

but rather need to be at the heart of any reading of his proposal. Poetry, novels, songs, and other art forms born out of resistance are never a mere counterthesis to that which they are resisting. They function, it seems to me, as an immanent window toward transcendence—not a transcendence disinterested in this reality (of the kind Taylor critiques near the end of the chapter), but one that able to be present deeply and incarnately even as it points beyond itself: the question of immanence and transcendence should not be an either/or for a public theology, but a both/and. I find a strong affinity between this section of Taylor's chapter and my own attempt to present poetic reason as necessary for a public theology. He points, very aptly, toward several *"prodigious art forms emergent from the scorned underside of necropolitical regimes."* I think he is right: theology needs to pay close attention to such art; too much of theology has forgotten the subversive power of beauty, and the fact that poetry has reasons that reason cannot know. I would press even further and say that we, as public theologians, should try to be artificers of beauty ourselves; we should try to make our theologies a thing of beauty, to the extent that each of us is able. To go beyond "only" difference requires, in the end, going beyond "only" linear reasoning and the language of abstraction and "toward" the language of art. I wonder what that might mean for the teaching and the writing of theology.

## 13

### American Indians, Conquest, the Christian Story, and Invasive Nation-Building

*Tink Tinker (wazhazhe udsethe, Osage Nation)*

Indian peoples [have] no particular property in any part or parcel of the country, but only a general residence there, as wild beasts have in the forest.

—Reverend Robert Gray, 1609<sup>1</sup>

As an American Indian scholar I am pleased and honored at this invitation to write in dialogue with latina/o theologians to explore questions of difference and solidarity. The assigned task is to argue "the intelligibility of the american experiment in nation-building" in the context of a "union of differences." "Anchored in the theological claims of the christian story" we are to struggle together toward "an improved understanding of the common good for our pluralistic, democratic society." This assignment presents significant challenges to any American Indian thinker. To begin with, the american experiment in nation-building has been consistently an experiment predicated on the genocide of Indian peoples. This could well mean that I am invited to engage in the continuing colonization of Indian peoples by affirming the artificial modernist state entity called the United States in some unequivocal manner as either an unmitigated good as a possible good. At least, to engage the invitation I would need to concede a territorial and cultural conquest that would nullify any American Indian claims to sovereignty. Second, as a professor in a christian school of theology, I deal explicitly with the claims of the christian story. As an American Indian scholar, however, I deal much more explicitly with a counter narrative that is rooted in the American Indian traditional world,

worldview, experience, etc. More importantly, it has become increasingly clear to me over the past three decades that the christian story has been and continues to be (i.e., has continuing consequences as) a genocidal disaster for Indian communities.<sup>2</sup>

Third, the concern announced in the project invitation for the "common good" is one that I also must approach very cautiously. The common good here might be seen as somewhat resonant with American Indian philosophical, spiritual, social, and political traditions, but the language of "common good" would not be our choice of language. The notion is too deeply rooted in euro-western philosophical discourses about the good, going all the way back to Plato and Aristotle. The term "common good" is one that is exceedingly broad in scope and even for some can be reduced to the quintessential goal of the state—going back at least to english philosopher John Locke. Since I want to challenge the modernist notion of the state, I would not expect to look to the state as a source for any common good, nor would I commit to working merely for the good of the state—given the Indian history of experience with european style states. So while I have qualms about conceding that the state we inhabit today as a site of the common good, I also question whether the state can ever be an actual democratic society—except of course in the extreme modernist and increasingly globalized notion of a constitutionally based procedural democracy, one that regularly obscures the distinction between democracy and voting. So the presumption in the assignment that ours is a democratic society, let alone a genuinely pluralistic one, seems to be rooted in american political rhetoric that, from my perspective, ultimately fails the test of reality. The terms then are problematic in many ways.

Rather than talk of the common good, Indian people would tend to think in terms of harmony and balance, a goal to which we aspire for the whole of our world. Thus every Indian ceremony has the goal of balance at its heart—even ceremonies preparing a people for battle. Every act of killing, whether in battle, hunting, or harvesting vegetables, ultimately involves humans in violence requiring some further ceremonial act on our part to help restore balance in our lives and in the world around us. And that is the real goal of our common life together. We will come back to this idea in a bit. Nevertheless, let me hang with common good for the time being as something possibly if vaguely compatible in some way with our desire for balance. I suppose that all of these are important differences that we need to sort out in achieving a sense of solidarity across lines of ethnic diversity. Given these misgivings I wrote back to Professor Recinos suggesting that this left me unsure of my role in this project. To his credit, Recinos agreed that I should fully speak my mind on the issues raised by the project.

So let me proceed with an argument that euro-christian democracy, along with the christian story itself, has proven to be a device of conquest for in-

digenuous peoples that has attempted to replace our cultures with the colonizer's value system; replace our ancient community ceremonial practices with notions of individualist salvation; to remove our traditional structures of leadership and consensus building; and to assuage our lingering feelings of violation by introducing notions of "procedural democracy" whereby people confuse acts of voting with democracy itself. From this argument I will try to clarify my growing resistance to anchoring any American Indian theology in the theological claims of the christian story. Ultimately, my argument will be that the old primitive (in the best, if ironic, sense of the word, implying first or original) cultures of American Indians can provide new and healthy direction to a world radically out of balance. Much of "public theology," of course, does explicitly embrace dialogue with non-christian based religious folk around the world. We should learn from each of them, one might argue; and American Indians are self-confident enough in our own identity to think that it is now time that America should learn from American Indians some things explicitly about balance and harmony. My chapter will press these concerns as a counternarrative, what Emily Townes calls counteremory,<sup>3</sup> one that resists any description of U.S. so-called democracy as an institution that represents an unmitigated good? Given the international crises that beset the world today, it seems time to be so bold as to consider alternatives to the sorts of modernist state "procedural democracies" that have come to dominate the United Nations. And it may be time to revisit the very people so radically displaced by the emergence of modern european state apparatuses, namely the indigenous peoples of the world. My chapter will do that from the perspective of traditional Indian institutions, institutions that actually better qualify as genuine democracies.

From an American Indian perspective, the problem with any naive purchase on the American narrative of nation-building is that the american narrative is steeped in historical and continuing violence, from 1492 until the present, a violence deeply rooted in the theological claims of the christian story. However, before I offer a brief outline of this history of colonialist violence against Indian peoples and the entanglement of that violence with the christian story, let me mention briefly the lingering residual effects of that violence in our contemporary Indian world. Unfortunately, the violence is not just past history. I am writing out of a community that suffers chronically from what we might call community-wide incidences of post-traumatic stress syndrome, all rooted back in colonial experiences of boarding schools and terrorist incidences called massacres. We could, given more space, report that one of the results of this history of violence is that Indian peoples suffer from multiple varieties of community-wide incidences of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As a result, our communities are today wildly out of balance in spite of every

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# Wading Through Many Voices

Toward a Theology  
of Public Conversation

Edited by  
Harold J. Recinos

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effort on the part of community leaders. The immediate Indian community experience of being out of balance in today's world is the late colonial residual of poverty. Indian poverty statistics are usually well concealed from the american public, since it would not do to disrupt the american narrative too much. Newspapers report statistics typically for "White, Black, Hispanic, and *other*," where Indians are squeezed in with a variety of folk (e.g., Asians) in the "other" category. When the statistics finally do surface, Indian people show up at the bottom of the list in virtually every category of social welfare: highest unemployment rate of any ethnic group in the United States (chronically, 60 percent nationally); shortest longevity (nearly twenty years shorter than the U.S. average); higher illness rates (six times the U.S. diabetes rate; seven times the TB rate, etc.); teen suicide rates three to ten times the U.S. average;<sup>4</sup> a school drop-out rate stuck at 50 percent; etc. These statistics are the tragic result of the violence of conquest, colonialism, "civilization," and missionary conversion (religious and cultural)—each representing a different but thoroughly integrated strategy of White racist oppression of Indian peoples. The statistics are a constant reminder that this racism and its residual genocidal results continue in a variety of ways to hold Indian communities down and to keep us out of the american narrative except as sports team mascot names.<sup>5</sup> They are the residual of a continuing history of racialized violence. In this context, we should note that our communities have been broadly christianized by the missionaries historically and into the present, and that fact has distinctly failed to help the people in any appreciable way. It may have, of course, managed to save certain individuals, but it has dramatically failed to save our communities. And indeed we must then remember that this was one of the principal objectives of the missionaries, precisely to destroy our communities by destroying Indian cultures and value systems, calling them satanic and diabolical.

Now we can turn to that history of genocidal violence against Indian peoples that begins with the pious Cristobal Colón in 1492, who took on the monastic robe of a "gray friar." During the seven years Colon was vice-regent of the Caribbean, with time out for his prayers, he managed to engage in the first transatlantic slave trade by sending some 1,500 Indians back to Spain to be sold into slavery and ruled over the deaths of some seven million people on one island alone.<sup>6</sup> This history of violence continues with the episcopalian invasion of Virginia in 1607; followed by the puritan invasion of what became New England, including the so-called pilgrims; and a constant stream of spanish catholics in the southwest part of the continent. America continues a european history of violence that has been unaccounted for and usually rigorously denied. When the first european forces invaded the Americas—the spanish to the Caribbean, the english to north America—they came with clearly preconceived notions

of conquering peoples, and with war-making technologies finely honed over several centuries of war-making in Europe.<sup>7</sup> So terrorism and surprise ambush massacres became the tried-and-true strategies for the colonial invaders. They also arrived having already developed the theological and intellectual means for justifying and legitimating their exercise of violence. Preachers like Robert Gray were already laying the foundation theologically in England trying to build local support in 1609 for the jamestown adventure. And the Rev. Gray was actually just one of many london preachers engaged in a coordinated effort from their pulpits in 1609 and 1610 to rally the faithful behind the jamestown invasion of America, all doing their part to lay the religious and theological foundations for empire in english discourse, denigrating the aboriginal owners of the land, and constructing notions of christian superiority.<sup>8</sup> None of these pastors, including Rev. Gray, had ever been to America, yet Gray and the others were able to make wild ethnographic claims with regard to the nature of American Indians and their rights to property.<sup>9</sup> Thus, empire became a part of both of the english and the american telling of the christian story.

John Cotton, the theologian of the boston puritan colony, did the same for John Winthrop and his army of invaders. As they prepared to embark on the Arbela for what was to become New England in 1630, Rev. Cotton preached the farewell sermon, assuring these puritan christian adventurers that their quest for Indian land was indeed just, that God wanted them to take this land and displace its current owners. Thus Cotton gave birth to the long-lived theological notion that these puritans were the "new Israel" appointed by God to conquer and occupy someone else's land; the aboriginal owners of the land were to become the new Canaanites.<sup>10</sup> This is the beginning of the american narrative as we have come to inherit it today. And this we might think of as the first american theology anchored in the claims of the christian story. "This land is your land; this land is my land . . .," but it certainly ain't Indian land anymore! As conservative republican japanese american senator S. I. Hayakawa quipped about another piece of Indian land, the Panama Canal, more than thirty years ago, "We stole it fair and square."<sup>11</sup> That seems to be the continuing puritan/christian/american opinion to this day—whether voiced on the streets of north America or in the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>12</sup> This chosen people narrative gave rise almost immediately to the religio-political doctrine that was later to be called "Manifest Destiny," a doctrine that is deeply rooted as a theological claim in the christian story, both in the popular mind and in the homilies of preachers.<sup>13</sup> This is the religio-political doctrine, the christian-story metaphor, that empowered the genocidal invasion of Indian country across the breadth of the continent and continues today to fuel the contemporary american domination of the world under the guise of the globalization of capital. I should add here that it matters little to Indian people that others around

the world, liberationists engaged in their own resistance to the globalization of U.S. power, are telling a quite different christian story. The christian story imposed on Indians by our colonizer has meant and accomplished irreparable harm to Indian communities.

The terrorism and massacres of Indians began in north America with Miles Standish at Plymouth in 1622.<sup>14</sup> The same year further south the episcopal settlers had invited the Powhatans to a feast celebrating a treaty signing between the two peoples. They proceeded to serve their guests a poisoned wine that immediately killed some two hundred Indians; then these english christians continued to slaughter another fifty by hand. This was surely an act of terrorism. To call it a massacre is simply not strong enough. A dozen years later John Winthrop's puritan army ambushed an unarmed Pequot village of old people, women, and children (civilian non-combatants) at Mystic in 1637, slaughtering some seven hundred innocents in another terrorist attack.<sup>15</sup> These early colonial attacks became habitually repetitive behavior throughout the U.S. conquest of the West. One of those terrorist moments was the 1864 attack on a peaceful Cheyenne and Arapaho village on Sand Creek in "Colorado Territory." Here the terrorist was an ordained methodist pastor (former missionary to Wyandots and then district superintendent of the colorado methodist district) who took time off to lead a colorado militia attack against a defenseless Indian village as "Colonel" John Chivington. Don't overlook the babies, he instructed his troops the night before the surprise dawn attack, "Nits make lice."<sup>16</sup>

In terms of nation-building and the formation of the United States, we must note that violence is a consistent characteristic of the new republic from the beginning. It began with *George Washington's War on Native America*, the title of Barbara Mann's fine piece of archival research;<sup>17</sup> and continued at a legal and intellectual level with the purchase of the "Louisiana Territory" by Thomas Jefferson, and his sending of Lewis and Clark to *explore* their new piece of property.<sup>18</sup> For the Osage Nation, of course, that was the moment when the United States bought "our" land—from the french! We are still trying to figure that one out. Within two years, the Jefferson government (through territorial governor William Clark) was already forcing the Osages to move west and cede the land on which we were living.

We have already noted that the U.S. republic, beginning with its war of independence in 1776, was from the very beginning invested in violence against American Indians. To illustrate the point, we might select just a couple of America's favorite presidential heroes, beginning with Andrew Jackson, by far the most hated president in the minds of nearly every Indian in north America. Yet, we should be quick to note, he continues to be a favorite among Democratic Party faithful today. Almost all state Democratic Party organizations host annual fundraising dinners named after Jackson and Jefferson. Among American Indians, however, Jackson

is particularly remembered for his deadly policy of Indian removal. He ran for the office of president on a platform calling for the removal of all Indian people from the southeastern part of the country in order to make fertile Indian farmlands available to white immigrant farmers and to ever-expanding slave-labor-based, big business plantation operations. He spent the eight years of his administration implementing the policy, remembered signally among Indian people as the "Trail of Tears." The estimate is that more than a quarter of all Cherokees (just one of the Indian nations so removed) died during the process of removal. Alexis de Tocqueville (himself a White elitist, a wealthy french tourist of the 1830s) said with no little sarcasm in tone, "The conduct of the Americans of the United States towards the aborigines is characterized . . . by a singular attachment to the formalities of law. . . . It is impossible to destroy men with more respect for the laws of humanity."<sup>19</sup> A few pages further he describes his own witness to a moment of the removal, a band of Choctaws crossing the Mississippi River in mid-winter:

It is impossible to conceive the frightful sufferings that attend these forced migrations. . . . It was then the middle of winter, and the cold was unusually severe; the snow had frozen hard upon the ground, and the river was drifting huge masses of ice. The Indians had their families with them, and they brought in their train the wounded and the sick, with children newly born and old men upon the verge of death. They possessed neither tents nor wagons, but only their arms and some provisions. I saw them embark to pass the mighty river, and never will that solemn spectacle fade from my remembrance. No cry, no sob, was heard among the assembled crowd; all were silent. Their calamities were of ancient date, and they knew them to be irremediable. . . . The expulsion of the Indians often takes place at the present day in a regular and, as it were, a legal manner.

The all time favorite presidential hero, both in his own time and yet today, is George Washington, often called the "father of our country." Long forgotten in american historical consciousness is his murderous war against Indian communities in the Ohio Valley. Long before the revolutionary war, Washington and others had been making illegal investments in lands west of the Alleghany Mountains, so a military campaign to solidify those personal investments and to remove aboriginal impediments to their ownership seemed logical enough. Using long-buried government archives in a blockbuster volume titled *George Washington's War on Native America* (2005), Barbara A. Mann now describes dramatically the scorched-earth war strategies of Washington in pursuing the conquest of the Ohio River Valley.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, she demonstrates that Washington actually precipitated this war during the revolutionary war as an onslaught intended to break the backs of the Iroquois League and the Ohio Union in

order to open their lands, Indian lands, for White settlement. Weakened politically and militarily by the war itself, the United States enacted the Northwest Ordinance in 1789, offering Indian peoples a promise: "The utmost good faith shall always be observed towards the Indians; their land and property shall never be taken without their consent; and, in their property, rights, and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed." Indeed the United States was denying any aggressive intent against Indians of the territory and renouncing any claims of discovery or conquest in their territories. As Churchill and Morris report, under Washington's presidency, "the U.S., of course, was comporting itself otherwise, even as the Ordinance went into effect."<sup>21</sup> So, under Washington's leadership, the power of the modern state extended to genocidal lying to and then murder of those whose lands it coveted.

Perhaps the second-favorite presidential hero is Abraham Lincoln. It should never be forgotten that within six days of signing the Emancipation Proclamation freeing African slaves in the U.S. south he also signed the death warrants of the thirty-nine Dakota Indians who were hung in Mankato, Minnesota, the day after Christmas in 1862. It was a fine public spectacle, the single largest judicial execution in U.S. history. One can still today engage in the public gaze of Mankato photographs thanks to omniscience of the Internet. And it should be noted that the offenders were all tried in a single military tribunal. Over three hundred Indians were found guilty of murder within the span of one eight-hour day. What had been a legitimate uprising of the colonized against their treaty-violating colonizers was translated legally and instantly into a criminal act punishable by execution. Indian people, needless to say, remember these histories of violence. We remember pastor Chivington's ruthless attack on a peaceful Cheyenne village in early winter—only two years after the Little Crow uprising.

At this point most readers will begin to understand my insistence that those who would encourage American Indians to buy into the american narrative of nation-building and find our own place within it, are asking us to participate in our own oppression. And the oppression is not just the history of military violence. As Tocqueville already noted in the 1830s, the violence increasingly included legal violence. We should remember that the U.S. Congress spent the first hundred years of its existence focusing some 25 percent of its legislative energies on what White people called the "Indian problem." The net result, of course, was a whole body of law, new additions to the rule of law (still on the books today) created merely to help the United States better control Indian people and to more efficiently separate Indian peoples from their resources, particularly their resources in land. We should add that technically none of this "federal Indian law" is constitutional; indeed as a whole it seems to be in clear violation of Article VI of the constitution where it stipulates that treaties are to be held as the

highest law of the land. Rather than "unconstitutional," white legal scholars prefer to euphemistically refer to it as "para-constitutional."

American violence, then, has become a consistent history of violence because violent behavior, whether public or private, personal or corporate, has a distinct tendency toward becoming an addictive pattern of behavior. Racism became very early a key strategy for rationalizing violence. Violent responses to Indian peoples created the need for—and a logic to support—further violence on the part of amer-european folk in their conquest. The addictive pattern can be seen as the same sorts of massacre behavior was repeated in Vietnam (e.g., Mai Lai), and again in Desert Storm the use of violence as the ultimate american foreign policy solution was soundly affirmed, trickling down to the rank-and-file in places like Abu Graib. The strategic use or threat of violence has continued today both in economic strategies and the imposition of nation-building on the modern colonized Other—where invariably we actually mean procedural-democracy and constitutional state-building. It continued in organizations like the School of the Americas (and will continue in whatever economic and diplomatic institutions are devised to replace the School of the Americas). It should be of little surprise that violence on the streets and in the private sphere in north America seems closely patterned after the perpetration of state and corporate violence. The practice of violence that so permeates american history and life is and has always been heavily racialized, beginning with violence against the aboriginal owners of the land. From the beginning it was also class biased, and it has been consistently and is today increasingly gendered. From the public sphere to the private, from Iraq and Afghanistan to the suburban home, violence and resort to violent solutions has become as american as apple pie.

Perhaps an analogous comparison between the private and the public can help focus the concern. In a typical case of spousal abuse, the abuse does not end with a single incident. Battering will and must, by some perverse logic, continue, in order that the woman might come to assent to it. It is not enough, as Albert Memmi already noticed in his 1956 classic anti-colonialist work, for the colonizer to think that he is right in his abuse of the colonized. He also needs for the colonized to believe that the conquest is just and right.<sup>22</sup> From the systemic to the interpersonal level, White male privileging can be tracked from their control of systemic structures of power to the blatant racism and sexism of their private joke telling. The defense of White privilege requires clarity about the racialization of the Other. Even jokes communicate important information both to those in the center of the power field (usually affirming their status and privilege) and to those condemned to the periphery. Ultimately, the defense of White privilege requires that black, brown, yellow, and red people acknowledge and in some measure consent to the hierarchical structuring of privilege in which

White is superior to Color. Whether the message is encoded in the usual coloration of political leaders or in the statistical percentages of young men of color locked up in prisons, the privileged status of Whiteness is regularly reinforced and reentrenched. In the same way, the privileging of men is consolidated and imposed on women—even in our contemporary moment of feminist resistance.

To understand international politics, we need to move from the private sphere and the abuse of women or the abuse of children to the globalization of capital in the public sphere. The United States must insist, as President Clinton (a liberal Democrat?) did shortly before leaving office, that "freedom can only be measured in terms of free markets," a sentiment rooted in the economics of Milton Friedman and the Chicago School.<sup>23</sup> President Obama, the newest liberal hero, is currently voicing the very same "free market" commitments even as he continues to pursue foreign policy options of violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and increasingly, Pakistan. The United States is invested spiritually in its economic conquest of the world. So we must tell Two-Thirds World countries—through our economic mission agencies: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—that they must have free market systems in place in order to do business with us. And as the world's sole reigning superpower, it becomes necessary to reinforce american privilege and the superiority of american (economic) ideology.<sup>24</sup>

So if I can summarize where this history takes me in my argument from an Indian perspective, ultimately there are two major problems with including American Indians in the project of american nation-building. First of all, american nation-building historically has been firmly predicated on the perpetration of violence against Indian peoples. And secondly, nation-building has been conceived and validated as religious violence squarely anchored in "the theological claims of the christian story." Whether it was the very early notions of White english folk as God's chosen people, the new Israel, conquering a new "promised land" or the later manifestation of this doctrine as the doctrine of manifest destiny, the motivating idea was that God wanted the Canaanites killed or removed. And like the israelite people of the hebrew bible, it turned out that assimilation (though not God's favorite choice of action) was one of the devices used for conquest. So the debates among White Americans in the nineteenth century, for instance, was whether Indians should simply be exterminated as vermin (the only choice for most of the western presses, like the *Rocky Mountain News*, or Frank Baum, a south dakota editor and author of the famous children's fantasy novel *The Wizard of Oz*<sup>25</sup>); or removed to less-desirable locations further away from newly invading White settlers; or, increasingly in the later nineteenth century, educated for assimilation as a domestic laboring class within the United States.<sup>26</sup> And now in this late stage of capitalist

colonialism, they want us to help them build this nation predicated on our own death or disappearance.

Before I merely dismiss nation-building out of hand, however, we should take a closer look at what the term has come to mean in modern state parlance. What is a nation? The whole question of what is a nation is deeply rooted in european romanticism of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which means that discourses about nations and nation-building are deeply rooted in european economic and political movements of colonialism and empire. In the wake of the french revolution, german questions of nation-building, for instance, were addressed by romantic-era theologians and philosophers like Schleiermacher and Hegel. Why would Indian folk want to engage in furthering the american imaginary?

At the same time, most perceptive american people are aware that nation is the preferred self-designation of American Indian communities. My people are the Osage Nation. The english language alternative, the one strongly preferred by the U.S. government, is the language of tribalism: Indians are tribes and have tribal governments. As Churchill argued nearly twenty years ago, the word "tribe," while it comes from naming the ancient, primitive, and premodern among humans, may derive most directly from its use in biology and animal husbandry to taxonomically categorize animals. Wherever european empire went, the colonized were characteristically named as atavistic primitives, distinctly less than the colonizer who was making claims on their lands and their lives. So the continued use of the terms "tribe" and "tribal" to refer to Indian peoples' communities is a colonial attempt to create Indianness as a category of abjection. Thus, Indians tend to use the word "nation" as a self-referent as a somewhat less problematic term. Yes, this too is a bow to the colonization of language, a deeply european, latinate concept as we have already implied. Yet to call ourselves nations finally is a counterclaim over against what the U.S. apparatus would reduce us to and over against what the U.S. claims for itself as a nation.

What is a state? Let's be clear. The modern state (nation-state?) is a new construct. There is nothing natural about the state. Moreover, we need to be clear historically that the emergence of the modern state coincides with the mushrooming of european colonialism and empire building. The modern state may have been born in the very events of 1492 that saw the launching of the columbian misadventure, born in the marriage of Castile and Aragon (Ferdinand and Isabella), born in the early birth of Spain as a modern country and state. It certainly grew in complexity as philosophers like John Locke pressed the voice of a larger elite than the absolute monarch in determining governance. From thence we can trace the history from England's puritan civil war of the 1640s; England's "glorious revolution" of 1688 a generation later; the american and french revolutions at the end of the next century. Yet the creation of the state and its apparatuses created governments

of increasing bureaucracies and bureaucratic power that pushed european empire-building and colonial adventuring to new heights. Indeed, colonialism and the growth of state bureaucratic power played off of one another, creating enormous wealth on the basis of cheap colonial natural resources and labor. For American Indians it was our land; for far too many Africans it was their bodies. Africans provided free labor; Indian bodies were an inconvenience to manifest destiny and needed simply to be removed one way or another. Millions died in the resulting genocidal conquest. So American Indians can concede the state or affirm american nation-building only at the severe cost of our own sovereignty and national status.

Like the romantic-era german nationalism of the nineteenth century, the american narrative is an ideal pressed by the political apparatus of the state and its politicians of either party, enhanced by the press (both liberal and conservative), and solidified by the churches. The romance of the american narrative is very much about nation-building just as it is embedded with the christian story in its ideology. And we should not think that American Indians can somehow universally avoid the compelling attractiveness of that narrative as it makes its claims daily on each of us. Too many young Indians, for instance, rush to live out some Indian warrior ideal and to escape reservation poverty by joining the colonizer's army or marine corps, putting their very bodies at risk to fight the wars of the same empire that has created our poverty. The narrative, however, is not of our own doing; rather, it is imposed on us by systemic forces that seem out of our control. On the other hand it can touch us emotionally/psychologically in such deep ways that a crowd of citizens can fall into patterns of behavior that build up the narrative itself. Since the narrative is historically raced and gendered, it always is of concern when people of color, even those of us involved in some resistance to the narrative, naively buy into its romanticism.

At present, the so-called tea party movement (and it is really unclear whether the metaphor is a reference to the Boston tea party of the revolutionary era or a reenactment of Alice in Wonderland's tea party) is again surfacing the rhetoric of "save our constitution," as if the U.S. constitution were a divine-word sacred text. While the notion of constitutional democracy is as important a part of the narrative as chanting "USA" when a U.S.-born athlete wins a gold medal, we need to remember clearly that the document was forged explicitly to protect the rights and privileges of White male land owners. The constitution is not the Word of God. Indeed the U.S. constitution was written by White, male, land-owning politicians who were under the theoretical influence of John Locke—among others, but this was Thomas Jefferson's favorite. And Locke, we should remember, was himself a wealthy, White, male land owner, a very highly placed political figure in seventeenth-century England who was heavily invested in slave trading (the Royal Africa Company), owned african slaves through investments in Bar-

bados plantations, and owned forty-eight thousand acres of Indian land in the Carolinas, holding the colonial title of carolina landgrave and serving as secretary to the "lords proprietor" of the Carolina Corporation, a colonial land venture. Indeed, Locke wrote, and more than a decade later revised, the "Carolina Constitution" for the corporation.<sup>27</sup>

For those who want to argue that it is time for American Indians to move beyond the past and to learn to live in the present reality, they need to remember that U.S. government predations against Indian people have not stopped but continue largely unabated, these days often in what one author calls legal micro-aggressions. Bill Clinton is remembered fondly by many Americans (especially now after eight years of a second Bush). By some accounts he was a liberal president. In 1994 Clinton invited "tribal" government leaders to his home (a.k.a., the White House) for a conference to engage in conversation between the U.S. government and Indian peoples anew. This was an extraordinary event at such a late moment in the colonialist/capitalist dominance of the continent. In his Rose Garden talk to "tribal" leaders, Clinton once again assured these Indian leaders vociferously that the United States under his leadership would respect the "government-to-government" relationship between "tribes" and Washington, D.C. The tribal leaders present, of course, were exactly those Indians who had given up on Indian sovereignty per se and decided to work the system to make the most of the existing system of dependency work to some benefit of their home communities. But to that extent we must admit that these relatives had been colonially compromised long before they ever got to the Rose Garden, that is, their minds had been colonized. Thus they applauded Clinton's mouthing of assurances for respecting government-to-government relations with Indians. The problem is, of course, that every little town in the United States has a government-to-government relationship with the federal government. What are, rather, reserved to Indian communities by virtue of treaties signed with the United States are nation-to-nation relationships, the one thing that american nation-building must necessarily disallow in order for it to celebrate its own legitimacy. So Clinton's use of government-to-government language is a legal micro-aggression, one that can be found on countless U.S. government websites. Again, if we concede american nation-building we finally disavow our own nation-ness. And that, as I will argue, is a dangerous move not just for Indian peoples but for the long-term survivability of the colonizer's self.

## MISSIONARY CONQUEST

At this point I need to address that aspect of the assignment that asks each of us to participate in creating a public theology anchored in the theologi-

cal claims of the christian story. I have already indicated certain misgivings with the christian story, especially insofar as that story has been thoroughly entangled with the euro-western story of colonialism, domination, empire, and the conquest of Indian peoples and Indian lands. Lumbee legal scholar Robert A. Williams articulates the intimate connection between conquest and the part played by the missionaries. He argues that the conquest must continue until "normative divergence" is completely wiped out; and in particular, he argues, "divergence from the conqueror's religion," if allowed to continue, would make the conquest less decisive.<sup>28</sup>

So again I need to clarify that my chapter certainly hopes to speak publicly to larger north american audiences, particularly including the white power center and the solid core of what I have called procedural democracy, but I no longer find it helpful to speak out of the christian narrative—even as I engage a critical analysis of parts of that narrative. Speaking from the midst of an aboriginal community long oppressed by the euro-western christian center of power, I have found it far more helpful to my community to make this move back toward our traditional expression of life and spiritualities. Nearly twenty years ago I wrote a book arguing that christian missionaries to Indian people regularly and customarily confused the gospel of Jesus Christ with their own cultures, and in the mission processes they regularly worked to convert Indian people culturally to the practice of european values and behaviors that actually had nothing at all to do with the so-called christ event. Ultimately, the missionaries functioned, knowingly or not, as colonial officials attempting to bring Indian behavior patterns into some (normative) pattern that could be more easily controlled by the colonizer and more easily manipulated in terms of accessing Indian land resources. Indeed it must be noted that the onslaught of european missionary outreach globally does not begin until and actually coincides with the beginning of european colonialism after 1492.

For American Indians, instead of trying to rescue the christian story with some liberationist reinterpretation of it, we need to stop and ask, why did these missionaries think Indians were so in need of european christian-style salvation in the first place. Why do missionaries today (of all denominations of Christianity) feel this need to impose the christian story and its cultural artifacts on other peoples? Of course, the most successful ways of imposing the christian story on others is by denigrating whatever it is that those people have always done. And a usual strategy involves reciting ethnographic misinterpretations and fabrications rooted in stereotyping and simple depredations until they are commonsense knowledge among the colonizer class. In the Indian world, our ancient ceremonies were characteristically categorized as evil, as demonic or satanic. It is in the nature of the colonization process that the colonized have a distinct tendency to internalize these very sorts of criticism and eventually believe these deprecations

parroted by the colonizer. Having experienced trauma on top of trauma in the conquest, and then threatened with some sort of eternal personal damnation, that is with the specter of hell, it was all too easy to give in to missionization not because of the compelling nature of the gospel, but rather just to achieve some level of survival in the face of genocide.

American Indians have been hurt by the missionary propagation of the christian gospel, and there seems to be no recovery from this, since the Christianity brought to Indians was a Christianity already fully clothed in the cultural language and symbolism of the euro-west and voiced in a theology that always justified the superiority of euro-christian folk and almost invariably worked to help the state (nation?) achieve its goals of conquest. Our traditional Indian ways of living had been destroyed by the colonizer. People had been murdered, sometimes in large numbers in events called massacres. Others of our ancestors died in epidemics of diseases brought by the colonizer. Those who survived eventually saw their children around the age of six arrested by colonial government officials (both ecclesial and secular, since the missionaries were carrying out their own governments colonial policies); and without recourse to trial these children were summarily sentenced to a dozen years of incarceration in prison facilities euphemistically called "boarding schools" that were run by both the churches and the U.S. federal government.

The advent of Christianity among Indian communities was part of the dramatic colonial ground shift that imposed a new cultural value system, a brand new and not too healthy way of life, along with new economic structures, new political systems of governance, new social structures, a whole new childhood education system, and a whole new worldview. Overnight, as it were, we were disallowed to speak with our ancestors or the other spiritual entities that had enlivened whole communities. To make sure that Indian people never looked back, there was a systemic attempt to categorize our former traditional existence as warlike, savage, primitive (in the wholly negative sense of the word), and childish, continuing a european intentional misrepresentation that goes back to the beginnings of the european invasion.

Now today as the colonial system inspired by the christian story has begun to show its flaws more publicly, we Indians are being asked to rethink the Christianity imposed on us under colonization and conquest and to find ways to reinterpret it as a story about liberation, to make our story a new story of israelite liberation from oppression—even though by now we should be clear that israelite liberation meant the death and annihilation of another people: the Canaanites back then and the Palestinians today, just as it meant the death and annihilation of aboriginal indigenous populations like American Indians the world over wherever the christian god empowered the expansion of european empire.

But there is yet another problem besides the history of christian violence and conquest and their accompanying racialized sense of superiority. This problematic is much more theological and cultural. It has to do with the question of worldview and cultural habits of behavior. To a great extent the cultures and worldviews of european folk and Indians are at polar opposites from one another, yet the missionaries imposed their own euro-western cultures and behaviors onto their Indian converts with little regard to the differences and what they might have meant or mean today. Examples of these include the tension between indigenous communitarian values and radical euro-western individualism. Thus christian notions of salvation are based on the radical individualism end of the spectrum and the presumed need of the individual, while Indian experiences of spirituality are always based on the needs of the community—even the so-called vision quest. Another example of cultural difference has to do with the entrenched temporality of modern euro-westerners. Everything comes down to time, even notions of salvation. In particular, the military industrial complex and capitalism itself is not even conceivable apart from notions of temporality. Production schedules; time clocks for valuing wage labor; development and the powerful euro-western myth of progress, all of these are rooted in temporality. On the other hand, Indian folk function basically out of a sense of the spatial. The location of our lands or the location of a particular ceremony is more important than what day of the week or what time of day the ceremony will happen. In this context we must add Indian notions of balance and harmony as counterpoint to euro-western notions of development and progress, especially when we remember that development and progress carry theological weight in euro-western thought systems. And I will focus more explicitly on Indian understandings of the interrelatedness of all life in the universe.

As astute White observers know today, the world stands in environmental jeopardy. So one aspect of a liberationist theology in the north should involve a retelling of the christian story in ways that might help rescue the earth from destruction. It turns out, however, that our Indian ancestors had ways of doing exactly that. The Indian imaginary began with respect for the earth and all living relatives, but it also meant that Indian folk dealt with one another with respect, particularly with respect for the life of another, human or other-than-human. Thus the Osage ceremony preparing for a defense of Osage land (the so-called war ceremony) included ceremonial acts to pray for any opponent who was killed in battle.

Those who came to steal our land blasted our traditional cultural ways as demonic and required that our ancestors end those ceremonies and cease telling those stories and the histories that supported our traditional theologies. Our ancestors were told they needed to replace those ways of being in the world with the new religion of the colonizer. Now, it seems,

we are being asked to re-create something of that old way of life all over again. Only it is not that same way of life. It is a way that tries to rescue all the negative forces of euro-western culture. What remains of our cultures has been romanticized by many New Age-leaning White folk as the source of some solution for their contemporary conundrum, but they have boxed in what they think Indian culture is or ought to be in terms of their own amer-european, euro-western cultures. So any solution offered out of an Indian cultural context must necessarily be cast into some version of individualism, usually voiced in some liberal language like "sustainable development," which allows them to both sound radical but to "have their cake and eat it too."

Allow me, then, to suggest one possibility for engaging a very different story, one of harmony and balance, one that might indeed bring respite to a planet in distress and make a way for people to live together in peace. As I have assured liberal-minded pacifists across the continent, a euro-philosophy of nonviolence will prove to be insufficient simply because of its impossibility—at least from an Indian perspective. My starting point for explaining this impossibility is the Indian principle of interrelatedness, rooted for example in the Lakota prayer "mitakuye ouyasín," for all my relatives.

The reality in our world is that human beings cannot live without taking from our relatives, the very relatives for whom we just prayed. We might even go so far as to argue that human life necessitates some perpetration of violence in the world. For humans to eat means that we must kill close relatives, whether we kill buffalos or deer; or take the life of sisters' corn or squash. Every act of violence, even eating, disrupts the harmony of the world around us anew; it creates imbalance that must somehow be repaired. And this is one of the highest spiritual responsibilities of every human being. Thus every time we fight or hunt, when we harvest, and every time we eat, there are ceremonies that help us restore the balance in the world around us that we necessarily disrupted. Thus, it is important to Indian people to remember constantly how to perform those ceremonies.

For an old Osage village to feed and take care of itself, for instance, would usually require the killing of fifty or sixty buffalos three times a year in our spring, summer, and fall hunts. We are told that there was a ceremony to be performed before each of these communal hunts, and that the ceremony was in all respects nearly identical to the ceremony (called the "war" ceremony by White interpreters) performed before a military contingent could leave the village to go out and defend the people from an enemy intruding on our lands. While those military contingencies might be completed without even killing an enemy, we knew ahead of time that this would be a possibility. And we knew for a certainty that we would indeed kill some of our sisters and brothers of the buffalo nation in a hunt. In either case the ceremony was a twelve- or thirteen-day public ceremony to make sure that

any violence we committed was done with utmost respect for those relatives who might be killed. Another useful social device was to set aside one whole clan of Osages whose task it was to nurture and protect our relationship with the buffalo nation. Because of their responsibility for maintaining balance in the world with our buffalo relatives, those who are in the *thoka udsethe* (Buffalo Bull clan) are proscribed from eating buffalo meat—except as part of a ceremony. Because the people of this clan are “buffalo people,” for them to eat buffalo meat would be an act of cannibalism. The rest of the Osage Nation counted on this clan to spiritually maintain our vital relationship to this important source of nourishment and protein and to help the nation maintain harmony and balance even when we necessarily engaged in the violence of hunting. The community goal, then, is to maintain balance in our relationships with other humans and with those other-than-human people around us. It is this deeply rooted cultural proclivity, by the way, that has made most Indian people less-than-ideal prospects for capitalist accumulation.

The cultural value of generosity is structured in Indian communities to help insure community balance. To this day, personal importance in Indian communities is measured in terms of wealth given away to others rather than wealth accumulated. Blasted as diabolical or satanic by the missionaries and the U.S. government alike, the traditional Indian “give-away” was an important device for helping to maintain relationships of balance within the community. To gain initiation into the council of elders (called *nó'ho'zhi'ga*) a number of criteria measuring cultural values had to be met. Along with intelligence, bravery, and community, upright character was generosity. At least three times in the person's life that person and the entire family would have had a very large give-away in which they would have given away essentially everything that they own, making them completely dependent on the community even for their subsistence. The moment of initiation would then become the occasion for a fourth such give-away, a give-away for which the person would have had seven years to collect especially valuable things to include as gifts. The primary responsibility of the person called “chief” in English translations is to insure the material well-being and balance of the people and to show generosity to all visitors who come into the community.

We must note, however, that in our balancing of the world around us there is much more at stake than just our own village or (Osage) national well-being. If we act recklessly and thoughtlessly we could easily put the whole of the world out of balance—for others as well as for ourselves.<sup>29</sup> Thus, it is incredibly important that we pay attention to these ceremonial obligations. In most Indian national communities there was an annual ceremony that functioned more generally to restore balance. These ceremonies, like the Plains Indian sun dance or the southeastern Green Corn

Dance, were concerned for the balance of the whole of the world and are sometimes referred to by White interpreters as world-renewal ceremonies. In most Indian national community contexts, the killing of any one (human or other-than-human) was not allowed during such a ceremony because of the nature of the ceremony itself. Three times in four days at one Lakota sun dance I attended, a stray rattle snake crawled up out of the canyon next to the arbor and entered the arbor itself. At the first instance, some White visitors ran to get something to use to kill the snake and had to be restrained and told that they were acting inappropriately. Each time two fire keepers carefully carried the snake out of the arbor and down to the bottom of the canyon and left it there with offerings of tobacco and gentle words asking the snake to stay away until the ceremony was over. At another sun dance the cooks had to be asked to remove the fly-paper they had posted to catch flies and keep the flies out of their food preparation. Killing flies was not an option; rather, they had to be tolerated and allowed to take their share of the food. So when an Indian community prays for “all” its relatives, these other-than-human relatives are always included.

Walking the earth in balance begins with one's own community, of course. But walking in balance with the nonhuman relatives that surround us in the place where we find ourselves is equally important to our personal well-being and the well-being of the community as a whole. Like human beings, each of these relatives has its own spirit and deserves to be treated with respect by humans—even if we are hunting for food. We are approaching a discourse here about worldview, since the business of walking the earth in balance is indeed about having a particular perspective about the earth around us and our place in it, a perspective that becomes habitual cultural practice. And the ceremonial aspects of our lives as Indians carry this perspective through with distinct consistency. As Indian people gather to eat, someone will invariably take some of the feed prepared for the people and set a small dish aside for the spirits—for the ancestors and anyone else present from that invisible spirit world. Again, this is about balance and interpersonal relationships.

Imbalance, not balance, has been the order of the day throughout the American colonial history of conquest and nation-building. And since imbalance becomes habit forming (along with Lockean-style individual possessiveness) it manages to continue from generation to generation and has become the order of the day in our globalizing political-economic context of climate change and global warming, just as it is in military and political coercions in U.S. foreign policy. Had George Bush engaged in a twelve- or thirteen-day ceremony (the typical length of the Osage pre-battle ceremony) before attacking Iraq or Afghanistan—especially one that might have recognized his enemies as relatives—I might have had a modicum of respect for his wars. If Georgia-Pacific or any other paper or lumber

corporation performed religious ceremonies prior to clear-cutting a forest, if they had spoken to the trees as relatives explaining why their death was necessary, and if they had returned something of value back to the forest, then perhaps I might have less of a guilty conscience in using their products. Instead, we have a mining industry that returns hazardous waste to the environment in the form of methyl mercury (e.g., zinc mining or even hydro-electric damming) or waste from cyanide used to process gold ore. Indeed, it seems that the only notion of balance is the accounting concern for the bottom line in the profit column.

If we are serious about saving the planet—and our grandchildren's lives—then maybe we have to figure out ways to shift the culture and worldview of the dominant capitalist/socialist imaginary that seems to get moderns stuck in arguing so passionately between two different but equally anthropocentric notions of progress and development. And we need to be clear in our understanding that we cannot let anthropocentrism go without giving up progress, development, and capitalism. Could we find a way to live with some indigenous model of what I call dynamic stasis (as opposed to the oxymoron of sustainable development)? It should be clear by now in my chapter that we are talking about a very different social imaginary that would lead to a very different sort of nation-building. To live in balance together in this sense would require a very different story and a different public theology.

## Response to Tink Tinker

*Lara Medina*

As I begin writing my response to the insightful chapter of Professor Tink Tinker of the Osage Nation, I am in the midst of teaching an intensive two-week course titled "Mexican Indigenous Ways of Knowing and the Sacred," offered through the Hispanic Summer Program housed at Princeton Theological Seminary. The students are predominantly of Latino heritages studying for graduate degrees in Christian ministry and theology. Since my own days of attending this program in the late 1980s, when U.S. Latina/o theology was just emerging, I felt a strong need to draw theological attention to the deepest sources of Latina/o cultural values. Why do Latinas/os value community, reciprocity, the sacred within the secular, and interdependency? For me the deepest source, the *cenote*,<sup>1</sup> or sacred well, of these values is our Indigenous lineages, our Indigenous ancestors, our Indigenous epistemologies or worldviews that evolved from the original inhabitants of the middle and southern regions of the American continent. I went on to write a thesis arguing that any relevant Chicana/o theology must take seriously Mexican Indigenous epistemologies to truly grasp our way of knowing and being in the world in relationship to ourselves, our communities, and the sacred. Up until now, my voice has been heard and respected in numerous academic settings, but rarely authentically engaged. I have found most Latino/a theologians, who strongly identify with "mestizo Christianity," to have internalized the colonial belief that Indigenous beliefs should be avoided. This resistance is most profound among those theologians teaching at private institutions where Christian claims must be safeguarded. Whether conscious or not, the openness to deeply engaging

with Indigenous spirituality to the point of it influencing the articulation of a U.S. Latino/a theology is sorely lacking. The work of Chicano theologian Virgilio Elizondo was the first to lift up the Indigenous worldview operating within the central icon of Our Lady of Guadalupe. His work dramatically influenced the birth of mestizo theology, but it seems that the honoring of the Indigenous stopped with the miraculous "Guadalupe event" that gave birth to "a new humanity."<sup>2</sup> Ada María-Isasi Díaz was the first U.S. Latina (Cuban) theologian to name the African within our mestizaje but did not elaborate further on the distinct African-ness of "mulatez." Subsequent prolific writings of Latina/o theologians continually draw from the beliefs and practices of the Latino people, a racially mixed people comprised of Indigenous, African, and European lineages. As numerous scholars have pointed out, it is exactly our non-European bloodlines (read "dark skin") that makes us most unacceptable, historically and currently. Considered to be a "mongrel race," it was the degree of our dark skin that determined our status in the colonial casta system and our citizenship rights in the southwest of the United States following the violated Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.<sup>3</sup> Our dark bodies configuring our racial status led to the "Mexican problem" within U.S. Christian churches in the twentieth century, and now feeds "anti-immigrant" legislation fundamentally targeting dark brown bodies. Our mestizaje exists precisely because of our brown and black lineages. Thus, I find the ongoing silencing of the deepest sources of our cultural values within current elaborations of mestizo theology to be quite troublesome.<sup>4</sup> As example, the astute work of Roberto Goizueta (Cuban) reveals how U.S. Latino religious/cultural practices challenge Western Cartesian dichotomies as they "presuppose an integral, holistic, and organic anthropology"<sup>5</sup> but he fails to identify the root source (Indigenous/African) of this holistic and organic way of being and knowing. As Elizondo stated a little more than a decade ago, "As new groups forge their geographical-social identity, they tend to forget their ancient origins."<sup>6</sup>

Professor Tinker's chapter has encouraged me to publicly state my frustrations with Latina/o theology. I fully agree with Tinker that Indigenous worldviews hold the corrective to the social and ecological ills caused by "euro-christian democracy." Without romanticizing Indigenous traditional ways, his naming the fundamental concepts of balance leading to harmony, community, interrelatedness of all life, generosity, the significance of space or one's relationship to a land base, and ceremony to honor the necessary taking of life, offers Christians a chance to reflect on spiritual fundamentals needed for a renewed ecology and a renewed Christ consciousness. These north American Indigenous values resonate profoundly with those of the middle and southern regions of the Americas. For ancient "Mesoamericans," balance, reciprocity, fluidity, interdependency, sacred geography, and embodied sacred energies shaped a worldview for civilizations living

in close relationship to the divine. Ometeotl, or divine duality, both male and female, penetrated the thought and ceremonial lives of the Mexica people. The *tlamatinime*, the poetic theologians preached creative arts, not war, for direct communication with the divine. Tinker's chapter encourages me to continue my scholarship around ancient Mesocamerican spiritual and ethical concepts and their application to contemporary Chicana/o and mestizo lives.

In lak Ech      For All Our Relations

this time is an understanding of nepantla, a good sweat ceremony, and a self-reflection with the God of Transformation.

To All My Relations! Aztlán, 2010

## Response to Lara Medina

*Tink Tinker*

Some two decades ago I was given a new name (common enough in American Indian communities). It was an elder Oglala medicine man who had stopped in Denver and participated in our prayers and saw something of our work in the urban Indian community there. What he saw in me back then was an American Indian ordained cleric with a commitment to Indian traditional culture and spirituality. Along with many younger Native clergy, I had made the journey back to my father's culture and decidedly away from my mother's strict lutheranism. In a prayer ceremony during his stay with us he gave me the name Walks Between Two Worlds. The name, however, marks more than my own life; it begins to get at the complex state of contemporary existence for all of Native America—in one way or another. As such, I find myself very sympathetic to Professor Medina's concern for and attachment to the Nahuatl term "nepantla" as an in-between-ness or borderland for Chicano/a folk. In an important sense, neplanta is the historical Chicano/a naming of hybridity as the postcolonial condition. And that experience of hybridity is a key residual fact of colonialism that we American Indians cannot escape. Moreover, that we share our American Indian heritage with our indigenous Chicana/o relatives is clear to most Indian folk. It was particularly clear to activists involved with Colorado AIM and Denver's Crusade for Justice beginning in the late 1960s. But there are differences in our contemporary contexts that merit discussion. So for the sake of conversation I will state my objections to Professor Medina's nicely argued neplanta thesis relatively pointedly despite my appreciation for her chapter's elegance.

Where I would begin to debate the issue is in Medina's assumption that the bipolar duality represented in neplanta consists of complementary opposites that result in a contemporary state of being that can and should be embraced unequivocally. European colonial adventuring surely did result in creating tensions of binary opposites wherever their military might took them around the globe. The question is whether indigenous peoples, having been forced under the terrible pressures of conquest to compromise their own cultures, value systems, ceremonial traditions, and long-established habits and communal behaviors, can find balance and harmony in some hybrid state of being. I fully realize that it has become intellectually unpopular to speak in terms of binary oppositions these days (e.g., colonizer/colonized). The problem is, however, that the binaries have never been completely erased by Native hybridities but have in many cases become even more pronounced.

I would argue that for American Indians the colonial imposing of the need for creating a borderland existence was and is devastating. It has and continues to eviscerate our cultures and our systems of values, precisely by putting our cultural traditions (especially our cultural traditions of balance and harmony) into diametric tension with the cultural values and habits of behavior of our colonizers. Radical european individualism results in a cultural system that is distinctly different from the ancient Indian cultural systems of a community-based worldview. The base of temporal thinking that came with european colonialism results in a very different set of values that was imposed willy-nilly on the spatial-based world of American Indians.

Colonialism changes everything. That much is clear. Whether the resulting hybridity of native life can be remotely seen as a place of balance, however, is certainly contestable. Medina says that balance and equilibrium represent natural inclinations of the cosmos, and I would agree wholeheartedly. Yet the net result of european colonialism is a decided global situation of imbalance, an imbalance that has left Indian communities (euphemistically called reservations) in dysfunctional poverty and utter disarray.

In the traditional world of American Indian life and thought, balance and harmony is the constant goal of community life and of each person. For Osages that balance meant a balance in the architecture of a village (placing the clans of the earth and sky divisions across the street from one another—in balance). In the same way it meant ceremonially protecting the relationship between the people and the buffalo or corn. So, one particular clan, the buffalo bull clan, was assigned the task maintaining the whole nation's relationship with our buffalo siblings. Everyday acts like hunting and eating necessitate some violence against close relatives and thus disrupt the ideal of balance. All of life, then, consists of necessary disruptions of personal, community, and cosmic balance on the one hand and the appropriate ceremonial acts needed to restore balance at any given moment.

The initial Osage experience of *wakonda*—the Osage word for the cosmic life force—reflects this ideal of balance. *wakonda* is experienced first of all as a complimentary dualism of above and below, male and female, sky and earth. The point of this dualism is that it never posits a dualism of good versus evil. Rather, the two opposites are both necessary for balance to occur and thus represent a complementary dualism.

This means that something that might seem quite simple and easy, like the shift from our perception of the cosmos to calling upon the male monotheistic deity of the european colonizer, is an introduction of radical imbalance that disrupts the common good of Indian communities. For instance, the maleness of the traditional christian god—and no less so the femaleness of the popular monotheistic White feminist mother-earth-goddess—must necessarily displace and destroy any Indian notion of what White discourse would call the sacred, which for Indians requires a balance of male and female energies. At this point the claims of the euro-christian story effectively trump the indigenous story and force fatal compromises that doom Native cultures and their value system.

I am fully aware that many christian Indian folk quite willingly live a neplanta hybridity, sometimes trying to be more christian than the christians, that is, White folk. While they may attempt to bring something of their own cultural values to their practice and understanding of Christianity, the culture is inevitably mangled as an exercise in hybridity where almost every subtlety of the original value system is lost.

Hybridity, of course, cannot be entirely escaped, as the pressures of colonialism continually erode our cultures and our habits of behavior. Even traditional practitioners, who may have disavowed colonial christian beliefs and practices—at least, at the surface level—are shaped nevertheless by our experiences of colonialism. Our understandings are increasingly voiced in a linguistic surface structure that is shaped by colonial euro-western cultural values of individualism and competition. Many sun dances, for instance, seem to be moving toward this sort of an individual exercise in spiritual self-empowerment.

Sometimes our most knowledgeable and best-trained elders find that they are suddenly using explicit phrases and the general language of New Age individualism to explain the ceremonies to outsiders. As a result more and more young Indians pick up on that New Age language used by these elders and come to embrace their traditional ceremonies with a euro-western individualist slant. The sun dance is traditionally engaged "for the sake of the people." That is to say, the health and balance of the community depends on the vicarious suffering of each of the dancers on behalf of the whole people. The New Age influence, however, means that young men increasingly commit to this dance in order to somehow increase their own personal power or status in the community, a terrible violation of the

ancient tradition. Ultimately, this means that the deep structures of Indian ceremonial life have begun to alter radically even as communities seem to be holding onto the surface structures in one form or another.

Like Professor Medina, I too have long participated in some of what remains of the old traditional indigenous ceremonial structures: dances, pipe ceremonies, purification ceremonies (a.k.a. "sweat" lodge), sun dances, and the like. And I have attained a certain status in my own urban (read hybrid/neplanta) Indian community of metropolitan Denver, increasingly as a recognized spiritual/ceremonial elder. Yet it is precisely in these contexts that I can see the awful limitations of neplanta. The culture of individualism and temporality has been so deeply imprinted upon Indian folk that it has become a major challenge to reclaim our own understandings of these ceremonies and to separate the indigenous worldview from the worldview imposed on us by missionaries, educators, U.S. government regulatory agencies like the BIA, and the need for developing everyday work skills in a money economy.

Our struggle now must be to protect what we still have in the ways of the deep structure values and habits of behavior and to begin the process of relearning what so many have lost. This is, I would argue, increasingly difficult to do this within the confines of the church, that is, within the confines of euro-western colonial systems and institutions.

68. The prodigious art and sign-force at work in movements that are spectral to racialized imperial power is central to my forthcoming book, *The Theological and the Political: On the Weight of the World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011).

69. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 63–64. See also Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 122–23.

70. Fregoso, *MeXicana Encounters*, 1–47.

### CHAPTER 13: AMERICAN INDIANS, CONQUEST, THE CHRISTIAN STORY, AND INVASIVE NATION-BUILDING

1. Robert Gray, *A Good Speed to Virginia* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1609). See also Karen B. Manahan, "Robert Gray's *A Good Speed to Virginia*," in *Literature of Justification*, edited by Edward J. Gallagher, <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/justification/jamestown/essay/4/>. Gallagher et al. have evidently posted Gray's sermon online, but in a controlled access site: *Early English Books Online*, 2003. Early English Books Online Archive. February 1, 2006, [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&rft\\_id=xri:eebo:image:6158](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&rft_id=xri:eebo:image:6158). This is a very useful project. Gray's sermon, it should be noted, was one of a series of notable sermons preached in London in 1609–1610 in order to rally support for the Jamestown colony, which had been foundering since its first beachhead in 1607.

2. My use of the lower case for such adjectives as "american," "christian," "biblical," and so forth, is intentional. While nouns naming religious groups might be capitalized out of respect for each Christian—as for each Muslim or Buddhist—using the lower case "christian" or "biblical" for adjectives allows readers to avoid unnecessary normativizing or universalizing of the principal institutional religious quotient of the Euro-West. Likewise, I avoid capitalizing such national or regional adjectives as american, amer-european, european, euro-western, etc. I also refer to north America. It is important to my argumentation that people recognize the historical artificiality of modern regional and nation-state social constructions. For instance, who decides where the "continent" of Europe ends and that of Asia begins? No one, for instance, designates the western half of north America as a separate continent clearly divided by the Mississippi River, or alternatively the Rocky Mountains. My initial reasoning extends to other adjectival categories and even some nominal categories, such as euro, and political designations like the right and the left and regional designations like the west. Quite paradoxically, I know, I insist on capitalizing White (adjective or noun) to indicate a clear cultural pattern invested in Whiteness that is all-too-often overlooked or even denied by american Whites. Moreover, this brings parity to the insistence of African Americans on the capitalization of the word "Black" in reference to their own community (in contradistinction to the *New York Times* usage). Likewise, I always capitalize Indian and American Indian.

3. Emilie Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (*Black Religion/Womanist Thought/Social Justice*) (London: Palgrave, 2006).

4. The situation in Canada is very similar. See the canadian "ReligiousTolerance.org" for a recent accounting of teen suicides among First Nations peoples: [www.religioustolerance.org/sui\\_nati.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/sui_nati.htm).

5. See Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas: 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1997), for a much fuller accounting of this history of genocide.

6. For explicit details, see the essay I cowrote with one of our doctoral students: Tink Tinker and Mark Freeland, "Thief, Slave-Trader, Murderer: Christopher Columbus and Caribbean Population Decline," *Wicazo Sa Review*, Spring 2008, 25–50.

7. Besides the long history of christian military crusades against Muslims in Palestine, one should not forget the religious war fought during the first half of the seventeenth century in Europe pitting Catholic against Lutheran, a nasty war in which over a quarter of the men in central Europe died. Few people seem to question how these sorts of war-making by european folk affected the psyche of Europeans and what effect this had on their self-identity—both in Europe and throughout the european invasion and conquest of Native America.

8. See the very fine analytic collection essays of Edward Gallagher and several of his graduate students treating this body of sermons, each preached in a local congregation before being published for wider circulation. Edward J. Gallagher, ed., *The Literature of Justification*, an internet publication of Lehigh University: <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/justification/about/>. I have in mind here especially the collection of essays included in the section titled *Jamestown—Essays*, <http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/trial/justification/jamestown/essay/> (accessed April 2, 2010).

9. See Lumbee legal scholar Robert A. Williams Jr., "Documents of Barbarism: The Contemporary Legacy of European Racism and Colonialism in the Narrative Traditions of Federal Indian Law," *Arizona Law Review* 31, no. 2 (1989): 237–78.

10. Robert Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest, and Liberation Theology Today," *Christianity and Crisis* 49 (1989): 261–65. See also the response to Warrior by William Baldrige, "Native American Theology: A Biblical Basis," *Christianity and Crisis* 50 (1990): 180–81.

11. "The Nation: Ceding the Canal-Slowly," *Time*, August 22, 1977, [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,915288-4,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,915288-4,00.html).

12. See particularly the volume by Lumbee Indian legal scholar Robert A. Williams Jr., *Like a Loaded Weapon: The Rehnquist Court, Indian Rights, and the Legal History of Racism in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2005), for plentiful examples of racism in Supreme Court opinions.

13. The term was not given its formal name, of course, until new york editor John O'Sullivan used the phrase in his defense of the then current american foreign policy of violence, namely the expansionist policies of President Polk, in an editorial piece titled "Annexation," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17, no. 1 (July–August 1845): 5–10.

14. Neal Slaisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 125–33.

15. Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (New York: Norton, 1975), 202–27.

16. The best volume on Sand Creek is still Stan Hoig's *Sand Creek Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1961). See also Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of*

*Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1997), particularly the chapter titled, "'Nits Make Lice': The Extermination of North American Indian, 1607–1992."

17. Barbara A. Mann, *George Washington's War on Native America* (New York: Praeger, 2005).

18. This moment, of course, was recently and widely celebrated in the american narrative during the bicentennial of the events, idealized and romanticized for contemporary Americans in a five-part PBS series at the time. For an earlier critique of the use of media in this fashion to justify the colonial project that is America, see Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's essay, "Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner," in her book by the same title.

19. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. M. Lerner, trans. G. Lawrence (New York: Harper, 1966), chap. 18.

20. International law now bans strategies of scorched earth under the Geneva Conventions: "It is prohibited to attack, destroy, remove or render useless objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population, such as foodstuffs, agricultural areas for the production of foodstuffs, crops, livestock, drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation works, for the specific purpose of denying them for their sustenance value to the civilian population or to the adverse Party, whatever the motive, whether in order to starve out civilians, to cause them to move away, or for any other motive" (Article 54, Protocol 1, Geneva Conventions, 1977: <http://deoxy.org/wc/wc-proto.htm>). The United States, of course, is not covered under these conventions since it never has ratified them—for fear of recrimination.

21. Glenn Morris and Ward Churchill, "Key Indian Laws and Cases," in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1992), 13.

22. Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 89, 129–288. "In order for the colonizer to be a complete master, it is not enough for him to be so in actual fact, but he must also believe in its (the colonial system's) legitimacy. In order for that legitimacy to be complete, it is not enough for the colonized to be a slave, he must also accept his role. The bond between the colonizer and the colonized is thus destructive and creative. It destroys and re-creates the two partners in colonization into the colonizer and the colonized. One is disfigured into the oppressor, a partial, unpatriotic and treacherous being, worrying about his privileges and their defense; the other into an oppressed creature, whose development is broken and who compromises by his defeat."

23. See Naomi Klein's critique of the "free market" economic policies of Friedman and his "chicago boys": *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).

24. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 46; Edward Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953). Hardt and Negri go a step further in assigning violence a central role in the emergence and development of modernity in general. The United States, by this accounting, is simply part of a larger european and amer-european pattern of behavior, rooted in the intellectual, political, religious, and economic development of the euro-west.

The legacy of modernity is a legacy of fratricidal wars, devastating "development," cruel "civilization," and previously unimagined violence. Erich Auerbach once

wrote that tragedy is the only genre that can properly claim realism in western literature, and perhaps this is true precisely because of the tragedy western modernity has imposed on the world. Concentration camps, nuclear weapons, genocidal wars, slavery, apartheid: it is not difficult to enumerate the various scenes of the tragedy.

25. The call for extermination continues into late December, 1890. Newspaperman Frank L. Baum wrote, "the best safety of the frontier settlements will be secured by the total annihilation of the few remaining Indians." Editorial, *Aberdeen Saturday Pioneer*, December 30, 1890, quoted in Elliott J. Gorn, Randy Roberts, and Terry D. Bilhartz, *Constructing the American Past: A Source Book of a People's History* (New York: HarperCollins, 1972), 74. Baum, best known as author of the Kansas fantasy book *The Wizard of Oz*, was celebrating the Wounded Knee massacre, which had happened the day before.

26. See Churchill's monograph on government run boarding schools. The church-run boarding schools were certainly no better at all—as we now know publicly from disclosures in Canada. Ward Churchill, *Kill the Indian, Save the Man: The Genocidal Impact of American Indian Residential Schools* (San Francisco: City Lights Press, 2004). And note my own introduction to Churchill's text: "Tracing a Contour of Colonialism: American Indians and the Trajectory of Educational Imperialism," xiii–xli.

27. Most likely working along with Mr. Ashley Cooper, one of the lords proprietor of the corporation and Locke's patron. David Armitage demonstrates Locke's involvement in the later revision of the document in 1682, in "John Locke, Carolina, and the Two Treatises of Government," *Political Theory* 32, no. 5 (2004): 602–27.

28. Robert A. Williams Jr., *American Indians in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 198.

29. This, of course, is precisely what we are experiencing globally today in this eco-crisis of global warming.

## RESPONSE TO TINK TINKER

1. "*Cenote*" is a Nahuatl term derived from the Yucatecan Maya "*tz'onot*" and refers to deep sinkholes filled with water formed by the erosion of cracks in the dry limestone surface of the Yucatan Maya region. In such an arid region, rain, caves, and *cenotes* are of authoritative sacred significance as life itself depends on these sources of water. See Edward B. Kurjack, "Cenotes," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures*, ed. David Carrasco, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 154–55.

2. See Virgilio Elizondo, *La Morenita: Evangelizer of the Americas* (San Antonio, TX: MACC Distribution Center, 1980) for his first articulation of the "Guadalupe event" using a Mexican framework. Jeannette Rodriguez followed in her treatment of the indigenous context for the apparition in *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

3. As one example, Martha Menchaca, *Recovering History, Constructing Race: The Indian, Black and White Roots of Mexican Americans* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001).

4. For a critical analysis of mestizaje see Manuel A. Vásquez, "Rethinking Mestizaje" in *Rethinking Latino(a) Religion and Identity*, ed. Miguel a. De La Torre and Gastón Espinosa (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2006), 129–57.

5. Roberto Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 140–51. Also see Goizueta, "The Symbolic World of Mexican American Religion," in *Horizons of the Sacred*, ed. Timothy Matovina and Gary Reibe-Estrella (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

6. Virgilio Elizondo, *Guadalupe, Mother of a New Creation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 177.

## CHAPTER 14: NEPANTLA SPIRITUALITY

1. Gloria Anzaldúa, "Border Arte: *Nepantla, El Lugar de la Frontera*," in *La Frontera/La Border: Art about the Mexico/U.S. Border Experience* (San Diego, CA: Centro Cultural de La Raza and Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 1993), 114.

2. In *Lak Ech* is an ethical concept in the Nahuatl language emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living beings. Nahuatl is the living language of the Nahua cultural complex indigenous to the middle and southern regions of the continent now known as the Americas. Nahuatl is considered an Uto-Aztecan language.

3. Electronic invitation from Harold Recinos, editor of *Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation*, dated April 8, 2009.

4. Roberto Rodriguez, "Welcome to Apartheid, Arizona USA," Column of the Americas, <http://web.me.com/columnoftheamericas>, posted May 15, 2010.

5. House Bill 2281, State of Arizona May 23, 2010, [www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/hb2281s](http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/hb2281s).

6. Rodriguez, "Welcome to Apartheid."

7. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters / Aunt Lute, 1987), 79.

8. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera*, 23.

9. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), xiii.

10. Isasi-Díaz and Tarango, *Hispanic Women*, 67.

11. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera*, 23.

12. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands La Frontera*, 38.

13. "Beware of romanticizing mestizaje, it could be fictional." Author's translation. Anzaldúa, "Border Arte," 111.

14. The works of numerous Chicana/o artists, writers, and intellectuals reflect the presence of the Indigenous spirit. For example, the visual art of Yreina Cervantez, Santa Barraza, Leo Limon, Irene Perez, Michael Amescua, David Botello, Carlos Frequez, Raoul De La Soto, Ester Hernandez, Joe Galarza, Marisol Torres, and the art collective of Mujeres de Maiz, to name just a few.

15. David Carrasco, "Jaguar Christians in the Contact Zone," *Enigmatic Powers: Syncretism with African and Indigenous Peoples' Religions among Latinos*, ed. Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo and Andres I. Pérez y Mena (New York: Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies, 1995), 74.

16. Roberto R. Treviño named these aspects of religious agency in his study on turn-of-the-century Tejano Catholics. See "The Handbook of Texas Online," [www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/print/MM/pqmcf.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/print/MM/pqmcf.html).