

All Our Relations: Red Power Politics in Third Worldist San Francisco

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I did not know then how much was ended. When I look back now from this high hill of my old age, I can still see the butchered women and children lying heaped and scattered all along the crooked gulch as plain as when I saw them with eyes still young. And I can see that something else died there in the bloody mud, and was buried in the blizzard. A people's dream died there. It was a beautiful dream. . . . the nation's hoop is broken and scattered. There is no center any longer, and the sacred tree is dead¹

– Black Elk, *Oglala Lakota Holy Man on the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre*

And so out of seeming death came a new way of life, a new vision, a new flowering of Indian Way. Instead of disappearing, dissolving as a people, as we were expected to do, we found a new social consciousness and a new sense of ourselves in the human cauldron of the cities. . . . The notion of Red Power was inevitable. We didn't even have to invent a cause. We had one we'd been born with: the very survival of our people as a People.²

– Leonard Peltier, *American Indian Movement (AIM)*

History resists moving in straight lines. Four years after the bloody massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, two cavalry companies armed with Hotchkiss guns arrived in Oraibi, Arizona and arrested nineteen Hopi

1 John G Neihardt. *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988; originally published by John G. Neihardt: 1932), 270.

2 Leonard Peltier. *Prison Writings: My Life is My Sun Dance* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), p. 93–94.

“militants,” summarily shipping them to the military installation on Alcatraz. Upon news of their forced relocation to the Bay Area, the *San Francisco Morning Call* stirred the racist imagination of its readership by describing these new prisoners as “fierce redskins,” “crafty cutthroats,” and “scalping bucks,” adding that they composed “one of the most cruel, cold-blooded savages in the world.” Sensationalistic reports like this struck a deep chord within the dominant popular culture, echoing the mythic adventures of late nineteenth-century Western novels. “Every small boy from Meiggs’ wharf to the Pacific Mill dock,” the newspaper noted, “is practicing at scalping his companion with a wooden scalping knife”. After an arduous month-long journey on foot, horse, train, and boat, the nineteen Hopi prisoners finally arrived in San Francisco on January 4, 1895 under the military supervision of a Lieutenant Bernard, a veteran of George Armstrong Custer’s infamous military campaigns and widely considered to be an “accomplished Indian fighter.” Yet, while mainstream society viewed these prisoners as “savages” and criminals, the Hopi “militants” understood themselves to be “prisoners of war” in defense of their land and people.³

The Hopi “militants” had actually never engaged in any armed conflict with the federal government; instead, they were considered “hostile” because they resisted both the dissolution of communally-held lands and the forced education of their children in government and missionary-supported boarding schools. As a result, they languished on the island prison for nearly a year, occasionally visiting the city of San Francisco under armed supervision to “witness,” and be instructed in, the benefits of the country’s educational system. As one source described it, they were to be “held in confinement, at hard labor, until . . . they shall show . . . they fully realize the error of their evil ways [and] until they shall evince, in an unmistakable manner, a desire to cease interference with the plans of the government for the civilization and education of its Indian wards.” They remained the single largest grouping of

3 “Ready Scalpers,” *San Francisco Morning Call*, Jan. 4, 1895: 5; For dramatic visual documentation of their incarceration, see William C. Billington’s photograph entitled, “Moqui Indians, from Arizona, prisoners of war to the US Government,” February 9, 1895, archived at the Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley.

Native Americans ever to live on Alcatraz — that is, until another group of Native American “militants” occupied the island in the fall of 1969.⁴

In a profound twist of historical fate, Native Americans arriving on the island in 1969 — just as the Hopi prisoners seventy four years prior — found themselves still protesting the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ boarding schools, still seeking to defend traditional cultural and spiritual practices, and, perhaps most importantly, still fighting to protect the sanctity of Mother Earth; however, this time with one key difference, Alcatraz was “liberated territory,” not a place of punishment. Native American activists from throughout the Bay Area (and eventually the entire country) occupied Alcatraz for nearly nineteen months demanding “self-determination” for indigenous peoples. Alcatraz became a place, not of loss, pain, isolation, or death, but a “Home” and a symbol of life and rebirth.⁵ History had come full circle, so to speak; the “hoop,” “sacred tree,” and “dream,” which Black Elk thought had died on the cold, snowy grounds of Wounded Knee was radically reborn and revitalized. AIM activist Leonard Peltier would later explain that, “Instead of disappearing [and] dissolving as a people . . . we found a new consciousness and a new sense of ourselves in the human cauldron of the cities. . . . The notion of Red Power was inevitable.” Yet, tragically, and in perhaps a final and telling twist, Peltier must write his words from the depths of another federal penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas — a contemporary casualty of the ongoing assault on Indian Country and as a political prisoner of the “New Indian Wars” which have waged since the birth of the Red Power movement in the late Sixties.⁶

4 Quotation from Craig Glassner, “From Arizona to Alcatraz: Hopi Prisoners on Alcatraz,” accessed at: http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=FROM_ARIZONA_TO_ALCATRAZ:_Hopi_prisoners_on_Alcatraz, on June 1, 2009.

5 A similar process occurred in 1973 at Wounded Knee, as the American Indian Movement occupied the historic site for seventy-one days declaring the independence of the Oglala Sioux Nation. Peter Matthiessen. *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), chapters 3-4; and Vine Deloria. *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999) p. 70-83.

6 Matthiessen. *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*; and Bruce Johansen and Roberto Maestas. *Wasi'chu: The Continuing Indian Wars* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979).

Alcatraz was crucial to the development of this Movement. Mainstream historians of the Sixties pay scant attention to “Red Power,” mistakenly placing it either within the larger framework of the New Left or as an imitative offshoot of the Black Power Movement.⁷ Both interpretations are, in many ways, reflective of the simplistic “black-white” racial binary that pervades the United States and its historiography. To be sure, the predominantly white New Left and movements arising within communities of color shared a youthful composition. Yet, where the New Left often cautioned its constituency to “not trust anyone over the age of thirty,” young Red Power activists self-consciously sought out, reconnected with, and gave respect to traditional Elders of their communities. This difference was fundamental and revealed profoundly different points of origin and visions for the future. Similarly, to suggest that young Native American activists simply duplicated the strategies and programs of Black Power unjustly flattens the history of both groups, obscuring important interconnections and mutual influences, and, perhaps most significantly, minimizes the ability of Red Power activists to think and act for themselves. The Red Power Movement emerged neither out of the New Left nor as a carbon copy of the Black Panther Party (the most active and influential Black Power organization in the Bay Area); instead, it organically emerged out of and responded to the unique historical circumstances confronting Native Americans in late twentieth-century “America.”

7 For representative examples, see Todd Gitlin. The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage (New York: Bantam Book, 1987); Morris Dickstein. Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties (New York: Penguin Books, 1989); Richard Flacks. Making History: The Radical Tradition in American Life (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Sohnya Sayres, et. al. The 60s Without Apology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); and Milton Viorst. Fire in the Streets: America in the 1960s (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979). Even George Katsiaficas’ otherwise excellent The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968 (Boston: South End Press, 1987) neglects Native American activism in the United States and consequently is incapable of fully grappling with the specificity of Red Power. Terry H. Anderson’s The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) attempts to include Red Power – even incorporating a key moment in Red Power activism (Wounded Knee) into the sub-title. In the end, however, Anderson only accords three pages (out of 423!) to Red Power. In fact, he spends more time considering white countercultural fascination with Native American spirituality than on Native Americans themselves.

As Peltier eloquently explains, “We didn’t have to invent a cause. We had one we’d been born with: the very survival of our people as a People.”

Fortunately, careful historical studies of the Red Power Movement have started to appear. In regards to Alcatraz, historian Troy Johnson has published a number of excellent books outlining various facets of the occupation.⁸ Yet, while Johnson’s important work constitutes the first scholarly treatment of the occupation, at long last revealing the historical agency of Native Americans, he unfortunately misses something significant: relations. Whereas the occupation of Alcatraz – and the larger Red Power Movement – clearly emerged out of the unique circumstances of Native America, it did not develop within a vacuum. Local Red Power activists were *also* a product of a dynamic Third World radicalism sweeping the Bay Area. They constituted a key component of, and thus must be understood within, a larger polycentric social movement that resonated with calls for self-determination by a variety of radical Third Worldist organizations such as the Third World Liberation Front, Black Panther Party, Los Siete de La Raza, the Red Guard Party, and Katipunan Ang Demokratikong Pilipino (KDP).

Scholars, to date, have rightly noted this call for self-determination; however, they have unfortunately extracted it from the social context it developed within, subsequently neglecting to consider what the term actually meant. As a result, it is generally appreciated as either a militant call for federal reforms in Indian policy, a demand for democratic integration into the

8 Troy Johnson. Alcatraz: Indian Land Forever (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California, 1994); You Are on Indian Land! Alcatraz Island, 1969-1971 (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California, 1995); and, most significantly, The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-Determination and the Rise of Indian Activism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

United States, or a catalyst for a renewed sense of Indian pride.⁹ Alcatraz, no doubt, contributed to a cultural revitalization within Native America, fueling an increase in Indian self-identification and a renewal of traditional cultural practices and institutions (such as sweat lodges and pow wows); yet, the nineteen-month occupation of Alcatraz reflected something more profound. As in other nationalist struggles being waged by activists of color, the occupants of Alcatraz embraced a revolutionary concept of “self-determination” which was fundamentally anti-colonial and anti-imperialist. Thus, while they vehemently rejected the genocidal assimilationist policies of the previous one hundred years, they simultaneously opposed liberal initiatives designed to integrate them into a culturally pluralist and capitalist United States. Like other Third Worldist movements in the Bay Area, they saw the domestic

9 Troy Johnson argues that the “underlying goals of the Indians on Alcatraz Island were to awaken the American public to the reality of the plight of the first Americans and to assert the need for Indian self-determination. In this they were indeed successful. As a result of the Alcatraz occupation . . . a policy of Indian self-determination was adopted.” Calling attention to Nixon’s July 1970 speech outlining “self-determination” as a guiding principle for federal Indian policy, and the subsequent return of Blue Lake to the Taos Pueblo, Johnson believes self-determination occurred. In fact, he even goes as far as stating, “I hope that this book begins the process of recognition and pays the proper respect for Nixon’s contributions to American Indian people.” Nixon’s policies, however, were consistent with the dual strategy of repression and co-optation practiced on other radical/revolutionary movements of the era. On the one hand, Nixon’s “Law and Order” campaign, reflected in the widespread domestic counterinsurgency programs conducted by the FBI, systematically crushed those calling for substantive transformation by generally harassing, arresting, and even assassinating radical activists. At the same time, Nixon’s administration strategically implemented a number of co-optive programs, such as calling for Black Power (by supporting Black businesses and promoting Black capitalism) or supporting Indian self-determination (meaning the employment of more Indians in select agencies and allowing them more input in bureaucratic decision-making. In other words, self-administration) in a concerted effort to undercut the substantive thrust of the movements themselves. For Johnson quotes, see Johnson. The Occupation of Alcatraz, p. 217, 219. For a more sensitive (and dialectical) understanding of domination and resistance, see Jack D. Forbes. Native Americans and Nixon: Presidential Politics and Minority Self-Determination, 1969–1972 (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California, 1981). For an insightful study of Red Power and identity formation, see Joane Nagel. American Indian Ethnic Renewal: Red Power and the Resurgence of Identity and Culture (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

struggle of one's "People" in international terms and as a process of decolonization. For Native Americans, this clearly meant reasserting the sovereignty of indigenous nations.

The occupation of Alcatraz is widely understood to be an originating moment of Red Power activism, sparking, as Peltier describes, "a new consciousness" and a "new sense of ourselves." However, in closely examining Bay Area Native activism *prior* to the dramatic island occupation of 1969, this essay reveals that a radical consciousness and militancy *predated* this defining action. In short, a rich and complicated local history exists that is obscured with exclusive focus on the spectacular. While the media (both then and now), as well as many historians, typically highlight the confrontations that occurred between activists and authorities, the diligent organizing and relationship building which served as the essential foundation for such important events escapes our attention. As with the years of campus/community organizing that laid the groundwork for the historic 1968 Third World Strike at San Francisco State College, or the "Survival Programs" of the Black Panther Party, or the nearly decade-long, community-building efforts of Asian Americans at the International Hotel (before police violently evicted the elderly Pilipinos who called this last vestige of San Francisco's Manilatown their home), we shall see here that the roots of Red Power activism in the Bay Area — for meaningful and substantive self-determination — extend much deeper than that of the occupation itself.

World War II radically remade Native American communities in the Bay Area as they began to grow in both size and diversity. As a major embarkation point for the war in the Pacific, many returning veterans decided to simply stay. Likewise, similar to the migration of African Americans to the West, many Native Americans moved to the Bay Area to take advantage of employment opportunities in war-time defense industries. Russell Means, a Sioux from South Dakota and future spokesperson for the American Indian Movement, recalls how his "parents didn't want their children to grow up under reservation conditions. They didn't want to live under the BIA's thumb, and they didn't want us to experience the horror of boarding schools." Therefore, in "the middle of 1942, my mother moved us to Vallejo, California, where my dad [Russell Means] found work as a welder in the big

navy shipyard on Mare Island.”¹⁰ By the time the Means family moved to San Leandro (just south of Oakland) in 1954, a more profound change was sweeping Indian Country, leading to an even larger-scale movement of Native Americans into the area.

By the mid-1950s, the federal government enacted a series of laws designed to further undermine the existence of indigenous nations and their traditional cultures.¹¹ First, Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108, the so-called Termination Act, on August 1, 1953. Termination unilaterally dissolved previously recognized indigenous nations and suspended all federal services. By the end of the decade, over 109 different indigenous nations were terminated, removing trust protection from over 1.3 million acres of valuable land.¹² In 1956, Congress passed Public Law 84-959, otherwise known as the Relocation Act. With federal recognition and services terminated, the federal government encouraged Native Americans to leave the reservation and cast their lot in select cities. To make the prospect of relocation attractive, the BIA presented brochures and pamphlets to poverty-stricken reserva-

10 Russell Means. Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Means (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 22.

11 While implemented during the Eisenhower/Nixon administrations, these policies originated much earlier, in piecemeal fashion, under the stewardship of Dillon S. Myer, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs during the Truman Administration. Myer gained special notoriety during World War II as head of the War Relocation Authority, the agency responsible for administering the internment of nearly 120,000 Japanese Americans in remote locations such as Manzanar and Tule Lake. See Richard Drinnon. Keeper of Concentration Camps: Dillon S. Myer and American Racism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

12 Whereas the federal government rationalized that “termination” allowed for full integration into the United States, thereby equating it with the emerging Civil Rights Movement, Adam Fortunate Eagle writes that the underlying motivation had more to do with valuable resources lying beneath the land. He writes, “In 1952, the government prepared an 1,800 page report on Indian conditions. Indians called it the ‘Doomsday Book.’ The report discussed the complicated task of eliminating the reservation system and concluded that the expense and difficulty were justified by the prospect of gaining control of the natural resources held by the tribes. In addition to timber and water, it was estimated that the 23 Western tribes controlled 33 percent of the country’s low-sulfur coal, 80 percent of the nation’s uranium reserves, and between 3 and 10 percent of the gas and petroleum reserves.” Adam Fortunate Eagle. Alcatraz! Alcatraz! The Indian Occupation of 1969-1971 (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1992), p. 20.

tion residents illustrating affluent suburban homes replete with modern appliances. More importantly, the BIA promised specific aid to those “on relocation”: transportation, vocational training, job placement, and housing assistance. What they found upon arrival, however, was radically different than any expectations that they might have held.¹³

Relocation offices opened in both San Francisco and Oakland in 1955. Nearly ten years later, in 1964, the Native American community, representing roughly one hundred different tribal groups, had swelled to over 10,000 – two-thirds arriving to the Bay Area by relocation.¹⁴ Given a one-way Greyhound bus ticket from the reservation, relocatees found themselves in a strange new environment. After being processed at the local relocation office, new arrivals were put into temporary housing. In San Francisco, relocatees (both families and single individuals) were sent to the Wellington Hotel in the Tenderloin district. Wilma Mankiller, both a future Alcatraz occupant and principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, remembers her relocation to San Francisco in 1956.

My folks had vouchers the BIA officials had given them for groceries and rent. But when we arrived, we found that an apartment was not available, so we were put up for two weeks in an old hotel in a notorious district of San Francisco called the Tenderloin. During the night, the neighborhood sparkled with lots of neon lights, flashily dressed prostitutes, and laughter in the streets. But in the morning, we saw broken

13 Donald Fixico. Termination and Relocation: Federal Indian Policy, 1945–1969 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986) remains the standard historical study of the twin processes of termination and relocation. See, in particular, chapters 2, 5–7, and 9.

14 These population figures are extremely conservative due to both the ambiguous racial/ethnic classification system and imprecise methodology used by the Census Bureau in 1960 and 1970. As a result, others place the figure between 20,000 and 40,000. See “Lack of Work Forces Indians From Homeland,” *Oakland Tribune*, December 17, 1967; Joan Ablon. “Relocated American Indians in the San Francisco Bay Area,” in Deward Walker, Jr, ed. The Emergent Native Americans: A Reader in Culture Contact (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1972), p. 713–714; Troy Johnson. The Occupation of Alcatraz, p. 9; and Native American Research Group. American Indian Socialization to Urban Life: Final Report (Berkeley: Institute for Scientific Analysis, 1975), p. 26.

glass on the streets, people sleeping in doorways, and hard-faced men wandering around. The hotel was not much better than the streets.¹⁵

After a few weeks, the Mankiller family moved out of the Tenderloin and found an apartment in the working-class district of Portrero Hill. Since a predominantly Native American neighborhood did not exist in either Oakland or San Francisco, Native Americans frequently moved into other communities of color. “Many Hispanics lived in our neighborhood,” Mankiller recalls of Portrero Hill, “and we became good friends with a Mexican family next door named Roybal. They took us under their wing, and made our adjustment a pet project.”¹⁶ In 1960, the Mankiller family moved into Hunter’s Point, a principally African American neighborhood. There, she explains, “. . . my perceptions of the world around me began to take shape. . . . Hunters’ Point was primarily a community of black families [and] Black culture had a profound impact on my development. . . . I was taught invaluable lessons on those mean streets. They were part of our continuing education in the world of urban poverty and violence.”¹⁷ As neighbors, these relationships proved influential. Nor should they come as a surprise. Whether they were arriving from a reservation in Oklahoma, small Black communities in Louisiana, or from *pueblitos* in Mexico or Central America, communities of color in post-war San Francisco shared the experience of having to transition from a rural background to a fast paced, competitive life in the city. After graduation from high school, Wilma Mankiller moved into the Mission District, a primarily Latina/o neighborhood, where the growing Native American community of San Francisco was beginning to get organized and vocal.

At first, Native American organization concerned itself with the social consequences of termination and relocation. In 1956 the American Friends Service Committee opened the Intertribal Friendship House in Oakland. Later that year, the Roman Catholic St. Vincent de Paul Society established the San

15 Wilma Mankiller. Mankiller: A Chief and Her People (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1993), p. 71.

16 Wilma Mankiller. Mankiller, p. 72.

17 Wilma Mankiller. Mankiller, p. 108–109.

Francisco Indian Center in the Mission District. These two community centers served as hubs for local Native American activities. At the San Francisco Indian Center, for instance, each day was filled with activities: Indian dancing on Tuesday; a ladies sewing club, Indian arts and crafts, a girls' ping pong and boys billiards tournament on Wednesday; council meetings on job, housing, and welfare on Thursday; modern ballet class and powwow on Friday; and a children's health clinic on Saturday, followed by a rock-n-roll dance in the evening.¹⁸ "The Indian Center," Mankiller recalls, "became a sanctuary for me. It became an oasis where I could share my feelings and frustrations with kids from similar backgrounds."¹⁹ Over time, nearly forty different social clubs came together — often under the roof of either community center. These organizations were primarily tribal-specific, such as the Sioux Club, Navajo Club, United Paiutes, or Tlingit-Haida Club, and were intended to preserve and maintain distinct cultural traditions in the face of relocation and its assimilative pressures. But, as they organized regional pow-wows, ceremonies, and picnics, a social network took shape that functioned, in one capacity, as an orientation for recently-arrived relocatees, but equally as a base for more explicit political organization in the future.²⁰

From mid-1963 to 1964, the atmosphere in San Francisco was extremely charged as local civil rights organizations, such as the NAACP, CORE, and the Ad Hoc Committee to End Discrimination, joined together to form the United Freedom Movement (UFM). Starting at Lucky supermarkets in February, the Sheraton-Palace Hotel in March, Auto Row in April, and Bank of America in May, hundreds of UFM supporters gathered together, formed picket lines, and committed civil disobedience to call attention to the systemic economic inequalities and employment discrimination facing communities of color in San Francisco. These protests catalyzed activism throughout the Bay Area, ranging from anti-poverty work in the newly-created "community action programs" of San Francisco's Economic Opportunity Council (EOC) to

18 Stan Steiner. The New Indians (New York: Delta Books, 1968), p. 187-188.

19 Wilma Mankiller. Wilma Mankiller, p. 111-112.

20 "Indians Promote Cultural Pride," *Oakland Tribune*, December 17, 1967; Adam Fortunate Eagle. Alcatraz! Alcatraz!, p. 25; Troy Johnson. Occupation of Alcatraz, p. 13-14.

the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley.²¹

Within this context, Native Americans in San Francisco also began to organize themselves; this time, however, their agenda extended beyond organizing cultural events to include direct confrontation with the BIA and its relocation program. In February 1962, many of the various social clubs had joined together to form the American Indian Council of the Bay Area, Inc., providing “urban Indians,” for the first time, with a greater political voice in the region. In short order, members of the United Council, as it came to be called, organized protests against the BIA. In the summer of 1963, Richard McKenzie, the president of the United Council, pulled together a group of its members and, with picket signs reading “White Man Go Home,” marched over a three-day period on local BIA offices. Their specific complaint was that the federal government failed to provide adequate retraining programs for relocatees. McKenzie later explained, “The simplest facts of life in the city were new to them: gearing your entire day by a clock, when to go to work, when to eat lunch. They don’t even understand where you board a bus, how to pay, and how to open and close the doors. Because they have been sent from the reservation with a lack of training, information, and money, [they face] the hardships and loneliness of the disillusioned Indian in the city.”²² The BIA did little to respond.

Within a year, however, as the San Francisco media focused their attention on the civil rights protests of the UFM, the United Council increasingly connected to a developing network of Native American activists across the country. As early as the 1950s, traditionalists on reservations resisted federal efforts to undermine indigenous sovereignty. In 1957, for instance, Tuscorora leader Wallace “Mad Bear” Anderson led a peaceful protest of Mohawk tradi-

21 Natalie Becker and Marjorie Myhill. Power and Participation in the San Francisco Community Action Program, (Berkeley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, 1967), pp. 4-14; Larry Salomon. Roots of Justice: Stories of Organizing in Communities of Color (Berkeley: Chardon Press, 1998), 41-60.

22 “Indians Picket U.S. Office,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 14, 1963. The accompanying picture shows McKenzie with a young woman dressed in traditional clothing. The caption reads: “Uprising in Oakland”. McKenzie quote taken from Stan Steiner. The New Indians, p. 179.

tionalists to the steps of a New York courthouse, destroying a batch of legal summonses for supposed non-payment of state taxes. They argued, as members of a sovereign nation, they were not legally required to pay state tax. One year later, Anderson continued organizing in defense of indigenous sovereignty as he — and over one hundred other Tuscorara, Mohawk, and Seneca — successfully turned back the New York Power Authority who sought to build a reservoir on Tuscorara land. “Mad Bear” Anderson was a visionary, ahead of his time, viewing the struggle of Native Americans within the United States as parallel to the developing national liberation struggles in the Third World. In 1958, after receiving a personal invitation from Fidel Castro, he traveled to Cuba on behalf of the Six Nations, seeking sponsorship for formal admission into the United Nations as a sovereign nation. After returning to the United States, Anderson said, “This is the dawn of a new day. I will do all in my power to see Indians unite across the continent. There is a movement of Indian nationalism in the nation. In the future we will bring our movement and the black movement together.”²³

Members of the United Council did not quite share Anderson’s radical vision. They too sought Indian unity and believed in the protection of treaty rights; yet, as urban middle-class Indians disconnected from a land base, they were much more influenced by a traditional civil rights approach, specifically directing their attention to either reforming the BIA, the Office of Economic Opportunity, or litigating treaty rights in the courts. They did not have the internationalist orientation of Anderson, nor his open identification with the Black freedom struggle. Nonetheless, the United Council did increasingly embrace the tactics of civil disobedience, direct action, and symbolic protest. As such, they developed fraternal relations with the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC), a national organization formed in 1961 by a group of Native American college students to counter the overly-professional National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). Prominent members of NIYC included Clyde Warrior, Mel Thom, and Hank Adams. By 1964, motivated by

²³ Troy Johnson, Occupation of Alcatraz Island, p. 37–38; Anderson quote in Steiner, New Indians, p. 281.

deteriorating conditions on reservations and inspired by the success of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the Deep South, the NIYC decided to engage in direct action. Similar to SNCC's scheduled "Mississippi Summer Project," in which youth from across the country traveled to Mississippi to challenge racism, NIYC members coordinated the "Washington State Project" in an attempt to challenge state laws that unconstitutionally violated the 1854 Treaty of Medicine Creek.

Thus, as the UFM in San Francisco picketed and conducted "sit-ins" for more jobs at prominent local businesses, the United Council joined with the NIYC in supporting the fishing rights struggle of the Puyallup, Nisqually, and Makah (among others) on various rivers located near Seattle, Washington. In late February 1964, Mel Thom, president of the NIYC, flew into San Francisco to strategize with Richard McKenzie and Allen Cottier, the newly-elected president of the United Council.²⁴ At this meeting, which they provocatively called a "war council," they discussed the "fish-in" scheduled for March 2, and how Bay Area leaders could provide "strategic leadership" in defending the 110-year old treaty right guaranteeing the use of traditional waters. To support activists in the area, the United Council called on Native Americans across the nation to conduct "sympathetic activities." If individuals could make it to Washington, that was even better. Speaking to the growing unity among Native Americans, Cottier added, "The fish-in in Washington will be the first time the Indians of the United States have united physically since the Custer Massacre. Seventy of the 300 American tribes will be represented there." On Sunday, March 1, McKenzie flew to Seattle to participate in the "fish-in," and, indeed, hundreds of Native Americans – from the Mohawks of New York to the Lumas of New Mexico – arrived from across the nation. For McKenzie and others from the Bay Area, the impact of

24 Richard McKenzie and Alan Cottier would also circulate as head of the San Francisco Indian Center.

direct action and inter-tribal unity made a lasting impression.²⁵

Returning to the Bay Area, McKenzie prepared for another direct action set to take place later in the week on Sunday, March 8. One-year prior, in mid-1963, two important events converged that inadvertently impacted local Native American activism. First, an agreement was reached in the Indian Claims Commission over disputed land claims in California, culminating nearly twenty years of litigation between attorneys representing the federal government and California Indians. A controversial settlement of \$29.1 million was awarded as compensation for nearly sixty-four million acres of stolen land. In the end, this amounted to merely \$.47 per acre. California Indians, throughout 1963 and into 1964, hotly debated this decision.²⁶ Secondly, by summer 1963, the last prisoners were finally removed from the federal penitentiary on Alcatraz. The infamous prison had proven too costly to maintain. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy called for the closure of Alcatraz, thereby setting off a debate as to the future use of the abandoned facility.

On March 8, 1964, the day after members of the UFM jammed the lobby of the Sheraton-Palace to protest employment discrimination, five Sioux members of the United Council – Richard McKenzie, Allen Cottier, Garfield Spotted Elk, Mark Martinez, and Walter Means [Russell Means' father] –

25 “Canon Fights for Indians,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 1, 1964; “Arrest at Indian ‘Fish In’,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 3, 1964; For the standard study on fishing rights struggles within the Pacific Northwest, see American Friends Service Committee. Uncommon Controversy: Fishing Rights of the Muckleshoot, Puyallup, and Nisqually Indians (Seattle: University of Washington, 1970). Also, see Faye G. Cohen. Treaties on Trial: The Continuing Controversy Over Northwest Fishing Rights (Seattle: University of Washington, 1986); Stan Steiner. The New Indians, pp. 48-64; and The Institute for Natural Progress. “In Usual and Accustomed Places: Contemporary American Indian Fishing Rights Struggles,” in Annette Jaimes, ed. The State of Native America, pp. 217-239.

26 The Indian Claims Commission was created in 1946, as part of the Indian Claims Commission Act, to adjudicate land claims brought forth by indigenous nations charging illegal expropriation of their land. The Indian Claims Commission, however, was unable to *return* lands. Instead, despite the desires by many Native Americans to actually regain sacred lands, the Commission merely determined the appropriate monetary compensation to be paid for any stolen land. To make matters worse, the specific monetary award was determined by the estimated price per acre *at the time* of expropriation. See Donald Fixico. Termination and Relocation, pp. 21-44.

chartered a boat to Alcatraz and claimed the island under homesteading provisions of the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie.²⁷ Upon arrival on the rocky island, Allen Cottier, dressed in a war bonnet and carrying an American flag, read a statement aloud to the assembled media, claiming Alcatraz in the name of Indians – specifically, the Sioux. He then briefly outlined the legal basis for the occupation, and – in the spirit of the recent Indian Claims Commission settlement – offered \$.47 per acre to the federal government, amounting to roughly \$9.40 for the entire island. After reading the statement, the American flag was raised, and the landing party began to sing and dance in celebration.²⁸

The “invasion,” as the local media referred to the events of the day, lasted roughly four hours. Intending to stay longer – having brought tents, clothing, and food – members of the United Council decided to return to the mainland after U.S. marshals started threatening them. Having made their point in the media, and formally completing a claim statement to be filed in Sacramento’s Bureau of Land Claims, these early occupants of Alcatraz returned to the San Francisco Indian Center. It would now be up to the courts to decide who owned Alcatraz.²⁹

The mainstream media, while sympathetic to Native Americans, largely characterized the events as a publicity stunt. Within the local Native American community, however, it was a harbinger of greater things to come, signaling a slow shift in political consciousness. Russell Means, barely twenty-six at the time of this occupation, recalls how,

Until that March evening, I had never had the slightest clue that my quiet, easygoing father might have harbored the principles or the spirit to boldly and publicly seize Indian land back from white America, to stand up for Indian rights – or even to step into the spotlight that was

27 “Peace at Palace,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 8, 1964, p. 1; “Alcatraz Invasion,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 9, 1964, p. 1.

28 “Alcatraz Invasion,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 9, 1964; “Wacky Indian Raid, Alcatraz ‘Invaded,’” *San Francisco Examiner*, March 9, 1964; “War Dance on Alcatraz: Sioux Stake a Claim on the Rock,” *Oakland Tribune*, March 9, 1964; Adam Fortunate Eagle. Alcatraz! Alcatraz!, p. 15-17.

29 “Aftermath of Alcatraz ‘Invasion,’” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 10, 1964, p. 2.

sure to follow him. It made me proud to be his son, and to be Lakota. . . . For a few exhilarating hours, I felt a freedom that I had never experienced, as though Alcatraz were mine. . . . It was my first inkling of what direct action can accomplish.”³⁰

The events on Alcatraz were, indeed, inspiring. However, they were not yet fully part of “the nationalist movement” that traditionalist Mad Bear Anderson described as developing across Indian Country in the late 1950s. They were still a product of geography and “the times,” fitting firmly within a reformist and legalistic paradigm utilized by other liberal activists of color in the area. It would be a mistake to underestimate the ideological connections existing between the successful UFM protests and this early Alcatraz protest. Carrying the American flag on Alcatraz, members of the United Council did not seek to distance themselves from the United States; instead, they attempted — through direct action and the use of media — to assert legal rights and protections. Members of the United Council, though they engaged in public demonstrations against the BIA, supported the fishing rights of Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest, and claimed legal title to Alcatraz, still focused on working within the system.

In September 1965, in a final attempt to prevent the disposal of Alcatraz and gain legal title to the island, Richard McKenzie filed suit in federal court. The courts ultimately dismissed McKenzie’s case. Expressing frustration with the U.S. legal system and a desire for stronger tactics, McKenzie concluded, “Kneel-Ins, Sit-ins, Sleep-ins, Eat-ins, [and] Pray-ins like the Negroes do wouldn’t help us. We would have to occupy the government buildings before things would change.”³¹ Yet, similar shifts were occurring within the Black freedom struggle. Alongside the front-page article describing the 1964 Alcatraz occupation, another story reported on Malcolm X’s decision to leave the Nation of Islam. In the interview, he outlined his orientation,

I am still a Muslim, but the main emphasis of the new movement will be

30 Russell Means. *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, pp. 105–107.

31 Rupert Costo., “Alcatraz,” *Indian Historian* (Winter 1970), p. 9; McKenzie quoted in Stan Steiner. *The New Indians*, p. 45.

Black Nationalism as a political concept and form of social action against the white oppressors.³²

Nationalism, as “a political concept and form of social action,” would increasingly emerge among relocated Native Americans in San Francisco too.

Into the late 1960s, the exodus of relocated Native Americans into the Bay Area continued to grow. A 1965 Fair Employment Practice Commission report noted that Native Americans constituted “the fastest growing minority group” in California, yet still “lags behind all of the other groups in jobs, pay and schooling.”³³ While it is difficult to ascertain the yearly figure of Native Americans arriving in the Bay Area, one study reports that nearly 80% arrived after 1960 – two-thirds coming directly through the BIA relocation program.³⁴ By the end of the 1960s, the full diversity of Indian Country lived in San Francisco, ranging from long-time Sioux and Dine residents to Pomo, Eskimo, Mohawk, and Tuscarora. This demographic movement, however, not only diversified the Native American community, but also gave birth to new political leadership.

Richard McKenzie, Belva and Allen Cottier, and the Means family – all

32 “A Black Nationalism for the U.S.,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 9, 1964, p. 1, 19. Newspaper articles covering the sit-in at the Sheraton-Palace hotel noted the split already developing within the local civil rights community. Established leaders within the UFM (such as Terry Francois and Willie Brown of the NAACP) came into increasing conflict with the more youthful and militant members of the coalition. Debates often centered on the role of civil disobedience. Eighteen-year old Tracy Sims, speaking as the chair of the Ad Hoc Committee to End Discrimination, spoke for many when she responded, “I don’t think that the arrests are detrimental to our cause. . . I think they show everyone that the fervor for civil rights has *finally* struck the North.” [emphasis added]. “‘Rebellion’ Splits Negro Leaders,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 8, 1964, p. 1, 2.

33 “State Indians – Births and Depression,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, December 18, 1965. The FEPC report further states that the unemployment rate for Native American men is 15%, three times higher than that of whites and 3 percentage points higher than African Americans. In addition, sixty-seven percent either worked as unskilled laborers in California factories or fields. In regards to educational achievement, nearly 50% of those Native Americans in California had not gone beyond the eighth grade.

34 Native American Research Group. American Indian Socialization to Urban Life: A Final Report, p. 20-21.

Sioux and having arrived prior to 1960 – represented an early cohort that, by the late 1960s, found itself increasingly out of step with younger Native Americans. On the one hand, most of the leaders of the United Council at the time of the 1964 Alcatraz occupation were already in their thirties and forties. The differences were more than generational however. Though they volunteered at the San Francisco Indian Center and with the United Council, many were established entrepreneurs and enjoyed a certain sense of stability; those arriving in the mid-1960s, on the other hand, still experienced the harshest cultural and economic aspects of relocation and urbanization. Divergent class backgrounds, in turn, shaped differing ideological orientations. The United Council, for instance, while firmly focused on the social needs of urban Native Americans, emphasized an advocacy politics that relied principally upon the influence of established leaders instead of promoting a “grassroots activism” inclusive of the poorest sectors of the community. As the influx of younger Native Americans converged with the dynamic political developments occurring within the larger Bay Area, such as the organization of the Black Panther Party and the militant demands of students of color on college campuses, a new political generation began to emerge and take shape in local Native American communities.

One such individual was La Nada Boyer. Upon arrival in San Francisco, Boyer promptly visited the local BIA office, waiting in the lobby several days for them to find her an adequate job. After a few days, with no help forthcoming from the BIA, Boyer – who was only seventeen years old at the time – began to look for work in the city on her own. Eventually, she found work in a string of dead-end jobs. Typical of BIA policy, as soon as she found employment, the BIA terminated her monthly relocation payment of \$140, thereby cutting themselves free from any further responsibilities. Isolated in the city, La Nada Boyer, like many other young Native Americans arriving in San Francisco, spent countless hours in “Indian bars,” seeking both to escape the harshness of a new urban environment through alcohol and to find solace in the company of other Native Americans.³⁵

35 LaNada Boyer. “Reflections of Alcatraz,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 18:4 (1994), 75-92; Peter Collier. “The Red Man’s Burden,” *Ramparts* 8:8 (February 1970), p. 30.

Yet, the political landscape had changed by the late Sixties, as the options available to Native Americans began to extend beyond the BIA and the bars. With the implementation of War on Poverty programs under the administration of Lyndon Johnson in 1964, new possibilities opened up for urban Native Americans. In San Francisco, for instance, the Economic Opportunity Council (OEO) was organized on the basis of four target areas: Chinatown, Western Addition, Hunter's Point, and the Mission District.³⁶ As Native Americans lived primarily in the Mission District, many participated in that neighborhood's OEO-funded programs alongside other people of color. La Nada Boyer worked with the Mission Rebels, a non-profit organization that funded cultural events, recreational activities, job-training, and educational programs for poor youth from the neighborhood. In January 1968, with their sponsorship and organizational connections, La Nada Boyer entered the University of California at Berkeley under the campus' recently instituted Educational Opportunities Program (EOP), a direct product of Black and Chicana/o pressure to increase "minorities" in higher education. She later recalled,

I was the first Native American student. And it was lonely! But . . . I made friends immediately with everyone, all people of color. . . . And, until we [Native Americans] had our own organization, I belonged to the Mexican American Student Confederation (MASC).³⁷

Later that spring, she deepened her political activism by traveling to Washington D.C. and participating in the Poor People's March. After returning to the Bay Area in the summer of 1968, La Nada Boyer, along with

36 Later, the Tenderloin district would be added as a target area. For the Economic Opportunity Council of San Francisco, see Natalie Becker and Marjorie Myhill. Power and Participation in the San Francisco Community Action Program and Ralph M. Kramer. Participation of the Poor: Comparative Case Studies in the War on Poverty (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), specifically chapter 2.

37 La Nada Boyer keynote address given at "Red Power: Thirty Years of American Indian Activism in the San Francisco Bay Area," a commemorative conference sponsored by San Francisco State University's Department of American Indian Studies at the Seven Hills Conference Center, San Francisco, November 19, 1999. Video located at Media Services Center, University of California-Berkeley. Also, see La Nada Boyer. "Reflections of Alcatraz," p. 76.

Lehman Brightman, founded United Native Americans, a militant pan-Indian organization of tremendous influence which, through both its community-based activism and ideological positioning, directly set the stage for the 1969 occupation of Alcatraz.

Founded in the same year, and roughly a month before, the American Indian Movement in Minneapolis, UNA still remains neglected by historians of the Red Power Movement. By the late 1960s, new organizations were emerging which slowly supplanted the political leadership of the United Council. A loose network of activists existed which ultimately cohered into various inter-related organizations. Members of UNA, for instance, worked in close relationship with the California Indian Education Association (CIEA), literally sharing membership at times. However, where CIEA tended to emphasize issues related solely to Native American education in California, UNA articulated a much broader political agenda, shaped by an explicitly nationalist vision. UNA's nationalist vision was founded upon a radical notion of self-determination that transcended earlier reformist definitions, specifically engaging issues of indigenous sovereignty, traditional spirituality, and methods to rebuild a land base. Mad Bear Anderson's "Indian nationalist movement" had finally arrived in San Francisco.

In the first issue of *Warpath*, the organization's newsletter, UNA openly declared itself to be "a completely new kind of organization," "created from the grassroots level," and committed to doing "everything possible to aid in the liberation and survival of all native, tribal peoples everywhere." UNA would "bring together all people of Indian identity and Indian descent . . . not just in the United States, but eventually throughout the Americas;" and, "to bring together all who can identify with the Native American liberation struggle without getting involved in full-blood vs. mixed-blood in-fighting or inter-tribal squabbles." Lastly, as an "action organization," UNA declared, in contrast to earlier political organizations, it would "move forward on the basis of real issues and . . . turn [its] backs on factions, self-serving cliques, 'perpetual leadership' groups, and personalism."³⁸

38 "United Native Americans'. . . A Totally New Kind of All-Indian, Pan-Indian, Action Organization," *Warpath* 1:1 (Summer 1968), p. 2.

It is difficult to remove UNA from the larger context of the Bay Area, in particular the evolution of the Black Panther Party. While it did not intend to imitate the Black Panthers, UNA did share certain characteristics. For instance, it spoke in terms of fighting for “liberation,” against “colonialism” and “imperialism,” developing “grassroots” or “people power,” linked local struggles with those occurring throughout the world, and proposed a specific set of organizational principles and programs. As the Black Power Movement distanced itself from the discourse of a non-violent civil rights struggle, so too did UNA, declaring the opening of a new phase of Native American resistance. “The ‘Stoic, Silent, Redman’ of the past,” UNA explained, “who turned the other cheek to white injustice is dead. . . . And, in his place is an angry group of Indians who dare to speak up and voice their dissatisfaction at the world around them.”³⁹

Embracing an anti-colonial orientation, UNA quickly targeted both the BIA and the local Office of Economic Opportunity for failing to provide for urban Native Americans. In a September press conference, Lehman Brightman, labeled the BIA “the best example of colonialism that you’ll find in the world.” To underscore his point, he discussed the Native American unemployment rate which exceeded 70%; death rates from tuberculosis that were seven to eight times the non-Native rate; an infant mortality rate double that of whites; a life-expectancy fifteen to twenty times shorter than the national average; a suicide rate 100 times the national average; over ninety percent of housing on reservations were considered substandard; and a systemic pattern of alcoholism tied directly to the psychological impact of colonization. In light of these facts, Brightman argued, the OEO office, the BIA, and local governments continue to ignore Native Americans. In fact, he added, the BIA “is perpetuating [these problems] by not giving us an adequate education.” La Nada Boyer, at that point, took the microphone and poignantly testified to her experiences in both the BIA boarding schools and at the University of California, Berkeley. First, she explained how, as a child, she had been expelled from educational institutions solely “because I spoke up for what I believe is right.” Linking issues of curricular diversity to broader social change

39 “The New Indians,” *Warpath* 2:1 (Fall 1968), p. 1.

in the community, Boyer explained that even at Berkeley,

I can't find out anything about my own people. . . . It's hard for me to go to college and eventually be assimilated and never be able to relate to the American Indian and their problems. I feel they're trying to make me into a white person. . . . What is needed [is] a university of our own with Indian teachers who understand the problems we're going through.

Six days later, UNA marched on the local OEO office charging discrimination against Native Americans. In response, the OEO granted \$48,000 to the San Francisco Indian Center. While UNA was pleased with the results, it never lost sight of its larger, radical anti-colonial political agenda.⁴⁰

Through *Warpath*, UNA was able to not only report on Native American activism, but also to give it a unique form and substance. In particular, it emphasized an all-Indian unity premised upon an international framework. As early as the first issue, *Warpath* chronicled the struggles of the Paiute in Nevada, who were attempting to stop white farmers from illegally siphoning their water; the colonization and recent political awakening of native Hawaiians as an indigenous nation; the massacres of indigenous communities in Brazil; and the efforts of the Darien Indians of southern Panama to stop U.S. corporations from further developing the Panama Canal. In its reporting, *Warpath* framed these local struggles as fundamentally inter-connected, bound together by the experience of political, economic, and cultural imperialism. At the same time, this sense of solidarity extended to other communities of color, such as Chicanos/as in the Southwest. "Recent months have seen the awakening of many Mexican-Americans to the importance of their Native American ancestry," *Warpath* observed. It added,

For many years these sons of the Aztecs . . . living in the United States have been brainwashed by Anglo-American racism. But now the

40 "The U.S. Indian and 'Colonialism,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 26, 1968, p. 5; "Awakened Indians Battle the System," *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 26, 1968, p. 47; "Indians Protest Federal Aid 'Bias,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 2, 1968, p. 3; "Indian Liberation Struggle Advancing," *Warpath* 1:2 (Fall 1968), p. 2.

“Brown Berets,” the Brown Heritage Club [both local Bay Area Chicano/Latino organizations] . . . are affirming that ‘Brown is Beautiful.’ Many Chicano leaders are openly talking about their Indianness and about alliances with Tribal Americans. . . . Indians need to understand the desire of Chicanos for the preservation of their heritage and language, for control over their communities, and for changing the schools. Chicanos need to understand the goals of Indian people. Maybe we need a number of get-togethers . . . in order to better understand each other’s problems.⁴¹

While this meeting seemingly never took place, UNA’s internationalism did contribute to a gathering of Native Americans from throughout the Western Hemisphere.

In the fall of 1968, UNA put out a call in *Warpath* for an “international gathering of Indian people.” The intent of the conference, UNA proposed, was to figure out how to “work together to achieve liberation and justice in the face of the twin enemies of stifling bureaucracies and captive Indians who work with them,” and “to rekindle the ancient spiritual strength of the Indian people.”⁴² Traditionalists of the Six Nations agreed to sponsor such an event, and in August 1969, the “Native Aborigines of the Americas Unity Convention” took place on the Tonawanda Seneca reservation near Buffalo, New York. Chairing the proceedings were Chief Beeman Logan and veteran activist Mad Bear Anderson. Over the course of the week, indigenous activists from throughout the Americas (but primarily the United States) discussed and debated the entire spectrum of issues relating to Native American sovereignty. Janet McCloud (Tualip) and Edith McCloud (Walla Walla), for instance, shared news and analyses of their ongoing struggle in the Pacific Northwest to protect indigenous fishing rights. UNA highlighted issues relating to urban Indians, as well as distributed copies of *Warpath*, posters of historic Native American figures, and bumper-stickers that read “Indian

41 “Mexican-Americans Are Asserting Their Indian Ancestry,” *Warpath* 1:1 (Summer 1968), p. 7.

42 “Indian Liberation Meeting Planned,” *Warpath* 1:2 (Fall 1968), p. 2

Power,” “Custer Had It Coming,” and “Indians Discovered America.”⁴³ The unity of spirit and action achieved at the convention cannot be underestimated. For UNA, the reconnection with traditionalists fighting to preserve sacred lands, rights, and traditions on the reservation reaffirmed both their militancy in defending Native American sovereignty and their belief that indigenous spirituality would play a key role in liberation.

A necessary part of this “rebirth,” or process of decolonization, included the development of American Indian or Native American Studies. La Nada Boyer, as head of the Berkeley chapter of UNA, worked closely with Lehman Brightman, Steve Talbot, Carmen Christy, and Jack Forbes to establish a curriculum on campus that accurately reflected Native American history and culture. Throughout the fall semester of 1968, they had developed courses, such as “American Indian Liberation,” “Indian Community Development,” and “The Indian Experience.” They also pushed for a full Department of American Indian Studies to be established by the fall of 1969. Accordingly, in the spring of 1969, the campus chapter of UNA joined with Chicano/a, Asian American, and African American student organizations to form the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF), and demand from the college administration a Third World College composed of four permanent departments: Black Studies, Chicano Studies, Asian American Studies, and American Indian Studies.⁴⁴

UNA pointed out that since January of 1968, only fifteen Native American students had attended Berkeley, and worse yet, there were zero Native Americans scheduled to be admitted in Fall 1969. The TWLF, therefore, demanded an increase in the enrollment of all Third World students. UNA members viewed the Native American struggle as unique, but they simultaneously understood it – and themselves – as inter-connected with other communities of color. In explaining their embrace of the term “Third World,” UNA members stated, the “term ‘minority’ has been thrown out of the Third World vocabulary since whitey wanted the Third World people to

43 “Western Hemisphere Meeting of Indians Called,” *Warpath* 1:3 (Summer 1969), p. 7; “Indian Liberation Conference a Success,” *Warpath* 1:4 (Fall 1969), p. 3.

44 “Struggle for Indian Studies,” *Warpath* 1:3 (Summer 1969), p. 4.

believe that they were the minority. All suppressed peoples of color that make up the Third World, all over the world do not make up a minority but are the majority, and whitey is the true minority and doesn't want us to know it."⁴⁵

La Nada Boyer emerged as a key leader during the student strike. She recalls that, "the strike at Berkeley was the largest riot, or so-called campus disturbance, that they had at Berkeley, and it was because we were people of color . . . they feared us as people of color. This is when they brought the unshielded bayonets and the riot guard, the National Guard; when they dropped tear gas bombs on campus; and this is when they started looking at individuals and so-called leaders." In the end, Boyer was suspended from Berkeley for two quarters without the benefit of a trial, thereby neutralizing an important campus activist.⁴⁶

By the end of spring 1969, the Third World Strike at Berkeley came to a conclusion. UNA, however, characterized it as a "half-assed victory since there still is no Third World College with a department of Indian studies. Rather, we have a department of Ethnic Studies (whitey is afraid to use our term, Third World) with a division of Native American Studies." UNA was also greatly concerned with the orientation of the new discipline. "Native students want to be able to come through the university machinery [as] INDIANS who can continue to relate to their own people and go back to the reservations or Indian communities with the weapons they need to STOP whitey from starving Indians, taking away Indian lands, putting Indians into prisons and Stop whitey from trying to make us like him." With that said, by the fall of 1969, Berkeley offered six courses in an Indian Studies program chaired by UNA president Lehman Brightman. As for Boyer, she and students from both Berkeley and San Francisco State's newly-formed American Indian Studies programs were already involved in planning another action: an occupation of Alcatraz Island.⁴⁷

45 "Native Students Fight Racism at UC Berkeley," *Warpath* 1:4 (Fall 1969), p. 11.

46 La Nada Boyer keynote address given at "Red Power: Thirty Years of American Indian Activism in the San Francisco Bay Area," November 19, 1999. Over the course of the strike, she had been arrested and indicted for felony assault, a charge later reduced to battery.

47 "Native Students Fight Racism at UC Berkeley," *Warpath* 1:4 (Fall 1969), p. 11; "Indian Studies," *Warpath* 2:1 (Spring 1970), p. 7.

Throughout the summer of 1969, the fate of Alcatraz was once again hotly debated when Lamar Hunt, son of a Texas oil tycoon, proposed to the city of San Francisco his plans to purchase it for private development. Eventually, the proposal was defeated when local activists mounted a campaign to prevent the commercialization of the bay, but it re-ignited discussion (and powerful memories) of the earlier attempt to reclaim the island.⁴⁸ While the United Council was no longer the epicenter of Native activism, certain individuals were still quite active in local politics. Belva Cottier, a veteran of the 1964 island occupation, joined UNA in the late 1960s, while Adam Nordwall (Adam Fortunate Eagle), a founder and chairman of the United Council, worked tirelessly within the Bay Area community. Plans to re-take Alcatraz, therefore, emerged simultaneously in different locations. Adam Nordwall began strategizing at United Council meetings, while students at Berkeley and San Francisco State debated the idea in their fledgling Native American Studies courses. Between the two circles, tentative plans were made for summer 1970.

On October 10, 1969, the San Francisco Indian Center mysteriously burnt to the ground, and with the loss of this crucial social and cultural center, a new sense of urgency became palpable. Wilma Mankiller recalls that,

The fire had a galvanizing effect on everyone in the local Native American community. Time was of the essence. A statement had to be delivered. It would require action and not mere words. We could not sit in the ashes and weep. . . . We could not afford to wait for the next summer. The occupation of Alcatraz had to occur as soon as possible. And it did.⁴⁹

The occupation that began on November 9, 1969 marked the eclipse of the political generation associated with the United Council. For years, they had submitted proposal after proposal to convert Alcatraz into an Indian facility.

48 Adam Fortunate Eagle. Alcatraz! Alcatraz!, pp. 39-40; Troy Johnson. The Occupation of Alcatraz, pp. 22-23; Robert Warrior and Paul Chaat Smith. Like a Hurricane, pp. 11-12.

49 Wilma Mankiller. Mankiller, p. 190.

Frustrated, individuals like Adam Nordwall felt a symbolic action needed to be taken to alert the public to the conditions of Native Americans in the Bay Area. This seemed more urgent now that the San Francisco Indian Center was destroyed. Yet, much had changed in the Bay Area. A new, more militant, generation influenced by United Native Americans, the Third World Strikes on college campuses, and the teaching of traditionalists (not to mention the equally prominent activities of the Black Panther Party, Red Guard Party, and the various radical Chicana/o organizations) wanted more than symbols. They demanded self-determination rooted in something more material and spiritual: land.

Ironically, the occupation of Alcatraz ultimately weakened UNA as an organization. Individuals continued struggling on behalf of Native sovereignty but not necessarily as members of UNA. Many became active in Indians of All Tribes (IAT), the pan-Indian organization that led and coordinated the exhausting nineteen-month occupation. Moreover, as time went by, AIM came to be identified by the media as *the* Red Power organization. Nevertheless, despite their invisibility in history books, this essay has argued that the political praxis of IAT cannot be understood apart from that of UNA and, more generally, the Third Worldist landscape that it existed within. In other words, the occupation of Alcatraz, and the ideas animating it, did not emerge spontaneously, but instead reflected an organic extension of UNA's politics and philosophy. While the dramatic occupation riveted the public's attention, a radical consciousness and militancy had taken shape long beforehand that ultimately formed the true "Rock" upon which the spectacular occupation was built.