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**CONTESTING HISTORICAL ENCHANTMENT:
MILITARIZED SETTLER COLONIALISM AND REFUGEE
RESETTLEMENT IN NEW MEXICO**

BY

CHRISTINA JUHÁSZ-WOOD

B.A., Government, Smith College, 2006
M.A., American Studies, University of New Mexico, 2011

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

American Studies

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July, 2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am so grateful to the many people who have supported me over the course of completing my PhD in the American Studies Department (AMST) at the University of New Mexico (UNM). First, thank you to my committee for all of your feedback, guidance, and encouragement and especially to my advisor and Dissertation Chair Professor Antonio Tiongson, who provided extensive comments during my coursework, comprehensive examination, and dissertation. He has worked tirelessly to support me and other graduate students at UNM. Professor Alyosha Goldstein's graduate courses influenced my teaching, research, and the direction of this project. I am grateful for his excellent feedback and advice during coursework, the Master's degree, the comprehensive examination, and now the PhD. Professor Cathy Schlund-Vials has truly gone above and beyond as an external dissertation committee member. Her incisive and thoughtful comments on my drafts and her continuous support have made the project so much better. Professor Danika Medak-Saltzman has given me tremendous advice and direction from my prospectus through my research to the completion of the PhD. I have been fortunate to take excellent courses with UNM faculty including Professors Barbara Reyes, Irene Vasquez, Jennifer Nez Denetdale, and Rebecca Schreiber. Thank you to Professor Irene Vasquez for serving on my comprehensive examination committee.

Thank you to the numerous librarians and archivists who assisted me during my research at the National Archives at Denver, the Albuquerque Public Library Special Collections, and the UNM Center for Southwest Research.

I was fortunate to receive the support of several fellowships during my PhD from the UNM Center for Southwest Research, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Russell J. and Dorothy Bilinski Foundation, and the University of New Mexico Graduate Studies Erikson

Trust. The UNM offices of Graduate Studies, Career Services, and the AMST Graduate Student Association supported my conference travel.

I thank the friends who gave me their support, encouragement, kindness, and community, especially Anzia Bennett and Liza and Derek Minno Bloom.

With the support of a number of writing groups I was able to stay focused and on track with completing this project. Thank you Maria Lopez, Michelle Munyikwa, Melanie Yazzie and Emma Shaw Crane for writing with me and for your feedback on my drafts. It has been such a joy to work with Eryn Espiritu-Gandhi, Huan He, and Rachel Lim this past year. Thank you for all of your close readings of my work, your feedback, and your friendship.

Finally, words cannot express how thankful I am to my wonderful family. My aunt Linda Wood edited my dissertation multiple times. She has encouraged, supported, and helped me to reach the finish line. My older sisters Alexandra Juhasz, Jennifer Schwartz, and Antonia Juhasz's commitment to education as a tool for social justice has always inspired and guided me. My sister Linda Juhasz-Wood has always been there for me when I needed her. Finally thank you to my mother, Lorraine Wood, and my father, Joseph Juhász. I am lucky to be your daughter.

CONTESTING HISTORICAL ENCHANTMENT: MILITARIZED SETTLER COLONIALISM AND REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN NEW MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation provides an interdisciplinary critical study of refugee resettlement to Albuquerque, New Mexico. I argue that refugee resettlement to the United States cannot be understood separately from the ongoing structure of settler colonialism. I analyze Albuquerque's post-WWII militarized settlement as a settler colonial process of extraction and suburbanization that depended on Native labor and resources to fuel the growing nuclear weapons programs. Albuquerque's Kirtland Air Force Base played a role not only in displacing and thus producing refugees during the Vietnam War but also in marking Albuquerque as a distinctly militarized geography to which they were resettled. Thousands of refugees from regions of the Global South affected by U.S. militarism, imperialism, counterinsurgency, and warfare have subsequently been housed in the city's International District, also referred to as the War Zone. Militarized settlement and suburban settler colonialism have contributed to racialized and gendered hierarchies of labor, housing, education and health and they foster uneven exposure to extractive industries, toxic contaminants, nuclear waste, and militarized police violence. Artists and activists contest these structures by working towards demilitarization and decolonization.

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Introduction

In this project, I seek to connect two militarized geographies that are often viewed as unrelated: Albuquerque's International District and Kirtland Air Force Base. Locals commonly refer to the International District as Albuquerque's "War Zone" because of its associations with high rates of gang and drug-related violence, crime and policing. The International District's official name signifies the heterogeneity of refugees who have been resettled to this area from regions of the Global South affected by US militarism, imperialism, counterinsurgency, and warfare. Thousands of refugees have been resettled from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Cuba, Central America, Southern Africa, and the Middle East.¹ The International District is also located in close proximity to the Kirtland Air Force Base, the sixth largest in the nation; it hosts the Sandia National Laboratories, where components of conventional and special weapons are developed, tested, and stored.²

Critical geographers have written extensively about the impact of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, where the atomic bomb was invented, on surrounding New Mexico communities and ecologies. However, there have been relatively few studies of Albuquerque's military institutions, an absence that my work addresses.³ The Base has been built into the fabric

¹ There are approximately 40,000 residents in the International District. It includes the neighborhoods of La Mesa, Trumbull, South San Pedro, Fair West and Elder Homestead.

² The Kirtland Air Force Base is located Southeast of Gibson Boulevard. The Kirtland Base is the largest employer of locals in the state and covers approximately 52,000 acres. In 2015, Sandia National Laboratories had 10,500 employees and an operating budget of \$2.78 billion. Sandia's main offices are in Albuquerque but it also operates a lab in Livermore, California and test sites in Nevada and Hawai'i.

³ Selected texts on Los Alamos include: Peter B. Hales, *Atomic Spaces: Living on the Manhattan Project* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); Jake Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); James W. Kunetka, *City of Fire: Los Alamos and the Atomic Age, 1943-1945* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979); Joseph Masco, *The Nuclear Borderlands: the Manhattan Project in post-Cold War New Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Valerie L. Kuletz, *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West* (New York: Routledge, 1998). While this project focuses primarily on the Kirtland Air Force Base, it also seeks to demonstrate the interconnections between New Mexico's other nuclear and non-nuclear military facilities.

of Albuquerque, yet its historical and present day-to-day operations can be largely unknown to those outside this institution. I argue that while the International District and Kirtland Base are often understood as separate entities in Albuquerque, they are in fact interconnected through the militarized structures of US settler colonialism and empire building. These structures produce racialized and gendered hierarchies of labor, education and health and foster uneven exposure to extractive industries, toxic contaminants, nuclear waste, and police violence, which disproportionately impact Native peoples, refugees, and people of color.

My dissertation is guided by the following research questions: Why was the Kirtland Air Force Base established in Albuquerque and how have its missions and work changed over time? How does the militarization of Albuquerque connect to the broader militarization of New Mexico and the Southwest? What are the economic and environmental impacts of the Kirtland Air Force Base? How has the Base directly or indirectly impacted relocation, refuge, migration, and resettlement to what would become designated by the city as the International District? What are the impacts of the securitization and militarization of the International District on Indigenous, refugee, and migrant communities in particular? How have these communities reclaimed space, produced new narratives, resisted militarisms, and forged solidarities for decolonization and demilitarization?

To answer these questions, I draw on a diverse array of sources including archival materials, oral histories, and interviews. Archival materials from the Albuquerque Public Library Special Collections, the University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, and the National Archives provided a wealth of sources for my research; these included Kirtland Base files, tourist information, maps, Bureau of Indian Affairs files, local magazines, newspapers, and newsletters. I draw on online sources including social media. I also conducted ethnographic field

work, participant observation, and oral histories with artists and workers at non-profit organizations throughout Albuquerque. Katherine McKittrick argues against a division between physical and imaginative space, drawing on what she terms a “poetics of space” that includes “theories, poems, dramatic plays, and historical narratives.”⁴ The “poetics of space” I consider includes performances, novels, films, monuments, and sculptures.

This project is grounded in the concerns of scholars in American, Asian American, critical ethnic, gender and queer, and critical refugee studies with settler colonialism, racial and gendered formations, militarization, and migration. I draw on the analyses of critical feminist geographers such as Ruthie Wilson Gilmore, Mishuana Goeman, Laura Pulido and Katherine McKittrick, who consider how colonized, racialized and gendered spaces are mapped and remapped through relationships to property, labor, and land. While critical geography and refugee studies have often focused on urban cities on the East and West coasts, I bring attention to the significance and specificities of urban spaces in the US Southwest, specifically New Mexico. I further expand writings on racial and gendered formations in New Mexico, which have not been grounded in critiques of settler colonialism as an ongoing, militarized structure and which do not account for refugee and migrant resettlements in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

Albuquerque is relevant to Asian American, and critical ethnic studies because of its significance as the center of US nuclear-weapons programs, of Indian Country in the Southwest, and because of its proximity to the border with Mexico. In the first half of the dissertation, I detail how the enforcement of the Selective Service Act during WWII fostered militarized displacement for New Mexico’s Pueblos. I contrast this displacement with militarized settlement

⁴ Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women And The Cartographies Of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxiii.

to the city as a process that depended on labor and resources extracted from Native lands in order to fuel the city and the nuclear weapons program. This form of militarized settlement served the larger aims of settler colonialism: to take Native lands for the US nation, to remove, kill, or assimilate Native people, and to replace the Native population with settlers.⁵ Furthermore, hierarchies of Indigeneity, race, and gender in employment and housing in the city were cemented through what I term “suburban settler colonialism.” In the second half of the dissertation I show how the Kirtland Base played a role not only in displacing and thus producing refugees during the Vietnam War but also in marking Albuquerque as a distinctly militarized geography to which they were resettled.

This work is not limited by a straightforward disciplinary history of the Kirtland Air Force Base’s impact on the International District; rather, it utilizes a genealogical approach. Ed Cohen, citing Michel Foucault, views genealogy as an understanding of the present in which the present is not seen as an objective or determinant outcome of history; rather he explains that genealogy emerges “from fragmentary and often random convergences whose accreted effects nonetheless confront us as ‘real.’”⁶ A genealogical approach to racial and gendered formations interrogates the ways in which these categories become disconnected from the past and naturalized through relationships of power in the present.

Genealogy troubles progressive teleologies by demonstrating the interaction between geographies and temporalities often marked as separate and discrete. This integrated approach therefore requires analyzing across archives of geographies typically read separately and independently as well as paying attention to sources deemed illegitimate by positivist histories.

⁵ In terms of terminology, I utilize both “Native,” and “Indigenous” peoples in this project. Whenever possible I refer to specific Native nations.

⁶ Ed Cohen, *A Body Worth Defending: Immunity, Biopolitics, and the Apotheosis of the Modern Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 23.

Methodologically, I draw on Y en L  Espiritu's interdisciplinary method of critical juxtaposition, which brings together “seemingly disconnected events, communities, histories, and spaces in order to illuminate what would otherwise not be visible about the contours, contents, and afterlives of war and empire.”⁷ This method seeks to show the relationships between “familial, local, national, international, and transnational dynamics.”⁸ I critically read institutional archives from museums and archival collections by asking questions including: What role do these archives play in knowledge production? How are relationships of power imbedded in archives? Who is excluded from particular archives and what are the implications of these absences?

I locate my project in the area of critical refugee studies, whose scholars demonstrate how US policies towards refugees are not neutral but rather selectively driven by the imperatives of the settler imperialist state and racial capitalism.⁹ The concentration of refugees in Albuquerque and the greater Southwest has been largely neglected in critical refugee studies. Yet it provides significant insights for the interrogation of the ongoing relationalities between settler colonialism, militarism, and US imperialism. Thousands of refugees have been resettled to other states in the greater Southwest including Arizona, Nevada, and Texas. There are parallels and key distinctions between the ways in which these broader processes have played out across this geography. I focus primarily on Southeast Asian refugees resettled after the Vietnam War given the space constraints of this dissertation.

Work on the Southwest is often confined to area studies that look at its distinct culture, history, and geography as disconnected from urban studies, policing, and militarization

⁷ Espiritu, Y en L , *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 21.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ For more on critical refugee studies see: “The Critical refugee studies Collective,” The Critical Refugee Studies Collective, accessed May 27, 2020, <https://criticalrefugeestudies.com/>.

nationally and transnationally. As Lisa Lowe argues, the isolation of colonial archives has contributed to incomplete modes of historical analysis. To be clear, I am not seeking to fill in a missing history of New Mexico, or to offer a counter history, but rather, in line with scholars such as Lowe, to interrogate how a “past conditional temporality...symbolizes aptly the space of a different kind of thinking, a space of productive attention to the scene of loss.”¹⁰ I concentrate on the losses of land, health, and community that are made invisible by mainstream and militarized histories of New Mexico.

Theories, Methods, and Key Terms

American and Asian American studies scholars have shown how the legal and cultural categories of native, alien, citizen, immigrant, migrant, refugee, and asylum seeker in the US are not immutable and neutral but rather unstable categories shaped by geopolitical interests. However, these studies have not always been grounded in an analysis of the structure of US settler colonialism as ongoing. In her 2003 presidential address to the American Studies Association Amy Kaplan argued: “We have the obligation to study and critique the meanings of America in their multiple directions, to understand the enormous power wielded in its name, its ideological and affective force, as well as its sources for resistance to empire.”¹¹ Since the invasion of Iraq by US forces, American studies and Asian American studies scholars have paid increasing attention to the extensiveness of US Empire abroad, at times neglecting American imperialism across what is called North America. This is a problem because it contributes to the view that colonialism exists elsewhere and in the past. However, this is not to say that American studies and Asian American studies can be conflated or that their engagements with settler

¹⁰ Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 175.

¹¹ Amy Kaplan, “Violent Belongings and the Question of Empire Today Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, October 17, 2003,” *American Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (March 2004): 1-17.

colonialism have been similar.

Antonio Tiongson Jr. argues that while American studies and comparative ethnic studies have increasingly engaged with Indigenous studies, Native theorizing, and settler colonial studies, the engagements of Asian American studies with settler colonialism and Indigeneity in the context of North America have been limited.¹² Mishuana Goeman notes that with the exception of Pacific Islands studies, few scholars have considered the imbrications between Native peoples in North America (here she looks at Canada) and Asian immigrants.¹³ Indeed, Asian American studies scholars have long conducted analyses of settler colonialism in Asia and the Pacific Islands, particularly Hawai'i, but have paid less attention to the continental US.¹⁴ As in Hawai'i, refugees in New Mexico do not hold significant political or economic power. New Mexico has often served as an example of a border zone between Native, white, and Hispano peoples. Like Hawai'i, it is often characterized as a multicultural state rather than a settler colonial one. In this dissertation I ask what it means to reframe a historical approach to refugee resettlement to New Mexico to account for the transnational connections to spaces of incomplete sovereignty. Specifically, how was US territorialism in New Mexico mirrored through overseas expansions?

This project therefore addresses the long-standing entanglements between New Mexico and Asia and the Pacific Islands as settler colonial, tourist, and military sites for producing and managing forced migration and weapons development and testing. This is not meant to be an

¹² Antonio Tiongson, Jr., "Asian American studies, Comparative Racialization, and Settler Colonialism," *Journal of Asian American Studies* Volume 22, Number 3 (October 2019): 419-437, 419.

¹³ Mishuana Goeman, "Flirtations at the Foundations: Unsettling Liberal Multiculturalism in Helen Lee's Prey," *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1 (1) (2015): 117-144, 127-128.

¹⁴ See for example: Candace Fujikane, "Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 2 (2000): xv-xxii; Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: a Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference," *Settler Colonial Studies*, 3:3-04: 280-294; Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008).

exhaustive consideration but rather a means to opening up a larger conversation about the confluences between settler colonialism in the US Southwest and the ongoing machinations of US empire building in Asia and the Pacific Islands through the ongoing legacies of militarization, from nuclear fallout to climate change and the displacement of refugee populations. I seek to demonstrate the specific workings of capitalism and empire building not as static but rather changing formations. Part of my work involves mapping historical and contemporary militarized linkages between geographies such as the American Southwest and Asia and the Pacific Islands, which are not often brought into conversation and are typically studied and written about in distinct disciplinary formations. Asian American studies scholars of Empire often view the 1898 Spanish-American War and the 1899 Philippine-American War as distinct events rather than as extensions of a settler colonial and imperialist projects across what is called North America. I draw inspiration from American studies and Asian American studies scholars who have paid increasing attention to the relationships between US militarization as a “domestic” and “foreign” processes, showing what Lisa Lowe terms the “intimacies across continents” that blur the temporal and legal distinctions between geographies and areas of study treated separately.¹⁵

Settler colonialism is distinguished from forms of colonialism and imperialism that primarily seek to extract resources from colonies using local and/or imported indentured and slave labor. By contrast, settler colonial nations seek to eradicate Indigenous peoples in order to claim land for the nation and its settlers. Patrick Wolfe argues that settler colonialism is not an

¹⁵ See for example: Paul Lai, “Militarized Friendship Narratives: Enemy Aliens and Indigenous Outsiders in Cynthia Kadohata’s *Weedflower*,” *College Literature* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 66–89; Iyko Day, “Alien Intimacies: The Coloniality of Japanese Internment in Australia, Canada, and the US,” *Amerasia Journal* 36, no. 2 (2010): 107–24; and Juliana Hu Pegues, “Settler Orientalism,” *Verge: Studies in Global Asia* 5, Vol. 5, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 12-18.

event in history but rather is an ongoing structure.¹⁶ The use of the term “ongoing” challenges the historicization of settler colonialism by bringing attention to the ways in which the US continues to perpetuate genocide against Native peoples through environmental injustice, the failure to honor treaties, the theft of lands, incarceration, military enlistment, and police and state violence. In this dissertation, settler colonialism is not peripheral to a critical refugee study but rather at its center. By saying that settler colonialism is at the center of my study I mean to say that refugee policy and history in the US cannot be understood separately from settler colonialism. The making and extension of the US as an “ideal refuge” has been built upon the erasure of Native nationhood and sovereignty; the US is not a refuge but a colonizer and occupier of Native lands. Settler colonialism informs geopolitical and capitalist relationships across colonial and imperial geographies that produce and manage refugee resettlement. My dissertation confronts the ways in which settler colonialism is maintained through militarized settlement and demonstrates how overseas and invasion wars bring into relation lands and bodies often thought to exist separately.

Scholars often date the beginning of American refugee policy to the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 in which the US government provided selective admission for European refugees beyond regular immigration quotas. According to the United Nations:

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.¹⁷

¹⁶ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (December, 2006): 387-409. Terms such as empire, colonialism, and imperialism do not have clear or static definitions. Generally, I understand imperialism to be characterized by international monopolies that seek resources from colonies to fuel production and economic power. Colonialism is carried out by imperial nations to economically and physically divide and control territories.

¹⁷ “What Is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning: USA for UNHCR,” Definition and Meaning | USA for UNHCR, accessed May 12, 2020, <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>.

Despite this relatively clear and broad designation, the category of refugee has always been extremely limited and guided by political and strategic interests. Further, the categories of immigrant, refugee, asylum seeker, and migrant are not straightforward. They change reflecting who is valued and devalued within a global context across space and time. For example, different countries apply distinct standards for refugees. One could meet the standards to be a refugee in Canada but not in the US. Vinh Nguyen notes that the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was envisioned as a temporary institution to resolve the problem of refugees quickly and absolutely. The condition of being a refugee was thought to be a short term one and an aberration in a world political system based upon fixed categories of borders, citizenship, nationhood, and nationality. Nguyen argues that the ever increasing number of refugees in each subsequent year has meant that the refugee condition is not an irregularity but rather a fixture of modern racialized capitalism.¹⁸

Modern refugee policies in the US are dated to the United States Refugee Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-212), which was an amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, also known as the Hart-Keller Act (Public Law 89-236). The 1980 Act established formal procedures for admitting refugees to the US. Under the Act, the category of asylum in the US was created; it applies to those whose refugee status has not been decided. Those who do not meet the requirements for asylum are often categorized as undocumented or alien. A migrant is distinguished from a refugee and asylum seeker as someone who is seeking better economic and living conditions. However, the distinctions between refugees and migrants are not clear cut as many refugees migrate for a variety of reasons, often including better economic and

¹⁸ Vinh Nguyen, "Refugeetude: When Does a Refugee Stop Being a Refugee?" *Social Text* 139, Vol. 37, No. 2 (June 2019): 109-131.

work opportunities. Many migrants may be fleeing circumstances of dire poverty and climate change, which is in itself a form of violence. Nguyen argues that “the institutionalized term and legal category *refugee*, with its emphasis on legally recognized persecution, operating under the rubric of human rights, fails to name the diversity of actual experiences of those ushered (or targeted for ushering) into the refugee framework.”¹⁹ He does not suggest that the legal category of refugee no longer exist. Rather, he understands that the category of refugee is essential and can literally mark the difference between life and death for some. He is instead trying to destabilize the UN definition as the ultimate means of categorizing refugees.

Describing her status as a refugee from Iran, Dina Nayeri writes: “What is escape in such circumstances, and what is just opportunistic migration? Who is a true refugee? It makes me chuckle that ‘refugee’ is a sacred category, a people hallowed by evading hell. Thus, they can’t acknowledge a shred of joy left behind or they risk becoming migrants again.”²⁰ Here Nayeri speaks to the ways in which refugees need to present themselves given the thorough screening process and the very limited numbers of people who are permanently resettled. She also notes that in the case of Iran, she cannot describe the positive aspects of her life there or she will risk no longer being seen as a refugee.

While the figure of the refugee is relatively privileged within international law, scholars also point to the distinctions made between the good refugee and the bad refugee. The good refugee is handpicked, vetted, and invited by the state. The bad refugee is uninvited and treated as a threat to the border by arriving en masse, as is the case for members of the “Central American caravan” currently awaiting very lengthy processing of their application for asylum, or of boats of refugees arriving on Europe’s shores and borders.

¹⁹ Ibid., 116.

²⁰ Dina Nayeri, *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* (New York: Catapult, 2019), 18.

Wars are the central driver of refuge and the US has been permanently at war with Native peoples since its founding. Native peoples have been subject to wars of genocide, forced marches, and confinement to prisons, reservations, and concentration camps, yet are not often considered refugees in dominant historiography. Article II of the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide states:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.²¹

That the US government carried out, and continues to carry out, such actions against Native peoples is clear. Yet, as Dunbar-Ortiz argues, most historians and the wider public fail to acknowledge this truth. The exclusive application of the term genocide to WWII contributes in what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne call “settler innocence.”

Dunbar-Ortiz explicitly uses the term “refugee” to refer to Native peoples driven from their traditional homelands during the Indian Wars of the 18th and 19th Centuries. For example, she refers to Cherokees whose towns had been burned down by the British in the 1706 French and Indian War as refugees.²² Furthermore, she refers to the policy of the Continental Congress in 1779 to establish three armies with orders to “wipe out the Senecas and any other Indigenous nation that opposed their separatist project, burning and looting all the villages, destroying the food supply, and turning the inhabitants into homeless refugees.”²³ She further relates the reservation system to refugee camps: “During the final phase of military conquest of the

²¹ “OHCHR Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide,” accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CrimeOfGenocide.aspx>.

²² Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon, 2014), 69.

²³ *Ibid.*

continent, surviving Indigenous refugees were deposited in Indian Territory.”²⁴ Under the 1830 Indian Removal Act, tens of thousands of people from the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muscogee-Creek, Seminole, and Cherokee Nations were forcibly marched from their lands to concentration camps in Alabama and Tennessee through the “Trail of Tears.” Thousands of people died from diseases, exposure, and starvation. In 1862 Minnesota governor Alexander Ramsey forcibly marched 1,700 Dakota people to Fort Snelling.²⁵ In 1863 James Henry Carleton forcibly marched 10,000 Navajo people 300 miles to the concentration camp at Fort Sumner. These removals were acts of genocide that displaced Indigenous peoples from their lands to make way for white settlement, the expansion of chattel slavery, resource extraction, and the spreading of capitalist markets.²⁶

By invoking the term refugee in relation to Native populations in a settler colonial context, Dunbar-Ortiz points to the ways in which they have been, according to the U.N., “forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.”²⁷ Dunbar-Ortiz argues for the sovereign status of Native nations to which other Native peoples were displaced. She also brings attention to the unstable and shifting relations of colonialism in the US across territories, states, and Native nations. Dunbar-Ortiz applies terminology to settler colonialism that is often utilized in contemporary analysis of US

²⁴ Ibid., 156-157.

²⁵ Brett Wilkins, “A Brief History of US Concentration Camps,” *CounterPunch.org*, June 21, 2019, https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/06/21/a-brief-history-of-us-concentration-camps/?fbclid=IwAR0p76C5H5uzaAzl0x8TQZ7JO_LdD4kZliw690rD0sSQtBmU3JN09aKFfAA.

²⁶ Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History: The Legacies of Navajo Chief Maneulito and Juanita* (University of Arizona Press, 2007).

²⁷ “What Is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning: USA for UNHCR,” Definition and Meaning | USA for UNHCR, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>.

militarization and war policy including “enemy combatant,” “counterinsurgency,” “germ and biological warfare,” and “mercenaries.” Dunbar-Ortiz argues that because historians and the broader public fail to acknowledge genocide in the Americas, this is at least partially the reason that its core logic continues to resonate through US globalized imperialism, invasions, occupations, and other forms of militarism in nations such as Cambodia, Laos, Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁸

US militarization has been the central cause of modern forced displacement, migration, and refugee resettlement particularly as the US military is the greatest polluter in the world and a key driver of climate refugees.²⁹ John Grenier writes:

US people are taught that their military culture does not approve of or encourage targeting and killing civilians and know little or nothing about the three centuries of warfare—before and after the founding of the US—that reduced Indigenous peoples of the continent to a few reservations by burning their towns and fields and killing civilians, driving the *refugees [emphasis added]* out—step by step—across the continent...[V]iolence directed systematically against noncombatants through irregular means, from the start, has been a central part of Americans’ way of war.³⁰

Here, Grenier points to the erasure and justification of US war crimes since before its founding.

Dunbar-Ortiz argues: “During the Soviet counterinsurgency in Afghanistan in the 1980s, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees called the effect ‘migratory genocide’—an apt term to apply retrospectively to the nineteenth-century US counterinsurgency against Indigenous peoples.”³¹

The creation of refuges, therefore, has been a core aspect of European conquest and American nationhood rather than singularly a 20th century response to global migration in the wake of WWII. Part of the reason why Native peoples are not widely viewed as refugees is because of the

²⁸ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the US*.

²⁹ Murtaza Hussain, “Industrialized Militaries Are a Bigger Part of the Climate Emergency Than You Know,” *The Intercept*, September 15, 2019. <https://theintercept.com/2019/09/15/climate-change-us-military-war/>.

³⁰ John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 223-24.

³¹ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous People’s History of the United States*, 148-149.

failures to recognize Native nationhood and settler colonialism as ongoing. Native nations do not conform to the construction and maintenance of militarized borders particularly since the end of WWI when such borders were more firmly designated and cemented by colonial powers.³²

Here I briefly sketch out some key court decisions and US policies and military campaigns that furthered settler colonial domination and the widely held misconception that Native nations are not sovereign and independent. Settler colonial power and domination were legally entrenched when Justice John Marshall held that Native peoples could not own their own lands (the 1823 Supreme Court decision *Johnson v. Mc'Intosh* that paved the way for the Indian Removal Act). This case established the right to conquest as rooted in the “Doctrine of Discovery,” which legitimated European territorializing and the theft of Indigenous sovereign lands in America. The Supreme Court found that Indigenous peoples in North America were marked by imperfect sovereignty, and it coded imperfect sovereignty into law by assigning to them the status of domestic dependent nations, thereby reinforcing the hegemony of the US settler state. In *Cherokee Nation v. The State of Georgia* (1831), Supreme Court Justice Marshall characterized the US government’s relationship to Native peoples as a ward or guardian. The government was responsible through a trust for safeguarding Native lands. Trusteeship aligned with the notion of Native incompetency, which found Native peoples incapable of owning their land.

Volpp argues that the spatial mode of territorial sovereignty cannot account for modes of layered sovereignty within the borders of nations. Citing Alyosha Goldstein, Volpp notes the significance of John Locke’s theory of the social contract; it extended to the settler contract on

³² Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*. The Post-WWI era also witnessed the formalization modern nation-states, the interstate system, the centralization of administrative bureaucracies, the normalization of identity documents, and legal designations of refugees and illegal aliens.

land considered *terra nullius* because it was considered to be in a state of nature and not properly cultivated via agriculture. However, as Dunbar-Ortiz makes clear, prior to conquest Indigenous peoples in the Americas had complex and varied forms of governance, land-tenure and agriculture, diplomacy, and roadways that connected distinct nations. This history is important for understanding the devastation wrought by conquest as well as for challenging the historical misrepresentation of a pre-conquest “pristine wilderness” sparsely populated by disconnected and unsophisticated tribes. As noted, reservations have been dependent upon the Federal Government. They have been seen as bounded but not separate and autonomous nations under international law. Alexander G. Weheliye argues for looking at sites of global exception including “Guantanamo Bay, internment camps, maximum security prisons, Indian reservations, concentration camps, slave plantations, or colonial outposts, for instance.”³³

The earliest use of the term “refugee” in US policies was in fact utilized to uphold settler expansion and racial capitalism. Evan Taparata dates the earliest use of the term “refugee” to the US law of 1789, which allowed for white Canadians who had sided against the British during the Revolutionary War to settle in the Northwest Territory.³⁴ By contrast, slaves seeking refuge in free states were not treated as refugees under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The Union Army captured free slaves and placed them in “contraband camps” to perform hard labor as “captured enemy property.”³⁵ He therefore concludes, “the earliest forms of refugee law and policy in the United States were rooted in westward expansion, settler colonialism, and slavery.”³⁶ As with that of Dunbar-Ortiz and Grenier, Taparata’s work brings forth the question of how we think,

³³ Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014): 12.

³⁴ Evan Taparata, “‘Refugees as You Call Them’: The Politics of Refugee Recognition in the Nineteenth-Century United States,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 38, no. 2 (2019): 15.

³⁵ Brett Wilkins, “A Brief History of US Concentration Camps.”

³⁶ Taparata, “Refugees as You Call Them,” 11.

historically, about the selective use of the term “refugee” in the US as tied to supposedly clear and long-lasting determinations of citizenship. Espiritu notes that the citizen is often treated as the marker by which the refugee is compared. She argues for flipping this equation and arguing that the refugee be the discursive figure by which we come to study and deconstruct foreign policy and relations.³⁷

Citizenship in the US has always been, and continues to be, a racialized, gendered, and exclusionary category. For example, under legally backed chattel slavery, slaves were not considered full persons. As non-persons they were further excluded from the liberal egalitarian principles of equality and natural rights set forth in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. Weheliye notes that in the *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) decision the Supreme Court justices held that Scott did not have a right to habeas corpus because he was not a legal person.³⁸ Following the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 Chinese Americans were barred from naturalization. The Dawes Severalty Act (1887) extended citizenship to individual Indian property owners who relinquished association with tribes. The Dawes Act provided individual allotments of land to Indians for twenty years after which they could be eligible to the title that was held in trust by the federal government. To receive title to the land, Indians had to demonstrate “competency”; full-blooded Indians were considered legally incompetent. The granting of citizenship therefore works to uphold the hegemony of US settler governance and liberal warfare while also casting this gift as in need of perpetual repayment.³⁹

Critical Refugee Studies and Comparative Racial Critique

I specifically follow an interdisciplinary critical refugee studies method that Espiritu

³⁷ Espiritu, *Body Counts*.

³⁸ Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 78.

³⁹ Mimi T Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 232.

argues, “reconceptualizes ‘the refugee’ not as an object of rescue but as a site of social and political critiques, whose emergence, when traced, would make visible the processes of colonization, war, and displacement.”⁴⁰ Critical refugee studies interrogate the tensions between the everyday and the spectacular, the past and the present, and the public and the private.⁴¹ Espiritu notes that sociological studies often treat refugees as objects of study rather than as producers of knowledge. Accounts of refugees often focus on helpless masses in need of humanitarian aid or as threats to national borders.

Most of the research and scholarly writing on the history of refugee resettlement to the US does not account for settler colonialism, which can therefore, if unwittingly, reproduce US nationhood, borders, and sovereignty. How can a reframing of refuge in relation to settler colonialism strengthen and support refugees and asylum seekers? To be clear, the structures of settler colonialism and imperialism, rather than Native peoples, migrants, and refugees, are the primary focus of my analysis. Espiritu contends that critical refugee studies treat the refugee “not as an object of investigation but rather as a *paradigm*.”⁴² In accordance with Espiritu’s argument, an examination of the figure of the refugee in Albuquerque reveals overlapping and entangled formations of militarization, settlement, and unsettlement that challenge the ways in which histories, nations, and borders are conceived of separately. I resist treating identity as

⁴⁰ Espiritu, *Body Counts*, 189.

⁴¹ For additional work in Critical Refugee Studies see for example: Neda Atanasoski, *Humanitarian Violence: The US Deployment of Diversity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Nell Gabiam, *The Politics of Suffering: Syria’s Palestinian Refugee Camps* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016); Wenona Giles and Jennifer Hyndman, *Refugees in Extended Exile: Living on the Edge* (London: Routledge, 2016); Nadya Hajj, *Protection Amid Chaos: The Creation of Property Rights in Palestinian Refugee Camps* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Trần Đình Trụ, *Ship of Fate: Memoir of a Vietnamese Repatriate* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2017); Simon Behrman, *Law and Asylum: Space, Subject, Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2018); Peter Nyers, *Rethinking Refugees: Beyond States of Emergency* (London: Routledge, 2006); Serena Parekh, *Refugees and the Ethics of Forced Displacement* (London: Routledge, 2017); Molly Todd, *Beyond Displacement: Campesinos, Refugees and Collective Action in the Salvadoran Civil War* (Seattle: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

⁴² Espiritu, *Body Counts*, 19.

homogenous and static and reject anthropological approaches to studying Native peoples as subjects that can be “known,” through what Audra Simpson refers to as “ethnographic refusal.”⁴³ This is not to say that I engage in a “subjectless critique”; rather, a critical refugee study treats refugees not as objects but as subjects with agency and as producers of knowledge.

Mainstream representations of refugees often neglect the colonial and imperial histories that shape internal conflicts within seemingly post-colonial geographies and result in forced migration. Under traditional refugee studies, the state is often seen as compassionately providing for the health and welfare of refugee populations, who are treated as helpless victims rather than complex persons with agency. This scholarship, as well as government reports and publications, often proposes solutions to the “refugee problem” by focusing on the individual’s ability to assimilate to normative American society and culture. For example, Eric Tang demonstrates how refugee women’s domestic spaces are figured as unsettled and therefore always in need of the oversight and disciplining of the welfare state.⁴⁴

For many Cold War refugees from communist countries, resettlement was meant not only to demonstrate the repression and unpopularity of these regimes but also to prop up US self-proclaimed democracy and capitalism during the Cold War. For example, proportionally, Hungarians were one of the largest groups of refugees to be resettled to the US following WWII, in part because of sympathy for Hungarians after 1956 and also because they were portrayed as easily assimilable to mainstream US education, culture, and labor. Hungarians were represented as “good refugees,” quintessential neoliberal subjects whose success upholds the promise of American meritocracy, liberalism, and governance. Tang argues that refugee exceptionalism has

⁴³ Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 34.

⁴⁴ Eric Tang, *Unsettled: Cambodian Refugees in the NYC Hyperghetto*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015.

also been applied to later refugees of color, such as Cambodian refugees, who have experienced very different conditions of warfare, occupation, racism, resettlement, and economic and social precarity. Tang challenges the benevolent narrative of refugee resettlement by bringing attention to the violence that constitutes unending warfare and militarization.⁴⁵ After the Vietnam War, refugees were no longer synonymous with Eastern Europeans but with Vietnamese “boat people” and Cubans fleeing the Castro government. As with Hungarians, greater numbers of refugees were admitted from these countries as part of the larger Cold War strategy. As Espiritu argues, the resettlement of refugees was used to make a bad war into a good war.⁴⁶

Assimilation narratives produce meaning not only about refugees but also about nations. These narratives take as a given that assimilation is the desired goal. As Aihwa Ong argues, Cambodian refugees have often strategically deployed signifiers of assimilation in order to produce legibility within regimes of state power.⁴⁷ Assimilation-based narratives presume a homogenous or static American nation, society and culture into which one assimilates. The homogeneity not only erases distinctions of race, gender, ethnicity, and class but also the historical and ongoing structural forces that produce inequity. Rather than follow a liberal politics of assimilation, I consider what it means for refugee studies to center a transnational decolonial and demilitarized project.

Scholars of comparative racial critique have paid significant attention to the relational character of racial and gendered formations domestically. However, less attention has been paid to the transnational role of racialization, particularly in regard to overseas war and its impact on the domestic. I am hesitant to use the terms “domestic” and “transnational” because of the ways

⁴⁵ Tang, *Unsettled: Cambodian Refugees in the NYC Hyperghetto*.

⁴⁶ Espiritu, *Body Counts*.

⁴⁷ Aihwa Ong, *Buddha is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, and the New America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.)

they are often used in American studies literature. Manu Karuka argues that:

There is no ‘national’ territory of the United States. There are only colonized territories. There is no ‘national’ US political economy, only an imperial one, which continues to be maintained, not through the rule of law, contract, or competition, but through the renewal of colonial occupation. In the US framework there is no ‘national’ law that can be distinguished from conquest. The United States claims and maintains its ‘domestic’ territories at the nexus of war and finance.⁴⁸

Transnational studies can fail to recognize Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty within the borders created and violently policed by the settler state. Looking specifically at reservations in relation to overseas incorporated and un-incorporated territories, commonwealths, and possessions works against the ways in which scholars have often treated transnationalism.

This project is an attempt to address settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and refuge within the specific location of Albuquerque, New Mexico in the post-WWII context. It identifies forms of displacement and refuge that are not readily put together including the draft of Pueblo soldiers to fight in the Pacific Theater of WWII, Indian relocation programs, and refugee resettlement after the end of the Vietnam War. This dissertation argues for the significance of cities such as Albuquerque that are not as readily associated with refugee resettlement as those on the East and West Coasts. Although the number of refugees resettled is small in comparison to the number resettled in cities such as Long Beach, New York, San Diego, or Houston, cities such as Albuquerque should not be overlooked as they tell us not only about the varied histories of refugee policies and resettlements but also what it means to try to make home in areas with smaller refugee populations and services.

Albuquerque’s large Native population and proximity to numerous reservations distinguishes it from other cities that have been the subject of critical refugee studies.

⁴⁸ Manu Karuka, *Empire’s Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), xii.

Albuquerque is located on unceded Tewa Pueblo territory and is a border town to numerous Native nations; it serves as a defense against Native peoples and as a space to extract resources from their lands.⁴⁹ It is bordered by Isleta Pueblo Reservation, the Sandia Pueblo Reservation, and the Santa Ana Pueblo Reservation. Albuquerque is ranked the sixth city in the nation in the percentage of Native peoples, around six percent of the city's total population.⁵⁰ There are twelve additional Native Nations within a 50-mile radius of the city. The 20 other state and federally recognized tribes in New Mexico are the Jicarilla Apache Nation, Mescalero Apache Tribe of the Mescalero Reservation, Navajo Nation, Ohkay Owingeh, the Ute Mountain Tribe of the Ute Mountain Reservation, Zuni Tribe of the Zuni Reservation and the Pueblos of Acoma, Cochiti, Jemez, Laguna, Nambe, Picuris, Pojoaque, San Filipe, San Ildefonso, Santa Clara, Kewa, Taos, Tesuque, and Zia.⁵¹ New Mexico itself is ranked fourth among states in the population of Native people, who comprise roughly 10.5% of the state's population.⁵² Yet, the city of Albuquerque did not recognize the historical existence of Native peoples in the city until the 1990s.

Scholars have grappled with addressing refugee resettlement to settler colonial nations and have utilized distinct terminology to refer to peoples who have been forcibly displaced, enslaved, and resettled on Native lands. For example, Jodi Byrd utilizes the term “arrivant,” as articulated by Kamau Brathwaite, to refer specifically to African slaves and Chinese coolies.⁵³ In the context of Palestine, Eryn Espiritu Gandhi utilizes the term “refugee settler” to capture: “the

⁴⁹ Melanie Yazzie, “Brutal Violence in Border Towns Linked to Colonization,” *Indian Country Today*, August 22, 2014, <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/politics/brutal-violence-in-border-towns-linked-to-kolonization/>.

⁵⁰ Martha Salazar, “Federal and State Recognized Tribes,” List of Federal and State Recognized Tribes, accessed May 13, 2020, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/state-tribal-institute/list-of-federal-and-state-recognized-tribes.aspx>.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² “US Census Bureau QuickFacts: New Mexico,” Census Bureau QuickFacts, accessed May 13, 2020, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NM>.

⁵³ Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), xxxv.

vexed relationship between refugees absorbed into a settler colonial state and native peoples in occupied Palestine.”⁵⁴ Gandhi demonstrates how Vietnamese refugees were utilized by the state of Israel to support Zionist expansionism and apartheid. Quynh Nhu Le uses the term “settler racial” as “an imperfect but nevertheless malleable identifier with which to describe the relational formations of power and complicity that structure settler states.”⁵⁵ Nguyen uses the term “displaced settler” to refer to refugees to Canada. Generally, I simply utilize the term “refugees” in this project. I do not seek to affirm the legal categorizations of refugees under national and international law. At times I refer to what some would call migrants as refugees. In so doing I maintain that there is not a static or unitary refugee subject position. Yet, I agree that despite the conditions that bring an individual to a settler colonial nation they nonetheless are implicated in and often benefit from its structures.

For example, Goeman notes that the reservation, treated as outside the urban city, provides the resources and materials that allow the urban city to function and reproduce. Water, coal power, and, increasingly, fracked oil, which generate much of the power and fuel for cities and the military industrial complex in the Southwest and Western US, are extracted from Native lands. This activity necessarily connects all non-Native peoples to the devaluation of Native lands and lives though it disproportionately impacts some settlers more than others. As environmental justice scholars argue, poor people and people of color are more likely to be exposed to pollution, toxicity, and unsafe drinking water. As such, settlers are not equally impacted by the government bodies and corporations that continue to steal from and pollute Native lands.

⁵⁴ Eryn Lê Espiritu, “Vexed Solidarities: Vietnamese Israelis and the Question of Palestine,” *LIT: Literature Interpretation Theory* 29:1 (2018): 9.

⁵⁵ Quynh Nhu Le, *Unsettled Solidarities Asian and Indigenous Cross-Representations in the Americas* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019), 11.

Scholars are therefore grappling with the larger question of whether we have differential expectations for those who have been brought forcibly to the United States or who are escaping as refugees from those we term settlers. This leads to the question of how we define and understand the term “settlers.” The Oxford dictionary defines a settler as “a person who goes to live in a new country or region.” Conquest is defined as “the act of taking control of a country, city, etc. by force.” Here, “taking control of” and “force” distinguish conquest from settlement. Non-Native people are often portrayed as not responsible for conquest and settlement because it was carried out before them and without their choice or consent. Settlers often think that they belong to the US as citizens, particularly because of the trials and tribulations their family went through to secure a better life. These myths require the absencing of the structures of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and cis heteropatriarchy that can legitimate the belief that “The settler belongs to his land, and the land belongs to him. His relationship to his country could be conceptualized as fee simple title.”⁵⁶ The absolution of responsibility for conquest and settlement has far reaching consequences on individual and collective levels, which I address throughout this dissertation. As noted, some people, and institutions such as the military, have much more responsibility for the conditions that negatively impact Native peoples, people of color, and refugees than do others.

In my project I look specifically at what I term militarized settlement. Juliet Nebolon characterizes settler militarism as “the dynamics through which, in Hawai‘i, settler colonialism and militarization have simultaneously perpetuated, legitimated, and concealed one another.”⁵⁷ In this project, militarized settlement refers to the processes through which Albuquerque grew

⁵⁶ Leti Volpp, “The Indigenous as Alien,” *UC Irvine Law Review* Vol. 5, Issue 2 (June 2015): 322.

⁵⁷ Juliet Nebolon, “Life Given Straight from the Heart”: Settler Militarism, Biopolitics, and Public Health in Hawai‘i during World War II,” *American Quarterly* Volume 69, Number 1 (March 2017), 25.

and developed as a city in relation to militarization. Like Nebolon, I characterize this settlement as part of the broader structure of settler colonialism that I argue has also been inextricably tied to US empire building, in particular that involved in post-WWII militarization in New Mexico Asia and the Pacific Islands. I seek to bring attention to the militarized, racialized and gendered structures that shape and entangle the geographies of homes, neighborhoods, and cities yet are often rendered invisible. I seek to contribute to a better understanding of the circuits of militarism that while often invisible continue to mark our shared present and future. I distinguish between militarized settlement and refuge to Albuquerque following the Vietnam War; they are nonetheless related processes. The militarization of New Mexico has impacted Native peoples and refugees in connected yet distinct ways.

For Indigenous peoples and other survivors of genocides, geographic spaces can index different relationships to traumatic memory. Albuquerque is a city that marks multiple, often unacknowledged genocides, of Indigenous peoples and of refugees resettled from, for example, the genocide perpetuated by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Khatharya Um writes that Cambodians have experienced the layered traumas of “war, genocide, occupation and forced dispersal.”⁵⁸ In this project I trace the ways in which these layered traumas converge in a site such as Albuquerque’s International District or War Zone. The almost one million refugees from the Vietnam War were most often resettled into precarious neighborhoods such as the International District, which has become a heavily militarized space in which the dynamics of white, heteromascularity continue to be mobilized against Indigenous, migrant, and refugee populations. The International District’s devaluation is directly connected to the valuation of the mostly white, upper class, and suburban areas of Albuquerque that continue to be tied to the

⁵⁸ Khatharya Um, “Exiled Memory: History, Identity, and Remembering in Southeast Asia and Southeast Asian Diaspora,” *asia critique* Vol. 20, Number 3 (Summer 2012): 832.

Base, especially the Sandia labs. The focus on gang violence and crime is placed on the War Zone rather than on the undercurrents of devaluation built into the city over time. I take a structural, historically-rooted approach to understand how inequalities have been built into the city in the post-WWII era as they have differentially mirrored and produced racial and gendered formations.

The specificities of New Mexico are often unknown and unacknowledged in urban studies of racial and gendered formations in the broader US. I take a relational approach to the study of racial and gendered formations that responds to the challenges and tensions posed by what is termed the “comparative turn” in ethnic studies. Scholars engaged with the comparative turn challenge white supremacist constructions of race as a hierarchical, essentialized, and biological category.⁵⁹ Comparative race scholars also critique the centering of whiteness in critical race studies. Scholars demonstrate how racial and ethnic formations are produced not only in relation to whiteness but also in relation to people of color. However, as many argue, using the terminology of comparison can too easily result in simplistic forms of analogy or likeness. David Theo Goldberg maintains that analogous forms of comparison can often obscure the distinctions between the geographies and histories being compared.⁶⁰ Chandan Reddy criticizes comparisons rooted in analogies for requiring the subjects compared to be reduced to a single axis of identity.⁶¹ Analogous forms of comparison presume not only homogeneity but also separateness. My project focuses on the local conditions of Albuquerque as connected to both national and transnational racial and gendered hierarchies and formations.

⁵⁹Allan Punzalan Isaac, *American Tropics: Articulating Filipino America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

⁶⁰ David Theo Goldberg, “Racial Comparisons, Relational Racisms: Some Thoughts Method,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32.7 (2009), 1275-1276.

⁶¹ Chandan Reddy, *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

I use the term relationality instead of “comparison” to resist characterizing Indigenous peoples and refugees as homogenous, static, and analogous. According to Shu-mei Shih, the erasure and displacement of Indigeneity is a central challenge to comparative racial critique particularly as Native peoples are often incorrectly equated with minorities in the US.⁶² Indigeneity is not a racial category, though, as Byrd argues, the fictive category of Indian has served to cast all Native peoples within biological and essential categories of race tied to blood quantum rules and genetics.⁶³ Distinct Native nations have been flattened out into one homogenous category of an “Indian race.” These externally imposed categories of race have been socially constructed depending on the needs of the nation and of corporations for land and labor.

I especially draw on Glen Coulthard’s contention that the ongoing dispossession of Native peoples’ lands occurs in relation to modes of power indexed by hierarchies of race, gender, sexuality, and class that operate to uphold settler colonialism. Coulthard contends that:

A settler-colonial relationship is one characterized by a particular form of *domination*; that is, it is a relationship where power—in this case, interrelated discursive and nondiscursive facets of economic, gendered, racial, and state power—has been structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of hierarchal social relations that continue to facilitate the *dispossession* of Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority.⁶⁴

Here, Coulthard points to the role of power in the creation and maintenance of domination, hierarchies, and dispossession. Scholars including Lowe, Aileen Moreton-Robinson, and Tiya Miles bring attention to the ways in which the black/white binary has obscured the complexities of racial and gendered formations as always intertwined with colonialism, empire, and

⁶² Shu-Mei Shih, “Comparative Racialization: An Introduction,” *PMLA* 123.5 (October 2008): 1347-1362.

⁶³ Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*.

⁶⁴ Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin: White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 6-7.

immigration. While the black/white binary of racialization in the US cannot be “moved beyond,” Moreton-Robinson argues that the black/white binary, specifically in whiteness studies literature, “places the literature outside of colonial history.”⁶⁵

Writing in regard to comparative racial and gendered formations, Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson write that minority nationalisms emerged during the 1960s and 1970s from a third-world decolonial politics based on notions of shared oppression that challenged the supremacy of the US nation-state. They suggest that by utilizing a nation-based politics, minority nationalists often reconstituted the very problematics inherent to the utopian national form. For example, minority nationalisms often prioritized heterosexual male leaders.⁶⁶ However, Hong and Ferguson’s theorizations of a politics of difference and queer of color critique ignore the specificities of Indigenous nationalisms or seemingly subsume them under the categories of ethnic or minority nationalisms. Critical ethnic studies scholarship has increasingly addressed this omission by acknowledging the specificity of Native nations across North America. Dunbar-Ortiz argues that Indigenous conceptions of nationhood predate and are distinct from European conceptions because they are rooted in endogenous self-determination and sovereignty that cannot be given by a colonial power. Nationhood is necessary for Indigenous survival because it impacts sovereignty and self-determination, the return of land, and treaty negotiations.

Demilitarizing and Decolonizing Settler Temporality

Tang argues that refugee exceptionalism is premised upon a linear temporality from displacement to resettlement. Critical refugee scholarship challenges this progression by

⁶⁵ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 55; Tiya Miles, *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

⁶⁶ Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson Eds., *Strange Affinities: the Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

highlighting the multiple dispossessions and forms of captivity that are ongoing for refugees and migrants before, during, and after official resettlement. Tang describes refugee temporality as “the refugee’s knowledge that with each crossing, resettlement, and displacement, an old and familiar form of power is being reinscribed”.⁶⁷ Refugee temporality and an understanding of settler colonialism as a structure rather than as an event challenge a militarized temporality in which wars end. As Lowe argues, by de-familiarizing the past we can envision alternative imaginaries for living in the present. I draw on what Emma Pérez characterizes as “decolonial imaginaries” or genealogies that rupture the historical progression from colonial to post-colonial.⁶⁸

Although there has always been resistance to the resettlement of refugees to the US, animosity toward them has arguably reached an all-time high.⁶⁹ Trump’s 2017 Executive Order 13769 limits the number of refugees to the US to fewer than 50,000 persons and each subsequent year the administration has cut this number in half. The Executive Order also gives the President the right to ban the entry of persons from majority-Muslim countries.⁷⁰ The administration has capped the number of refugees admitted to the US in 2020 to 18,000, which is the lowest number of resettlements since the 1980 Refugee Act was passed.⁷¹ As of this writing, a US federal judge has issued a preliminary injunction on Trump’s November,

⁶⁷ Tang, *Unsettled*, 21.

⁶⁸ Emma Pérez, *The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas Into History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

⁶⁹ Most Americans did not support admitting Vietnamese refugees. A Gallup Poll taken in May 1975 showed “54% of all Americans opposed to admitting Vietnamese refugees to live in the United States and only 36% were in favor with 12% undecided,” *Time*, May 19, 1975.

⁷⁰ Willa Frej, “Donald Trump’s Travel Ban Gets A Temporary Win From The Supreme Court,” *The Huffington Post* (TheHuffingtonPost.com, September 14, 2017), https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/supreme-court-trump-travel-lban_us_59b90270e4b086432b02b578.

⁷¹ James MacPherson, “US Judge Blocks Trump Executive Order on Refugee Resettlement,” *USA News | Al Jazeera* (Al Jazeera, January 15, 2020), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/judge-blocks-trump-executive-order-refugee-resettlement-200115174724457.html>.

2020 Executive Order that allows for local and state governments to veto the resettlement of refugees in their jurisdictions.⁷² Although the administration has reversed its policy of separating migrant families at the border it has proposed a massive increase in family detention centers. Between June and late May of 2018 over 700 migrant families were separated.⁷³ As of March 10, 2020 the Supreme Court allowed Trump’s Migrant Protections Protocols, commonly known as the “Remain in Mexico” policy, to stay in effect. The policy requires asylum seekers not from Mexico to remain in Mexico until they receive a hearing with US courts. The administration therefore follows an unprecedented politics of cruelty towards asylum seekers and refugees.

The refugee and the Native subject, as historically and contemporaneously outside of or liminal to the liberal-rights-based frameworks of nationhood, challenge US sovereignty and can produce new forms of imagination and consciousness. When looked at critically, refugees bring attention to the arbitrary and militarized borders of nation-states as well as to their claims to human rights, humanitarianism, and benevolence. Native peoples have long challenged the permanence of US national borders as predestined, demonstrating how land was stolen through genocidal military campaigns and broken treaties. Attention to the history of stolen lands unsettles the legality and temporal permanence of the US borders and claims to absolute sovereignty. As Simpson argues, settler colonialism is not settled; it is an unfinished and unsuccessful project that has always been, and continues to be resisted.⁷⁴ Um writes that for Southeast Asian refugees, America “both in its tragedies and in its valiance, becomes a signifier for the living legacies of war, genocide, forced severance, and, not the least, the indomitable

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Michelle Goldberg, “The Terrible Things Trump Is Doing in Our Name,” *The New York Times* (*The New York Times*, June 21, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/21/opinion/family-separation-trump-migrants.html>.

⁷⁴ Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*.

human capacity for resilience.”⁷⁵ Native peoples and refugees often share the status of survivors of genocides, military campaigns, environmental injustice, and climate change.

However, scholars also point to the challenges of building solidarities between refugees and Native peoples. Part of the work of my project involves accounting for the limitations that constrain potential affinities and solidarities in light of differential histories and relationships to the state. Writing in the context of Guam and Palestine, Gandhi argues that Vietnamese refugees have a vexed relationship to decolonial movements within these colonized spaces. In order to seek refuge from war, violence, and persecution refugees must appeal to the nation-state for refuge.⁷⁶ In the context of settler colonial nations, such as the US, Israel, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, this requires petitioning governments occupying Indigenous nations. Similarly, Volpp argues that immigration law requires a collusion with settler colonialism.

Tuck and Yang maintain that the rhetoric of decolonization in North America can easily risk collapsing into a metaphor.⁷⁷ They argue that settler colonialism and imperialism are related; they are nonetheless not the same, but rather incommensurable. Settler colonialism informs US imperialism, yet struggles for decolonization in North America are not the same as anticolonial movements abroad. Dunbar-Ortiz writes that decolonization requires, among other things, that Native people must have governance over their territories, control of their resources, and legal and political recognition of their autonomous culture. Taiaiake Alfred argues that decolonization directly challenges capitalism and the universality of white, heteropatriarchal subjects; it comes

⁷⁵ Um, “Exiled Memory,” 832. In this dissertation I further follow Um’s designation of “Southeast Asian refugees” to include Cambodian, Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, Mien, Thai Dam, Kammu, and others displaced by the Vietnam War.

⁷⁶ Espiritu, “Vexed Solidarities,” 9.

⁷⁷ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* 1.1 (2012): 1-40.

from an understanding of kinship with both human and non-human life.⁷⁸ Coulthard contends that “Indigenous modes of thought and behavior...harbor profound insights into the maintenance of relationships within and between human beings and the natural world built on principles of reciprocity, non-exploitation and respectful coexistence”.⁷⁹ An Indigenous self-determination rooted in place contests the neoliberal and capitalists’ rights to development through militarization, resource exploitation, and environmental injustice, the driving causes of forced migration. As Candace Fujikane argues in the context of Hawai’i: “For Asians who settle in Hawai’i because of histories of colonization in their own homelands, the violence of their own political displacement, in some cases as a result of American military intervention and occupation, only reinforces more strongly our critique of colonialism and its global effects.”⁸⁰

We are seeing more public and prominent expressions of solidarity for demilitarization and decolonization. Indigenous communities have been at the forefront of challenging the artificial imposition of US national borders and have welcomed refugees and immigrants to their lands. Native scholars and activists across North America have critiqued and led actions against the Trump administration’s proposed border wall, travel bans, increased raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the detainment and separation of families. These solidarity actions challenge the ongoing structure of US settler colonialism by pointing out that the borders of the United States are illegal. They further hold the US government and military responsible for creating the current refugee crisis and highlight its hypocrisy at refusing refuge to migrants and refugees fleeing imperial military violence, weapons, and climate change. Indigenous activists have called for accepting refugees and migrants to Native lands across Turtle Island,

⁷⁸ Taiaiake Alfred, *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 157.

⁷⁹ Coulthard, *Red Skins, White Masks*, 12.

⁸⁰ Fujikane, *Asian Settler Colonialism*, 9.

challenging the xenophobia and Islamophobia of the current administration. These movements resist acquiescence to American nationhood, capitalism, and citizenship. Setting the terms for migration and immigration to Native lands on Turtle Island strengthens Native sovereignty. Collective efforts towards decolonization, demilitarization and environmental justice are pertinent to confronting the root causes of forced migration and safeguarding planetary survival.

Chapter Overviews

In Chapter One, I approach the ways in which Albuquerque's militarized history is typically told through a close reading of the Museum of Nuclear Science and History. I establish two neologisms that I use throughout the dissertation: militarized fission and historical enchantment. Militarized fission reflects both the literal and metaphorical movements of settlers and nuclear materials across nationalized borders. Historical enchantment refers to a settler temporality that places Native peoples in the past and settlers in the present and future through the preservation of the nuclear family and nation. I argue that the museum relies upon the forgetting of settler colonialism, genocide, and war crimes in order to further these dominant narratives.

In Chapter Two, I provide a counter narrative to the museum through a transpacific studies approach to Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony*. I draw on archival materials to demonstrate how settler institutions such as boarding schools enforced the draft as a form of forced displacement. I focus on this history in order to demonstrate a longer genealogy whereby New Mexico's military institutions have impacted racialized and gendered displacement. *Ceremony* points to the affective and subjective experiences of serving in the Pacific Theater of war for its protagonist, Tayo. The novel moves from the trauma of transpacific entanglements to what I call decolonial webs and solidarities particularly in the context of the Vietnam War. I

utilize additional archival records to provide greater detail about the post-WWII growth of Albuquerque through what I term “suburban settler colonialism.” In doing so, this work departs from typical studies of refugees that discount the historical forces that shape the locations where refugees are resettled. I spend a significant amount of time detailing militarized settlement in order to provide context to what Espiritu terms “militarized refuge” as connected to ongoing formations of US settler colonialism. The term “militarized refuge” would seem to involve a contradiction. A refuge connotes safety, peace and freedom from militarization. Combining “militarized” with “refuge” confronts the way that militarization is posited as a humanitarian gesture, one carried out ostensibly as a “gift of freedom” to the oppressed often by the very institutions that produced such forced displacement.

In Chapter Three, “Deterred Refuge,” I shift the focus to the resettlements of Southeast Asian refugees to Albuquerque from 1975-1979, demonstrating how a representation of the city as an ideal site of settlement transformed to one of refuge. I contextualize these resettlements by following a critical refugee studies method that traces weapons productions and testing in Albuquerque to their use during the imperial war in Vietnam as part of the broader US Cold War strategy of nuclear deterrence. I delineate how the development within Albuquerque of on-base housing during the war, as well as continuing suburbanization, resulted in the official view that housing in parts of the International District was abandoned and empty. Southeast Asian refugees were often resettled to what had been housing for Kirtland Base employees. In this chapter I draw on oral histories to remap the ongoing legacies of war both locally and transnationally.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the late 1980s to the present, charting the change from the War Zone to the International District. I claim that national and local media’s criticisms of crime and violence in the War Zone operated to both naturalize and make invisible transnational

violence, domestic securitization, and more broadly the hierarchies intrinsic to a militarized city. Refugees were resettled from Central America, Africa, and the Middle East, often following US coups, occupations, and imperial wars. Refugee resettlements did not mark the end of the processes of displacement caused by liberal warfare: distinct forms of bureaucratic and police powers were exercised over refugees in the militarized Southwest. I further argue that the name change to the International District involved strategic decisions around multicultural representation. I look to the work of local artists to negotiate these complex and vexed histories.

In the Conclusion I reflect upon the contemporary refugee crisis and the Trump administration's various proposed bans on immigration, asylum, and refugee resettlements and calls to continue to re-arm America's nuclear arsenal. I also bring attention to the use of the Holloman Air Force Base as a detention center for unaccompanied migrant and refugee children under the Obama administration and its proposed re-use under the Trump administration. I explore how the stakes of engaging with a critical refugee studies project have increased. We need new ways to talk about migration, asylum and refuge in the wake of fascist policies and global crises. I consider the ways in which activists challenge the Muslim ban, Islamophobia, xenophobia, the detention of children, and the separation of families without appealing to narratives of US exceptionalism that prop up the settler state.

Chapter One:
Back to New Mexico’s Militarized Future:
Militarized Fission and Historical Enchantment in Albuquerque’s National Museum of Nuclear Science and History

In this chapter, I analyze the United States National Museum of Nuclear Science and History. It is located in the Southeast quadrant of Albuquerque, which includes areas of the Kirtland Air Force Base and the International District.⁸¹ Its exhibits detail the history, culture, politics and contemporary role of the nuclear science and weapons industries in the US, with an emphasis on New Mexico, where the atomic bomb was first created and tested. The exhibits include decommissioned military planes, pop culture ephemera and replicas of various weapons including the casings of Fat Man and Little Boy—the atomic bombs dropped over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

The Museum’s presentation of weapons in conjunction with seemingly neutral scientific information and benign cultural objects obscures the tremendous impacts of these weapons on the bodies and lands where they were developed, tested, detonated, and stored. The Museum’s erasure of violence is not unique; rather, it is indicative of a larger institutional forgetting fostered by the US military-industrial complex. I argue that the Museum produces historical narratives about the inevitability and necessity of Albuquerque’s military institutions through reiteration of pioneer and frontier myths applied to both science and land in New Mexico. This broader historical frame sets the stage for the second chapter of this dissertation that further

⁸¹ The Museum was established in 1969 by the Defense Nuclear Agency on the Kirtland Air Force Base and was originally tasked with telling “the story of the base and the development of nuclear weapons.” The Museum was relocated to Old Town, Albuquerque following the September 11, 2001 attacks and then to its current location in 2009. During this time, the Museum shifted its focus from a history of the Base to nuclear history and science more broadly. The National Museum of Nuclear Science and History, “Visit the Museum,” accessed July 20, 2018, <http://www.nuclearmuseum.org/visit>.

elaborates upon militarized settlement in Albuquerque as part of the ongoing structure of settler colonialism.



Figure 1.1 Exterior of the United States National Museum of Nuclear Science and History⁸²

The Museum serves as a public face for Albuquerque's Kirtland Airforce Base and one of the few available spaces for the community and tourists to view Albuquerque and New Mexico's military history. Others include the Trinity Site, the Bradbury Museum, and the New Mexico Veterans' Memorial. With over 60,000 visitors annually, the Museum serves as a significant site for imparting historical knowledge. It is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Museum, it is congressionally chartered, and it is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.⁸³ In addition to acting as a tourist site, it provides teacher workshops, classroom programs, and tours throughout the year. The museum's audience thus includes both tourists and locals.

As American, Asian, and critical ethnic studies scholars have shown, hierarchies of power influence both what is remembered and also how memory is transmitted. Scholars have looked to museums and memorials as sites of contestation, meaning making, and

⁸² Photograph by author, 2017.

⁸³ The National Museum of Nuclear Science and History, "Visit the Museum," accessed July 20, 2018, <http://www.nuclearmuseum.org/visit>.

institutionalized memory. For example, Nhu Le notes that Ronin, the main character of Gerald Vizenor's novel *Hiroshima Bugi: Atomu 57*, who is half Japanese and half Anishinaabe, grapples with the meaning of war memorials in Japan and the US.⁸⁴ Sara Echavez See's *The Filipino Primitive: Accumulation and Resistance in the American Museum* (2017) addresses the framing of Filipino and Native subjects in museums through what she terms "primitive proximities." Her work brings to light the relationalities and differences between such logics within the specific histories of US settler colonialism and imperialism in the context of the Philippines.⁸⁵ Furthermore, American and critical ethnic studies scholars have looked at the role of institutions such as the Smithsonian not only as holders of the archives of the settler and imperialist state but also as producers of forms of official histories and knowledge. These museums have often produced and reflected meanings about hierarchies of race as seen, for example, in World's Fairs exhibitions. Museums of Natural History often render distinct geographies and cultures as ethnographic displays for the consumption of the presumed western visitor. Furthermore, museums often separate the achievements of the nation, for example, in aerospace and transportation, from memorials and artworks as seen for example on the National Mall. As Marita Sturken's work has shown, memorials and museums often produce notions of American exceptionalism and, I would add, settler innocence.

However, there have been no critical analyses of the Museum of Nuclear Science and History. As an institutionalized space of memory making, the museum both reflects and produces dominant narratives, not just of nuclear science but also of history, culture, and racial and gendered formations. The Museum cannot be considered solely as a science, history or

⁸⁴ Le, *Unsettled Solidarities*.

⁸⁵ Sarita Echavez See, *The Filipino Primitive: Accumulation and Resistance in the American Museum* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

military museum, or as an archival depository. Visitors are greeted at the entrance by a sculpture with metal poles of varying sizes with the words “science, education, history, archives” engraved on them; these themes seem straightforward at first glance, but they become complicated when critically juxtaposed. In addition to weapons and other military equipment, the Museum’s archive contains photographs, videos, comic books, movie posters, furniture, dishware, medical devices, a model uranium mine, and a children’s section replete with games. I analyze these heterotopic materials for what they communicate about what Lowe notes is the “economy of affirmation and forgetting that characterizes liberal humanist understanding.”⁸⁶ Following a linear progression of history they reflect Lowe’s assertion that the inclusion of previously marginalized and excluded racialized groups in the US requires the absenting of the very structures that continue to cause marginalization and inequity. Liberal personhood was built, and continues to be understood, as a progressive movement towards equality that was, from the beginning, exclusionary. American liberalism absolves the nation and its citizens from the ongoing conditions and formations of settler colonialism, slavery, and racial apartheid.

Through a critical reading of these exhibits, I show how attention to forgetting can open interpretations that center settler colonialism and empire. I critically juxtapose the exhibits with work in critical ethnic, American, and Asian American studies as well as archival materials produced primarily by the city of Albuquerque to encourage militarized settlement and tourism. This chapter proceeds by drawing on a number of exhibits from the museum. I do not provide an overall analysis, in part because the museum is far too large and variegated to do so. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which its heterotopic archive produces particular historical and cultural narratives. Namely, I argue that narratives of scientific discovery mirror colonial discourses of

⁸⁶ Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 39.

conquest. These narratives sustain the inevitability and necessity of Albuquerque's nuclear weapons program, of American nationhood, and of ongoing wars of expansionism. Like the museum, histories of colonialism and empire are simultaneously romanticized, concealed, and hidden. I draw upon the exhibits to provide a broad overview of the ways in which militarized settlement has been historically carried out in Albuquerque; I provide more detailed analysis in the subsequent chapter.

Militarized Fission and Historical Enchantment

I utilize the Museum's exhibits as a means to establish two neologisms: militarized fission and historical enchantment. To understand how and why New Mexico came to serve as the center for nuclear weapons requires a broader understanding of the structural forces of American Empire. Generally, militarized fission treats US militarization as inevitable, scientifically rational, and necessary for democracy, modernization, economic development, defense, freedom, and progress towards civilization and liberal nationhood. Militarized fission further keeps military violence on human bodies, lands, and ecologies hidden from the public, and attempts to erase this violence from historical narratives and cultural representations.

I also utilize the term militarized fission to capture the movement of nuclear particles across colonial and imperial borders and geographies. Nuclear fission occurs when a nucleus is bombarded with atoms resulting in a chain reaction that releases energy. Its discovery by scientists made possible their invention of the nuclear bomb, its first test in New Mexico, its first and only use in war, and its use in thousands of tests across the Southwest and Pacific. I argue that this narrative of the inevitability of developing atomic weapons mirrors that of a settler colonial logic of Manifest Destiny. In the case of atomic weapons, the museum's exhibits suggest that there was a global race to construct the atomic bomb and that it was only right that

the US as the exceptional nation should be the one to both invent the bomb and to test and use it in war. The narrative of the inevitability of westward expansion makes it seem only obvious or natural that the US should extend its borders from “sea to shining sea” as if other nations that do not do so are in some way inferior. The idea of a bounded American nation state conceals the desires of capitalist expansion and the strategic interests of the US government to have access to both the Pacific and Atlantic seas. In both cases the notion of inevitability absolves leaders and governments of their decisions and choices to conduct genocide, war, and the murder of civilians. To suggest, historically, that something is inevitable is to insist that it was out of individual people’s hands.

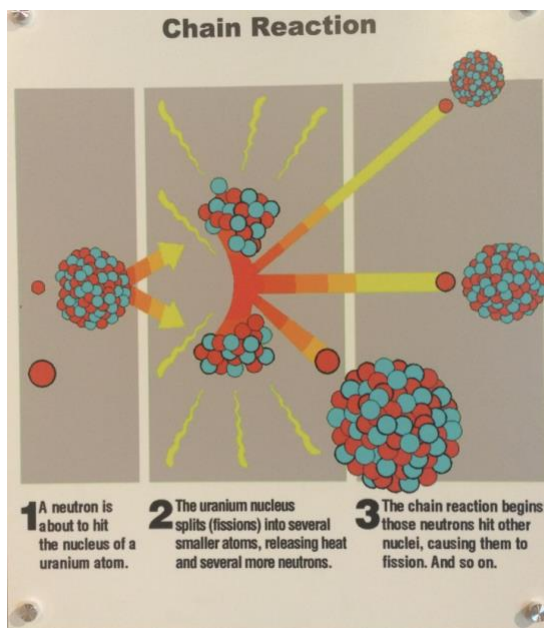


Figure 1.2 Chain Reaction⁸⁷

By historical enchantment I mean a particular means of representing New Mexico’s history in ways that displace colonialism, empire, and racialized capitalism. Historical enchantment justifies the ongoing and future existence of Albuquerque’s military institutions by

⁸⁷ Photograph by author, 2017.

invoking nostalgic views of the past, white heteronormative domesticity, and settler futurity. The New Mexico Department of Tourism first marketed the term “land of enchantment” in 1935 to encourage automobile travel through the state and entice tourists to discover the land and the people. The representation of New Mexico as the land of enchantment suggests that it is open for continuous scientific and physical settlement and may also imply that it is perpetually empty and uninhabited. Narratives of scientific and physical discovery are reiterated across these exhibits and work to reinforce settler hegemony, US nationhood, and the place of the military in the state. The Museum reflects the treatment of New Mexico as an endless frontier for the building and testing of weapons that will benefit the nation as represented by the heteronuclear, suburban family.



Figure 1.3 Suspended Model Atom⁸⁸

Albuquerque—like the nucleus of an atom depicted by the suspended large atomic model featured at the Museum’s façade—sits in the center of the state at the intersection of Interstates

⁸⁸ Photograph by author, 2017.

40 and 25 and is surrounded by air force bases, uranium and metal mines, nuclear reactors, weapons research facilities, nuclear storage facilities, nuclear waste disposals, and weapons testing grounds.⁸⁹ The Los Alamos Labs are located approximately 100 miles north of Albuquerque. To the south is the Holloman Air Force Base, roughly 200 miles away; it supports the largest military installation in the United States, the White Sands Missile Range. East of Albuquerque is the Cannon Air Force Base, which was activated during World War II and is currently under the jurisdiction of the Special Forces. In the southeast corner of New Mexico, 300 miles from Albuquerque, is the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, created by Congress to store nuclear materials and waste that are theoretically projected to last for the next 10,000 years. Fort Wingate, 130 miles west of Albuquerque near the City of Gallup stores conventional weapons and serves as a site to launch rockets to White Sands Missile Range. Finally, to the northwest are thousands of abandoned uranium and metals mines. After California, New Mexico has the largest amount of land taken up by the military, approximately 3,643,513 acres.⁹⁰

The Frontier Past

I begin my analysis in the popular culture section of the Museum, which includes ephemera from the 1985 movie *Back to the Future I*. The Museum includes the movie's poster, a photograph of the DeLorean, the car that is used in the film as a time-travel device, a flux capacitor, and a license plate that reads "OUTTATIME." A visitor might have difficulty understanding the curator's choice to include *Back to the Future* artifacts. The model of the flux capacitor, the narrative key to the DeLorean's power—which uses energy from a plutonium

⁸⁹ Albuquerque is also located roughly at the center of the US Southwest: it is 418 miles from Denver, 605 miles from Salt Lake City, 589 miles from Las Vegas, 802 miles from Los Angeles, 438 miles from Phoenix, 265 miles from El Paso, 834 miles to Houston, 637 miles to Dallas-Fort Worth, 547 miles to Oklahoma City, and 784 miles to Kansas City.

⁹⁰ Andy Kiersz, "Here's How Much Land Military Bases Take Up in Each State," *Business Insider*, November 10, 2014, <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-much-land-military-bases-take-up-in-each-state-2014-1>.

fueled nuclear reactor to create the chain reaction necessary to travel through time—relates the film more directly to atomic culture. The caption to the model of the Flux Capacitor includes the line from the film, “the Flux capacitor is what makes time travel possible.”⁹¹ Though one could read the inclusion of these materials as part of the larger section of the museum that focuses on atomic culture, I turn to interpret how the film and the Museum utilize plutonium, and atomic science more generally in order to provide viewers and visitors with a historically enchanted narrative of time that ultimately serves to uphold settler colonialism and the continuous expansion of US empire⁹²

Parallels can be seen between the entrance of the Museum and the opening scenes of *Back to the Future Part I*. The lobby of the Museum features a large panel titled “Pioneers of the Atom” with photographs of key figures in black and white collage-like images with mathematical formulas interspersed. The figures presented include Marie Curie, Enrico Fermi, Ernest Rutherford, Max Planck, Niels Bohr, and Wilhelm Roentgen (almost all white men), who represent the innovators of atomic science. The mathematical formulas conflate these historical figures with science itself. This linear progression of nuclear science ties to larger colonial narratives of progress through civilization and improvements in technology. As a timeline it is organized around specific events and discoveries by scientific leaders. The film and the Museum reiterate discrete yet connected pioneer myths of geographic and scientific discovery. Like Shona N. Jackson, I consider discovery myths to be poetic structures of political economy that naturalize, normalize, and maintain violence.⁹³ Militarized fission reflects a faith in western

⁹¹ *Back to the Future*, directed by Robert Zemeckis (1985, Burbank, CA: Universal Pictures).

⁹² The Merriam-Webster Dictionary online defines nuclearism as “dependence on or faith in nuclear weapons as the means for maintaining national security,” accessed July 19, 2018, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nuclearism?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld.

⁹³ Shona N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 112.

science and technologies as a neutral frontier for progress and enlightenment. The objectivity of science is extended to the Museum's historical narrative, which numerous docents described to me as unbiased and neutral but which I interpret as both concealing and justifying US genocide and war crimes.



Figure 1.4 Pioneers of the Atom⁹⁴

Back to the Future I begins with the sound of ticking clocks. As the camera pulls back, photographs of Benjamin Franklin, Albert Einstein, and other famous scientists become visible to the audience. These photographs are located in the character Emmett “Doc” Brown’s laboratory. Like the historical figures presented in the film and Museum, the Doc represents an inventor and scientific pioneer, especially through his invention of the first-time travel device. In *Back to the Future Part III*, which takes place in 1885, Doc Brown is a pioneer in the

⁹⁴ Photograph taken by author, 2017.

mythologized American West. The film begins with stereotypical plains Indians chasing the main character, Marty McFly, as he drives the DeLorean across Monument Valley, Arizona (although the film takes place in the fictional Hill Valley, California). Marty escapes, and when he emerges from the DeLorean he is wearing a comical cowboy outfit, brightly colored and covered with images of atoms. After this first scene, Native peoples are completely absent from the storyline, which focuses on the white settlers of Hill Valley in the past (the 1800s), the 1950s, the 1980s (the present), and the future, the 2000s. Marty's family, immigrants from Ireland, embodies the desirable immigrant myth; they have staked supposedly empty land to build the infrastructure that becomes Hill Valley. They are deserving immigrants; their motivations for seeking better fortune are not questioned.

As does the film, the Museum participates in the “disappearing Native” trope. It does not include any historical information about Native people in the city and state. Rather, the Museum represents Native peoples as part of de-historicized and decontextualized cultures rather than as modern political subjects and complex persons who have lived in New Mexico since time immemorial. These representations are a form of what I have called historical enchantment; they reflect the myth of New Mexico as a land of enchantment wherein picturesque Western landscapes cast a spell over visitors and tourists alike. The Museum frames Native peoples within a white, ethnographic gaze and as objects for tourists' consumption. These representations can be seen throughout a temporary exhibit titled “Route 66 Lost and Found.” The exhibit chronicles the so-called golden period of the historic Route 66 Highway, which intersected Highway 85.⁹⁵ The exhibit includes panels shaped to suggest the view from an automobile. The

⁹⁵ I visited the “Route 66 Lost and Found” exhibit in July, 2016. It is a temporary exhibit that is not currently on display. Also known as the Will Rogers Highway, Route 66 was established on November 11, 1926 and stretched from Chicago to Los Angeles. It was one of the first main highways built as part of the US Numbered Highway System and was a major impetus for western travel, particularly during the Dust Bowl. In Albuquerque,

curators have included a smaller picture postcard on one of the panels. Alongside the letters of the title “New Mexico,” the postcard conflates images of Indigenous peoples and Western landscapes.

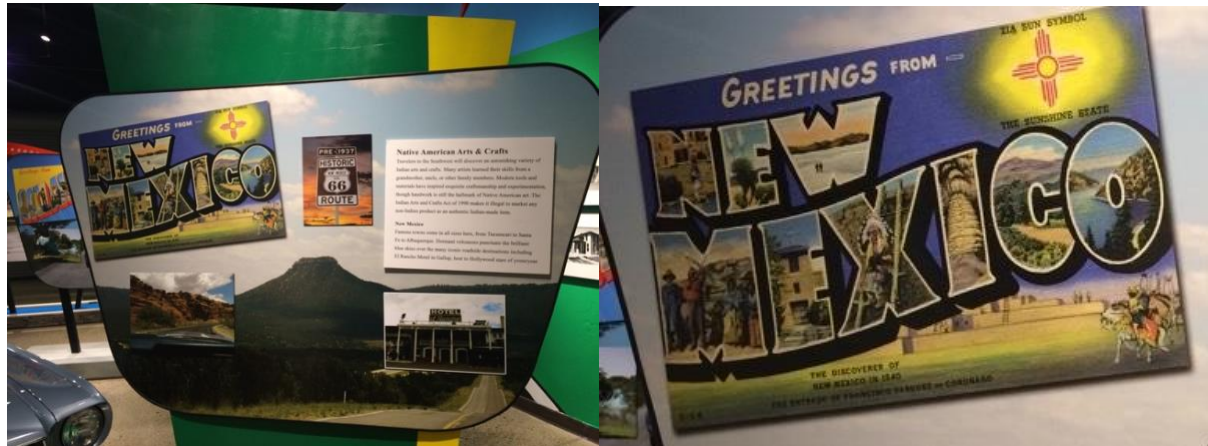


Figure 1.5: Greetings from New Mexico⁹⁶

Here, Native peoples and lands are characterized as anti-modern and exotic. Historical enchantment confines Native peoples to a pre-mythic past and to isolated Pueblos and reservations; it both draws on and upholds the view that urban spaces in Albuquerque are largely white and techno-scientific. On the right-hand corner of the postcard, the image of a conquistador can be seen with the title “The discoverer of New Mexico in 1540 the Entrado of Francisco Vasquez de Coronado.” The postcard claims that New Mexico was discovered by Spain rather than inhabited by Indigenous peoples for millennia. According to this historically enchanted narrative, Spanish colonizers first arrived in New Mexico and misguidedly attempted to find one of the famed Seven Cities of Cibola. Although the idea of the Seven Cities of Cibola turned out to be false, it nonetheless ushered in an unceasing equation of land in New Mexico

businesses sprang up along the route, catering to both residents and tourists. Route 66 became an ongoing symbol of American national identity, including the desire to seek freedom through westward travel. This freedom and travel were also a means by which to continue US settlement, resource expansion, and the growth of capitalist markets.

⁹⁶ Photograph taken by author, 2017.

with empty land and exploitable resources. It is worth noting that the postcard was meant to be sent to friends and family when tourists travelled through Albuquerque on historic Route 66.

Historical enchantment requires the erasure of the Spanish colonial violence that displaced Native peoples from their lands, exposed them to European diseases, and enslaved them. The museum does not note that Spanish colonization met strong resistance: in 1680 the Pueblos violently rebelled against the colonizers, effectively driving them from New Mexico for twelve years. The Spanish returned in 1693 in a reconquista led by Don Diego de Vargas, reasserting their power and establishing land grants. Spanish settlers who travelled with Vargas settled in the Middle Valley, where they founded Alburquerque (later named Albuquerque) in 1702 in honor of the Viceroy of New Spain. Contrary to the tri-cultural myth that treats Indigenous, Spanish and white populations as existing in peace and harmony, Albuquerque was not founded peacefully on unoccupied and empty land but rather through colonial, militarized violence. This erasure of violence is central to historical enchantment as a romantic, multicultural narrative of peaceful coexistence that encourages ongoing settlement through a celebration of New Mexico's unique culture.

Byrd contends that states of enchantment exist wherein imperialists imagine Indigenous peoples' lands as void or terra nullius, justifiably open for settlement by white, liberal subjects.⁹⁷ Historical enchantment relies upon the American frontier myth of pioneer settlement, which depicts the seemingly vast and empty landscapes of the American West as largely uninhabited and therefore open to continuous settlement. Under the frontier myth, natural resources are to be exploited and developed. Noël Sturgeon notes that the frontier myth that characterized white settlement on supposedly empty lands was "often accompanied by ideas of the land as female,

⁹⁷ Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, 21-28.

fertile, rapable, and in need of being tamed.”⁹⁸ The myth helped settlers justify their behaviors because they thought of the land as a geography of freedom, an idealized and mythological space where liberal American values including ingenuity, independence, and heteronormative masculinity could be realized. The frontier myth upholds settler-colonial conquest and genocide, rooted in the ongoing elimination of Native peoples and the presumption that settlers naturally own the land.

In the final scenes of the last *Back to the Future* series, Doc Brown invents a time-travelling train, which allows him and his family to time travel indefinitely. Actual railways during the late 19th century provided settlers with accelerated access to time and space, connecting geographies that had previously been difficult to reach, including Albuquerque. As Karuka details, the transcontinental railroad, which connected cities across the US, reinforced territorial sovereignty and expanded capitalist markets. In 1880, a stop in downtown Albuquerque was added to the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, and the railroad was taken over by the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway. Prior to the Kirtland Base, the Santa Fe Railroad was the largest employer in Albuquerque. The settler population increased when miners came to Albuquerque via the railroad following the General Mining Act of 1872 and established claim to Tijeras Canyon District. The Act allowed US citizens to prospect for minerals on public lands. If a citizen discovered minerals they were able to stake claims to them and the nearby lands for development. In the late 1880s, gold and silver ore were discovered in Jemez, located 40 miles from Albuquerque. In 1928, homesteader and railroad employees William L. Franklin and Frank G. Speakman leased 140 acres on the East Mesa to construct a private airport later called Oxnard Field, which would become Albuquerque’s Kirtland Airforce Base. The Airforce Base is

⁹⁸ Noël Sturgeon, *Environmentalism in Popular Culture: Gender, Race, Sexuality and the Politics of the Natural* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), 56.

therefore the result of a longer genealogy of transportation and frontier settlement.

Dunbar-Ortiz contends that pioneer logics of counterinsurgency resonate throughout US globalized imperialism, invasions, occupations, and other forms of militarism that fuel the increasingly privatized war economy. For example, she describes the military tactics used in the Indian Wars as extended through overseas imperialism and empire building in the Pacific during the late nineteenth century. Pablo Mitchell asserts: “New Mexico at the turn of the twentieth century resembled not as much its continental partners, California and Texas, as its mates abroad, the newly colonized islands of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. New Mexico thus appears not the last gasp of westward expansion, but as the first step in American imperialism emerging around the turn of the twentieth century.”⁹⁹ In 1900, the Secretary of War, Elihu Root stated of Filipinos: “Nothing can be more preposterous than the proposition that these men were entitled to receive from us sovereignty over the entire country which we were invading. As well the friendly Indians, who have helped us in our Indian wars, might have claimed the sovereignty of the West.”¹⁰⁰ During the American war in the Philippines, Filipinos were waterboarded, placed in concentration camps called “reconcentrados,” and executed. Roughly 200,000 Filipino civilians died, many from cholera.¹⁰¹ Byrd argues that the US continues to treat populations in other countries as if they were Indians “through continual reiteration of pioneer logics.”¹⁰² Through its narrative of WWII, the museum articulates new frontiers to spread American so-called democracy and freedom through military technology, technoscience, and the extension of

⁹⁹ Pablo Mitchel, *Coyote Nation: Sexuality, Race, and Conquest in Modernizing New Mexico, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 56.

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Immerwahr, “How the US has hidden its empire,” *the Guardian*, February 15, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/15/the-us-hidden-empire-overseas-territories-united-states-guam-puerto-rico-american>.

¹⁰¹ Sean Braswell, “The Concentration Camps of America’s Forgotten War,” accessed February 3, 2020, <https://www.ozy.com/flashback/the-concentration-camps-of-americas-forgotten-war/80333/>.

¹⁰² Byrd, *The Transit of Empire*, xx.

capitalist markets and corporatism.

WWII Legacies

The Museum focuses on World War II as a national emergency that necessitated the development of the atomic bomb. When the Museum chronicles the historical events that led to World War II, it portrays the US as rational and just, including rhetoric about the world's western democratic interest. Every historical panel in the Museum includes the small image of an atom. This constant reminder continues to connect the impartiality of science to the Museum's historical narrative. The Museum's historical narrative shifts from Germany to Japan with a panel titled "Japanese Military Aggression," in which it is claimed that Japan had been determined to take over China, Korea, and Southeast Asia to control and exploit their resources. The panel describes the Rape of Nanking and the Bataan Death March, including more images of deceased bodies. It also includes the claim that the US officially declared war on Japan in 1941 after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii to defend its "far-flung Pacific territories." However, it neglects to mention that the US war in the Pacific was carried out through spectacular violence that leveled entire cities and indiscriminately killed civilians. Juxtaposed with these materials are relics from Nazi Germany as well as graphic photographs of the Holocaust. The juxtaposition of these materials reflects the way in which the war with Germany can be conflated with the Pacific Theater. This is not to discount the war crimes carried out by Japan and Germany but rather to note that they are utilized as part of the "just war" narrative. This narrative reflects prevailing representations that obscure the US's ongoing interest in control over lands across Asia and the Pacific Islands and its larger denial of settler genocide and legalized apartheid (to be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter).

The US War Department built numerous military bases across New Mexico that would continue to connect this geography to Asia and the Pacific Islands. The weather, clear skies, proximity to the Manhattan project in Los Alamos, isolation, and abundance of so-called empty land contributed to the establishment of the Kirtland Base as a flight training school. It was activated as one of three Army Air Corps training centers in the US for bombardiers, pilots, and navigators in April of 1941. The 19th Bombardment Group carried out practice attacks in villages and ranches in New Mexico and conducted drills for reconnaissance and bombing missions that were later carried out in the Philippine Islands.

Land in New Mexico was treated as empty and therefore utilized for the testing of conventional weapons across what were in fact Native lands. The Museum does not note that from 1941 to 1945, Albuquerque's Flying Training Field would turn out 5,719 bombardiers and 1,750 regular pilots for the B-17s and B-24s. In September of 1945, training started for the B-29 Superfortress heavy bombers. The practice bombing range was partially located on land belonging to the Isleta Pueblo. In 1942, the proximity fuse was invented at Kirtland, automating the detonation of explosives when a target was within a predetermined range. Approximately 50,000 tests were fired and conducted in New Mexico between 1942 and 1945. In 1945, the Kirtland Base trained B-29 crews that participated in the firebombing of Tokyo, which decimated the city's infrastructure and killed hundreds of thousands of people, mostly civilians, in what most historians agree had become a total war. In sum, the initial burst of energy that created Albuquerque's Kirtland Base is linked to a longer history of US empire building and expansion connected to its geopolitical interests in the war in the Pacific.

As noted, atomic scientists are labeled in the Museum as "pioneers." "Pioneers" indexes both those who have settled lands and those who create new ideas or inventions. American

pioneers serve as part of the mythology that casts the US as exceptional on a world stage. American pioneers anticipate what the future will look like. Because pioneers are willing to risk their lives and livelihoods they are rewarded both for their individual successes and for the work of securing the nation. Discovery narratives continue to be applied to both land in the US and to atomic science. The Museum's exhibits idealize US government-employed scientists and military personnel through the language of pioneering as enterprising, independent, technologically adept, and creative. Los Alamos is characterized as a remote and isolated frontier for this work. Kirtland functioned as a travel center for scientists working on the atomic bomb. The Z Division of Los Alamos was set up to produce and test nuclear weapons and components. Due to a lack of space, the Z Division moved to the Army Airfield at the Kirtland Base under the name "Sandia Base," with Tech Area 1 designated as a space for classified bomb assembly work. In July of 1945, the Trinity bomb was tested at the Alamogordo Bombing Range in New Mexico. Atomic bomb materials and components were developed in Los Alamos, put together in Albuquerque, and then flown to the Tinian Islands where they were ultimately launched and dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Museum treats the atomic bomb's development as a necessity in the atomic arms race with Germany. The Museum does acknowledge that Germany did not treat the building of the atomic bomb as a priority. Nonetheless, the development and testing of the atomic bomb in New Mexico, and eventual use by the US in Japan are cast, like the process of fission, as part of an inevitable and warranted chain reaction rather than as genocidal acts and war crimes. Contrary to the Museum's claims of historical objectivity and neutrality, the exhibits support Marita Sturken's contention that museums and memorials often function to normalize violence.¹⁰³ In its

¹⁰³ Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2007).

chronicles of World War II, the Museum represents white, heteronormative American lives as implicitly more valuable than racialized lives; the rhetoric reflects Lisa Marie Cacho's contention that for some lives to be valued and cultivated, other lives must be understood as illegitimate and illegal.¹⁰⁴ Cacho argues that racialized deaths invoke less collective loss than the deaths of white, heteronormative subjects.

At the "Decision to Drop" exhibit, models of bombs hang from the ceiling, with the captions "OCCUPATION AND RECONSTRUCTION" and "PROMPT AND UTTER DESTRUCTION." Before the US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan was threatened with prompt and utter destruction if its leaders did not agree to an unconditional surrender. Following the bombing, Japan did sign a declaration of surrender resulting in Japan's occupation and reconstruction under the leadership of General Douglas A. MacArthur from 1945 until 1952. The Holloman Air Force Base's 49th fighter group was one of the main Air Force units to participate in this military occupation.



Figure 1.6 Occupation and Reconstruction and Prompt and Utter Destruction¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Lisa Marie Cacho, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 149.

¹⁰⁵ Photograph taken by author, 2017.

A panel titled “Aftermath” provides two lists identifying different positions regarding the US dropping the bombs. Despite attempts at neutrality by giving two lists, “Aftermath” begins by stating that the majority of Americans at the time were in favor of the atomic bombs in an effort to justify this war crime. The statement suggests that the US was acting in the American democratic interest. The Museum docent further echoed popular opinion with a reference to Japan’s willingness to “fight until the end” and maintained that dropping the bombs ultimately saved thousands of American soldiers from a prolonged war in the Pacific. However, many historians have demonstrated that dropping the bombs was most likely meant to send a message about American nuclear power to the Soviet Union after it invaded Manchuria and not necessarily to end the war.¹⁰⁶

“Aftermath” includes black and white photos of Hiroshima and Nagasaki before and after the atomic bombs were dropped. In contrast to the images of German and Japanese war crimes, none of these photographs include images of dead bodies or the maimed and severely burned bodies of survivors (many of whom later died from cancer). The photos that are presented mirror US government policy to purposefully prevent images of the effects of the atomic blasts from reaching the public. One photograph captures the “atomic shadows” of bodies burned into the surfaces of objects with the initial blast of the bomb. Images of modern day Hiroshima stand next to black and white photos of depopulated areas of land. The images suggest that despite the dropping of the atomic bomb—or perhaps more offensively, because of the bombing—the city was able to progress into a thriving urban metropolis again reflecting a settler temporality. A

¹⁰⁶ See for example: Gar Alperovitz with the assistance of Sanho Tree, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth* (New York: Knoph, 1995); Craig Campbell and Sergey Radchenko, *The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008.); Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); John Ray Skates, *The Invasion of Japan: Alternative to the Bomb* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

photograph of an almost entirely white crowd celebrating the end of the war en masse features one woman holding up a sign reading “WAR ENDS”; it contrasts with the desolate images without human beings. The absence of Japanese bodies directly connects to the relational valuation of white, heteronormative bodies.



Figure 1.7 Post-WWII Photographs¹⁰⁷

The Cold War Present and Speculative Futures

At the exit from the “Decision to Drop” section a dark hallway leads to a series of panels that end in a door with a menacing large red hammer and sickle. Adjacent to the door there is a television screen that flashes images that appear to be from 1950s, though this is unclear because no information is provided about them. These images include automobiles, a beauty queen, and dishes on a rack. The direct placement of these images perhaps suggests that the dropping of the atomic bomb was necessary for the idealized 1950s to exist. In this area of the Museum, the song “Mr. Sandman” can be heard quietly in the background. The song’s nostalgic overtones in concert with the stereotypical images of 1950s America recall a dreamier, simpler time. The singer calls on Mr. Sandman to put him to sleep, an act of enchantment that brings forth a dreamlike reality. In *Back to the Future Part I*, “Mr. Sandman” is played during a pivotal scene when Marty arrives by mistake in 1955 after a car chase with Libyan nationalists who were

¹⁰⁷ Photograph taken by author, 2017.

attempting to recover the plutonium that Doc Brown had stolen to fuel his DeLorean time-machine. Marty sees a road sign for the construction of the new suburbs that would later serve as his home in 1985; it reads “live in the tomorrow of today.” Marty must make his mother fall back in love with his father in order for their life in the 1980s to exist. Marty’s mother eventually does so after his father punches Biff, the town bully, in the face. Marty’s future existence finally becomes secured when his mother and father kiss at the “Enchanted Under the Sea” dance.

Historical enchantment relates to a notion of predestination and destiny, conditioned by white masculine violence and heteronormative and patriarchal conceptions of love and suburban domesticity. Reinforcing the Museum’s ideology, the films present personal and scientific frontiers that need to be conquered in order for the domestic spaces of US Empire to be secured. The frontier qualities of white masculinity, ingenuity, and scientific innovation applied to pioneers throughout time secure an ideal notion of the past as necessary for the romanticized suburban futures to exist. The US dependence on unending war as the rule rather than the exception results in the continual growth of the military economy and technology, the extraction of resources, the wastelanding of geographies, and the forced removal and displacement of racialized and gendered populations from their homelands.¹⁰⁸ Like the spread of radioactivity, the nature of militarized fission involves constant re-articulation of new borders to transgress.

Many assumed that following WWII the military would leave Albuquerque. Instead, Albuquerque became the center of the nation’s so-called nuclear deterrence strategy starting in

¹⁰⁸ Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 8. According to Voyles, wastelanding is a form of environmental injustice in which Indigenized, racialized, and gendered populations disproportionately bear the brunt of environmental harm. Environmental injustice relationally connects to environmental privilege, which provides wealthy elites access to environmentally safe and clean environments at the expense of those who benefit the least from extractive and polluting industries.

1946, which facilitated rapid militarized settlement. An article in the 1950 edition of the *Saturday Evening Post* identifies December 1, 1946 as the day when:

the Air Matériel Command took over Kirtland Air Force Base for undisclosed purposes. Money began to pour in. Builders were busy night and day. Demand for private housing increased. People arrived from every-where and stayed. Owners of mountain cabins who had been glad to get summer tenants now had them all year.¹⁰⁹

Albuquerque was posited as an ideal space for post-war settlement by soldiers who had trained at Kirtland. An August 27, 1995 article by Phill Casaus for the *Albuquerque Journal* entitled “Modern Albuquerque Born at WWII’s End by GIs Drawn to Charm, Opportunity” quotes 83-year-old Albuquerque resident Bernie May, who stated that virtually overnight “this became a young man’s country.” Casaus writes, “The war linked the United States in ways the nation had never experienced. Soldiers from other parts of the country, many of whom had never been out of their neighborhoods – let alone regions – before 1941, discovered the distant Southwest for the first time. When the war ended, newly discharged soldiers were attracted to Albuquerque like moths to a street lamp.” Here the terms of discovery are again applied to the land in New Mexico. A 1960 Albuquerque promotional packet (not included in the museum) titled “Albuquerque Heart of the Nuclear Space Age” states:

Once a transcontinental whistlestop, Albuquerque today is the heart of the nation’s nuclear and space programs. Founded in 1706, Albuquerque finds its modern pioneers concerned with the *Frontiers of the Universe [sic]*. Albuquerque has accepted change and contrast with unusual pliability. In the shadow of her futuristic nuclear laboratories, tourists ride a horse-drawn trolley while Indian drums pound ancient rhythms. Here is a scientific city with romantic memories. Its appeal is universal—to physicist and artist, to newcomer and native, to vigorous youth and the actively retired.

This quotation reflects the characteristics of militarized settlement and historical enchantment I discuss in further detail in the following chapter. That is, an enchanted view of Albuquerque’s history is used to justify ongoing settlement not as part of the militarized structure of settler

¹⁰⁹ Neil M. Clark, “The Cities Of America Albuquerque,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, April 8, 1950.

colonialism and Cold War empire building but rather as an inevitable result of historical forces that have affirmed the state as welcoming to all. As I detail in the following chapter, suburban housing and businesses catered to the nuclear family and proliferated beginning in the 1940s. In 1957, Albuquerque won the “All American City Award.” The Museum, like other popular histories of New Mexico, reflects a romantic nostalgia for Albuquerque’s post-WWII boom years, in which the city and its economy grew tremendously. Albuquerque’s growth as a technological, militarized city did not hinder but in fact reinforced an enchanting view of New Mexico’s history. It provided settlers with a modern city in proximity to “living history.” The Cold War, therefore, did not mark an end to New Mexico’s militarization but instead its acceleration. The militarization of Albuquerque during the Cold War served as part of the ongoing invasions that constitute the structure of settler colonialism. Military bases across New Mexico continued to connect settler colonial settlement, extraction, and wastelanding to wars of empire.¹¹⁰ The militarization of Albuquerque involved the poisoning of air, water, and land on Indigenous lands and on sites of US empire building throughout the Cold War and the ongoing War on Terror.

Although islands in the Pacific are not necessarily associated with New Mexico, there are relationships between them. Like New Mexico, the Pacific is a site of settler colonialism, militarism, and tourism. Voyles writes that the desert is represented as an unproductive and inhospitable space, and therefore easily wastelanded through weapons manufacturing, testing, and other forms of environmental injustice.¹¹¹ The first atomic bomb was exploded at the Trinity site in New Mexico. Nuclear testing would continue across the Southwest. The remote nature of islands in the Pacific, and the treatment of the ocean as disconnected from human life,

¹¹⁰ Voyles, *Wastelanding*, 8.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

contributed to its being treated as a sacrifice zone for nuclear weapons testing. New Mexico's isolation from larger metropolitan coastal cities has enabled the invisibility of the nuclear weapons complex as an ongoing structure of colonialism. It is important to bring to light the military, specifically nuclear, connections between New Mexico and Asia and the Pacific Islands because they remain materially and ideologically connected. The seeming isolation and distance from deserts and oceans gives a false sense that these geographies are disconnected and separate. Yet, nuclear weapons have largely been developed and tested on deserts in the Southwest and waters and islands in the Transpacific. It is through the isolation of these geographies, both from one another, and from others across North America, that they are produced as both invisible and as sacrifice zones to the nation.

For example, in 1948, Kirtland personnel participated in Operation Sandstone, and tested smaller, lightweight nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands (a US territory). On May 8, 1951, they tested the first thermonuclear device at Eniwetok Atoll; on February 28, 1954, they tested the first thermonuclear weapon at Bikini Atoll. In 1956, Kirtland personnel participated in Operation Redwing, which consisted of seventeen nuclear and thermonuclear explosions in the Bikini and Eniwetok Atolls. Each test was named after Native American tribes, including the Zuni, Apache, Navajo, and Tewa peoples of New Mexico.¹¹² The association of military weapons and enemies with Native peoples has been longstanding, as I continue to explore throughout this dissertation. The complex seemingly paradoxical association with Native tribes and weapons and foreign enemies reflects the larger discontinuities that Philip Deloria explores in *Playing Indian* (1998). He argues that Indigeneity is fundamental to a notion of American identity and exceptionalism at the same time that Americans must grapple with genocide as the

¹¹² Masco, *The Nuclear Borderlands*, 123.

conditions to which the nation was founded.¹¹³ Nuclear testing on the Marshall Islands resulted in the displacement of Indigenous peoples from their land as well as the poisoning and destruction of their means of daily living and survival. These are connections that are not made by the Museum but can be identified through the approach I have taken to militarized fission and historical enchantment and through a critical reading of archival materials.

During the Cold War, the US military presence in Asia and the Pacific Islands continued to grow. Jodi Melamed writes that after WWII the US worked to distance itself from traditional imperial regimes while nonetheless exporting American-style capitalism abroad.¹¹⁴ Dunbar-Ortiz explains that President Kennedy's imperialist and counterinsurgency Cold War policies and tactics echoed Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis," which I explore in greater detail in Chapter Three. The Museum presents little information on the Vietnam War with the exception of a model of an F105D Thunderchief jet with the caption that it "served in the Viet Nam conflict and later as the workhorse of the Air National Guard." The Museum idealizes the military's role during WWII as necessary and just. However, the Korean and Vietnam Wars challenge the image of the US as a liberating and anti-imperial force. The Korean War ended with an armistice and the US lost the Vietnam War. As Nikhil Pal Singh argues, "The long and disastrous Vietnam War shattered illusions that US power was arrayed on the side of just and peaceful decolonization."¹¹⁵ The mass protests against the Vietnam War and the rise of the counter-culture offer a stark contrast to the idealized post-WWII time period represented in the *Back to the Future* films and the Museum.

¹¹³ Phillip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹¹⁴ Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

¹¹⁵ Nikhil Pal Singh, *Race and America's Long War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 5.

Back to the Future I was released in 1985; the second and third films appeared closer to the end of the Cold War in 1989 and 1990. Though the first film was released ten years after the end of the Vietnam War, Susan Jeffords argues that the war was very much on the mind of the filmmakers. In *Back to the Future II*, the dystopian version of 1985 in which Biff is an abusive millionaire married to Marty's mother, Marty's father dies at the end of the Vietnam War.¹¹⁶ According to Jeffords, Doc Brown represents a Ronald Reaganesque cowboy who utilizes technology and plutonium to reunite the heteronuclear family and the fractured nation following the Vietnam War.¹¹⁷ The so-called Reagan Right attributed the social ills of the 1980s, including poverty, the AIDS crisis, and drug use to the breakdown of the heteronormative nuclear family structure. Both the film and the Reagan Right invoked the 1950s in order to eclipse the anti-Vietnam protests and they focused on the family as key to personal and national good. Reaganite rhetoric presents an optimistic view of the future rooted in the past myths of the American West and the 1950's nuclear household.

Espiritu, Lisa Lowe, and Lisa Yoneyama argue that the Vietnam War has been erased from the national consciousness in order to legitimate the ongoing US wars of empire building.¹¹⁸ They also argue that the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees to the US was carried out in order to remake the war into a good war. However, as they point out, this so-called humanitarianism was carried out by and through the very military institutions that created refugees. Refugee resettlement served not only to erase the role of the US during the war but also to represent the US as the ideal refuge. As I detail in Chapter Four, Southeast Asian refugees to

¹¹⁶ Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹¹⁸ Yên Lê Espiritu, Lisa Lowe, and Lisa Yoneyama, "Transpacific Entanglements" in *Flashpoints for Asian American studies*, ed. Cathy Schlund-Vials (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 177–180.

Albuquerque transited across geographies thought to be separate but long connected by US empire building (e.g., in Guam and the Philippines).

Officials in the Reagan administration also sought to return to small, covert wars that mirrored small-scale colonial wars carried out during the Indian Wars. Reagan defined the defense officials who worked to topple democratically elected governments and to increase the worldwide arms, weapons, and drug trades in Central America and Afghanistan as “cowboys”¹¹⁹. The Bush administration officials reiterated these refrains during the war in Iraq. In 2003 Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld compared US forces in Iraq to the legend of Kit Carson.¹²⁰ Robert Kaplan wrote, “The War on Terrorism was really about taming the frontier.”¹²¹ *Back to the Future I* was one of Reagan’s favorite movies; when Marty arrives in 1950s Hill Valley, the film “the Cattle Queen of Montana,” starring Reagan as a cowboy, is playing in the local theater. In his 1986 State of the Union address Reagan exclaimed, “Never has there been a more exciting time to be alive, a time of rousing wonder and heroic achievement. As they say in the film *Back to the Future*, ‘Where we’re going, we don’t need roads.’” Thomas Berardinelli, Director of the Air Force Nuclear Weapons Center, compared nuclear deterrence to purchasing a car: “Sustainment is how you keep running. Acquisition is like buying the right car for the future. In the world of nuclear weapons, the right car for the future is an effective bomb or warhead, weapons that can deter enemies and assure friends.”¹²² Doc Brown in the film, representing the US more broadly, is treated as exceptionally capable of handling nuclear energy and weapons.

The *Back to the Future* films and the Museum naturalize the narrative that the nineteenth-century American pioneer sets the groundwork for the development of civilization from the

¹¹⁹ Singh, *Race and America’s Long War*, 10.

¹²⁰ LaDuke and Cruz, *The Militarization of Indian Country*, 133.

¹²¹ Robert Kaplan, “Supremacy by Stealth,” *The Atlantic*, July-August, 2003.

¹²² *Albuquerque Journal*, April 9, 2016.

frontier to the modern city. In the Museum, the future of Albuquerque (and that of the nation) continues to be linked to the mythology of the American West and the idealized 1950's suburbs, both of which are invoked to justify the ongoing role of the military industrial complex. The Kirtland Air Force Base is described as necessary to the economy of New Mexico, which ranks fifth among states for persons living below the poverty level. The 2018 omnibus appropriations bill prioritizes roughly two and a half billion dollars for New Mexico military bases and defense, the national labs, the Waste Isolation Pilot Program, and the National Nuclear Security Administration. Currently, the US government allocates seventy million dollars to Kirtland for designing laser and space technologies and over \$400 million will be spent on space-related projects as President Trump advocates preparing for space warfare.¹²³

The US Department of Energy (DOE) sponsors one of the final areas of the Museum. The DOE focuses on the Waste Isolation Pilot Program, arguing that it is an example of how the DOE supposedly safely ships transuranic waste. The Public Service Company of New Mexico has an exhibit featured by the Museum, advertising the benefits of careers in nuclear energy. An exhibit entitled "Uranium: Enriching Your Future," funded by the company URENCO, begins with the title, "Enjoy the journey that takes Uranium from the mines to the reactor and learn about techniques used to mill and process the material and how waste is managed." The exhibit includes a replica of a small uranium mine. The Museum posits uranium mining as beneficial to the energy economy and gives examples of successful and fruitful careers in the nuclear energy sector. Here, an individual's future is directly connected to their work in New Mexico's nuclear industry.

¹²³ "Udall, Heinrich, Secure Strong Funding for NM Priorities in Omnibus Appropriations Bill," *Tom Udall Senator for New Mexico*, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.tomudall.senate.gov/news/press-releases/udall-kheinrich-secure-jstrong-funding-for-nm-priorities-in-omnibus-appropriations-bill>.

The Museum identifies two obstructions in the way of opening up New Mexico's uranium mines: having to rebuild mines that have been demolished, and the Navajo Nation's 2005 moratorium on uranium mining on their lands. When I toured this area of the Museum I spoke with a docent, a former geologist, who strongly believes that the mills should be reopened in New Mexico to process uranium ore. While he stated that he understands why Native Americans would not want to reopen the mills, he went on to argue that there is no hope for people on reservations and that potential earnings from uranium mining should serve as a higher priority than "protecting Mother Earth at all costs."

The Museum does not include information on or images of the devastating and ongoing impacts of uranium mining, weapons testing, open pits, and other toxic contaminants. As others have argued, nuclearism constitutes an unending war against Native and Indigenous peoples—it constitutes a physical structure of settler colonialism. For example, LaDuke and Cruz note: "On a worldwide scale, Native people hold around 70 percent of the world's uranium resources—from north of Saskatchewan, to the Diné and other Indigenous territories of the southwest, the Lakota Nation to the Mirrar nation of Australia."¹²⁴ During the development of the atomic bomb, Diné miners and their families were exposed to high rates of radioactivity that resulted in premature illness and death, particularly from lung, stomach, and liver cancers. Safety precautions that were put in place for the mostly white, male managers of the mining sites were not made available to the Diné miners. Many Diné miners came to their homes with flakes of uranium dust on their clothing, leading to a chain of exposure for their families. Contaminated sand was used in construction projects that left homes with high levels of uranium and radon. Chronic exposure to

¹²⁴ LaDuke and Sean Cruz, *The Militarization of Indian Country*, 36.

uranium has been linked to birth defects, neurological diseases, tuberculosis, and other cancers and diseases. Voyles writes:

Diné land hosts upward of 2,000 now-abandoned uranium mines, mills, and tailings piles, in which over 3,000 Navajo miners wrenched and blasted raw uranium ore from the ground and then processed it into yellowcake. Abandoned mines sit open, poorly covered, or insufficiently marked. Radioactive tailings piles litter the Navajo landscape, leaching radon gas into the air and water and scattering radioactive debris throughout the ecosystem. In addition to being radioactive, these piles are littered with other toxic contaminants, including arsenic, vanadium, and manganese.¹²⁵

In 1979, a disposal pond for uranium mill tailings located on private lands in Church Rock, New Mexico breached, releasing thousands of tons of radioactive waste down the Puerco River. The toxic river flowed into the Navajo Nation in Arizona and continued to be used by residents who had not been notified of the spill.

Voyles explains that the diffuse and invisible nature of radioactivity makes it especially dangerous when it travels through water.¹²⁶ Nuclear and biological weapons testing and storage results in a slow violence that impacts the cells of all parts of the ecosystem in ways that might not register for decades. It has been suggested that radioactive exposure can result in genetic changes carried throughout future generations.¹²⁷ Those responsible have still not sufficiently cleaned up the thousands of abandoned uranium mines and open pits. As a result of this neglect, surrounding lands and water continue to be highly contaminated. In November 2019 it was reported that some babies in the Navajo nation are born with high levels of uranium metal in their bodies.¹²⁸ While Native peoples are represented as fixed in the past through historical enchantment, the impacts of settler colonial and imperial fission continue to poison lands and

¹²⁵ Voyles, *Wastelanding*, 4.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 342.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁸ Marisa Demarco, "Doctor Discusses Research Showing High Levels Of Uranium In Navajo Women And Babies," KUNM, accessed May 23, 2020, <https://www.kunm.org/post/doctor-discusses-research-showing-high-levels-uranium-navajo-women-and-babies>

bodies in the future. In contrast, the health and wellbeing of the white, heteronormative nation is protected in the present and the future through the ongoing genocide of Native peoples and through settler militarism and permanent US wars.

Chapter Two: Patterns and Destinies: Transpacific Entanglements in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Suburban Settler Colonialism in Albuquerque

“The Pueblo Indians’ whole-hearted participation in the war effort has become an inspiring example to the rest of the nation. In proportion to the population, the contribution of these New Mexico Indians – not only in manpower for the armed forces and war industries, but in home front activities as well – far exceeds the United States’ average.”¹²⁹

— The United Pueblos Agency Annual (UPA) Report, 1942.

This chapter is focused on enforced displacement and militarized settlement during the WWII time-period in New Mexico. Militarized settlement in settler colonial nations is always related to forms of displacement of Indigenous peoples and of non-human life. I look at the role of settler institutions such as the Commission of Indian Affairs and United Pueblos Agency in enforcing and extending the draft. I argue that an attention to the structural dynamics of militarization, settlement, and suburbanization are critical for the consideration of militarized refuge in Albuquerque after the Vietnam War, the topic of the following chapters. These structures and processes impacted racial and gendered hierarchies of housing, education, and employment as well as creating uneven exposure to militarized weapons and waste.

¹²⁹ “United Pueblos Agency Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on War Activities of the Pueblos,” box 4, United Pueblos Agency reports and bulletins, 1941-1943, Sophie D. Aberle Papers, 1913-1987, University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, NM, 1. The report goes on to note: “Nearly one-fourth of the Pueblos’ able-bodied men between the ages of 20 and 50 are now in uniform; more than half the remainder are now working away from the Pueblos in vital transportation, shipbuilding, and plane manufacturing industries, and on farms and ranches...On the home front the Indians are buying large amounts of War Bonds; have organized air raid precautions units, enrolled in Red Cross, and scores have received training in first aid, home nursing, motor transport and other similar classes,” 1. The United Pueblo Agency (UPA) was formed in the summer of 1935 when John Collier merged five separate units that administered to the 19 Pueblos in New Mexico. The UPA’s main office was located in Albuquerque. Dr. Sophie D. Aberle was appointed to be the first Superintendent of the Agency from 1935 to 1944. Dr. Aberle was an anthropologist and physician. She was one of a series of liberal reformers who, beginning in the 1920s, sought to improve Native peoples’ lives. Numerous educators and social workers who had previously focused on the living conditions of immigrants in cities turned their attention to Indian Country. She instituted various programs to address health and nutrition issues across the Pueblos. She administered to the Pueblo’s involvement in World War II.

I juxtapose Leslie Marmon Silko's anticolonial novel *Ceremony* (1977) with settler colonial and imperial archives produced by the Commission of Indian Affairs, the city of Albuquerque, and the Kirtland Air Force Base from the 1940s to the 1960s.¹³⁰ In one such archival document, a November 26, 1945 memorandum entitled "Patterns and Destinies," John G. Evans, the General Superintendent of the United Pueblos Agency (UPA) wrote: "I do not know of any segment of our national population upon which the war imposed a more extreme experience from the point of view of a complete physical and spiritual change of scene than the Pueblo Indians who served in the armed forces."¹³¹ Despite the profound impact of WWII on almost every facet of Pueblo life there are few histories of this time period.¹³² However, WWII's impact on the Pueblos is the subject of the influential and well-read *Ceremony*, written by acclaimed Laguna Pueblo writer Leslie Marmon Silko and published in 1977.¹³³ Numerous literary scholars have analyzed the work's stylistic innovations, use of oral narrative, and mythic

¹³⁰ Silko, Leslie Marmon, *Ceremony* (London: Penguin Books, 2016 Anniversary edition).

¹³¹ Memorandum from John G. Evans to All Employees, 26 November 1945, Fol. 119.0-15 Veterans 1944-52, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, United Pueblos Agency, General Superintendent's Decimal File 1940-51, 119.0-13-119.14, box No. 376, Entry 99, National Archives and Record Center in Denver.

¹³² For histories of the Pueblos and WWII see: Joe S. Sando, *Pueblo Recollections The Life of Paa Péh* (Santa Fe: Clear Light Pub, 2008); Dorothy Cave, *Four Trails to Valor: From Ancient Footprints to Modern Battlefields, a Journey of Four People* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2007); Everett M. Rogers and Nancy R. Bartlit, *Silent Voices of WWII: When the Sons of the Land of Enchantment Met the Sons of the Land of the Rising Son* (Santa Fe: Sunstone Press, 2005); Virgil Wyaco, *A Zuni Life: A Pueblo Indian in Two Worlds* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998).

¹³³ Over half a million copies of *Ceremony* have been sold, and it is frequently taught in high schools and colleges, attesting to its place within the literary canon. Joanne Lipson Freed, "The Ethics of Identification: The Global Circulation of Traumatic Narrative in Silko's 'Ceremony' and Roy's 'The God of Small Things,'" *Comparative Literature Studies* 48 (2) (2011): 219-40, 10.

qualities.¹³⁴ Yet one of its key aspects often goes unaddressed: *Ceremony* is an anti-war and anticolonial novel.¹³⁵

Focused on the World War II time period but written during the height of the Vietnam War and Red Power Movement, the novel offers a searing indictment of US war making, settler colonialism and imperialism. Silko wrote that she chose to place *Ceremony* in the WWII time period because “of the atomic bomb. Because of how World War II ended. After the Second World War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War are just part of the big slide—the human race’s big slide into the big abyss. The world was never the same again.”¹³⁶ As detailed in Chapter One, the building in New Mexico of the atomic bombs that were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is often treated as an aberration within the WWII narrative or as a necessary end to the war. *Ceremony* reveals that the use of the atomic bomb is not anomalous but rather part of a long and ongoing war, one that physically and rhetorically connects colonized and racialized subjects from the continental US with the Transpacific.¹³⁷

As an early articulation of Asian-Indigenous relations, *Ceremony* has garnered increasing attention from Asian American scholars. Cynthia Wu for example situates the novel within Asian-Indigenous relational critique, and points to the ways in which it exposes structural

¹³⁴ See for example: Paula Gunn Allen, “The Psychological Landscape of ‘Ceremony,’” *American Indian Quarterly* 5 (1) (1979): 7-12, 7; Robert C. Bell, “Circular Design in ‘Ceremony,’” *American Indian Quarterly* 5 (1) (1979): 47-62; Reyes García, “Senses of Place in Ceremony,” *MELUS* 10, no. 4 (1983): 37-48, 37; Susan J. Scarberry, “Memory as Medicine: The Power of Recollection in ‘Ceremony,’” *American Indian Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (1979): 19-26; Matthew Mullins, “Material Foundations: Rethorizing Native Writing and Social Construction in Leslie Marmon Silko’s Ceremony,” *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture, and Theory* 70 (3) (2014): 31–53; Edith Swan, “Healing via the Sunwise Cycle in Silko’s ‘Ceremony,’” *American Indian Quarterly* 12 (4) (1988): 313-328, 313; Sharon Holm, “The ‘Lie’ of the Land: Native Sovereignty, Indian Literary Nationalism, and Early Indigenism in Leslie Marmon Silko’s Ceremony,” *American Indian Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (Sum 2008): 243-274.

¹³⁵ Freed, “The Ethics of Identification,” 10.

¹³⁶ Leslie Marmon Silko, *Storyteller* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 44.

¹³⁷ I follow Lisa Yoneyama’s assertion that “a decolonial genealogy of the transpacific—one that has been articulated and rearticulated as a transnational Asian/American critique of the United States’ militarized colonial presence in Asia and the Pacific Islands.” Lisa Yoneyama, “Toward a Decolonial Genealogy of the Transpacific,” *American Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (September 2017), 471-482, 472.

histories of stolen land, incarceration, and internment as well as emerging Asian-Indigenous solidarities.¹³⁸ In this chapter I draw on *Ceremony* as a means to further open up conversations between Asian-Indigenous relational critique and transpacific studies. I ask: What would it mean to read the novel in a transpacific context? How does such a rereading generate different lines of inquiry? What are the stakes? In so doing, I draw from transpacific studies scholars who bring attention to the convergences of both American and Japanese imperialism and racism during the WWII era. Indeed, US and Japanese war crimes, atrocities, and irregular tactics were rampant in the Pacific Theater. In the US, racist war propaganda against Japan proliferated and thousands of Japanese-American citizens were placed in concentration camps; several camps were located on Native reservations overseen by then Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier, without their consent.¹³⁹ Furthermore, scholars underscore the connections between US empire building at the turn of the 19th Century and WWII militarization, the postwar proliferation of US military bases, wars in Korea and Vietnam, ongoing control of US possessions and incorporated and unincorporated territories, and weapons tests across Asia and the Pacific Islands.¹⁴⁰

Critical writing on *Ceremony* has not looked to archival records of the time period. Methodologically, I contrast *Ceremony* with secondary literature on WWII and archival records from the Commission of Indian Affairs. Archival materials and court documents serve as a colonial archive; records were written primarily by bureaucrats, anthropologists, and liberal reformers under the Collier administration and thus reflect their motivations, perspectives, and subjective positions. Although the Collier administration moved away from forced assimilation

¹³⁸ Cynthia Wu, "A Comparative Analysis of Indigenous Displacement and the World War II Japanese American Internment," *Amerasia Journal* 42 (1) (2016): 1–15.

¹³⁹ Kenneth William Townsend, *WWII and the American Indian* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 199-201.

¹⁴⁰ Simeon Man, *Soldering through Empire: Race and the Making of the Decolonized Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018).

as the primary purpose of the Commission of Indian Affairs, WWII nonetheless expedited a settler assimilationist agenda through the liberal rhetoric of racial uplift.¹⁴¹ Administrators frame the war around forms of inclusion, improvement, and industriousness. I argue that archival records of the time period are significant for underscoring the ideologies and practices of the settler state that *Ceremony* shows to be individually and collectively harmful.

Ceremony provides a Native perspective on the affective traumas and familial intimacies of war that are absent from these archival records. *Ceremony* is about the experiences of Tayo, a Laguna Pueblo veteran who served in the Pacific Theater of WWII, primarily in the Philippines. The trauma of war serves as a catalyst for Tayo to understand the entanglements of the settler state in New Mexico and their ties to overseas wars in the Transpacific. Transpacific studies scholars Espiritu, Lisa Lowe, and Lisa Yoneyama also utilize the term entanglement to refer to the Transpacific:

Historical and ongoing settler logics of invasion, removal, and seizure continuously articulate with other forms of appropriation and subjugation: This US settler logic intersects with racialized capitalism and overseas empire asserts itself—often through the collaborative networks of US-backed, patriarchally organized, subimperial Asian ‘client states’—in transpacific arrangements such as export processing zones in the Philippines, US military bases in Okinawa and Guam, nuclear test sites in the Marshall Islands, the exportation of nuclear power plants throughout Asia, the partition of Korea and the joint military operations that demonstrate and secure empire’s reach.¹⁴²

They go on to argue that “any attempts at transforming the American present must take into account the geohistorical ramifications of US settler colonialism and its ties to specific transpacific conditions in Asia and the Pacific Islands.”¹⁴³ However, there have been few Asian

¹⁴¹ Roosevelt appointed Collier to be the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, which was confirmed by the Senate in April of 1933.

¹⁴² Y en L  Espiritu, Lisa Lowe, and Lisa Yoneyama, “Chapter Ten: Transpacific Entanglements,” in *Flashpoints for Asian American studies*, ed. Cathy Schlund-Vials (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017): 175-189, 175-76.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 176.

American studies that bring attention to the connections between settler colonialism on the mainland and subimperial client states in Asia. *Ceremony* offers an early, literary articulation of these connections through Tayo's fictionalized perspective, as written by Silko, a Laguna Pueblo woman. Scholars note that the novel takes a unique approach to temporality, jumping back and forth from past to present, which reflects the trauma and PTSD experienced by Tayo. Settler time follows a linear, chronological, and progressive movement from primitivism to civilization. *Ceremony* demonstrates the place in the present of what is often treated as the past. I therefore argue that *Ceremony* re-signifies transpacific critiques of overseas empire in relation to US settler colonialism in the continental US as ongoing. I contend that the novel also marks a critical juncture in moving from entanglements of empire to transnational webs of solidarity for decolonization and demilitarization in the wake of ongoing wars.

The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940

As noted in the Introduction, the forced displacement of Native peoples from their lands has a long precedent beginning with European conquest and continuing through the 19th Century Indian Wars. Critical scholars understand military campaigns, forced marches, and confinement to reservations as the working of the settler state. In this chapter I consider the enforcement of the draft as a form of 20th Century militarized displacement.

The forced displacement of Native peoples in North America continued through the 20th Century with US wars abroad. WWII marked the largest overseas enforced movement of Native peoples from the continental US via the draft and enlistment in the armed services.¹⁴⁴ Prior to WWII, Native peoples had served in all US wars. However, they were not drafted until WWII. Indians were not legally citizens of the US until 1924; they were previously considered wards of

¹⁴⁴ Townsend, *WWII and the American Indian*, 2.

the US government. As citizens, Native men were required to register for the draft and serve in the armed forces under the Selective Training and Service Act (1940), which required every male citizen or alien residing in the United States ages 21-36 to register with local draft boards. Domestically, thousands of Native people moved off reservation lands to work in the defense industries. Nguyen argues that the granting of citizenship works to uphold the hegemony of US settler governance and liberal warfare while also casting this gift as in need of perpetual repayment.¹⁴⁵ As citizens, Native men were required to repay this debt in part by registering for the draft and serving in the armed forces.

WWII built upon and extended national racial formations. While black soldiers were placed in segregated units, Indians were classified as white and served in integrated units. This reflects a longer history of racial formation during which blood quantum ratios sought to limit the Native population and their claims to land and resources.¹⁴⁶ Defense manufacturers also regarded Indians as white. Racial classifications were part of the broader policy of assimilation that departed from the US government policies of outright extermination but nonetheless were also arguably rooted in a desire to further acquire Native lands and resources by limiting the number of people legally considered Indian. During the 1800s, government Indian schools were part of the effort to “save” Indians via forced assimilation into American culture.¹⁴⁷ As critical Indigenous studies scholars have asserted, boarding schools extended the genocidal campaigns carried out during the Indian wars to campaigns of cultural genocide. Students at Albuquerque Indian School wore military-style uniforms and were forced to follow strict rules of hygiene and

¹⁴⁵ Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom*.

¹⁴⁶ Kim TallBear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

¹⁴⁷ John R Gram, *Education at the Edge of Empire: Negotiating Pueblo Identity in New Mexico's Indian Boarding Schools* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015), 4. One of the main proponents of Indian Schools was Richard Pratt, who oversaw schools for Native POWs.

behavior.¹⁴⁸ Pueblo children were taught not to speak their language or to practice their ceremonies and were instilled with the Christian religion. Militarization was therefore directly tied to education as a supposedly benign form of assimilation.

Under Collier's administration, there was a conscious shift to improve the dire conditions of Native reservations through improvements in education, technology, agriculture, medicine, and hygiene under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (IRA), often referred to as the "Indian New Deal."¹⁴⁹ President Roosevelt appointed Collier to be the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, which was confirmed by the Senate in April of 1933. Collier had been a social worker in New York City, working primarily with immigrant families. He advocated for cultural preservation among immigrant groups. He visited numerous Native communities, particularly in the US Southwest, and argued that the commission needed to be reformed to stop land loss and to increase aid to reservations and to move away from an explicit agenda of assimilation. While he is often understood to be a progressive advocate for Native peoples, this chapter complicates such widely held beliefs. His policies were imposed on Native tribes rather than voluntarily taken up, thus subverting their democratic intentions. Numerous tribes rejected the IRA on the grounds that their primary concern was upholding treaties made with the US government.¹⁵⁰ Although the Collier administration moved away from forced assimilation as the primary purpose of the Commission of Indian Affairs, the national emergency of WWII nonetheless expedited a settler assimilationist agenda through the liberal rhetoric of inclusion and racial uplift.

¹⁴⁸ Myla V. Carpio, *Indigenous Albuquerque* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2011).

¹⁴⁹ Indian Reorganization Act of June 18, 1934, Ch. 576, 5, para. 4, 48 Stat. 984-988.

¹⁵⁰ Townsend, *WWII and the American Indian*, 17.

The Indian Service was responsible for carrying out the Selective Service Act. As a result of the Act, thousands of Native soldiers would come to serve in the Pacific Theater of WWII. The UPA started planning for registration even before the passage of the Act.¹⁵¹ After it was passed, six Agency employees set up general meetings with men at the Pueblos as well as with the Pueblo Councils to explain its requirements.¹⁵² Placards explaining registration were placed in stores, trading posts, and community centers. “Every effort was made to notify men in sheep camps and at distant projects. Word was sent to those who were in the hills gathering pinons. Literally, all other work came to a standstill until every Indian between 21 and 35 was registered.”¹⁵³ According to the UPA, “Records for Valencia County, show that ten per cent of all those registered in Acoma and Laguna are now in the Army... Already it is apparent that the Pueblo Indians will, if necessary, show the same spirit today as in 1917 and 1918.”¹⁵⁴ Hospitals overseen by the BIA also worked to increase the number of Pueblo men who could be subject to the draft.¹⁵⁵ The Agency followed up with those who had been given a deferment for health-related issues to see if their conditions were curable, dispatching nurses to improve the health of those who were close to being eligible.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ “United Pueblos Quarterly Bulletin Vol. 2. No3 March 1941,” box 4, United Pueblos Quarterly Bulletins, 1940, Sophie D. Aberle Papers, 1913-1987, University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, NM: 1.

¹⁵² Furthermore, if a person’s age was unknown the UPA used census records and if errors were detected they cross checked them with the Catholic Fathers. The Catholic Fathers also kept records to identify a person’s baptismal name, 2. Ibid. The UPA also utilized 1939 census records to determine who was eligible for the draft. The census gathered information including degree of blood, family grouping, and status in family. A BIA Memorandum specifies to “Select those Indians who assisted Mr. Crawford on the census of last year for distributing the necessary forms to the Indians and being responsible for their execution and return to this office.” Day school teachers under the jurisdiction of the Agency were also instructed on registration procedures for conscription. The Albuquerque Hospital, Santa Fe Hospital and Boarding School, and Albuquerque Sanatorium also served as registration units. Memorandum by William F. Rapp, 10 September 1940, fol. 119.0-1 Administrative Correspondence Selective Service and Military Service (1940-41), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs United Pueblos Agency, General Superintendent’s Decimal File 1902-49, Box No. 315, Entry 99, Denver Office of the National Archives.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

Native women in New Mexico were also called upon to participate in war mobilization. In an April 28, 1941 letter to Dr. Aberle, Ruth F. Kirk the Chairman of District Thirteen of the W.A.C. (Women's Auxiliary Corps) State Council, writes that names were given to her of the women who attended Indian day schools in that district for registration to the W.A.C. She advocates for women to write letters to boost morale for soldiers and notes that many of the Zuni men who were enlisted were having a difficult time. Kirk writes: "This is the first time that the Indians have been invited to do the 'home work' of National Defense, and in this section with such a large Indian population, it seems to me to be mighty important to enlist their cooperation, as well as that of the personnel of the ladies in the Indian Service."¹⁵⁷ During this time period boarding schools, as well as the UPA, worked to increase Native women's domestic skills as a means towards assimilation to the heteropatriarchal division of public and private spheres.

Collier supported the purported democratic impulse of his policies by referring to the record rates at which Native peoples were registering for the draft. Congressman John Coffee said at the time "After the injustices that the Indian has suffered, he still is ready for an all-out defense of democracy, because only democracy can better his lot...[Indians] have seen in recent years, particularly under the enlightened administration of John Collier, that democracy gradually corrects those injustices."¹⁵⁸ WWII service of Native peoples contributed to the dominant but misleading representation of the US as a bounded and autonomous democratic nation. Native peoples' service in the war was largely represented as voluntary in order to show national unity and project an idealized image of American democracy. However, Native peoples were often motivated to join the army in order to protect the tribal lands that remained from

¹⁵⁷ Ruth F. Kirk to Dr. Sophie Aberle, 28 April 1941, Fol. 119.0 Administrative and Organization National Defense 1941, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, United Pueblos Agency, General Superintendent's Decimal File 1939-52, 327.7-9-327.24, Box No. 360, Entry 99, National Archives and Record Center in Denver: 3. .

¹⁵⁸ Townsend, *WWII and the American Indian*, 73.

further invasion and occupation. Furthermore, registration and enlistment served as a choice for Native peoples within a context in which few choices were available.¹⁵⁹ Contrary to the presentation of enthusiastic Native draft registration, Collier maintained the power of Congress to enforce the Selective Service Act despite resistance from numerous tribes. Collier in fact explicitly worked against tribal interests for sovereignty and autonomy during WWII. For example, he maintained the power of Congress to enforce the Selective Service Act despite resistance from numerous tribes. He denied the request for the total deferment of all Zuni Pueblo men, who argued the war was fought offensively rather than defensively and that there was no threat to their community. Hopi men sought conscientious objector status and were denied. Six Hopi men fled their arrest but were later apprehended, tried, found guilty of draft evasion, and sentenced to a one-year prison term.¹⁶⁰

The courts were utilized to uphold Selective Service Act; their decisions had far reaching impacts on Indian law. The Yakima tribe argued that they were alien residents who had not sought US citizenship and that their 1859 treaty with the US government precluded them from mandatory military service. The Supreme Court held that they were US citizens and therefore subject to the Selective Service Act, which superseded prior treaties. The Indian Bureau argued that this ruling invalidated not only the Yakima Nation's treaties, but also all treaties made between Native tribes and the federal government.¹⁶¹ The Iroquois Confederacy also challenged the Selective Service Act for violating its tribal sovereignty as an independent nation so designated by treaties made with the US government in the late 1800s. The tribe wrote to Collier that they were a foreign nation and could not be extended US citizenship without their consent.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 76. It was estimated that Indians received three times as much money working for the defense industries than working on reservations, 183.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 83-86.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 112.

Collier responded by writing that reservations were “semi-sovereign states” subject to US citizenship and military service although they could declare war separately on other nations. He declared that reservations were “municipalities” akin to cities and states by characterizing Native nations as “conquered.”¹⁶² He claimed that the Iroquois Confederacy’s independence was not long standing but rather had simply not been previously interfered with by Congress, which could choose to extend or withhold it. The circuit court of appeals ruled against the Iroquois Confederacy in *Ex Parte Green* (1941). It upheld the legitimacy of the 1924 and 1940 Acts and also found that Congressional law superseded treaties during the period of a “national emergency.”¹⁶³

While military service was aggressively forced on tribes, often invalidating treaties signed by the US government itself, officials portrayed military service as a desirable and benign means to broaden one’s education. In December of 1940 the UPA received a bulletin from the Progressive Education Association with “Materials Available on Education for National Defense.” Texts included “Education must help us to know and love the people of America” and “Education must help us to understand the values of the democratic way of life.”¹⁶⁴ V.K.

Whitaker, the head of New Mexico Boarding Schools wrote:

It cannot be overemphasized that, for the ordinary Indian student, service in the armed forces will in itself be invaluable education. He will see new parts of the United States and of the world, and he will encounter new ways of life. He will associate with men who speak far better English than he does, and he will have to read, write, and speak English continuously and accurately. Best of all, he will compete on even terms with other men, and he will have to do his best. He will find that his best is as good as other men’s, if not

¹⁶² Ibid., 117.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 110-123.

¹⁶⁴ Materials Available on Education for National Defense, Progressive Education Association, Fol. 119.0 Administrative and Organization National Defense 1941, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, United Pueblos Agency, General Superintendent’s Decimal File 1939-52, 327.7-9-327.24, Box No. 360, Entry 99, National Archives and Record Center in Denver: 3.

better, and the resulting self-confidence will be of great value to him long after the war is over. The Army may well be a far better, though harder, school than ours.¹⁶⁵

Whitaker's comments mirror those of many other officials who framed Native men's participation as an opportunity to travel and "see the world." Here, serving in the armed forces is treated as providing Indians with a quality education because they will have to "read, write, and speak English continuously and accurately." War serves as a terrain for both inclusion and competition in which soldiers can prove their masculinity and self-worth, presumably through acts of bravery and courage.

This narrative both comes out of and supports the notion of assimilation through education, in particular through the acquisition of the English language. The militarization of boarding schools serves to frame service in the armed forces not as a form of cultural genocide but rather as a benefit to Native peoples through inclusion in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Serving in the armed forces will demonstrate that Pueblo men are equal to other soldiers, which will create self-confidence to bring back to the reservation at the end of the war. As an articulation of racial liberalism, the quotation suggests not only that the armed services are not racist but they are in fact an extension of boarding schools' efforts to civilize Pueblo men.¹⁶⁶ As detailed in the following section, Tayo's experiences in *Ceremony* strongly refute Whitaker's assumptions and beliefs.

¹⁶⁵ "The Boarding Schools at War by V.K. Whitaker, Albuquerque, July 1, 1943," box 4, United Pueblos Agency reports and bulletins, 1941-1943, Sophie D. Aberle Papers, 1913-1987, University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, NM, 89.

¹⁶⁶ Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*. Melamed argues that from 1940 to the mid-1960s, government, sociology departments, philanthropies, and other cultural industries were key in disseminating a literary studies centered in racial liberalism. Racial liberalism acted as an ideology and a race regime directly tied to US global ascendancy during the Cold War period. Race novels operated to present racism largely as individual prejudice in order to invoke sympathy from white audiences. They further emphasized individual and property rights while delegitimizing the economic dimensions of raciality.

Numerous scholars have addressed how inclusion in the military by marginalized groups is used to prove allegiance and patriotism towards the US and thereby to gain access to the liberal rights of personhood.¹⁶⁷ As Dian Million writes, a liberal, rights-based framework not only produces the dehumanization of racial and sexual difference, but also calls upon the dehumanized to prove their worthiness.¹⁶⁸ The highlighting of the patriotic support and loyalty of Native peoples was intended as an effort to bolster the image of the US as anti-racist in a war ostensibly fought to fight German and Japanese genocide. For example, Nebolon argues that the inclusion of Native Hawaiians and Asian immigrants in public health programs in Hawai'i was dependent upon their displays of patriotism, allegiance to the US, and renunciation of Hawaiian sovereignty.¹⁶⁹ Such analyses disrupt the dominant narrative, in which Native peoples' service in the war was largely represented as voluntary in order to show national unity. Although propaganda written during the war emphasized the benefits for Native soldiers, *Ceremony* highlights the trauma of military service, specifically in the Pacific Theater. Trauma comes to serve as a catalyst for the protagonist, Tayo, to see the working of the settler state and its entanglements to ongoing overseas wars of empire in the transpacific.

Settler Colonialism and Transpacific Entanglements of Empire

A critical reading of archival materials cannot speak to the subjective and affective devastation wrought by the US government on Indian Country during and after WWII. In my analysis of *Ceremony*, I argue that the novel connects boarding schools, military service and post-war trauma to familial relations and intimacies. Tayo's traumatic experiences challenge the purported beneficial inclusion of Native people in the nation through military service, the

¹⁶⁷ LaDuke and Cruz, *The Militarization of Indian Country*.

¹⁶⁸ Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in the Age of Indigenous Human Rights* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013).

¹⁶⁹ Nebolon, "Life Given Straight from the Heart," 25.

democratic nature of the Collier administration's pre-war policies in the postwar context, and a progressive settler temporality of postwar peace. I turn to explore how entanglements between New Mexico and the Transpacific are figured in *Ceremony* and how they relate to the work of transpacific studies scholars.

In the beginning of the novel Tayo is physically and mentally ill. Tayo's war experiences are presented through his memories and nightmares not as acts of heroism and bravery as proclaimed by Whitaker but as acts of brutality and as war crimes. Tayo's unit captures and executes Japanese soldiers. He sees the face of his uncle Josiah in the line-up of soldiers and refuses to shoot. He is treated by a field medic for hallucinations caused by malarial fever. After the war ends, Tayo experiences the entanglements between New Mexico and the Philippines through posttraumatic memories, dreams, and physical symptoms.¹⁷⁰ Instead of the positive self-esteem projected by Whitaker after the war, Tayo and other Native veterans experience PTSD, alcoholism, poverty, racism, and border town violence.

Tayo is hospitalized in a mental institution in Los Angeles before returning to the Laguna Reservation in New Mexico. He cannot eat, vomits regularly, and has difficulty sleeping. In the hospital "Tayo had to sweat through those nights when thoughts became *entangled* (my emphasis); he had to sweat to think of something that wasn't unraveled or tied in knots to the past—something that existed by itself, standing alone like a deer."¹⁷¹ Tayo's attempts to untangle traumatic memories only lead him to further confusion. He is immobilized within the sanitized spaces of the California hospital where his psychosis is individualized and medicalized. In the train station in Los Angeles, Tayo sees a Japanese family and faints. When he awakens, he remarks that he thought that they were still in concentration camps.

¹⁷⁰ Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.

¹⁷¹ Silko, *Ceremony*, 7.

Returning to the Laguna Pueblo Reservation in New Mexico, he still cannot untangle these feelings as they remain deeply mentally and physically connected in ways he does not yet understand.¹⁷² For example Tayo uses the bathroom at the bar; when the water overflows and leaks through his boots, he “was afraid he would fall into the stinking dirty water and have to crawl through it, like before, with jungle clouds raining down filthy water that smelled ripe with death. He lunged at the door; he landed on his hands and knees in the dark outside the toilet. The dreams did not wait any more for night; they came out anytime.”¹⁷³ Tayo was deployed to the Philippines, which was at the time an American Territory taken violently during the Philippine-American War. Pueblo men’s service in the Philippines is not surprising if we consider prior expansions of US Empire in the 19th Century that allowed for New Mexico and the Philippines to serve as strategic and connected military sites during WWII. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War, was signed in 1848, just fifty years before the Spanish American War. The logic of Manifest Destiny, which resulted in New Mexico becoming a US territory until 1912, must be seen as connected to US overseas imperial ambitions at the turn of the 20th Century. Furthermore, as scholars such as Steffi San Buenaventura and Sharon Delmendo have demonstrated, Theodore Roosevelt explicitly compared Filipinos to American Indians arguing that their similar primitive natures justified US occupation as a means to impart civilization.¹⁷⁴

The novel connects boarding schools, military service and post-war trauma to familial relations and intimacies. Although Tayo voluntarily enlists for the armed service, he does so only

¹⁷² For example, while lying in bed Tayo “could feel it inside his skull—the tension of little threads being pulled and how it was with tangled things, things tied together, and as he tried to pull them apart and rewind them into their places, they snagged and tangled more.” *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷⁴ Steffi San Buenaventura, “The Colors of Manifest Destiny: Filipinos and the American Other(s),” *Amerasia Journal* 24, no. 3 (Winter 1998): 1–26; Sharon Delmendo, *The Star-Entangled Banner: One Hundred Years of America in the Philippines* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

after his cousin Rocky does. Rocky refers to Tayo as his brother, which moves Tayo, particularly because he had often felt an outsider in his aunt's house, where he was raised with Rocky after his mother abandoned him. However, his aunt consistently corrected others when they referred to Tayo and Rocky as brothers. The family ostracized Tayo because he had an absent white father and his mother had been a prostitute. By contrast, Rocky was praised by the family because he was handsome and an "A-student and all-state in football and track. He had to win; he said he was going to win."¹⁷⁵ Rocky's teachers at the Albuquerque Boarding School encouraged him to reject Laguna customs and to resist the attempts of "the people at home to hold [him] back."¹⁷⁶ Though Tayo initially resists the Army recruitment officer, his choice to register becomes tied to family allegiance and to Rocky's patriotism. The officer says: "Now I know you boys love America as much as we do, but now is your big chance to *show* it."¹⁷⁷ The recruiter mirrors Whitaker's comments regarding the potential for service in the armed forces to prove both allegiance and loyalty to the US as well as to enhance individual self-worth and ultimately to improve conditions back on the reservation.

Although WWII had officially ended, Native veterans such as Tayo suffered from the warlike conditions of border town violence and alcoholism that continue to tie him back to his service in the Philippines. Tayo refers to other Pueblo veterans as "MacArthur's boys" who bought their drinks with "cash from disability checks earned with shrapnel in the neck at Wake Island or shell shock on Iwo Jima; rewards for surviving the Bataan Death March."¹⁷⁸ According to the UPA, "As members of New Mexico's heroic National Guard regiment, the 200th Coast Artillery, more than a score of Pueblo Indians took part in the historic defense of the Philippines.

¹⁷⁵ Silko, *Ceremony*.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

Laguna Pueblo alone had 12 men on Bataan when that peninsula was overwhelmed by the Japanese.”¹⁷⁹ The 200th Coast Artillery of the New Mexico National Guard had been a cavalry outfit that was trained to be an antiaircraft unit sent to the Philippines two months before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Of the 1,800 New Mexican members of the 200th Coast Artillery who fought in the Philippines, only 900 survived the death march and another 300 died after the war from complications from the march.¹⁸⁰ In the novel, Rocky died when a grenade hit him during the march. His body was abandoned, and other soldiers had to drag Tayo to the POW camp. Tayo continues to suffer because he blames himself for the death of Rocky, the death of his uncle Josiah on the Laguna Reservation, and the conditions of drought plaguing the reservation for over six years. Some of the roots of this internalized racism stretch to flashbacks to when Tayo was a student at the Albuquerque Indian School and was told by teachers that Pueblo beliefs were superstitions.

However, Tayo eventually meets with the healer, Betonie, who lives on the outskirts of Gallup. Tayo remembers living in an Arroyo on the outskirts of Gallup, surrounded by industrial waste, with his mother as a child. He recalls how Native peoples concentrated to this geography were terrorized by vigilante and police violence. This brings into focus the working of the settler state prior to WWII through the theft of lands and the marginalization of Native peoples by the city and police. Tayo sees that Native peoples are treated as outsiders and criminals on land that was stolen and occupied. Native land loss in fact accelerated during WWII as the army acquired millions of acres of public domain. Betonie states in relation to Gallup that the papers that designate property as private have no meaning, that Native people had lived there first, and that

¹⁷⁹ “United Pueblos Agency Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on War Activities of the Pueblos,” box 4, United Pueblos Agency reports and bulletins, 1941-1943, Sophie D. Aberle Papers, 1913-1987, University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, NM: 1. Page 84.

¹⁸⁰ Jim Belshaw, “Wars Shaped State’s Fortunes,” *Albuquerque Journal*, September 19, 1999.

people cannot own land, rather they belong to it.¹⁸¹ He traces the city of Gallup back to the conquest of North America. He tells Tayo about the witchery that had created white people, who had come to North America and perpetuated genocide, and were also called the destroyers. The novel subverts the typical ways in which Europeans are characterized as “discovering” Native peoples. Rather, it is Native people who created Europeans through witchery. This does not mean that Native people are responsible for white people but rather that white people are not the central figures in the telling of history, of creation, and of time.

The roots of Tayo’s physical and mental symptoms therefore stretch back much further than the war. Todd Jude argues that Tayo:

must *unravel the tangle* [my emphasis] of lies about himself, the whites, the Indians, and the Earth. Then he must re-create a story that is true for him, a story that he can spin out to heal not only himself but also his homeland. He must understand the role the witchery has played in all the lies and loss; death and destruction and he must find a way to heal his severed connecting with the Earth.¹⁸²

The novel departs from war novels that focus on individual healing and demonstrates that Tayo’s recovery must happen within a context of his relations to both his human relatives (including the Japanese) and non-human relatives as well as to the land. As the novel continues, he sees that his visions are not mental illness: they reflect his experience. Tayo follows Betonie’s advice to undertake a journey to recover the Mexican cattle that had belonged to his uncle Josiah. The unraveling of the lies perpetuated by institutions such as the UPA occurs as Tayo moves through and across Laguna land. Tayo’s political awakening to the theft of Native lands in Gallup and its connections to the work of the destroyers through conquest, war, and the post-war period is one that is revealed through his discovery of the complex relations between people and the

¹⁸¹ Silko, *Ceremony*, 264.

¹⁸² Jude Todd, “Knotted Bellies and Fragile Webs: Untangling and Re-Spinning in Tayo’s Healing Journey,” *American Indian Quarterly* 19 (2) (1995): 155–70.

environment. While Tayo walks through the land he identifies the working of the settler state on the landscape: white ranchers own most of the land and fence and divide it into private property backed by the law. Land and animals are treated as commodities to be exploited and sold.¹⁸³ This recognition serves to connect Tayo to Indigenous epistemologies about the relational character of human and non-human life and sacred sites, and leads him to action, for example cutting the fences to release the Mexican cattle.¹⁸⁴

Through his recollections Tayo sees how 19th Century ideologies of assimilation connect to centuries of conquest and colonialism that were carried through to WWII nationalism and the post-war period. Assimilation is not only meant to achieve individual success within American capitalism; it is also intended to sever ties to land, community, and history. Although numerous scholars have focused on the ceremony of returning the cattle as disconnected from broader historical and political forces, I agree with Michael Satterlee who argues that bringing the cattle home is meant to serve as a means of re-exerting tribal sovereignty in the context of settler colonialism.¹⁸⁵

Nuclear Legacies of Militarization and Environmental Injustice

However, Tayo's recovery of Josiah's Mexican cattle does not constitute an end to the challenges that the novel explores. After Tayo successfully herds the Mexican cattle he goes to a uranium mine where his friend and fellow veteran Emo tortures, kills and disfigures their friends

¹⁸³ These views are reflected in UPA archival documents. For example, in a 1942 UPA Bulletin, one of the Range-Forestry Divisions objectives is to assist Pueblos with "Maintaining range fences." Furthermore, "The objectives of this Division are to promote the most profitable use of range and forestry resources," "United Pueblos Agency, Information for Pueblo Officers," box 4, United Pueblos Agency reports and bulletins, Information for Pueblo Officers, 1942-1949. Reports on boarding schools and motion pictures at old Acoma Pueblo, 1939, 1941, University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Albuquerque, NM: 89.

¹⁸⁴ Piper, "Police Zones: Territory and Identity in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony."

¹⁸⁵ Michelle Satterlee, "Landscape Imagery and Memory in the Narrative of Trauma: A Closer Look at Leslie Marmon Silko's 'Ceremony'," *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 13, no. 2 (2006): 73-92.

Harley and Leroy. Emo's behavior is indicative of the work of the destroyers. During the war, Emo had led the execution of a number of Japanese POWs. He keeps his GI haircut after WWII ends and shows Tayo a bag of teeth that he had taken from a Japanese corpse. Silko shows how even Pueblo peoples are not immune to the witchery. Holm asserts that the army burial of Leroy and Harley underscores the conditions of war—alcoholism, torture, violence, and racism—that continue on the Laguna Reservation during so-called peacetime.¹⁸⁶ Tayo's choice not to intervene could be considered cowardly. However, by refusing to intervene in the death of Harley, Tayo resists the temptation to fight violence with violence—the underlying logic of US war policy and its violent afterlives for Pueblo nations.

As numerous scholars have argued, the setting of this scene in a uranium mine is significant for several reasons.¹⁸⁷ Uranium mined primarily from Diné lands was utilized in the atomic bombs that leveled the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing thousands of civilians and ushering in the Cold War, the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and declared and undeclared wars across the world. At the time of the novel's publication in 1977, the US government recommended that Laguna land be considered a "National Sacrifice Area" because water and infrastructure were contaminated with radioactive waste, including an open uranium pit.¹⁸⁸ Although scholars of *Ceremony* have pointed to the connections it makes between uranium mining and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there has been less consideration of the ongoing entanglements of US nuclear weapons policy between New Mexico

¹⁸⁶ Holm, "The 'Lie' of the Land," 243-273.

¹⁸⁷ See: Sardar Amad Farooq and Muhammad Safeer Awan, "Environmental Justice and Indigenous Feminism: An Eco-Critical Study of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," *NUML Journal of Critical Inquiry* 16 (1) (2018): 1-16; Kristin Czarnecki, "Melted Flesh and Tangled Threads: War Trauma and Modes of Healing in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," *Woolf Studies Annual* 21 (2015): 50-77; Piper, "Police Zones," 483-97.

¹⁸⁸ Piper, "Police Zones," 121.

and the Transpacific. Although they are not recounted in the novel I turn to briefly chart some of these connections.

From the 1950s to the 1970s northwest New Mexico produced the most uranium in the world. LaDuke and Cruz note:

As weapons became more lethal—as harmful to those manufacturing, handling or storing these materials as they would be against an enemy—access to more isolated lands became a major military priority. With the massive increases of chemical, biological and nuclear weaponry that took place during the Cold War, it was clear that the military would need to take more land from populated areas. That would mean the additional seizure of Indian land.¹⁸⁹

The city of Grants, New Mexico, which bordered the eastern edge of the Navajo Nation and the Acoma and Laguna Pueblos, was the uranium capital of the world. LaDuke notes that leaders in the Navajo nation who had attended boarding schools and who also looked upon their WWII service positively signed many of the uranium and mining leases.¹⁹⁰

In the postwar period the US continued to maintain control over the territories of Guam, the Northern Marianas, and the Marshall Islands and to hold a military base in Okinawa. In 1953 the first thermonuclear device exploded in the Pacific. The first hydrogen bomb, named Mike, was dropped on the Elugelab Island; it released more than 500 times the number of megatons of the bomb dropped on Nagasaki. In 1953 the first thermonuclear device exploded in the Pacific under “Operation Ivy” was stronger than all of the explosives used in WWII combined.¹⁹¹ Between 1946 and 1958 the U.S detonated 67 nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands.¹⁹² Dozens of biological weapons tests occurred on the Enewetok Atoll, which also became the site where

¹⁸⁹ LaDuke and Cruz, *The Militarization of Indian Country*, 81.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

¹⁹¹ Karen Van Citters and Kristen Bisson, “National Register of Historic Places Historic Context and Evaluation for Kirtland Air Force Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico,” June 2003, 124.

¹⁹² Susan Rust, “How the US betrayed the Marshall Islands, kindling the next nuclear disaster,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/projects/marshall-islands-nuclear-testing-sea-level-rise/?fbclid=IwAR2K75PEhEp3y3qSiY-T9zjPRBmF8Xh-MMoqQheSQWo2g9eQ4Uxmj2zNOtw> (accessed February 3, 2020).

tons of nuclear waste from the Nevada Test Site were deposited without the knowledge or consent of the Marshallese.¹⁹³

Albuquerque's Kirtland Air Force Base oversaw all nuclear weapons testing in the Pacific during this time. Hundreds of Marshallese were relocated during the tests. Autumn Bordner argues that "The Marshall Islands were selected as ground zero for nuclear testing precisely because colonial narratives portrayed the islands as small, remote and unimportant."¹⁹⁴ The Chamorro peoples are Indigenous to Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. The US seized Guam, the southernmost island, after the Spanish-American War. The Northern Mariana Islands were taken by Germany and then relinquished to the Japanese at the beginning of WWI. The northern Chamorros took part in the brutal Japanese occupation of Guam during WWII. The US seized all of the Mariana Islands after WWII declaring them the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.¹⁹⁵ Following WWII, the Chamorros were sent to refugee camps as the US government took land for the military.

The Department of the Interior to this day administers federal funds to Guam together with the Office of Insular Affairs. The liberal policies of the Collier administration towards Indian Country discussed in the first section of this chapter would echo across the so-called decolonizing Asia and Pacific region in the post-war period. Simeon Man asserts that in the post-war period the US supported the decolonization of the Pacific Islands from Europe and Japan only as long as they followed American-style democracy and capitalism.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, the US utilized soldiers from South Korea, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Taiwan, the Philippines, and

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Keith L. Camacho, *Cultures of Commemoration: The Politics of War, Memory, and History in the Mariana Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).

¹⁹⁶ Man, *Soldering through Empire*, 8.

Indonesia to fight anti-communist insurgencies. One of the less well-known aspects of Commissioner Collier's tenure was his control of Japanese internment camps on Native reservations and his work with President Roosevelt to extend federal Indian policy to the Pacific Islands. After Collier's insistence, Roosevelt called on the Departments of State, War, and Navy to put together a committee to train civilians for post-war overseas work. He sought to have a more organized territorial management than had happened after the Spanish-American War. He specifically called on the BIA to participate and to establish a program akin to the Indian New Deal in the territories.¹⁹⁷ Like reservations across the US, these islands would serve as geographies where BIA policies could best be implemented. In all these cases, reservations and Islands in the Pacific served as contained and remote areas in which to test Collier's policies of so-called democratic governance. As for the continental US, Collier did not directly advocate for sovereignty, independence, and self-determination but rather for the primacy of the Commission of Indian Affairs to create the conditions under which tribalism and self-determination could best flourish. Collier had to maintain the ultimate and plenary power of the US government over Native tribes, thereby furthering a settler project.

Demilitarized and Decolonial Webs

Kevin Concannon argues "The power of the atomic bomb underscores the futility of boundaries and the impossibility of constructing differences between past and present, us and other; and yet, this same boundless power becomes for Tayo a means of linking differing colonial experiences."¹⁹⁸ Tayo comes to see the illegality and artificiality of US national borders and of American nationalism and patriotism during WWII, "finally seeing the pattern, the way

¹⁹⁷ Townsend, *WWII and the American Indian*, 211.

¹⁹⁸ Kevin Concannon, "Deer-Hoof Clackers and Coke Bottles: The Construction of the Postcolonial Nation in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," *Ariel* 35 (3/4) (2004): 183–200.

all the stories fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was still being told. He was not crazy; he had never been crazy. He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through all distances and time.”¹⁹⁹ Paula Gunn Allen writes that Native peoples “view space as spherical and time as cyclical, whereas the non-Indians tends to view space as linear and time as sequential.”²⁰⁰ The collapsing of settler time calls for distinct understandings and responsibilities in the present. The novel reflects a political concern regarding Native sovereignty, self-determination, and control of land that extends past the post-WWII time period to America’s war in Vietnam.²⁰¹ The novel serves as a warning that warfare may never end with the last reading, “It is dead for now,” the “for now” foreclosing a permanent resolution. Earlier in the novel, the destruction unleashed by the destroyers is described as:

They kill what they fear.
Entire villages will be wiped out
They will slaughter whole tribes
Corpses for us
Blood for us
Killing killing killing killing.²⁰²

Holm asserts that this refrain brings to mind both the Indian Wars and My Lai (1968). The 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee by the Seventh Cavalry (the same division that first invaded Iraq during the War on Terror) killed almost 300 Lakota civilians. During the Vietnam War, US soldiers murdered approximately 500 people, mostly women, children, and elderly men in the My Lai village. Soldiers raped and mutilated women and children. The army covered up the massacre for a year.

¹⁹⁹ Silko, *Ceremony*, 246.

²⁰⁰ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992): 59.

²⁰¹ Holm, “The ‘Lie’ of the Land,” 251.

²⁰² Silko, *Ceremony*, 136.

For Tayo, the entanglements of empire are tied together in part because they go unrecognized and un-mourned. The work of the novel is not one of the recovery of unknown history; rather, I suggest that it is an unraveling of the insidious nature of settler colonialism as deeply related to other forms of injustice and of geographies not often thought of in relation to one another. The novel exposes the legacies of the militarization of the Transpacific and their ties to New Mexico as related yet different sites of layered colonialism, empire, racialized capitalism, and neoliberalism.

As noted in Chapter One, Espiritu argues that the Vietnam War has been erased from the national consciousness in order to legitimate the ongoing US wars of empire building.²⁰³ She further argues that the resettlement of refugees from the war operated to remake a bad war into a good war. The impacts of serving during the Vietnam War for Native veterans have also been largely unrepresented in mainstream accounts, which often center a white male veteran. Numerous authors have brought attention to the impact of Native service during the Vietnam War on rates of post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide. La Duke and Cruz note:

[s]tudies of Vietnam veterans found that returning southwestern tribal veterans suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder at a rate of 45 percent... This high percentage was largely attributed to the high levels of combat exposure experienced by Native soldiers. In one study, a full 42 percent of those interviewed had seen heavy fighting; some 32 percent had seen medium combat.²⁰⁴

Native veterans from WWII also suffered high rates of PTSD. In both wars, Native men were more likely to engage with heavy combat in part because of stereotypes about their natural warrior-like characteristics.

The connections between differentially colonized and racialized groups brought into proximity through US wars enable new forms of solidarity. In the novel, Tayo is not the narrator;

²⁰³ Espiritu et al., “Transpacific Entanglements,” 177–180.

²⁰⁴ LaDuke and Cruz, *The Militarization of Indian Country*, 45.

rather, Spider Woman spins the narrative like a web. It starts to rain after Tayo returns the Mexican cattle, relieving the land of the long drought: “It was spinning out of the thunderclouds like gray spider webs and tangling against the foothills of the mountain.”²⁰⁵ Jeff Karem argues:

The image of the spider web stands as a more fruitful arrangement of the filaments of life than the entangled yarns that have formed in Tayo’s consciousness. As an image, the web conveys an idea of strength through balance and interdependence. Each strand must be anchored—none can stand alone—and each depends on its brethren for support.²⁰⁶

The novel is thus strategically organized; the pattern is revealed to Tayo and the audience through his connections to Laguna land as the basis for Native sovereignty and potential alliances for decolonization and demilitarization. The webs serve as metaphors for linkages between Native veterans and their communities, and for the connections they need to restore individual and community health in the wake of war.

Yet another way to think of webs in the novel is through their ability to strengthen ties across time and distance. I have argued that the novel gestures towards ways of connecting transpacific critiques of the ongoing legacies of European, Japanese, and American imperialism to activist organizing. Precedent for this work can be seen when Native veterans and civilians built solidarities against the militarization of Indian country and abroad. The novel was written during the spread of the Red Power Movement, an internationalist project of solidarity during the Vietnam War era. Holm notes that Tayo’s experiences resonate with those of Native veterans of the Vietnam War. During the 1973 defense of Wounded Knee military officials surrounded the occupation and murdered two of the participants. A number of AIM members were Vietnam

²⁰⁵ Silko, *Ceremony*, 96.

²⁰⁶ Jeff Karem, “Keeping the Native on the Reservation: The Struggle for Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 25, no 4 (2001): 21-34.

Veterans who came to see how the army they had served was waging war on their own people.²⁰⁷

Cruz and LaDuke suggest that:

The Native American soldier when confronted with the Viet Cong would actually be looking into more of a mirror than if the Native was looking at a fellow United States Soldier. The Native Soldier and the South East Asian soldier have similar tones and colors of skin pigment. They look at each other and see cousins or uncles, they see a resemblance. The government saw the tribal resemblance when looking upon them also... They see Crazy Horse in every Native who is called or volunteers to serve. They also see Crazy Horse in the enemy.²⁰⁸

As discussed above, in *Ceremony* Tayo identifies with Japanese soldiers, Japanese-Americans, and victims of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Scholars have grappled with the lack of critique of Japanese imperialism and Empire in the novel. Betonie tells Tayo that his identifications with Japanese soldiers and Japanese-American citizens can be in part explained by Pueblo mythology, under which they emerged from the same place before moving across continents and were therefore relations. This is not to say that Silko is treating Japanese, Vietnamese, or Native Pacific Islanders as analogous. Rather, the novel involves a specific critique of the reiteration of genocidal militarisms from European conquest to the present and future.

The use of extraordinary tactics, the killing of enemy non-combatants, biological warfare, and the destruction of the environment can be seen from the Indian Wars to the dropping of atomic bombs, the massacres of Vietnamese civilians, and the widespread use of chemical weapons including Agent Orange. The stakes for such solidarity and activism remain today as the percentage of Native peoples serving in the now “voluntary” army is higher than that of any other racial or ethnic group and as the US continues to wage seemingly unending wars.

Furthermore, as Tuck and Yang argue, literature such as Silko’s is especially needed as states

²⁰⁷ La Duke and Cruz, *the Militarization of Indian County*, 29.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 46.

such as Arizona attempt to ban ethnic studies courses and curriculum. They argue that Silko's connections between uranium mining in New Mexico and the dropping of the atomic bombs counters mainstream educational materials that allow for settler blamelessness that fuels patriotism and enlistment.²⁰⁹ *Ceremony* unsettles what they refer to as "settler innocence" as the novel makes clear when Tayo recognizes that:

If the white people never looked beyond the lie, to see that theirs was a nation built on stolen land, then they would never be able to understand how they had been used by the witchery; they would never know that they were still being manipulated by those who know how to stir ingredients together: white thievery and injustice boiling up the anger and hatred that would finally destroy the world. The destroyers had only to set it into motion, and sit back and count the casualties. But it was more than a body count; the lies devoured white hearts, and for more than two hundred years white people had worked to fill their emptiness; they tried to glut the hollowness with patriotic wars and with great technology and the wealth it bought. And always they had been fooling themselves, and they knew it.²¹⁰

Here Tayo directly shifts his focus to white settlers, demonstrating how even if they are deluded into thinking otherwise, they also suffer under colonialism. He suggests that settlers can never achieve true happiness or success because they are thieves: whatever they have gained was stolen. The narrative thus invites the non-Native reader to understand their own place in the structure of settler colonization as ongoing.

Militarized Settlement and Suburban Settler Colonialism

In the following section of the chapter I turn from the anticolonial and decolonial critique presented in *Ceremony* to another settler colonial archive, considering the ways in which Albuquerque developed in terms of militarized settlement and suburban settler colonialism in the post-WWII era. As I noted in Chapter One, the Kirtland Base was connected to a longer genealogy of displacement and settlement from Spanish Conquest to the WWII period. Although

²⁰⁹ Tuck and Yang, *Decolonization is not a Metaphor*, 31.

²¹⁰ Silko, *Ceremony*, 178.

it was originally meant to serve only as a flight training school during WWII it in fact became the center of US nuclear programs. I argue that one cannot underestimate the impact of WWII on the growth and development of Albuquerque and of the state of New Mexico. The Kirtland Base's role as a flight training school connected to post-war militarized settlement. As Native peoples were displaced through WWII, soldiers were trained on Native lands, some returning after WWII as Albuquerque emerged as the center of US nuclear programs. Don Alberts, the former Kirtland Air Force Base historian is quoted as saying of Kirtland:

Aircrew students who cycled through here saw the West for the first time, and they liked what they saw. It introduced a lot of people to the region who had never seriously thought of it before. And in many cases, they wanted to come back here if there was an excuse to do so. And it turns out there was an excuse to do so, introduced by the Second World War, especially in the area of special weapons.”²¹¹

Here the discovery narrative of historical enchantment continues to represent both the land of New Mexico and the nuclear weapons industry as sites of perpetual discovery. The economic development of New Mexico after the war is often portrayed positively, as bringing modernization, education, and wealth to the state as put forth in the Museum of Nuclear Science and Technology. However, *Ceremony* reframes development through the terms of ongoing colonialism: resource extraction, weapons development and testing, and the expansion of racial capitalism. In the novel Tayo makes a direct connection between extraction on Indigenous nations and the growth of cities such as Albuquerque “He wanted to scream at Indians like Harley and Helen Jean and Emo that the white things they admired so much—the bright city lights and loud music, the soft sweet food and the cars—all these things had been stolen, torn out of Indian land; raw living materials for the ck’o’yo manipulation.”²¹² Lydia Cooper notes that when he travels through Albuquerque, “Tayo reflects on the ‘plastic and neon, the concrete and

²¹¹ Jim Belshaw, “Wars Reshaped State's Fortunes,” *Albuquerque Journal*, May 24, 2020.

²¹² Silko, *Ceremony*, 204.

steel' advertisements, architecture and art of white Americans living in New Mexico. Tayo links this fabricated and industrialized mode of living to aggressive nationalist ideologies driving the recent Manhattan Project's development and testing of nuclear weapons in New Mexico, a project that sought as its ultimate goal to exert military and cultural influence on a global scale."²¹³ Cooper relates Albuquerque's architecture, advertisements, and art (most likely on Route 66 that ran through Albuquerque on Central Avenue) to the nuclear weapons industry more broadly.

This section of the dissertation demonstrates how Albuquerque's growth as a city was directly tied to militarization. I characterize this development as "suburban settler colonialism," which contributed to racialized and gendered hierarchies of space and labor. I address the following questions: How can we understand settler colonialism in relation to urbanization in Albuquerque from 1945-1960? How do these understandings change the ways in which studies typically theorize urbanization and suburbanization?

I argue that suburbanization and settler colonialism are intimately linked in distinct ways in Albuquerque as the center of US nuclear weapons programs and of Indian Country in the Southwest. In tourist materials produced during this time period, the frontier town is transformed into the modern city for families whose male breadwinner works with, or in relation to, the Kirtland Base. Land inside and outside of Albuquerque continues to be represented as an empty resource to be exploited for profit. Here, I elaborate on militarized settlement as tied to notions of national and domestic defense. The domestic not only relates to the position of the nation but also to the home.

The literature on suburbanization often looks at large metropolitan cities mostly on the

²¹³ Lydia R Cooper, "'The Sterility of Their Art': Masculinity and the Western in Leslie Marmon Silko's Ceremony," *Western American Literature* 49 (3) (2014): 267-91.

East and West Coasts such as New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles.²¹⁴ Scholars demonstrate how policies such as redlining and running highways to the suburbs through urban neighborhoods contributed to racially and economically segregated neighborhoods. This literature points to the structural and enduring forms of racism and heteropatriarchy built into the fabric of American cities.²¹⁵ However, less has been written about the suburbanization of New Mexico. Furthermore, the relationship between settler colonialism and suburbanization remains relatively under theorized.²¹⁶ Yet, settler nations, for example, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and Israel all have suburban developments. Suburban settler colonialism promulgates white, heteronormative cis-patriarchy through “the single-family house, the nuclear family, the separation between work and home, and the separation between gendered spaces.”²¹⁷ The nuclear family consists of two parents and children who live in one home. In the context of the Cold War it came to serve as a symbol of the American Dream, linking capitalism to ideal family formation. This section builds upon the first chapter’s analysis of historical enchantment to show how the nuclear family was directly tied to the work of the nuclear weapons industry, one that played a central role in the ongoing structure of settler colonialism and imperialism in Asia and the Pacific Islands.

As noted previously, Albuquerque’s militarized suburban growth in the 1940s and 1950s

²¹⁴ See for example: Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Lorrie Frasure-Yokley, *Racial and Ethnic Politics in American Suburbs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); David L. Kirp, *Our Town: Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia* (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Natalie Y. Moore, *A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation* (New York: Picador, 2017); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

²¹⁵ See for example: Paige Glotzer, *How the Suburbs Were Segregated: Developers and Businesses of Exclusionary Housing, 1890-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020); Becky M. Nicolaidis and Andrew Wiese, *The Suburb Reader* (New York, Taylor and Francis, 2006).

²¹⁶ Lorenzo Veracini, “Suburbia, Settler Colonialism and the World Turned Inside Out,” *Housing, Theory & Society* 29 (4) (2012): 339–57.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 340.

was shaped by and produced toxic legacies of resource extraction from and wastelanding of Indigenous lands across the Southwest and Transpacific; they were treated as environmental zones to be sacrificed to the nation, as detailed in a previous section. The militarization of Albuquerque and New Mexico more broadly during the 1940s and 1950s required not only lands for testing, but also the extraction of mineral and energy resources and storage spaces for America's growing nuclear stockpile. During the Cold War, the military infrastructure put in place during WWII enabled an increase in the settler population who worked for military institutions such as the Kirtland Base; it also fostered the growth of military projects that continued to decimate Native lands and lives. The Atomic Energy Act of 1946 included the creation of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) at Kirtland to "take jurisdiction over nuclear research and development from the military and become responsible for the development, manufacture, and custody of atomic weapons."²¹⁸ The designation of the Kirtland Base as the headquarters of the AEC prompted the increase of the population and its development in terms of what I have called militarized settlement. This settlement constitutes part of the structure of settler colonialism because the institutions at the Base continued to facilitate the destruction of Native lands and lives through resource extraction and the development, testing, and storage of nuclear and conventional weapons.

In addition to the jobs brought to Albuquerque by the AEC, employment in the oil and gas industry increased rapidly during the early 1950s. The BIA reported that the search for oil and gas on Native lands accelerated following WWII. Although oil and gas were not found in the Albuquerque area, the city served as a financing and supply headquarter. Major oil companies including the Pacific Northwest Pipeline Corporation, Phillips Petroleum, Sinclair, Skelly, and

²¹⁸ Van Citters and Bisson, "National Register of Historic Places Historical Context and Evaluation for Kirtland Air Force Base."

Superior Oil maintained offices in Albuquerque. In 1951, the BIA administered roughly 10,000 oil and gas leases spreading across 1,500,000 acres in New Mexico. It reported that 23,000,000 barrels of oil were extracted from lands on Native reservations and that 24,680 acres of land on the Jicarilla Apache Reservation in New Mexico were leased to oil companies.²¹⁹ As of 1956, New Mexico was the third highest state for number of natural gas reserves. By 1956, Albuquerque had nine firms selling oil and gas stocks and bonds. The extraction of resources partially fueled the nuclear weapons industry and racial capitalism more broadly.

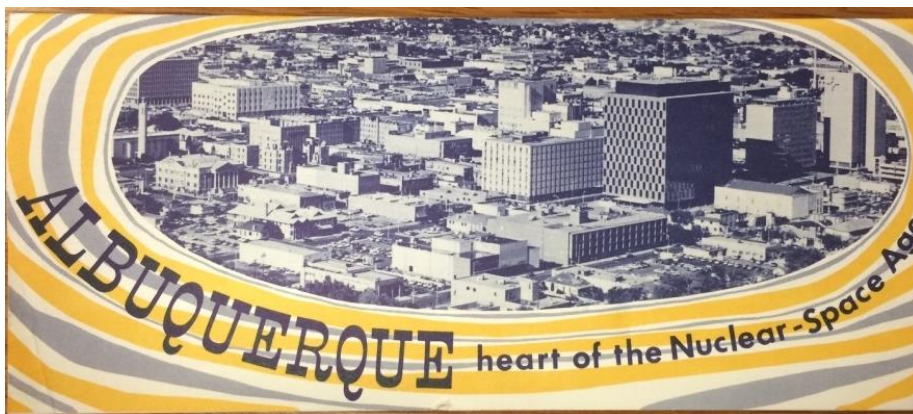
I turn to consider in greater detail the connections between settler colonialism and suburbanization, drawing on materials produced by the tourist industry and the Kirtland Base, which were used to recruit engineers and scientists to work at the Base and to live in Albuquerque. This archive includes telephone directories, welcome packets, newspaper articles, Bureau of Indian Affairs documents, oral histories, and a recruiting film called “The Sandia Story.” The Kirtland Base materials were also given to new employees to explain the work of the Base and to present a historically enchanted view of New Mexico and Albuquerque’s history. These materials deserve analysis in part because they speak to Joanne Barker’s call to understand the appeal of settler colonial systems even if they harm those included within its terms.²²⁰

Settler societies and suburban developments are characterized by outward movement and displacement. The inevitability of Albuquerque’s growth parallels the logic of Manifest Destiny and westward expansion as detailed in Chapter One through the terms of militarized fission. Materials put out by Kirtland and the city’s tourist industries phrase the development of

²¹⁹ “Indian Welfare Progress Reported,” Department of Interior Information Service, fol. 611 Memoranda for the Press—Press Releases, Correspondence with Press (1950-51), Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs United Pueblos Agency, General Superintendent’s Decimal File 1941-51, Box No. 329, Entry 99, Denver Office of the National Archives.

²²⁰ Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

businesses in nuclear terms with words like “mushroomed.” The city’s limits are characterized as continuously expanding. Kirtland and Albuquerque are represented as future-oriented spaces: “When movement was everything, the future was speeding to Albuquerque—where a disparate band of dreamers and doers saw endless possibilities in the equally endless acres of sand and dirt.”²²¹ This quotation aptly reflects the attitude that land in New Mexico provided boundless opportunities for enterprising scientific pioneers at the labs and for developers and entrepreneurs. Libby Porter and Oren Yifatachel contend that “the racist imaginary deployed by colonizers of Indigenous peoples has worked to render the urban as a place *not Indigenous*, profoundly spatially and temporally disconnected from Indigenous histories and geographies, despite the obvious fact in settler-colonial societies that most cities and settlements sit on unceded territories.”²²² In contrast to Kirtland documents that represent scientists and engineers as modern pioneers, this chapter characterizes them as militarized settlers. In these documents Native people are figured through historical enchantment as perpetually in the past and as outsiders to the modern technical city.



²²¹ “1706-1956, 250 Years of Progress, Albuquerque the Wonder City of the Southwest,” University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Vertical Files, Albuquerque – Guides and Maps – Maps 1950s-1960s.

²²² Libby Porter and Oren Yiftachel, “Urban Settler Colonial Studies: Introduction to the Special Issue,” *Settler Colonial Studies* Vol. 9, No. 2 (2019), 177-186: 177.

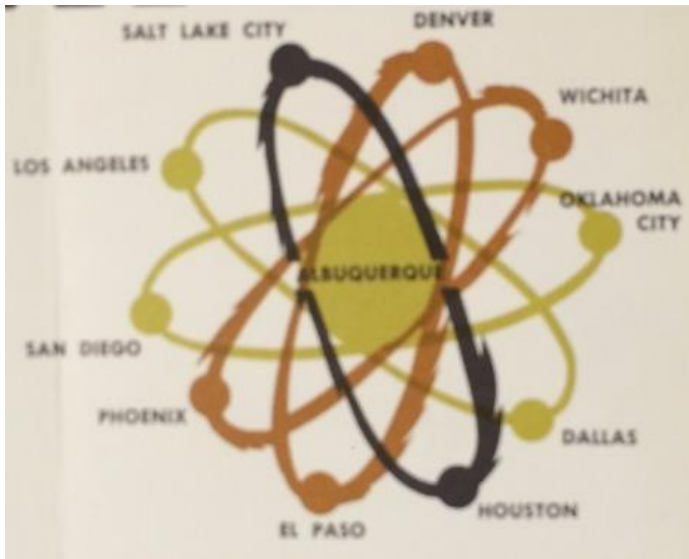


Figure 2.1 Albuquerque heart of the Nuclear-Space Age²²³

The 1956 Kirtland Guide titled “1706-1956, 250 Years of Progress” describes Albuquerque’s suburban development as a process that transformed an arid desert landscape to one with green lawns and trees. The guide reports that Albuquerque’s City Commission was busy working on zoning and infrastructure to keep pace with the rapid population growth. The guide further states that “Other factors and other people are at work, pushing and tugging and hauling Albuquerque and the state into its predestined, can’t-miss promise of a fabulous future.”²²⁴ The rapid influx of settlers led to a shortage of housing and a high cost of rent. Early Cold War Albuquerque was a booming city for businesses and real estate.

Ted Sherwin started working for Sandia’s public relations department in 1949. In an interview, he states that the Albuquerque community was “introduced” to the Sandia Laboratories and its ongoing work through print media, radio, and TV. He notes that Sandia put up science exhibits at the state fair for the public. “The Sandia Story” was a film used as a

²²³ Albuquerque Promotional Pamphlets, V.3 1960-The Public Library ABQ – BernCo, Special Collections.

²²⁴ “1706-1956, 250 Years of Progress, Albuquerque the Wonder City of the Southwest,” University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Vertical Files, Albuquerque – Guides and Maps – Maps 1950s-1960s.

recruitment tool; it was shown at universities across the country and can currently be viewed on YouTube. The film notes that the Sandia Lab was responsible for turning the nuclear technologies created at Los Alamos into weapons to be delivered to the Department of Defense. The film follows a new employee to Sandia, a white man recruited from an Ivy League college to work as an engineer. He arrives with his wife and two children at the Albuquerque train station; someone who appears to be a Spanish woman selling crafts greets the family.²²⁵ His movement from the “Old World” of the Ivy League university to the “New World” of New Mexico reflects Veracini’s argument that “suburbia *reenacts* settlement.”²²⁶

The movement from urban cities westward parallels the migration from metropolitan cities to suburban enclaves marked by single family homes, substantial outdoor space, cleanliness, and racial and ethnic homogeneity. The narrator of the film states that “From the moment a newcomer arrives in Albuquerque he senses the spirit of western friendliness. And the feeling was mutual, we knew we were going to like it here.” The film characterizes Albuquerque as one of the country’s “earliest settlements”; the narrator states that “A new breed of pioneer is blazing trails along the scientific frontier of nuclear science research and engineering.” Here the term “pioneer,” applied to 19th century homesteaders and settlers is reimagined for scientists and engineers as part of the process of militarized fission.

Guides put out by the Kirtland Base encouraged settlement to New Mexico, characterizing the state as enchanting because of its large size and low population density and its National Park space, mountains, caverns, and white sands. New Mexico’s status as an enchanting tourist site is perpetuated in the film and in other materials. The climate, recreational facilities, and proximity to the Pueblos are treated as an advantage to settling in the city. Tourist materials

²²⁵ “The Sandia Story,” YouTube video, from 1945, <https://archive.org/details/TheSandiaStory>.

²²⁶ Veracini, “Suburbia, Settler Colonialism and the World Turned Inside Out,” 339–57.

and Kirtland recruitment worked to present Albuquerque not as racially and culturally foreign to the rest of the nation but rather as the model for the “All American” city. New Mexico’s difference is turned into an advantage; Native peoples are posited as in the past and Albuquerque as a future-oriented city.

The film also serves as somewhat of a training video for new employees. It follows the narrator as he signs up for his security badge and tours the Base. The film reflects a division of racial and gendered labor indicative of both settler colonialism and suburbanization. The 1955 Kirtland directory notes that the Base included a hospital, post office, legal offices, kindergarten, laundries, a photo studio, clothing store, commissary office, meat cutting plant, repair shops, and military police detachment. Areas specifically designated for men included an athletic office, automotive hobby shop, bachelor officers’ quarters, barbershops, beer parlor, bowling alley, carpenter shop, and pistol range. Areas specifically designated for women included a baby clinic, nurse’s lounge, and beauty shop.²²⁷

A few men monopolized the development of housing in Albuquerque during the 1940s and 1950s. Dale Bellamah was the biggest developer in Albuquerque. He began building in the late 1940s; during the 1950s he developed 3,500 homes in subdivisions throughout Albuquerque. He bought most of the land for the subdivisions in the 1950s when it went up for state and city public auctions. While he was a member of the City Planning Commission he bought 50 acres of land at Wyoming and Lomas Boulevards (now part of the International District).²²⁸

Bellamah’s largest subdivision in the northeast, and the one that he was most proud of, was begun in 1954. Named after Bellamah’s wife, the development was to include over 5,000 homes. Heavily promoted and even fully guaranteed, the Princess Jeanne subdivision, with its modern kitchens, parks, curved streets and central shopping center was considered to be a model community during the 1950s. In 1954, one Princess Jean

²²⁷ “Sandia Base Telephone Directory May 1955,” The Public Library ABQ – BernCo, Special Collections.

²²⁸ Dede Feldman, “The Northeast Heights Where Houses Multiplied Like Jackrabbits,” *The Albuquerque Tribune*, April 2, 1980.

home was chosen as the 'Home for All America' and featured in *Better Homes and Gardens*.²²⁹

While the Base was a bounded geography inaccessible to the broader public, the home serves as a site for showcasing the modern nuclear family. The technological work of the Base and labs was related to new technologies made available in the home. Ed Mankin, one of Albuquerque's primary post-war builders, is quoted as saying: "Give the men a good-sized garage, a good place to shave and room to store their garden tools and fishing gear and they'll be happy. The women want the bragging things – a fine sink trim, pretty countertop, modern ceiling spotlighting for kitchen work and a pretty bathroom with lots of tile and a vanity."²³⁰ Here, aspects of the home (a garage, spotlighting for kitchen work) mark distinct spaces as inherently gendered. The gendered division of space corresponds to the labor associated with masculinity and femininity (driving and cooking). These activities are also connected to the spatialization of Albuquerque in city and Kirtland materials: men labor at the Base as engineers and scientists and then are able to take advantage of New Mexico's distinct geography and possibilities for road travel and leisure.

The Base also permitted the gendered and racialized economy to flourish. For example, Richard Bice states that the money used to pay Sandia employees would recirculate in the economy through jobs that provided services for the employees: "And those moneys get recalculated into the community and so it's a multiplication factor of something like that so you'd expect the population of Albuquerque to grow about three times as fast as Sandia would grow in terms of families. It would be people in the sense there is usually one breadwinner in Albuquerque and Sandia."²³¹ Like the westward movement to homesteading, suburbanization

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Phill Casaus, "Modern Albuquerque Born at WWII's End By GIs Drawn to Charm, Opportunity," *Albuquerque Journal*, August 27, 1955.

²³¹ Richard A. Bike, interview by Carl J. Mora, May 9, 2000, 978.961 Interview Bike 2000, NM Military Posts, The Public Library ABQ – BemCo, Special Collections.

links the space of the home to reproduction. The ideal of female domesticity tied to the suburban nuclear family developed during the period of post-WWII suburbanization. Suburban ideals parallel those of 19th Century homesteaders. Settlement and suburbanization were reactions to the breakdown of traditional gendered roles resulting from urbanization and industrialization.²³²

The women referred to in these quotations were mostly middle class and white. It is presumed that they do not work at the Base. These descriptions are not applied to Native women and women of color. For a feature story on Albuquerque in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Neil M. Clark writes: “A thousand or more Indians live in Albuquerque. A well-trained Indian maid can be a joy to a housewife, but she takes time off for dances and fiestas, and a set dinner hour means little to her if she isn’t hungry.”²³³ This quotation contributes to the view that Albuquerque is not Native land; rather, “a thousand or more Indians” live there. In addition to the gender divisions between the Base and the home, the home itself is a space of hierarchy tied to racial formation. The claim that “A well-trained Indian maid can be a joy” positions white women as the experts in training Native women to be domestic workers in white women’s homes. As women of color feminists demonstrate, not all women are impacted by the patriarchy in the same ways. This quotation reveals the intersecting oppressions of gender, race, and class and specifically, the ways in which Indigeneity is racialized and gendered. Native women domestics are distinct because they take time off for dances and fiestas. Furthermore, the author suggests that in order for Native women to have dinner prepared on time they themselves need to be hungry. This suggests an inability to manage time.

In the 1950s, technological corporations, many connected to the research at Sandia, opened across New Mexico. As at Sandia, research and technical labor were stratified according

²³² Veracini, “Suburbia, Settler Colonialism and the World Turned Inside Out,” 345.

²³³ “The Cities of America,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 1950: 145.

to gender, race and class. The 1956 Kirtland guide states:

Albuquerque's labor pool is large. Big Spanish-American and Indian families produce many nimble-fingered young ones, eager to work and quick to adapt themselves to skilled duties. The state's Employment Security Commission goes all out to help new firms in their labor requirements, even to the extent of doing research, surveys and recruiting the kind of people the employer needs to train. Traditionally an area of craftsmen in jewelry and other hand crafts, the city and the state has a real asset in possessing a large number of quick-to-learn workers. Albuquerque's 13 new electronic firms, whose products require intricate assembly work by deft hands, are putting these native skills to good use.²³⁴

In contrast to the ideal white nuclear family, made up of a father, mother and two children, Spanish and Indian families are characterized as large and therefore non-nuclear in formation. The quotation also describes children as "many nimble-fingered young ones." Lisa Nakamura notes that the phrase "nimble fingers" has been applied disproportionately to women of color working on domestic and global electronic assembly lines.²³⁵ In the quotation from the Kirtland Guide, Spanish-American and Native families' reproduction is directly related to the labor of technology. The labor of making traditional arts and crafts is portrayed as useful for positions in growing technological fields. However, Indigenous laborers and laborers of color were underrepresented if not largely absent from research and development work on the Base. These positions are the most highly paid ones at the Base.

Settlement and suburbanization are thus not just about physical homes but also new forms of social organization and engineering. The Kirtland materials reflect Cacho's analysis of the racialized and gendered valuations of life as connected to home ownership:

²³⁴ "1706-1956, 250 Years of Progress, Albuquerque the Wonder City of the Southwest," University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Vertical Files, Albuquerque – Guides and Maps – Maps 1950s-1960s.

²³⁵ Nakamura details how hundreds of Navajo women worked in the Fairchild Semiconductor plant on the reservation in Shiprock, New Mexico during the 1960s. Fairchild initially sold technology exclusively to the US military. In order to boost production and reach into individual homes Fairchild built processing facilities in Shiprock, at the US Mexico-border, and later in Southeast Asia. Nakamura writes that this labor was racialized and gendered as an affective "labor of love." She notes that there were exceptions to minimum wage laws on reservations that paralleled those in foreign processing zones. Lisa Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronics Manufacture," *American Quarterly* (66.4) (2014): 919-941, 935.

So much of life and its supposed ‘seminal’ moments are organized according to the universalized expectations of the family and its gendered roles in naturalizing private property (buying your first home), wealth accumulation (passing down inheritance), and the pleasures of domestic consumption (planning weddings and baby showers)—all of which conflate the reproductive labor upon which consumer capitalism depends with the unpaid but rewarding labor of love.²³⁶

Ofelia O. Cuevas describes homeownership as the ultimate form of private property that confers personhood upon an individual. She describes how people of color have historically been excluded from home ownership and argues that for them a house has never been a sanctuary free from state intrusion and violence.²³⁷ Authors such as George Lipsitz and Cheryl Harris point to the possessive treatment of whiteness as property under US law. Moreton-Robinson refers to “white possessive logics” as the discourses that naturalize and rationalize settler-colonial land ownership.²³⁸ Moreton-Robinson argues that white people are dedicated to the nation because as white property, they benefit from the capital and social benefits that accrue with whiteness.

Paul Chakravatty and Denise Ferreira da Silva write that houses “refer to the three main axes of modern thought: the economic, the juridical, the ethical, which are, as one would expect, the registers of the modern subject. It is, in fact, impossible to exaggerate the significance of individual (private) property in representations of modernity.”²³⁹ In the 20th century, US housing policy worked to systematically exclude people of color from homeownership and perpetuate the state’s investment in whiteness as private property. After WWII, banks extended credit to white veterans to purchase homes in the growing suburbs. The Veterans administration and Federal Housing Authority encouraged racial covenants that worked in conjunction with federal housing

²³⁶ Cacho, *Social Death*, 165.

²³⁷ Ofelia O. Cuevas, “Welcome to My Cell: Housing and Race in the Mirror of American Democracy,” *American Quarterly* 64.3 (September 2012): 605-624.

²³⁸ Citing Charles Mills, Shona Jackson writes that the “racial contact” equates whiteness with personhood and demarcates people of color as non-persons in civil society. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity*.

²³⁹ Paula Charkravatty and Denise Ferreira da Silva, “Accumulation, Dispossession, and Debt: The Racial Logic of Global Capitalism—An Introduction.” *American Quarterly* 64.3 (September 2012): 361-365, 362.

and development programs and the construction of highways to further contribute to segregation and white flight.²⁴⁰

The federal government's investment in settlement and housing was adapted to cover homesteading in the post-WWII time-period. An article titled "Last Land Frontiers Explained" in the June, 1945 *Inside Interior* newspaper cites a pamphlet titled "Our Last Land Frontiers—How Veterans and Others Can Share Them," which outlines the legal procedures for homesteading on public lands. The Department of the Interior received thousands of monthly requests for information on homesteading following WWII.²⁴¹ Homesteaders were required to be in residence for three years before receiving a title to public lands from the Department of the Interior. Veterans from any war who were over 21 years old were granted the advantage of applying up to two years credit for the time they served in the military.²⁴² The frontier view of homesteading was transferred to the post-WWII period as veterans were given benefits permitting homesteading. This militarized settlement was thus tied to federal programs that sought to increase the population of states such as New Mexico following WWII.

The GI Bill did not apply equally to all veterans. Scholars have demonstrated how black and Latino soldiers did not receive equal treatment when it came to the GI Bill. However, in the case of Native peoples, there were incommensurable and distinct reasons for the denial of GI benefits. For example, the VA and banks did not give loans on allotment or trust lands.²⁴³ Documents from the UPA demonstrate that Pueblo veterans were systematically denied loans

²⁴⁰ Nikole Hannah-Jones, "Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights Law," *ProPublica*, October 28, 2012. <http://www.propublica.org/article/living-apart-how-the-government-betrayed-a-landmark-civil-rights-law>

²⁴¹ "Last Land Frontiers Explained," *Inside Interior*, vol. 2, no 2, June 1945.

²⁴² Veterans were also given a 90-day priority for their applications to settle on public lands to be considered. WWII veterans who were under 21 were given the full benefits of veterans over 21 of previous wars. "Last Land Frontiers Explained," *Ibid*.

²⁴³ LaDuke and Cruz, *The Militarization of Indian Country*, 41.

guaranteed by the GI Bill. A March 10, 1949 letter from the UPA to the Association on American Indian Affairs, Inc. states that generally speaking, Pueblo veterans have been unable to secure loans under the GI Bill and that discrimination played a role in the denial of loans. He further attributes the low rate of loans to “inadequate applications.” Lawyers for the First National Bank of Albuquerque wrote that numerous obstacles prevented banks from giving loans to Indians under the GI Bill; for example, state police could not repossess the mortgaged property of Indians on reservations. Furthermore, banks argued that reservations were too small and far away from cities and they therefore put in place insurmountable credit requirements. Pueblo veterans were able to receive some loans to purchase equipment for businesses including farms, stores, and cafes. Under the provisions of these benefits, a Native veteran could only use the loans to purchase land and property *off* the reservation. The UPA sent letters to concerned banks that UPA representatives would accompany the Sheriff onto reservation land in order to assist with repossessing equipment when an individual had failed to pay back their loans.

In closing, this chapter has drawn on the novel *Ceremony* as well as archival records to elaborate on militarized settlement to Albuquerque New Mexico from the end of WWII through the 1960s. I have argued that militarized settlement operated specifically through what I have termed suburban settler colonialism, a racialized and gendered process and ideology that connected the work of securing domestic national peace to securing the domestic household through the nuclear family. The domestic work of the home makes possible the work of the nation to secure domestic peace through the deterrence strategy of nuclear weapons development. The suburban nuclear family becomes a disciplinary norm that relates the American Dream of home and private property ownership to the ideal family formation of married heterosexual couples with children. The inability to achieve this dream is tied to

individual failure within a seemingly equal meritocracy. In the following chapter I demonstrate how refugees after the Vietnam War were resettled to the city of Albuquerque in the wake of war and economic recession. As suburbanization continued to fission across the city, the area that became known as the War Zone became the main site of refugee resettlement.

Chapter Three: Deterred Refuge and the Vietnam War (1975-1979)

“It was multiple colonizations through New Mexico and then now new even through Vietnam. So it’s weird because it’s taken time, and we would think that, oh, that’s an issue of the past, but it’s still occurring. It’s perpetual. I think that’s how colonialism works.”²⁴⁴

- Lan Sena

In March of 2018 I met with Lan Sena at a coffee shop in Albuquerque’s Northeast Valley. The New Mexico Asian Family Center had put us in touch after I contacted them about conducting oral histories with Vietnamese refugees who had been resettled to Albuquerque. Sena’s parents arrived as refugees to Albuquerque in the late 1970s. In the epigraph to this chapter she characterizes colonialism not as an historical event but rather as an ongoing process that connects New Mexico and Vietnam, two geographies that have been colonized and recolonized by various imperial regimes. This assertion is mirrored by Man who argues that: “The Vietnam War was more than just a war between world powers, a contest between two ideological systems; rather, in this war, the legacies of multiple colonialisms converged and were fought over by soldiers and workers on the ground.”²⁴⁵ Here, Man points to the legacies of multiple forms of empire building and occupation in Vietnam. He also brings attention to the role of soldiers from and across various sites of colonialism in combat. I have previously argued that military institutions in New Mexico foster settler colonialism through militarized settlement and suburbanization, resource extraction, and weapons development and testing. In this chapter I contend that Albuquerque was chosen as a site of resettlement after the imperial war in Vietnam because of its militarization. My archive reveals that every step of the resettlement process from the Kirtland Base’s activities in the Vietnam War to the transport of refugees and resettlement

²⁴⁴ Lan Sena, oral history by Christina Elizabeth Juhasz-Wood, March 2018, 13.

²⁴⁵ Man, *Soldering Through Empire*, 9.

was carried out by or in relation to the military and on militarized land. This chapter addresses the following questions: Why was Albuquerque chosen as a city to resettle refugees after the fall of Saigon? Which groups were responsible for the resettlements? What were the demographics of refugees who were resettled? Where in the city were refugees resettled and why were they resettled there?

The resettlement of Vietnamese refugees to Albuquerque from 1975-1979 is a case of “militarized refuge” in the context of the ongoing structure of settler colonialism.²⁴⁶ Militarized refuge in Albuquerque merits attention not only for its distinctiveness from other geographic spaces in Asia and the Pacific Islands and on the East and West Coasts of the Continental US, but also for what it reveals about their interconnections. Refugees to Albuquerque largely moved through the imperial and colonial geographies of military bases in Guam, the Philippines, and the contiguous US, which like the Kirtland Base were increasingly militarized following WWII. Like these bases, Kirtland is located on Indigenous lands that serve as a central site for weapons development and testing.

This chapter demonstrates how Albuquerque’s post-WWII growth furthered suburban settler colonialism in increasingly less visible ways, impacting the precarity experienced by refugees to the city during this time. I consider how the Base relationally and differentially impacted Native peoples and refugees, increasingly concentrated into what became the International District. I take an approach that seeks to show connections between incommensurable displacements, relocations, and resettlements carried out in the wake of war. I situate the resettlement of Vietnamese refugees in the context of Cold War Indian relocation programs in New Mexico. In doing so, I am not arguing that these programs are comparable.

²⁴⁶ Espiritu, *Body Counts*.

Rather, in line with the larger project of this dissertation, I consider the structural dynamics of militarization locally and transnationally over time as they impact forced displacement and relocation to the specific geography of the International District or War Zone.

My archive for this chapter includes newspaper articles, oral histories, and government reports and publications. I take a critical feminist approach to archives, questioning the role that they play in knowledge production. Newspaper narratives obscure both the causes of forced migration and the militarization of spaces of so-called refuge through good refugee narratives of upward mobility. Narratives about refugees to Albuquerque operate and reproduce settler narratives, namely the acceptance of racial capitalism and the treatment of Albuquerque as non-Native land. I draw on oral histories to reveal different narratives: narratives of precarious work, education, and living conditions specific to Albuquerque as a militarized city. In Chapter Four I build upon this analysis to consider how Native peoples and refugees have produced collaborative projects that complicate and refract resettlement to the city.

Narratives about refugees can mirror dominant narratives of racial formation in New Mexico that have been promulgated and reinforced by the military and tourist institutions detailed in the past two chapters. For example, the only academic history of refugee resettlement to New Mexico situates this resettlement historically as:

Before Jamestown or Plymouth, Spanish Conquistadors settled New Mexico. The conquerors mingled with the natives of New Mexico in a mutually acceptable fashion to create 'la raza.' In the 1880's, Anglos headed west to become ranchers and merchants. Later in the early twentieth century, Texans and health-seekers made their home in New Mexico, an enchanted mesa representing bountiful opportunity. In the wake of New Mexico's post-World War II population growth, the state truly combined peoples of all races, cultures, and perspectives. New Mexico has a reputation for racial tolerance which promised an open door to the Southeast Asian refugees. The state has the largest percentage of minorities in America, so it seemed to be an ideal relocation site for the Indochinese.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ Terri Galles Bryan, "Southeast Asian Refugee Resettlement in San Diego, California and Albuquerque, New Mexico," (MA thesis, University of New Mexico, 1990), 124.

In this quotation, Albuquerque is presented as one of the earliest American settlements, not founded by England as was the case in Jamestown and Plymouth Rock, but by Spain. Dunbar-Ortiz writes: “Meditating on the five major US wars since World War II—in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq (1991), Afghanistan, and Iraq (2003)—with flashes of historical memory of Jamestown, the Ohio Valley, and Wounded Knee, brings us to the essence of US history. A red thread of blood connects the first white settlement in North America.”²⁴⁸ Dunbar-Ortiz directly connects Jamestown to the Vietnam War and War on Terror, providing an anticolonial genealogy and critique. Although the Spanish are labeled as “conquerors” they are nonetheless situated as mingling in a “mutually acceptable fashion to create ‘la raza.’” La raza translates to the “the race” but can also be understood as “the community.” This quotation makes no reference to the extreme violence of Spanish colonization of New Mexico, marked by murder, rape, torture, forced religion, and the theft of lands. The Indigenous peoples of New Mexico are not even mentioned as living in New Mexico. Rather, official history begins with Spanish conquest. Narratives of historical enchantment are therefore reiterated in writing about refugee resettlement.

The quotation moves to the 1880s, with no mention of Mexican and then US occupation following the Mexican-American War. Westward expansionism is not about the spread of American empire and capitalism but rather of Anglos who “headed west” to become ranchers and merchants and later health seekers and artists who were drawn to an “enchanted mesa representing bountiful opportunity.” Again, this mirrors the view of New Mexico as an uninhabited site for ongoing discovery and exploration. The quotation then moves to Albuquerque’s post-WWII growth not as a militarized phenomenon made possible by the

²⁴⁸ Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples’ History*, 196.

establishment of the Kirtland Base as the center of the US nuclear weapons project but rather as the culmination of past histories of racial and cultural acceptance and integration.

New Mexico is described as a state within which Indians, Hispano, and Anglos mutually and freely coexist in a multicultural land of enchantment rather than as a settler colony located on unceded Tewa Pueblo land. The quotation situates the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees within the state's combination of "peoples of all races, cultures, and perspectives." There is no mention of *why* Southeast Asians are "welcomed" to the US. As with narratives of conquest and occupation in New Mexico, the war in Vietnam is absent from this narrative and New Mexico is represented as a natural site for the relocation of the "Indochinese" because of its large percentage of racial minorities. The narratives affirm voluntary multicultural liberalism and multiracial belonging and forget the violent machinations of colonialism and war that produce this inclusion.²⁴⁹ These absences operate to naturalize US war-making and militarized settlement as the same or similar to refugee resettlement.

Relocation

I turn to consider how post-WWII war relocation programs that lasted from 1945 through the 1960s furthered settler colonial imperatives by continuing to push for and enforce migration from reservations to cities. Institutions such as the Commission of Indian Affairs, which played a pivotal role in the mobilization of Indian land during WWII, transitioned to ones that coordinated relocation from reservations to cities. I consider the role of relocation programs in the larger context of the Cold War and the mobilization of Native land and labor during the Vietnam War.

²⁴⁹ Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*. Melamed argues that from the late 1960s to the early 1990s there was a shift to liberal multiculturalism, whereby US colleges and universities played a primary role in appropriating and managing race-based social movements' cultural critiques. Women of color feminism challenged liberal multiculturalism reduction of culture to aesthetics and the obfuscation of differential relations of power and material access.

Shifting to post-Vietnam War resettlement programs, I consider how, like relocation programs, these were guided by discourses of humanitarian benevolence and myths of American assimilation yet were directly related to militarization.

Both relocation and resettlement call for an approach that closely analyzes space and movement. George Lipsitz writes of activist movements' treatment of space that "They signal that space is not merely a barren expanse, the universe around the Earth, or an empty temporal interval. It is a dynamic place where important discursive and political work can be done when people recognize that space is the place in which to do it."²⁵⁰ I take a genealogical approach to the space of Albuquerque specifically through the lens of militarized refuge. However, there are key differences and incommensurabilities between these programs that I explore as well. One key difference is that refugees are resettled to a settler colonial nation whereas Native peoples were relocated as part of the larger structure of settler colonial resettlement to unceded Native lands. Native peoples were moving to and from Native lands differentially marginalized by the settler state. In particular, Native peoples are relocated to border towns such as Albuquerque and Gallup marked by vigilante and police violence and racism that treats Native peoples as foreigners and criminals.

Another connection I have made between Asian and Indigenous studies in this dissertation relates to the draft of Native soldiers to serve in the armed forces in Asia and the Pacific Islands. Native peoples have the highest rate of enlistment of any racial or ethnic group. As I detailed in the previous chapter, US wars connect the conditions of US settler colonialism to those of empire building. Yet, drawing on Tuck and Wayne I note that these formations are not equivalent or analogous but rather incommensurable. As noted in the previous chapter,

²⁵⁰ George Lipsitz, "Space," in *Keywords for American Cultural Studies, Second Edition*, eds. Bruce Burgett and Glen Hendler (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 227-231, 231.

enforcement of the Selective Service Act resulted in the largest contemporary enforced movement overseas of Native peoples from North America. *Ceremony* challenges the mainstream representations of Native service during WWII that alibi the good war narrative through the forgetting of settler colonialism. The “national emergency” of WWII opened the door for increased extraction of resources and weapons testing on Native lands. However, as Denetdale notes, encouraging Native peoples to leave their reservations was not novel in New Mexico. She writes that officials with the Collier administration had pushed for Navajos to move off reservation in the wake of dire conditions following the forced reduction of livestock in the late 1930s, for example.²⁵¹

The connections between Indian Country and Asia and the Pacific Islands continued to be entangled in complex ways. After WWII ended, Congressmen argued that the integration of Native peoples in the military and defense industries was evidence that they had successfully assimilated to American society and that federal programs should be terminated. When Dillon Myer became the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1950, he argued that aid should be immediately revoked from all tribes because of their so-called successful integration into the armed forces. He headed the War Relocation Authority that oversaw the internment of Japanese American citizens. He thought that his experience with transferring Japanese Americans to internment camps prepared him to oversee an Indian relocation program. Federal domestic post-war termination, relocation, and competency programs claimed to provide Native peoples with self-sufficiency by taking away federal benefits. However, such programs were motivated in part by a desire to decrease the federal funding for Native tribes in order to increase the defense and

²⁵¹ Jennifer Nez Denetdale, ““No Explanation, No Resolution, and No Answers’ Border Town Violence and Navajo Resistance to Settler Colonialism,” *Wicazo Sa Review* vol. 31, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 111-131, 115.

military budget during the Cold War.²⁵² Furthermore, moving Native peoples from their lands that were once deemed useless provided corporations and the government with increasing access to newly discovered valuable resources in New Mexico including uranium, coal, oil, and gas.

However, these acts did not go unchallenged. Representatives of the Pueblos of Acoma, Isleta, San Felipe, Sandia, San Ildefonso, Tesuque, Santo Domingo, and Zia wrote that the Competency Bill was undemocratically passed without public hearings.²⁵³ Representatives from the San Felipe Pueblo wrote to the BIA charging that the Competency Bill violated the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo's provisions that the US protect the assets of Native peoples, provide hospitals and education facilities, and put Native land in Federal Trust. The representatives also noted that that the Treaty stated that "No Indian shall bear arms in time of War" (though as demonstrated above, Native people served in WWI and WWII). The letter further states that "knowing that we were the first inhabitants on this continent, we feel that no such law should be legislated against our will."²⁵⁴ A Resolution passed in the Santa Domingo Pueblo states:

The Indians are mindful of these facts: (1) Under the Allotment System they were robbed of 86 million areas of land; (2) under the Reservation System they were shunted to the land considered unfit for a white man and incapable of sustaining life; (3) now that some of these lands, once considered worthless, are found to contain valuable mineral deposits, there is a sudden interest shown in 'freeing the Indian' from the protection of the Indian Bureau and also of solicitude for the Indian's welfare heretofore not apparent in dealings by the Federal Government with the Indians.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Carpio, *Indigenous Albuquerque*.

²⁵³ Pueblo of Isleta, 27 January 1954 Letter, Fol. G-023 Legislation, Proposed-Federal 83d Congress Beginning January 1, 1953, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, United Pueblos Agency, General Superintendent's Decimal File 1941-43, 023-041.3, Box No. 336, Entry 99, National Archives and Record Center in Denver.

²⁵⁴ Letter from Lazaro Sanchez to Hon. Glenn L. Emmons, 12 January 1954, Fol. G-0233 Legislation, Proposed-Federal 83d Congress – 2nd Session General Beginning January 6, 1954, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, United Pueblos Agency, General Superintendent's Decimal File 1941-43, 023-041.3, Box No. 336, Entry 99, National Archives and Record Center in Denver.

²⁵⁵ "Resolution," Council of Santo Domingo Pueblo, 16 January 1954, Fol. G-0233 Legislation, Proposed-Federal 83d Congress – 2nd Session General Beginning January 6, 1954, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, United Pueblos Agency, General Superintendent's Decimal File 1941-43, 023-041.3, Box No. 336, Entry 99, National Archives and Record Center in Denver.

In a letter to the Commission of Indian Affairs, Martin Virgil the Chairman of the All-Pueblo Council requested that the Bureau stand up for Native people's rights in New Mexico as "their sons have fought for yours all over the world." He writes "Pending Indian legislation is the most ruinous in the black record of one hundred fifty years of broken promises by the federal government."²⁵⁶ The All-Pueblo Council, made up of representatives of the 19 Pueblos in New Mexico, objected to the Competency and Malone bills arguing that they would not eliminate the BIA but rather the services that were guaranteed to Indians under Federal Treaty. They argued that the State of New Mexico would be unable to provide the necessary services in the absence of the Federal Government.

The Pueblos were not one of the tribes that were officially terminated. However, relocation programs did impact them. The BIA established a relocation program that covered all reservations that were under the Federal Trust. In 1956, Public Law 959 allocated funding to the BIA to provide Adult Vocational Training to Native peoples ages 18-35 on or near reservations. According to a 1956 BIA Report, the United Pueblo Agency relocated 183 persons in 1955, 41 of whom returned to the reservation.²⁵⁷ A BIA field relocation office was located in Gallup. It appears that vocational applications began to be accepted in 1958. The BIA report characterizes the program as a benevolent one. However, the report notes the use of possible force against those who did not want to relocate, the removal of public welfare assistance for those who did not relocate, and the employment of reprisals against family members of those who would not

²⁵⁶ Letter from Martin Vigil to Hon. Glenn L. Emmons, 12 January 1954, Fol. G-023 Legislation, Proposed-Federal 83d Congress Beginning January 1, 1953, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, United Pueblos Agency, General Superintendent's Decimal File 1941-43, 023-041.3, Box No. 336, Entry 99, National Archives and Record Center in Denver.

²⁵⁷ The Association on American Indian Affairs, "The American Indian Relocation Program A Report," page 6, December 1956, Folder: 797. Avt. General – Inactive Corres., Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Field Employment Assistance Office, Denver Colorado, Employment Assistance Reports, Box 2, 075-70A0218, National Archives and Record Center in Denver.

relocate. The BIA estimated that 60 applicants from Gallup would be accepted for full-time vocational training in 1958.²⁵⁸ In 1959, the Denver Field Relocation Office reported relocations from the Navajo Reservation in Shiprock, Crownpoint, Intermountain, the United Pueblos, and Pima.²⁵⁹ Relocation programs would give an individual Native person transportation to the nearest large city and assistance until they received their first job, which the Bureau would help to find. After few people accepted the terms, the program expanded to include families, money for tools, and four weeks of subsistence. Myer did not want to concentrate high numbers of Indians in any one neighborhood and therefore refused to permit more than two families to house on the same block. The goal of the program was assimilation.

Although the program was voluntary many Superintendents pushed for relocation because their performance was reviewed according to their number of those relocated. In general, relocation efforts most often placed Native peoples in high crime neighborhoods with little economic opportunity and poor housing.²⁶⁰ Carpio also notes that these efforts were often poorly funded.²⁶¹ Albuquerque was not one of the main relocation centers but it did provide training programs for Native peoples. Relocates faced discrimination, racism, police and vigilante profiling and violence in border towns such as Albuquerque. Indigenous studies scholars note that the largest percentage of Native peoples live in cities rather than reservations. Part of the growth of the urban Indian population can be traced to WWII and subsequent programs such as relocation. However, many factors also influenced Native movement off reservation as capitalist industries and cities such as Albuquerque grew and as conditions on

²⁵⁸ “Memorandum Adult Vocational Training Program, Fiscal Year 1958,” Folder: 797. Avt. General Inactive Cases, Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Field Employment Assistance Office, Denver, Colorado, Employment Assistance Reports, Box 2, 075-70A0218.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Carpio, *Indigenous Albuquerque*, 13.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 14.

reservations deteriorated after WWII.

Carpio notes that relocation programs “began relying on public employment agencies that placed people in seasonal work, the lowest paying and least secure positions.”²⁶² She writes: “To complicate an ambiguous and complex situation, state and local governments denied or only provided limited services when an Indian arrived. Each believed that the other had the primary responsibility for Indian citizens.”²⁶³ In 1970, Albuquerque had the highest number of Native people of any city in the state: 3,351. The Southeast Heights had the largest percentage of Native residents in the city. A 1978 State of New Mexico Office of Indian Affairs Report states: “The employment picture of New Mexico Indians is not good. They fall short of the economic level of the state, which in turn is ranked 45th among the 50 states economically, based on per capita income. The reasons for this are a distinct lack of Indian Participation in the labor force and high unemployment combined with low paying jobs for those that do work.”²⁶⁴ This quotation omits historical context and takes as a given, or ignores, Albuquerque’s militarized economy, one that is both racialized and gendered. I turn to further consider how settler colonialism in New Mexico connects to overseas war, in this case, the Vietnam War and the subsequent concentration of Southeast Asian refugees and Native peoples to the International District.

The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge

The US emerged from WWII as the world’s dominant superpower. Economic growth relied upon resource extraction, industrialization, technological development, and the opening of capitalist markets within the contiguous US and overseas. This militarization would continue

²⁶² Ibid., 13.

²⁶³ Ibid., 15.

²⁶⁴ State of New Mexico Office of Indian Affairs, “The Employment Picture of the Indian Reservations in New Mexico,” University of New Mexico Center for Southwest Research, Vertical Files, Population – New Mexico Indian Reservations, 1970s, 1980s: 12.

through the Cold War as the US engaged in wars, invasions, and counterinsurgencies in nations undergoing independence following formal colonial regimes, notably Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The Korean and Vietnam Wars, framed as wars of liberation, functioned to further build US defense industries, resource extraction, and economic and trade markets.

Studies of refugee resettlement often fail to account for the primary reason for resettlement, namely that the US war “over there” caused forced migration “over here.” Here I demonstrate a few of the ways in which the Base was involved with the war in Vietnam and the subsequent production of refugees. In contrast to celebratory narratives of WWII, information about the role of the Base in the Vietnam War is difficult to find. Much of this information comes from literature produced by the Base; it is self-serving and by no means exhaustive.

In 1964 Kirtland’s National Guard participated in operation “Beef Broth,” which increased the number of Air National Guard units to support Air Force operations.²⁶⁵ Kirtland’s Air National Guard was deployed to North Korea after the *USS Pueblo* was attacked and captured by North Korea.²⁶⁶ The ship was named after the city of Pueblo in Colorado. Terms associated with New Mexico’s distinct culture were applied to Kirtland’s Air National Guard, which was called the “Enchilada Force” during the Korean War and was later renamed “the Tacos” during the Vietnam War. Kirtland’s 377th Air Base Wing was activated in 1966 at the Ton Son Nhut Air Base in Vietnam.²⁶⁷ According to an article in the *Albuquerque Journal*, “In Vietnam, the group provided financial, personnel, housing, dining, transportation and security services and supported flying operations. The group’s security forces also fought off many

²⁶⁵ Van Citters and Kristen Bisson, “National Register of Historic Places Historical Context and Evaluation for Kirtland Air Force Base,” 170.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁶⁷ Tania Soussan, “Running the ‘city,’” *Albuquerque Journal*, April 9, 2016.

attacks on the Base during the war, and some members were killed or wounded.”²⁶⁸

Albuquerque’s 188th Tactical Fighter Squadron of the Air National Guard was activated in January of 1968. In June, 250 personnel were deployed 285 miles Northeast of Saigon to the Tuy Hoa Air Base and also to bases in South Korea. The squadron included 22 F-100C/Ds, two F100Fs, and 25 pilots who arrived in Vietnam as part of the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing. Other military personnel were deployed to South Korean bases. The squadron flew over 6,000 combat attacks during the Vietnam War and was deactivated in June 1969.²⁶⁹

Kirtland’s experience with nuclear weapons simulation was applied to conventional weapons used during the war. In 1968, Kirtland’s Air Force Weapons Laboratory (AFWL) modified 10,000-pound bombs to create the “Daisy Cluster” bomb, used in Vietnam to clear landing zones for helicopters. According to the 1969 Kirtland Guide, “The bombs knock down enough trees to allow assault and rescue helicopters to land immediately after the explosion.”²⁷⁰ They were tested in Southeast Asia in October 1968. The 1969 Kirtland Guide lists as one of its highlights: “DECEMBER – 7th Air Force C-130s are dropping 10,000 pound bombs in South Vietnam, the first operational use of a Weapons Laboratory-developed capability to create instant helicopter landing zones in enemy sanctuaries by blasting the jungle open.”²⁷¹ The 1969 Guide includes the image of a parachute dropped over South Vietnam. The bombs were used in combat in 1970.²⁷² In 1970 the bomb was modified to a 15,000 bomb called the “Combat Trap.”²⁷³ In addition, the AFWL “improved bomb ejector racks, release systems, and armament

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Charles D. Brunt, “Six decades of service,” *Albuquerque Journal*, April 9, 2016, 24.

²⁷⁰ “We the people of New Mexico dedicate this 1969 unofficial welcome guide to the men and women of the Aerospace Nuclear Team at Kirtland AFB who help provide the credibility for nuclear deterrence”, The Public Library Albuquerque—Bernalillo County, Special Collections.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 24.

²⁷² Van Citters and Kristen Bisson, “National Register of Historic Places Historical Context and Evaluation for Kirtland Air Force Base,” 26.

²⁷³ Ibid., 160.

control systems. The AFWL also modified conventional munitions-handling equipment and developed a device that enabled air controllers to detect camouflaged soldiers and equipment.”²⁷⁴

In March of 1970, lasers designed at Kirtland, including super-powered gas lasers, were used to guide bombs to their targets in Southeast Asia.²⁷⁵ In 1971, the AFWL at Kirtland operated the nation’s only laser test range, which was at the base of the Manzano Mountains. That year, the Sandia Optical Range was created to research and develop laser weapons. Kirtland lasers could produce an incredible amount of energy roughly at the speed of light. The lasers could be used as defense against low-flying aircraft and missiles as well as on the battlefield. They could also survey distances, predict weather patterns, and be used for surgical purposes.²⁷⁶ In 1973, a new laser testing range was established in the Tijeras Arroyo, which had been previously used as a rifle range. Laser technologies were cast as less destructive and more “environmentally friendly” than other weapons.²⁷⁷ These weapons were built and tested on Indigenous lands in New Mexico and Nevada.

The US dropped over 4.6 million tons of bombs on Vietnam, killing roughly two million people. The US dropped over two million tons of bombs on Laos, decimating land and infrastructure and forcing tens of thousands to flee.²⁷⁸ These campaigns and other military operations in Laos were kept hidden from Congress and the American populace. Starting in the mid-1950s, the CIA recruited and trained Hmong soldiers to engage in covert actions utilizing guerilla tactics during the Vietnam War. Lasting thirteen years, this was the longest paramilitary war carried out by the US until its ongoing war with Afghanistan. In addition to largely

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ John Ira Petty, “Base Operates Laser Range,” *Albuquerque Journal*, August 25, 1971.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Davorn Sisavath, “The US Secret War in Laos Constructing an Archive from Military Waste,” *Radical History Review* 133 (January 2019): 103-116, 103.

deploying local rather than US troops these campaigns were made secret through covert financing often disguised as humanitarian assistance.²⁷⁹ In the next section I ask: What does it mean to move from one war zone to another? From a geography where bombs decimated the land to another that produced and tested these weapons?

The Militarized City

I now consider some of the ways in which Albuquerque functioned as a militarized city to which refugees would be resettled. In the 1960s and 1970s Albuquerque's Kirtland Base continued to serve as the militarized center or nucleus of the greater Southwest, not only for the production of weapons but for their use by various branches of the military. During the 1960s and 1970s, Albuquerque was a distinctly militarized geography, through the overlap between the military and police, the growth of the Base and its staff, and the Base's military projects, tests, and weapons storage.²⁸⁰ Albuquerque's militarization in the 1960s impacted space on almost every level from the local to the regional and transnational yet was increasingly less visible, literally moving into the air, space, and underground through what I termed in Chapter One as "militarized fission."²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 105.

²⁸⁰ In Kirtland and Sandia personnel were organized into a military patrol: "The patrol, part of area military police and made up of the cream of the crop, has two jobs – to supplement city and State Police agencies by aiding military personnel and to keep servicemen out of trouble." Dave Gordon, "Military's Town Patrol Help, Crack Outfit Backs Up City, State Police," *Albuquerque Journal*, October 14, 1962.

²⁸¹ Sandia and the Los Alamos National Laboratory worked together on the Vela Program to design satellites launched into space during the 1960s and early-1970s in order to detect and monitor nuclear explosions. Public Affairs Division, United States Department of Energy Albuquerque Operations Office, *Story of Albuquerque Operations* (Albuquerque: New Mexico, 1978), National Archives, Records of the Public Building Service NM, Real Property Case Files 1946-1972, 14, 26. A December 3, 1961 *Albuquerque Journal* article notes that photographers from Kirtland photographed man-made shooting stars over the Atlantic Missile Range in Florida. The photographs were used to study the simulated effect of nuclear weapons explosions. Roy Carbine, "Kirtland Lensmen Filming Man-Made Shooting Stars," *Albuquerque Journal*, December 3, 1961. In 1966 the ALO took part in developing radio isotopic thermoelectric generator (RTG) power that was used in Department of Defense space missions, and by the NASA Pioneer space probes, the Apollo flight series, the Mars lander mission, and the Mars-Jupiter-Saturn flyby missions. Public Affairs Division, United States Department of Energy Albuquerque Operations Office, *Story of Albuquerque Operations* (Albuquerque: New Mexico, 1978), National Archives, Records of the Public Building Service NM, Real Property Case Files 1946-1972, 6.

The spatial organization of Albuquerque corresponded with the larger policy of deterrence. Cold War terminology and secrecy were built into the city. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s bilingual signs were put on the wire fences that designated the restricted areas of the Kirtland Base. The fences were commonly referred to as the “iron curtain.”²⁸² In a May 24, 1963 article for the *Albuquerque Journal* titled “Small West Mesa AF Station Guards N.M. Skies,” Gil Hinshaw writes that the 687th Aircraft Control and Warning Squadron (AC & W), also known as the West Mesa Air Force Station, can “see all of New Mexico without ever being seen and only few people are aware they even exist.” The article states that to “keep in training” the surveillance operators would “sit at their controls and play a game of chess-like warfare.”

President Kennedy signed the Limited Test Ban Treaty on August, 5 1963, which put a hold on nuclear testing in the atmosphere, water, and outer space. However, the 1963 Ban did allow for underground testing to continue. During the 1960s, the Base focused primarily on missile testing, preparing for the possible resumption of atmospheric testing, and producing the conditions of a nuclear blast with non-nuclear components. The nuclear simulation facilities at Kirtland were some of the only ones in the nation.²⁸³ *The Albuquerque Tribune* reported that in 1967 eight and a half tons of conventional high explosives were tested near Moriarty (located approximately 40 miles from Albuquerque) to simulate an atomic explosion in what was termed “Operation Goliath.”²⁸⁴

The Base’s isolation and secrecy continued to contribute to the militarized fission of toxins that have seeped through the Base’s soil into the city of Albuquerque and its water

²⁸² Dave Gordon, “Military’s Town Patrol Help, Crack Outfit Backs Up City, State Police,” *Albuquerque Journal*, October 14, 1962.

²⁸³ Bill Stockton, “Kirtland Base Is Scene Of Important A-Studies,” *Albuquerque Tribune*, February 20, 1969.

²⁸⁴ Wayne Gregory, “Kirtland Base Scientists Set Off Big Blast in Test Near Moriarty,” *Albuquerque Tribune*, December 8, 1967. High Explosive Simulation Tests (HESTs) continued until Spring 1969. The Base also held a Seismic Impulse Machine that simulated the electrical energy discharged from a nuclear bomb.

supplies. Robert Hawk started working in Sandia on August 2, 1949. Hawk served in the New Mexico legislature and the Albuquerque County Commission for twenty years. He explains that “There was a lot of protection of the weapons themselves and the security was very, very tight, but when it came to cleaning up the nuclear components there were some things left to be desired.”²⁸⁵ Hawk continues with his experience serving the government:

CM (interviewer): I quote Robert Oppenheimer and this is back in 1944 saying that waste management is not important and just dump it in the arroyos there.

RH: That’s exactly right.

CM: that seemed to be sort of the whole AEC [Atomic Energy Commission] attitude towards waste, just don’t tell the public, right. That’s some chickens that have come home to roost.²⁸⁶

In a June 25, 1982 article for the *Albuquerque Journal* titled “Old Dump at Kirtland May Be Tainting Wells,” Nolan Hester writes about the activities of the American Car and Foundry Plant between the years of 1955 to 1967. The Plant was contracted by the AEC, which dumped roughly 170,000 gallons of hazardous liquid solvents and plastic wastes from the Base into the Tijeras Arroyo. The dumping occurred when the trenches of the arroyo were not sealed and the toxic chemicals seeped into the soil, eventually reaching the water table, then draining into the Rio Grande River, and then into the South Valley neighborhood. In another example of militarized environmental injustice, the new pipelines and tanks that were installed to store the massive amounts of fuel required by Kirtland jets in 1953 began to slowly leak into the city’s soil and aquifer. It was not until 2006 that the extent of the spill was known; with approximately 24 million gallons of oil leaked, it was almost twice as big as the Exxon-Valdez oil spill. The

²⁸⁵ Robert Hawk, interview by Carl J. Mora, April 24, 2000, 978.961 Interview Hawk 2000, NM Military Posts, The Public Library ABQ – BernCo, Special Collections.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

hidden toxicity of these spaces was unknown to the majority of Albuquerque's population and those who were resettled to Albuquerque following the Vietnam War.

Resettlement/Unsettlement

When I asked when Sena's father was resettled to the city, she stated:

He came up to the line and they asked him, "Where do you want to go?" He was like, "I have no idea. Wherever there's freedom." And the woman, who was from Albuquerque, she said, "Well, I'm from Albuquerque. Do you want to come here?" And he was like, sure. He couldn't even pronounce Albuquerque. He didn't know where New Mexico was. And so he went into the library at the refugee camp, and the only material that they had on New Mexico was this really old magazine. And he opened it and it was like cowboys and Indians kind of article, and he was like, "Oh my gosh! What did I do? I'm going to have to ride a horse? I'm going to have to learn how to shoot guns? I don't know what I'm going to be doing! This is going to be awful – what did I do?!" But when he was flying into Albuquerque, I think he just looked down and saw how developed it was, you know, and so he was like, "Oh okay, this will do."²⁸⁷

The quotation mirrors other oral histories and interviews of refugees to Albuquerque that I explore in this chapter. They demonstrate long, circuitous, and even seemingly random transits across militarized imperial, colonial, racialized, and gendered geographies. Sena's father is unfamiliar with Albuquerque, which was true for many Vietnamese refugees.²⁸⁸ The caseworker's implication (though not stated directly) that Albuquerque is a place with freedom is directly juxtaposed to the old magazine and its associations with the violence of the American frontier of cowboys and Indians.

Sena's father does not identify with either cowboys or Indians; the prototypical American frontier is not one of discovery and enterprise but of violence. In the magazine, cowboys are

²⁸⁷ Lan Sena, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 3.

²⁸⁸ For example, Hanh Nguyen describes her work for the resettlement office funded by the State Department: "But actually most people kind of go, 'Where is that? We never heard of that place. We only know New York. We only know Los Angeles,' okay." Hanh Nguyen, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, February 2019, Albuquerque New Mexico, 9. Lan Sena stated about her mother's resettlement to Albuquerque: "So, she had no idea where she was going. She didn't understand English. She just knew to just keep going and go with whomever they say, you know. She was just following. And that's kind of how she ended up here in Albuquerque. They kind of just told her and she didn't really know what it was about, where it was. She just knew she had to go," 2.

most likely to be portrayed heroically and the Indians as savages or perhaps through the noble savage trope. As noted in Chapter One, President Kennedy referred to the decolonizing world as the new frontier for American democracy and capitalism, and Vietnam was specifically called Indian Country. As Tuck and Wayne write: “Indian Country” was/is the term used in Viet Nam, Afghanistan, Iraq by the US military for ‘enemy territory.’”²⁸⁹ What does it mean to be resettled from one imagined frontier to another?

Although he seemingly is given a choice of where to go, Sena’s father’s lack of knowledge about the US allows for the caseworker to essentially make the choice for him. Unlike Kirtland employees, many refugees resettled to Albuquerque were not given the choice of where to settle. As I argued in the previous chapter, militarized settlement increased the population of high paid workers at the Base as well as housing for these workers. Efforts to recruit these workers tied to the myths of New Mexico as a land of enchantment ideal for perpetual settlement. Both physical and scientific discoveries were possible in this new frontier and went hand in hand. Discoveries and extractions of resources made possible the production of new weapons, some of which were used in combat during the Vietnam War.

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act was amended to include policies towards refugees.²⁹⁰ The purpose of the Refugee Dispersal Policy and the Tertiary Resettlement Policy was to avoid locating too many refugees in one area. These policies were geared towards the larger project of assimilation to American culture by limiting the number of refugees in a given city. In the wake of the Act refugees were resettled to smaller cities such as Albuquerque. The

²⁸⁹ Tuck and Yang, *Decolonization is not a Metaphor*, 31.

²⁹⁰ Gim Wever and Tybel Litwin, “Indochinese Refugees in America: Profiles of Five Communities A Case Study,” Twenty-Second Session, Executive Seminar in National and International Affairs, Department of State, 1979-1980, 1.

military shifted from being an agent of war to one of so-called humanitarian relief through the resettlement of refugees.

Many of the refugees who first arrived in Albuquerque had connections to the US military. For example, Khanh Chon, a refugee who later came to Albuquerque, had lived in a training center for military recruits in Vietnam, where her father was an officer.²⁹¹ One of her father's cousins was a Navy commander; she and all but one of her siblings went with her mother onto his ship when the Viet Cong arrived.²⁹² Their boat was towed by another Navy ship and taken to the Philippines and then on a merchant boat to Guam, where they stayed for a month and a half.²⁹³

Almost all 1975 refugees from Vietnam were routed through military bases on Guam, the Philippines, and Wake Island, which held strategic significance during WWII.²⁹⁴ In the postwar period the US continued to maintain control over the territories of Guam, the Northern Marianas, and the Marshall Islands and to hold a military base in Okinawa. The post WWII militarization of the Philippines and Guam prepared them to serve as sites for refugee transport. Nu Nguyen, who eventually settled in Albuquerque, also went from Vietnam to Guam through "Operation New Life." Nguyen went from Guam to Camp Pendleton in California. Like Nguyen, militarized refugees were then resettled through bases in the contiguous US some of which had played prominent roles in the war, including Camp Pendleton in California, Fort Chaffee in Arkansas, Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, and Fort Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania. Bichlien Nguyen

²⁹¹ Bichlien Nguyen, interview by Thuy Vo Dang, July 20, 2012, VAOHP0081, transcript, Vietnamese Oral History Project, University of California Irvine, Irvine, CA, 1.

²⁹² Ibid., 10.

²⁹³ Ibid., 12.

²⁹⁴ Espirtu, *Body Counts*, 40.

flew to Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania where her family stayed for about a month. The camp's name comes from its key role during the Indian Wars.

In order to leave one of the main bases in the US, refugees had to demonstrate economic self-sufficiency, which few were able to do. Most of the refugees who were able to leave did so through the family sponsorship method. Sponsors were volunteers from churches, corporations, companies, and individual families. Bichlien Nguyen's family was sponsored by Albuquerque's Lutheran Church. She states:

Well, so my father, being head of the family, he went to look for sponsors. When you go as a large family it's hard. Not everyone will be able to sponsor a large family. So there was a church in New Mexico, a Lutheran church and my father was a Buddhist. My mom is a Catholic. But, so she decided to sign up with that church and that's where we went. He told us where we were going and there was no discussion.²⁹⁵

This quotation further reflects the ways in which patriarchy operates in resettlement. As "head of the family" Nguyen's father made the decision about where to resettle without consultation with his wife or daughter.

Five hundred Vietnamese refugees were resettled to Albuquerque by the US State Department in 1975. The so-called first wave of Vietnamese refugees arrived between April and December of 1975. This group consisted mostly of people who had served in the Vietnamese military or government, had owned businesses or were involved with trade, and had lived in urban areas.²⁹⁶ An article from the *Albuquerque Journal* notes that "Many in the first group of Vietnamese refugees who came to Albuquerque had worked for American forces in Vietnam and were airlifted out by the Americans to save them from retaliation."²⁹⁷ Trung Giem was the head of Albuquerque's Vietnamese Association during the 1970s. He had been a military officer who

²⁹⁵ Bichlien Nguyen, interview by Thuy Vo Dang, 17.

²⁹⁶ Wever and Tybel Litwin, "Indochinese Refugees in America," 6.

²⁹⁷ Katherine Saltzstein, "Work Ethic Helps Asians Get Ahead in American," *Albuquerque Journal*, April 10, 1989.

arrived in Albuquerque with the first wave of refugees. Yen Nguyen came to Albuquerque because her sister-in-law lived in the city. She had worked at the American Embassy in Saigon and she and her family were airlifted out of Vietnam after the communists took over.²⁹⁸ An air force advisor had sponsored Bichlien Nguyen's husband. Xuan Nguyen had met Americans from Albuquerque when he served in the South Vietnamese Air Force and they later assisted him and his family with coming to Albuquerque.

Former and current military personnel directed sponsorship programs in Albuquerque. Bobbie Nobles was one of the key figures in sponsoring refugees to Albuquerque. He had tours of combat in Thailand and Vietnam in 1969 and then in Vietnam in 1972. His obituary reads: "Concerned about the situation and his Vietnamese friends in 1975 when Saigon fell to the communists, Bobbie began working in the Refugee Resettlement program from 1975-1978. He worked tirelessly to locate his former Vietnamese counterparts, and was hired as the Deputy Director of the NM Indo-China Refugee Resettlement Program (NMIRRP)."²⁹⁹ Nobles and his wife Claudia personally sponsored 39 refugees; he co-founded the Asian American Association of New Mexico in 1998.³⁰⁰ Sena spoke about Nobles during my oral history with her:

But a huge part of it is that there was an individual who used to be a fighter pilot. And he was actually a really remarkable person. He just saw him bombing this nation, and he saw himself with all of these other people that were his comrades; you know, the South Vietnamese were fighting alongside him, and then when the war ended, he just wasn't happy just leaving them and leaving everything the way it was. He knew that he had to do better.³⁰¹

Nobles is viewed positively for his service in Vietnam and for his post-war efforts to help other military officials with whom he had worked. This narrative points to the vexed relationship for

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ "Bobbie Lincoln Nobles," French Funerals and Cremations, <http://hosting-23291.tributes.com/obituary/show/Bobbie-Lincoln-Nobles-104324809>. Accessed March 30, 2020.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Lan Sena, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 5.

soldiers; these narratives do not include a critique of the Vietnam War (though perhaps an implicit one). They demonstrate the ways in which military personnel played key roles with resettlement.

A second wave of refugees arrived between October and December 1975 and came through the NMIRRP, which had opened that October.³⁰² This group had primarily been farmers and fishermen who had received little formal education and were transferred from Camp Pendleton, California. A third wave of refugees arrived between July and December 1976 from Cambodia and Laos through an Expanded Parole Program.³⁰³ This group was also largely resettled by the NMIRRP. Many in the group had worked for US agencies and businesses. The fourth wave started in 1977. Some came to be reunited with relatives and others were part of the famous groups of Vietnamese “boat people.” Others were Lao, Lao Hmong, and Cambodian families who largely arrived from Thai refugee camps.³⁰⁴

As I argued in the previous chapter, suburban settler colonialism in Albuquerque is a racialized and gendered project rooted in white supremacy and heteropatriarchy. This suburbanization was made possible by the expansion of the Kirtland Base and in part through resources that were extracted from Native reservations in the post-war period. Native lands were mined for resources, including uranium, used to store and test nuclear weapons. The city’s population was not only militarized; the city also came to serve a military-based economy in which high paying jobs at the Base were mostly held by white men and service positions were held by Indigenous people and people of color.

³⁰² Wever and Litwin, “Indochinese Refugees in America,” 6.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 7.

The success of businesses located along Central Avenue in Albuquerque waned with the construction of Interstate 40. According to an article in the *ABQ Free Press*, “property values here dropped and the middle class shunned the area.”³⁰⁵ During the 1960s and early 1970s, many of the middle-class families who lived in what became the International District moved to either on-base housing or the growing suburbs in the Northeast Heights.³⁰⁶ Refugees were subsequently placed in housing originally built for military families as chronicled in the previous chapter. Refugee resettlement areas are often marked by inadequate housing arrangements that violate city codes and by a lack of transportation, social services, opportunities for education, and healthy foods. The disinvestment in sites deemed “abandoned” corresponds with the narrative that refugees should be grateful for whatever the state gives to them. It also suggests that refugees are not taking away from white middle-class housing and jobs but rather are filling naturally abandoned housing and working in the jobs that no one else would want to have.

Vietnamese refugees in Albuquerque also faced overt racism. Sena notes, “Like for instance, my father, when he would go to school (back then it was called TBI, now CNM), he would encounter a lot of racist remarks. They would face a lot of discrimination and so a lot of them stuck with each other. They just kind of felt more comfortable. So, it was difficult for my parents.”³⁰⁷ According to the State Department, “many Albuquerque landlords do not want the

³⁰⁵ Mary Montañó, “Public Invited to Inaugural Neighborhood Fiesta,” *ABQ Free Press*, July 16, 2014.

³⁰⁶ An article entitled, “Military Living Commences at Kirtland,” for the January 24, 1960 edition of *Albuquerque Journal* describes the Capehart Housing Complex, which included 490 homes that were constructed on the Base. Each of the units was three or four bedrooms and square footage was allotted according to the person’s army rank. The article states: “Two extremely pleased Kirtland families are those of Master Sergeant Al. A. Mantes and Navy ADC Charles Betts Jr. Mrs. Mantes met her husband when he was stationed at Prestwick A.F.B., about 32 miles from Glasgow, Scotland. She has been in the United States a little over a year and is especially happy with the kitchen in her new Kirtland quarters. The kitchen is a dream come true of American efficiency and multiplicity of appliances. It has a stove, refrigerator, washer, dryer and garbage disposal, all of which come with the house.” The 1969 Guide notes that there could be a waitlist for on-base housing and provides contact information for a housing referral office. The guide also mentions that during 1969 there were 450 families that lived in Sandia’s Zia Park. Other government housing was available at the Wherry subdivision.

³⁰⁷ Lan Sena, oral history by Christina Juhasz-Wood, 7.

refugees.” In her experience, Hanh Nguyen states that most refugees were resettled to the International District because of its affordability, although some families were moved to the North Valley when Section Eight housing became available.³⁰⁸ Sena notes that a large refugee community was housed at Mountainview Apartments:

But everyone in the – I always think of Mountainview Apartments, because that’s like where a huge population moved and even are still there. I think they just kind of stuck with each other. Then they kind of moved away and bought houses, and so they’re in different parts of town. But I think it took a while for them to go deeper into the city and become more comfortable. Like, after the first initial years it was difficult, you know, especially for my parents coming to the US and seeing some discrimination. So they stuck with each other.³⁰⁹

The Mountainview Apartments were the city’s largest public housing project at that time.

According to the State Department, by 1979 over 300 people were on the waiting list for units in that complex. At the time of the report: “Mountain View has 558 units occupied by 278 Hispanic, 103 Anglo, 80 Black, 60 Asian, and 37 American Indian households.”³¹⁰ The report further alludes to conflicts in public housing developments, “Charles Ramirez, Jr., who manages the city’s public housing project, believes the media improperly blew up a squabble between Vietnamese and other teenagers into a big racial conflict...the publicity caused the Vietnamese family to move out of the area.”³¹¹ The report ascribes hostility towards Vietnamese refugees to the city’s racial make-up and hierarchies: “There is a recognition of the humanitarian motive. But the Chicanos have waged a long, uphill battle for acceptance as first-class citizens and feel that they have ‘almost made it’; how, then, can they be expected to look kindly on favored treatment of a new ethnic minority in a situation where housing is tight and jobs are hard to

³⁰⁸ Hanh Nguyen, oral history by Christina Juhasz-Wood, page 12.

³⁰⁹ Lan Sena, oral history by Christina Juhasz-Wood, 7.

³¹⁰ Wever and Tybel, “Indochinese Refugees in America,” 9.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

find.”³¹² Cacho argues that comparisons between Southeast Asian refugees and people of color (in this case African Americans) often entail the treatment of these groups as separate and the assessment of their interests as unrelated. She argues that when African Americans in inner cities appeal to their citizenship, they are claiming the rights and resources that they have been denied and feel are unfairly being given to newly arrived refugees. Though distinct in this case, one can see such arguments in the case mentioned above. Chicanos in New Mexico have earned the rights of citizenship over centuries of struggle; these should not be so easily given away to those newcomers who have not fought for them over time. Cacho notes that this form of comparison requires the assumption that there are a limited number of resources; when these are given to refugees, they are necessarily taken from citizens. But rights are not a limited resource. Refugees are posited as threats and therefore become the site of critique rather than do those who extract and hold the most resources.

Furthermore, such statements necessarily ignore the role of Chicanos in settler colonialism. The history of Chicano rights has been studied and taught separately from related histories of settler colonialism and empire. For Cacho the purpose of bringing attention to these forms of comparison is not to blame individuals or communities for appealing to such rights but rather to understand the structures that produce such competing claims and that naturalize rights and resources as limited quantities to be competed over. Such calls for inclusion and rights to citizenship differ from those of Native nations in New Mexico for sovereignty, the return of lands, an end to resource extraction, and respect for sacred sites and treaty obligations. Because refugee resettlement is often written about ahistorically and independently from the structures that produce and manage such resettlements, refugees are thought to exist separately from other

³¹² Ibid.

marginalized racial and ethnic groups rather than interpolated into such structures. The focus is often put on model minority or American Dream myths, which operate to relationally devalue and marginalize others.

Like relocation programs, Albuquerque's resettlement program was chaotic and lacking in organization. There was not a specific group or person tasked with the resettlement of refugees to Albuquerque.³¹³ Promises for job training and quality housing were rarely fulfilled. Research Voluntary Agencies (Volags) are non-profit agencies given federal contracts for refugee resettlement. Volags in Albuquerque included the United States Catholic Conference, the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, International Rescue Commission, the Leo Tolstoy Foundation, the American Council for Nationalities Service, and the American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees. Hanh Nguyen worked for the Leo Tolstoy Foundation. Sena's father came to Albuquerque through the Tolstoy Foundation. It became the largest organization to resettle refugees during this time period. It assisted refugees with applying for jobs and receiving assistance and provided them with home furnishings.³¹⁴ The Foundation helped to resettle approximately 2,000 refugees to New Mexico between 1975 and 1983, when it closed due to the declining number of refugees resettled to the state. The presence of Volags contributes to the view that the resettlement of refugees is a humanitarian process that the local, often religious, community is responsible for carrying out.

The lines between the military and the non-profit sector in Albuquerque were blurred. Hanh Nguyen volunteered to assist refugees when they first arrived in Albuquerque. She was eventually hired by the refugee resettlement office, funded by the US State Department, to

³¹³ Ibid., 5.

³¹⁴ The daughter of Russian Novelist Leo Tolstoy started the Foundation. It had other branches in Salt Lake City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The Associated Press, "Refugee-Aid Group Closes City Office," *Albuquerque Journal*, May 22, 1983.

provide medical translation from October 1975 to June, 1976. A marine, Jimmy Glenn, ran her office. She states that most of the staff at the office were Vietnamese or marines who had served during the war: “some of them were already retired from the military, but they still have access to the Base. And so maybe, that's why they also have access to the commanders there, in case they need something, they know they would get support from the air force there.”³¹⁵ Mel McCutchan was involved in assisting with refugee job placement beginning in 1975. He worked for the Sandia Corporation. Sandia allotted some of his work hours to the National Alliance of Businessmen, which received most of its funding from the Department of Labor. He worked with the Private Industry Council to locate jobs. He placed some refugees in the Levi Strauss Company and with jewelry manufacturers. Other refugees were given placements with hospitals and restaurants. Some refugees were given job placements in Kirtland’s commissary.³¹⁶ McCutchan is quoted as saying that “It’s easier to put a refugee to work than any other disadvantaged person.”³¹⁷ He placed roughly 300 to 400 refugees in jobs each year.

Vietnamese refugees, many of whom had held skilled positions in Vietnam were placed in low wage positions involving repetitious work. Bichlien Nguyen, who was 18 at the time, went to work at the Levi Strauss factory where she stayed for six months sewing pockets. She notes that they paid minimum wage at the factory. She states: “And I made so many pockets. It’s very rough when you do that. My knuckles were raw and bleeding but that’s the way it is.” At Levi-Strauss 75 out of 587 employees were Southeast Asian refugees.³¹⁸ An *Albuquerque Journal* article quotes Nobles: “They’re able to work with their hands very well,” he said.

³¹⁵ Hanh Nguyen, oral history by Christina Juhasz-Wood, 9.

³¹⁶ Gim, Wever and Tybel Litwin, “Indochinese Refugees in America: Profiles of Five Communities A Case Study,” 8.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Katherine Saltzstein, “Work Ethic Helps Asians Get Ahead in American,” *Albuquerque Journal*, April 10, 1989.

“They’ll do repetitious work. Some are trying to keep from starving.”³¹⁹ Levi Strauss jeans are often thought of as a quintessential American product. Tang argues that refugees constitute a surplus labor force akin to factory workers overseas. The company’s hiring of refugees is presented as a humanitarian gesture; they are seemingly providing jobs that others do not want to hold.

In addition to working for the Levi Strauss factory, many refugees held their first jobs in Albuquerque in jewelry companies. Native jewelry has been one of the main commodities geared toward tourists to New Mexico. Jewelry markets exist within Old Town Albuquerque and the Santa Fe Plaza. Refugees often worked to buff and polish earrings and rings.³²⁰ This was the case for Luyen Nguyen who left Vietnam for Indonesia at age 17. His mother was afraid that he would be conscripted into the Communist army.³²¹ He spent several months in a refugee camp in Indonesia before he was sponsored to come to Albuquerque. Nguyen went on to take courses at the Technical Vocational Institute and was later hired by the Morning Sun Trading Company where he worked full time supervising “32 Asian workers who make plastic molds and cut and polish silver jewelry at Morning Sun...Of Morning Sun’s 50 employees, most come from Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia.”³²² Nguyen states that most of the employees at Mountain Sun Jewelry would like to attend school but feel an obligation to be employed full time in order to send money back home.³²³

The owner of Morning Sun Jewelry, Joseph Giorgio stated: “I’ve had other ethnic groups working here. I prefer to work with these people. Give them an opportunity and they want to

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

succeed. Those born here don't have to prove as much.”³²⁴ Although Giorgio does not explicitly name the ethnic groups he had previously employed, based on Albuquerque's demographics he is most likely referring to Hispano, Latinx, Chicanx, and Native peoples. Goeman writes that “the immigrant is in a state of ever-present nonsettlement, or arrivancy, which only results in upward mobility vis-à-vis assimilation.”³²⁵ Under Albuquerque's multicultural discourse, Asian peoples can assimilate to racialized capitalism. Giorgio states that he chose to hire Asian workers because his competitors had done so and because they would be happy to work at midnight and on weekends for overtime pay. His use of the term “prove” serves as evidence of the debt that Giorgio believes refugees have to repay as well as his sense that they can and should labor much harder than local residents.

As Espiritu argues, under traditional refugee studies, the state is often seen as compassionately providing for the health and welfare of refugee populations, who are treated as helpless victims rather than complex persons with agency. This scholarship, as well as government reports and publications, often proposes solutions to the “refugee problem” by focusing on the individual's ability to assimilate to normative American society and culture. These narratives also serve to reinforce both the good refugee narrative described in previous chapters and the model minority myth that emerged in tandem with civil rights strategies to support a post-racial view of the US. The good refugee narrative and model minority myth also contributes to the misconception that individual pathologies, rather than structural racism, are at fault for racialized inequality. As seen above, the good refugee is often invoked in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups, who are marked as comparatively less successful based on their supposed poor work ethic. Espiritu argues that these narratives serve to reinforce the

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Goeman, “Flirtations at the Foundations,” 117.

representation of the US as an ideal refuge even under precarious conditions.

Given these limited forms of support it is also important to underscore refugees' agency and survival within these contexts. Sena's mother chose to stay in Albuquerque because "When she got resettled here though, she loved it. Her brothers ended up going to Texas. She ended up visiting some family in Louisiana and got to see different parts of America but knew that this was the place that she wanted to call home."³²⁶ She eventually started her own store and bought a home. She supported her husband while he got his degree in engineering. Part of the way that refugees managed was through community support and assistance. Sena states: "But a lot of those services, I think everyone just kind of helped each other. They knew, like, "Oh this person, they just got their social security card. We should go talk to them and maybe they can talk about how that process was."³²⁷

This chapter has explored the resettlement of militarized refugees to Albuquerque from 1975-1979. It has argued for an approach to critical refugee studies that is cognizant of resettlement to settler colonial nation states such as the US. Militarized refuge in Albuquerque cannot be separated from the role of the Kirtland Base and other military institutions in Albuquerque. The Base played a role not only in producing refugees through its actions during the Vietnam War but also in marking Albuquerque as a distinctly militarized geography. Militarized refugees transited across settler colonial and imperial geographies through the transpacific and contiguous US. The promises of freedom in Albuquerque contrasted with its status as a border town where Native peoples and refugees came to live in the shadow of the Kirtland Base. As Sena states in the epigraph, colonialism is not an event in the past; it continues to inform the marking of spaces thought of as long settled. As I detail in further chapters,

³²⁶ Lan Sena, oral history by Christina Juhasz-Wood, 2.

³²⁷ Ibid., 4.

knowledge of history is crucial for building solidarities for demilitarization and decolonization rooted in the recognition of Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood.

Chapter Four: From War Zone to International District

“They will have to learn everything quickly. They will learn about danger in their new home. They will learn there is freedom they never imagined. They will learn that they are in Albuquerque. Albuquerque, America.”³²⁸

The International District received its official name in January 2009 after a town hall meeting at the Cesar Chavez Community Center with then City Counselor Rey Garduño and approximately fifty other attendees. According to the *Albuquerque Journal*, “The ‘international’ name seems to fit, given that the area is among the most diverse culturally in Albuquerque and features specialty grocery stores and restaurants.”³²⁹ Indeed, it was (and continues to be) the most racially and ethnically diverse legislative district in the state of New Mexico with the largest urban Native population. By 2009, many post-1975 Southeast Asian refugees and their families had started and ran successful businesses in the area. In a sarcastic tone the article states “We’ll just have to see if the new name catches on” reflecting both uncertainty about the name change and the likelihood that the area would continue to be referred to as the War Zone by locals. For many, the name change to the International District was humorous given the relative size of Albuquerque. Unlike larger metropolitan cities, Albuquerque is not associated with histories of international migration and settlement.

More optimistic reports focus upon the achievement of the American Dream for refugees who were resettled to the International District. In a 2009 *Albuquerque Journal* article titled “Call It ‘The American Dream Zone,’ Not ‘The War Zone,’” the author suggests a subtitle to the International District: “The District of All-American Heroes and Dreams Come True.”³³⁰ Here,

³²⁸ Phill Casaus, “Iraqis Come a Long Way to Reach City’s ‘War Zone,’” *Albuquerque Journal*, September 24, 1994.

³²⁹ Dan McKay, “Introducing the ‘International District,’” *Albuquerque Journal*, February 3rd, 2009.

³³⁰ Jim Scarantino, “Call It ‘The American Dream Zone,’ Not ‘The War Zone.’” *Albuquerque Journal*, February 19, 2009.

the International District is linguistically but also culturally and visually rendered as the space where the American Dream originates. The article focuses on Lily Nguyen who started Pho #1 Vietnamese Restaurant in Albuquerque with her husband Hue. The article reads:

Lily and Hue Nguyen are not the only all-American heroes in this neighborhood. In each neat house with fresh paint, in the scores of small businesses and ethnic restaurants that are a joy to discover, live and work people who dug in and stood their ground when this was, indeed, the War Zone. Now it is the International District, a place where dreams come true. By hard work and perseverance, by seeking honor and taking responsibility, these heroes have created something to inspire an entire city.³³¹

The Nguyens are American heroes for having stayed in the neighborhood when it was “indeed, the War Zone.” By having survived this, yet another form of violence, they have transformed the neighborhood into an area with neat houses “with fresh paint, in the scores of businesses and ethnic restaurants that are a joy to discover.” Vietnamese refugees such as Nguyen are presented as ideal entrepreneurial, self-maximizing neoliberal subjects whereby success is equated with economic achievement. As Cacho argues, the optimizing neoliberal subject serves to uphold the valuation of certain racialized subjects compared to others considered less valuable; here that may equate with those who do not work hard, persevere, seek honor, and take responsibility. This self-maximization follows a linear narrative of refugee progress from displacement to transit and finally resettlement and assimilation and integration. On what erasures does such naming depend upon?

Authors such as Ong and Tang demonstrate how the promise of refugee life in the US often differs markedly from the optimistic narrative of the American Dream. For refugees, the desire for an education and economic mobility is often met with a number of harsh realities: having to learn English, gain access to higher education, pay rent, pay bills, and obtain childcare and other services that have been increasingly reduced and privatized under neoliberalism.

³³¹ Ibid.

Nguyen argues that what he terms “refugeetude” includes an understanding of the relations of racialized capitalism that refugees enter into in the US. He also gestures to emerging understandings of refuge in relation to settler colonialism. In this chapter I further interrogate refugee resettlement to Albuquerque in relation to heteropatriarchy, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism as ongoing structures.

Refugees to Albuquerque were resettled to often precarious conditions characterized by toxicity from the Base, disorganized and limited income support and governmental services, and gang violence and police securitization. I claim that a focus on gang violence and crime within the War Zone operated to both naturalize and make invisible the violence perpetuated by the police and the Kirtland Base, adjacent to the neighborhood, and the US military more broadly. The War Zone moniker came to symbolize the association of the entire area and its inhabitants with lawlessness, disorder, and irrationality, requiring policing, securitization, and oversight. The area became a site of exception where the use of excessive force was often seen as necessary and justified. The Kirtland Base continued to be invisibilized, its violence towards local and transnational communities hidden from view. Nuclear weapons are still stored on the Base, toxic uranium mines remain largely uncleaned across New Mexico, and the city has failed to take needed action on the underground plume of jet fuel spilled by the Base that largely impacts the International District.

In line with authors such as Tang and Nguyen, this chapter considers how the experience of refuge as long lasting cannot be captured by bureaucratic definitions that distinguish between pre and post-refuge, pointing to the space between such definitions and individual experience within the specific settler geography of Albuquerque’s War Zone or International District.³³² In

³³² Nguyen, *Refugeetude*, 114.

this chapter I tease apart different ways of thinking about the International District as a war zone through a critical refugee studies approach that continues to trace how refugee subjects bring to light entanglements of colonialism, empire, racial capitalism, and heteropatriarchy. Such an approach differs from mainstream accounts that treat refugees as static objects of study rather than as complex subjects with agency.

I assert that the International District naming was not meant simply as a form of multicultural representation or as an effort by the city towards gentrification but rather as a strategy to provide much needed material services to improve residents' daily lives through an area of the city often treated as disposable, abandoned, and vacant. I explore how organizers and artists connect the devaluation of this neighborhood to broader structures of white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and genocide and consider the possibilities of what Byrd calls "horizontal interrelations between different colonized peoples within the same geopolitical space."³³³ This approach responds to Espirtu's argument that "an engaged critical refugee studies project needs to do more than critique; it also needs to integrate sophisticated theoretical rigor with the daily concerns of real people as they navigate their social worlds."³³⁴ These strategies involved complex relationships to discourses of the American Dream, to the police state, and to other racialized and gendered subjects. Methodologically, I critically juxtapose the reports of policy makers and newspaper reporters with oral histories and artwork produced as part of the 2016 "Real ID Live" project. The project brought together community members in the International District to produce art collaboratively. I argue that this project complicates the presumed divisions between colonial and postcolonial, home and abroad, and war and its aftermath. I bring

³³³ Byrd, *Transit of Empire*, 63.

³³⁴ Espirtu, *Body Counts*, 13.

attention to forms of survival, agency and resilience in the context of confinement, vacancy, and abandonment across transnational militarized sites of resettlement and unsettlement.

What's in a Name?

Top results from a Google search of “Albuquerque, International District” yield questions such as: What are the bad neighborhoods in Albuquerque? What is considered the war zone in Albuquerque? Is Albuquerque a safe city? What are the nice areas of Albuquerque? The “War Zone” name indexes multiple meanings in Albuquerque; its common association is to gang violence and crime. As I explore below it can also be read in terms of militarized refuge, the treatment of the city as non-Native land, police violence and securitization, and proximity to the Kirtland Base. These varied meanings demonstrate how constructions of place and space can hold numerous associations simultaneously. What does it mean to rethink both these terms and the landscapes that one resettles to as itself as unstable formations? I argue that associations to the War Zone and International District cannot be understood apart from their entanglements with incommensurable and related relationships to settler colonialism, war, settlement, and racialized capitalism. Tracing these meanings brings to light the ways in which colonialism and imperialism have not ended in Albuquerque yet manifest themselves in nefarious and sometimes hidden ways.

I turn to consider some of the ways in which one could interpret the meanings of the War Zone and International District. War zones bring to mind images of bombing and of active fighting between parties and nations that make a space largely unlivable and cause forced displacement. I do not mean to suggest that war zones are comparable or equally dangerous and equivalent but that some war zones are visible and receive greater attention from the press and others are less so. I also suggest that war zones that are treated as separate and unrelated are

connected particularly through the resettlement of refugees. I have approached the War Zone by tracing how Albuquerque has grown and developed through militarization because it was chosen as a flight school for pilots and bombardiers during WWII. Before it was known as the War Zone and International District the area was most often referred to as the Southeast Heights. (The War Zone name did not really gain traction until the 1990s.) This dissertation has sought to address how declared and undeclared wars, primarily from WWII through the Cold War impacted settlement, relocation, and unsettlement to this militarized geography. As I argued in Chapter One, militarized fission relies upon the erasure of militarized violence on victims of declared and undeclared wars. I focused on the role of WWII to the forced displacement of Native peoples primarily from the Pueblos through the draft and defense industries. Through an analysis of *Ceremony*, I considered how Native peoples faced a different kind of war zone in border towns such as Gallup, one marked by vigilante and police violence, racism, and alcoholism. The development of Albuquerque in the Cold War period corresponded to the continuing seizure and extraction of Native lands for mining, weapons development, and testing. Furthermore, the government explicitly (though largely unsuccessfully) sought to relocate Native peoples to urban areas including Albuquerque during this time period. It was a military based economy in which hierarchies of race and gender structured employment, education, and housing through what I termed suburban settler colonialism. Vietnamese refugees were resettled to the city through forms of militarized refuge that continue to tie New Mexico to the Asia and the Pacific Islands.

I argued that several factors impacted the economic devaluation of the International District in the mid-1970s, the vacancy of housing, and the decision to resettle refugees to this area: the construction of on-base housing, the further growth of developments to the East and West of Albuquerque, and the decline in tourism along Route 66 following the establishment of

the Interstates that diverted traffic from Route 66. The Vietnam War was the first to have a negative economic impact on New Mexico contributing to job loss. Economist Brian McDonald quoted as saying, “In some ways, the Vietnam War may have been the first to hurt the New Mexico economy. It took defense dollars that might have gone to research at the laboratories but were instead spent fighting the Vietnam War.”³³⁵ Refugees from the Vietnam War were often settled into what had formerly been housing planned for Base employees who had moved on base or farther to the East areas of the labs. I characterized this process through the terms of what Espiritu calls militarized refuge: the transiting of refugees across settler colonial and imperial geographies whereby both declared and undeclared war marked the spatial and psychic organization of space.

Yet another meaning of the War Zone is the treatment of Albuquerque as non-Native land and of the Native peoples there as out of place. Denetdale writes that although Gallup, New Mexico is “established on aboriginal Diné lands, the town’s space is rendered as foreign territory, and Diné are cast as the invaders and aliens who threaten civilization.”³³⁶ As *Ceremony* demonstrates, border towns such as Albuquerque, Farmington, and Gallup are marked by racialized territoriality in which Native peoples are much more likely to face poverty, vigilante and police violence, arrests, incarceration, and exposure to toxic waste and other contaminants. A disproportionate percentage of Albuquerque’s unhoused Native population is located in the neighborhood.³³⁷

Another way to think of the name “War Zone” is in terms of the number of soldiers who lived in the area during the Vietnam War. Valerie Martinez, a community organizer who

³³⁵ Jim Belshaw, “Wars Reshaped State’s Fortunes,” *Albuquerque Journal*, September 19, 1999.

³³⁶ Denetdale, “No Explanation,” 113.

³³⁷ Carpio suggests that the location of Albuquerque’s Indian Center in the International District has also contributed to the number of Native peoples in the area.

spearheaded the REAL ID Project, stated in an oral history with me that she had heard that the name “the War Zone” originally referred to Base employees who lived in the area and had participated in the Vietnam War. She stated:

Well what's interesting about the term the "war zone", which is a phrase that residents really don't like us to use about the International District, but in talking to people before the 2014 project, I heard from at least a couple of people that said the war zone was actually a term that came from the fact that military housing, before they fenced off the base, there was military housing in the International District. And that that term came from that, it wasn't a description of the International District but it was kind of a literal description of military personnel living in the International District, in base housing. I'd asked a lot of people about that, whether that was true. It is true that there was base housing in the International District, but whether that it was called the war zone for that reason, I haven't been able to verify.³³⁸

Though her claim is unsubstantiated, her quotation can be connected to the ways I conceive of the War Zone as a settler colonial, militarized, racialized, and gendered geography connecting Albuquerque to the militarization to Asia and the Pacific Islands.

Starting in the 1990s, the War Zone moniker most often referred to the increase in gang violence, homicides, and drug-related crime in Albuquerque. In 1994 then Mayor Martin Chavez formed the “Council on Gangs.” The council found that there were 3,253 documented gang members in Albuquerque and Bernalillo County. The *Albuquerque Journal* reported in December, 1995: “Gangs. They’re statewide, and growing. Bernalillo County alone has at least 9,000 members. And they are becoming more deadly turning our streets into drug markets and *killing fields* [my emphasis].”³³⁹ Nicholas Bakas, who was retiring from command of the southeast Albuquerque police substation stated there were “*body counts* [my emphasis] daily. Gunshots on a nightly basis. Drug dealing on an around-the-clock basis.”³⁴⁰ Another article

³³⁸ Valerie Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, May 9, 2019. Albuquerque, New Mexico: 7.

³³⁹ Carla Crowder and Rebecca Roybal, “Gangs Lethal Grip,” *Albuquerque Journal*, December 10, 1995.

³⁴⁰ Jeff Jones, “Retired APD Captain Helped Heal ‘War Zone,’” *Albuquerque Journal*, September 5, 1998.

published in the *Albuquerque Journal* entitled “1995’s KILLING PACE” stated that “These are the deaths that make headlines – the *body counts* [my emphasis] that saturate the 6 o’clock news. The *body count* [my emphasis] went up last year – to a record 61 homicides in Albuquerque and a record 27 outside the city limits in Bernalillo County. In 1994, 56 homicides were reported in Albuquerque police and 15 to the county sheriff’s department.”³⁴¹ In 1996, 30 killings happened in the Trumbull-La Mesa area, a neighborhood in the International District.³⁴² A police department Sheriff attributed most of these killings to the selling and use of drugs specifically crack cocaine.

Perhaps consciously or unconsciously these reporters are also using terms applied to wars in Vietnam and Cambodia and to an area of the city where refugees from these countries were and continued to be resettled in the wake of US wars. Refugees to Albuquerque were resettled *from* active war zones abroad though these differed with respect to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Furthermore, most refugees to Albuquerque had spent a varying amount of time in refugee camps in the Philippines and Thailand. The International District continued to serve as a primary site of refugee resettlement from US wars from the time of the War on Drugs through the ongoing War on Terror, reflecting relentless warfare in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. As with the refugees from the Vietnam War, subsequent waves were resettled following US covert operations, invasions, wars, and economic policies that rendered spaces extremely dangerous and caused forced displacement.

As noted above, “killing fields” and “body counts” are terms often associated with the Vietnam War and the US secret war in Cambodia. As Espiritu notes, “During the Vietnam War, the US Army employed ‘body counts’—the number of confirmed Vietnamese kills—to chart US

³⁴¹ Carla Crowder, “1995’s KILLING PACE,” *Albuquerque Journal*, January 2, 1996.

³⁴² Jones, “Retired APD Captain Helped Heal ‘War Zone.’”

progress in the war.”³⁴³ She further writes: “US military policies cost Vietnam at least three million lives, the maiming of countless bodies, the poisoning of its water, land, and air, the razing of its countryside, the devastation of most of its infrastructure.”³⁴⁴ Following their takeover of Cambodia on April 17, 1975 the Khmer Rouge vacated citizens from cities to forced labor camps. From their takeover until 1979, nearly one fourth of the population of Cambodia was killed. After Vietnam liberated Cambodia, Cathy Schlund-Vials writes: “Faced with famine, lack of medicine, no infrastructure, and persistent political uncertainty, approximately 510,000 Cambodians fled to neighboring Thailand; 100,000 sought refuge in close-by Vietnam. Between 1980 and 1985, almost 150,000 Cambodians came to the United States, facilitated by the 1980 Refugee Act”.³⁴⁵ In the summer of 1979 when the admissions quota was raised, roughly 150 refugees arrived in Albuquerque each month. Approximately 90% of those new arrivals were from Laos, were farmers, and had little formal education.³⁴⁶ The early 1980s also brought about increases in the number of Southeast Asian refugees resettled to Albuquerque following the signing of the Refugee Act of 1980. From 1980 to 1982, 15 to 20 Southeast Asian refugees arrived each month in Albuquerque. Between 1980-1983 the Tolstoy Foundation resettled the largest number of refugees.³⁴⁷ A Catholic Social Services Agency, under the US Catholic Conference, resettled most of the other refugees during this time period, roughly one to two families a week.³⁴⁸ Some churches and private individuals also sponsored refugees. In 1984, there were changes to immigration laws that required refugees to have worked for the US

³⁴³ Espiritu, *Body Counts*, 2.

³⁴⁴ Espirtu et al., *Transpacific Entanglements*, 177.

³⁴⁵ Cathy Schlund-Vials, *War, Genocide, and Justice: Cambodian American Memory Work* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012): 3.

³⁴⁶ Gim, Wever and Tybel Litwin, “Indochinese Refugees in America,” 7.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

government abroad or the deposed government of their country or to have spent time in a reeducation camp.

The use of terms such as war zones, killing fields, and body counts to describe urban neighborhoods within the US indexes the fear that foreign wars produce migrants and refugees who invade domestic spaces. The racialized terrorist and purveyor of irrational violence transforms into the figure of the gang member as inherently lawless and as a distinct inherently racialized and criminalized body. Cacho writes:

Akin to ‘the stranger,’ so-called ‘unlawful’ people (looters, gang members, illegal aliens, suspected terrorists) and so-imagined ‘lawless’ places (totalitarian regimes, inner cities, barrios) are ontologized. These grossly overrepresented, all-too-recognizable figures with lives of their own—the looter, the gang member, the illegal alien, the suspected terrorist—have *real world referents*. We transparently recognize criminals (with their disreputable traits and deceitful nature) *only* if we refuse to recognize the material histories, social relations, and structural conditions that criminalized populations of color and the impoverished places where they live.³⁴⁹

Here Cacho notes how areas perceived to have a large number of gangs become equated with crime itself, as with the War Zone moniker. Increases in crime in the War Zone contributed to another form of war, that between the police and residents. Singh argues that following the formal gains of the civil rights movement and the changes to US immigration law, the US government turned its military attention to the domestic frontier.

In the late 1970s police forces increasingly adopted military tactics and weapons. Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon focused their energies on policing and fighting crime. Singh notes that “By the end of the 1970s, the racial crisis of poverty and spatial isolation, the health crisis of drug addiction, and the economic downturn precipitated by oil shock and stagflation had yielded a military revolution in policing at home.”³⁵⁰ The equation of cities with

³⁴⁹ Cacho, *Social Death*, 9.

³⁵⁰ Singh, *Race and American’s Long War*, 9.

the frontier was particularly acute in Albuquerque. During the 1970s Albuquerque Police Department (APD) officers targeted activists and political dissidents with the use of excessive and lethal force. For example, in 1972 the APD killed Rito Canales and Antonio Cordova, members of the Black Berets, a Chicano youth organization in Albuquerque.³⁵¹ It was part of a larger crackdown against Indohispano and Chicano rights organizers some of whom sought the return of land grants they argued had been illegally taken after the US-Mexico War.³⁵² Subsequent oversight and reforms were made; however, when new mayors were elected they often backtracked on efforts at reform. In the 1990s the APD faced a number of scandals related to officer-involved shootings and the militarization of the force. In one case the APD arrived in full SWAT battle attire with grenades and assault rifles at the home of a man whose family feared he might commit suicide. They shot and killed the man from thirty feet away.³⁵³ The War Zone name as well as the terms “body counts” and “killing fields” are racialized. Their application produces a notion of the War Zone as foreign territory. War zones are equated with irrational and pathological violence that requires military intervention. The use of such terms in the 1990s can be seen to rationalize the escalation of tactics and militarization of the APD.

However, in an article published in 1998, Officer Bakas was quoted as saying, “I was there when it was called the ‘War Zone.’ We don’t use that term anymore. We don’t need to use that term anymore.”³⁵⁴ Bakas “believes the turnaround – which he calls a partnership involving

³⁵¹ Samuel Gilbert, “Albuquerque PD: a Case Study of Police Brutality,” *Al Jazeera*, April 28, 2016.

³⁵² For Reies Tijerina, the founder of the land-based movement Alianza, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in the name of God, and became a part of the US Constitution; he suggests that the nation-state would remain broken until the US government honored the treaty. For more on Alianza see: Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* (New York: Longman, 2000), 370-1; David Correia, “‘Rousers of the Rabble’ in the New Mexico Land Grant War,” *Antipode* 40, no. 4 (2008): 561-583.

³⁵³ Radley Balko, “Albuquerque's Long History of Police Abuse, Cover-up and Scandal,” *The Washington Post*, April 14, 2014.

³⁵⁴ Jones, “Retired APD Captain Helped Heal ‘War Zone.’”

the police and community – is one of the most dramatic crime success stories in the nation.”³⁵⁵ However, Martinez argues that it was really residents of the district, not the police, who made the effort to drive drug dealers and violent offenders from the neighborhood.³⁵⁶ As noted above, in the 1990s community members made the effort themselves to increase safety in the area. Neighborhood marches took place that year as neighborhood organizers successfully drove a number of drug dealers from the area. One such organizer was Alvorn Clifton. Her son was killed in a car accident when he was driving home from Laguna Pueblo. She was a member of the Eureka Matrons, which was a local chapter of the New Mexico Colored Women’s Club. According to Clifton’s daughter Betty Brooks, “My mother believed in the people in her neighborhood. She wanted the same for her neighborhood that other neighborhoods had and she...used all her resources to get that.”³⁵⁷ The article reports that there were hundreds of marchers against drug dealers, a program for landlords to locate “good renters,” and more police raids.³⁵⁸ The notion of efforts towards “good renters” brings to mind Helen Heran Jun’s analysis of comparative racialization in San Francisco in the 1990s when the Asian Law Caucus (ALC) sued the Housing Authority for protection against interracial violence. She argues that this was done because refugees could not challenge the spatial and economic violences that impacted them in primarily black urban spaces.³⁵⁹ In contrast, poverty and a lack of resources could not be challenged in the War Zone in the same ways that gang members and crime could be.

Refugees continued to be explicitly and implicitly compared to other racialized groups in Albuquerque, particularly in discourses related to welfare. Across local articles written during

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 6.

³⁵⁷ Lloyd Jojola, “Activist the ‘Mayor of Southeast Heights,’” *Albuquerque Journal*, March 22, 2005.

³⁵⁸ Jones, “Retired APD Captain Helped Heal ‘War Zone.’”

³⁵⁹ Helen Heran Jun, *Race for Citizenship: Black Orientalism and Asian Uplift from Pre-Emancipation to Neoliberal America* (New York: NYU Press, 2011).

the 1980s and 1990s there is an almost obsessive fixation on whether or not refugees would be on welfare. For example, Marion Morrison handled most of the refugee welfare cases in the Southeast Albuquerque Office of the Income Support Division under the New Mexico Department of Human Services. According to a report by the State Department, “She believes there has been some abuse of the system by refugees, but not nearly as much as the regular welfare recipients. The interpreters deserve much of the credit.”³⁶⁰ This point is echoed in an article for the *Albuquerque Journal* about a family of refugees resettled by Catholic Charities from Laos, “But if the Sattanaks are like most Southeast Asian refugees, they will soon be off public assistance and hard at work.”³⁶¹ As feminist scholars have argued, representations of welfare recipients are racialized and gendered. Welfare policies punitively force women of color into low-wage labor. They also use them as scapegoats for anxieties about economic uncertainty in the context of neoliberal practices that exacerbate economic inequality.³⁶²

In reality, refugees received very limited assistance from the time that they arrived in Albuquerque and they continued to live and labor under precarious conditions. The Tolstoy Foundation and Catholic Services allotted approximately \$200 to assist each refugee arrival. According to the State Department:

Both resettlement directors say \$200 is hardly enough. Security deposits and the first month’s rent on apartments, as well as basic needs for food, clothing, and furnishings are expected to come out of this allotment. With welfare cases now backed up because of the accelerated influx, it can take as much as three months before a refugee family actually sees cash assistance. The resettlement directors say the national VOLAGs make site visits and are aware of how the money is spent. It goes to meet the most urgent immediate needs.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ Wever and Tybel Litwin, “Indochinese Refugees in America,” 8.

³⁶¹ Anthony DellaFlora, “Patience Shines Through Frustration At Communicating in New Language,” *Albuquerque Journal*, April 9, 1989.

³⁶² Gwendolyn Mink, *Welfare’s End* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

³⁶³ Wever and Tybel Litwin, “Indochinese Refugees in America,” 8.

In 1983, the Southeast Heights Neighborhood Association started a community garden for low-income residents. The majority of those who participated were Laotians. The garden was planned in the wake of welfare cuts to refugees; welfare coverage changed from 36 to 17 months without notice.³⁶⁴ There were no county offices to assist refugees with employment; this was done primarily through Catholic Social Services.³⁶⁵ Resettlement programs continued to be chaotic and haphazard. Benevides reports that he would meet with one of the agency's three interpreters to greet refugees at the airport. Sometimes they received less than 24 hours' notice and could also be called to come at night.³⁶⁶ Interpreters had a large range of duties: showing refugees how to use appliances, taking them grocery shopping, registering their children for school, and helping them apply for services including Medicaid, cash assistance, and food stamps. Debby Spak was the Tolstoy Foundation's director; she noted that refugees received no training or orientation prior to their arrival and also did not speak English. Albuquerque did not have an active vocational training program. Due to a lack of funding, Albuquerque's Cross Cultural Center used non-professional ESL teachers, such as university students, to teach courses.³⁶⁷

Refugees continued to be employed in low wage work, for example making jewelry. Despite the ongoing gang and police violence, economic precarity, and the lack of services offered to refugees, policy makers and newspaper reporters continued to frame resettlement after 1979 in the terms of the American Dream narrative. For example, in describing the War Zone *Albuquerque Journal* reporter Phill Casaus writes: "It is an unappetizing beginning. But to the refugees, battered by war, shackled for years to a refugee camp, this is a better place. A place to

³⁶⁴ Pat Kailer, "Community Garden: Neighborhood Group Plans, Low-Income Residents Plant on Grand Scale," *Albuquerque Journal*, April 18, 1983.

³⁶⁵ Bryan, "Southeast Asian Refugee Resettlement in San Diego," 73.

³⁶⁶ Wever and Tybel Litwin, "Indochinese Refugees in America," 7.

³⁶⁷ Bryan, "Southeast Asian Refugee Resettlement in San Diego," 73.

live.”³⁶⁸ This reflects the optimistic narrative of refugee resettlement as a future-oriented process. These narratives locate a refugee’s worth within a future temporality. Elizabeth Povinelli argues that late liberalism is characterized by a future temporality of ethics and by dispersed, ordinary suffering that does not involve “a crisis.” Povinelli argues that late liberalism is a response to legitimacy crises brought about by anticolonial, postcolonial, and new social movements and is characterized by the duration of suffering in the present. Such slow violence or death contrasts with spectacular forms of violence that often yield a greater search for blame. The jet fuel spill could be considered as one form of slow violence that has yet to be properly remediated as can the ongoing contamination caused by nuclear weapons in New Mexico. The figure of the refugee is what Povinelli terms the autological subject or the reasonable self-owning subject of freedom moving towards the future. Such figures contrast with that of the gang member, although Cacho also points to overlaps between the figure of the refugee and the gang member; for example, Cambodian gang members are also subject to social death and are seen to be justifiably deported.

There has been some response to the spectacular violence of the APD in recent years. The APD again gained attention in 2014 after a number of high profile officer-involved shootings, for example, that of James Boyd, an unarmed mentally ill homeless man who was cooperating with police before he was shot and killed. Martinez stated that, “I think overall, the Albuquerque police department has been very troubled. Not only with police shootings, but with other things. And so, I think we're still deep in the process of changing the culture of the Albuquerque police department, to one that's going to serve the residents of the International District much more compassionately and much more effectively.”³⁶⁹ In 2014 the Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a report that found that Albuquerque police officers used violent force unconstitutionally. From

³⁶⁸ Casaus, “Iraqis Come a Long Way to Reach City’s ‘War Zone.’”

³⁶⁹ Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 7.

2009, the year the International District received its name, to 2014, the DOJ found the use of deadly force in 20 officer-involved shootings to have occurred when there was minimal threat to officers. The report further found that the police used tasers unnecessarily, escalated situations to physical force, and received insufficient training.³⁷⁰ It also found that the APD disproportionately targeted Native people and people of color. While the report offers concrete suggestions for reforming the APD, it does not allow for a critique of the structural forces that have contributed to the treatment of the War Zone and its residents as a state of exception. As Povinelli argues, there is no catharsis under late liberalism. Refugees are framed in a perpetual state of becoming; they have to prove their worth through labor and education and improve their neighborhoods in ways that were assumed for militarized settlers in the hope that the area will return back to its original status as safe and welcoming. These optimistic views of resettlement are written about refugees not by refugees themselves. I turn to consider what goes un-mourned and unacknowledged by these narratives through a meditation on several pieces of artwork made by residents of the International District.

The Real ID: Contestations of Place, Space, and Mourning

This section of the chapter provides a bookend to the first chapter, which analyzed the Museum of Nuclear Science and Technology in Albuquerque. As Lowe notes, it is the “economy of affirmation and forgetting that characterizes liberal humanist understanding.”³⁷¹ The Museum, located on the periphery of the International District and the Kirtland Airforce Base, both reflects and produces institutionalized meanings about the role of militarization in the city and state. I argued that the Museum’s exhibits operate to delink the nuclear weapons industry from the

³⁷⁰ US Department of Justice Civil Rights Division to the Honorable Richard J. Berry, April 10, 2014, https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2014/04/10/apd_findings_4-10-14.pdf.

³⁷¹ Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents*, 39.

bodies and lands most impacted by the production, testing, and use of nuclear weapons. I also argued that the Museum presents a narrative of scientific and physical discovery as one of linear progress, securing an enchanted past and future of heteronormative domesticity for the white nuclear family, a stand-in for the nation during the Cold War. The idealized heteronuclear family remains the basis for success in the United States through ideals of marriage, private property, homeownership, and economic stability. This is often the referent that narratives written about refugees use to determine successful assimilation and success within Albuquerque.

The “Round New Mexico” section of the *Albuquerque Journal* from September 18, 2009 notes that the first International District Festival will be held in the newly named neighborhood.³⁷² “The festival will feature food and music of the various cultures that populate the area.”³⁷³ The article is juxtaposed to one about the “POW/MIA Recognition Day” ceremonies held the same week at the New Mexico Veterans’ Memorial. “The hour-long ceremonies include posting of the colors by an honor guard, singing of the national anthem, unfolding of the POW/MIA flag, a Missing Man Table and Honors Ceremony, gun salute, and playing of taps and a moment of silence.” The juxtaposition of these two stories also indexes the physical proximity of the International District to the New Mexico Veterans’ Memorial and the differing forms of representation occurring simultaneously. The first is a celebration of the cultural elements of the International District; the second is a formal ceremony involving military officials as well as then Governor Bill Richardson. This juxtaposition references a larger discontinuity between the honoring and memorialization of New Mexico’s veterans and the lack of recognition of wars that have produced refugees to the International District.

³⁷² "AROUND NEW MEXICO," *Albuquerque Journal*, September 18, 2009.

³⁷³ Ibid.

I toured the New Mexico Veterans’ memorial in the summer of 2019. It is a sprawling 25-acre complex that includes a visitor center, a bell tower, gardens, kiosks displaying information from the “Colonial War” to the “War on Terror,” and a large wall etched with letters written by New Mexico soldiers to their families.³⁷⁴ The memorial also includes a museum and library. The museum holds photographs, artwork, memorabilia, knick knacks, uniforms, and weapons. The site is far from one advocating for demilitarization but, as a site of mourning, it at least provides some sense of the loss of lives that has come from New Mexico’s participation in US wars albeit a loss that does not include the victims of war.



Figure 4.1 Entrance to New Mexico Veterans’ Memorial³⁷⁵

³⁷⁴ “New Mexico Veterans' Memorial - Honoring Our Veterans,” New Mexico Veterans' Memorial, Accessed May 26, 2020. <http://nmvetmemorial.org/>.

³⁷⁵ Photograph taken by author, 2019

While I was browsing the indoor exhibits I heard music in an adjoining room. There, the “Veterans and Patriots Performance Group” was finishing a show. I was able to catch the last two songs. In the first, an Elvis impersonator sang “American Trilogy” in front of an American flag; it was a song that I later found out Elvis would often use as a show stopper in the 1970s, most famously in his January 14, 1973 telecast special “Aloha from Hawai’i.” The special was released in the wake of negotiations between the US and Vietnam following the “Christmas Bombing” campaign of that year. In the wake of failed peace talks President Nixon ordered that over 20,000 tons of bombs be dropped on Vietnam; approximately 1,600 North Vietnamese civilians were killed as a result. A handout titled “Some Interesting Facts About Our Shows” notes that many of the participants are themselves veterans who use performance as a means to address their PTSD. The show ended with a group performance of “God Bless America” being performed largely to veterans and their families. I found the show disquieting. I was moved by the expressing of loss and mourning for veterans and their families but found the appeals to patriotism and military service upsetting particularly as many of the performers suffer from PTSD.

In contrast to these official forms of mourning, there is a silence for survivors of the Cambodian genocide around how or where their families were killed that can preclude the ability to mourn.³⁷⁶ Cambodian life was completely transformed after the Khmer Rouge takeover, which sought to sever completely from the past.³⁷⁷ Um writes that “The struggle to remember for many of history’s battered subjects is therefore also a struggle for relevance.”³⁷⁸ Albuquerque is also a site of what Schlund-Vials terms “historical amnesia.” The genocide perpetuated against both

³⁷⁶ Um, *Exiled Memory*, 833.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 834.

Indigenous peoples in North American and Cambodians under the Khmer Rouge remains largely unrecognized in dominant historiography and popular culture.³⁷⁹ The forgetting of the War Zone name in relation to soldiers located in the area during the Vietnam War also demonstrates how the role of the Base in the Vietnam War has been largely erased from public memory. In contrast to the museum and the memorial there are no public sites to collectively reckon with the violence perpetrated by the Base and to mourn and remember the individual and collective impacts of war on these nations and on Southeast Asian refugees as well as Native veterans and veterans of color. I turn to consider how several pieces of art produced publicly as part of the Real ID live project meditate upon the complexities of making home and of mourning in a settler, racialized geography.

In 2011 Albuquerque Mayor Tim Keller, then a state Senator, reached out to Martinez about organizing a large art project in the International District. She stated that she had to get permission from the residents of the neighborhood first and spent over a year meeting with community organizations, nonprofits, neighborhood associations, and individual homeowners to gauge interest.³⁸⁰ The original grant for the Real ID live project came from the NEA. The project formally began when there was a call put out for four artists to facilitate community engagement in the International District. I conducted an oral history with one of these artists, Billy Joe Miller.³⁸¹

After the facilitators were chosen, calls were also made for community participants, approximately half of whom were refugee families. Eight countries and seven languages were part of the project. Martinez partnered with refugee service organizations in Albuquerque

³⁷⁹ Schlund-Vials, *War, Justice, and Genocide*, 4.

³⁸⁰ Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 2.

³⁸¹ Miller identifies as a white, queer man who had lived in the International District for eight years. Billy Joe Miller, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, January 18, 2019, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

including Lutheran Family Services, Catholic Charities, and the UNM Refugee Wellbeing Project. It was also important to Martinez that the project be intergenerational; participants ranged from infants to 80-year olds. In contrast to media reporting, which is *about* refugees, this project was carried out collaboratively *with* refugees. As Espirtu argues, refugees are often treated as helpless masses without agency. By contrast, a critical refugee studies approach brings attention to refugees not as objects of study to be known by experts (or reported upon by media) but rather as producers of theory and knowledge. Meetings were held every Sunday for seven months and lasted for three to four hours. Participants would sometimes meet at other times as well.³⁸² Each meeting included a meal shared among participants. Martinez stated that it was important for participants to “feel a sense of equitable participation no matter your physical, emotional, or intellectual abilities, or your age. So, the teams have to be trained in cultivating an atmosphere of belonging and a sense of safety and refuge. And so we chose a spot that’s accessible by public transportation...is in the heart of the International District along Central Avenue.”³⁸³

In an oral history with me, Hanh Nguyen described receiving a notice for the event through the International Healthy District Coalition and her decision to attend some meetings. She describes the coalition as having started “10 years or 11 years ago, as a way for the International District, the people who live in the International District, to have a place that we can feel like home, that we have a stake in the wellbeing of the area.”³⁸⁴ She gained strong familiarity with the area when she worked as a medical translator for refugees who arrived in Albuquerque after the Fall of Saigon. She stated about her participation with the Real ID Project:

³⁸² Ibid., 3.

³⁸³ Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 3.

³⁸⁴ Nguyen, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 5.

“when I came, I saw people speak all sorts of languages, and a lot of people didn’t speak English, just like when I was, when I first came. So I thought I would help them, the organizer out by being another set of eyes and ears, so if they need something I can jump in and help, in whatever capacity I could.”³⁸⁵ One of the most difficult challenges facing refugees is having to learn English in a short time. The onus is placed on refugees, but in Albuquerque there were and continue to be limited ESL resources. The focus of the meetings was not to teach English; rather, it required all participants to navigate communicating across languages. Martinez notes: “They consist of really collaborative art activities, there doesn't need to be a lot of dialogue, and that's how we dealt with the fact that not everybody spoke the same language.”³⁸⁶ Each week the artists/facilitators would lead the group in activities including writing, the performance of plays, and drawing. This work also served to counter the isolation that many refugees to Albuquerque experienced. The interactive element of the project was key to its design. Miller stated: “That was the magic, that Valerie Martinez facilitated an amazing way for people from different cultures to not just interact, but to create together and dream together.”³⁸⁷ Martinez stated that the project was not solely about creating art but rather about the interactions with participants that “require people to be engaged with each other, to laugh with each other, to imagine with together.”³⁸⁸

During the second half of the process, participants decided on the final projects that they wanted to create. According to Miller: “One thing we kept coming back to was, ‘What is home to you?’ And specifically when I was leading the Morning Glory project and facilitating how that would happen, it was, ‘What is sanctuary to you? What is meaningful gathering space? What is

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 3.

³⁸⁷ Miller, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 13

³⁸⁸ Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 3.

shelter?"³⁸⁹ Participants voted on the projects that they wanted including a community garden (which still exists), photo portraits, a performance and play at a park, a film, and a permanent shade structure, which became the piece *Morning Glory*. (Miller and the three other artists/facilitators did not vote).

When discussing her participation with the project, Nguyen points to the importance of the International District name:

Because I remember the time when it was called by a really bad name, I don't want to use the bad name, I don't want to pronounce it. And that's the reason why I thought, "Well this is one way I can help make it to erase that name and to make it a better place," because I'm one of the people that drive around and wonder, "That land is vacant, why can't they make a garden out of that, grow some vegetable or something?" And I still do, I still go around and say, "Oh, build a garden, grow vegetable or something." I'm one of those crazy people that keep pushing for the new public library to go on where Caravan used to be, and I insist that, "Can we have a garden there?" I'm among very few people that keeps saying, "Can we have a garden there?" Well, a few other things, but in this one garden is one component. We want to have public showers there at the library also.³⁹⁰

Nguyen shifts from describing the reason why she does not use the term, the War Zone, to describing the kind of projects that she wants to see in the International District. She brings attention to the role of activists in seeking the name change as part of a larger effort to increase services in the International District: gardens and the library. There are fewer grocery stores and less access to fresh fruits and vegetables in the International District. Erasure is not just about the name and its connotations but also its associations with vacancy. This work sought not only to counter the image of the area as a War Zone but also to remake and reimagine what the area could look like through the desires of its residents.

Morning Glory, the shade structure envisioned as part of the project is meant not only to reflect conceptions of home but also to produce a space of refuge, contemplation, and respite. As

³⁸⁹ Miller, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 6.

³⁹⁰ Nguyen, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 22.

noted, the shade structure was meant to serve as a site of contemplation. The International District has what Martinez calls a high number of urban heat islands. In contrast to other areas of the city with approximately 18% tree canopy there are areas of the International District that have zero to three percent.³⁹¹ As a result, there are a number of heat-related health issues for residents. According to the project's website, it "evokes participants notions of 'home,' 'safety,' and 'belonging.'" Morning glories are flowers that bloom according to the time of day. The piece evokes a connection to the landscape through flowers as living and changeable. It ties not only to the natural landscape but also to Albuquerque's built environment. One can look through the glass to the Sundowner Apartments, where the piece was permanently installed in 2017. The Sundowner was built in 1960 along Historic Route 66 and, like many former motels in this area, suffered an economic downturn after the construction of the Interstate. Martinez emphasizes the economic downturn in the 1970s: "when the interstate came through, that really decimated the businesses along Route 66 because the interstate got built and everyone started to bypass all of those businesses to be on the freeway. So the district, at that time, just the neighborhood - it didn't have a name - took a real financial blow in the 70's when the interstate was being built."³⁹² The hotel was turned into housing for "veterans as well as individuals with disabilities, the formerly homeless and low- and middle-income residents."³⁹³ The Sundowner serves as a significant site for both affordable housing and community organizing and gatherings. Affordable housing is difficult to find in Albuquerque and, as Martinez stated to me, there are a lot of problems in the International District with housing insecurity, homelessness, and

³⁹¹ Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, page 5.

³⁹² Ibid., 9.

³⁹³ Matt Locke, "Empowering and Housing Vulnerable Communities," Accessed May 26, 2020, <https://www.newlifelivesnm.com/>.

exploitative and absent landlords.³⁹⁴ Martinez notes that though there are some services available to assist with housing in the International District, there are not enough.

I also consider how this piece can be thought of as a form of mourning. In Albuquerque, there are numerous memorials and museums to New Mexico veterans, few to the victims of war and their families, and none to the victims of militarization. Espiritu argues that the suffering of the Vietnam War has largely gone un-mourned in the US.³⁹⁵ Um writes about the significance of contemplation for Cambodian refugees:

Refuge provided for little reprieve as the exigencies of the present compound and provoke the haunting of the past. Marginality, invisibility, and racism deprive refugees of the luxury of contemplation. Linguistically isolated, many first generation refugee survivors kept to themselves even within the confines of their own families. The struggle to mourn, memorialize, and heal thus competes with the struggle to survive against the poverty and other symbolic forms of violence that are enacted daily upon vulnerable communities. For many, grieving comes as stolen moments.³⁹⁶

To make a home in the International District is also to stake out connections to the past and to one's homeland. It is elusive and fractured, much like the experience of refuge itself. Rather than suggest that such relief is possible I interpret the piece as reflecting upon the ways in which trauma can exist in fragmented circles rather than as a straight line towards peace. To meditate upon these struggles is to bring into focus traumas that are obscured by official, state-sanctioned histories such as those presented by the Museum and the Veterans' memorial. Such histories operate through historical enchantment to erase the victims and survivors of war. In contrast to artwork confined to museums this public piece is available to be seen and interacted with by all.

³⁹⁴ Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 7-8.

³⁹⁵ Espiritu, *Body Counts*, 2.

³⁹⁶ Um, *Exiled Memory*, 838.

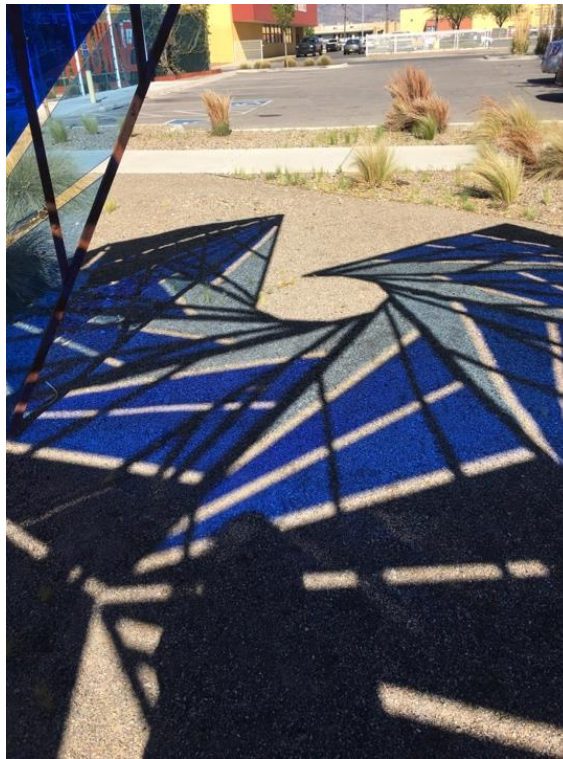


Figure 4.2 Morning Glory³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ Artful Life, Residents of Albuquerque's International District, Nina Dubois and Billy Joe Miller. Photographs taken by author, 2019.

The shade produced by the structure moves depending on the position of the sun. The intensity of the colors it produces also changes. The piece both includes spirals and casts them as shades. I consider here the spirals created by the piece in relation to Ocean Vuong's *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (2019). Vuong's novel is a series of letters that he wrote to his mother who is illiterate. The novel is thus structured around an impossibility or impasse. Vuong's subjective perspectives, what Nguyen refers to as "refugeetude," speak to the experiences of refuge (violence, precarity, death) that continue after he and his mother have resettled to the US after the Vietnam War. His mother works in a nail salon, exposed to toxic chemicals, laboring for low wages. Vuong speaks about the crisis of opioid addiction as an ongoing war visited upon children of refugees in cities such as Hartford where they live.

Scholars of the Transpacific have pointed to the lasting impacts of trauma on Southeast Asian refugees resettled to the US from the Vietnam War. Like *Ceremony*, this scholarship reflects the cyclical nature of time. For example, Um writes that "The consuming preoccupation with loss and extinction is not new for many Southeast Asian Communities, but it is rendered acute by the circular, seemingly repetitious spirals of historical experiences in which trauma stands out as an undeniable feature of the countries' pre- and postcolonial landscape."³⁹⁸

Similarly, Vuong writes:

Some people say history moves in a spiral, not the line we have come to expect. We travel through time in a circular trajectory, our distance increasing from an epicenter only to return, again, one circle removed. Lan [his grandmother], through her stories, was also travelling in a spiral. As I listened, there would be moments when the story would change—not much, just a miniscule detail, the time of day, the color of someone's shirt, two air raids instead of three, an AK-47 instead of a 9mm, the daughter laughing, not crying. Shifts in the narrator would occur—the past was never a fixed and dormant landscape but one that is re-seen. Whether or not we want to or not, we are travelling in a spiral, we are creating something from what is gone.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁸ Um, "Exiled Memory," 834.

³⁹⁹ Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019), 27-28.

His novel speaks to the cyclical nature of time for victims of war and for geographies marked by overlapping and enduring imperialism such as Vietnam and New Mexico. Lan's stories challenge a settler temporality from war to peace and a linear approach of history towards progress and recovery from war as articulated in the good refugee narrative. I attended an event where Vuong spoke directly about refugee resettlement on Native lands. He discussed the ways in which refugees were resettled by war and pointed out that the US has been at war with Indigenous peoples since its founding. Refugees are interpolated into structures of violence and are also victims of the US war machine. As noted in Chapter Two, the rate of PTSD among Native soldiers who fought in the Vietnam War is disproportionately high. Both the VA and Albuquerque Indian Center are located in the International District, which may partially explain the number of Native veterans who live in the area. The spiral configurations of refugee and Indigenous temporalities bring to mind Nguyen's assertion that: "In refugeetude, to 'be with,' following Jean-Luc Nancy and others, is to be entangled in plurality and coexistence, to hold on to the many tensions that bind refugee and Indigeneity in likeness and incommensurability. It is a continual and constant form of awareness, critique, and being that develops with an impetus to understand the threads that link past, present, and future forms of displacement."⁴⁰⁰ For Tayo in *Ceremony*, the entanglements of empire are tied together in part because they go unrecognized and un-mourned. The work of *Ceremony* is not one of the recovery of unknown history; rather, I suggest that it provides a means of understanding structures that remain hidden in plain sight and are also deeply related to other forms of injustice, trauma, and PTSD. A recognition of these entanglements serves as a means for the narrator to move from notions of individual failure to the understanding of broader structures of power that connect marginalized subjects. As Judith

⁴⁰⁰ Nguyen, *Refugeetude*, 126.

Butler suggests, grief and fantasy can dispute liberal conceptions of autonomy and personhood and open up space to confront globalized imperial military violence. As opposed to the Museum of Nuclear Science and History and the Veterans' memorial, which reflect a historically enchanted view of time as a linear progression, *Ceremony* reflects entanglements of space and time across geographic spaces of displacement and refuge.

In a conversation with Tommy Orange, the author of *There, There* (2018), a novel about the history of Native Americans in Oakland, Vuong speaks to the ways in which both this and his own novel invoke generational histories.⁴⁰¹ Speaking about well-known American

bildungsroman novels Vuong states:

What is missing from these works is a prehistory. How did we get here? And I think American narratives are very fraught with looking back, because we only arrive at slavery and genocide as the beginning of the nation and the beginning of American identity under this sovereignty, this republic, right. And so a lot of the literature that comes out of that is very nervous about looking back. And I wanted to write a coming-of-age story that begins not with the main character's life, but the lives of those who made his life possible.⁴⁰²

Under historical enchantment, the history of Native peoples is erased: history begins with conquest and settlement. Novels such as *Ceremony* and art such as the REAL ID Project can work to reinscribe individual and collective identity and survival in the face of US genocides and imperialism that are officially forgotten through historical and cultural amnesia.⁴⁰³ Vuong writes of the novel: "And all of a sudden you take from the zeitgeist, which simplifies you, and you create an intricacy and a uniqueness that is only true to you. In other words, you humanize yourself in a plane where you should have already been human. But Lord knows the history of

⁴⁰¹ Ocean Vuong in conversation with Tommy Orange, Arts and Lectures Live on Public Radio, podcast audio, February 3, 2020, <https://libguides.csuchico.edu/c.php?g=414275&p=2823093>.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*.

this planet, some are often deemed more human than others.”⁴⁰⁴ As with *Ceremony, On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* affirms the significance of stories and storytelling in the wake of forces of cultural genocide.

Miller also produced the piece *Writha*, a large wreath that was part of the exhibition “At Home in the World” held at the 516 Arts gallery in downtown Albuquerque in 2016. According to the gallery's website, the exhibition "considered place within the larger contexts of nationhood and the global stage. It asked: how do place, migration, cultural expression and civic mindedness factor into the issues of nationalism and citizenship?" The project started when Miller met with participants, many of whom lived in the International District, for around 8 to 10 meals. Miller states: “During the meal, I asked what were images of home for them and traditions and just the histories, family histories that were moving to them." Participants in the project included refugees from Vietnam and Afghanistan.



Figure 4.3 *Writha*⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Vuong in conversation with Tommy Orange.

⁴⁰⁵ Made by Residents of Albuquerque’s International District and Billy Joe Miller, <http://www.billyjoemiller.com>, accessed July 13, 2020.

When I questioned Miller about why these pieces were chosen he said that participants had noted that wreaths and altars can be seen across cultures. Wreaths serve as welcoming signals to outsiders. Wreaths are often placed outside the home and have a variety of meanings based on place and context. This wreath is made out of New Mexico deadwoods that were collected on BLM land. The large branches make the wreath somewhat dangerous to the touch. They suggest both the welcoming and protective aspects of natural elements. The use of material taken from BLM land conjures the history of the institution to furthering settler colonialism. Goldstein argues that the BLM serves to reconfigure colonialism.⁴⁰⁶ For example, under the Trump appointed interior secretary the BLM has moved forward with oil and gas leases in New Mexico's Chaco Canyon, an area that holds cultural and religious significance for the Pueblo and Navajo peoples. In the wake of the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Native communities in New Mexico the BLM has gone forward with this process with limited community input.

The oversized nature of the wreath in combination with these materials projects a somewhat menacing feeling. Wu notes that tour guides at Manzanar Historic Site contextualize Japanese internment in longer histories of structural violence including Native dispossession and environmental injustice. She writes "It is these very moments of disorientation that allow [the visitor] to arrive at a complex understanding of the connections between injustices sustained by Indigenous and racialized populations."⁴⁰⁷ I suggest that the size of the wreath can create such a moment of disorientation. In combining symbols of land, home and welcoming, the wreath relates to an uneasiness with trying to build home, often through displacement, on a militarized geography of stolen land.

⁴⁰⁶ Goldstein, "Toward a Genealogy of the US Colonial Present," 10-11.

⁴⁰⁷ Wu, "A Comparative Analysis of Indigenous Displacement," 1.



Figure 4.4 505 Altar⁴⁰⁸

The exhibit also included a piece titled “505 Altar.” One of the participants from the Philippines and one from Afghanistan described the significance of altars inside homes. Altars can index the relationships between religion and empire in the Philippines; they became more

⁴⁰⁸ Made by Residents of Albuquerque’s International District and Billy Joe Miller, <http://www.billyjoemiller.com>, accessed July 13, 2020.

common under the Catholicism imposed by Spanish colonists. Roman Catholic Filipinos often have an altar in their homes that includes figurines of saints, candles, and crucifixes. Altars feature heavily in Catholic churches in New Mexico, which was also colonized by Spain and the United States. Altars also serve to remember and commemorate the dead. In a sense, they mirror alternative archives described by Cacho. She draws on an interdisciplinary “archive of feeling,” as theorized by Ann Cvetkovich, which does not require a reason *why* a person should be valued. Altars insist on the value of lives that have been deemed less worthy and valuable.

In contrast to altars that often hold religious figurines and pictures of relatives and friends, the 505 altar includes mostly found natural and discarded items. Miller and other participants searched for found materials at junkyards, a community compost site, and a former glass recycling center. Other materials were found in the International District. The participants were looking mostly for organic materials that had been considered trash to include in the project. The altar juxtaposes organic and inorganic materials that reflect the colors of the natural environment specific to the US Southwest and to New Mexico, particularly the pink and green colors. The altar holds cactus fruits, soil, a coyote skull, devils claw, and other plants found in the International District. These materials, physically associated with land in New Mexico are critically juxtaposed against the ristra that was made out of shot gun shells collected at a shooting area near Jemez. Ristra, made of dried chili, are often hung in front of homes in New Mexico. The shotgun shells were found in the Ojito Wilderness. Miller described the juxtaposition of the shooting range with the beauty of the area. These shells are a physical contrast to the organic materials featured in the wreath and on the altar. This disruption to the other materials, I would suggest, invokes the uneasy messiness of unsettlement within New Mexico. It can also bring attention to the forms of militarization that make refuge an enduring rather than temporary

condition. The piece brings attention to the terrains of weapons that are often hidden yet omnipresent across New Mexico.

Attempts to make home in the International District cannot be disconnected from its specific physical environment, which is so different from that of Southeast Asia. Despite the challenges of living in the area, many Vietnamese families have chosen to stay. Sena notes: “Yeah, the Vietnamese community is very large in that area, mostly because they got resettled there. So, a lot of them, even though they got resettled there, like in apartments or anything like that, they still bought houses in that area and stayed there.”⁴⁰⁹ The International District remains a site where refugees have built connections with one another through processes of remembering history, of surviving, and through connections between past and present and across geographic spaces marked by distinct forms of war and militarization. In response to my question, what was it like for you growing up in Albuquerque? Sena stated: “Oh, I loved it. I mean, it has its goods and bads [*sic*], you know. I still to this day encounter racist remarks. But I know that it’s the land of enchantment. That’s why I see myself living here and raising kids and staying here. This is where my heart is. I think that’s really what Albuquerque does to everyone—New Mexico does to everyone.”⁴¹⁰ In my experience living in Albuquerque for eight years I can relate to this sentiment. The physical landscape *is* enchanting. There is also a way to recognize and respect struggles for survival in ways that do not alibi settler colonialism and racial capitalism as is done in the narratives of historical enchantment. There is the possibility to hold the successes of refugees and their families in the same plane, or perhaps circular configuration, of joy and loss.

⁴⁰⁹ Sena, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 6.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

Conclusion: Never Again Is Now

In the winter of 2019 I was finally able to tour the Kirtland Air Force Base. The father of one of my friends had worked on the Base as an engineer for several decades. He was retired, but still had an ID that allowed him, and by extension us, entry. Although I lived a few miles from the Base for years I could not tell you prior to writing this dissertation where the gates were located, and where the Base began and ended. As we rode through the first gate we all exclaimed how the area we were touring felt large but was only a miniscule part of the whole. I was again struck by my lack of awareness of the Base's size and of how far it stretched to the East and South of the city.

We drove by many of the buildings I had read about in my research. It was bizarre to see how ordinary they were but also how little their facades revealed about the work that went on inside. Buildings that carried out research on simulated warfare, laser technology, and nuclear storage are located next to a grocery store, a school, and a large lot for storing trailers and RVs. We drove by new and old housing that had been built on the Base. This experience reminds me of Um's assertion that: "Uncertainty and ambivalence are no strangers to refugees. At times, it is the disquieting feeling brought on by the mundaneness that seems most unsettling. Against the cacophony of war, revolution, and genocide, quotidian life disturbs with its deafening ordinariness."⁴¹¹ The juxtaposition of mundane domesticity and high security military projects was jarring. These critical juxtapositions brought into focus the ways in which the militarization of the city is in many ways mundane, hidden, and dematerialized.

Albuquerque is distinct from many cities with military bases that have a large number of soldiers on duty. The Base serves more as a landlord for private independent and governmental

⁴¹¹ Um, *Exiled Memory*, 837.

research and defense industries. Part of the invisibility of the Base stems from the fact that many of the people employed there are not visibly in uniform. The Base is marked by varying levels of security, entry, and knowledge. I was able to enter a part of the Base but each building requires a different security clearance. Large parts of the Base have very high security clearance because, for example, nuclear weapons continue to be stored there. I have been able to gain a deeper knowledge of the work of the Base in the 20th and 21st centuries and yet I am aware that what I have discovered barely skims the surface. How does such a large military installation hide within plain sight? I have utilized the neologism of militarized fission to capture the movement of nuclear particles across time and space but also as a metaphor for militarized structures that remain unseen yet produce toxicity, death, and destruction as they move across policed borders. The sight and sound of police vehicles in the International District is a daily and regular reminder of the ways in which war exists across this city during peacetime. How can we think about these war zones in relation to others around the world?

As I wrote this dissertation, Vinh Nguyen's contention that refuge has become a fixture of modern capitalist formation was echoed by the news. For example, from December through February, 2020 alone, approximately one million Syrians fled to the border with Turkey. Most live in makeshift tents or without shelter in freezing conditions.⁴¹² The Syrian government under President Bashar al-Assad, backed by Russia, has justified the relentless bombing of civilians as "counter-terrorism."⁴¹³ In Yemen, in the wake of US and Saudi-led bombing campaigns, civil unrest, and the inability of the Yemenis to flee, the region is experiencing what has been

⁴¹² Vivian Yee and Hwaida Saad, "Syrian Children Freeze to Death. Bombs Rain Down. And 'Nobody Cares,'" *The New York Times*, February 26, 2020.

⁴¹³ Ibid.

labeled the worst humanitarian catastrophe in the last 100 years. Millions of Yemenis are at risk of starving and exposure to cholera.

In media reports of the crisis, it is humanitarian groups that call for relief for those in Yemen. The physical distance between the US and Syria, Yemen, and other war ravaged countries makes it less likely that there will be large numbers of refugees attempting to enter the US. However, the Trump administration has played upon American fears of refugees, not only as takers of American jobs, but also as drains on social services, and most notably as potential terrorists and criminals. The period of time during which I have written this dissertation has indeed been exceptional when it comes to presidential policies towards refugees and migrants. My project was envisioned during the second term of President Obama's administration. With the 2016 election of Donald Trump US refugee policy has been drastically changed. In contrast to their treatment by past administrations, refugees have not been utilized to alibi past or ongoing wars and military interventions. With the Muslim and other travel bans and stricter requirements for applying to be a refugee as well as cuts to funding for refugee services and programs fewer refugees have been resettled to Albuquerque and the rest of the US. For those who are resettled there is less funding available, as Martinez notes:

it used to be 18 months, and then it moved to, you know, a year, then to 6 months, and now really there's just money for 3 months of resettlement. It's a really terrible blow to resettlement success stories or efficacy in the International District, because when you arrive and you only have three months of funding to help you learn a new language, get a job, you know, find stable housing, it's just not enough. And so, refugees are really facing critical challenges in the International District, and there are fewer of them coming.⁴¹⁴

Those who are currently seeking asylum at the Southern border are treated as inherently criminal migrants by the administration. Under Trump's "Remain in Mexico" policy those seeking asylum are not given an immediate hearing by a US court but are rather sent back to Mexico to

⁴¹⁴ Valerie Martinez, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 10.

await one indefinitely. By crossing the border to seek asylum refuge they are treated as criminals, apprehended, deported, and placed in detention facilities. Children seeking refuge are also treated as inherently criminalized, separated from their families, and held in overcrowded for-profit private detention centers.

Nguyen argues that refugee optimism is constrained by the possibility of deportation and denaturalization.⁴¹⁵ Schlund-Vials notes that there was greater enforcement of the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) after 9/11. As Schlund-Vials notes, 1,500 Cambodian refugees who had not been naturalized as US citizens were deported or slated to be deported.⁴¹⁶ In 2001, the Supreme Court found that INS could not hold noncitizen felons for more than six months if deportation was not enforceable, which was the case for deportees from Cambodia that did not have a repatriation agreement with the US. However, within a year after the decision Cambodia signed an agreement.⁴¹⁷

These possibilities are more likely under the Trump administration that has, for example, sought to deport greater numbers of Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees with criminal records. This policy departs from a prior understanding that the Vietnamese government would not repatriate those who came to the US prior to 1995.⁴¹⁸ The administration has deported on average 91 Vietnamese refugees a year. In January of 2020 the administration deported 24 Cambodian immigrants who had come to the US as refugees because they had been charged with committing a crime. However, this is not to say that the treatment of some refugees, migrants, and asylum

⁴¹⁵ Nguyen, *Refugeetude*, 123.

⁴¹⁶ Schlund-Vials, *War, Genocide, and Justice*, 14.

⁴¹⁷ Cacho, *Social Death*, 62.

⁴¹⁸ Shannon Dooling, "40 Years After The Vietnam War, Some Refugees Face Deportation Under Trump," *NPR*, March 4, 2019.

seekers as criminal is a new phenomenon. It has historical precedent, including during the past administration, which deported the largest number of people in US history. Between 2014 and 2016 the Obama administration deported on average 38 Vietnamese refugees a year. Since the mid-1990s a total of 16,000 Southeast Asian refugees have been deported.⁴¹⁹ An article published in *The Nation Magazine* in January of 2019 concludes thus: “But the Trump administration’s grim holiday message still haunts countless other refugees: The United States is no longer a country of sanctuary for migrants, but a land of permanent unsettlement.”⁴²⁰

In 2019, over 70,000 migrant children were placed in US government custody, more than in any other nation and at any time in US history.⁴²¹ The Trump administration has drastically increased the number of children separated from their families as well as the amount of time that they spend detained. Trump’s stringent immigration policies have meant that fewer people come forward to serve as guardians to unaccompanied children: many of those who would otherwise volunteer are undocumented. The administration has used these policies as part of a larger deterrence strategy; if more children were separated from their families and held in detention facilities officials reasoned that refugees would be less likely to come to the border. Others have suggested that the overcrowding of camps in Mexico and detention facilities would add to the view of a crisis at the border requiring greater funding from Congress for Trump’s border wall and enforcement agencies.⁴²² At least six children have died in government custody. Experts point to the lasting impact that the trauma of separation and detainment causes to children.

⁴¹⁹ Michelle Chen, “Southeast Asian Refugees Are the Latest Victims of Trump's Deportation Crackdown,” *The Nation*, January 3, 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/southeast-asian-refugees-deportation/>.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Associated Press, “The US Has Held a Record 69,550 Migrant Children in Government Custody in 2019,” *NBCNews.com*, November 12, 2019.

⁴²² Karoun Demirjian Neena Satija, “A Trump Administration Strategy Led to the Child Migrant Backup Crisis at the Border,” *The Washington Post*, November 12, 2019.

In 2018, the Trump administration proposed detaining children on military bases as part of its zero tolerance approach to immigration, which includes family separation. After public outrage the administration ended this policy. Precedent for this practice was in fact established by the Obama administration.⁴²³ In January of 2016, the Holloman Airforce Base in Alamogordo New Mexico was chosen as one of three military bases in the US to house migrant children.⁴²⁴ They were held from January to February 2016 in a building that had been used by the 4th Space Surveillance Squadron.⁴²⁵ Military bases were chosen, in part, because they did not have to go through the same licensing requirements as migrant shelters. Nearly 16,000 unaccompanied children were held at these bases from 2012 to 2017.⁴²⁶ The children ranged in age from 14-17 years old and were fleeing violence from Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Contractors hired by US Health and Human Services were responsible for education and medical care.

Alamogordo Mayor Susie Galea is quoted as saying that the city was a “charitable one,” but assured her constituency that the youth would not have to attend public school or use city services because they would be overseen by the federal government.⁴²⁷ Speaking about housing youth on military bases, Lt. Col. Tom Crosson of the Department of Defense stated: “There could be no detriment to the mission. The facilities have to be vacant and have no projected use.”⁴²⁸ Here, Crosson uses military language (“the mission”) to support the housing of unaccompanied minors. These spaces are treated as ideal for housing children because they have

⁴²³ Associated Press, “The US Has Held a Record 69,550 Migrant Children in Government Custody in 2019,” *NBCNews.com*, November 12, 2019.

⁴²⁴ Matt Howerton, “Immigrant Children Arrive at Holloman AFB,” *KOAT*, October 5, 2017.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁶ Tara Copp, “Thousands of Undocumented Children Could Be Housed at Fort Benning. What's next?,” *ledger (Columbus Ledger-Enquirer)*, accessed May 26, 2020, <https://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/local/article231201518.html>.

⁴²⁷ Matt Howerton, “Immigrant Children Arrive at Holloman AFB.”

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*

“no projected use.” Here, the confluence of refuge, militarization and so-called humanitarianism could not be starker.

Separating children from families and placing them in militarized facilities has a long history in the US. Slave owners separated children from their families. Thousands of Native children were separated from their families and placed in boarding schools where they endured physical and sexual violence and inadequate food, shelter, and medical care. Furthermore, the US has a long history of placing Native children in foster care or for adoption by non-Native families. Japanese-Americans families were separated during WWII and held in concentration camps, several in New Mexico.

In response to the Trump administration’s policies, activists have forged new solidarities that speak to the repetitive nature of history. On June 27, 2019 I attended a protest at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, which called for an end to family separation and detention. The event served as a moment of solidarity for a number of organizations working for immigrants’ rights and justice. Speakers included survivors of concentration camps that held Japanese-Americans during WWII. What felt particularly acute for me was the proximity of the present to the past in chants and signs reading “Never Again Is Now” and “Stop Repeating History.” For survivors, internment was not an event in history, but something that was done to them. This refrain is echoed by my father who, when speaking about his status as a Holocaust survivor and refugee often says that what are stories for others are memories for him.

It is perhaps not surprising though nonetheless devastating that given the ongoing relationships between settler colonialism, refuge, and detention that the communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic are those on Native reservations, in detention facilities, and in

refugee camps. As I write this, the pandemic continues to ravage Native communities in New Mexico. The Navajo Nation that stretches across the four corners region including New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah has the highest per capita number of corona virus cases in the nation. Two detainees held in ICE facilities have died while in custody. As of this writing, Otay Mesa has 155 confirmed cases of infected detainees and 11 personnel.⁴²⁹

The organization Tsuru for Solidarity had been organizing a pilgrimage to converge in Washington, DC in June, 2020 to close immigrant detention centers.⁴³⁰ (It has been put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic). They planned to bring 126,000 paper cranes, called Tsuru, representing the number of Japanese-Americans who were held in concentration camps during WWII. They are now hosting a virtual protest to close the camps from June 6-7, 2020.

Democracy NOW! has reported on two protests organized by Tsuru for Solidarity.⁴³¹ The first took place at Fort Sill; it involved Japanese elders who had been directly impacted by the concentration camps that held Japanese Americans during WWII. Dressed in black, survivors took turns recounting their experiences. At one point, a man in military uniform tells them that they have to move, that they can't hold their protest at Fort Sill. One of the organizers asks what will happen if they do not move; the man responds that he is not going to arrest them but that they still need to move. Survivors continue to tell their stories when the military officer comes back and asks why they don't understand English. In response, another organizer states they had been removed enough. When he asks: "What don't you understand?" an activist states that "we understand history."

⁴²⁹ Ryan Devereaux, "ICE Detainee Who Died of Covid-19 Suffered Horrifying Neglect," *The Intercept*, May 24, 2020, <https://theintercept.com/2020/05/24/ice-detention-coronavirus-death/>.

⁴³⁰ "Stop Repeating History," Tsuru for Solidarity, May 26, 2020, <https://tsuruforsolidarity.org>.

⁴³¹ "Japanese-American Internment Survivors Protest Plan to Jail Migrant Kids at WWII Prison Camp," Democracy Now!, accessed May 26, 2020, https://www.democracynow.org/2019/6/24/stop_repeating_history_japanese_americans_incarcerated

The proposal of Fort Sill as a site to hold children in concentration camps is not an anomaly in history; the Fort is a place marked by histories of racialized and colonial state control. Using the slogans “Never Again is Now” and “Stop Repeating History” activists bring attention to the use of the space as a concentration camp for Japanese Americans, as a Native boarding school, and as a prison for Apaches including Geronimo where some were incarcerated for nearly 30 years. LaDuke and Cruz write that after a 13-year pursuit involving 5,500 military personnel, Geronimo and his community were “[I]ncarcerated after having been starved into submission, forcibly removed from their homelands and brought to this place.”⁴³² They write that the Comanche people had requested that Fort Sill not destroy the sacred site of Medicine Bluff. In April of 2008 it was reported that, despite protests, Fort Sill officials chose to go forward with the construction of the Training Services Center at the base of the Bluff.⁴³³

Fort Sill is one of many cavalry bases used in the Indian Wars that was transformed into a military base. Fort Wingate is located on Diné and Zuni territories, which were seized in 1850. The fort was used as a temporary prison camp for Diné during the Long Walk. During WWII, fifteen hundred Navajo men, nearly one third of the work force, constructed an army ordnance depot at Fort Wingate.⁴³⁴ The fort later served as a testing facility for Pershing missiles and other weapons that have resulted in high levels of toxicity on surrounding lands and waters.⁴³⁵ As LaDuke and Cruz note, roughly 20 Native reservations are signified as forts, for example Fort Apache, Fort Independence and Fort McDowell.⁴³⁶

⁴³² Cruz and LaDuke, *The Militarization of Indian Country*, 15-18. They further note that this had been the site where Yale University’s Skull and Bone society is thought to have exhumed and desecrated Apache bones, including Geronimo’s.

⁴³³ Kyle Payne et al., “Fort Sill Gets Green Light to Build at Base of Medicine Bluff,” <https://www.kswo.com>, August 15, 2008, <https://www.kswo.com/story/8844182/fort-sill-gets-green-light-to-build-at-base-of-medicine-bluff/>

⁴³⁴ Townsend, *WWII and the American Indian*, 181.

⁴³⁵ Cruz and LaDuke, *The Militarization of Indian Country*, 113.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 128-129.

Organizing on behalf of Tsuru for Solidarity is not just a moment of protest but a distinct means of telling history, one that runs contrary to the affirmations and forgetting that are central to American liberalism. Admittedly, there are a number of hurdles that make it difficult for refugees to be in solidarity with Indigenous struggles towards anti-colonialism and decolonization in the US. As I detailed in the Preface to this dissertation, narratives of refugee debt and gratitude are hegemonic and oft reiterated. As many waves of refugees have been resettled because of their ties to the military, as was the case with my father, refugees may have conservative, pro-American, and pro-military politics. The good refugee and immigrant success myth requires the absencing of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy.

As Cacho argues, the stakes of a relational approach to understanding refugee histories is not to blame the victims of war for the efforts they made to survive. Many in the first and second generations of children of immigrants and refugees who do not need to take such actions to survive must ask, how does access for some to upward mobility, education, and achievement bring us into relation to the suffering of others whose lands and labor makes possible our access to the supposed American Dream? Despite the understandable impulse to heal and move on from trauma it is worth recognizing that such healing is often framed in western terms as associated with capitalism; jobs, private property ownership, and education are connected to having healed from trauma. When asked about the experiences of second generation Vietnamese Americans such as herself, Sena stated:

For me, it's like, for one, wanting to really highlight these stories, highlight their parents' stories, to let their parents have a space to tell their story as well and to keep it going. Because something that's really dangerous that's happening for my generation is that they don't care. They don't care about their parents' stories. There's been a few of them that I know, that just like, "Why do they just keep talking about the war? Just let it go already. It already happened. What's the point?"

And so I tell them, "Well, what was the point of learning about the Holocaust? What's the

point of learning about history in general?” It’s to not ever let it happen again, is to know your history, to know where you come from, and to help others to prevent that from ever happening. And it’s even becoming dangerous for our third generation because there’s this lack of education, at least proper education, on history. She doesn’t know what Japanese internment camps are and she’s a junior in high school. And she didn’t even know what the word ‘minority’ was, which was, I’m telling her, “Man, you are in a place of privilege! Like how could you not know!”⁴³⁷

Grace Cho observes that wars can result in the loss not only of entire families but also of inter-generational memories, stories, photographs, and mementos. She writes that the loss of family archives corresponds to broader silences and erasures around war.⁴³⁸ Candace Fujikane argues that we can honor and respect the struggles and difficult decisions made by our relatives to survive state violence and persecution while also acknowledging and acting from an awareness of the systems of privilege from which they benefit.⁴³⁹

Nguyen suggests that: “As Arendt remarks, the keeping of “refugeeness” affords the refugee a more expansive vision of history and politics. Such a vision—or refugeetude—means that the refugee subjects can begin to make crucial linkages between themselves and others who have undergone and are undergoing similar experiences within the ‘national order of things’ including migrant, undocumented, racialized, and Indigenous groups.”⁴⁴⁰ In the second, larger protest, which took place adjacent to the base at Fort Sill, speakers included representatives from Black Lives Matter, a local DREAM Coalition, and a Native American woman who survived boarding schools in Oklahoma. Each speaks to their reasons for engaging in the protest without suggesting that their experiences are the same or comparable but rather that they are related through space and time. These forms of solidarity building differ from other protests and actions

⁴³⁷ Sena, oral history by Christina Juhász-Wood, 17.

⁴³⁸ Grace Cho, *Haunting the Korean Diaspora: Shame, Secrecy, and the Forgotten War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

⁴³⁹ Candace Fujikane, “Introduction: Asian Settler Colonialism in the US Colony of Hawai’i,” in *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai’i*, eds. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okumura (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008): 1-42.

⁴⁴⁰ Nguyen, *Refugeetude*, 124.

that reinforce narratives of American exceptionalism and slogans such as this is a “nation of immigrants” or “we are all immigrants.” Acting from an awareness that the Trump administration’s policies are being enacted on stolen land does not weaken but rather, like the strands of the web, strengthens a project that ultimately seeks an end to forced migration through US militarization, and climate change. This is not to say that activists are engaging in a utopian project; they are not arguing against immigration or the legal category of refugee, but against policies that can literally make the difference between life and death. They are demonstrating that refuge and asylum do not need to happen at the expense of native sovereignty and nationhood.

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