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American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title

Still Bad Indians

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9f41q415>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 47(3)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

2024-12-01

DOI

10.17953/A3.1308

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Still Bad Indians

Stephanie Lumsden

I purchased my copy of Deborah A. Miranda's *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* while I was completing the MA program in Native American studies at UC Davis ten years ago. Since its publication in 2013, *Bad Indians* has become a touchstone for me, one I return to often to reinvigorate my hopes for a decolonized future on California Indian homelands. *Bad Indians* is a foundational text in which Miranda defies conventional genres and utilizes memoir, archival method, and poetry to illuminate the generative power of California Indians' stories.

Throughout the book Miranda skillfully weaves together California Indian stories of survival in the face of invasion, genocide, and occupation, disrupting colonial narratives of history that so often erase Indigenous presence, resistance, and persistence. Miranda does not shy away from the horrific violence that California Indians have been subjected to since invasion, nor does she try to distort our common experiences of loss and trauma into a bid for reconciliation with the illegitimate occupying settler state. The California Indian stories Miranda tells are evidence of what our peoples have endured and, by sharing them, she invites more California Indian stories to be told.

When I read *Bad Indians*, I feel connected to a long history of California Indian resistance to ongoing conquest and occupation and I am reminded that our relationships with our homelands are very old and storied. *Bad Indians* is an affirmation of California Indians' unwavering commitment to remaining in our homelands and to our responsibilities to one another and our more-than-human kin. What makes *Bad Indians* so significant is that it recovers California Indian genealogies of resistance by rehearsing a California Indian method of storytelling. If, as Miranda asserts, "story is everything we

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are: human beings are made of words and the patterns we construct out of words," then the stories we choose to share matter.¹ *Bad Indians* is not just a touchstone for me. It is a foundational guide for the decolonizing goals of California Indian studies.

Stories of California Indian women's experiences of violence, survival, and resistance are significant, because they reveal that gender violence is endemic to settler colonial dispossession. Miranda emphasizes the importance of California Indian women's stories and reclaims their narratives from traces in archival documents such as newspapers and anthropological field notes, actions that bring California Indian women's experiences under settler occupation into sharp relief. While recovering a story of sexual violence from the notes of the linguist J. P. Harrington, Miranda states that "through the vehicle of this field note we are engaged in a very Indigenous practice: that of storytelling as education, as thought-experiment, as community action to right a wrong, as resistance to representation as victim." California Indians tell stories to remember those of our ancestors who did not survive conquest because they teach us to continue their legacies of resistance. Reclaiming these ancestors' stories of resistance to occupation disrupts the settler narrative of conquest and "refute[s] colonial organizing of land, bodies, and social and political landscapes."² Our stories of surviving colonial gender violence reassert our continual presence on our homelands in spite of the ceaseless efforts of the state to remove us from the relations that sustain life and make a future for us all possible.

TSEWENALDIN WOMAN

California Indian women's resistance to colonial gender violence reveals the carceral experiences of Native peoples living under settler state occupation. In the following section, I take inspiration from Miranda's example in *Bad Indians* and share a story about a Hupa woman from the village of Tsewenaldin who fought back against US soldiers who threatened her with sexual violence. The Tsewenaldin woman's story is important because it highlights Hupa women's resistance to the settler state. Drawing on the work of Leslie Marmon Silko, Deborah Miranda states that "human beings have no other way of knowing that we exist, or what we have survived, except through the vehicle of story."³ I join Miranda and other California Indian scholars who seek to retrieve our ancestors' stories of resistance from the colonial archive and argue that the Tsewenaldin woman embodies California Indian resistance to settler colonial carceral violence and challenges patriarchal readings of history that erase Hupa women's role in defending not only themselves but also their people and more-than-human kin. The Tsewenaldin woman's act of resistance and the story that the colonial archive nearly obfuscates are a lasting legacy of California Indian survival. Following Miranda's methodology of California Indian storytelling, I center the experiences of California Indian women and read archival traces for evidence of their survival and presence.

The discovery of gold in California during the 1840s introduced unprecedented violence and chaos into the lives of Indigenous peoples throughout the state. By the late 1850s, the United States' invasion into Indian homelands in northwestern California disturbed every facet of California Indian life. In the Humboldt military district, efforts at removing or "exterminating" Native peoples in order to guarantee

white settlers access to land were consistently met with resistance from the Wiyot, Yurok, Karuk, and Hupa Indians, among others. California Indian resistance in the northwestern corner of the state confounded the US military effort to entrench the territorial sovereignty of the United States after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and annexation of California in 1848. California Indian peoples' collective refusal to leave their homelands or passively endure genocidal atrocities compelled the United States to increase its military occupation. Military forts were established strategically in the region to quell Indian uprisings.

Fort Gaston was established in the Hoopa Valley in 1858 by the United States to diffuse the political power of the Hupa, who held considerable influence over other tribes in the region. The US Army suspected the Hupa of supplying "hostile" tribes in the region with provisions and fighters while denying their participation in militant resistance.⁴ Fort Gaston, built on the valley floor near Hupa villages, was a base of operations from which the US Army and civilian volunteer militia launched genocidal attacks against California Indian resistors. Like most military forts in the region, Fort Gaston was a prison where Indian resistors were held captive until they could be removed to reservations elsewhere in the state. As could be predicted, the presence of US soldiers and volunteer militia in such close proximity to Hupa villages intensified animosities and led to an increase in acts of violence against Hupa people, particularly women, children, and elders.

In the fall of 1859, tensions were high in the Hoopa Valley. The Hupa, who refused to be removed from the valley but did not wish to engage in open warfare that would put their people at risk, debated among themselves about the best strategy to minimize further harm from the invading US Army. In the midst of these debates, a group of US soldiers from Fort Gaston came upon a Hupa woman from the village of Tsewenaldin and attacked her. She resisted her attackers and fatally wounded one of them with the only weapon within her reach, an elk horn tool used for cleaning eels.⁵ The Sacramento *Daily Union* reported on the attack: "A party of four soldiers recently abused a squaw at Hoopa, and the squaw resisted, stabbing one of the party fatally. An investigation was to take place."⁶ The newspaper's use of the common gendered, racial slur to dehumanize the Tsewenaldin woman adds another layer of violence to the attack on her and disavows her political identity as a Hupa woman in the middle of a genocidal invasion. The woman from Tsewenaldin bravely fought back against her attackers to defend herself, but her act of resistance extended far beyond the immediate threat to her life. Her act of self-defense was also a defense of the land, the Hupa people, and more-than-human beings whose lives and dignity have been molested by settler invasion. When the Tsewenaldin woman grasped for the elk horn tool that she had been using to clean eels and stabbed one of her assailants, she also fought back against the carceral logics of genocide, surveillance, containment, and removal that form and organize the settler state and threaten Hupa life.

The colonial archival record of the Tsewenaldin woman and her act of resistance ends with this one mere mention in the Sacramento *Daily Union*, but it is not the end of her story. While combing through the archive of the Center for Community Indian Development held by special collections at Cal Poly Humboldt, I found another part of

her story. I found Tswenaldin woman's story told from the perspective of some of her descendants in a folder containing Yurok and Hupa elders' oral histories. Tribal elders Jimmy James, G. Trull, and Earl Smoker are listed as the authors of a story recorded in 1988 titled "Story of Hoopa Billy," and in it they tell a story about the Hupa woman who had been attacked by soldiers from Fort Gaston, one of whom demanded that she become his wife.⁷ When she refused to go with the soldiers, they attacked her and she fought for her life and fled to the village of Takimiłdin in hopes to escape. After she stabbed and killed one of the soldiers who attacked her, the Tswenaldin woman fled and evaded capture with the help of a friend, another Hupa woman from Takimiłdin.⁸ With the help of her friend, the Tswenaldin woman was hidden among her people and avoided retribution for defending her life and killing the soldier. The friendship between these two Hupa women made resistance, escape, and survival possible.

After her initial escape to Takimiłdin, the Tswenaldin woman became a fugitive in her own homeland. She evaded capture by sneaking to the nearby Yurok village of Weitchpec in a redwood dugout canoe under the cover of night with other resistance fighters persecuted by the occupying US Army. Once she was able, she traveled again by redwood dugout canoe during the night and journeyed upriver to the mouth of the Klamath River on the coast. Once there, she took refuge in the Yurok village of Requa, where she lived and raised a family undetected by US soldiers. Her descendants survived and remember her as the only one who ever killed a soldier and got away with it.⁹ Tswenaldin woman's many living descendants confirm her survival, and family lore keeps her resistance from fading from collective memory. As Deborah A. Miranda states in a keynote in this collection, "I write about my ancestors to honor their humanity; ancestors were people who figured out how to make it through something terrible because they were willing to try unthinkable solutions." I am following Miranda's example and telling the Tswenaldin woman's story to honor her survival and resistance.

In a history of the Hupa people, Hoopa tribal member Byron Nelson elaborates on the story of the Tswenaldin woman. Nelson explains that the attack against her angered the village leader, Tswenaldin John, and bolstered his resolve to resist the United States.¹⁰ However, another village leader, Captain John of Takimiłdin, feared that her act of self-defense would be the cause of more settler and soldier aggression against the Hupa. Captain John urged the village of Tswenaldin to take responsibility for her actions to protect others from consequences. The debates about whether or not to lay down their weapons after this assault were spirited and the disagreement between the two leaders eventually led to a political feud between their villages that lasted for several years.¹¹ Some of the Hupa, like Captain John, thought that the United States was too powerful an enemy to keep fighting and wanted to negotiate terms for a ceasefire. Tswenaldin John, who likely considered the Tswenaldin woman a close relation, refused to negotiate with the government whose soldiers had attacked the woman from his village, treating the attack against her as an unforgivable offense. Tswenaldin John and other Hupa fighters joined the Indian resistance in the mountains outside the Hoopa Valley, continuing to fight against the US Army and settler militia even after 1864, when the Hupa and some of their allies agreed to end hostilities provided they would not be removed from their homelands.¹²

In 1864, the superintendent of Indian affairs for the State of California, Austin Wiley, signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United States Government and the Hoopa, South Fork, Redwood, and Grouse Creek Indians. In the treaty, the Hupa were promised, among other things, rations and supplies from the Indian agent that would remain stationed on the reservation, protection from settler encroachment provided by the soldiers at Fort Gaston, a physician, and domestic training for Hupa women. While settler attacks and theft did not cease, and the Indian agents and US government reneged on the treaty agreement often, continuing to push for the removal of Indians from the Hoopa Valley, the Hupa were successful at remaining in their home. The Hupa have fought to remain in the valley since then; it is their home forever.

DOMESTICATION AND OCCUPATION

Subjugating California Indian women by containing them in white settler homes where they were made to labor as domestics under the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians illustrates that “domesticating” Native women is essential to settler state sovereignty. Undermining Native women’s political authority among their people and relegating them to domestic space facilitated settlement by weakening California Indians’ collective resistance efforts. Settlers’ emphasis on the benefits of domestic training for Native women was also reflected by their dehumanizing portrayals of California Indian women as “ugly and uncivilized.” Newspapers mocking Native women’s “degraded womanhood” as entertainment was commonplace during early California statehood. For example, the presence and dress of a California Indian woman walking the streets of Placerville in 1857 was reported as follows: “The *Placerville Argus* says that one of the dingy daughters of Diggerdom was seen a day or two ago, promenading the streets of that place in a delaine dress and crinoline skirt.”¹³ The racist alliteration in the article reveals the hostility that settlers reserved for California Indian women, particularly those who demonstrated their capacities to defy the imposed borders of the Indian reservation by coming into white settler towns.

Newspapers such as the *Placerville Argus* frequently reported on the movements and behaviors of Native women and acted as a form of surveillance and policing. In this example, the Native woman is described as “promenading the streets” while adorned with a typical style of dress for white women in a nearly accusatory tone. By describing her as “promenading,” the article insinuates that she is making a spectacle of herself and performing in order to be seen. The author’s choice of words reveals that California Indian women were an unwelcome disruption to white settler space and one that was sure to inspire scorn in the newspaper’s settler readership. Native women’s presence outside of Indian reservations or settler households, where many of them labored as domestics, activated settler anxieties about the threat Native women posed to the future of the settler state. Settler anxieties about persistent California Indian presence and the alternative polities that Native women in particular represent were assuaged through colonial gender violence.¹⁴ Denigrating Native women and policing their mobilities also signaled that violence against them was permissible and unremarkable with few exceptions.

Settlers' violence against California Indian women is not a mere consequence of invasion. As Audra Simpson has argued, violence against Native women enacts the state's "sovereign death drive" whereby its sovereignty and governance is dependent on the murder and disappearance of Native women.¹⁵ White men's genocidal practices of abducting and raping California Indian women and girls, trafficking them, or keeping them as "Indian wives" until they were killed or discarded demonstrates how conquest and occupation are gendered projects. During the gold rush, racialized gender violence against Native women preceded and enabled the expansion of the settler state's territorial sovereignty. White men targeted California Indian women for sexual violence so openly in northern California that it was regularly reported in local newspapers. An 1858 article from the *Trinity Journal*, titled "Indian Women—Their Treatment," reported that white men's sexual violence against California Indian women was so common that Indian women regularly fled into the mountains, camping for days to hide from their attacks.¹⁶ Newspaper articles documenting settlers' rampant sexual violence against Native women were common and served two purposes: first, to provide settlers with reassurance that California Indians were immobilized by military and vigilante violence; second, the disavowal of the violence of conquest by blaming individual men who committed assaults. As Hupa scholar Jack Norton argues in his foundational text *Genocide in Northwest California: When Our Worlds Cried*, "The enormity of these crimes cannot be excused by placing blame upon 'those few rascals' on the boundaries of the frontier."¹⁷ Native women's stories teach us that colonial gender violence is endemic to the ongoing conquest and dispossession of California Indian homelands. However, those of our ancestors whose efforts at collective and individual resistance pierce through the archival silencing of Native voices give us a chance to bear witness to the ways that they were bad Indians.

SABOTAGE

Newspapers such as the *Trinity Journal* leave gaps in the archive by excluding California Indian women's insights into their own experiences. These archival silences, as Miranda demonstrates throughout *Bad Indians*, leave us to speculate about the fear, anger, and hopes of our ancestors' interior lives. Miranda addresses the gaps left by the colonial archive by writing back to the ancestors she meets through her research. She speculates about their lives and grieves for them, and by doing so she spans the temporal gap between living California Indians and our ancestors. I take inspiration from Miranda's method of speculation and grief in order to flesh out the traces of California Indian women's stories of resistance.

Native nations were attacked by settlers who separated women and children from their communities and held them captive as enslaved laborers under the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians. This legal structure of gendered colonial dispossession was horrifically violent and had devastating consequences for Native peoples. Despite the risks of even greater violence, California Indians frequently resisted their captivity in settler households by running away, stealing, committing arson, and killing their captors. California Indian ancestors who were deemed "domesticated"

by settlers resisted so often that an 1862 editorial in the *Humboldt Times* cautioned against keeping indentured Indians as apprentices, warning about the dangers of “harboring even ‘tame’ Indians.”¹⁸ The warning was warranted, as enslaved California Indians repeatedly stole money and goods from settlers and fled from the white homes where they were imprisoned, as the following example from an 1861 *Marysville Daily Appeal* illustrates, titled “Indian Servants Thought Unreliable”:

The *Humboldt Times* says: “Several instances have occurred lately of Indian apprentices absconding from the parties to whom they had been indentured. One young squaw that had been at service for some months in the family of Captain Tomlinson, in this town, ran away a few days since taking wearing apparel, some forty dollars in money, and other valuables which she had stolen from members of the family. Experience teaches that the natives do not, as a general rule, become reliable servants. Each individual, however, who has one, will of course insist that theirs is trustworthy, until the contrary is proven.”¹⁹

Precisely how the California Indian girl mentioned in the article came to work for Tomlinson’s family cannot be known from this source, but it is not unreasonable to assume that she, like so many California Indian girls, had been abducted from her community and sold into a life of servitude. The California Indian girl in this story toiled for Captain Tomlinson and his family for months under the oppressive conditions created by the Act for the Government and Protection of Indians before she finally took what she could carry and fled to freedom. The archive of California’s newspapers during the gold rush and early statehood are filled with settlers’ triumphant stories of killing Native parents and selling their children to the highest bidder, so it is very possible that the girl suffered a similar fate.

The newspaper article indicates that the California Indian girl was in Tomlinson’s charge for months before she robbed his family and escaped. I wonder if she plotted her escape from the moment she arrived at Tomlinson’s house. Did she think about taking what she could carry on her way out as a pittance for all of her suffering and exploited labor? Did she mourn her family during her quiet moments alone? How long did she have to obey and make nice in order to earn Tomlinson’s trust so that she could escape? This California Indian girl’s robbery and escape from Tomlinson’s house mocks the relationships of domination that undergird the white household and reproduce the settler state. Since the white settler home was so foundational to the development and expansion of the United States, her act of sabotage undermined ongoing conquest. By running away, the California Indian girl not only refused her own captivity, she also refused ongoing occupation of California Indian homelands and the threat to life posed by the settler state. Raiding settlers’ homes and running away were acts of sabotage that enabled enslaved California Indians to disrupt settler regimes of property and assert Indigenous presence on their homelands. In this collection, Amrah Salomon states that “Miranda demonstrates a deep cyclical relationality with bad Indian ancestors that pushes us to continue to find new ways to be bad Indians ourselves, while also working within the difficulties of how one becomes bad

in the first place.”²⁰ Our relationships to bad Indian ancestors, such as the runaways, thieves, and vandals described by the colonial archive, inspires us to be bad Indians.

MORE-THAN-HUMAN KIN

Framing narratives of history through a California Indian perspective illuminates how Native peoples’ relationships with more-than-human beings sustains Indigenous resistance. Miranda’s work reminds us to read into the actions of our more-than-human kin for evidence of their anticolonial resistance and mutual defense of our homelands. In the oft-cited section of *Bad Indians* titled “Ularia’s Curse,” Miranda elaborates on a story shared by Isabel Meadows about a Native women named Ularia giving the Carmelo River the idea to curse a man named Sargent, an American settler who evicted her from her land.²¹ Miranda explains that rivers operate on a different temporal plane than human beings; while the river heard Ularia’s curse and bore witness to her dispossession, it did not respond until after her death.²² When Sargent was herding cattle across its waters ten years later, the Carmelo River finally answered Ularia’s call and enacted justice through retribution.²³ The river waters swelled during a storm and swallowed Sargent, leaving him cold, shaken, and ill. After his encounter with the river, Sargent’s condition was very grave and he died of illness just a few days later. I return to this passage often, reminded of how our more-than-human kin have been engaged in mutual resistance to colonial invasion and settler occupation alongside California Indian peoples. Miranda’s treatment of the river as a spirited and storied being reflects a California Indian epistemology that humbly acknowledges the dignity and will of all things. Ularia’s curse and the river’s agency as an accomplice in anticolonial resistance instructs us to look for examples of more-than-human kin engaged in mutual defense of our homelands and the conditions that sustain life in them. In the following section, I take inspiration from Miranda and tell a story about a black bear and a destroyed police car.

BEAR’S STORY

On the night of August 3, 2019, a Humboldt County sheriff’s deputy drove north on Highway 96 toward Orleans to answer an emergency call regarding a possible drug overdose. Just as the sheriff’s deputy drove through Weitchpec, the same Yurok village where the Tsewenaldin woman hid as a fugitive in 1859, a large black bear tumbled down an embankment and crashed onto the patrol car. The sudden weight of the bear destroyed the windshield, smashed the hood, and caused the car to veer of the road and crash into the embankment.²⁴ The officer driving the vehicle somehow managed to escape unharmed prior to the car hitting the stone mountainside and could only sit and watch dumbfounded as the car rolled on its side and burst into flames while the bear fled like a fugitive into the night. The surprising events of Bear’s story made Bear into something of a celebrity for at least her due fifteen minutes of fame. Bear’s story was featured in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Guardian*, and a host of smaller periodicals, each of which depicted the incident as an “unlucky” coincidence that resulted in the fiery destruction of a police car. However, Miranda’s example in *Bad Indians*

encourages an alternative reading of Bear's story and the presumed unluckiness of events that transformed a patrol car into a burning heap of scrap metal.

California Indian peoples recognize that good or bad luck is not just a matter of coincidences. Luck can be harnessed by individual beings who seek to realize a particular outcome or future.²⁵ Powerful individuals such as medicine people, trickster figures in origin stories, or even an abolitionist Bear can summon luck and interrupt egregious imbalances of power. What if the bear acted with intention and called down some luck to aid her in the attack on the patrol car? What if the bear, trudging up the embankment during the evening hours spotted the oncoming patrol car from a distance and anticipated the exact time that it would cross below her? Perhaps the bear had seen these kinds of cars passing through the reservation before and resented their blaring sirens and gunshots aimed at her California Indian kin. Did she know the high rates of police violence and murder of California Indian peoples? Does she miss those of our people who have been taken from our homelands by police violence?

The love and responsibility that the Hupa people feel for our homelands and more-than-human kin have always been the foundation of our resistance to colonial invasion and occupation. As Mishuana Goeman has articulated, maintaining ethical relationships with the land is at the heart of the struggle for decolonization for Native peoples.²⁶ The relationship between California Indian peoples and salmon illuminates how kinship with more-than-human beings is a governing ethic and a key factor in their anticolonial resistance to the state. In 1862, when Redwood Creek Indian resistors were captured and forcibly removed approximately 180 miles south to the Round Valley Indian reservation, many escaped and made the perilous journey back home to meet the salmon when they returned to the rivers to spawn and die. Redwood Creek Indians risked their lives to return to their salmon relatives, and that relationship undermined the legitimacy and permanence of the United States by refusing to be contained.

HER MOUTH IS CUT

In *Bad Indians*, Miranda writes a letter to Vicenta, a California Indian girl whose story of surviving systemic sexual violence in the mission system was shared by Isabel Meadows in her interviews with J. P. Harrington.²⁷ Once again, Miranda reaches through the archival documentation of Vicenta's experience of sexual violence perpetrated against her by Padre Real at Mission Carmel and makes connections to California Indian women and girls still surviving colonial gender violence in the present day. As Miranda demonstrates across multiple temporalities in her narrative, colonial gender violence remains a central part of conquest and settler occupation in California. While writing to Vicenta, Miranda grieves for her, celebrates her bravery, and shares her own experience of surviving sexual violence. She meditates on the possibility of justice for what was done to Vicenta and wonders what telling her story can offer. Miranda muses, "Maybe that's why Isabel felt, of all the stories she knew about violation and invasion and loss, *your story* was the one to tell Harrington. She was proud of you. She respected you for refusing to shut up. She liked that you weren't a good Mission Indian. Maybe she even thought future Indian women could learn

from you.”²⁸ Miranda invites the question, what *can* we learn from Vicenta’s story? What can we know from her experience? If we feel a surge of pride in our chests and a restoration of our spirits when we hear stories of refusal and survival, then what is our duty to tell as the living descendants of these Bad Indians? Miranda’s retelling of Vicenta’s story and the importance that Isabel Meadows ascribed to it inspired me to return to a painful family story of surviving colonial gender violence that my grandmother has told me, in different versions, throughout my adulthood. Piecing together shards of this story from the archive of my grandmother’s fading memory reveals the intimate and painful ways that we are connected to our homelands.

Every month I make the hourlong journey from the coast in Eureka to the Hoopa Valley to visit my grandmother, who lives on our family’s land assignment overlooking the beautiful and life-sustaining Trinity River. Oftentimes, Gram sees my car pull into the long rocky driveway and comes outside to meet me, eager for our visit and word from town. When I step out of the car, she impatiently asks if I’ve brought her any sweets from the store. She hungrily eyeballs the grocery bags in my backseat, hoping for a glimpse of Franz peanut butter cookies or Hostess fried pies, and complains about how the store in Hoopa never has anything good. Once I am able to get into the house and placate Gram with her favorite treats, our conversation begins. Gram and I chat about family news, the weather on the coast, current events, and how to fix whatever has broken in the house since my last visit. No matter how our conversation begins, we inevitably find our way back to the topics of lost family baskets, photos that went missing from albums, and how the neighboring family laid a gravel road on our side of the land assignment. Gram’s persistent fear of a diminishing land assignment conjures up old family stories for her. Painful recollections about what it has cost our family to retain a small piece of land in the Hoopa Valley fill Gram’s mind and spill out of her mouth while we sit together. My Gram’s sense of urgency about defending the land assignment comes from the story of my maternal great-great-grandmother, Annie Widrig, for whom I was given the middle name Anne.

According to my grandmother and the genealogical records of the Hoopa Valley Tribe, Annie Widrig was the wife of a soldier named Snider who was stationed at Fort Gaston before the US Army abandoned it in 1892. In one version of the story, my Gram claims that Snider was a cruel man who treated our grandma Annie so terribly that she tried to run away from him. The story goes that when Annie ran away, Snider pursued her and demanded that she return home with him. In this version of the story, Annie defies Snider by refusing to go back with him and struggles against his capture to regain her freedom. Snider, enraged by Annie’s defiance, took a knife to her face and cut her cheeks while she screamed and struggled to escape. Gram is not sure how Annie got free of Snider, but she knows that she survived him because Annie bore scars from the attack until her death sometime in the 1920s. Grandma Annie was badly scarred from his attack and her injuries were so shocking that it earned her the name Her Mouth Is Cut. As Olivia Chilcote argues in this issue, “The only way California Indians can move beyond destructive narratives is to share retellings of the past that center our ancestors and who we are as a people.”²⁹ Gram remembers being told by her uncles that Great-Grandma Annie had scars on her face as an old woman.

Annie Widrig's scars are embodied evidence that she was disfigured by US occupation and that she fought like hell to survive.

In another version of Great-Grandma Annie's story, Gram says that Annie was disobeying the orders of an unnamed soldier from Fort Gaston, not her husband Snider, and that he was the one who cut her face. In this rendition of the story, Snider is only partially absolved: Gram notes that he did not defend Annie from attack. Gram speculates about why Grandma Annie stayed behind in the Hoopa Valley when Snider was shipped out back east, and says maybe she did not want to leave her home. The two versions of the story leave me with many unanswered questions. What I know for sure is that my ancestor Annie Widrig defied the soldiers who occupied her homelands and that she remained living in the Hoopa Valley with her people long after he moved elsewhere back east. There is no way for me to know what the conditions of her marriage to Snider were, but the context that she and other Hupa women were living in is manifested in the chaos of the tsunami described by Deborah A. Miranda's keynote speech included in this volume. California Indian women's stories of resistance and survival are significant because they challenge the permanency of settler state occupation. As Caitlin Keliiaa writes in this collection, "In this work, which was at times painful to do and difficult to witness, I had to accept that I could not separate myself from these histories. They are indeed intertwined with my own."³⁰ California Indians feel deeply related to our ancestors' stories of colonial violence and survival since they mirror so many of our contemporary experiences under ongoing occupation. Like Keliiaa, I also see myself as living a life that is deeply connected and indebted to Grandma Annie's defiance of the settler state and the patriarchal figures that seek to enact its genocidal vision against us. She outlived the presence of US soldiers in the Hoopa Valley at Fort Gaston, which eventually fell to ruin from disuse, though not before its carceral structure remained for some decades as the Hoopa boarding school before the original buildings were completely destroyed.

When I asked Gram what made her remember Grandma Annie's story, she told me that Annie Widrig was the first person in our family to live on our family land assignment after it was granted in 1910, and she wants to make sure that my name is on a piece of it, too. For my Gram, our Grandma Annie's story deepens our family's relationship to our homelands in the Hoopa Valley. As Goeman argues, "Indigenous peoples make place by relating both personal and communal experiences and histories to certain locations and landscapes—maintaining these spatial relationships is one of the most important components of politics and our identity."³¹ Hupa women's stories of surviving and resisting colonial gender violence, heavy as they are with grief and rage, connect us to homelands in profound and painful ways. I am not happy to hear the story of my ancestor Annie Widrig. Hers is not a story that I think can be easily celebrated as a story of survival. In the aftermath of the gold rush, life for California Indian women was uncertain and full of loss, but Annie *still* ran away and tried to save herself. I cannot settle on a single way to feel about this family story, but I am grateful to Grandma Annie. As Miranda says in her acknowledgements in *Bad Indians*, "Always, always, thank you to the Ancestors—for the dreams, belly laughs, stories . . . the good, the bad, the ugly, the sacred . . . thank you for your survival."³²

NOTES

1. Deborah A. Miranda, *Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir* (Berkeley: Heyday, 2013), 193.
2. Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 3.
3. Miranda, xi.
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