Solving the "Indian Problem:" Indian Relocation to Los Angeles County in the 1950s and 1960s

Michelle Vásquez-Ruiz

"Indians have grown up under the protective custody of the reservation" and so "suddenly being thrown upon the mercies of a harsh, urban existence many become confused," informed Irene Beadle a representative of the Church Federation to a *Los Angeles Times* reporter in 1962.[1] Between 1956 and 1969 the newspaper echoed these sentiments, publishing a variety of articles that highlighted the "harsh" realities of indigenous migrants who arrived to Los Angeles as a part of the Indian Relocation Programs of the 1950s. These articles demonstrated the challenges that migrants confronted when adjusting to urban life.[2] The obstacles were created by the *Los Angeles Times'* assumption that indigenous migrants depended on the federal government and therefore could not navigate the city on their own.

The Indian Relocation Program sought to encourage Native American relocation from the reservations to urban centers through employment and skill development programs.[3] The

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[1] Dan L. Thrapp, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here." *Los Angeles Times*. July 21, 1962.

[2] Thrapp; Matt Weinstock. "The Indian in L.A—With No Reservation" June 19, 1962, A6.

[3] John A. Price, "The Migration and Adaptation of American Indians to Los Angeles" *Journal of American Indian Education* 8, no. 2 (1969): 16-25; Donald L. Fixico. *Termination and Relocation Federal Indian*

program was a part of the larger series of "termination" policies passed by Congress in an effort to reduce tribal dependence on the federal government.[4] Despite the policies' impact, the relocation of Indigenous peoples to Los Angeles has received little attention in academia. Although anthropologists and historians have studied the effects and limitations of this policy through broad social historical perspectives, none has considered how space or the lack of space affected the ways in which Indigenous migrants constructed community. This article argues that an analysis of physical and imagined spaces complicates the current understanding of Indigenous migratory experiences. In utilizing oral histories of Indigenous migrants and news articles published by the *Los Angeles Times*, it is evident that the experiences of Indigenous migrants disrupted stereotypical notions of "indigeneity."

Some scholars argue that the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 and its related programs promoted paternalistic policies.[5] These policies circumvented critical discussions of Indigenous sovereignty.[6] Historians also argue that the mismanagement of these policies and programs revived an authoritative relationship between white policymakers and Indigenous peoples because non-Indigenous state employees managed these programs. Further complicating these perspectives other scholars considered how migrants addressed the challenges they faced through constructing ideas of community in Los Angeles.[7] Looking at the experiences

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Policy, 1945 -1960 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 143.

[4] Donald L. Fixico, *Termination and Relocation Federal Indian Policy, 1945 -1960* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), 135.

[5] Hilary N. Weaver, "Sovereignty Dependency, and the Spaces in Between: An Examination of United States Social Policy and Native Americans" in *Social Issues in Contemporary Native America Reflections from Turtle Island*, 2014, ed. Hillary N. Weaver. Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2014, 7; Fixico.

[6] Weaver, 7.

[7] Nicolas G. Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration and Identity in Twentieth-century Los Angeles* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2014.); Joan Weibel-Orlando, *Indian Country, LA: Maintaining Ethnic Community in Complex Society*. (University of Illinois Press, 1999); Ned, Blackhawk, "I Can Carry on

of migrants as opposed to Federal policies, these academics argue that despite many challenges Native peoples constructed and exerted their own Indigenous identity in the new urban spaces they called home. However, while these researchers advance our understanding of Indigenous diasporic experience, they do not explain how Americans perceived Indigenous communities in mainstream society. Their work looks at internal relationships within a vacuum that does not take into account the landscape and non-Indigenous inhabitants of these urban spaces. There is little consideration of how an urban setting altered the ways in which migrants constructed community and space.

Analyzing space as a political character in the development of community reveals how geography played a role in the forming of social relations.[8] Utilizing the methodologies presented in their work to study the experience of Indigenous migrants can further a holistic understanding of the effects of relocation. For Indigenous people, whose identity has been traditionally anchored in a specific conception of space and time, understanding the multilayered and spatial experience disrupts these antiquated notions. Therefore, a deep understanding of the construction of an Indigenous community cannot be completed without consideration of the role urban landscapes played for these Indigenous migrants. The space that they navigated was not a backdrop, but an essential component in how they developed community.

In consideration of this methodology, this article utilizes a combination of oral histories found in the UCLA Center for Oral History Research and *Los Angeles Times* newspaper articles published between 1950 and 1969 to argue that Indigenous

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from Here: The Relocation of American Indians to Los Angeles" *Wicazo Sa Review* 11, no. 2 (1995).

[8] Jose Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in California Town, 1880–1960* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Johnson, Gaye Theresa. *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity Music Race and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013); George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2011); Edward Soja *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 2011).

migrants through physical and imagined spaces constructed communities and identities that defied the paternalistic representations in the *Los Angeles Times* and by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. While the *Los Angeles Times* articles highlighted these challenges, their portrayal often invoked paternalistic images of Indigenous migrants. Through consulting the oral interviews of migrants, their recollection revealed an alternative depiction. Despite challenges, the memories migrants shared demonstrated that they constructed networks of support through leisure activities like sports and powwows. These networks later served to politicize and reinvigorate a cultural consciousness for many Indigenous migrants. For some migrants this political and cultural consciousness later engaged with the discourse of "self-determination," a discourse promoted in the 1970s through the Red Power Movement.

This concept of "Self-Determination" has permeated the history of Indigenous and government relations in the United States. From the conception of the U.S. Constitution, Indigenous sovereignty has always been a contested issue that has created a series of policies made to address Indigenous use of land and resources within a greater context of colonialism.[9] Viewed as "wards of the state," several policies after WWII sought to end Indigenous dependence on the federal government.[10] In 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower approved Public Law 280, which sought to transfer the "federal responsibilities for Indian affairs to state government," in effect ending dependence of Indigenous communities on the federal government.[11] This transfer of power created a domino effect in which "ill equipped states" reduced access to state resources for many Indigenous reservations.[12]

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[9] Weaver, 8.

[10] Edward Charles Valandra, *Not Without Our Consent Lakota Resistance to Termination, 1950 -59* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 17; Joan Ablon, " American Indian Relocation: Problems of Dependency and Management in the City," *Phylon* 26, no. 4 (1965), 367; Fixico, xiv.

[11] Fixico, 111.

[12] Peter Iverson, "Building Towards Self-Determination: Plains and Southwestern Indians in the 1940s and 1950s" in American Indians in

Many tribes could not provide employment, housing and other resources for their residents.[13] In an effort to reduce dependence on the federal government Congress passed the Indian Relocation Act of 1956. This policy was understood as "state-sponsored efforts at Americanization that for the first time sought to use cities as a way of integration [...]" into the mainstream.[14] Even though these policies sought to end dependence, they did so through a framework of dependency. The program offered job training and housing to Indigenous peoples who would relocate to larger cities.[15] Among those who relocated, over 29,000 migrated to Los Angeles.[16] Migrants to Los Angeles arrived at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) office for orientation and temporary housing in "low-income" neighborhoods.[17] The BIA often recruited potential migrants from Indian Boarding schools or through the reservations. The program screened for candidates likely to find employment in Los Angeles and offered an option of a "better life" for many migrants who chose to relocate.[18] However, the rhetoric of dependence followed them despite relocating from the reservation.

The "Indian problem," a term often used by the *Los Angeles Times,* was defined differently between the newspaper and the participants of the program.[19] While news articles argued that Indigenous dependence on the federal government was the challenge, many migrants believed the true problem was a lack of opportunity on the reservations.[20] This difference in

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American History, 1870-2001 a Companion Reader, ed. Sterling Evans, Prager Publishers, 2002, 111- 112; Fixico, 113.

[13] Ablon, 367; Iverson, 112.

[14] Rosenthal, 51.

[15] Blackhawk, 17; Weibel-Orlando, 14-18; Weaver, 13.

[16] Weibel-Orlando, 15.

[17] Rosenthal, 52.

[18] Ibid., 53-56.

[19] Leonard Greenwood, "City Called a 'Foreign' Country to Indians," *Los Angeles Times,* 18 December, 1968, 3.

[20] Leroy Big Soldier, Oral History, Interview conducted by Ruth Bahylle, 20 June, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles; John James, Oral History, Interview conducted by Ruth Bahylle, 16 June, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research,

understanding speaks to contrasting definitions of "self-determination" within a colonial discourse. Further, this difference also created a contrasting understanding of whose responsibility it was to solve the "Indian problem."[21]

In an effort to reduce Indigenous dependence on the federal government, the House Concurrent Resolution 108, passed by Congress in 1953, sought to "end [Indigenous] status as wards of the United States;" this resolution established the U.S. Indian Termination Policy, which sought to "Americanize" Indigenous peoples and make them "self-sufficient."[22] Public Law 280, also passed in 1953, transferred the "federal responsibilities for Indian affairs to state government," in effect "ending" the dependence of Indigenous communities on the federal government.[23] As a result of these federal legislations, many states passed laws reducing public services for Indigenous peoples, and terminated treaties and fiscal support to reservations. As a part of this process, the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 established the Federal Relocation Program, which offered job training and housing to Indigenous peoples who would relocate to Los Angeles.[24] As Indigenous people "refused to die off" because of conquest, they became "America's problem."[25] This move to reduce Indigenous dependence on the state pushed many peoples to migrate from reservations to urban centers. As this series of policies attempted to address the "ward" status of Indigenous people, it circumvented a discussion of land rights and colonization. Since the construction of the nation-state, Indigenous tribes have battled for the recognition of sovereignty of their ancestral lands. The attempt to "urbanize" and integrate Indigenous peoples into the nation-state

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University of California, Los Angeles; Paul Houston, " Indian Discovers Life in City is Good—but It's Terrifying" *Los Angeles Times,* March 03, 1968,H1; Kenneth Fanucchi, "Indians Need Ghetto to Point Up Severity of their Problem," *Los Angeles Times,* 19 May, 1968, SF_B1.

[21] Leonard Greenwood, 3; Thrapp. "Minister Helps Indians Take Place in Society" F6.

[22] Fixico, 93-94.

[23] Ibid., 111.

[24] "House Concurrent Resolution 108" 1953; Blackhawk,17; Weaver, 13; Weibel-Orlando, 14-18.

[25] Thrapp, "Minister Helps Indians Take Place in Society," F6.

was an attempt to dissolve the cultural and ancestral linkages to their land. The "Indian Problem" was not solved by these policies but relocated to larger cities. The *Los Angeles Times* would echo Congressional sentiment through their portrayal of Indigenous migrants who were implicitly portrayed as colonial subjects.

Due to the *Los Angeles Times* and its representation of Indigenous migrants as wards of the state, these migrants were looked at as subjects of a colonial power. Many of the *Los Angeles Times* articles, which sought to expose the challenges of relocation, often categorized Indigenous people as "conquered" and "defeated."[26] Articles often alluded to historical defeats and images of "primitivism."[27] These articles operated under the idea that, "the federal government [had] assumed the responsibility of [Indigenous peoples]" post-conquest.[28] Articles like "Navajo Find Success on Leaving Reservation," published in 1955, reported the migration of Navajo people by contextualizing their defeat against Col. Kit Carson during the Navajo Wars in the 1860s stating that, "with one stroke, Carson eliminated Indian resistance."[29] The article connected this historical defeat with their migration in the 1950s despite the events being one hundred years apart; in juxtaposing these events, the author of the article framed their story of migration under a context of colonization. The same piece concluded that migrants needed to follow the "dictates of the United States" to find success.[30] In alluding to the image of conquest, the *Los Angeles Times* portrayed Indigenous migrants as passive characters whose success depended on the federal government. Other articles like "Indian Discover Life in City is Good—but It's Terrifying," published in 1968, further indicated

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[26] Kevin Thomas, "'Exile' Portrays Indian Life in Los Angeles." *Los Angeles Times,* 15 June, 1967, E12.

[27] Cordell Hicks, "20,000 Indians From 100 Tribes Live Here: Thousands to Migrate to Los Angeles From Reservations, Thereby Completing the Circle." *Los Angeles Times*. 29 June, 1958, 24; Thrapp. "Minister Helps Indians Take Place in Society," F6; Bill Murphy, "Navajos Find Success in Leaving Reservation." *Los Angeles Times,* 5 December, 1955, A1.

[28] Murphy, A1.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

that migrants could not find success upon migrating as "many [were] unable to adjust to such an alien society after a life as wards of the government, [and] end[ed] up in urban style squalor." [31] The *Los Angeles Times* blamed Indigenous peoples' inability to adjust because of their dependence on the federal government. As this article referred to the government as "paternalistic Uncle Sam," they maintained a passive interpretation of Indigenous migrants. By portraying Indigenous peoples as wards of the state, the newspaper underestimated the role of Indigenous people and placed responsibility on the external institutions for the success of the Relocation Program. "The Indian Problem" for the *Los Angeles Times* was the assumed dependence on the federal government and the inability for Indigenous migrants to navigate the city independently.

The problems of the indigenous migrants went beyond the rhetoric of dependency that the *Los Angeles Times* employed but presented complex challenges in navigating different social and physical landscapes. For many Indigenous migrants, their participation in the program was a necessary response to the declining resources the reservation could offer. With the passage of Public Law 280 and other termination policies, reservations could offer residents fewer resources and support.[32] According to historian Peter Iverson, local governments were "unwilling or unable" to provide resources for reservations which led to an increase in unemployment and "other critical problems."[33] Sharon Buckley, a Sioux migrant, recalls migrating in search of opportunity as her family had little money, she "wanted more" for herself.[34] She made a conscious choice to migrate, because she perceived it would be in her best interest. Similarly, Loretta Flores from the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana and Leroy Big Soldier from the Black River Falls Reservation in Wisconsin

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[31] Houston, H1.

[32] Big Soldier interview; James, interview; Houston, H1; Fanucchi, SF_B1; Rosenthal, 65.

[32] Fixico, 111.

[33] Iverson, 111-112.

[34] Sharon Buckley, Oral History, 19 February, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles.

recalled migrating because of the lack of employment on the reservation.[35] Their decision to migrate demonstrated an assertion of agency.[36] The BIA offered vocational training and job placement, and participation in the program could offer opportunities that the reservations could not.[37] As resources were scarce on the reservation, many Indigenous people chose to migrate as a solution to their problems, leaving behind family, friends and home. In migrating, many exercised a type of agency and self-awareness; they were willing to expose themselves to the different realities of the urban landscape as a solution to their challenges back home.

Upon migrating to Los Angeles, participants of the program found numerous challenges adjusting to city life. As Glenna Amos (Cherokee) recalled, "… some of the people that came out [to Los Angeles] had never used gas and lights and water before, … they had a lot of accidents, getting burned using gas stoves" but she added that a bigger challenge was learning how to budget.[38] James John (Navajo) echoed a similar reflection as he recalled migrants mismanaging their money and "wasting" it.[39] City life was not just a change of setting but came with contending vast cultural differences. Ernie Peters (Sioux) described in a *Los Angeles Times* article how migrants had a new "responsibility to landlords, utility companies [and] tax collectors [which] created budgeting problems."[40] Relocating to Los Angeles meant more than a change of geography; it also included adjusting to the fast pace of the city and maintaining accountability towards landlords, employers and the BIA.

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[35] Loretta Flores, Oral History, Interview conducted by Ruth Bahylle, March 02, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles; Big Soldier, Interview.

[36] Rosenthal, 65.

[37] Ibid., 49, 65.

[38] Glenna Amos, Oral History, Interview conducted by Ruth Bahylle, May 18, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles.

[39] John, interview.

[40] Houston, H1.

Beyond the challenges of learning how to use the gas and lights in their new urban homes, Indigenous people were faced with systemic discrimination.[41] Randy Edmonds (Kiowa) remembered feeling discriminated against as he stated, "It was subtle but it was there. When you are denied opportunities by the greater society you know there is something wrong. There is prejudice going on, there is some discrimination going on."[42] Like Edmonds, other migrants did not specify the type of discrimination they may have faced but recognized racial difference when moving to Los Angeles. Moreover, many migrants faced racial discrimination in the workplace as they were "barred" from joining "unions that were necessary for work in many professions."[43] Even though they were accustomed to interacting with non-Indigenous peoples on the reservation, the urban landscape of Los Angeles came with a different racialization of space and culture.

When asked about facing discrimination, Helen Dionne, a Creek migrant explains, "a lot of people did not understand Native Americans."[44] Her non-Indigenous neighbors questioned why the government gave her aid. Neighbors and other outside communities lacked the understanding that migrants did not receive as many benefits as the program advertised. Dionne explains that, "they did their best on their own."[45] In one anecdote shared to the *Los Angeles Times*, Ernie Peters, a Sioux migrant, recounts fearing to "cross a line" when he offered a seat to a woman on a bus.[46] Peters' fears of "crossing a line" reveal how navigating urban spaces also came with the understanding of how to navigate a new cultural landscape. As space maintains racial

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[41] Houston, H1; Amos, Interview; Big Soldier, Interview; "Friendly Powwow Welcomes Indians" 14 May, 1951,32: Rosenthal, 64.

[42] Randy Edmonds, Oral History, 23 April, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles.

[43] Rosenthal, 64.

[44] Helen Dionne, Oral History, 15 February, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles.

[45] Dionne, Interview.

[46] Houston, H1.

meanings through understood social hierarchies, sharing space within an urban culture requires understanding of the social structures designated to that given space.[47] The diverse populations of the physical landscape of Los Angeles exposed Indigenous peoples to a variety of different people and situations.[48] Problems Indigenous migrants faced upon migrating were more complex than just issues of dependency. They had to understand how to navigate public spaces within the parameters of racial and social hierarchies. Peters understood that to succeed in the city, "you had to be better than white man" or "have the white man pave the way for you." Everyday tasks like using public transportation went beyond just overcoming technological problems, but became challenges in navigating a new cultural landscape. Challenges in moving to the city were not limited to getting accustomed to the "go-go life of the city" but involved having to learn how to navigate racialized spaces.[49] To successfully navigate Los Angeles, migrants had to understand the complexities of how public spaces were socially organized.

The *Los Angeles Times* argued that Indigenous peoples needed to reduce their dependence on the federal government and looked to other non-federal institutions to indirectly replace their custody of Native peoples.[50] This is exemplified by the many articles that highlighted successful adjustment programs created by churches and other community centers. An article published in 1968 entitled, "City Called a 'Foreign' Country to Indians," commented that, "settlement houses" would help migrants better adjust to the city or that "rehabilitation centers" would prevent Indians from being burdens to the state. Other pieces entitled, "Minister Helps Indians Take Place in Society," and "Excellent Standard Set-Up at Indian Center Exhibition," or "Southland Homes Aiding Indian Youths' Education" emphasized the

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[47] Lipsitz, 15.

[48] Big Soldier, interview; Mary Patterson, Oral History, Interview conducted by Ruth Bahylle, 16 May, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles.

[49] Houston, H1.

[50] Murphy, A1; Greenwood, 3; Thrapp, "Minister Helps Indians Take Place in Society," F6.

successful adjustment of Indigenous migrants as a direct result of their participation in church or in community centers.[51] The article, "Minister Helps Indians Take Place in Society," explained that," a 50-year-old Sioux who [had] been [at the church] holds down a good civil service job, [bought] his own home after several years of unhappiness here."[52] In mentioning these services with the success of this Sioux migrant, the article implied the success of these non-federal institutions in helping migrants adjust to an urban setting. Though some articles described some individual triumphs, much of their success was still mentioned in association to the efforts of external institutions.[53] Regardless of whether they found help through churches, community centers or the federal government, indigenous migrants were primarily portrayed as passive characters whose success was thought to be dependent on external institutions. This necessity to designate space further alluded to the larger discussion of land rights and colonial responsibilities. As the federal government terminated Indigenous treaties and sought to end wardenship of indigenous people they created de-facto displacement. Since these legislations eliminating tribal claims to land and space, the "Indian problem" was relocated to the city where the challenges continued to revolve around the occupation of space. Designating space through churches and other institutions maintained a paternalistic relationship between larger social structures and indigenous people.

In addition to newspaper portrayals, government institutions such as the BIA attempted to control the spaces that migrants would enter as they designated certain spaces as dangerous. Since the BIA controlled where migrants were placed, they constructed a paternalistic relationship that closely surveilled Indigenous migrants. Case managers monitored participants of the program through home visits that evaluated how migrants were adjusting

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[51] "Excellent Standard Set-Up at Indian Center Exhibition," *Los Angeles Times*. June 02, 1957, F9; Dan L. Thrapp, "Minister Helps Indians Take Place in Society," F6; Lynn Lilliston, "Southland Homes Aiding Indian Youths' Education" *Los Angeles Times*. 10 September, 1965, G1.

[52] Thrapp, "Minister Helps Indians Take Place in Society," F6

[53] Houston, H1; Murphy, A1; Thrapp, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here." *Los Angeles Times*. 21 July, 1962, 10.

to the city.[54] Helene Dionne (Creek) recalls feeling negatively towards the BIA. She shared that despite having an education from Haskell, an Indian Boarding school in Kansas, "they treated [her] like [she] didn't know anything."[55] She added that she did not feel like the BIA trusted her. She attested that "they were always with you like you didn't know how to do things."[56] She described an instance when she went shopping and explained, "Our case manager was with us and telling us what to buy. They didn't trust you with the money. They had to hold your hand."[57] Participants of the program felt monitored and distrusted by the BIA. The Bureau also tried to control multiple aspects of migrants' lives; they advised migrants to maintain a clean home as "neighbors [would] judge [them] by the appearance of [their] lawn and home."[58] These directions created an environment in which not only the BIA, but also "neighbors" and the larger society would hold a position of control to monitor migrant lives. Employers and school officials were also asked to evaluate and report on migrants' "personal habits, aptitude, interests [and] mental ability."[59] Through the visits and evaluations, migrants were placed in subordinating positions; school, work and the home became sites of social control.[60] The colonial framework resulted in conceptions of space as sites of power, leading to subordination and surveillance.[61]

The *Los Angeles Times* reinforced subordination and surveillance when reporting on the popularity of "Indian bars" — bars located in downtown Los Angeles and "Hill X," a secluded hill that overlooked the city where migrants gathered. Articles that discussed the "Indian bars," usually reference the documentary film *The Exiles*, which described Indigenous migrants and the social institutions they frequented as "wild" and "mad."[62]

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[54] Rosenthal, 59-61.
[55] Dionne, Interview.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Rosenthal, 59.
[59] Ibid., 61.
[60] Soja, 36-37.
[61] Ibid., 36.
[62] Thomas, E12; Wienstock, A6.

Descriptions of rituals on "Hill X" or other secluded spaces were often juxtaposed to reference violence or illegal activity that had little relevance to subject of the article.[63] These articles believed that when not properly guided by external institutions, Indigenous migrants could develop alcoholism.[64] In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Bill Barret, a Creek migrant and clergyman, stated that in the first weeks "migrants [wouldn't] know anyone. They [would] get bored. They [would] drop in at some tavern and [be] on their way to skidrow."[65] Although interviews with migrants corroborated the growing alcoholism in the community, the *Los Angeles Times'* paternalistic frame maintained a colonial understanding of Indigenous migrants.[66] The articles implied a designation of space for Indigenous migrants; whereas churches were seen as positive spaces that provided guidance, spaces like "skidrow" and "Hill X" were considered dangerous sites outside of the apparatuses of surveillance. These spaces, outside of the monitoring sphere of the BIA, were depicted as violent and immoral.[67] The *Los Angeles Times* believed Indigenous peoples needed a designated space to find "success," and the paper maintained churches and community centers as an appropriate mechanism to regulate migrants.

The *Los Angeles Times* depicted churches and other community centers as spaces that could save Indigenous migrants from the perils of alcoholism and the dangers of "Indian Bars." In an article published in 1963 entitled, "Indian Welcome Center to be Opened by Church," church leader William Ng believed that "for most [migrants] the complexity, loneliness, need for community and disintegration of values in urban living are overwhelming sometimes … many adjustments are needed and often guidance is important."[68] In portraying migrants' experience as "lonely" and "overwhelming," migrants were framed as victims of their "urban" environment. The *Los Angeles Times* implied that

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[63] Chester Callero, "Valley Indians Whoop It Up for Culture." *Los Angeles Times*. 9 February, 1958, SF1; Weinstock, A6.
[64] Thrapp, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here," 10; Houston, H1.
[65] Thrapp, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here," 10.
[66] Edmonds, Interview; Flores, Interview.
[67] Thomas, E12; Callero, SF1; Wienstock, A6.
[68] "Indian Welcome Center to be Opened by Church," B7.

for Ng, "guidance" from the church was essential to migrants' survival in Los Angeles. Similarly, in an article entitled, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here" which highlighted the efforts of a Los Angeles church to integrate migrants, Irene Beadle of Church Federation stated that "Indians have grown up under the protective custody of the reservation, and suddenly being thrown upon the mercies of a harsh urban existence many become confused."[69] The newspaper portrayed Beadle to have a similar paternalistic view of Indigenous migrants by believing that they were at the "mercies of a harsh urban" space. In stating that migrants had previously been "under the protective custody of the reservation" implies a paternalistic approach to the church's efforts to assist migrants. The church in providing "guidance" fulfilled the "custodial" responsibility that Irene Beadle believed the reservation system formerly held. Indigenous migrants were framed as victims of urban relocation that required guidance from larger institutions like churches to survive.

Although churches, as allies to the BIA's Indian Relocation Program, followed paternalistic relationships with migrants, migrants influenced churches to reflect their own tribal heritage and identity. Cherokee, Choctaw, Chicksaw, Creek and Seminole migrants created their own tribal church congregations in their new environment.[70] The churches incorporated Indigenous languages into the sermons and hymns, signifying a mutual adaptation between the religious institutions and the Indigenous migrants they served.[71] As the *Los Angeles Times* in their article, "Indian Get Help of Religion Here" reported on the First Indian Baptist Church, "The congregation sang a Creek hymn, chanting acapella the Indian words, a strange, haunting air to non-Indian ears." Indigenous migrants claimed church spaces as a space exclusively catering to Indigenous identities. Glenna Amos, a Cherokee migrant, remembers her church as a large "supportive family" and recalls that "[their] churches were all Indian. There were very few non-Indians in the church …"[72] While the church

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[69] Thrapp, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here," 10.

[70] Weibel-Orlando, 87-89.

[71] Thrapp, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here," 10. Weibel-Orlando, 15-16; Edmonds, Interview.

[72] Amos, Interview.

may have been perceived as a space in which migrants could learn "American values" and adjust to the city, migrants were able to retain their Native identity and created a space of their own. The Choctaws, Creeks and other Oklahoma tribes established their own tribal-based Indigenous churches that continued to promote the usage of their Indigenous language and traditions through religion.[73] Just as Mexican-American communities utilized churches to "proclaim an ethno-religious identity" through Spanish sermons and Mexican religious traditions, Indigenous migrants claimed churches as a platform to express their own Indigenous identities.[74] They constructively recreated churches as a space from which they could maintain language and traditions that paralleled cultural practices from the reservation. In reconstructing and creating alternative designated spaces to reflect their identities and needs, Indigenous migrants asserted a presence within Los Angeles. As churches offered their support through finding them housing and employment, Indigenous migrants reshaped these controlled and regulated spaces to meet their needs.[75] By utilizing churches, Indigenous migrants constructed networks that expanded beyond the pews and coordinated leisure activities like sports and dances.

While these spaces existed, the *Los Angeles Times* still considered the lack of a visible Indigenous ethnic enclave in Los Angeles as an obstacle. They argued that there was "no Indian Community in Los Angeles."[76] In an article, "Indians Need Ghetto to Point Up Severity of their Problem," Joseph Vasquez, an Apache/Sioux migrant and a Los Angeles Human Resources Commissioner, made a clear argument that the lack of a centered Indigenous neighborhood was a major reason migrants found it difficult to navigate the city.[77] He argued that "if [migrants] created some ghettos the problems of the Indian would have

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[73] Amos, Interview; Edmonds, Interview; Patterson, Interview.

[74] Jose Alamillo, *Making Lemonade out of Lemons: Mexican American Labor and Leisure in California Town, 1880–1960* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 83.

[75] Rosenthal, 60.

[76] Thrapp, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here," 10.

[77] Fanucchi, SF_B1.

received the attention their severity demands."[78] According to Vasquez, migrants often times found themselves lost and unable to create networks because they did not have a centralized space. Other articles further emphasized the need for more Indian centers, settlement houses, and halfway houses as a way of better adjusting migrants into the city.[79] Articles like "Shop Planned as 'Halfway' House: Indian Turns to Peace Pipe," and "Shooting Star Agency Helps Indians Adjust" highlighted this need. The *Los Angeles Times* applauded the work of non-federal institutions that created spaces through community centers, programs, and churches.[80] Most articles celebrated the efforts of non-federal institutions to provide housing, employment and other recreational opportunities. Although well intentioned, these articles maintained paternalistic rhetoric that stunted Indigenous peoples' ability to navigate the city independently. In addition, this concern upheld a colonial framework in discussing the status of Indigenous migrants in the city as conquered people incapable of navigating the urban space without the control and guidance of centralized powers and institutions, e.g. churches, colonial spaces, employers, housing. They maintained that creating spaces for these migrants was necessary for their success.

While no interview ever mentioned a specific Indigenous neighborhood, many clues indicate the presence of centralized spaces and programs that migrants constructed. Physical spaces like churches and community centers localized Indigenous activity and served as transitional spaces for newly arrived migrants. As some participants discussed housing, activism, and church participation, they recalled knowing what neighborhoods to visit in order contact other migrants, often referencing Downtown Los Angeles as a centralized space. In reference to her

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Thrapp, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here," 10; Greenwood,3; Murphy, H1. Noel Greenwood. "Shop Planned as 'Halfway' House: Indian Turns to Peace Pipe to Train Youths Indian's Shop" *Los Angeles Times*. 8 May, 1969, D1.

[80] "Excellent Standard Set-Up at Indian Center Exhibition," F9; "Shooting Star Agency Helps Indians Adjust" *Los Angeles Times*. 3 March, 1968, H2; "Indian Welcome Center to be Opened by Church," 10; Lilliston, G1.

own activism through the church, Glenna Amos (Cherokee) remembered that she would "go door to door and pass out invitation [for church] meetings in tenement houses that [were] in downtown … where most of the people that were brought out were …" Although it is possible that Amos knew where to find migrants because the churches received contact information for migrants through the BIA, it is also possible that through her own experiences and networks she understood where migrants resided.[81]

There was a shared understanding of a centralized space in which other migrants could be contacted. Donna Kuyiyesva, a Hopi and Pima migrant, recalled that after moving out of Los Angeles her family had difficulties meeting other Indigenous migrants: "There wasn't any native people around there."[82] Although it is difficult to assess why Indigenous peoples never established an ethnic enclave, a large part of the reason is because of the Indian Relocation Programs' structure. As migrants arrived many were placed in apartments or small homes in Downtown Los Angeles.[83] As migrants gained employment, many began to earn enough money to migrate to wealthier neighborhoods across Los Angeles.[84] As Ronald Andrade, a Luiseño migrant, explains, Los Angeles was an "evolving town;" Indigenous migrants were both physically and socially mobile.[85] This mobility made it difficult for migrants to create a centralized space like other ethnic groups, whose ethnic enclave was created out of social immobility. Although a challenge to migrant success might have been the lack of an ethnic enclave, Indigenous migrants recreated designated space and created imagined communities to best meet their needs.

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[81] Rosenthal, 65.

[82] Kuyiyesva, Interview.

[83] Dionne, Interview; Flores, Interview; Edmonds, Interview; Patterson, Interview.

[84] Elaine Bissonette, Oral History Interview, 28 April, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles; Roland Andrade, Oral History Interview, 23 April, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles.

[85] Andrade, Interview.

Imagined spaces realized through sports created stronger networks that moved away from the dependence of formal institutions and created an "urban indigeneity." "Ball tournaments," originally organized through local California reservations or simple gatherings at a local park, worked to establish an imagined Indigenous landscape.[86] Historian Jose M. Alamillo explains in his study of Mexican-American labor and leisure that although participation in sports like baseball indicate a process of Americanization, for marginalized communities that did not fit into a "white-black binary" participating in sports communities actively and "symbolically confronted" race and racial segregation.[87] Moreover, in participating in sports they created spaces allowing participants to develop networks and community within racialized spaces.[88]

Following this similar argument, Indigenous migrants to Los Angeles constructed networks for participation in sports and created their own baseball leagues and tournaments. Mary Patterson a Caddo/Potawatomi migrant and John James a Navajo migrant, and founders of the American Indian Athletic Association, believed that sports served as an avenue for meeting other migrants and other native peoples of California; Patterson remembers that sports "really brought the Indians together."[89] Echoing this sentiment, Luiseño migrant Ronald Andrade remembers "a lot of the Indian people [in] LA got to know [other] Indians, […] because of the ball tournaments."[90] The American Indian Athletic Association, founded in 1963, held various tournaments where teams played in cities and reservations across the southwest.[91] Initially, churches would utilize sports as a recruitment tool.[92] Although on the surface attending church might have appeared to be a religious devotion, Mary Patterson, "embarrassingly" admitted to attending church to participate in

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[86] James, Interview.
[87] Alamillo, 119.
[88] Ibid., 109-111.
[89] James, Interview; Patterson, Interview.
[90] Andrade, Interview.
[91] Rosenthal, 121.
[92] Amos, Interview; Bissonette, Interview; Patterson, Interview; James, Interview.

sports.[93] Sports teams eventually became centralizing spaces that facilitated Indigenous peoples' ability to connect with other migrants. Although Indigenous participation in sports might be interpreted as examples of Indigenous acculturation, organization within these tournaments was an example of social claims to space and identity**.** As historians Allan Downey and Susan Neylan argue, sports allowed Indigenous peoples to exist through their own terms within colonial spaces.[94] Migrants' participation through sports allowed them to subvert the control and surveillance of the BIA and other non-Indigenous spaces. Through sports, Indigenous migrants could meet and connect with other Indigenous peoples across various tribal affiliations. As many migrants chose not to directly discuss relocation with each other, sports facilitated a space in which migrants could "appreciate each other, help each other [and] share.[95] This claim to space and identity was also exemplified through the emergence of powwows in Southern California. Powwows, traditionally practiced in Plains culture communities, were popularized in Los Angeles through relocation.[96] By the late 1960s, Powwows were weekly events organized frequently in local parks, school gymnasiums, community centers and university campuses.[97] James John (Navajo) remembered, "I went down to the park… a lot of Indians would go down there. So I just went down there on my free time just to shoot around and play basketball with them."[98] This usage of public space for ball games established their ethnic presence within Los Angeles. John Vallerie (Kiowa) recalled taking his children to Powwows to teach them the "Indian

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[93] James, Interview; Patterson, Interview.

[94] Allan Downey, Susan Neylan, "Raven Plays Ball: "Indian Sports Days" within Indigenous and Colonial Spaces in Twentieth-Century Coastal British Columbia." Canadian Journal of History 50, no 3, 442.

[95] Amos; Big Soldier.

[96] Andrade, Interview; Herle, Anita, "Dancing Community: Powwow and Pan-Indiansim in North America." *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 17, No.2: 58.

[97] Edmonds, Interview; Rosenthal, 123, Weibel-Orlando, 93-94.

[98] James, Interview.

ways."[99] Georgiana Shot (Sioux) shared that when she took her children to powwows in the mid-70s, "that's when the kids knew they were Indians and that they wore feathers."[100] For migrants, Powwows became central to retaining Indigenous identities. Within the context of a colonial and racialized space that was constructed through the paternalistic relationship between the federal government, other social structures and Indigenous peoples, Powwows were sites of empowerment and resistance.[101]

The goal of the relocation programs was to Americanize Indigenous peoples, retaining an Indigenous identity through performance directly addressed and resisted the program's aims. Randy Edmonds (Kiowa) recalled the establishment of the Drum and Feather Club, a traditional drumming group, as a reaction to the inability to "practice traditions" in the "big city."[102] Powwows, like sports, facilitated the creation of an Indigenous network across Los Angeles where migrants attended powwows for the purpose of meeting other Indigenous people.[103] Christine Valleire (Cherokee) shared that she "never went to powwows in Oklahoma" but became "real active" in powwows "just to see people."[104] These events allowed migrants to forge community and exchange customs and traditions across tribal affiliations.[105] Although a physical "Indian Ghetto" could not be located in Los Angeles, migrants constructed an imagined space where they could obtain support from other Indigenous migrants in a real urban space.

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[99] John Vallerie, Oral History Interview, 9 March, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles.

[100] Shot, Interview.

[101] Rachel Buff, *Immigration and the Political Economy of Home: West Indian Brooklyn and American Indian Minneapolis, 1945-1992* (Berkley: University of California Press. 2001), 11.

[102] Edmonds, Interview.

[103] Biossonette; Christine Vallerie, Oral History Interview, February 19, 2011. American Indian Relocation, Project: Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles; Flores; Patterson.

[104] Christine Vallerie, Interview.

[105] Rosenthal, 122- 123.

In arguing that Los Angeles "had no Indian community," the *Los Angeles Times* restricted what their interpretation of Indigenous migrants was and what community looked like.[106] The newspaper underestimated Indigenous migrants and their ability to navigate and succeed in urban areas without a centralized space or community. The reflections shared by Indigenous migrants reveal the creation of alternative spaces that challenged narratives of victimhood constructed and reinforced by the BIA and the *Los Angeles Times*. Indigenous peoples merged religious spaces and activity to their own traditions and languages as a method of claiming presence and an ethnic identity within Los Angeles. Leisure activities like sports, powwows and other dances helped facilitate networks of support and the maintenance of tribal identities; these activities further contradicted the notion of Indigenous dependence on external institutions. While Indigenous migrants might not have had a centralized neighborhood like other ethnic groups (e.g. Mexican-American "Barrios"), it did not signify the absence of community. As they played in parks, in neighborhoods or traveled to reservations to watch games, they managed to construct a world of their own and found other avenues of support and success outside of the BIA and other paternalistic institutions.

Navigating urban spaces created a unique expression of Indigenous identity that allowed many to interact with various tribes and customs that, in effect, created an urban Indigenous experience. Through their participation in the Indian Relocation Program, many developed a cultural and social consciousness that contradicted the depictions of Indigenous colonial subjugation. This is evident in the development of Indian churches, cultural clubs, powwows and sports associations that sought to promote tribal teachings to Indigenous migrants. Ronald Andrade shared that culture was "predominantly [taught] around the Powwow."[107] As distance from home created a larger need to understand Indigenous culture, many migrants developed a stronger cultural understanding and appreciation of their tribal identity upon leaving the reservation. In discussing the frequent powwow

[106] Dann L. Thrapp, "Indians Get Help of Religion Here."
[107] Andrade, Interview.

events, Randy Edmonds (Kiowa) identified "that [migrants] had to come to an urban area to learn about your traditions and culture. If [they] weren't learning that back home [they] could pick it up an urban area."[108] Even California Indians, "[suddenly] became Indians overnight." As Glenna Amos (Cherokee) commented, her neighbor who was a California Indian celebrated the day she received paperwork that recognized her as a tribal member; Amos expressed feeling "proud of her." Her neighbor's desire to show Amos her tribal identification stemmed from the belief that "Indians from other states didn't think the California Indians were real Indians."[109] This influx of various Indigenous peoples promoted a need to reconnect and demonstrated tribal affiliations and culture.

Due to the growth of this cultural consciousness and through the development of civil rights movements, some urban Indigenous migrants developed a consciousness that sought to reclaim space. Migrants constructed a notion of self-determination that diverged from the Bureau of Indian Affairs' definition, which questioned the marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Some migrants became more involved in community activities as they more openly critiqued the federal government.[110] Ronald Andrade (Luiseño) when discussing his activist work and the different powwow groups in Los Angeles, declared that "[They were] good people trying to protect the culture… they were an important part of what I was doing," as culture was necessary for the development of political organizing. Moreover, in discussing educational groups, Andrade added that he met a group that "wanted to change [a section of] the Declaration of Independence" and stated, "we must protect ourselves from the evil savages." This group organized to "demanded that Los Angeles County Schools teach an addendum" that clarified, "not all Indians were dirty savages."[111] The networks they established through relocation facilitated communication for the following generation of Indian activists that would emerge in the 1970s. Andrade argued that in the 1970s, Los Angeles was one of the most

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[108] Edmonds, Interview.
[109] Amos, Interview.
[110] Rosenthal, 51.
[111] Andrade, Interview.

politically active spaces in California.[112] Although there were some families that disagreed with the activism, Andrade's parents and other members of the community often donated Native American jewelry or pottery to fundraise for their activities.[113]

Numerous protests and actions in the 1970s further illustrated this birth of consciousness.[114] Andrade participated in the occupation of the Southwest Indian Museum along with thirteen other Native college students because of an offensive exhibit of Indigenous mummification.[115] The *Los Angeles Times* quoted a protester who argued, "The objects on display here do not tell our side of the story, but instead help perpetuate the myth and ignorance that still prevail among the white majority."[116] The protest of the Southwest Indian Museum symbolized an emerging consciousness that questioned the validity of the colonial relationship. Indigenous communities in Los Angeles began to fight against the "myths" of "ignorance" that plagued their portrayal in popular consciousness. The occupation of the Southwest Indian Museum confronted limitations to spaces and power. Although "self-determination" implies innate sovereignty over space and territory, the BIA bequeathment of "self-determination" contradicts this definition. These actions symbolically addressed the passive portrayal of Indigenous peoples and the restrictions set out by the Indian Relocation Program.

In the 1970s, Indigenous migrants reconstructed the relocation program to better align with the needs of "Indigenous

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Ibid.

[114] "300 Indian Seize Capitol Building and Close Bureau, 1972," *Los Angeles Times* Nov 03, 1972; Kenneth Fanucchi, Indian students protest drama. *Los Angeles Times*, 20 October, 1971.

[115] Andrade, Interview; "100 Indians Protest, Museum Pledge to Remove 3 Exhibits" *Los Angeles Times*. 21 December, 1970, C1; "11 in museum Indian protest fined, jailed." *Los Angeles Times* Apr 30, 1971; Shaw, David. "12 protesters arrested at southwest museum. *Los Angeles Times* 13 January, 1971.

[116] "100 Indians Protest, Museum Pledge to Remove 3 Exhibits" *Los Angeles Times*. 21 December, 1970, C1.

peoples."[117] Randy Edmonds (Kiowa), who was the director of Indian Center from 1971 to 1973, remembered that "many [migrants] went into the non-profits to provide "service to Indian people to the urban area" through grants requested from the federal government.[118] In 1971 Edmonds helped establish the United Indian Development Association (UIDA) that took over contracts for the BIA to better assist Indigenous migrants. Organizations such UIDA helped connect migrants to services and programs that supplemented the needs not addressed by the BIA.[119] Edmonds argued that the establishment of these native run programs contributed to the downfall of the BIA control over the Indian Relocation Program. Edmonds proudly remembered that "[they] actually turned it all around and were operating the programs instead of the white people."[120] He believed that having Indigenous peoples control these institutions better served the needs of migrants. President Richard Nixon's administration eventually reversed many of the termination policies of the 1950s and announced intention to turn over American Indian programs to the Indians themselves. [121] These shifts in power re-envisioned the purpose of the relocation program focusing more on addressing "self-determination" over "Americanization."[122] They started to reclaim space by taking active leadership roles in many of the institutions.[123] These examples demonstrate explicit claims to space that actively defied passive and paternalistic interpretations of Indigenous migrants. While the *Los Angeles Times* and the BIA may have viewed the "Indian Problem" as necessary to make Indigenous people self-sufficient, Indigenous

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[117] Edmonds, Interview; Rosenthal 50.

[118] Edmonds, Interview.

[119] Donald Lee Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America,* (University of New Mexico Press, 2000.) 130.

[120] Edmonds, Interview.

[121] Roy Haynes, "Awarding of Indian Aid Contract Stirs Dispute." *Los Angeles Times*, 7 March, 1971, E4; Richard Nixon, "Special Message to the Congress on Indian Affairs" (Speech, Washington DC, 8 July, 1970) in The American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2573.

[122] Rosenthal, 50.

[123] Andrade, Interview; Edmonds, Interview; Patterson, Interview.

migrants began to reconsider their portrayal as "wards" of the state through the development of networks.

Through their creation of alternative and imagined spaces, Indigenous migrants constructed an alternative identity contrasting their passive portrayal as colonial subjects. Although the *Los Angeles Times* infantilized them by emphasizing their need to be dependent on external institutions, they survived in the city by creating support networks through sports and other leisure activities. These spaces revitalized an Indigenous identity and presence in Los Angeles. Their involvement in these spaces created a political consciousness for some that would continue to grow into the 1970s through the Red Power Movement.