

# Not an Indian Tradition: The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples

ANDREA SMITH

*This paper analyzes the connections between sexual violence and colonialism in the lives and histories of Native peoples in the United States. This paper argues that sexual violence does not simply just occur within the process of colonialism, but that colonialism is itself structured by the logic of sexual violence. Furthermore, this logic of sexual violence continues to structure U. S. policies toward Native peoples today. Consequently, anti-sexual violence and anti-colonial struggles cannot be separated.*

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[Rape] is nothing more or less than a  
conscious process of intimidation by which  
all men keep all women in a state of fear

—Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*

Rape as “nothing more or less” than a tool of patriarchal control undergirds the philosophy of the white-dominated anti-violence against women movement. Anti-violence activists generally understand rape solely as gender violence. This philosophy has been critiqued by many women of color, including critical racist theorist Kimberle Crenshaw, for its lack of attention to racism and classism. Crenshaw analyzes how male-dominated conceptions of race and white-dominated conceptions of gender stand in the way of a clear understanding of violence against women of color. It is inadequate, she argues, to investigate the oppression of women of color by examining race and gender oppressions separately and then putting the two analyses together because the overlap of racism and sexism transforms the dynamics of both. Instead, Crenshaw advo-

cates replacing the “additive” approach with an “intersectional” approach that accounts for the overlap. “The problem is not simply that both discourses fail women of color by not acknowledging the “additional” issue of race or of patriarchy, but rather, that the discourses are often inadequate even to the discrete tasks of articulating the full dimensions of racism and sexism” (1996, 360).

Despite her intersectional approach, however, Crenshaw falls short of describing how a politics of intersectionality might fundamentally shift how we analyze sexual/domestic violence. If sexual violence is not simply a tool of patriarchy, but is also a tool of colonialism and racism, then entire communities of color are the victims of sexual violence. As Neferti Tadiar argues, colonial relationships are themselves gendered and sexualized. “[T]he economies and political relations of nations are libidinally configured, that is, they are grasped and effected in terms of sexuality. This global and regional fantasy is not, however, only metaphorical, but real insofar as it grasps a system of political and economic practices already at work among these nations.” Within this context, according to Tadiar, “the question to be asked . . . is, Who is getting off on this? Who is getting screwed and by whom?” (1993, 183). Haunani Kay Trask draws similar analysis about U. S.-Hawai’i relationships, which she frames in terms of “cultural prostitution:”

“Prostitution” in this context refers to the entire institution which defines a woman (and by extension the “female”) as an object of degraded and victimized sexual value for use and exchange through the medium of money . . . My purpose is not to exact detail or fashion a model but to convey the utter degradation of our culture and our people under corporate tourism by employing “prostitution” as an analytical category . . . The point, of course, is that everything in Hawai’i can be yours, that is, you the tourist, the non-native, the visitor. The place, the people, the culture, even our identity as a “Native” people is for sale. Thus, Hawai’i, like a lovely woman, is there for the taking. (1993, 194)

Within the context of colonization of Native nations, sexual violence does not affect Indian men and women in the same way. However, when a Native woman suffers abuse, this abuse is not just an attack on her identity as a woman, but on her identity as Native. The issues of colonial, race, and gender oppression cannot be separated. This explains why, in my experience as a rape crisis counselor, every Native survivor I ever counseled said to me at one point, “I wish I was no longer Indian.” Women of color do not just face quantitatively more issues when they suffer violence (that is, less media attention, language barriers, lack of support in the judicial system, etc.) but their experience is qualitatively different from that of white women.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ann Stoler argues that racism, far from being a reaction to crisis in which racial others are scapegoated for social ills, is a permanent part of the social fabric. “[R]acism is not an effect but a tactic in the internal fission of society into binary opposition, a means of creating ‘biologized’ internal enemies, against whom society must defend itself” (1997, 59). She notes that in the modern state, the constant purification and elimination of racialized enemies within that state ensures the growth of the national body. “Racism does not merely arise in moments of crisis, in sporadic cleansings. It is internal to the biopolitical state, woven into the web of the social body, threaded through its fabric” (1997, 59).

Similarly, Kate Shanley notes that Native peoples are a permanent “present absence” in the U.S. colonial imagination, an “absence” that reinforces at every turn the conviction that Native peoples are indeed vanishing and that the conquest of Native lands is justified. Ella Shoat and Robert Stam describe this absence as “an ambivalently repressive mechanism [that] dispels the anxiety in the face of the Indian, whose very presence is a reminder of the initially precarious grounding of the American nation-state itself . . . In a temporal paradox, living Indians were induced to ‘play dead,’ as it were, in order to perform a narrative of manifest destiny in which their role, ultimately, was to disappear” (1994, 118–19). This “absence” is effected through the metaphorical transformation of Native bodies into a pollution of which the colonial body must purify itself. As white Californians described in the 1860s, Native people were “the dirtiest lot of human beings on earth.” They wear “filthy rags, with their persons unwashed, hair uncombed and swarming with vermin” (Rawls 1984, 195). The following 1885 Proctor & Gamble ad for Ivory Soap also illustrates this equation between Indian bodies and dirt:

We were once factious, fierce and wild,  
 In peaceful arts unreconciled  
 Our blankets smeared with grease and stains  
 From buffalo meat and settlers’ veins.  
 Through summer’s dust and heat content  
 From moon to moon unwashed we went,  
 But IVORY SOAP came like a ray  
 Of light across our darkened way  
 And now we’re civil, kind and good  
 And keep the laws as people should,  
 We wear our linen, lawn and lace  
 As well as folks with paler face  
 And now I take, where’er we go  
 This cake of IVORY SOAP to show

What civilized my squaw and me  
And made us clean and fair to see. (Lopez n.d, 119)

In the colonial imagination, Native bodies are also immanently polluted with sexual sin. Alexander Whitaker, a minister in Virginia, wrote in 1613: “They live naked in bodie, as if their shame of their sinne deserved no covering: Their names are as naked as their bodie: They esteem it a virtue to lie, deceive and steale as their master the divell teacheth them” (Berkhofer 1978, 19). Furthermore, according to Bernardino de Minaya: “Their [the Indians] marriages are not a sacrament but a sacrilege. They are idolatrous, libidinous, and commit sodomy. Their chief desire is to eat, drink, worship heathen idols, and commit bestial obscenities” (cited in Stannard 1992, 211).

Stoler’s analysis of racism in which Native peoples are likened to a pollution that threatens U. S. security is indicated in the comments of one doctor in his attempt to rationalize the mass sterilization of Native women in the 1970s: “People pollute, and too many people crowded too close together cause many of our social and economic problems. These in turn are aggravated by involuntary and irresponsible parenthood . . . We also have obligations to the society of which we are part. The welfare mess, as it has been called, cries out for solutions, one of which is fertility control” (Oklahoma 1989, 11). Herbert Aptheker describes the logical consequences of this sterilization movement: “The ultimate logic of this is crematoria; people are themselves constituting the pollution and inferior people in particular, then crematoria become really vast sewerage projects. Only so may one understand those who attend the ovens and concocted and conducted the entire enterprise; those “wasted”—to use U. S. army jargon reserved for colonial hostilities—are not really, not fully people” (1987, 144).

Because Indian bodies are “dirty,” they are considered sexually violable and “rapable.” That is, in patriarchal thinking, only a body that is “pure” can be violated. The rape of bodies that are considered inherently impure or dirty simply does not count. For instance, prostitutes have almost an impossible time being believed if they are raped because the dominant society considers the prostitute’s body undeserving of integrity and violable at all times. Similarly, the history of mutilation of Indian bodies, both living and dead, makes it clear to Indian people that they are not entitled to bodily integrity, as these examples suggest:

I saw the body of White Antelope with the privates cut off, and  
I heard a soldier say he was going to make a tobacco-pouch out  
of them. (cited in Wrone and Nelson 1982, 113)

Each of the braves was shot down and scalped by the wild volun-  
teers, who out with their knives and cutting two parallel gashes

down their backs, would strip the skin from the quivering flesh to make razor straps of. (cited in Wrone and Nelson 1982, 90)

One more dexterous than the rest, proceeded to flay the chief's [Tecumseh's] body; then, cutting the skin in narrow strips . . . at once, a supply of razor-straps for the more "ferocious" of his brethren. (cited in Wrone and Nelson 1982, 82)

Andrew Jackson . . . supervised the mutilation of 800 or so Creek Indian corpses—the bodies of men, women and children that he and his men massacred—cutting off their noses to count and preserve a record of the dead, slicing long strips of flesh from their bodies to tan and turn into bridle reins. (Stannard 1992, 121)

Echoing this mentality was Governor Thompson, who stated in 1990 that he would not close down an open Indian burial mound in Dickson, Illinois, because of his argument that he was as much Indian as are current Indians, and consequently, he had as much right as they to determine the fate of Indian remains.<sup>1</sup> He felt free to appropriate the identity of "Native," and thus felt justified in claiming ownership over both Native identity and Native bodies. The Chicago press similarly attempted to challenge the identity of the Indian people who protested Thompson's decision by stating that these protestors were either only "part" Indian or were only claiming to be Indian (Hermann 1990).<sup>2</sup> The message conveyed by the Illinois state government is that to be Indian in this society is to be on constant display for white consumers, in life or in death. And in fact, Indian identity itself is under the control of the colonizer, subject to eradication at any time. As Aime Cesaire puts it, "colonization = 'thingification'" (1972, 21).

As Stoler explains this process of racialized colonization: "[T]he more 'degenerates' and 'abnormals' [in this case Native peoples] are eliminated, the lives of those who speak will be stronger, more vigorous, and improved. The enemies are not political adversaries, but those identified as external and internal threats to the population. Racism is the condition that makes it acceptable to put [certain people] to death in a society of normalization" (1997, 85).

Tadiar's description of colonial relationships as an enactment of the "prevailing mode of heterosexual relations" is useful because it underscores the extent to which U. S. colonizers view the subjugation of women of the Native nations as critical to the success of the economic, cultural, and political colonization (1993, 186). Stoler notes that the imperial discourses on sexuality "cast white women as the bearers of more racist imperial order" (1997, 35). By extension, Native women as bearers of a counter-imperial order pose a supreme threat to the imperial order. Symbolic and literal control over their bodies is important in the war against Native people, as these examples attest:

When I was in the boat I captured a beautiful Carib women . . . I conceived desire to take pleasure . . . I took a rope and thrashed her well, for which she raised such unheard screams that you would not have believed your ears. Finally we came to an agreement in such a manner that I can tell you that she seemed to have been brought up in a school of harlots. (Sale 1990, 140)

Two of the best looking of the squaws were lying in such a position, and from the appearance of the genital organs and of their wounds, there can be no doubt that they were first ravished and then shot dead. Nearly all of the dead were mutilated. (Wrone and Nelson 1982, 123)

One woman, big with child, rushed into the church, clasping the alter and crying for mercy for herself and unborn babe. She was followed, and fell pierced with a dozen lances . . . the child was torn alive from the yet palpitating body of its mother, first plunged into the holy water to be baptized, and immediately its brains were dashed out against a wall. (Wrone and Nelson 1982, 97)

The Christians attacked them with buffets and beatings . . . Then they behaved with such temerity and shamelessness that the most powerful ruler of the island had to see his own wife raped by a Christian officer. (Las Casas 1992, 33)

I heard one man say that he had cut a woman's private parts out, and had them for exhibition on a stick. I heard another man say that he had cut the fingers off of an Indian, to get the rings off his hand. I also heard of numerous instances in which men had cut out the private parts of females, and stretched them over their saddle-bows and some of them over their hats. (Sand Creek 1973, 129–30)

American Horse said of the massacre at Wounded Knee:

The fact of the killing of the women, and more especially the killing of the young boys and girls who are to go to make up the future strength of the Indian people is the saddest part of the whole affair and we feel it very sorely. (Stannard 1992, 127)

## COLONIZATION AND THE NORMALITY OF PATRIARCHY

Native women are threatening to the project of genocide in many ways. Hazel Carby notes that in the Afro-American context, white men justified the lynching of black men as a means of protecting white women from the supposed predations of black men. "White men used their ownership of the body of the white female as a terrain on which to lynch the black male. White women felt that their caste was their protection and that their interests lay with the power that ultimately confined them" (Carby 1996, 309). The racist violence, then, used by white men against black men simultaneously strengthened patriarchal relationships within white society as white men were pictured as the protectors of white women. Similarly, the colonization of Native women as well is part of the project of strengthening white male ownership of white women.

Karen Warren sheds light on how the colonization of Native women strengthens patriarchy within white society. She argues that patriarchal society is a dysfunctional system that mirrors the dysfunctional nuclear family. That is, when there is severe abuse in the family, the abuse continues because the family members regard it as "normal." Only when a victim of abuse has contact with less abusive families may she come to see that her abuse is not "normal." Similarly, Warren argues, patriarchal society is a dysfunctional system based on domination and violence. "Dysfunctional systems are often maintained through systematic denial, a failure or inability to see the reality of a situation. This denial need not be conscious, intentional, or malicious; it only needs to be pervasive to be effective" (1993, 125).

Europe at the time of Columbus's misadventures was just such a completely dysfunctional system wracked with violence, mass poverty, disease, and war. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed in the Inquisition, and their confiscated property was used to fund Columbus's voyages. David Stannard states: "Violence, of course, was everywhere . . . in Milan in 1476 a man was torn to pieces by an enraged mob and his dismembered limbs were eaten by his tormenters. In Paris and Lyon, Huguenots [sic] were killed and butchered, and their various body parts were sold openly in the streets. Other eruptions of bizarre torture, murder, and ritual cannibalism were not uncommon" (1992, 61; see also Sale 1990, 28–37).

European societies were thoroughly misogynistic. Europe's hatred for women was most fully manifest in the witch hunts. In many English towns, as many as a third of the population were accused of witchcraft (Stannard 1992, 61). Women were the particular targets of this witch hunts (Barstow 1994, 21). The women targeted for destruction were those most independent from patriarchal authority: single women, widows, and women healers (Ehrenreich and English 1979, 35–39).

By contrast, Native societies were relatively more peaceful and egalitarian. Their egalitarian nature poses a threat to the ability of white men to continue their ownership of white women because they belie patriarchy's defense of itself as "normal." And in fact, the nature of Native societies did not escape the notice of the colonizers. It was a scandal in the colonies that a number of white people chose to live among Indian people while virtually no Indians voluntarily chose to live among the colonists. According to J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, "Thousands of Europeans are Indians, and we have no example of even one of these Aborigines having from choice become Europeans!" (Stannard 1992, 104). As William Apess (Pequot) once stated in the 1800s: "Where, in the records of Indian barbarity, can we point to a violated female?" (O'Connell 1992, 64). Brigadier General James Clinton of the Continental Army said to his soldiers as they were sent off to destroy the Iroquois nation in 1779: "Bad as the savages are, they never violate the chastity of any women, their prisoners" (cited in Wrone and Nelson 1982, 17). As Shoat and Stam argue, the real purpose behind this colonial terror "was not to force the indigenes to become Europeans, but to keep Europeans from becoming indigenes" (1994, 72).

The high status of women in Native societies did not escape the notice of white women either. White women often looked to the Native societies as models of equality from which the white society should base itself, often to the dismay of white men. Even in war, European women were often surprised to find that they went unmolested by their Indian captors. Mary Rowlandson said of her experience: "I have been in the midst of roaring Lions, and Savage Bears, that feared neither God, nor Man, nor the Devil . . . and yet not one of them ever offered the least abuse of unchastity to me in word or action" (Rowlandson 1974, 108–109). Between 1675 and 1763, almost 40 percent of women who were taken captive by Native people in New England chose to remain with their captors (Namias 1993, 25).<sup>3</sup> In 1899, Mrs. Teall wrote an editorial in the *Syracuse Herald-Journal* discussing the status of women in Iroquois society:

They had one custom the white men are not ready, even yet, to accept. The women of the Iroquois had a public and influential position. They had a council of their own . . . which had the initiative in the discussion; subjects presented by them being settled in the councils of the chiefs and elders; in this latter council the women had an orator of their own (often of their own sex) to present and speak for them. There are sometimes female chiefs . . . The wife owned all the property . . . The family was hers; descent was counted through mother. (Lopez n.d., 101)

In response to her editorial, a man who signs himself as “Student” replies:

Women among the Iroquois, Mrs. Teall says . . . had a council of their own, and orators and chiefs. Why does she not add what follows in explanation of why such deference was paid to women, that “in the torture of prisoners women were thought more skilful and subtle than the men” and the men of the inquisition were outdone in the refinement of cruelty practiced upon their victims by these savages. It is true also that succession was through women, not the men, in Iroquois tribes, but the explanation is that it was generally a difficult guess to tell the fatherhood of children . . . The Indian maiden never learned to blush . . . The Indians, about whom so much rhetoric has been wasted, were a savage, merciless lot who would never have developed themselves nearer to civilization than they were found by missionaries and traders . . . Their love was to butcher and burn, to roast their victims and eat them, to lie and rob, to live in filth, men, women, children, dogs and fleas crowded together. (Lopez n.d., 103)

Thus, as Warren argues, the dysfunctionality of patriarchal white society can only be maintained if it seems like the only option. The relatively egalitarian nature of Native societies belies patriarchy’s claims to normality, and thus it is imperative for a patriarchal society to thrive to destroy egalitarian societies that present other ways of living. The demonization of Native women, then, is part of white men’s desires to maintain control over white women.

#### SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Native women are also threatening because of their ability to reproduce the next generation of peoples who can resist colonization. While the bodies of both Indian men and women have been marked by sexual violence, Ines Hernandez-Avila notes that the bodies of Native women have been particularly targeted for abuse because of their capacity to give birth. “It is because of a Native American woman’s sex that she is hunted down and slaughtered, in fact, singled out, because she has the potential through childbirth to assure the continuance of the people” (Hernandez-Avila 1993, 386). David Stannard points out that control over women’s reproductive abilities and destruction of women and children are essential in destroying a people. If the women of a nation are not disproportionately killed, then that nation’s population will not be severely affected. He says that Native women and children were targeted for wholesale killing in order to destroy the Indian nations (1992, 121). This is why colonizers such as Andrew Jackson recommended that troops systematically kill Indian women and children after massacres in order to complete extermination.

This practice of controlling Native women's ability to reproduce continues in new forms. The General Accounting Office released a study in November 1976 indicating that Native women were being sterilized without informed consent. Dr. Connie Uri (Cherokee/Choctaw) conducted further investigations leading her to estimate that 25 percent of all Native women of childbearing age had been sterilized without their informed consent, with sterilization rates as high as 80 percent on some reservations (Jarvis n.d.; Dillingham 1977a; Dillingham 1977b; Oklahoma 1989).

While the institution of informed consent policies has somewhat curbed the abuse of sterilization, it has reappeared in the form of dangerous contraceptives such as Norplant and Depo-Provera. These are both extremely risky forms of long-acting hormonal contraceptives that have been pushed on Indian women.<sup>4</sup> Depo-Provera, a known carcinogen which has been condemned as an inappropriate form of birth control by several national women's health organizations, was routinely used on Indian women through Indian Health Services (IHS) before it was approved by the FDA in 1992. It was particularly used for Indian women with disabilities. The reason given: hygienics. Depo-Provera prevents Native women with disabilities from having their periods, keeping them "cleaner" for their caretakers. Once again, Native women's bodies are viewed as inherently dirty, in need of cleansing and purification. The Phoenix IHS policy in the 1980s, according to Raymond Jannet, was, "We use it to stop their periods. There is nothing else that will do it. To have to change a pad on someone developmentally disabled, you've got major problems. The fact they become infertile while on it is a side benefit." Jannet argues that Depo-Provera helps girls with emotions related to their periods. "Depo-Provera turned them back into their sweet, poor handicapped selves. I take some pride in being a pioneer in that regard." But, he said, while he has no problems using the drug on Indian women, "I will not be going out and using it on attractive 16-year-old girls who one day hope to be mothers" (Masterson and Guthrie 1986).

The colonization of Native women's bodies continues today. In the 1980s, when I served as a non-violent witness in the non-violent witness program for the Chippewa spearfishers being harassed by white racist mobs, one persecutor carried a sign saying "Save a fish; spear a pregnant squaw." During the 1990 Mohawk crisis in the town of Oka, a white mob surrounded the ambulance of a Native woman attempting to leave the Mohawk reservation because she was hemorrhaging after having given birth. She was forced to "spread her legs" to prove she had given birth. The police at the scene refused to intervene. An Indian man wearing jeans was arrested for "wearing a disguise," he was brutally beaten, and his testicles were crushed. Two women from Chicago Women of All Red Nations (the organization I belong to) went to Oka to videotape the crisis. They were arrested and held in custody for eleven hours without being charged, and were told that they could not go to the bathroom unless the male

police officers could watch. The walls of the place where they were held were covered with pornographic magazines.

This colonial desire to subjugate Indian women's bodies was quite apparent when, in 1982, Stuart Kasten marketed a new video game, "Custer's Revenge," in which players get points each time they, in the form of Custer, rape an Indian woman. The slogan of the game is "When you score, you score." He describes the game as "a fun sequence where the woman is enjoying a sexual act willingly." According to the promotional material:

You are General Custer. Your dander's up, your pistol's wavin'. You've hog-tied a ravishing Indian maiden and have a chance to rewrite history and even up an old score. Now, the Indian maiden's hands may be tied, but she's not about to take it lying down, by George! Help is on the way. If you're to get revenge you'll have to rise to the challenge, dodge a tribe of flying arrows and protect your flanks against some downright mean and prickly cactus. But if you can stand pat and last past the strings and arrows—You can stand last. Remember? Revenge is sweet.<sup>5</sup>

#### SEXUAL VIOLENCE, LAND, AND ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

The connection between the colonization of the bodies of Native peoples, particularly those of Native women, is not simply metaphorical. Many feminist theorists have argued for a connection between patriarchy's disregard for nature, for women, and for indigenous peoples. It is the same colonial/patriarchal mind that seeks to control the sexuality of women and indigenous peoples that also seeks to control nature (Merchant 1980; Caputi 1993; Ruether 1975). As Shoat and Stam explain, "Colonized people are projected as body rather than mind, much as the colonized world was seen as raw material rather than as mental activity and manufacture" (1994, 138).

Certainly, even today, colonizers justify the theft of Native lands on the grounds that Native peoples did not or do not properly control or subdue nature. For instance, among the Christian Right, John Eidsmoe contends that Christians never stole Indian land. He argues that since Native people did not privatize land, and since their communities had not been "established by God," then Europeans had a right to seize the land from them. And furthermore, while Christianity may have been forced on Native people, "millions of people are in heaven today as a result" (Eidsmoe 1992, 133, 140). As Pat Robertson states:

These tribes are . . . in an arrested state of social development. They are not less valuable as human beings because of that, but they offer scant wisdom or learning or philosophical vision that can be instructive to a society that can feed the entire

population of the earth in a single harvest and send spacecraft to the moon . . . Except for our crimes, our wars and our frantic pace of life, what we have is superior to the ways of primitive peoples . . . Which life do you think people would prefer: freedom in an enlightened Christian civilization or the suffering of subsistence living and superstition in a jungle? You choose. (Robertson 1993, 153)

Immanuel Wallerstein argues that “racism is meant to keep people inside the work system [at a state of marginalization], not eject them from it” (1991, 34). In the case of Native peoples, however, who have an unemployment rate on many reservations as high as 90 percent, the intent of racism is to exclude them. Because the majority of the energy resources in this country are on Indian lands, the continued existence of Indian people is a threat to capitalist operations. Thus, the connection between the colonization of Native bodies and Native lands is not simply metaphorical but is rooted in material realities.

One way in which capitalism has succeeded in continuing its unrelenting assault against the environment is that certain populations become deemed as “surplus” populations and hence either worthy repositories of environmental waste or scapegoats of environmental crisis in need of population control. Samir Amin describes this process as “apartheid,” where “sacrifices imposed on some do not carry the same weight as the benefits obtained by others” (1977, 142). Those peoples who have already been rendered dirty, impure, and hence expendable are then forced to face the most immediate consequences of environmental destruction. Unfortunately for colonizers, it is not so easy to contain environmental degradation to those populations deemed expendable.

It is not an accident that 100 percent of uranium production takes place on or near Indian land (La Duke 1993, 99). Nor is it a coincidence that Native reservations are often targeted for toxic waste dumps. To date, over 50 reservations have been targeted for waste dumps (Beasley 1991, 40). Military and nuclear testing also takes place almost exclusively on Native lands. For instance, there have already been at least 650 nuclear explosions on Western Shoshone land at the Nevada test site. Fifty percent of these underground tests have leaked radiation into the atmosphere (Taliman 1991). Native peoples, the expendable ones, are situated to suffer the brunt of environmental destruction so that colonizers can continue to be in denial about the fact that they will also eventually be affected. As Aime Cesaire notes, the processes of colonization are not containable; ultimately everyone is impacted: “Colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by the contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer . . . tends objectively to transform himself into an animal. It is this result, this boomerang effect of colonization, that I want to point out” (1972, 20).

A case in point is the current plan to relocate all nuclear wastes into a permanent high-level nuclear waste repository in Yucca Mountain on Shoshone land, for a cost of \$3.25 billion. Yucca Mountain is located on an active volcanic zone where kiloton bombs are exploded nearby, thus increasing the risks of radioactive leakage (Taliman 1991). In addition, if this plan is approved, the proposed repository on Yucca Mountain would receive nuclear wastes throughout the United States. Only five states would not be affected by the transportation of high-level radioactive wastes. With up to 4,000 shipments of radioactive waste crossing the United States annually, trucking industry statistics reveal that up to fifty accidents per year could occur during the thirty-year period during which nuclear waste would stream to Yucca Mountain (Taliman 1991).

Katsi Cook, Mohawk midwife, argues that this attack upon nature is yet another attack on Native women's bodies because the effects of toxic and radiation poisoning are most apparent in their effect on women's reproductive systems.<sup>6</sup> In the areas where there is uranium mining, such as in Four Corners and the Black Hills, Indian people face skyrocketing rates of cancer, miscarriages, and birth defects. Children growing up in Four Corners are developing ovarian and testicular cancers at fifteen times the national average (Taliman 1992). Meanwhile, Indian women on Pine Ridge experience a miscarriage rate six times higher than the national average (Harden 1980, 15). And on the Akwesasne Mohawk reserve, one of the most polluted areas in the country, the PCBs, DDT, Mirex and HCBs that are dumped into their waters are eventually become stored in women's breast milk (Contaminated 1994, 11). Through the rape of earth, Native women's bodies are raped once again.

As long as Native people continue to live on the lands rich in energy resources that government or corporate interests want, the sexual colonization of Native people will continue. Native bodies will continue to be depicted as expendable and inherently violable as long as they continue to stand in the way of the theft of Native lands. The United States is indeed engaged in a "permanent social war" against the Native bodies, particularly Native women's bodies, which threaten its legitimacy (Stoler 1997, 69). Colonizers evidently recognize the wisdom of the Cheyenne saying, "A Nation is not conquered until the hearts of the women [and their bodies as well] are on the ground."

## NOTES

1. Press conference, Chicago, Illinois, August 17, 1990.
2. As a result of the organizing efforts of Native people in Illinois, the site was eventually closed, but the remains were not reburied when the next governor took office.

3. I am not arguing that the non-patriarchal nature of Native societies is the only reason white women may have chosen to live with their captors, but that it is a possible explanation for why many chose to stay.

4. For a description of the hazards of Depo-Provera, see Minkin, who concludes that “the continued use of Depo-Provera for birth control is unjustified and unethical” (n.d.). Depo-Provera, a known carcinogen that has been condemned as an inappropriate form of birth control by several national women’s health organizations, was routinely used on Indian women through Indian Health Services (IHS) before it was approved by the FDA in 1992 (Masterson and Guthrie, n.d.). There are no studies on the long-term effects of Norplant, and the side-effects (constant bleeding, sometimes for over ninety days, tumors, kidney problems, strokes, heart attacks, sterility) are so extreme that approximately thirty percent of women on Norplant want it taken out in the first year, with the majority requesting to have it taken out within two years, even though it is supposed to remain implanted in a woman’s arm for five years (Hanania-Freeman 1993, 20). To date, over 2,300 women have joined a class action suit against Norplant, who are suffering from 125 side effects relating to Norplant (Plant 1994, 46). For a statement on Depo-Provera from the National Black Women’s Health Project, National Latina Health Organization, the Native American Women’s Health Education Resource Center, the National Women’s Health Network, and Women’s Economic Agenda Project, contact NAWHERC, PO Box 572, Lake Andes, South Dakota 57356–0572.

5. Promotional material from Public Relations: Mahoney/Wasserman & Associates, Los Angeles, Calif., n.d.

6. Lecture at Indigenous Women’s Network conference at White Earth reservation, September 17, 1994.

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