CHAPTER 1

NATIVE AMERICAN ACTIVISM: EFFORTS AT THE RECOVERY OF SOVEREIGNTY, LAND, AND CULTURAL FREEDOM

When the Baby Keetso custody battle came to the public's attention in the Spring of 1988, few people realized that the questions raised by the case were neither unusual nor unprecedented. The child, a Navaho infant, was hardly the first Indian to be adopted illegally by a white couple (in this case, the Keetsos of San Jose); a 1984 survey of California social services found that eighty percent of Indian baby placements violated the Indian Child Welfare Act. Passed by Congress in 1978, the law requires that an Indian child's tribe be notified before the child is placed in a non-Indian home. Irrespective of compliance with the law, today one in three Indian babies is "adopted out"--out of the family and out of the tribe. [1]

As in the Baby Keetso case, arguments for and against white adoptions of Indian babies reveal the basic cultural differences between white and Indian value systems. Both sides advocate a fundamental concern for the welfare of the child, yet their criteria for measuring (and predicting) welfare differ greatly. The white social welfare system

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1. Joan Smith, "Young Once, Indian Forever," <u>San Francisco Examiner Image</u>, July 3, 1988, 5.

places a premium on material security and uses basic economic considerations to justify most Indian child removals from reservation and urban settings. But for Indians, "keeping the children is a matter of both tribal and individual survival." [2] Most social workers fail to appreciate the importance of the extended family in tribal culture and tend to underestimate the value of this aspect of home life. This ongoing disruption of Indian family life threatens tribal identity as well.

LIVING IN THE FOURTH WORLD

The debate over Indian adoptions touches on even deeper questions about the nature and quality of life in Native America today. Plagued by high unemployment, economic stagnation, and rampant substance abuse, many Indian reservations constitute rural ghettos, with living conditions that would normally be considered characteristic of a Third World nation. But rather than describe much of Native America in Third World terms, it is more appropriate to refer to Indians and Indian tribes as part of the Fourth World. [3] The term "Fourth World" has been used variously to refer to the poorest segment of the Third World, to minority/oppressed peoples in general, and even to the

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2. Ibid., 7.

3. George Manuel and Michael Posluns, The Fourth World: An Indian Reality (New York: Free Press, 1974).

regions of the Arctic. But in 1980 at a United Nations conference in Sweden, Indian leaders realized that

> their closest allies were such people as the Sami nomads from Lapland, the people of Brittany who claimed independence from France, the Basques who claimed independence from Spain, and other land-based people. It was here that the term 'Fourth World,' or global network of indigenous peoples, was coined. [4]

The worldwide resurgence of regionalized nationalist activism has also been called "devolutionism," a movement toward decentralized political and social authority. [5] Thus, Native American activism--efforts at the recovery of land, sovereignty, and cultural freedom--constitutes just one dimension of the worldwide movement of currently unrecognized and unfulfilled nationalities.

While making up only one percent of the population of the United States, Native Americans and Alaskans comprise six percent of the country's poor and thirteen percent of the unemployed; eighty percent of the Indian population lives below the poverty line. [6] At Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where the average annual income

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4. Rex Weyler, Blood of the Land: The Government and Corporate War Against the American Indian Movement (New York: Everest House Publishers, 1982), 213.

5. See Thomas S. Martin, "Devolutionism: The new nationalist movements transforming the world," Utne Reader, no. 30 (November/December 1988), 78-83.

6. George E. Tinker, "Does 'All People' Include Native Peoples?" in God, Goods, and the Common Good: Eleven Perspectives on Economic Justice in Dialog with the Roman Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter, ed. Charles P. Lutz (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1987), 125-6.

is around $2800, "nearly everyone . . . lives on welfare, supplemented by free food through a government commodities program." [7] Virtually all available jobs are financed by federal funds (through the tribal council, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Indian Health Service), and in some cases these are parcelled out on the basis of nepotism. Some estimates place the alcoholism rate at more than eighty percent, with an average life expectancy of forty-seven. One of the leading causes of death is cirrhosis of the liver. [8] Though conditions are not this severe at all reservations, Pine Ridge can certainly be considered as representative of the current state of many. Unfortunately, this phenomenon is not a new one; one scholar has commented that the problems cited by Indian activists in the 1930's, prior to the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act in 1934, are still with us. "Those among them who are still alive could be--and, in fact, often are--saying today just what they said in the 1930's." [9]

Native American activism has been and will continue to be motivated by the will to survive as a people, materially, culturally, and spiritually. The achievement of increasing

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7. Bella Stumbo, "A World Apart," Los Angeles Times Magazine, June 15, 1986, 16.

8. Ibid.

9. E. Richard Hart in Indian Self-Rule: First-hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan, ed. Kenneth R. Philp (Salt Lake City: Institute of the American West, 1986), 4.

degrees of sovereignty will eventually lead to the restoration of traditional lands; together, sovereignty and land will provide the governmental and material autonomy necessary to support cultural freedom. But beneath the pressing need to transform social reality lies an even more fundamental question facing Native Americans: What does it mean to be an Indian in the midst of white America? In some ways, the key issue facing Native Americans has more to do with identity than with prosperity.

NATIVE AMERICAN ACTIVISM

Sometime in the late 1960's white America rediscovered this continent's original inhabitants. After nearly 500 years of conquest, colonization, and assimilation, many Americans were surprised to learn that there were still individuals and groups able and willing to call themselves Indians. These Indians were different somehow from Indians that had been encountered in the past, particularly in their ability "to communicate with non-Indians so that the latter will listen and understand." [10] And so they were called

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10. Alvin M. Josephy, Jr. (ed.), Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1971), 5.

"the new Indians" [11], even though the phrase had already been used some sixty years earlier. [12].

But "Indians did not discover they were Indians in the early 1970's. We were not reborn; we were simply noticed." [13] Although what came to be known as the Red Power movement did address important issues in ways that were at times novel, the activism of the last twenty-five years stands in continuity with a long history of political, military, and religious resistance to colonial and U.S. encroachment.

Only twenty-two years after the Pilgrims founded Plymouth Colony in 1620, Miantunnomoh, a Narragansett, was enlisting the aid of an old enemy in resisting the intruders:

> Brothers, we must be one as the English are, or we shall all be destroyed. You know our fathers had plenty of deer and skins and our plains were full of game and turkeys, and our coves and rivers were full of fish.
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> But, brothers, since these Englishmen have seized our country, they have cut down the grass with scythes, and the trees with axes. Their cows and horses eat up the grass, and their hogs spoil our bed of clams; and finally we shall starve to death; therefore, stand not in your own light, I ask you, but resolve to act like men. All the sachems both to the east and the west have

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11. Stan Steiner, The New Indians (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), xii.

12. It was used by Professor Fayette McKensie, a white reformer and activist, in 1906. See Hazel W. Hertzberg, The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), 33.

13. Philip S. Deloria, "The Era of Indian Self-Determination: An Overview," in Philp, 204.

> joined with us, we are resolved to fall upon them, at a day appointed, ... [14]

Two centuries later, the Cherokee Nation fought their forced removal by bringing suit against the state of Georgia. Refused protection by the federal government, all but a few were marched to Indian Territory in what came to be known as the Trail of Tears. In short,

> . . . the new Indian politics is part of an old Indian struggle. It is the resurgent phase of a diffuse, fragmented movement of Indian resistance, a movement that has continued in one form or another for generations. [15]

Incorporation and Response

One way to interpret the varied history of Native American activism is to consider the ways in which Euro-American society has attempted to incorporate Indians into its economic and political structures and the ways Indians have responded. It is possible to identify at least six major periods of Indian-white interaction, as Stephen Cornell has shown. [16] Figure 1 summarizes each period's distinguishing pattern of incorporation and response.

Of course, 500 years of Indian-white relations involving several colonial powers and several hundred Indian

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14. Virginia Irving Armstrong (ed.), I Have Spoken: American History Through the Voices of the Indians (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 3-4.

15. Stephen Cornell, The Return of the Native: American Indian Political Resurgence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 6.

16. Ibid., 11-15.

FIGURE 1: PATTERNS OF INCORPORATION AND RESPONSE*

Period	Economic Incorporation	Political Incorporation	Response
Market (c. mid-16th to late 18th centuries)	Voluntary integration into fur markets based on Indian labor and consumption	Competitive European politics; substantial Indian autonomy; alliance	Diplomacy; some armed resistance
Conflict (c. late 18th to late 19th centuries)	Forced expropriation of Indian lands; exclusion of Indians from larger economy; little demand for Indian labor	American hegemony; increasingly restrictive treaty relations	Armed resistance; negotiation under stress
Reservation (c. late 19th century to 1930s)	Continued land loss through allotment; welfare dependency; eventually declining demand for Indian resources	Comprehensive U.S. administrative control of reservations; forced assimilation; citizenship	Secular intergroup politics sporadic at best; growth of religious movements
IRA (1930s to late 1940s)	Efforts to stabilize land base and develop reservation economies; support for reservation communities	Establishment of federally sponsored tribal governments; political support	Increased political participation through tribal governments; some supratribal activity
Termination (late 1940s to early 1960s)	Some demand for Indian lands; federal promotion of urban migration; withdrawal of support for reservations	New assault on tribal sovereignty; some states gain jurisdiction over Indian lands; imposed assimilation	Growth of supratribal politics; new constituencies appearing; opposition to termination
Contemporary (1960s to present)	Resurgent demands for Indian economic resources; major efforts to develop reservation economies; increased labor integration	"Self-determination" for Indian tribes; support for tribal governments; repression of radicals	Rapid growth in political activity of all kinds; eventual decline of radical activism

*Excerpted from Cornell, 12.

nations can hardly be recounted in such a simplified schema. Some tribes did not contact white culture during all six periods; some did not respond the same way other tribes did. The important thing here is to be aware of the dominant features in the patterns of incorporation and response and to realize that, despite the uniqueness of Indian tribes, Native Americans do in many ways share a common history. Whether through diplomacy and armed struggle in the eighteenth century or religious renewal in the twentieth, Native Americans have always resisted the attempts of Euro-Americans to expropriate land, restrict cultural freedom, and incorporate individual Indians into white society.

Tribalism and Pan-Indianism

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Native American activism was largely tribal (addressing specific issues facing a certain tribe), with little of what would now be called a pan-Indian orientation. Several organized national movements arose during the Progressive Era, most notably the Society of American Indians, with the intent of defining a common Indian identity and serving a common Indian interest. But the rise of pan-Indianism did not mean the end of tribalism, and activism in the twentieth century has been strongly influenced by both understandings of Indian identity. The obvious tension between tribalism and pan-Indianism is part of the reason for the lack of a coherent Indian activist strategy. It also accounts for the

differing agendas of "tribal" and "ethnic" Indians. Tribal Indians

> . . . see the United States as one nation subject in some sense to the trends and movements of history and sensitive to the perceptions of other nations. Their drive for nationhood imagines a time when each tribe will have some kind of parity with the other nations of the world, as each tribe believes it had prior to contact with Europeans. . . .
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> Ethnic Indians . . . look directly at the federal government. They understand its operation on a fairly sophisticated basis; they know the politics of American society and see Indians as another ethnic group that needs to assert itself continuously if it is to have any share in the rights and privileges of that society. [17]

The differences between tribal and ethnic Indians were illustrated during the protest movement of the 1960's and 70's, with tribal Indians projecting a pro-Indian attitude and ethnic Indians a more anti-oppression orientation.

Euro-Americans have always been perplexed by the survival of Indian tribal identity, which they have assumed would eventually fade into oblivion. Whatever the reason for the persistence of tribalism, the fact is that many tribes are no closer to extinction today than they were centuries ago. "Of the estimated 300 Indian languages spoken in the area north of Mexico at the time of discovery, at least half are in current use." [18] Indian identity is still defined largely in tribal terms, and will continue to

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17. Vine Deloria, Jr., and Clifford Lytle, The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 242-3.

18. D'Arcy McNickle, Native American Tribalism: Indian Survivals and Renewals (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 7.

be indefinitely. In fact, in the post-war years there has been a rebirth of tribalism, what might be called a renaissance of tribal self-realization. "In spite of appearances 'tribal nationalism' [has] not been assimilated or destroyed as easily as was popularly imagined. It [has] merely been 'submerged.'" [19] As the Hopi traditional chiefs have said, "We are still a sovereign nation. We have never abandoned our sovereignty to any foreign power or government." [20] Vine Deloria, Jr., and Clifford Lytle have argued that tribal (i.e., traditional) Indians are often the descendants of the last chiefs and headmen to surrender to white control, and have been responsible for the invention of Indian activism. [21]

But working in concert with tribal-based activism has been the pan-Indianism of the urban Indian experience, particularly in the 1960's and 70's. Beginning with the large-scale urban migration during World War II, increasing numbers of Indians moved from reservations to cities in a process that affected most tribes. Following the war, the BIA decided to formalize and assist the urbanization process, and by 1952 had set up Field Relocation Offices in eight U.S. cities. Some 160,000 Indians had taken part in the relocation program by the mid-1970's, when the program

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19. Steiner, 277.

20. Ibid., 8.

21. Deloria and Lytle, 232-5.

ceased. The concentration of a large diversity of tribes in urban settings has led to the evolution of informal, supra-tribal networks and organizations, which provide mutual support and address common concerns and issues. While early observers (some tribal Indians among them) argued that pan-Indianism merely represents a transitional stage on the path to assimilation, recent views recognize its value as an adaptive social mechanism, "a political response to particular characteristics of the contemporary Indian situation." [22] It is also in many ways a subculture, and one that "gives every evidence of being a permanent rather than a temporary phenomenon." [23] Both tribalism and pan-Indianism (or supratribalism) will continue to influence the shape of Native American activism in the years to come.

New Indians and Red Muslims

Although it was the outgrowth of historical and cultural developments unique to the Native American community, the "Red Power" movement did follow on the heels--chronologically, at least--of the Black Civil Rights movement. Because the general public associated the upsurge in Native American activism with the other social movements of the period, certain labels were modified and applied to the Indian cause: sell-out tribal elders became "Uncle Toma-

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22. Cornell, 133.

23. Hertzberg, 323.

hawks," while the radicals of Indian activism were called "Red Muslims."

> The slogan "Red Power" was articulated at first partly with tongue in cheek. Borrowed from "Black Power," with which black militants were already moving both blacks and whites to face each other in idea-shattering confrontations, it had an initial shock value on just the persons whom it should have shocked. . . . It took no time at all for the humor to drop away and for the coiners of the slogan . . . to see that they had given voice to a new, and totally serious, idea and force. [24]

When Congress called together a group of Indians in order to seek their approval of the 1967 Omnibus Bill, an economic assistance package drafted by the Department of the Interior, the tribal leaders instead issued a statement, the "Resolution of the Thirty Tribes," opposing the legislation on several points. For the first time, the Red Power agenda "formally and officially had been put on public record in a resolution to the President of the United States." [25]

Behind the growth of Red Power lay not only renewed tribalism and growing pan-Indianism, but also a new generation of university-educated Indians intent on putting their intellectual capacities to work in ending cultural genocide. Their response to the pressing issues facing Native America was to set an agenda in pursuit of self-determination and political independence; their vehicle was the National Indian Youth Council, founded in 1961. As we have seen, this orientation was nothing new in the history of Native

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24. Josephy, 2.

25. Steiner, 285.

American activism. What was new, and what made these activists "new Indians," was the resources they had at their disposal as they waged political, legal, and ideological warfare with the U.S. government.

> At the start of the twentieth century, the Indian resource situation was grim indeed. Poor, few in number, organizationally crippled, with little in the way of bargaining chips, most Native Americans lacked the resources necessary to sustain political activity within the dominant society. Since the Indian New Deal [the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934], however, and particularly in the last few decades, there has been a marked increase in Indian political resources and, therefore, in Indian capacities for political action. [26]

During the late-1960's a number of urban Indian organizations were formed, most notably the American Indian Movement in 1968. Although the events AIM has come to be remembered for--the BIA takeover, Wounded Knee, and the Longest Walk--were high-profile confrontations receiving intensive media coverage, AIM began with and continues to have an agenda focussed on cultural survival, with programs addressing the legal, economic, educational, and spiritual needs of the Indian community.

> At the initial founding in Minneapolis, Minnesota, July 28, 1968, AIM established priorities which would insure the survival of our Red Nations in the Western Hemisphere. . . . Today [1982], we re-affirm those goals and call for the continued direction as established in 1968. [27]

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26. Cornell, 164.

27. [American Indian Movement], "The American Indian Movement," unsigned manuscript, 1982, Flora Lamson Hewlett Library, Graduate Theological Union, 14.

AIM established Citizens' Patrols in 1968 as a way to halt police harassment and mistreatment of Indians in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and formed the first Survival Schools in 1970 to address the educational and cultural needs of Indian youth. Later activities have continued to address local and regional Indian welfare issues. [28]

AIM's declaration of Thanksgiving, 1970, as a national day of mourning set the stage for the events of the next decade. Only a year earlier another group of young, urban Indians, calling themselves Indians of All Tribes, had occupied Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay and proclaimed it to be Indian Land. The occupation was to last nineteen months,

> and by the end of 1970 the Indians' fight for freedom had already entered a new and more militant phase. . . . Alcatraz had been . . . a symbol of the Indians' new determination to go on the offensive for their rights. [29]

AIM organized the Trail of Broken Treaties in 1972, an automobile caravan to Washington, D.C., in order to bring government and public attention to the problems facing urban and reservation Indians. The administration's inattentiveness and the lack of media coverage both ended when the BIA headquarters building was occupied. Four months later, many of those involved in the BIA occupation reassembled at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, the site of the 1890 massacre of

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28. Ibid., 2-4.

29. Josephy, 7.

several hundred Lakota by U.S. forces. The ensuing seventy-one day military confrontation between Indian activists and federal agents marked a high-water point in Indian activism.

> The activists of 1973 provided the most sensational evidence yet of the return of Native Americans to the political arena, of their defiant claim to the right once again to make their own choices. [30]

AIM thus incorporated national action into its original, regional orientation. In the months and years following Wounded Knee, AIM leaders broadened their vision to include international concerns, recognizing a natural affinity with indigenous peoples of other continents. In 1974 the First International Indian Treaty Conference was held, which led to the formation of the International Indian Treaty Council. The IITC gained Non-Governmental Organization status with the United Nations in 1977, and since then has participated in a number of international human rights events. Due in part to the U.S. government's unwillingness to recognize and support Native American autonomy,

> Indians have more often been placing their case before such international bodies, making common cause with more than a few former colonies which are drawing parallels between the Indian peoples' present situation and their own past, . . . [31]

While the Red Power movement may have come at a time when other minority groups were making their voices heard,

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30. Cornell, 4.

31. Bruce Johansen and Roberto Maestas, Wasi'chu: The Continuing Indian Wars (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 216.

and may have been organizing over some of the same issues, Native Americans were never completely at home in the Civil Rights movement.

> Segregation, which the black man protested so bitterly, was not seen as a denial of social status by Indians. They had never aspired to a place in the white man's society, except as individuals might make that choice for themselves. What Indians as tribal members desired was a good faith performance by the national government of the contractual obligations and reciprocities incorporated in treaties. [32]

But then, "Red Power" was never really about power at all, but about the nature and quality and value of life. Native American activists in the 1960's and 70's didn't want power over anyone else, or power sharing in an integrated society. They wanted power over their own lives, control of their own destinies: in a word, self-determination. While the activists' pursuit of nationalism and demand for sovereignty may have caught white Americans by surprise, what was at stake was clearly more than just material prosperity. As a young Vine Deloria, Jr., once observed,

> We are no longer fighting for physical survival. We are fighting for ideological survival. . . . It isn't important that there are only 500,000 of us Indians. What is important is that we have a superior way of life. [33]

Activism in the Eighties

The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, passed by Congress in 1974 in response to Native Americans' increasing activism, alleviated some of the hardships

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32. McNickle, 122.

33. Steiner, ix-x.

of reservation life. Though both BIA and tribal bureaucracies grew substantially as a consequence of increased federal funding, a certain amount did "trickle down" to the tribal constituency. Unfortunately, however, few of the newly instituted programs were aimed at improving long-range economic conditions, and the dawn of Reaganomics meant a reversal of these short-lived efforts. "By the end of 1981 it was estimated . . . that Indians were experiencing [budget] cuts ten times greater than those affecting their non-Indian fellow Americans." [34] Unemployment on many reservations soon returned to, and in some cases exceeded, levels experienced in the 1960's.

A variety of Native American activist organizations have continued to address issues on local as well as national levels in the 1980's, evidencing the continuing tension between tribal and pan-Indian identification. The Reagan administration's willingness to return to the discredited economic policies of the 1950's, which led to the disastrous policy of termination, has pointed out that "it will always be important to set out the sources of Indian tribes' right to exist and possess a special [legal and political] status," [35] which is based on constitutional provision as well as cultural distinctiveness. If

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34. Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., Now That the Buffalo's Gone: A Study of Today's American Indian (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 257.

35. Philip S. Deloria in Philp, 192.

Native Americans learned one thing about American society during the Red Power years, it was "that no one is feeling sorry for them. They are going to have to fight for social justice." [36]

The Future of Indian Nations

President Reagan's comments before a Moscow State University audience in May of 1988 give some indication of the continued struggles which will face Native Americans in the coming years. Suggesting that the U.S. had erred in "humoring" Indian people and allowing them to practice a "primitive lifestyle," Reagan ended a seven-year silence on Native American issues by adding insult to injury. Having established

> the worst Indian policy record of any administration in this century, . . . he also has the distinction of being the first president since the 1800's to have . . . personally offended Indian people in an international forum. [37]

Despite Reagan's ignorance of the impoverishment affecting all aspects of reservation life, and regardless of the time-worn suggestion that Indians assimilate into mainstream society, Indian nations will continue to struggle with many of the same issues that have faced them for decades. It is certainly true that "American growth and development shattered the traditional competence of tribal people to make a

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36. Philp, 190.

37. Suzan Shown Harjo, "Reagan Adds Insult to Injury," Daybreak 2, no. 3 (Summer 1988), 34.

living and sustain their own way of life"; [38] the key question is how to either restore this traditional competence or institute an alternative, so that Native American self-determination can become a reality.

Most Native American scholars and activists agree that economic self-sufficiency is the first step toward the recovery of sovereignty, land, and cultural freedom. The lack of economic freedom and resources, as well as the continued mismanagement of Indian resources by the BIA and others, hampers efforts at effective self-government by Indians. This affects the maintenance of existing programs as well as experimentation with alternative approaches to persistent problems. Though the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 accomplished some important things for Indian tribes, it ultimately failed because it "did not really provide Indian people with the basic and fundamental thing that must support tribal sovereignty: economic self-determination." [39] The same holds true today; "until Native American people have a greater economic power base from which to build, their sovereignty is going to be very limited. . . . That is the key issue." [40]

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38. W. Roger Buffalohead, "Self-Rule in the Past and the Future: An Overview," in Philp, 267.

39. Ibid., 270.

40. R. David Edmunds, "Tribal Sovereignty: Roots, Expectations, and Limits," in Philp, 290.

But the problem facing many tribes today is that economic autonomy is often at odds with economic development. In most cases, development will not take place without federal funding, which always comes with strings attached. Coupled with the funding dilemma is the need for control over tribal resources, particularly those resources that Indians are currently deprived of (i.e., in violation of treaty agreements). It has even been argued that if tribal control of reservation resources were allowed, "all other things such as economic development would fall into place." [41] But control of resources on reservation lands cannot be a comprehensive solution until reservation lands that have been illegally taken are restored to the original inhabitants. The history of Indian-white relations testifies that "the real issue in this country has been over the control of land and natural resources . . . ." [42]

Despite the urgency of the economic problems facing Indian Country, questions of cultural survival must also be addressed on an ongoing basis. Deloria and Lytle have suggested a four-point agenda for action that will help Indians reestablish themselves: reform of tribal government, cultural renewal and revitalization, establishment of economic stability, and stabilization of government rela-

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41. Gordy High Eagle, "Indian Control of Indian Resources," in Philp, 297.

42. Philip S. Deloria, "What Indians Should Want: Advice to the President," in Philp, 319.

tions between tribes and the U.S. [43] Although pursuit of all four goals simultaneously will be overwhelming for some time to come, each is a vital part of a healthy Native American future.

> The cultural landscape is now so littered with erroneous information [about Indians] that it is extremely difficult for the serious Indian youngster to learn the truth about his past. If Indians are going to govern themselves with any degree of confidence, they must begin to define what is acceptable behavior and invoke the conscience of the community to maintain these standards. [44]

This sense of accountability to the tribal community will form the basis of continued cultural renewal, particularly with regard to religious tradition and spiritual expression. Though Native Americans have suffered at the hands of benevolent oppressors for nearly 500 years, their best hope still lies in self-help. "Until Indians accept responsibility for preserving and enhancing their own knowledge of themselves, no institution can enable them to remain as Indians." [45]

ACTIVISM AND TRADITIONALISM

Behind the renewed activism of the Red Power movement was an increased emphasis on traditional beliefs and cultural values. "From the very beginning of AIM, the attempt was made to honor the traditional beliefs of our people,

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43. Deloria and Lytle, 244-64.

44. Ibid., 253.

45. Ibid., 250.

even though many of us weren't sure exactly what that meant." [46] Many of the young Indian activists had grown skeptical of the beliefs and values of Western culture and were attempting to recover their tribal heritage. The statement issued by Indians of All Tribes shortly after the group occupied Alcatraz Island reflects this underlying concern for traditionalism:

> We feel that if we are going to succeed, we must hold onto the old ways. *This is the first and most important reason we went to Alcatraz Island.*
>
> We feel that the only reason Indian people have been able to hold on and survive through decades of persecution and cultural deprivation is that the Indian way of life is and has been strong enough to hold the people together.
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> We hope to reinforce the traditional Indian way of life by building a Cultural Center on Alcatraz Island. [47]

Contributing to this orientation was the feeling that Indian people were in a state of spiritual bankruptcy, having been stripped of their traditional beliefs yet unable to assimilate to Western Christianity.

> The stirrings of Indians to regain freedom over their lives were accompanied by a revival of pride in their own traditions and an interest in traditionalist Indians who had kept alive the beliefs and life philosophies of their ancestors and preached a return to their fathers' lives of peace and purity. The movement was essentially a religious one, reflecting the revulsion that many Indians felt for the white man's present-day life and the lack of meaning Christianity had for them. [48]

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46. Paul N. Schultz, conversation with author, January 24, 1989.

47. Josephy, Red Power, 188.

48. Ibid., 41.

The role of these "traditionalist Indians" can be contrasted with that of the Black clergy in the Civil Rights movement. While Black ministers were often involved in the leadership and organization of marches, rallies, and boycotts in the South, Indian religious leaders were just as important to the Red Power cause, but in a different way. They rarely assumed leadership or took initiative, but watched from the rear as events unfolded. "The traditionals saw their role was to ensure that the protest became a responsible expression of the people's feelings, not merely a recitation of liberal slogans." [49]

Traditionalism continues to play an important role in Native American activism. The number of Native American lawyers has increased dramatically in the last twenty-five years, and today legal scholars and activists often base their arguments for Indian sovereignty on traditional understandings: "If Indian government is to mean anything, the first thing we must do is to determine who we are. We alone must make that political decision." [50] "In our ways, spiritual consciousness is the highest form of politics."

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49. Deloria and Lytle, 241.

50. Oren Lyons, "Spirituality, Equality, and Natural Law," in Leroy Little Bear, Menno Boldt, and J. Anthony Long (eds.), <u>Pathways to Self-Determination: Canadian Indians and the Canadian State</u> (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 12.

[51] "Aboriginal rights are higher than politics or legal jargon. They are part of the natural law, which is higher than all politics." [52] The emphasis on a natural law basis for self-determination leads to a position markedly different from the Western understanding.

> The concept of First Nation self-government is usually understood to mean two broad groups of jurisdiction: each First Nation governing its own people and their affairs, and governing their land and its use. Traditionally among First Nations, these concepts are combined. The creator gave each people the right to govern its own affairs, as well as land on which to live and with which to sustain their lives. These Creator-given rights cannot be taken away by other human beings. [53]

Traditionalism thus informs all aspects of Native American activism and insures that the re-assertion of "Indianness" will be true to each tribe's cultural heritage. Although a precise definition for traditionalism may be impossible, it exists as a very real influence for Indian people, and is understood in a primarily intuitive manner. Perhaps Oren Lyons has provided the best summation of traditionalism and its implications for activism: "Traditionalism is the representation and continuum of a culture

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51. Akwesasne Notes (ed.), Basic Call to Consciousness (Mohawk Nation: Akwesasne Notes, 1978), 49.

52. Oren Lyons, "Traditional Native Philosophies Relating to Aboriginal Rights," in Menno Boldt and J. Anthony Long (eds.), The Quest for Justice: Aboriginal Peoples and Aboriginal Rights (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 23.

53. David Ahenakew, "Aboriginal Title and Aboriginal Rights: The Impossible and Unnecessary Task of Identification and Definition," in Little Bear, Boldt, and Long, 24.

that has been here from time immemorial *and that demands respect*." (emphasis mine) [54]

PEOPLE AND NATIONS IN EXILE

More than any other minority group in American life, Native Americans have a sense of activism which is grounded in the history and geography of this continent. While others may have experienced the effects of Western oppression for as long or longer, Native Americans are uniquely informed by their rootedness in the land itself. Yet they are people and nations in exile, many of them far removed from traditional homelands, all of them prevented from enjoying the rights and fulfilling the responsibilities of the land. Indian nations have been called "entrapped," even "domestic dependent," nations. Despite 500 years of active resistance, Native Americans remain people of the land caught in the relentless march of Western history, people of space trapped in Western time. Characterized by what Deloria calls the political and religious dimensions of exile, they represent a contemporary manifestation of the ancient Israelites; "we might . . . expect American Indians to discern, out of the chaos of their shattered lives, the

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54. Oren Lyons, "Traditionalism and the Re-assertion of Indianness," in Philp, 244.

same kind of message and mission that inspired the Hebrew prophets." [55]

Through the sheer absence of economic and political clout, Native Americans must confront the perennial questions of identity while knowing that they are often not in control of their own destiny. Rather than being allowed freedom of cultural expression and self-definition, they have been subjected to the identity the dominant society has envisioned for them. Hollywood stereotypes of the noble savage have provided more than just popular entertainment; the images of Indians established by cartoonists, novelists, and filmmakers have been the foundational context for Indian-white relations. "One cannot understand the realities of modern Indian life and the prospect for the next generation without understanding the popular images of the past and the present." [56] What is more, Native Americans have had to cope with the awareness that their signifiers [57] often act insanely.

> I live in fear of the white man. I fear the death he possesses. I fear the violence that is in him. . . .

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55. Vine Deloria, Jr., "Out of Chaos," Parabola 10, no. 2 (1985), 22.

56. Rennard Strickland, "White Memory, Red Images, and Contemporary Indian Policy," in Raymond William Stedman, Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), ix.

57. This is after the language of Charles Long. See Signification: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

> The white man hates himself. And he hates the Great Spirit. . . . Why else would the white man do the things he does? The things he has done to the Indians? To everyone? [58]

> We always think that white people are superior because they have more things, can read and write better, and are more aggressive. They seem to have more freedom than we have. So, we think they are better people, but they are not. They are stupid and ignorant like we are sometimes. Do you think a smart man would go and destroy everything he touches? Do you think a smart man would try to accumulate a lot of things that he is not going to use, and that he cannot take with him when he dies? That is stupidity. [59]

As a Lakota Ghost Dance song succinctly puts it, "The whites are crazy! The whites are crazy!" [60]

Perhaps the best image of Native Americans in exile is that of a people waiting patiently for the restoration of harmony in the land. In the words of Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist N. Scott Momaday,

> The people of the town have little need. They do not hanker after progress and have never changed their essential way of life. Their invaders were a long time in conquering them; and now, after four centuries of Christianity, they still pray in Tanoan to the old deities of the earth and sky and make their living from things that are and have always been within their reach; while in the discrimination of pride they acquire from their conquerors only the luxury of example. They have assumed the names and gestures of their enemies, but have held on to their own, secret souls; and in this there is a resistance and an overcoming, a long outwaiting. [61]

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58. Vine Deloria, Sr., in Steiner, 106.

59. Francis McKinley's father in Philp, 248.

60. John Redhouse in Johansen, 13.

61. N. Scott Momaday, House Made of Dawn (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 56.

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Authentic Native American theological reflection, whether traditional or Christian in orientation, will necessarily take place with reference to and in the context of the historic struggle of resistance. The Fourth World reality--impoverishment, forced assimilation, powerlessness--creates dire living circumstances, but even more pressing is the question of identity. Enduring Indian cultural values and norms, though oftentimes forced into submersion, have carried with them a spiritual pre-understanding often at odds with "the white man's religion." The activism of the 1960's and 70's was accompanied (some would say made possible) by a renewed interest in and allegiance to traditional tribal beliefs, with a concomitant aversion to the Christian Church. The new generation of Native American scholars and activists has been quick to recognize that the materialist orientation of Western Christianity is at odds with the traditional Indian respect for the inherent spiritual value of all creation, particularly the land itself. And the steadily rising critical consciousness among Native Americans will continue to call into question the dominant religious institutions. Native Americans who have chosen to be Christians, and those who were given no other alternative, may find it difficult to hold onto their traditional identities while still giving an account of the faith they possess.