Chapter 1

AIM

Use of Popular Images of Indians in Identity Politics

They wore beaded belts, sashes, chokers, moccasins, headbands, and lots of Indian jewelry. I thought, what are they trying to prove? There I was, in the swing of things, accepted by the white man, wearing his stylish clothes. Those guys looked ridiculous, all dressed up like Indians.

—Russell Means (*Where White Men Fear to Tread*)

As revealed by Russell Means's recollection of the first time he met American Indian Movement (AIM) members,[1] Western notions of cultural identity privilege exotic body images as an index of authenticity.[2] Although to date it remains a previously unexamined topic, like Amazonian Indians who adorned themselves in Native costume when they partnered up with environmentalists and nongovernmental organizations to further their causes in the 1980s and 1990s,[3] AIM members intentionally dressed in Native attire and accouterments when meeting with the media during the closing years of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s. What are best termed their "red-face performances" can be understood as a form of declining age-old images of the white man's Indian because these Native Americans chose to reuse these stereotypes by paying attention to every characteristic popularly associated with these icons and playing on them in creative

ways. In this form of usage, the performer essentially embodies both the stereotype and its critique so integrally that no safe barrier can be erected between the two.[4]

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, during the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of the Red Power Movement—including the establishment of AIM—popular images of Native Americans as the Noble Anachronism or the Savage Reactionary influenced Natives and non-natives alike in complex ways. This was the case due to the confluence of the following events: recent federal Indian policy included a relocation program, which moved thousands of American Indians from rural reservations to urban centers; a counterculture arose, which was largely made up of disenfranchised white middle-class youths who worshipped American Indians; and the country was militarily engaged in Vietnam.

Close attention to the personal accounts of AIM founders reveal that they considered themselves warriors. Early members who came from reservations where traditions were alive may have continued those when dressing in war paint and feathers in preparation for media events. The majority of AIM founders, however, had no such background and—following Rosello—can be said to have become "reluctant witnesses" to popular images of savage reactionaries in an effort to garner media attention for their cause. They inhabited the stereotype of the war-mongering brave—braiding their hair, painting their faces with war paint, adorning themselves with beads and feathers—while reusing these stereotypes in striking and imaginative ways. They donned these accouterments without a full understanding of the particular cultural significance of each specific item or symbol. Many factors contributed to their understandings of who they were and what they were doing when playing "Injun." The story of these individuals, therefore, offers an ideal opportunity to examine the doubled positions of American Indians as members of sovereign Nations and racialized people, some of whom simultaneously identify as both tribal and pan-Indian.

A commonly acknowledged fact that has to date been underanalyzed is that the founding members of AIM primarily came from urban areas, from rural areas where no reservation community existed, or from reservations where traditions and ethnicity had been severely weakened. In any of these cases, youths grew to adulthood without

deep knowledge of cultural traditions. Those raised in urban settings based their understandings of Indianness on pan-Indian notions of identity. Upon joining social organizations such as AIM, male youths emulated these icons in an effort to present themselves as warriors. As a result, frequently AIM members publicly declared themselves warriors but privately lacked knowledge about culturally specific warrior traditions. New insights arrived with an influx of Native American Vietnam era veterans who joined the organization after returning from military service. Many of these men had suffered racism resulting from age-old popular images of the white man's Indian while in the military service. Others, who came from reservations on which warrior traditions remained strong, brought the desired knowledge about warrior traditions to AIM.

The Urban Experience

The irony of the Dawes Act (General Allotment Act 1887), which authorized the surveying of land on American Indian reservations and issued 160-acre/65-hectare allotments to male heads of households and 80-acre allotments to female heads of households in an effort to free up land for Euro-American homesteaders, was that no sooner had Native Americans been placed on small family farms than the United States began its rapid transformation into a technologically advanced economy. Consequently, small, labor-intensive farms of the type capable of being developed on the standard allotment were simply unable to compete with large, capital-intensive, commercial farms.[5] As a result, a large population shift occurred from rural areas to cities within America between 1917 and 1945. Native Americans were part of this migration. In an effort to improve their economic situations, they began migrating into urban areas in the early twentieth century. Within these decades, approximately 100,000 American Indians left their reservations in search of new means of economic support.[6]

In 1940, more than half of all Euro-Americans were city dwellers (56.5%), whereas only 8 percent of all Native Americans were urban dwellers. The number of American Indian urban in-migrants increased dramatically after World War II with the institution of the

government's voluntary relocation program. During summer 1951, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) workers began to expand what had previously been an unofficial relocation program to all Native Americans. In 1952, the urban Indian relocation program began operation. Its goal was to entice reservation dwellers to move into one of seven metropolitan areas—Oakland/San Francisco, California; Chicago, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; Dallas, Texas; Cincinnati/Cleveland, Ohio; Oklahoma City/Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Waukegan, Wisconsin—where the jobs supposedly were plentiful.

Under the urban Indian relocation program guidelines, BIA employees were charged with facilitating placement and orienting new arrivals, as well as managing all financial matters and job training programs for them. An initial inquiry about the program at the BIA office usually began the process and paperwork. After reviewing an applicant's job skills and employment records, the BIA official would contact the relocation office in the applicant's city of choice. With clothes and personal items packed, the applicant boarded a bus or train to his destination, where a relocation worker met the relocatee. Once there, the newcomer received a check to be spent under the supervision of the relocation officer. The monies were earmarked for toiletries, cookware, groceries, bedding, and an alarm clock—to ensure punctuality at work. The BIA usually covered the cost of the relocatee's first month's rent, clothing (uniforms, etc.), groceries, and transportation expenses for travel to and from work. After the first month, relocatees operated independently.[7]

The BIA's Adult Vocational Training Program officially placed thousands of Native Americans in the aforementioned seven chosen metropolitan areas, but many more American Indians simply migrated to these same or other urban centers after hearing of employment opportunities. It has been estimated that as many as 750,000 Native Americans migrated to the cities between 1950 and 1980.[8]

Operating under the federal goal of assimilation, the BIA painted its relocation program as a golden economic opportunity for Native Americans, offering them a chance to improve their social status. Donald Fixico points out that propaganda used by the BIA portrayed relocation to urban centers as a "New Deal" for American Indians. Although the program was ostensibly voluntary, BIA officials used various tactics, including persuasive literature, to pressure Native Americans to relocate.

BIA workers circulated brochures and pamphlets throughout reservations to suggest that a better life awaited Indians in urban areas. Pictures of executives dressed in white shirts, wearing ties and sitting behind business desks insinuated to Indians that similar occupational positions could be obtained. Photos of a white frame house with shutters in suburban America enticed women, suggesting that their families could have similar homes.[9]

Unfortunately, in nearly all cases these brochures could not have been further from the truth. Because the BIA primarily relied on public employment agencies, relocatees were in fact most often placed in "seasonal railroad and agricultural work, the lowest paying and least secure type of employment."[10] The fact that Native Americans were relocated from reservations to urban centers and provided with only their first month's expenses, offered no training, and given temporary, low-paying jobs, after which time they were left to their own resources, means that this program constitutes an example of structural violence perpetrated by the American government against American Indian people at its worst.

The results of relocation to urban centers most often were unsuccessful for Native American individuals and families, and American Indians are considered a prime example of urbanization's casualties. Frequently, urban life proved an insurmountable challenge. Relocatees found themselves in settings without the usual markers of community—common territory, mutually intelligible language, and shared ethos found on reservations.

The anonymity of the city contrasted sharply with the intimate nature of the reservation. Although vast cultural diversity exists among the hundreds of different Native Nations found within the contiguous United States, there are a few commonalities. Placement of a profound value on agreement and consensus is one such near universal characteristic. Moreover, their collective notions of identity that were coupled with the ethic of sharing were at odds with individualistic notions of Euro-American identity that were coupled with the ethic of hording.[12] Having been raised within reservation communities centered on kinship and sharing, these Native American relocatees initially had great difficulty accepting or understanding their roles in the urban social settings in which they found themselves because these

settings were dominated by majority rule, adversary legal procedures, and self-interest.[13]

Countless relocatees lived with loneliness and a sense of quiet desperation, which forced many to return home. Although numerous relocatees returned home after failing to adjust, others survived through community building. To build community, Native Americans in any specific urban setting needed to ignore specific tribal markers and focus on pan-tribal traits and values in an effort to negotiate commonality.[14] To a large extent, the story of urban relocatees focuses on the doubled positions of American Indians as members of both sovereign Nations and a racialized people. Ironically, the pan-tribal image of Indianness was fostered and shaped by the Euro-American stereotype of the iconic Plains Indian warrior.[15]

This discursive formation of Indianness was seen on a regular basis by urban American Indian youths in innumerable cowboy and Indian westerns, on television, or at the movies as they grew up in the 1940s and 1950s. Moreover, as Joan Weibel-Orlando points out in her study of the largest urban Indian community extant in the contemporary United States—the 50,000-member strong Indian community of Los Angeles, California:

> Weekly Saturday night powwows, film and television depictions of nineteenth-century Indian life, and bumper stickers forewarning others that "Custer Died for Your Sins" all invoke Plains Indian cultural styles as models for contemporary Indian identity. Importantly, the Plains Indian ethos serves as an icon for both the non-Indian general public and a considerable number of urban Indians who are not Plains Indians. Its invocations by those Indians who wish to create and sustain an overarching mythic commonality supports a sense of a shared ethnicity cum community.[16]

Although it served to build community, the focus on pan-tribalism gradually eroded the legacy of Native traditionalism. Furthermore, as urban Indians experienced common problems and experiences, they came to view themselves more as "Indians" and less as "tribalists," thereby picking one identity over the other.[17]

American Indians who relocated to urban centers often were exploited because they would not speak out, complain, or demand their rights. As a result, urban life too often became a world of poverty,

unemployment, inadequate medical care, poor housing, and frequent moves from one rented residence to another.[18] Since the initial relocation program that began in the 1950s, Indian youths have consistently bore the brunt of urban pressures. Attending public schools was never easy and continues to be a problem for young members of this minority. In many cases, life in the streets became part of their everyday existence.[19] Maladjustment and unrest on the part of urban Native youth was the catalyst that resulted in the full blossoming of American Indian activism in the middle of the twentieth century.

Rise of the Red Power Movement

Native American discontent with federal policies consistently simmered on reservations and in urban settings throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Activism was sporadic but intense during the 1950s, but essentially in its infancy in terms of national visibility and non-native support. Within the larger cultural milieu of civil unrest and social protests that occurred in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, people of Native American descent took action to make their grievances known to the mainstream American public by means of confrontation politics, street theatrics, and skillful use of the media.

What has come to be known as the Red Power Movement fully emerged within the broader context of the growing Civil Rights Movement of the latter 1950s and the 1960s. The late 1960s were a volatile era of civil unrest. Native Americans in general benefited substantially from the governmental programs concerning the poor, which resulted from the social unrest of this period.[20] One outcome was that more young Native Americans were receiving college educations. These youths were outspoken activists for the American Indian cause who modeled their work on black successes in the Civil Rights Movement. Urban and campus populations of Native Americans, which had swelled due to the BIA relocation policy and efforts to get Native American youth to stay in school and attend college, created a base from which the Native American militant movement could be formed. A fundamental core of support came, however, from Indian elders who had never given up hope for the righting of wrongs.[21]

In regard to urban Indian militants, Minneapolis, Minnesota became the focus of urban frustration with the formation of AIM in July 1968 and with a plethora of Native activity.[22] A small group of

local Native Americans, primarily of Ojibwa heritage, began patrolling the section of the city surrounding Franklin Avenue, which was filled with dilapidated apartment buildings and locally known as "the Reservation" where they dwelled. Their goal was to keep a close watch out for reported police discrimination and brutality toward American Indians. The patrols successfully cut the Native American arrest rate and AIM was formed shortly thereafter with an original focus on services for urban Indians.

Having been raised in the area, founding members of AIM had experienced problems such as the social pressures of assimilation, discrimination, and maladjustment to the urban setting of the Twin Cities. "For most of them, this resulted in questions and feelings of insecurity about their Indianness. Through educational and childhood experiences, they had become alienated from their tribal traditions and ashamed of their Indian heritage, while simultaneously rejecting the dominant society as well."[23] The organization's initial goals, therefore, were to help Indian people overcome the problems of adjustment to the urban setting, to improve the community standing of the Indians living in the area, and to improve the livelihood of the Indian community at large.[24]

As the focus of AIM's members shifted from local urban issues to national and intertribal issues, AIM can be said to have created a hybrid indigenous space in which Indian people claimed and exercised citizenship simultaneously in individual Native Nations and in the United States.[25] This is true insofar as AIM encouraged its members to retain their tribal identity and celebrate their individual heritage, while also encouraging the development of a second form of American Indian identity. AIM's ideology emphasized rethinking notions of Indian sovereignty, treaty violations, as well as "a new concept of Indian nationalism or a supratribal Indian identity."[26] That is, AIM favored a generalized sense of Indianness best illustrated by the fact that at the time of its founding, AIM did not "define Indianness on the basis of 'blood' or race but on *cultural identification.*"[27] Moreover, AIM leaders stressed that Indianness was "a way of living and looking at the world, and anyone—Black, Indian, *or White*—with that outlook can be 'Indian'."[28] Because of their own firsthand experience with problems of adjustment, ethnic alienation, and discrimination, AIM leaders developed an ideology stressing pride in the Indian heritage and one's identity as an Indian, the creation of a positive Indian image, and the values and behaviors considered necessary for such persons.[29]

AIM's ideology always stressed spirituality and an affinity to nature.[30] Dennis Banks points out in his biography that "Spirituality is the heart and soul of Indian life, but we AIM people had been raised in white boarding schools, had lived in the Indian ghettos of big cities, had done time in prison. We did not know what we should believe in or how we could find sacredness."[31] Banks documents the search he undertook to find a spiritual underpinning for AIM. After seeking assistance from his home community where he learned that ceremonies had gone underground, he was told by associates in Minneapolis to seek out Henry Crow Dog on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. After sizing him up, Crow Dog began teaching Banks the elementary aspects of Lakota religion, which convinced him that he had found an appropriate spiritual path for AIM. Returning to Minneapolis, Banks expressed this conviction to other AIM members and soon the Crow Dogs were offering spiritual assistance to other members of the AIM organization. Dennis Banks, Clyde Bellecourt, Russell Means, and two other AIM members participated in the Sun Dance together at Pine Ridge. Over time, Leonard Crow Dog joined AIM and became its spiritual leader. As a result, the sacred pipe has particular significance to members of AIM because it symbolizes the form of spirituality claimed by their organization.

Other organizations developed in this decade include the National Indian Youth Council; the United Native Americans, Inc.; which was established by members of seventy separate tribes in 1961 after coming together for a conference in Chicago; and the United Indians of All Tribes, which was founded in Seattle, Washington, in 1970. With the founding of such pan-Indian national organizations, something new entered Indian affairs, the energy of youthful pride. Young American Indians, including those who had grown up in urban areas disenfranchised of cultural knowledge, joined AIM, United Indians of All Tribes, or other organizations in an effort to reconnect to their Native heritage. As a result, they began to feel pride in their Native American ancestry. The underlying social philosophy behind these organizations was to make the U.S. government right past wrongs and honor the hundreds of broken treaties with Native Nations of North America in order to allow their contemporary descendants to live in peaceful autonomy.

The first dramatic instance of Native American symbolic politics of the late 1960s was the occupation of Alcatraz Island, beginning on November 20, 1969 and ending on June 11, 1971. During the

occupation, American Indians from all over the United States and groups from around the world journeyed to the island to contribute to the real and symbolic struggle. The spirit of Alcatraz represented both challenge to prevailing images of Native Americans as the fading victims of history and resistance to the policies and treatment of Indian individuals and communities in the past and, most important, in the present.[32]

The living legacy of the occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969–1971 is enormous. Coupled with previous efforts on the part of Native Americans, such as publication of Standing Rock Sioux legal scholar Vine Deloria Jr.'s canonical work *Custer Died for your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969), this occupation marked a new day in Indian–white relations. The occupation of Alcatraz initiated a nine-year period of Red Power protest, which resulted in a more open and confident sense of identity among people of Native American descent. It also resulted in a transformation of national consciousness about American Indians.[33] Inspired by the Indians of All Tribe's takeover of Alcatraz Island, AIM leaders developed a real knack for thinking up dramatic takeovers that attracted media attention. Indeed, Troy Johnson, Duane Champagne, and Joane Nagel opine that "the most important factor contributing to AIM's influence on Red Power protest was its ability to use the news media—newspapers, radio, magazines, and television—to dramatize Indian problems and protests."[34] During this time, AIM took on its reputation as a decidedly militant organization.

In 1970 alone, AIM members conducted two newsworthy events. In an act of protest, AIM members tossed worn clothing—including used pantyhose and mismatched shoes—out to those in attendance at the 1970 National Conference of Welfare Workers while chanting "Indians don't want welfare!" This exercise garnered national attention.[35] On another occasion, AIM was invited to assist three Lakota women who planned to occupy one of the United State's foremost shrines of democracy—none other than Mt. Rushmore. They chose this monument because it is part of the Sacred Black Hills, which were illegally taken from the Lakota people by the U.S. government in 1877. Having the mountain defaced with the likenesses of Euro-American conquerors is a grievous insult to indigenous people.[36] On August 29, 1970, twenty-three dedicated young Indians braved arrest and fines to help the Lakota, Nakota, and Dakota regain their Sacred Black Hills. Once most members of their group had gained the summit, the protestors hung out a large flag bearing the words

"SIOUX INDIAN POWER" near the faces of the four presidents. After a brief ceremony, they renamed the location Crazy Horse Mountain in honor of the famous Oglala-Sicangu Lakota warrior and visionary (1849–1877) who was recognized among his own people for being committed to preserving the traditions and values of their way of life. The occupation lasted for approximately three months until severe weather forced their withdrawal. This protest garnered immediate media attention. Ike Pappas of CBS News covered the story on location with a broadcast airing on September 2, 1970.[37]

AIM's Use of the Savage Reactionary Image

Close attention to texts written by and about AIM leaders reveals that founders of this organization intentionally manipulated stereotypes of the white man's Indian in order to accomplish their goals. AIM leaders, who were very much aware of and concerned with image control and management embraced what they knew—stereotypical images of American Indians—when communicating with the media for their own political purposes.

The popular Indian stereotype from which those creating images of AIM drew most heavily is the Savage Reactionary. In one of the only systematic studies of media representation of AIM, Tim Baylor opines that this image was used by Natives and non-natives alike because it reflects cultural frames commonly recognized by most Euro-Americans, thereby eliminating the need to explain them to reporters or other members of the intended audience.[38] The power of such imagery should not be underestimated. In the absence of lobbying power or economic influence, the "symbolic capital" of cultural identity is one of American Indians' most valuable political resources. This certainly proved true for members of AIM.[39]

Biographical and autobiographical accounts reveal that the manner in which AIM members wore their hair and dressed was fully intentional. This is made clear in Bank's life story when he recalls how on the way to a big meeting on the Pine Ridge Reservation he reflected on the importance of presentation. He narrates "I thought about how much I wanted to present myself and my AIM companions to the people in a way they would remember. I dressed up for the occasion with a concho headband that was to become a trademark for me. I announced that I wanted everybody to be dressed well. A

couple of times I got on the bus's P.A. [public announcement] system and said, 'This is Dennis. I want you to look good and proud when we get to the rez [reservation].' "[40]

According to Fixico, AIM members who "looked Indian," flaunted it. For example, George Mitchell, an AIM co-founder, who was a full-blooded Chippewa, enjoyed dressing in his tribe's "traditional garb" and wore his long hair in two braids.[41] As previously noted, in these early years AIM membership was open to individuals of all racial and ethnic origins. Individual members, therefore, displayed a variety of phenotypes. As a result, upon joining AIM those who did not "look Indian," such as blacks, Euro-Americans, or mixed-blood or urban-raised Native American youths who had been taught to groom themselves according to middle-class white standards, grew their hair long and—whenever possible—began to wear it in braids.

AIM members were encouraged in their efforts at portraying themselves in war paint and feathers because representatives of the media clearly sought out those individuals who most closely fit their preconceived Indian stereotypes. When recalling the occupation of the BIA Building in 1972, Banks painstakingly describes how on the second morning, "we let the press in. . . . And we dressed up for the occasion. Russ [Means] wore a red shirt with a beaded medallion over his chest. An eagle feather dangled from one of his braids. Clyde [Bellecourt] wore a black, wide-brimmed Uncle Joe hat and a bone chocker around his neck; I draped a colorful Pendleton blanket over my shoulders."[42]

And, representatives of the media got what they wanted, for, as Means points out:

> The one in our group most interviewed by the press was Floyd Young Horse, a Minneconjou from Eagle Butte, South Dakota, because of his classic, full-blood face, his red-wrapped braids, and his fine sense of humor. He told reporters he had come in an "Indian car" with so many things wrong with it that it shouldn't be up and running at all, but somehow "its spirit was keeping it going."[43]

In these instances, it is unclear which stereotypical image of the American Indian—Noble Anachronism or, Savage Reactionary—Banks wanted his companions to emulate. These accounts do, however, lend insight into the tug of war experienced by individual members of AIM regarding personal and public identity. On a day-to-day basis

each had to decide whether or not to present him or herself as tribal or pan-Indian, as authentic or as a stereotype in order to meet the expectations of the media.

Writing in the late 1970s, Rachel Bonney observes, however, that from the outset AIM distinguished itself from most other national and local Red Power organizations by the strategies its members employed to achieve their goals. These were markedly "militant, involving the use of demonstration, confrontation, and occupation."[44] Without questioning the source of their notions of warriorhood or of this seemingly inherent militancy, she continues:

> AIM leaders and members consider themselves warriors fighting for their cultural survival and a return to traditional forms of government and religion. If violence and conflict are necessary for the recognition of their treaty rights and the obligations of the federal government to honor those treaty rights, AIM members are willing to die to accomplish these goals.[45]

This intention is made evident as Banks fondly remembers what he insists was "fear" in the eyes of government officials when they encountered AIM "warriors" with "homemade spears and clubs in their hands and their faces painted for war."[46] The fear-inspiring nature of these warriors' face paint is called into doubt when Banks details further in his autobiography that "a number of our men had painted their faces for war, with lipstick if they could find nothing else."[47]

Two major factors contributed to the representation of AIM as a militant organization. The first is grounded in how the media chose to frame its coverage of the organization. This has been researched and discussed by Baylor, who discerned how media agents framed movement goals based on an analysis of NBC Evening News coverage of American Indian protest from 1968 to 1979. Baylor found that although AIM wanted the emphasis placed on treaty and civil rights, 98 percent of the news segments included a militant frame. Moreover, in segments mentioning treaty or civil rights, the issue of militancy overshadows any presentation of the real grievances and issues behind Indian protest.[48]

Surprisingly, as Baylor notes below, the media characterized AIM as a militant organization *before* AIM had engaged in any major confrontation—and the label stuck. For the purposes of his study, the operationalized militant frame included:

any segment that labeled Indian protesters as "militant" or where the focus was on violence and the breakdown of law and order. This frame included all segments that mentioned or showed the breaking of laws, the use of weapons, gunfire, injury to individuals, and the destruction of property in this frame. The media used the militant frame right from the very start of its coverage. The first NBC segment during this period uses the militant frame. However, it is not just NBC that employs the militant frame. CBS's first coverage of AIM on June 28, 1970 is a lengthy six-minute segment. This segment refers to AIM as a "militant" group six times. Yet AIM was less than a year old, and it had not yet engaged in any of the major confrontations for which it would achieve notoriety. The media continuously characterized the movement as militant during all of the eleven-year period under analysis.[49]

As illustrated in the aforementioned personal accounts of AIM founders, members of this organization intentionally applied war paint and constructed make-shift spears and clubs in attempts to portray themselves as warriors. Their presentation as warriors shifted markedly, however, in the coverage at Wounded Knee II and beyond. This change can be attributed in large part to a factor that has been overlooked by Bonney and others but is essential to any thorough consideration of the militancy associated with AIM. The determining element was that Native American veterans of the conflict in Vietnam joined AIM in large numbers upon completion of their tours of duty in South Asia. These American Indian veterans can be said to have brought legitimacy to AIM's claim to militancy. Tom Holm has broken new ground on this topic.[50]

Stereotypes and Native American Soldiers

Forty-two thousand Native Americans joined the military and served in Southeast Asia between 1965 and 1973. The majority of these young people came from reservations suffering from crippling levels of poverty with exceedingly high unemployment rates. Like youths growing up in other communities oppressed by structural violence

such as the ravages of serious economic circumstances, military service is one of the few viable opportunities for personal advancement for these young men and women. Unlike other non-whites, as well as working-class and underclass whites who join the military, Native American enlistees choose to maintain strict cultural and spiritual martial traditions—in the form of song, ceremony, spiritual practices, and beliefs—while in the service and upon return to their home community.

In *Strong Hearts, Wounded Souls* (1996), Tom Holm explores the significance of warfare and warriorhood to the Vietnam-era Native American veterans whom he interviewed. Their accounts reveal the damaging effects popular images of American Indians can have from two fronts. First, as is evidenced by the following testimony of a Vietnam veteran of Creek and Cherokee descent who consulted with Holm, the Savage Reactionary image has so thoroughly permeated American popular culture that even some Native American youths take their cues from it. As this young man notes, "I'd seen the same John Wayne movies as everyone else and thought I was doing an honorable thing, that war was the 'Indian way'."[51] This soldier's comment bears out the validity of Gramsci's point that when ensconced within a full range of institutional and government structures and activities, representational regimes such as filmic images of American Indians can result in those portrayed accepting their own exploitation.[52]

The damaging influences of representations of Native Americans as war mongers is evidenced at a more insidious level by the fact that many American Indian servicemen were put into harm's way as a direct result of Hollywood's misrepresentations. Whether they entered the military with traditional knowledge or not, the age-old stereotype of the Savage Reactionary worked against all Vietnam-era Native American soldiers because commanders who believed in the characteristics promulgated by these popular images sent American Indian men into danger out of racism.

A Navajo veteran specifically told Holm that he was ordered to "walk point" on numerous occasions because he was "stereotyped by the cowboys and Indian movies. Nicknamed 'Chief' right away. Non-Indians claimed Indians could see through trees and hear the unhearable. Bullshit, they even believed Indians could walk on water."[53] The point man acts as a scout walking ahead of his unit's main body. He, therefore, is in the position most likely to trip mines and

booby traps or to walk into an enemy's concealed position. Saturated in stereotypical images of Noble Anachronisms who are one-with-the-environment, countless platoon commanders thought that Native Americans were inherently gifted with the ability to read their surroundings and thus ordered them to walk point. Unfortunately, these types of racial stereotypes placed American Indian military personnel in very dangerous, real-life situations.[54]

Pseudo-Indian images and symbols in the U.S. military predate Native American enlistment in large numbers by more than a century. These simulacra attest to the fact that during these decades "all Indians were stereotyped as warriors!"[55] Their existence demonstrates a desire on the part of non-native military personnel to take on themselves the Indian warrior's supposed natural warlike character and exceptional fighting skills.

Holm compares and contrasts the warfare practices of Native American societies based on an analysis of ethno-historical material from twenty tribes.[56] He found in addition to economic and territorial-based warfare, among American Indians intertribal conflict was an activity whereby young men gained status necessary to becoming tribal leaders.[57] In a majority of these communities, warriors applied face or body paint in preparation for battle. Young men frequently painted their faces with symbols from their visions, such as a moon on the forehead and a star on the nose.[58] Like the symbols painted on their shields or armor, the protective power of these symbols was perceived to derive from the individual warrior's personal medicine or spiritual helpers.[59]

Six of the twenty societies studied by Holm had well-defined warrior societies. These were important religious and political institutions. The primary function of these organizations was "keeping" the community's war medicine—the supernatural power that protected it in peace time and enhanced warriors' abilities during battle.[60] Additionally, members kept order in camp and while on the move, punished criminals, guarded the encampment against surprise attacks, and held rituals for the social and spiritual good of the community.[61]

Warrior societies most clearly were developed within the tribes that lived on or peripheral to the Great Plains. Warriors in these Native Nations traditionally relied on charms or war medicines received through visions, or directly from holy men and women for protection in battle. For example, when Crazy Horse went into battle, he wore a feather in his hair, an eagle-bone whistle, and a round

stone secured under his left arm with a leather thong.[62] Other noted warriors are known to have attained invulnerability by applying the pulverized roots of specific plants over their bodies or by wearing sashes of antelope hoofs across their chests.[63] A warrior's charms and war medicines were ultimately reliant on his willingness to observe specific taboos and once in battle to keep his mind focused on the source of his power. To break any taboo or lose focus jeopardized a Plains warrior's protection.[64]

In his study, Holm found that one of the most important factors underlying the ability of American Indian military personnel to survive combat was adherence to "ancient, ancestral values."[65] As a Cherokee veteran explains, "I tried to live up to the ways of my ancestors and be a warrior."[66] In personal accounts, veterans document bringing with them into combat sacred tobacco, small arrowheads, prayer plumes, or fetishes carved in the shape of an animal spirit. Others relied on old war songs or prayers. Several veterans recalled spiritual events while in Vietnam—including visions of dead relatives or animal guides—that offered much needed support.[67] Given that the majority of AIM's founding members came from urban areas or reservations on which traditions were lost, it can be assumed that the designs they applied to their faces and bodies as "war paint" did not convey the spiritual power described above.

Wounded Knee II

It was AIM's spiritual leader Leonard Crow Dog who revived the Ghost Dance at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973. In doing so, he revived much more than a dance. At Wounded Knee, members of AIM together with traditional Lakota were not there simply to protest the appalling living conditions on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The village of Wounded Knee was intentionally selected for the protest to demonstrate continuity with the suffering and injustice experienced by those who were massacred there in 1890. This was largely so because this was where a dream of revitalization had been anchored; that is, the dream for the return of all Indian dead and plentiful game—especially *tatanka*, or buffalo that were everything to the Lakota.

The 1890 Ghost Dancers had restored and affirmed the Sacred Hoop, the life-way and the solidarity of the Sioux People. They had also denied the superiority and the sovereignty of the Euro-American

culture. The Sacred Hoop took on a pan-Indian character at Wounded Knee in 1973 when Indians of different nations stood side by side against a common foe—namely—Euro-Americans and the U.S. government. For many participants, the Sun Dance and Ghost Dances performed at Wounded Knee became foci for rediscovering and reaffirming their Indianness. As Elizabeth Rich notes, this place—Wounded Knee—and the name associated with it have become inextricably linked with AIM over the years:

> Part of the strength of the American Indian Movement has been its ability to produce strong metonymic statements that take the furtive nighttime 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee as a central event for the Movement's view of history, hence AIM's call to "Remember Wounded Knee." As well as functioning as a name for the land, the words Wounded Knee come to stand for the many underhanded, crippling, and unjust actions and policies, practiced by the United States government for over two hundred years, since the signing of the first treaty in 1774 with the Delaware, which was broken along with many other treaties. A pan-tribal articulation strategically locates common concerns among various and different American Indian groups. While there may be, for good reason, some reluctance to think about American Indian people in terms of a single group, the texts produced by the American Indian Movement state that its purpose is to unite people in order to have an organized way of addressing recurrent and chronic problems that affect many different American Indian people and groups, rather than to blur their differences and to universalize indigenous experience.[68]

This and other AIM strategies were extremely effective as is evidenced by polls taken at the time.

A Louis Harris poll taken in March 1973 indicated 93 percent of those polled had followed coverage of the Wounded Knee occupation. Moreover, the majority of those polled supported the protest. Baylor opines that if the opportunity for AIM to get its message across to a wider public ever existed, this was it. AIM would never again have this much favorable attention.[69] Public support was this high

partially because throughout the 1960s and 1970s, members of a then-prevalent social movement known as the counterculture movement were enchanted with American Indians.

Faced with "continuing social transformations—the baby boom, civil rights struggles, consumer culture, the war in Vietnam—older, Cold War quests for personal brands of authentic experience [that] gave way to increasing doubts about the existence of God, authenticity, and reality itself," this group of dissatisfied white middle-class young people, looked outside their own world for answers.[70] American Indians, ever the object of romantic interest, were a particular study for this new group. The Noble Anachronism stereotype, which is characterized by a high degree of natural virtue that is made excruciatingly poignant by the awareness that he and his people are doomed by "an oncoming White culture not compatible with his admirable but primitive mode of living," fit this group's needs precisely.[71] From a distance, Noble Anachronisms looked perfect: ecologically aware, spiritual, tribal, anarchistic, drug-using, exotic, and wronged, the lone genuine hold-outs against mainstream American conformity and success.[72]

Disenfranchised American youths appropriated elements from Native American cultures, or at least Euro-American notions of such, to signal alienation from their parent culture. "As an antidote, they promoted community, and at least some of them thought it might be found in an Indianness imagined as social harmony."[73] Members of the counterculture movement initially emulated timeworn stereotypes of American Indians as Noble Anachronisms living in harmony with nature; of course, this was neither a wholly new use of the white man's stereotype nor a new role for American Indians. Regardless, by the time AIM occupied the small village of Wounded Knee, it had tremendous public support in part because members of the counterculture admired Indians and backed their causes as a byproduct of the emerging environmental movement.

The Ecological Indian

Since first contact, Native Americans have been consistently pressed into service as symbols in a variety of political and cultural controversies—from the taxation that led to the Boston Tea Party to the

marketing of herbal remedies in the early 1900s—chiefly of concern to Euro-Americans.[74] This was again the case with the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, when the natural environment began to be seen as something more than a commodity to be exploited and bitter battles were fought over pesticides, oil spills, toxins, industrial, and medical or human wastes, as well as other concerns. J. Porritt popularly summarized the general principles of this movement as follows:

> A reverence for the earth and all its creatures; protection of the environment as a precondition of a prosperous, healthy society, sustainable alternatives to the rat race economics of growth; a recognition of the rights of future generations in our use of all resources; open, participatory democracy at every level of society.[75]

This discourse demonstrates that the classic binary opposition between humans and the natural world was envisioned to dissolve and be replaced by the notion of a partnership in which humans no longer had the upper hand. "Learning from their past mistakes, humans will, in the future, respect and revere nature's power. It is therefore, as part of the natural world, rather than in control of it, that humans are depicted as aware of the restraints which must be placed upon culture by nature."[76]

Encouraged by the environmental movement, people have tended to view American Indians—who had come to symbolize embodiments of nature, land, and environment as early as the mid-1700s—as the "original conservationists," that is, "people so intimately bound to the land that they have left no mark upon it."[77] From that time onward, Native Americans can be said to be fetishes of the environment. That is, closeness to nature and knowledge of how to care for it were powers attributed to American Indians to the point where people believed and acted as though they really had these abilities. Indeed, it was assumed that these powers were intrinsic to Native Americans.

The fundamental principles of the American environmental movement mirror those articulated in numerous American Indian beliefs systems, which are firmly located in a strong sense of place. It must be stressed, however, that within these diverse ideologies an intimate connection to the earth takes hundreds of specific forms unique to the individual Native Nations. Although the potential influence of