-pushing Northern Pacific Railroad was blocked by the reservation. Settlers bound for Montana and the Pacific Northwest called for trails to be blazed and defended across the reservation. Promoters who wanted cheap land to sell at high prices to immigrants schemed to break up the reservation. Except for the Sioux units that continued to fight, the majority of the Sioux people were unarmed, had no horses, and were unable even to feed and clothe themselves, dependent upon government rations.

Next came allotment. Before the Dawes Act was even implemented, a government commission arrived in Sioux territory from Washington, DC, in 1888 with a proposal to reduce the Sioux Nation to six small reservations, a scheme that would leave nine million acres open for Euro-American settlement. The commission found it impossible to obtain signatures of the required three-fourths of the nation as required under the 1868 treaty, and so returned to Washington with a recommendation that the government ignore the treaty and take the land without Sioux consent. The only means to accomplish that goal was legislation, Congress having relieved the government of the obligation to negotiate a treaty. Congress commissioned General George Crook to head a delegation to try again, this time with an offer of \$1.50 per acre. In a series of manipulations and dealings with leaders whose people were now starving, the commission garnered the needed signatures. The great Sioux Nation was broken into small islands soon surrounded on all sides by European immigrants, with much of the reservation land a checkerboard with settlers on allotments or leased land.¹⁶ Creating these isolated reservations broke the historical relationships between clans and communities of the Sioux Nation and opened areas where Europeans settled. It also allowed the Bureau of Indian Affairs to exercise tighter control, buttressed by the bureau's boarding school system. The Sun Dance, the annual ceremony that had brought Sioux together and reinforced national unity, was outlawed, along with other religious ceremonies. Despite the Sioux people's weak position under late-nineteenth-century colonial domination, they managed to begin building a modest cattle-ranching business to replace their former bison-hunting economy. In 1903, the US Supreme Court ruled, in *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock*, that a March 3, 1871, appropriations rider was constitutional and that Congress had "plenary" power to manage Indian property. The Office of Indian Affairs could thus dispose of Indian lands and resources regardless of the terms of previous treaty provisions. Legislation followed that opened the reservations to settlement through leasing and even sale of allotments taken out of trust. Nearly all prime grazing lands came to be occupied by non-Indian ranchers by the 1920s.

By the time of the New Deal–Collier era and nullification of

Indian land allotment under the Indian Reorganization Act, non-Indians outnumbered Indians on the Sioux reservations three to one. However, the drought of the mid- to late-1930s drove many settler ranchers off Sioux land, and the Sioux purchased some of that land, which had been theirs. However, “tribal governments” imposed in the wake of the Indian Reorganization Act proved particularly harmful and divisive for the Sioux.¹⁷ Concerning this measure, the late Mathew King, elder traditional historian of the Oglala Sioux (Pine Ridge), observed: “The Bureau of Indian Affairs drew up the constitution and by-laws of this organization with the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. This was the introduction of home rule. . . . The traditional people still hang on to their Treaty, for we are a sovereign nation. We have our own government.”¹⁸ “Home rule,” or neocolonialism, proved a short-lived policy, however, for in the early 1950s the United States developed its termination policy, with legislation ordering gradual eradication of every reservation and even the tribal governments.¹⁹ At the time of termination and relocation, per capita annual income on the Sioux reservations stood at \$355, while that in nearby South Dakota towns was \$2,500. Despite these circumstances, in pursuing its termination policy, the Bureau of Indian Affairs advocated the reduction of services and introduced its program to relocate Indians to urban industrial centers, with a high percentage of Sioux moving to San Francisco and Denver in search of jobs.²⁰

Mathew King has described the United States throughout its history as alternating between a “peace” policy and a “war” policy in its relations with Indigenous nations and communities, saying that these pendulum swings coincided with the strength and weakness of Native resistance. Between the alternatives of extermination and termination (war policies) and preservation (peace policy), King argued, were interim periods characterized by benign neglect and assimilation. With organized Indigenous resistance to war programs and policies, concessions are granted. When pressure lightens, new schemes are developed to separate Indians from their land, resources, and cultures. Scholars, politicians, policymakers, and the media rarely term US policy toward Indigenous peoples as colonial-

ism. King, however, believed that his people's country had been a colony of the United States since 1890.

The logical progression of modern colonialism begins with economic penetration and graduates to a sphere of influence, then to protectorate status or indirect control, military occupation, and finally annexation. This corresponds to the process experienced by the Sioux people in relation to the United States. The economic penetration of fur traders brought the Sioux within the US sphere of influence. The transformation of Fort Laramie from a trading post, the center of Sioux trade, to a US Army outpost in the mid-nineteenth century indicates the integral relationship between trade and colonial control. Growing protectorate status established through treaties culminated in the 1868 Sioux treaty, followed by military occupation achieved by extreme exemplary violence, such as at Wounded Knee in 1890, and finally dependency. Annexation by the United States is marked symbolically by the imposition of US citizenship on the Sioux (and most other Indians) in 1924. Mathew King and other traditional Sioux saw the siege of Wounded Knee in 1973 as a turning point, although the violent backlash that followed was harsh.

Two decades of collective Indigenous resistance culminating at Wounded Knee in 1973 defeated the 1950s federal termination policy. Yet proponents of the disappearance of Indigenous nations seem never to tire of trying. Another move toward termination developed in 1977 with dozens of congressional bills to abrogate all Indian treaties and terminate all Indian governments and trust territories. Indigenous resistance defeated those initiatives as well, with another caravan across the country. Like colonized peoples elsewhere in the world, the Sioux have been involved in decolonization efforts since the mid-twentieth century. Wounded Knee in 1973 was part of this struggle, as was their involvement in UN committees and international forums.²¹ However, in the early twenty-first century, free-market fundamentalist economists and politicians identified the communally owned Indigenous reservation lands as an asset to be exploited and, under the guise of helping to end Indigenous poverty on those reservations, call for doing away with them—a new extermination and termination initiative.

"INDIAN WARS" AS A TEMPLATE FOR
THE UNITED STATES IN THE WORLD

The integral link between Wounded Knee in 1890 and Wounded Knee in 1973 suggests a long-overdue reinterpretation of Indigenous-US relations as a template for US imperialism and counterinsurgency wars. As Vietnam veteran and author Michael Herr observed, we "might as well say that Vietnam was where the Trail of Tears was headed all along, the turnaround point where it would touch and come back to form a containing perimeter."²² Seminole Nation Vietnam War veteran Evan Haney made the comparison in testifying at the Winter Soldier Investigations: "The same massacres happened to the Indians. . . . I got to know the Vietnamese people and I learned they were just like us. . . . I have grown up with racism all my life. When I was a child, watching cowboys and Indians on TV, I would root for the cavalry, not the Indians. It was that bad. I was that far toward my own destruction."²³

As it happened, the fifth anniversary of the My Lai massacre in Vietnam occurred at the time of the 1973 siege of Wounded Knee. It was difficult to miss the analogy between the 1890 Wounded Knee massacre and My Lai, 1968. Alongside the front-page news and photographs of the Wounded Knee siege that was taking place in real time were features with photos of the scene of mutilation and death at My Lai. Lieutenant William "Rusty" Calley was then serving his twenty-year sentence under house arrest in luxurious officers' quarters at Fort Benning, Georgia, near his hometown. Yet he remained a national hero who received hundreds of support letters weekly, who was lauded by some as a POW being held by the US military. One of Calley's most ardent defenders was Jimmy Carter, then governor of Georgia. In 1974, President Richard Nixon would pardon Calley. One of the documented acts, among many, that Calley committed and ordered others to carry out at My Lai took place when he saw a baby crawling from a ditch filled with mutilated, bloody bodies. He picked the baby up by a leg, threw the infant back into the pit, and then shot the baby point-blank. My Lai was one of thousands of such slaughters led by officers just like Calley, who a few weeks before My Lai had been observed throwing

a stooped old man down a well and firing his automatic rifle down the shaft.

The ongoing siege at Wounded Knee in 1973 elicited some rare journalistic probing into the 1890 army massacre. In 1970, university librarian Dee Brown had written the book *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, which documented and told the 1890 Wounded Knee story, among many other such nineteenth-century anti-Indian crimes and tragedies. The book was a surprise best seller, so the name Wounded Knee resonated with a broad public by 1973. On the front page of one newspaper, editors placed two photographs side by side, each of a pile of bloody, mutilated bodies in a ditch. One was from My Lai in 1968, the other from the Wounded Knee army massacre of the Lakota in 1890. Had they not been captioned, it would have been impossible to tell the difference in time and place.

During the first US military invasion of Iraq, a gesture intended to obliterate the “Vietnam Syndrome,” on February 19, 1991, Brigadier General Richard Neal, briefing reporters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, stated that the US military wanted to ensure a speedy victory once it committed land forces to “Indian Country.” The following day, in a little-publicized statement of protest, the National Congress of American Indians pointed out that fifteen thousand Native Americans were serving as combat troops in the Persian Gulf. As we have seen, the term “Indian Country” is not merely an insensitive racial slur to indicate the enemy, tastelessly employed by accident. Neither Neal nor any other military authority apologized for the statement, and it continues to be used by the military and the media, usually in its shortened form, “In Country,” which originated in the Vietnam War. “Indian Country” and “In Country” are military terms of trade, like other euphemisms such as “collateral damage” (killing civilians) and “ordnance” (bombs) that appear in military training manuals and are used regularly. “Indian Country” and “In Country” mean “behind enemy lines.” Its current use should serve to remind us of the origins and development of the US military, as well as the nature of our political and social history: annihilation unto unconditional surrender.

When the redundant “ground war,” more appropriately tagged a “turkey shoot,” was launched, at the front of the miles of killing

machines were armored scouting vehicles of the Second Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), a self-contained elite unit that won fame during World War II when it headed General Patton's Third Army crossing Europe. In the Gulf War, the Second ACR played the role of chief scouts for the US Seventh Corps. A retired ACR commander proudly told a television interviewer that the Second ACR had been formed in the 1830s to fight the Seminoles, and that it had its first great victory when it finally defeated those Indians in the Florida Everglades in 1836. The Second ACR in the vanguard of the ground assault on Iraq thus symbolized the continuity of US war victories and the source of the nation's militarism: the Iraq War was just another Indian war in the US military tradition. After weeks of high-tech bombing in Iraq followed by a caravan of armored tanks shooting everything that moved, the US Special Forces entered Iraqi officers' quarters in Kuwait City. There they found carrier pigeons in cages and notes in Arabic strewn over a desk, which they interpreted to mean that the Iraqi commanders were communicating with their troops, and even with Baghdad, using the carrier pigeons. High-tech soldiers had been fighting an army that communicated by carrier pigeon—as Shawnees and Muskogees had done two centuries earlier.

Twelve years after the Gulf War, a US military force of three hundred thousand invaded Iraq again. A little-read report from Associated Press correspondent Ellen Knickmeyer illustrates the symbolic power of Indian wars as a source of US military memory and practice. Once again we find the armored scouting vehicles and their troops retracing historical bloody footprints as they perform their "Seminole Indian war dance":

Capt. Phillip Wolford's men leaped into the air and waved empty rifles in an impromptu desert war dance. . . .

With thousands of M1A1 Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, Humvees and trucks, the mechanized infantry unit known as the "Iron Fist" would be the only U.S. armored division in the fight, and would likely meet any Iraqi defenses head on.

"We will be entering Iraq as an army of liberation, not

domination,” said Wolford, of Marysville, Ohio, directing the men of his 4th Battalion, 64th Armor Regiment to take down the U.S. flags fluttering from their sand-colored tanks.

After a brief prayer, Wolford leaped into an impromptu desert war dance. Camouflaged soldiers joined him, jumping up and down in the sand, chanting and brandishing rifles carefully emptied of their rounds.²⁴

HISTORY NOT PAST

In April 2007, all the news seemed to be coming from Virginia and was about murder—the murder of Indigenous farmers that commenced four hundred years before with the founding of Jamestown and the rampage at nearby Virginia Tech University on April 16, 2007. Yet no one commented in the media on the juxtaposition of these bookends of colonialism. Jamestown was famously the first permanent settlement that gave birth to the Commonwealth of Virginia, the colonial epicenter of what became the United States of America nearly two centuries later, the colony out of which was carved the US capital, Washington, on the river whose mouth lay up the coast. A few years after Jamestown was established, the more familiar and revered colony of Plymouth was planted by English religious dissidents, under the auspices of private investors with royal approval, as with Jamestown, and the same mercenary activities personified by Captain John Smith. This was the beginning of British overseas colonialism, after the conquest and colonization of Scotland, Wales, and Ireland turned England into Great Britain. The Virginia Tech killings were described in 2007 as the worst “mass killing,” the “worst massacre,” in US history. Descendants of massacred Indigenous ancestors took exception to that designation. It was curious with the media circus surrounding the Jamestown celebration, and with Queen Elizabeth and President Bush presiding, that journalists failed to compare the colonial massacres of Powhatans four centuries earlier and the single, disturbed individual’s shootings of his classmates. The shooter himself was a child of colonial war, the US war in Korea.

Meditating on the five major US wars since World War II—in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq (1991), Afghanistan, and Iraq (2003)—with flashes of historical memory of Jamestown, the Ohio Valley, and Wounded Knee, brings us to the essence of US history. A red thread of blood connects the first white settlement in North America with today and the future. As military historian John Grenier puts it:

U.S. people are taught that their military culture does not approve of or encourage targeting and killing civilians and know little or nothing about the nearly three centuries of warfare—before and after the founding of the U.S.—that reduced the Indigenous peoples of the continent to a few reservations by burning their towns and fields and killing civilians, driving the refugees out—step by step—across the continent. . . . [V]iolence directed systematically against noncombatants through irregular means, from the start, has been a central part of Americans' way of war.²⁵

23. See Drinnon, *Keeper of Concentration Camps*. Some of the Japanese concentration camps were built on Native reservations.
24. Myer quoted in *ibid.*, 235.
25. See Cobb, *Native Activism in Cold War America*.
26. House Concurrent Resolution 108, 1953, *Digital History*, http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/dispatch_textbook.cfm?smtid=3&psid=726 (accessed October 1, 2013). See also Getches, Wilkinson, and Williams, *Cases and Materials on Federal Indian Law*; Wilkinson, *Blood Struggle*. For a survey of federal Indian policy, see O'Brien, *American Indian Tribal Governments*, 84–85.
27. See Zinn, *People's History of the United States*, 420–28.
28. Kinzer, *Overthrow*, 111–47.

CHAPTER TEN: GHOST DANCE PROPHECY

Epigraph 1: “Sioux Ghost Dance Song Lyrics,” documented and translated by James Mooney in 1894, *Ghost Dance*, <http://www.ghostdance.com/songs/songs-lyricssioux.html> (accessed December 10, 2013).

Epigraph 2: Quoted in Zinn, *People's History of the United States*, 525.

1. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 1–2.
2. *Ibid.*, 3.
3. “Blue Lake,” *Taos Pueblo*, <http://www.taospueblo.com/blue-lake> (accessed October 2, 2013).
4. From the statement of James E. Snead, president of the Santa Fe Wildlife and Conservation Association, “Taos Indians—Blue Lake,” in “Hearings before the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, U.S. Senate, 91st Congress, 2nd Session (September 19–20, 1968),” in *Primitive Law—United States Congressional Documents*, vol. 9, pt. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), 216.
5. For the senators’ arguments against the return of Blue Lake, see “Pueblo de Taos Indians Cultural and Ceremonial Shrine Protection Act of 1970,” *Proceedings and Debates of the 91st Congress, 2nd Session (December 2, 1970)*, *Congressional Record* 116, pt. 29, 39, 587, 589–90, 594. Nielson, “American Indian Land Claims,” 324. The senators on the subcommittee were concerned about the Alianza Federal de Mercedes (later renamed the Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres), formed in 1963 to pressure the federal government for reconsideration of land-grant settlements and the loss of the commons. The organization claimed that colonialism had robbed resources, depopulated communities in northern New Mexico, and impoverished the people. The Alianza was composed of many poor land-grant heirs and was identified primarily with a Texas-born Mexican, Reies López Tijerina. In June 1967, the National Guard was dispatched with tanks, helicopters, and infantry to Rio Arriba County in search of the agrarian Mexican rebels who had participated in the “Courthouse Raid” at Tierra Amarilla.

The incident and the government's response briefly focused national and international attention on northern New Mexico, and the land-grant issue, which had been resolved in the courts over sixty years before, once again became a live issue.

Several federal Spanish and Mexican land-grant cases have been brought in federal courts, one to the Supreme Court in 1952 that was denied a hearing: *Martínez v. Rivera*, 196 Fed. 2nd 192 (Circuit Court of Appeals, 10th Circuit, April 16, 1952). In 2001, following more than a century of struggle by Hispanic land grantees who were deprived of most of their landholdings after the United States occupied New Mexico in 1848, the US General Accounting Office began a study of the New Mexico land grants. The GAO issued its final report in 2004, but no action has yet ensued. US General Accounting Office, *Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*.

6. Cobb, *Native American Activism in Cold War America*, 58–61. For a full history of the NIYC, which still thrives, see Shreve, *Red Power Rising*.
7. Quoted in Zinn, *People's History of the United States*, 516–17.
8. Cobb, *Native American Activism in Cold War America*, 157.
9. Mantler, *Power of the Poor*.
10. Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 28–29.
11. *Ibid.*, 29–30.
12. On the founding of the American Indian Movement, see *ibid.*, 114–15, and Waterman and Bancroft, *We Are Still Here*.
13. Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 111.
14. “Trail of Broken Treaties 20-Point Position Paper,” *American Indian Movement*, <http://www.aimovement.org/ggc/trailofbrokentreaties.html> (accessed December 10, 2013).
15. Robert A. Trennert, *Alternative to Extinction: Federal Indian Policy and the Beginnings of the Reservation System, 1846–51* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1975), 166.
16. See testimony of Pat McLaughlin, chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux government, Fort Yates, ND (May 8, 1976), at hearings of the American Indian Policy Review Commission, established by Congress in the act of January 3, 1975.
17. See Philip, *John Collier's Crusade for Indian Reform*.
18. King quoted in Dunbar-Ortiz, *The Great Sioux Nation*, 156.
19. For a lucid discussion of neocolonialism in relation to American Indians and the reservation system, see Jorgensen, *Sun Dance Religion*, 89–146.
20. There is continuous migration from reservations to cities and border towns and back to the reservations, so that half the Indian population at any time is away from the reservation. Generally, however, relocation is not permanent and resembles migratory labor more than permanent relocation. This conclusion is based on my personal observations and on unpublished studies of the Indigenous populations in the San Francisco Bay area and Los Angeles.

21. The American Indian Movement convened a meeting in June 1974 that founded the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), receiving consultative status in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in February 1977. The IITC participated in the UN Conference on Desertification in Buenos Aires, March 1977, and made presentations to the UN Human Rights Commission in August 1977 and in February and August 1978. It also led the organizing for the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Conference on Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, held at UN headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, in September 1977; participated in the World Conference on Racism in Basel, Switzerland, in May 1978; and participated in establishing the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. See Echo-Hawk, *In The Light of Justice*; see also Deloria, *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties*.
22. Herr, *Dispatches*, 45.
23. Zinn, *People's History of the United States*, 521.
24. Ellen Knickmeyer, "Troops Have Pre-Combat Meal, War Dance," Associated Press, March 19, 2003, http://www.myplainview.com/article_9c595368-42db-50b3-9647-a8d4486bff28.html.
25. Grenier, *First Way of War*, 223–24.

CHAPTER 11: THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

Epigraph 1: McNickle, *The Surrounded*, 49.

Epigraph 2: Vizenor, "Constitutional Consent," 11.

1. The author was present at the proceedings.
2. See Watson, *Buying America from the Indians*; and Robertson, *Conquest by Law*.
3. Miller, "International Law of Colonialism." See also Deloria, *Of Utmost Good Faith*, 6–39; Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land*.
4. Eleventh Session, United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, <http://social.un.org/index/IndigenousPeoples/UNPFIIISessions/Eleventh.aspx> (accessed October 3, 2013).
5. "International: Quakers Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery," August 17, 2012, Indigenous Peoples Issues and Resources, <http://indigenouspeoplesissues.com/> (accessed October 3, 2013). See also "The Doctrine of Discovery," <http://www.doctrineofdiscovery.org/> (accessed October 3, 2013).
6. "The Doctrine of Discovery: 2012 Responsive Resolution," Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, <http://www.uua.org/statements/statements/209123.shtml> (accessed October 3, 2013).
7. Vincent Warren, "Government Calls Native American Resistance of 1800s 'Much Like Modern-Day Al-Qaeda,'" *Truthout*, April 11, 2011, <http://truth-out.org/news/item/330-government-calls-native-american-resistance-of-1800s-much-like-modern-day-alqaeda> (accessed October 3, 2013).