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“What Have We Got to Celebrate?”: Native American Contestation to Commemoration during the Late 20th Century

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“What Have We Got to Celebrate?” Native American Contestation to Commemoration during the Late 20th Century

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by

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Abstract

This thesis examines how Indigenous groups in the United States have contested mainstream historical narratives of America's founding during major commemorative events in the late twentieth century. To analyze this, I have examined two major national commemorative events during which Native Americans spearheaded a marked shift in the popular interpretation of national origins. The first event I analyze is the 1976 Bicentennial of the American Revolution; the second event is the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary. Native Americans contested the ways that the federal planning bodies for both events represented the history of the nation's founding. How could they be called on to participate in celebrations that, in their perspective, marked an end to Indigenous sovereignty? Their complaints about the framing of these events as overwhelmingly positive historical contributions produced tangible change in how these commemorations unfolded. I argue that Native American activists' challenges to conventional, Eurocentric founding narratives promoted by the federally planned commemorations in 1976 and 1992 resulted in the emergence of alternative founding narratives, that presented more complexity and nuance, within American popular discourse. These activists have not been given due credit for their role in the increased awareness of more complex historical understandings of the nation's founding within the historiography. Moreover, the challenges Indigenous activists brought forth helped to catalyze a shift in the way that historical narratives promoted during these commemorations considered inclusion and diversity.

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Introduction

"In fourteen hundred ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue…. October 12 their dream came true, You never saw a happier crew! 'Indians! Indians!' Columbus cried; His heart was filled with joyful pride…. The first American? No, not quite. But Columbus was brave, and he was bright."

-Excerpts from the poem "In 1492" by Jean Marzollo

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

- Declaration of Independence

The Chicago River ran red with dye as demonstrators unfurled a banner reading, "Sink the Myth of Columbus." Red paint doused "The Defense," a relief sculpture that adorned the Michigan Avenue Bridge and depicted a frontier soldier in the midst of fighting with Potawatomi Native Americans during the Battle of Fort Dearborn. It was Columbus Day in Chicago during the 1992 Quincentenary commemoration of Christopher Columbus's landfall in the "New World." A parade sponsored by the Joint Civic Committee of Italian Americans, typically an occasion to celebrate Italian-American pride, had incited controversy for promoting what protesters claimed to be a far too celebratory narrative heralding Columbus as a heroic figure. While the parade carried on and did not experience cancellation as others in 1992 had, most notably in Denver, Colorado, the *Chicago Tribune* characterized the parade as "wholly different

than anything that had come before." Protesters used red dye in the river and red paint defacing sculptures to symbolize Native American blood and publicize their view that Columbus had become a symbol for "all the ways whites have destroyed cultures different than their own." Tom Pearce, a member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), told a crowd of 300 gathered in protest at the Michigan Avenue Bridge that Columbus's photo should appear "right next to Adolf Hitler's" in history books. While parade organizers sought to appease protesters by inviting members from the American Indian Center to march as the first entry in the parade, this action proved too little too late as those in opposition to the parade continued to jeer parade participants while simultaneously holding their own demonstrations against the parade. By the end of the day, Chicago police had arrested nine protesters with charges that included defacing public property and disorderly conduct.[1]

The protest against the Chicago Columbus Day parade was only one of many demonstrations that Native American activists and their supporters organized during and in the years leading up to the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary. These activists utilized the occasion of commemoration to challenge mainstream narratives regarding Columbus's arrival to the "New World" and call for a more complex and nuanced approach to understanding the historic encounter. As articulated by Colorado AIM, many Indigenous activists viewed the celebration of Columbus and his legacy as a celebration of genocide. They were vehemently opposed to the perpetuation of a narrative they believed justified and glorified the colonization and subsequent destruction of their nations. The quincentennial marked an opportune occasion for a reexamination of the past and a "rectification of the historical record."[2]

[1] Mary Hill and Robert Davis, "Columbus '92: Not A Parade for Everyone," *Chicago Tribune*, October 13, 1992.
[2] Glenn Morris and Russell Means, "Why We Opposed Columbus Day and Columbus Day Parades," *Indigenous Thought*, Vol 1, No. 4 and 5 (October 1991): 36, Box 50, Folder 20, Columbian Quincentenary Collection, , 1981-1995 (bulk 1990-1992), Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Nearly two decades earlier, similar sentiments from Native American activists regarding narratives of United States' origins appeared during the 1976 Bicentennial commemoration of the American Revolution. Irked by federal Bicentennial planners' calls for Native American participation in their planned commemoration, many Native Americans questioned how they could celebrate an event that, to them, represented an end to Indigenous sovereignty. Moreover, they questioned the commemoration's emphasis on celebrating founding ideals of equality and liberty when they had not historically benefited from those ideals. Though many of the nation's citizens would be celebrating the 200th anniversary of the "growth and development of the United States," this growth, according to Native activists opposed to the commemoration, was "achieved primarily through the systematic and criminal exploitation and deprivation of the lives, property, rights, and heritage of the American Indian people."[3] Indigenous activists made use of this commemorative period to bring attention to contemporary issues facing Native communities and ensure that their perspectives would be included within the narrative promoted by the federally planned Bicentennial commemoration. Ultimately, their involvement with the Bicentennial would guide the commemoration towards a more inclusive outcome, but only after significant controversy and debate. Not only would this more inclusive direction alter the Bicentennial commemoration, it would affect commemorations to come, including the Columbus Quincentenary, which, though beset with controversy, sought to include Native histories and perspectives from the outset.

This thesis examines how Indigenous groups in the United States have contested mainstream historical narratives of America's founding during major commemorative events in the late twentieth century. To analyze the ways in which stories of the United States' founding

[3] Joy Chaudhuri, ed., *Indians and 1976: Native Americans Look at the American Revolution Bicentennial Observance* (Tucson, AZ: Amerind Club, University of Arizona, 1973):35.

have been contested by Indigenous groups in the U.S., I will examine two major national commemorative events from the late twentieth century during which Native Americans spearheaded a marked shift in the popular interpretation of national origins. The first event I analyze is the 1976 Bicentennial of the American Revolution; the second event is the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary. Native Americans contested the ways that the federal planning bodies for both events represented the history of the founding of the United States of America. Their complaints about the framing of these events produced tangible change in how those commemorations unfolded and introduced more complex and nuanced founding narratives into the national conversation.

I argue that Native American activists' challenges to conventional, Eurocentric founding narratives promoted by the federally planned commemorative events in 1976 and 1992 resulted in the emergence of alternative narratives within American popular discourse regarding the country's origins. These activists have not been given due credit for their role in the increased awareness of more complex historical understandings of the U.S.'s founding within the historiography. Moreover, the challenges Indigenous activists brought forth helped to catalyze a shift in the way that historical narratives promoted during these commemorative events considered inclusion and diversity. Instances of contestation to commemoration during this period illuminated Native people's perspectives on the past and present to a widespread, national audience. Within both commemorative events, Indigenous activists working to challenge mainstream founding narratives appeared to have two main perspectives as it related to their role in the commemorations. One set of activists, who took on what I characterize as a moderate perspective, believed that they could work within the confines of the federal commemorations, engaging with official planners to ensure that commemorations would include Native

perspectives. In relation to these activists, another set of activists appeared more radical. These activists believed that rather than working within the official commemorations, their goals to challenge these mainstream historical narratives would prove more effective using strategies such as protest to commemorative events that upheld Eurocentric interpretations, as well as holding counter events that promoted historical narratives from an Indigenous point of view. I also argue that while similarities between the two commemorative controversies are many, by 1992, many of the Native American activists in opposition to the commemoration of conventional founding narratives had more widespread and racially diverse support.

Organized chronologically, chapter one examines the 1976 Bicentennial of the American Revolution. In the mid-1970s, the federal government organized a commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution. Originally planning to hold one culminating event in 1976, the federal government's commission charged with overseeing the Bicentennial, the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA), decided instead to encourage local events put on by individual states and cities spanning from 1973 to 1976. They made that change in large part due to the severe criticism they faced from the public for being overly commercial and not doing enough to include local communities and minority groups in the planning of the Bicentennial.[4] As Americans reflected on the significance of celebrating such a momentous event in the history of the nation, questions began to arise regarding the meaning of the American Revolution and its relevance to American identity in the present day.

In commemorating the 200th anniversary of America's independence, it was apparent that the ARBA sought to promote the conventional narratives long associated with the American

[4] Tammy Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2013), 1-3.

Revolution: unity and liberty, and thus presented what critics saw as "a patriotic consensus understanding of the American Revolution."[5] Minority groups, particularly Native Americans, were highly critical of the way in which the ARBA presented the Revolution. These groups pondered what exactly there was to celebrate about the American Revolution in the context of their marginalized histories and modern day identities. The collective memory of the Revolution for Native Americans was vastly different from the memory promoted by the ARBA. Why would Native Americans want to celebrate the immense loss they experienced as a result of colonialism and the founding of the nation by European settlers?

Because of the disapproval displayed by many minority groups, including Native Americans, leaders of the ARBA called for the creation of the Bicentennial Ethnic and Racial Council (BERC) to include more minority perspectives. BERC marked the first time that any federal agency called on a diverse group of ethnic and racial minorities to "make policy and program recommendations on an official level."[6] These discussions would ultimately alter Bicentennial messaging, placing more emphasis on the value of multiculturalism and diversity in American society; they stressed the idea that America is "not a melting pot, but a salad bowl."[7] This transformation would have a significant impact on commemorations to come. More broadly, it would also contribute to the rise of social and local history and the popularization of understanding America as a "nation of nations."[8]

Between this thesis's investigation of two instances of contestation to commemoration in the late twentieth century, a short interlude explores the 1977 International NGO Conference on

[5] Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976*, 3.
[6] "Ethnic America: Not A Melting Pot but a Salad Bowl," *Bicentennial Times*, 3 (December, 1976).
[7] "Ethnic America: Not A Melting Pot but a Salad Bowl," *Bicentennial Times.*
[8] National Endowment for the Humanities, "American Issues Forum: A National Program for the Bicentennial Year, Final Prospectus," December, 1974, Box 60, Mills E. Godwin Executive Papers, 1974-1978, Series III, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas. Native American participation in this U.N. sponsored conferenced marked North American Indigenous activists' first entry onto an international stage and the recognition of their nations within this setting represented a major triumph. The 1977 conference is important because it began to sow the seeds of resistance to the 1992 Quincentenary commemoration of the Columbus landfall. Indigenous activists later deemed the conference's recommendation to observe October 12 as an "International Day of Solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas" as the most important result of the meeting.

Chapter two's focus centers on the 1992 Quincentenary Commemoration of the Columbus Landfall. Sixteen years after the Bicentennial hurrah, controversy emerged again as the federal agency responsible for planning the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's encounter in the Americas, the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission (CCQJC), faced widespread criticism and negative publicity that ultimately led to a failure to produce any sort of meaningful commemoration.[9] The commission experienced a long list of setbacks, including issues surrounding leadership and finances.[10] In addition, Indigenous groups, in concert with members of other racial groups, were highly critical of its plans to celebrate a figure who garnered comparisons to Hitler.[11] These difficulties taken together caused the federal commission to founder in its planned Quincentenary.

With an official charge to plan and coordinate the 500th anniversary of the "voyages of discovery of Christopher Columbus," the CCQJC's initial plans for the Quincentenary

[9] Stephen J. Summerhill and John Alexander Williams, *Sinking Columbus: Contested History, Cultural Politics, and Mythmaking during the Quincentenary* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 34-62.
[10] Statement of L. Nye Stevens, Director of Government Business Operations Issues, T-GGD-91-24: Testimony, Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission (Washington, D.C.: United States General Accounting Office, 1991).
[11] Jose Barreiro, "View from the Shore: Toward an Indian Voice in 1992," *Northeast Indian Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 14.

commemoration presented an overwhelmingly positive perspective on the arrival of Columbus and positioned him as a hero to be celebrated.[12] Though they attempted to include Native perspectives within the commemoration from the beginning, perhaps learning from the controversy of the Bicentennial, their efforts to include alternative narratives became overshadowed by the commemoration's emphasis on celebrating Columbus as a heroic figure. Those in opposition to the commemoration perceived this celebratory emphasis of a Eurocentric version of the Columbus landing as flawed and incomplete. This one-dimensional version of the Columbus landing was not sufficient to address the diverse perspectives held within the U.S., particularly to Native groups and those concerned with a more balanced and inclusive version of events.

Native American activists staged several protests and counter demonstrations to the events planned as a part of the quincentennial in order to promote their perspective and to bring attention to the modern problems faced by Indigenous groups in the U.S. While several demonstrations and meetings took place across the country in attempts to respond to the Columbus Quincentenary, activists in Berkeley, CA created the Berkeley Resistance 500 Task Force, which was eventually approved by Berkeley's city council as an official city body.[13] This task force successfully instituted the first Indigenous Peoples' Day in 1992 to replace Columbus Day in the city.[14] As those opposed to the commission's plans for the Columbus quincentennial sought to reinterpret the traditional narrative, and in the case of Berkeley, a successful reinterpretation of the Columbus Day holiday, many Americans became more conscious of an

[12] U.S. Congress, *An Act to Establish the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission*, HR 1492, 98th Congress, August 7, 1984.
[13] John Curl, "Part 3 Resistance 500 & the First Indigenous Peoples Day 1991-1992," Archives of Indigenous Peoples Day, A Documentary History of the Origin and Development of Indigenous Peoples Day, accessed March 31, 2021, https://ipdpowwow.org/Archives_3.html.
[14] "'Columbus Day' dumped in Berkeley," *Native Nevadan*, February 28, 1992, 14; "In Berkeley, Day for Columbus is Renamed," *New York Times*, January 12, 1992.

Indigenous perspective. The influence of these events lives on today as society has continued to place more value on minority perspectives, particularly as it relates to historical narratives. Indigenous Peoples' Day has become an increasingly popular holiday as the conventional Columbus "discovery" narrative loses currency. One of the most enduring outcomes produced by the Quincentenary, as historian Michael Kammen notes, is the more balanced portrayal of Columbus's accomplishments to American history in school curricula.[15]

While many scholars have examined the phenomenon of commemoration in American culture, with some analyzing the 1976 Bicentennial or 1992 Quincentenary, none have focused solely on the ways in which Indigenous groups in the United States challenged conventional narratives of America's founding, and thus influenced American collective memory. Michael Kammen, in his article "Commemoration and Contestation in American Culture: Historical Perspectives," is the only historian to connect the 1976 Bicentennial and the 1992 Quicentenary commemorations together in his analysis of episodes of contestation in American commemorative events. His article provides an overview of contested aspects of commemoration arguing that commemorations are not always a source of consensus, and noting that divisiveness is likely to exist during times originally intended to unite.[16] Though not focused on specific racial groups or a single event, his article highlights many instances of contestation in several commemorative events in order to show diversity within the range of controversies. Kammen's approach is a topical overview of contestation in commemoration as a call to bring more attention to this area of historical memory. This thesis seeks to answer his call.

[15] Michael Kammen, "Commemoration and Contestation in American Culture: Historical Perspectives," *American Studies* 48, No. 2 (2003): 203.
[16] Kammen, "Commemoration and Contestation," 185.

Several scholars have analyzed the 1976 Bicentennial celebration of the American Revolution, but few have drawn attention to the experiences of marginalized racial minorities and even fewer to the experiences of Indigenous people. Literature on the Bicentennial largely focuses on the overall feeling of ambivalence towards the fête due to the social context of the time.[17] Many Americans greeted the "unitary visions of the American past" put forth by the federal government with much skepticism.[18] The more the federal government attempted to summon up a traditional narrative of the American Revolution, the more some members of the public pushed back. Scholars have also explored the way in which corporate interests and the over-commercialization of the Bicentennial threatened its success as it lacked proper contemplation of the founding ideals and the contemporary needs to strive for the complete fulfillment of those ideals.[19] Most agree that although the Bicentennial was initially fraught with controversy, the federal government's willingness to alter their plans from a single culminating event to a more grassroots approach had an enduring legacy, leading some to portray the Bicentennial as an overall success.[20]

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[17] Many scholars have credited events such as assassinations, the conflict in Vietnam, the Watergate scandal and the overall tumult of the 1960s and 1970s for ambivalence towards the federal Bicentennial commemoration. For further reading on American ambivalence towards the Bicentennial, see John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 206-244; Christopher Capozzola, "'It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country': Celebrating the Bicentennial in an Age of Limits," in *America in the Seventies*, eds. Beth Bailey and David Farber (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 29-49; David Ryan, "Re-enacting Independence Through Nostalgia: The 1976 US Bicentennial After the Vietnam War," *Forum for Inter-American Research* 5, No. 3 (2012): 26-48; Michael Devine, "The Bicentennial as History: What Have We Learned from Celebrations of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution," *History News* 41, No. 6 (November/December 1986): 8-14; Michael Kammen *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1991), 695; Ivan Greenberg, "Postage and Power: U.S. National and the 1970s 'Bicentennial' and 'Americana' Stamp Series," *Journal of Social History* 49, No. 1 (Fall 2015): 61.

[18] Capozzola, "'It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,'" 30.

[19] For further reading on the over-commercialization of the Bicentennial see Tammy Gordon, *The Spirit of 1976: Commerce, Community, and the Politics of Commemoration* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 234; Capozzola, "'It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,'" 37.

[20] Capozzola, "'It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,'" 38; Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 233; Devine, "The Bicentennial as History," 12; Thomas Archdeacon, "American Historians and the American Revolution: A Bicentennial Overview," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 63, No. 4 (Summer 1980): 278.

While the 1976 Bicentennial commemoration is well explored within the scholarship, discussion of minority groups' roles in transforming the event has not been sufficiently addressed. Discussions surrounding these groups are typically relegated to one or two paragraphs, with a focus mainly on Black Americans. Like Native American criticism, African American criticism of the Bicentennial also challenged the whitewashed, traditional portrayal of the Revolution and elucidated the need for continued efforts towards fulfillment of the founding principle of equality.[21] Building on those analyses of Black criticism, my scrutiny of the Native American response and experience during the Bicentennial enhances our understanding of the complex collective memory of the country's founding, and ways in which mainstream narratives may seem incomplete. In doing so, I have relied on the research of Chadwick Allen who has analyzed Native Americans during the Bicentennial in his 2012 publication *Trans-indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*.[22] Allen's analysis exhibits the divisive nature of Indigenous participation in the Bicentennial, with some groups participating and others deeply contesting. My research builds on Allen's discussion by drawing connections to collective memory and American identity, and by focusing on the ways in which Native American contestation to the Bicentennial influenced popular understanding of the American Revolution and helped to transform the Bicentennial itself.

[21] Capozzola, "'It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country,'" 34-35; Bodnar, *Remaking America*, 237, 240-241; Lyn Spillman, "When Do Collective Memories Last? Founding Moments in the United States and Australia," *Social Science History* 22, No. 4 (Winter 1988): 467; Michael Kammen, "Commemoration and Contestation in American Culture: Historical Perspectives," *American Studies* 48, No. 2 (2003): 199; Greenberg, "Postage and Power," 61; Milton Klein, "Commemorating the American Revolution: The Bicentennial and Its Predecessors," *New York History* 84, No. 3 (July 1977): 258.

[22] As a literary scholar, Allen's main analysis of indigenous experience is through indigenous literary texts in a comparative analysis with indigenous groups in Australia and New Zealand in order to develop effective methods for interpreting trans-indigenous literary texts; for further reading see Chadwick Allen, *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Literary Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

Historiography of the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary is far less robust. Stephen Summerhill and John Alexander Williams's book *Sinking Columbus: Contested History, Cultural Politics, and Mythmaking during the Quincentenary*, published in 2000, offers the only thorough scholarly examination of the Quincentenary. As two academics who participated in various aspects of the Quincentenary, they provide a firsthand account of the commemoration's unfolding, investigating events from local, national, and international perspectives. Summerhill and Williams detail the controversies that took place, from the commission's plans gone amiss to the "culture wars" that commenced. With this, they argue that the Quincentenary succeeded *because* it failed. They also posit that the Quincentenary was able to transcend a superficial status as it "emerged from controversy."[23]

Sinking Columbus presents a well-rounded analysis of the Quincentenary, touching on the contentions that existed between racial and ethnic groups in American and their various memories of the Columbus encounter, but as the authors cast a wide net in developing the book, their attention to the criticism by Native Americans is only a small part of the project.[24] My analysis of the Indigenous experience during the Quincentenary will build upon Summerhill and Williams's work, and place emphasis on the ways Native groups in the U.S. challenged the popular narrative of the "discovery" of America, and its framing as an overwhelmingly positive historical development. Linking the 1992 Quincentenary with the 1976 Bicentennial will provide

[23] Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus*, 4-5. As told in *Sinking Columbus*, Williams participated "as a federal bureaucrat charged with managing an official program for the Quincentenary" and Summerhill participated "as a university administrator and academic." *Sinking Columbus* is their "report on the commemoration."
[24] Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus*, chapter 4. Summerhill and Williams examine the "ethnic infighting" between Italian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Native Americans over the ways in which the Quincentenary would depict Columbus's arrival in the Americas. They hold that this in-fighting doomed the Quincentenary before it began. They also contend that the Indigenous perspective garnered public attention, with support from recent scholarship and compelling moral arguments for "historical justice," adding that "the old-fashioned views of official planners were superseded by a reaction based in contemporary social reality." Their argument supports the view that commemorations are a reflection of a society's values; as values change over time, commemorations are likely to change in order to meet new values.

a comprehensive look at how Indigenous people in the U.S. have countered such narratives of America's founding, and how instrumental they have been in shaping new narratives.

Other historical scholars have examined the influence of Indigenous activists on other commemorative events or sites, such as the Battle of Little Bighorn. A chapter in Edward Tabor Linenthal's 1991 publication, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields*, examines the various narratives and commemorative activity surrounding the historic Battle of Little Bighorn, popular memories of General Custer, and the ways in which Indigenous activists led challenges to the popular narrative and commemorative interpretation of the site during the late twentieth century. Linenthal writes that while the "traditional patriotic orthodoxy associated" with the battle remained unchallenged for nearly a century, in the 1970s Native American activists contested the Anglo-American narrative of the battle in anticipation of the centennial commemoration. During that period, many Native activists called for the renaming of the site, at the time called Custer Battlefield, and a reframing of the interpretative materials at the site, which were often situated from a Eurocentric standpoint. *Sacred Ground* provides a detailed analysis of the history of the conventional narrative and the efforts to reinterpret that narrative.[25] Furthering this work requires an examination of other commemorative events where Indigenous activists challenged popular memories, resulting in a more inclusive and balanced historical narrative.

Additional scholarly attention to the Quincentenary has come from the field of sociology. Numerous sociologists have analyzed the changing reputation of Columbus over time, and have used the 1992 Quincentenary as a watershed event in these shifts. Timothy Kubal, Howard Schuman, Barry Schwartz, Hannah D'Arcy, and Amy Corning are just a few who have analyzed

[25] Edward Tabor Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and Their Battlefields* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991): 127-171.

the shifting memory of Columbus.[26] The main focus of these scholars' works lie in understanding collective memory and how it functions in a society rather than on the role of Native American activism. Using their work to aid my understanding of collective memory, this thesis provides a historical perspective on the Quincentenary and the roles that Native Americans played relative to the reinterpretation of older narratives.

Understanding the ways in which these commemorations were planned, unfolded, and contested requires examination of a large swath of primary sources. The principal primary sources I scrutinized for this thesis come primarily from three main groups: 1.) documents produced by the federal government, federal agencies charged with commemoration planning, or federally funded organizations that conducted commemoration programming, 2.) journalistic coverage of the commemorations, Indigenous activism, and reactions to the commemorations, and 3.) publications, statements, and events produced by Indigenous groups in response to the commemorations.

Like most federal entities, the commissions charged with planning both the Bicentennial and the Quincentenary extensively documented their planning efforts and created final reports at the conclusion of their commemorations. Meeting minutes, event and activity plans, commission newsletters, and final reports all inform the perspective of the planning commissions, their mission, and the narratives promoted by the federal government during these commemorations. As we will see, both commemorations' planning bodies gravitated towards upholding conventional, mainstream narratives as it related to the founding of the country. These narratives

[26] For further reading on a sociological perspective on the Columbus myth see Timothy Kubal, *Cultural Movements and Collective Memory: Christopher Columbus and the Rewriting of the National Origin Myth*; Howard Schuman, Barry Schwartz, and Hannah D'Arcy, "Elite Revisionists and Popular Beliefs: Christopher Columbus, Hero or Villain?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 2-29; Amy Corning and Howard Schuman, *Generations and Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

privileged a white, Eurocentric perspective that left something to be desired as it related to inclusion. The documents produced by the planning bodies also shed light on how these commissions dealt with opposition to their plans and their ability to adapt in the face of scrutiny.

Because these commemorations marked major moments in American history, journalistic coverage of both were massive. Coverage ranged from reportage of official events and activities or protests and counter events, to opinion pieces and interviews with planning officials or Indigenous activists. In order to ensure representation of a spectrum of perspectives, I have examined a swath of national, local, and activist publications. These include widely available and representative publications such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *Newsweek*. These publications reveal that the alternative founding narratives proffered by Native activists received widespread attention, and were perhaps highly influential in altering some Americans' understandings of the American Revolution or the Columbus landfall. Due to the grassroots nature of many activists' efforts to challenge the federally promoted founding narratives, local press also provides important accounts of many of the protests or counter events led by Native activists in their attempts to contest mainstream, Eurocentric histories. In addition to national and local press, analysis of Native American press is crucial to understanding Indigenous perspectives to both commemorations. Various Native journalistic publications, to include activist publications such as *Akwesasne Notes* and *Indigenous Thought*, as well as Indigenous produced publications meant for a general audience like *Native Nevadan* and *Char-Koosta News*, provide accounts of events as they unfold, but from the Native perspective. They also contain various opinion pieces and help to unveil the positions that many Native Americans possessed as it related to how these commemorations were representing a critical piece of history directly relate to Native peoples' relationship with the United States.

Some of the most important, yet difficult to obtain, primary sources consulted for this thesis were documents produced by Native activists for the purpose of publicizing the Indigenous perspective, attempting to ascertain an overall Native opinion regarding their role in the commemorations, or organizing collective action to oppose commemorations and plan counter events. For the Bicentennial, a report from the Amerind Club at the University of Arizona, *Indians and 1976: Native Americans Look at the American Revolution Bicentennial Observance,* provides a synthesis of Native opinions on the Bicentennial. The Amerind Club organized a nation-wide meeting of Native leaders from various tribes around the country to formulate a formal response to the Bicentennial. Additional sources include the *Indian Historian*, a Native journal publication, and a conference report from the Bicentennial Ethnic/Racial Coalition (BERC).

Indigenous activists produced a vast amount of documents during the Columbus Quincentenary to promote their perspective and plan protests and demonstrations. I relied heavily on the Columbian Quincentenary Collection located at the University of New Mexico's Center for Southwest Research.[27] The archive contained an overwhelming amount of material related to the Quincentenary, including ephemera from protests, counter events, and conferences related to the contestation of the federally planned quincentennial. I also utilized the *Northeast*

[27] During the planning of the Columbus Quincentenary, the University of New Mexico sought to document the commemoration by creating this archival collection. UNM describes this collection as "the official records of the 1992 commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Columbian voyages." Within in the collection, I utilized the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission (CCQJC) records, collected from members of the commission. I also relied heavily on Christopher Dodge's collection of materials within the archive, which contained many Native American perspectives and material related to the counter-movement against the Quincentenary. Dodge was a librarian in Minnesota, co-editor of *Confronting Columbus: An Anthology* (McFarland, 1992), and an activist involved in countering the Quincentenary. Additionally, I consulted the Native American Perspectives series within the archive, which contained some of the Native American responses, programs, and publications related to the Quincentenary. Most of the documents within this series represented Native Americans opposed to the celebratory nature of the commemoration. "Columbian Quincentenary Collection," UNM Center for Southwest Research & Special Collections, accessed May 9, 2022, https://nmarchives-dev.unm.edu/repositories/22/resources/1762.

Indian Quarterly, a journal published by the American Indian Program at Cornell University, and publications and statements from activist groups such as the American Indian Movement (AIM) and Berkeley's Resistance 500 Task Force. Taken together, these sources provide a thorough view of the diversity of perspectives that existed within the Native community.

Scholars of memory have long noted the significance of founding moments to a nation's history, and in turn, the identity of its citizenry. These founding moments remain a symbolically vital memory for the creation of a national identity due to their ability to construct a sense of community among seemingly disparate groups.[28] Examining the ways Native Americans challenged collective memory, sought to reshape public commemoration of American history, and influenced contemporary understandings of myths and stories of America's founding furthers our understanding of how historical memory functions and changes within a society. It also provides insights into the American identity in the late twentieth century and how that identity has altered over time. Notably, it illuminates the perspectives forwarded by a historically marginalized group on essential aspects of American history. Bringing these voices to light yields a more robust interpretation of collective memory on America's origins in the late twentieth century.

In both instances, in 1976 and in 1992, Indigenous groups led efforts, through collective action, to reinterpret mainstream, Eurocentric narratives regarding America's origins as a country. The success of these activists' efforts demonstrates the influence that minority groups have on the larger collective, and in turn, American memory and identity. It also serves as an

[28] Michael McDonnell, ed., *Remembering the Revolution: Memory, History, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 4-5; Lyn Spillman, "When Do Collective Memories Last? Founding Moments in the United States and Australia," *Social Science History* 22, No. 4 (Winter 1988): 468.

indicator of the changing values within American society as it relates to inclusion and diversity. Further, the evolving historical narrative of American origins reveals the dynamic nature of collective memory and the idea that memory is not a fixed statue in time, but is malleable and at the mercy of a society's constantly changing values and identities.

Chapter 1: 1976 American Revolution Bicentennial

"Justice, justice, justice, justice. We've never had any of that justice – and now you people want us to celebrate!" exclaimed Robert Burnett, the tribal chairman of the Rosebud Sioux tribe from South Dakota, in a 1975 meeting. Burnett was one of several Native American leaders who met with John W. Warner, the head of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA), just months before the official start of the Bicentennial celebration of the American Revolution, to voice his concerns with the federal agency's call for Native American participation in the fête. "The bicentennial is hypocritical because it makes heroes out of men who have stolen our lands and our lives. I simply cannot celebrate the name or the deeds of such men," Burnett continued; the room filled with an air of bitterness and irritation at the prospect. Warner, unsure of how to respond to these concerns, sat in silence smoking his pipe.[29]

The views of Burnett and other Indigenous leaders who met with Warner were representative of many Native Americans who felt they had nothing to celebrate on the occasion of the United States' 200th anniversary of independence. Other minority groups shared this stance, believing that organizers had conceived of the Bicentennial too narrowly and failed to include the histories and contributions of their groups in the federal planning of the celebration. Their criticisms proved too powerful to ignore. By the time the Bicentennial took place, the official period designated as March 1, 1975 to December 31, 1976, federal planners heard and responded to various criticisms launched at the celebration and made a dramatic shift in their planning: they decided to move from one culminating event organized at the federal level to a more localized and grassroots approach. As a result of complaints like Burnett's, the celebration

[29] James T. Wooten, "Indians Balk at a Role in Bicentennial," *New York Times*, January 31, 1975.

of the Bicentennial instead emphasized the importance of local communities and the cultural pluralism that exists in America.[30] This move placated much of the criticism, but not all of it. Many Native Americans still criticized the principles behind celebrating the Bicentennial of the American Revolution, noting that they could not celebrate the immense loss their peoples had experienced as a result of colonialism and the founding of the nation by European settlers. They also criticized their ongoing tense relations with the federal government, bringing national attention to the issues they currently faced and expressing that the United States had not yet fully realized many of the founding principles that originated during the Revolutionary era.

In analyzing the Native American experience during the American Revolution Bicentennial celebration of the mid-1970s, this chapter explores the extent to which Indigenous people participated in or contested the event and demonstrates how Native engagement with the Bicentennial altered the federal commemoration. Although constrained by space and limited sources to assess with exact precision how many Indigenous people participated in or reacted to the Bicentennial and what point of view the majority possessed, the available evidence demonstrates that Native Americans were able to significantly influence the Bicentennial as well as popular understandings of the American Revolution and Native Americans.

This chapter argues that Native American criticism of the Bicentennial not only brought national attention to Indigenous populations, but also transformed the Bicentennial itself, along with several other factors, to become a more inclusive event. As the federal Bicentennial planners originally sought to promote conventional and celebratory narratives of the American Revolution, Indigenous contestation to this narrative encouraged the federal planners to create

[30] "'76 Bicentennial Cuts Back as Mood Shifts," *New York Times*, July 4, 1973; James T. Wooten, "The American Bicentennial Begins With A Crowded Calendar and an Uncertain Focus," *New York Times*, March 2, 1975; Bicentennial Ethnic/Racial Coalition, *National Bicentennial Ethnic Racial Council Conference Report*, (Washington, D.C.: American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, 1975), 3.

more inclusion within the commemoration to appease those in opposition and ensure that the Bicentennial reflected a diverse American public. This is most apparent in the Bicentennial planning organization's decision to create a council, the Bicentennial Ethnic Racial Council (BERC), to help inform the planning committee and work to place more emphasis on diversity and inclusion within the commemoration. This unprecedented action marked the first time that a federal body sought guidance from a diverse group of ethnic and racial minorities regarding official policy and program recommendations.[31]

In general, two distinct Indigenous responses to the Bicentennial emerge. On one hand, some denounced the event entirely, planning to either boycott the celebration or hold their own counter commemorations, such as the Centennial of the Battle of Little Bighorn. Others believed the Bicentennial presented opportunities to publicize the modern plight of Native communities on a national scale while also promoting Native culture, history, and the contributions made by Indigenous groups to the nation as a whole. They saw Native American participation in the Bicentennial as a paramount occasion to narrate their own story. These figures held that if Native Americans did not choose to participate, federal planners might present their history, contributions, and culture in an unauthentic or less important light.

Interpretation of the Native American experience in the Bicentennial is crucial to our understanding of collective memory of the American Revolution and views on American identity in the 1970s. Many Americans considered (and continue to find) the American Revolution a formative event for the founding of the nation; it is arguably viewed as "*the* nation-building event" and serves to create a sense of national identity.[32] Yet the precise message of the

[31] "Ethnic America: Not A Melting Pot but a Salad Bowl," *Bicentennial Times*, 3 (December, 1976).
[32] Michael McDonnell, ed., *Remembering the Revolution: Memory, History, and Nation Making from Independence to the Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 20.

Revolutionary moment remains up for debate. Examining the ways Americans debated how to commemorate such a seminal event 200 years later aids in our understanding of American identity and memory as it shifts from group to group, and generation to generation. Examining reactions to those depictions, especially from historically marginalized groups, further illustrates that American identity and historical memory is constantly in flux.

When historically marginalized groups contest the popular narrative of the American Revolution, they demonstrate that one prevailing narrative of such a seminal event cannot sufficiently reflect the diverse citizenship of the United States. A deeper examination of Native American contestation to the American Revolution Bicentennial unveils challenges to the conventional narrative of the American Revolution as a unifying event buoyed by the ideals of equality and freedom.[33] It also reveals the malleable nature of memory and identity while further promoting the need for inclusiveness within the popular telling of America's founding and the demand to advance promises of equality in contemporary times. Opponents to the mainstream narrative promoted by the federal Bicentennial argued for a recasting of the narrative that did not just simply add Indigenous people to the story, but presented an authentic telling of how the American Revolution affected Native communities. This demand signaled growing concerns for more inclusive history, which, as we will see in chapter two, continue into the 1990s and remain an ongoing battle even today.

[33] For a further understanding of the traditional narrative on the American Revolution, see McDonnell, ed., *Remembering the Revolution*, 2; Janice Hume, *Popular Media and the American Revolution: Shaping Collective Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 118; Sarah Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

Troubled Beginnings: The Bicentennial Planning Efforts and Early Controversy

On July 4, 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law a bill creating the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission (ARBC). Charged with the task of planning and implementing a national "observance of the nation's 200th anniversary," the ARBC sought to recapture "the majestic significance of the Revolution" to both the American people and the world at large. The bill stated that in addition to planning "celebrations at the national level," the ARBC would also lend a "helping hand" to state and local commemorations.[34] While federal planning efforts began in 1966, localized planning efforts were underway much earlier. Washington, D.C., Boston, and Philadelphia all "hoped to lay claim to the Bicentennial."[35] At least a decade earlier, the city of Philadelphia had developed plans for an international exposition akin to a World's Fair perhaps believing that a singular culminating event that occurred in Philadelphia during the American Revolution's Centennial celebration would be repeated one hundred years later.[36] Eventually this proposal would receive serious consideration from the ARBC and approval from President Richard Nixon.[37]

Due to organizational issues and financial woes, the ARBC accomplished virtually nothing until 1968 when Congress finally acted on the Commission's request for funding and appropriated $150,000 for staffing and other operational costs.[38] By 1970, the Commission submitted an official plan to President Nixon. The ARBC recommended that the celebration

[34] American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, *The Bicentennial of the United States of America: A Final Report to the People,* 5 Vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977): 2:2; hereafter cited as *Final Report*; "President Signs Bicentennial Bill," *New York Times,* July 9, 1966.
[35] Capozzola, "It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country," 31
[36] During the American Revolution Centennial Commemoration in 1876, Philadelphia hosted a Centennial Exposition. This event was the singular, culminating event of the Centennial. See "The Centennial Exposition," *Bicentennial Times,* Volume 3, July 1976; Allen, *Trans-Indigenous,* 59; *Final Report,* 1:240-242; Capozzola, "It Makes You Want to Believe in the Country," 29-31.
[37] *Final Report,* 1:244 and 2:4.
[38] *Final Report,* 1:240-242.

include three basic guidelines and three themes. The guidelines stated that the Bicentennial needed to be national in scope, the celebration's primary year was to be 1976 with a focal date of July 4, 1976, and that the "Bicentennial should be a time for Americans to review and reaffirm the basic principles on which the nation was founded." The themes set by the ARBC were: (1) *Heritage '76*; (2) *Festival USA*; and (3) *Horizons '76*.[39] *Heritage '76* was meant to commemorate the historic past of the founding of the nation, *Festival USA* celebrated the culture, diversity, and traditions of the American people, and *Horizons '76* sought to plan for the future and create lasting contributions towards the next century.[40] The overarching goal of the Bicentennial was to "unite the nation in purpose and dedication to the advancement of human welfare."[41] In establishing these guidelines, themes, and central goal, the ARBC clearly anticipated that the Bicentennial would be a unifying event that would not only look backwards to the past, but would also celebrate the modern day and look forward to the future. Nixon endorsed the proposal and instructed the Secretary of State to proceed in planning for an exposition in Philadelphia as the Bicentennial's centerpiece event.[42]

With the federal Bicentennial plans moving forward, evidence of dissent appeared early on. In the wake of the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King and in the midst of the increasingly unpopular conflict in Vietnam, many American citizens felt disillusioned with the country and expressed criticism over the rosy, patriotic vision put forth by the ARBC. In a 1969 *New York Times* opinion piece titled "The Real Revolution – Or Doodle Dandy?," Eric F. Goldman, a history professor at Princeton University, spoke of the American public's disaffection with the federal government as he lamented the "malaise" that marked

[39] *Final Report*, 2:4.
[40] *Final Report*, 1: Introduction (unnumbered).
[41] *Final Report*, 1:242.
[42] *Final Report*, 1:244 and 2:4.

"many thoughtful Americans" who felt that "basic institutions and traditions of the United States" had been "distorted." He also denounced the corporate interests that sought to turn the Bicentennial into a "blatantly commercialized fife-and-drumming" affair, promoting "an attic version of the idea of liberty."[43] With the influence of the civil rights movement still resonating, Goldman's writing revealed the disconnect between the founding ideals of liberty and the nation's inability to live up to it. In addition to complaints over what some viewed as an overly commercial portrayal of the American Revolution, discord emerged over the plans for the exposition in Philadelphia. At a price tag of close to $2 billion, the centerpiece Bicentennial event in Philadelphia had many questioning the use of these funds.[44] Black leaders in Philadelphia voiced concerns that rather than funneling resources towards a "solution of fundamental urban problems," Bicentennial planners were more interested in "making the exposition a bonanza for downtown developers and business interests to the exclusion of the third of Philadelphia's population that lives in black ghettos."[45] Critics also attacked the ARBC for failing to reflect the racial diversity of America; until 1972, the Commission included no Native American members and only a "barely token" African American presence.[46] This was only the start of what would become a tidal wave of criticism hurled at the Bicentennial lasting until its conclusion.

Whether or not the Commission fully registered these complaints, by 1972 it had nixed its plans for the centerpiece event in Philadelphia due to cost and lack of public support. The ARBC voted unanimously against an exposition and Nixon "reluctantly" agreed.[47] Reports

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[43] Eric F. Goldman, "Topics: The Real Revolution – or Doodle Dandy?," *New York Times,* September 27, 1969.
[44] *Final Report,* 1:246.
[45] Donald Johnson, "Black Dissent and High Cost Snag Philadelphia Bicentennial Plans," *New York Times,* November 14, 1970.
[46] Ethel L. Payne, "Will blacks help mark 200 years of freedom?," *Chicago Daily Defender,* August 23, 1971.
[47] *Final Report,* 1:246.

indicated that a "shifting mood" in national attitudes served to foster a new, more modest, conception of the Bicentennial that would focus instead on local events with "little Federal participation or initiative."[48] Though this served to appease some critics, including a few members of the ARBC, Nixon and the Commission were not yet safe from fire.[49] Since Nixon had taken office, naysayers alleged that he was using the Bicentennial for political means "by loading the Bicentennial Commission with Republicans" who had "failed to plan a substantive celebration."[50] This criticism reached a climax when documents leaked to the press revealed a concerted effort to politicize and commercialize the Bicentennial celebration to the benefit of Nixon and the Republican Party.[51] Although a congressional investigation into the matter would ultimately conclude that the allegations made against the ARBC "were without foundation," Congress would act on a recommendation to dissolve the ARBC and establish a new federal planning body.[52]

President Nixon approved of a bill to abolish the ARBC and establish the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA) in 1973, to go into effect in January of 1974.[53] The *New York Times* reported that this change would be "getting the bicentennial back on track" as the Administration would focus less on "pageantry and politics" and more on the founding ideals of the nation.[54] With the change in the federal planning body, the ARBA also altered previous notions that the Bicentennial should be composed of a singular, culminating event, such

[48] "'76 Bicentennial Cuts Back as Mood Shifts," *New York Times*, July 4, 1973; *Final Report*, 1:246-247.
[49] Howard Taubman, "1976 Bicentennial Group Is Planning a Varied, Year-Long Celebration for Entire Nation," *New York Times*, August 1, 1971.
[50] "President Criticized on 1776 Celebration," *New York Times*, August 13, 1971.
[51] "Bicentennial's Goals Set By People's Commission," *New York Times*, February 9, 1973; "'76 Bicentennial Cuts Back as Mood Shifts," *New York Times*, July 4, 1973; Herbert Mitgang, "The Spirit of '73," *New York Times*, November 20, 1973.
[52] *Final Report*, 1:247.
[53] *Final Report*, 1:247-248.
[54] "Pageantry vs. Vision," *New York Times*, December 14, 1973.

as a World's Fair. Rather than a holding an event as the Bicentennial's centerpiece, "America and its citizens" would be the centerpiece, as newly appointed head of the ARBA, John W. Warner, declared. He continued to state that the ARBA would encourage "tens of thousands of individual celebrations – large and small – planned and carried out by citizens in every part of America."[55] With the change in focus of the celebration, the ARBA would still retain the original three themes created by the ARBC, *Heritage '76*, *Festival USA*, and *Horizons '76*, which served to guide all localized planning efforts as the Bicentennial year creeped closer.

While the pivot toward a more grassroots approach to the commemoration ultimately proved a successful choice, the Bicentennial would never be completely free of the criticism that marred planning efforts from the start. Public trust of the federal government continued to decline. According to the Pew Research Center, 65 percent of Americans trusted the government in 1966; by 1976, that number had fallen to 35 percent.[56] The Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War proved powerful events in bolstering the growing apathetic attitudes Americans held towards the Bicentennial. In addition, minority groups, and particularly Native Americans, continued to condemn the commemoration for ignoring the quest for modern day solutions to their contemporary plights and, instead, celebrating what many considered a problematic past. In time, these critiques would help to shape the Bicentennial itself.

[55] "Even Critics Overwhelmed by Celebration," *Bicentennial Times*, Volume 3, August 1976; John M. Crewdson, "Nixon Names Head of Agency for '76: Navy Secretary Warner to Coordinate Bicentennial," *New York Times*, March 11, 1974.
[56] "Public Trust in Government: 1958-2019," Pew Research Center, last modified April 11, 2019, https://www.people-press.org/2019/04/11/public-trust-in-government-1958-2019/.

Anticipation: Native Americans Look Towards 1976

The late 1960's and early 1970's marked an unprecedented boom in Native American activism. The "Red Power" movement called for better conditions on reservations, recognition of treaty rights, a dismantling of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs, and, above all else, self-determination for tribes. Several key events throughout this period created an environment ripe for collective action against a Bicentennial commemoration that many activists deemed as exclusionary to Indigenous groups. Prominent Native American activist group the American Indian Movement (AIM) had formed in 1968, followed by the nineteen-month occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969 to 1971, and the "Trail of Broken Treaties" march on Washington D.C. in 1972. In 1973, activists occupied Wounded Knee for seventy-three days.[57] Activists used these conflicts to bring attention to their contemporary demands for sovereignty, treaty rights, and the preservation of Native culture.[58]

As we shall see, though the Bicentennial elicited two distinct Indigenous perspectives, Native Americans engaged with the Bicentennial viewed the ability for Native Americans to determine if or how they will participate in the Bicentennial as of the upmost importance. A more moderate approach called for Native participation within the federal Bicentennial so that an authentic Indigenous voice would emerge within the official activities. These activists viewed official engagement with the Bicentennial as an opportunity to alter what many saw as an overly patriotic commemoration that did not fully consider how the American Revolution might have negatively affected Native populations. Others, which I will characterize as radical, saw their opposition and protest to the federal Bicentennial as the most effective way to ensuring the

[57] Akwesasne Notes, ed., *Basic Call to Consciousness* (Summertown, TN: Native Voices, 1978), 9-11 and 18-20.
[58] Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: The Free Press, 2001): 66.

Native perspective surfaced. Protest to the commemoration represented their outright rejection to how the Bicentennial promoted the Revolutionary narrative and provided a means to draw attention to their perspectives and their contemporary demands.

From the start of the ARBC's planning efforts, Native Americans led discussions debating how they should respond to the affair, responses that would ultimately shape the more inclusive tone the Bicentennial took by 1976. In 1973, a national conference gathering Indigenous representation from over thirty tribes convened at the University of Arizona to "stimulate the discussion and exchange of Indian views regarding the coming Bicentennial celebration."[59] The conference, officially titled American Indian Week Conference, was organized by the University of Arizona's Amerind Club and funded in part by the ARBC.[60] This conference was the earliest major event in which Native Americans gathered on a national scale to discuss a response to the Bicentennial.[61] One of the student conference organizers was a Pawnee-Crow from Colorado named Thomasine Hill, who had served as the only Native American member of the ARBC.

Appointed to the ARBC in 1972, Hill recognized early on the significance the Bicentennial held for many members of the Native American community. In her statement to Congress during the Senate's August 1972 oversight hearings of the ARBC, she articulated the views of many Native Americans, stating that "we Indians have little to celebrate by this event

[59] Joy Chaudhuri, ed., *Indians and 1976: Native Americans Look at the American Revolution Bicentennial Observance* (Tucson, AZ: Amerind Club, University of Arizona, 1973): iii; hereafter cited as *Indians and 1976*; "ARBC Resolution Encourages the Involvement of All Constituencies," *Bicentennial Newsletter*, Volume 4, No. 6, Summer 1973, Box 2, Folder 1, E. Alvin Gerhardt Papers, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.
[60] *Indians and 1976*, iii-iv. "ARBC Resolution Encourages the Involvement of All Constituencies," *Bicentennial Newsletter*, Volume 4, No. 6, Summer 1973, Box 2, Folder 1, E. Alvin Gerhardt Papers, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.
[61] Allen, *Trans-Indigenous*, 62.

because, in fact, we lost a country. At the same time, I believe that through the bicentennial we have an opportunity of understanding… the uniqueness of …groups that make up our Nation."[62] In setting the scene for Indigenous objection to the Bicentennial, Hill also envisioned the opportunities the commemoration presented to further understanding of American diversity. Hill described the three options she believed the Bicentennial presented to Native Americans: "we can either reject the whole concept of the Bicentennial and not become involved, or we can hear about the Bicentennial and let someone else represent us and react; or we become involved."[63] These three choices presented a summation of Indigenous responses to the Bicentennial that would be discussed in depth over the next few years. Overall, Hill's testimony appeared to embrace an optimistic view of the Bicentennial, while also calling on the Bicentennial planners to rethink their approach in certain aspects. Stating that Native American participation in the Bicentennial could be an "act of faith" towards a "new era of liberty and equality," Hill encouraged the federal Bicentennial planners to increase Native American representation of the Commission's members and consultants.[64] With Hill's testimony foreshadowing the conversation at the American Indian Week Conference, a larger group of Native voices continued to emerge in the years leading up to the Bicentennial year.

The American Indian Week Conference proved to be more than just a forum for Indigenous people to discuss their views and responses to the Bicentennial; it also resulted in producing recommendations to the ARBC and President Nixon that would ultimately come to fruition and usher in important changes for the observance. Of the three choices Hill believed

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[62] American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, *Hearing, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Sessions, on H.R. 13649 and H.R. 13828* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972): 499.
[63] American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, *Hearing, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Sessions, on H.R. 13649 and H.R. 13828I*, 500-501.
[64] American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, *Hearing, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Sessions, on H.R. 13649 and H.R. 13828I*, 499.

existed for Native participation in the commemoration, the options that received the most attention were that Native Americans should actively participate in the Bicentennial, or they should boycott the Bicentennial and organize their own counter commemorations.

Harvey Little Elk Wells, a conference attendee and member of AIM, lobbied for the boycott of the federal Bicentennial celebration and the establishment of a commission to organize a centennial celebration of the Battle of Little Bighorn, where Native Americans defeated U.S. forces led by General Custer 100 years prior.[65] To Wells, the American Revolution was "in fact a death knell of sovereignty, independence, and freedom of our people;" the founding principles of the nation were not of liberty and equality, but principles of "genocide and oppression" which have lasted for centuries due to America's "resolute adherence to these principles of inequality." Wells summarized the hypocrisy inherent in the federal Bicentennial planning efforts to celebrate founding principles that had been historically implemented in an inequitable fashion, especially to the nation's racial minorities. Why would those who had been excluded from these founding principles seek to celebrate them? Wells called on Native Americans to boycott the celebration, further elaborating that "there could be no greater disservice to one's grandfathers than to participate in this racist celebration." To boycott the celebration, however, would not be enough. In order to publicize Native history, culture, and the hypocritical nature of the Bicentennial, Wells proposed a gathering of Native Americans at the site of Little Bighorn on June 25, 1976 to "celebrate the centennial anniversary of our peoples' finest hour."[66] Wells presented a perspective shared by many Indigenous people, though not all believed this would be the most productive route, demonstrating the vast divide that existed amongst Native Americans as it related to their roles in the Bicentennial.

[65] *Indians and 1976*, 28, 35-37.
[66] *Indians and 1976*, 35-37.

Others at the conference spoke of the need for Indigenous participation in the Bicentennial, insisting that Native voices needed to play a role in the commemoration. This perspective viewed the Bicentennial as an opportunity to champion for solutions to the contemporary problems faced by Native communities and to educate the population at large on Native Americans. In a summary of multiple caucus discussions from the conference's final report, participants stated that "American Indians need to have a strong voice" in the Bicentennial "to dispel the ignorance of the majority of the American public regarding the Indian's way of life."[67] They suggested that the Bicentennial offered opportunities to advance historical research on Native Americans, increase educational programs for Natives and non-Natives, preserve Indigenous culture, and advocate for improved living conditions on reservations.[68] While these areas all provided reasons for Native American participation, these discussions above all stressed the self-determination of Native communities during the Bicentennial, asserting that "our needs should be met according to our standard instead of those of the whiteman."[69] Whether or not Native Americans would choose to engage with the Bicentennial, all were unyielding in their resolve for Indigenous agency.

The conference held at the University of Arizona in January of 1973 was a highly constructive forum towards crafting a response to the Bicentennial, even if it was not a fully unified response. At least two significant factions emerged: those who called for a boycott and those who believed it necessary to participate. While the Bicentennial boycotters remained firm, others believed this position offered "no real or constructive solutions." A vote taken at the conclusion of the conference revealed that the majority of attendees were in favor of

[67] *Indians and 1976*, 12.
[68] *Indians and 1976*, 12-13, 24-27.
[69] *Indians and 1976*, 14.

participation.[70] In the end, conference attendees passed three resolutions that were then sent forward to President Nixon, national and state level Bicentennial committees, and over 500 Native American reservations and organizations.[71] The essence of the three resolutions boiled down to expanding Native American representation and input towards federal and state Bicentennial plans.[72]

The conference stimulated real change by the ARBC. By September 8, 1973, the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission had passed resolutions directly influenced by the recommendations made from the American Indian Week Conference. Noting that "many American citizens today do not feel recognized nor involved" with the Bicentennial, the ARBC resolved that:

> (1) The ARBC acknowledge the ethnic and cultural diversity of our citizenry and the contribution of this pluralism to America, (2) the ARBC encourage and enhance this pluralism in the observance of the 200th anniversary, and (3) the ARBC, as a commission and through its program committees, actively and consistently seek the participation of all constituencies in the planning, development and implementation of our Nation's Bicentennial.[73]

In addition, the ARBC credited the American Indian Week Conference for spurring these resolutions during their multi-day discussion regarding Native American participation in the Bicentennial. The conference had not only helped the Native Amercian participants express their thoughts on the matter, but also had a direct effect on transforming aspects of the Bicentennial observance. Once 1976 arrived, the Bicentennial celebration would be more than a traditional remembrance of the American Revolution, failing to recognize the contentious past and the need

[70] *Indians and 1976*, 49.
[71] Thomasine Hill to Richard M. Nixon, January 19, 1973, quoted in *Indians and 1976*, 65-66.
[72] *Indians and 1976*, 63-64.
[73] "ARBC Resolution Encourages the Involvement of All Constituencies," *Bicentennial Newsletter*, Volume 4, No. 6, Summer 1973, Box 2, Folder 1, E. Alvin Gerhardt Papers, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.

for continuing efforts towards fulfilling ideals of equality and freedom. Because of Native American engagement with the Bicentennial, the ARBC placed more emphasis on valuing the pluralism and ethnic diversity that existed in the country. This recasting of the Bicentennial served to create an enduring legacy in a growing movement for diversity and inclusiveness. While scholars like Chadwick Allen have analyzed Indigenous responses to the Bicentennial from the American Indian Week Conference, a direct connection between those responses and the ARBC's resolutions has been largely overlooked by historians. This evidence reveals the vast influence Native Americans wielded towards altering Bicentennial messaging and speaks to their ability to gain a foothold in the larger conversation.

The ARBC's adoption of resolutions inspired by the American Indian Week Conference represented a positive step towards the inclusion of and increased participation by Native Americans in the Bicentennial. A divide still existed within the Native community, however, as those committed to a boycott or counter celebration held strong in their perspectives. These objectors continued to lambast the Bicentennial, attacking the underlying principles intrinsic in commemorating the founding of the country that had resulted in the end of Indigenous sovereignty. With the federal Bicentennial planners still catching heat for their efforts, it became apparent that additional adjustments to the Bicentennial needed to occur to further propel the organization's commitment to inclusion. Like the adopted resolutions, positive change directly influenced by Native American involvement with the affair would eventually take root.

In November of 1973, the ARBC took an inventory of events or projects planned in relation to the Bicentennial by various ethnic, historical and cultural societies and organizations. The intent of the inventory was to "assure that programming and coordination of the ARBC

reflect the breadth and scope of our society."[74] Multiple Native American organizations were interviewed on their plans for the Bicentennial, revealing further evidence of disagreement within the Native community. The American Indian Historical Society, located in San Francisco, took a firm stance supporting a boycott, viewing the formation of the United States as a "takeover of Indian country," and expressing an "intense dissatisfaction" with the planning and programming of the Bicentennial as it currently stood.[75] The Navajo Nation in Arizona stated that they were "gung ho" in their plans to participate in the Bicentennial, asserting that although they were pleased to work closely with the ARBC, they believed the Commission needed to take stronger measures to include Native Americans in federal planning efforts.[76] The Colorado River Indian Tribes Museum took a middle-of-the-road position, expressing that while "tribes had little to be thankful for the Revolution," the Bicentennial did present possibilities for further research and educational opportunities involving Native Americans.[77] In sum, the report indicated a mixed bag of reactions to the Bicentennial; some organizations intended to cooperate, while others were hostile to the idea noting that "for the most part hostility comes from Indian organizations." The general consensus from many of the organizations was that the federal Bicentennial body was not making enough of an effort to include ethnic minorities in the planning or deliberations of Bicentennial plans. The investigator from the ARBC was most surprised to "hear constantly that he was the first direct contact that the organization or individual had with a Bicentennial representative."[78] The inventory report revealed deep frustration from many, especially Native Americans, that the federal Bicentennial planning

[74] American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, "Bicentennial Projects: An Inventory of Ethnic, Historical and Cultural Societies," 197, Box 2, Folder 12, E. Alvin Gerhardt Papers, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia, 1.
[75] "Bicentennial Projects: An Inventory of Ethnic, Historical and Cultural Societies," 9.
[76] "Bicentennial Projects: An Inventory of Ethnic, Historical and Cultural Societies," page number TBD.
[77] "Bicentennial Projects: An Inventory of Ethnic, Historical and Cultural Societies," 28-29.
[78] "Bicentennial Projects: An Inventory of Ethnic, Historical and Cultural Societies," 90.

efforts were not accurately representing the nation's diversity. It was obvious that further alterations would be needed to successfully include all citizens.

As 1976 approached, evidence of Native American discontent with the Bicentennial abounded. The *Akwesasne Notes,* a news publication of the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne in New York, was especially fierce in their criticism of the Bicentennial. A publication independent from any one activist organization, the *Akwesasne Notes* was a highly influential Native American newspaper focused on activism in the community.[79] For the most part, articles published throughout 1975 and 1976 in the *Akwesasne Notes* regarding the Bicentennial reflected the perspective of Native Americans deeply opposed to the occasion. In a piece titled "I Cannot Rejoice With You," Bobby Lake wrote that Indigenous people "have nothing to rejoice about" during the Bicentennial year. Lake described the atrocities Native Americans have been subjected to over time – "every conceivable form of malice, genocide, and discrimination" – and concludes bitterly that "after all my people have been through, I cannot rejoice with you."[80] Declaring that asking Native Americans to celebrate the Bicentennial "is akin to asking the Japanese to share in celebrating the historical technical advance inherent in Hiroshima," the *Akwesasne Notes* made clear their point of view when publishing this Jim Dance quote in large font in their Late Summer 1975 issue.[81]

In addition to editorial pieces, the *Akwesasne Notes* posited their perspective through images. Producing calendars, stamps, and pins to be sold as "sort of our answer to the U.S. Bicentennial," the merchandise promoted their position as clear as day with the words "200

[79] "We Never Intended to Start a Newspaper: A History of Akwesasne Notes," *Akwesasne Notes,* Early Summer, 1976; Doug George-Kanentiio, "Akwesasne Notes: How the Mohawk Nation Created a Newspaper and Shaped Contemporary Native Americans," *in Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press, Part 1*, ed., Ken Wachsberger (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2011), 109-137.
[80] Bobby Lake, "I Cannot Rejoice With You," *Akwesasne Notes,* Late Summer, 1975.
[81] "Bicentennial: The Native Perspective," *Akwesasne Notes,* Late Summer, 1975.

Years of Resistance" printed on said merchandise.[82] In the Late Summer 1975 issue, the *Akwesasne Notes* included a large pull out poster of an altered photo of Mt. Rushmore with text reading, "always remember – your father never sold this land."[83] By producing merchandise endorsing Native American opposition to the Bicentennial, the *Akwesasne Notes* illustrated efforts to raise awareness and consciousness both within and beyond the Native American community. The *Notes* encouraged readers to place pins, stamps, and posters in public spaces as "mini-reminders" of Native people, the federal Bicentennial, and the hostile relationship between the two.[84]

Although the *Akwesasne Notes* appeared overwhelmingly opposed to the Bicentennial, evidence voicing support for Native participation also cropped up from time to time in the publication, as well as in other Native publications. The *Akwesasne Notes* published quotes from Clydia Nahwooskly, a Cherokee working for the Smithsonian Institution, who spoke before a Senate panel, stating that the Bicentennial should not be a celebration of the past or the present for Native Americans. Instead, it "should be a time for heightened ethnic self-awareness and correction of inequities." The *Notes* also lent support towards calls from several Native leaders demanding more representation in the federal Bicentennial efforts.[85] Similar sentiments appeared in the *Indian Historian*, a journal published by the American Indian Historical Society. Charles Tate Norman, a member of the Chickasaw Nation in Oklahoma, responded to the Society's calls for Native commentary on the Bicentennial, articulating that while it is "very difficult to find cause for celebrating," the commemoration could "at least help to call more direct attention to

[82] "200 Years of Resistance Button," Advertisement, *Akwesasne Notes*, Early Summer, 1976.
[83] "Always Remember – Your Father Never Sold This Land," *Akwesasne Notes,* Late Summer 1975.
[84] "200 Years of Resistance Stamps," Advertisement, *Akwesasne Notes*, Early Summer, 1976.
[85] "Bicentennial: The Native Perspective," *Akwesasne Notes,* Late Summer, 1975.

the presence and the position of the tribes."[86] These instances gave weight to the varying perspectives of Native Americans who believed their participation in the Bicentennial presented a constructive opportunity. They also further illustrated the divide within the Native American community regarding the participation of Indigenous people in the Bicentennial. Though a unified response remained elusive, Native Americans all agreed that only they should determine what role they would play in the Bicentennial. The emphasis on Indigenous agency was the common thread that wove through all Native responses to America's 200th anniversary.

Criticism of the Bicentennial celebration of American independence, particularly from minority groups including Native Americans, was not ignored by federal planning efforts which, by 1974, were overseen by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ARBA). Under the direction of John W. Warner, the ARBA felt it necessary to address grievances voiced by Bicentennial detractors since a principle directive of the Bicentennial was to invoke the "true spirit of democracy" and assure full participation of all American citizens.[87] Leading up to the Bicentennial year, the ARBA would further pivot their plans, placing more emphasis on celebrating America's pluralism and diversity. In addition, more extensive endeavors were made regarding increased Native American participation and programming.

Warner requested the organization of a multi-ethnic and racial coalition to make recommendations and aid in planning in order to further understand how the ARBA could improve upon efforts towards "full and equal participation by persons of all ages, races and gender in the Bicentennial."[88] Warner's request led to the creation of the Bicentennial Ethnic

[86] Charles Tate Norman, "Commentary: The Bicentennial," *Indian Historian* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1974): 35.
[87] "ARBC Resolution Encourages the Involvement of All Constituencies," *Bicentennial Newsletter,* Volume 4, No. 6, Summer 1973, Box 2, Folder 1, E. Alvin Gerhardt Papers, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.
[88] Bicentennial Ethnic/Racial Coalition, *National Bicentennial Ethnic Racial Council Conference Report* (Washington, D.C.: American Revolution Bicentennial Administration, 1975), 1; "Minorities Promised Direct Line to ARBA," *Bicentennial Times,* Vol. 1, No. 9, 1975; American Revolution Bicentennial Administration,

Racial Council (BERC), signifying the first time a federal agency "sought counsel and participation of such a broadly based and diverse groups of ethnic and racial community representations." Though comprised of a vastly diverse set of citizens, members of BERC were unified in their belief that the Bicentennial could serve as a "springboard for better understanding of racial and ethnic groups and culture and their significant contributions toward the building of the nation," as they explained in their 1976 report.[89] BERC would eventually pass multiple resolutions and recommendations to the ARBA, considerably altering the shape of Bicentennial celebrations.

Formed in 1974, BERC brought together over 400 people representing various ethnic and racial groups at a three-day conference held in January of 1975 with the purpose of increasing racial and ethnic participation in the Bicentennial. Over the course of the conference, a Native American Caucus was established, along with other ethnic and racial caucuses, to individually assess programmatic and structural priorities. The Native American Caucus discussion reflected the apathy Native Americans felt towards the Bicentennial as a whole, but an optimistic outlook also emerged. The conference's report summarized the caucus discussion stating that "the idea of dressing up in tribal costume and dancing in the name of the Bicentennial" was of little concern to Native Americans, especially in comparison to the "dire conditions and crucial problems in Indian Country." It noted, however, that the Bicentennial had the ability to "represent a positive approach to building the long awaited bridges between people and cultures," fostering a greater understanding of all American people.[90] The Native American Caucus discussion delineated the

Bicentennial Ethnic Racial Report: International Participation in the Bicentennial (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), 4.

[89] Bicentennial Ethnic/Racial Coalition, *National Bicentennial Ethnic Racial Council Conference Report, 1.*

[90] Bicentennial Ethnic/Racial Coalition, *National Bicentennial Ethnic Racial Council Conference Report,* 3, 10, 20-21.

more moderate activist perspective of those who believed participation in the Bicentennial could lead towards constructive solutions in the Indigenous community. It also revealed a commitment to inclusion and diversity and helped to express BERC's resolve to shape the Bicentennial as an affair that would emphasize the importance of pluralism and acknowledge the contributions minorities had made to the country as a whole.

The BERC conference marked an unprecedented forum for various minority groups engaged with the Bicentennial to have a direct and considerable influence on Bicentennial planning efforts. Conference attendees clearly articulated strategies for improving the commemoration, positioning the Bicentennial as an opportunity to legitimize pluralism on a national scale.[91] Recommendations made to the ARBA included encouraging programs that reflected American diversity and designating the Bicentennial as a 'commemoration' rather than a 'celebration.' Warner took the discussions seriously. Upon the conference's conclusion, he proclaimed that he had been "deeply moved" and promised to take action on BERC's recommendations.[92]

Faced with pervasive Native American apathy and opposition to the Bicentennial, leaders continually sought institutional solutions that might bring them around, believing that Indigenous involvement with the events would demonstrate a meaningful commitment to inclusion. In 1974, the ARBA created a Native American Programs office headed by Wayne Chattin, a Blackfoot. The ARBA developed Chattin's office to assist in all programming related to Native Americans. In addition, he was responsible for reaching out to tribes across the nation to discuss the "many opportunities and contributions" the Bicentennial held for Native populations.[93] The ARBA

[91] Bicentennial Ethnic/Racial Coalition, *National Bicentennial Ethnic Racial Council Conference Report,* 7.
[92] Bicentennial Ethnic/Racial Coalition, *National Bicentennial Ethnic Racial Council Conference Report,* 5, 35.
[93] John W. Warner to Executive Directors of the Bicentennial Commissions of the 50 States, the Territories, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, May 27, 1975, Box 88, Folder: Mr. John W. Warner,

viewed the Native American Programs Office as a way to ensure that "the often-neglected contributions of Native Americans to the development of American society would be recognized in the Bicentennial."[94] The incorporation of Wayne Chattin and a Native American office indicated that calls for increased representation in Bicentennial planning efforts were heeded, further illustrating that Indigenous engagement with the Bicentennial had a direct influence on the positive transformations the Bicentennial underwent. Though it is not known how many Native American Bicentennial programs Chattin had a direct hand in, by the Bicentennial's conclusion, it was reported that a total of 1,041 Native American events were officially registered with the ARBA.[95] Chattin also helped to oversee the $8,500,000 of ARBA funds that were "poured into Indian projects during the Bicentennial."[96]

While the appointment of Wayne Chattin as an official ARBA staff member and the creation of an office solely for the purpose of Native America programming did address much of the criticism, some Native Americans continued to oppose the commemoration. The *Akwesasne Notes* stood unwavering in their condemnation of the Bicentennial and disparaged the appointment of Chattin as a way for "the Bicentennial Administration to gain acceptance of native peoples."[97] Undoubtedly the *Akwesasne Notes*, representing the position of Bicentennial opposition, viewed Chattin's appointment as merely token representation that failed to adequately address the historically contentious relationship between Native Americans and the U.S. federal government. Native people resolute in their hostility towards the Bicentennial could never be placated with the Bicentennial's amendments over time. This was because their past

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Mills E. Godwin Executive Papers, 1974-1978, Series III, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia; *Final Report*, 1:252; Comptroller General of the United States, *Planning for America's Bicentennial Celebration – A Progress Report* (Washington, D.C.: Comptroller General of the United States, 1975), 32.

[94] *Final Report*, 1:252.

[95] *Final Report*, 2: 263.

[96] "Indians Look to 'Horizons' For Progress," *Bicentennial Times*, October, 1976.

[97] "The Last Hurrah: A Bicentennial Wrap-up," *Akwesasne Notes*, Late Autumn, 1976.

and contemporary issues with the United States remained unresolved. Why would these populations want to celebrate or even commemorate the tragedies endured by their people to the benefit of colonizers? Instead, a commemoration of Native victory in the form of a Centennial celebration of the Battle of Little Bighorn seemed more suitable.

The Bicentennial Arrives: Celebration or Counter-Celebration?

When the Bicentennial year of 1976 finally arrived, Native Americans opposed to the national commemoration made good on their calls for counter-celebrations and demonstrations. They held a number of events in protest of the Bicentennial in 1976. These events revealed exasperation with the anniversary as well as attempts to publicize Native Americans' ongoing grievances on a national platform, especially as it related to their relationship with the U.S. federal government. The Bicentennial counter event that received the most attention in the mainstream press was the Centennial celebration of the Battle of Little Bighorn where, one hundred years earlier, Native Americans had scored an overwhelming victory against General Custer and his troops. The historic conflict against the U.S.'s attempts to claim Native lands held modern day significance to many Indigenous people, and brought up the subject in their own continued land disputes and a larger struggle for sovereignty and self-determination.

Both the U.S. federal government and various Native American groups commemorated the battle's Centennial. Reports characterized the federal government's commemoration as "low-key," describing the scene at the National Parks Service ceremony in which a historian detailed the battle as a "vivid feature of a long and tragic episode in our country's history." Meanwhile, about one hundred yards away, 150 Indigenous people from various tribes joined together in a

victory dance.[98] Overall, mainstream press coverage of the commemoration indicated an understanding of the victory dance, noting that in light of the contemporary problems faced by many Native Americans, including modern disputes over land, "it is easy to see why" Native Americans "would rather hold victory dances on the centennial of the big battle they won than join white people in celebrating the Bicentennial."[99]

The Centennial commemoration also marked a departure from past popular understandings of the battle. Instead of painting it as a "sacrifice" for American advancement, the brochure from the observance stated that the battle represented "one of the last armed efforts of the Northern Plains Indians to preserve their ancestral way of life." Further evidence of this shift manifests in the National Park Service's recommendation to rename the Custer Battlefield National Monument to the Battle of the Little Bighorn National Monument in attempts to "balance the story."[100] The *Akwesasne Notes* took a more victorious approach to covering the event, characterizing "Custer fans" as angry with the change in tone. They also drew contemporary parallels between the battle and modern day struggles against coal mining companies that wished to exploit Native lands.[101] Press coverage of the Centennial of Little Bighorn signified a growing awareness and understanding of perspectives critical of traditional "great men" versions of history. It also gave credence to Native American opposition to the

[98] Grace Lichtenstein, "Quiet Rite Honors Custer Battle," *New York Times,* June 26, 1976; Grace Lichtenstein, "Custer's Defeat Remembered in Entreaties on Peace," *New York Times,* June 25, 1976.
[99] Grace Lichtenstein, "After Custer, It Has All Been Downhill: Indians' Status Unchanged: Very Bad*," New York Times*, June 27, 1976.
[100] Although the NPS recommended a change in name in both 1972 and 1976, the name change would not be official until 1991; see Kammen, "Commemoration and Contestation in American Culture: Historical Perspectives," 197; "Custer's Centennial: Coal and Court Actions Replace Guns and Arrows," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, June 20, 1976. For additional reading on the Little Bighorn site, the controversy over the historical narrative, and Native American challenges to the conventional narrative, see Linnenthal, *Sacred Ground*, 127-171.
[101] "Custer Still Lives in Fantasyland," *Akwesasne Notes*, Late Autumn, 1976.

Bicentennial as a legitimate and justifiable position to take. In all, many Americans had come to embrace diversity and inclusion in the Bicentennial year.

Beyond the Little Bighorn Centennial, Native Americans utilized the occasion of the Bicentennial year to organize a variety counter events that brought attention to the present-day issues that plagued their communities. On Thanksgiving in 1976, a "group of New England Indians fasted at the site of the first Thanksgiving feast" in order to draw attention to their poor status due to "a government that they say has taken away their land and many of their rights."[102] Another counter commemoration was a march, held in December of 1975, marking the 113th anniversary of the mass hanging of thirty-eight Santee Sioux in Mankato Minnesota.[103] The counter commemoration declared by the *Akwesasne Notes* as "one of the most meaningful" was the Trail of Self-Determination, a caravan of Indigenous activists driving cross-country to the nation's capital to demand the dismantling of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and show support for self-determination and full control of Native lands.[104] While the Trail of Self-Determination received little to no coverage in national press, the Bicentennial counter event was deemed especially significant for Indigenous people opposed to the Bicentennial as it used the commemorative year as a channel to protest for better treatment from the federal government.

Counter commemorations offered Native Americans a means of publicizing their plight regarding a multitude of issues that afflicted their communities. The Bicentennial created opportunities for these objections to gain more nationwide exposure than perhaps may have been possible in years with less historical significance. While protest may have been the most productive route towards publicizing Native difficulties for some sectors of the Indigenous

[102] "Most Feast, But Indians Fast on Holiday," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, November 26, 1976.
[103] "Custer Still Lives in Fantasyland," *Akwesasne Notes*, Late Autumn, 1976.
[104] "The Last Hurrah: A Bicentennial Wrap-up," *Akwesasne Notes*, Late Autumn, 1976; "Trail of Self-Determination Caravan Heads toward U.S. Capital in Serious Effort to Bring Changes," *Akwesasne Notes*, Early Summer, 1976.

population, others believed participation in the Bicentennial would offer them the best means for securing national attention towards improved relations and understanding of Native Americans.

During the official Bicentennial period, Native Americans collaborated with the ARBA to create programming that ensured their culture and contributions to the country at large would receive their due attention within the commemoration. Much of this programming focused on highlighting Indigenous culture, history, contributions, and drawing attention to modern problems faced by many Native communities. In general, the Native American activities aided the Bicentennial's mission to celebrate America as a "pluralistic society built on diverse ethnic and racial contributions, cultures and heritages."[105] In forging a partnership with the ARBA, Native Americans used the Bicentennial as a means to increase visibility of their role in American society.

Ranging from fun to reflective, Native American programming demonstrated a wide array of content that drew public attention to the history and continued presence of Native Americans. A major Native American Bicentennial event, organized with the help of Wayne Chattin's office, was the American Indian Finals Rodeo and Pow Wow. This event was promoted with "much enthusiasm" by the ARBA and awarded a $50,000 grant.[106] The all-Native rodeo, held in Salt Lake City, was meant to showcase the "heritage of the Indian cowboy" and a celebration "of all Indian ways, of Indian history, or Indian future in the Third Century."[107] Representing numerous tribes, over 200 "Indian Cowboys" participated in what the *Bicentennial Times* characterized as "the most popular spectator sport on reservations and in Indian

[105] *Final Report*, 1:191.
[106] "All Indian Rodeo, Pow-Wow To Be Major Bicen Event," *Bicentennial Times*, October, 1976; "The Last Hurrah: A Bicentennial Wrap-up," *Akwesasne Notes*, Late Autumn, 1976.
[107] *Final Report*, 2:154.

communities all across the nation."[108] While the rodeo event brought attention to a fun side of Indigenous culture, other events conveyed a more contemplative tone. In Indiana, a re-enactment of the 1838 "Trail of Death" in which the Potawatomi were forcibly removed from northern Indiana took place; 150 Potawatomi died during this march to Kansas. At the conclusion of the re-enactment, two historical markers were dedicated to the tragedy.[109] Other activities placed emphasis on preservation, including the construction of an Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, the renovation of historical sites on the Rock Sioux Tribe reservation, and the establishment of the Buechel Museum Photo Archives that housed over 15,000 photographs of "Indian life on the Rosebud and Pine Ridge Reservations in South Dakota."[110] Native Bicentennial programs were also constructive, such as the Shoshone Tribe's use of Bicentennial funds to launch a water and sewer project, which helped to further bring national attention to Native American issues such as "treaties, water and natural resources, economic betterment, health, housing, education and general social growth."[111]

Although it is difficult to fully assess the number of Native Americans who actively participated in the Bicentennial, available evidence suggests a strong level of participation. The ARBA's *Final Report* concludes that 27,489 projects and 38,995 events, for a total of 66,484, were officially recognized by the Administration as Bicentennial programming.[112] Of those, 430 projects and 611 events, for a total of 1,041, were Native American activities.[113] Using these numbers, 1.57 percent of activities officially registered with the ARBA focused on Native Americans. According to the 1970 U.S. Census, 0.39 percent of the total population self-

[108] "All Indian Rodeo, Pow-Wow To Be Major Bicen Event," *Bicentennial Times*, October, 1976.
[109] "Indiana Community Pays Moving Tribute to Indians," *Bicentennial Times*, September, 1976.
[110] *Final Report*, 2:166; *Final Report*, 1:193; "Photographic Archive," *Bicentennial Times*, Volume 1, No. 4, 1974.
[111] *Final Report*, 1:193; "Celebration Places Focus on Native Americans," *Bicentennial Times*, July, 1976.
[112] *Final Report*, 2:257.
[113] *Final Report*, 2:263.

identified as American Indians.[114] Those numbers indicate that Native Americans were well represented in the Bicentennial's official programming. To be sure, these statistics do not necessarily paint a full picture toward understanding the level of participation by Indigenous people in the ARBA's Bicentennial, but they do provide a glimpse that suggests a high level of engagement in proportion to the Indigenous population. Whether or not Native Americans participated in officially recognized Bicentennial events, they used the occasion as an opportunity to actively engage in a dialogue with and about the Bicentennial, planning to either partake in an official ARBA activity, or in planning their own counter commemorations.

Altogether, Bicentennial programming related to Native Americans demonstrates an extremely diverse range. The Bicentennial provided many Native communities with an opportunity to showcase various facets of their lives while also cultivating a growing awareness of Indigenous people as a whole to the total American population. The various activities also reveal the ARBA's concerted effort to include the Native American population more fully in the Bicentennial commemoration. Native American engagement with the Bicentennial illustrates that they played an outsized role in the Bicentennial's pivot towards a grassroots approach that placed high value on America's cultural diversity in the commemoration. Over time, the Bicentennial became a far more inclusive event than what had originally been envisioned. This engagement with the Bicentennial also signifies that minority groups, through activism, have an ability to affect and influence the majority. Native Americans' alternative memory of the American Revolution, and their actions to publicize their perspectives, helped to introduce more nuance into the mainstream collective memory of the Revolution during this period. As Native Americans worked towards increasing the visibility of their point of view, they gained a place

[114] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population: 1970 Subject Reports, Final Report PC(2)-1F, American Indians* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973): x.

within the larger conversation regarding narratives of the country's founding and its meaning within contemporary collective American identity.

Assessing the Bicentennial's success is a difficult task due to the diversity of opinions regarding the commemoration left in the historical record. Overall, it could be argued that the ARBA's willingness to change their approach in commemoration towards more localized and inclusionary efforts were successful; Native Americans participated in high numbers. In this respect, they joined much of the rest of the American population who also engaged in large numbers. Thousands of events and activities were held all around the country; a total of 11,739 Bicentennial "communities" were established.[115] The ARBA estimated that the grassroots nature of the commemoration involved or affected 90 percent of the population.[116] If success is measured by "participants, not spectators," as claimed by the ARBA, then yes, the Bicentennial was successful.[117] However, this level of success must be qualified.

Disillusion regarding the Bicentennial among minority groups remained. In reports from the Bicentennial's focal date, July 4, 1976, evidence of both Native American and Black discontent appears. The Chief of the Hawk Clan of the Tonwanda band of Seneca tribe, Corbett Sundown, stated that, "instead of celebrating on July fourth I'll be crying, and why shouldn't I?"[118] In interviews of New York African Americans, the *New York Times* reported that there was a "consensus among blacks that the 200th birthday of the United States was more of a dramatic vent that pointed up continuing racial inequities of the nation than a cause to celebrate." One man interviewed stated that he would rather watch the Fourth of July celebration on TV

[115] *Final Report*, 1:77.
[116] *Final Report*, 1:266.
[117] *Final Report*, 1:191.
[118] Israel Shenker, "Indian Clan Isn't Inclined to Celebrate Bicentennial," *New York Times*, July 2, 1976.

instead of going to any events in person, further elaborating that "I would not have felt right showing up and even letting people think I was completely satisfied with this country."[119] Until the nation's continuing inequities were fully resolved, some members of minority groups displayed a resistance to the Bicentennial, which claimed to celebrate the ideals on which the nation was founded. According to press coverage, apathy among Americans as a whole appear to have remained as well. Philadelphia's Bicentennial celebration at the Liberty Bell was reported to have a much smaller crowd than anticipated; only 250,000 people of the one million visitors predicted attended the event. Reports also indicated that this low level of attendance was in line with many "other historic sites along the East Coast," including the Yorktown Bicentennial visitor center.[120]

Reports from the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration reveal a much rosier assessment. Acknowledging the difficulty in measuring success – "since there is no simple yardstick which applies" – the ARBA's *Final Report* concluded that an "unqualified yes" would be the answer to questions surround the Bicentennial's success; they had been successful in commemorating and contributing to the ideals delineated in the nation's founding documents, as well as "the American dream."[121] In addition, the report applauded the ARBA's efforts towards inclusion stating that, "the Bicentennial's emphasis on the nation's cultural diversity was surely one of the Bicentennial's hallmarks."[122] "Americans became more and more aware that rather than being a 'melting pot,' they were a pluralistic society built on diverse ethnic and racial contributions, cultures and heritages. The celebration of this diversity became an important part

[119] Thomas A. Johnson, "Few Blacks Inspired by Bicentennial," *New York Times*, July 8, 1976.
[120] Wilford Kale, "Crowd Prediction's Off, But Not Philadelphia Spirit," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, July 4, 1976; Kale, "Bicentennial Was Big by Being Little a Lot: Localities' Events Offer Measure of '76 Success," *Richmond Times Dispatch*, December 26, 1976.
[121] *Final Report*, 1:Preface (unnumbered)
[122] *Final Report*, 1:266.

of the Bicentennial," the ARBA trumpeted. Clearly proud of the emphasis placed on diversity, the ARBA gave credit to dissenting groups for having "a voice in shaping and forming the Bicentennial."[123] Concerning Native American participation, the *Final Report* did not conceal to the "caution, coolness and, at times, bitterness" many Indigenous people felt towards the Bicentennial.[124] Recognizing why Native Americans would approach the Bicentennial in this way, the report nevertheless declared that "Native Americans did participate in substance and spirit." As a result, all Americans benefited from a "better understanding and appreciation for each other."[125] The ARBA's final assessment, though skewed with overwhelming positivity, was explicit in the beneficial effect that Native Americans had on the Bicentennial's end result.

In the end, whether or not the Bicentennial was considered a success by its contemporaries, Native American engagement, criticism, and dissent played a significant role in the transformation of the commemoration. The Bicentennial's emphasis on the value of diversity highlighted an increasingly important facet of American values within mainstream society. While it is possible that this transformation may have happened without Indigenous engagement, as other groups in society were also vocal in their criticism of the Bicentennial, it is clear that Native Americans contributed to this in a substantial way, especially as it related to the role of Native Americans in the commemoration. Native Americans also aided in adding complexity to popular understandings of the American Revolution and Indigenous populations, creating a more comprehensive narrative of the country's origins and more exposure of contemporary Native Americans to the American public as a whole. Many Americans, including the ARBA, displayed an understanding of Indigenous contestation to the Bicentennial; they acknowledged the troubled

[123] *Final Report*, 1:191.
[124] *Final Report*, 1:130.
[125] *Final Report*, 1: 197.

past between Native Americans and the federal government, as well as the negative connotation these groups held of the American Revolution. Counter commemorations proved powerful tools in influencing these popular notions. They offered meaningful ways for Native groups to express their views that the Bicentennial, as a celebration of independence, liberty, and equality, was inherently hypocritical. The Bicentennial period was a time for reflection of these founding ideals; it was also a vehicle to critique the nation's failure to fully live up to those ideals.

The 1970s was a period of intense transition.[126] Influenced by the preceding civil rights movement, people of color helped to shatter the notion that a singular cultural consensus existed in this "Age of Ethnicity."[127] Although federal Bicentennial planners initially tried to evoke a unified vision of the American Revolution, it became increasingly clear that a single historical narrative could not fully reflect the breadth of American society. In many ways, minority groups' challenge to the traditional memory of the American Revolution mirrored challenges to the status quo that characterized the decade. These challenges had a profound effect on collective memory of the Revolutionary era and the founding ideals from which the American identity is derived. In analysis of the Bicentennial commemoration of 1976, evidence of dissent provided reason to approach these founding ideals in new ways.

While dissent to the federal Bicentennial commemoration created a forum for minority groups to confront contemporary issues regarding the founding principles of equality and liberty, increasing and including diverse understandings within long-standing historical narratives of the nation's founding remain unfulfilled. Native Americans will continue to challenge mainstream

[126] Beth Bailey and David Farber, eds., *America in the Seventies*, 2.
[127] Gordon, *Spirit of 1976*, 5; Eric Porter, "Affirming and Disaffirming Actions: Remaking Race in the 1970s," in *America in the Seventies*, 50-74; "National Bicentennial Ethnic/Racial Alliance: Program Guidelines," June 1975, access digitally from Box 49, Folder "1975/07/31 – Federal Agency Bicentennial Task Force," James M. Cannon Files, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

historical narratives regarding the country's origins, which will be explored in chapter two's analysis of the 1992 Christopher Columbus landfall quincentennial. It is safe to say that while contestation so the 1976 Bicentennial experienced qualified success in promoting diversity and bringing attention to present-day problems, inclusion of minority groups, particularly Native Americans, within historical origin narratives required further work. Harkening back to methods used during contestation to the Bicentennial, Native Americans will again utilize engagement with official planning efforts or protests and counter events as a means to challenge the narrative that the federal Columbus Quincentenary commemoration promoted, though this time with more militant approaches and more buy in from other racial groups. The quest for full inclusion remained an ongoing endeavor.

Interlude: 1977 Geneva Conference

A crowd began to form at the customs gate in the Geneva, Switzerland airport. Swiss customs officials were perplexed by a group of twenty-two passengers presenting small, brown leather bound passports with the words "Haudenosaunee Passport" inscribed on the cover. After informing the travelers, weary from a nine-hour flight, that they needed time to "study" the unfamiliar passports, the Swiss officials returned to the group of Haudenosaunee travelers with a special entry permit. The group of Haudenosaunee conferred on what implications the special entry permit offered. One man stated that the permit, "by virtue of being a 'special' permit" negated the validity of their passports. Others agreed. A representative from the Haudenosaunee group of travelers expressed to the Swiss officials that the special entry permit would not be acceptable to them; recognition of the validity of Native American nations was of the upmost importance to these travelers. After some discussion, Swiss officials returned to offer the Haudenosaunee an entry permit used for nations in which Switzerland had no formal relations with. The Haudenosaunee discussed among themselves and decided that this permit would be acceptable, as the Haudenosaunee had no formal relations with Switzerland. The travelers viewed the issuance of this permit as recognition from Switzerland of their right to travel with their own passport. Thereafter, Swiss officials inserted the permits into each passport as the Haudenosaunee travelers formed a single file line and walked through the gate into Switzerland.[128]

[128] Akwesasne Notes, ed., *Basic Call to Consciousness* (Summertown, TN: Native Voices, 1978), 57-60; International Indian Treaty Council, "The Geneva Conference: Official Report," *Treaty Council News Special Issue* 1, no. 7 (October 1977): 1. Note: other reports state that the delegation consisted of twenty-one to twenty-four Haudenosaunee representatives.

In September of 1977, one year after the Bicentennial, the United Nation's Special NGO Committee on Human Rights Sub-Committee on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Decolonization sponsored an International NGO Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations in the Americas in Geneva, Switzerland. The group of twenty-two traveling with their Haudenosaunee passports represented the Six Nations (Iroquois) Confederacy at the conference. The recognition of their passports as valid by Swiss customs officials represented what the Indigenous people of America delegates were looking for by attending the conference: formal recognition of their nations on an international stage. Their presence at the conference went further. It marked the first time that Indigenous people represented themselves in an official capacity at the UN.[129]

Following the success of activists' efforts to include a Native perspective within the 1976 Bicentennial, Indigenous participation at the Geneva conference signaled a culmination of growing efforts for Indigenous recognition in an official capacity; it would also set the stage for a new chapter of Indigenous activism in the early 1990's, which will be examined in the final chapter. As we will see, ideas concerning Columbus Day commemorations in advance of the 500th anniversary of the Columbus landfall discussed at the conference will begin to form a more tangible shape leading up to the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary. The purpose of this interlude is two-fold. It brings due attention to the 1977 UN conference as a key moment in Native American activism during the late twentieth century, and it provides a bridge between two eras of commemoration, the 1976 Bicentennial and the 1992 Quincentenary, where Indigenous activists

[129] John Curl, "Part 1: The Geneva Conference, 1977," Archives of Indigenous Peoples Day: A Documentary History of the Origin and Development of Indigenous Peoples Day, accessed January 29, 2022, https://www.ipdpowwow.org/Archives.html.

effectively challenged prevailing ideas on the origins of the country and introduced their perspectives to the mainstream.

The International Indian Treaty Council (IITC) played a major role in the conception of the UN conference. Formed in 1974, the IITC organized as "a platform to pursue the rights of Indigenous peoples under international law."[130] The IITC emerged during an upswing in Native American activism in the late 1960's and early 1970's. As mentioned in chapter one, several key events including the formation of AIM, the occupations of Alcatraz and Wounded Knee, and the "Trail of Broken Treaties" march had marked extraordinary efforts from Native American activists to call for better conditions and secure treaty rights. By 1974, activism to defend Native American rights and advance the self-determination of tribes was at a high point. It was then, at Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota, that the IITC held its first national meeting attended by more than 5,000 representatives from 98 Indigenous Nations.[131] In 1977, IITC became the first Indigenous Peoples' organization designated as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNESCO), and thus, was able to represent Indigenous interests in an international and official capacity.[132] Multiple accounts credit IITC with approaching the Special NGO Committee on Human Rights with a proposal to hold a meeting to discuss the creation of a process for recognizing the rights of Indigenous people throughout the world.[133]

A few years earlier, the United Nations declared 1973 to 1982 the "Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination." As a result, the Geneva Special NGO Committee on

[130] Akwesasne Notes, ed., *Basic Call to Consciousness*, 11.
[131] "About IITC," International Indian Treaty Council, accessed January 29, 2022, https://www.iitc.org/about-iitc/.
[132] International Indian Treaty Council, "The Geneva Conference: Official Report," 1; International Indian Treaty Council, "About IITC."
[133] Akwesasne Notes, ed., *Basic Call to Consciousness*, 11; Curl, "Part 1: The Geneva Conference, 1977."

Human Rights established the Sub-Committee on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Decolonization to research and organize action to further the objectives of the UN's declared decade. The Sub-Committee had been at work organizing a variety of international NGO conferences regarding different areas of racism and racial discrimination.[134] After the IITC and several other Native American activist organizations approached the Sub-Committee with the idea to look into Indigenous rights, the Sub-Committee agreed to sponsor a conference on the matter.[135] The International NGO Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous Populations in the Americas was the fourth of such a conference in the series, but the first on discrimination against Indigenous peoples. In its conference report, the Sub-Committee recognized its role in bringing international attention to the violations of Indigenous rights, but noted that the most important development on this front in recent years had been "the emerging ability of the indigenous peoples, in a number of regions, to organize themselves, to make their situation known and to state their needs and aspirations through their own spokesmen to the national and international communities." They wrote that the purpose of the conference was to "bring together first-hand information about the situation" and to recommend actions "that would help eliminate discrimination against" Indigenous people. The Sub-Committee credited the Indigenous representatives for playing an active role in the conference and its preparation.[136]

Dubbed as "an important historic event for Indian nations and peoples" by the IITC, the conference commenced on September 20 through the 23, 1977 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The IITC, with its newly minted NGO consultative status, organized the

[134] Special NGO Committee on Human Rights (Geneva) – Sub-Committee on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Decolonization, *Report of International NGO Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous Populations in the Americas – 1977*, September 1977, foreword (unnumbered).
[135] Akwesasne Notes, ed., *Basic Call to Consciousness*, 11.
[136] Special NGO Committee on Human Rights (Geneva) – Sub-Committee on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Decolonization, *Report of International NGO Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous Populations in the Americas – 1977*, foreword (unnumbered).

Indigenous delegation and documentation. The IITC reported that approximately 400 people attended with 100 Native American delegates and participation, noting that the attendance was "unusually high."[137] This conference was the first time that such a wide and united representation of Indigenous nations and peoples from various regions of the Americas represented themselves at a UN event. Represented were more than 60 nations from fifteen different countries.[138]

Opening remarks kicked off the conference with speakers ranging from Indigenous leaders and activists to UN officials. AIM activist Russell Means denounced the United States for committing "genocide" against Indigenous people in his remarks, but noted that it was not until the Geneva Conference that Indigenous people had a voice within the international community.[139] Other speakers reflected on the current condition of Indigenous peoples throughout the North and South American continents and pondered how to move forward to better these conditions. Abundantly clear within all of the opening remarks was a desire to advance human rights and self-determination of Indigenous people and ensure that the Indigenous voice was heard within international relations.[140] The Sub-Committee organized discussions within the conference into three commissions – economic, social and cultural, and legal. On the last day of the conference, each commission submitted a report on their discussions and findings and recommended plans of action. Following the presentations of each report and their recommendations, the delegates at the conference create a list of final resolutions. Some resolutions spoke to legal issues such as sovereignty or land rights, some spoke to investigating

[137] International Indian Treaty Council, "The Geneva Conference: Official Report," 1.
[138] Special NGO Committee on Human Rights (Geneva) – Sub-Committee on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Apartheid and Decolonization, *Report of International NGO Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous Populations in the Americas – 1977*, 1.
[139] International Indian Treaty Council, "The Geneva Conference: Official Report," 5.
[140] International Indian Treaty Council, "The Geneva Conference: Official Report," 5-12.

the role of corporations in the exploitation of Native lands and resources, and some spoke to the preservation of Native culture and social integrity.[141]

While the conference concluded with a long list of recommendations, Jimmie Durham, head of the IITC, deemed the recommendation "to observe October 12, the day of so-called 'discovery' of America, as an International Day of Solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas" as "one of the most important things to come out of the Geneva Conference."[142] Durham outlined exactly why this recommendation was so important, even though it did not receive very much attention at the time, in the IITC's conference report. First, he declared, the recommendation signified international recognition of Indigenous rights and the violation of those rights. Those who stood in solidarity bolstered the recognition of issues facing Indigenous populations and aided in the advancement of rectifying these issues. Secondly, he saw this resolution as a large step towards providing a more accurate representation of Columbus's arrival to the Americas within education. He writes, "children all over the world will learn the true story of American Indians on Columbus Day instead of a pack of lies about three European ships."[143] Durham saw the international solidarity day as much more meaningful than a symbolic holiday. With the establishment of an official day to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples of America, Durham believed that communities all over the world would commit acts of solidarity such as demonstrations, seminars, or fundraising events to promote a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to understanding Native peoples history in America and their current plight. The establishment of an International Day of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples would provide

[141] International Indian Treaty Council, "The Geneva Conference: Official Report," 22-24.
[142] International Indian Treaty Council, "The Geneva Conference: Official Report," 2 and 22
[143] International Indian Treaty Council, "The Geneva Conference: Official Report," 2.

"people and organizations a chance to do well-planned, unified actions in solidarity" with Native Americans' struggle.[144]

Efforts to recognize October 12 as an International Day of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples planted the seed for resistance to the 1992 Columbus Day Quincentenary and the establishment of a formally recognized Indigenous Peoples Day in Berkeley, CA. Durham noted that the Geneva conference revitalized activists' efforts back in the United States. They came home with a renewed and united sense of energy after what many considered a very important first step in organizing themselves. He writes, "we are the people who will liberate ourselves…no one else can do it."[145] Similar sentiments appear twenty-eight years later in Chief Oren Lyons's (Haudenosaunee) reflection of the conference published in a 2005 reprint of *Basic Call to Consciousness*, the *Akwesasne Notes*'s report on the Geneva Conference. Looking in hindsight, Chief Lyons recognizes the influence the conference had on decades to follow as it relates to the standing of Indigenous people in America. Lyons claims that by 1992, Indigenous activists had generated so much pressure against the Quincentenary that the United Nations proclaimed 1993 to be the "Year of the World's Indigenous People." He further contends, "Indigenous Peoples defeated Columbus in the international field of public opinion in 1992."[146]

[144] Ibid.
[145] International Indian Treaty Council, "The Geneva Conference: Official Report," 34.
[146] Akwesasne Notes, ed., *Basic Call to Consciousness*, 23.

Chapter 2: 1992 Christopher Columbus Quincentenary

"Columbus was the world's foremost optimist. He was very tenacious, very persevering. He never let go of his dream. That, in a way, is what the American Dream is all about," John Goudie, Chairman of the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, told the *Miami Herald*. Described by the newspaper as "eyes twinkling, hands flailing" and "cheeks rosy with excitement," Goudie's enthusiasm when describing Christopher Columbus and the upcoming 500th anniversary of the explorer's arrival in the Americas was palpable.[147] However, by the time of the quincentennial in 1992, controversy overtook enthusiasm because of the federal commemoration's emphasis on Christopher Columbus as an American hero and his arrival in the Americas as a mostly positive historical contribution. This emphasis would turn out to be a major misstep as its focus on a single historical narrative did not allow much space for more nuanced narratives and perspectives to emerge. By 1992, American society had experienced shifts in the ways that many valued diversity and inclusion. The reputation of Columbus and the ways American public culture understood the wider effects of his voyages were also undergoing a shift. While these new interpretations had begun to surface in academia since at least the 1970's, by the 1990's these shifts began to filter into American media and popular discourse. In large part, the widely publicized actions of Native American activists to reinterpret the Columbus landfall from an Indigenous perspective during the Quincentenary led to the wide-scale emergence of an important alternative narrative that reinterpreted earlier Eurocentric narratives.

[147] Ana Veciana-Suarez, "Hello, Columbus: A Cuban-American helps launch the 500th anniversary celebration," *Miami Herald* [no date], Box 31, Folder 17, Columbian Quincentenary Collection, 1981-1995 (bulk 1990-1992), Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Traditionally, many Americans credited Christopher Columbus as the "discoverer" of America. As the story has often been told, Columbus, an Italian mariner born in Geneva, sailed across the Atlantic in 1492 with ships provided by Spain's Queen Isabella in search of a direct route to Asia. Instead, he stumbled onto islands in the Caribbean, discovering the "New World" and proving that the Earth was round. It can be argued that his role in the history of the United States is foundational to the country's origin story. Over time, promoters of the story of Columbus elevated it to mythical proportions that symbolized more than just an explorer who traveled to new lands. As American Studies scholar Heike Paul has noted, this "American foundational mythology stages the 'discovery' and the subsequent settlement and colonization of the 'new world' in prophetic ways as an inevitable step forward in the course of human progress."[148] Columbus's ascent to the status of American hero can be traced back to the eighteenth century when many Americans began utilizing the symbol of Columbus to affirm independence from England.[149] By the late nineteenth century, Columbus had transformed to become an important ethnic hero for immigrants and Catholics, Italian-Americans in particular, as they staked their claim as Americans during a period of rampant xenophobia and nativism.[150]

To be sure, by the quincentennial year, this celebratory narrative of Christopher Columbus had lost currency as new questions emerged regarding the ideological effects of whose version of history was being told. Native Americans were crucial players in helping shift

[148] Heike Paul, "Christopher Columbus and the Myth of 'Discovery'," in *The Myths That Made America: An Introduction to American Studies* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014): 43.
[149] Paul, "Christopher Columbus and the Myth of 'Discovery'," 52-53.
[150] Paul, "Christopher Columbus and the Myth of 'Discovery'," 60-68. For more readings on Christopher Columbus and his shifting status as a symbol, refer to Paul, "Christopher Columbus and the Myth of 'Discovery'," 43-87; Stephen J. Summerhill and John Alexander Williams, *Sinking Columbus: Contested History, Cultural Politics, and Mythmaking during the Quincentenary* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), 7-33; Timothy Kubal, *Cultural Movements and Collective Memory: Christopher Columbus and the Rewriting of the National Origin Myth* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Amy Corning and Howard Schuman, *Generations and Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 23-45.

public opinion. The "discovery" narrative erased an entire population's perspective, Indigenous people of America, from the historical register. Subsequently, as plans for the federal 500th anniversary of the Columbus encounter were underway, many Native American activists around the country staged protests and counter events to ensure that their perspectives would be heard. Other Native activists utilized formal participation in the Quincentenary as a way for Native voices to come through in the official Jubilee Commemoration. As I will demonstrate, these activists' actions and words resulted in raising the consciousness of many Americans as it relates to the Indigenous point of view on the Columbus encounter and the idea that this pivotal event in American history conveyed complex messages about cultural encounter rather than solely positive ones. For that reason, not even the members of the Quincentenary Jubilee Commission intended the 500th anniversary of Columbus's landfall to be purely celebratory.

The Native American activists behind the shift in public opinion have not been given due credit for their part in constructing the reinterpretation of Columbus's arrival. This chapter demonstrates the ways in which they were pivotal in elevating a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the event, thereby altering and enriching understandings of American origins. These organized efforts made a lasting impact on how many Americans interpreted the Columbus landfall, as seen in the creation of the first Indigenous Peoples Day and a movement to revise school curricula to correct previous notions of Columbus and his "discovery" of America. This chapter also offers a thorough analysis of many of the key events surrounding the controversy over the Quincentenary and Columbus Day in the early 1990s, which will aid in understanding how an increasing number of Americans may have begun to alter their perceptions of the Columbus narrative that had been promoted for so long. It particularly centers the roles of Native Americans in insisting on vital changes to those historical narratives, as well as

involvement in rethinking the nature of commemoration and historical memory. Additionally, I consider why some efforts to "include" Native American perspectives did not prove successful, while others succeeded. In contrast to the 1976 Bicentennial, protests and counter events to the 1992 Quincentenary appeared to have an increased amount of support from various racial groups, indicating widespread favor for a more balanced and inclusive portrayal of Columbus's arrival in the Americas. The influence of this activism continues today as efforts towards replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day and promoting antiracist education have only accelerated since the 1990's.

The Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission (CCQJC)

Ten years prior to the quincentennial year of 1992, Congress reviewed the bill to establish a federal agency tasked with planning and conducting the anniversary commemoration of the Columbus encounter. Describing Columbus's "voyages of discovery" as the "greatest event in the history of the secular world," the senators responsible for presenting the bill to Congress felt that it was not too soon to begin the planning for the anniversary of "such an unprecedented event." Their discussion of the bill made it clear that the narrative they wished to promote in the commemoration would celebrate Columbus and his "discovery" of the "New World" as an overwhelmingly positive historical contribution in American history, calling the American people "the ultimate beneficiaries of his vision, courage, and travail."[151] Columbus had expanded European civilization, and for Congress, this necessitated a celebration of national scale. The bill required the commission to seek out cooperative actions with Italy's and Spain's planned commemorations, which spoke to the importance of including people of Italian,

[151] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Quincentenary of the Voyages of Christopher Columbus: Report (to accompany S. 2580),* 97th Congress, 2d Session, September 29, 1982, Report No. 97-639.

Hispanic, and Latin American heritage in the Quincentenary.[152] The bill, however, failed to include any reference to the Indigenous people who were already living in the Americas when Columbus arrived.

Once Ronald Reagan signed the bill to establish the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission (CCQJC) in August of 1984, symptoms of ethnic conflict appeared early on as the administration struggled to appoint commissioners as well as a chairman. The final bill stipulated that the commission be composed of thirty members, with a chairman and vice chairman both appointed by the President. In addition to the thirty official members, the commission had the right to appoint honorary members and advisory councils to assist in the commission's work. The administration had to make all commission appointments within ninety days after the President signed the bill into law.[153] By August of 1985, only twenty-three members had been appointed, eleven of whom were Italian-American and three who were Hispanic.[154] According to the scholars Stephen J. Summerhill and Alexander Williams, Frederick W. Guardabassi, an Italian-American member of the commission, appeared to be the leading candidate for the chairmanship. A conservative businessman from Fort Lauderdale with an "affable personality and refined manners," Guardabassi seemed just right for the job. Summerhill and Williams indicate that "ethnic issues" interfered, such that he did not

[152] U.S. Congress, *An Act to Establish the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission*, HR 1492, 98th Congress, August 7, 1984. Stephen J. Summerhill and John Alexander Williams provide background on the rationale behind including Italy and Spain and the ethnic background of the legislators involved with the bill in their book *Sinking Columbus*, 36-38. They write that an Italian-American sponsored and nearly identical version of the bill was killed in favor of a bill sponsored by Hispanic Americans.

[153] U.S. Congress, *An Act to Establish the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission*. Although the bill to establish the CCQJC was first presented in 1982, it was not passed until 1984. Summerhill and Williams detail the delays that occurred in the passage of this bill in their book *Sinking Columbus*, 34-38.

[154] Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus*, 42; although the terms Hispanic and Latino are distinct (but often used interchangeably), it is unclear from the available evidence if these commission members were Hispanic, of Spanish descent or from a Spanish speaking country, or if they were Latino, of Latin American origin or descent. Summerhill and Williams use the terms interchangeably within their account, from where I have based my information on. See Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus*, 205.

receive the chairman position. Of the three Hispanic members on the Commission, only one was eligible for the chairman position. Summerhill and Williams allege that the reason that the administration did not appoint Guardabassi to the position was purely political. While Italian-Americans made more contributions to conservative politicians, Hispanic communities held more votes. Ultimately, the White House came to the decision to nominate a prominent Hispanic-American for the chairman position.[155]

John Goudie seemed to answer the commission's needs to resolve its ethnic conflicts. When Ronald Reagan nominated him, the commission unanimously elected him as chairman of the CCQJC at their first meeting in September of 1985. A wealthy Republican businessman, Goudie had immigrated to the United States from Cuba in 1960.[156] His successful Miami-based realty and development firm, Goudie and Associates, Inc., made him a prominent fixture in Miami's business community.[157] He appeared to be a perfect fit as chairman of the commission. Described as "charming and good looking," he seemed to possess the personality, experience, and cultural background to excel as chairman of the CCQJC. Goudie was known for his "good-humored charm" and thus had the ability to placate the Italian-American members of the commission and avoid much of the ethnic infighting between Italian-Americans and Hispanics.[158]

As an immigrant who found success in achieving his American dream, Goudie felt strongly that his story mirrored Columbus's. Columbus, Goudie told the *Boston Globe*, "was the first immigrant to the Americas, and embodied the entrepreneurial spirit." Goudie admired the

[155] Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus*, 41-42.
[156] Alex Beam, "The Selling of Columbus," *Boston Globe*, March 21, 1990, Box 31, Folder 17, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[157] "Biography: John N. Goudie," Box 31, Folder 17, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[158] Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus,* 46-47.

explorer for his perseverance and his ability to materialize a farfetched goal into something developed and profitable.[159] That view likely resonated with many immigrants in the United States, many of whom had been marginalized throughout American history and were often required to justify their place in American society.

Other commission members voiced similar perspectives celebrating the story of immigrants in America. Fellow member Henry Raymont wrote in the *New York Times* that Americans needed to "again grasp and take pride in what might be called the storybook truth about the New World: That the Americas were settled by peoples seeking new frontiers and status in a hemisphere free of the oppressiveness of the old European order."[160] Nor was he the only commissioner who believed that Americans needed to be reminded of Columbus's legacy. In a letter to his fellow commissioners, Guardabassi wrote "to most people the only significance of Columbus Day is that there are sales in all the stores, and that government employees, bank tellers, and others get the day off. It is evident to me as it must be to you that we have a massive educational job to do."[161] These commission members sought to use the Quincentenary as an opportunity to remind American citizens of Columbus's legacy and his impact on American history and contemporary civilization. In proffering this narrative of Columbus as a "bootstraps"-style American hero, commissioners failed to recognize that this narrative only provided one perspective on the Columbus encounter.

Although the main narrative the CCJQC sought to promote for the 500th anniversary commemoration presented a Eurocentric point of view, the group also made concerted efforts to include alternative narratives and address the negative effects of Columbus's arrival on

[159] Beam, "The selling of Columbus."
[160] Henry Raymont, "Columbus Can Mean A Still Newer World," *New York Times*, October 10, 1983, A19.
[161] Letter from Frederick W. Guardabassi to fellow commissioners, October 16, 1985, Box 31, Folder 3, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

Indigenous people. While calling Columbus "an American hero," chairman Goudie simultaneously displayed an understanding of Native American perspectives, telling the *Miami News* that "Native Americans want the rest of us to understand the devastation of their ancestral peoples and cultures that followed in Columbus' wake, and also to recognize that much of the native heritage still managed to survive." One of the commission's main goals in the planned commemoration, he explained, was to provide multiple perspectives so that there could be "something for everybody."[162] They aspired to use the anniversary as a means to unite Americans who share a common history. While the commission's intent was to provide an inclusive Quincentenary, perhaps learning from missteps of the 1976 Bicentennial commission, the controversy that would follow in the years to come suggests that the commission was unable to anticipate that their approach in centering Columbus and his accomplishments during the anniversary would be perceived as flawed and incomplete. Goudie said as much when he told the *Boston Globe* in 1990 that he preferred "not to dwell on the negative consequences of Columbus' voyages." Instead, he hoped to "look to the future."[163] He did not expect the commemoration's downplaying of the negative components of Columbus's arrival to incite criticism from those looking for a more comprehensive approach to understanding the event and all of its ramifications.

Inasmuch as Goudie and the other members of the commission sought to include a range of perspectives, they did not recognize how much that by the late 1980s, many Americans' ideas about race, identity, and history had transformed since midcentury. As we saw during the 1976 Bicentennial, popular culture had begun to embrace multiculturalism and emphasize the

[162] John Goudie, "Columbus' landing worth super jubilee…," *Miami News*, no date, Box 31, Folder 17, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[163] Beam, "The selling of Columbus."

importance of racial and cultural diversity in an effort to actualize the equality fought for during the many civil rights movements of the era. Native American groups fought against historical narratives that relegated Indigenous peoples to the sidelines.

Over the next few years, the CCQJC's work consisted of writing a report to Congress on planning activities and recommendations for the quincentennial, which revealed the commission's desire to provide a commemoration that would be "as inclusive as possible." The commission decided to have a theme that referenced the combined influence of Italy, Spain, and Portugal on the "New World," as well as a theme that discussed the "Old World" and the peoples native to the Americas.[164] These themes illustrate the commission's attempts at inclusion by recognizing and commemorating various ethnic groups in America. In contrast to the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, the CCQJC insisted from the start that inclusion was a necessity. Yet although they made efforts towards a widespread inclusion of all Americans, without Indigenous representation on the official membership of the commission, the commission was perhaps unequipped to present Native perspectives in a way that might reflect the desires of contemporary Native Americans. Their report still placed emphasis on Columbus as a figure worthy of a large-scale commemoration, which would prove to be a major misstep once the quincentennial year arrived.

Beyond establishing the Quincentenary's themes, the commission also had lively discussions regarding terminology when describing the Columbus encounter. When reviewing the language used in the report, commission member Nicolas Sanchez-Albornoz, a professor of history at New York University, told the commission he thought that the term "celebration" should be replaced by the term "commemoration" since "American Indians….do not have

[164] Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, *Sixth Meeting Minutes, March 5, 1987*, 22, Box 51, Folder 8, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

anything to celebrate." Goudie disagreed, claiming that the law called for a celebration; another commissioner agreed, stating that "although the term celebration can be offensive, many people will be celebrating." The commission decided to keep the term as is. They did, however, change a reference of Columbus's "discovery" to "exploration."[165] By the time of the next meeting three months later, the commission again took a vote on the term of "celebration" versus "commemoration." Commission member Raymont had seen recent press coverage of the Quincentenary and noted that the commission "seemed to be out of sync" with what was going on in the world. While a few commissioners still held to the belief that Quincentenary should be a celebration, ultimately the commission decided that since the term might offend a few, it should be changed to "commemoration." The commission took a vote and passed the motion to change "celebration" to "commemoration."[166] The discussion on the correct term indicates that at least some members of the commission understood that controversy was brewing and sought to address it. It also suggests that activists working to alter the older, celebratory narrative had already had an effect on the commemoration.

When the CCQJC finally submitted their report to Congress, they had settled on five major themes: "I. Columbus: the Man and the Visionary; II. Our Old World Heritage; III. Our New World Heritage; IV. American Alternatives: The New World's Contribution to the Old; and V. The Future: New Worlds then and Now."[167] While theme I raised Christopher Columbus onto a pedestal as a beacon of "human effort and aspiration," theme III acknowledged that there were

[165] Ibid., 28-30.
[166] Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, *Seventh Meeting Minutes, June 11, 1987*, 12-13, Box 51, Folder 11, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[167] Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, *Report to the Congress of the United States by the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission*, 9, Box 31, Folder 17, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

"real human costs" associated with his voyages.[168] Wisely stating that "commemorations of great historical events reveal the principles on which a civilization rests," the commission's chosen themes reflected their understanding of what an "inclusive Quincentenary program" would consist of.[169] The CCQJC wrote in their introduction that they felt the Quincentenary should "guide the people of the United States in their continuing efforts to embrace diversity within unity."[170] By creating themes that addressed various points of view, the commission believed that it was properly addressing diversity and providing a program that would include everyone. In comparison with past commemorations, such as the Bicentennial, the commission did create one of the most inclusive federal commemorations in U.S. history to date. As later protests would reveal, however, their version of an inclusive commemoration had shortcomings. Two major issues emerged from the way in which the federal government conceptually structured the Quincentenary: first, their focus on a single figure, Christopher Columbus, and framing him as heroic; and second, designating the commemoration as a "jubilee," which suggested something overwhelmingly celebratory. Although the commission made concerted efforts to include diverse perspectives and acknowledge the negative effects of the Columbus encounter, their efforts became overshadowed by the Quincentenary's emphasis on honoring Columbus, the man.

The law permitted the commission to appoint advisory committees composed of honorary members to assist them in planning, so in 1988, the CCQJC created the Native American Advisory Committee "to advise the Commission on matters pertaining to areas of special

[168] Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, *Report to the Congress of the United States by the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission*, 9-10.
[169] Ibid., 3, 9.
[170] Ibid., 3.

interest" in an effort to emphasize the "inclusive aspects" of quincentennial programming.[171] The Native American Advisory Committee included three prominent Native American figures: Dave Warren, a Santa Clara Pueblo and a program analyst at the Smithsonian, Suzan Shown Harjo, a Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee and Executive Director of the National Congress of American Indians Organization, and William Ray, a Klamath and member of the Oregon Commission on Indian Services.[172] The Advisory Committee's primary responsibility was to advise the commission on issues and programming related to Native Americans and to support outreach efforts to the Native community.

Because the members of the Native American Advisory Committee were honorary, the official CCQJC commissioners did not always include them in many important decisions that the CCQJC made, a fact that created tension. As a result, after serving on the committee for a year, Dave Warren turned in his resignation letter to chairman Goudie. He explained that the time commitment to serve on the committee was too great, but also that he felt that his status as an honorary member of the CCQJC rendered his presence ineffective. At a previous commission meeting held in Baltimore, official members had told Warren that he would not be able to attend a portion of the meeting, which Warren found unacceptable. "In order to effect the kind of changes that will facilitate a more effective involvement of American Indian representation with the commission," Warren wrote in his resignation letter, "the person(s) who represents American Indian interests on the commission must be official and actual, not honorary." Warren believed that having an Indigenous person on the commission would add credibility in the eyes of the

[171] Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, *CCQJC September 15-16, 1988 Meeting: Annual Report Draft*, 6, Box 51, Folder 15, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[172] Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, *CCQJC September 15-16, 1988 Meeting: Annual Report Draft*, 12, Box 51, Folder 15; *Memorandum to Members of the Commission from Paco*, May 13, 1990, Box 33, Folder 4, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

Native community. He minced no words. Without Indigenous representation at the "highest and most official level," the quincentennial commemoration would be a "travesty." Warren found the omission of Native Americans from the initial appointments to be a "slight to the native people of this nation and the Western Hemisphere." He recommended that the administration appoint a Native American member to the commission as soon as possible and suggested that fellow Native American Advisory Committee member Suzan Shown Harjo be appointed.[173]

Warren's complaints and recommendations fell on deaf ears. Ten months after Warren turned in his resignation letter, Native American Advisory Committee member William Ray asked to be appointed as an official commission member as there was a current vacancy on the commission, a request that the commission apparently disregarded.[174] By April of 1991, twenty-five months after Warren's letter and fifteen months after Ray's request, an organization called 1992 Alliance, formed as a means for Native people to respond to the Quincentenary, called on the commission to appoint an Indigenous member.[175] This, too, went unfulfilled.

Beset by organizational and leadership problems, the commission failed to address the lack of Indigenous representation on the official membership. In December of 1990, Goudie resigned as chairman of the commission after facing scrutiny for his financial dealings.[176] By February of 1991, commissioner Frank Donatelli took over as Goudie's replacement. Quoted in the *Washington Post* in July of 1991, Donatelli stated that the lack of Native representation on the commission was "clearly an oversight," and promised to appoint William Ray as an official

[173] Letter from Dave Warren to John Goudie, May 7, 1989, Box 50, Folder 3, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[174] Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, *CCQJC January 1990 Meeting: Native American Advisory Report*, Box 64, Folder 14, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[175] Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, *CCQJC April 1991 Meeting Minutes; Native American Advisory Report*, Box 64, Folder 18, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[176] Jeff Gerth, "Columbus Fete Under Financial Scrutiny," *New York Times*, December 17, 1990, A1 and B16. For further reading on the resignation of John Goudie see Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus*.

member.[177] Available evidence does not indicate if William Ray was ever appointed as an official member, but we do know that by mid-1991 William Ray's status on the commission remained honorary.

The commission's halfhearted commitment to Native American inclusion increasingly aroused ire. In May of 1990, the CCQJC co-sponsored a conference held in Santa Fe, New Mexico on the "significance of the Quincentenary for Native Americans." Goudie had hoped that this conference would help the commission to become "better acquainted" with the Native American perspective.[178] Native American Advisory Committee member Suzan Shown Harjo served as the moderator for the "Quincentenary from the Native American Perspective" conference held at the New Mexico Museum of Indian Arts and Culture. The *New Mexican* reported that 150 people packed into the theater at the museum, including at least 40 tribal representatives and prominent Native American activist Russell Means. Discussion at the conference revealed two distinct Native perspectives. One perspective, which I will characterize as more moderate and accommodationist, saw the Quincentenary as an opportunity to provide a more balanced portrayal of the Columbus encounter and reaffirm their status as sovereign tribes. The other group, viewed as radical by the moderates, rejected any participation in the Quincentenary. Russell Means presented the stance that the more moderate tribal leaders felt was too radical. The *New Mexican* described Means as "seething with anger" at the willingness of some Native people to participate in the commemoration. Describing the Columbus Jubilee as "the highest insult" to "the sons and daughters and every patriot of the whole Indian people,"

[177] Joel Achenbach, "Columbus Rediscovered," *Washington Post*, July 14, 1991.
[178] Letter from John Goudie to the Commissioners, April 27, 1990, Box 64, Folder 15, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

Means drew comparisons of Columbus to Hitler and Stalin, recalling Columbus's abuse of Native peoples.[179]

Some tribal representatives from the state rejected Means's approach. Taking a more moderate stance, Regis Pecos, executive director of the New Mexico Office of Indian Affairs, agreed that although there's "not much to celebrate among Indian people," he thought that the commemoration should be used as an educational opportunity, one that could "be part of a healing process in this country." Fred Peso of the Mescalero Apache tribe concurred, "we can't continue to be mad." Peso saw the Quincentenary as an occasion for economic growth and increased tourism on reservations.[180] These two varying responses to the Columbus commemoration mirrored those that had emerged during the lead up to the 1976 Bicentennial. Two distinct perspectives within the Native community existed during both commemorative events: moderates and radicals. Moderates were willing to work within the confines of a Columbus commemoration to increase visibility of their perspective. Radicals completely rejected any type of commemoration of Columbus; they sought a complete reinterpretation of the holiday and the historical narrative.

[179] Bob Quick, "Indian speakers say Columbus not cause for any celebration," *New Mexican*, May 18, 1990 and Bob Quick, "Indian leaders say utilize Columbus fest," *New Mexican*, May 25, 1990, Box 64, Folder 16, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[180] Bob Quick, "Indian leaders say utilize Columbus fest."

"The View from the Shore": Native perspectives, protests, and Quincentenary counter-events

Native responses to the Commission's planned Quincentenary Jubilee varied, but can be categorized into two general perspectives, as seen in the aforementioned discussion at the Santa Fe conference on Native perspectives. Some Native Americans believed the most constructive type of involvement in the Quincentenary was participation in official Quincentenary programming. These groups sought to use the occasion as a way to promote their point of view and ensure the Native voice was present in the national commemoration. Other Native Americans believed that participating in any kind of Columbus commemoration worked against their mission to reinterpret the Columbus holiday and traditional narratives of America's origin. They found protest to be the most useful type of participation during the quincentennial, believing that their direct opposition to the commemoration would be the most straightforward way to have their perspectives publicized. Both strategies proved effective in their own ways, but perhaps the two strategies working in concert together made the most impact.

The diverse range of Indigenous views were encapsulated in a 1990 issue of the *Northeast Indian Quarterly* titled "View from the Shore: American Indian Perspectives on the Quincentenary." Asserting that this special issue held particular importance, editor José Barriero described the edition as a report of Native voices offering their perspectives on the commemoration. Beginning in 1987, the *Quarterly* had surveyed various Indigenous leaders, educators, and tribal councilors on their perspectives for the 500th anniversary commemoration. Although "View from the Shore" presented a wide range, Barriero explained that a majority of

respondents believed "that the American Indian voice, among other culture-based viewpoints, should emerge within the Quincentenary."[181]

A survey conducted by the Indigenous Communications Resource Center enclosed in the special issue provides the most comprehensive evidence available of Native perspectives on the Quincentenary. Comprised solely of Indigenous respondents, the survey aimed to discern fundamental attitudes in Native communities towards the commemoration. According to their survey, the overwhelming majority of respondents, seventy percent, believed that October 12, 1992 signified "500 years of Native People's resistance to colonization," or an "anniversary of a holocaust." Twenty percent identified it as a "commemoration of a cultural encounter," and six percent described it as a "celebration of discovery." The survey also revealed that most believed that "celebrating" the commemoration was unacceptable. Most respondents saw the Quincentenary as some sort of opportunity with "public education about Native issues" as the most popular goal for Indigenous participation in the Quincentenary. The Indigenous Communications Resource Center saw notable value in planning educational programs for young people. Overall, they reported that respondents' attitudes towards the quincentennial "conveyed expressions of rage and reconciliation, grief and hope, fear and endurance."[182]

"View from the Shore" also included various articles and opinions written by prominent Indigenous figures, scholars, and activist that revealed a variety of perspectives ranging from those who sought to participate in the Quincentenary, those who preferred to counter it, and those who fell somewhere in between. Quotes from Suzan Shown Harjo, a member of the CCQJC Native American Advisory Committee, appeared within the pages arguing for a

[181] José Barreiro, "First Words," *Northeast Indian Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 1.
[182] Indigenous Communications Resource Center, "500 Years: Preliminary Results of a Quincentenary Survey," *Northeast Indian Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 21-22.

retooling of the Columbus "discovery" narrative taught to children. Harjo stated that this narrative served as the basis for misunderstandings and "puts Indians in the past tense rather than in the present or future tense."[183] Harjo was closely involved with the Quincentenary and efforts to include a Native voice in the commemoration. She walked the line between activists who wanted to work within the planned commemoration and activists who sought to actively protest it. As a member of the CCQJC's Native American Advisory Committee, Harjo demonstrated her commitment to working within the official Quincentenary's plans to ensure that Native voices were featured in the commemoration. At the same time, Harjo served as coordinator for the 1992 Alliance, a major national initiative by Native leaders to counter Columbus celebrations during the quincentennial year. *Native Nations* described the planned actions of the 1992 Alliance as "the most far-reaching response to the Quincentenary Jubilee celebrations of any to be attempted."[184] Harjo was extremely outspoken on her stance towards the Columbus commemoration. *Newsweek* featured her writings on why she would not be celebrating Columbus Day in their Fall/Winter 1991 special issue.[185] Simultaneously, her views were quoted in articles in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* urging Americans to listen to Native voices and asserting that the Quincentenary was not an occasion for celebration.[186]

Indigenous reactions to the Columbus Quincentenary varied widely, yet with a clear consensus that Indigenous people needed to contribute in some way, via either protest or official participation. While activists such as Harjo utilized both methods, some sectors of the Native

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[183] José Barreiro, "View from the Shore; Toward an Indian Voice in 1992," *Northeast Indian Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 9.
[184] "The Year of Indigenous People: The 1992 Alliance," *Native Nations*, January 1991, 10, Box 36, Folder 23, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[185] Suzan Shown Harjo, "I Won't Be Celebrating Columbus Day," *Newsweek*, Fall/Winter 1991, 32, Box 36, Folder 24, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[186] Joel Achenbach, "Columbus Rediscovered," *Washington Post*, July 14, 1991; Dirk Johnson, "As Discoverer is Hailed, The Discovered Protest," *New York Times*, October 14, 1991, A8.

community worked only within the confines of the planned Quincentenary, but many others were unwilling to take this route and instead planned protests or counter-events to push their perspectives into the mainstream. These efforts influenced increasingly diverse understandings of the landfall that unfolded during the 1990's.

Reflective of the great diversity of opinion, a wide range of grassroots movements by Native activists and organizers around the country spurred those protests. They also occasionally joined forces in both national and international efforts at which activists from around the Americas met together to plan counter-events and resistance to the Quincentenary. At times disparate and at other times unified, activists' efforts to publicize the Native perspective on the quincentennial were largely successful in gaining coverage in national, mainstream news outlets such that some cities, most notably Berkeley, California, rejected Columbus Day and instead celebrated the first Indigenous Peoples Day in 1992. These activists also succeeded in enacting long-term changes, from providing a more balanced portrayal of the Columbus encounter in school curricula to increasing public awareness of alternative narratives and perspectives on Columbus's arrival in the Americas. They also brought greater attention to contemporary issues faced by Indigenous groups in the United States.

Concurrently occurring during various grassroots protests in anticipation to the Quicentenary, Native protesting also emerged against what many Indigenous activists deemed retrograde portrayals of Native Americans. One of the most vivid took place starting in the fall of 1989 against a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funded exhibit titled *First Encounters: Spanish Exploration in the Caribbean and the United States, 1492-1570* that had debuted at the Florida Museum of Natural History located on the University of Florida's campus

in Gainesville, Florida. Considered the first major Quincentenary exhibition, the NEH described the exhibit as an examination of "Spanish efforts to explore and colonize the Southeastern United States and the early Native American responses." A planned tour for the exhibit would take *First Encounters* to ten different cities throughout the U.S. over the span of approximately three years.[187] *First Encounters* appeared, at first, as a promising exhibit that would give equal space to exploring the two-way encounter between the Spanish and the Indigenous people already living in southeastern North American lands. As Karen Coody Cooper's *Spirited Encounters* reveals, scholars criticized the exhibit for disproportionately presenting only one side of the encounter, not both.[188] The labels within the exhibit suggested the readers of exhibit labels as "we" – non-Natives – and "they" as the Indigenous groups. Although the exhibit included some Native perspectives, critics saw this inclusion as an afterthought that did not sufficiently address the Indigenous point of view, because, as alluded to in the exhibit, "'we' only have Spanish accounts."[189] While the curators of *First Encounters* had sought to provide both European and Native American perspectives, they admitted that they had not consulted a single living Native person.[190]

These problems did not go unnoticed by Native American groups. Activist Jan Elliott, a North Carolina Cherokee and editor of *Indigenous Thought* (a networking newsletter that linked counter-Columbus Quincentenary activities) reported that the exhibition was a "prime example of how institutionalized racism works to rationalize the continuing conquest of the indigenous

[187] National Endowment for the Humanities, *NEH Exhibitions Today: A Report from Humanities Projects in Museums and Organizations, Division of Public Programs* (Washington, D.C.: NEH, 1993), 17.
[188] Karen Coody Cooper, *Spirited Encounters: American Indians Protest Museum Policies and Practices* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2008), 111.
[189] Pauline Turner Strong, "Exclusive Labels: Indexing the National 'We' in Commemorative and Oppositional Exhibitions," *Museum Anthropology*, 21, no. 1 (1997): 47.
[190] Cooper, *Spirited Encounters*, 111.

peoples of this hemisphere by Eurocentric culture."[191] Elliott claimed that the language within the exhibit, the presence of a replica of the Columbus's ship, *Niña*, and the school tours for the exhibit that encouraged children to take "the role of explorers" and shoot at "imaginary Indians on shore" all offered justifications for the negative impacts of Spanish arrival on Native peoples. In response, she organized one of the earliest examples of counter-Columbus and counter-Quincentenary protest.[192] Joined by Russell Means, University of Florida students, Gainesville residents, and representatives of the Tampa-based American Indian Issues and Action Committee, they demonstrated for sixteen days, 24 hours a day outside of the Florida Museum of Natural History in late November of 1989.[193] Protesters demanded to speak with the museum directors and curators regarding the lack of Native American perspectives within the exhibit, but according to Elliott, the museum director refused to speak with them.[194]

Arrests of select protesters led to more publicized controversy over the exhibit. University of Florida police arrested two students, one of whom, Michele Diamond, received a charge for trespassing after refusing to step down from the deck of the *Niña* replica outside the museum.[195] After she spent the night in the Gainesville city jail, the UF Student Honor Court placed her on probation for disobeying University regulations. The arrest of students caused further outcry, which lead to a vigil at Tigert Hall, the administration building that housed the

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[191] *The Ethics of Celebration and De-celebration, Quincentenary Issues, Education, and the Native American Perspective*, conference program, 9, Box 36, Folder 9, Columbian Quincentenary Collection; "'Cleaned-Up?' First Encounters Exhibit Tours U.S. Cities," *Indigenous Thought,* Volume 1, No. 1 (January-February 1991): 1, Box 50, Folder 20, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

[192] "'Cleaned-Up?' First Encounters Exhibit Tours U.S. Cities," 1; Strong, "Exclusive Labels: Indexing the National 'We' in Commemorative and Oppositional Exhibitions," 47; and "From the Editor," *Indigenous Thought,* Vol 1, No. 4 and 5 (October 1991): 36, Box 50, Folder 20, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

[193] "'Cleaned-Up?' First Encounters Exhibit Tours U.S. Cities," 1. Note: another account of the protest states that the protest lasted for 19 days; see "From the Editor," 36.

[194] "From the Editor," 36.

[195] "University of Florida Police Arrest Students Protesting Racist Exhibit," *Indigenous Thought,* Volume 1, No. 1, January-February 1991, 7, Box 50, Folder 20, Columbian Quincentenary Collection and Mitch Stacy, "Conference at UF to re-explore Columbus' educational impact," *Gainesville Sun*, December 6, 1991, 1A, Box 36, Folder 23, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

university President's office. Protesters also publicized the fact that students rather than prominent Native activists received scrutiny from campus police. *Indigenous Thought* alleged that although Russell Means had been in violation of museum policy when he held aloft protest signs inside the museum, museum officials were too afraid to have Means arrested and instead sought to discourage the protests by arresting students.[196]

While protesters at the Florida Museum of Natural History failed to enact the changes to the exhibit they desired, protests to *First Encounters* continued throughout the United States as the exhibit went on tour. Following its stint in Gainesville, *First Encounters* opened at the Tampa Museum of Science and Industry, where the American Indian Issues and Action Committee organized another protest.[197] By October of 1991, two years after *First Encounters* first debuted, Elliott reported that activists had "seen results beyond our dreams," calling the response from museum directors and curators in other cities to include minority perspectives "tremendous." A museum in Houston cancelled the exhibit, absorbing thousands of dollars in costs. Other museums added additional materials in order to incorporate alternative perspectives into exhibit.[198]

Efforts to assuage protesters against the *First Encounters* exhibit grew increasingly creative, but faced uphill battles against frustrated activists. The curators at Science Museum in St. Paul, Minnesota, for example, worked with local scholars and activists to embed a companion exhibition titled *From the Heart of Turtle Island: Native Views, 1992* into the *First Encounters* exhibit. This marked the first time the museum and community members had collaborated as curators for an exhibit. *Native Views* offered an alternative perspective that reflected Indigenous

[196] "University of Florida Police Arrest Students Protesting Racist Exhibit," 7.
[197] "'Cleaned-Up?' First Encounters Exhibit Tours U.S. Cities," 1 and 3.
[198] "From the Editor," 36; Strong, "Exclusive Labels: Indexing the National 'We' in Commemorative and Oppositional Exhibitions," 48.

points of view of Spanish exploration of the southeastern U.S. while simultaneously celebrating the "survival, art and culture of indigenous peoples in the Americas."[199] Though curators did not necessarily intend for *Native Views* to act as a counter exhibition, scholar Pauline Turner Strong later described *Native Views* as effectively overshadowing and "critiquing the labeling of *First Encounters*." *Native Views* labels within the exhibit directly addressed why Indigenous groups had found *First Encounters* offensive and presented a perspective not situated within a European point of view. Curators placed the *Native Views* companion labels alongside and in juxtaposition to the *First Encounters* labels and objects. For example, next to the *Niña* replica, the *Native Views* counter label read, "For many Euro-Americans this replica of the *Niña* is a source of pride. For indigenous people, the *Niña* symbolizes death and destruction."[200]

The *Indigenous Thought* newsletter reported the changes to *First Encounters* as a major victory to their cause. "We are proud of the results that our protests have had nationwide and will continue to protest and to use 1992 to bring needed changes to the US educational system."[201] Even with the Native companion exhibition to *First Encounters* in Minnesota, other Native American activists remained dissatisfied that the museum did not cancel the exhibit. At the opening of *1492, 1992: First Encounters, Native Views* in St. Paul, supporters and members of the American Indian Movement (AIM) participated in a protest outside of the museum led by AIM activist Vernon Bellecourt. Bellecourt threw what he claimed was a pint of his blood on the *Niña* replica outside of the museum, stating that the exhibit glorified Columbus. Protesters believed that even with the companion exhibit, *Native Views*, the exhibition did not tell the full

[199] Pat Pheifer, "Indians denounce Columbus exhibit: Bellecourt leads museum protest," *Star Tribune (Minneapolis)*, May 30, 1992, 4B, Box 36, Folder 15, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[200] Strong, "Exclusive Labels: Indexing the National 'We' in Commemorative and Oppositional Exhibitions," 51-52.
[201] "From the Editor," 36.

story and thought there should be no place for the exhibit in St. Paul.[202] Consensus among Native activists remained elusive.

Aside from inciting change within the *First Encounters* exhibit, activists organizing protests also used the event as an opportunity to stimulate public conversations addressing the ethical and social issues surrounding content within the educational system, particularly regarding school history curricula related to Native Americans and the Columbus landfall. With funding provided by the Florida Humanities Council, Jan Elliott and her husband Richard Haynes, a professor of philosophy at UF, coordinated a conference held on University of Florida's campus in December 1991. The conference, titled *The Ethics of Celebration and De-celebration, Quincentenary Issues, Education, and the Native American Perspective*, sought to critically examine and understand the upcoming quincentennial from a Native American perspective. Included within the conference were seminars on multicultural education and ways to incorporate various perspectives into curriculum.[203] Asserting that the planned Quincentenary provided an opportunity to expose the "Columbus mythology," directors felt that "the myth itself is deeply embedded in our educational system and will be difficult to change without considerable effort."[204] This conference marked continuing Native American activists' efforts to integrate alternative narratives and Native perspectives within the school system, a goal identified as especially important to Native activists early on.

The success seen in response to the protests to *First Encounters* marked the beginning of a deluge of efforts and subsequent successes accomplished by Indigenous activists in response to

[202] Pheifer, "Indians denounce Columbus exhibit."
[203] *The Ethics of Celebration and De-celebration, Quincentenary Issues, Education, and the Native American Perspective,* conference brochure and program, Box 36, Folder 9, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[204] FEH Proposal, *Quincentenary Issues from a Native American Perspective: The Ethics of Celebration and de-celebration,* 1, Box 36, Folder 9, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

the Quincentenary. While initially met with resistance from officials in charge of Quincentenary related events, protesters persevered in their efforts and were eventually able to incite changes to various commemorative activities. As we will see in other grassroots efforts across the country, these activists effectively utilized collective action to achieve many of their aims in publicly countering the narrative offered by federal commemorative events and supplementing this narrative with a Native point of view on Columbus's landfall.

As the quincentennial year approached, activists around the country ramped up efforts to protest Columbus Day celebrations and organize their own events that celebrated Indigeneity. Activists organized several protests in various cities, serving to publicize Native points of view in national press coverage. Most notably, AIM efforts in Colorado to protest the annual Denver Columbus Day parade received national attention and widespread local support from activists, leading to a cancellation of the parade in 1992.

Activists' selection of Denver as a site for protest, and their subsequent successes starting in 1990 there, were highly significant. Colorado had been the first state to make Columbus Day an official holiday and had a longstanding tradition of celebrating Columbus Day; Denver had held a Columbus Day parade since at least 1909.[205] But in anticipation of the quincentennial, protests to the Columbus Day parade in Denver exploded. AIM leader Russell Means focused on Columbus Day protests in Denver specifically because of its deep-rooted observance of

[205] "Columbus Day Parade Canceled to Avoid Protests," *Los Angeles Times*, October 11, 1992; Tom Noel, "Columbus Day started in Colorado," *Denver Post*, September 23, 2010. While Italian-American communities in Colorado in the early twentieth century were considered newer and weaker in comparison to communities in New York and California, community leaders in Denver sought to unite the community that did exist to "give them a common history" and "encourage their assimilation into dominant society." Prominent Italian-American figure Angelo Noce persuaded the Governor of Colorado to sign a bill declaring Columbus Day a state holiday in order to "revere the Italians' good citizenship." See Timothy Kubal, *Cultural Movements and Collective Memory: Christopher Columbus and the Rewriting of the National Origin Myth*, 112-115.

Columbus Day and its large Native American population.[206] At the Denver Columbus Day parade in 1990, approximately 65 activists from Colorado AIM planned to demonstrate in protest of the Columbus Day celebrations. Fearing a major disruption to the parade, parade chairman and head of the Federation of Italian-American Organizations (FIAO) Bill Marinella allowed protesters to lead the parade.[207] Means called this action "honorable," adding that he had made plans to meet with the organization to discuss the national movement to change Columbus Day. Colorado AIM led a rally held a few days later in Denver's Civic Center Park at which activists called for the abolishment of the holiday, or, at the very least, a revision of it to recognize the Native American human costs associated with the Columbus landfall. Reports note that the rally attracted about 150 multi-ethnic participants, including members of the Black organization Nation of Islam, signifying broad racial and ethnic support for Colorado AIM's goals.[208]

The next year, 1991, Colorado AIM became more aggressive in their approach to stop the Columbus Day celebrations in Denver. Rejecting an invitation to lead the parade as they had in 1990, Means and Glen Morris, another leader of Colorado AIM, declared that they would become more militant in their demands to abolish Columbus Day celebrations as part of the countdown to 1992. An estimated 50 Native American activists blocked the Denver Columbus Day parade for 45 minutes, beating drums and chanting "no parades for murderers." As they protested, they poured two gallons of fake blood onto the street. Accounts of the protest state that police teams hauled protesters away to clear the path for the parade, arresting four and issuing summons to four others, including Russell Means. Following the parade protest, Colorado AIM

[206] "American Indian Movement Wants Columbus Day Out," *The Circle*, October 1990, 8, Box 36, Folder 22, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[207] "Columbus Day demonstrators join in parade," *Indigenous Thought*, Volume 1, No. 1, January-February 1991, 1, Box 50, Folder 20, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[208] Bruce Finley, "Indian activist has fun during protest of Columbus Day," *Denver Post*, October 9, 1990, Box 22, Folder 20, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

held a rally with hundreds of supporters on the steps of the state capital building asserting that a celebration of Columbus Day was a celebration of genocide and "centuries of racism in the Americas." At the same time, Colorado AIM issued a series of demands to the Denver Mayor including a demand to remove a plaque at Denver's Civic Center Park that honored Columbus as the "Discoverer of America." While the city stated that they were trying to settle the dispute over the plaque, Italian-American groups in Denver made it clear that they opposed its removal. Tensions were exacerbated when the KKK offered assistance to protect the plaque.[209]

With demands that remained unmet, Colorado AIM's protests against the Denver Columbus Day parade reached an apex for the quincentennial year. Colorado AIM mailed flyers out to activists around the country to invite them to what they planned to be a wide-scale protest. Their flyer stated:

> COLUMBUS DAY PROTEST: Columbus Day Started in Colorado and We're Going to Stop it in Colorado!
>
> In 1905, Colorado became the first state to proclaim Columbus Day a holiday. That is why it is appropriate, on the 500th anniversary of the Invasion by Columbus, to stop the holiday in Colorado. For the past three years, Colorado AIM has warned the city of Denver and the state of Colorado about continuing their racist, anti-Indian parades and monuments to Columbus. This year, parade organizers have promised a "massive" parade in celebration of Indian genocide. We will be at their parade to blow out the candles on Columbus' anniversary cake. We hope to see you there, too.[210]

The parade protest in 1992 served as the largest and most effective protest in Denver thus far. Reports of the protest indicate that hundreds of Indigenous activists gathered to stop the parade. Weeks before, Means had demanded that the Federation of Italian-American Organizations remove all references to Columbus. In attempts to compromise with activists, parade organizers

[209] Dirk Johnson, "As Discoverer is Hailed, The Discovered Protest," *New York Times*, October 13, 1991, A8; "Counter-Quincentenary Protesters Encounter Celebrators at Kickoff of Quincentenary Year," 1-2.
[210] American Indian Movement of Colorado, "Columbus Day Protest," flyer, Box 36, Folder 18, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

invited activists to lead the parade and establish scholarships for Native Americans. AIM activists did not see this offer as a compromise they were willing to accept. Due to the large gathering of demonstrators against the parade, the Federation president cancelled the parade twenty minutes before it was about to begin stating that activists' "threats were more than words." Following the cancellation, Means led more than 500 supporters to a rally at Civic Center Park where a mock burned-out Native village had been erected. Although reports state that there were no violent confrontations, police arrested seven protesters for disturbing the peace. Means called the cancellation of the parade a "clear-cut victory," adding that "the rest of the country has to follow suit."[211] After the 1992 cancellation of the Columbus Day parade, the city of Denver did not hold another Columbus Day parade for nine years.[212]

The escalating AIM protests in Denver against its long-standing Columbus Day parade signified growing dissonance amongst Indigenous activists in relation to Columbus Day celebrations and the Quincentenary. As seen in this series of events, because AIM's demands to reinterpret the Columbus Day celebrations remained unmet by the FIAO, AIM intensified their actions in protest to the parade. Their success in forcing the cancellation of the parade in 1992 and beyond illustrates the influence they were able to exercise with their collective action. It also marked a victory for further publicizing Native views and ensuring that the Native voice would emerge, as many activists hoped, during the Quincentenary. The addition of this voice to the

[211] "Columbus Day Parade Canceled to Avoid Protests"; "Protest Cancels Denver Parade," *New York Times*, October 10, 1992, 18; James Barron, "He's the Explorer/Exploiter You Just Have to Love/Hate," *New York Times*, October 12, 1992, B7.

[212] Michael Janofsky, "Despite Protests, Denver's Columbus Day Parade Resumes," *New York Times*, October 8, 2000, 22. Though the parade resumed in 2000, it was fraught with controversy and additional protests comprised of thousands of demonstrators after Italian-American organizations failed to make good on their promise to rename the parade a "March for Italian Pride." While the parades continued with controversy in later years, protests and participation in the parades dwindled after 2007. By 2016, the city of Denver replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous People's Day. See "Columbus Day Parade: Peace reigns at parade," *Denver Post*, October 8, 2000 and Patricia Calhoun, "Goodbye, Columbus: Happy Indigenous People's Day, Denver," *Westword*, October 10, 2016.

commemoration created complexity to the mainstream narrative that the federal Quincentenary sought to promote.

Denver was not the only city where heavy protesting to Columbus Day celebrations and counter events occurred during the quincentennial year and the years leading up to 1992. National press coverage of Columbus Day events and counter-events reveals a high level of activist engagement to counter traditional Columbus Day celebrations throughout the country in cities both large and small, including Chicago, New York, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Boston. In Washington, D.C., protesters poured blood on the Columbus statue in Union Station and vandalized it in spray paint with the message "500 years of slavery." In New York, protesters vandalized the Columbus statue at Columbus Circle at the corner of Central Park.[213] Protesters in Boston, to the chagrin of the Italian-American grand marshal of Boston's Columbus Day parade, petitioned for the right to join the parade.[214] Suburban Greenfield, Wisconsin saw protesters outside of a "Landing Day Celebration" call for the removal of a Columbus statue that conveyed "a true message of domination over Native American people."[215] In Philadelphia, a multiracial coalition of Native activists and neighborhood supporters protested the city's decision to rename Delaware Avenue to Christopher Columbus Boulevard in anticipation of the Quincentenary.[216]

Activists in opposition to traditional Columbus Day celebrations and commemorations publicized their perspectives by inciting controversy within public events. Not all of these events directly related to official Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee plans, but protesters

[213] "Topics of the Times: Columbus Bashing," *New York Times*, October 20, 1991, E14.
[214] Fox Butterfield, "Columbus Runs into Storm in Boston," *New York Times*, October 11, 1992, 18.
[215] Scott Kerr, "Protesters Call Columbus Sculpture Insulting," *News from Indian Country*, October 30, 1991, 12.
[216] "Honoring Columbus Backfires in Philadelphia," *New York Times*, August 25, 1991, 27; Maria Bloom, "Lenni-Lenape/Delaware Indians an Allies Confront the Myth of Christopher Columbus," *Green Letter*, Fall 1991, 15, Box 36, Folder 23, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

took advantage of the moment to reaffirm and broadcast on a large scale a Native point of view. In doing so, Native activists offered an alternative account to the traditional Columbus "discovery" narrative that had been widely accepted in most Americans' understanding. The widespread attention Indigenous groups received as a result of their activism contributed to the rise of a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the Columbus encounter within American historical memory.

Although anti-Quincentenary protests received the most attention, education related counter-events were equally important to many Indigenous activists. High school students participating in a mock trial in Montana found Columbus guilty on several charges including kidnapping, theft and torture. An additional charge of genocide resulted in a hung jury.[217] Middle school students in New York voted to declare Columbus a villain after their own mock trial. The director of the American Textbook Council, Gilbert Sewall, declared that "revisionism has carried the day," claiming that Columbus had "undergone what is perhaps the most dramatic reworking of any major historical figure in memory." Crediting the Quincentenary with accelerating the debate on revised portrayals of Columbus that had been mounting since the 1970's due to new scholarship and increased interest in multicultural thinking, Sewall told the *New York Times* that "all of America's leading high school history texts give the explorer's many failings equal billing with his accomplishments."[218] Librarians also saw a need to contribute public consumption of diverse perspectives on the Columbus encounter. In 1990, the American Library Association resolved to provide materials to quincentennial programs that looked at the

[217] "'Columbus' arrested, arraigned in Arlee; CNN may cover trial," *Char-Koosta News*, October 6, 1992; "'Columbus' receives sentence in Arlee: Found guilty, he faces 500 years of community service to the world," *Char-Koosta News*, November 6, 1992.
[218] Sam Dillon, "New York City Students Ponder the Explorer in Debates and Skits," *New York Times*, October 12, 1992, A1.

landfall from an "authentic Native American perspective" as a response to the "massive celebration" of Columbus's voyage.[219]

Many educational institutions appeared to heed the calls from Native American activists related to educating schoolchildren and the public on Indigenous perspectives of the encounter, indicating the far-reaching successes of the Native activists and their supporters. And yet, we should not overstate the changes to public opinion broadly speaking. According to a survey administered by the Associated Press in fall of 1992, sixty-four percent of the 1,001 randomly chosen adults still considered Columbus a hero, while fifteen percent called him a villain.[220] This closed-ended question opinion survey should be taken with a grain of salt, as it is not necessarily the most precise way to measure public opinion. By 1998, however, another open-ended question survey indicated that the heroic view of Columbus had waned.[221] An updated version of the same survey conducted in 2014 revealed that the number of people who now viewed him as villainous had increased since the 1998 survey.[222] Although the surveys administered between 1992 and 1998/2014 followed varying survey methods, they still indicated a change over time in the opinions that Americans held as it related to Christopher Columbus, signifying that generational changes regarding opinions of Columbus were at play. While older generations in 1992 were less likely to be influenced by Native activism and their perspectives on the Columbus landfall, younger cohorts may have consumed counter-narratives more readily, thus affecting their opinions on Columbus. Though the purpose of this chapter is not to assess the overall public opinions most Americans hold regarding Columbus, these figures provide food for thought on

[219] American Library Association, *Columbus Quincentennial Resolution*, June 1990, Box 36, Folder 10, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[220] Barron, "He's the Explorer/Exploiter You Just Have to Love/Hate."
[221] Schuman, Schwartz and D'Arcy, "Elite Revisionists and Popular Beliefs: Christopher Columbus, Hero or Villain?," 2-29.
[222] Amy Corning and Howard Schuman, *Generations and Collective Memory*, 43.

the influence that Indigenous activists and their actions during this time had on the mainstream beliefs of Columbus in American society.

Indigenous Peoples Day in Berkeley, California

October 1992 marked the first celebration of Indigenous Peoples Day in the country when the city of Berkeley, California renamed their holiday in direct reaction to the federal Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee. Just as significant, this event marked the successful collaboration of a vast network of activists, local leaders, and organizing events that shaped the decision to rename the day. Going further, city officials also declared 1992 as the "Year of Indigenous Peoples" and the Berkeley school board resolved to modify Columbus's image in history classes and textbooks.[223] By at least 1990, the Berkeley chapter of the Alliance for Cultural Democracy (ACD), a national multi-ethnic cultural organization, had begun efforts to plan a counter-event to the 1992 quincentennial, but as organizers recognized, Native Americans would need to take the lead in planning counter quincentennial projects in Berkeley. For this lead, ACD Berkeley looked towards the Oakland based South and Meso-American Indian Information Center (SAIIC), a Native organization dedicated to linking Indigenous peoples in North and South America, and the upcoming Encuentro meeting in Quito, Ecuador hosted by the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE).[224]

Characterized by Creek activist and poet Joy Harjo as "one of the most comprehensive such hemispheric meetings of indigenous people," the Quito Encuentro conference marked a

[223] "In Berkeley, Day for Columbus is Renamed," *New York Times*, January 12, 1992, 18.
[224] John Curl, "Part 2: The Encuentro of the Condor and Eagle, 1990," Archives of Indigenous Peoples Day: A Documentary History of the Origin and Development of Indigenous Peoples Day, accessed December 7, 2021, https://www.ipdpowwow.org/Archives.html.

notably successful collaboration between various leaders and activists.[225] CONAIE held the Encuentro conference in July 1990 with the objective to "promote unity and active participation of Indigenous Peoples…in the '500 Years of Indian Resistance' campaign."[226] Encuentro offered the opportunity for Native people and non-Native people to gather and critically reflect on the history of colonialism in America, while also coordinating activities in response to the upcoming 500th anniversary for which many countries were planning a commemoration. Reports indicate that the Encuentro meeting drew between 350 and 400 participants, with representation from over 120 different Indigenous nations, tribes, and organizations. Representation from North America included approximately 70 Native people and 30 non-Natives.[227]

The Encuentro meeting had an outsized impact on the shift in opinion of Berkeley's leadership. Activist John Curl, a member of Berkeley's ACD chapter, attended Encuentro as Berkeley Mayor Loni Hancock's representative. According to Curl's account, Mayor Hancock, described as a populist who cared about social justice, "grasped the situation immediately" when Curl and Nilo Cayuqueo, Curl's contact at SAIIC, presented her with the proposition to plan a counter Quincentenary event. Mayor Hancock wrote in a letter that the City of Berkeley stood in solidarity with attendees at Encuentro and called on "all City agencies and the Berkeley school system to involve themselves in activities during the years 1991-1992 to educate our citizens about the historical facts of the colonization of this hemisphere and its effects on indigenous people." Within the letter, Mayor Hancock also denounced the U.S.'s plans for its Quincentenary

[225] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, "Christopher Columbus and 'The Stink Hiding the Sun'," *Crossroads*, October 1990, 17, Box 36, Folder 23, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[226] "Five Hundred Years of Indian Resistance," *Earth Island Journal*, Spring 1990, 15, Box 36, Folder 23, Columbian Quincentenary Collection; Curl, "Part 2: The Encuentro of the Condor and Eagle, 1990."
[227] Robert Allen Warrior, "Columbus quincentennial is nothing to celebrate, but 500 years of native people's resistance is," *Utne Reader*, November/December 1991, 74, Box 36, Folder 23, Columbian Quincentenary Collection; Curl, "Part 2: The Encuentro of the Condor and Eagle, 1990."

Jubilee.[228] Curl's presence at Encuentro shaped efforts in Berkeley to plan the first Indigenous Peoples Day in October 1992.

Over the course of the conference, participants had collaboratively arrived at resolutions regarding the perspectives of Indigenous Americans and the upcoming quincentennial. They were initially broken up into eight different workshops that addressed various issues related to Indigenous people, policies, culture, education, and the 500th anniversary. John Curl had chosen to attend the workshop that considered the position of Native people during the 500th anniversary. According to Curl's account, this group spent their time working on "long list of resolutions and observations to be sorted out, refined, boiled down, and brought before the entire conference, along with the resolutions from all the other commissions, on the last day." Ultimately, the Encuentro conference produced the Declaration of Quito, which stated their official position as they reflected on "500 years of oppression" and "500 year of Indian resistance." Within the Declaration, the First Continental Gathering of Indigenous Peoples proclaimed their "emphatic rejection of the Quincentennial celebration."[229] The U.S. Embassy in Ecuador reported that approximately one third of participants were white Americans or Europeans.[230] The substantial attendance of non-Native people at Encuentro speaks to the multiracial support that counter quincentennial activity had during the years leading up to 1992, something that appears to have increased since the Native backlash to the 1976 Bicentennial.

Encuentro was not the only genesis of counter Quincentenary activity in San Francisco's Bay Area. Local activists and progressive social justice organizations joined forces in a coalition

[228] Letter from Loni Hancock to Encuentro attendees, July 3, 1990, Archives of Indigenous Peoples Day: A Documentary History of the Origin and Development of Indigenous Peoples Day, accessed December 7, 2021, https://www.ipdpowwow.org/Archives.html.
[229] "Declaration of Quito: Indigenous Alliance of the Americas on 500 Years of Resistance," July 1990, Box 36, Folder 14, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[230] Gregory Lagana, PAO, AmEmbassy Quito memo to Andy Bolton, U.S. Information Service, August 1, 1990, Box 64, Folder 16, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

they called Resistance 500! to begin making formal plans for a counter protest.[231] Shortly after the Encuentro meeting, Curl, along with Native activists Nilo Cayuqueo, Antonio Gonzales, and Millie Ketcheshawno, met with Berkeley mayor Hancock to report on Encuentro and begin formal plans to establish a counter quincentennial event. Mayor Hancock suggested that the city of Berkeley create a task force to "study the issues and report findings and recommendations" as they relate to Berkeley's plans for counter activity. Unofficial at this point, activists recognized that having the Berkeley City Council establish the task force as an official city body would be of the upmost importance in their mission to plan official city programming for the upcoming quincentennial year.[232] While there were several organizations in the Bay area working towards counter Quincentenary programming, Berkeley's task force became the most successful in their ability to advance counter commemorations to the official Quincentenary Jubilee.

As 1992 approached, SAIIC continued to lead collaborations between activists regarding the Indigenous response to the Quincentenary. Following a meeting in Minneapolis in 1990, activists in the Bay area planned additional follow-up meetings in March of 1991 in Davis and Oakland, CA. Under the title "1992 Bay Area Regional Indian Alliance," SAIIC and other Bay Area activists coordinated the All-Native Conference (also referred to as the 1992 Native Network), which took place at D-Q University in Davis. True to its name, the three-day All-Native Conference limited attendance to Indigenous peoples, but was followed up the next day with the All People's Network Conference in Oakland that welcomed non-Native activists interested in aligning with the counter Quincentenary cause. Reports indicate that the All-Native Conference had over 100 North American Native representatives in attendance and the All

[231] Curl, "Part 2: The Encuentro of the Condor and Eagle, 1990" and "Part 3: RESISTANCE 500 & the first Indigenous Peoples Day 1991-1992."
[232] Curl, "Part 3: RESISTANCE 500 & the first Indigenous Peoples Day 1991-1992."

People's Network Conference had over 100 Native delegates and over 200 non-Native participants.[233] In a 1992 call to action flyer, SAIIC reported that these gatherings drew attendees from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, stating that "the diversity of representation at the meetings helped produce numerous plans of action."[234] As a result of both conferences, attendees resolved to "declare and reaffirm October 12, 1992 as International Day of Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples."[235] Additionally, all activists and organizations involved with coordinating efforts under the 1992 Bay Area Regional Indian Alliance agreed to formally coalesce under the name Resistance 500![236] Within the Resistance 500! coalition, several localized chapters existed in the Bay area to include San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, and San Jose. Each local task force held their own individual meetings, but came together once a month to meet as a coalition.[237]

Berkeley's Resistance 500! task force continued with plans that they had informally began with Mayor Hanock following the Encuentro meeting. By mid-1991, after lobbying to various city commissions and the School Board, the Berkeley City Council voted unanimously to approve Berkeley's Resistance 500! task force as an official city body. This designation enabled to task force to make official recommendations as to how the city of Berkeley should respond to the upcoming Quincentenary. Curl explained, "we already knew that we were going to propose replacing Columbus Day. But we needed to educate and lobby every public body in the city to gain citywide support for the idea that Indigenous Peoples Day fitted with the values of the people of Berkeley much more than celebrating Columbus with a holiday." Over the next few

[233] Curl, "Part 3: RESISTANCE 500 & the first Indigenous Peoples Day 1991-1992"; Peter Fimrite, "Columbus Day Celebration Called 'Insult'," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 26, 1991, A4, Box 36, Folder 22, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[234] South & Meso American Indian Information Center (SAIIC), "1992 Call to Action!," Flyer, Box 37, Folder 1, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[235] Curl, "Part 3: RESISTANCE 500 & the first Indigenous Peoples Day 1991-1992."
[236] SAIIC, "1992 Call to Action!."
[237] Curl, "Part 3: RESISTANCE 500 & the first Indigenous Peoples Day 1991-1992."

months, the task force pitched the concept of celebrating Indigenous Peoples Day in lieu of Columbus Day for the quincentennial year and beyond through various city commissions until they reached Berkeley City Council.[238] On October 22, 1991, the city council unanimously passed a proposal to make Indigenous Peoples Day an official holiday in Berkeley, the first celebration of which would take place in the following year, 1992.[239]

Berkeley's decision to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day as a response to the Quincentenary, on an official level, made national news. The *New York Times* reported in January of 1992 that Berkeley, "a city known for political correctness," had "renamed" Columbus Day. The article described the city's declaration "a revisionist assertion that Columbus was no hero but instead a self-serving colonialist whose arrival in the New World led to the death of millions of American Indians."[240] The Director of University of California, Berkeley's Native American Studies program praised the decision calling it a "very positive way to illustrate the Native American aspect in the quincentennial that could be very easily overshadowed." Others, particularly those representing Italian-American interests, did not see Berkeley's revisionist approach as a positive. The Sons of Italy's Commission on Social Justice criticized the city's decision claiming that they were attempting to rewrite history five hundred years after the fact.[241]

In addition to declaring October 12 as Indigenous Peoples Day, Berkeley's city council declared 1992 as the "Year of Indigenous People." They also called on schools, public libraries, and museums to include Native perspectives in their teachings and activities during the

[238] Ibid.
[239] "Declaration of the City Council of Berkeley, California, Concerning Indigenous Peoples Day," Box 50, Folder 13, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[240] "In Berkeley, Day for Columbus is Renamed," *New York Times*.
[241] "City deep-sixes Columbus Day for 'Indigenous People'," *Star Tribune*, January 11, 1992, 7A, Box 36, Folder 22, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

quincentennial year.[242] The Berkeley School Board heeded city council's call and passed Resolution No. 4960 in November of 1991, which recognized October 12 as Indigenous Peoples Day and resolved to include more robust histories of Native Americans in school curricula.[243]

Throughout the course of 1992, leading up to October 12, Berkeley and other Bay area Resistance 500! chapters organized a myriad of cultural and educational events and projects. These events ran the gamut from art events, educational conferences, Native ceremonies, film showings, demonstrations and more. While some activities placed significance on celebrating contemporary Native culture, such as art shows, or promoting present activism, like AIM's or ITTC's efforts, other educational activities focused on the past, looking to correct previous popular notions of the Columbus landfall. For instance, a "Truth in History" teach-in at UC Berkeley found scholars and activists working together to discuss the "mythological Christopher Columbus and our discovery of him at our shores." In this teach-in, the narrative of the Columbus landfall placed Indigenous groups as the primary perspective – "our discovery of him." Between July and October of 1992, over 60 events related to Indigenous Peoples Day took place.[244] During the month of October, an event occurred nearly every day.[245] Meanwhile, the CCQJC planned to sail replicas of Columbus's ships, built by Spain, to various ports in the United States during the quincentennial year to commemorate Columbus's voyage. The ships docked in the New York Harbor in June.[246] The CCQJC had originally planned for the ships to

[242] "Declaration of the City Council of Berkeley, California, Concerning Indigenous Peoples Day," Box 50, Folder 13, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[243] Berkeley Unified School District, *Resolution No. 6960,* Archives of Indigenous Peoples Day: A Documentary History of the Origin and Development of Indigenous Peoples Day, accessed December 7, 2021, https://www.ipdpowwow.org/Archives_3.html.
[244] "Some Resistance 500 Events," September 8, 1992, Box 36, Folder 14, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[245] "October 1992: 500 Years of Resistance," Calendar of activities in the Bay area, Box 50, Folder 13, Columbian Quincentenary Collection; 1992 Bay Area Regional Indian Alliance, Calendar of activities, Box 36, Folder 14, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[246] "In 1992, America Discovers Columbus: New Niña, Pinta and Santa Maria Help Begin a 500th Anniversary Celebration," *New York Times*, June 28, 1992.

dock in San Francisco on October 12 as a conclusion to its twenty-one city U.S. tour, but by August, after the ships arrived in the Boston Harbor, the CCQJC announced that the ships would not continue their voyage to the west coast. [247] According to multiple accounts, west coast Quincentenary organizations responsible for raising money in their localities for Columbus quincentennial programming were unable to raise the over $850,000 needed to sail the ships to the west coast.[248] Citing this as a victory, Curl claimed that because of Resistance 500! and other associated groups' successful campaigning and organizing, citizens in the Bay area were unsupportive of the Quincentenary's plans and thus reluctant to donate any money towards official Quincentenary organizations. They preferred to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day instead.[249]

Although Berkeley had officially declared October 12 as Indigenous Peoples Day, the main celebration was set to take place on October 10, which fell on a Saturday. The day began with a sunrise ceremony at the waterfront, continued with various commemorative including the dedication of an Indigenous monument (the Turtle Island Monument) and an Indigenous Peoples parade, and ended with a closing ceremony.[250] The first Indigenous Peoples Day was a success. Local activists had reclaimed Columbus Day for Indigenous peoples of the United States. At the time of this thesis's writing, in 2022, the significance of this day remains salient. By 2019, the *New York Times* reported that more than a hundred cities and counties had renamed the Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day.[251] Although not yet a federal holiday, in 2021,

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[247] James T. Yenckel, "Exploring a Nation of Columbus Celebrations," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1992; Curl, "Part 3: RESISTANCE 500 & the first Indigenous Peoples Day 1991-1992."
[248] Fern Shen, "History Towed into Baltimore, *Washington Post*, May 30, 1992; Curl, "Part 3: RESISTANCE 500 & the first Indigenous Peoples Day 1991-1992."
[249] Curl, "Part 3: RESISTANCE 500 & the first Indigenous Peoples Day 1991-1992."
[250] Berkeley Resistance 500 Task Force, "Indigenous Peoples Day," Flyer, Box 50, Folder 13, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[251] "Maine is the Latest State to Replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day," *New York Times*, April 28, 2019.

President Biden became the first U.S. president to recognize the Indigenous Peoples Day.[252] The changes instilled by activists in the early 1990's as it relates to Columbus Day and the reputation and legacy of Christopher Columbus, the historical figure, continue to be felt over thirty years later.

As perfectly illustrated in this battle over memory and history, various narratives exist within our society's collective historical memory. For the Columbus encounter commemoration, a single narrative was not sufficient for a society comprised of a significantly diverse citizenship. While Quincentenary organizers hoped to provide a commemoration that would serve to unite Americans, their ineptitude at including alternative perspectives that hold equal weight with the traditional Eurocentric perspective resulted in a commemoration rife with division. In hindsight, full consensus and unification over a prominent historical event such as the arrival of Columbus to the Americas is likely never to exist. As historian Michael Kammen argues in his analysis to contested public commemorations, while celebrations of contemporary triumphs may serve to unify, commemorations and celebrations of historical events involve the "possession and control of the past." Because commemorations of historical events involve remembering, interpreting, and *appropriating* the past, various groups must compete for prominence of their narratives in the national register.[253] A national commemoration that privileges one narrative over another is unable to meet the needs of a diverse society where different narratives exist. The success of Native activists' protests to the Quincentenary reveals an American society on the cusp of transformation as it relates to how we value diversity within our populous. An increase of non-Native supporters of Native activism since the 1976 Bicentennial indicates the beginning of a

[252] "Biden becomes first president to commemorate Indigenous Peoples' Day," *Washington Post*, October 8, 2021.
[253] Michael Kammen, "Commemoration and Contestation in American Culture: Historical Perspectives," *American Studies* 48, No. 2 (2003): 186.

shift in American society's values on diversity that will continue to shift as we reach into the beginning of the twenty-first century.

On May 18, 1993, the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission held its final meeting. The commission was set to terminate on July 31, 1993 and was responsible for creating a final report prior to their termination. The report, dated July 30, 1993, outlined the CCQJC's responsibilities, goals, and accomplishments. For the most part, the report characterized the commission's work as primarily positive, downplaying the counter events that had rejected the commission's initial perspectives. It stated, "the Columbus Commission developed an outstanding list of endorsed programs and projects of the Quincentenary." In particular, the commission seemed most pleased with what they were able to accomplish within the educational aspect of the quincentennial, creating a "Teachers' Curriculum Guide" and establishing the Columbus Scholarship program and the Christopher Columbus Fellowship Fund. The commission praised the attendance that the Columbus ship replicas attracted on their tour of the Gulf and East Coasts, yet made no mention of the cancellation of the tour to the West Coast.[254] On an official basis at least, the members of the commission claimed success in their endeavor to develop and coordinate plans for the quincentennial year.

The commission's final report not only fails to mention the controversial aspects of the Quincentenary, it also indicates that the "difficulties" faced by the group "centered primarily on

[254] William H. McNeil, Acting Chairman, *Final Report of the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission*, July 30, 1993, 1-7, Box 64, Folder 12, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.

the Commission's lack of funding."[255] "The Commission was never able to raise sufficient money to fund its huge mission," it claims, further elaborating that:

> It was generally agreed that the root of the problem centered around the fact that the private sector was expected to pay for an enterprise that was created and undertaken by the Federal Government. CEO's of major companies said "No" because they saw far less than adequate Federal funding for the Quincentenary. The Commission firmly believes that most business leaders would have given much more credibility to the Commission's overall endeavor, if this had not been the case.[256]

After explaining what they believed to be the root of the Quincentenary's funding issue, they recommended that future commemorative commissions ensure they have the proper funding in order to accomplish their mission. While the lack of funding surely had a negative impact on the commission's ability to plan all that they had envisioned, it is curious that they make no acknowledgment to issues related to the way the entire commemoration was structured. That is, a largely celebratory commemoration of Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of the Americas. Of course, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter, the commission viewed inclusion as an essential aspect to the success of the commemoration, but, in hindsight, it is clear to see that they failed to provide the level of inclusion needed to appease varying sectors of society in an increasingly diverse populous. And perhaps this lack of full and authentic inclusion, and the ensuing controversy it caused, led the private sector to shy away from donating funds to official programming; it's likely that these two issues are not mutually exclusive.

As an addendum to the final report, several commissioners wrote letters to provide their own personal reflections and thoughts on the Quincentenary. One commissioner, Charles W. Polzer, criticized the commission's approach to framing the commemoration. Rather than blame funding as the primary issue to the Quincentenary's failure, he saw the commission's emphasis

[255] McNeil, *Final Report*, 7, Box 64, Folder 12, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[256] Ibid, 9.

on Christopher Columbus as the main reason for the quincentennial's floundering. He wrote, "the Commission made a fatal error in focusing its attention on the person of Christopher Columbus… This emphasis, which the Commission followed religiously from the beginning, contributed to the explosive atmosphere occasioned by current ethnocentrism."[257] Had the CCQJC considered what a truly inclusive commemoration would consist of, perhaps they would have involved more Native Americans within the official membership of the commission and worked to emphasize alternative perspectives on the encounter as equal weight to the traditional narrative. The commission appeared out of touch and insensitive to contemporary social needs that demanded a more nuanced and comprehensive approach to understanding the past. As Summerhill and Williams reflect in *Sinking Columbus*, while the official Quincentenary failed, the "unofficial, *other* Quincentenary" succeeded because it "gave voice to the subaltern."[258] The Indigenous perspective overthrew the outdated perspective of the commission, which in turn enriched American historical consciousness of the Columbus landfall.

Indigenous contestation to the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas successfully challenged popular narratives of "discovery" on a national scale and altered the way in which many Americans understood the event. Native activists used the occasion as a means to bring their perspectives into the mainstream and ensure the emergence of a narrative that had long been overlooked. Historical memory shapeshifts, adapting itself to meet contemporary needs. In 1992, American society was changing. Multicultural education was on the rise and many Americans were hungry for a historical narrative that provided more parts of the whole. While shifts in the historical memory of the Columbus landfall had been brewing

[257] Charles W. Polzer to William McNeil, "An Addendum to the Final Report to Congress on the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission," July 31, 1993, Box 64, Folder 12, Columbian Quincentenary Collection.
[258] Summerhill and Williams, *Sinking Columbus,* 126.

since as least the 1970's, the actions that Native Americans involved with quicentennial activities took placed this shifting memory on the forefront of American consciousness. Their widespread contestation to the way in which the official Quincentenary presented the arrival of Columbus placed questions about this narrative, and how comprehensive or not it was, in the minds of many Americans, particularly those in school or involved with education in some way. These activists were instrumental in the revision of the Columbus "discovery" narrative, and their role in bringing this revision to the mainstream has not been sufficiently addressed in the historiography. The controversy of the 1992 quincentennial serves as a prime example of a vocal minority who was able to enact change and influence historical understandings within the collective majority.

Epilogue

Indigenous activists' challenges to conventional founding narratives during commemorative events in the late twentieth century had important effects. If those protests did not wholly change popular views, they nevertheless resulted in the emergence of alternative founding narratives within the national discourse. These challenges have had a significant influence on commemorations and holidays thereafter. The observation of Indigenous Peoples Day by various states and cities, on an official level, has proliferated in the years since. As of October 2021, according to CNN, over 130 cities and 20 states observe this holiday, which helps to popularize a perspective that challenges a well-known historical narrative of U.S. origins.[259] The addition of this perspective into popular stories of the country's founding provides a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of something that practically every U.S. citizen learns during childhood. Due in large part to these activists' efforts, a more complete founding narrative now exists within our popular memory.

Native Americans' contributions to the federal commemorations in 1976 and 1992 also brought more attention to the need for inclusiveness within established and mainstream historical narratives, which, in turn, has likely had an effect on subsequent commemorations of historical events. Inclusivity has increasingly become an important fixture of large-scale commemorative events, as seen most recently in the sesquicentennial commemoration of the American Civil War from 2011 to 2015. In contrast to the Civil War centennial commemoration of the early 1960s, the sesquicentennial emphasized the end of American slavery rather than perpetuating Lost Cause narratives. Virginia's state level Civil War sesquicentennial commemoration clearly

[259] AJ Willingham, Scottie Andrew and Dakin Andone, "These states are ditching Columbus Day to observe Indigenous Peoples' Day instead," CNN, accessed April 10, 2022, https://www.cnn.com/2021/10/11/us/indigenous-peoples-day-2021-states-trnd/index.html.

illustrated this effort in their decision to begin the commemoration by marking the anniversary of John Brown's raid and his antislavery activism as a milestone towards the start of the war.[260] These efforts to provide more inclusion within historical narratives are a part of a growing trend and changing values that place inclusion and diversity as a priority. Among a variety of other factors, early attempts to include a wide range of perspectives within historical commemorations during the Bicentennial and Quincentenary have undoubtedly shaped later commemorations' inclusive tone.

Following the civil rights movement and other social movements starting at mid-century, the historical profession began to transform, particularly with the rise of social history, African American history, women's history, Native American history, and a wide range of other fields that broke away from the 'Great Men' narratives, economic, and political history that had long dominated the field. In addition, population trends within the U.S. indicate that the country's racial makeup has been diversifying at an unprecedented rate. From 1980 to 2000, the non-white population grew by about ten percent. By 2019, U.S. Census data showed that the non-white population had grown by another nine percent.[261] These trends provide a broader picture that illustrate a general population more aware and perceptive to alternative perspectives in history, particularly as they relate to diverse populations.

On the surface, it can seem that these acts to increase inclusion within commemorations or holidays may be solely symbolic. Yet commemorations and holidays that promote diversity do so on both an overt and subconscious level. Overtly, they promote diverse perspectives within

[260] "Program Takes Look at John Brown's Raid," *Free Lance-Star*, November 3, 2009; Cheryl Jackson, "The Civil War Sesquicentennial Commemoration in Richmond, VA: Living Out the Promise of Remembrance and New Beginnings," *History News*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Winter 2011): 26.
[261] William H. Frey, "The nation is diversifying even faster than predicted, according to new census data," The Brookings Institution, last modified July 1, 2020, https://www.brookings.edu/research/new-census-data-shows-the-nation-is-diversifying-even-faster-than-predicted/.

long-standing and popular historical narratives. Broadening the scope of popular understandings of history helps to tell a more complete story and history is better for it. Subconsciously, commemorations or holidays that uplift marginalized or unrecognized perspectives, such as Indigenous Peoples Day, present subtle queues to everyday people to consider those perspectives. When someone sees Indigenous Peoples Day recognized on a calendar, they take that information in on a subconscious level, and, perhaps, form some sort of understanding that a variety of perspectives and truths can exist within established and deep-rooted mainstream historic narratives promoted by certain holidays or commemorations.

If the act of commemoration "lifts from an ordinary historical sequence those extraordinary events which embody our deepest and most fundamental values," as argued by scholar Barry Schwartz, then contestation to commemoration reflects, on some level, the transformation of certain values.[262] Dissent during the commemorations in 1976 and 1992 provided a means for some Americans to question whether the values promoted by the federally planned commemorations were a true reflection their own individual values and the whole of a diverse American populous. The lack of alignment between the values promoted within federal commemorations and the values held by some individuals caused federal planners to adapt and rethink the kind of American public they imagined as the audience for these events.

These instances of contestation demonstrated that one prevailing narrative has not always been sufficient in addressing the diverse identities and differing experiences and memories that exist. Indigenous activism to encourage a more complex and nuanced historical memory and to diversify the messages of public commemoration reveals the flexible nature of memory, supporting the idea that a country's popular memory about the past often reflects the present. As

[262] Barry Schwartz, "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory," *Social Forces* 61, no. 2 (December 1982): 377.

the values of our society continue to evolve, those evolving values are bound to emerge within contemporary commemorative activities.

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