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Encased Encounters: Remapping Boundaries of
U.S. and Mexican Indigeneity

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

María Teresa Ceseña

Committee in charge:

Professor Ross Frank, Chair
Professor Roberto Alvarez
Professor Ricardo Dominguez
Professor Natalia Molina
Professor Eric Van Young

2011

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The dissertation of María Teresa Ceseña is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2011

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Alejandro Ceseña, Otilia
Flores Camacho, Antonio García Lozano, and
Leonor Chavarría García. Your strength lives on in me.

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VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Encased Encounters: Remapping Boundaries of U.S. and Mexican Indigeneity

by

María Teresa Ceseña

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2011

Professor Ross Frank, Chair

In our current historical moment, notions of citizenship and sovereignty are continually being called into question. Over the past two hundred years, processes of delimiting the cultural and geographic parameters of the U.S. and Mexican nation-states have played out in distinct but parallel ways. As the two countries that share the largest militarized border in the world, flows of migration, or rather the containment of these flows, has necessitated a clear demarcation of what constitutes indigenous people, and more importantly, indigenous landscapes. Citizenship in both countries has always been predicated upon how the nation-state imagines its borders, and whom it imagines as worthy of residing within those borders. This work maps the systemic and overt forms of racism that create current discourses and perceptions of indigeneity, analyzing how these forms continue to define and delimit nation-building projects today. Through centering an analysis of the National Museum of the American Indian in the United States and the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico, I link their institutional practices and representations of indigenous communities to larger historical developments and

genealogies to reveal the way that structural racism and ideologies operate to manage and produce the ongoing “absent presence” of indigeneity. This project aims to move away from the notion of museums as sites of multicultural inclusion and public recognition to examine the ongoing problem and reconfiguring of “difference” in such spaces. Looking at the way that each museum facilitates navigation through spatial, as well as temporal boundaries, I then locate these navigations within larger historical and contemporary debates surrounding conflicting notions of state and Native sovereignty. I contend that museums are key sites for capturing, staging and authenticating indigenous identities, serving as important locations to examine the indigenous presence in larger national and discursive contexts. This dissertation asks the following questions: how do museums provide the groundwork for the imagined and symbolic landscapes through which we see, engage and *encounter* the indigenous presence in the early 21st century? How does an understanding of indigeneity in these two museums reveal much more about the present conditions of globalization, neoliberalism, diaspora, history and political sovereignty? How does apprehending the racialization of space and place allow for nuanced analyses of power and native subjectivities in the present-day?

Introduction

Violence has been (and continues to be) both instrumental and foundational to the formation (and maintenance) of nation-states worldwide (Goswami, 2002; Chatterjee, 1993; Anderson, 1991). The United States and Mexico are no exception. Throughout their existence, both have utilized violence against Indigenous peoples, as well as other non-white peoples, in order to create and perform sovereignty and hegemony. However, there are various forms of violence, each of which functions differently and enables something slightly different for those in power. In their article titled “Dismantling Borders of Violence,” Alberto Lopez Pulido and Olivia Marrujo Ruiz distinguish between three unique yet connected forms of violence: physical, economic, and symbolic; all of which have worked, and continue to work, in tandem to create and maintain U.S. and Mexican hegemony. Whereas physical and economic violence take on seemingly more tangible manifestations, such as rape, murder, beatings, theft (of land and other forms of property), job discrimination and/or the withholding of pay from those who occupy the most vulnerable positions in the labor market (such as women, children, and the undocumented), symbolic violence is somewhat less obvious. Perhaps the most complex of the three forms, and in many ways the most powerful, symbolic violence includes a host of discursive practices that allow “those in power [to] wield notions of privilege and prestige to belittle, degrade, and attack more vulnerable members of society” (Pulido and Ruiz, 2010, p. 135).¹ It is symbolic violence, which I also refer to as

¹ Alberto Lopez Pulido and Olivia Marrujo Ruiz. “Dismantling Borders of Violence.” *U.S. Catholic Historian*. Vol. 28, No. 4, Fall 2010.

discursive violence that enables the other more tangible, physical manifestations of pain and loss to take place.

In this dissertation I examine the role that symbolic/discursive violence has played in the subjugation of Indigenous peoples and cultures within the larger projects of U.S. and Mexican nation building. As very powerful sites of knowledge production, national museums, have acted as some of the primary enablers of discursive violence in the ways that they categorize and define people and cultures, making them legible for the public. In one way, museums act as stages, enabling performances of sovereignty, national identity, cultural authority, and territoriality by nation-states. In another way, museums function as performative spaces, shaping how we encounter “difference” on multiple levels and in multiple ways. Working within a performance studies framework, I view museums as spaces where rituals are performed by a variety of performers: curators, visitors, and subjects of display. Whereas rituals function to regulate and restrict, as have museums, they also carry with them the potential to resist through their disruptions; therein lies the potential for change and transformation of people, ideas, and spaces. “Though ritual undeniably contains elements of the regimented, the habitual, the routine, it is always already potentially transformative enchanting and ludic” (Amoore and Hall, 2010, p. 302). Rather than acting as spaces whose sole purpose has been to educate the public about the reality of “race” “culture” and “nationalism,” museums have functioned as active producers of meanings of all these things.²

² Here I am borrowing the words of Melani McCalister as she discusses the role of cultural texts in producing meanings about the Middle East. See *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

Prior to discussing their transformative potentials of museum spaces/exhibitions, I must first discuss the more regulative/restrictive functions that accompanied their emergence within projects of nation building, which commenced with intensity at the end of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Additionally, it is necessary to point out that projects to define the nation-state were not central only to the United States and Mexico. Rather, the nineteenth century saw an emerging world order of modern nation-states throughout Europe and the Americas—each vying for a position within that hierarchy. As these successor states transitioned from colonial rule to independent nationhood, therein lay the question of how to deal with those who came to represent the “colonial difference,”³ the mass of native inhabitants who were envisioned within the nation as sources of cheap/necessary labor and as links to the pre-colonial past. Among them, the United States and Mexico were confronted with the question of what to do with “the Indian.” Historically seen as obstacles standing in the way of progress, both literally and figuratively, it was not until well into the twentieth century that either country attempted to incorporate Indians into the nation through programmatic assimilation. While each country dealt with their Indigenous populations in different ways, and with stratified levels of embracement, both the United States and Mexico looked to Indigenous peoples and their cultures for what they could provide rhetorically and ideologically to the framing of the nation—confining any favorable association with Indigenous peoples and cultures to the past—and for their lands and labor which formed and funded the basis of nation building. Though these pasts were framed as glorious beginnings meant to evoke pride and nostalgia for the pre-modern, pre-Industrialized countryside or pre-national

³ See Walter Mignolo (2000) for further discussion of the “colonial difference.”

natural origins, they established a binary between dead (proud) and living (defeated) Indigenous communities; the latter slated for intervention at any cost in order to be made fit for incorporation into the modern nation-state.⁴

Questions over how or where to include Indigenous peoples within the nation-state have fueled debates in Mexico and the United States for centuries. These debates have occupied many fronts, including issues relating to land access and ownership, citizenship, and self-determination. Indigeneity is often closely associated with a connection to land (Buff, 2001; Nagel, 1997; Anzaldúa, 1987), as such; access to or removal from land has been a major point of contention in both countries. For example, though the colonial period in Mexico was highly destructive to native peoples, scholars agree that the most significant attack on Mexican native societies occurred during the Liberal Reforma (1854-1876), especially devastating for native peoples because its policies effectively broke up communal lands as well as certain notions of identity tied to land and community (Macleod, 2000; Krauze, 1997; Meyer, 1991). In the United States, the 1830 Removal Act forced upwards of 70,000 native people off of their land and denied them access to their ancestral homelands, making way for white settlement and what was deemed more “efficient” use of the land (Mancall and Merrell, 2000; Spence, 1999). As each nation-state vied for its position within the emergent world of modern nation-states, the place of the Indian in this world had to be defined and addressed.

This dissertation takes on the task of mapping the ways that Indians have come to be understood within U.S. and Mexican national imaginaries. While I do not focus on the

⁴The modern nation-state is a political entity and concept developed in the Westphalian Treaty of 1648. It establishes territoriality but also cultural boundaries that imagines the integrity of this new form and system of geopolitical organizing. See Anderson (1996) *Imagined Communities* and Gellner (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*.

policies and actions that facilitated the physical death of Indigenous peoples through forced displacement and outright genocide, I deal instead with the construction of their discursive death⁵ to fully apprehend the symbolic mechanisms and apparatuses of violence that have been deployed against them. In order to do this, we must think through a politics of encounter. While encounter has a range of meanings: face-to-face, virtual, etc. I am influenced by the type of encounter elucidated by Melani McCalister in her seminal text, *Epic Encounters* that “include[s] those that happen across wide geographic spaces, among people who will never meet except through the medium of culture” (2001, p.1). Just as violent face-to-face encounters have facilitated the death and dispossession of native peoples throughout the Americas, their physical destruction was no doubt facilitated by the ways they were constructed discursively through various forms of visual media including captivity narratives, cartoons, and paintings (Deloria, 2006; Sayre, 2000; Berkhofer, 1979). Notions of Indians as romanticized figures to be both feared and desired, came about through American popular culture more so than actual physical contact between bodies. If representation has played a key role in the construction of ideas about and feelings toward Indigenous peoples, perhaps the key to repudiating the continuation of violent practices and institutions is to rethink how we encounter each other, and to do so outside of the logic of conquest. By the logic of conquest, I am referring to the way that many of us think it only possible to understand each other in terms of exploitation, superiority, and domination. Even as I write these words, I know

⁵ Orlando Patterson (1972) discusses the notion of “social death” as a way of describing the condition of life under slavery for various peoples throughout history, which is apt in describing the early efforts by conquistadors to implement Indian slavery as the means to exploiting “the New World.” I extend his construction to Native peoples in the United States and Mexico into modern times today. See Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery And Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

that in practice, it is extremely difficult to divorce myself completely from this type of zero sum mentality, but it is important to at least attempt to resist it nonetheless.

Therefore, I must at least attempt to engage with the discourses that have set me/us up to see competition and conquest as the only viable way to survive.

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation begins by bringing together two discrete sets of literature that address the policies of incorporation of Indigenous peoples in the United States and Mexico. Employing a comparative framework, I trace hegemonic articulations of Indigeneity as they were produced by the nation-state in attempts to incorporate and assimilate “the Indian” beginning with the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This comparison serves as a frame for the entire dissertation, within which I engage with two specific museums: The National Museum of the American Indian (Washington, D.C.) and the Museo Nacional de Antropología (Mexico City, D.F.) to examine how each either asserts and/or questions notions of sovereignty, transnationalism, cultural and racial boundaries. Placing this review of literature within a comparative framework is what enables me to perform a cultural studies analysis of the exhibits, their forms, contents, and what each actually enables.

PRACTICES OF LOOKING

My methodology in this project has been driven by a central question which asks, *why this form at this time?* In documenting the past as well as the present and future, there is a need to go beyond simply describing the very vibrant forms of cultural production and expression that our communities rely on for spiritual strength and continuity. It is crucial to interrogate what it is that these particular forms of production and expression actually enable and how they may be utilized by future generations seeking to create their own senses of agency and identity, therefore enabling us as scholars and participants, to build up our repertoires and be ready at all times to respond to the obstacles we face in our work and in our everyday lives as members of society.

I believe that my analytical framework can be best explained visually. Below is what I call the performative complex. Figure 1.1 represents a hypothetical charting of the museum as a primary performer.

PERFORMER	Performs:	Functions as:	ENABLES
• Museum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authority • Nationalism • Objectivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptacle • Educator • Storyteller 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theft • Hegemony • Erasure/Justification

Figure 1.1: Performative Complex

For each museum, each exhibition, and each issue that proved to be central to my analysis, I asked the types of questions depicted in the table above. Doing so allowed me to push a bit further beyond the “What” and “How”, into the territory of “Why”?

Additionally, I looked to decode, or “render comprehensible that which is initially unfamiliar, to establish a ‘reading’ of an event or an object” (Hall, 1997, p. 166).

Utilizing “the device of cultural studies in which practices are read like a text with an analysis of power, social constructions of race, and collective memory” (Davalos, 2004, p. 109), I make sense of each exhibit by keeping in mind the institutional and ideological parameters of their construction, and the relational colonial histories that enabled/necessitated their constructions in the first place. However, it was important to keep in mind that the very nature of certain spaces, like the NMAI, which attempts to challenge official histories that privilege texts, in order to “represent[ed] a social, historical, and political world outside the ‘text’”(Archuleta, 2008, p. 182). Additionally, the notion of Critical Regionalism which José Limón defines as “simultaneously a theory, methodology, and praxis for recognizing, closely examining, fostering, but also linking cultural and socioeconomic localized identities, especially as these stand in antagonistic, if also negotiated, relationships with late capitalist globalization”(2008, p.8), helped me situate the visual representations within the context of modernity and globalization.

Using both a cultural studies and performance studies approach to shape my primary framework and analytical lens allowed me to read contemporary museological practices alongside my historical comparison of the ways in which Indigenous people have been framed by project to construct the US and Mexican nation-states. More specifically, I decoded the exhibits using a combination of reader/subject positions. Sturken & Cartwright (2001) lay out Hall’s description of the three dominant reading techniques:

Dominant-hegemonic reading. [The reader] can identify with the hegemonic position and receive the dominant message of an image or text (such as a television show) in an unquestioning manner

Negotiated reading. [The reader] can negotiate an interpretation from the image and its dominant meaning.

Oppositional reading. Finally, [the reader] can take an opposition position, either by completely disagreeing with the ideological position embodied in an image or rejecting it altogether (for example, by ignoring it).⁶

I embodied these three reading positions at different times and circumstances throughout my research at the museums. However, I also approached this section of my research very aware of the limits of reading solely from the archives of cultural practices (Taylor, 2003) and of being able to intellectualize how I experienced each museum (Warrior, 2005; hooks, 1991; Scott, 1991). Still, I began my visual reading of the museums with these initial questions: Where does each museum delimit the nation-state they represent? Who is included within these boundaries, and who is excluded? How does each museum represent itself on a local, national, transnational, and global scale? Though the NMAI is clearly a critique of colonialism and all its manifestations, while the Museo Nacional de Antropología voices a loud message of Mexican nationalism, the exhibits at both museums reveal—through the content, frameworks, and modes of representation—some

⁶ Quoted in Hall (1993, p. 90-103).

of the messier aspects of colonization that nation-states have tried to eradicate and sanitize, but can never fully erase, and also the potential to disrupt linear trajectories that place people and culture on a fixed continuum. This project interrogates how encounters are shaped in a very performative way within/through museum displays.

MUSEUMS, MODERNITY, AND THE NATION-STATE

The linear thought and trajectories that we see being engaged with in both museums, in different ways, are very much the products of modernity. What has come to be understood as modern thought or logic began in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, though it really reached wide-scale dissemination during the eighteenth century. Several Latin American scholars locate the emergence of modernity with the onset of capitalism primarily in Spanish America during the sixteenth century (Mignolo, 2001 & 2000; Quijano, 2000; Dussel, 1996) The problematic view instigated and proliferated by Western social science of there being a singular “modern moment,” not only established a dichotomy between tradition and modernity, but as Appadurai notes, came to “distort the meanings of change and the politics of pastness” (1996, p.3). This modern split was an attempt to devalue traditional understandings of the world, typically based on religious or spiritual beliefs, instead privileging several key concepts which Stuart Hall identifies as Reason, Empiricism, Science, Universalism, Progress, Individualism, Toleration, Uniformity of Human Nature, Freedom, and Secularism (1996, p. 24). Condensing these criteria even further, Néstor García Canclini names just “four basic movements that constitute modernity: an emancipatory project, an expansive project, a renovating project,

and a democratizing project” (1995, p.12). Adding to this is Hall’s notion of “vernacular modernities” envisions the possibility of non-Western societies “enter[ing] ‘modernity,’ acquir[ing] the fruits of its technologies, and yet do[ing] so to some extent on their terms” (2000, p.215-216). This then allows for yet another split between “modern” in the sense of the set of logic that emerged in Europe during the Enlightenment, and the more colloquial “common sense” understanding of modern as meaning contemporary. While changing the term would not then automatically erase the hierarchies that European modernity enabled for Europeans and European colonizations, it would enable “a proliferation of modernities, each with its own historical trajectory rather than the universalization of a singular Western modernity”(Hall, 2000, p. 216).⁷ Additionally, Walter Mingolo (2000) advocates for what he calls a “double-critique” which Pet Pels (2002) succinctly describes as a critique that “identifies the interior contradictions of modernity, and especially its ‘coloniality’ (the violent, dark side of modern government) as well as its exterior limits, where modernity confronts the colonial difference, that is something it has declared other than itself” (p.377). The logic of modernity, especially the notions of progress, reason, and expansion, provided the foundation for the creation of nation-states around the globe, including the Americas.

Throughout the nineteenth century projects to include the Indian within the nation-state were implemented through education, law, and cultural representations that defined Indians within national narratives, and institutionalized these definitions of through the display of art and artifacts within the national museums systems. Through the classificatory actions of US social scientists influenced by the Boasian-inspired drive to

⁷ Referenced in Appadurai (1996).

document and display that which could be salvaged of “fleeting” native culture (Errington, 1998, p.180), and Mexican Científicos whose theories employed a mix of Social Darwinism and paternalistic oppression (Macleod, 2000, p. 26), Indigenous peoples in both countries would be defined by non-Indigenous scholars and politicians well into the twentieth century. In fact, Franz Boas was instrumental in helping create the International School of Archaeology and Ethnology, which opened in Mexico City in 1911. One of his best students was Manuel Gamio, used Boas’ principles as outlined in the *Mind of Primitive Man* (1911) to structure Inigenismo programs that began in Mexico during the 1920s (Dawson, 2004).

Rather than pinpoint the birth of “nationalism” in a single century or moment, it is important to distinguish between nationalisms that emerged under different circumstances, in different locations, and at different times. While Benedict Anderson (1991) locates the emergence of the nation, what he terms *Imagined Communities*, during the eighteenth century in Europe and North America, Claudio Lominitz-Adler (2001) argues that the idea of nation begins much earlier, at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Spanish America. The combination of “nation” and “state”—nation-state—requires a bit of discussion. Max Weber defines the state as “the sole source of the ‘right’ to use violence. Hence ‘politics’ for us means striving to share power or strength to influence the distributions of power either among states or among groups within a state” (2001, p.78).⁸ Lominitz-Adler describes nationalism as a “productive discourse that allows subjects to rework various connections between social institutions, including,

⁸ From “Politics as a Vocation” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Hans Heinrich and C. Right Mills (2001).

prominently, the relationship between state institutions and other social organizational forms”(2001, p.13). So if the state is an inherently violent entity, and nationalism is a discourse of negotiation, then nation-states would have to entail negotiations of/for power among peoples (national communities) entangled in violent (and shifting) bonds of dependence.⁹

As such, the violent push to contain and delimit territories influenced where boundaries would lie, and who would be included within those boundaries. Anderson’s definition of the nation describes an “imagined political community...imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign...” and necessarily imagined because the span of most nations entails that most people will never actually meet their fellow citizens of the nation (1991, p. 6). At a very basic level, Anderson’s definition of the nation helps us conceptualize the type of encompassment involved in defining certain people as part of a nation, as either insiders or outsiders. However, Lominitz-Adler complicates this notion:

...the power of nationalism lies not so much in its hold on the souls of individuals (though that is not insignificant) as in the fact that it provides interactive frames in which the relationships between state institutions and various and diverse social relationships (family relationships, the organization of work, the definition of forms of property, and the regulation of public space) can be negotiated (2001, p.13-14).

In terms of my project and my questions concerning what it means to be Indigenous, an understanding of when, how, and where “the nation” emerged, is important for understanding how people have had to negotiate their role within, and their relationship to the nation. What have people had to imagine, and what have they had to forget to be included within the nation? How do people identify with some members of

⁹ For further discussion of “bonds of dependence” see Lominitz-Adler (2001, p.13).

the population and dis-identify with others? How much of this process is individual choice, how much is communal, and how much is coerced through the placement and enforcement of arbitrary racial and ethnic categories determined by the state, what I identify as discursive violence?

I compare articulations of Indigeneity in the United States and Mexico not simply because they are geographic neighbors but to elucidate the areas of overlap within the discourses addressing and framing “the Indian” as part of the nation-building project. Appadurai notes “Nation-states, for all their important differences...make sense only as part of a system. This system (even when seen as a system of differences) appears poorly equipped to deal with the interlinked diasporas of people and images that mark the here and now” (1996, p.19). My historical comparison relates to current questions about transnational and global Indigeneity affecting specifically, Mexicans and Chicana/os in the Latino Diaspora who reside in and make claim to US spaces that have been framed as either Euroamerican settlements or as Native Americans lands, but always within the larger geopolitically defined territory of the United States.

INDIGENEITY AND GLOBALIZATION

Over the past century the world has witnessed enormous activity in globalization: the movement of capital, industry, and bodies across boundaries. As such, globalization has opened up possibilities for alliances on an unprecedented global scale. Indigenous peoples around the world have utilized the framework of international Indigenism to advocate for distinct collective rights (Niezen, 2003, p. 18), revealing both the fluidity of

national borders and the fragility of the nation-state as a sovereign territorial body that can or must always determine the status and identity of “its” people. Global movements in many ways have shaken the very foundations of the nation-state, but still have not caused their obliteration. To the contrary, as processes of globalization intensify, so do nation-states’ attempts to strengthen their boundaries, and consequently, the boundaries of national identity: seeking to more clearly define who may or may not be included as citizens, and who may or may not represent the nation’s core (Ong, 1999; Appadurai, 1996; Basch, 1993).¹⁰ This also affects the category of “Indigenous”: who may articulate Indigeneity and how “it” may be articulated? What might constitute this native/Indigenous substance or thing?

Audra Simpson and Glen Turner define Indigeneity as “the distinctive cultural, historical and political reality of Indigenous peoples” (Simpson and Turner, 2008, p. 18). While Indigeneity may constitute both the conditions and articulations of being Indigenous, it is a fairly recent notion. In many ways, it is a reaction to fixed notions of Indigenous identity as something that can be clearly defined and projected onto particular racialized bodies. I must point out that by using Indigeneity, I am anachronistically placing a more contemporary notion upon past conditions and articulations of Indigenous groups in the United States and Mexico, but it is my contention that these histories are what established the basis for contemporary movements by and representations of Indigenous peoples from both countries. However, it is important to distinguish between contemporary uses of Indigeneity, and historical definitions of Indigenous identities by

¹⁰ Of course the paradox of the global Indigenous struggle is that while the principle goals surround self-determination and sovereignty on both a distinctive and collective level, they also rely on recognition by nation-states for legitimacy. For further discussion on the politics of non-recognition see Bruce Granville Miller (2003).

nation-states whose intentions were to establish fixed notions of Indigenous people and cultural practices, typically relegating both to the past. Unlike current uses of Indigeneity, constructions of “Indians” were not concerned with the recognizing/acknowledging of “distinct cultural, historical, and political realities,” but rather were attempts to homogenize differences so that they could be made to fit within preconceived national imaginaries.

(TRANS)NATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

While Mexican and US laws and programs relating to Indians may be viewed by some as entirely different and unrelated, it is important to point out that state officials from both countries found themselves in conversation with one another over the years. One such example of the transnational conversations I am referring to took place during the month of April, 1941 when *El Primer Congreso Indigenista Interamericano* (The First Inter-American Indigenist Congress) convened in Patzcuaro, Mexico in order for Indigenous activists from across the Americas to “discuss and confront issues of forced national ‘assimilation’” (Hernández-Ávila, 1999, p. 80-81). Organized primarily by Dr. Luis Chávez Orozco, the Mexican Minister of the Department of Indian Affairs and also the Chairman of the Central Organizing Committee for the event, and John Collier, the U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1933 to 1945, the conference followed a detailed agenda that addressed six major topics related to Indian issues: 1) Education, 2) Arts and Crafts, 3) Natural Resources, 4) Organization, 5) Legislation, and 6) Anthropology. In a letter sent by John Collier to Dr. Luis Chávez Orozco, dated February

3, 1940, Collier laid out the purpose of the conference in the following statements that were attached to the letter:

The Indian problems of the Americas, reaching as they do into every aspect of governmental activity, Mexico and the United States have selected for the agenda for the first Inter-American Congress on Indian Life those subjects dealing with vital, present day problems common to both countries.

This agenda as well as the policies at the end of each section have been thoroughly discussed and approved by the minister of Indian Affairs of Mexico and by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs of the United States of America.¹¹

I begin with this historical example to point out that the “hemispheric approach”¹² to addressing the “Indian problem” is not a new tactic employed by either the United States or Mexico. Also significant, is the way that both Mexico and the United States saw the “Indian” problem as a common and singular issue. This historic example of individuals from several nation-states reaching across national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries reflects more recent efforts undertaken by diasporic Indigenous groups/communities to transcend inter-tribal and transnational divides.¹³

The following chapter, “In the ‘Race’ to be Modern” maps out acts of symbolic violence perpetuated by the United States and Mexico in attempts to dehumanize Indigenous peoples by rearticulating them as sites of labor, as sources of land needed for

¹¹ This brief introduction to the agenda was followed by a longer more detailed list which addressed six topics: 1) Education, 2) Arts and Crafts, 3) Natural Resources, 4) Organization, 5) Legislation, and 6) Anthropology. The format for each of the six topics included: a definition of the issue, a listing of a few (say 1-4 etc) subpoints, and a concluding “Policy” proposal. Look up proper citation format. The agenda for the First Inter-American Congress on Indian Life for Mexico and the United States. Attached to a letter from John Collier to Dr. Luis Chávez Orozco, 3 February 1940, AGN-

¹² In her article titled “South of the Border at the NMAI,” Robin Delugan describes the inclusion of Indigenous groups from across the Americas within the U.S.-based National Museum of the American Indian as the “hemispheric approach”.

¹³ See Ramirez (2007) for a discussion on native diasporas.

progress and development—modernization—as well as imagined figures that would come to symbolize the past, and casting them as incapable and/or unworthy of citizenship. By examining the processes of incorporating Indigeneity into the U.S. and Mexican national imaginaries during the initial periods of modernization and nation building, this chapter sets up the historical framework necessary to interpret the repercussions of said processes in the present moment.

Chapter 2, “Staging Sovereignties” documents current shifts in museological practices, including the emphases on collaborations between native communities and museum professional as well as on the bridging of tradition and modernity as a decolonizing practice, occurring in what we might consider the second museum age. This chapter then specifically looks at the way that some contemporary native groups are utilizing museum exhibitions at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) as performative spaces to challenge and reshape boundaries of race, culture, time, and territoriality. I present these challenges as acts of staging in the sense of presenting alternative realities; realities that do not yet exist, but when presented discursively to the public, become possible to envision and perhaps, one day become actual reality; a sort of “rehearsal for politics.”¹⁴ Additionally, I look at the space of museums as potential where the processes involved in the construction of historical narratives, racial identities, and museum displays themselves, can potentially be brought to light and examined; exposing

¹⁴ In *Time Passages*, George Lipsitz elaborates on the crucial role that culture performs within struggles for justice and social change by referring to culture as a “rehearsal for politics, trying out values and beliefs permissible in art but forbidden in social life” (2001, p. 17)

their constructed-ness as opposed to their taken-for-granted existence, which then opens up the possibility for counter-hegemonic acts.

Chapter 3, “Chapter Three: Stagings of Nationalism, Modernity, and Indigeneity,” provides a textual reading of second floor gallery of the Museo Nacional de Antropología, devoted to contemporary Indigenous groups. In this chapter I discuss how the MNA very strategically and literally maps out the spectrum of Mexican racial and cultural diversity as a means of reinforcing dominant discourses of Mexican national sovereignty and territoriality, not to challenge them. In the version of sovereignty on display at the MNA, the Indigenous peoples of Mexico fit neatly on a map and can be easily identified by their styles of dress, their geographic location, and by the crafts they produce. Also crucial to this staging of Mexican state power and authority, is the very clear demonstration of links between Mexican mestizo modernity and Mexican Indigenous traditions. Essentially, Mexico cannot be modern without distinguishing itself from the Indigenous peoples who people the countryside. Focusing on the regional mapping of the exhibits, I provide a reading of the incorporation of artesanía, as well as photos of it the acts of production, that when combined together, offer “proofs” of Indigenous life and traditions as continuation of a past which is not dead or forgotten. Additionally, I locate the positioning of female mannequins within the spaces of the sala as part of the Mexican nationalist project that names women as symbols of Indigeneity and bearers of the nation.

Overall, my research examines the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C. and the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City, as performative spaces where cultural, political, and geographic boundaries are remapped

and re-staged through exhibition. This project interrogates how museums provide the groundwork for maintaining and challenging the imagined and symbolic landscapes through which we see, engage and *encounter* racial and ethnic differences in the early 21st century. My comparison of these two national museums, specifically their representations of Indigeneity and Mexicanidad/Latinidad, reveals how the present conditions of globalization, neoliberalism, and immigration, are shaping struggles for political and cultural sovereignty, self-determination, and community building among diasporic groups throughout the Americas.

Chapter One: In the “Race” to be Modern

The production of modernity involves the staging of differences... The modern occurs only by performing the distinction between the modern and the non-modern, the West and the non-West, each performance opening the possibility of what is figured as non-modern contaminating the modern, displacing it, or disrupting its authority.

Timothy Mitchell
Questions of Modernity, 26

My introduction discussed the differences between symbolic, physical, and economic violence. While modernization project(s) involved all of these forms of violence, this chapter examines the symbolic/discursive constructions of Indigenous peoples and cultures as different/inferior in comparison to subjects imagined as the true worthy citizens of the nation-state. In this sense, staging involves the performance of power on both a national and world stage. The projection of power was facilitated through both the material and discursive regulation of bodies and boundaries. “The closed, imaginary space of the modern nation-state [was] produced through forms of mapping, boundary making, border control, and the management of cultural forms and economic flows” (Mitchell, 2000, p.26). Territoriality, or the spatial expression of power¹⁵ became central to how nation-states would define themselves, more particularly how they would define who belonged and who did not belong within those territorial boundaries. In this sense, boundaries cover the geographic, cultural, and racial parameters of nationhood.

¹⁵ James Tyner. “Territoriality, Social Justice and Gendered Revolutions in the Speeches of Malcolm X” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Sep., 2004), pp.330-343.

“In the ‘Race’ to be Modern” provides a comparative historical mapping of the projects of incorporating “the Indian” implemented by the United States and Mexico during the early periods of nation building. It focuses on the uses of symbolic violence that facilitated the constructions of Indigenous peoples as sites of labor, as sources of land needed for progress and development—modernization—and as imagined figures that would come to symbolize the past (unmodern and uncivilized) in contrast to the future (modern and civilized) that each country sought to map out for itself. Utilizing a comparative historical framework provides the foundation for my later chapters, which analyze the role that museums perform as very visible manifestations of these acts of staging.

While projects to modernize have been implemented differently and have materialized differently, US and Mexican modernities were formed in relation to one another. I first trace how and why the notions of “Indian” and “Nation” in Mexico and the United States have been signified and re-signified in different ways and at different times throughout the formative centuries since Anglo-American colonists first declared independence from England in 1776, and Mexican criollos declared independence from Spain in 1810. In order to build the newly independent nations, each employed a variety of approaches to “modernize” Indigenous groups emphasizing land, educational, and cultural reform. This chapter compares the discourses of assimilation (erasure) and incorporation at the bases of *Indigenismo* (beginning in the 1920s) in Mexico and the Indian New Deal (beginning in the 1930s) in the United States to argue that the ideological underpinnings of these two key movements remain at the core of contemporary discourses surrounding sovereignty; that projected by the state and that

projected in diverse ways by Native peoples from across the Americas. This is apparent in efforts by state and federal forces to dispossess and disenfranchise Indigenous groups, and in movements by Indigenous groups on a global scale who refuse to accept the common mantra that the past is in the past and should remain in the past as will be revealed in my subsequent chapters. Rather, by holding on to memories of these past programs and policies, through education including the production of community-informed cultural representations and expressions—resistance against the dominant push for selective historical and cultural amnesia remains alive. I compare the United States and Mexico not simply because they are geographic neighbors but to elucidate the areas of overlap and difference within the discourses of *Indigenismo* and the Indian New Deal. This discussion is crucial in providing the foundation for my later analysis of the NMAI and the MNA which addresses current questions about transnational and global Indigeneity affecting Indigenous people worldwide, but focusing specifically on Mexicans, American Indians, and Chicana/os who reside in and claim racial, political, and cultural ancestry in/to the Southwestern United States.

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE: FRAMING THE NATION-STATE

Nineteenth-century Mexico, like other places around the world at this time, experienced political, economic, and social upheavals surrounding the establishment of the nation-state. For turn-of-the-century Mexico, the project of modernity relied upon the ability to clearly define who constituted an “Indigenous” person and what counted as “Indigenous” culture (Wade, 1997; Bonfil Batalla, 1996; Borah 1979). With a large

population of disparate groups living in the countryside, finding ways to control the masses yet ensure their availability as laborers, involved elaborate projects to dispossess and disenfranchise them, as well as continual re-significations of “the Indian”. Because there was not a coherent, organic, centralized sense of Mexican national consciousness, attempts to construct what it meant to be “Mexican” occurred in stages and required “intensely traumatic events”(Van Young, 2006, p.24) While “Indians and Indian culture could constitute a racialized basis for a modern civilization,” they were seen as remnants of the past in need of intervention/transformation in order to fit the Mexico that politicians, *científicos*, and elites of the country envisioned. Praise for the Indian focused primarily on their ability to act as “ ‘bridge[s]’ to the future.”¹⁶ There could not be an empty, nor an ambiguous, space in-between.

However, Mexico could not embrace its “future” with an outdated system of racial classifications—*the castas*—leftover from the colonial era.¹⁷ What was needed was a new national democratic framework that stood for equality under the law and individual entrepreneurship, mirroring the United States and countries of Europe. The goal was to be on par with the rest, and hopefully be the best. The path to achieving such a future lay in the ability to develop the country economically, and to “modernize” any remnants of the colonial past. What was really at stake was the land that Indians possessed communally, which made it more protected in many ways, and the labor they provided, which had served as the basis of Spain’s colonial wealth for nearly three centuries (Lynch 1986). Without access to the land of the countryside, Mexico could not develop its

¹⁶ Quoted in Vasconcelos (1997, p. 6).

¹⁷ For further discussion see Katzew and Deans-Smith (2009).

economy or satisfy the expectations of the new criollo elite for financial gain and social status, because even though urban spaces were synonymous with the highest social status, most sources of elite wealth were underwritten by ownership and control of rural (formerly peasant controlled) lands.¹⁸ Additionally, without access to cheap labor, Mexico could not develop its economy. Without demolishing traditional communal landholdings, Mexico could not possibly conceal the fact that the majority of the population was Indigenous or at least of Indigenous descent. For these reasons, it is no wonder that the newly independent nation of Mexico went after Indian communal land and Indian labor as its first orders of business; to forge a sense of national identity, Mexico needed both. Projects to reconfigure the Indian within the emerging vision of the nation carried within them colonial hauntings¹⁹ as well as dreams of modernity.

But Indians were not ghosts, nor were they mere figments of the imagination visible only in dreams. Invoking “the Native” as a symbol of Mexico’s cultural strength and bravery helped romanticize the war for independence as an underdog tale of triumph against colonial oppression after the fact, but protecting “the Native” was never at the forefront of elite criollo agendas. (Lynch, 1986).

Like other independence struggles in Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America, the Mexican Wars for Independence took from the European Enlightenment “a new approach to knowledge, a preference for reason and experiment as opposed to authority and tradition” (Lynch, 1986, p. 28). In this case, Spain represented the

¹⁸ As Lynch notes in reference to the growth economic strength of Mexico’s economy during the middle of the seventeenth century, “The hacienda, the great landed estate, became a microcosm of Mexico’s economic self-sufficiency and of its growing independence”(1986, p. 3).

¹⁹ Here I am making reference to Avery Gordon. *Ghostly Matters*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

repressive “authority and tradition” from which criollos wished to separate. Of course Indigenous peoples were also linked to the past and tradition—as opposed to Modernity—but they were envisioned much differently. Unlike the out-dated repressive character associated with Spain, Indigenous peoples were associated more with the pre-conquest origins of the newly Independent nation. Also, Spain represented an obstacle to criollo elite who “ from an early time regarded [Mexico] as the New World ‘Other’ ”(Errington, 1998, p. 184). By virtue of being born outside of the Iberian peninsula, mestizos and criollos were limited in their economic and political mobility (Nobel, 2008; Braiding, 1991; Lynch, 1986). During the early colonial years, the scarcity of white, non-Indian women, combined with a decline in the Indigenous population, made it common for Spaniards to marry Indian elites; thus, blurring the racial lines (Wasserman, 2000, p. 11). Unlike the United States, “colonial expansion into the territory of the indigenes by the elite of New Spain proceeded by marriage and conversion as well as by force and enslavement” (Errington, 1998, p. 183). Still, in terms of framing of the movement for Independence, Indians served mainly as fodder for the cause.

When I say fodder, I mean it in every sense of the word; meaning they mobilized it and were used to justify it. Fed up with the abuses of power enacted by the Bourbons throughout the eighteenth century, criollo elite resisted Spain’s attempts to strengthen its authority over populations in the colony, as well as its control of the region’s natural and valuable resources. John Lynch characterizes independence as “the culmination of a long process of alienation in which Spanish Americans became aware of their own identity, conscious of their own culture, jealous of their own resources” (Lynch, 1986, p. 1). Though Mexico’s move to separate itself from Spain in 1810 involved the joint

efforts/passionate mobilizations of criollos and Indigenous peasant classes, “...insurrection meant one thing to the Creole protonationalist —nominally directing the attack against the colonial regime — and quite another to common people in the Mexican countryside”(Van Young, 2001, p. 503). So, if for Criollos it meant resistance against an oppressive, and greedy, Spanish state, what *did* it mean to the “common people” of the countryside?

In *The Other Rebellion*, Eric Van Young points to the tensions underlying much of the insurgency of rural peoples during the wars for independence. Critiquing a strictly materialist reading of the causes and inspirations behind such insurgency, Van Young identifies the larger stakes for which rural peoples were willing to risk their lives and their livelihoods:

Rather than torture the evidence of rural rebellion into an agrarian mold, therefore, I have opted to interpret it into a more heavily cultural register, where issues of ethnic, community, and group identity occupy the foreground and agrarian grievance recedes into the background. In this scenario, agrarian conflict between haves and have-nots in the Mexican countryside still assumes an important role, but more as a pretext for public action, as an instantiation or subcase of tensions of a deeper and more general nature rooted in ethnocultural conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (2001, p. 497).

One of the paradoxes of modernity is that while it privileges the individual as the supreme subject, it simultaneously seeks out and praises the notion of the universal subject. Whereas a focus on the individual would seem to connote a sense of celebration for uniqueness, these celebrations only went so far. Only certain “individuals” were deemed worthy of being modern and on par with the universal subject. Within oppressive systems of colonial rule, Indigenous peoples also found spaces to resist and rearticulate the damaging effects of colonialism. One example of this involves the adoption of the

confradía, which Norget describes as public institutions supported by the entire community and dedicated to promoting the overall well-being of the community through general propiations to its sacred guardians” (2006, p. 96). While this system emerged as a result of the imposition of Spanish-style *municipios*, as it developed it “allowed for the strengthening of local identity and indigenous solidarity”(ibid).

The criollo elite knew this. As they sought to distinguish themselves as unique and separate from Spain, they had no intention of celebrating the uniqueness of communities who had worked for centuries to strengthen their autonomy and retain a sense of themselves in resistance to the identities imposed upon them. Rather, it became even more crucial that Indigenous peoples be constructed as inferior, so as to justify the creation of a nation that would replace colonial hegemony with national hegemony.

The strength of the senses of local autonomy were facilitated by the fact that for the most part, Spanish colonization could not fully strip people in the countryside of their cultural practices and belief systems. What did these limited “protections”, or rather, incomplete disavowals of native cultures and societies afford the criollo and mestizo elite? The Spanish colonial project, with its energies focused on extracting labor and surplus from native populations, benefited more (i.e ran more efficiently) if/when Indigenous social and political order remained intact because keeping them intact facilitated such extractions. For Indigenous groups in Mexico, the survival of social structures, combined with the articulation of emerging syncretic transformations, enabled both their ability to mobilize as well as their abilities to remain on their lands.²⁰ As Van

²⁰ However, this would change dramatically towards the turn of the century, when at the hands of the *Porfiriato*, communal lands were broken up and used to underwrite the wealth of the landed class of hacendados.

Young notes, despite the fact that “upper-level political and belief structures were effectively dismantled by European conquerors within a generation or so of contact, Indigenous societies harbored hidden reserves of belief and cultural resilience which made of the new Euro-constructed social category of Indianness the key element in collective identity well into modern times”(2001, p. 511). These senses of local autonomy do not go unnoticed in the Museo Nacional de Antropología, however, they are defined and contained within the glass and within displays that place Indigenous groups neatly onto maps with clearly marked geographic, cultural, racial, and gendered boundaries.

Historically, efforts to convert Indigenous peoples in Mexico have functioned as a means to control (Pardo, 2006; Hassig, 2006; Kearney, 2004) but have also served as the basis, or at least significant inspiration, for numerous popular rebellions (Ai Camp, 1996; Braiding, 1991). The initial *grito*, or cry for independence on September 16, 1810, was sounded by the ringing of the church bells in the village of Dolores, ordered by Father Miguel Hidalgo, a criollo priest. At the center of town, the Church not only provided the physical location for the initial battle cry (i.e. the bell tower), but also provided the space where revolution(s) could be facilitated. Hidalgo’s pivotal action represented “...one of Latin America’s few efforts to integrate the Indian masses into the independence struggle” (Handelman, 1997, p. 27). As a criollo, Hidalgo was a Spaniard by blood, but because he was born in the colony he lacked the status of a peninsular, a Spaniard born in the Iberian Peninsula. Unlike the majority of the criollo elite, Hidalgo did not follow a conservative agenda, which prioritized the protections of elite economic and social

interests first and foremost, hidden under the guise of newly emerging ideas concerning the possibility of freedom achieved through the establishment of a nation. He is often romanticized as a symbol of rebellion and one who tried to protect local interests and Indigenous autonomies. However, his intentions are not completely clear. His capture and execution by Spanish colonial officials helped solidify the mythology surrounding him, marking him as a martyr of the struggles for independence.²¹

After Hidalgo's execution, leadership of rebellions against the *peninsulares* shifted to Jose Maria Morelos, a Mestizo skilled at guerilla warfare and committed to Indian rights and liberal reforms such as universal male suffrage, an end to slavery, torture, and the caste system. Though he maintained a central leadership role from roughly 1811-1815, his more liberal agenda (as opposed to the more conservative agenda of the elite) was also rejected for the same reasons, namely for his interest in granting universal suffrage, the end to slavery, and his avocation of popular sovereignty, which he outlined and presented at the Constitutional Congress at Chilpancingo, Guerrero in 1813 (Joseph and Henderson, 2002, p.189).²² As a student of Hidalgo, his capture and execution marked the “last effort to achieve independence in a manner that would benefit the Indian and Mestizo masses rather than just the criollo elite” (Handelman, 1997, p. 27).

However, before his capture and execution, Morelos was the first to invoke past Aztec rulers, Montezuma and Cuauhtémoc as symbolic Indigenous heroes, establishing a

²¹ In one of the many murals located at Chicano Park in San Diego, CA, Hidalgo lays the foundation for the artistic chronology of Mexican heroes. Following Hidalgo in ascending order are Benito Juarez, Emiliano Zapata, and finally Cesar Chavez. Hidalgo is also well documented through murals in Mexico, among the most famous, Diego Rivera's mural that occupies a space in the Palacio Nacional in Mexico City.

²² Gilbert Michael Joseph and Timothy J. Henderson. *The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

further “negation of Spanish values by the Indians” (Meyers, 1983, p. 299). This helped to further characterize the Indian rebel warrior as a figure with the blood and tenacity of Aztec kings. This too would be appropriated by more conservative criollos in the service of constructing the myth of the nation-state, complete with a glorified story of past Indigenous rulers—essentially passing the throne to themselves. Because criollos by definition had no blood connections or ancestral ties to Indigenous Mexico, they needed to create such ties through a discursive framing of the Aztec past, which they felt privy to as modern-day resisters to the “Spanish” with whom they now actively dis-identified. As Sheila Marie Contreras stipulates in *Bloodlines* “the glorification of the Aztecs is less about establishing a direct line of descent than it is about carefully crafting a national telos that moves from Teotihuacan to Tenochtitlan to present-day Mexico City” (2008, p. 5-6). Criollo resistance of their Spanish kin offered a certain sense of legitimacy by claiming a prior right of sovereignty, which they could now bestow upon themselves in order to continue the myth of Mexican nationalism.

When formal independence was officially gained in 1820-21, the triumphant leader Agustín de Iturbide, tapped into the ideals and the efforts of Hidalgo and Morelos but did so to further a conservative agenda. Rather than attempting to actually empower—in however limited fashion—the mass of mestizos and Indigenous peoples, as did Hidalgo and Morelos, Iturbide, along with his fellow criollo elite, merely gestured toward Indians in order to define the budding sense of “Mexican” national identity. Drawing on Aztec heroes of the past, criollos were able to successfully distinguish themselves as “Mexicans” attached to a land that had produced one of the most advanced societies in the world, the Aztecs (Contreras, 2008; Errington, 1998). Additionally,

without the need for Spain's approval, "Mexican" criollos could make rules to benefit their own interests. The national glorification of Mexico's Indigenous past was a strategic attempt to ensure that living Indians would follow in the conservative direction of the Independence movement (i.e. the future), and not some more radical path (i.e. of the past) that might actually grant them equal rights. Opportunistic rather than inclusionary, criollos "included" Indigenous peoples as part of the nation only in name.²³ They used ideas of allegiance and support of Catholicism to solidify this rhetorical power play.

SOIL, WATER, and THE FIFTH SUN: A FORMIDABLE SOLID IN FORMATION

(1880S-1910)

Soil referring to Indigenous lands or the thefts thereof...

Water meaning the city on the lake that became the focus of *Mexicanidad*...

The Fifth Sun signaling the reprisal/appropriation of Aztec cosmology, iconography, and the fetishizations to come...

I begin this section of the chapter by referring to the ideological foundations of the Mexican nation-state as a formidable solid in formation. I then identify soil, water, and the fifth sun as the core tenets of this formidable solid. Soil in this context, refers

²³ A significant portion of this praise emerged in the form of worship of la Virgen de Guadalupe. Though not yet officially included as part of Mexico's national patrimony, she offered "proof of [Criollo] autonomy from Spain and their linkage with the Indigenous and mestizo majority. Made patron saint of New Spain in 1754, hers was the banner carried by the popular insurgents who struggled for Mexican independence in 1810 and the peasant armies of Emiliano Zapata who fought for justice and land in the revolution one century later. After 1920, the Virgin of Guadalupe became the symbol of the vilified and martyred Catholic Church[fn1]" (Lewis and Vaughan, 2006, p. 1)

specifically to the theft of land and the breaking up of communal systems of land ownership, which was also an attempt to dismantle relationships/understandings of the land which were/are central to notions of identity, spirituality, and POWER.

Water in this context, refers to Tenochtitlan, the site of the capital of the Aztec empire, built on an island within lake Texcoco in 1325. Constructed to be the “foundation of heaven,” Tenochtitlan was the first concentration of hegemonic political power within the space now known as Mexico City. David Carrasco describes the capital city as a “proud, invincible place, the center of the vertical structure of the cosmos that linked the human world with the command of the supreme deity Ipalnemohuani”(1999, p. 32). For my purposes, Tenochtitlan represents the first stage in the formation of the solid.

When the Spanish took control of the Aztec empire in 1521, they built the new capital directly on top of Tenochtitlan, beginning the second stage in the formation of the solid. The fifth sun in this context, refers to the belief within Aztec cosmology that the fifth sun, like all previous suns, was destined to die out in accordance with the “grand cycles of creation and destruction”(Carrasco, 2000, p. 175). Within this framework, the demise of the Aztec empire could easily be appropriated in order to “naturalize” the end of one group’s rule and the beginning of a new power; simply another phase within the fulfillment of a “national telos”(Contreras, 2008, p.6) wherein Mexico City acts as the final destination and the epitome of modernity.

Simultaneous efforts to separate people from the land, symbolically embrace Aztec cosmology as the ancestral past of the nation, and concentrate power within the urban space of Mexico City helped to create a discursive barrier, separating the lived realities of Indigenous peoples from their place within the national imaginary. By

framing Indigenous peoples, histories, and cultures in this way, the actual ethnic, linguistic, and racial diversity that exist and persist within Mexico, are foreclosed ideologically from having any real sort of effects upon the present.

Faced with vast contradictions between the emerging story of the nation and the persistent realities of the population, conflicting “truths” had to be put to rest. In order to make criollo dreams a reality, the majority of the population would need to be dealt with in order to contain Mexico’s Indigeneity within the past. Hence, the Aztecs would come to stand for Mexico’s Indigenous past. Because Mexico was entrenched in a series of wars off and on through the years between 1810 and 1920, this discursive move to centralize the Aztecs (their iconography, their historical and material remains) would not occur on a national scale until the twentieth century, following the Revolution of 1910 via the project of revolutionary *Indigenismo* (Errington, 1998). However, the process of transitioning Indians into peasants truly began in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with the intermittent presidencies of Benito Juarez from 1858-1872, and Porfirio Diaz from 1877-1911. Though they were political rivals and disagreed about the means by which to bring Mexico into the modern era, they both did agree that it should not be left to the people to “choose the nation’s path” (Wasserman, 2000, p. 113). This lack of faith in the masses, the majority of whom were Indians living in the countryside, shaped the way the elite would govern, and the vision of a modernized Mexico they sought to achieve.

Though Juarez and Diaz both had Indigenous blood, Juarez a full-blooded Zapotec, and Diaz a mestizo of mixed Mixtec and Spanish ancestry, they both saw Indians as obstacles to progress. Both did their best to rise to the occasion of stateliness

and project a sense of modernity at all times. Mark Wasserman describes the physical transformation of Porfirio Diaz during his final years in office:

The new Diaz was comfortable in tie, gloves, and tuxedo!...The changes in the dictator's appearance can be seen as a metaphor for what Mexico had become, and not become, under his rule. Mexico was no longer an Indian country. It's elite, despite the fact its members were often *mestizos*, had labored mightily to disguise the nation's Indian heritage"(2000, p. 164)

Whether because of shame or necessity, disguising the Indian without and within, more than anything else, seems to have become the mantra of Mexico's most powerful. Of course there are instances of denial that proved beneficial for the survival of Indigenous cultures.²⁴ Though his own efforts to distance himself from his mother's Indian ancestry may have, in theory, alienated a majority of the population, it was the process of alienating the people from the land that set in motion the dramatic alteration of Indian communities and identities in Mexico, demonstrating very clearly how the discursive (Diaz' denial) clearly effects material reality (death, loss of land, the killing of the soul). Scholars agree that the laws of La Reforma (1854-1861), established during the presidency of Benito Juarez (1858-1872) were the greatest assault on Indian society because of the way they targeted traditional communal landholding practices (Macleod 2000, p. 23; Wasserman, 2000).

In 1856, the Mexican congress enacted the Ley Lerdo, which privatized land formerly owned by the Church and inhabited by various pueblos, many citizens of the pueblos fought the new land laws in court, and won. However, Mexicans who resisted

²⁴ For example, during the colonial period and beyond, *danzantes* in the central Valley of Mexico often concealed the true meanings and intentions of their dances by offering them up as sacrifices to Catholic saints while literally hiding their pagan deities within the Christian statues themselves.²⁴

the move to individual land ownership were seen as standing in the way of progress as

John Mason Hart argues below:

Elites saw Mexico falling even further behind the United States, and they grew desperate in their quest to bring about modernization and profits. The success of the pueblos in defense of their properties hardened the stereotypes held by the elites, who thought the Indigenous population to be racially inferior and criticized the rural population as “stubborn” and unwilling to change (2006, p. 21).

This led to even more strenuous efforts to dispossess Indigenous peoples from their lands.

The material dispossession coupled with attempts to transform Indigenous communities into individual workers, where identities could be based more on their labor, rather than their cultural practices.

This also gestures toward the importance of place, not only in forming identities, but also for the culturally significant attachments to particular places. Formal religions that follow specific doctrines (often preserved and reproduced in written forms) presuppose their own universality and therefore, their ability to travel. In contrast, many Indigenous spiritual practices rely on a relationship with particular places that are understood as culturally and spiritually significant to the community (Smith, 2005). For example, according to the Javier Garcia Silva the present-day Nahua located near Mexico City, “still believe that mountains, ravines, streams, pools, and caves are inhabited by gods who, depending on their disposition, can be either malevolent or benevolent beings” (2001, p.314). While they have incorporated Christian beliefs and practices into their everyday practices, the practices still maintain an indigenous base that observes the importance of Cemanahuac, or “That which surrounds us,” and shapes newly incorporated practices and beliefs around this notion. When the natural environment

undergoes processes of transformation at a rapid pace, spaces must be creatively re-imagined.

One such rapid transformation of space, and the ability to traverse it more quickly, took place with the construction of the railroads. This also allowed the Mexican nation-state to demonstrate its power on a wider, more visible scale. By creating the means to transport both people and goods across the country (and into the United States) the railroads caused land to become more easily developed and therefore valuable, and consequently, elites were more willing to forcefully expropriate it from communal landholding villages (Wasserman, 2000, p. 182). By the end of the nineteenth century, many Indigenous communities were beginning to identify more so as peasants (Van Young, 2001, p. 520). With the growing divide between rich and poor, labor functioned evermore strongly as a site of racialization, solidifying the association of “Indian” with “cheap wage labor”. Unlike the racial classifications of the colonial era, a Modern society based on industrial labor gave the illusion of possibilities for upward mobility and helped maintain the status quo while at the same time legitimizing Mexico’s transformation from a former colony rife with racially based inequities to an independent nation-state promising democracy under the law and equal opportunities for every individual.²⁵

The Liberal vision of economic development spearheaded by Juarez and later Diaz, focused on individual initiative (Wasserman, 2000, p. 97), and moved away from communal forms of production and consumption. While Liberals were advocates of state

²⁵ The Constitution of 1824 said that all citizens were equal under the law. The Constitution of 1857 went a step further granting universal male suffrage. However, as history reveals, the right to vote was highly restricted, based on the fear and distrust of the lower class. Additionally, women and Indians could not legally be citizens. From the latter half of the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century, Mexico has been democratic in name only, suffering political corruption and rigged elections for many decades thereafter.

and local rights and autonomy, the push toward individual entrepreneurship went against the more collective efforts of Indigenous communities that had been place since the colonial period. Where individual responsibilities were important, the efforts of individuals were seen as contributing to the group, not solely for individual personal gain. Statuses functioned more as community-appointed roles, not as self-appointed positions (Norget, 2006, p. 97). As a corporate type of enterprise, Indigenous organizational structures, such as the *cofradias*, posed a threat to national interests because they had proved to be a source of spiritual and political strength to Indigenous groups, and were instrumental in movements to resist the imposition of external influences (ibid). Additionally, because the *cofradias* placed “the collective good above that of the individual” Mexican Liberals felt they “inhibited personal initiative, limited competition, and hampered economic growth”(MacLeod, 2000, p. 315). Therefore, it became a necessary project to dismantle these types of Indigenous corporations in order to make way for new systems of social and political organizations, as well as new systems of land ownership.

Liberals sought to privatize land ownership, and aimed at reshaping the character of the worker to one who practiced self-restraint and who “docilely accepted the discipline of the workplace”(Wasserman, 2000, p.184). In order to make it easier to transfer pieces of land from communal to individual property owners, the Indigenous corporate identities had to be discursively constructed as inferior and un-modern, in comparison to individual private property ownership. In further efforts to build the modern nation, Mexican Liberals also pushed for the introduction of “new technology [which would] put an end to a type of agricultural production oriented principally toward

subsistence and small markets” (MacLeod, 2000, p. 315). The increased migration of country people into the cities led to major disruptions in traditional social networks. Also, the simultaneous movement of white Mexicans into urban spaces, which was considered as a sign of wealth, sparked evermore-strenuous efforts to eradicate the Indian presence in the city, but of course, without eliminating their labor. Eradication would come in the form of incorporation, a way to erase the ugly side of Indigeneity. Memories of the dead were acceptable, and colorful, tourist-friendly Indians and their artesanía were desirable, but living, breathing, hungry, impoverished, Indigenous peoples were an anomaly to Mexican modernity.

THE RURAL REBEL MEETS THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: INDIGENISMO, MEXICANIDAD, AND THE FRAMING OF THE MODERN MEXICAN NATION

Indigenistas hoped to transform Indians into citizens by changing their lifestyles and value systems, but inasmuch as they could also change the content of these signifiers, Indigenistas hoped to transform the way all Mexicans understood their nation. For instance, they would constantly endeavor to empty the term “Indian” of its racial content. They celebrated Indians as the national soul and the potential equals of all Mexicans (Dawson, 2004, p. xix).

While the Mexican Revolution instituted a regime change, the political and ideological implications of these changes were not made manifest until after the fighting ceased. In the aftermath of the revolution of 1910, Mexico found its economy and its countryside dilapidated, in need of repair. After a decade of civil war, Mexico found itself once again behind in the race to be modern. The project to be modern, especially in

the eyes of Europe and the United States involved a series of programs aimed at rebuilding the economy, improving social relations, and changing the image of the nation and its people. But who were Mexico's people and what was the path they were supposed to follow?

The decades following the Revolution gave birth to "revolutionary indigenismo," a series of programs meant to facilitate the incorporation of Indigenous Mexicans into the nation (Taylor, 2009; Vaughan & Lewis, 2006; Dawson, 2004). Because the Revolution of 1910 essentially ousted the Porfiriato through the large-scale mobilization of peasants, as Errington puts it, "these people had to be accommodated and brought into the nation-state in some way" (Errington 1998, p. 184). As such, Indigenismo throughout the 1920s and 1930s involved a comprehensive project aimed at reforming Mexico's Indigenous elements, specifically the people who had proved more powerful and organized than previously believed. Indigenismo targeted Indigenous Mexicans through education, representation, land reform, and the law. Official efforts sought to simultaneously glorify Indigenous communities of the past while assimilating Indigenous communities of the present; clearly a project to Mexicanize the Indians rather than indigenize the Mexicans (Krauze, 1998). This involved a dual project that involved "celebrating the culture of Mexico's mestizo and Indigenous peoples and recasting national history as a popular struggle against invasion, subjugation, and want"(Vaughan & Lewis, 2006, p. 1)

Efforts by mestizo and criollo elites to bring Indians into the fold of the nation were primarily strategic and token, but necessary gestures. Of course there were the Indigenistas who sympathized with the Indian and who "desire[d] to incorporate Indians into a reconstructed modern nation, in which living Indians were treated with respect and

dignity, and their traditions accorded respect as the true national past” (Dawson, 2004, p. xiv-xv). However, official efforts to incorporate through state-sponsored programs were necessary primarily because they were the only way to maintain the myth of Mexican nationalism, which claimed a racial link to the Indigenous past through the process of mestizaje (racial mixing) and to quell any residual revolutionary fervor. The notion of la raza cósmica, or the cosmic race of bronze people, popularized by Jose Vasconcelos in the 1920s, praised Indians for their roles as one of the two primary progenitors of modern Mexicans, but it ultimately extolled and welcomed the power of European genetics to reign supreme. Diluting the Indian was the ultimate goal (Contreras, 2008; Miller, 2004). Putting aside the fact that the notion of mestizaje greatly distorted Mexico’s actual racial reality, virtually erasing blackness and the diversity of Indigenous peoples and cultures, it nonetheless laid the foundation for the way that “Indians” would be symbolically embraced by the nation: 1) as part of its proud ancient ancestry, and 2) as in need of further mestizaje.

Still Indigenismo programs preached the central notion “that Indians needed special recognition and that special values attached to them” (Miller, 2004, p. 32). These programs and the images they constructed continue to be present in modern classifications of what it means to be Mexican Indigenous. Following the logic of modernity, Indigenistas approached the “problem” of the Indian through scientific inquiry and positivism, again reinforcing the patriarchal position of the state which was premised on the assumption that Indians are childlike, incapable of making their own decisions, and unaware of what is best for them. Alexander Dawson names the primary institutions that emerged out of revolutionary Indigenismo, formed with the specific

purpose of “helping” the Indian in mind. Bureaucratic entities such as the Secretaría de Educación Pública, Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas, and the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH) framed the way that both the “problem” and the “solution” would be understood and dealt with by Mexican elites. Most relevant to the development of the Indigenous Mexican imaginary was the Dirección de Antropología²⁶ and INAH which were instrumental in the creation of the National Museum System. However, Mexico’s most famous museum did not fill itself with antiquities.

A crucial part of constructing Mexico’s Indigenous past involved the unearthing of archaeological ruins as well as the ethnographic study of living remnants of the past. Alfonso Caso and Manuel Gamio were two very influential figures in the field of Mexican anthropology during the 1930s and 1940s. Following the drive among Western anthropologists to study and categorize the cultures of the world, especially those with “exotic” value, Caso attempted to define what it meant to be an Indian. However, in contrast to foreign social scientists, Mexican “Indigenistas were not engaged in studying and preserving a disappearing other, but were instead trying to facilitate the disappearance of the other” (Dawson, 2004, p. xix). To further this disappearance, Caso ultimately based what it meant to be an “Indian” on three criteria that could be easily removed through personal or communal choice, unlike US criteria that were based primarily on provable and legally specified amounts of blood quantum.²⁷ Woodrow Borah names these criteria as, “physical appearance, culture, language, and loyalty,” which he notes are difficult to measure since, “there has been racial mixture on so vast a

²⁶ Dawson points out that the Dirección de Antropología was founded as part of the Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento in 1917 (2004, p. xvi).

scale... [and that]...at best can only serve as an indication rather than proof that an individual is Indian” (1994, p. 3). Borah’s discussion points to the difficulty in calculating Indigenous populations since what is meant by “Indigenous” is not clearly or uniformly defined. While a majority of Mexicans have some amount of Indigenous ancestry (Contreras, 2008; Menchaca, 2001; Bonfil-Batalla, 1996), Borah’s perception reflects social scientific representations of Mexico as simultaneously a mosaic of regional specificity and singularly unified multicultural diversity. As such, social science methods and discourses provided Indigenistas with an ideal implement to deal with both the spatial (territorial vastness) and temporal (cultural backwardness) problem of the Mexican national Indian.

Also central to such notions was the work of José Vasconcelos who advocated for the promulgation of mestizaje, racial mixing, in order to continue the beneficial process that Spain’s conquest of Mexico had set into motion during the sixteenth century. More specifically, he argues in his now infamous and widely critiqued (Contreras, 2008; Miller, 2004) essay, *La Raza Cósmica*, that it was destined that the races “intermix at a gradually increasing pace, and eventually...give rise to a new human type, composed of selections from each of the races already in existence” (Vasconcelos, 1997, p. 3). In the case of Mexican Indians, he argued the mixing that ensued was bound to take a long time since the Spaniards and the Indians were so “dissimilar” to begin with, and because when México declared its independence and successfully overthrew official Spanish rule in 1821, “the fixing of the races was interrupted before the racial type was completely finished” (Vasconcelos, 1997, p.5). So in essence, he saw Indigenismo, and mestizaje in particular, as the possibility to continue what the Spanish had begun, but now with full

tenacity and efficiency.

This is not to say that the Indian would or could ever disappear completely, but the “Indigenous” figures that were welcomed to stay as they were, came in the forms of “exotic and romantic symbolism, based more on the glorification of the pre-Columbian Indian ancestry of the nation than on respect for contemporary Indian populations.”²⁸ Many of these same images, such as the Aztec warrior figure, have been employed similarly by Chicanos, though these symbols were constructed and promoted by white, elite Mexicans who were celebrating the romanticized (dead) Indians rather than respecting the rights of living, struggling Indigenous populations that forced assimilation programs could not absorb or eradicate.

Perhaps the most recognizable manifestations of the reach and influence of Indigenismo emerged in the work of modernist artists, among the most iconic of the period, Diego Rivera and Frida Khalo. Rivera was known internationally for his murals depicting scenes of the first contacts made between Spanish conquistadors and Aztec nobility along with contemporary encounters between native folkways and modern industry. Khalo’s self-portraits captured her own pain in concert with nostalgia for Mexico’s past, a past, which she identified with its Indigenous traditions. Their styles epitomized the synthesis of modern and traditional, reflecting the larger move by modernist artists and indigenistas to “incorporate the unmodern neatly into a cultural narrative of (revolutionary) history [that]... formed...a kind of organic, narrative continuity that would have historical force and that could serve as the antidote to any

²⁸ Ibid, p. 32.

sense of belated entry to modernity” (Hendrick, 2003, p. 27).²⁹

The formidable solid that was to become the ideological foundations of the Mexican nation-state, relied on the construction of narratives about Indigenous people, Indigenous cultures, and the Indigenous landscape; all in comparison to what could be considered modern. These narratives that were created with such vigor towards the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, have persisted in many ways and continue to be manifested visually in spaces like the Museo Nacional de Antropología. It finds its place as yet another layer building on/off the already existing layers within the formidable solid, which continues to be in formation.

THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO: UNEQUAL “INDIANS”

In *Recovering History, Constructing Race*, Martha Menchaca traces the development of racial categories placed upon Indian, Black, White, and *mestizo* populations in Mexico (particularly the area of the U.S. Southwest that was annexed from Mexico in 1848), focusing on the political and social forces (laws and access to land) that influenced how these categories have been constructed relationally to each other. In the period leading up to the annexation of Texas (and much of the Southwest) in 1848 by the United States following the defeat of Mexico in the U.S.-Mexico War, she argues that through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) and the subsequent Gadsden Purchase in

²⁹ Of course the other very substantial antidote came in the form of land reform and the move to nationalize the oil industry. First, the Constitution of 1917 created the ejido, which essentially re-communalized lands that had been previously divided. Second, the massive land redistribution instituted by Lázaro Cárdenas during the 1930s marked a shift away from previous policies regarding the lives of Indigenous communities (Keen, 2004, Krauze, 1997).

1854, the United States took over Spain's role as the colonial oppressor (Menchaca, 2004).

U.S. racialization of Indigenous populations shared many similarities with the racial projects in Mexico, though there are some fundamental differences. While both Mexican and US nationalizing frameworks identified the Indigenous elements within their borders as privy to the past and the origins of the nation, the frames employed to define Indigenous people in relation to the nation-state, diverged on several points. Namely, where Mexican Indians were seen as part of what made Mexicans, Mexicans, Native Americans were not seen as ancestrally linked to Anglo-Americans at all. So, where the African presence in Mexico was erased with a privileging of the Indigenous as the commingling agent to whiteness within Mestizaje, the African presence in the United States replaced the Indigenous as “a yardstick against which white labor could measure its own position” (Roediger, 1999, p. 23) and provided the basis of US Industrial Capitalism. Native lands however were not absent; rather they were fundamental to the equation that read something like this:

Anglo-Americans

+ *Land (Indianness)*

+ *Slave Labor (Africans)*

= *Birth of the US Industrial Capitalism*

Of course I am dealing specifically with the inception, growth, and development of industry in the Eastern and Southern section of the United States, since the US Southwest

was still part of Mexico at the time that US Industrial Capital begins to become coincides with the emergence of the American Protestant Work Ethic which leads to ideas of Manifest Destiny which then brings Mexico and the Southwest into the conversation. But my equation is also meant to reflect the prevalence of the black-white binary upon which US racial projects are and have been based upon for centuries. This in turn explains why Native peoples must exist outside of US racial constructions. This also explains why so much of mainstream “US” history always begins in the East Coast, in a sort of vacuum. The eighteenth century stands for the spirit of Independence from the views of Anglo-American colonists, but for Mexicans and Indians, represents moments of Genocide, violence, and the inception of strategic attempts to further absorb the people by expanding the territory of what would become the United States of America. In defense of the black-white binary, an entire Civil War was fought in order to ensure that slavery would be a protected enterprise in the states that relied on Black labor for their economies and to reinforce their “whiteness”.

CONSTRUCTING “THE WHITE MAN’S INDIAN”³⁰

When the British began colonizing the eastern coast of America, they were not accustomed to racial differences to the extent that the Spanish were when they conquered Mexico (Krauze, 1997, p. 52) In fact, upon encountering American Indians, Anglo settlers thought they were white, but simply tan from the sun and the paints they applied

³⁰ Drawing from the title of Robert F. Berkhofer’s famous text that traces the construction of “Indians” by Anglo-American colonist in the United States.

to their bodies. However, this quickly changed and Indians received labels such as “red” and tawny” (Vaughan, 1999). Robert F. Berkhofer traces the development of “savage” as a descriptor for native people, from Christopher Columbus’ initial use to describe Caribbean cannibals, to its more salient usage, as synonymous with “Indian,” which developed between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. It was during colonization he argues that “...preconception seemed to have created image, and image in turn became fact” (1978, p. 17). Berkhofer’s study is foundational in the way it deconstructs, as it traces, the development of now common sense terms used to describe Indians and in the way it sets up the predicament of authenticity. As images of Indians became solidified in the eyes of “the white man,” images of what Indians were not, were simultaneously developing. The notion of the “real” “authentic” Indian untouched by modernity, what Gerald Vizenor refers to as the “hyperreal Indian,” (Vizenor, 1995) and centuries of European contact precluded the possibility of the “modern” Indian and the “authentic” Indian ever coexisting in Euro-American eyes.

On the eve of US independence from Britain, Phillip Deloria notes how American colonists drew heavily on their own constructions of Native peoples in order to fuel the spirit of the rebellion:

Increasingly inclined to see themselves in opposition to England rather than to Indians, they [eighteenth-century Anglo-American colonists] inverted interior and exterior to imagine a new boundary line of national identity. They began to transform exterior, noble savage Others into symbolic figures that could be rhetorically interior to the society they sought to inaugurate...As England became a them for colonists, Indians became an us (Deloria, 1999, p. 22).

By emphasizing the peripheral status that Native peoples inhabited in relation to the burgeoning nation-state, Anglo-American colonists could align themselves with their idealized imaginations of Indians, without ever having to link themselves, racially to actual living Indians. Further constructions and legislations would ensure that Indians, as part of the US nation-state, would necessarily be conceived of as spatially and temporally opposite of “Americans.”

In contrast to the emphasis on *mestizaje* in Mexico, Anglo Americans did not embrace the idea of white and non-white races mixing, though there did exist a similar imagined Indianness that existed among Anglo-Americans as they framed the US nation-state. Though intermarriages and intermixing did occur, particularly between whites and Natives as well as between whites and Black slaves, mixed children that resulted from such unions were not viewed as a step in the direction toward achieving an ideal racial product. To the contrary, following the one-drop rule that permeated and defined US society (then and now), mixed-race children maintained their “color” and were seldom welcome into white communities.³¹ In the cases of white-Native relations made famous by captivity narratives beginning in the seventeenth century, it was usually whites that experienced “transculturation,” and/or “adoption” into Native communities— so-called “white Indians” (Sayre, 2000, p.12), but not so much the other way around. Where elite Mexicans sought to absorb elements of the Indigenous into an idealized mestizo racial identity (at least rhetorically), Anglo-Americans experienced a simultaneous fear and fascination of Indians, whom they “refused to integrate into their settlements”(Sayre, 2000, p.11). However, like Mexican and Latin American *mestizaje*, American

³¹ See Cheryl Harris (1999) “Whiteness As Property” in *Critical Race Theory*.

celebrations of Indigeneity were not about embracing actual Indians as American citizens,³² but had more to do with appropriating their cultures in romanticized exoticized forms.

While there are plenty of examples of Anglo-American attempts to physically and symbolically embody Indianness through performance as revealed by Phillip Deloria in *Playing Indian*, these performances only serve(d) to reinforce the whiteness of the performers.³³ Much more prevalent, yet much less obvious than the act of playing Indian, is what Natchee Blu Barnd refers to as “inhabiting Indianness”:

a much more enveloping act of colonial, racial, and national imagination than that of either “playing Indian” or “going native”... Where playing or going Indian requires an active gesture...inhabiting Indianness implies the possibility of a less conscious form of participation and consumption (Barnd, 2008, p.16-17)

In Barnd’s conceptualization, “inhabiting” consists of, for example, the use of Indian themed street names within suburban neighborhoods. Additionally, because the land, particularly frontier space, has come to stand in for Native people in an abstract sense, the act of settlers inhabiting the land, involved/involves inhabiting Indianness as well.

LAND, BLOOD, & THE INDIAN NEW DEAL

Following The Indian Removal Act (1830) implemented by Andrew Jackson, Congress then went on to pass The Dawes Act or Allotment Act of 1887 that “made the

³² Native Americans were not granted legal citizenship until the passage of the 1924 Indian Citizenry Act. Still, actual citizenship, and the actual part is up for debate, was not granted until 1965 with the Civil and Voting Rights Act which passed within the context of the Civil Rights Movement and linked movements such as the Chicano Power Movement and the American Indian Movement.

³³ Similarly, performances of Blackface Minstrelsy provided Irish Americans with an entry into whiteness. See Roediger (1999) *The Wages of Whiteness*.

allotment of land to individual Indians and the break up of tribal landholdings the official policy of the United States”(O’Neil, 1986, p. 30). At the time, The Allotment Act marked the greatest attempt by the US government to assimilate Indians by making them into farmers of their own individual plots, because the farming industry at the time, “was still the largest single vocation within the United States” (O’Neil, 1986, p. 30). The lands that Indians were allotted however were not the most fertile grounds.

These grounds did however cultivate discontent. It was not simply the allotment of less-than-ideal plots of land, but the paternalistic assumptions attached to allotment in general that poisoned their growth. It was the argument of the federal government that the source of failure of programs directed toward Indians was not to be found within the programs, but within Indians. Culture was typically singled out as the main culprit. For the Dawes Act, on one hand the reservations were supposed to be a holding place (like Spanish missions in colonial Mexico) for Indians to become civilized. Critics of the reservations said that the same holding space had been made into a protected communal Indian home that represented an obstacle to their Americanization. Both of these logics end with the same result; destroy the communal bases of social organization to complete the passage of Indians to a state sufficient for citizenship. Floyd A. O’Neil identifies four “underlying suppositions” central to the Indian Rights Association, which organized to get the Allotment Act passed:

They were (1) that farming was superior to hunting, (2) that alcohol was evil, (3) that idleness was the ultimate evil, and (4) that Christian religion should take a very strong position in American Indian life and assume a strong proselytizing stance. **Essential to this view of Christianity was the idea that the existence of tribes was evil.** [Emphasis mine](1986, p. 32)

Of course, one real motive behind allotment was to make Indians self-sufficient farmers, essentially letting the US government off the hook in terms of “government attention and expenditures”(Garroue, 2001, p. 232). The Dawes Act made former communally held/owned lands accessible to non-Indians through the “surplus” clause which allowed for sale of any lands leftover from divisions made among tribal communities after a twenty-five year “safeguard” period (Iverson, 1999, p. 31). Under the guise of promoting “self-sufficiency,” additional laws like the Burke Act of 1906 gave a “ ‘competent allottee fee-simple title to his or her land, this permitting the individual to lease or sell the acreage at any time”(Iverson, 1999, p. 33). In essence, the Dawes Act and the Burke Act were intended to facilitate the assimilation of Indian peoples, and the legalized theft of Indian lands.

Land was not the only vehicle of erasure. Like The Dawes Act, measures to define Indians through specific blood quantum requirements were also a “means to liquidate tribal lands and to eliminate government trust responsibility to tribes along with entitlement programs, treaty rights, and reservations”(Garroue, 2001, p. 225). The process of determining “Blood Quantum” went as follows:

Degree of blood is calculated on the basis of the immediacy of one’s genetic relationship to ancestors whose bloodlines were (supposedly) unmixed. The initial calculation often begins with a ‘base roll,’ a listing of tribal membership and blood quanta in some particular year. The base rolls make possible very elaborate definitions of identity. (Garroue, 2001, p. 225)

Unlike Mexican *mestizaje* which relied on processes of racial mixing to erase the Indian, blood quantum measurements relied on larger, not smaller, required amounts of Indian blood in order to prove Native status; those who could not prove or who did not have

enough blood to be legally Indian, would lose their recognized status and be deemed not Indian by law. Indian blood quantum requirements were also the opposite of similar blood policies used to determine blackness known as the one-drop rule (Garroue, 2001; Harris, 1995).³⁴

The power of blood quantum measurements often emerged from their inconsistencies. Not only are there federal distinctions, but tribal standards as well. In addition, the fact that not all tribes agreed to be recognized by the federal government, and/or individual tribes made different treaty deals with the US government all affect how a person with Indian ancestry may be defined legally (Garroue, 2001, p. 228).

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 (IRA), also known as the Indian New Deal, dealt with both land and blood, but I give it its own separate heading because it is very much a response to and continuation of previous policies that created provisions regarding land and blood, as well as tribal governments, and the relationship these governments shared with the US federal government.

As specified in the preamble of the Indian Reorganization Act, the bill was created and passed in 1934:

for purposes of local self-government and economic enterprise; to provide for the necessary training of Indians in administrative and economic affairs; to conserve and develop Indian lands; and to promote the most effective administration of justice to matters affecting Indian tribes and communities by establishing a federal Court of Indian Affairs (Deloria, 2002, p. xi).

³⁴ Garroue notes: “Although people must show only the slightest trace of ‘black blood’ to be *forced* (with or without their consent) into the category ‘African American,’ modern American Indians must *formally* produce *strong* evidence of often rather *substantial* amounts of ‘Indian blood’ to be *allowed* entry into the corresponding racial category” (Garroue 2001:231)

It was organized under four main titles: Indian Self-Government, Special Education for Indians, Indian Lands, and the Court of Indian Affairs, and was largely a response to the findings of the *Meriam Report* of 1928 which laid out the institutional side of the Indian problem. Like the larger New Deal initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Indian New Deal saw it as the responsibility of the federal government to pay for activities and programs deemed necessary for the growth and development of tribal communities.

In terms of land and blood, the Indian New Deal made it possible for the federal government to reorganize communities through seemingly arbitrary sales of lands and contradictory blood requirements. Vine Deloria Jr. describes how the section of the bill titled “Self-Government” specifies the power and authority of the Secretary to:

...purchase lands for landless Indians and designate them as reservations. He could therefore issue a charter for a tract of land and, when landless Indians were willing to move to this land, set down the conditions under which Indians of one-fourth degree Indian blood could become members of the new reservation. By agreeing to move to the land, individual Indians were said to have ratified the charter. There was no provision that the Indians occupying the newly purchased reservation be of the same cultural or genetic background and heritage, so in effect new ‘tribes’ were to be created that were ‘Indian’ in a racial sense but shared little else in common (2002, p.xxi).

This reflects the ignorance of federal officials who saw it as their duty to do what was best for Native people, without really understanding who Native peoples were and what they desired in the way of a relationship with the US government. It also reflects how Indigeneity was perceived and framed by arms of the federal government. One such example of these assimilative forces comes from the experience of the Navajo. As Traci

Brynee Voyles (2010) notes, the federal discourse created to frame “the Navajo problem” involved a complex process, where both the people and the land:

constituted a *queer* problematic to the colonial bureaucracy; that is, they were seen as reproductively and racially nonheteronormative, unable or unwilling to maintain hegemonic proprietary relationships to the land as well as ‘proper’ familial orders and reproductive practices. This ecological queerness emerged from an *a priori* racialization of Navajos that rendered them primitive and pitiable ‘wards’ of the US government—children to the American national patriarch—in the eyes of liberal, and unassimilable savages in the eyes of less sympathetic conservatives.³⁵

While my analysis is concerned with the discursive framings of Indigeneity, tribes themselves were concerned not just with what the new legislation would mean to how they were perceived, but to how it would affect their material conditions—their livelihood—such as specifically protected rights to fish and hunt as outlined in prior treaties. However, the treatment of Indians, and the respect, or lack thereof, accorded to Indians under federal and state legislation, was influenced and implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) justified by prior constructions of Native peoples as uncivilized, in need of patriarchal governmental assistance, and as already vanishing.

In *Indian Self-Rule*, Floyd A. O’Neil reflects back on a memory he had of going to school in the 1930s and being forced to sing hymns that equated “Indian[s]” and “Negro[es]” with “rude barbarian[s]” and did so with the voice of authority; that of the teacher and of Christ. He remarks:

Those teachers were incredible. I remember one of the hymns we were required to sing in the school. It was from an old Protestant hymnal, and maybe you will recognize the words. The Indian children at the Fort Duchense School were required to sing it, too. It went:

³⁵ Traci Brynne Voyles. *Decolonizing Cartographies: Sovereignty, Territoriality, and Maps of Meaning in the Uranium Landscape*. Ph.D. Dissertation. [La Jolla]: University of California, San Diego, 2010.

Let the Indian and the Negro,
 Let the rude barbarian hear,
 Of the glories of the kingdom...

These lyrics did not wash with the Indian students. When they would not sing the words, the teacher would become incensed. It was one of my first experiences in watching the politics of acculturation at work. It was then, and still is, fascinating (Philip, 1986, p. 43).

This reflection reveals some of the tensions that arose during the 1930s in reaction to the Indian New Deal. Whereas the years leading up to the IRA were characterized by the efforts of Christian organizations and professional missionaries to “assimilate” Indians into the US social fabric, John Collier seemed to be attempting something different, which many saw as a threat to the “progress” they had already made.

Donald Parman describes Collier’s intentions as he entered his newly appointed position as the commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1933:

Collier hoped to achieve Indian self-sufficiency through improvement and conservation of remaining Indian land, ending allotment and the constant loss of holdings, replacing white lessees with Indian farmers and ranchers, consolidating checkerboarded allotments into larger and more manageable units, and providing credit for economic development...[and] planned to revamp the role of the BIA from one of prosecuting attorney and judge to that of defender of the Indians’ interests (1994, p. 93).

Though superficially the IRA seemed like a means of empowering Indians, many opponents saw it as simply the latest and most forceful attempt to assimilate Indians (Iverson, 1998, p. 94). One the staunchest advocates of the IRA, Rupert Costo characterized it as further “Colonization of the tribes...to be accomplished through communal enclaves subject to federal domination through the power of the secretary of the interior”(Costo, 1986, p. 48). White congressmen and Christian missionaries saw the IRA as a direct assault on their ongoing efforts to assimilating/Christianize Native

peoples (Parman, 1994, p. 95). Additionally, several tribes, including the Navajo Nation, did not trust John Collier or the paternalistic undertones of the legislation. While some may have feared losing their allotments (O'Neil, 1986) others simply did not trust the powers of the IRA to dismantle already established treaties and tribal governments (Costo, 1986, p. 48).

CONCLUSION

The Indian Defense League of America (1920s) and The National Congress of American Indians (1944) both functioned as mechanisms used by Native Americans to define their relationship to the federal government. Both organizations preceded the era known as "Termination" (roughly 1946-1960), when the federal government created "programs to terminate the special status of Indian tribes and to absorb Indian people into American society" (1996, p. 118). While the U.S. was trying to strip Indians of their special status in order to assimilate them into the nation, Mexico was reinforcing the special status of Indians, but for the same purpose; to absorb them into oblivion. In Mexico, the *Congreso Indigenista Inter-Americano* (1941) and the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (1940s), served as vehicles for education and eventual incorporation of Indigenous peoples into the modern national family that was already predicated on the purported "primitiveness" of the very Indigenous peoples it attempted to incorporate.

Where my tracing of Mexican Indigeneity is framed primarily by instances of war, artistic movements, and the development of Mexico's economy, my tracing of US Indigeneity is framed more so by specific laws/acts that sought to further define

Indigenous people, always in terms of their relationship to the nation-state, and by their (in)ability to ever embody the “Americanness” that envisioned them antithetically. I am not arguing that these types of interactions were not also prevalent in Mexico.

I could substitute “Americanness” with “Mexicanness” and theorize about a similar impossibility of embodiment, but what makes it different is the US’ obsession with blood quantum and formal federal tribal recognitions (and non-recognitions) that made/makes it so that US legal “Indian” identity must always necessarily be much more literally and strictly defined. Rather than relying primarily on the symbolic to both define and dilute Indigenous peoples from the population as was/is the case in Mexico, with exceptions of course, the U.S. government tried to more actively eradicate the existence of Indigenous peoples. Either by attempting assimilation, which according to O’Neil, “...was not an abstract, remote concept [but] [r]ather...an active philosophy, with tremendous power to break up families and even take the lives of children” (1986, p. 32), or through the establishment of specific and legally mandated blood quantum measurements required to prove “Native” status. Such “proof” was determined on an individual basis and was necessary if one wished to receive federal recognition as well as the limited entitlements that such recognition might afford.

Like Mexico’s establishment of bureaucratic institutions specifically responsible for dealing with Indians issues such as the Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas, the US government also established such bodies, the most famous of them being the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the BIA. The similarities and differences between the two countries lie within the similarly marginalized status of Indigenous peoples, and in the relational marginality of nation to nation. While one is marginalized internally, the other is

marginalized externally. In the United States and Mexico, Indigenous peoples were/are seen as subaltern in comparison to “White” citizens. Both have a history of being dispossessed of communal and ancestral lands, to differing degrees. Both were/are used in the discursive framings of the nation, with any sort of proud representations relegated to the realms of death (in the past) and/or art(esanía). Where they fundamentally differ is in the way that Native Americans were never envisioned as part of the national family; Indigenous Mexicans were. As such, the ability to tribal governments to assert their sovereignty is a direct result of that construction. Ongoing fights for Native sovereignty in the United States are predicated on the understanding that Native Peoples in the United States were never meant to be part of the United States as “Americans”; “Mexicans” were envisioned, and I emphasize *envisioned*, as part of the “Mexican” family, however liminal the ways in which that status was envisioned. Additionally, and most importantly for my discussions in this chapter and in this dissertation, is the inherently unequal relationship of nations vis-à-vis the nation, shared between the United States and Mexico.

Manichean framings such as: “First World” vs. “Third World”; English speaking vs. Spanish speaking; White people vs. Brown people; and “Modern” vs. “Backward” have shaped and continue to shape relations between Mexican-origin people and Native Americans who simultaneously occupy US spaces. These dichotomies, which get re-appropriated again and again, continue to affect the (il)legitimate entry (or denial of entry) into discourses surrounding Indigeneity and belonging, by people whose Indigenous ancestries originate south of the US-Mexico border, and who are therefore accorded a perpetually “foreign” and threatening immigrant status in/by the United States

of America.³⁶ The following chapter engages the discourse of staging as it is deployed by the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. as a means to demonstrate alternative notions of existence, more specifically, alternative notions of what it means to be Indigenous, where the boundaries of culture, time and space lie, and how we might reshape our understandings of what it means to be truly and fully sovereign.

³⁶ In the case of transnational tribes such as the Kumeyaay Nation, which encompasses areas in San Diego and Imperial Counties as well as Baja California, Mexico, having US federal recognition affords certain benefits such as cultural visas, to Kumeyaay from Mexico to enter the United States legally for limited periods in order to share culture.

Chapter Two: Staging Sovereignty

One the one hand, it is necessary to engage in oppositional politics to corporate and state power by taking power. Yet if we only engage in the politics of taking power, we will have a tendency to replicate the hierarchical in our movements. So it is important to “make power” by creating those structures within our organizations, movements, and communities that model the world we are trying to create.

-Andrea Smith
*Conquest*³⁷

The above passage truly gets at the dilemma encountered by many of us who are critical of the hegemonic practices and structures of the U.S. nation-state, yet still find it worthwhile and necessary to demand justice from the very systems that we are critiquing. Because struggles for justice rarely involve simple unilateral decisions of being either completely for or completely against any one thing, person, or institution, thinking in terms of Us/Them, Inside/Outside, American/Anti-American only replicates exclusive binaries that modernist logic has relied upon for centuries as a means of separating the “Civilized” from the “Uncivilized” and more specifically, Whites from all racial “Others.” Therefore, challenges to dominant forms of power, necessitate that we envision what the alternatives might actually look like while we simultaneously deal with what already exists. In the process of “imagin[ing] the unimaginable,”³⁸ we are bound to run into roadblocks to our resistance, and encounter strategies that just do not work as well in practice as they might have seemed in our imaginations. Still, however imperfect our

³⁷ Andrea Smith. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005, p. 187.

³⁸ At the 2009 Ethnic Studies Engages Indigenous held at UC San Diego, scholar Andrea Smith challenged the audience of professors, students, and community members to imagine the unimaginable. She was referring specifically to the U.S. nation-state, calling for us to imagine a world if we were wake up and the U.S. as a nation-state no longer existed, but instead, something else more sustainable and equitable functioned in its place.

attempts, we cannot give up in the fights to continually decolonize our minds, our material conditions, as well as the institutions that perpetuate our oppressions.

My introductory chapter, “In the Race to be Modern,” traced discourses of nationhood through which the United States and Mexico imagined and constructed their political, racial, cultural, and geographic boundaries during initial periods of nation building. Over the past two hundred years, processes of delimiting the cultural and geographic parameters of the U.S. and Mexican nation-states have played out in distinct but parallel ways. As the two countries that share the largest militarized border in the world, flows of migration, or rather the containment of these flows has necessitated a clear demarcation of what constitutes indigenous people, and more importantly, the indigenous landscape. Citizenship in both countries has always been predicated upon how the nation-state imagines its borders, and whom it imagines as worthy of residing within those borders. In this chapter I focus on the institutional and representational practices of the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C., looking at the museum’s attempt to “make power” by challenging the boundaries of nation-states, while simultaneously imagining the alternatives; notions of sovereignty and nationhood that are based on recognition, respect, and responsibility. Though not without its faults, and definitely not without its critiques by Native and non-Native people alike, the NMAI represents part of a necessary and ongoing effort to decolonize beyond borders and beyond the politics of multicultural representation.

“AMERICAN” INDIANS IN THE MAKING OF THE U.S. NATION-STATE

Before embarking on a discussion of the contemporary exhibits currently on display at the NMAI, it is important to note the Smithsonian Institution’s emergence in the late nineteenth century, and the role it has played in shaping meanings about Indigenous people and cultures during initial projects of U.S. nation building. Beginning in the formative years, the United States bore the particularly tricky burden of demonstrating its revolutionary ideals of freedom and equality while simultaneously clearing the land of Indians in order to make room for European settlers attempting to fulfill what they believed was their Manifest Destiny. Phillip J. Deloria notes, “Americans wanted to feel a natural affinity with the continent, and it was Indians who could teach them such aboriginal closeness. Yet, in order to control the landscape they had to destroy the original inhabitants” (Deloria, 1998, p. 5). Both Native Americans and African slaves were viewed as antithetical to “American-ness.” However, because Indians were viewed as “wild beasts” (Almaguer, 2008, p. 117) and a such, more in touch with the wilderness, it was not such a far stretch to also then associate them with symbols of independence and freedom; the very ideals with which American frontiersman were actively imagining/aligning themselves (Roediger, 1999). Indians, however, were not imagined as part of the national story that America and “Americans” wished to construct about themselves, except as quickly vanishing or already extinct characters in the larger narrative being produced in conjunction with the burgeoning U.S. nation-state.

As an institution that has historically functioned as a facilitator of U.S. Empire and colonialist modes of thinking, the Smithsonian Institution helped create U.S. national

narratives by the establishment of world-class monuments backed by the rigors of the emerging social scientific disciplines such as Anthropology. Additionally, the acquisition of Native objects and remains became a necessary component of US expansion and construction of the national self. As Kathleen Fine-Dare explains, the theft of cultural patrimony is “an ingrained practice of nation and empire building, one that is tied up with the need to create a future built on what is often little more than fantasies about the past” (Fine-Dare, 2002, p. 17). However, early Smithsonian exhibits did not display Indians or their culture as part of national culture. Rather, Indians occupied spaces more so as specimens, which Amanda J. Cobb demonstrates very poignantly in the following passage:

For Native people there is nothing *natural* about natural history museums. Museums have long been understood as buildings that house collections—collections of art, scientific specimens, or other artifacts or objects considered to be of permanent value because of their rarity, uniqueness, and so on—for display. Because Native Americans have long been understood by collectors as scientific specimens, as objects of permanent value because of their rarity, uniqueness, and so on, Native remains and artifacts have been housed in museums, frequently in natural history museums, and displayed—dinosaurs to the left, Indians to the right (2008, p. 363).

Still, Indians played a central role in nationalist fantasies providing an imaginary link between Americans and the continent’s wilderness, as well as concrete material goods that could be owned as aboriginal treasures. Additionally, associating Indians with the revolutionary spirit of America continued well into the late nineteenth century. With the growth of industrial capital across the land, by the early twentieth century Indians and their objects began to serve more as symbols of an “authentic reality in the face of urban disorder and alienating mass society” (Deloria, 1998, p. 74). Objects and practices that

“incorporated Western materials, styles, and forms failed...to satisfy the longing among Western consumers for the lost authenticity of the local and handmade that accompanied industrialization”(Phillips and Steiner, 1999, p. 10). Notions of what constituted “authentic” Native culture also influenced ideas about what constituted “authentic” Native peoples. Debunking Western notions of “authenticity” that have been applied to Native peoples is clearly one of the NMAI’s primary goals, which I discuss in the section that focuses on the *Our Lives* gallery.

Contributing to notions of “authenticity” was the collecting practices of elite Americans during the nineteenth century. Among the most avid collectors of Native objects during the nineteenth century was George Gustave Heye who founded the first Museum of the American Indian in 1916. Heye, along with other major collectors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, saw their collecting efforts as necessary in order to maintain “material record[s] of the romantic past of the Indian peoples they believed to be vanishing” (Jacknis, 2008; Sturtevant, 1999, p. v). Ira Jacknis describes the style and content of several museum models that were most likely influential to Heye’s museological vision:

Each type of museum carried a different disciplinary message. History museums included Native and Anglo objects in a single narrative, even if it was a tale of conquest and disappearance. Natural history museums, on the other hand, were predicated on colonialist notions of survey, uniting the natural and cultural for the Native peoples encountered in contested lands. Art museums in the nineteenth century were generally reserved for Western culture and its direct ancestors (2008, p.6).

Heye’s collecting, as well as his display practices, was supported by the underlying logic of salvage anthropology. Different from the “cultural preservation” emphasized in the National Museum of the American Indian Act (1989) which provided the legal basis for

the establishment of the NMAI on the National Mall, the type of “salvaging” envisioned and practiced by Heye assumed the imminent decline of Native culture and the soon to follow death of Native peoples. However, Ann McMullen offers a critique of perspectives that frame Heye as a crazy obsessive “boxcar collector,” describing him instead as an “inconvenient truth”(2009 p. 66) for the NMAI who she argues has to paint Heye as such, in order to distinguish its mission as fundamentally different. The NMAI’s mission is more inline with a new genre characteristic of the second museum age, which takes on a much more interdisciplinary approach incorporating interpretive models and more collaborative processes of exhibition creation (Phillips, 2005) The de-colonial strategies employed by the NMAI represent a new move among public institutions seeking to reshape our notions of boundaries (cultural, temporal, and spatial) as well as evoke critical engagements about the ways that historical knowledge is produced. In *New Museums and the Making of Culture*, Kylie Message elaborates on the paradigm shift currently taking place in many museums across the globe:

...a new museum has emerged as a result of substantive changes in thinking, approach and development. These shifts are practical (caused by changes within professional museum practice and cultural policy), theoretical (a result of the increasing appropriation of museums by scholars of cultural studies) and symbolic (connected to the changing relationship between the museum, the state and other authoritative organizations). They are represented by a clear articulation of the relationship between the museum as a discursive model and the various discourses that have appropriated it as a signifier of something else. (2006, p.8).

Message’s description is useful in thinking about the NMAI’s emergence in 2004. The “theoretical” shift is evident in the museum’s engagement with postmodern discourses and Native epistemologies. The “practical” shift lies in its emphasis on community

collaboration and the use of native voices to inform the exhibits. The “symbolic” shift arises out of the museum’s legally sanctioned commitment to cultural preservation and repatriation of native ceremonial objects and human remains as part of the National Museum of the American Indian Act passed by congress in 1989, which enabled the establishment of the museum on the national mall. Treating the museum as a discursive model for possible social change, I examine the way boundaries are imagined and contested, and how this relates to struggles for sovereignty. My goal is not simply to report what it is that the NMAI does, but to think through the result, how they achieve it, and to demonstrate what these practices reveal about our present historical circumstances and the strategies we must employ to sustain and revitalize the ongoing processes of decolonization.

Decolonization in this case involves a rethinking of dominant Western epistemologies and ontological categories, while simultaneously staging what alternative epistemologies might look like. A major component of colonization has been the enforcement of colonial boundaries that sought to physically erase Indigenous peoples from the land, but also their understandings of the land and more importantly, their relationships to it. One of the primary ways that the NMAI questions the notion of boundaries is through their “hemispheric mission,” (DeLugan, 2006) or the inclusion of Native peoples from North, South, and Central America which asserts a blatant refusal to privilege geopolitical borders as the markers of difference among indigenous peoples of the Americas. Therefore I find it necessary to engage with the many notions of boundaries engaged with by the NMAI as a central focus.

CHALLENGING BOUNDARIES

I begin my analysis in the *Our Peoples* gallery, which focuses primarily on challenging Western epistemologies, particularly the way that history is conceived of and constructed, as if necessarily divorced from the present. Central to western accounts, especially within the Americas, has been the placement of Indians in the past, which helped solidify “common sense” notions that Indians had vanished not only from the land, but also from existence.

Since maps have been one of the primary instruments in shaping “colonial spatialization[s]” (Goeman, 2008), often erasing the Indigenous presence within newly conquered territories of the Americas; the following installation is a crucial site with which to begin a discussion of boundaries. Beginning with the main entrance wall that reads “Evidence” upon an otherwise empty surface, I followed the curve of the wall to its backside where I again encountered blankness. After a few seconds, maps of the Americas in order of European contact illuminated the wall. Beginning first with 1493 in a space simply labeled “Caribbean,” the light then followed a trajectory heading in a westward direction, illuminating what I immediately recognized as “Mexico” (1520), then onto “Peru” (1533) then to the “American Southeast” (1540) to “Brazil” (1552), and finally ending with “New England” (1616). First illuminated in white, the maps quickly turned to red, in the same progressions as they were “discovered” by Europeans. The light clearly reflected the movement and spread of Enlightenment ideas, which facilitated modern notions of “undiscovered” lands believed to be uninhabited and what

accompanied those constructions—the notion of the vanishing Indian. The maps tell the story of encounter, reflecting the magnitude of disease and decimation that occurred as the result of “discovery” as indicated in red, but also how an entire continent of diverse peoples were lumped together as “Indians”, a label that many have since strategically embraced and used to form pan-ethnic identities and supra-tribal coalitions (Nagel, 1995).

While the maps follow a Western conception of time and space in the ways they align with the trajectory of European “discoveries” that occurred throughout the Americas, this is necessary, as the objective of the maps is to reflect the European gaze that refused to recognize local specificities, preferring instead to erase them via processes of colonial lumping, which corresponded with European desires to contain and delimit the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas in order to facilitate the exploitation of natural resources as well as land and labor. Maps carry particular importance in projects to create colonial hegemony. Not only do they seek to erase people’s understandings of space, but seek to undo the social, cultural, and spiritual links to those places. Sense of place and the relationship that individuals and communities share with particular places, are at the center of many Indigenous cosmologies (Goeman, 2008; Smith, 2005; Basso, 1996). Maps therefore function within what Stuart Hall describes as “regimes of representation” where the acts of naming and drawing out of boundaries plays a constitutive role in the transformation of spaces to places, rather than simply reflecting geography as it is.

An example from literature will shed light on this phenomenon even further. In *The Sharpest Sight* the late Louis Owens describes a scene in which one of the central characters, Mundo Morales, a descendant of the elite class of Californios, stands with

deputies who are trying to find his best friend, a mixed-blood Indian of Choctaw, Cherokee, and Irish decent (modeled after Owens himself), whom they suspect of rape and murder. As an officer of the law, Mundo helps the deputies, but does so with ambivalence, knowing his precarious position. First, he is a Mexican in California who wears a badge as a representative of the government, second, he is keenly aware of the racist practices of the State that disposed his ancestors of their land, as well as from the native peoples who inhabited the missions and later the very same rancho that Mundo's family owned. In the scene, Mundo is forced to work with the deputies who he knows will surely kill his friend once they find him. Looking down at a map of the Santa Cruz Mountains, Mundo is filled with discomfort as described by the narrator:

Mundo stood between one of the other deputies and the man in the gray suit and looked down at the county map. There was something about maps he didn't like. The first thing they did when they wanted to take something away from you was draw a map; that's what the Viejo had said (Owens, 1995, p.39).

Through his personal experience, as well as what he knew about his family's relationship with maps in the region as being disposed Californios, he was well aware of the underlying notion of conquest upon which maps are drawn, as well as his own complicity with it. In this instance, the character of Mundo exemplifies the constitutive nature of naming places, which from Western perspectives, have served to erase Indigenous conceptions of place as well as subject Indigenous peoples to territorial dominance. Though Mundo and his family had suffered dispossession due to Western mapping practices, he too (or at least his relatives) had in many ways benefited from the dispossession of California Native peoples.

This example gestures toward the power of maps to facilitate dispossession, as well as the constitutive function of naming and mapping spaces. When a space is named into a place in the interests of hegemony, the un-naming or un-mapping of that space carries with it a counter-hegemonic effect. The challenge to European geographies is made manifest at the NMAI as the maps which first appeared in bright white light, then turn to red, then disappear almost completely; leaving just the empty, dim spaces they had once filled, and only the visual memory of their existence.

This looping territorialization and deterritorialization not only provides a simulacrum of the cyclical violence of colonialism which persists in nuanced forms for Indigenous peoples and racial minorities throughout the Americas and worldwide, but also sets the stage and the scope for the re-imagining of landscapes and “common sense” understandings of geography. Of course this is not just about maps and territories, but about the ways that particular lands have been linked to particular bodies and made legible through a lens of “discovery,” which above all, has been used as a basis for dismantling all aspects of Native sovereignty, focused on, but not limited to land. In the *Third Space of Sovereignty*, Kevin Bruynell locates boundaries as the “productive center of the conflict between American colonial impositions and indigenous post-colonial resistance” (Bruynell, 2007, p. xvii). Since the NMAI deals with the Americas, not just the United States, the maps serve to delimit the scope of representations with which the museum will engage, but resist doing so in any sort of fixed way. Cobb notes that by representing the Americas, rather than just the United States, the NMAI “recogniz[es] that the boundaries of contemporary nation-states in no way reflected tribal cultural boundaries” (2005, p.489). Legally, the sovereignty of tribal nations relies on recognition

by the nation-state in which they are located (Neizen, 2003; Miller, 2003; Wilkens, 1997). However, this creates a serious conflict of interest when nation-states like the United States, refuse to support the U.N. Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, which is supported by many sovereign nations located within the geopolitical borders of the United States. As Smith notes, “The constant undermining of the U.N. by the U.S. hinders the ability of indigenous nations to gain recognition as sovereign nations under international law” (2005, p.182) In these instances, simply re-naming spaces is not enough of a change or challenge to prior modes of understanding. In the interest of making power, it is necessary to question existing relationships to and complicity with colonial conceptions of space.

IRRECONCILABLE SOVEREIGNTIES

Because the territorial hegemony of the U.S. nation-state has been based primarily on temporal as well as spatial reconfiguring of indigenous geographies, resistance against attempts to definitively map out indigenous territories necessitates a reconfiguring, or dismantling, of settler-colonialist notions of sovereignty. Whereas state and colonialist sovereignty are based on conceptions of absolute power and clearly marked (exclusive) cultural and geographic boundaries (Buynell, 2007; Biolosi, 2005; Smith, 2005), contrarily “indigenous sovereignty and nationhood is predicated on interrelatedness and responsibility” (Smith, 2005, p. 186). Following initial encounters between Europeans and Native peoples of the Americas, claims to Native lands were made based on the Christian doctrine of “discovery” (Behrendt, Lindberg, Miller, and Ruru 2010;

Newcomb, 2008). Taking on a spiritual status, colonial mappings of Indigenous space sought to establish “territorial supremacy” (Frederickson, 1981) and dominion over, not alongside, Native peoples who were deemed “uncivilized” because they were neither Christian nor European.

This same type of colonial domination, based on absolute power, believed to be ordained by God, would later serve as the basis for the formation of the U.S. nation-state, taking the form of settler colonialism and manifest destiny (Roediger, 1999; Almaguer, 1994), the aim being to replace Native peoples on the land and establish new social, economic, and political systems in their place (Ostler, 2004; Wolfe, 1999). As Mishuana Goeman suggests, this “colonial spatializing” functions by creating “nationalist discourses that ensconce a social and cultural sphere, stake a claim to people, and territorialize the physical landscape by manufacturing categories and separating land from people” (2008, p.96). While land was and is central to any notions of sovereignty, the physical spaces alone are not what fuel debates over sovereignty. What are fundamentally at stake are Native people’s rights to determine who they are and how they relate to their universe, including the land with which they share a certain responsibility.

In “Cultural Sovereignty and Native American Hermeneutics in the Interpretation of the Sacred Stories of the Anishinaabe,” Lawrence Gross lays out a very real predicament for Native peoples:

In a scenario in which Native Americans achieved sovereignty over their land and politics, would that accomplishment have any functional meaning if, at the same time, Native Americans were fully assimilated into the culture of the dominant society? (Gross, 2003, p.127).

In Gross' case, he is referring specifically to the proliferation and adaptation of sacred stories outside of the contexts from which they initially emerged, asking whether the lessons of the past still bear weight on the present and the future if the worlds we now live in are so very different? Following a similar logic, Goeman suggests that one of the most powerful forms of resistance against settler-colonialist notions of bounded (and inherently limited) space, is storytelling, where the emphasis is on “ [s]ymbolic relationships and obligations rather than inherent rights bounded through nation-state models of border and citizenship (2008, p.299). When people participate in storytelling with their families and as a larger community, they remember places, histories, and their relationship to those places and histories. Additionally, the act of telling and re-telling stories also carries with it the ability of the storyteller to adapt each story to a particular situation, audience, and the larger socio-historical context. This is particularly relevant in a time when the forces of globalization attempt to place non-digital forms of knowing and dissemination somewhere in an archaic past.

The museum has historically been treated as a receptacle for containing objects and information that can tell us about the past. The relationship between Native peoples and museums has typically consisted of the museums holding objects of Native importance from the past that could tell non-Native peoples about themselves, on a temporal scale from “primitive” to “civilized”. However, in this second museum age, a shift has taken place. When Gross points to the spaces beyond land and politics where battles for sovereignty can be and are being waged, I see the museum as a potentially powerful site of cultural expression and representation, as well as education, where the battles for cultural sovereignty are being staged. Native peoples and other communities

of color are using the space of the museum to display glimpses of the worlds they would like to live in.

OUR LIVES: CONTEMPORARY NATIVE LIVES AND IDENTITIES

In the following section, I explore The Our Lives gallery, how it is organized, what it contains, and the role it plays in creating an alternative notion of sovereignty. Again, the notion of boundaries proves to be of central importance. This gallery interrogates boundaries first at the level of seemingly separate “bounded” discourses that have worked in conjunction with each other to shape notions of Native identity. Secondly, it participates in a re-mapping of Indigenous landscapes by showing how individual communities articulate their tribal identities, as well as how each understands and expresses their senses of cultural and geographic boundaries through practice of traditional cultural forms in a contemporary context. Following an overview of the gallery’s thematic structure, I conclude by focusing on the community-specific exhibit of the Campo Band of Kumeyaay Indians from San Diego, California. Here I bring in statements made by Campo community curators about their experiences as part to the collaborative curatorial process implemented by the NMAI. My analysis situates the Campo exhibit in dialogue with the larger gallery and the museum as a whole.

In order to understand the significance of these dialogues, it is important to understand how the *Our Lives* gallery is framed. The gallery clearly spells out its intentions in the following wall text:

Our Lives

Our Lives is about the lives and identities of native people in the twenty-first century. The central areas of the gallery look at key elements that have affected native identity such as definition, social and political awareness, language, place and self-determination. These areas reveal that identity is not a thing but a lived experience. In the community galleries, eight native communities share aspects of their lives that show the diversity and vibrancy of native people in a changing world. To create each gallery NMAI staff members worked closely with a group of community residents who were chosen by their peers. The community curators decided which stories to tell and how to tell them. Everything you see here and read reflects their voices, perspectives, and ultimately their identity as native people. (Jolene Rickard and Gabriel Tayak, curators central areas. Cynthia L. Chavez and curators community gallery).

The “central areas,” also referred to as the spines, are important in the way they establish the parameters for the dialogues that take place between the individual communities and the gallery’s larger stance toward furthering decolonization and global Indigenous rights.

Prior to encountering the spine, one must first walk through a reflective tunnel where streaming video of life-sized individuals walk beside you. From a man dressed in the official uniform of the United States Marine Corps, to a woman holding a child, to two men walking and chatting. At the end of the tunnel the following caption reads, “Anywhere in the Americas, you could be walking with a twenty-first century Native American,”(NMAI, 2004). As the portion of the museum that is devoted to contemporary lives and identity, the wall very clearly reflects the museum’s larger goal to complicate preconceived notions or expectations one might have for a museum about Indians. The entrance wall also simulates direct contact between visitors and Native peoples, which alludes to the common practice among European settlers, especially during the formative years of the U.S. nation-state, of developing ideas about Native people with limited or no direct contact with them.

During the nineteenth century, museums as well as worlds fairs, were some of the first opportunities for European Americans to have direct physical contact with living breathing examples of otherness which allowed them the opportunity to clearly distinguish themselves from the “primitive” cultures and peoples they were encountering for the first time with their very own eyes (Fine-Dare, 2002; Tenorio Trillo, 1996). Displays of Africans and Native peoples of the Americas living in their “natural” “authentic” habitats were meant to exemplify the least advanced stages of human development that many visitors simultaneously abhorred and desired (Fine-Dare, 2002). By allowing visual representations of categories, types, and hierarchical systems of technology and culture, the museum and the worlds fair assumed the roles of civilizing agencies—dealing not only with objects and people, but with what Stuart Hall describes as “notions of what the world should be” (Hall, 1997, p.160). Though not the same as forced removal or physical genocide, museums formed part of the larger “exhibitionary complex” which according to Tony Bennet, found its power “not in the ability to inflict pain but by its ability to organize and coordinate an order of things and to produce a place for people in relation to that order” (Bennet, 2004, p.123). Indians and other non-white people occupied the lowest positions within colonial and later nationalistic forms of power and control.

DISSECTING THE SPINE—HAUNTINGS OF COLONIALITY/MODERNITY

Contemporary responses to these past structural oppressions are exhibited on the front side of the central spine that one encounters after passing through the entrance wall.

The disciplinary function of the museum as it pertained to Native peoples in the early years of its existence is clearly addressed in the six categories that make up this backside of the spine: “Body and Soul,” “Blood,” “Appearance,” “Charted,” “Documented,” and “On Display.” I begin with a discussion of the content included in “On Display.”

As one of six major categories, “On Display” consists in its entirety, of a large photo of Luiseño performance artist, James Luna in his famous performance/exhibition titled “The Artifact Piece” that appeared at the San Diego Museum of Man in 1987. “The Artifact Piece” continues to be among the most iconic of Luna’s many performances. It is described by the NMAI in the following text:

Is my identity an artifact frozen in the past? The artist James Luna, Luiseño, lay motionless in a nineteenth century museum display case. Labels commented on the scars on his body. Nearby cases contained Luna’s family photographs. Luiseño medicine objects and other personal items laid out like early anthropological displays of arrow heads, pottery shards, and tools. This work of performance art entitled “The Artifact Piece” was first shown in 1987 at the Museum of Man in San Diego. In it Luna subverts the practice of regarding Native Americans as objects or artifacts. By placing his living body on display he criticizes museums that display native cultures as dead or solely part of the past. (Jolene Rickard, Guest Curator and Gabriel Tayac, NMAI 2004).

On one level, the inclusion of Luna’s work within the “On Display” section, gestures toward the performativity of museum displays, demonstrating the theatrical nature of exhibition. On another level, his work, especially the display of his work at the NMAI, directly implicates the social sciences, particularly Anthropology, for the performative role it has played in producing discourses about Native peoples based on the observation of Native traditions as well as on the analysis of Native objects and bodies as scientific

specimens.³⁹ “The Artifact Piece” performs what Kathleen McHugh describes as the act of “compelling Euro-American tradition to contend with the Indigenous thought and culture already haunting its own traditions” (2008, p.430). Literally bounded within a glass case, captured in a photo, on a wall in the NMAI, Luna’s body signals a paradigmatic as well as practical shift in Native representations and resistance. Typically deemed illegible outside of the logics and languages of the colonizer, Luna’s performance creates somewhat of a literal haunting of the discourses that have shaped rather than reflected Native “realities”. Luna’s original performance functioned as both a dislocating and critiquing of the very manufacturing of the museum. By including him within this section labeled “On Display,” the NMAI re-appropriates his original critique, its very presence comes to represent/symbolize his work, and similar types of performance, as an already accepted modality within the aesthetics of criticism and resistance characteristic of the second museum age.

Rather than simply react to previous problematic representations of Native peoples in museums, “On Display” alongside the five remaining categories lay out the framework for the gallery, placing contemporary articulations of sovereignty made by individual communities in dialogue with larger structural attempts that have been made to dismantle that very sovereignty over the past five hundred years. Organized into the six main categories mentioned above, the spine addresses the many discourses: scientific (biological), legal, political, and spiritual that have shaped the racialized category “Indian” as part of a larger discursive formation governing how peoples labeled as

³⁹ Though not explicitly mentioned, this is also a very important reference to the role of N.A.G.P.R.A. (the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) that was passed by the U.S. congress in 1990, one year after the passage of the National Museum of the American Indian Act (1989).

racially “Indian” could be talked about, understood, and treated. Essentially, this backside of the spine deals with the multiple and intersecting hegemonic discourses that have shaped ideas/notions about Native peoples’ identities. In *Subject to Display*, Jennifer Gonzalez situates this type of racial cataloguing within the larger discourse of visibility:

The concept and lived experience of race are thus intertwined in a discourse of visibility that enables subsequent forms of hierarchy or oppression to become naturalized, that enables membership in communities to be established, and that facilitates the process by which categorical distinctions are able to become unwritten laws (2009, p. 5)

Efforts to “naturalize” what was meant by “Indian” developed through a number of discourses and practices that I will flesh out through a discussion of the remaining five categories that make up the spine.

Collectively the six categories make the argument that “Indian” identity, like other racial categories, has never been solely about skin color. “Indian” as a category, particularly in the United States, is just as much a legal and political category, as it is a racial and cultural one. More than skin color per se, blood quantum has been and continues to be an imagined marker of Native identity, which the NMAI addresses under the subheading, “Blood.” The following text provides a brief overview of how “Blood” has been and continues to be a central criteria for determining Native identity and rights:

Is my identity in my blood? In the nineteen thirties the US government tried to regulate who was native by means of ‘blood quantum’ (How much “Indian blood” someone has). The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 states “The term ‘Indian’ as used in this act shall include all persons of Indian blood who are members of any recognized Indian tribe now under federal jurisdiction and all persons who are descendants of such members who were on June 1, 1934 residing within the present boundaries of any Indian reservation and shall further include all persons of one half or more Indian blood...

This description elucidates the inextricable link between blood and boundaries in the determining Native rights and identity; not one or the other, but the necessity of both notions as part of the larger discursive formation of Indian racial identity.

An additional example is displayed in glass and included under the “Blood” section.

Dated March 31, 1937 the letter reads:

The term ‘Indian’ as used in this act shall include all persons of Indian who are or may become members of any tribe, pueblo, band, or group now or hereafter recognized as such by the congress or the secretary of the interior, provided that such persons shall at the time of filling their applications be residents on or hold title to lands set aside or acquired for Indian’s use and occupancy, providing further that any such person who has been absent from his reservation, pueblo, or allotment for a period of five years immediately preceding the filing of such application and who is not now occupying or using through marriage, assignment, inheritance, or purchase similar lands within a reservation, pueblo, or recognized Indian community, shall not be considered eligible for such benefits. To this add provision for surrender of allotment upon death and also Alaska clause.

Here we are informed about the very arbitrary nature of this system of determining Native identity based on blood, that it was not only time-specific, but tied to a bounded sense of spatiality where movement away from “lands set aside or acquired for Indian’s use and occupancy” could negate one’s ability to claim rights and recognition as a Native person. Considering the “taking vs. making power” model I have referenced previously, claiming identity based on blood quantum is one of those very clear examples where simply taking power (i.e. by being able to claim that one has enough “Indian” blood) is not a lasting/sustainable solution. Though the system of determining blood quantum has been and continues to be necessary for tribal groups seeking rights and recognition, the system was initially envisioned in the hopes that blood would dilute to the point of non-

recognition. In this scenario, the criteria for group membership is decided by someone outside of the group; the burden of proof always falling on the person attempting to claim their identity based on blood. See for example an additional document displayed on the spine:

Memorandum Blood. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior.
Copy from Mr Deyker. May 21, 1936

A reminder. You will recall that at our meeting of May 15th it was decided that each one in attendance should submit his idea as to who should be considered an Indian (with a possible future statutory definition in mind) and how the degree of Indian blood and other factors governing eligibility as an Indian should be determined. It will be appreciated if you will submit your ideas at your earlier convenience. John Warrick.

In the actual display, you can clearly see that the typed word “descent” has been crossed out and the word “blood” has been written in to replace it. This seemingly minute detail has proved extremely significant and detrimental in some cases, where quantifiable biological notions of identities have superseded Native determinations and understandings of group membership.

These letters emphasize that the type of recognition based on a bounded, quantifiable type of Native racial identity, materialized within the larger discourses surrounding scientific or biological racism that prevailed as *the* way to understand and talk about human variation, particularly in the United States around the turn of the nineteenth century. This classificatory mechanism was used to justify institutional and social discrimination against Native Americans as well as African Americans on the basis of their scientifically proven “primitiveness.” The legal implications of having or not having the required amount of blood quantum for Native Americans are referenced in the sections of the spine labeled as “Charted” and “Documented.” Where “Charted” displays

photos of family trees and racial diagnostic photos charting lines of descent, “Documented” includes copies of official letters from the Office of Indian Affairs denying tribal enrollment and federal recognition to people who could not provide “sufficient” documentation to prove their Indianness (See Figure 2.1).

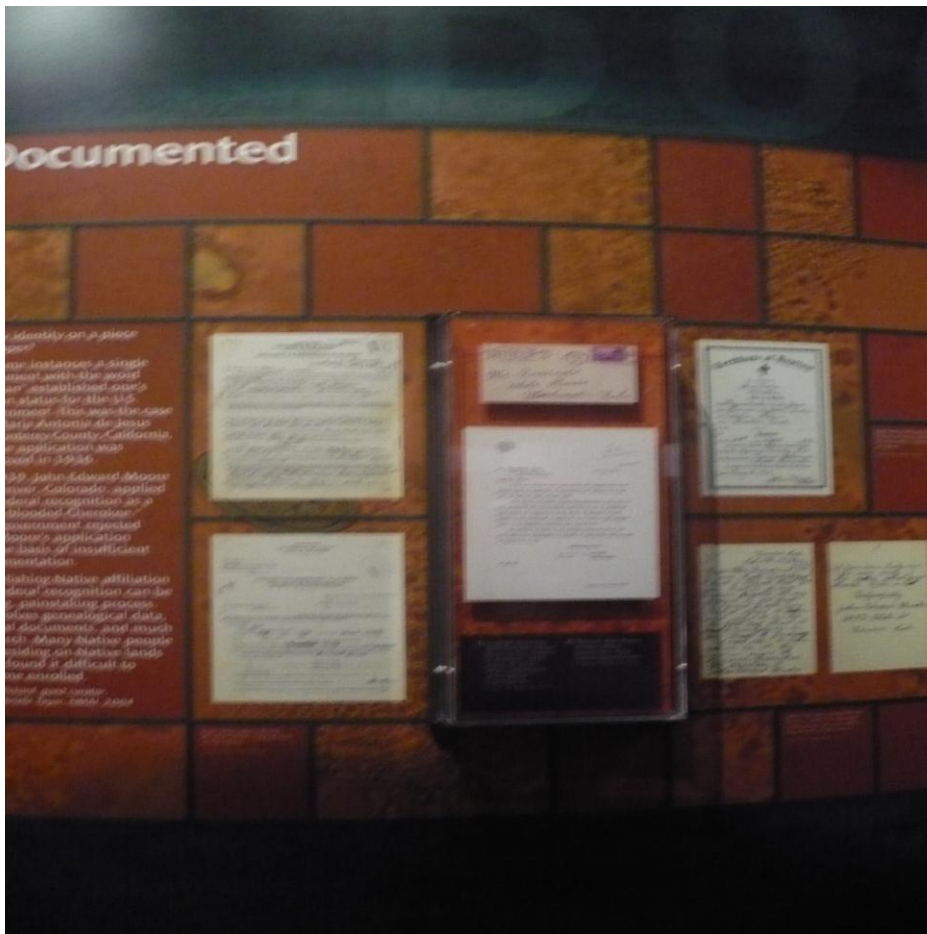


Figure 2.1: “Documented.” Photo taken by Maria Teresa Ceseña, 2010. Our Lives Gallery. National Museum of the American Indian.

Socially, blood quantum took on “common sense” status through the rhetorical and scientific connections made between one’s internal blood and their outward physical

characteristics. The connection between internal and external is addressed in the section labeled “Appearance.” Utilizing an excerpt from Franz Boas’ *The Half-blood Indian* (1894), the NMAI exposes the arbitrary “scientific” principles applied to Native bodies as if they were concrete, fixed truths:

We find that the Indian type has stronger influence upon the offspring than the white type...expressed in the great frequency of dark hair and dark eyes among halfbloods. It may be that dark hair and the wide face are more primitive characteristics of man than the narrow face and light eyes of the whites. Then, it might be said that the characteristics of the Indian are inherited with greater strength because they are older” (Frans Boas *The Half-blood Indian 1894*).

A direct response to this racial mapping comes in the “Faces of Native America” (See Figure 2) as well as the facial mosaic model (See Figure 3). Here, there is a clear separation between the back or darker side of modernity and the contemporary responses by Native peoples to a changing world.

Upon the front side of the spine is a wall displaying the following:

The Faces of Native America:

These faces reveal the complexity of indigenous peoples in the Americas today. These faces represent a hemisphere of native **survivance**. They stand in contrast to the stereotypical photographs of nineteenth century Native Americans (Jolene Rickard, Guest Curator and Gabriel Tayac, NMAI 2004).



Figure 2.2: "Our Lives." Photo taken by Maria Teresa Ceseña, 2010. Our Lives Gallery. National Museum of the American Indian.



Figure 2.3: "Face Mosaic." Photo taken by Maria Teresa Ceseña, 2010. Our Lives Gallery. National Museum of the American Indian.

By highlighting facial features as manifestations of complexity, there is still a reliance on visual markers to demonstrate human diversity. However, the variety of features and styles embodied by the individuals in the photographs literally complicates what one

might expect the “Faces of Native America” to look like, as there is no one way to look or be Native. Additionally, the images and text challenge perceptions and understandings of race, particularly the expectation of easily distinguishable (i.e. visible) markers of “authentic” “Indianness” which builds on the initial phrase from the wall entrance informing you that “ Anywhere in the Americas you could be walking with a twenty-first century Native American,” implying that what has been deemed visibly recognizable Indianness, is a product of Modernity and EuroAmerican systems of racial classification.

Additionally, the aesthetic of the photos—all in black and white with alternating pastel tints—is reminiscent of Andy Warhol’s “Marilyn Prints,” with the main distinction being that each of the NMAI photos is of a different person. Warhol on the other hand, used the same photo of Marilyn Monroe and simply alternated the shading of each to represent how her image had become a mass-produced pop culture icon. Widely recognized as a now classic example of postmodern art, the seemingly Warhol-inspired “Faces of Native America” offer a critique not only of mass-produced images of stereotypical nativeness, but the pop culture reference also designates the role of Native people as producers/consumers within the global economy. Distinct from the Marilyn Prints, “The Faces of Native America” showcase a multitude of visual difference as a result of colonial enterprises, literally framing each person within a bounded perimeter, as peoples native to the Americas have been experiencing since colonization and the subsequent rise of nation-states, each with their own borders and boundaries meant to organize/separate people by location. However, the placement of individual photos side-by-side along a single wall, allows the viewer to literally see the bigger picture and the proximity of differences that exist across the western hemisphere. Had the NMAI chosen

instead to take a group photo of all included on the wall, differences might have easily been subsumed. With the individual photos, each person maintains their uniqueness, which is central to the Our Lives exhibits.

Within the same side of the wall is a piece of text that interrogates the way Native people define themselves, it confronts Native communities who rely on colonial understandings of blood specifically, and sovereignty more broadly:

Fully Native

Who is an Indian? A Native American? An Indigenous person? American Indian, First Nation, or Aboriginal? All these labels are used but none is entirely correct. Who decides? Are you a fullblood, halfblood, quarter blood? The question of how much “Indian blood” you have, also called “blood quantum,” began with European contact. This colonial way of thinking continues when we keep defining ourselves by blood. What part of you is native? Is it your head, your heart? Maybe it’s your thoughts. But, it is not just your blood. We are the sum of all our parts. All human, one hundred percent, and fully native.

(Jolene Rickard, Guest Curator and Gabriel Tayac, NMAI 2004).⁴⁰

This text is clearly calling for the disavowal of blood quantum measurements by Native communities, citing their use as a perpetuation of “colonial thinking.” Interestingly, all of the descriptions under “Fully Native” are descriptors that emerged out of English-speaking countries: “Native America,” “First Nations,” and “Aboriginal.” While “Indigenous” is mentioned, *Indígenas* is not. Additionally, all of the six categories, except for the one titled “Body and Soul,” incorporate example of U.S. colonialism. The NMAI

⁴⁰ All of the NMAI curators are Native. However, in an effort to demonstrate the sense of “collaboration” rather than a singular hegemonic voice, many of the broad definitions are indicated as being authored by a “guest curator” or by the “NMAI.” While I appreciate this act of resistance to citations and identifiable authors, it also precludes the possibility of questioning their authority. For example, whom may we question concerning the definitions of what it means to be “Fully Native”? On another note, all possible distinctions, in terms of the different ways one might be categorized within the North and South American continents, are listed, except for the term *Indígena*—However, its English translation “Indigenous” is provided.

is a U.S.-based museum, but in its attempts to challenge boundaries of nation-states, it reaffirms the hegemony of the U.S. nation-state in its ability to stand as the primary source of colonial violence which Indigenous peoples of the Americas must speak against, always assuming a U.S. Native perspective.

SOVEREIGNTY ACROSS BORDERS?

The Campo Band of Kumeyaay Indians, is just one of twelve reservations on the American side of the U.S.-Mexico border that make up the larger Kumeyaay Nation which encompasses sections of San Diego and Imperial Counties, as well as Baja California, Mexico. Collectively Kumeyaay peoples have experienced colonization from several sources, not just the United States, but as one of the individual community exhibits, the Campo exhibit had to speak back to historical injustices, such as the one's expressed within the spine, but could not speak to historical injustices that the tribe specifically experienced. Instead, the Campo exhibit was to speak of its responses and adaptations (in the contemporary moment) to a more shared sense of common colonial impositions. As part of the *Our Lives* gallery focused on contemporary lives and identity, there were limits to how the tribe could express their tribal identity, which is rooted in many ways to their history of relationships and resistance to outside forces. As one of the Campo community curators, Michael Connolly Miskwish had to contend with these constraints:

I wanted to get more into the history of the California Indians...what happened in California with the genocide...before that, the retaking of the lands from the Mexicans, and just before

the Mexican American war... but they didn't want any of that historical stuff.⁴¹

California Native peoples, as well as other Native groups of the U.S. Southwest, experienced three different colonial systems of government under the Spanish, the Mexicans, and the Americans. These histories are particularly important in terms of how the Kumeyaay situate themselves within the racially complex southern California landscape, as well as in terms of how they imagine what their history could have been under different circumstances than what actually took place. In *Kumeyaay: A History Textbook*, which was published three years after the opening of the NMAI, Connolly Miskwish offers “An Alternate History”:

We can only speculate what would have happened if the Mexican-American War had not happened. Clearly, the Kumeyaay were close to driving the Mexicans from their lands. Other tribes throughout California were beginning to enjoy similar successes. With the declining Indian population beginning to stabilize, and Indian warfare techniques improving, the California Indian nations may have had to confront Russians from the north or perhaps a sea-faring European power. Ultimately, a confrontation with the United States appeared inevitable. What is clearly evident is whoever came after the Mexicans would have found a much more entrenched, militarily sophisticated Indian population than that encountered by the Spanish. Perhaps a later U.S. takeover would have encouraged a greater willingness to seek accommodation with the Indian population and have avoided the genocidal policies that followed (2007, p.71).

Though the passage cited above was not a part of the NMAI exhibit, it reflects the fact that Campo's tribal sovereignty relies partly on their ability to tell their stories as they see them, and as part of the larger Kumeyaay Nation, not just as one of the twelve

⁴¹ Michael Connolly Miskwish, interview by Maria Teresa Ceseña, digital recording, 21 February 2008, El Cajon, CA.

reservations. Here the temporal boundaries of historicity proved somewhat stifling to their exercise of cultural sovereignty.

The words of Paul Junior Cuero, also a Campo community curator as well as Campo's tribal chairman, reinforces this sentiment:

We kept wanting to bring the past up and you know... I would say... some of the past is how we live today. But it was really kind of difficult when it came to that part... cuz like I said, we kept wanting to go back on the past on certain things and then too, it was kinda hard cuz we wanted to talk about the rest of our Kumeyaay tribes cuz there [are] twelve of us...but it wasn't about other Kumeyaay; the spotlight was on our tribe, and so it was kinda hard.⁴²

In Cuero's statements, he also brings up the limited view of the Kumeyaay Nation that comes across in an exhibit that focuses on an individual reservation rather than the larger Kumeyaay Nation which would have reflected a Kumeyaay conception of space beyond the lands designated by the U.S. government, encompassing the Campo Reservation.

However, by focusing on one reservation, rather than the entire Kumeyaay nation, which crosses the U.S.-Mexico border into Baja California, the NMAI exhibit challenges perceptions of the San Diego borderlands as primarily Mexican and or Latino spaces. This is expressed in Cuero's statement about the exhibit itself in that "...it put Campo, in a sense, on the map..."⁴³ The question remains, whose map did it put them on and what did/does that re-mapping enable? During my many visits to the NMAI I would often sit near the Campo exhibit to take pictures and record text as part of my research and participation as a Smithsonian Latino Center Fellow. Each time a guided tour passed by

⁴² H. Paul Cuero, interview by Maria Teresa Ceseña, digital recording, 21 February 2008, El Cajon, CA.

⁴³ Ibid

the display, the cultural interpreter⁴⁴ leading the group made sure to point out the Campo exhibit, in particular, a map showing the Kumeyaay Nation as existing on both sides of the US-Mexico border. At the top left corner of the map was a small globe containing a red dot that marked Campo's physical location on Earth. The following text accompanied it:

“Haawka! We are the Campo band of Kumeyaay Indians, one of the seventeen bands of the Kumeyaay Nation. Kumeyaay bands live in California and Mexico, and we, the Campo band, maintain family and cultural ties with all of them. We all come from one oak tree. Times change, the world is changing around us, but we still come from that same oak tree. Our survival has always depended on the careful management of the environment. Like our ancestors, we use our resources to meet our needs. Today we draw on traditional knowledges and practices to guide us into the future” (Campo Kumeyaay Curators, 2003)

This description offered by the Campo Kumeyaay Curators emphasizes the merger between ancestral and contemporary epistemologies, which parallels the links between communities across the border. They reject a linear sort of trajectory that might place tradition as mutually exclusive to modernity, representing strategic engagement with the past as a way to inform the present and the future. They also challenge the boundary of the U.S. and Mexican nation-states, citing the oak tree, rather than a specific geographic location, as their place of emergence.

Additionally, the exhibit is centered on the contemporary practice of traditions that further challenge colonialist mappings by telling stories through song. Central to Kumeyaay senses of cultural sovereignty is the practice of “Bird Singing” which provides spiritual nourishment to its practitioners through the transmission of sacred knowledge

⁴⁴ At the NMAI each docent wears a nametag that has on it their name as well as the tribe or community they identify with. On one of my many visits I decided to take a guided tour and the leader made sure to identify himself as a cultural interpreter, not a tour guide.

about places and the origins of Kumeyaay creation. The songs are described in the exhibit as:

Bird Singing

Bird singing includes 300 songs that were given to the Kumeyaay from the Creator. Men and women sing them in our language, but only men accompany the singing with rattle playing. The songs tell a story about creation and a journey our ancestors made. The first song is about the sun going down and it is sung at sundown. The singing continues until 3 o'clock in the afternoon the next day. The songs are metaphors for life. There are teachings in them. It is like taking a journey through life and relating those experiences to today (Campo Kumeyaay Curators, 2003)

As a beginning speaker of the Kumeyaay language, I have been exposed to several traditional stories; some spoken and some sung. When I recognize words or meanings are explained to me, it is clear that similar themes and characters run through the songs and stories. However, depending on the audience and the speaker, the stories remain vibrant, living tales in their ability to adapt and reflect the current moment. Further, they really expose the reality that the stories of the past are completely relevant to our lives today. Unlike written histories that do not change (except through interpretation), the songs provide a living breathing archive of information about the past, but more importantly, of lessons for the present and future.

As Steven Joel Elster notes in his study titled, "They'd Sing and They'd Tell": Native American Song Cycles and Creation Stories in Southern California," the story/song genre, which we see/hear in the Kumeyaay Bird Songs, is actually quite widespread, extending beyond the extended southern California region (ESCR). However, what he found to be unique about the types of songs found among singers/storytellers within the ESCR, like those of the Kumeyaay, is that "no one song is

expected by itself to convey a segment of the story. It is rather a set of songs that are used to illuminate a subject from a variety of perspectives”(2010, p.65). Just as the songs of a single community are meant to reflect several sides of the story, the display practices in the Our Lives gallery emulate this type of multi-perspective consciousness as it relates to understandings and expression of sovereignty.

By staging an array of sovereignties from across the Americas, the NMAI demonstrates that “sovereignty” is by no means a universal notion. More than beautiful scenery, these very literal landscapes, provide a sense of what each local community experiences in their everyday material existence, but rearranged in a way that envisions these same spaces as truly sovereign spaces, based on what that means to each community. This is first and foremost apparent in the variety of statements such as the quote from Ana Savallo stating, “What makes me Kumeyaay is knowing where I come from. We’re still here even though some people don’t think we are” displayed in large letters, against the panoramic snapshots taken of the Campo Reservation. This backdrop, along with the backdrops of the other seven community exhibits, compose the larger spatial geography of the contemporary lives section, once again focusing on how boundaries are conceived, maintained, and contested. Different from the set of illuminated maps I commented on earlier in the *Our Peoples* gallery, these spaces reflect Indigenous rather than colonial perspectives of space and history.

As each of the eight distinct community exhibits articulates a unique sense of their political, legal, cultural, and geographic boundaries, they do so in conversation with the spine, together forming an imagined decolonial landscape. As Kevin Bruynell argues in *The Third Space of Sovereignty* “[t]he ‘imagining’ of alternative ‘political

geographies' is a fundamental part of the effort to see viable alternatives to the statist or colonialist conception of sovereignty" (2007, p. 222). Where the act of "taking" power might seem to reside in a strictly political realm, and "making" power within a primarily cultural arena, the two acts actually enable each other. Rather than treating culture as a noun, as something fixed and absolutely definable, it is important to consider culture as a verb, a process that enables change and renewal, and provides necessary weapons for resistance. In *Time Passages* George Lipsitz elaborates on the crucial role that culture performs within struggles for justice and social change:

Culture can seem like a substitute for politics, a way of posing only imaginary solutions to real problems, but under other circumstances culture can become a rehearsal for politics, trying out values and beliefs permissible in art but forbidden in social life. Most often, however, culture exists as a form of politics, as a means of reshaping individual and collective practice for specific interests, and as long as individuals perceive their interests as unfilled, culture retains an oppositional potential" (2001, p. 17)

If we think of the museum as an "exercise in Native Cultural Sovereignty" (Cobb, 2005, p. 486-488), as a type of rehearsal for political sovereignty, rather than the final defining act itself, we can recognize the possibilities that the museum, as a form of oppositional culture, actually enables in terms of political struggles for indigenous rights and justice specifically, and for our understandings of citizenship and sovereignty generally.

THREATS TO SOVEREIGNTY?

The NMAI opened its doors just three years after the 9/11 attacks and the launching of the official U.S. War on Terror. Though seemingly unrelated, the War on

Terror emphasized the need to keep out alien “Others,” making not just foreignness, but brownness synonymous with danger. In *Conquest*, Andrea Smith argues that the US War on terror was “really an attack against Native sovereignty, and that consolidating the U.S. Empire abroad is predicated on consolidating U.S. Empire *within* U.S. borders” (2005, p.179). Semantically, being Native or Indigenous is the opposite of being foreign, yet colonialism, particularly settler-colonialism has functioned to invert these dynamics, making settlers into “Nativists” and Natives into “Others.” Though the most visibly targeted in the U.S. War on Terror were/are people of apparent Arab or Middle Eastern decent, the only way to contain the problem “at home” on U.S. soil, was to secure the borders—emphasis placed on the U.S.-Mexico border—and remind people what “American” power and identity truly signify—exclusivity and bounded-ness. While the struggles of Mexicans trying to immigrate across the U.S.-Mexico border (with or without documentation) may seem unrelated to the struggles of American Indians seeking sovereignty on their own terms, the two are inextricably linked. In beefing up the borders that separate the United States from Mexico, the U.S. assumes the authority “to determine *who can be on these lands*. By instituting repressive immigration policies, the U.S. government is once again asserting that it—not indigenous nations—should determine who can be on these lands” (Smith, 2005, p.179). In the process of deeming Mexicans as unwelcome, perpetual “Others,” U.S. fears (of terrorism and racial Otherness) ultimately trump Native sovereignty. In essence, fear can justify any act of U.S. terrorism, if the boundaries of the nation-state are placed into jeopardy.

In many ways, the NMAI’s very existence on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., as an edifice in direct physical opposition to Capital Hill, performs a significant

reconfiguring of the U.S. geographic, political, and historical landscape. According to Amanda J. Cobb, the “NMAI both symbolically and physically reclaims Washington, D.C., as Indian Country” (Cobb, 2005, p. 490). By setting up a visual dialectic between Native peoples and the arm of the U.S. government responsible for the many laws and treaties that have been used to define and redefine Native sovereignty on the axes of insider/outsider, domestic/foreign, and dependent/independent, the NMAI’s presence marks a significant moment in the ongoing struggle for recognition and visibility by Native peoples in the United States. However, its material existence should not be considered as mere visual proof of liberation, nor should it be treated as an arrived at location (literally or metaphorically) in some teleological sequence of colonial struggle and resistance. Instead, the way it envisions and contests boundaries offers a site and method for re-imagining processes of decolonization and perhaps alternative notions of sovereignty that are necessary in the ongoing efforts to decolonize by Native and non-Native peoples.

When I teach courses that deal with the constructions of race and ethnicity, it is always through a decolonial lens. Though most of my students would agree that the exploitation of people, resources, and land have been lamentable, particularly at the hands of European colonizers, and through U.S. settler colonialism, they still often view these processes of violence as either primarily historical (already done and firmly in the past), or as necessary effects of progress. Many even try to challenge me by asking, “Where would we be if the Americas had never been colonized?” What troubles me the most about these kinds of questions/beliefs, other than their frequency, is that many students think that the only way we can understand each other is through conquest and

domination. Many students often know what they think they are supposed to say in order to appear politically correct, either adhering to simplistic notions of celebratory multiculturalism or opting for the well rehearsed “race is just a social construction” argument. However, they often do not understand the significance of these statements. Though this might appear to be a step in the right direction when we think of the alternative—the argument that race is biologically determined—the complete disavowal of race as an important site as well as analytical lens, is an even scarier proposition that rehashes the logic of colorblindness, that many now support with renewed vigor, citing the fact that the United States has a Black man in the oval office as undeniable proof.

Suffice it to say, ideas surrounding/supporting colonial dominance have been firmly implanted and fertilized through legal and political practices and institutions have raised these colonial notions to the level of taken-for-granted “common sense.” Though an exhibit at the NMAI or any museum, might not immediately or even necessarily translate to direct action, or affect the material realities of groups who have been exploited through colonization and its many vestiges, it plays an important role in the movement to reshape ideas not just about Native peoples, but about how we as humans understand knowledge in the first place, and how we understand ourselves in relation to each other, and our universes; at least that seems to be the goal.

HOW DID I GET HERE?

The NMAI first captured my attention on September 22, 2004, the day after its grand opening on the national mall in Washington, D.C. When I reached for the copy of

the *San Diego Union Tribune* sitting outside my front door that day after the opening of the NMAI, I immediately took notice of the large photo of a danzante that dominated the front page. Prior to my encounter with the news that day, images of danzantes, or dancers, had become familiar sights to me as I conducted a two-year long ethnographic study documenting the historical emergence of Danza Azteca during the early 1970s, as well as its contemporary practice in the San Diego borderlands. My analysis revealed that danza functions as a way for Chicana and Chicano danzantes to rewrite their racial and cultural histories as indigenous peoples, and also allows its practitioners to perform a sense of agency and identity as they dance. Through participation in semi-exclusive group ceremonies, as well as very public community performances, danza offers its participants a way to not only express their desires to reconnect with a lost sense of their Indigenous Mexican roots, but to actively reshape their identities through the active embodiment of Indigeneity.

Interested in how a Chicana could be or would be incorporated into a museum for American Indians, I made my way to Washington, D.C., and searched the gallery spaces for mention of Chicanas and Chicanos. I had heard that the NMAI actually employed as “Chicana Interpreter” to which I was surprised. When I attempted to make contact with this Chicana Interpreter, she refused to speak with me, and also convinced other program specialists at the museum not to talk to me either. I thought that by explaining my work, and myself she would understand my interest in this new museum and the implications it might carry for people like us, Chicanas. I quickly realized that this sense of imagined community I thought I felt was just that, completely imagined and naïve as it turned out. I never did get a response besides the initial rejection, and never really got an explanation

as to why I was so threatening. In my own attempt to understand how the NMAI staged encounter, how I imagined the process of encounter to be, was shifted in way that forced me to consider how I might be interpolated within the exhibits myself.

So I began to search for anything that resembled my experience and/or my cultural frame of reference. Just like the newspaper article that initially sparked my interest in the NMAI, I was drawn to the presence of *danzantes* once again. I found them in a small installation explaining *Dia De Los Muertos*, or Day of the Dead, which is a spiritual tradition that originated in Mexico but has since been incorporated into the Catholic feast of all souls. The installation is located within the *Our Universes* gallery, a space devoted to exploring Indigenous cosmologies and worldviews. During my many visits to the museum, I was always drawn to the *Dia De Los Muertos* installation, mostly because my family has practiced the tradition since I was a little kid, but also because it was the only instance of something in the museum resembling my experience and my identity. I also enjoyed watching the looping video that followed a nighttime procession from a graveyard, through the streets, and finally into the American Indian House in New York City. There the footage continues to show the all-night celebration that involves praying, singing, and dancing by *danzantes*, and dancing by couples to *norteño* music. It became a part of my routine to listen to museum visitors and watch their reactions when they saw the large *Calaveras* encased in the glass. Often people would correctly identify *Dia De Los Muertos* as a Mexican practice, but then incorrectly identify the scenes from the video as being from Mexico as well. Sometimes I would correct people, letting them know that what they were watching was footage of Mexican people in New York. Many

times people were confused, since the written text all said “Mexico” and the large photo of the cemetery, was in fact from Mexico.

My experience around the Dia De Los Muertos installation revealed the ways that Indigeneity is envisioned at and by the NMAI. While there are several community exhibits of groups from Latin America, these groups remain in Latin America as Indigenous peoples, and never Latinos. Whereas Native groups in the United States have also experienced migration (forced and voluntary) as well as racial mixing within their populations, there remains a fundamental difference posited between who is “Fully Native” and those who have sacrificed their Indigenous roots in order to gain social and political status.

In many ways danza azteca resembles the type of “ethnogenesis” experienced by American Indians, during the 1970s (Nagel, 1997) as they too sought to reconnect with traditional spiritual practices and epistemologies, which in turn shaped renewed senses of cultural and ethnic identities. However, Chicanos and American Indians have occupied very different, often oppositional positions, within U.S. racial hierarchies. While Mexicans and American Indians are the only two racialized groups in the United States who have entered into treaties with the U.S. government (Vigil, 1998; Almaguer, 1994; Forbes, 1973), U.S. citizens of Mexican descent have no officially recognized sovereign territories, nor are they referenced as “Indians” at any point in the U.S. constitution. Though Chicano Movement discourses incorporated the re-imagining of the Southwest as a mythical homeland referred to as Aztlán, American Indian claims for rights are based on a sense of territorial sovereignty legally recognized by the U.S. government at state and federal levels—Aztlán has no legal basis other than its allusion to the land annexed by the

United States following the Mexican-American War (1846-1848). The move to identify Aztlán as a specific space (the Southwest) rather than an unspecified mythical location known only as somewhere north of Tenochtitlán (present-day Mexico City) in many ways alienated American Indians who also already claimed parts of the Southwest as their ancestral territories as well as their present tribal nations, a claim they have been making for generations.

While part of the project of decolonization is to rethink the form and content of historical knowledge production, well-documented material conditions cannot be overlooked. For example, as the only treaty that specifically involves Mexicans in U.S. territory, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) specifically distinguishes between Mexicans, who are deemed legally eligible for citizenship and Indians who are deemed ineligible for citizenship. Following the establishment of California as a state in 1850, the easiest way to deny working-class Mexicans the rights afforded to them by the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, was to place them into the category of “Indian” (Almaguer, 1994, p.57). Of course laws alone do not have the power to change the reality that most Mexicans are Indigenous, nor did it protect all or even most Mexicans from being kicked off of their lands or being treated like second-class citizens by Anglo settlers, however, the power of laws to shape opportunities (access to citizenship, land, and life) as well as perceptions of Mexicans in opposition to Indians, have had real material effects on the life experiences of Mexicans who were able to pass as white, and Indians who were segregated to Reservations and restricted from gaining American citizenship until 1924. According to Stanley Rodriguez of the Santa Ysabel band of Kumeyaay Indians, when the Americans moved into what is now San Diego County, it made sense for tribal

Indians to claim that they were Mexicans, since being Mexican was supposed to carry certain legally protected rights and entitlements.⁴⁵ However, the category of “Mexican” as stipulated in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had a particular “Mexican” in mind, those of the landed class typically known as Rancheros or in California, the Californios. Lower class Mexicans, as well as tribal Indians, could not pass for the elite class of people to whom the treaty realistically intended.

Knowing the legal and political history that has shaped Indian and Mexican social relations within the United States, particularly the southern California borderlands, as well as being aware of the reality that Chicana/o claims of Indigeneity have embraced as much myth as they have reality (Contreras, 2008) I was surprised to see a “Mexica danzante” take over the coverage of the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian. I wondered if this image was reflective of the fairly recent trend within Native American Studies, to go “borderless” and embrace a more “hemispheric” approach (Weaver, 2007), or if it indicated a shift in the racial and political discourses surrounding Chicana@ Indigeneity, that would recognize Chicanas and Chicanos as Indigenous people with transnational Indigenous roots in the U.S. and Mexico. If this were in fact a new discursive configuration, would it then spark efforts to rethink the social and political histories that have shaped our understandings of the differential relationships to power experienced by Indians and Mexicans in the United States?

Perhaps these questions cannot be answered by the NMAI, but they are important types of questions to ask in any Ethnic Studies project. The Ethnic Studies project, much

⁴⁵ Lecture given by Stanley Rodriguez of the Santa Ysabel Band of Kumeyaay Indians at the University of San Diego, in San Diego, CA. October 4, 2010.

like the discourses we examine, is always shifting or being reconfigured based on the changing social/political landscapes we find ourselves inhabiting, and based on the nuanced understandings we arrive at in our engagements with sites of historical, political, and cultural production. If race and ethnicity were already set in stone, then there would not be much left for any of us to do or think about in our projects. Based on what we know about how we know what we know, we know that this is not the case, nor will it likely ever be. What is it that I hope these questions will arouse? I hope they inspire more questions and critical engagements with spaces like museums, that do the work of documenting people's stories in the public sphere, but also attempt to create dialogues between the objects and information on display, the people whose lives these objects and information seek to represent, and the people who come to experience what the museum has to offer. Not only a site where identities and histories are produced, but also a site where presents are documented/acknowledged and futures are envisioned through staging.

Chapter Three: Stagings of Nationalism, Modernity, and Indigeneity

In order for traditions today to serve to legitimize those who constructed or appropriated them, they must be staged. The patrimony exists as a political force insofar as it is dramatized—in commemoration, monuments, and museums. In our America, where it is only within the last few years—and not in all countries—that the majority of the population has become literate, it is not surprising that culture has been predominantly visual. To be cultured, then, is to grasp a body of knowledge—largely iconographic—about one’s own history, and also to participate in the staging in which hegemonic groups have society present itself with the scene of its origins.

–Nestor Garcia Canclini
Hybrid Cultures

I begin with the words of Nestor Garcia Canclini because they really get at one of the central issues that constructs modernity, that of having power of the production and possession of knowledge. It is never simply enough to have this knowledge, nor can power simply exist. Power must be demonstrated in order to be gained and maintained. Though not exclusively achieved through discourse, representations play a significant role in the constructions of peoples, cultures, and nation-states. To have knowledge, or rather, control over the act of producing knowledge about someone—their culture, history, and identity—carries with it great power. While not the only source of knowledge production by far, museums have served and continue to serve as indispensable instruments of state power, playing the role of performative spaces where cultural, geographic, and racial boundaries are defined, sometimes challenged, and more often solidified. In the previous chapter, I wrote of the act of staging in the sense of presenting an alternative reality, a reality that does not yet exist, but when presented discursively to the public, this reality becomes possible to envision and perhaps one day

become actual; a sort of “rehearsal for politics.”⁴⁶ Additionally, I looked at the space of museums as potential where the processes involved in the construction of historical narratives, racial identities, and museum displays themselves, can potentially be brought to light and examined; exposing their constructed-ness as opposed to their taken-for-granted existence, which opens up the possibility for counter-hegemonic acts.

Like the NMAI, the MNA also participates in acts of staging. However, these stagings are done from a different perspective and position, and are done more so in the service of the Mexican nation-state, rather than in the interests of the Indigenous communities represented in the museum. Whereas the NMAI stages various versions of sovereignty that challenge the singular absolutist/restrictive notion of state sovereignty, the MNA very strategically and literally maps out the spectrum of Mexican racial and cultural diversity as a means of reinforcing dominant discourses of Mexican national sovereignty and territoriality, not to challenge it. In the version of sovereignty on display at the MNA, the Indigenous peoples of Mexico fit neatly on a map and can be easily identified by their styles of dress, their geographic location, and by the crafts they produce. Also crucial to this staging of Mexican state power and authority, is the very clear demonstration of links between Mexican mestizo modernity and Mexican Indigenous traditions. Essentially, Mexico cannot be modern without distinguishing itself from the Indigenous peoples who people the countryside, who must be located—borrowing the words of Garcia-Canclini—within the “scene[s] of its origins.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ George Lipsitz. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Néstor García Canclini. *Hybrid Cultures : Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Translated by Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. López. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, p.109.

This chapter explores the research I conducted at the Museo Nacional de Antropología during the summer of 2007, the observations I made, the textual analysis I performed, and the experiences I had as a Mexican American visitor to the space devoted to contemporary Indigenous groups labeled as La Sala: Pueblos Indios (The Gallery: Indian Peoples). I begin my analysis by first mapping out the spatial organization of this sala (gallery), and the ways in which the museum uses Western anthropological categories to frame encounters between Indigenous peoples and cultures of contemporary Mexico and visitors. My analysis then shifts to a focus on two dominant motifs that traverse the representational landscape: the strategic placement of artesanía (handicrafts such as woven textiles, beadwork, and pottery) throughout each of the regionally specific sections, the positioning of female mannequins in domestic home scenes, which act as figures central to the framing of the rooms, as well as the larger Mexican national imaginary. I examine these exhibitionary spaces not simply to describe them but in order to see how Indigeneity is mapped onto the bodies of individuals and the crafts they produce, both of which have become iconic signifiers and transmitters of Mexican traditional national culture and identity.

Crucial to an understanding of the significance of these differential sovereignties, is a mapping out of the contexts of emergence of this particular space; when it was established, why it was established, and what was going on socially, culturally, and politically at the time when the MNA first opened its doors to the public, allowing visitors to begin their lessons in Mexican history, culture, and power.

THE MUSEUM'S ROLE IN MODERNITY

Beginning in the nineteenth century museums began to serve as “public sites for mass education in the idea of progress...[and] [r]egardless of subject matter, the contents of most museums were arranged and exhibited as an unfolding development through time,” creating and then drawing upon this construction of the public’s notion of “common sense.”⁴⁸ Although Mexico, like the U.S and other European nation-states, established a national museum system following independence (1821), the museums as representations of the nation did not really take off until the 1920s, because as according to Errington “during most of the nineteenth century, the country was preoccupied more with wars than with forging national identity, especially for the masses” (1998, p. 161). Mexico’s representations of its national story can be categorized as a string of sequential battles and victories against outside oppressors, Mexico historically on the defensive. The museum offered an ideal site to contain and display the story of the nation and its people.

The Museum Nacional de Antropología opened at its present location in 1964⁴⁹ under the administration of President Lopez Mateo in preparation for the much-anticipated 1968 Olympic Games that were to be hosted by Mexico City. Because Mexico was to become the first Latin American nation, as well as the first “developing country” (Carey, 2005:11) to host the games, “Modern” Mexico had much to prove. This was not their first attempt to position themselves on the global stage as a modern nation on par with European nations. Among the first acts of staging was the placement of the large stone statue of Tlaloc, the god of rain, which had to be removed from its place of

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp.18-19.

⁴⁹ The first National Museum was installed on Moneda Street in Mexico City in 1865, nearly one hundred years earlier, and under the auspices of Emperor Maximiliano (Gómez Tagle, 1988, p.4).

origin in San Miguel Coatlinchan—and its transportation to the front entrance of the museum. The removal, transportation, and identification of Tlaloc was not without controversy. Not only was the statue unearthed and removed from without the permission of the community, but also it had also previously been identified as Chalchiuhtlicue, the “goddess of rivers, springs, lakes, and seas” (Gómez-Cáno, 2010, p. 51). However, the MNA stages the figure as the male deity, Tlaloc, which reaffirms a consolidated sense of Mexican patriarchal nationalism. In a very large way, literally, Tlaloc’s presence at the entrance of the MNA represents the need to demonstrate power through the theft and repositioning of Indigeneity upon which the MNA relies. As a symbol of Mexican cultural patrimony in contrast to the shape and presence of the modernist style architecture of the museum’s structural orifice, Tlaloc sets the stage for a series of perfectly laid out dichotomies: past and present, Indigenous and Mestizo, and Tradition and Modernity that infiltrate the spaces of the museum.

This strategic placement of Mexican antiquity (the statue of Tlaloc) in a central location—the very urban modern Ciudad de Mexico (Mexico City)—was not the first attempt to shape perceptions of Mexico as a powerful space. The year 1910 marks a very significant time in Mexican history and in the views that would be formed of Mexico by the rest of the world. Prior to the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910 and lasted nearly seven years, plans to project Mexico City as *the* premiere modern city culminated in the Centenario celebration that commemorated the one hundred year anniversary of the grito de Dolores in 1810. According to Tenorio Trillo it was “planned to be the apotheosis of nationalist consciousness” (1996, p.76). To commemorate the grito de Dolores that had signaled the cry for Independence in 1810, Porfirio Díaz’s

administration planned a grandiose desfile (parade) along the Paseo de la Reforma, which acts as Mexico City's central arterial route. The Paseo de la Reforma, in all its grandeur, was intended as a gift to the Empress Carlota, modeled after the champs-Elysees in Paris (Krauze, 1997, p.17). The spatial conception that enabled the construction of the current museum really began towards the end of the nineteenth century with Diaz's vision of the "capital city...as textbook of civic religion: a city of monuments and well-defined public and private spaces"(Tenorio Trillo, 1996, p.79) which came to "represent a public lesson in *historia patria*"(Krauze, 1997, p. 17). Mexico City was meant to reflect a cosmopolitan character as well as provide the sense of a consolidated nation-state (Tenorio Trillo, 1996, p.79).

However, with the outbreak of civil war, the Revolution of 1910 exposed the material realities and posed a contradiction to idealized paintings of Mexico as a modern, democratic, mestizo nation (Gonzalez, 2002; Knight, 1990). Following the Revolution, during the presidency of General Álvaro Obregón (1920-1924), the project of revolutionary Indigenismo was set into motion. Errington describes the circumstances surrounding these initial attempts to construct a national self:

One of General Obregón's first acts in office was to commission the archaeologist Manuel Gamio to excavate Teotihuacán, and order "Dr. Atl" to convene conferences on *artes populares*, that is, folk crafts (Rubin de la Borbolla 1986; and see Atl 1922 and Gamio 1986). These two elements—archaeology and the crafts of living peoples—became equated in the Mexican national story as past and present manifestations of the Mexican nation, because the peoples who produced these crafts were regarded as the living descendants of the people who had built the great temple complexes excavated by archaeologists. Indians, both ancestral and contemporary, became crucial elements in Mexican national self-construction (1998, p. 161-162).

Errington defines a national story as, a story “in which a ruling elite speaks for the entire nation; these stories invent, appropriate, or construe the past in such a way that the past results in the speakers, who see themselves as standing for the nation” (1996, pp.18-19).

Numerous scholars have analyzed the architecture, content, and display techniques of the MNA (Contreras, 2008; García Canclini, 1995; Errington, 1998), noting the presence of the “hegemonic voice” of the nation “instituted and revealed in...its Aztec-centric display”(Errington, 1998, p. 181). This institutionalization of Mexican nationalism then gets displayed through what Néstor García Canclini calls the “staging of power” (1995, p.109). This act of “staging” he argues, exists within a larger process of “cultural ritualization,” which among other things, relies on the visual to implement the project of nationalist modernity by linking the past (symbolized by traditions) with the modern landscape.

MAPPING THE INDIGENOUS LANDSCAPE

The entrance of the Sala: Pueblos Indios provides an artistic depiction of the Indigenous Mexican landscape painted by Luis Covarrubias, the younger brother of Miguel Covarrubias, also famous for his murals and books that incorporated his talent as an artist and interests as an “amateur sociologist” (Mathias, 1947, p.55).⁵⁰ The map by Covarrubias provides the viewer with a colorful view of Indigenous Peoples of Mexico. Free of any depictions of modern infrastructure, technology, or industry, the map places

⁵⁰ When I visited MNA during the summer of 2007, the famous Mural Maps that Miguel Covarrubias created for the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco, 1939 were on display in the bottom floor gallery which houses traveling exhibits.

peoples throughout the natural environment, distinguishing them by their recognizable traditional styles of clothing, by inferred location on the wordless map, and by the cultural practices depicted, such as the flight of the *voladores* of Veracruz as shown in the center of the mural below.



Figure 3.1: “Covarrubias Mural.” Photo taken by Maria Teresa Ceseña. July, 2007

The following text explained the mural:

THE COVARRUBIAS MURAL

In 1963, referring to the construction of this museum, Luis Covarrubias, the painter, depicted in this mural some of the subjects to which Ethnography was engaged at that time and that could be represented in plastic form: economic activities, apparel, dance, types of housing.; all of them within the geographical realm in which they were taking place. The exhibition from where this work was taken placed its elements in their historical context and performance within the social political and religious institutions, many of which last until our day.

This represents then, the particular vision of the artists based on the Ethnography found at that time, which perceived Indian Peoples as isolated groups within the national context.

However, during the last five decades of the 20th century, the advancement of Ethnography has forced to consider those ethnic groups as constituent parts of the ethnical and cultural diversity of Mexico.⁵¹

This instance reveals a self-reflexive stance by the museum as it takes measures to historically contextualize the Covarrubias map, and its depictions of Indigenous Peoples, as a product of its time. However, the museum does not fundamentally challenge the “isolated” nature of its representations, as I will show in the following sections. It relies on the parameters and paradigms of social scientific inquiries that attempt to classify, with authority, human variation on the basis of their distinct cultural practices. On the one hand, this guards against a homogenized notion of Indigenous people in Mexico, yet on the other hand, it makes it appear that peoples vary solely due to location, style of traditional dress, and traditional forms of artesanía. What we do not see are the ways that people engage with larger systems of oppression, like racism and class exploitation, in creative and distinctive ways. Additionally, the use of the mural, which acts as a landscape, already “implies separation and observation” (Williams, 1973, p. 42). As such, the presence of the mural at the entrance of the sala orients the viewer by encouraging them to look at the peoples and cultures represented as somehow more distant and remote from themselves.

Confounding the importance of the outsider perspective—objectivity—the text praises the development of ethnography as the impetus responsible for having “forced [us] to consider those ethnic groups as constituent parts of the ethnical and cultural diversity of Mexico.” While these mural maps do not reappear beyond the entrance, they

⁵¹ “The Covarrubias Mural” Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, D.F.

establishes a framework for viewing the exhibits, calling on visitor to perform a more “dominant-hegemonic reading” of the material and textual content.⁵² The murals represent the central framework of this section of the Museum, which relies on regional cartography as a primary mechanism of cultural distinction and visual organization.

LA SALA EXPLICADA

The MNA is internationally known for its pre-colonial antiquities, such as the Aztec Calendar, or Sun Stone. In a book released by the MNA in 2004 to commemorate its 40th anniversary, it proclaimed itself “one of the world’s great museums” (Solis, 2004). However, it is much less known for its ethnographic representations displayed on the second floor of the museum. The second floor delves much more deeply into the realm of the private, particularly the space of the home and family, making the private public in the form of encounter between visitors and subjects on display. In a way, it offers a public staging of the private “Mexican family” which also serves as the basis for the nation-state. I read this museum in light of its connection to prior historical projects/practices of nation building that took place in Mexico beginning in the nineteenth century.

The entire second floor of MNA is devoted to contemporary Indigenous groups throughout Mexico and is organized by the following eight geographic and cultural regions: 1) El Gran Nayar 2) Pureecherio Tierra de los Purepecha 3) Los Ottopames 4)

⁵² My position as a foreign researcher already inclined me to perform an “oppositional reading” of the exhibits. However, my identification as a woman of Mexican descent with a desire to understand rather than simply criticize the museum, influenced what I would categorize as a more “negotiated reading” of the messages presented. See Sturken and Cartwright (2001) for how they define the different types of readings that viewers can perform, which they base on Stuart Hall’s model of decoding.

Sierra de Puebla 5) Oaxaca 6) Costo del Gulfo 7) Chiapas and 8) Sala El Noroeste: Sierras, Desiertos, y Valley. Interestingly, the major categories include distinctions by groups of people (Los Otopames), by larger geographic region and people (Pureecherio Tierra de los Purepecha), and by geographic region without reference to a particular group (Costo del Gulfo and Sala El Noroeste and El Gran Nayar), as well as areas designated to specific sates within Mexico (Oaxaca and Chiapas). Because of the variety of distinctions and categorical organization employed by MNA, it makes it difficult to say that the Sala: Pueblos Indios is not separated simply by region, or by language group, or by state. Instead, all three separate it. However, my reading of the spaces employs elements of Critical Regionalism, which José Limón defines as “simultaneously a theory, methodology, and praxis for recognizing, closely examining, fostering, but also linking cultural and socioeconomic localized identities, especially as these stand in antagonistic, if also negotiated, relationships with late capitalist globalization”(2008, p.8) So while the exhibits themselves do not engage necessarily in a conversation with globalization, my reading of them does.

Each of the larger categories is organized thematically by Western anthropological classificatory schema, among the major categories: economy, ritual, myths, government, trade and industry, social organization, family and kinship practices. All of these categories get represented differently based on the region being displayed. However, they are all framed by the sala’s initial discussions and explanations offered about race, particularly the process of mestizaje.

Before getting into the specific regional representations, the first section addresses “Pueblos Indios” or “Indian Peoples” in general:

The social and cultural complexity of present Mexico originated in Colonial times, which the Mesoamerican civilization—developed by local ethnic groups—, got in touch with the Western civilization through its Spanish variant, and the African population and culture which arrived at that time. With these three fundamental ethnic components, together with Asians and other latecomers, each region developed the present biological and cultural blend. Cities were settlements for Peninsulars, Creoles, and later on, Meztizos; thus, the numerous castes, and those identified later as Indian Peoples, were banished to the suburbs and rural towns. These were the majority and distinguished themselves for their use of languages of Prehispanic origin, characteristic garments, and traditions such as the growth of corn, the sharing of communal property of the land, the provision of mutual support among families, and fulfillment of collective obligations.

Present Indian Peoples are, then, the carriers of ethnic cultures which, having prehispanic roots, have been developing under adverse conditions against Mestizos and Creoles through five centuries. The axis of the Indian culture is the growth of corn, one of the fundamental aspects of the Mesoamerican civilization and its neighboring cultures from the north. This crop sets up timeframes and spaces to perform other economical activities, both traditional and modern, together with the observance of rites and celebrations pertaining to the religious cult.⁵³

In the second section of the description, the text gets at the sense that Indigenous Peoples have different, conflicting cosmological understandings of time, space, which this explanation bases primarily on the agricultural cycles surrounding corn. Not quite elaborating on these religious cults, particularly in devotion to the Olmec Maize God (Taube, 2004), the description paints a homogenized picture of Indigenous people in Mexico, distinguishable primarily by languages, “characteristic garments” and traditions. The most significant aspect of this description is the phrase marking present day Indigenous Peoples as “the carriers of ethnic cultures which, having prehispanic roots, have been developing under adverse conditions against Mestizos and Creoles through

⁵³“Pueblo Indios” “Indian Peoples” Translation provided by Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, D.F.

five centuries.” This statement provides a primer in which to decode the entire sala, which is framed as a process of continual survival against violence, the most violent event being colonialism, which is placed in the past, over five hundred years ago. The new forms of violence, such as neoliberalism and global capitalism, are not addressed, nor even acknowledged.

Additionally, while the text implies a critique of colonialism, the displays and organization do not mirror this critique. There is one other significant instance where the Spanish colonial period is acknowledged. Just past the large wall text describing the “Pueblos Indios” there is a replica of a scene from the famous artistic depiction of race, typically known as the castas, making a quick initial reference to previous colonial understandings of race in Mexico, in order to disavow them from the contemporary moment.



Figure 3.2: “The Castas.” Photo taken by Maria Teresa Ceseña. July, 2007.

The accompanying text:

La pintura popular de la época tomó nota de la diversidad étnica que estaba ocurriendo en la Colonia, con la mezcla de las poblaciones americanas, las europeas y las negras. En estas muestras se ilustran las características físicas y el ambiente domestico de los elementos éticos que se conjugaron a partir del siglo XVI.⁵⁴

The popular painting of the time noted the ethnic diversity that was taking place in the colony, with the mixing of the populations of Americans, Europeans, and Blacks. These examples illustrate the physical characteristics and the domestic environment of the combined ethnic elements that joined together at the close of the 16th century.⁵⁵

By locating the legacy of racial classifications in Mexico as somehow in the distant past, the MNA establishes its authority to speak about contemporary Indigenous groups who they proclaim to understand through more “rational” lenses of scientific inquiry and representation.

García Canclini notes that:

The museum has to consent to a few signs of modernity so that its discourse is believable: it speaks of the conquest, and gives the number of inhabitants of some states with the goal of emphasizing the high or low proportion of Indians. But it does not explain what historical processes and what social conflicts devastated their populations and changed their way of life (1995, p. 130).

The MNA also asserts its authority in its discussion of race and racial mixtures in a scientific sense. Rather than a simple act of reporting the current state of racial affairs, it actively constructs the meanings of race from its disembodied authoritative voice in the large wall text labeled:

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

⁵⁴ Fragmento del cuadro de castas, anónimo, del siglo XVIII. Colección del Museo Del Virreinato. Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, D.F.

⁵⁵ Translation provided by Maria Teresa Ceseña.

The diversity within the Mexican population is found both, in the cultural and biological aspects. At first sight, it is possible to detect variations in the physical characteristics of inhabitants in different regions of the country. In their conformation American, European, African and to a lesser extent Asia components have intervened. They, in turn, already had represented different blends when they got in touch with each other.

The mode and rhythm of mestizos has been subjected to historical circumstances and to regional and social class differentiation including also Indigenous language speaking populations.

If we exclude the language, sometimes it is practically impossible to biologically differentiate between mestizo and Indigenous population, since they present similar profile characteristics such as height, cranial shape, blood systems and feeling and general lifestyles. This is also expressed in similar cultural behaviors.⁵⁶

There is much to discuss in this text. First the language of mixture assumes that most “blends” occurred amicably, reflected in the phrase, “they got in touch with each other.” This is not to say that mestizaje was and is always violent, but this very generally glosses over a very long history of racial conflicts and alliances.⁵⁷ For the purposes of this analysis, I will focus on the central paradigm of difference that this explanation establishes. By noting the impossibility of “biologically differentiat[ing] between mestizo and Indigenous population[s]” the museum lets us know that the main determinant of difference is culture. Continuing with this logic, it becomes clear why so many of the mannequins that populate the landscape of the second floor do in fact look the same. I will address this in the final section of this chapter that deals with the placement of female mannequins in primarily domestic spaces. In the next section, I discuss how the

⁵⁶ “Physical Anthropology” Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, D.F.

⁵⁷ For further discussion on mestizaje see Miller (2004)

museum does differentiate between peoples and how this reflects the Mexican nation-state's stake in "staging the popular."⁵⁸

ARTESANIA OFFERS "PROOFS OF LIFE"

What I have identified as artesanía, is also commonly referred to as the art of the popular, handicrafts, folk arts, and tourist art. The "common sense" understanding/view of artesanía, is that it is primarily traditional. As such, it is often placed in opposition to "art" which is seen as more modern and sophisticated (García Canclini 1995; Lipsitz, 2001; McRobbie, 1994). Many authors have theorized about the production and consumption of popular crafts as they relate to cultural politics (Wood 2000, p. 187; García Canclini, 1995; Errington, 1998). More than trinkets or simply sources of income, artesanía represents the expression of identities as well. According to Ruth Phillips, Native American tourist art specimens often "found their way onto museum storage shelves—but, because of their lack of history of 'authentic' Indian use, not into public exhibitions" (1995, p.112). These types of objects were excluded or silenced from public display because of what they could potentially reveal. As Phillips describes:

...objects that displayed the traces of aboriginal peoples' negotiation of Western artistic and economic systems had to be excluded from formal programs of collecting and exhibiting in order to support the standard museum representation of Native Americans as other, as marginalized, and as premodern. (Ibid, p.100).

In the case of the NMAI, which is considered within the genre postmodern, postcolonial museums, the public display of tourist art has become a widely embraced practice for

⁵⁸ I borrow this title from chapter 5 of *Hybrid Cultures*. (1996, p. 145).

precisely the same reasons why this type of art was initially excluded; because of the processes it reveals and the relationships it elucidates. In terms of the prevalent role that artesanía plays in displays at the MNA, it functions in the reverse, meaning that instead of revealing the processes of and relationships associated with colonization and globalization, it is used to reveal a contained diversity that fits quite neatly within the overall national imaginary that praises the colorful folksy side of Indigenous groups, but often not subversive types of art that might demonstrate power and resistance against the Mexican nation-state. The display of artesanía functions to visually replicate the relationship between the producers of the crafts and the processes of production within which they participate, which are also embedded with notions particular labor status embedded within the social hierarchy. For example, Lynn Stephen describes the difference between merchants of crafts and who she identifies as “piecework producers”; the difference being tendency of merchants to “project...a unitary ethnic image” of producers, while producers tend to “project a more fractured identity emphasizing their position of labor exploitation” in addition to their specific cultural identities (1995, p. 18). Displays of artesanía in the MNA do not address any of these issues. Rather, the crafts and the producers of the crafts are on display together. In this analysis, I read the preponderance of artesanía as well as photos of Indigenous peoples producing artesanía, as being linked to the project of Mexican nation building, which in many ways relied on the visual to stake its claim to modernity on the world stage, particularly in relation to the United States.

While the use of photography within the current museum serves to update and supplement previous exhibits by including snapshots of reality rather than primarily

solely on faceless mannequins, I see the display of photographs depicting people in the process of making crafts as tied to a particular history of documenting Indigenous people and traditions⁵⁹. Within the context of Mexican history, “photography can best be seen as one of the importations of modernity, another expression of the desire to join those on the cutting edge” (Mraz, 2009, p.19). Though photography is no longer considered “the cutting edge” technology, the way that it is incorporated amidst the quintessentially “traditional” pieces of artesanía, offers visual documentation of the labor used to produce the crafts, as well as a sense of the authenticity of the items on display.

In addition to providing a sense of authenticity to material objects, historically photography has been used in Mexico to depict class differences based on labor identities, the *tarjetas de visita*. John Mraz describes the work of Cruces y Campa which was instrumental in creating visual representations of Mexico during the early twentieth century:

The *tarjetas de visita* that Cruces y Campa created of what they described as “Mexican Types” represent their anonymous objects in quite another light. These images depict a wide variety of street trades, carried out by individuals identified only by their occupation. Hence, they must have served in part to buttress bourgeois identity by representing that which it was *not*: the nameless masses engaged in manual labor (2009, p.24).

Obviously, I cannot equate the photos of artisans currently on display with the photos of the early twentieth century, but there is a definite link. Take, for example, the following photo of a man producing pottery. Upon first glance, many things signify his working-class position. Starting with his physical appearance, his hair is unkempt and his hands

⁵⁹ A guidebook produced by the National Museum of Anthropology during the 1980s, shows a very different type of sala. While the current floor does contain a few mannequin absent of any defining facial features, the majority of them now have faces, though most of the mannequins appear to be molded after only one or two people. Additionally, the pages of the book show virtually no photos on the walls or within the cases. This is not the case today.

are literally dirty from working with the clay. The profile view forbids him from engaging the camera and also denies him an entrance into dialogue with the viewer. Though my photo of the photo cuts it from the frame, if you look closely towards the bottom right hand corner, you can see a portion of the actual piece of pottery that was displayed alongside the photo of the man. The material piece offers proof of his work, and the photo of the man offers proof of the literal manpower that went into the construction of the pot.



Figure 3.3: “Photo of Man Making Pottery.” Photo taken by Maria Teresa Ceseña. July, 2007.

Displayed in the glass with the object of his labor, he is still divorced from it by the mode of representation. As Mraz (2009) points out with his reference to “Mexican types,” they were much more about representing objects than subjects. In this sense, the man who is

clearly a living subject of the Mexican nation-state, by being displayed, goes from perceiving subject, to perceived object. Had he been facing the camera, his subjectivity might not be quite so absent as it is with the disengaged perspective the museum chose to display. Additionally, this man is identified not only by the style of pottery he is producing, but more generally by the type of labor he performs. His identity then is based not just on his Indigeneity, but rather on his “peasantness.”

In the next photo we see a child weaving a textile.



Figure 3.4: “Photo of Child Weaving Textile.” Photo taken by Maria Teresa Ceseña. July, 2007.

Similar to the previous example, this photo also depicts a person in the process of creating a handicraft. Unlike the man with the pottery, the little boy does not have noticeably dirty hands; instead he sits in the dirt to perform his task. However, like before, the subject does not engage the camera, rather the camera has ultimate framing authority. The small size of the child, compared to the man, obviously has an effect on how he inhabits the space of the photo, but the angle of the shot is much higher, almost directly inverted toward the ground. Within the photo, there is something significant that is not present in the other photos. Upon closer examination, we can see that the loom he is using is made from an overturned child's chair. In the background we see what looks like a pile of plywood, perhaps leftover from a previous project, or being stored for a future one. What do all of these visual markers indicate? For one, he is learning the craft at an early age, or at least that is the implication we are supposed to perceive. His entry into the traditional arts at an early age points to the continuity of particular cultural practices, and to the adaptation (symbolized by the chair turned loom) that must take place within any fusion of tradition and modernity. While he does not engage the camera necessarily, this portrait reveals that he is engaging, or at least being invited to engage with the production and expression of his community's sense of autonomy and livelihood. He is not simply a worker in training.

In a third example, we see a photo of a woman wearing the jewelry we are to assume she created. Her photo is positioned amongst the jewelry, behind glass.



Figure 3.5: “Photo of Woman with Necklaces.” Photo taken by Maria Teresa Ceseña. July, 2007.

This woman represents one of the first instances of a photographed artisan looking, even smiling, at the camera. Rather than a depiction of the process of creating the necklaces, she appears to be selling them at a marketplace. Though she most likely produced the beadwork she is displayed with, she is represented as a seller more than a producer of crafts. What kinds of inference can we draw from this? While the male figures, both the man and the boy, represent the skill and the labor power, the woman represents a cultural broker, with the power to negotiate, hence, her direct gaze toward the camera lens.

However, just when we get a glimpse of agency from the subjects being represented, we are then confronted with the display of a female mannequin wearing a textile, but stands encased in glass, without a head. It is clear that the mannequin is there as a dress form simply to model the textiles. However, this also sends a clear message that the crafts, not the people, are the real source of pride and value, at least in this case. Here, the creations and the labor are divorced from the bodies responsible for their

production, and the headless mannequin, reflects the type of violence that cuts heads out of pictures and people from the frames of the national imaginary. Or rather, includes them, but only within the realm of culture. Not quite an example of the “primitivist visual discourses” of the nineteenth century intent on capturing as their “object...the ‘savage,’” (Tejada, 2004, p.5) but an objectified posing of Indigeneity nonetheless.

DOWNWARD FACING DOMESTICITY

The last example from the previous section provides a useful transition to this final section which looks at Mannequins of men, women, and children who occupy a central role in the spatial organization of the Sala: Pueblos Indios. Their presence and position reflects nationalist projects to center the Indigenous family within the Mexican landscape as a whole. Mannequins modeled after women predominate and are shown primarily within domestic spaces (i.e. cooking or caring for home and children) or as caught in the act of constructing artesanía, as shown in the previous section of the chapter. In addition to always being portrayed in maternal and/or subservient roles, the majority of the women have faces marked by sadness and are positioned with their gazes pointed downward. Many carry bundles and babies upon their backs, as if to symbolize the burden of reproduction as a form of labor that is gender specific. This also reflect the responsibilities of child-rearing that are disproportionately projected onto Indigenous women within their own lives, and within the project of nation building, particularly within the discourses surrounding mestizaje which have targeted Indigenous women as the necessary vessels to birth la raza cosmica.

In her critique of the implications of revolutionary Indigenismo, Analisa Taylor observes that:

While the mestizo is constructed as a male and as symbol of national unity, modernization, and progress, the Indian is depicted as feminine, fertile, and inert, likened to the productive agricultural landscape. The Indian symbolizes a work-in-progress, as object of the ever-unfolding post-revolutionary task of cultural and economic modernization (2009, p. 3).

This residual sentiment of previous Indigenismo projects at the beginning of the twentieth century comes across very clearly throughout the entire Sala. The fact that the faces of the women depict sadness, appears to bemoan their positions in society and the compulsory melancholia embedded within what Hendrick identifies as the “ingrained melancholy character” (2003, p. 16) within projects of modernity. Furthermore, this look of sorrow and bewilderment also represents “the supposed Indigenous inability, or unwillingness, to enter into the mainstream of modernization,” which he astutely points out has been projected unto women as:

...the supposed Indian propensity for nostalgia and passivity [which] dovetailed nicely with imaginings of the maternal as a passive, timeless, and originary source from which both nation and individual could draw strength and creativity; thus, there was continued emphasis on the image of the Indian mother as origin of racial and national energies (ibid).

The modern counterpart would therefore be envisioned as masculine. Following this logic, the projected inability of Indigenous men to achieve modernity would therefore “amoun[t] to social death” (Hendrick, 2003, p. 22).

The following examples provide a striking representation of the burdens placed upon women, signaling the visitor to take on a more critical stance. In the woman

pictured below, it appears that the weight of the world is literally on her back and she either cannot or will not lift her head from its downward gaze. For a museum that was founded on the principles of modernity and progress, the position and sentiment of this female mannequin reveals a different story. Instead of looking forward, she looks down. The melancholia is fortified by the double-wrapped rope around her wrist, symbolic of a double-bind; the ensuing loss of tradition perhaps, and the inability to engage with the viewers who visit the museum to gain access into the privacy of the home and what seems to be her very personal pain. The subsequent photo also shows a woman and child who occupy a dwelling, but do so as marginal subjects, indicated visually by the presence of shadows that permeate the house. I visited the museum on several occasions, at different times of day, and no matter the lighting outside, the shadows always remained.

I will close with the following image, which stands out as the clearest example of social critique, that of the inverted gaze. While all other mannequins are placed within a particular domestic context, this mannequin appears on the floor of the museum as if one of the visitors. Her presence is both awkward and somewhat confusing, as it is not completely clear whether she is meant to represent an actual living person, or a ghost who haunts the halls of ethnography. Upon first noticing her, I approached from behind. I was trying to get a closer look at the objects and text displayed behind the glass. Without first seeing her face, I thought she was a living person. When I realized she immobile, I looked at her face and was startled. I caught myself jump back slightly and felt embarrassment as other museum viewers had been watching me and waiting to see my reaction. Apparently they had reacted the same way a few minutes before I entered the area. At once she is both spectacle and spectator. She looks down into the glass as if to

learn something about Mexican culture. On future visits, I often returned to the spot of our first encounter and wondered if she would be in the same spot, or if she would be repositioned on a daily basis. Over the span of weeks she never moved. On several occasions, I sat on a nearby bench to witness other people's reactions upon meeting her for the first time. Each time, the reactions were that of surprise, ranging from mild double-take to abrupt jump back. Sadly, I also witnessed men posing for pictures with the figure, putting their arms around her, one man even pretending to kiss her. So while it seems that her presence is meant to represent a critical self-reflection, she ultimately becomes just another spectacle within the larger landscape.

CONCLUSION

The staging of tradition in many ways privileges the hegemonic political voice and not necessarily the peoples and cultures that get represented in the museum. However, the Museum of Anthropology represents itself as the central authority on Mexican historical and contemporary culture. The second floor gallery begins by confronting issues of space, race, and ethnicity, and cultural traditions. Though this chapter was not meant to be a comparison between the MNA and the NMAI, I must draw attention to some of the fundamental differences between the two spaces. Unlike the NMAI which I read as a potential model for resistance in the way that it asserted notions of sovereignty that challenged the sovereignty of nation-states such as the United States, Canada, and Mexico, the MNA in many ways upholds and reinforces official discourses/narratives of Mexican nationalism and history which have no intention of

challenging the boundaries nor the hegemony of the nation-state. However, the processes involved in gaining, maintaining, and withholding power, rather than the proofs that power exists, in this case are what provide the most useful tools for resistance. It is for this reason that it becomes necessary to look at the MNA alongside the NMAI; not simply to show how/where one has been successful in challenging the boundaries of nation-states, and how/where the other has not. My point is not to show how the MNA might benefit from the example of the NMAI, as though it were a first-world model of liberation to which Mexico should aspire. The point of looking at these two spaces in a cross comparative way, is to reveal how each performs a different type of sovereignty and why.

The first difference comes out in kinds of messages that each museum attempts to (is enabled to) convey. Whereas the NMAI clearly makes a postmodern critique of coloniality, the MNA, as part of Mexico's self-promotion, and as the epitome of Mexicanness, has a very different kind of stake in affirming, rather than critiquing its modernity. Additionally, there is no obvious effort to include the voices of the people represented in the exhibits, in contrast to the NMAI which frames itself through a dialogic relationship between communities and curators, namely with the "community-curator" positions they created as part of their representational pedagogy. Additionally, both the MNA and the NMAI make deliberate efforts to represent distinct communities existing within a broader collective. Where they diverge on this point is that the NMAI simultaneously sets out to re-imagine a much broader, global indigeneity with the potential to de-privilege the limits of the nation-state. Who and what the MNA conceives

of as Indigenous is very clear, and clearly within the geopolitical borders of the Mexican nation-state.

EPILOGUE

American identity and citizenship are increasingly being measured along a spectrum of patriotism and terrorism, often with little else left in-between. Such a binary is a coded way to enforce compulsory patriotism and functions to foreclose the possibility of critical engagement with questions concerning the nation-state, sovereignty, and U.S. borders. Furthermore, as terrorist is coded in specific racial terms, this binary encourages the distancing of the citizenry away from those deemed suspect. Nonetheless, as this notion of “Insider/Outsider” relies on allocating all sovereignty to the geopolitical parameters of the U.S. Nation state, Indigenous communities have increasingly challenged the assumptions and discourses that underlie the war on terror. Indigenous challenges to the war on terror are also buttressed by recent theories of sovereignty that recognize a particular as well pan-American struggle.

The rise of globalization, as well as increases in global cultural flows has dramatically challenged notions of “geographic and cultural fixity” (Delugan, 2010) that once framed the U.S. social imaginary. A growing majority of peoples residing in the United States consider themselves members of transnational and/or diasporic communities (Djelic & Quack, 2010; Kennedy & Roudometof, 2002; Ramirez, 2007) and feel that their identities are constituted through multiple geographic and social spaces. Therefore, the ability to navigate across various borders is becoming a highly valuable social commodity not just for elite “flexible citizens” (Ong, 1999). As the state has required more “cultural fixity” through the discourses and policies imposed by the war on terror, questions of sovereignty and the legitimacy of imposed national borders have

become important for Indigenous communities as well as Latino immigrants. Becoming more aware of the effects of the war on terror, racialized communities have begun linking their struggles and negotiating the meanings of sovereignty and borders.

INTERTWINED STRUGGLES for SOCIAL JUSTICE and EQUALITY

In April of 2010, the “Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act,” more commonly known as SB 1070, was signed into law by Arizona Governor, Jan Brewer. Following the passage of Senate Bill 1070, the U.S.-Mexico border has become a site of increased surveillance, where bodies are defined racially and organized economically, politically and socially. As an act that utilizes profiling to determine one’s belonging to the nation, it is important for scholars from across disciplines to interrogate how this legislation is affecting all communities in the United States. Even though this law is supposedly about who *doesn’t* belong, it reinforces the narrow conception of who *does* belong. During various historical moments, *all* racialized communities have been viewed in contrast to this narrow understanding of citizen. How we understand these events will in turn shape how we understand ourselves in relation to others.

Over the past two hundred years, processes of delimiting the cultural and geographic parameters of the U.S. and Mexican nation-states have played out in distinct but parallel ways. As the two countries that share the largest militarized border in the world, flows of migration, or rather the containment of these flows, has necessitated a clear demarcation of what constitutes Americans, Mexicans, and indigenous people. Citizenship in both countries has always been predicated upon how the nation-state imagines its borders, and whom it imagines as worthy of residing within those borders.

When examined in the context of the U.S. War on Terror, it becomes even clearer that the struggles of Mexicans trying to claim citizenship, Americans trying to deny/reinforce citizenship, the struggles of American Indians seeking sovereignty on their own terms, as well as the multitude of “American” immigrant experiences are inextricably linked; containing the problem “at home” means reinforcing the U.S.-Mexico border and the assumed authority of the U.S. in defining “American” power, identity, and territoriality.

The passage of S.B. 1070 sparked an opportunity to form a united front across disciplines as well as racial and ethnic divides. For example, two internationally known and respected scholarly organizations: MALCS (Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social) and the NAISA (Native American and Indigenous Studies Association) stood in allied opposition to what they rightly named an outright racist piece of legislation. Both organizations either threatened to cancel or postpone their annual conferences, which were scheduled to take place in Arizona during the months following the passage of S.B. 1070. In addition to the press releases posted on each of their official websites, many members of these organizations encouraged and participated in the mass protests that occurred in April and May of 2010. Additionally, the Tohono O’odham Nation, which traverses both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border and is located within Pima County, Arizona, also produced a resolution condemning the bill. In one of the many sections of their resolution, the Tohono O’odham Nation brought attention to the racial implications of the bill as it clearly targets brown bodies and non-English speakers alike:

...[A]lthough Native Americans have been present in what is now Arizona since time immemorial, many tribal members speak English as a second language, do not speak English, or were not issued birth certificates and lack documentation establishing their citizenship and lawful residence in the United States; and SB 1070 therefore will expose Arizona tribal

members to arrest if they are suspected of being illegal aliens and cannot document their citizenship or lawful presence in the United States.⁶⁰

These two foundational organizations as well as the Tohono O’odham Nation provide just a sampling of the many potentially fruitful sites of alliance. This example reveals the way that activism is continually adapting to the reality of fixed borders amidst a growing global consciousness. These movements contribute to the type of scholarly critique necessary for transforming the way that scholarship and activism can be brought together to fight a common injustice.

As an issue that disproportionately affects Mexican, Latino and Indigenous communities, these recent mobilizations elucidate the potentials for alliance along this common front, and provide a framework for truly thinking and acting beyond borders. While on the surface it may appear that S.B. 1070 targets primarily Latino immigrants, Native American and Latino organizations have recognized that the bill targets all people of color by encouraging “average citizens” to be vigilant and take action against those they suspect to be in the United States illegally, thereby promoting racial profiling. The full implications of this bill are yet to be determined. Therefore, the work of documenting the coalitions that are forming in response to its passage, is a necessary scholarly pursuit. I hope to make my contribution to the current literature that analyzes notions of citizenship, sovereignty, and belonging, which are central to larger issues of American racial and ethnic identity formation.

⁶⁰ RESOLUTION OF THE TOHONO O’ODHAM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
(Opposing Arizona Senate Bill IOTO as Discriminatory State Legislation)
RESOLUTION NO. 10-184. http://www.tonation-nsn.gov/uploads/press_release/

My goal in this dissertation was to examine how and why the ideas of “Indian” and “Nation” in Mexico and the United States have been signified and re-signified in different ways and at different times throughout the formative moments of nation building, and how these significations continue to impact contemporary discourses and practices concerning Indigenous people, national identity, sovereignty, and how we encounter differences. Like the unearthing of a transnational time capsule, it becomes necessary to ask, “What exactly has changed since these foundational periods?” and, “What do those changes look, feel, smell, sound, and taste like? While I could not and did not intend to cover all possible sensory markers, I embraced my analysis with not only a critical lens (via my eyes and my brain) but with my entire body which has experienced at varying levels, the racialization and de-racialization of being a Mexican woman in the southern California borderlands which simultaneously encompass Indian country and *gringolandia*. In a way, we may think of my body as a contact zone in the spirit of Gloria Anzaldúa’s insights.⁶¹ All in all, the discourses that have emerged out of Mexico and the United States concerning Indigeneity, brownness, foreignness, whiteness, Mexicanness, Americanness, domestic or hyper-sexualized femininity, and other markers, have shaped how I am perceived, my self-perception, as well as what kinds of knowledge with which I can engage in any sort of legible/respectable way.

Far from demonstrating a limited exercise in essentialist fixity, embracing/creating local and pan-regional identities, these discourses continue to be a crucial grounds for grassroots organizing and community alliance building by

⁶¹ In her groundbreaking experimental text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza Consciousness*, Gloria Anzaldúa speaks of contact zones as spaces of conflict and negotiation.

marginalized communities.⁶² Additionally, having a strong sense of one's community (both locally and globally) and politics—i.e. the sense of what I/we/you stand for and what I/we/you will fight for—seems a necessary initializing step in emphasizing individual and collective senses of identity, responsibility, and more importantly, in forging very personal social investments/connections to local natural environments, local cultural practices, and the efforts of people to stand together against any and all forces that seek to oppress, exploit, or erase them/us. All history and philosophy must first begin locally, from a local space and perspective.

⁶² For further and more specific critiques of essentialist identity politics, see Linda Nicholson and Steven Seidman *Social Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995 and Ali Rattansi and Sallie Westwood. *Racism, Modernity and Identity: On the Western Front*. Cambridge, UK; Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1994. See also Sonia Alvarez, Evelino Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar. *Cultures of Politics, Politics of Culture: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998.

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