Introduction to Native American & Indigenous Studies

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Agenda

Introduction to Native American & Indigenous Studies

Week 1 – Keywords: Indigeneity/Indigenous, Native
Week 2 – Keyword: Land
Week 3 – Keyword: Sovereignty
Week 4 – Keywords: Nation, nationhood
Week 5 – Keywords: blood, tradition
Week 6 – Keywords: colonialism, decolonization
Week 7 – Keyword: Survivance
Week 8 – Keyword: Knowledge
Week 9 – Keywords: Literature, Art
Week 10 – Keywords: Queer, 2-Spirit or, previously (derogatory), berdache
Week 11 – Keyword: Resistance
Week 12 – Keyword: Race

***In and Around These Mountains* (1999)**
Oil on paper on canvas

Mateo Romero (b. 1966)
Cochiti Pueblo

Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South

Malinda Maynor Lowery

- The individuals shown in Figure 10, along with 200 other people, applied to the Office of Indian Affairs in 1936 and 1937 for recognition as having “one-half or more Indian blood.” Referring to “these people,” D’Arcy McNickle and his companions from the OIA said that they “did not have a clear understanding of the term Indian.”
- Anthropologist Carl Seltzer took the photographs as part of anthropometric tests he conducted to determine each applicant’s quantity of “Indian blood.” The photographs represent one point of view on Indian identity: Indianness is defined by one’s head shape, size, skin color, and hair texture. Each person pictured here had their own story, and together they embodied the community’s layers of identity.
- Brewington, Lowry, Revels, Maynor, and Chavis were all descended from “forefather” James Lowry; Chavis was also a descendant of Major Locklear, as was Beadan Locklear Brooks. “Forefather” John Brooks was another ancestor of Beadan Brooks.
- Like the other 200 applicants, these six are all connected by kinship, and they testified to that fact in the study; their applications contain genealogy charts identifying their ancestors. For the study, however, each declared that they were “onehalf or more Indian blood” to suit the OIA investigators...But kinship to Joe did not matter to their political organization; they sought recognition based on Seltzer’s findings of their blood quantum and introduced a new layer of identity formation to the community.

FIGURE 10. Six Participants from the Siouan enrollment study, 1936. Top row, left to right: Cloyd Chavis, Beadan Locklear Brooks, Lindsay Revels; bottom row, left to right: Lawrence Maynor, Kermit Lowry, Cora Mae Johnson Brewington. (Photographs by Carl C. Seltzer; National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.)

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- Divided by name, this group nevertheless all identified as Indians, as a People. Sustaining strongly felt divisions while maintaining coherence is the paradox of identity formation in any community with sharp political disagreements. How does the group stay together? Why doesn't it split apart? Sometimes, of course, it does; many Indian communities have divided along lines of ancestry or politics and become, essentially, different nations. But the imposition of federal policy's intense focus on race served to keep this group together even while it was falling apart.
- For example, today many of the Original 22's descendants would not identify as "Siouan," "Cherokee," or "Lumbee" but as "Tuscarora," recalling the ancestry that many Brooks Settlement members claimed. I have first cousins who are Tuscarora, but I'm Lumbee. Our mothers are sisters, and we all ate at Grandma Bloss's table and sang at Granddad Foy's piano. We don't deny one another, but we pull in different directions over issues of history and tribal names.
- To say "these people did not have a clear understanding of the term 'Indian'" defies logic and the identity definitions that the People themselves create.

FIGURE 10. Six Participants from the Siouan enrollment study, 1936. Top row, left to right: Cloyd Chavis, Beadan Locklear Brooks, Lindsay Revels; bottom row, left to right: Lawrence Maynor, Kermit Lowry, Cora Mae Johnson Brewington. (Photographs by Carl C. Seltzer; National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.)

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- In 1936 the community's internal conversation about Indian identity— family, settlement, schools— mattered little to the Office of Indian Affairs. The Indian Reorganization Act's "half-blood" provision had conflated "race" with "tribe," taking a primarily political relationship between Indians and the federal government and converting it into a social relationship not dissimilar from the one that existed in the Jim Crow South.
- Policy makers at the OIA unintentionally assisted white supremacists. OIA officials proved unable to recognize the legitimate political disagreements of Robeson County Indians because they believed that blood quantum and appearance were accurate markers of identity. Such markers also upheld the system of white supremacy because they defined racial categories, not the political ones that were the foundation of Indian policy. Further, the OIA systematically ignored the realities of Indian people themselves, favoring "expert" opinion instead.
- Why did Indians choose to submit their own identity markers to these tests? The answer was complex, involving class, "tribe," racial discrimination, "blood," kinship, and settlement.
- The OIA employed anthropometric tests that measured and observed a person's physical features to reveal the "Indian blood" of individuals in Robeson County. Robeson County Indians and the OIA each used the tests to express different ideas about Indian identity and "Indian blood." Indians approached the concept of "Indian blood" from a kinship perspective and sought to demonstrate their community's social organization and coherence to the OIA through the tests.
- Policy makers at the OIA, on the other hand, viewed "Indian blood" as a practical equation that allowed them to apply a scientific theory to social policy. While the OIA's standard seemed objective on the surface, the prevailing racism of the day corrupted their concept of "Indian blood" and enabled science to support racism.

Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South

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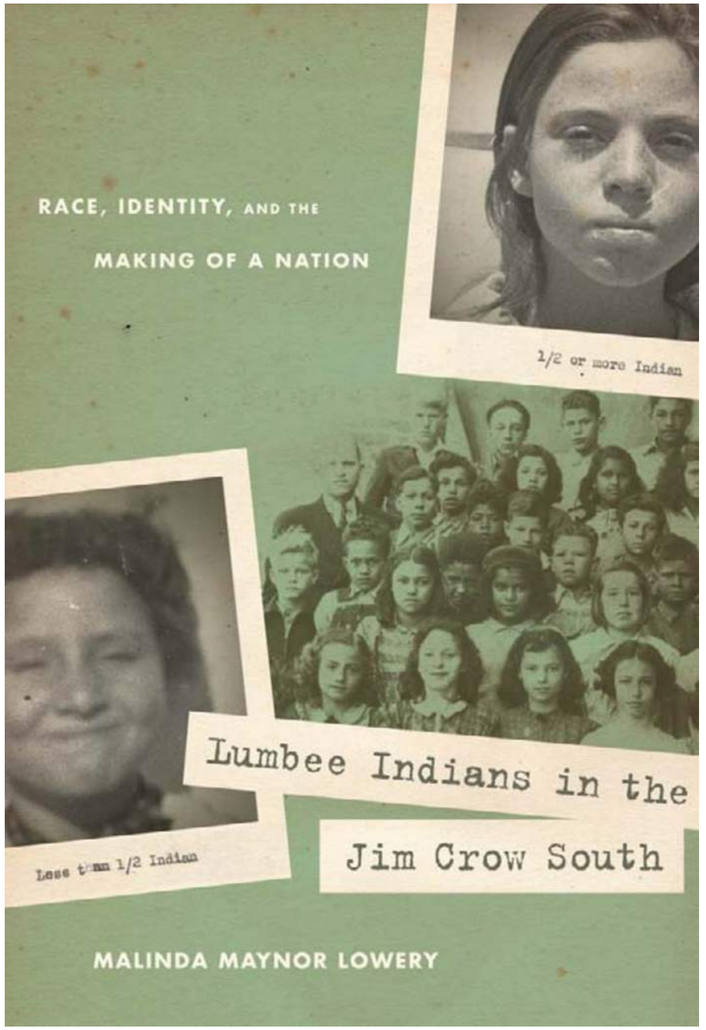
- OIA policy makers did not question the Indian ancestry of the ChippewaCree, who did not have the long history of OIA investigations into their origins that the Robeson County Indians had. The OIA expressed concern, however, that some applicants did not have the required blood quantum. OIA staff developed an “Application for Registration as an Indian,” a questionnaire to determine an Indian’s ancestry, tribal affiliation, relationship to the federal government, and degree of assimilation. Legal historian Paul Spruhan pointed out that OIA staff often relied on more than strictly “blood” to determine the identity of Indians under the New Deal. They frequently employed social and cultural definitions alongside evidence of blood quantum.
- Regarding the Chippewa-Cree, the OIA staff did not employ anthropometry, as they did in Robeson County, to determine eligibility. Instead, they relied on the applications, consequently rejecting some applicants who did not display what officials considered to be proper “Indian habits.”



Lumbee Indians in the Jim Crow South

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- Officials rejected applicants— sometimes against the recommendation of their Chippewa-Cree advisers— who were married to whites, were perceived as wealthy, or had “a good job.” Sources indicated that these applicants were rejected because Collier determined that they did not need or deserve the economic benefits that might have accompanied land purchase. Obviously, OIA officials employed biological criteria loosely, and economic considerations could determine blood quantum.

- Officials ignored the contradictions between anthropometric field practice and theory and turned their attention to the practical application of the science to Indian policy. With little consensus on the reliability of anthropometry, they acknowledged that race was a social construction as much as a biological fact, and they recommended that the government “weed out” Indians who were “sociologically white, regardless of degree of blood.”

- The declaration that Indians had “no choice” but to claim their Indianness implied that their identity was merely a thin veneer covering their status as nonwhites, a stance that closely corresponded to the Farm Security Administration’s view that Indians differed little socially or politically from any other racial group.

John Collier's failures

- What might have been the source of OIA Commissioner John Collier’s caution? The OIA staff had considerable historical experience with Congress’s efforts to fund benefits for Robeson County Indians, and Collier may simply have wanted to avoid another slew of similar federal recognition bills from other tribes claiming to be “one-half or more Indians.”
- Another reason may have involved the way many state governments dealt with Indians and mixed-race people in the South. For example, the state of Virginia waged an identity war against its Indians, led by eugenicist Walter Plecker, which resulted in the denial of hundreds of Indians’ rights to preserve their families and communities. Plecker corresponded with Collier in the early 1940s, trying to solicit his support for his campaign to eliminate “Indian” as a social and racial category. While Collier’s social conscience stood on the opposite end of Plecker’s, he and Plecker shared anthropometry as part of the foundation of their social agendas.
- Anthropometric studies conceivably could encourage states like Virginia to discriminate further against their Indian citizens. The OIA’s supposedly “objective” method of determining “Indian blood” only proved more and more dangerous to the rights of Native American people.
- WWII made Collier’s relationship with Congress more tenuous, and he may have been less eager to interfere with the affairs of state government for the sake of funding programs for recognized tribes. OIA officials continued walking a tightrope when it came to upholding segregation and the state and federal governments’ relationship with Robeson County Indians. They wanted both to avoid upsetting Congress and to prevent Congress from dictating how they implemented Indian policy.

The coalition emerges out of your recognition that it’s fucked up for you, in the same way that we’ve recognized that it’s fucked up for us. I don’t need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?

—**Fred Moten,** ***The Undercommons***

Building Maroon Intellectual Communities

Chris Finley

- I have never stopped thinking about this idea that Black and Native people may be saying the same things, but with my Native studies and ethnic studies institutionalization all I can hear is difference when discussing settler colonialism and anti-Blackness.
- Without Black studies, there would be no Native studies. I owe a debt to Black theory, history, and the long history of Black intellectualism within the academic industrial complex. Currently, the analytic of settler colonialism is seen as sexy. This has not meant that nonnative people are suddenly recognizing native nation's sovereignty or the fraught relationship natives and nonnatives have to the settler colonial nation. Many natives and nonnatives did support the encampment and the efforts of the water protectors in the No Dakota Access Pipeline movement that began in April 2016 and ended when the federal government burned down the encampment in February 2017.
- How can we build movements together that understand that we all have a lot to learn about each other and that we are going to make mistakes with each other? How can people of color get along in the academic industrial complex when discipline, history, possession, and scarcity define the institutionalization of ethnic studies?
- Within the traditional framework of ethnic studies, Indigenous peoples can only be victims of settler colonial violence, which makes them disappeared or silenced in present discussions, or Indigenous peoples are the perpetrators of violence against Black people. In earlier ethnic studies models, there was an attempt made by communities of color to show how our oppressions overlapped and to try and organize from this place of shared oppression.2 This did not work too well for too long because it isn't long before our messed up ideas about one another or ourselves float to the surface and we say and do something stupid. We should expect that we will not be perfect with one another. We should embrace failure in the attempt toward intimacy. After all, isn't working together a move toward intimacy?

Building Maroon Intellectual Communities

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- Settler colonial studies and Native studies are not the same fields of study. We in Native studies know this and many people in Native studies use settler colonialism as an analytic and not strictly as an identity category to “rub up on and against.” Not everyone in ethnic studies and beyond understands the critical distinctions between these fields of study, yet some scholars choose to discuss settler colonialism without or with very little mention of Native communities in the present moment or use analytics in the field of Native studies.
- Just confessing our fucked experiences or our trauma is not enough. As affectable subjects, we are expected to confess how much we have been hurt by settler colonialism and loss. Native feminism, at its best, theorizes loss, rape, and land theft instead of simply confessing this as part of our identity and experience under the regime of settler colonialism.
- I do not want to participate in essentialist arguments, or epistemological arguments where we have to decide whether slavery and anti-Blackness, settler colonialism, land claims, or immigration is more significant or what came first. The battle for innocence and victimhood are the gold medals to be won in the oppression Olympics to represent and recognize ourselves as proper innocent (not intersectional) victims.
- Where do you live? If you live in Canada or the United States, you are living on stolen Indian land. Does this scare the shit out of you? It really should, because it is really scary. And also, if the only tool Native studies has is to call you out as a settler, then we are really failing in Native studies. In other words, we should not just have a critique where you fall into an either with us (Indigenous) or against us (settler) identity. How can we complicate this binary? What responsibilities should you possess as a settler toward Indigenous peoples?

Building Maroon Intellectual Communities

Chris Finley

- Problems arise when white supremacy falls out of this conversation. I'm not saying this because I love to talk about whiteness, but we need to recognize how white supremacy and universalism sets us in opposition and competition with each other for the saddest stories.
- For nonnatives, settler colonialism only seems to be sexy without the subject of the native. Living and breathing Native communities complicate the Black and white story of the formation of the United States.
- Instead of trying to argue for the primal scene of oppression that started the movement of rape, land theft, ecological exploitation, imperial expansion, genocide, and slavery from Europe to Africa and the Americas, can we let go of the question "Did it start with colonialism or anti-Blackness?" and start to ask, How do Black and Native communities continue to hurt each other in the present? What are we actually fighting for? Can we form maroon communities? What kind of political commitment and relationship would we need to make to each other to build a relationality that does not rely on competition for institutional resources or recognition?
- Letting go of ideas that have been supported by schools, popular culture, laws, and so forth will not just change because we say so, but at least I hope this chapter creates a desire for an identity formation that works for togetherness and love. The maroon identity is full of mistakes and failures. It is not for individualism but a hope to start hearing more similarities in our stories than differences. Being a maroon is a call to the past when Black and Native people took care of each other; instead of trying to pull each other down to pull ourselves up. We have survived over five hundred years of slavery and colonialism, yet many of us have moved far away from even a hope of togetherness. I'm talking about a deep way of being together. A place where we see the brokenness as a method of relatedness instead of seeking wholeness through comparison and loss. In a **maroon community**, we theorize love and failure.

"Boujee Natives"
Snotty Nose Rez Kids