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Subversive: Space as a Movement-Making Tool

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Subversive: Space as a Movement-Making Tool

Maddie Schumacher

Toitu he kainga, whatua nga-rongaro he tangata
The land still remains when people have disappeared.

I take a moment to honor that I am on Dakota land, in a country built by stolen labor. Macalester College is situated on the ancestral homeland of the Dakota people, particularly the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands, who were forcibly exiled from the land because of aggressive and persistent settler colonialism. I make this acknowledgement to honor the Dakota people, ancestors, and descendants, as well as the land itself.

Glossary

How can we speak if we don't know the words?

Aotearoa: the Maori name for the islands of New Zealand, literally translating to “land of the long white cloud”.

Capitalism: an economic and political system in which trade and industry is controlled by private owners for profit. In an increasingly globalized world, free-market capitalism results in the exploitation of human labor and natural resources for the maximization of profit.

Chicanx/o/a: Mexican-American.

Dominant space: the construction of space that physically excludes or renders hypervisible indigenous people, people of color, and others with marginalized identities.

Hapu: the basic political unit within Maori society; a sub-tribe or clan.

Hegemonic: politically or socially dominant or in power.

Intersectional: a concept to describe the ways in which oppressive institutions – including racism, sexism, queerphobia, ableism, xenophobia, and classism – are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another.

Iwi: set of people bound together by descent from a common ancestor or ancestors; the largest social units in Maori society; a tribe.

Mana whenua: territorial rights, power from the land.

Marae: open space or courtyard where people gather; the Te Reo word for meeting grounds; the focal point of Māori communities throughout Aotearoa. It is usually a complex of carved buildings and grounds that belongs to a particular iwi, hapu, or whānau.

Memory studies: an academic field that studies memory as the past made present. The methodology is primarily focused on how memory happens in the present and how it is a form of work, labor, and action.

Nonbinary: an umbrella term for a gender identity that is not solely woman/female or man/male.

Neo-colonialism: the control of Global South nations and peoples by Global North nations through indirect means, aimed at reinforcing capitalism and cultural subjugation.

Pakeha: white New Zealander of European heritage.

Papakāinga: the ancestral home of an iwi or Maori kinship group, or a housing development for Maori on their ancestral land.

Person of color: a person who is not solely white, Pakeha, or of European parentage.

Prison-industrial complex: the overlapping interests of government and industry which result in the use of surveillance, policing, and imprisonment as solutions to economic, social, and political problems – in particular including the rapid expansion of prison populations in recent decades and heightened government spending on imprisonment, regardless of actual need.

Queer: an umbrella term for people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender. There is discussion over the use of the term queer; who should be able to use it, and the context in which it should be used. I find the term to be liberatory in its inclusivity; compared to terms like gay, lesbian, and bisexual, it is language that highlights identity rather than an attraction or gender based in binary ideas. The Te Reo word for queer is takatāpui.

Subversive: seeking or intending to disrupt established systems or institutions.

Tangata whenua: a Maori term that means “people of the land”, generally used to refer to Maori communities or Maori people as a whole.

Te Ao Maori: the Maori world.

Te Reo: the first language of Aotearoa; the eastern Polynesian language spoken by Maori people.

Tikanga: the Maori way of doing things, whether in culture, custom, ethic, etiquette, formality, lore, method, protocol, etc.

Whakapapa: genealogy; to recite in proper order; literally: to place in layers.

Whānau: often translated as ‘family’, the term includes physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions and is based on whakapapa; can be multi-layered, flexible and dynamic based on a Māori and a tribal world view. It is through the whānau that values, histories and traditions from the ancestors are adapted for the contemporary world.

Introduction

We cannot deny what we witness with our own eyes: the rich’s exploitation of the poor, the most vulnerable in our societies being locked up at ever-increasing rates, and the state-sponsored murders of black and brown bodies. Oppression – and violence to ensure continued oppression – exists in every region and state on this earth.

And yet, this is what ties us together: a common struggle against imperialism, racism, sexism, and domination. Queer, feminist Chicana scholar Gloria Anzaldúa once wrote of the border between Mexico and the United States as “*una herida abierta*, where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab hemorrhages

again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country – a border culture” (Fisher Fishkin 2005). Anzaldúa’s language is significant: as modern borders and border-making are tools of separation, we also contain a power to redefine ourselves using the very tools meant to divide us.

All those of us whose nonexistence is demanded,
who have been pushed down and out to the fringes of society,
we who are most distanced from the West and whiteness,
we whose bodies are scars,
memories of the hurt our ancestors have endured,
are members of a third country border culture;
one where political borders cease to be logical or consequential.
We are bodies of borders;
representatives of ourselves;
tied to our collective experience more than any political nation.
It is precisely this arbitrariness of borders, lines drawn in the dirt to separate those of us who would otherwise be relatives, that calls for a new ethos in our struggles against domination.¹

Ultimately, it is clear that modern manifestations of oppression demand more from us than isolated movements with no grounding in land, memory, and identity. In this paper, I begin by sharing my

positionality and why my belief in solidarity is more than aspirational. I then move to a discussion of memory studies, couching native struggles in a cross-boundary dialogue in order to express a transnational frame. In my first section, I examine how race and cultural memory are imprinted onto natural landscapes, imbuing nature with meaning. I analyze the Twin Cities’ and Aotearoa’s twin legacies of indigenous removal and criminalization of culture as well as their historic and contemporary constructions of “wilderness.” In doing so, I bring together Pacific and North American indigenous environmental memory in order to describe and argue against the exclusion of indigenous people from each country’s nation-building project and full nationhood. In my second section, I insert these ideas of land and memory into the context of taking and making space. I observe how both Maori and American Indian movement-making utilized place to subvert the erasure of indigenous land-based memory and the manufacture of dominant space. Finally, I assert that these indigenous movements should serve as guides for future movements and space/land-based tactics in dismantling oppressive structures. In total, this paper argues that the connections between land and indigeneity are inextricable from each other, and that the same colonialist forces that erased indigenous memory must be reclaimed in service of liberatory movements.

¹ Find this paper’s accompanying zine at <https://www.facebook.com/100000596522144/posts/2177415252288338/> and at Wellington, New Zealand public schools

Positionality

All knowledge and research is situated in the framework of the author. Our race, ethnicity, gender identity, nationality, sexuality, class, and faith tradition inform our research topics, methodologies, and findings. This paper begins with an assumption of shared investment in intersectional indigenous justice – but claiming solidarity in this way requires a prelude. I am not indigenous, but I am the descendent of Cantonese people who immigrated illegally from southern China to San Francisco, California during the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Like my subject of study, my heritage traverses the Pacific Ocean. My story is an immigrant story, but it is also a story of a fourth-generation Chinese-American. I am mixed race, queer, and nonbinary, meaning many of my identities reject binaries in name and practice. I am a United States citizen and have lived my entire life in the Southwest and Midwest regions of the United States. My citizenship has allowed me to travel the world with relative ease and the presumption of innocent intentions. So too has my upper middle-class background and both of my parents' graduate educations given me unique access to academic and social spaces.

I claim that all marginalized communities should have an investment in justice. Yet there are still intricacies of different spaces and sociopolitical contexts. I do not want gloss over the different marginalizations of different people

around the globe. I do not want to equate struggles. Instead I want to nuance the complexities of transnational oppression and make the case for solidarity between indigenous people and people of color across political borders.

I am further connected to both the Twin Cities Metro Area, Minnesota and Aotearoa New Zealand because I have done significant learning and have forged relationships with indigenous people in both places. In Aotearoa, I was primarily taught by Ngarangi-Mata-Taurira Tataiaro-Rangi Te Rangiuia, a native speaker of Te Reo and a practitioner of Maori tikanga. In the Twin Cities, I have taken part in conflicts around indigenous environmental justice, in particular Line 3 Pipeline Resistance, and completed significant academic research on American Indian environmental memory with Professors Marianne Milligan, Nathan Titman, and Karin Aguilar-San Juan. These experiences have allowed me to draw comparisons between the experiences and struggles of native movements across continents.

Methodologies: Memory Studies and Transnationality

My paper's contribution to the American Studies discipline is grounded in its focus on memory and connections between indigenous struggles across national borders – solidifying it within a transnational and memory studies framework. I argue that the same apparatuses that produced the oppression and continued colonization of Maori in

Aotearoa New Zealand are also responsible for the removal of Dakota people in Minnesota and the cultural and physical subjugation of American indigenous people across the North American continent. Additionally, as one of the foundational frameworks of American Studies academic research, memory studies serves chiefly to interrogate our societal and cultural memories – as well as the privileged history-making that goes into constructing them. Even though producers of history have been predominantly white and have contributed to the raced and classed construction of nature, memory challenges traditional archival research methods and examines that which is excluded from commonly defined history. The study of memory is in itself a disruption of established historical narratives. Perhaps more importantly, memory’s significance is drawn from its dependence on culture – meaning indigenous environmental histories do not exist separately from contemporary constructions of nature.

With these understandings of transcontinental oppression and manufactured histories in mind, it is up to us to bring the same transnationality to our movements. In her most recent work, *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*, prolific and radical black American activist Angela Davis writes of the parallels between Ferguson, Palestine, and other social movements and struggles

around the globe. She amazingly weaves disparate but simultaneous movements for justice into a web of collective social change. She notes that the Israeli military – which leads a regime that condones apartheid – has and continues to train U.S. sheriffs, police chiefs, and FBI agents in “counter-terrorist” tactics (Davis 2016; Siddiqui 2016). In fact, both armed forces have used the same Combined Tactical Systems (CTS) tear gas and other crowd control weapons against protesters. Both metaphorically and literally, around the world actors of state violence were using the same ammunition to hurt organizers and communities in both geographic places. I will demonstrate later on that both the United States government and New Zealand Parliament wielded similar weapons and tools in discrediting and devaluing the First Peoples of each land.

At this point any efforts to silo ourselves and our movements are narrow-viewed and individualistic. Ultimately, we cannot bring forth equity in Aotearoa without simultaneously reaching justice on Dakota land, abolishing the prison-industrial complex, ending apartheid, and quashing neo-colonialism worldwide. I see a future that is subversive, intersectional, and transnational. When young Palestinians realized the similarities in the weapons being used against Ferguson protesters and themselves, they flooded Twitter with tactics and advice for their American counterparts on staying safe in the face of tear gas and rubber bullets (Activestills 2014). It is these solidarities – the

recognition of simultaneous and interrelated struggles – that lend our movements power.

Producing Space

As Lefebvre states, “space is at once result and cause, product and producer” of social relations (Lefebvre 1991). All social connections, relationships, and structures have a spatial form and location. But what exactly does that mean? All social structures – like queerphobic and racist oppressions – are produced by space. New Zealand academic Linda Johnson explains this concept further; “In terms of power, it follows that *the creation and control of space* is a fundamental component of hegemonic power” (Johnson 2015). Cultural geographer Doreen Massey also articulates, “[space] is both the message and the medium of domination and subordination’ for it ‘tells you where you are and it puts you there” (Massey 1983). Systemic oppression and the structures that enforce it are made manifest in the spaces we inhabit, which constrain the actions of people of color, trans and queer people, women, the homeless and working class, and the young and elderly (Reid-Clevel 2017). But these spaces don’t simply exist – they are produced through specific actions in specific places.

The Twin Cities’ Cultural Memory

The Twin Cities, for example, holds a past that is stained by ties to white supremacy; ties that historically have gone unacknowledged. In 1855, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote *The Song of*

Hiawatha, a book-long poetic documentation of American Indian folklore, centering on the characters of Hiawatha, Minnehaha, and Nokomis. It sold out its first printing, rapidly gained international acclaim for relaying Native American myths, and was translated into dozens of languages. It has since become clear, though, that Longfellow’s poetry is deeply problematic: rather than restating tribal voices and traditions accurately, he culturally appropriated and conceived his own version of a Chippewa² story. He ends the poem by suggesting that native people trust and follow the white man. Inserting his own opinions, he took on “an invented ‘Indian’ voice that dislocated and rendered complex traditions into simplistic forms” (Savoy 2015, 56).

Outrageously, just as Longfellow was being praised for his cultural thievery, the La Pointe Treaty of 1854 was removing the same Lake Superior Chippewa from their rightful lands and confining them to reservations. Roughly a century later, Minneapolis named one of its defined communities Longfellow neighborhood in celebration of the poet. Shockingly, the Longfellow land tract is situated directly northeast from Lake Nokomis, and flanked to the west and south, respectively, by Hiawatha Avenue and Minnehaha Falls – all three names derived from Longfellow’s white

² Both Ojibwe and Chippewa are names that white colonizers attributed to the group originally called Anishinaabe. The Lake Superior Chippewa call themselves such on their website, so that is what I use for this paper.

re-telling. These central landmarks of the Twin Cities represent an erasure not only of indigenous history in this place, but additionally an erasure of Longfellow's heinous appropriation. Effectively this stolen land was turned into dominant space in the service of colonization. In smaller words, what Lefebvre, Johnson, and Massey are arguing is that the everyday spaces we inhabit are not only controlled and managed by oppressive systems, they are tools and weapons of that oppression. Dominant space (as I will use the term) refers to the construction of space that physically excludes or renders hypervisible indigenous people, people of color, and others with marginalized identities.

Memory and collective pain cannot be separated from their place-names and landscapes. History and cultural tradition are embodied in the natural environment. In the Twin Cities, the legacy of racism manifests in the assimilation of the narratives of people of color and the denial of full citizenship. Perhaps nowhere is this more visible than in the cities' greenspaces – which have consistently earned the Twin Cities metro area the title of the nation's best parks system (ParkScore Index 2016). Minneapolis and St. Paul's greenspaces, which, when combined, encompass nearly 1000 acres, have been nationally heralded for their purported excellence and accessibility. For the metropolis' residents of color, however, these parks perpetuate the "white lie" of the Twin Cities and justify ignorance of urban race and class inequalities (Nickrand

2015). Rating systems like the ParkScore Index define "access" as the percent of population within a ten-minute walk of a public park – but do not consider how accessibility extends beyond geographical proximity and for whom parks have been constructed. It is therefore necessary to understand that the meaning imbued in Twin Cities natural landscapes facilitates and perpetuates a system of racial injustice.

Place-Names and Place-Making

In relating identity and cultural memory to the land, we must first situate ourselves in the place-world of indigenous place-names. Keith Basso (1996) describes a place-name as geographic titles that illustrate meaningful images and stories, like *Line of White Rocks Extends Up and Out* or *Trail Extends Across a Red Ridge With Alder Trees*. In conversation, then, someone can use place-names to elicit the corresponding story's meaning, whether as a moral imperative or reassurance. In this way, the Western Apache intimately connect knowledge and place within a context of cultural significance – grounded in the Ndee word *ni'* which signifies both land and mind. Place-making is "a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We are... the place-worlds we imagine" (Basso 1996, 7). Apache place-names are integrally tied to culture and collective memory, so their usage is a foundational and constantly affirming part of Western Apache identity. Locating ourselves this way inextricably connects our natural

environments with who and what we are (Basso 1996, 110). Profound connections between naming and environmental thought – as seen in Longfellow neighborhood – exist virtually everywhere. As seen in the tradition of the Western Apache, as well as indigenous traditions across the continent, nature holds meaning that is preserved through cultural memory.

It is not very surprising then that Minneapolis has named an entire neighborhood for a man who co-opted indigeneity for his own personal gain and reduced native folklore to a poor and simplistic imitation. As evidenced by Apache place-names, how we name our environments articulates the cultural memory behind them. In the mid-nineteenth century, after the Dakota uprising, the Dakota people were expelled from Minnesota. The state governor at the time dictated, “The Sioux Indians must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the State,” (Waziyatawin 2008). Communities were forcibly removed from their sacred places including Bdote, where the Minnesota River joins the Mississippi River, Minisota Makoce, the Dakota sacred homeland, and Bde Maka Ska, White Earth Lake.

Whites soon renamed White Earth Lake “Lake Calhoun” in honor of John C. Calhoun, a politician who was both an ardent advocate for southern slavery and had authorized the construction of the Fort Snelling internment camp for Dakota peoples. Only recently has there been a successful movement to return the lake to

its original name, however this lake and its surrounding greenspace, including many other dominant place-names, cannot be separated from American Indian oppression. Both callous place-naming and the historic construction of nature establish the Twin Cities within a legacy of white supremacy predicated upon the profound connections between memory, identity, and place. In the end, it is clear that the American legacy of racialized human-environment relationships are deeply ingrained in the metro area, as diverse memory-laden land becomes dominant space in the service of white supremacy and the historical, physical, and legal erasure of minoritized peoples.

Wilderness on Two Sides of the Pacific

Similarly, as European colonists began settling Aotearoa and physically transforming the landscape, dominant space was being produced. Not only was the landscape being physically transformed, but the meanings within the land were also changing. Firstly, this process required that history – and any indication of the space that once was – be erased (McCann 1999). In Aotearoa New Zealand, this meant the seizure of land, the stripping of mana whenua and tikanga, and the criminalization of Te Reo Maori. Access to Te Ao Maori, which was so intimately tied with the land, was stolen. Maori memory and culture were deemed inferior and pushed to smaller and smaller pieces of land. What was formerly bush inhabited and utilized by local iwi – bush that served as the basis of Maori

spirituality and culture – was rendered ahistorical, an *other* to colonist civilization, and as “timeless, untouched, remote wilderness”. This assigned value has increasingly informed and defined how the Department of Conservation, and necessarily Crown relations with Maori, have been understood and consequently engaged (Abbot 2008). Automatically, once cultural land is constructed into wilderness, the presence of humans in that nature can only be as “agents of degradation” rather than codependent creatures (Cronon 1995). Wilderness is not something people belong to, only visit (Yi-Fu Tuan 1974).

The construction of “wilderness” was also an integral part of rationalizing indigenous American mistreatment and oppression. Around the turn of the twentieth century, with the rise of preservationists and writers like Muir, Leopold, and Thoreau, the nation was forming its concept of wilderness. The conceptualization of the characteristics and purpose of the natural environment was heavily influenced by the increasingly prominent environmental movement. However, during its first hundred years, this movement focused almost exclusively on preserving pristine places and was steered by affluent whites (DeLuca and Demo 2001, 542). Furthermore, with the popularization of the camera, there arrived a new opportunity to capture the natural beauty of places like Yosemite (DeLuca and Demo 2001, 546). Nature transformed from a participatory, inhabitable space into a sublime, spectacular object. This

simultaneously crafted wilderness as a sacred “Eden” and soothed white anxieties about the existence and sovereignty of indigenous peoples (Spence 1999, 547). Combined with the religious rhetoric of the time, wilderness became a perfect, sacred, and pristine God-given sanctuary, and a reflection and manifestation of God’s original design for America (Spence 1999, 70). In many ways, these conceptions reflected old imperialist, romantic fantasies of manifest destiny and an untouched continent waiting to be discovered. However, both this “discovery” and the so-called “discovery” by Columbus were predicated on the nonexistence (and therefore necessary dispossession) of indigenous peoples.

The problem with the definition of wilderness as pure, untouched natural space – which became an ideal for all nature and a standard for what is worth preserving (DeLuca and Demo 2001, 542) – was that it did not occur naturally. Rather, the idea of wilderness as a nonhuman, transcendent space apart from civilization is a deeply *human* creation and a product of human civilization (Cronon 1996, 7-28). That myth of pristine wilderness is founded on the erasure of the humanity, presence, and place-based memory of native peoples (DeLuca and Demo 2001, 554).

In addition to cultural myth, this took place legally as wilderness was formalized in American legal code to be an uninhabited Eden set aside for the viewing pleasure of white, affluent vacationers. According to the Wilderness

Act of 1964, wilderness was defined as “an area where... man himself is a visitor but does not remain.” To hunt and light utilitarian fires – to survive and thrive as humans in that space – was a disruption and direct violation of this ideal sublimity. From the perspective of preservationists, because native peoples lived off of the land, they were inherently incapable of appreciating the natural world and needed to be removed (Spence 1999, 62). Rationalized upon the environmental movement’s humility, restraint, and respect for the integrity of natural systems, preservationists’ racism was even encouraged. Samuel Bowles (1868), a Yosemite advocate, affirmed,

“We know they are not our equals... we know that our right to the soil, as a race capable of its superior improvement, is above theirs; [therefore] let us act directly and openly our faith... Let us say to [the Indian]... you are our ward, our child, the victim of our destiny, ours to displace, ours to protect.”

Impassioned speeches like Bowles’ did not go unnoticed; Yellowstone National Park was soon the first example of removing a native population in order to preserve nature – and was celebrated nationally for it. To put it simply, the global construction of wilderness has always gone hand in hand with indigenous oppression, no matter where in the world (Spence 1999, 3).

Wilderness is just one kind of dominant space crafted intentionally by and for oppressors and oppressive systems.

To be clear, the manufacture of dominant space results in the physical and racial exclusion of bodies of color – but, just as importantly, it is a key tool of imperialism and capitalism. This production of space was an essential part of the illegal seizing of over 485,000 hectares, or 1.2 million acres, of Maori land in Aotearoa, the virtual obliteration of thriving economies (forcing huge numbers of newly-dispossessed Maori into a poverty that would be passed down through generations), and the conversion of these homelands into individual property for private pastoral agriculture (Wright 2016), similar to the chain of events in the Americas.

Naturalization as Dehumanization

Moreover, these American and New Zealand legacies have naturalized black people and people of color, thereby dehumanizing them and rationalizing the systematic discrimination against them. Just as wilderness was constructed to be part of a broader religious tradition, so too was race: “For most of American history, statements about race were really also statements about nature, about ‘natural’ racial differences, whether created by God or evolution” (Outka 2008, 6). This association between racial difference and nature – and the belief that indigenous people and people of color are “naturally” less than – has also informed and excused the American environmental movement’s involvement in anti-black eugenics and segregationist efforts (Finney 2014, 38). This naturalization discourse has been

foundational to the suggestion that black people are animal, bestial creatures and genetically closer to primates, which has rationalized their dehumanization and exclusion from full citizenship (Finney 2014, 40–41). Indigenous American people have been similarly constructed to be uncivilized, savage, and animalistic (yet prohibited from wilderness) – especially when they make utilitarian use of their natural environment. They are seen as part of nature, rather than human agents who transform it (DeLuca and Demo 2001, 554).

By constructing nonwhite people as “others,” the white, powerful affluent are able to marginalize these communities and deny their rights to natural space and national identity (Neal and Agyeman 2006, 3). With outdoorsiness, tramping, and participation in the natural environment constructed as an integral part of nationhood and patriotism – and under the pretense that this inherited memory does not impact or complicate contemporary racialized environmental relationships – it is easy to deny indigenous people and people of color in both countries full citizenship under national culture. From the beginning, the creation of wilderness and public natural lands has been the centerpiece of the nation-building project of defining who Americans and Kiwis are (Finney 2014, 50). For white and Pakeha folks, camping/tramping and spending time in natural environments forges connectedness and “oneness with nature”, but when indigenous peoples do the same,

they are considered unmodern and uncivilized. Both historically and contemporarily, indigenous people and people of color have not been allowed to participate in this nation-building project on their own terms – at times being outright excluded from it. In many ways, this oppression by dominant culture has left both people of color and native people physically and psychologically exiled from their homeland while still in it (Tretthewey 2010). With historical memory anchoring patriotic identity in place and natural environments (Savoy 2015, 109), our inherited national legacies bring with them a rejection of indigenous people and people of color and their ability to fully engage with nature in “normative” ways.

In constructing indigenous people and people of color as other and erasing their ways of life and histories, the land is constructed to be dominant space. Crucially, however, this also means that, if these spaces were intentionally produced, they can also be deproduced or reproduced. Dominant spaces force a physical exclusion and, often, exploitation of marginalized people. But these spaces are also wholly dependent on the continued marginalization and invisibility (or, at times, hypervisibility) of oppressed bodies (Feldman 2002). Therefore, to be frank: mere existence is resistance. Oppressed people have the power. We have the power to overthrow the dominant spatial regimes that constrain our actions and make us feel small. And we can *create* spaces of representation by inserting ourselves into and reclaiming

dominant spaces and discourses (McCann 1999).

Existence is Resistance

Reclaiming space first requires us to retell the stories of our ancestors; memories and histories that remind us of the power and wisdom in our bloodlines, stories grounded in the land we lie upon. In this section, I detail two key Maori movements that revolve specifically around land rights in Aotearoa: the Maori Land March of 1975 and the Bastion Point occupation in 1977.

History Before History

Before 1869, iwi Ngati Whatua chief Apihai Te Kawau had sold 1,200 hectares of the iwi estate to the governor for the city of Auckland (Aotearoa New Zealand's now most populous city). He also provided another 1,800 hectares for a church, school, and national defense base, which he expected to be returned after it had fulfilled its purpose. Afterwards, he safeguarded the land at Orakei with a Crown Grant and a certificate of title which declared the land 'absolutely inalienable.' The Crown would go on to abuse Apihai Te Kawau's generosity and, through ploys and dealings, would ultimately seize legal control of the entire 280 'absolutely inalienable' estate – which included the land at Bastion Point – by 1950 through various iterations of the Public Works Act. By 1977, Ngati Whatua had made many attempts at obtaining a just hearing: eight actions in the Maori Land Court, four in the

Supreme Court, two in the Court of Appeal, two in the Compensation Court, six appearances before commissions and the committee of inquiry, and fifteen Parliamentary Petitions. Then the New Zealand national government took steps to develop 24 hectares of stolen Crown land at Bastion Point that the hapu had hoped to get back. Joe Hawke (Ngati Whatua), leader of the Orakei Maori Action Group, believed that only direct action would save Ngati Whatua's land and hapu.

By this time, American Indian and First Nations movements were already a force to be reckoned with in the United States. November 9, 1969 was declared Indian D-Day as Bay Area indigenous communities landed on and occupied Alcatraz Island for nineteen continuous months. According to the movement, named Indians of All Tribes (IOAT), the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie declared that all retired, abandoned, or out-of-use federal land must be returned to the native people who once occupied it (Kelly 2014). Since Alcatraz prison had closed in 1963 and was declared surplus federal property in 1964, IOAT organizers felt the island was theirs to reclaim. By the time the occupation was forcibly ended by the United States government in 1971, the rising American Indian Movement was planning the Trail of Broken Treaties, a cross-country protest that embarked in 1972 and traversed Wyoming, the Dakotas, Minnesota, and ended in a march on Washington, D.C. (Baird-Olson 1997). Both of these land-based

movements utilized space and land to remember cultural history and raise the consciousness of the participating indigenous individuals. This was particularly critical at the time because many reservations were seeing significant emigration to cities and metropolises and a new generation of urban Indians who knew less about their cultural background.

The Maori Land March and the Bastion Point Occupation

Back in Aotearoa, the New Zealand government introduced the Maori Affairs Amendment Act at the finality of the 1967 parliamentary session which mandated compulsory conversion of Maori land with four or fewer owners into general land (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2017). In the way of Maori tikanga, iwi land didn't have specific named owners because it was cared for and used communally; so the act effectively dispossessed much of the tangata whenua. According to Kiwi historian Aroha Harris (2004), the Maori Affairs Amendment Act meant

“the commodification of land, facilitating its acquisition for sale to others who would make it productive, and assimilation. Europeanisation of Maori land, which is the basis of identity as tangata whenua, would resolve once and for all the Maori problem by conjuring it away, and to realise the Pakeha dream of ‘one people.’ For Maori, the Act was seen as the ‘last land grab’ by the Pakeha.”

Inspired internationally by indigenous American efforts like the Trail of Broken Treaties, in 1975 Dame Whina Cooper lead Te Roopu o te Matakite from Mangere Marae the length of the North Island to Parliament in Wellington. The marchers were hosted overnight at 25 different marae as they physically connected the disparate remaining pieces of Maori-controlled land across the North Island. Harris continues, “For many of the participants, bruises, blisters, and aches became less important as the march provided a profound cultural, spiritual, and political reawakening. Those who felt distanced from their culture were able to immerse themselves in it nightly at each of the host marae... the march was an important consciousness-raising exercise” (2004). The march's dignity certainly made a permanent impression on New Zealand history, but more importantly it reclaimed space and culture that had been stolen and criminalized by Pakeha colonizers. I argue that this reclamation and subversion of space is what made the Land March movement so powerful.

It was at this time that the Orakei struggle was reaching a climax and Joe Hawke decided to respond to the government's thievery with direct action in the tradition of North America's Indians of All Tribes. In April 1977, a disused warehouse was dismantled, trucked to the site at Orakei, and became Arohanui Marae, supplemented by makeshift houses, tents, and caravans. It was a living papakainga. The protesters were creating their own space upon land

that had been taken from them and their culture. Joe Hawke was joined by trade unions, the local populace, Matakite, members of Tamatoa, Socialist Action, the Socialist Union Party, and Citizens' Association for Racial Equity. What was their demand? The return of all Crown land at Bastion Point – totaling 72 hectares or 178 acres. Walker Ranginui connects the two movements in stating, “Like in the Land March, participants were immersed in the tikanga of the marae and [were] given detailed explanations of the history of the land” (1990). It's clear that dominant space is dependent on the erasure of memory from the land. By evoking that history, the protesters subverted the power of colonists and created their own.

Finding Power in Reclaiming Space

These days, contemporary academics write now of an anti-colonial lexicon and ‘an ethics of making space and showing face’ that wasn't commonplace before the turn of the century (Tuck 2013). Understanding our histories, and the legacy of power and protest in Aotearoa and America, we know there is inherent power in the subversion of race, gender, and class dynamics and rituals through the intrusion and reclaiming of marginalized bodies and histories. And importantly, this subversion is grounded in space. Environmental justice academic Laura Pulido (2000) writes of,

“the spatiality of racism[;]... the fact that space is a resource in the production of white privilege.

Indeed, neighborhoods are not merely groupings of individuals, homes, and commerce, they are *constellations of opportunities* with powerful consequences, for both the recipient and nonrecipient populations. Although whites must go to ever greater lengths to achieve them, relatively homogeneous white spaces are *necessary* for the full exploitation of whiteness.’

Put simply, accruing the full social and economic benefits of whiteness is dependent on the preservation of white uniformity and the status quo. Any disruption of this dominant white harmony – whether in physical intrusion or radical language – is a disruption of the force behind the oppression itself.

We are members of that third world border culture, in the words of Gloria Anzaldua. Academics locate those marginalized by society within a community of ‘others’; ‘a third space’ which ‘allows strategic alliances between those on the margins and creates a liberating space of resistance’ (Soja and Hooper 1983). We, the oppressed, do not have to be privy or beholden to the demands of a society that has already shamed us and cast us out. When we recognize that, ultimately, we can never meet the expectations of a world that prioritizes whiteness, masculinity, cisheteronormativity, and wealth, we free ourselves from conforming to those standards at all. Prolific activist and writer bell hooks identifies the margins as a site of revolution and radical possibility, where

a person can “say no to the colonizer and the oppressor” (1989). Rejecting the unfair expectations placed on our shoulders lends power to our movements for safety, dignity, and liberation. I follow this line of thought, then, to assert that the power of movements comes from the subversion of dominant spaces. Harnessing that power allows us to disrupt the state of affairs: to interrupt oppression and push liberatory change.

What does it mean to subvert space in direct action? (1) Put bodies in the space. The first and easiest way to resist the invisibility and silence expected and demanded of you is to take up space and make noise. Build a makeshift marae on the land the Crown claims as theirs. Lead a Black Lives Matter march down a main arterial highway and bring traffic to a standstill. As queer trans femme poet Alok Vaid-Menon writes, “they say that femininity is not powerful./ but i have stopped traffic by simply going outside./ i have suspended time. i have made everyone watch. i/ have shed every category, word, and lie. i have etched/ myself so deep inside, they will never forget me” (2017). Make people watch you. (2) Look to your ancestors; recount your histories. Dominant space requires an erasure of memory; requires the land to be scrubbed raw and bleached of its history and culture. Bring back what was scoured away. Teach the children. Nourish the land, and yourself while you’re at it. (3) Remember your relatives at/across borders. Resist the forces that separate you from your transnational kin – build

relationships and community across borders and oceans. Trade secrets. Cherish your membership in the third country border culture. (4) Resist conformity, make a radical celebration out of your marginality. The margins offer freedom and possibility; reside there. Don’t placate to those who don’t deserve your time and energy.

Conclusion

Grounded in land, space, and memory, this analysis has demonstrated the transnational effectiveness of reclaiming dominant space and subverting oppressive routines. This conversation is particularly relevant in the current moment on Dakota homeland as a majority-indigenous community of homeless families has created a “tent city” for themselves along one of the busiest avenues in Minneapolis. They are existing alongside each other, subverting the dominant space of hipster Franklin Avenue, and they have forced the mayor of Minneapolis to take notice and make promises to house the residents. But only time will tell if he will follow through on his promises. Local queer, indigenous, and Latinx performer Xochi de la Luna points out this irony of this indigenous tent city occupation in their song *Sin Hogar*, “I was homeless when I wrote this, pondering how I was ‘homeless’ on Dakota, Lakota, Anishinaabe land. Land taken from people by colonizers, just like my people./ Esta no es mi tierra,/ Pero no es tuya/ Me encuentro sin hogar/ Siempre que batallar”

(2018).³ This tent city, although over eight thousand miles away from Bastion Point, demonstrates incredible similarity to the Maori land protest, including the formation of housing structures, the concentration of native people, and the reclamation of stolen land. It is connections like these that prove the importance of cross-global protests and solidarities. Our world's powerful increasingly depend on exploitation and the sacrifice of society's undesirable and oppressed in order to preserve social, psychological, and economic control. In subverting space, we upend these dominant social routines. Our resistance frees us in the short term, but I additionally envision an alternate future: one based in an ethos of active resistance to colonization and commercialization and an ethic of radical care.

³ Listen here:
<https://lacuranderandtheritual.bandcamp.com/track/sin-hogar-2>

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