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US Imperialism and the Problem of “Culture” in Indigenous Politics: Towards Indigenous Internationalist Feminism

Melanie K. Yazzie

... in this moment of late capitalism and advanced colonialism, it is critically important for indigenous scholars to examine, articulate, and disrupt the global capitalistic forces that work to imperil tribal existence, making the work of revolutionary feminist scholars increasingly relevant.

—Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*

It is not possible for the children of my generation to grasp our laws in all their complexity. We were raised in settler society, divorced from our past and alienated from our history. Until all generations of our people come together to resume our birthright as caretakers of this land, the future will remain unclear and the laws of the land will not be known to us.

—Lee Maracle, *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism*

In August, 2017 I attended the annual Royal Geographical Society (RGS) conference at Imperial College London in London, England. I was one of four Indigenous scholars from North America invited by the RGS to participate in the opening plenary for the conference. We were asked to address the topic of decolonization. I had already heard from concerned Indigenous colleagues in geography of concerns that despite its theme, “Decolonising geographical knowledges: opening geography out to the world,”

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seemingly nowhere in the program did Indigenous scholars working in decolonial methods and political traditions appear. As it turned out, after the program was finalized our plenary was added in an attempt to rectify this omission.

Although I was certainly invested in decolonizing the conference (it was, after all, sponsored by an academic association with “royal” in the title and held at a college named “imperial”), I was also excited to have a paid roundtrip flight to London. An Irish-American friend and comrade had been helping me to identify connections between the Irish struggle for liberation from British control and the Indigenous struggle for liberation from US control. On behalf of an organization I work with in New Mexico, I decided to take advantage of the trip to London to take a short side delegation (of one!) to Belfast, Northern Ireland. My intention? To meet with Irish freedom fighters to learn more about their struggle and to renew the historic connections that had existed for over 160 years between Indigenous and Irish revolutionaries.

I left the United States a few days early so I could travel to Belfast before coming back to London for the conference. Like my travels to Palestine, Nicaragua, and South Africa, the last two of which serve as case studies for this article, Northern Ireland left a lasting impression. Fresh from the experience, I wrote an entirely new plenary presentation that incorporated Irish liberation into my discussion of decolonization. I offered these remarks to a packed auditorium. Here is an excerpt from that talk:

I recently traveled to Belfast, which as many here know is the epicenter of the contemporary Irish movement to decolonize their homelands from British colonial and imperial occupation. During my brief time there, I learned of the long histories of solidarity between the colonized peoples of Turtle Island and the colonized peoples of Ireland. I was reminded that during the great Irish famine, the Choctaw Nation in 1847 aided the Irish people in a spirit of solidarity even whilst undergoing one of the most infamous genocidal campaigns in history, The Trail of Tears. I was shown photographs of Clyde Bellecourt and Floyd Red Crow Westerman, two important figures from the famed American Indian Movement, taken during their trip to Belfast in the mid-1980s. I was told a story of how Clyde Bellecourt offered a Lakota dance of honor at the grave of Bobby Sands, one of the young Irish freedom fighters who gave his life during the 1981 prisoners’ hunger strike. I was told by countless people how closely they followed the #NoDAPL movement in Standing Rock in 2016 and 2017, and that the Starry Plough flag—an emblem of Irish freedom—was flown alongside the hundreds of other flags from independent nations that professed international solidarity with the Oceti Sakowin, or the Great Sioux Nation, at the camps situated at the frontlines of the #NoDAPL struggle in Oceti Sakowin territory. These stories were not . . . sanctioned by institutions of the state that, quite to the contrary, seek to repress, divide, and disconnect the powerful relationality that exists between and amongst colonized peoples of the world. Rather, these stories [reignited] . . . a relationality based on a deep, historical desire for liberation from the shackles of colonization by two of the most destructive empires in world history: Great Britain and the United States.¹

As I began talking about Northern Ireland—which is still under colonial occupation by Britain and incorporated as part of the larger entity of the United Kingdom—and making connections between the Irish liberation struggle and our own Indigenous strivings for decolonization from US colonial occupation, I could see people start to shift uncomfortably in their seats. I was in the belly of the beast, the British imperial metropole, talking about ongoing anti-colonial and anti-imperial liberation struggles. I imagined the thought running through their minds: “I came here to learn about Indigenous resurgence and this woman is talking about British imperialism?”

While the reaction from the audience certainly created a tense and uncomfortable atmosphere, their response is less interesting than the significance of the internationalism that emerged in that time and place. In its most normative iteration, internationalism “is a political principle which transcends nationalism and advocates a greater political or economic cooperation among nations and people.”² Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we have witnessed how the hegemonic worlds that cohere into specific forms of internationalism bolster empires like the United States and Great Britain. These forms of internationalism have been crafted largely to justify military expansion, resulting in almost endless (and immensely profitable) wars. In most cases, military expansion has occurred under the banner of “intervention,” a common refrain in US foreign policy that implies there are crises throughout the globe that cannot be resolved without military action. The story is always the same: nations deemed uncooperative or backwards are rife with corruption and human rights abuses, desperately in need of democracy. The champion to spread democratic good will? The US military.

My August 2017 remarks in London were unique because, before my trip to Belfast only three days prior, my understanding of decolonization had not encompassed the connections between imperialism, war, and anti-imperial modalities of national liberation. I certainly did not have a strong grasp of internationalism. This is likely because I am an Indigenous person situated in the Global North, in which the political and intellectual project of decolonization rose to prominence in the last twenty years and typically only refers to itself (the United States and Canada, specifically). I was also trained in US universities that normalize the idea that federal Indian policy is limited to “domestic” maneuvers with and against the United States. Thus, despite important work that historians have produced on imperialism and Indigenous history, I was not aware of the histories and possibilities of internationalism in Global North Indigenous politics. In his history of colonial violence in the early American West, for example, Ned Blackhawk traces US-Indigenous relations along the frontiers of imperial expansion.³ Likewise demonstrating that Indigenous people were, and are, at the center of imperial histories, Jace Weaver and Coll Thrush have documented the transatlantic travel of Indigenous people from settler colonies like the United States and Canada to various parts of Europe.⁴ Other historians have (troublingly) argued that Indigenous people developed empires prior to, and in response to, settler incursion.⁵

These works focus on history before the twentieth century (with the exception of Weaver’s study, which spans an impressive 927 years from 1000 to 1927). How have Indigenous people in the United States interacted with US imperialism since this time?

If we are transnational subjects, as Weaver and Thrush argue, how, too, have we interacted with anti-imperialist formations in other parts of the globe? Certainly, one key example of analysis examining the twentieth century is Jennifer Nez Denetdale's important critique of the collusion of the famed World War II Navajo code talkers with US imperialism. A significant twenty-first-century intervention, offered by scholars such as J. Kēhaulani Kauanui and Robert Warrior, concerns "redwashing," or US Indigenous support for Israeli settler colonialism.⁶ However, for scholars in Native American and Indigenous studies there remains much to explore about US-based Indigenous politics in relation to imperialism (and anti-imperialism), especially forms that have shaped our material and political worlds in an era of neoliberal governmentality.⁷

My purpose in writing this article is thus twofold: first, to uncover the existing internationalism that has long shaped the myriad political formations in the United States; and second, to articulate a political formation that I call *Indigenous internationalist feminism*. A critique of US imperialism, this formation is premised on three intellectual and political traditions: radical Indigenous internationalism, Black left feminism, and queer Indigenous feminism. Indigenous internationalist feminism expands upon Lower Brule Sioux historian Nick Estes's definitions of "radical Indigenous internationalism," which can be traced to historic organizations like the Society for American Indians and the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC).⁸ It also draws from the tradition of Black left feminism, which has long made connections between Black struggle, revolutionary feminism, and national liberation.⁹ Indigenous internationalist feminism provides a framework for transnational Indigenous practices that seek to build counterhegemonic power with other anti-colonial, anti-imperial, and anti-capitalist liberation struggles, both within and outside of the United States. At the center of these practices is an ethics of relationality between humans, and also between humans and our other-than-human kin.

I have written elsewhere about how queer Indigenous feminists have worked through this notion of relationality, profoundly shaping the politics and horizons of contemporary Indigenous liberation struggles in the Global North. This article explores how relationality can be applied to an internationalist politics that seeks to undermine and challenge the hegemony of capitalist social relations globally.¹⁰ Before broaching Indigenous internationalist feminism in the concluding section of this article, however, I outline a more common and insidious form of Indigenous internationalism that has taken root through neoliberal investment in culture, which I call *Indigenous neoliberal internationalism*. I reflect upon two key moments in the development of my politics and analysis about internationalism to further this analysis: my experiences as an undergraduate student studying abroad in Nicaragua and my participation in a Native American delegation to southern Africa. Through these case studies, I hope to show how forms of Indigenous internationalism that promote economic uplift through international networks of charity and cultural entrepreneurship simply reproduce the violence and inequality at the root of imperialism and capitalism.

In part, I examine my own experiences as self-critique, reflecting on political choices I have made that have caused harm by upholding US imperialism and global capitalism. But perhaps more importantly, these case studies exemplify larger trends

in contemporary progressive Indigenous politics in the United States. Neither could have happened without the multi-million-dollar investments in development projects in Indian Country and the Global South from powerful nonprofits like the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and both pivot on the cultural politics of authenticity and economic development that have come to dominate the grammar of decolonization in the Global North. These personal case studies show how vastly different forms of Indigenous internationalism can (and do) produce vastly different political outcomes for Indigenous people, even though they may employ similar progressive rhetoric about “justice,” “decolonization,” and “transformation.”

As Indigenous liberation struggles in the Global North continue to grow, and as we fearlessly confront the devastation of extractive capitalism in our lands, it seems urgent to critique the reactionary turn to culture that has defanged our dreams of collective liberation and forestalled the international solidarity which, I believe, holds profound hope for our renewed efforts at decolonization. For, as Palestinian scholar Steven Salaita argues, “solidarity, transnationalism, intersectionality, kinship, or intercommunalism” must be key facets of the “mutual liberation” that American Indians and colonized people across the world share if we all are to realize our decolonial freedom dreams.¹¹

INDIGENOUS NEOLIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM, STORY ONE: NICARAGUA, 2002

On a muggy August day in 2002 I began my junior year of college by stepping off a plane in San José, Costa Rica to spend my fall semester abroad. I lived for a month in San José while improving my Spanish, then headed into the field for the remaining three months to assist a grassroots weaving cooperative with their marketing and cultural entrepreneurship efforts. At the end of September, I hopped on a bus from Costa Rica to Nicaragua, disembarking in the capital city, Managua, after a grueling eight-hour trip. Along with my field coordinator and the other exchange students in my program, I spent a few days as a tourist in the colonial city of Granada, about an hour from Managua, before taking a three-hour trip by local bus to the small city of Matagalpa in the mountains of northern Nicaragua. The field site where my internship was to be held, a rural community southeast of Matagalpa, was another hour-and-a-half trip by bus and we then continued on foot up a network of dirt roads carved into the mountainside. A small, intergenerational group of Indigenous women who specialized in backstrap weaving ran the cooperative from the small, two-room home of its leader, Patricia.¹² Most of the cooperative’s activities were conducted under the tin shade fixed to the front of Patricia’s house, where we would spend hours together weaving on looms attached to the shade’s rafters, sewing purses and other small commodities out of woven fabric to sell to foreigners visiting the region, winding endless yards of *hilo* into balls, and chatting and laughing with one another.

After about a month in the community, Carmen, one of my host sisters, asked me to consider teaching English at the local primary school. Feeling completely inadequate to the task—my Spanish was still poor, and I had never taught before—I nevertheless developed a handwritten curriculum, took the four-hour round-trip to Matagalpa to

make copies for the students, and began to divide my time between visiting Patricia's house and teaching at the village center, a two-mile hike up the mountain. As I came to know everyone in the community, I developed a profound appreciation—love—for the life they lived. My twenty-year-old self romanticized the aspects of everyday life that seemed to thrive in the absence of capitalist development and infrastructure—slaughtering chickens for dinner, collecting fresh eggs for breakfast, growing vegetables, hauling fresh water from the *pozo* down the hill, bathing with rainwater in a makeshift wooden cubicle open to the elements, and walking everywhere, because no one could afford a car. In my mind, the community was practicing the “sustainability” and “traditional” ways of life I had learned about in seminars and multicultural student clubs at my progressive, environmentally conscious liberal arts college in the United States. I was all the more gratified because the community self-identified as Indigenous and the collective's backstrap weaving was considered an Indigenous art form. My own people, the Diné, also specialize in weaving, and the Navajo Nation's land base is similarly rural: people frequently haul water from nearby wells, butcher sheep for meals, and conserve water by using outhouses and washing dishes in plastic tubs.

These parallels struck me as significant; not only was the community practicing sustainable living—we are both conservationists!—but also the way they were capitalizing on their Indigenous culture to provide economic development for their families mirrored the market demand for Navajo weavings in the United States—we are both cultural entrepreneurs! While I marveled at the sustainability that seemed to flourish in the absence of development, I also felt a deep, sincere obligation to teach the weavers in the collective the techniques of economic success that Navajo weavers experienced in selling their art. In my mind, the quality of the collective's weaving was on a par with Navajo weaving. Except for the factory-dyed and -produced cotton yarn that the collective could access, compared to the natural hand-dyed wool that Navajo weavers used, every other aspect of the weaving could be deemed “authentic,” and therefore high quality, by discerning buyers. The weavings were, after all, made by Indigenous people using a millennia-old method indigenous to the Western Hemisphere, unique and full of color. Yet, the weavings and woven and sewn products such as the purses, wallets, and book jackets that Patricia and the others created commanded a mere fraction of the price of Navajo weavings, which have a global reputation as coveted, high-ticket items. I was accustomed to seeing Navajo weavings sold for thousands of dollars in museums and high-end art galleries; the goods that the collective produced were sold in venues like flea markets and rural *tiendas* that seemed beneath their quality.

I thus saw it as my mission to help Patricia and the rest of the collective elevate the standing of their art by capitalizing on tried-and-true cultural entrepreneurship techniques used by successful Native American artists in the United States. Over the course of my three months' stay with them and for several years afterwards, I attempted to find US markets for their products, creating a website for international exposure and narrating their art through the lens of cultural authenticity, which carried almost total currency with high-end consumers of Native American art in places like the United States and Europe.¹³ In other words, I attempted to implement a type of internationalism based on commodifying comparative forms of Indigeneity

and cultural authenticity, which hinged on exporting the liberal logics of economic development and social evolution common to US-based articulations of Indigenous self-determination to a context where I was told my Third World Indigenous brethren suffered from a state of chronic underdevelopment and, by extension, political disempowerment. This ran contrary to the politicized forms of internationalism premised on revolutionary solidarity and resistance to imperialism that were the hallmark of twentieth-century decolonization struggles—the actual historical emergence of Third Worldism, as it were (which I talk about below).¹⁴

Although cringe-worthy, my impulse to enact internationalism based on a comparison (and commodification) of Indigenous culture and identity did not arise simply from benign hubris or facile notions of human connection and empathy. I was conditioned to assume that culture and identity, as well as the developmentalist idea of “authenticity,” were common-sense approaches to understanding and intervening into contemporary Indigenous issues, both at home and abroad. As Raymond Williams points out, hegemony is a veil that makes it difficult to recognize (or realize) that structures and relations of power infuse everyday forms of affect, or “structures of feeling.”¹⁵ As an intern in Nicaragua, I was reproducing a structure of feeling—an affective expression of liberal internationalism doing work on behalf of specific structures of power, namely global capitalism and US imperialism. Indeed, the invocation of culture and identity in a context of profound power imbalance such as the one in which I, an Indigenous woman from the Global North, found myself, does not come without intention or consequence. As a code for the developmentalist logic of liberal ideology, cultural authenticity was the lens through which I had been trained to understand the relative “backwardness,” and thus the need for “development,” of Indigenous people outside of the United States.¹⁶

Lenape scholar Joanne Barker has examined the politics of cultural authenticity extensively. In *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity*, she argues that a “paradigmatic authority of theories of assimilation and social evolution” exists in theories of Native culture and identity: “These theories assume a historical trajectory for understanding the value and consequences of social change over time along a whole host of progressive lines: from primitive to civilized; from integral and whole to contaminated and fractured; from lived to lost . . . these changes are read as the natural and good result of social development.”¹⁷ In other words, we are made to believe that progress, development, and civilization are natural, undisputed inclinations and the product of rational self-interest and primordial evolution.¹⁸ Joel Wainright’s critique asserts that development is not a natural process, but rather a form of politics that stakes a claim within a field of power conditioned by the inequalities and violence of prevailing structures of global capitalism, US imperialism, and colonialism.¹⁹ Indeed, “development” functions as a seductive code for incorporation into capitalism, but whether this incorporation occurs through subjugation or opportunism does not change capitalism’s overarching structure.²⁰ As Barker puts it, “Native peoples . . . are only recognized as Native within the legal terms and social conditions of racialized discourses that serve the national interests of the United States in maintaining colonial and imperial relations with Native peoples.”²¹

Barker's insights about the function of cultural authenticity within the racialized regimes of recognition that animate US liberalism are shared by scholars focusing on Indigenous politics in other contexts.²² Elizabeth Povinelli's work on Australia points out that the celebration of cultural authenticity is a manifestation of multicultural humanism, a specific form of liberal recognition and inclusion that emerged to reorganize human life to conform to new mutations of neoliberal capitalism.²³ As other scholars note, one of the hallmarks of neoliberalism is a shift away from state policies of assimilation of distinct groups within society toward recognizing their multiculturalism.²⁴ This particular character shift of liberalism is consistent with the rise of neoliberal governmentality, which reinvents the traditional liberal discourse of individualism for new market expectations and facilitates the continuation of capitalism under shifting global conditions through practices and programs of self-regulation, proper conduct, and entrepreneurship.²⁵ While liberalism has always normalized capitalist social relations, under neoliberalism capital has found new influence in the devolutionary movement of governance away from official mechanisms of the state toward sites of individual development and cultural reproduction.²⁶ Market logics such as economic development extend to realms not primarily economic such as culture and personal growth. The expansion of these logics has been so complete that "any form of life not organized on the basis of market values is characterized as a potential security risk."²⁷ As a result, we have seen ostensibly cultural practices like weaving being merged with notions of economic productivity and individual uplift; indeed, as will be examined in more depth, the concept of "cultural entrepreneurship" emerged during the neoliberal period to index this new form of governmentality.

This was the neoliberal context in which my interest in Indigenous economic development and women's empowerment in the "Third World" emerged: a paradigmatic web of development-cum-cultural entrepreneurship that cunningly continued and extended US imperialism and capitalism. Crossing the international borders between the United States and Costa Rica, and then Nicaragua, with this agenda in tow, I effectively became an ambassador for the very same imperialism and colonialism subjugating my Indigenous nation back home. Given the hegemonic common sense that dominated my ontological horizons, it is certainly perverse, but not surprising, that I was blind to the structures I was reinforcing, as well as to the long-standing anti-imperialist and anti-colonial solidarities in places like Nicaragua, where revolution had transpired only two decades before. Indeed, the reach of the imperialist underpinnings of developmentalist logic are revealed in the expectation that I would export the gospel of my perceived expertise in Indigenous economic development and cultural entrepreneurship to other locations throughout the globe—that is, where underdevelopment (a term made synonymous with Third World conditions by neoliberal development institutions like the International Monetary Fund) was seen to be the cause of a broad spectrum of social ills like poverty, illiteracy, disease, infant mortality, malnourishment, political upheaval, lack of access to English-language training, and the like. Eradicating these ills, I was told, requires development and closer proximity to capitalism, and cultural entrepreneurship was the ticket for (Indigenous) entry into the good life.

INDIGENOUS NEOLIBERAL INTERNATIONALISM, STORY 2: SOUTH AFRICA, 2007

I didn't gain much insight in the five years after 2002. After graduating with a BA in political science in 2004, I moved back to my parents' home in Colorado and immediately got to work applying for jobs. Given the history of my interests in college, it should come as no surprise that I was interested in nonprofit organizations that focused on Indigenous cultural entrepreneurship. After ten desperate months, I landed a job as a recruiter in the admissions department of a tribal college in Santa Fe, New Mexico specializing in arts education. My first job was not ideal, but nevertheless was a step in the door of a nonprofit that I admired. Then, after seven disgruntled months, I quit: the admissions department was dysfunctional and leadership toxic. I then worked at a wholesale home-goods store for the next seven months to make ends meet and in the summer of 2006, landed the job I had actually wanted, that of program coordinator for the tribal college's extension and outreach division.

Although I assisted with a number of projects, my primary assignment was funded by a \$1.5 million grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation: a cultural and economic exchange between Southern African and Native American artisans called "The Answers Lie Within" (TALW). The stated mission of the exchange program was "to provide a venue for indigenous peoples to think creatively about engaging the art market locally, nationally and internationally in order to create more access to wealth and opportunities to transform indigenous communities into sustainable systems."²⁸ Two years earlier, forty southern African artists and entrepreneurs had traveled to Santa Fe, New Mexico as part of the first half of the exchange and in July, 2007, fifty Native American artists traveled to six southern African countries—South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Botswana, and Zimbabwe—and participated in nine site visits, which were organized according to different areas of focus, such as pottery, painting, and fashion design. While the tribal college had played a partial role in organizing the African delegation to Santa Fe, it assumed total responsibility for the second part, our trip to southern Africa, and as soon as I was hired, I was given the task of coordinating the Native American delegation to Africa. I was nervous to be undertaking such a monumental task at so young an age, but I embraced the opportunity to continue the work in Indigenous cultural entrepreneurship that I had begun five years earlier in Nicaragua.

Settling into my new position, I began to sort through the large stack of TALW program files and found a book which the previous program coordinator had encouraged me to read to understand the economic and political motivation for the grant project. Published in 2004 by the Wharton School of Business, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty through Profits, Enabling Dignity and Choice through Markets* is by C. K. Prahalad, a prominent business thinker and former professor of corporate strategy.²⁹ I dutifully dug in, duly impressed by the bookjacket blurbs from Madeleine Albright and Bill Gates that lauded the book's essential contribution to ensuring "sustainable growth in the developing world" by fighting "poverty with profitability."³⁰ After no more than one paragraph, this phrase leaped out at me:

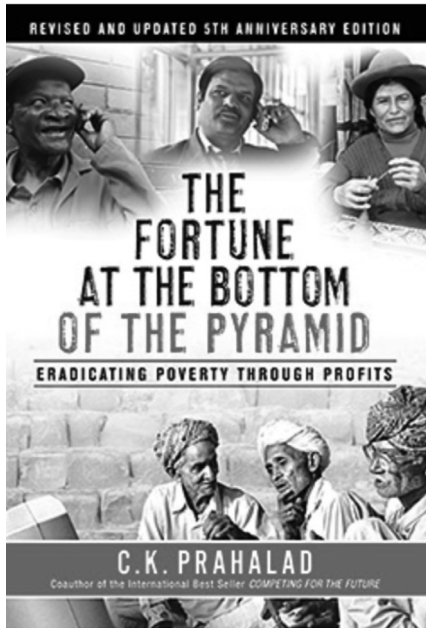


FIGURE 1. *The cover art for the paperback of the fifth anniversary edition showcases the faces of Third World entrepreneurs—ostensibly from Africa, Asia, and Latin America—embracing technology, cultural tradition, and hard work to craft unique development strategies.*

“If we stop thinking of the poor as victims or as a burden and start recognizing them as resilient and creative entrepreneurs and value-conscious consumers, a whole new world of opportunity will open up.”³¹ Citing several cultural entrepreneurship success stories throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America (see fig. 1), Prahalad argues that the poor need to be “exposed to the range and variety of opportunities that inclusive capitalism can provide.”³² He concludes that “Social transformation for the poor is tied to economic development” and that nongovernmental organizations or nonprofits, microenterprises, small and medium enterprises, cooperatives, and multinational corporations all play a key role in crafting a “market-oriented ecosystem for wealth creation” amongst the world’s poorest populations.³³

I found Prahalad’s thesis compelling because it aligned with what I already felt to be true: here was a prominent figure, endorsed by other prominent figures, making a case that through economic development, cultural entrepreneurship (what he called “creative entrepreneurship”) holds unique benefits for promoting social uplift. Seeming to take what I already knew and catapult it to a larger platform and scope, Prahalad’s assertions about the economic promise of developing the “creative” capacities of poor communities drew from the same neoliberal developmentalist grammar of cultural entrepreneurship that I had assumed in my efforts to uplift rural Indigenous women in Nicaragua through small-scale commodification of weaving.

Furthermore, whereas my work in Nicaragua was performed on a shoestring budget with a half-dozen or so Indigenous weavers in one community, the scope of TALW was monumental, involving millions of dollars, hundreds of people, dozens of

communities, and nine countries. Throughout the project, I worked with an international team of more than thirty people and shepherded almost fifty Native American artists, leaders, fashion designers, intellectuals, and traditional practitioners to Africa and back. This meant that I arranged their flights and accommodations, organized visits and traveled to sites across the entire southern part of the continent; gave interviews on South African national television; corresponded with diplomats in countries like Swaziland and Lesotho; and helped to successfully produce the culminating event of the trip, a high-profile international fashion show in downtown Johannesburg, South Africa featuring dozens of designers from South Africa, Mozambique, Botswana, the United States, and Canada. Although exhausting, the experience was immensely rewarding. It felt like a blossoming of the seeds I had planted doing international work during my study-abroad experience in college.

I additionally felt a sense of accomplishment with TALW because we had forged relationships with African artisans during our brief time in their homelands and our efforts seemed to lay the foundation for a sustainable project aimed at their long-term economic and social development. However, long-term programming never materialized, and it was the failure of my employer institution and the Kellogg Foundation to enact meaningful change that sparked my disillusionment with the nonprofit arena and desire to pursue graduate studies. However, my disappointment didn't arise from a political critique of our approach and methods; rather, I was disappointed that we hadn't followed through with successfully spreading the gospel of cultural entrepreneurship to our African brethren, which I still viewed as the best means for promoting social progress and economic development for Indigenous people. After all, Santa Fe is a place where fostering the creative entrepreneurship of Indigenous people is a multi-billion-dollar business, one in which the W. K. Kellogg Foundation had clearly staked a major claim.³⁴ It wasn't until the fall of 2010 that I began to reflect critically on my role in the TALW. I was a second-year PhD student when I first encountered courses about globalization, colonialism, decolonization, and neoliberalism—terms I had never heard before—and I soon realized that, in my capacity as the coordinator for TALW, I was an agent of neoliberal capitalism and US empire. Despite its claim, TALW was never really intended to be an equal “exchange” of skills and ideas between Native American and African artists; rather, as citizens of the Global North and practiced cultural entrepreneurs, we were expected to export our skills with capitalism to the developing world with the hope that our expertise would catch on and help impoverished Indigenous people in the Global South achieve sustainable development through similar means. This is the very definition of cultural and economic imperialism.³⁵

As outlined previously, liberalism allows capitalism to continue under even the most hostile circumstances, and the liberal language of development harbors a cunning power to transform conditions deemed unfavorable—such as the lack of infrastructure that poverty implies—into opportunities for seemingly endless profit. Culture—that unique ethnographic attribute that Indigenous peoples supposedly still retain in a world otherwise corrupted by mass consumption—has become in the neoliberal period a new horizon for profit. Moreover, this function of power does double duty, for in making political transformation seem the natural extension of cultural

entrepreneurship—assumed at the site of individual self-regulation—liberalism also conceals capitalism as a structural source of disparity and flattens any anti-capitalist tendencies that arise out of the lived conditions of exploitation and extraction that make the unequal accumulation of wealth possible. In other words, the ascendance of culture within Indigenous politics has resulted in the almost complete reframing of Indigenous empowerment such that capitalism continues, while other forms of empowerment—namely, resistance—are cast as violent and savage, indeed “backwards” modes of political expression that threaten development—or worse, go against Indigenous “culture” and “tradition.”³⁶

Even within some contemporary Indigenous resistance movements we can see this logic at work, with culture, authenticity, and tradition serving as mechanisms for lateral discipline of more radical or militant approaches. For instance, the equivalence often drawn between “cultural” approaches like prayer or tradition and “peaceful” resistance comes to mind here. While these liberal maneuvers of culture within Indigenous political formations are diverse, and certainly irreducible to the larger forces I outline here, nonetheless such currents disempower our demands for substantive justice and liberation and encourage us instead to participate in the normalizing and spreading of capitalism and US empire. Moreover, they reframe our demands to seem impossibilities at best—as if we could ever abolish capitalism—and criminal transgressions at worst. Povinelli again usefully sums up this process: “late liberal cultural recognition incorporated and disciplined the challenge that anticolonial and new social movements posed to liberal forms of government by shifting the locale of the crisis.”³⁷ That is, cultural recognition pivots away from the violent racial difference inherent to capitalist social relations to a new regime of “truth,” one with seemingly endless capacity for reproducing those relations: culture.

TOWARDS INDIGENOUS INTERNATIONALIST FEMINISM

As I have demonstrated, the neoliberal language of culture is wielded, at times by Indigenous people, to grant the United States permission to crush the national liberation struggles and rebellions that, as Povinelli writes, challenge its global supremacy. In the decades following World War II, these struggles, rebellions, and movements occurred in the form of anti-colonial and anti-imperial revolutions in the Third World. Revolutionaries from Third World nations like Vietnam and Algeria were seeking decolonization and national independence from European imperialism at a time when the United States was aggressively crafting a new form of imperialism that, wielded through nuclear power and the might of global capitalism, aimed to assert its global supremacy and crush the rising tide of communism then gaining ground through several Third World revolutions. In 1966, revolutionary movements from Africa, Asia, and Latin America converged in Cuba for the Tricontinental, an international conference that emerged from the “unfinished anti-colonial wars of national liberation” that characterized anti-imperialism in the Third World at that time.³⁸ The Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL) was established at the Tricontinental. OSPAAAL “provided the infrastructure for mutual

understanding amongst the movements in the three continents” and advocated “peace and socialism” as the means of solidarity and political struggle.³⁹

Today, building upon the tradition of left anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism that coalesced in the 1966 Tricontinental, contemporary movements and rebellions led by colonized and oppressed people continue to challenge the dominance (and violence) of US imperialism and global capitalism. In this final section, drawing from the left internationalism exemplified by the Tricontinental and foregrounding both socialist/communist (what I call “left”) and queer feminist politics, I position the practice of Indigenous internationalist feminism by Indigenous people in the Global North as a contemporary framework for international solidarity to advance the historic Third World decolonization movement.

On Radical Indigenous Internationalism and Relationality

Historian Nick Estes’s recent book traces the history of radical Indigenous internationalism, which he argues “allowed revolutionary Indigenous organizations to make relatives. . . . with those they saw as different, imagining themselves as part of Third World struggles and ideologies, and entirely renouncing the imperialism and exceptionalism of the First World.”⁴⁰ As Estes implies, radical Indigenous internationalism seeks to reinforce Indigenous nationhood through meaningful solidarity with other colonized nations as part of a larger aspiration for decolonization. This explains why the International Indian Treaty Council made international relationships with Third World/Global South nations and national liberation struggles like the Irish Republican Army and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, as earlier touched upon in the context of my 2017 RGS plenary speech. For Estes, this vision of radical Indigenous internationalism is a “truly revolutionary proposition,” for it implies decolonization on a global scale, the achievement of which would effectively mean the abolition of capitalism, imperialism, and liberalism. Moreover, Indigenous nationhood within this context exists “beyond the confines” of the liberal political imaginary of the nation-state, for it proposes a “world altogether free” of colonialism—not only for Indigenous peoples in the First World/Global North, but for all colonized and oppressed nations and other-than-human relatives.⁴¹

Critics of Indigenous nationhood often claim that all forms of nationhood or sovereignty are exclusionary and inherently violent. Significantly, however, the Indigenous nationhood that comes into being through radical Indigenous internationalism does not replicate liberal nation-state formations that function to keep the violence of imperialism and capitalism intact across the globe, but rather gains legibility through routes and relationships with other national liberation and decolonization struggles. Steven Salaita points out that cooperative practices like solidarity and collaboration between American Indians and Palestinians pose a serious threat to the supremacy of liberal nation-states like Israel and the United States. These cooperative frameworks, what Salaita usefully calls “inter/nationalism,” reject the dominance of the liberal nation-state construct, instead embracing a capacious form of relationality as the basis for political imagination and action. At the center of inter/nationalism is

a commitment to “mutual liberation” within the register of global decolonization, and, importantly, Indigenous nationalism.⁴² For Salaita, Indigenous nationalism is not an “isolated organism. It is a radical entity that survives in relation to the destinies of other nations.”⁴³ Like Estes, to develop his theory of inter/nationalism Salaita draws from long-standing histories of Native-Palestinian solidarity, the most recent of which is Native support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign.

Estes argues that in light of the centrality of treaties to Oceti Sakowin history, even before the advent of settler states, Oceti Sakowin claims to sovereignty and nationhood are premised on the treaties they have made with human and other-than-human entities, such as the Pte Oyate or Buffalo Nation. This concept of nationhood is substantially different than liberal definitions of the nation-state, which Estes calls “the most powerful political construct in world history.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, according to Estes, the treaty-based nationhood at the heart of radical Indigenous internationalism does not seek equal recognition as a legitimate, independent nation-state within the global theater of liberal internationalism, which he rightly points out “glaringly omitted Indigenous peoples”; rather, treaties are a key expression of Indigenous nationhood because they formalize—indeed, govern—the vast network of relationships between and within nations that give coherency and legibility to nations *as nations*. Estes’s nationhood, then, is not like a noun or bounded entity, but is a system and practice of reciprocal relationships, or relationality, that treaties formalize and enforce.⁴⁵

Examining the connections between relationality and Indigenous nationhood in the context of contemporary identity formation in Cowessess First Nation, Robert Innes’s book *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* analyzes how Cowessess First Nation kinship practices persist in spite of, and in opposition to, the imposition of settler laws in Canada.⁴⁶ As the book’s title implies, kinship is a form of law, what Innes calls the “Law of the People,” which encompasses four interrelated dimensions: (1) responsibility; (2) a guide for how nations form relationships with other nations; (3) the criteria by which nations determine belonging and inclusion (sometimes known as membership or citizenship); and (4) the principles that govern collective life. I suggest these kinship dimensions closely correspond with Estes’s core emphasis that treaties, both between human entities and between human and other-than-human entities, are the basis of Indigenous nationhood and therefore the mechanism by which we engage in supra- or international relations with other nations, including other-than-human nations. In other words, relationality and kinship-making are at the heart of our traditions of radical Indigenous internationalism, and therefore at the center of our contemporary efforts to reforge bonds of solidarity with other anti-colonial and anti-imperial struggles in the Global South.

Laura E. Donaldson notes that as clan leaders, Cherokee women held the unique power to enforce kinship as a political act of peacemaking between opposing parties. Donaldson’s discussion of nineteenth-century Cherokee women’s leadership argues that these women practiced an Indigenous ethics of kinship that dictated “to all participants what their attitudes towards each other ought to be.”⁴⁷ Moreover, those participating in a peacemaking process were expected to act in a “way in which their

ancestors had taught them to behave.”⁴⁸ Similarly, the treaties discussed in Estes’s *Our History Is the Future* echo both this process of peacemaking and the importance of kinship ethics like responsibility and reciprocity to engaging in political relationships between parties. Estes, however, demonstrates not only how these bonds of kinship are forged between human beings, but also how Indigenous people of the Human Nation forge bonds with our other-than-human relatives and engage in sophisticated forms of internationalism and treaty-making with other-than-human nations like the Buffalo and Water Nations. This axis of relationality, as I argue below, has always been at the heart of our visions of decolonization and therefore ought to be front and center when we discuss any type of Indigenous solidarity or relationality.

On Queer Feminism and Kinship

In recent history, we have seen relationality reemerge as a powerful organizing principle for Indigenous rebellions in the Global North involved in struggles for environmental and climate justice. These rebellions have articulated a resurgent politics of Indigenous nationhood based on deep relationships with land and water, *and* an unwavering commitment to solidarity with other struggles for decolonization and liberation across Turtle Island and the Global South.⁴⁹ The NoDAPL uprising is one of the strongest examples of this trend. Newly popular terms like “water protector” and “land defender” emerged out of that uprising, as well as a constellation of land-based struggles that had emerged from Indigenous resistance to oil and gas extraction in Canada five years prior, such as Unist’ot’en Camp. The popularization of these terms reflect the prominence of relationality and interspecies/interelemental kinship in the field of contemporary Indigenous political struggles.⁵⁰

The figure of the water protector or the land defender centers on the interconnectedness between humans, land, and water. Discussing this interconnectedness, Tonawanda Seneca feminist Mishuana Goeman points out in her recent work on resource extraction and gender violence that settler colonialism relies on a “scale based on difference,” while Indigenous feminist praxis instead offers a “scale based on connection” that upsets and collapses the settler scale separating “humans, lands, animals, and so on.”⁵¹ I have recently asserted that “It is no coincidence that Goeman was writing about scales based on interconnection at a time when the NoDAPL struggle was taking off in Oceti Sakowin territory. Human water protectors activated a profound and powerful human/water relationality (and thus human/water internationalism) when they rose up to protect and defend their water relatives from destruction by the Dakota Access Pipeline.”⁵² This interelemental internationalism, which to me seems unique to Indigenous land-based movements for decolonization, expands our notions of what constitutes internationalism beyond the realm of the human.

As noted earlier, Innes describes kinship as the basis of Indigenous governance, entailing guidelines for how nations form relationships with other nations and the principles that govern collective life. However, Innes also underscores the importance of kinship ethics in establishing criteria by which nations determine belonging and inclusion, sometimes known as membership or citizenship. The idea of human/

water kinship advanced by the NoDAPL struggle invokes an expansion of human-centric relationality to include water, land, and animals within our circle of human-run nationhood. In this sense, water protectors revised criteria for belonging and inclusion in Indigenous nations by reestablishing kinship with our water relatives, thereby reinstating the membership of our Water Nation relatives within our larger (interspecies and interelemental) international coalitions of governance, caretaking, and protection.

This expansive practice of kinship and nationhood should also include all of our human relatives within our circles of governance and protection through capacious forms of internationalism. Here I draw from Black left feminist Mary Helen Washington, who has argued for a left internationalism that practices the “radical inclusivity that defines queer feminism.”⁵³ Queer Dakota feminist Kim TallBear argues for a similar kind of inclusivity in her work on queer Indigenous kinship. TallBear foregrounds caretaking—one of the central features of Indigenous kinship relations—without reducing this relational practice to a gendered form of biological reproduction that relies upon cis-hetero forms of ideal Indigenous womanhood.⁵⁴ For TallBear, caretaking (for children, for example) can be performed—and customarily, was performed—by any relative who belonged to, and was in good standing with, clan networks, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation. On a political level, TallBear’s work encourages us to maintain a commitment to making new relatives (and new revolutionaries) without reducing this essential practice of movement building to biological reproduction performed by cis-hetero bodies and reinforced by heteronormative social relations.

This is all the more important given that gender essentialist versions of caretaking reproduce the heteronormativity at the heart of capitalist social relations. Pat Parker, a member of the famed Combahee River Collective, sums it up well: “the left must give up its undying loyalty to the nuclear family. . . . The nuclear family is the basic unit of capitalism and in order for us to move to revolution it has to be destroyed.”⁵⁵ In other words, although caretaking and radical inclusivity are pillars of a queer feminist ethics of kinship, it is important not to reinforce the gender and sexual normativities that animate capitalist social relations in our approaches to movement building. We are, after all, trying to undo capitalist social relations’ stranglehold over our lives. Any concept of anti-capitalist politics that does not also have a strong commitment to queer feminism, including left orientations, risks reinforcing capitalism and limiting our collective ability to build the kind of expansive, inclusive movements we need to advance the revolutionary struggle for global decolonization.

In January, 2017, at the time of the airport protests of President Trump’s “Muslim ban,” I experienced an example of radical inclusivity in action when a queer feminist and Indigenous socialist organization I co-founded, The Red Nation, staged the #nobanostolenland intervention in Los Angeles. On the evening of January 28, I had been reading people’s reflections on the ban on social media when I was stunned by a livestream of the first airport protest against the ban. Thousands of people had gathered at JFK International Airport in New York City to protest (and dismantle) what airports had essentially become after 9/11: a violent state of exception. Instead of acquiescing to the terrorizing surveillance and state authority these spaces enforce in the name of “homeland security,” people were fearlessly reclaiming airports to resist

racism and imperialism. I searched online for a similar protest in southern California and learned of an airport protest against the ban at LAX on the afternoon of January 30. Having recently moved to California from New Mexico, my partner and I had several leftover cardboard boxes in the garage. I rummaged through my art supplies, found some semi-dried red acrylic paint, and we made two signs to bring with us to the LAX protest. One read “No Ban on Stolen Land” and the other read “Refugees Welcome on Native Land.”⁵⁶

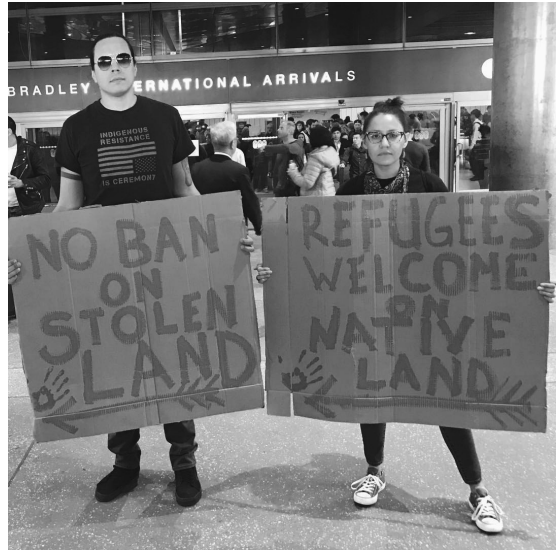


FIGURE 2. *The author and her partner in front of the Tom Bradley International Terminal at LAX in Los Angeles, California during a January 2017 protest against President Donald Trump’s “Muslim Ban.”*

A picture of us holding the signs in front of the entrance to Bradley International Terminal at LAX quickly appeared on social media and within hours went viral. I started to receive messages from as far away as Iran thanking us for this gesture of solidarity. Indeed, the point of #nobanonstolenland was to extend an act of radical international solidarity premised on practices of making kin—of making relatives and claiming relatives—that lie at the heart of Indigenous definitions of nationhood and belonging. Put a different way, #nobanonstolenland was meant to encourage people to imagine collective forms of belonging and accountability that do not reproduce racist and exclusionary ideas about citizenship and nationalism like those that give shape to US settler nationalism and the Muslim ban. Rather, #nobanonstolenland emphasizes an expansive and inclusive form of belonging where Muslims, refugees, and others are embraced as relatives—indeed, as kin—and treated as equal members of Indigenous nations so long as the principles of kinship are observed. As an organization that employs a queer Indigenous feminist framework based on inclusive and expansive systems of Indigenous kinship in its revolutionary politics and practice, it seemed important for The Red Nation to put these politics into practice at a crucial juncture in the history of US-based social movements.

CONCLUSION

I want to close by offering a brief discussion about left politics in relation to queer feminism and how these two liberatory traditions come to bear on Indigenous internationalism. This article's brief comparison of Washington, TallBear, and Parker has shown that all three clearly share a critique of heteronormativity, but Washington and Parker go further to connect their queer feminist politics to a left agenda. Estes's historical account of radical Indigenous internationalism is also clear about the left traditions of internationalism that Red Power internationalists invoked in their alliance making with Third World liberation struggles through mechanisms like the IITC. As previously detailed regarding my RGS plenary talk in London, I too invoke long-standing traditions of left internationalism in my conception of transnational solidarity between and with Northern Ireland and Palestine. Although likely controversial, this point is not trivial. In Nicaragua and South Africa, the two case studies in this article, oppressed peoples, many of whom are Indigenous, drew from left traditions to organize some of the most pivotal revolutions of the twentieth century.

In Nicaragua, for example, I of course knew about the revolutionary history of the Sandinistas and the US-backed Contra war of the 1980s that attempted to overthrow their government. Many houses in the community where I stayed had the flag and colors of the FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional) painted on their front garden walls. I also heard whispered accounts of armed Sandinista strongholds still existing in Indigenous communities deep in the mountains of the north. But I nonetheless failed to note how the obvious support that many families still had for the Sandinistas in 2002 might contradict the neoliberal project of social and cultural entrepreneurship that I was there to facilitate. I was no CIA operative infiltrating a Third World revolutionary movement, but I was an agent of empire facilitating the infiltration of capital. For this reason, it is crucial for Indigenous internationalist feminists to take a principled stance on imperialism by espousing anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist politics in our conceptions of decolonization and liberation.

I draw from Black internationalist feminism to frame the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist politics of Indigenous internationalist feminism. For Cheryl Higashida, Black internationalist feminism is a tradition that "challenged heteronormative and masculinist articulations of nationalism" while maintaining national liberation as central to Black women's rights. Higashida highlights two dimensions of the continued struggle for national liberation advanced by these feminists: "First, it held that self-determination for oppressed nations would bring about socialism for the working classes of all nations. Second, it linked the struggles of African Americans in the United States to struggles for national self-determination" elsewhere.⁵⁷ Similarly, Indigenous internationalist feminism seeks to recuperate the discourse of Indigenous nationhood that was shaped in large part through invoking revolutionary (leftist) traditions of internationalism with Third World liberation struggles during the Red Power era. In this sense, Indigenous internationalist feminism seeks to uphold and reaffirm Indigenous nationhood by renewing and expanding long-standing bonds with our kin in the Global South who continue to struggle for the realization of their

national liberation and genuine independence from US imperial interference. As Estes reminds us, however, Indigenous internationalist feminism does not seek to achieve recognition within existing legal frameworks of nationalism. Rather, the Indigenous nationhood at the heart of Indigenous internationalist feminism aspires for the abolition of capitalist social relations—this is why it is a revolutionary internationalism.

Moreover, the traditions of relationality that form the substance of radical Indigenous internationalism are the basis for making relatives with colonized nations of the Global South. While our forms of decolonization and liberation may differ, our status as nations means we have the natural right to engage in expansive treaty making, or enter into capacious kinship, with any entity who may be a comrade in the larger project of global decolonization, including other species and elements. This is particularly important given the rise of post-nationalist critique within the progressive enclaves of bourgeois academia, and especially within queer feminism. Higashida notes how “feminist and queer of color politics dovetails” with “the post-nationalist position that all nationalisms and nation-states, even anticolonial ones, possess Enlightenment roots and investments in heteropatriarchy, homogeneity, and racial essentialism,” and are therefore harmful to the liberation of Third World women.⁵⁸ An important thread within Indigenous feminism has centered on a similar critique of Indigenous nationalisms in the United States and Canada.⁵⁹ These critiques of Indigenous nationalism are foundational. But they perhaps do not capture the full spectrum of nationalisms that Indigenous people espouse as part of our liberation praxis. Indeed, these interpretations of nationalism tend to limit their discussion to the Global North (and to human beings), thereby marginalizing histories of Indigenous nationhood that are international, forged through transnational networks of anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, posthuman, *and* anti-heteronormative solidarity.

Third World revolutionary internationalism has also historically offered the most robust traditions for engaging in anti-imperialist struggle. At the outset of this article, I posed the question “how have Indigenous people in the US interacted with anti-imperialist formations in other parts of the globe?” The answer can be found in radical Indigenous internationalism and our long histories of allying with Third World liberation struggles. Indigenous internationalist feminism draws upon these traditions to recenter internationalist connections with other revolutionary struggles in the Global South, while at the same time maintaining a strong critique of heteronormativity and embracement of interspecies and interelemental kinship, thereby invoking the emergent good sense of relationality in our politics of collective decolonization.

NOTES

1. Melanie Yazzie, "Decolonization and National Liberation: From Turtle Island to Ireland," Royal Geographical Society international conference, Imperial College London, England, August 28, 2017. For the full text of this speech, see <https://therednation.org/2017/12/11/decolonization-and-national-liberation-from-turtle-island-to-ireland/>.
2. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internationalism_\(politics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internationalism_(politics)).
3. Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).
4. Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Jace Weaver, *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World, 1000–1927* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).
5. Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
6. Jennifer Nez Denetdale, "Securing Navajo National Boundaries: War, Patriotism, Tradition, and the Dine Marriage Act of 2005," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 131–48; Gale Courey Toensing, "Redwashing' Panel Follows Academic Associations' Boycott of Israel," *Indian Country Today*, December 31, 2013; see article text reposted by Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel, News and Opinion, <http://pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=2350&key=india>.
7. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
8. See Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (New York: Verso Press, 2019).
9. Cheryl Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism: Women Writers of the Black Left, 1945–1995* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011).
10. Melanie Yazzie and Cutchá Risling Baldy, "Introduction: Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Water," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 7, no. 1 (2018): 1–18, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/30378>; Mishuana Goeman, "Ongoing Storms and Struggles: Gendered Violence and Resource Exploitation," in *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 99–126; Kim TallBear, "Making Love and Relations beyond Settler Sexualities," University of British Columbia Social Justice Institute, February 24, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfd02ujRUv8>.
11. Steven Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), ix.
12. Names have been changed to protect individuals' identities.
13. Most of my knowledge about Native American art comes from my experience working in the Native art world, first at the Institute of American Indian Arts from 2005–2008 and, later, from 2009–2010, at the Southwest Association for Indian Arts (SWAIA), the organization that sponsors the famous Santa Fe Indian Market.
14. Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
15. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford University Press, 1977).
16. Barker, *Native Acts*.
17. *Ibid.*, 16.
18. Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 6.
19. Joel Wainwright, *Decolonizing Development: Colonial Power and the Maya* (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

20. Melanie Yazzie, "Decolonizing Development in Diné Bikeyah: Resource Extraction, Anti-Capitalism, and Relational Futures," *Environment and Society* 9 (2018): 25–39, <https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2018.090103>.

21. Barker, *Native Acts*, 6.

22. Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

23. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition*.

24. *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*, ed. Charles R. Hale (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Shannon Speed, *Rights in Rebellion: Indigenous Struggle and Human Rights in Chiapas* (Stanford University Press, 2007); Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition*.

25. Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

26. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*.

27. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*, 22.

28. Kgobati Magome and Melanie Yazzie, *Report on The Answers Lie Within Exchange Visit: A Cultural and Economic Exchange between the American Indian and Southern African Indigenous Communities* (2007). On file with author.

29. C. K. Prahalad, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty through Profits, Enabling Dignity and Choice through Markets* (Philadelphia: Wharton School Publishing, 2004).

30. See C. K. Prahalad, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid: Eradicating Poverty through Profits*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Wharton School Publishing, 2004).

31. Prahalad, *The Fortune at the Bottom*, 1.

32. *Ibid.*, 5.

33. *Ibid.*, 100, 65.

34. The tribal college where I worked is located in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Santa Fe is considered the epicenter of the Native American art market in the United States (and, in some cases, a center for the trade of international Indigenous art). It is also a place where nonprofits like the International Folk Art Market and the Santa Fe Indian Market excel at "cultural industries." According to the UNESCO Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity, cultural industries are "Industries which combine the creation, production, and commercialization of creative contents which are intangible and cultural in nature"; see "Understanding Creative Industries," November 13, 2006, <https://www.ico-d.org/connect/features/post/229.php>. Around the time that TALW took place, the Santa Fe-based Global Center for Cultural Entrepreneurship (GCCE), now known as Creative Startups, promoted cultural entrepreneurship on a global scale. Using progressive language like "community," and "sustainability" to frame its mission, the GCCE administered another W. K. Kellogg Foundation grant project to foster what they called "Cultural Enterprise Entrepreneurs." Cultural Enterprise Entrepreneurs "are cultural change agents and resourceful visionaries who generate revenue from a cultural activity. Their innovative solutions result in economically sustainable cultural enterprises that enhance livelihoods, and create cultural value and wealth for both creative producers and consumers of cultural services and products"; see *Global Center for Cultural Entrepreneurship: Fostering Economic Prosperity and Cultural Wealth* (2010), <https://nasaa-arts.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Cultural-Entrepreneurship-presentation.pdf>. Although the GCCE did not have a direct role in coordinating TALW, its mission aligned with that of TALW and helps paint a picture of Santa Fe and the larger context that influenced our approach to this project.

35. This is made worse by the fact that cultural entrepreneurship bolsters the murderous US military industrial complex through actively participating in the expansion of US imperialism in places like Central America and Africa. For example, the section of TALW grant proposal about

implementation strategy specifically cites the United States' African Growth and Opportunity Act (2000) as a vehicle for exploring "export opportunities" for southern African artisans to utilize as they grow their cottage industries. In an October 29, 2001 speech delivered at the African Growth and Opportunity Forum in Washington, DC, then-president George W. Bush remarked that

In an era of global trade and global terror, the futures of the developed world and the developing world are closely linked. . . . We share the same threats; and we share the same goal—to forge a future of more openness, trade and freedom. . . . Our enemies, the terrorists. . . . fear human creativity, choice and diversity. . . . We offer a better way. When nations respect the creativity and enterprise of their people, they find social and economic progress. When nations open their markets to the world, their people find new ways to create wealth. . . . We share more than a common enemy; we share a common goal: to expand our ties of commerce and culture, to renew our commitment to development and democracy (<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/WCPD-2001-11-05/pdf/WCPD-2001-11-05-Pg1563.pdf>).

In one breath, the President declares terrorists as "our enemies" who "offer a narrow and backward vision;" a vision that "threatens" our shared goal of a global futurism based on "development and democracy." In the next, he proclaims that "social and economic progress," the benchmarks of this futurism, can only thrive when "nations respect the creativity and enterprise of their people." Bush's speech is eerily similar to the forms of neoliberal Indigenous internationalism that I detail in this article. In fact, his notions of an international cooperation that is premised on creative enterprise arises from the same discourses and goals that animate Indigenous neoliberal internationalism. Of note, however, is how neatly the liberal rhetoric of cultural uplift and economic development folds into a justification for counterinsurgency and war to rid the world of terrorists, thereby procuring "a future of more openness, trade and freedom." Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd reminds us that the original insurgent, the original enemy of US empire, is the Indian; see Jodi Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011). All who can be made and remade in the image of the Indian (like the terrorist) are subject to the imperial logic of counterinsurgency designed to crush anti-colonial and anti-imperial rebellion and secure a future for capitalist accumulation. Such is the neoliberal logic of Indigenous cultural entrepreneurship: to promise "freedom" to Indigenous peoples while actually delivering new regimes of death.

36. Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez, "North American First Peoples: Slipping Up into Market Citizenship?" *Citizenship Studies* 8, no. 4 (2004): 349–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1362102052000316963>.

37. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment*, 22.

38. <https://www.thetricontinental.org/about/#history>.

39. Ibid.

40. Estes, *Our History Is the Future*, 204.

41. Ibid.

42. Steven Salaita, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), ix.

43. Ibid., xvii.

44. Estes, *Our History Is the Future*, 206.

45. Ibid., 205.

46. Robert Alexander Innes, *Elder Brother and the Law of the People: Contemporary Kinship and Cowessess First Nation* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013).

47. Laura E. Donaldson, "'But We Are Your Mothers, You Are Our Sons': Gender, Sovereignty, and the Nation in Early Cherokee Women's Writing," in *Indigenous Women and Feminism:*

Politics, Activism, Culture, ed. Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 52.

48. Ibid.

49. Yazzie and Risling Baldy, "Introduction."

50. Ibid., 7, n 4.

51. Goeman, "Ongoing Storms and Struggles," 101.

52. Ibid.

53. Mary Helen Washington, "Afterlives: Legacies of The Black Literary Left," keynote address, Global Radicalism: Solidarity, Internationalism, and Feminist Futures conference, September 22, 2018, The People's Forum, New York, NY, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9YWQDjElTw>.

54. TallBear, "Making Love and Relations."

55. Pat Parker, "Revolution: It's Not Neat or Pretty or Quick," in *This Bridge Called My Back* ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (Watertown, MA: Persephone Press, 1981), 242, qtd. in Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*, 10.

56. In my frantic searching on Facebook, I came across a thread on the page of my colleague and friend Jodi Byrd. The thread offered a similar critique of the protests. I noticed that Byrd, a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation and a leading thinker in US-based Indigenous studies, had a hashtag on her post, #NoBanOnStolenLand. I was stunned by the phrase. Like all good political slogans or viral-worthy hashtags, it was simple but powerful, perfectly expressing my own thoughts about the manifest destiny being deployed in the protests. When I learned that the phrase 'No Ban on Stolen Land' was actually coined by Laura Sachiko Fugikawa, an assistant professor of American studies and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality studies at Colby College, I wasn't surprised. The message about politicized relationality and kinship so clearly displayed in the hashtag seemed to me deeply rooted not only in Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism, but also in the kind of anti-racist and queer feminist politics that I draw from in this article.

57. Higashida, *Black Internationalist Feminism*, 2.

58. Ibid., 8.

59. See Barker, *Native Acts*; Denetdale, "Securing Navajo National Boundaries"; Denetdale, "Chairman, Presidents, and Princesses."

