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Discontinuities, Remembrances, and Cultural Survival: History, Diné/Navajo Memory, and the Bosque Redondo Memorial

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HISTORY, DINÉ/NAVAJO MEMORY, AND THE BOSQUE REDONDO MEMORIAL

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On 4 June 2005, hundreds of Diné and their allies gathered at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, to officially open the Bosque Redondo Memorial. Sitting under an arbor, visitors listened to dignitaries interpret the meaning of the Long Walk, explain the four years of imprisonment at the Bosque Redondo, and discuss the Navajos' return to their homeland in 1868. Earlier that morning, a small gathering of Diné offered their prayers to the Holy People.[1]

In the past twenty years, historic sites have become popular tourist attractions, partially as a result of partnerships between state historic preservation departments and the National Park Service. With the twin goals of educating the public about the American past and promoting their respective states as attractive travel destinations, park officials and public historians have also included Native American sites. Mindful that Native people must be involved in all levels of planning and establishing historic sites, they have invited Natives to participate. This endeavor purports to incorporate Native perspectives into the design and content of historic sites projects.

As is true of other memorials that were established to remind the public of significant American events involving its Native peoples, the Bosque Redondo Memorial was created to recognize Navajo experiences. By acknowledging

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these struggles, the memorial also brings Navajos into the American historical narrative, thereby signifying that, as a modern nation, the United States has embraced multiculturalism. The memorial perhaps will also illuminate the unjust treatment Navajos received *from* the United States and possibly inspire reconciliation. The memorial, which has drawn Navajos' embrace and skepticism, serves as a point from which to reflect upon the ways that their experiences under American colonialism have been understood by both Navajos and non-Indians. Natives have argued that non-Indians prefer a sanitized version of American history, in which the dispossession of Native peoples and the brutality they experienced at the hands of non-Indians remain invisible or are downplayed.[2]

This study examines the multiple meanings of the Navajos' Long Walk, their incarceration at *Hwéeldi* (the prison camp), and the return to their homeland in 1868. Navajos still remember the trauma of the Long Walk and the four years of captivity under American rule. The ancestors' stories have survived for several generations and have become part of the collective Navajo memory. Beginning in the 1960s, Navajo leaders drew on these same memories to articulate a Navajo vision of sovereignty. The messages that the leaders have disseminated about the meanings of their ancestors' experiences in the mid-nineteenth century reflect the sentiments of American historians who have concluded that the defeat and removal of Navajos led to the birth of the modern Navajo Nation. This sort of interpretation confirms America's reputation as a model modern multicultural nation that has embraced its people of color. However, the discursive practices and cultural displays that present the United States in such favorable light fail to recognize or acknowledge the nation's genocidal legacy and ongoing violations of Native sovereignty and basic human rights.

The Long Walk and the Bosque Redondo

Diné history is similar to that of other Native peoples who endured invasion, conquest, removal, and assimilation during white settlement of America. Prior to 1863, the Diné were an autonomous people. In the sixteenth century, Spanish arrival in the Southwest created a series of cultural, economic, and political transformations among the Diné. Incorporating Spanish horses into their way of life, Navajos became a formidable military force that successfully resisted Spanish and then Mexican conquest. The Navajo shift to a pastoral economy initiated expansion of their territory south

toward Cebolla and west into Canyon de Chelly. Like other Native peoples, Navajo relations with the invaders oscillated between peace and hostility. Spanish enslavement of indigenous peoples, a practice that became a custom in the Southwest well into the American period, triggered armed confrontation. Further, as the Spaniards and then the Mexicans enlisted Pueblo auxiliaries in their raids on Navajos, Navajo and Pueblo relationships also cycled between peace and war. Some Pueblo peoples resented Navajo attacks on their communities; others continued their trading and kin relations with Navajos. Although not to the extent that scholars have initially reported, some Pueblo peoples fled Spanish and Mexican oppression to seek refuge among their Navajo allies, leading to the formation of new Navajo clans and a population increase in Diné.[3]

In 1848 Americans wrested the present southwest United States from Mexican control with the end of the U.S.-Mexico War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Ironically, the American rationale for claiming these lands was to bring peace and stability to the region, but the United States only escalated the cycles of violence among Navajos, other Native peoples, and New Mexicans. The establishment of Fort Defiance in the heart of Navajo country in 1851 led to a confrontation between the Diné leader Manuelito and the American military; the conflict embroiled Navajos in a war that would lead to their military defeat by the end of 1863.

In the late fall of 1863, Maj. Gen. James H. Carleton unleashed New Mexico volunteers and Pueblo allies against the Navajos, ostensibly to end raiding that was devastating New Mexican communities. Initially unsuccessful in forcing the Navajos to surrender, the army engaged in a winter campaign led by the Indian fighter Col. Christopher "Kit" Carson and eventually subjugated them by invading their stronghold, Canyon de Chelly. The U.S. forces laid waste to the means by which Navajos had sustained themselves. Cornfields were destroyed; hogans were burned to the ground; fruit trees were chopped down; sheep, goats, and cattle were slaughtered. Navajo women and children were taken captive for the slave market. Defeated and demoralized by Carson's brutal methods, thousands of Navajos surrendered at Forts Defiance and Wingate during late 1863. Navajo prisoners endured a series of forced marches, well over 350 miles from these forts, to the Bosque Redondo reservation near Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Over eleven thousand Diné were incarcerated at Hwéeldi from 1864 to 1868.[4] The Navajos who were relocated to this new reservation were to be inculcated with American values that included Christianity and Western education.

The years at the Bosque Redondo reservation were unremittingly brutal and harsh. Navajo captives endured freezing winters and unforgiving summer heat. They were forced to labor for the benefit of the soldiers and live in pits in the ground. Starvation, disease, and sexual violence were epidemic. Although Navajos planted their cornfields, drought and pests destroyed the crops. The project to assimilate Navajos was a disaster. American officials reported that Navajo captives were stealing away from the reservation. By 1866 it was increasingly obvious that the Navajos' situation had not improved. The reservation's author, Major General Carleton, faced increasing criticism from several sources. Federal officials considered how to improve the efficiency of the reservation system, but the government in general was no longer willing to pay for the upkeep of the Navajos. The plan to turn Navajos into whites had cost U.S. citizens at least ten million dollars. A substantial portion went to contractors who had inflated prices for poor quality beef and other items such as clothing and blankets. The People were losing heart and threatening to rebel.[5] In the course of four years, over twenty-five hundred Diné died as a result of the forced march and the miserable conditions at Hwéeldi.

On 28 May 1868, peace commissioners Lt. Gen. William Sherman and Samuel Tappan negotiated a treaty with Barboncito, a Diné leader who had been selected by his people to represent them.[6] Navajos were grateful to see the Treaty of 1868 that allowed them to return to their homeland. On 18 June 1868, the People formed a column that stretched at least ten miles. The elders wept. The Diné were going home.

Back in their own country, the People struggled to reestablish their pastoral way of life and revitalize cultural practices. To this day, they have not forgotten the Long Walk and Hwéeldi. They remember those dark times with stories, songs, and poetry, which bear witness to the genocidal experience that their ancestors endured and, at the same time, honor them for their courage and perseverance. Diné poet Luci Tapahonso reminds young Navajos of their ancestors' trials: "You are here because of what happened to your great-grandmother long ago."[7]

Navajo Stories

After returning to their homeland, the Navajos were reluctant to speak about the overwhelming trauma of Hwéeldi. Gus Bighorse, a warrior who rode with the leader Manuelito, explained: "We take our tragic story with us, but

we can't talk about it. It is so terrible. Only if somebody would ask us a question, then we talk about it."[8] Even as Bighorse acknowledged the deep psychological and emotional scars from those dark years, he also voiced his need to tell his stories: "I want to talk about my tragic story, because if I don't, it will get into my mind and get into my dream and make me crazy."[9] Bighorse realized that stories, however traumatic, also had healing powers. Despite their deep doubts and hesitance about speaking of Hwéeldi, many Navajos eventually shared their narratives, which were often conveyed generationally within matrilineal clans.

The impetus to disseminate the stories of the Long Walk and the Bosque Redondo to the public was initiated by the land claims process in the 1950s and 1960s. White researchers hired by the Navajo tribe questioned Navajos, many of whom were elderly at the time of the interviews. These elders told stories about the Navajo experience under American colonialism during the mid-nineteenth century. Some storytellers had been children at the time of the Long Walk and the Bosque Redondo captivity, while others had heard the stories from their parents or grandparents. One of the first collections of oral histories to be published was *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period* (1973). The storytellers told of kin who never returned after being captured by slave raiders or who were killed as others hid and watched helplessly. When family surrendered at the forts, they arrived with little clothing or sometimes naked. In the face of starvation, they attempted to eat the crow and coyote, only to find these animals inedible. The strange American foods—white flour, rank meat, beans, and coffee—made them sick; many died from dysentery. During the forced march, soldiers shot elders and pregnant women who could not keep up. Women were raped and forced to sell their bodies for food. Sometimes new mothers killed their newborns because they did not want them to suffer captivity or because the child had been the result of rape.[10]

The ancestors' stories contain themes and features associated with an oral tradition. For example, in their narratives, the interviewees go back and forth in time, sometimes referring to the Long Walk and their years at Hwéeldi and then interspersing references to the massacre of Navajos by Spaniards in Canyon de Chelly in 1805—the site of the slaughter is known as Massacre Cave in Canyon del Muerto. They even mention the livestock reductions of the 1930s and 1940s. Significantly, by referencing the violence that the People endured from the Spanish to the American period, the storytellers declare a history of sustained colonialism that has not drastically

changed far into the twentieth century. The narrators acknowledge that, while only a few Navajo men were responsible for attacks on New Mexicans and Pueblo peoples, the entire Navajo population was targeted by the United States.

Perhaps the most salient feature of these stories is their stark reference to the brutality and cruelty that Diné ancestors suffered from American soldiers and the New Mexican slave raiders. The stories of murders, rapes, shootings, starvation, and deaths reduce listeners to tears. The storytellers' memories voice anguish, pain, and humiliation. Navajos are overwhelmed with sadness for ancestors who underwent such monstrous inhumanity. As my father Frank Nez told me about his grandmother's ordeal during this horrific time, *"Nihimásání dóó nihicheii tih dahooznii'. T'áá ał tsxo bikei tiháahoznii'. Ch'éi náh yik'ei tihdahooznii'"* (Our grandmothers and grandfathers suffered greatly. Everything that could be suffered and endured on this earth, they suffered and endured. The stresses were so great). According to Cherokee scholar Andrea Smith, the history of white-Native relationships demonstrates that the colonizers sought "not only to defeat Indian people but also to eradicate their very identity and humanity."[11]

Importantly, the stories also reference Navajo places and the significance of ceremony and prayer in the quest for survival and revitalization. Several of the storytellers note that the medicine people performed a ceremony to aid in the People's return to their homeland. Navajo stories graphically depict the utter inhumanity inflicted on the People, but in telling these accounts the narrators become part of the movement toward healing and reconciliation. These narratives present moments to reflect upon the Navajos' perseverance, courage, and integrity in the face of atrocity and prove once again the value of the traditional Navajo worldview and practices. The Navajos' truths, ceremonies, and prayers have ensured their survival and revitalization as a people.

American Historians, the Long Walk, and the Bosque Redondo

Just as Navajos have shared stories of their relatives' ordeals, non-Indian historians and other scholars have also offered their interpretations of this period in Navajo history. Although researchers have paid attention to Navajo perspectives about the Long Walk and Hwéeldi, they have filtered the Navajo experience through the rhetoric of American nationalist discourse. That narrative portrays the experiences of people of color as part of the

state's process to integrate them into the national mainstream. As anthropologist Elizabeth A. Povinelli suggested in her study of how the Australian nation has embraced its indigenous peoples, modern nations like Australia and the United States value aspects of indigenous cultures and laws in order to free themselves of their settler past and confirm their contemporary reputations as models of (post) modern multiculturalism.[12] Further, multicultural narratives that declare indigenous peoples have been successfully integrated into the citizenship body render invisible the structures of injustices and inequalities that keep Navajos and other Native nations dependent on the United States.

According to non-Indians, the Bosque Redondo experience transformed Navajos into model American citizens who willingly embraced the benefits of white civilization. In a similar manner, the deployment of the Long Walk narratives through the filter of Navajo nationalist discourse also presented the tragic events as the catalyst for founding the modern Navajo Nation. For example, in a 1980 publication, historian David S. Lavender described the result of the imprisonment at Bosque Redondo:

> Escorted by troops and carrying their possessions and their sick in wagons, the Indians, released in segments, began their long walk in June 1868. They took with them an improved knowledge of agriculture and vocational trades, better methods of constructing the hogans in which they lived, and an appreciation of the convenience of wagons. . . . The people as a whole had a fresh, strong sense of tribal unity, and a determination somehow to make their way peacefully in the Anglo world while retaining their own values.[13]

Lavender's conclusions about the meaning of the Navajo experience during the Long Walk reflect those present in American narratives about the Southwest. For example these histories present indigenous peoples such as the Navajos as the instigators against innocent incoming settlers and credit the United States as the bearers of peace and democracy to a war-ridden region. The idea that Navajos learned to accept peaceful means for living only after they had been brutally defeated praises the multiculturalism narrative. The ability of people of color to "walk in two worlds" has been one of the most prevalent Anglo constructions of Native people's experiences under American rule.

In 1985 historian Katherine Osburn responded to calls from scholars who charged that dominant American narratives failed to center Native people's responses to historical changes. She updated the history of Navajos at the

Bosque Redondo by examining captives' responses to the assimilation process. According to Osburn, Navajos relied upon a number of strategies, "a pattern of cooperation, resistance, and initiative," to survive. Navajos' reliance on their ceremonies and prayers was one major tactic for survival. Captives seemed to cooperate with assimilation plans by working on the irrigation ditches, farming crops, and learning trades such as blacksmithing and leathermaking. Captives also resisted the program in ingenious ways. Navajos "stole any available food and also produced some three thousand extra ration coupons."[14] Women were sometimes forced to prostitute themselves to obtain food, although Osburn hastens to note that Navajo women were "generally modest and decent, before and after the Bosque Redondo years."[15] Her concern that Navajo women not be unduly sexualized by the white male gaze is admirable. However, by refusing to acknowledge the prostitution of Navajo women as part of the conquest of indigenous peoples, she sustains the structures of violence in which many Native peoples continue to find themselves.

Historians and other scholars like Osburn have failed to illuminate the structures of domination and inequality that Native peoples face constantly. Dakota historian Angela Cavender Wilson chastises American historians for refusing to acknowledge the ways in which scholarship has ignored the ongoing impact of colonization on Native peoples:

> I have had ample time to reflect on my anger toward the vast majority of white historians who engage in research and writing about our past. Many have assisted in our colonization and the perpetuation of our oppression in myriad ways, including celebrating the myth of Manifest Destiny, making light of the genocide and terrorism experienced by our people. . . . More recently, many historians are guilty of focusing solely on the resiliency of Indigenous people while refusing to offer an honest and critical indictment of state and federal governments, leaders, and all the citizens of America who have been complicit in our bodily extermination, [our] cultural eradication, and assaults on our lands and resources. Most historians have been accomplices in a great conspiracy to ensure Indigenous subordination.[16]

In her essay, Wilson goes on to suggest that a reevaluation of Native peoples' historical experiences under American westward expansion will lead to healing and stimulate needed transformations within Native communities.

In 1998 historian Lynn R. Bailey delivered an interpretation similar to those of Lavender and Osburn in an update of his study on Navajos at the Bosque Redondo. According to Bailey, during the years of war with the United States, Navajos had a "choice" of either retreating farther into their homeland or surrendering and marching to the Fort Sumner internment camp. Enduring the prison camp, Bailey argues, was "not entirely without benefit." During their internment at Bosque Redondo, Navajos exhibited some art at farming, and the "irrigation system they constructed was probably the most intricate and best engineered in all of New Mexico." They replaced the digging stick with hoes, shovels, rakes, and plows. They learned metalworking to make nails, horse and mule shoes, and, of course, jewelry. One Navajo man acquired headman status after he demonstrated skill at forging iron.[17]

Scholars have perpetuated these favorable depictions of the Bosque Redondo experience. In 2003 reporter Bill Donovan interviewed anthropologist Martin A. Link about the reality of Navajos' experiences during the Long Walk. Link's assertions echoed American historians' work, declaring that knowledge about the Navajo experience has been mythologized. His arguments render Navajos' experiences under American colonization as somehow benign and even beneficial. Basing his conclusions on military documents and photographs from the period, Link claimed that U.S. soldiers treated their Navajo captives as humanely as possible during the forced march to Fort Sumner; that Navajos were free to leave the prison camp whenever they wished; and that, in addition to having enough to eat, they were also able to pursue industries such as weaving.[18] The contrast and tension between the narratives told by Navajos and by non-Navajo scholars illustrate not only the culturally distinct ways in which the past is remembered, but also the authority accorded to documentary evidence.[19]

One area of tension in mid-nineteenth-century Navajo history is Kit Carson. As a colonel of federal New Mexico volunteers, he commanded the military campaign that ultimately broke the Navajo resistance and led to their removal. In 2002 Navajo lawmakers, led by New Mexico state senator Leonard Tsosie, successfully derailed efforts to declare Carson's home in Taos, New Mexico, a state monument. Senator Tsosie declared: "You know, many of our people are still wounded by this. I don't think we should be recognizing someone who literally killed thousands of New Mexicans and that's what this individual did." Tsosie compared Carson to former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic, who was tried for war crimes.[20]

The opposition to memorializing Carson's home was so intense that the measure was set aside and has not been revived.

In a recent essay, historian Paul Hutton ventures reasons for the modern vilification of Carson. According to Hutton, Carson should be recognized as a frontier hero whose deeds mirrored those of Daniel Boone or William F. Cody. He says scholars like Peter Iverson and Clifford E. Trafzer, sympathetic to the Navajos, have had a large hand in Carson's disgrace and disfavor in the United States.[21] Carson, he argues, has been unfairly portrayed by a generation of scholars who interpreted Manifest Destiny as the imperial dispossession and oppression of Native peoples. Hutton insists that Carson was not responsible for the deaths of over twenty-five hundred Navajos and that his campaign directly caused the deaths of only twenty-three Navajos. Moreover, Hutton decries Navajos for their "remarkable historical amnesia" when blaming Carson for the federal Indian policy of removal and relocation and forgetting that they too had a long warrior tradition.[22]

The continuing tension between the meanings of the past is further evidenced by a recent move by Navajos in Fort Defiance, Arizona, to rename their main street. Years ago the Bureau of Indian Affairs named the street "Kit Carson Drive." Now Navajos hope to select a title more appropriate to Navajo sensibilities. Navajo community members also recommended that the Kit Carson Memorial State Park and Cemetery near Taos be renamed.[23] The debates are ongoing in the *Navajo Times*, as Diné and non-Diné argue about Carson's place in history.[24]

As is true of other historic sites associated with Native-white relationships, the memorial commemorating the Navajos' experiences under American colonialism is a topic fraught with controversy. With few exceptions, American narratives have consistently justified conquest and dispossession and denied the horror, violence, and inhumane treatment of the Diné and other Native peoples. Moreover, as Cherokee writer Jimmie Durham asserts, "In American morality, integrity and intellectual clarity are constantly stifled by a refusal to acknowledge the colonial nature of American nations, followed by the refusal to acknowledge the predicaments and rights of colonized peoples."[25] While most Americans fail to make connections between America's imperial past and the subjugation of its original inhabitants, indigenous peoples continue to bear witness to a past of injustices committed against them in the process of American conquest. Cherokee scholar Jeanette Haynes Writer declared that most Americans have viewed the 11 September

2001 attack on America as a watershed in American history in which the trespass of the country's safe boundaries by terrorists altered American reality. In contrast Native peoples have long experienced acts of terrorism instigated by the U.S. government and white settlers: "Forgotten or ignored are the United States' colonization, deculturalization, and oppression of Indigenous peoples through acts of terrorism." As Writer points out, acts of terrorism have been going on for over five hundred years.[26]

Rather than responding to the multicultural American narrative that purports to present all perspectives and historical experiences in a balanced manner, it is incumbent upon scholars, educators, and community members to insist on an analysis of power that interesects with race, class, and gender. Such scrutiny can then be linked to projects of political and social transformations that will move Navajo sovereignty toward a model that is founded upon traditional principles. Finally, Navajos are recognizing that they must acknowledge their own complicity in sustaining the injustices and inequalities that have shaped Navajo historical experiences.

A Century of Progress, 1868–1968

In 1968 Navajo leaders announced a series of cultural events to commemorate the signing of the Treaty of 1868. Like non-Navajo scholars, they declared that the treaty between the Diné and United States and the People's return heralded the birth of the Navajo Nation. From the 1960s to the 1970s, American historians characterized the survival of the Navajos under American conquest as mirroring that of Anglo frontiersmen and women in conflicts with Mexicans and Indians. For example Iverson explained the significance of the Navajo experience at Bosque Redondo and their return to their homeland:

> Previously, the Navajos had had things in common culturally, but politically there had been little centralization. They had lived in widely scattered locations, and authority was vested solely in local headmen. Their allegiances and frames of references were based on a far more limited area. But now things would be altered. They had gone through the common crucible of the Long Walk experience. Now, through the treaty of 1868, they would be returned to a portion of their old home country, but they would return to a reservation with strictly defined borders. Their political boundaries had been established: the Navajo Nation had begun.[27]

The image of a crucible—of people withstanding incredible odds—is common in American history.[28] According to this type of history, after surviving U.S. genocidal policies, Navajos agreed to become both American and Navajo citizens, their choice affirming America's story as a liberal nation that embraces multiculturalism.

One of the purposes of the 1968 anniversary events was to provide Navajo citizens with opportunities to reflect upon the meaning of the past one hundred years since their return from captivity. American nationalist notions of progress emphasized societal development toward a more civilized and democratic state (modeled on white civilized society) and a universal history inclusive of all people and cultures.[29] The modern Navajo government, which is founded upon the principles established in the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, asserted national sovereignty in the 1960s, a decade during which Navajo leaders fully embraced liberal ideologies as the foundation for their political system.[30] The events of the mid-nineteenth century were a portent for the formation of a Navajo nation. Navajo leaders and their non-Indian allies identified 1868 as a watershed that marked the beginning of the modern Navajo Nation and the accompanying discourse about the wonders of development for the Navajo people. At the same time, some Navajos formed grassroots organizations to empower their communities and condemn their leaders' support of policies that impoverished Navajos and kept them dependent on the federal government and internal white control.

The creation and perpetuation of a modern Navajo nation hinged on fostering a collective consciousness through cultural events and ceremonies. Navajo leaders collaborated with non-Indian and Navajo intellectuals and educators to implement cultural awareness of their national past.[31] Beginning in January 1968, cultural events took place throughout the year. These occasions included a round-up in June, Centennial Days celebration in July, and tribal fairs in August and September, culminating in a reenactment of the return from Hwéeldi along one of the routes that the Navajo captives had taken to and from Fort Sumner. The tribally owned *Navajo Times* and the *Gallup Independent*—a border-town paper—announced the centennial events and published images of Navajo progress. These images included photographs of the development of natural resources and exhibits of Navajos utilizing Western technologies for agriculture. Listing many accomplishments, the dominant Navajo narrative heralded the establishment of the modern Navajo government after returning from Bosque Redondo and the successful Navajo entrance into modern American society.

Navajo chairman Raymond Nakai delivered a speech at the opening of the centennial year that recapped the meaning of the one hundred years following the Navajos' return from their nightmare:

> The Century of Progress which we commemorate has not been an easy one hundred years. It was initiated by the tragic and heartbreaking "long march" from Ft. Sumner. It marked a struggle of a proud people, accustomed to roam unfettered over the vast expanses of this great western United States. It reflects the slow, but steady progress of our people to this very moment. However difficult has been our struggle, never was the faith of the Navajo people the least bit diminished in their ultimate place in society. Never did the Navajo despair. Always, he sought and fought for a better way of life. All in all, this past one hundred years does reflect great progress on the part of our people.[32]

Nakai's speech was published in two centennial publications: *Navajoland, U.S.A: First Hundred Years, 1868–1968* (1968) and *Navajo: A Century of Progress, 1868–1968* (1968). These two books explain that the political history of the Navajos prior to 1863 was essentially nonexistent and that the Navajo Nation emerged after the United States politically organized it in the 1930s and 1940s.[33] Both publications avoid discussing the violence that Navajos experienced as the Americans brought them "democracy" and "peace."

Many images from this period, which were disseminated in a number of fairs beginning in the early 1950s, celebrated the development of Navajo natural resources such as coal, natural gas, and uranium, which ostensibly meant that Navajos would have access to electricity, running water, and other modern conveniences. Monies from development projects would allow Navajo children to receive Western education. Benefits from modernity for Navajo women would include suburban-style homes and appliances that eased their domestic life. Certainly, for women, the messages about Navajo entrance into the modern nation also meant that they had accepted Western concepts of appropriate gender roles. At the same time that Navajo leaders heralded the benefits of modernity, they also expressed ambivalence, for modern life seemed to contradict Navajo cultural values. The images of prosperity were balanced with messages about the necessity of retaining cultural continuity with the past. As Povinelli has observed, such declarations have been interpreted as the successful integration of Native people into the modern nation; thereby rendering invisible the intolerance

and hatred of indigenous cultures that espouse distinctively different beliefs and values from those of the settler nation. Further, the discourse of the multicultural nation ensures that the United States does not have to acknowledge that it used coercion and repression to achieve its goal of assimilating its indigenous inhabitants into its polity.[34]

By the 1980s, however, fractures in the images of prosperity began to appear as critics noted that the Department of the Interior, which oversaw Indian affairs and was supposed to aid the Indian tribes, worked hand-in-hand with corporations to bilk the Navajo tribe out of much-needed monies. The development of natural resources such as coal, gas, and uranium, meant to ensure Navajos' arrival into mainstream America, did not improve their lives. In fact the growth was directly connected to the forced relocation of thousands of Navajos in northern Arizona over the span of several decades. The coal and uranium mining also caused environmental degradation.[35] The uranium boom left Navajo miners and their families struggling with death, cancer, and other consequences related to radiation exposure.[36]

Navajo leaders negotiated, and are continuing to negotiate, water rights agreements that benefit developers in the Southwest and American citizens, but have done little to alleviate the poverty of their own people.[37] The opening of the Navajo sawmill, which had been lauded as profitable, was closed after Navajos who formed Diné Citizens Against Ruining Our Environment (CARE), a grassroots organization dedicated to preserving Navajo lands and resources, raised questions about forestry practices that were destroying the natural environment. This questioning, combined with federal resource-management requirements, eventually led to the closing of the sawmill in Navajo, New Mexico.[38] Moreover, as postcolonial critics have pointed out, ideologies of nations, based on Western concepts, reinscribe relationships of hierarchy, domination, and asymmetry, including gender roles, which have included women's limited participation in the political arena.[39]

Native scholars such as Vine Deloria Jr., David E. Wilkins, Taiaiake Alfred, Andrea Smith, and Joanne Barker have problematized the roots of Native governments and articulated the ways in which those governments have become dominated by a foreign sovereign settler state.[40] Alfred, a Mohawk political theorist, calls for indigenous critiques that will demythologize Euroamerican conquest of Native peoples and enable a movement toward reorientation and recovery of indigenous politics and political traditions in their present-day societies.[41] The articulation of the Navajo past and the meaning of the Long Walk and the Bosque Redondo experience by

Navajo leaders in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s reflects the ways in which tribal governments have been co-opted by the United States. In addition continuous challenges by Navajo activists are forcing their leaders to question the doctrine of state sovereignty and white society's dominion over the Navajo Nation and its lands.

The Treaty of 1868 and the Bosque Redondo Memorial

The seeds to establish the Bosque Redondo Memorial were planted in the 1968 centennial commemoration. Over several decades, Navajos and their allies kept attention focused on the creation of a memorial. In 1968 the town of Fort Sumner bought a section of the Bosque Redondo and deeded it to the state of New Mexico for that purpose. Early on Navajo visitors to Fort Sumner noted that little evidence remained of the army fort and prison camp, where their ancestors had eked out a living. As a reminder of their ancestors' experiences, representatives of the Navajo Nation established a rock cairn to commemorate the spot on 14 February 1971.[42]

Gregory Scott Smith, manager of the state monument in 2003, acknowledged the bitter history of the relationships between Navajos and white Americans and declared the memorial's significance: "It will honor the memory of thousands of Navajo and Mescalero Apache people who suffered and died as a result of the forced relocation and internment. Moreover, it will celebrate the official birth of a sovereign nation born of the tragedy of the Bosque Redondo."[43] Like other memorials, such as the one to preserve the memory of the Sand Creek massacre in Colorado, the Bosque Redondo monument acknowledges the United States' record of injustices against its indigenous peoples. Perhaps the memorials will force Americans to begin questioning the facade of American superiority and exceptionalism.

In their remembrances of the Long Walk and the Bosque Redondo, Navajos have pointed to the Treaty of 1868 as an indication that the United States recognized Navajo sovereignty. A year after the 1968 centennial, the tribal council passed a resolution to name their tribe the "Navajo Nation." This official act affirmed and declared Navajo sovereignty.[44] On 1 June 1999, Treaty Day, Navajo educators and leaders brought the original treaty document from the National Archives in Washington, D.C., to Cline Library at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, for a yearlong celebration of Navajo nationhood. Thousands of Navajos journeyed to view the document. On Treaty Day, Navajos gathered at the university campus to

commemorate the Treaty of 1868. Sight of the treaty unleashed a flood of stories passed down through Diné memory. While the People remembered the nightmare of the 1860s, when Americans subjugated their ancestors, they also told stories of how their ancestors sacrificed to enable the People's return to their beloved homeland, where they could begin the process of rebuilding their lives.[45]

In 1992 the New Mexico State Legislature passed a House measure directing the Office of Cultural Affairs to establish the Bosque Redondo as a memorial to the Navajo people. With federal and state monies, a structure was created to house a museum and a visitor center. Although additional funding is required to complete the memorial site, the memorial officially opened on 4 June 2005.[46] Planners included Navajos in establishing the memorial and organizing the official dedication. However, they also expressed concern that all participants remain "civil" as Navajos and non-Navajos presented their interpretations of the Navajo past.

In November 2005, the National Park Service held a conference in Window Rock, Arizona, to invite Navajo responses to the proposal for creating a national memorial to the Long Walk and the Bosque Redondo experiences. A day of listening to testimony about the Long Walk and Hwéeldi made clear that the 141 intervening years had not dimmed the impact on Navajo consciousness; the People still remembered those dark years with pain and bitterness. Waiting patiently all day and listening to speakers explain the importance of establishing the memorial, local Navajo community members finally got a chance to share their stories. Just as their grandparents had heard and conveyed the stories to the next generation, the participants shared their own, which were filled with images of violence, hunger, sickness, and loneliness. There were moments when emotions threatened to overcome the presenters and the audience alike. At the same time that the People mourned, they also celebrated the courage and resilience of their grandmothers and grandfathers. Our ancestors who survived Bosque Redondo and returned to Dinétah had persevered by remembering the teachings of the Holy People. Our memories were a testament to the People's vision, courage, and resilience.

To what extent do American narratives of the past merge with Navajo memories? Do Navajo and non-Indian perspectives about the American past contrast dramatically? The official commemoration of the Bosque Redondo offers some clues. During the course of planning the events for 4 June, I served as a consultant at the request of the organizers. One coordina-

tor from a state office in Santa Fe requested my vita—to see if I might be qualified to speak—and solicited recommendations for speakers. The person cautioned me that "they" were interested in speakers who would not be controversial and who would not call the Bosque Redondo "a concentration camp." Although the planners and organizers hoped for a "civil" program throughout the dedication, Navajo leaders were forthcoming in naming their ancestors' humiliating and atrocious experiences at the Bosque Redondo prison camp. Navajo Nation president Joe Shirley Jr. said, "The story needs to be told, to serve as a reminder of the genocide and the holocaust that were perpetrated on a nation." Lawrence Morgan, Speaker of the Navajo Nation Council, said the memorial represented a "slaughterhouse" and that while not all Navajos supported the memorial it should become a tool for education and healing.[47] Other speakers such as Lt. Gov. Diane Denish hoped that America had learned something from this horrific time in history and that it would not be repeated. These speakers noted that the Navajo Nation, having survived this trauma, had grown stronger. It was, however, obvious on that same day that many Americans still had not made the connection between America's imperial past and the present imperial war in Iraq.

As Sen. Pete Domenici delivered his remarks, Nicole Walker, a Diné woman, entered the area where dignitaries sat, interrupted him, and began addressing the crowd. In memory of her ancestors who had survived the forced march to Hwéeldi, Walker and her family members had begun walking down U.S. Highway 83 to Fort Sumner at three o'clock in the morning. Her granddaughter carried the Navajo Nation flag for the contingent. Walker's grief, expressed in her wailing, moved the audience into a silence that could be heard. In the midst of Walker's interruption, reporters and photographers rushed to the front to capture for a larger audience this moment of fracture in the "official" program.[48] Certainly, Walker's dramatic performance indicates that Navajos still resist non-Indians' interpretations of their past, especially regarding the Long Walk and the Bosque Redondo. Navajo citizen Chester C. Clah wrote about the dedication in a letter to the *Navajo Times*:

> June 4, 2005, will always be remembered as a day of healing and it certainly gave me a spiritual boost. Our ancestors were at last recognized for their sacrifice and hardships they encountered. Tears were shed openly when Nicole Walker made her entrance wailing like our grandmothers did back then. I want to thank her for her undying

> effort to put across to the dignitaries what exactly the U.S. government put our people through. . . . Our ancestors were like Christ. They made the ultimate sacrifice to retain our homeland.[49]

Clah went on to urge his fellow Navajos to visit the memorial and pay tribute to our grandmothers and grandfathers. In February 2005, the Navajo Nation council decided not to support the state of New Mexico and the National Park Service's call to establish the Long Walk trail system. That vote indicates the ambivalence that many Navajos still feel toward speaking about their past.[50]

Conclusion

The Navajo experience under American colonialism elicits multiple interpretations and contested meanings. American accounts, insisting that Navajo "aggression" and "hostility" required the People's subjugation, sharply contrast with Navajo narratives that depict the genocidal legacy of U.S. expansion and settler nationhood. Further, Navajos embrace the messages that their ancestors survived the harshest conditions during the Long Walk so that they could found a new nation. Diné leaders fostered a collective Navajo consciousness in the mid-nineteenth century, which was a historical watershed. At the local level, Navajo storytellers continue to bear witness to their grandparents' trials and emphasize the brutality of the U.S. invasion.

Historian Waziyatawin Angela Wilson (formerly Angela Cavender Wilson) hopes that as researchers expose the truths of the U.S. past and rethink the historical treatment of America's indigenous peoples, Americans will move toward rectifying the ongoing oppression and injustices that indigenous peoples still face.[51] Navajo histories based on the ideals and characteristics of Western histories deserve to be interrogated as maintaining colonized spaces. Only then can the Diné move toward a society founded upon traditional principles.

Notes

1. Navajos refer to themselves as the Diné, which means the People. Throughout my paper, I use all three terms—Navajo, Diné, and the People.
2. Clara Sue Kidwell and Ann Marie Plane, "Introduction," in "Representing Native American History," special issue, *The Public Historian* 18 (fall 1996): 9–18; C. Richard King, "Surrounded by Indians: The Exhibition of Comanche and the Pre-

dicament of Representing Native American History," *The Public Historian* 18 (fall 1996): 37–51; Sarah Horton, "Where is the 'Mexican' in 'New Mexican'? Enacting History, Enacting Dominance in the Santa Fe Fiesta," *The Public Historian* 23 (fall 2001): 41–54; and Timothy Braatz, "Clash of Cultures as Euphemism: Avoiding History at the Little Bighorn," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 28, no. 4 (2004): 107–30.

3. Ronald H. Towner, *Defending the Dinétah: Pueblitos in the Ancestral Navajo Heartland* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003).
4. Neal W. Ackerly, "A Navajo Diaspora: The Long Walk to Hwéeldi," Dos Rios Consultants, Inc., 1998. http://members.tripod.com/~bloodhound/longwalk.htm.
5. Gerald Thompson, *The Army and the Navajo: The Bosque Redondo Reservation Experiment, 1863–1868* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1976).
6. Martin A. Link, introduction to *Treaty between the United States of America and the Navajo Tribe of Indians with a Record of the Discussions that Led to Its Signing* (Flagstaff, Ariz.: K.C. Publications, 1973).
7. Luci Tapahonso, "In 1864," in *Sáanii Dahataał: The Women are Singing* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1993), 8.
8. Gus Bighorse quoted in Tiana Bighorse, *Bighorse the Warrior*, ed. Noël Bennett (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1990), 58.
9. Ibid., 81.
10. Broderick H. Johnson, ed., *Navajo Stories of the Long Walk Period* (Tsaile, Ariz.: Navajo Community College Press, 1973).
11. Frank Nez, conversation with the author, Fort Sumner, New Mexico, April 2005; and Andrea Smith, "Rape and the War against Native Women," in *Reading Native American Women: Critical/Creative Representations*, ed. Inés Hernández-Avila (New York: Altamira Press, 2005), 65.
12. Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 42.
13. David Sievert Lavender, *The Southwest*, Regions of America (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 181, 182.
14. Katherine M. B. Osburn, "The Navajo at the Bosque Redondo: Cooperation, Resistance, and Initiative, 1864–1868," *New Mexico Historical Review* 60 (October 1985): 399, 401.
15. Ibid., 403.
16. Angela Cavender Wilson, "Reclaiming Our Humanity: Decolonization and the Recovery of Indigenous Knowledge," in *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, ed. Devon Abbott Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 79.
17. Lynn R. Bailey, *Bosque Redondo: The Navajo Internment at Fort Sumner, New Mexico, 1863–1868*, Great West and Indian series (Tucson, Ariz.: Westernlore Press, 1998), 197–99.
18. Bill Donovan, "Long Walk Steeped in Myths," *Gallup (N. Mex.) Independent*, 30 January 2001; Jennifer Nez Denetdale, "The Long Walk: A Response to an

Amateur Historian," *Navajo Times*, 8 March 2001; and Martin Link, letter to the editor, *Navajo Times*, 5 April 2001, p. A4.

19. Julie Cruikshank, "Discovery of Gold on the Klondike: Perspectives from Oral Tradition," in *Reading beyond Words: Context for Native History*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Toronto, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996), 434.
20. Leonard Tsosie quoted in Fritz Thompson and Loie Fecteau, "Kit Carson: Hero or Villain?" *Albuquerque Journal*, 3 March 2002, p. A1.
21. Paul Hutton, "Why Is this Man Forgotten?" *True West*, March 2006, 24–32; Peter Iverson, *Diné: A History of the Navajos* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002); and Clifford E. Trafzer, *The Kit Carson Campaign: The Last Great Navajo War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982).
22. Hutton, "Why Is this Man Forgotten?" 32.
23. Marley Shebala, "Fort Defiance Wants No Reminders of Kit Carson," *Navajo Times*, 19 January 2006, p. A3.
24. For example, see Camille Cazedessus II, letter to the editor, *Navajo Times*, 16 February 2006, p. A6; and Irvin Morris, letter to the editor, *Navajo Times*, 23 February 2006, p. A6.
25. Jimmie Durham, "Geronimo!" in *Partial Recall*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (New York: New Press, 1992), 56.
26. Jeanette Haynes Writer, "Terrorism in Native America: Interrogating the Past, Examining the Present, and Constructing a Liberatory Future," *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 33 (September 2002): 318, 320. Michael Yellow Bird also discusses these themes in "Cowboys and Indians: Toys of Genocide, Icons of American Colonialism," *Wicazo Sa Review* 19 (fall 2004): 33–48.
27. Peter Iverson, *The Navajo Nation* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 10.
28. See for example, David J. Weber, *Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest: Essays by David J. Weber*, Calvin P. Horn Lectures in Western History and Culture (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988); and Brian W. Dippie, *Custer's Last Stand: The Anatomy of an American Myth*, University of Montana Publications in History (Missoula: University of Montana, 1976). In his examination of how American historians have interpreted the Alamo, Weber declares that the enshrinement of the Alamo as a holy place and the sanctification of its defenders as martyrs has reinforced and intensified Anglo Americans' beliefs in American moral superiority over the "darker" races. Dippie's study examines the continuing popular story of Custer's last stand. Although Custer's men were soundly defeated by the Sioux and their allies, Americans have interpreted the battles as evidence of white Americans' determination to "stand to the last man," thus construing white American men as "heroes."
29. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith adds an indigenous perspective to poststructualist critiques on the examinations of history as an Enlightenment or modernist project that raises questions about history as a tool that colonizers utilize to buttress their authority over colonized peoples. See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York: Zed Books, 1999).

30. The Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) was legislation fashioned under Comr. Ind. Affs. John Collier and intended to "allow" tribal governments more control over their political and economic systems. Prior to the act, tribal leaders' decisions had to be agreeable to the federal government. For a history of the development of the modern Navajo government, see David E. Wilkins, "Governance within the Navajo Nation: Have Democratic Traditions Taken Hold?" *Wicazo Sa Review* 17 (spring 2002): 91–129; and David E. Wilkins, *The Navajo Political Experience* (Tsaile, Ariz.: Diné College Press, 1999).
31. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 1991), 6; and Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44 (summer 1993): 61–80.
32. Raymond Nakai, speech delivered at the official opening of the Navajo Centennial year, in Martin A. Link, ed., *Navajo: A Century of Progress, 1868–1968* (Window Rock, Ariz.: Navajo Tribe, 1968), 108.
33. Perry Allen, ed., *Navajoland, U.S.A.: First Hundred Years, 1868–1968* (Window Rock, Ariz.: Navajo Tribe, 1968); and Martin A. Link, *Navajo: A Century of Progress*.
34. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition*.
35. Donald Grinde and Bruch Johansen, "The Navajos and National Sacrifice," in *The Multicultural Southwest: A Reader*, ed. A. Gabriel Meléndez, M. Jane Young, Patricia Moore, and Patrick Pynes (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 204–20.
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University Press, 1999); and Joanne Barker, ed., *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005).

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42. Frank McNitt, "Fort Sumner: A Study in Origins," *New Mexico Historical Review* 45 (April 1970): 101–17; and Ronald L. Stewart, "Fort Sumner: An Adobe Post on the Pecos," *El Palacio* 77, no. 4 (1974): 12–16; and Ronald L. Stewart, "An Indian Shrine at Fort Sumner," *El Palacio* 77, no. 2 (1974): 36.
43. Gregory Scott Smith, "A Concern for the Future," *El Palacio* 108 (winter 2003): 19.
44. Iverson, *Diné*, 245.
45. Ibid., 36.
46. Jose Cisneros and Gregory Scott Smith, "The Bosque Redondo Memorial: Long Deserved, Long Overdue," *El Palacio* 108 (winter 2003): 14–18.
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