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THE WATER THAT SUSTAINS US:

INDIGENOUS RESISTANCES TO DEFEND THE ENVIRONMENT IN OKLAHOMA

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

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Environmental protection and resistance are essential to defend our natural environments, and I have gained immense inspiration from and admiration for the Indigenous resistances that I have encountered and researched for this thesis. This work is ultimately inspired by two sons,

Donovan and Zion, who I work for daily to help them sustain a world for their future…I am grateful for Mary and David Leslie, Jr., my Mother and Father, who taught me to appreciate nature and the natural world and to respect and care for all living species. I am also forever grateful to my extended family in Colorado, Minnesota, California, Washington, Texas, and Hong Kong. I am so thankful to all of the wonderful individuals that I am honored to call friends. Each of you is unique, and I am grateful for all of our time together. I am also in appreciation of our human family. We are all distinctly diverse and may that never change as we continue to come together through a globalized world. My mother taught me patience. Hopefully, through patience with each other, we can regenerate our interconnection to our natural world and our collective effort to defend all living species.

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Abstract

My research focuses on Indigenous people's resistance movements to safeguard and sustain their natural environments. I would affirm that Indigenous-led resistance movements and actions to preserve the environment protect the water and natural environment for all people. Indigenous resistance movements that safeguard and sustain water and the environment achieve three critical paradigm shifts that advocate for environmental justice and undermine exploitative cycles of systemic violence and environmental racism. They are: a promotion of Indigenous environmental justice resistances, where people and the natural world are interdependent and mutually sustaining; a disrupting (and decolonizing) of settler-colonial processes, specifically in Oklahoma; and a dismantling of neocolonial global structures in Indigenous resistances to environmentally-destructive industrial oil production and infrastructure development at Standing Rock, and in Ecuador and Nigeria. These bold, transformative processes of water protection are being actualized by Indigenous people.

Key words:

Indigenous Resistances, Environmental Justice, Decolonization, Environmental Racism, Environmental Sustainability

Chapter One

Introduction: Indigenous Resistances to Defend the Environment in Oklahoma

On April 13th of 2017, during Green Week at the University of Oklahoma (OU), which is organized by the Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability in order to raise awareness on environmental issues and advocacy, a panel spoke to a large audience in the Buskuhl Gallery in Gould Hall, the College of Architecture, to discuss the construction of the Diamond pipeline, an oil transportation pipeline. The panel was a collaboration between OU Green Week organizers and the Society of Petroleum Engineers at OU. The panel was comprised of: Casey Holcomb, OU graduate, independent journalist and policy advocate; Kevin Kemper, a practicing attorney and lecturer in the Native American Studies Department; David Sabatini, Director of OU's WaTER Center; Taiawagi Helton, professor of law; Kristen van de Biezenbos, professor of law; Mike Stice, Dean of the College of Earth and Energy; and Ramadan Ahmed, professor of petroleum engineering. The panel did not include any Indigenous speakers even though they had been invited previously, and an article in the OU Daily confirmed that the panel would have Indigenous representatives (Roper 2017), they declined to participate.

Casey Holcomb, policy advocate, was the first to introduce himself. The panelists seemed to be positioned in a gradation of their political viewpoints from left to right. One of the major concerns about the construction of the pipeline was the large number of waterways and wetlands that it would traverse. Plains All American Pipeline,[1] the oil transportation company, contracted

[1] Dr. Kevin Kemper did remind the audience that Plains All American pipeline was the company indicted with criminal charges for the major oil spill (140,000 gallons of heavy crude oil) in Santa Barbara County, California in May 2015. Kamala Harris found Plains All American pipeline was "charged with felony violations of state laws regarding the spilling of oil and hazardous substances into state water" (State of California Department of Justice 2016), and took the company to court to ensure that they paid for the damages, "up to at least $1.5 million in penalties" (Gorman and McWilliams 2018) and adequately orchestrated the clean-up of the area.

to construct the Diamond pipeline proposed that its route begin in Cushing, Oklahoma, also known as the "Pipeline Crossroads of the World," in the north-central part of the state and continue through Arkansas to Memphis, Tennessee crossing tribal land disturbing unmarked graves from the Trail of Tears in the eastern part of Oklahoma.

Because it was held during Green Week, many expected that the panel would consist of pro-environment, anti-pipeline representatives. Due to an effort to offer multiple viewpoints, the panel was composed of "prominent professors from both the environmental sustainability and petroleum engineering departments" (Roper 2017). The room was full of OU students, professors and citizens of the Norman community. As soon as the panelists began to speak, it was clear who in the crowd supported them by the cheers and applause they received. The panelists were given particular questions to answer, and their views represented a diverse cross-section of the perspectives at OU regarding environmental and ethical considerations regarding this particular oil pipeline's construction. However, there was still an element of division reinforced by the timing of the cheers from the audience members.

After the panel discussion was completed, Olivier Rey, journalist for the *Red Dirt Report*, asked me for a comment about the panel. At the time I was unaware Indigenous representatives were expected to attend the event and had declined to participate, so I responded that the panel had lacked an Indigenous Oklahoman perspective on the issue, considering opposition to the pipeline had been raised by several tribes in the state.[2] The closest to this was the views voiced

[2] In an article, "The Diamond Pipeline: What do eastern Oklahomans need to know?" in the *Tulsa World* on February 3, 2017, Seminole Nation member and director of the American Indian Movement, Michael Casteel of Tecumseh spoke at a news conference at the Oklahoma state Capitol with other leaders of the NoPlainsPipeline coalition, such as Ashley Nicole McCray of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe and Mekasi Camp-Horinek member of the Ponca Tribe, concerned about the pipeline's construction through Trail of Tears burial sites.

by Dr. Kevin Kemper who volunteered as an attorney for the Standing Rock Water Protectors Legal Collective[3]. He was at the Standing Rock Sioux resistance camp against the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline through ancestral Lakota Sioux burial sites as well as imminent pollution of the Missouri River. On the last night at Oceti Sakowin Camp, one of the largest resistance camps against the Dakota Access pipeline, Dr. Kemper describes, "before it was invaded and destroyed by the authorities" in January of 2017 (Diamond pipeline panel, April 13, 2017). Kemper was there, "when the explosions were going off…when you were breathing in and smelling smoke at the same time" (Diamond pipeline panel, April 13, 2017). He continues emotionally with, "people were screaming, guns were pointed at us; they had a rocket launcher…the armored vehicles, the militarized police" all in the effort to protect a pipeline.[4]

Dr. Kevin Kemper was also in North Dakota on Standing Rock Lakota Sioux land in September 2016, "the day after the guard dogs had the blood of Native Americans dripping from their lips… he was there and observed the desecrated graves…" bulldozed to begin construction of the Dakota Access pipeline (Diamond pipeline panel, April 13, 2017). His following questions to the audience reveal that violence against Native Americans has not ended, "Why was it necessary to beat them—to sic the guard dogs on them, to spray water on them when it was freezing?" (Diamond pipeline panel, April 13, 2017). These echo the questions that Dr. Kemper asked in the North Dakota courts as he defended over 800 people (including elderly and young

[3] The Water Protector Legal Collective offers free legal services for the hundreds arrested near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation (https://waterprotectorlegal.org/). The majority of arrests were peaceful protestors participating in civil disobedience to stand against the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline. Some of the court cases are still in process, or prison sentences given to demonstrators are now nearing completion almost two years later

[4] These quotations are transcribed from a recording that I made at the Diamond Pipeline panel (April 13, 2017) of Dr. Kevin Kemper recounting his traumatic experiences at Standing Rock witnessing the militarized response of the security and North Dakota police forces in January 2017 when the remaining Standing Rock camps were forcibly evicted.

mothers) who were arrested during the Standing Rock resistance and treated like violent criminals even though they were peacefully demonstrating on their ancestral land (Diamond pipeline panel, April 13, 2017).

For many people the "American Indian Wars," a series of wars and massacres during westward expansion, lasting from 1622-1924, had ended. The conflict that arose on the Standing Rock Lakota Sioux's reservation, and nearby, mimicked the same battles that occurred at the Battle and Massacre of Wounded Knee. In the Spring of 2016, on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, white men were still shooting Indigenous Americans with guns, albeit rubber bullets, but the fight over land and who it belonged to was still continuing in the twenty-first century. This echoes the position voiced during the Standing Rock resistance and elsewhere that this historical cycle of violence against American Indians[5] and Indigenous people is repeating itself—both overtly and systemically. This time the majority of Native Americans involved at Standing Rock peacefully, prayerfully, and non-violently stood against police and security forces heavily armed in full riot gear. They chose to be called *water* protectors, not protestors. Did Energy Transfer Partners, the company in charge of building the Dakota Access pipeline, respect tribal sovereignty of the Lakota Sioux in North Dakota, when it bulldozed through sacred burial sites? Did Plains All American pipeline respect tribal sovereignty in Oklahoma when it proposed and built the Diamond pipeline through unmarked graves from the Trail of Tears? The ethical ramifications of oil transportation construction need to be investigated further especially

[5] In the documentary film, *Urban Rez* (2013), Russell Means reclaims the term "American Indian." He explains that anyone who was born in the Americas is a "Native American." He believes that Native Americans should more accurately be known as American Indians. According to other interviewees in the film, it is an opinion with differing perspectives.

regarding the regulations of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) which offers federal protection of Native American grave and burial sites.[6]

The Indigenous resistance movement on the Standing Rock Lakota Sioux reservation is now simply referred to as *Standing Rock*. It has been considered one of the most powerful Indigenous-led, environmentally centered, non-violent movements that we have seen in the history of the United States. It brought together, in solidarity, tribes from all over the United States and the world, some of which historically were enemies. Ron His Horse is Thunder, former Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, explained that "this is the first time in this continent's history that this many tribes have come together in solidarity over one issue; there have been gatherings of this size but not with this many tribes united over one issue" (2016). *Defend the Sacred* by Kyle Bell, filmmaker from the Thlopthlocco Creek Tribal Town in Oklahoma, describes the event in this way, "Since April 2016, over 5,000 Indigenous people representing over 300 tribal nations gathered to stand in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux tribe in North Dakota" (2016). More people would continue to come through the Fall and Winter so that it was considered as large as some of the medium-sized North Dakota towns in the state.

The importance of *Standing Rock* is related both to the affirmation of Native American sovereignty rights and environmental justice, in response to the on-going violations of treaties, and human and environmental rights' abuses that continue in the modern day. Tom Goldtooth, leader from Indigenous Environmental Network, describes this as, "we have a corporate-controlled world and a corporate-controlled United States," and "it's about privatization of land" particularly the "taking of Indian land and Native lands;" *Standing Rock* is "becoming the apex"

[6] Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)(Public Law 101-601; 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013) states that its "second major purpose of the statute is to provide greater protection for Native American burial sites" (https://www.nps.gov/archeology/tools/laws/nagpra.htm, accessed March 18, 2019).

of these historical abuses (2016). The continual modern-day injustices are typically by corporate extractive industries, such as companies like Plains All American and Energy Transfer Partners. The first is the company responsible for the construction of the Diamond pipeline, and the second for the illegal[7] construction of the Dakota Access pipeline on Lakota Sioux land. From this historical perspective, it is clearer why Indigenous representatives declined to participate at the Diamond pipeline panel during OU's Green Week. It is related to the perpetuation of colonial processes and subtle ideologies, through the dominance of state institutions and actors that maintain these hegemonic and implicitly racist practices to this day.

Indigenous Resistances

Many Indigenous people have formed resistances or collective mobilizations globally to address the destruction of their environment and to thwart petroleum extraction and/or its transportation on their land via pipelines (Allard 2016; Bitterman 2016; Cepek 2018; Ereyitomi 2010; LaDuke 1999; McCreary and Milligan 2014; Sawyer 2004). These primarily peaceful resistances have been met with brutal military or police force killing, injuring, or arresting Indigenous citizens. This police brutality and the combative modern-day suppressions of Indigenous resistances, against the exploitation of their land, perpetuate cycles of systemic violence and racism, rooted in colonialism and settler-colonialism, against Indigenous people. To

[7] On June 14, 2017, Judge James Boasberg, in D.C. district court, ruled that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "failed to perform an adequate study of the pipeline's environmental consequences when it first approved its construction" and thus was considered to be illegally constructed (Meyer 2017). However, on August 31, 2018, the "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issued a decision affirming its original decision to issue a construction permit for the Dakota Access pipeline." Mike Faith, Jr., Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and Jan Hasselman, Earthjustice attorney have continued the battle in the courts, and in the words of Mike Faith, Jr. the operational pipeline represents "a clear and present danger to the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and its people" (https://earthjustice.org/features/faq-standing-rock-litigation, accessed March 18, 2019).

me, these reactions also resemble counter-insurgency tactics used throughout Latin America historically to suppress communist and socialist political movements. Both use systemic processes to control Indigenous and other populations from achieving authentic sovereignty.

For example, in the film *When Two Worlds Collide*, Alberto Pizango, president of AIDESEP (Interethnic Association for the Development of the Peruvian Rainforest) poignantly states that, "We are killing each other." He not only was referring to the violence that erupted in 2009 in Peru when police forces shot into crowds of Indigenous protestors, killing and injuring several people. He also was referring to the deaths of Peruvians from their government being enticed to promote neoliberal investment practices at all costs. As a result, Pizango led thousands of Indigenous people of the Peruvian Amazon to proclaim to the government that Indigenous land and the rainforest is not available for exploitation by foreign investors.

According to the UN Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention in 1989, "The rights of ownership of the peoples over the lands which they traditionally occupy shall be recognized. The rights of the people to the natural resources pertaining to their lands shall be specifically safeguarded" (International Labour Organization, 1989).[8] This still is not happening in the United States, Peru, or Ecuador. As I will examine in Chapter 5, regarding Ecuador, there are committed individuals working tirelessly for this ideal to come to fruition, and the protection of ancestral land of Indigenous people is vitally important for their livelihoods but also for the protection of integral natural resources on the planet. The father, of a police officer who was dismembered after he killed Indigenous protestors in the outbreak of violence near the Peruvian Amazon in 2009, speaks not in retaliation but asks, "What's wrong with this world when oil or a

[8] Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), Part II. Land, Article 14 & 15, Adopted in Geneva during the 76th ILC Session (June 27, 1989). (https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169, accessed March 18, 2019).

piece of gold is worth more than a human life?" It is this question that epitomizes one of the driving forces behind my research. If the social world that we live in values material and extractive resources more than human life, then we are devaluing our own existence. In Oklahoma, we are constantly faced with this reality. Our state is supported by the oil industry, but if it does not invest in the social institutions that sustain the people of this state, then our quality of life will continue to crumble.

Academic research and researchers have a role in changing these deadly processes of structural and physical violence. Particularly, Anthropology offers a unique perspective towards Indigenous advocacy. There are transformative steps beyond advocacy that can create sustainable and regenerative social and environmental change. If the cost of unregulated resource extraction is the "structural expendability" of human life (Steady 2009),[9] this will take us, as people, down a path of self-destruction. If we care more about extractive resources than clean water, air and land, we will have nothing left to sustain us. These are the larger systemic realities guiding my research, and how they can be transformed is what I am seeking to answer.

Oklahoma and Research Positionality

"You are on Stolen Land" is one of the most poignant messages of many Indigenous resistance movements in North America. When Dr. Kim Tallbear spoke at the American Anthropological Association's meetings in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2016, it was one of the first times that I had heard this adamantly communicated by an Indigenous American woman (November 19, 2016). Dr. Tallbear reminded her audience that Minneapolis was built on her

[9] Filomina Steady's (2009) work on environmental justice explains the concept of "*structural expendability"* where certain groups of people are deemed structurally expendable and are treated with a complete disregard to their well-being regarding industrial development primarily for extractive resources that also destroy the surrounding environment.

people's land and they did not give it away willingly. The forced removal and relocation of Native American tribes— in what is now the United States— is an integral part of the history of Oklahoma, as well.

Oklahoma is now the home of 39 American Indian tribes; 38 of which are federally recognized. Prior to European colonization, only four of these tribes lived in what is now Oklahoma, the Wichitas, Caddos, Plains Apaches, and the Quapaws. Seven other tribes sought refuge in what is now Oklahoma, before the height of westward expansion, without **direct** violent pressure or force from the white settlers and newly formed U.S. government; they are the Osages, Pawnees, Kiowas, Comanches, Delawares, Shawnees, and Kickapoos. While some tribes resettled in Oklahoma with less armed resistance, the majority were either marched, such as on the Trail of Tears, or violently forced to relocate to the state. They are the Absentee Shawnee, Alabama Quassarte, Cherokee, Cheyenne-Arapaho, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Citizen Potawatomi Nation, Euchee (Yuchi), Eastern Shawnee, Fort Sill Apache, Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Kaw Nation of Oklahoma, Kialegee Tribal Town, Miami, Modoc, Muscogee, Otoe-Missouria, Ottawa, Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, Ponca, Sac & Fox, Seminole, Seneca-Cayuga, Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, Tonkawa Tribe, United Keetoowah band of Cherokees, and the Wyandotte Nation.[10] I listed each tribe to give recognition to the people who live in the state of Oklahoma where their choice to live here was not always their own. The history and

[10] This information is on the American Indian Cultural Center and Museum's website under the link, "Tribes" and then "Oklahoma Tribal History" (http://www.theamericanindiancenter.org/oklahoma-tribal-history). The American Indian Cultural Center and Museum is a new space to honor the cultural history and art of Native Americans. It is in Oklahoma City that will open in 2021. The Senior Curator of the museum is Dr. heather ahtone. (She purposefully does not capitalize her name.) She was previously the James T. Bialac Associate Curator of Native American and Non-Western Art at the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art at the University of Oklahoma from 2012-2018.

contemporary positionalities of each person in Oklahoma rests on this past. We are all affected by the history of the land in which we dwell.

The University of Oklahoma, as well as many other large cities and urban structures were built on a homeland promised to Native Americans. After oil was discovered in "Indian territory," the already brutalized Native people of this country were again encroached upon by settlers who sought their land (Ashley Nicole McCray, recording at Diamond pipeline Tobacco planting ceremony, June 3, 2017). McCray expresses this historical tragedy during her acknowledgement that Indigenous people in Oklahoma have faced perpetual persecution and disregard to their sovereignty, and it is continuing still in the form of pipelines and other extractive industrial practices. She speaks about this as she and others ceremonially plant tobacco along the proposed route of the Plains All American Diamond pipeline. She is from the Absentee Shawnee and Oglala Sioux tribes, and she was the democratic nominee for Oklahoma Corporation Commissioner for the 2018 general election. She was also one of the founders of Stop the Plains All American pipelines in 2016 and Camp Oka Lawa, the resistance camp formed against the construction of the Diamond pipeline in 2017. The lack of consent related to the use and conquest of American Indian land is something that is still occurring today (Deloria 1969, LaDuke 1999). This modern-day encroachment of American Indian land is still continuing in Oklahoma and across the United States with accompanying violence. Understanding the research positionalilty of Oklahoma, as a state strongly tied to Indigenous Americans and the oil industry, gives a picture of both issues of exploitative land acquisition and compromises of Indigenous sovereignty perpetuated in the modern day.

Research Methodologies

The analytical frameworks that I used to shape my research on Indigenous environmental resistance movements are: activist and engaged Anthropology and research (Abu-Lughod 2014; Das 2015; Farmer 2005; Hale 2006; Scheper-Hughes 1995); Indigenous and feminist methodologies (Johnson and Madge 2016); a grounded theoretical perspective, and embodied research (Vacchelli 2018). My desire to study Indigenous movements that are protecting the environment arose from an issue of *National Geographic* from November 2015 entitled *Cool It. (The Climate Issue)*. It said what many of us have been hearing for decades that our unrestrained consumption of fossil fuels is taking our natural environment and once-balanced ecosystems down a path of no return. This makes me deeply sad as the natural world has been my source of comfort and inspiration since I was a child. It is where I experienced the divine for the first time. Growing up spending summers in the mountains of Colorado and on one of the many lakes in Wisconsin, profoundly shaped who I am as a person. The natural world also cannot speak for itself in words necessarily. The interdependence between humans and nature is essential for our mutual sustainability and survival.

I sought to explore what Indigenous environmental movements were occurring in the world, but also in my country and state. I wanted to understand what made them unique. It seems that the Indigenous environmental resistance movements in Canada have achieved many relative successes. Standing Rock in the United States would unsettle this wave of Indigenous victories, so to speak. However, Standing Rock is a victory of spirit and a symbol of unification around a common issue to *defend the sacred*.[11] The spirit of resistance of *Standing Rock* has continued to

[11] *Defend the Sacred* is a unifying message spoken at Standing Rock but also is considered to be a rallying cry for other environmental activists and movements who have carried on the spirt of Standing Rock. It is also the title of a short film directed by Kyle Bell (2016) featuring Native actor Adam Beach.

grow and spread around the world to inspire other Indigenous resistances to defend the environment.

Activist Research and Anthropology

In this section, I will briefly discuss the anthropological theoretical frameworks that informed my understanding of activist research. Nancy Scheper-Hughes, cultural anthropologist (1995) warned of the "chameleon-like ambidexterity of the politically uncommitted" or the "non-committal" anthropologist (411). In other words, the focus on purely objective research, in disciplines outside of Socio-Cultural Anthropology, can ignore harmful social conditions and cause the researcher to be pressured to remain neutral in contexts that require an ethical response. Scheper-Hughes states that this was why she followed the urgings of her *companheiras* when they called her towards active participation in mobilizing for social change to help them improve their lives.

In my own work, when I have witnessed suffering, I have felt compelled to do whatever possible to alleviate it, following in her example. One of the most difficult aspects of this is that a great deal of the suffering in the modern world is deeply ingrained in systemic forces and transforming the actual causes of the suffering can be extremely difficult. Scheper-Hughes (1995) calls on anthropologists to not get lost in "theoretical abstractions and rhetorical figures of speech" when describing the real horrors of political violence where "suffering is aestheticized," and as a result, "minimized and denied" (417). This is one of the most immediate challenges of research-driven writing in academia. Theorizing, as well as the practice of cultural relativism, can bury the acuteness of suffering unintentionally. As Scheper-Hughes advocates, I believe that an element of understanding complex social issues is participating in them empathetically.

Charles R. Hale (2006), cultural anthropologist, addresses the distinction between "activist research" and "cultural critique." Although he is very much an advocate of activism in the anthropological field, he believes that the "cultural critique," or the theoretical constructions that arise from "activist research" are influenced in an essential way by participating in the related social activism. Hale describes it as being a process of the critical knowledge that the researcher gains causing them to advocate or align their convictions with the investigated political or social cause (2006:98). This is a process of commitment to addressing the injustices that are observed in the world by a positioned social researcher with ethical obligations.

Hale views "activist research" as direct engagement with the community in struggle where dialogue is used throughout the entire process, so that the type of the research and its effects are shaped by both the people in the community and the anthropologist (97). As anthropologists, what is our responsibility to those who are suffering? Veena Das, anthropologist who works on issues of collective violence and social suffering, wrote that, "suffering that is assimilated within the normal…is much more difficult to decipher," (2015:1). Paul Farmer, medical anthropologist and physician, wrote that "extreme suffering…is seldom divorced from the actions of the powerful" (2005:42). As social science researchers, it is an integral element of the research process to identify the particular causes of injustice that are being documented or investigated and to explore how these are being implicitly maintained through powerful social actors to their own benefit.

Lila Abu-Lughod (2014) suggests two approaches that are integral to "writing against culture," or a deconstruction through writing of the existing power structures maintained through "culture." First, using "*connections,"* more specifically "interconnections, historical and contemporary" that describe the global and historical forces that impact the subject and place that

is being studied. This is why I focused on my research positionality earlier to expand on the importance of an acknowledgement of the historical connections between my contemporary research and the past injustices that have shaped present realities. Second, Abu-Lughod incorporating "*ethnographies of the particular"* where the emphasis on specificity breaks down the fixed construction of "othering" (392-393). I seek to follow Abu-Lughod in my focus on particular individuals in Oklahoma and how they have shaped environmentalism in diverse ways. Their narratives are integral to understanding the whole picture of what is occurring presently regarding environmental justice initiatives in Oklahoma.

Indigenous Methodologies and Embodied Research

When I began to consider what type of fieldwork in which I wanted to participate, I already was acutely aware of my presence as a researcher and how that might affect the types of interactions that I would have. I wanted to explore Indigenous environmental justice resistances, but in no way did I want to embody the role of the oppressor, colonizer, or settler as a non-Indigenous researcher, or be the systemically-inept Anthropologist that Vine Deloria, Jr. expertly critiques in their lack of tangible benefits given back to the community from the completed research (Deloria 1969). The two ways that I sought to challenge this historical categorization were to meet the people that I interviewed on their own terms and to compensate them considerably. I experienced discord with this only when I was attempting to meet particular deadlines created by my academic institution regarding the completion of my thesis (Johnson and Madge 2016:89). When I was reaching the end of my fieldwork's completion timeline goal (when I wanted to have all of the interviews completed), I felt rushed to set a time to do my last interview, even though it seemed to be an inconvenience with my interviewees. Eventually, I

decided to allow what was best for them to become the deciding factor of when we would meet. In our attempts to arrange a time to meet, I battled mentally with my social positionality worried that she did not want to meet with me because I was associated with a university.

The other way that I decided to practice *empowering research* due to differing social positionalities between the researcher and my interlocutors was to contribute directly to their well-being through our interactions. Jay T. Johnson and Clare Madge (2016) highlight "*empowering research*" as that which seeks to contribute to a betterment of the individual's lives who are involved directly in the research. The research must be collaborative, and the product must add to "the process of increasing the social, political, spiritual, and economic, and/or psychological potential of individuals and communities" (Johnson and Madge 2016:77). I sought to create this dynamic reciprocity from the beginning of my research through contributing financially to the efforts of Good Hearted People Camp, an Indigenous-led camp in Harrah, Oklahoma led by the two individuals I interviewed. After I received the Morris E. Opler[12] Research Grant from the Anthropology Department at the University of Oklahoma, I was able to compensate the leaders of Good Hearted People Camp in the interviews we did during my field research.

As I have analyzed the specific methodological framework and research methods that I utilized, I came to the realization that the approach that informed my research in an implicit way was an embodied one. I use this term to specifically identify the way that my particular position was affected by the new experiences and ideas that I encountered, but also how I hoped to intentionally use the position of my body, as a researcher and participant, to critically understand and purposefully communicate these intentions. *Embodied Research* is a research methodology

[12] Morris E. Opler was a prominent scholar of Native North America, past President of the American Anthropological Association, and a faculty member of the Anthropology Department at the University of Oklahoma.

that explores how the presence of the body impacts the interactions in the research and the research itself, which is similar to the self-reflexivity that is utilized in social science research, where the researcher analyzes their possible influence as a researcher. *Embodied research* emphasizes the ***interactions*** between the researcher and interlocutors even more than a self-reflexive approach, which I appreciated. While it is extremely important to understand your social position as a social scientist, an exploration of the different interactions that arise from this is crucial to utilizing *empowering research* methods as well.

As a dancer, being acutely aware of the movements of the body is familiar to me. *Embodied Research* methodologies are gaining momentum regarding the effectiveness in working with marginalized communities. Elena Vacchelli (2018) describes embodied research as crucial for "the deployment of noninvasive approaches to working with research participants in vulnerable situations" (1). In my experience, it was the connection to my embodiment that propelled my research further. Because I am experiencing a world that is faced with extremely urgent environmental challenges, I would like to employ my research focus to navigate and better understand these complexities in relation to how I can interact with other individuals living in the same place but experiencing these challenges in different ways.

Particular Methods and Chapter Overview

My research began with a close examination of the *Standing Rock* resistance as an Indigenous-led environmentally-centered movement, I followed the news reports meticulously. News of the struggle were somewhat limited to independent media sources and individuals posting live feeds to social media of abuse that they witnessed or experienced. Also, the filmmakers of three particular documentaries that were released after the height of the resistance

offered up-close footage of the movement.[13] I wanted desperately to travel to Standing Rock to offer solidarity and other support, but financial constraints left me in Oklahoma with my two sons, the youngest being only 1 years old. As a single mother, I am deeply committed to my two sons but also to preserving the natural world for them to have a safe and healthy environment to live. This was a constant theme of what I heard from other mothers who participated in Standing Rock directly or from afar.

The following year after the Dakota Access pipeline was completed in 2017, I was to begin fieldwork for my Master's thesis. I knew that I wanted to use a grounded theoretical approach that would allow me to discover the most prevalent themes (determined from the fieldwork, not predicted prior to its inception) to become my focus rather than a pre-designed research agenda that predominantly influenced what I was looking for in my research and fieldwork. What I discovered was that the spirit of Standing Rock had spread across the country, and in Oklahoma, Indigenous Americans were mobilizing to defend their land from non-consensual, settler-colonial pipeline construction. The two particular Indigenous environmental justice resistances that I witnessed in Oklahoma were against the Plains All American-Red River and Diamond pipelines which were under construction, consecutively, in 2016 and 2017. The first was during the same year as the Standing Rock mobilization, and the second, which was inspired by it, occurred the following year. Like the Dakota Access pipeline, the construction of both pipelines was eventually completed; (the Red River pipeline was completed in January 2017, and the Diamond pipeline in January of 2018). It cannot be ignored however that what Indigenous

[13] *I Stand: The Guardians of the Water*, directed by Kyle Kauwika Harris of the Choctaw Nation (shown at Norman Film Festival 2017); *Akicita, The Battle of Standing Rock*, directed by Cody Lucich of the Maidu Tribe in Northern California, Official Selection for Sundance Film Festival 2018; *Awake, A Dream from Standing Rock*, directed by Josh Fox (who directed *Gasland*), Myron Dewey, James Spione, Screenplay by Floris White Bull are the three films.

environmental resistances have achieved is monumental in many cases. A legacy of environmental protection through collective resistance is continuing at this very moment in Louisiana at the L'eau Est La Vie Camp against the Bayou Bridge pipeline, which is the final stretch of the same pipeline that originated in North Dakota. The *Water Protectors*[14] of the L'eau Est La Vie Camp that are leading the resistance against the Bayou Bridge pipeline are being met with similar police and private security opposition and violent arrests that the Standing Rock *Water Protectors* also faced. The police and private security are protecting the interests of Energy Transfer Partners, the same company that was in charge of constructing the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota.

In Chapter two, I will examine previous literature on Indigenous environmental justice movements and also how predominant concepts of what is considered to be the "environment" endangers people and limits the parameters of environmentalism. In further chapters, I will highlight three key paradigmatic shifts that I found to be evident in Indigenous resistance movements to protect the environment led by Indigenous people that are transforming these dominant cultural constructions. Indigenous resistance movements to defend the environment achieve: Indigenous environmentalism, where people and the natural world are inseparable and interdependent (Chapter two); a disrupting (and decolonizing) of settler-colonial processes, specifically in Oklahoma (Chapter three and four); and a dismantling of neocolonial global

[14] Indigenous demonstrators preferred to be called *water protectors* instead of protestors. "The term water protector started before the latest standoff. But it's a term that environmental activist Dallas Goldtooth and everyone at the camp insists on using. The word 'protester' is negative, he says. It makes Native people seem angry and violent for protecting their resources" (Herrera 2016). There is a current *Water Protector* website (https://www.water-protectors.com/) that describes the "Mission," "Goals," and an invitation to receive updates and volunteer or action opportunities.

structures in Indigenous resistances to environmentally-destructive corporate oil production and infrastructure development at Standing Rock, and in Ecuador and Nigeria (Chapter five).

In Chapter three, I offer a regional overview of Oklahoma as the setting of my research. It includes a brief history of the discovery of oil and the Native American ownership of the respective land rights. It then outlines significant contemporary events and predominant conceptions related to challenges for supporting Indigenous environmental justice in Oklahoma. Chapter four focuses on Good Hearted People Camp and their resistance to the dominant structure. Chapter five highlights other Indigenous resistance movements nationally and internationally to defend the environment and their victories as well as challenges. Early in the chapter, I give a slightly more in-depth look at the beginning of Standing Rock's arising movement and then look at resistances in Ecuador and Nigeria, particularly with the Cofán and the communities of the Niger Delta. The main commonality of all of these resistances is that they are seeking to resist rampant pollution from corporate oil production and transportation on their land. Chapter six offers a summary on what I was able to achieve with my research and a discussion of potential directions for future avenues of social change towards environmental protection.

I was fortunate to receive a Morris E. Opler Memorial Scholarship from the Anthropology Department at the University of Oklahoma as a research grant. It was significant enough to allow me to conduct interviews with the leaders of Good Hearted People Camp, at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, and in Cushing, Oklahoma with both oil equipment manufacturing and transportation CEOs offsetting travel costs. I conducted two interviews at each site which was a smaller number than I had hoped, but it was a realistic number given the amount of time that I had to complete my fieldwork. As I had intended, I also gathered information through

participant-observation at the public demonstrations, events, and meetings that I attended, particularly at the No Plains Pipeline - Red River Pipeline Demonstration (September 2016), the Diamond Pipeline Panel (University of Oklahoma, April 2017), Earth Rebirth Benefit Weekend for Camp Oka Lawa (August 2017), Good Hearted People Camp's Opening Weekend (October 2017), and Norman's Board of Adjustment meeting concerning horizontal drilling permits in Lake Thunderbird's floodplain (January 2018). I also supplemented my field research with current multi-media resources such as related news articles, films, music, art, and social media live feeds (or recordings from resistance actions). I also focused my academic research on environmentalism and Indigenous resistances to defend their environment, particularly in Nigeria and Ecuador, as well as at *Standing Rock* and in Oklahoma. As I had hoped, I became more immersed in the environmental movements of my state particularly the ones led by Indigenous people to defend their way of life and the environment.

Chapter Two

Indigenous Environmental Justice Movements

The term *environmental racism*[15] can be defined as the systemic control of environmental contaminants or degradation, to exploit one racial group over another as far as exposure to environmental contamination, risk of air and water pollution, or harsh chemicals or toxic substances being in close proximity. It is used by environmental justice activists and advocates, to describe situations of environmental injustice. There have arisen more significant critiques of environmentally unjust policies as far as pointing out the connection between certain racial groups experiencing more acute exposure to environmental pollution, or environmental racism (Checker 2007; Cole and Foster 2001; LaDuke 1990; Waldron 2018). It many cases, there is an intersectionality evident and *environmental classicism* can be defined with a similar analysis. It is also "the poor" who are affected the most by environmental discrimination (Cunningham 2017; Myers 2018; Nixon 2011). Javier Auyero, sociologist, and Débora Swistun, anthropologist state that much of the previous ethnographic work "on poverty and marginality in Latin America" (aside from that of medical anthropologists Paul Farmer, Nancy Scheper Hughes, and others) "has failed to take into account one simple, essential fact: the poor often breathe polluted air, drink polluted water, and play on polluted grounds with dire consequences to their current health and future capabilities" (2008:361).

Historically and in the modern-day, the amount of direct intentional violence that Native North Americans have experienced is genocide. It continues to exist now through **structural,**

[15] According to African American Voices in Congress (AVOICE), Dr. Benjamin Chavis, director of the United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice (CRJ), first used the term in his grassroots activism campaigns "in response to an incident in Warren County, North Carolina" in 1982 protesting the site of a chemical landfill. This protest, "though unsuccessful, garnered the attention of national civil rights leaders and environmentalists and is commonly recognized as the birthplace of the Environmental Justice Movement" (http://www.avoiceonline.org/environmental/history.html, accessed March 19, 2019).

systemic, and symbolic violence. In particular, it continues in the form of environmentally racist practices, or the exposure of a particular group of people to harmful pollutants. Currently, the ecocide of Native American Indian land is the primary form of systemic violence that threatens Indigenous communities across North America (Blackhawk 2006; Brook 1998; Churchill 1993; Grinde and Johansen 1995; LaDuke 1999). Daniel Brook (1998) states that the United States has approved and even colluded in **environmental genocide**[16] against Native American people, specifically with toxic military dump sites on or extremely close to tribal lands. Winona LaDuke (1999) affirms this, in *All Our Relations*, where she describes the majority of nuclear/ uranium waste repository sites were positioned directly adjacent to American Indian and First Nation people's reservations and land. Also, there are close to 1,000 abandoned uranium mines within the Diné (Navajo) Nation boundaries (LaDuke 1999:97-111). These practices are reproducing a historical cycle of violence against Indigenous people and their land and can be considered both ethnocide and ecocide,[17] simultaneously.

Certain scholars and writers have offered a critique of the human-centeredness of the Anthropocene epoch, which is a descriptive term for the geo-historical time in which we exist where humans are impacting the planet more than any other era. It is true in many regards that humans and their activity, are responsible for this very rapid destruction of the Earth and in many

[16] *Environmental genocide* is deliberate fatal degradation of the environment in order to harm intentionally or willful negligence particularly orchestrated by a powerful entity against an under-represented or disenfranchised ethnic group or people. Another related term to this is *sacrifice zones* or *sacrifice areas*, where environmental destruction is so devasting human life is at severe risk living in the area. Gregory Hooks and Chad L. Smith (2004) discuss this in the abandonment and testing of lethal chemicals by the U.S. military in the same counties as Native American land.

[17] *Ethnocide* is genocide or killing large groups of people based on their identification with a particular group. Ethnocide is more particularly related to the intentional killing of groups of people related to their ethnic identity. It is often related to forced assimilation or cultural genocide.
Ecocide is an equivalent term first used by Arthur Galston, plant biologist, "to describe the willful destruction of the natural environment… which ultimately harm[s] humans and wildlife" (Hay 2013).

cases, the irreversible transformation of the climate and environment. It is more accurate that **not all humans** are responsible **for the same** "carbon footprint," or amount of environmental destruction occurring (Klein 2014; Malm and Hornborg 2014). Andreas Malm's (2015) main critique is that, "blaming all of humanity for climate change lets capitalism off the hook" (1). He lists six reasons—ranging from the steam engine's invention by the power elite who controlled the means of production, British imperialists discovering coal in India, and industrialization of China by foreign companies to exploit their labor capital—that point to a small elite group of powerful individuals' control over industry (Malm 2015:3). Acknowledging these historical and contemporary conditions, explains why climate change can be linked to a smaller group of financially-powerful individuals than all of humankind. Naomi Klein (2014) also explains the same predicament, that the decisions that would avert environmental catastrophe are the same ones that threaten the power held by an elite minority. This can also offer explanations as to why Indigenous members of the global population will experience harsher impacts from the climate crisis as opposed to more privileged individuals.

Anna Willow and Sarah Wylie (2014) describe the ***detachment*** and depression that occurs in people who have to live in or near environmentally degraded places. They specifically state that more anthropological, sociological, and ethnographic investigation needs to be conducted on the "experiential dimensions of energy development," how it literally affects the bodies of the people in close proximity of this development. Willow and Wylie highlight the work of Deborah Davis Jackson (2011) who came up with the term "*dysplacement"* to describe how the presence and perceptions of pollution in close proximity to people can "transform formerly positive sensory experiences of place to experiences of profound alienation" (226). Therefore, even though people are not actually experiencing displacement, the environmental degradation that

they are tangibly living with can evoke the same response or ***detachment*** to their surroundings, or where they feel conditions of "*dysplacement"* (Willow and Wylie 2014:226).

The people living in Oklahoma, currently, live in a state and region that is influenced heavily by the oil industry. Even the University of Oklahoma is supported by the revenue from the petroleum industry. Therefore, the people of Oklahoma who have lived with similar conditions of "*dysplacement"* may need to consider how conditions of petroleum dominance have become normalized or naturalized into patterns of symbolic and structural violence against the livelihood of the land and people. ***Structural violence*** is systemic violence that threatens an individual's livelihood or right to life. Johan Galtung (1969), peace scholar and founder of the Peace Research Institute in Oslo, Norway, defines **s*tructural violence*** as societal structures that maintain practices that cause violence to humans in the way that they prevent them from meeting their basic needs for survival. ***Environmental violence***[18] is a structural violence against the environment and natural landscape where we dwell,[19] which threatens both humans and the environment's ability to survive or sustain the necessities for survival. Environmental violence needs to be examined more extensively through social science research related to its effect on human health. Both structural and environmental violence reconstruct Indigenous and other people's relationship to their environment, transforming humanity, and altering what it means to be human by hindering our ability to sustain ourselves from our natural environments.

[18] The term environmental violence is an extension of Galtung's "structural violence" analysis. While this term is not overly prevalent, it is used by Williams (2010), and I would suggest that it describes exactly what is occurring as far as structural violence against the environment, where the environment is not able to sustain itself through its natural processes.

[19] I use the term "dwell" here in the manner in which Keith Basso (1996) (drawing on Martin Heidegger, and he notes Sartre and Edward Casey also) uses to describe the concept of place as a more central analytical focus than an "ancillary," or supportive (Basso 1996:158) one. As I see it, also, a less subordinate position which could be used in an analysis of the perceptions of the environment in western cultural narratives.

Indigenous Concept of Living Beings as the Different Attributes of the Environment

Craig Howe and Tyler Young,[20] (2016) anthropologists, describe the Mni Sose, or Missouri River, as a "living being."[21] They further personify the river with the following imagery:

> She flows from the confluence of two smaller rivers whose headwaters are in the Rocky Mountains. Her sinuous body weaves through three states and creates a border between four more before sinking her mouth into the Mississippi River, not too far north of Cahokia…Her waters and riparian areas provide sustenance to countless living beings.

How could changing discourse and rhetoric about our natural environment, enhance the public, political, and economic value of its protection? Do we value human life over our environmental partners or relatives: rivers, trees, lakes, soil, grass, animals, flowers? Animals seem to rest between human life and natural landscape categories or geographic formations. The key question to consider is how would changing the way we speak about the environment change our relationship with it?

Alecia Onzahwah, Native activist, founder of Indigenize, Inc.[22] and Good Hearted People Camp in Oklahoma explained how the very word "thing," that is used so commonly in the term

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[20] Craig Howe is the director and founder of the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, and he is an enrolled citizen of the Oglala Sioux tribe. Tyler Young is a research assistant at the Center for American Indian Research and Native Studies, and he is a science teacher at St. Francis Indian School (https://culanth.org/fieldsights/mnisose, accessed March 18, 2019).

[21] This was published in a forum of *Cultural Anthropology* called "Hot Spots" which began in 2011 "to report on current 'hot spots' in the world from the perspective of anthropologists—and others—on the scene." They are short timely pieces only 500-700 words from "scholars/activists/students directly involved with the crisis" (https://culanth.org/fieldsights/275-hot-spots). This particular piece "Mnisose" is from the collection, "Standing Rock, #NoDAPL, and Mni Wiconi" compiled by Jaskiran Dhillon and Nick Estes in December 22, 2016 (https://culanth.org/fieldsights/1010-standing-rock-nodapl-and-mni-wiconi).

[22] Indigenize, Inc. is a company founded in 2014 by Alecia Onzahwah and Tosawi Saddler "to strengthen Native families by strengthening Native communities." They offer both *Fatherhood is Sacred* and *Motherhood is Sacred* workshops and classes (https://www.facebook.com/IndigenizeInc/, accessed March 18, 2019).

"living things," diminishes our relationship to the "living beings" that make up our world. The word "thing" is usually associated with objects and it often has an underlying implication of something of little personal value or worth, or something that easily can be replaced or mass-produced. She says that by referring to the natural world and its inhabitants as "living things" instead of "living beings" maintains this exploitative relationship with the living beings of our natural world (Personal Interview, June 20, 2018).

Several activists, scholars, and journalists have pointed out that it is Indigenous people who are defending the living beings in the natural world (Akipa et al. 2006) that cannot speak for themselves in words. Kathryn Akipa (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate), Craig Howe (Oglala Sioux), Lanniko Lee (Cheyenne River Sioux), Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate), and Lydia Whirlwind Soldier (Sicangu Lakota) share their personal reflections on Mni Sose (the Missouri River) in "Reflections on Mni Sose after Lewis and Clark." It is a collection of each author's response to the view of "the river as the actor" not "simply acted upon," and their perspectives on "the meaning of the river" to each individual. It is also a written work that describes each author's relationship embodied between the river and "your family" and "your tribe" (Akipa et al. 2006:79).

Howe and Young (2016) point out that the protection of the Missouri River and the land surrounding it is not a new endeavor for the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. They were instrumental in another fight to protect their land related to the proposed building of five dams as a Pick-Sloan project to prevent flooding. Whenever the flooding was still occurring on the lands previously belonging to the Standing Rock Sioux and the Three Affiliated Tribes, which had been sold for an extremely low price, the tribes "took the lead in calling for a return of their lands that were not inundated" by flood water (Howe and Young 2016). In 1985, the Joint Tribal Advisory

Committee (JTAC) was established by the Secretary of the Interior to investigate these claims, and "the resulting report called for monetary damages to be awarded and excess lands returned" to the tribes (Howe & Young 2016). This was a victory of sorts.

Prior to this, the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 was originally created to bring more sovereignty to Native American tribes and create less interference from the U.S. government in their affairs. The constitution of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe was written shortly after this act was passed. It plainly states that, "the (Standing Rock Sioux) tribe has jurisdiction over all 'waterways, watercourses and streams running through any part of the Reservation'" (Howe and Young 2016). Hence, this was how the birth of the *Water Protectors* of Standing Rock and across the country came to be. They see it as written into their history and constitution to protect all of the water that is on their land.

Predominant Concepts of Environmentalism and Contradicting Cases

What are the differences in the ideologies of Indigenous peoples towards environmentalism, and how do they complement and contradict predominant or mainstream ones? Do Indigenous people have the political sovereignty and leverage to stand against multi-national companies, governments, or a combination of the two? This particular categorization, as Indigenous environmental justice movements, has the potential to empower these resistances further. This has changed or intensified in the last decade with the continual clashes with extractive industries and Indigenous people defending their ancestral land. The mainstream definition of environmentalism in the United States has a tendency to be *ecocentric*, meaning that it focuses on the non-human natural environment exclusively. However, a perception of the environment that is solely *anthropocentric* is equally problematic. If the predominant western

perception of the environment is detached or segregated from sociological processes (Beck 2010) or anthropomorphic systems, then the human species suffers from a lack of interconnection to our natural world (Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina 2016). In other words, environmentalism, as a constructed concept, excludes human's interdependence on the natural world. I will explain possible reasons for this separation of the natural (non-human) environment and social worlds, and how in many instances this is perpetuating environmental injustice.

Ulrich Beck (2010) writes "if the 'environment' only includes everything which is not human, not social, then the concept is sociologically empty" (674). Drawing on Beck's analysis of the predominant concept of what is considered to be the 'environment,' I wish to contrast how Indigenous environmentalisms are structured around the interdependence rather than the separation of humans from the natural environment, what is commonly known as plants, animal species, and natural landscapes and how this differs with western concepts of environmentalism. Environmental problems that affect humans directly cause this categorization, of the environment as not interdependent with humans, and vice versa, to be challenged. Indigenous environmentalisms focus on the integration and interdependence of humans with the natural world.

Ulrich Beck (2010) also highlights Weber's view of the human consumption of natural resources as an "insatiable appetite" that has actual "unseen consequences" for humans as well as for the environment. It is the consequences of this for humans that have been under-examined (Beck 2010:255). The conceptual separation of the environment from human processes is often linked to modernization, as a process of segregating civilized society from untamed nature. In other words, modernity is categorized as technologically dictated and confined to spaces where nature is controlled or kept, quite literally, outside. Beck references Talcott Parsons as

reaffirming this that "modern society 'lives more and more outside nature'" (2010:255). This separation of humans from the natural world also points to the predominant perception that environmental problems can be solved by modern technological or scientific advancements where humans are superior to the natural world. A relationship of interdependence with the environment is emphasized by Indigenous people's traditional cultural practices, and it is essential to understand what the possibilities are for regenerative and sustainable development practices.

The climate change debate often is framed around the negative effects of human actions on the environment, especially those related to "basic concepts and institutions of first, industrial, nation-state modernity" (Beck 2010:256). Indigenous environmental justice resistances affirm this caution. What Beck is suggesting through a "greening of modernity" and a more "reflexive modernization" is precisely about the mutually-dependent relationship of humans and the environment that Indigenous environmentalisms and environmental justice movements advocate. Therefore, the perception of a separation of nature and humanity, or the environment and humans, is impossible because the two exist (and survive) symbiotically.

Ulrich Beck (2010) also asks the question of where the necessary public support of a "greening of modernity" is going to come from. He believes it must be the type of support that crosses lines of race, class, politics, ideologies, nationalities—and I would add cultures. The answer to Beck's question has begun to occur most recently in the Indigenous mobilizations that have gained cross-national, and multi-cultural, racial, and class support, such as the Standing Rock Sioux resistance in North Dakota. Led by Indigenous people, initially Indigenous youth, this civil resistance movement has brought together people from diverse cross-sections of class,

race, and culture to form a unified multi-cultural mobilization against corporate oil, particularly the building of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

David Bond (2013) further illuminates the political strategy of categorizing the environment, as exclusively non-human natural processes, or as entirely separate from humans' well-being and health, as a political technique to undermine environmental catastrophes. His work is critical of the aftermath and "clean-up" efforts of the BP Oil Spill in the Gulf Coast in 2010. A year after the oil spill, public meetings were held to "elicit public input on how to fix the environment" (694). One woman who spoke stated, "'The water and air are poisoned. The environment is killing us'" (Bond 2013:694), or rather the spilled crude oil is polluting the land and water that sustain us. As the citizen's bodies reacted to the toxicity of the petroleum in their water and their health deteriorated, they sought medical attention and chose to bring their concerns to the public forums. The federal officials who were leading the meetings explained that they were there to discuss "damages to the environment" and their "concerns" would be "best addressed elsewhere" (Bond 2013:695). One frustrated woman asked, "'Do you not think the health of the environment is related to the health of the residents?'" (695). Quite the opposite, according to Bond, the federal officials conducting these meetings were attempting to keep stories of human contamination separate from the category of the environment, and the project of restoring it did not include human welfare or healthy residents. Bond states definitively that the forced separation of the environment from human health outcomes "articulates the emerging categorical fault lines between the public and the environment," and how the "making (and remaking)" of the category of the environment has direct consequences for people (2013:695). Therefore, the category of the environment is maintained politically in order to downplay the severity of environmental damage and how it directly affects people nearby. These public

meetings would have been run differently if environmental clean-up was directly connected to the health of the residents.

In “Flammable,” (the pseudonym created by social scientists, Javier Auyero and Débora Swistun of an actual town in Argentina), there was never a collective realization that their health problems were related to the rampant pollution in their surrounding environment. This was related to the lack of awareness of the contamination of their land and water because it was so “slow and gradual” that “their daily routines were never disrupted” (Auyero and Swistun 2008:369). As Rob Nixon (2011) depicts with his concept of “slow violence” that environmental violence is often invisible due its gradual impacts. In other words, there was no exact “tipping point,” (Beamish 2000 in Petryna 2015) a term that Adriana Petryna (2015), anthropologist, uses to discuss the point when conditions of global warming go beyond a point of no return. This is in contrast to a silent permeation of “chemicals gradually accumulated in the ground, streams, and bodies” (Auyero and Swistun 2008:369).

If there is no clear tipping point or marker of highly toxic or sensationalized contamination, it is difficult to determine how exactly humans are being affected and to what degree. Petryna describes that it is possible that there will be no warning, only a “blindsidedness” caused by the denial of possible environmental threats or the disbelief or non-awareness of their consequences. Petryna (2015) writes that, “blindsidedness is a manifestation of extreme isolation and lost time” (150). Just as some believe that the health of the natural environment is not intrinsic to our survival, this denial may be an extremely isolated perspective, one of little interconnectedness that could lead to deadly consequences. Moreover, there are those who deny the science proving climate change, but still cling desperately to “Enlightenment-era baggage” (Shapiro 2015:369) that science will save them from the annihilation caused by environmental catastrophe, without

acknowledging that the cause of this destruction was, in fact as science determined, human-made.

Javier Auyero and Débora Swistun (2008) describe a phenomenon called the "labor of confusion." This occurs when people are somewhat aware of their contamination but choose to believe other narratives, or as Hannah Arendt (1968) describes, "practical lies." The often invisibility of environmental pollution is compounded by the difficulty to pinpoint where the toxicity is coming from, until the body becomes physically ill (Shapiro 2015). These changes remain tacitly experienced but not explicitly articulated or protested. Due to the difficulty to actually see these toxic pollutants in many cases, it is difficult to identify them as the cause of diminished health for people who are exposed to them, similar to oil seeping slowly into the earth. In many cases, sickness become silently internalized.

Rob Nixon (2011) accentuates the environmental activism of Rachel Carson and Wangari Maathai to shed light on their fight to expose the "slow violence" evident in both pesticide pollution and desertification. Carson and Maathai exposed the industrial development complex's environmentally destructive and life-threatening practices in their respective countries, the United States and Kenya. Carson's case relates to chemical pesticides and Maathai's thwarting rampant deforestation of natural native forests by large scale agricultural and neoliberal development projects. They both decided it was worth risking their own lives and professional reputation to uncover what was slowly killing the environment and people that it sustained. As a result, they experienced deadly political backlash from the powerful actors that were threatened by their knowledge of these environmental transgressions. In many cases, the public is unaware of slow environmental (and systemic) violence due to the gradualness of its processes; therefore,

it was difficult to actually detect the subtle toxic transformations that were occurring in and to the environment, and in the process, directly harming people (Nixon 2011).

In many situations related to toxic environmental pollution, the people who experience the contamination first hand are unable to determine the exact source of the pollution, and often discount its existence. Just as Nixon (2011) describes a "slow violence," or an implicit systemic violence caused by human actors to the environment— but also unperceived by the same or different actors, or in this case the victims of the toxic contamination—the breakdown, or "labor of confusion" that occurs is also extremely political (Auyero and Swistun 2008). The "social production of toxic uncertainty" is maintained by various actors with vested interests in perpetuating ambiguous and uncertain perceptions of the surrounding environment and its level of toxicity or danger (Auyero and Swistun 2008). The toxicity of the pollutants in the environment is determined not by the actual situation but often by what is favored to be the most optimal condition for the powerful actors to maintain corporate profit.

In Oklahoma, one example of humans being directly affected by environmental pollution, particularly water pollution, is the poisoning of groundwater sources by wastewater injection wells, which dispose of the fluid by-products of hydraulic fracturing (or fracking) after extraction of petroleum and natural gas. This negatively impacts eco-system health because it contaminates potable water sources. Currently, this is an extremely important issue in Oklahoma that many Indigenous environmental protection groups have organized against, as well as the construction of pipelines which also endanger drinking water sources. If the environmental resources, or the water and land sources, that quite literally sustain us are polluted beyond viability, we will no longer be able to survive. Environmental pollution is not and can never be considered separate from us, as humans. It affects the very sources of our human survival. If the pollution of

groundwater sources is not viewed as an actual threat to human survival, and the problem spreads to contaminating all fresh water aquifers beyond safe standards of drinking water, then what is at stake for **all** people is our collective and individual survival as humans due to a lack of clean water sources.

Human relationships with the environment are constrained by political and economic factors in the modern world. How are these changes in awareness of interdependence with the environment impacting humans? Indigenous resistances are leading the ideological shift from environmentalism being about only non-human beings to being related to human's interdependence and interconnection with their natural surroundings and these living beings. If the natural world is polluted beyond viability, humans are affected both directly and indirectly related to proximity, food and water source contamination, or destruction of our natural environments. When the natural world becomes a part of us, or a relative, as it is referred to in many Indigenous ontologies and languages, we become a part of it as well.

Chapter Three

Oklahoma's History and Contemporary Situation: Disrupting Settler-Colonial Oil Industrial Practices

The black gold of Oklahoma, or petroleum-oil, is a commodity that is deeply embedded in the land of our state, both historically and presently. Oil, and the manufacture and extraction of it, functions as a seemingly integral part of our modern world. However, its cost can be high, economically and environmentally, and when its production and transportation is mismanaged, it can be catastrophic and deadly. Indigenous resistances in Oklahoma and the United States continue to uncover its toxicity when spilled in large quantities above ground and the threat it poses to fresh water sources.

In Oklahoma, oil was discovered by Lewis Ross, the brother of Chief John Ross of the Cherokee Nation in 1859, in what is now Mayes County. In the same year—according to Muriel H.Wright (1926), who wrote, "First Oklahoma Oil was Produced in 1859," published in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma*[23]—the "world's first deep well was drilled" in Titusville, Pennsylvania, producing 25 barrels a day for the first year. A little earlier in the same decade, "green oil" was discovered in certain wells and springs in the Cherokee Nation in Oklahoma and was said to have potent healing properties against ailments such as rheumatism. Notable to mention, as well, the first oil company in Oklahoma was the Chickasaw Oil Company organized in 1872 (Wright 1926:17-18).

In 1884, both the Cherokee and Choctaw Councils of each Nation respectively passed acts "for the purpose of finding petroleum or rock oil and increasing the revenue" of each Nation

[23] Originally, I found the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* reproduced online. When I went to visit the particular site again, I was unable to locate it. Fortunately, I found the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* in Oklahoma State University's digital collections (https://cdm17279.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p17279coll4/id/4892/rec/14, accessed January 11, 2019).

(Wright 1926:19). Initially, "the concessions granted by these acts were assigned to Doctor Faucett," a founder of the oil industry from Pennsylvania. They "covered the exclusive right to produce, transport by pipeline, and refine petroleum throughout the Cherokee Nation…and in the Choctaw Nation from the Arkansas and Canadian rivers to the Red River… a total of nearly 20,000 square miles or about 13,000,000 acres" (Wright 1926:19). In 1885, on January 3rd, the U.S. Department of the Interior stated in a letter that the Cherokee "are quite capable of determining, without the aid of the Interior Department or Congress, what is to their advantage or disadvantage. The government cannot interfere with their rightful use and occupation of their lands, which are as rightfully theirs as the public domain of the United States" (Wright 1926:20). In 1890, Edward Byrd gained mineral leases from the Cherokee Nation and drilled his first well in Rogers County near Chelsea, Oklahoma, where oil was found at just 36 feet below the surface. However, neither this well, nor the one completed by Dr. Faucett and the Choctaw Oil and Refining Company in 1888, could produce commercial level quantities; this well became known as the "Old Faucett Well" (American Oil & Gas Historical Society).

It is interesting to note that the American Oil & Gas Historical Society article, "First Oklahoma Well" gives two seemingly different descriptions of how the Nellie Johnstone No.1 well got its name. One is that it was named after the Native Delaware woman who owned the land that the well was on, and the other is that it was named for William Johnstone's six-year-old daughter (perhaps they were the same person). The first Oklahoma well, Nellie Johnstone No.1 would later become famous for being Oklahoma's first "gusher" at 1,320 feet below the surface and with a production of about 50 to 75 barrels of oil each day. However, like the other wells, there was a limited market and transportation accessibility for the oil, so the well was capped for two years. This was in 1897. Still, according to the American Oil & Gas Historical Society, the

Nellie Johnstone No.1 well "ushered in the oil era for Oklahoma Territory"— producing more than 100,000 barrels of oil in its duration. In just ten years following this oil discovery, Bartlesville's population increased from 200 to more than 4,000 inhabitants, and Oklahoma's oil production increased "from 1,000 barrels to over 43 million barrels annually." It was this level of oil production in Indian Territory that spurred on the process of Statehood in 1907. Between 1897 and 1907, Oklahoma was known for being "the largest oil-producing entity in the world" (American Oil & Gas Historical Society). The discovery of oil would drastically change "Indian Territory," where so many Native Americans had been forcibly relocated or fled for their lives from settler warfare in what is now Texas. "Indian Territory" would become the state of Oklahoma in 1907, and it would experience an influx of settlers again wanting the land that had been promised to the American Indian tribes.

Close to thirty Osage were murdered for their oil rights in the early turn of the 20th century. David Grann wrote *Killers of the Flower Moon: Oil, Money, Murder and the Birth of the FBI* in 2017, uncovering this dark history that few people know about in the present day. It describes what happened to the people of the Osage Nation, in Pawhuska, Oklahoma, when oil was discovered on their land. Lee Cowan interviewed Grann for CBS, who explained that, "By 1923, the Osage collectively received that year more than $30 million, which today would be worth the equivalent of more than $400 million. And this was being split up by a group of about 2,000 people" (Cowan 2017). The Osage built mansions, drove fancy cars, hired white servants, and the town of Pawhuska was booming. According to an NPR interview with Dave Davies, David Gann described the Osage wealth as "one American might own a car, each Osage owned 11 cars," and according to the press at the time, the Osage were referred to as, "the red

millionaires and the plutocratic Osage" (Gross 2017). They were considered to be the richest people in the world during this era.

However, the U.S. government did not let the Osage manage their oil fortunes.[24] Each Osage person was referred to as a "ward" and assigned a "white guardian," to protect them from "mismanaging their new-found wealth" (Cowan 2017). However, systematically, one by one the wards, or Osage millionaires, were murdered. Between 1921 and 1925, the official count was 27 Osage people were shot, poisoned, pushed off speeding trains, or their houses were bombed. It became known as the "Reign of Terror" (Cowan 2017). One of the murders took place on federal land, so the newly formed FBI was called to investigate. William K. Hale—the most "powerful" white man in Osage County who had no oil rights—had his nephew, Ernest, marry an Osage woman, Mollie Burkhart, whose family had accumulated a large oil fortune. Hale was eventually taken to court and tried for the murders, and it became clear that Ernest was planning to murder Mollie to gain her family's oil rights.

These horrific events and murders are a perpetuation of the genocidal practices that occurred during westward expansion and the conquest of Indigenous land in what is now the United States and Canada. The petroleum oil industry's construction of pipelines and other infrastructure that is continuing today on Native American ancestral land and burial sites can be considered "settler-terrorism" in many instances. The land of American Indians is still being encroached upon and stolen by "settlers" to this day through eminent domain policies utilized by oil pipeline construction companies to secure the land to build the pipeline. One of the contemporary forms of violence occurring against Indigenous Americans is environmental in

[24] Despite the previous letter by the U.S. Department of the Interior written to the Cherokee in 1885 about their autonomy and sovereignty in managing their lands, even though their lands were also considered the public domain of the United States (Wright 1926:20). This, however, did not set a precedent regarding the Osage's right to manage their oil revenue.

nature, meaning that the land that is theirs is being treated in a violent manner, regarding its exploitation and the lack of consent for infrastructure projects by corporate oil companies. In the next section, I describe an interview with a president of an oil equipment manufacturing company based in Cushing, Oklahoma. His perspective was different than I had predicted it to be, but he was still certain that pipeline infrastructure was the best way to transport oil across the country.

Perspectives on Environmental Ethics from Oil Industry CEOs in Cushing, Oklahoma

Oklahoma is ranked as the 7th highest producer of oil in the United States. The dependency and dominance of oil in the United States is still an issue hinged around transportation and whether or not pipelines or rail transportation is safer to transport domestic and imported oil. Now that Indigenous environmental movements have revealed that pipelines constructed under or in close proximity to water sources are potentially harmful to people nearby or downstream, we might need to reassess our so-called "dependence" on oil. Pipelines also have become an integral element of the United States' endeavor to domesticate its oil supply, and decrease reliance on foreign suppliers, like the Middle East. The political prisoners in Iraq who became members of ISIS could be considered a consequence of the U.S. being at war there. Thus, corporate oil companies are continuing to construct pipelines across the country to transport oil domestically. It is the disregard to Indigenous sovereignty and the environmental degradation of the land that is the most problematic.

Kenny Longbrake, President of AKL, Oilfield Supplies Services and Catholic Deacon in Cushing, Oklahoma articulated that Native Americans have not only experienced a history of injustice and unfair treatment but also have not been able to take care of their "own business"

because of federal requirements to go through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). This was towards the end of our interview in his office in Cushing. He also conveyed a belief that pipelines are much safer than rail transportation of crude oil, and the standards enforced by the Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) have improved immensely from fifty years ago. He began the interview explaining that almost all of the pipelines and the oil in the United States comes through Cushing, Oklahoma[25] and even the Wall Street price per barrel of oil incorporates delivery costs to Cushing. He explained that within the last 5-10 years the United States has become "oil independent" from overseas importation. "I love our land and I hate to see a spill on it," but he said that a rail car explosion would be a lot worse as far as the cost of human life. Longbrake compared it to polluting a lake and killing all of the fish versus losing human lives from an explosion. Of course, the pollution of a lake could cause health problems for people, as well. He discussed the poor water quality of Drumright, Oklahoma which was caused by a lack of past regulations regarding waste water from oil fracking not being re-injected deep enough below groundwater sources. The saline and extremely high salt content of the waste water is even more deadly and toxic than oil from a spill, he explained.

When asked about using alternative energy, he answered that many of the oil storage tanks use solar panels to heat the oil, and he was definitely not opposed to alternative energy technology. "I am an environmentalist. I live out in the country. I raise my own cattle and own feed." We discussed why someone in the oil industry might not want to talk to an environmentalist. He explained that "some environmentalists are so anti-oil," and he felt zealots on either "side" were too extreme. He further articulated that the new standards of operating

[25] Cushing, Oklahoma, is also known as the "Pipeline Crossroads of the World." It is where the Keystone pipeline enters and is redirected South as well as several other pipelines that traverse the country. Cushing's oil storage capacity can also store up to 85 million barrels of oil. In 2016, it was measured that Cushing's crude oil storage tanks of various companies in total held 58.5 million barrels of oil.

horizontal drilling operations are strictly enforced by the Oklahoma Corporation Commission and the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency). He saw the waste water injection wells as being more environmentally hazardous than a pipeline spill. He did critique the U.S. culture of "it's all about me" and "don't tread on me," meaning everyone has a right to do whatever they feel is right, but he actually voiced an appreciation for the OCC and their regulations due to this.

The Native Americans own a lot of the mineral rights in the state of Oklahoma, but it has been passed down through generations so the number of people who own them now has increased significantly, Longbrake explained. We then drove to see the Trans Canadian system, or where the Keystone pipeline comes into Cushing, also known as the "pipeline crossroads of the world." The oil storage tanks in Cushing are primarily divided into 250,000-barrel oil tanks, which we drove by to view. They are extremely large cylindrical white tanks, somewhat close together with ladders to the top of each one. The logo of the oil company that owned each one was painted on the side of each enormous oil tank. The oil storage tank parks in Cushing, Oklahoma have the capacity to store up to 85 million barrels of oil. In 2016, it was measured that Cushing's crude oil storage tanks of various companies in total held 58.5 million barrels of oil.

This Spring, I also spoke to the CEO[26] of an oil transportation company. He received a Master's degree in Environmental Science focusing on the bio-remediation of soil from Oklahoma State University, and he worked as a pipeline construction engineer after completing his degree. He explained that he decided to re-route a pipeline that was set to go through a particular section of property because the landowner told him that a boy was buried in the back of his property. He conveyed the same concern regarding pipelines constructed with disregard

[26] The University of Oklahoma IRB consent forms that I used did have an option to be quoted directly without identification. This is what he preferred to do, and he declined to have our telephone interview recorded.

toward American Indian burial sites. He believed they should also be re-routed, and it is not ethical to build through grave sites. If he had been the pipeline construction engineer with Energy Transfer Partners who decided the route of the Dakota Access pipeline, the grave sites of the Standing Rock Sioux would have been protected. One of the primary reasons for the initial outrage around the construction of the Dakota Access pipeline was that it went directly through grave sites of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe (Colwell; Hersher 2017). The continual disregard of Indigenous sovereignty is an indicator that settler-colonialism still exists and is operating through instances such as the nonconsensual construction of the Dakota Access pipeline. The next sections describe the Indigenous resistances that occurred recently in Oklahoma in opposition to nonconsensual pipeline construction in tribal jurisdiction areas of the Absentee Shawnee, Cherokee, and other tribal nations.

Resistances to Plains All American - Red River Pipeline

Plains All American pipeline proposed an investment of $500 million to build a new pipeline to transport crude oil from Cushing, Oklahoma to Longview, Texas; "A portion of the 350-mile-long, 16-inch pipeline," also known as the Red River Pipeline, would run through eastern Cleveland County where Norman is located, and under Lake Thunderbird (Hampton 2016). The pipeline, in theory, would have the capacity to transport 110,000 barrels of crude oil per day. However, the risks of leakage or spill into Lake Thunderbird, Norman's major water source, concerned citizens and activists. Several organizations and individuals have been mobilizing in opposition to the Red River pipeline since its first proposal. The organizations that became active during 2016 were Stop Plains All American Pipeline, the Oklahoma chapter of the Sierra Club, and Earth Rebirth. All still have an active social media presence and have promoted

demonstrations and publicity films to raise awareness about the damaging effects of pipelines, particularly to water sources and soil contamination. Students and faculty from the University of Oklahoma have been involved in the mobilizations against the Red River pipeline. On August 24, 2016, Dr. Stephen Ellis, associate professor in Philosophy at OU, spoke to the members of the Board of Adjustment of Norman City Council to "appeal the permit previously granted" for the Plains All American Red River Pipeline (Bitterman 2016, Bonnet 2016).

I joined demonstrators against Plains All American on the corner of Main and Porter in downtown Norman on September 7, 2016 with my son, Zion, who was one and a half years old. It was a busy time for that intersection around 6 pm. There were approximately 50-70 demonstrators when we arrived. We joined my close friend and her 11-year-old son, and she gave us an artistically-made hand-sprayed sign to hold that read, "No Plains Pipeline."



Stop the Red River Pipeline Demonstration, September 7, 2016, Norman, Oklahoma

There was an Indigenous woman and mother near us with her three children, two sitting in a wagon. I admired her courage to bring her children with her. One of her older sons held a sign. An older man in a truck pulled over to heckle us. He asked how any of us were going to drive our cars without having pipelines. My friend answered him that they weren't needed. He responded that most activists still drove cars and it didn't make sense to him why they were demonstrating against something that they used. I had walked over to talk to him and explain that there are many environmental risks, and we need to begin transitioning to alternative energy sources such as solar and wind, as well as alternatives for cars. He seemed to think about it briefly but still didn't seem convinced as he drove off after making a couple more comments about the need to drive cars. After receiving lots of supportive honks from other drivers, we crossed the street to gather together with the remaining demonstrators and celebrate our solidarity and plan for the next action. What was significant about this demonstration was that it was part of a series of demonstrations in response to the Norman's Board of Adjustment committee's granting a permit for the Red River pipeline. People from all different multi-racial and cultural backgrounds were a part of these civil demonstrations. The first was on August 24, 2016, after the Board of Adjustment announced its decision at Norman's city hall. Another demonstration was held September 17, 2016 at the Donald Trump fundraiser near the OU campus, then demonstrators marched through OU's campus ending at President David Boren's house on Boyd Street (Phillips 2016; Slinkard 2016).

The Red River pipeline's construction was completed in December 2016, and it began operating in January 2017. It starts at Plains All American terminal in Cushing, Oklahoma and runs to Longview, Texas. However, a particular section of the Red River II pipeline had a fairly major infrastructural problem that required rebuilding the section that runs under Lake

Thunderbird near Norman, Oklahoma. This is extremely concerning due to the fact that high pressure oil would be pumped through this same pipeline. This portion of the Red River pipeline crosses through Absentee Shawnee, Kickapoo, Sac and Fox, and Citizen Potawatomi Nations' land. While it is admirable that Plains All American Pipeline uses recycled equipment, it also needs to increase the safety standards of this equipment to make sure it is still high quality. In this case, Indigenous environmental activists and organizers leading the way in disrupting settler-colonial practices in Oklahoma due to their presence as an alternative voice to mainstream support for the oil industry. They are also helping raise awareness among non-Native people to understand the complexity of the issue.

Camp Oka Lawa and Resistance to Plains All American - Diamond Pipeline

The Diamond pipeline also met with Indigenous resistance in the camps formed in Oklahoma, especially Camp Oka Lawa and Camp Wealaka, which welcomed Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to participate in their peaceful resistances.[27] Both camps were not affiliated with a particular tribe necessarily. Joseph Rushmore compiled a collection of photographs and writings of the prominent members of Camp Oka Lawa. As part of the digital presentation, the following words are written under a photograph that says *Charles*.

> *The pipeline always existed. The pipeline is just another **colonial** aftermath…. My brother once said that they came in here on boats and now they come in here in SUV's. That's exactly what it is. That's the pipeline. The pipeline is incarceration. The pipeline is the foster care system. The pipeline is the education. It's everything. It's the reservation, prisoner of war camps. It's the loss of identity, not even the loss of identity, the stripping of identity. Just like they do to the ground, just like they do to these lands and water. So, to implement that, that's something we're interested in, we want to make an initiative to revitalize our communities. To let them have something [emphasis added].*

[27] Camp Oka Lawa was located in the Comanche tribal jurisdiction area in Oklahoma closer to the central Eastern part of the state. Camp Wealaka was located closer to Tulsa. Both were in close proximity to the proposed route of the Diamond pipeline.

These statements affirm that pipeline construction is a modern-day extension of the colonialism that American Indians and Indigenous North Americans have experienced since the first European settlers came to what is now the United States and Canada. "The pipeline is incarceration…the foster system…the reservation…prisoner of war camps;" it is rooted in the same type of nonconsensual settler conquest that occurred hundreds of years ago. Settler-colonialism is still occurring today just in different manifestations or modern processes. In many ways, the nonconsensual land use by particular oil transportation and other extractive resource companies can be considered neocolonialism where the colonial power has been replaced by the oil industrial complex.

Another collection of statements critical of the Diamond Pipeline construction states:

> *I don't even like saying 'Native people,' it's a colonial term, but it's how they determine us. We deserve [our rights] because we once lived in harmony as human beings, we were connected to the land and water. Now we're fighting for it and some of our reservations don't even have clean water. What is it going be like when these pipelines or these extractions keep going? What's going to happen to our populations? What's going happen to our youth and children, our women and our elders? Our traditions are already under attack, it's a fight just to keep who we are, to understand who we are. If you understand who you are then you're going to be able to navigate through this world a lot better. Sadly to say, economically, it has a huge impact on that, it leaves us at a disadvantage. What happens if the millions of dollars that were invested in this pipeline were to go back to the reservation? Go back to the people? We'd be able to go back to our tribal ways of life. It means a lot. It's sad to say that this western society has no connection to that. That's why they keep on doing what they're doing. We have something that's worth more. That's being Indigenous, our languages, our culture, our traditions, our spirituality.*[28]

These statements echo a main point that Alecia Onzahwah elaborates on in my interview with her. It is that "our traditions are already under attack," and it is this loss of culture that contributes to a loss of identity. As the question is posed, what if the millions of dollars that has been invested in oil infrastructure and production would be invested in the reservations and livelihood of Indigenous people, it is answered with "We'd be able to go back to our tribal ways

[28] The website with these photographs unfortunately is no longer available. The photograph above by Joe Rushmore is of the Camp Oka Lawa tobacco planting ceremony at sunrise on the Diamond pipeline route, and it can be found at: https://twitter.com/hashtag/okalawa (accessed March 20, 2019).

of life" that value a connection to the land and water, "our languages, our culture, our traditions, our spirituality." This is the power behind Indigenous resistances is that they are rooted in cultural traditions and spiritual guidance through prayer which honors the natural world.



Photo by Joe Rushmore, Sunrise Tobacco Planting Ceremony on bulldozed land from the Diamond Pipeline route, Checotah, Oklahoma, June 8, 2017

The Diamond Pipeline was to be constructed from Cushing, Oklahoma to Memphis, Tennessee. One of the primary concerns was that as Plains All American pipeline proposed, the pipeline would cross at least 200 bodies of water, 11 of which are primary drinking water sources. In February 2017, Indigenous environmental leaders, Mekasi Camp-Horinek, Indigenous leader with Bold Alliance, Ashley Nicole McCray, environmental activist and Democratic candidate for Oklahoma Corporation Commissioner in 2018, and Michael Casteel of Tecumseh, Seminole Nation, and director of the American Indian Movement held a press conference at the Oklahoma Capitol. They explained that one of the main effects of the

construction of the Diamond pipeline was its disturbance of unmarked graves along the Trail of Tears. Casteel, of the Seminole Nation, compared the deadly forced march of the Trail of Tears to Indian territory to the transportation of people to Nazi concentration camps, or as he says the "reservations," or tribal land in Oklahoma.

It is vitally important to investigate Indigenous resistances that have arisen against settler-colonialism. Laurel C. Smith, cultural geographer, describes settler-colonialism in a more tangible, direct way with the description of "state-led internal colonialism" (Smith L. 2015), or a systemically entrenched colonialism that has dissolved historic boundaries of *settler colonialism* and has replaced "settler" positions of power with those of the state and its resulting structures. This term is more fitting for the modern systemic and covert colonialism practiced in the United States. It particularly relates to the type of resistance movements attempting to combat neoliberal-capitalist hegemonies centered around the oil industry's political and economic dominance. It is this structural violence that has exploited, killed, and disenfranchised Indigenous people, and it is the same structural violence that has polluted the land of Indigenous people in the U.S. and globally. Indigenous environmental resistances are advocating for alternative solutions to this "state-led internal colonialism" in the United States. Political protest and civil disobedience have led many movements to their victory, and it is the collective solution for Indigenous movements and advocates, in order to defend our natural environment and regenerate our natural resources.

Safeguarding Clean Water in Oklahoma

In 2015, Mary Fallin, the former Governor of Oklahoma, acknowledged that oil and gas activity in the state, which includes waste water re-injection in disposal wells specifically, had

contributed to the drastic increase in earthquakes in Oklahoma (Delatorre 2015; Wines 2015). The Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) has information about this connection on its website as well. It is now incontrovertible; this is in contrast to how it used to be regarded in certain political circles that ambiguously assessed the connection of earthquakes and the increase in fracking waste water injection wells throughout the state. Despite this, in the same year, a law was passed stating that local governments were not allowed to ban fracking in their counties (Wertz 2015), and that only the OCC can mandate regulations for oil and gas companies.

A protest demonstration was organized against former Governor Fallin's designation of a prayer day for the oil industry of Oklahoma called Oil Field Prayer Day. The demonstration was held on what was marked as Oil Field Prayer Day for 2017 at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) on October 13th.[29] There was criticism from Indigenous activists who had designated it as Indigenous People's Day, which Governor Fallin was in opposition to giving state recognition. The University of Oklahoma has already done so by celebrating Indigenous People's Day for the past four years. Sydne Gray and Ashley Nicole McCray, leaders of OU Indigenize, spoke passionately about the dire situation all Oklahomans face regarding the oil industry's lack of ethical regulations and respect of tribal lands, both of which are reeking environmental havoc on the state. Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, gathered and voiced concerns about the increase in earthquakes, threats to clean water sources—since many of Oklahoma's fresh water bodies are already high in mercury content, which makes fishing no longer a viable food source in those areas, and the oil industry's disregard of tribal sovereignty.

[29] The demonstration was scheduled to occur throughout the afternoon that day. When I arrived in the early part of the afternoon and did not see anyone in front of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission, I was immediately concerned that people had been arrested. I checked with a secretary on the first floor of the Corporation Commission, and she thought that the demonstration had simply ended early. I watched news coverage, recordings and live feeds of the event.

OCC Commissioner, Bob Anthony, explained at the demonstration that no one wants to be regulated by the government with reference to recent legislation that makes it illegal to ban fracking in city jurisdictions. This legislation is why fracking has not been banned in the state yet.

The paradoxical reality is that this political discourse that caters to anti-government, anti-regulation enthusiasts uses government policy to maintain their politically economic truth regime, such as Oklahoma's legislation against banning fracking. In this case, a Foucauldian assessment of how truth and power reinforce each other is evident as an economic "regime of truth" (Foucault 1984:131). Michel Foucault elaborates on his description of the "political economy of truth" by stating that it has five important traits:

> it "is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement (the demand for truth, as much for economic production as for political power); it is the object, under diverse forms, of immense diffusion and consumption (circulating through apparatuses of education and information whose extent is relatively broad in the social body, not withstanding certain strict limitations); it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media); lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation ('ideological' struggles). (Foucault 1984:131-132)

Foucault's analysis of the construction of politically economic truth regimes can be applied to the predominant conception of fracking and its acceptance, due to a lack of belief in scientific cautions against waste-water reinjections' connection to earthquake increases in Oklahoma. The common rhetoric that it is related to increases in economic productivity and the general well-being of the people in Oklahoma is still widely circulated. The gross production tax (GPT) of oil companies was just raised from a minimal 2% to 4% in 2017. With such a low tax on the oil industry, it is difficult to see how oil revenue in the state contributes directly to the well-being of its people. Those who are critical of this extremely low GPT (in comparison to other states in the country with much higher GPTs on oil and natural gas industries) would like it to go back up to

7%, which is a still small percentage of the overall profits generated by this industry. Some of these individuals argue that this still is barely enough to help many of Oklahoma's struggling state programs—such as education—have the necessary budget to function at a low minimum standard.

The oil industrial extraction process of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) produces large amounts of waste-water, and waste-water injection wells are used to dispose of the fluid water byproducts underground. The waste-water that is produced is a high content saline brine that is extremely toxic and even more damaging to water and land resources than petroleum oil. The Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) is the regulatory state agency for fuel, oil and gas, public utilities, and transportation industries. It also regulates the depth that fracking waste-water needs to be re-injected to avoid contaminating ground-water sources or underground sources of drinking water (USDW). The reinjection process of waste water must be at a depth below ground-water sources in what is known as the basement rock, or below underground sources of drinking water (USDW).

A report published in the Spring of 2017, entitled *Oklahoma Drinking Water at Risk from Oil and Gas Injection Wells: Exposing Oklahoma Corporation Commission's Flawed Drinking Water Protection Policies* written by Clean Water Action and Clean Water Fund[30] exposed the fact that injection waste-water well permitting in Oklahoma has not always followed the rule that the waste-water must be reinjected below the base-of-treatable water (BTW). It also found a significant number of public and private wells in Oklahoma that draw water from below the

[30] Clean Water Action (https://www.cleanwateraction.org/) and Clean Water Fund (https://www.cleanwaterfund.org/) were both founded during the campaign for the Clean Water Act in 1972 in order to protect drinking water sources and clean up polluted water ways (https://www.cleanwateraction.org/about/who-we-are). The two national organizations, both based in Washington D.C., work in partnership; Clean Water Action is an environmental organization, and Clean Water Fund is a research and education organization. Clean Water Action has nearly one million members nationwide.

established base-of-treatable water (BTW). The Clean Water Action and Fund's report found that 6,844 domestic water wells and 175 public water supply wells use water from below the base-of-treatable water which is the depth that is the OCC's marker for how deep wastewater injection must occur. The Clean Water Action and the Clean Water Fund's report used data from the Oklahoma Water Resource Board to identify Oklahoma's potentially threatened water wells. The report also found that at least eighteen waste-water disposal wells were not reinjecting waste-water deep enough, meaning it was being reinjected into the level above the basement rock (the level where USDW, or underground sources of drinking water are found). The *Oklahoma Hydraulic Fracturing State Review* (January 2011) written by the State Review of Oil & Natural Gas Environmental Regulations (STRONGER) also linked from the Oklahoma Corporation Commission's main page states that OCC Rules 165:10-3-10 and 165:10-3-11, "prohibit the pollution of surface or subsurface water during hydraulic fracturing or subsequent flowback operations." Therefore, the OCC does, in fact, prohibit the pollution of ground water sources by hydraulic fracturing operations.

When I visited the Oklahoma Corporation Commission on two separate occasions to conduct interviews for my fieldwork, I asked specifically, about the Clean Water Action/ Clean Water Fund's report, *Oklahoma Drinking Water at Risk from Oil and Gas Injection Wells: Exposing Oklahoma Corporation Commission's Flawed Drinking Water Protection Policies*. On my second interview there, I met with Tim Baker, the former director of the Oil and Gas Conservation Division (now retired), and Madeline Dillner, Oil and Gas Specialist with the Brownfields Program[31] and GIS, who had also graduated from the University of Oklahoma with

[31] The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program of the U.S. considers a "brownfield" to be "a property expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant."

a degree in Environmental Sustainability. They both explained that the report did not consider the topography, related to fault formations in Oklahoma, that requires different ways to assess where ground water sources actually are located underground. I asked if they were planning to produce a report that responded to the study. Dillner said through her work that she had significantly lowered the number of endangered water supply wells by measuring for a different Base-of-Treatable-Water (BTW) depending on the particular well's location. However, she had not written a response on behalf of the OCC regarding the Clean Water Action's report. This and further collaboration with the Oklahoma Water Resources Board could alleviate some of the murky enforcement of waste-water injection wells and their particular specified depths' impacts on active water wells. I have decided this will be a future research direction that I will pursue, particularly to look further at regulatory measures related to prior investigation of surrounding land as far as locations of potable water wells before waste-water re-injection wells are built. Social scientists need to identify whether there are persisting environmental justice violations as far as where waste-water re-injection wells are placed regarding being in close proximity to residents of color or lower socio-economic status.

Sociocultural Consequences of Fracking and Environmental Pollution

Anna Willow and Sara Wylie (2014) clearly articulate the very real dangers of "fracking," as well as contemporary Indigenous and environmental activists. Willow and Wylie (2014) write in *Journal of Political Ecology* (2014), about the hazards of hydraulic fracking. They state specifically that:

There are approximately 450,000 brownfields in the U.S. currently. (https://www.epa.gov/brownfields/overview-epas-brownfields-program, accessed March 20, 2019).

> It is not merely its abrasive sound that led environmentalist author Bill McKibben (2011) to declare fracking 'the ugliest word in the English language'…Commonly voiced ecological and human health concerns surround water quality and availability, discharges of toxic substances into the environment, air emissions released during production and processing, explosions from methane build-up, and earthquakes. While actual and potential environmental degradation resulting from fracking has received a significant amount of scholarly attention…and is currently being investigated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (2012), equally devastating—and clearly interrelated—**sociocultural consequences have been comparatively overlooked** [emphasis added] (223).

Willow and Wylie (2014) call for more "qualitative ethnographic inquiry" to investigate the "sociocultural consequences" of fracking, since some quantitative work on environmental impact has already occurred. The work of Simona Perry is an exception, and as an environmental scientist and ethnographer, she incorporates the "place-based consequences of regional and national energy politics" (Willow and Wylie 2014:223) and explains the trauma, societal costs, and health implications of "unconventional" oil and gas developments. In her work, she looks at what specifically the "societal costs" from "hydrofracking" are for communities where this work is being done. She writes that more detailed "community health impact assessments" that include "psychological and social stress" may help to clarify the miscommunication of risks that often occurs "at the local level" (Perry 2012:352). This may also further help prevent a "mistrust of the entire research or risk-assessment process" (Perry 2012:352) which could also provide more active community resistance to environmental degradation.

Willow and Wylie also emphasize that due to the predicted increase in fracking and similar oil and gas extraction techniques, it is essential to support the "collaborative mobilization and inspired academic studies aimed at influencing environmental public policy and industrial practices" (2014:224). A degraded environment directly impacts the people that live there, and to downplay the "politics of human-environment relationships" is a strategy to promote potentially destructive extractive practices as I discussed in the previous chapter. Energy infrastructure

development has a dramatic impact on the people in close proximity to these projects. How can people share their stories of impacted conditions of living from environmental degradation?

Sara Wylie and Len Albright (in Willow and Wylie 2014) documented the effects of the Well Watch Project, a digital media group that, "allowed residents impacted by oil and gas development to post personal stories and to connect with others experiencing similar situations." It is an "attempt to 'intervene in the technical and informational asymmetries between [the oil and gas] industry and impacted landowners by developing closer relationships between communities and academics." It is also an avenue "developing free, open source tools for communities and community organizations'" (Willow & Wylie 2014:231). Also, "the construction of a new kind of digital infrastructure allowed people in locations as distant as Pennsylvania and Colorado to speak for themselves," and further "to compare their own health impacts, feelings of vulnerability and fear, and experiences of corporate/government negligence" with other people living with similar conditions (231). This could be a potential avenue for collective mobilization of the people having to endure living near environmental degradation.

Could some of these solutions work in Oklahoma? Many have begun to warn that water will become one of the most disputed resources, more than oil in the next century. Melinda Laituri, professor in Colorado State University's Department of Ecosystem Science and Sustainability, spoke at the University of Oklahoma Water Center's Awards Banquet in October 2018, voiced this exactly. Indigenous *Water Protectors* are bringing to light this same level of awareness about the importance of protecting water sources. Water is a renewable natural resource, but it has been noted that the amount of fresh water on the Earth is decreasing gradually. When I wrote back and forth recently with Alecia Onzahwah, leader of Good Hearted People Camp, she reminded me that their twelve-year-old granddaughter had asked them to only

install a manual pump for their water well, “so we never take water for granted” (A. Onzahwah, Personal Communication, January 13, 2019). The Indigenous resistances that have occurred in Oklahoma are reminding us all of this same reality.

Chapter Four

Good Hearted People Camp

I want this chapter to be written in a way that honors how the information it includes was shared. Alecia Onzahwah and Tosawi Saddler are the founders of Good Hearted People Camp and Indigenize, Inc. In this chapter, Onzahwah speaks about colonization and decolonization processes, and Saddler discusses the interdependence between humans and their natural surroundings. This couple, with the help of other caring individuals, has started an awareness-building space and soon to be educational center on their land that Onzahwah inherited from her grandmother. They have recently added three tiny houses to the property and are working on completing a long house, built with traditional architectural practices. The "camp" is located near Harrah, Oklahoma. One of their upcoming projects is the completion of a water well system so that they can have easier access to water, without relying on the city's water services. As requested by their twelve-year-old granddaughter, she stated that she did not want an electric pump to operate the well but a manual one to not take for granted water accessibility. Later, she also explained that she did not want to depend on the city's electrical infrastructure either to operate an electric pump for the water well.

I first met Alecia Onzahwah at a benefit event for Camp Oka Lawa, the resistance camp to the construction of the Diamond pipeline located in east central Oklahoma on Choctaw land in close proximity to the actual pipeline construction. The benefit was held at Earth Rebirth[32] in Norman, Oklahoma. It was held during the course of a weekend on Friday evening and Saturday during the day (September 1-2, 2017), and included speakers, music, live painting, and an open

[32] Earth Rebirth is an environmental non-profit based in Norman, Oklahoma that emphasizes working closely with schools to build and maintain on-site gardens. The founder Andrew Sartain recently converted their downtown location to a mobile one in a green-friendly RV.

space to share collaborative ideas. It was at this event that the main founders and organizers of Camp Oka Lawa expressed the decision to move many of their efforts to a new location in Harrah, Oklahoma to be named Good Hearted People Camp. It was never explicitly stated that the decision to move may have been related to the newly passed legislation making any obstruction of oil pipelines a felony in the state of Oklahoma.[33]

I had wanted to be a part of the resistance at Oka Lawa Camp that had begun in the late Spring of 2017 and had lasted throughout the summer. Therefore, I decided to leave Alecia with a financial contribution in solidarity with the new camp that was to be formed. It was made clear that while Good Hearted People Camp would not be directly connected to resisting the construction of a particular pipeline,[34] it would still be directly concerned with issues of mobilization around the protection of the land and water in Oklahoma and would offer solidarity to other Indigenous resistances fighting against pipeline construction on their land. While previous efforts at Camp Oka Lawa had maintained a spirit of non-violence and prayerful action, just as Standing Rock had exemplified, there was one instance in particular that had been disturbing to several of the people who had been camping there. It was an interaction that occurred between a pipeline worker and a younger member of the camp. The pipeline worker had asked if there were any "squaws" at their camp (Onzahwah, Personal Communication,

[33] The "critical infrastructure bill" (HB 1123) wording includes any "tampering with" oil infrastructure will be considered a felony with $100,000 fines and up to 10 years of imprisonment. It also includes a $1,000,000 fine to any organization or individual assisting the accused individual. The passage of this legislation in Oklahoma occurred in the Spring of 2017 during the time when mobilizations against the construction of the Diamond pipeline were occurring particularly, Oka Lawa and Wealaka camps.

[34] "While founders of this camp have worked on pipeline issues in the past, we are not fighting a specific pipeline, but we recognize that there are several issues that must be addressed in order to effectively improve overall awareness and unity here" (Onzahwah 2018). This statement speaks to the level of awareness and unity in Oklahoma around organizing on these issues. This statement is from the social media page for Good Hearted People Camp (Camp Wealaka still maintains a separate social media page).

October 14, 2017). This term is an implicit invocation of sexual and racial harassment, and it made the female participants of the camp feel at risk and uncomfortable. Indigenous Environmental Network pointed out that the fossil fuel industry directly impacts the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women because there is a connection between pipeline construction bringing an influx of male workers to rural areas and the resulting violence against women and girls that occurs (2015).

Good Hearted People Camp

The first event held at Good Hearted People Camp was an opening weekend on October 13th -15th, 2017, directly following the demonstration against Oilfield Prayer Day held on the front steps of the Oklahoma Corporation Commission (OCC) in Oklahoma City on October 13th, 2017. My younger son and I visited the camp for the first time on the Saturday, October 14th, 2017, of the opening weekend. We arrived and were instantly greeted by two younger girls and their brother, ranging in age from twelve to six, who asked if we needed help carrying anything to camp. I had packed a bag of food to share, so I offered this to the older girl. My son was instantly happy to be outside and greeted by other children, and he shared his favorite ball with the young boy. After I greeted the other people gathered for the opening of the camp, including Ashley McCray,[35] my son ran off into the wooded area with the other kids to begin setting up our tent. After Alecia Onzahwah arrived a little later, I talked with her about selling their house in town and making the big decision to move out of town to begin work on the camp. She explained

[35] Community organizer and environmental advocate, she won the democratic candidacy for Oklahoma Corporation Commission in 2018 as a young Indigenous woman, also a member of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe in Oklahoma and the Oglala Lakota tribe. I had not met her formally at this point but had her speak at the Earth Rebirth Benefit.

that at first, they felt concerned about where they would store everything previously in their house, but they soon realized that they did not really need as much as they thought they did.

I was interrupted by my little one's persistence to run off into the woods again, and hesitantly, I acquiesced to his wishes. I loved seeing him play with the other children. I personally felt that the entire evening was a close-knit gathering of mutual respect and solidarity. It soon grew dark and a fire was built in the center of the communal space. My son continued going back and forth between where the other children were playing and the fire. He was the youngest child there, and only two at the time, so I still felt the demands of watching him a little more diligently than if he were a bit older. His amount of movement did allow me to interact with a lot of people in the process and all of them were extremely kind and understanding of his curiosity and energy. We shared a meal together that was a delicious stew prepared at one woman's home and brought to be warmed over the fire with the fry bread made by Ashley and another young woman. I had brought a bowl, as requested (in order to not create waste from disposable dishes) but it was still in our car at the time. A woman offered another one to me full of the warm homemade stew of meat and vegetables. My son sipped the broth from a spoon as we sat by the fire with everyone. Also seated around the fire was a young man, accompanied by his partner, a young woman.[36] He was facing felony charges for publicly obstructing oil infrastructure in another state. Later he would ask for prayers from all of the spiritually strong people gathered there that night for his upcoming court date. As far as I have heard, he is still safe and has not had to serve any time in prison.

After the meal ended, everyone gathered together in a circle and began sharing traditional songs (primarily in Kickapoo and other Native languages) and testaments about solidarity,

[36] They both appeared to be Indigenous. As far, as racial categorizations, myself and another young man were the only racially defined non-Indigenous Americans at this gathering.

resistance, and unity. One young Indigenous man who had been at Standing Rock spoke about the *seventh generation* prophecy and that now was the time when the younger generation would be the ones to heal the Earth. It was a powerful moment marking the beginning of a new space, with a new consciousness. As Zion slept in his stroller, I stayed on the perimeter of the circle to keep him asleep as to not disturb the moment. I was honored to be there.

Later that evening a large storm blew in and we decided to drive home along with several others. We left our tent behind, and all morning I regretted leaving and not weathering the storm with the people who stayed. I did stay in touch with Alecia regarding our tent and its adventures flying into the trees. If I had the chance to visit again for opening weekend, I would have chosen to sleep in our car during the torrential rain, high winds, thunder, and lightening, to wake up and share more time with the inspiring people gathered there. I was concerned Zion might sleep less all night in his car seat or another place in the car, so we drove through the night back to our home in Norman.

Earlier last summer (2018), Alecia and I arranged a time to meet again to speak about the statement of purpose posted on the Good Hearted People Camp social media page. One paragraph explains:

> This camp is aimed at not only addressing land and water issues as they come up, it has been created as a space for empowering our communities with knowledge on water and land issues as well as **a space for decolonization** with the hope that we can help to inspire healing within our communities from the effects of generational trauma [emphasis added] (Onzahwah 2018).

When we met this summer, Alecia expressed slight disappointment that members of her family and tribe had voiced criticisms to her for starting the camp. They were concerned that it was going to become a "Standing Rock," or place with similar political activism. I asked if she and Tosawi, her husband, and their daughter Mikwana (M.K.) could speak about the process of

decolonization, and how current neocolonial processes that degrade water and land resources could be decolonized through their work. I told her that the College of Education at the University of Oklahoma had held a symposium, titled *Decolonizing Education, Research and Practice*, where I presented. I felt this was a progressive step in the right direction, but so much more could be done. I asked what her thoughts were about the processes of decolonization, and if she saw neocolonialism, or remaining colonial structures, in their everyday life. This is how she answered:

> First, I think it's important to understand colonization. I think that's a very, very important thing. Because without that understanding, there is not an understanding of the need to decolonize. And so that's kind of why in looking at—looking for something out there, that was relatable to the average community member, I couldn't find anything. The things that have been written… First of all, there are only two guides that I had found. One of them, Oklahoma is not ready for. It is a little on the radical side, what some would consider radical, the other one was—and this is not a jab at any of the people who wrote these—but one of them was more on an academic level; in order to reach the people that need it the most— because there is a large majority of us outside of the academic circles, and the minority is in academic circles in comparison—and so in order to really create change, in the mindset and in the direction of where our people are going we have to reach the people in the community, and it has to be relatable, as they can be applied to our lives and our experiences. And so, in that, sometimes there are definitions that cannot be avoided, but in the guides I have found, they are still not broken down—in terms of, just the word **decolonization** in itself—**colonization, systemic racism, institutional racism**, all of those terms. And so, I looked at that and said, what can we do to create something that is applicable to our people. It has to include those terms. There is no other way around it, so I used those terms and broke those down and used examples, real life examples, on how those terms affect our lives. So it's not really anything formal, it's just like a booklet, a guide. I just called it: *A People's Guide to Understanding Colonization.*[37] But in it, I explain **the steps of colonization**, and also the historical effects of it, in terms of **environmental genocide**, and also in terms of **systemic racism**, such as the mascot issue and how that has affected us, because a lot of people don't realize that that dehumanization does impact us, and it opens the door for all of these other atrocities to occur. Ongoing atrocities, people don't even realize that have gone on for the past thirty, forty years [emphasis added].

[37] According to Onzahwah, she has refrained from publishing (formally) *A People's Guide to Understanding Colonization,* due to its candid tone, she said that, "unlike most history books, it is fairly straightforward" (Personal communication, January 17, 2019).

Through Onzahwah's[38] explanation of the challenges surrounding a lack of accessible literature on colonization and decolonization for Indigenous Americans particularly, which are both terms and conditions essential to understand—as far as how they contribute to the historical trauma still experienced by Native Americans in Oklahoma and the United States, she identifies how these present-day processes are still hidden or not obvious to many people. This realization is an important, necessary step in order to bring about the healing for those affected. This is what inspired her to write *A People's Guide to Understanding Colonization*. She explained that what already exists, as far as writing, on this topic is possibly too radical or heavily-academically oriented for the average person in Oklahoma. She also evokes the importance of understanding the terms, *systemic racism* and *institutional racism*[39] and what the real-life effects are for Native people who may not have a way to explain their lived experiences of these discriminatory practices or the post-traumatic stress still felt from intergenerational trauma. She emphasizes that if the concepts of colonialism are not understood fully, then "decolonization" cannot be achieved completely either. Onzahwah continues with:

> I'd like to refer to Winona LaDuke's book *Militarization of Indian Country,* and some of those examples that she has provided, as far as the environmental genocide that has occurred, and so those are some of the examples that I use in this as well as the boarding schools and the historical trauma and how that has impacted us as a gear in the whole systemic-racism machine. And so, that's the starting point in getting people to understand that **we are colonized, and that we are occupied. We are living under occupation** [emphasis added]**.**

[38] I consciously chose to refer to Alecia as Onzahwah, her last name, in this part of the section to offer a juxtaposition to referring to her by her first name, to deconstruct what it means to be a scholar. She is not affiliated with an academic institution, but her analysis and investigation of decolonization is equivalent to that of many modern scholars. I chose to reference her in this way in my analysis of her interview responses, in the typical style of academic writing that cites authors by their last name when referencing them in text.

[39] Systemic and institutional racism is a particular type of racism that is maintained through social institutions and systems and is visible in structural disparities of opportunity (Bonilla-Silva 2015). Onzahwah speaks of how this type of racism affects Native Americans often without explicit awareness of its existence.

In order to understand systemic racism, she states that individuals must also understand what it means to be "colonized" and "occupied." If Native people "are living under occupation," isn't this still colonization, and as Onzahwah asks, how can healing occur without a realization of this historically oppressive and deadly structure still having signs of existence in the present-day?

> To tear away those layers that have been put over our eyes so that way by understanding the history, and what those terms are then we can begin to understand where we need to go, in terms of healing, because understanding our past has got to be a part of our healing. We will not have healing without understanding that trauma, and so it's important to understand that part, and so the whole process of that and understanding that trauma, the separation of our languages, the separation of our ceremonies, the separation of our family structures. The disruption of our family structures has led us to where we are at now and some of the chaos that we see going on in our communities, and some of that—I don't if this is the right description—maybe apathy, towards some of the issues. I don't know if apathy is the right term because I don't know if people can have apathy if they don't fully understand the connection between these issues and ourselves.

Onzahwah emphasizes that apathy may not be the correct word to describe the general feeling of people in her community, or other Native people, if they are not fully aware of the historical processes that have informed their present-day conditions. Her call to understand what originally caused the wounds of historical trauma is essential for a reintegration with and re-connection to one's Native language, ceremonies and family structures. Healing can only occur if Indigenous Americans reconnect to these essential cultural elements, and they re-establish a connection to their ancestral culture. She explains:

> In breaking down the history of that trauma that was inflicted on us, and that cycle that has gone on, I also break down and explain what makes us who we are. What makes us Indigenous people is our language. It is our ceremonies, it is our connection to the land, it is our family structures, and it is also our style of leadership, which is not leadership that we see today, that has been mirrored as a reflection of the oppressor. Leadership is not hierarchal; it is not a hierarchy. When it comes to Indigenous values-based leadership, it is not a hierarchy. If anything, leadership is one that supports the people and sacrifices for the people.

Onzahwah affirms that what makes Indigenous people unique, it is "our language, it is our ceremonies, it is our connection to the land, it is our family structures, and it is our style of

leadership." She explains that Indigenous leadership is not the type that we see today that "has been mirrored as a reflection of the oppressor." It is "not hierarchal," but "one that supports the people and sacrifices for the people." It is important to understand these elements of being a Native person that it is "what makes us who we are." She explains in the following passage that without this awareness, fighting among different Indigenous tribes, communities and people will continue:

> It's important to get our people to remember what these are because when we don't, then we have things occur within our tribes that keep us stagnant, that keep us fighting amongst ourselves, that keep us oppressing each other, such as this camp. And so there is not a true liberation until our minds are liberated first, and until we begin to reclaim ourselves, those five factors of our identity, we have to reclaim every single one of those to the best of our ability. And so, for me that is the **largest part of decolonization**. That is the first and foremost step, but then after that, we have to begin to question and ask ourselves about sovereignty, and what sovereignty really is—Sovereignty is not the sovereignty that has been defined for us— it's a quasi-sovereignty [emphasis added].

Onzahwah states that knowing these "five factors of identity," a reclamation of learning "our language…our ceremonies…our connection to the land…our family structures…our style of leadership" is the "largest part of decolonization" and it is the "first and foremost step" to this process. Then she attests that "we have to begin to question and ask ourselves…what sovereignty really is." The type of sovereignty[40] that has been defined as such "has been defined for us—it's a quasi-sovereignty." Indigenous sovereignty defined by Indigenous people would include a full reclamation of "ourselves" and theses "five factors of identity," language revitalization, ceremonial observances, re-connecting to the land, valuing traditional family structures and

[40] Onzahwah's critique of sovereignty is along a similar vein as Vine Deloria, Jr. (1979) and Joanne Barker (2005) insofar as sovereignty before its earlier historical origins was a European term (Alfred 2009), and in its recent historical executions, it was used not as a tool of liberation or equalizing people's political rights, but more as a settler-colonial tool of dominance. An example of this is that, "Given the fact that every single treaty signed with Indigenous peoples in the Americas and the Pacific was broken… England, France, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States used the treaty-making process to neutralize the political force of allied and individual Indigenous groups…" (Barker 2005:5).

styles of leadership. Sovereignty seems to be a western concept as far as the recognition of one entity's power versus another. This runs counter to the type of non-hierarchical leadership that Onzahwah describes insofar as seemingly more powerful entities such as the U.S. government determine the parameters of sovereignty and what tribes and nations are considered to be this. Onzahwah continues:

> We have to begin to look, we have to begin to heal and reclaim our identities. Because there is a time, and it has been stated by the top minds—financial minds—in this so-called country, that this system, this empire is not going to sustain itself. And so, we have to begin looking—truly looking at—what do our tribes look like at that point, because if our people do not heal and decolonize and begin reclaiming those identities, and if they are just carrying a card, or just having a tag, a tribal tag, and that is the extent of their identity, when that system fails and when there is no funding going to our tribes, or tribal governments, how many people will truly be, a working, participating member of that nation? And so, because there are a lot of people, a lot of times through no fault of their own, but sometimes it is their own fault, because they don't seek out that connection to their community, they think, I have a card, and therefore, I am automatically… that's their identity, but it's not. So whenever, the system fails and the tribal government as we know it does not exist anymore, where are those people going to go? Do they have a connection to their tribal… the traditional, the first and foremost of their tribe, do they have that connection? Or are we going to see the large tribes, and even some tribes that are the size of my own, a little over 4,000, all card-carrying members, but when that government funding is gone, and therefore, nobody wants to be in those leadership positions because they are not being paid anymore. When that disappears because the system has crumbled, where are these people going to go? Are our nations going to go from 20,000, or 4,000, to maybe 150? And so, for me, that's what makes it **necessary for us to decolonize**.

Onzahwah is asking difficult questions about the replacement of traditional tribal governance with the current relationship with the U.S. government that defines styles of leadership and political and legal systems that are completely different from traditional American Indian systems of tribal organization. Elizabeth Archuleta (2005), Ethnic Studies scholar, stated that the different systems of understanding between a western-based legal system and Indigenous Americans was so distinct that it is problematic to assume that an Indigenous person will instantly begin living under the same laws that they did not create. Onzahwah is describing a similar situation related to generations that have assimilated (often with no other choice for

survival) and are now living with laws that their ancestral culture did not create. When these foreign (colonial) systems collapse and Indigenous Americans have lost connection to their traditional practices, she is asking where they will turn to for systemic support. Onzahwah explained that this is why understanding how Indigenous people can decolonize in our modern society and reclaim their identity is essential for healing from historical trauma and for future survival.

> First of all, understanding our history, reclaiming those values and all of those aspects of our identities, because when this does happen—because history has shown that this does happen to all civilizations, that they don't last forever. Whenever that happens, our people need to be prepared for that and begin having those conversations. But right now, a lot of our people are stuck in the mindset of, 'We're sovereign. We're a tribe and we're sovereign,' but we rely on those funds, and those grants from the government and programs that are not created by ourselves that **do not benefit us really**. That inadvertently, I say inadvertently, maybe on purpose—I don't know—but they keep us in a place where we are not truly healing and not truly reclaiming our identities. There are good people in those positions, in all those positions, good people who have the heart and that are really trying to do good things for their communities, but when you think about it, those programs are meant to address the symptoms of the issues and not the root causes. For example, ICW,[41] rather than addressing what causes this chaos in our families to where these children have to be separated from their parents—rather than address that, they say, 'well, we need foster homes.' So, they are addressing a symptom as opposed to the root cause, and the root cause would be to help our people to regain that identity so that they are not filling those voids with other things, or self-medicating because of the traumas that have occurred in them. And so, for me, colonization entails all of that. I can only define what that looks like in our people. On a larger scale, that would be wonderful, but I don't know that it's truly possible. It would take a great awakening—I am not saying it's impossible—but it would take a great awakening for people to finally listen to us and to begin learning our values and applying them to the way that we live [emphasis added].

Onzahwah reminds Indigenous people, or perhaps all of us, that we need to "begin to heal and reclaim our identities." Indigenous individuals' cultural identity can be diminished by the dominant mainstream worldview that undermines any divergent expressions of identity. However, the promotion of cultural identities is becoming more important now than ever. With

[41] ICW stands for Indian Child Welfare. Onzahwah is critical of searching for foster homes for Native children rather than seeking the services and help needed for the parents to help them rebuild their home life from past intergenerational trauma.

Native language endangerment and losing the last living members of particular tribes, preserving and revitalizing Indigenous languages, ceremonies, connection to the land, family structures, and style of leadership becomes essential to sustaining diverse cultural identities and healing effects of historical violence. Onzahwah questions the current government funding and tribal grants that many "card-carrying" members and tribes utilize primarily because they "are not created by ourselves" and "**do not benefit us really**." She critiques that possibly "inadvertently" or "on purpose," "they keep us in a place where we are not truly healing and not truly reclaiming our identities." Onzahwah affirms that this is due to a continuing reliance on funding from the federal government that historically has been based on the assimilation of Native Americans and has not advocated for the actualization of tribal cultural identities in a way that is determined by the tribal members.

On the same visit with Alecia Onzahwah and Tosawi Saddler, they told me about a particular event with their oldest granddaughter that made a deep impression on them. One evening, Onzahwah said they were sitting in the living room, and her granddaughter had been in her room when she came out in tears to speak to them. She was nine years old at the time. She asked Tosawi, Alecia's husband to teach her the old ways. She pleaded, "I need you to teach me the old ways. I need to learn them."

When Tosawi Saddler spoke, he responded to his wife Alecia Onzahwah in this way:

> I have a different viewpoint because I was fortunate to grow up, within my ceremonies and culture. I was given that. My father and mother were a part of AIM[42] when I was born, so they were already in that mindset, but they've always made me aware, of that… My father used to always tell me that, unfortunately, we live in a world that is no longer our own. It is no longer ours. We are under white people's— we are stuck living in white people's

[42] The American Indian Movement, or AIM, was originally started in Minneapolis, Minnesota to protect Native Americans who were suffering from police brutality and racism in many of the larger cities after the federal "Relocation" program (Indian Relocation Act, 1956), but later became a national movement with several direct actions including the Alcatraz (1969-1971) and Wounded Knee (1973) Occupations, and the "Trail of Broken Treaties" (1972) demonstration in Washington, D.C.

> society, whether we like it or not. He used to tell me that you need to learn to walk in two worlds, and whatever it means, one of his analogies he uses—wear a moccasin on one foot and a shoe on another. Walk comfortably in both worlds. Sometimes you may have to walk on one side or the other but always maintain your identity, your culture, your values, and your beliefs. Even if you are out in the white world, you have to live like that.
>
> When I was younger I didn't really understand it as much. As I got older, I could see it more because I had to do it. I had to make it and survive and be what they called successful in society, and I had to put my moccasins aside and go work in the corporate world to make it. But it was always about maintaining. I always kept my values and beliefs, kind of kept them away and hidden. When I was younger, they were uncomfortable for people, they were really uncomfortable for people, back then when I was younger, it wasn't cool. Now it's cool to be Indian, but it wasn't cool back then and you used to have to keep those tucked away. But like Alecia said, **decolonizing is getting back to our ceremonies, our beliefs, and living that way,** and **as Native people it is not just the land, it is all these living things that are around us that we are a part of**. I've said it before, that in our beliefs—in my people's beliefs—all this was here before we were brought here. We're guests here, in this—on this earth. If you look at this ecosystem, we don't have a place. We are an intrusion in the ecosystem. We don't have a place. If all people disappeared from this earth, the earth would thrive and do much better than with us. But a single thing like if you take a bee out of the ecosystem, it would wipe out most of the ecosystem. But if you take us out of it, it's going to get better. We as people, and **as part of decolonizing is realizing that you are a guest here** and that you need to try to not impact this environment and support it if you can in your place in that environment.

Saddler believes that the human species is an "intrusion in the ecosystem" such that if we were wiped off of the planet, the earth would thrive and do much better. This is in contrast to a bee that has an integral relationship to its ecosystem that if it disappeared, the ecosystem that it belonged to would collapse also. Saddler affirms Onzahwah's belief that "**decolonizing** is getting back to our ceremonies, our beliefs, and living that way" [emphasis added]. He continues, "as Native people," it is not just about honoring the land, but "all these living things that are around us that we are a part of." Saddler emphasizes that "**decolonizing** is realizing that you are a guest here" [emphasis added], and that each person must avoid negatively impacting their environment and to "support it if you can in your place in the environment." This describes a more interdependent relationship with the natural environment than that is promoted in western-culturally based environmentalisms.

> People have asked me when I talk about the trees, we call them Grandfathers in our language, that's how we describe them, because they were here before us. They are older than us and wiser than us. They don't take more than they need. They know their place, and they don't hurt the environment and they support other things in the environment. And if you look at some of them are so wise; as soon as they are born they already know their place, not like us. If we were born and left some place we would die. We have to be taught and nurtured and brought up how to live. Some of these grandfathers, they're born, they already know their place, they can already take care of themselves. From day one, they already know it. They are already given that knowledge. They are wiser than us, us, we're just—in our language— poor, pitiful human beings. We don't know anything. So that's **the humility that is a huge part of decolonizing**, because current society, it's all I, me. They don't look at— they put themselves above everything. It's all here to serve us. That's how they believe. All these things were put here to serve us. They don't take into consideration about these things. There is no here, there is no now, there is no food, there is no water, if we don't take care of it. A perfect example is climate change. Those, the powers that be that are up in the higher status of society, don't want to acknowledge it, or ignore it, because as soon as they do, they lose their cash cow, their power, their control, because they have to give up the taking of all the resources for their own benefit, to protect it for the future, for their own children, their own grandchildren. They don't care about this. They only care about their immediate status right now. They don't care about what happens tomorrow. They get that greed, and as long as they have that power and money, they can protect themselves. [emphasis added].

Tosawi Saddler views the trees as relatives, as grandfathers. "They were here before us…they don't take more than they need" he explains. He continues with contrasting their wisdom with human's that "if we were born and left some place we would die," but trees are "so wise; as soon as they are born, they already know their place, not like us…they can take care of themselves." Saddler clarifies that it is knowing the humility of our dependent nature as humans is part of decolonizing as well. He affirms that in "our language" we are "poor, pitiful human beings." It is "the humility that is a huge part of decolonizing," which also contrasts to our current modern society which emphasizes placing your individual needs about all else. He also identifies a western cultural mentality of the natural world that "it's all here to serve us." He illustrates the dangerous downfall to this mentality is evident in climate change where the dominant cultural mentality is not promoting an interdependence with our natural world. Because of this, he continues that there is not a consideration of the future or protecting

resources for our children and our grandchildren and their children when individuals "only care about their immediate status right now." The pursuit of power and money also drives this disregard to the interdependence between humans and their environment.

In the rest of the interview conversation, Saddler reminds us that many tribes have prophecies of this time that are all similar, in that they all express this time in human history when Indigenous people will be looked to for the answers to our modern problems. In other words, they will be known as the people with the "owner's manual" on how to live. The "Seventh Fire Prophecy" that Ojibwe have explains that there will be two paths, where one leads to further suffering, pain, death, and destruction. The other path can be followed if people choose to listen to Indigenous people's warnings. If they do, then there will be a time of "peace, understanding and people will thrive" on the Earth. The prophecies also speak of a coming time in human history, a turning point of "learning to live with the land."

Saddler continues that, "Native people have become so distant" from their traditional practices and have become dependent on modern infrastructure to survive. He states that knowing how to take care of oneself outside of the modern structure is important. Understanding that plants and animals sacrifice for humans to sustain us is a part of this. As he mentioned previously, decolonization is a process of re-connecting to the ancestral, or "old ways," and again "realizing that you are a guest here" in the natural world.

Decolonization for Onzahwah and Saddler is related to first recognizing that colonization, systemic racism, institutional racism, and environmental genocide are still harming Indigenous people in modern forms. Onzahwah states that, "we are colonized, and… we are occupied. We are living under occupation" in the United States in the present day. The way to decolonize is

"getting back to our ceremonies, our beliefs, and living that way… as Native people." Saddler reiterates that it is also about practicing humility towards our environment as human beings. When I recently messaged back and forth with Onzahwah, she described when her twenty-five-year-old son participated in the Standing Rock resistance on the "frontlines," she was reminded of how mothers felt who sent their children to other Indigenous resistances in the U.S.'s recent history, such as the Alcatraz (1969-1971) or Wounded Knee, South Dakota (1973) occupations organized by AIM where Indigenous Americans occupied these two locations in order to bring national attention to continual treaty violations and human rights abuses against Native Americans in the United States. She also explained, for many Native Americans, we are "so colonized that we send our own to fight wars that aren't ours overseas," and "we partake in nationalism of a nation that isn't ours" and give little recognition to the resistances, such as Standing Rock and others that have been fought in defense of Native sovereignty. She wrote that we "fail to acknowledge those who fight or have fought the wars right here" in what is now the United States. In the next section, I will outline three modern Indigenous resistances to corporate oil development, such as pipeline construction, exploration, and refinery infrastructure, in three different regions of the world, North America, South America, and Africa, at *Standing Rock*, in the Amazon region of Ecuador, and in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Chapter Five

Indigenous Resistances: Dismantling Neocolonial Corporate Oil Industrial Structures and the Power of Collective Mobilization

In this section, three Indigenous resistances will be outlined as far as the exploitation and environmental violence that has destroyed the livelihoods, clean water and overall quality of health of the Indigenous people in close proximity to the oil industrial development, such as pipeline construction, exploration, and refinery infrastructure on their land. These environmental and human injustices need to be brought to the forefront of human consciousness and dialogue in order for our world to exist in a more humane and environmentally sustainable and regenerative way instead of remaining unseen. Anthropologists, Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (1991) discuss patterns of systemic racism that have occurred for centuries in the countries of the modern "west," and have been deconstructed in the social spotlight. Politically and through social protest, these symbolically violent patterns still found in linguistic patterns, aesthetic preferences, or scientific frameworks are pushed into "ideological debate" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:27). Through this presence in the public realm, colonial racism is not tolerated, in "official rhetoric," despite its looming presence in battles "to control key signs" (1991:27), or in the case of *Standing Rock,* key pieces of land. Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) describe what they call a "very common pattern" that **"once something leaves the domain of the hegemonic, it frequently becomes a major site of ideological struggle"** (27). This is the place where environmental protection battles are being waged by Indigenous people and others concerned about the sustainability of the environment.

What is now occurring in the modern world is this "ideological struggle" is diffused by environmentally-conscious lip service, or "greenwashing," to pacify environmental activists or

concerned individuals into believing solutions are being sought. However, in many instances this is not accurate.[43] Comaroff and Comaroff (1991) outline a very significant point in the shift from hegemonically-accepted patterns of behavior to ideological debate for more mainstream society. In other words, the process when these frameworks move from the complicit, or implicit, to the conscious realm. This is when people become conscious and explicitly aware of social and environmental inequalities. Comaroff and Comaroff also discuss a socially significant time when awareness rests in between the conscious and the unconscious. They say that it is this "in-between" the conscious and unconscious, or "along a *chain of consciousness"* somewhere in the middle—is where "symbolic struggles" occur—where individuals are semiconscious that a shift is occurring from their previously accepted implicit systems of being, to the forging of new socially constructive ideologies (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:28-29). Hopefully, as a global society, we stand on transformative ground.

What happens, however, when those upholding neocolonial structures, speak the appropriate environmentally conscious discourse but still participate in environmentally destructive policies and patterns? Just as it is politically incorrect to be overtly racist (Memmi 1968), it is not necessarily favored to be overtly environmentally destructive. Resistance is part of the "dialectic" evident between the "colonization of consciousness" and the "consciousness of colonization" where colonization or neocolonialism is present (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:32). Neocolonialism is an inhumane and unjust perpetuation of a historic framework of

[43] Suzana Sawyer points out that a similar type of *greenwashed*, or humanitarian and environmentally-focused rhetoric was evident in the campaign introduced by the Chevron Corporation in 2007, called *Human Energy* (Sawyer 2009:2). Omolade Adunbi (2015) mentions billboards in the Niger Delta that depict Chevron as being a corporation that is intent on helping enhance the well-being of Nigerians. In 2011, Chevron established a partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development to contribute $50 million to the Niger Delta Partnership Intiative (NDPI) Foundation. Hopefully, the region will see tangible results from this development aid not simply more greenwashed rhetoric.

social stratification, and it is being upheld through modern-day *environmental colonization* through the workings of the oil industry. Using the analysis by Comaroff and Comaroff, it is the modern-day Indigenous resistance movements to defend the environment that are pushing environmental injustices into a realm where their hegemony, as unquestioned environmentally-violent practices, is no longer implicitly consumed.

Standing Rock Lakota (Sioux)

Estimates state that ten thousand people, primarily Indigenous—many called themselves, "Water Protectors"—gathered in mass demonstration on Lakota Sioux ancestral land, on and near Standing Rock Indian Reservation, close to Cannon Ball, Sioux County, North Dakota to protest the proposed route and existence in general of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). Known as the "Black Snake," a project by Energy Transfer Partners, the pipeline was projected to span 1,172 miles and transport close to 470,000 barrels of oil per day, with the capacity of transporting 570,000 barrels per day. Two of the resistance camps built for the demonstrations were made just outside of the Standing Rock reservation land boundary on un-ceded Sioux territory, and ironically, many of the hundreds of Indigenous *Water Protectors* were arrested for "trespassing" on their own ancestral land.

Young Lakota leaders of One Mind Youth group were instrumental in beginning this movement. Overcoming drug addiction and suicide ideation, one of the leaders Jasilyn Charger fought her addiction with the persistence of her friend and young Indigenous leader, Joseph White Eyes, who told her, "'Don't get high, let's go to a sweat.'" She said that "got me off drugs and into our culture" (Elbein 2017). Many Native American youth are fighting their depression and hopelessness with a return to prayer, ceremony, and activism, and the *Standing Rock* movement is a clear example of how this was actualized. Another spark that ignited the *Standing*

Rock resistance movement was the first run (500 miles), on April 24, 2016, completed and organized by the young leaders, Bobbi Jean Three Legs and Joseph White Eyes, to deliver a message to the Army Corps of Engineers in Omaha to not allow construction of DAPL under the Missouri River. The organizers gathered youth from all of the now separated, nine Sioux bands, that once had a tribal republic known as Oceti Sakowin, or the "Seven Council Fires," which became the name of the largest Standing Rock resistance camp (Elbein 2017). One of the runners Daniel Grassrope, from Lower Brule, south of the Cheyenne River Sioux reservation, felt he finally had a purpose. The next run the youth would make was 2,000 miles to Washington D.C. on July 15, 2016. Despite the fact that further construction, or another easement of DAPL had been approved on July 26, 2016, while the runners were making their journey, they gathered national and international support that would ignite the message they carried all the way to their tribal elders and council, and to the rest of the world.

During the Obama administration, on December 5, 2016, the Standing Rock resistance gained a major victory when the Army Corps of Engineers announced that it would create an environmental impact statement and explore alternative routes for the proposed pipeline. This statement was made by Assistant Secretary for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy, who was appointed to her position in August 2016 by President Barack Obama. However, a powerful article included in the Standing Rock Syllabus,[44] written by Kelly Hayes (2016) questions an earlier "victory," when former President Obama called for an initial halt to construction of the Dakota access pipeline. However, in this case, construction eventually commenced just as it did after

[44] The Standing Rock Syllabus (#StandingRockSyllabus) is a collective effort by the NYC community to bring together and maintain support through unifying "Indigenous scholars and activists, and settler/ POC supporters" by creating a collection of articles, books, and other written works, as well as solidarity initiatives to continue supporting the Standing Rock Sioux's "assertion of sovereignty over their traditional territories" (https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/about/).

Trump entered office, and the "victory" was short lived, but in Hayes' opinion part of a "political performance" that gives the illusion of victory to those involved in the resistance, but it is extremely short-lived and not permanent in actuality**.**

Kim Tallbear, professor of Native Studies at the University of Alberta and former environmental planner for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy, stated a sad truth, speaking about Standing Rock, that, "there are no rights being violated here that haven't been violated before," and that these continuing violations "have taken two forms: long-term disregard for Indigenous land rights and a 'bureaucratic disregard for consultation with Indigenous people'" (Donnella 2016). Distrust of corporate America still runs "deep within the veins of Native Americans," said Robert Dean, a veteran from the Chippewa Cree tribe in Minnesota (Donnella 2016). In 2015, the Keystone XL pipeline was opposed directly by the mobilization of numerous Native American tribes, including the Omaha, Dené, Ho-chunk, and Creek Nations. The Indigenous Environmental Network, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Resources Defense Council, and countless concerned citizens and activists also joined in opposition to the Keystone XL. The pipeline was proposed to cover 1,179 miles from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico. "The Rosebud Sioux, a tribe in South Dakota, called the proposed pipeline an **'act of war'** and set up an encampment where the pipeline was to be constructed," according to Leah Donnella (2016) in an article for NPR, "The Standing Rock Resistance Is Unprecedented (It's Also Centuries Old)" (2016). Even though President Obama vetoed the Keystone XL pipeline, the sentiments of the Native American community were cautious. A. Gay Kingman, the executive director of the Great Plains Tribal Chairman's Association stated that it was only a temporary action to appease the resistance. In his words: "Wopila [thank you] to all our relatives who stood strong to oppose the KXL, but keep the

coalitions together, because there are more pipelines proposed, and we must protect our Mother Earth for our future generations" (Donnella 2016).

In the current litigation, defending the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, by Earth Justice's legal team, headed by Jan Hasselman, they are asking the judge to rule on the Trump administration and the Army Corps of Engineers' decision to not complete the originally required, environmental impact statement which is mandated by law under the National Environmental Protection Act, or NEPA. More specifically, Earth Justice writes that:

> On Feb. 8, the Trump Administration granted an easement allowing the pipeline to be constructed under the Missouri River half a mile upstream of the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. It reverses an earlier decision by the Corps to withhold the easement while the agency completed an environmental review of alternate pipeline routes and the Tribe's treaty rights. The environmental review, referred to as an environmental impact statement, has been wrongfully terminated mid-process.
> The lawsuit challenges the Corps' hasty and unexplained departure from its previous decision and explains how the Corps ignored the Tribe's treaty rights and seeks to destroy culturally significant and sacred sites. It also explains how the Corps violated federal statutes requiring close environmental analysis of significant and controversial agency actions (February 14, 2017).

Jan Hasselman states that, "the Trump Administration is circumventing the law: wholly disregarding the treaty rights of the Standing Rock Sioux and ignoring the legally required environmental review." He continues with, "It isn't the 1800s anymore—the U.S. government must keep its promises to the Standing Rock Sioux and reject rather than embrace dangerous projects that undercut Treaties."[45] Most recently, Mike Faith, Jr., Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe[46], stated "The Corps has conducted a sham process to arrive at a sham conclusion, for the second time. The Dakota Access Pipeline represents a clear and present danger to the

[45] "Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Asks Federal Court to Set Aside Trump's Pipeline Reversal; Critical Motion Charges Trump Administration Circumvents Law and Ignores Treaty Rights," February 14, 2017. http://earthjustice.org/features/faq-standing-rock-litigation, accessed August 10, 2018.
[46] "Tribe Renews Legal Challenge to DAPL permits," November 1, 2018. http://earthjustice.org/features/faq-standing-rock-litigation, accessed November 15, 2018.

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and its people, and we will continue to fight until the Corps complies with the law." The *Standing Rock* Indigenous resistance movement is extremely significant because it gathered together a multi-racial and multi-cultural resistance, that included Native American tribes from across the United States and Canada, including Idle No More supporters, to stand in opposition to environmental, systemic, and cultural violence and genocide against Indigenous people. In the next section, the Indigenous resistance led by the Cofán in the Ecuadorian Amazon, against oil industrial exploration and pollution on their land is also being waged by the Waorani whose ancestral lands and home are potentially being sold by the Ecuadorian government to the highest bidder. Indigenous resistances to defend the environment are occurring throughout the world, especially against the exploitative practices of the fossil fuel industry, and the support of these movements is vital to protect the natural world for each Indigenous person and all people.

The Cofán - Ecuador

Michael L. Cepek, anthropologist, exposes the health and environmental degradation that the Cofán of the Amazon region of Ecuador have experienced for over half a century in *Life in Oil* (2018). The Cofán's plight with oil discovery and extraction on their ancestral lands has been marked with both resistance and adaptation, but many Cofán have lost their lives from cancer and other health complications from polluted water. Their worldview prior to oil exploration was marked by an understanding of the things that they had previously encountered and as a result, their language resembled this as well having no words to explain oil or resisting its extraction (Cepek 2018). Therefore, the new and eventually negative encounters that they began to experience in relation to oil, were not within their established frames of reference. Initially, the

word “protest” was not even part of their daily existence or vocabulary. It was described as close as possible with two Cofán words “*se’piye* (prohibiting) and *iyiccoye* (fighting),” but Cepek describes both terms as “extremely broad” (Cepek 2018:169). Essentially, Cepek explains that the Cofán learned to protest the oil companies on their land from “the non-Cofán people who claimed to be their allies” (2018:169). Taking a step back, the Cofán also did not have a specific word for oil or contamination. For oil, they combined several Cofán words to create a descriptive conglomerative word to describe the “black, dark, dirty, stinky, sticky, thick;” “hard to get rid of;” “attaches itself to objects;” and “bad” (Cepek 2018:132). They also had never experienced a “dirtiness that harms or kills” (Cepek 2018:132). Contamination, as described by one of the people, Deji, who Cepek worked with, said: “We Cofán don’t have a word that says, ‘a thing that becomes dirty and then damages or kills a person.’ In our language, it’s hard to convey that thought. It's not something we created, so it is difficult to talk about” (Cepek 2018:133).

Ever since the 1940s and the Cofán’s “initial encounter” with Royal Dutch Shell, it was “never a simple matter” regarding oil (Cepek 2018:169), but the Cofán still held negative associations with “*cocama,”* or non-Indigenous Spanish speakers, who historically had brought death and disease to their people. By the 1980s, Cofán people had experienced encroachment on their land due to a homestead law that allowed “free land” to be taken by colonists starting in 1974. To the Ecuadorian government, the Cofán were considered to be a “non-entity” and their land was available to anyone wishing to claim it. Randy Borman who grew up with the Cofán, as the son of Bub and Bobbie Borman who came to Dureno with the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) or Wycliffe Bible Translators confirmed this disregard by the Ecuadorian state (*Oil and Water* 2014). There was also a new disease, *cáncer*, which the Cofán were forced to

encounter as many people were getting sick and in general, were not as healthy or strong as they used to be due to the rampant oil pollution in their water.

These two factors of land dispossession and illness, along with rampant mismanagement and pollution of oil extraction and transportation on their land were tipping points for the rising resistance from the Cofán. In 1987, the Cofán "blockaded a road that Texaco attempted to build into their territory without warning or permission" (Cepek 2018:167). They had been encouraged to outline the boundaries of their territory and had met with the Ecuadorian president's office and Ecuadorian Institute of Agrarian Reform and Colonization to mark their community's territory. However, even their marked territorial boundaries were often disregarded by oil exploration personnel. Cepek (2018:182-186) describes another successful direct action of the Cofán that included occupying an abandoned and polluting oil well pump site, known as Dureno 1, for over a month. The Cofán community members and shamans (from neighboring tribal communities also) gathered together, and the shamans set up a camp on a nearby hill, and many believe it was their presence that caused the victory. Toribio, the president of the Cofán ethnic federation at the time stated, "We have lived here since the old times. We have struggled to survive. This well is on our home…it sends its wastes into our rivers and streams…it has contaminated our land. That's why we don't want it" (Cepek 2018:183).

According to the PBS Documentary, *Oil and Water* (2014), from "1972-1992, oil companies dumped more than **18 billion** gallons of toxic wastewater and crude oil into Ecuador's Amazon River basin…an amount 85 times more than the crude spilled into the Gulf of Mexico during the Deepwater Horizon tragedy." In 1999, I lived in Quito, Ecuador and had the opportunity to visit the Mondaña community near a tributary of the Napo River in the Amazon with Dr. Phyllis Passariello. We stayed at Yachana Lodge, an eco-tourism lodge, started by

Douglas McMeekin.[47] The beauty and importance of the rivers and waterways there is profound. They are truly the life blood of the region, like veins pumping vitality to everywhere they touch and beyond.

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine found that "people in the oil zone" of Ecuador "suffer 5x more stomach cancer, 15x more liver and skin cancer, 18x more bile duct cancer, 30x more larynx cancer" (2014). Hugo Lucitante, a young Cofán leader, who grew up in both the U.S. and the Amazon, is determined to advocate for the livelihood of his people (Cruz 2015). David Poritz, a young American, who came to Ecuador in the 6th grade is now engaged in the same struggle. He states that the pollution from the oil industry in the Amazon can be considered an "indirect genocide" to the people there (*Oil and Water* 2014). The two met and became friends and are the young leaders/protagonists in the documentary *Oil and Water*. Hugo Lucitante is now attending Brown University (to graduate in 2019) on a full scholarship, where Poritz attended. Brown has also created the Cofán Heritage Project, a project to shed light on the struggle of the Cofán people. David Poritz, with Manuel Pallares, have created the first equitable stamp or trademark (set of ethical and environmental standards) for oil companies with his company Equitable Origin,[48] which has certified the first two drilling sites in Colombia with the Pacific Rubiales Energy Company.

As Daniel Brook (1998), describes the systemic placement of deadly environmental pollution on Native North American lands as **environmental genocide**, the same is occurring in

[47] The Yachana foundation has built schools and the Mondaña medical clinic, which we visited. It also promotes permaculture practices, fair trade coffee production, aquaponics and sustainable green building. It also initiated a conservation project establishing 2,500 acres of rainforest to remain protected from oil exploration or palm plantations.

[48] The EO100™ Standard for Responsible Energy is "a set of rigorous performance standards for energy development projects" (Equitable Origin 2019) created by David Poritz. https://www.equitableorigin.org/about-us/overview/our-story/, accessed March 20, 2019

the Amazon region of Ecuador as David Poritz labeled it as "indirect genocide." The pollution of the lands of Indigenous Ecuadorians is environmental genocide as well, or ecocide that causes the ethnocide of a people. The Cofán, and the Waorani, are determined to not let this happen. Their resistance is integral to the sustained protection of their livelihoods, land, and other Indigenous communities in the area, but it is also relevant to the protection of the Amazon as a vital ecosystem interconnected with the entire planet. In the next section, the devastating oil pollution that has occurred for decades in the Niger Delta will be exposed for its vast amount of human rights abuses and environmental injustice against the communities there and Indigenous Nigerians' resistance to this corporately-driven extraction, refinement and transportation of crude oil that has destroyed their land.

The Niger Delta Communities - Nigeria

In 1956, while Nigeria was still a British colony, Shell British Petroleum discovered oil. It is reported that since 1982, Nigeria has accumulated $700 billion in oil export revenues. This wealth has been concentrated in the top 1% of the country, and the people of the different communities in the Niger Delta region have experienced a drastic decline in quality of life, increasing sickness, and death, due to pollution from oil extraction on their land. Even though obscene structural violence and socio-economic human rights violations occur daily in the Niger Delta, the deaths occur more slowly and gradually like the crude oil that seeps into the earth or water of the Niger Delta and little tangible humanitarian intervention has occurred to alleviate this suffering other than promised oil clean-ups and various development projects.

In 2002, approximately six hundred Nigerian women from the Itsekiri community of Ugborodo seized control of the federally-owned $800-million oil production facility located in

the Escravos channel in Madangho, Nigeria. The women non-violently took control of the Chevron Escravos terminal, the largest oil complex in the country, by barricading the entryways and forbidding anyone to exit or enter the plant, and thus, halting all work operations in the facility (Onabu 2010). Thomas Ereyitomi, the community leader, was quoted in *Frontlines of Revolutionary Struggle,* that he could not provide an exact number of participants, but it included all of the women from the community. The purpose behind their demands was to request that Chevron provide access to electricity in their community (since the Chevron facility was fully powered), address constant damage to their land, water, and fishing resources that was decimating their health and livelihoods, and provide equitable employment opportunities for their sons, husbands, and brothers. Ereyitomi stated that, "It is immoral for Chevron not to provide basic amenities in a community in which they operate and generate money" (Frontlines of Revolutionary Struggle 2010).

Eventually because of their persistence, within a few days, Chevron offered to hire over a dozen people from the community, build a town hall in Ugborodo, and construct schools and electric and water systems, according to Thomas Fortuna writing about their resistance for Global Nonviolent Action Database in 2011.[49] The women of Ugborodo inspired the women of the Gbaramatu community to occupy and seize control of four other pipeline stations. Twelve days after these protests commenced, Chevron conceded to an agreement of creating forty new job positions and promoting twenty workers to full-time. Moreover, "According to the protestors, the company also agreed to build water and electricity systems, schools, and hospitals

[49] The Global Nonviolent Action Database was written primarily by students at Swarthmore College for their research seminar in Peace and Conflict Studies by George Lakey. Also, students from Tufts University, supervised by peace and justice educator Dale Bryan, Georgetown University (peace scholar Barbara Wien), Menno Simons College Winnipeg and Canadian Mennonite University (conflict resolution studies scholar Karen Ridd), and Kennesaw State University (Maia Hallward) contributed to the database, https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/who-made-database, accessed June 11, 2018.

for local communities and set up a micro-credit scheme that would help village women start their own businesses" (Fortuna 2011).

In the year 2009, the situation had remained the same with regard to oil pollution and human rights abuses in the region due to unfulfilled promises. Chevron's ***daily*** production of oil averaged 480,000 barrels of crude oil. Omon-Julius Onabu writes that Mary Olowu, a community leader, lamented that "beside lack of electricity and other infrastructures, our community is being threatened by the harsh oceanic waves of the Atlantic Ocean and the daily crude oil and gas operational economic activities of the oil companies" (Onabu 2010). Their main grievance was a grossly disproportionate distribution of industry revenue from Chevron and a lack of equitable infrastructure, such as poor living conditions alongside the multi-million-dollar oil industrial complex.

Due to these injustices, conflict continues to escalate throughout the region due to oil pollution. The conflict is primarily a result of disenfranchised young males forming militant groups due to the limited resources for work and the destruction of their previous sources of income and livelihood, such as fishing, from oil pollution. Unfortunately, as Omolade Adunbi (2015), Nigerian political anthropologist and professor of Afroamerican and African Studies, explains that the actions that have produced results for the Niger Delta people and communities have been achieved through violence executed intentionally by the united militant rebel groups. According to Hilda Dokubo, Nigerian social activist and actress, it is the young men in the militia groups who have the ancestral blessing to restore resources to local communities (Adunbi 2015:206-208). There was hopefulness with the political candidate and former President of Nigeria from 2010-2015, Goodluck Jonathan since he is from the Niger Delta. However, even as governor of the Bayelsa State, he was "extremely corrupt" and did not address the actual needs

of the people (Adunbi 2015:212-213). In 2016, Nigeria's daily production had risen to "a maximum crude oil production capacity of **2.5 million barrels per day**,"[50] according to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. It ranked as "Africa's largest producer of oil and the sixth largest oil producing country in the world" (Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation 2016). However, the people in the Niger Delta continue to suffer and die as their land is polluted beyond recognition.

Thomas Fortuna (2011) states that "conservative estimates report that almost 7,000 spills resulting" from "approximately 3 million barrels of oil occurred within the 25-year span between 1976 and 2001." In 1998, Felix Tuodolo prepared an Environmental Rights Action Report for the Urhobo Historical Society, "Chevron's Oil Spill in Ilaje in Nigeria's Ondo State," the report described the spill in Ilaje as killing over **3,260 animals**. He wrote that dead animals lined the shore of the main river. Chevron reportedly contained the leak after seven days, but oil was still visible in the area one month following. He observed that women were worst affected by the oil spill. He quotes two women from the community. Mariam Ibinuolapo lamented, "This oil spill has murdered all my livestock. I don't know how I am going to survive now. I know I am going to die now" (Tuodolo 1998, opening quotation).[51] Stella Omoetan said, "This is what I do to feed myself and the children, now it has all gone. We are helpless. The last time our youths went to the Chevron platform to demand for our rights, they used soldiers to kill them" (Tuodolo 1998, opening quotation).

[50] This is an increase from the production in 2009 of 480,000 barrels of crude oil per day. It is still an enormous amount from a region where the majority of the people live in extreme poverty and on land destroyed from oil spills and corroding infrastructure.

[51] Tuodolo begins the Environmental Rights Action (ERA) Report with three quotations from people who were suffering the immediate and lasting consequences of the oil spill in Ilaje. Madam Stella Omoetan and Mariam Ibinuolapo (Mrs.) are two women that he quotes directly at the beginning of the report.

The report also describes the shooting and killing of two ILA youths on the Chevron Parabe platform on May 28, 1998 by a Chevron-authorized Nigerian military retaliation. Larry Bowoto was shot and was hospitalized for a month to recover. He survived the incident, but his livestock were not as fortunate. After his return to his home in Ikorigho, his entire stock of pigs was sick and died within a couple of months. The people of the Ubale-Nla community were the closest to the spill and believed it to be a result of leakages from the oil wells. On July 26, 1998, the community noticed a slick of oil in their river and water source. Later the same day, the oil had spread to almost all of the canals, streams, and tributaries of the river, affecting the nearby communities. The people reported the damage of the spill in Igbokoda at the local Ilaje government headquarters and to the Ondo State Environmental Protection Agency in Akure. Chevron was notified also. The Ondo State EPA visited immediately to take account of the spill. "It took Chevron almost seven days to visit the spill site and parts of the affected communities in the Awoye area," according to Tuodolo. This was reportedly their only visit also. To clean up the spill, community children were "employed to mop up the oil" (Tuodolo 1998).[52]

Thousands of livestock were reported as being killed from the oil spill, and also around 1,500 fishing bundles of the surrounding communities were destroyed. Drinking water became extremely scarce, and skin rashes and diseases spread in the communities as a result of the exposure to the toxic oil in the water. Gastric infections were also a result of the polluted water sources of the communities. The people were forced to travel several kilometers to find good drinking water (Tuodolo 1998).

[52] Felix Tuodolo (1998) prepared an Environmental Rights Action Report for the Urhobo Historical Society entitled "Chevron's Oil Spill in Ilaje in Nigeria's Ondo State." The report describes the spill in Ilaje, and I accessed it as an online document at the following location http://www.waado.org/Environment/OilSpills/NigerDelta/Ilaje.html, (accessed March 20, 2019).

In 2012, *The Wall Street Journal* featured an article by Drew Hinshaw about Chevron's natural gas rig that caught fire and burned for 46 days in the ocean. He orders the major spills in Nigeria, beginning with the previously described one in July 1998, that spilled an estimate of over 40,000 barrels of crude oil. In 2006, an onshore well spilled crude oil and remained burning for over a month. In 2009, a spill from a pipeline that transported 120,000 to 150,000 barrels caught fire daily for months. In 2011, Shell reported a leak from an offshore platform that spilled another 40,000 barrels (a modest estimate). Hinshaw explained that, "the United Nations Environment Program in August estimated it would take 30 years and cost $1 billion to clean up oil spilled over decades into Nigeria's river deltas. Oil companies and Nigeria's government should share the cost, the UN group said." The Nigerian government is considering making legislation that would allow the trial of oil companies. However, at the time, former President Goodluck Jonathan's senior adviser Oronto Douglas stated that only if clear proof of the oil company's "recklessness" from an independent party was available could the Nigerian government hold companies like Chevron accountable (Hinshaw 2012).

The village chief of Koluama asked Chevron to relocate the people in his community out of the hazardous and polluted areas. Hinshaw concluded that this type of catastrophe is what has fueled the fire of local militant groups in the past. He writes that, "continued environmental damage will further radicalize an already frustrated population, encouraging a return to arms in the oil-rich wetlands" (Hinshaw 2012). The Human Rights Watch Report on Nigeria compiled in 2014 describes the payoff program that the federal government established in 2009 which granted "26,000 militants, youth, and gang members" amnesty and cash stipends to surrender their weapons. The government is currently spending approximately $400 million annually from oil revenue money to keep militant groups at bay. However, as the Human Rights Watch report

states, this is not addressing the "region's underlying causes of violence and discontent, such as poverty, public sector corruption, environmental degradation from oil spills, and impunity for politically sponsored violence," and is a small fraction of the oil profits made from export and sale (Human Rights Watch 2014).

In June of 2014, the government announced the next year, 2015, as the ending date for the amnesty program, which involves a monthly pay-off to militants. The rationale recognized the need to secure and create jobs for the trained "ex-militants;" otherwise, the situation would remain unchanged and violence would erupt again. However, a major critique of the amnesty program is that it pays more than the minimum wage of many professional jobs, such as teachers (Adunbi 2015, Golden-Timsar 2018). Rebeca Golden-Timsar, Associate Director of the Graduate Certificate in Global Energy, Development and Sustainability at the University of Houston, who has been doing twenty years of field work as an anthropologist in the Niger Delta, concluded after returning there earlier this year that the Amnesty program that began in 2009 has not been as successful as hoped. In her article in *Forbes*, "Energy and New Violence in the Niger Delta," she explains that many of the pay-offs were given to militant commanders and often did not circulate to all members or were not even the full amount promised. This was also a problem when directly deposited into personal bank accounts, as the bank would take a portion of the payment. She states that the Nigerian government's military presence also has increased in the Niger Delta since the Amnesty program, as well as "bunkering," or the process of insurgents taking oil for their own sale and distribution (Golden-Timsar 2018).

An Amnesty International report from March 19, 2015 entitled "Nigeria: Hundreds of oil spills continue to blight Niger Delta" states that Royal Dutch Shell and Italian multinational oil giant ENI are guilty of over 550 oil spills in the region in 2014. In contrast, Europe experienced

only 10 between the years of 1971 - 2011 across the whole continent. Audrey Gaughran, Global Issues Director of Amnesty asserted that, "In any other country, this would be a national emergency. In Nigeria it appears to be standard operating procedure for the oil industry. The human cost is horrific—people living with pollution every day of their lives" (Amnesty International 2015). Shell and other oil companies blame the spills on militant sabotage and theft. However, this has been proved wrong by communities and NGOs working in the area. In November 2014, Shell admitted to severely underestimating the size of two major oil spills in the Niger Delta and thus under-compensating the communities for the environmental damage. Also, it was discovered that Shell was aware for years that one of its pipelines was too old and hazardous to be used in the region (Amnesty International 2015). The Nigerian people deserve just compensation for the accumulated destruction of their environment from the multi-national oil companies that have caused the damage.

IRIN news, or Integrated Regional Information Networks, originally a project of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports primarily on humanitarian cases that are often neglected as far as news coverage and exposure. It published a report in November of 2011, entitled "Niger Delta still unstable despite amnesty" highlighting the fact that despite the decrease in violence in the region due to the amnesty program, this is not a sustainable peace. The article highlights the sentiment of Delta lawyer Omon-Irabor that the reason for militancy is a lack of infrastructure in the region, particularly because it is where the majority of the nation's wealth is being extracted. He said that the reason for militant movements in the Niger Delta is that there is "no infrastructure, no roads, development, schools, bridges or employment for the youth." This structural violence occurs alongside the oil wealth of the region.

Productivity and oil revenues dropped at the height of the militants' conflict according to Justice in Nigeria Now, a human rights and environmental protection organization. However, no infrastructure developments that the people of the region are requesting have been granted. It has only been the amnesty payments to young men participating in militant activities that has occurred. The women protestors in 2002 also received promises for electric and water system developments to occur. However, few tangible steps to create economic stability as far as infrastructural developments have occurred according to the report by IRIN news.

According to the 2015 Supplement to the Annual Report by Chevron, the sales and other operating revenues for the year were $129.9 billion. The second page of the report displays the new installations to the Wheatstone oil platform as 37,000 metric ton topsides added to the "steel gravity structure" in April 2015. (Hopefully, militants will not find a way to blow up the structure.) Chevron's rampant pollution and failure to grant people's requests for viable infrastructure in the Niger Delta could easily be described as structural violence because it is not providing the basic social structures, and thus it is hindering people from meeting their basic needs for survival. In this case, the oil development in the Niger Delta region by Chevron is blatantly structurally and environmentally violent towards the Nigerian people that live there.

Filomina C. Steady (2009) describes this rampant disregard of the people in the Niger Delta as "**structural expendability**," or when some groups of people are treated as expendable. Environmental Justice practices run counter to this; they embody "the principle that all people and communities are entitled to equal protection of their environmental, health, employment, housing, transportation, and civil right laws" (Steady 2009:48). According to Steady, environmental justice defines injustice as "any undue imposition of environmental burdens on innocent bystanders or communities that are not parties to the activities generating such burdens"

(2009:48). Steady references Sir Nicholas Stern, past senior economist of the World Bank, who states that industries continue with environmentally destructive practices in order to not raise their production costs and maintain profits. He points to climate threats as the fault of neoliberal economic policies. He said that "climate change is the greatest market failure the world has ever seen" (Steady 2009:48). Hopefully, Chevron will begin to implement environmentally just practices; otherwise, the death and maltreatment of the members of the communities in the Niger Delta will be on their hands. In this chapter, specifically, three Indigenous resistances were described in order to illustrate how they are dismantling neocolonial global structures that promote environmentally-destructive corporate oil production and infrastructure development. At *Standing Rock*, with the Cofán, in Ecuador, and the communities of the Niger Delta in Nigeria, these Indigenous-based resistances advocate for environmental justice and thwart environmentally-violent neocolonialism.

Chapter Six

Conclusion: Interconnected Survival

I sought to explore what Indigenous environmental resistances were occurring in the world, and there are many others that I have not mentioned, but also those that arose in my country and state. The Indigenous environmental resistances that manifested in Oklahoma, *Oka Lawa Camp, Wealaka Camp,* and *Good Hearted People Camp,* and at *Standing Rock,* in North Dakota, and through the Cofán, in Ecuador, and the communities of the Niger Delta in Nigeria, all achieve three key paradigmatic shifts necessary for the regeneration of our natural world. They are: a promotion of Indigenous-based environmentalisms, where people and the natural world are interdependent and inseparable; a disrupting (and decolonizing) of settler-colonial processes, specifically in Oklahoma and the United States; and a dismantling of neocolonial corporate oil industrial structures that employ environmentally-destructive exploitation of the people and natural environment.

Steven Shapin (1994) explains that, "Trust is integral to social order" and the maintenance of it in the modern world is different from the premodern (15). "Social relations are lifted out of local scenes of interaction" face-to-face and "restructured in abstract time-space" where "*systems of expertise"* fill in the gaps and reassure individuals that even though they might not know everyone personally who is involved in their well-being, a trust in the constructed order will guarantee their safety or survival (Shapin 1994:15). Uday Mehta (1990) refers to this process through Durkheim's notion of "logical conformity" or "the reliance on the semi-codified social, linguistic, spatial" or "classificatory schemes based on these implicit markings" that create a "sense of limits" without explicitly stating them. Politically, the trust that citizens have in the social mechanisms that maintain political ideals and economic frameworks of conditioning are

shaped through a moral, social order but also one that trusts in the authority of these "*systems of expertise"* (Shapin 1994:15). A trust in established "truths" is what binds humans together socially. The "world-known-in-common" is fashioned from trust, or "the great civility" (Shapin 1994:36).

This moral social fabric woven together through processes of routine that have an automatic quality (Shapin 1994:34) are disrupted when trust is broken, or the pre-established truth might be false. "The maintenance of everyday order" is managed through routines of: "*not* inquiring too far too much, *not* seeking to go too deeply beyond the 'face value' of things" or letting the pre-existing knowledge be enough. When these perceptions are proved to be untrue both "cognitive" and "moral order" fail simultaneously (35). When trust has been broken, then the morally upheld civility begins to crumble. This could happen when the majority of Oklahomans find out that a major byproduct of the waste-water reinjection from fracking is threatening drinking water sources in the state.

Another example of this disruption of social order can be seen in Ann Stoler's (2008) unraveling of historic colonial order in the Dutch Indies which determined that the might of colonial rule was actually rife with "epistemic anxiety" (360). The biggest threat that it sought to keep at bay was a civil uprising from "political disaffection" arising from the colonized people (356). The seemingly "civil" dominance of the colonists was little more than a smokescreen to maintain a politically economic regime of power producing truths sold as the excepted (forced) taxation of the Native people of the Indies. In a similar situation, Oklahomans pay for the stability of a truth that might eventually cause deaths or severe compromises in health from poor water quality.

Unsettling Neocolonial Structures through Activism within Academic Institutions

Sarah E. L. Wakefield (2007), works with the "Food Movement" in Canada, and makes it clear that "access to sustainable, healthy food is increasingly seen as an environmental justice issue" (332). She explains that the connection between anti-poverty and environmental activism is relevant especially when one can see that "environmental and human devastation" is explicitly linked to healthy food accessibility (333). Actually, it is more accurate to conclude that environmental destruction, not poverty, causes the prevalence of malnutrition (Kennedy 1990; Maathai 2007: Wakefield 2007).

Wakefield explains how research that is informed through praxis is like "giving life to ideas about the way the world is" (2007:331). In her analysis the neocolonial actor is the Canadian "dominant corporate–industrial food system" (Wakefield 2007:331). She also states that "food activism" can highlight the often "opaque relationship" or connection between human and environmental degradation (Wakefield 2007:333). Wakefield is both a food activist serving as "coordinator of the 'food and health' working group of the Centre for Urban Health Initiatives," and an Associate professor at the University of Toronto in Geography (Wakefield 2007:333). She critically examines the type of praxis or involved action occurring among academics. She references L.J. Maxey's definition of activism as being "something we can each engage with in our everyday lives . . . attempting to do as much as we can from where we are at" (Maxey 2004:160 in Wakefield 2007:334).

Wakefield also emphasizes the importance of praxis within the university setting to "rework" those institutional patterns that keep on "reproducing and legitimizing existing social stratifications" (2007:336). She looks at praxis from within and outside academia. In order to clarify one area where these lines blur, she references Routledge (2004:84), as describing activist

research that works directly with members of a community where "a collective experience that contributes in some tangible way to the goals, tactics and strategies of those with whom we collaborate" (Wakefield 2007:338). She also articulates the challenges of the limited accessibility of academic writing (both in jargon used and actual availability of peer-reviewed journals to the general public). Wakefield writes that writing for other (non-academic) sources can help disperse critical knowledge in other outlets, but this can still be a major problem regarding the pressure to produce scholarly publications as opposed to spending time being involved in social justice movements or other praxis actions outside of the university (Wakefield 2007:340-341). Alecia Onzahwah, leader of Good Hearted People Camp, has not yet formally published *A People's Guide to Understanding Colonization.* One of her reasons for writing it was the lack of accessible information for the majority of people on the topic of colonization and decolonization. If she ever desires to publish it, and I am able to help with the resources at the University of Oklahoma, I will actively do so, as a contribution to her vitally important work. Maintaining its accessibility for all people would be necessary to achieve her original goals for the guide.

Reflections on Indigenous Resistances to Defend the Environment

"When is everyone going to wake up?!" Sydne Gray, OU Indigenize leader proclaimed at the Oilfield Prayer Day demonstration held at the Oklahoma Corporation Commission (October 13, 2017). She was speaking to all of us to hold accountable the oil industry for the increase in earthquakes, contamination of potable water sources through fracking waste water and oil, and a loss of protected land due to the prevalence of pipeline construction throughout our state. Another related question to ask is when are the *colonized*, going to rise up, or "stand up" as James Baldwin said in *A Rap on Race* with Margaret Mead (1972). "What if the man in

Johannesburg stands up?" poignantly asks Baldwin, and they (we) refuse to be oppressed no longer. Collective mass mobilization could give Indigenous people the strength to stand up to the environmental injustice that is oppressing their livelihoods. This support has the potential to decolonize predominant conceptions of the environment and dismantle harmful systemic environmentally violent or genocidal practices. In this case, the role of the social researcher could be to advocate for Indigenous resistances to defend the environment by dispersing knowledge about these resistances.

There are constant attacks on Native sovereignty by oil pipeline development and other environmental violence that occurs to Indigenous people that is rampant in our modern world (Barker 2005). In the current era, Indigenous Americans are forced to maintain a relationship with their land that is based on the constant defense of neo-settler encroachment. For those individuals whose ancestors were "settlers," (Snelgrove et al. 2014) taking action to stop the continual theft of American Indian land through different government policies ends the cycles of historical and environmental violence and racism in our country. Pipeline construction on "un-ceded Native American territory," or in the tribal jurisdiction areas of Oklahoma, without consent, is a violation civil and human rights. Every time a pipeline or other oil infrastructure is built on Indigenous land without their consent, this is a case of environmental injustice.

This is why the Dakota Access pipeline's construction by Trump's executive order set a dangerous precedent that continued in Oklahoma with the completed construction of the Red River II and the Diamond pipelines. Because the Dakota Access pipeline was built even though approximately ten thousand people came to where it was being constructed and said, "do not build the black snake" and "water is life," it was still constructed, and now still has oil rushing through it. People around the country including myself were following every post and news story

possible to be accountable for the militarized violence against peaceful "protectors." These injustices and human rights abuses that occurred at Standing Rock cannot be forgotten. They must not be buried in the soil upturned from the bulldozers who covered the pipeline. It must be remembered that it is the Indigenous people of our land that continue to teach that the integral part of being human is our vital connection to the environments where we live. It is only through these environments that we are sustained and will survive.

Our survival is directly connected to the survival of all living "beings" around us, and this includes the land, water, air, plants, and animals that sacrifice their lives to sustain us. To many Indigenous people, the land, water, and air are living entities that are sacred because of our relationships to them and their direct connection to our survival. Our modern world neglects this connection to our natural world in so many ways. Indigenous environmental resistances reflect Vizenor's "survivance," a term of active survival (Archuleta 2005; Vizenor 2008); Jace Weaver suggested "survivance" was a combination of survival and resistance. Indigenous resistances to sustain the environment: re-enliven Indigeneity as a dynamic concept that is not frozen in the past (McCreary and Milligan 2014), re-affirm environmentalism as a interdependent relationship between people and the natural world, and decolonize, dismantle, and disrupt both neocolonialism and settler-colonialism in our modern day's implicit and ideological structures through their action and resistance of oppressive systems. One begins to see that the land is a part of us, because it is what sustains us.

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