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# *Special Forum* Introduction: Transnational Nuclear Imperialisms

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We are here for the thousands of Japanese women and  
men suffering in their bodies and  
in their souls. We are here for the thousands of Japanese  
children suffering deformities due to  
radioactive effects. But we are also here for every victim of  
military and civil nuclear [sic]:  
People of Marshall Islands People of Maralinga  
of Three Miles Island of La Hague of Chernobyl  
of Moruroa and Fangataufa.  
Let's march all together  
to make humanity leave the nuclear age behind.

—Chantal T. Spitz, “august 6th 1945 – 6 août 1995”

On the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1995, Mā'ohi activist Chantal T. Spitz traveled from French-occupied Polynesia to Sydney, Australia, to join thousands of antinuclear protestors gathered on Gadigal land. The demands were multiple but united: to end all forms of nuclear imperialisms that continue to scorch the Earth. These included the environmental, health, and psychological damages left by the sixty-seven United States nuclear and thermonuclear bombs tested in the Marshall Islands; the seven British nuclear tests that devastated Pitjantjatjara land in Maralinga; the radioactive leaks that contaminated Susquehannock land on Three

Mile Island; the nuclear waste dumped in the Atlantic Ocean near La Hague; and, last but not least, the decision by the colonial power occupying French Polynesia to continue testing nuclear bombs on the islands of Moruroa and Fangataufa, back in Spitz's home country. By travelling to Australia, where Aboriginal peoples have long struggled against settlers mining, testing, and dumping radioactive material on their lands, Spitz sought to bring together all victims of the transnational nuclear imperial complex. She called for renewed border-crossing solidarities linking Indigenous antinuclearisms with those of other islands, renewed transnational solidarities that could make her dream come true: "Never again Hiroshima and Nagasaki Marshall Islands Maralinga / Never again Moruroa and Fangataufa."<sup>1</sup>

All over the world, antinuclear activists like Spitz have striven to connect with other activists from formerly or currently colonized countries, to create and also to build on South–South antinuclear networks of resistance. In 1991, Olzhas Suleimenov, Kazakh poet and protestor of USSR nuclear tests in his country, travelled to Nevada to build a transnational alliance with the Western Shoshone nation, a victim of American nuclear tests (**Rozsa**, this Special Forum). In 1996, Amantay Asilbekov, leader of the Uighur antinuclear movement in China, established close collaborations with antinuclear governmental representatives in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>2</sup> In 2006, Paul Ah Poy, president of the Fiji Nuclear Veterans Association, traveled from Suva to Pape'ete to unite Fijian and Mā'ohi nuclear tests veterans.<sup>3</sup> In 2014, Matashichi Oishi, a Japanese fisherman, travelled to Mājro in the Marshall Islands to meet Indigenous antinuclear activists impacted by the very same bomb that irradiated him and his crew.<sup>4</sup> In 2019, Marshallese photojournalist Leonard Leon collaborated with CHamoru scholar Tiara Na'puti to document the impact of nuclear colonialism in the Northern Mariana Islands (Amundsen and Frain, this Special Forum). Activists from the Global South and its diaspora have long sought and continue to seek South–South collaboration. This is in part because they have all identified the transnational structure underpinning the nuclear industrial complex: imperialism. As Spitz summarizes, the development of nuclear technology has only been possible because Indigenous lands have been stolen:

Nuclear countries do not develop and experiment their weapons of death on their own soils but on their colonies' soils. Nuclear is happening because colonies exist. If French Polynesia was not a French colony, Jacques Chirac would not have possibility to resume French testing in my country. If French Polynesia and Marshall Islands were not colonies, Pacific would be nuclear free.<sup>5</sup>

The nuclear industrial complex is thus rooted in decades of the exploitation, destruction, and displacement of Indigenous communities.

Scholars and activists have long referred to the appropriation of Indigenous land for the furthering of nuclear programs as nuclear colonialism. Yet the term does

not reflect twenty-first century political and environmental dynamics. In order to maintain their nuclear industrial complex in the midst of international pressure to decolonize, nuclearized nations now often appropriate only circumscribed sites in independent countries. These comparatively small areas of land make up what Daniel Immerwahr has called a “pointillist empire,” which today extends all over the planet.<sup>6</sup> Given these new forms taken by the nuclear industrial complex, it is often more accurate to refer to such contemporary political domination as *nuclear imperialisms*. We define nuclear imperialisms as the state-sponsored, systemic mode of oppression in current or former sites of empire through any use of the nuclear complex. We use the plural, imperialisms, to emphasize the simultaneous and overlapping modes of nuclear oppression that involve multiple empires, technologies, and ideological framings that exist and extend beyond geographic, temporal, and national boundaries and borders.

This Special Forum advocates for transnational dialogue in nuclear studies that incorporates Indigenous resistance to nuclear imperialisms. In this introduction, we look at the genealogy of nuclear criticism and the lack of dialogue between its different disciplines and subdisciplines. As we will discuss below, mainstream nuclear discourse in the United States and Europe has tended to focus on transnational relationships between the US, its NATO allies, and its enemies. In contrast, postcolonial and Indigenous Studies scholar-activists have developed extensive critiques of the environmental racism subtending the nuclear industrial complex, but these critiques are often constrained by the limits of area studies. North-North collaborations between the US and its allies have South-South counterparts in transnational networks of resistance that unite Indigenous peoples from Roñdik, Tureia, Maralinga, New Mexico, Hammaguir, Semipalatinsk, and beyond. To paraphrase Oceanian scholar Epeli Hau’ofa, it is Indigenous peoples across the world who have achieved the greatest degree of unity on issues involving common threats to the environment.<sup>7</sup> Concerning issues of their land, and particularly the issue of nuclear bombing, mining, and polluting that furthers the nuclear industrial complex, the sense of a transnational Indigenous identity is acute. In highlighting these ongoing networks of Indigenous solidarity, we hope, in Chakrabarty’s footsteps, to “provincialize” nuclear aggressors in nuclear studies.<sup>8</sup> Indigenous antinuclear activists in different geographic and cultural contexts do not only talk back to their oppressors (**Bahng**, and **Schwartz**, this Special Forum). They also find solace (**Amundsen and Frain**, this Special Forum), humor (**Matsunaga**, this Special Forum), and strength (**Rosza**, this Special Forum) in dialoguing *with each other*. A transnational turn in nuclear studies therefore shifts the conversation about Indigenous histories, from didactic cautionary tales to be consumed by the West, to strategies of resilience and resistance to be shared.

By contrast, mainstream nuclear discourse has predominantly been interested in the future—specifically, a speculative, totalizing future dependent on the existence of nuclear war. It emerged amidst policies of deterrence, compounded by fears of mutually assured destruction by the world’s nuclear powers. The arms race of the Cold War, especially between the US and its allies and the USSR, forced the world into a

decades-long state of paranoia about “the bomb.” Atomic culture, especially in the US and the UK, featured images of atomic warfare’s threat to families. Narratives like “Duck and Cover” (US) and “Protect and Survive” (UK), highlighted civilians’ ways to prepare and respond in the event of a nuclear blast. But for the white middle-class families at the center of these popular narratives, these futures did not come to pass. Rather, these tropes fueled the speculative genres of nuclear criticism beginning in the 1980s. These proleptic nuclear cultures were further compounded by the secrecy of the Cold War. Cold War novels and films offer espionage, intrigue, and cover-up at the center of their plots, often with a fixation on avoiding nuclear warfare by narrowly missing total planetary annihilation. Alternatively, they offer speculative accounts of dystopian postnuclear futures, didactically designed to warn humankind against their power-hungry follies. Both of these structures rely on the erasure of nuclear imperialisms. In these creative worlds, nuclear weapons have either not yet been detonated, or exist only in the imagination of the artist. Many readers will recall, for example, the final montage in *Doctor Strangelove*, featuring a succession of nuclear explosions.<sup>9</sup> While the scene was edited to look like a speculative future, it relies on historical footage of actual explosions. Western nuclear aesthetics’s firm investment in the speculative therefore violently ignores the reality of nuclear detonations on Indigenous lands and their ongoing effects on Indigenous bodies. Although the subdiscipline of nuclear criticism begins in 1984 with a foundational special issue of *diacritics* on “Nuclear Criticism” that purported to adopt a transnational approach, its transnationality was limited to North–North networks. It largely overlooked North–South relationships, let alone South–South solidarities. Subsequent special issues and collections that have explicitly sought to adopt a transnational framework have tended to reproduce this hemispheric bias.<sup>10</sup>

Many scholars and writer–activists, however, highlight that Indigenous people have spearheaded—and continue to lead—the global antinuclear fight. In 1994, the i-Kiribati and African American scholar Teresia K. Teaiwa became one of the leading voices on this issue in her article “bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans.”<sup>11</sup> Discussing the commodification, through association with a sexualized garment, of the suffering of ri-Pikinni (Bikinians), she maps the simultaneous instrumentalization and erasure of nuclear violence onto gendered and racialized Oceanian bodies. Furthermore, groundbreaking contributors, such as Holly M. Barker, Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Greg Dvorak, Stewart Firth, Barbara Rose Johnston, and Nic MacLellan have also written definitive pieces about nuclear proliferation in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>12</sup> Sarah Alisabeth Fox, Andy Kirk, Shiloh Krupar, Valerie L. Kuletz, Joseph Masco, and Traci Brynne Voyles have made substantial contributions to nuclear histories in the Western United States.<sup>13</sup> A similarly rich body of literature has been written on each nuclear empire and on how Indigenous people in Amazigh, Uyghur, Kazakh, and Nenets territories have resisted the nuclearization of their land. However, many of these essential interventions have remained constrained by the geographic limits of area studies.

We recognize that there is a need to further dialogue between regional specialists. As ourselves specialists of nuclear proliferation in Oceania, we are fully aware of the compartmentalizations of nuclear studies within area studies. Given that the very field of “area studies” is a product of the Cold War, transnational and comparative scholarship are indispensable to challenge these imperial constraints and to promote a systematic transnational approach to the issues of nuclear imperialism and Indigenous sovereignty. Adopting a transnational nuclear framework challenges scholars to think of new lines of inquiry. We ask: Are nuclear resistance networks revitalizing preexisting networks or are they creating new alliances? What colonial structures might end up compromising these collaborations and perpetuating hemispheric biases and power imbalances? Are there unifying nuclear tropes across various sites of nuclear imperialism? What aesthetic and generic specificities capture the experiences of nuclear refugees across the world? Can international law be a tool for local reparative justice? How do the politics of recognition shape nuclear justice during or after Empire?

The goal of this Special Forum of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies* is to facilitate dialogue between scholars of nuclear studies across their defined areas of specialty. As such, this introduction encourages future collaborations while outlining possible challenges. Our approach, reflecting the challenges of transnational studies, is multi-sited. First, we provide cultural and historical context to transnational nuclear studies by narrating the life cycle of a uranium atom. Following this fictional atom crossing borders and affecting various communities throughout its lifetime, we purport to demonstrate the need to go beyond critical nuclear area studies. In this second part, we interrogate the role of academic scholarship in extracting and processing Indigenous narratives. We ask in particular how transnational scholarship can abide by the principle of ethical storytelling, in a manner mindful of the fact that nuclear stories of survival are place-based and culturally rooted. Finally, in the third and last section, we shift from theoretical framing to more concrete examples of transnational nuclear scholarship. This last section introduces the contributions made by the scholars featured in this issue, with a special emphasis on the new questions that emerge by putting various nuclear imperialisms in dialogue.

### **I. Historical Context: The Transnational Life Cycle of a Uranium Atom**

Rather than embarking on a comprehensive survey of the transnational scope of the nuclear industrial complex, we invite the reader to a story: the life cycle of an atom of uranium. This atom will cross countless national borders, be shipped and driven and flown to several processing sites, and transmitted across and between military bases to civil plants to Indigenous communities and back again. By following this fictional atom, we hope to provide an incomplete yet striking overview of the transnational environmental racism underpinning the nuclear industry.

If you live in the United States, there is a one in five probability that your light is powered by uranium mined on stolen Indigenous land in Australia, Canada, Kazakhstan, Russia, and the continental United States. In all of these countries, Indigenous

communities have been displaced to make room for mining and have been heavily affected by the radon-induced health issues linked to the mines. Even after mine closures, imperfect—or non-existent—cleanups have resulted in further health issues for Indigenous communities living near or returning to former mining sites. For example, Indigenous uranium miners of the Navajo nation and their families experience rates of cancer at least fifteen times the national average, even after the closure of the mines.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, uranium mining goes beyond inflicting health issues onto Indigenous communities; it participates in recurring cycles of cultural genocide. Resource extraction at these sites was originally made possible by Indigenous forced removal and is extended by the impossibility of Indigenous people returning to contaminated land. Indigenous communities across the globe have had to organize against uranium mining, activism which has been complicated by convoluted legal battles to prove that their members still have links and relationships with these lands, even though they had been living on those lands long before uranium was discovered underground. In Australia, Joan Wingfield, spokesperson of the Kokatha people and antinuclear activist, eloquently summarized the transnational scope of this uranium-fueled cultural genocide by asking a settler audience: “I ask you what would happen if we came along and dug up [your] cemetery ... ? Everybody would be complaining. White people can do that to people like the Kokathas, to Aboriginal people in Australia. That is not right. There are white laws protecting your cemeteries and yet they have done nothing to protect our places like that.”<sup>15</sup> For Indigenous residents near mining areas, the damage brought by nuclear colonialism is cyclical, and does not read as a series of events spaced out with a standard deviation. The effects of uranium mining are experienced sporadically and multigenerationally.

After having been mined on stolen land, uranium is most likely to be transported by crossing other Indigenous territories—and endangering other Indigenous communities. Thus, uranium-filled ships travelling from Australia to the United States approach or cross the national waters of many Pacific nations that have repeatedly opposed the presence of radioactive material within their national borders. In solidarity with the Indigenous people affected by uranium, the participants of the 1983 Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement, which took place in Vanuatu, called for a global moratorium on uranium mining and the “whole nuclear cycle” so that the UN could conduct an investigation of the devastating effects on the “lands and lives of Indigenous people through the world.”<sup>16</sup>

Nuclear power plants continue to present undeniable risks to nearby inhabitants, but new technologies have greatly diminished the probability of nuclear accidents. However, very little technological progress has been made when it comes to storing nuclear waste. National priority was clearly given to securing nuclear plants located near populated (predominantly white) areas, rather than to ensuring the safety of nuclear storage facilities mostly located near Indigenous communities. Indeed, nuclear waste sites are often located on Indigenous land considered already contaminated by previous nuclear testing. For example, the Apache community in the Mesca-

lero reservation, already contaminated by the fallout from the first atomic bomb in 1945, has since been targeted as a national site for highly radioactive waste processing (Matsunaga, this Special Forum).<sup>17</sup> Additionally, between 1944 and 1972, the Hanford Nuclear Site was used as a plutonium production reactor in developing nuclear weapons and dumped more than 1.7 trillion gallons of radioactive materials in the Columbia River near the Yakima and Nez Perce tribes. Such dumping has had subsequent negative effects on both water and fish sources.<sup>18</sup> Nuclear waste also threatens Indigenous communities well into the future: The Western Shoshone have been fighting the US federal government's desire to deposit nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain for nearly fifty years and the issue has not yet been resolved.<sup>19</sup> The environmental racism that dictated the development of military nuclear technology continues to inform the development of civil nuclear ones.

Barbara Flick, Gamalroi antinuclear activist from Australia, thus aptly cautions: "I think it is important for you to think about pushing a button and light flooding a room, in relation to how many aboriginal [one might extrapolate to Indigenous] lives it is going to cost for you to be able to do that."<sup>20</sup> The International Atomic Energy Agency, the United Nation's nuclear equivalent of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, has argued that nuclear energy is going to be an essential component of any plan to seriously avoid climate collapse. Yes, it is true that nuclear energy does not produce dangerous quantities of greenhouse gases. Nevertheless, a transition to nuclear energy should not happen at the expense of Indigenous nations being forced to host uranium mines, nuclear plants, and radioactive waste storage on their lands. Nuclear power production has significant environmental and human impact that should not be ignored due to our current preoccupation with the climatological impact of fossil fuel consumption. It is particularly urgent to decouple nuclear energies and nuclear imperialisms.

The civil and military nuclear complexes are so closely interlinked that a uranium atom used in a nuclear plant may very well be reused in an atomic bomb created for the military. For many decades, the generation of electricity remained a secondary purpose for existing reactors whose main function was to produce fuel for weapons, and electricity profits were used to fund the weapons program.<sup>21</sup> Nuclear testing sites are systematically situated far from the nuclear countries' economic and political centers, in lands occupied by differently racialized, disenfranchised, and impoverished people. The first five countries to develop atomic bombs—the United States, the USSR, the United Kingdom, France, and China—all conducted their tests on Indigenous land. The US tested its weapons on Native American Indigenous land, near reservations in Nevada and New Mexico; in Kiribati; in Hawai'i; and on Marshallese land in Bikini and Eniwetok. The UK tested on Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara peoples' land in Maralinga and Emu Field (Australia), before bombing Kiritimati and Terapukatea Island (Kiribati). France began its nuclear tests on Amazigh land in Algeria, before moving to Moruroa and Fangataufa (French-occupied Polynesia) on Mā'ohi land and waters. The USSR tested primarily on Kazakh land at Semipalatinsk and on Nenets land



in Novaya Zemlya. China detonated its bombs in Lop Nur, in the Xinjiang region (شىنجاڭ) predominantly inhabited by Muslim Uighur peoples. Despite publicized oppositions between these nuclearized countries, they have developed their deadly weapons through the same means: the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples. While detonating nuclear weapons on Indigenous lands does not constitute war for the metropole, in seeing nuclear testing and its contemporary aftermath through an Indigenous perspective, it becomes clear that Indigenous peoples are under attack. Though these five countries detonated nuclear weapons on “foreign” soil, the bombings do not constitute war for the metropole because the nuclearized sites were on Indigenous land that did not possess the same political stature as nation-states. Like uranium mining, nuclear testing thus reiterates the effects of land dispossession and Indigenous removal of prior centuries.

Even though the United States ended its testing on September 23, 1992, the life cycle of our uranium atom did not end on that date. The ongoing impact of these tests on Indigenous communities ranges from health issues, reproductive issues, forced relocation, and psychological trauma. For example, in the United States, the Atomic Energy Commission is guilty of having launched in the 1950s the controversial Project 4.1, a top secret medical research program which studied the effects of radiation on human beings in the Marshall Islands without patients’ consent.<sup>22</sup> This project, involving five hundred and thirty-nine people, included experimental surgery and injections of chromium-51, radioactive iodine, iron, zinc, and carbon-14.<sup>23</sup> Project 4.1 was not the only one of its kind during the period. In the 1950s, as part of Project Sunshine, the Atomic Energy Commission collected tissue from human cadavers, often those of babies and children, and primarily without the consent of their next of kin, to study the amount of strontium-90 detectable in human tissue and bone.<sup>24</sup> Thus far the only recourse for these human rights violations have been lawsuits, most of which have not been paid in full.

Nor are the deleterious effects of nuclear testing likely to abate anytime soon. In the 1970s, on Runit Island (Ānewetak), the US army built a massive concrete dome over a crater created by the nuclear blast “Cactus,” covering several tons of nuclear waste placed directly into the dome without a concrete lining. This highly radioactive waste has since been leaking in the ocean—a process that could accelerate with the rise of sea levels.<sup>25</sup> As Traci Brynne Voyles has eloquently shown in *Wastelanding*, the way imperial powers treat a land is coconstitutive of the way they also treat the peoples inhabiting this land—and vice versa.<sup>26</sup> In the case of nuclear imperialisms, sites of empire are not only the theater of the annihilation of land, but also of the continued erasure of Indigenous communities.

Today, long after the end of nuclear testing, the US Army continues to pollute Indigenous territory through ongoing training involving radioactive elements. The US has organized military exercises using depleted uranium on the military bases Schofield Barracks and the Pōhakuloa Training Area (respectively located on O’ahu and Big Island of Hawai’i).<sup>27</sup> The US Army has also been using Indigenous waters in Kuwajleen

(Kwajalein, Marshall Islands) to test its antiballistic system since 1959—a military occupation that will continue with increased intensity in the twenty-first century given that the Trump administration declared that developing an anti-Chinese missile shield was crucial for Republicans.<sup>28</sup> This type of contemporary exploitation still does not come with financial compensation: Despite American “aid,” the Marshall Islands is still the poorest country in Micronesia. As historian Ruth Oldenziel has concluded, the development of high-tech antinuclear shields coincides with the ongoing impoverishment and exploitation of Indigenous peoples.<sup>29</sup>

Even after the end of nuclear tests and other contaminating experiments, Indigenous land continues to be stolen to stockpile nuclear weapons and harbor nuclear-powered submarines. This phenomenon is particularly perceptible in the Pacific, where large portions of entire islands, such as Guåhan (Guam) and Kuwajleen, have been consumed by foreign nuclearized military. Not even the open seas are spared: During RIMPAC (the biennial Rim of the Pacific Exercise), the world’s largest maritime war game, the US Army occupied the ocean with nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. CHamoru demilitarization activist Kisha Borja-Quichocho-Calvo thus commented on this ongoing land dispossession: “When looking at the current map of what the military already owns, I see a cookie cutter landscape. It’s as if the military has taken cookie cutters and [taken] the lands that it wanted then left my people with the scraps of dough.”<sup>30</sup> Indigenous peoples who refused to have their lands and waters transformed into a nuclear playground were relentlessly pressured by the American administration to cave in. The people of Belau (Palau) wrote the world’s first antinuclear constitution in 1979, banning the United States from using their island as a nuclear submarine base and an ammunition storage dump. Yet Americans have made Belauans revote on their constitution seven times between 1979 and 1986 to try to obtain the “right,” nuclear-friendly result on these referendums.<sup>31</sup> The US imposed these demands for Belau to remove antinuclear elements of their constitution, threatening to cancel the Compact of Free Association (COFA) the two countries had entered.

Unlike other forms of imperialism, nuclear imperialisms are not only interested in occupying another given territory simply to exploit its resources or merely to pollute it. They annihilate their chosen sites of empire. The transnational nuclear complex vaporizes islands in the Republic of Marshall Islands and replaces land with lakes and craters in Kazakhstan. Nuclear imperialisms are ongoing processes that rely on large-scale terra-deforming, excavating, biociding, mining, transporting, detonating, stockpiling, and waste disseminating and disposing associated with nuclear energies and weaponry. The life cycle of a uranium atom, thus, has a convoluted journey. It is likely to cross several national borders, and to adversely affect more than one Indigenous peoples. The full temporal and geographical scope of nuclear imperialisms are, therefore, impossible to assess—because they are still ongoing, and the multitude of their effects are both present and yet to be determined.

## II. Theoretical Context: Academic Scholarship and Ethical Storytelling

This Special Forum was prepared in rather dramatic times. Since we published our call for papers, we have seen the hottest month of July ever recorded, unprecedented wildfires in the US, Brazil, and Australia, and a global pandemic that many scientists have linked to environmental devastation.<sup>32</sup> On the one hand, this leads us to believe that such scholarship, foregrounding Indigenous peoples' grappling with a particular type of environmental destruction, is particularly relevant today. On the other hand, it further underscores that Indigenous peoples are dramatically underrepresented in academia, not only as subjects, but also as scholars. Indigenous scholars—and their communities—are disproportionately affected by climate collapse. Simultaneously, academics and the general public alike are developing a renewed interest in Indigenous knowledges, epistemologies, and research methodologies, hoping to find alternative ways to care for other-than-humans in times of climate collapse. Many academics wrestle with these unfortunate legacies of institutional and environmental racism, in which Indigenous scholars and students are frequently overworked and overwhelmed when seeking to meet the recent—and long overdue—interest in Indigenous knowledge.

We ourselves have had to reevaluate our impulse to ask Indigenous scholars to perform the additional (and, in this case, unpaid) labor of educating others in times of trouble. The pandemic in particular has disproportionately affected scholars from underrepresented backgrounds, and especially women. Researchers who had planned to contribute to this Special Forum have had to cancel their plans due to such unforeseen circumstances. In an attempt to address such structural issues, the Indigenous narratives and scholarship featured and cited in this research provide robust analysis and cultural critique historically excluded from Western academic circles. This Special Forum therefore abides by inclusive citational practices and hopes to encourage consensual community engagement.

An important challenge in this respect is the binary between archive and scholarship. In Indigenous studies, many Indigenous narratives by writers, poets, and activists outside of academia get labeled as the “archive” or as “primary sources.” They serve as a raw material, to be analyzed, processed, and transformed into “scholarship” with a much higher commodity value—just as raw material such as cotton was harvested in colonies and processed into fabric in metropolises. This colonial binarism must be overcome. In this collection, contributors repeatedly highlight that Indigenous antinuclear activists have written, sung, and given speeches and continue to do so with polemical value. Contributors approach the works of writers, artists, and activists in such a way that the boundary between the archive and the theory becomes blurred.

Such a stand raises new questions about ethical storysourcing. As recent research in trauma theory and postcolonial studies has underscored, the question of whether or not the “subaltern” can speak is compounded by the question of whether

or not they want to speak, and if so, to whom.<sup>33</sup> This question has found many different answers in different (neo)colonial contexts. In the contiguous United States, for example, Black trauma has been so systematically commodified and put on display that many Black victims have called for an end to the overappropriation of Black pain. By contrast, Indigenous pain continues to be systematically marginalized from the public discourse, especially pain related to slow, unspectacular nuclear violence. When represented, Indigenous pain has often been caricatured as a cautionary tale.<sup>34</sup> As a result, many of the Indigenous writers, artists, and activists featured in this Special Forum face a double challenge: make their stories known, and tell them on their own terms as contemporary stories, not testimonies of the past. The following articles thus abide by the principle of ethical storysourcing. They are not the result of invasive fieldwork by scholars preying on “primary sources” as raw material but are rather shared between writers, artists, and scholars in a consensual and hopefully mutually beneficial way. Scholars and writer-activists alike share their stories in a commitment to racial justice, environmental activism, and antimilitarism. Contributors to this Special Forum investigate their subject positions, analyzing how Indigenous stories were collected, by whom, and why scholars became the ones to share them. All the texts, artworks, and discourses analyzed in this special issue were thus written or shared *because their authors wanted them to be known*.

### III. Transnational Nuclear Studies in Practice: Featured Contributions

The essays collected here offer a survey of Indigenous transnational resistance to nuclear imperialisms. From Tinian to Guåhan, from Nevada to Kazakhstan, from Minnesota to Ontario, from Pikinni to California, South-South transnational networks of resistance unite antinuclear Indigenous people. As evidenced by these essays, transnational Indigenous alliances demonstrate alternative networks for fighting as well as healing, but also present the limitations of the nation-state as the arbiter of transnational justice.

The first essay featured in this collection criticizes the limitations of South-North environmental alliances, citing the Marshall Islands’s fraught relationship with the global North. **Aimee Bahng**’s essay, “The Pacific Proving Grounds and the Proliferation of Settler Environmentalism,” underscores the limitations of a top-down transnational approach to antinuclear environmentalism. Exploring the role played by “green” transnational institutions like the United Nations in perpetuating settler colonial dynamics, she argues that aid, protection, and environmental remediation can become tools to further domination if bestowed by the very institutions that have permitted the impoverishment, military aggression, and environmental devastation of the global South in the first place. She criticizes the fallacy of the transnationalism of multinational institutions such as the UN, highlighting that the settler environmentalism imposed upon the Marshall Islands reproduces hierarchical forms of imperial governance under the mantle of progressivism.

The next two essays explore how Indigenous transnational alliances draw on the increased visibility afforded by crossborder antinuclear activism to battle environmental racism and at the same time consolidate Indigenous sovereignty. In “Indigenous Antinuclear Literary Resistance,” **Kyoko Matsunaga** explores the writings of Jim Northrup, an Anishinaabe writer-activist who fought for the rights of Indigenous nations in the United States and Canada. Presenting Northrup’s opposition to the Prairie Island nuclear power plant in Minnesota, Matsunaga makes the argument that antinuclear politics are coconstitutive of pantribal and transnational alliances. Through her nuanced conceptualization of transnational treaty rights between the territories now called Canada and the United States, Matsunaga shows that the Indigenous fight for sovereignty is subtended by a shared antinuclear sentiment on both sides of the settler border.

In “The Nevada Movement: A Model of Trans-Indigenous Antinuclear Solidarity,” historian **George Gregory Rozsa** explores alliances between Indigenous peoples, this time in the Cold War context. He analyzes the transnational Indigenous solidarities developed in spite of the Iron Curtain. He demonstrates that the Kazakh and Western Shoshone antinuclear agenda united Indigenous peoples against their particular superpower colonizers, respectively the US and the USSR. Foregrounding the underdiscussed history of antimilitarism in the USSR through an analysis of speeches and songs performed in the 1980s and 1990s, he underscores the multiplicity and creativity of embodied protests against the nuclear industrial complex across ideological divides.

Further exploring the role of creativity in amplifying the urgency of issues addressed by transnational antinuclear alliances is “The Politics of Invisibility: Visualizing Legacies of Nuclear Imperialism.” In this piece, **Fiona Amundsen and Sylvia C. Frain** examine how visual artists have challenged the invisibility central to the legacies of nuclear imperialisms in Oceania. In particular, they focus on allyship and transnational arts by studying the photographic imagery of artists Jane Chang Mi and Leonard Leon. They argue that the work of these artists creates alternative forms of visualization of the nuclear process, politicizing that which has been rendered invisible through American state-produced imagery. The artists’ positionalities (an American-born Chinese artist drawing, and drawing from, the Marshallese nuclear archive and an Indigenous Marshallese writing e-poetry about militarism in the Marianas) brings a new visuality to the transnational legacies of nuclear imperialism in the Pacific.

Finally, in “Radiation Songs and Transpacific Resonances of US Imperial Transits,” **Jessica A. Schwartz** explores how what she calls “radiation songs” detail the ongoing and systemic violences of US nuclear imperialism in the Marshall Islands. In a listening of two songs, “Kajjitok in aō nan kwe kiiō” and “Radiation,” Schwartz argues how songs subversively cross national borders, delivering petitions to US citizens and governmental representatives. Her ethnographic work promotes transnational scholarship that overcomes linguistic compartmentalization and integrates nuclear diasporas. Using a gender and sexuality studies framework, she analyzes nuclear songs in

their social, gendered context and explores the impact of radiation on Marshallese bodies in the Marshall Islands and beyond.

### Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> Chantal T. Spitz, *Pensées insolentes et inutiles* (Papeete: Éditions te Ite, 2006), 23.
- <sup>2</sup> Becky Alexis-Martin, "The Nuclear Imperialism-Necropolitics Nexus: Contextualizing Chinese-Uyghur Oppression in Our Nuclear Age," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 60, no. 2 (March 4, 2019): 152–176.
- <sup>3</sup> Nic Maclellan, *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2017), 233.
- <sup>4</sup> Maclellan, *Grappling with the Bomb*, 239.
- <sup>5</sup> Spitz, *Pensées*, 22; sic.
- <sup>6</sup> Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 18.
- <sup>7</sup> Epeli Hau'ofa, *We Are the Ocean: Selected Works* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 49.
- <sup>8</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
- <sup>9</sup> Stanley Kubrick, dir., *Doctor Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, 1964, Columbia Pictures, Film.
- <sup>10</sup> In the 1984 special issue of *diacritics*, Jacques Derrida's famous essay "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)" argues that nuclear war has "not occurred" and posits it as a "fabulous specularization." Over the next four decades there are several special issues addressing nuclear criticism, including "Nuclear Criticism," in *Papers in Language and Literature* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1990), ed. William J. Scheick; Richard Klein's work on "The Future of Nuclear Criticism" in *Yale French Studies*, no. 97, pt. 2, 1980–1998 (2000): 78–102; as well as *The Silence of Fallout: Nuclear Criticism in a Post-Cold War World*, ed. Michael Blouin, Morgan Shipley, and Jack Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013). While each of these issues offer critical engagement with the original *diacritics* issue, none offer sustained attention to Indigenous concerns regarding nuclear weapons

(with the notable exception of Julie Williams's essay's section on Gerald Vizenor's *Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu* 57, "Gerald Vizenor: Texts and Contexts," *American Indian Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2013): 406–408.

- <sup>11</sup> Teresia K. Teaiwa, "bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans," *The Contemporary Pacific* 6, no. 1 (1994): 87–109.
- <sup>12</sup> Holly M. Barker, *Bravo for the Marshallese: Regaining Control in a Post-Nuclear, Post-Colonial World* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2013); Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007); Greg Dvorak, *Coral and Concrete: Remembering Kwajalein Atoll between Japan, America, and the Marshall Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018); Stewart Firth, *Nuclear Playground* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987); Barbara Rose Johnston and Holly M. Barker, *Consequential Damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap Report* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008); and Nic Maclellan, *Grappling with the Bomb: Britain's Pacific H-Bomb Tests* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2017).
- <sup>13</sup> Sarah Alisabeth Fox, *Downwind: A People's History of the Nuclear West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Andy Kirk, *Doom Towns: The People and Landscapes of Atomic Testing: A Graphic History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Shiloh R. Krupar, *Hotspotter's Report: Military Fables of Toxic Waste* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Valerie L. Kuletz, *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West* (Routledge, 1998); Joseph Masco, *The Nuclear Borderlands: The Manhattan Project in Post-Cold War New Mexico* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
- <sup>14</sup> Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining*, 4.
- <sup>15</sup> WWNFIP (Women Working for a Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific), *Pacific Women Speak: Why Haven't You Known?* (Oxford: Green Line, 1987), 33.
- <sup>16</sup> Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Conference, *Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Conference, 1983: Report* (Honolulu, Hawai'i: Pacific Concerns Resource Center), 8.
- <sup>17</sup> Peter H. Eichstaedt and Murrae Haynes, *If You Poison Us: Uranium and Native American* (Santa Fe, NM: Red Crane Books, 1994).
- <sup>18</sup> Michelle Tolson, "Yakama Nation Fights for Nuclear Waste Cleanup at Hanford Site," *Earth Island Journal*, May 21, 2014, [https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/articles/entry/yakama\\_nation\\_fights\\_for\\_nuclear\\_waste\\_cleanup\\_at\\_hanford\\_site/](https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/articles/entry/yakama_nation_fights_for_nuclear_waste_cleanup_at_hanford_site/).

- <sup>19</sup> Amy Corbin, “Yucca Mountain,” *Sacred Land Film Project*, <https://sacredland.org/yucca-mountain-united-states/> Updated 1 April 2010; Danielle Endres, “The Most Nuclear-Bombed Place: Ecological Implications of the US Nuclear Testing Program,” in *Tracing Rhetoric and Material Life: Ecological Approaches*, ed. Bridie McGreavy, Justine Wells, Guy McHendry, Samantha Senda-Cook (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2017), 253–287.
- <sup>20</sup> WWNFIP, *Pacific Women Speak*, 30.
- <sup>21</sup> Rebecca Priestley, *Mad on Radium: New Zealand in the Atomic Age* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2012), 186.
- <sup>22</sup> Barbara Rose Johnston and Holly M. Barker, *Consequential Damages of Nuclear War: The Rongelap Report* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008), 104–105. The dates and intentionality of the radiation exposure of human beings has been a longstanding debate.
- <sup>23</sup> Tilman A. Ruff, “The Humanitarian Impact and Implications of Nuclear Test Explosions in the Pacific Region,” *International Review of the Red Cross: Cambridge* 97, no. 899 (September 2015): 775–813; E. P. Cronkite, V.P. Bond, et al., “Report to the Scientific Director Operation Castle—Final Report Project 4.1: Study of Response of Human Beings Accidentally Exposed to Significant Fallout Radiation,” October 1954 (Naval Medical Research Institute and US Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory), <http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/issues/testing/Marshall%20Islands%201954.pdf>.
- <sup>24</sup> Nic Maclellan, “Nuclear Testing and Racism in the Pacific Islands,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity*, ed. Steven Ratuva, 1–21 (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), <https://apo.org.au/node/238066>.
- <sup>25</sup> Maclellan, “Nuclear Testing,” 18.
- <sup>26</sup> Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining*.
- <sup>27</sup> Rebecca H. Hogue, “Risk and Resistance at Pōhakuloa,” *Empire and Environment: Confronting Ecological Ruin in Asia-Pacific and the Americas*, ed. Rina Garcia Chua, Heidi Hong, Jeffrey Santa Ana, and Xiaojing Zhou (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming 2021); and Joseph H. Genz, Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua, Monica C. LaBriola, Alexander Mawyer, Elicita N. Morei, and John P. Rosa, *Volume 1 of Teaching Oceania Series, Militarism and Nuclear Testing in the Pacific* (Honolulu: Center for Pacific Islands Studies, University of Hawai’i-Mānoa, 2019), <http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/handle/10125/42430>.
- <sup>28</sup> Anaïs Maurer, “Kakadu – Kwajalein – Ka Pae ’Āina: les nouvelles routes de l’impérialisme nucléaire,” in *Indo-Pacifique et routes de la soie: Les nouvelles stratégies*



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- <sup>29</sup> Ruth Oldenziel, “Islands: US as Networked Empire,” *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War*, ed. Gabrielle Hecht (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 13–42.
- <sup>30</sup> Genz et al., *Volume 1 of Teaching Oceania Series*, 44.
- <sup>31</sup> Stewart Firth, *Nuclear Playground* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1987), 59.
- <sup>32</sup> Aaron Bernstein, “Coronavirus and Climate Change,” Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, blog, May 19, 2020, <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/c-change/subtopics/coronavirus-and-climate-change/>.
- <sup>33</sup> Kaiama Glover, “‘You Have Said Things You Should Not Have Said,’” *Francosphères* 4, no. 1 (August 1, 2015): 71–83; Anaïs Maurer, “Snaring the Nuclear Sun: Decolonial Ecologies in Titaua Peu's *Mutismes: E 'Ore te Vāvā*,” *The Contemporary Pacific* 31, no. 2, forthcoming 2020.
- <sup>34</sup> Kyle Powys Whyte, “Our Ancestors’ Dystopia Now: Indigenous Conservation and the Anthropocene,” *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*, ed. Ursula K. Heise, Jon Christensen, and Michelle Niemann (Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 206–215.

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