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James F. Brooks
General Editor

Beyond Red Power

American Indian Politics
and Activism since 1900

*Edited by Daniel M. Cobb
and Loretta Fowler*



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34. *DO*, October 14, 1968; *PI*, October 14, 1968.

35. *ST*, August 13, 1970.

36. *ST*, September 18, 1970. See also Wilkinson, *Messages*, 168–172.

37. AFSC, *Uncommon Controversy*, xviii, xxix. See also Robert Johnson, "Indian Fishing Controversy," *PI*, November 22, 1971.

38. AFSC, *Uncommon Controversy*, xxix.

39. Wilkinson, *Messages*, 170.

9 Talking the Language of the Larger World Politics in Cold War (Native) America

Daniel M. Cobb

The decade of the 1960s is often seen as a nebulous midway point between the termination era of the 1950s and the self-determination era that came into its own during the 1970s. Scholars acknowledge the role that the War on Poverty played in strengthening tribal institutions and fostering an acceptance of self-governance in Washington DC, even as local communities encountered problems with implementation (see table 4). In the past, however, they have focused on policymakers or individual communities.¹ Meanwhile, studies of activism continue to focus primarily on the militancy of the late 1960s and after.² In this chapter, Dan Cobb takes a different approach. He explores a diverse array of Indian and non-Indian reformers, youths, social scientists, and tribal leaders whose ideas and actions were deeply influenced by the struggle for black equality, the youth movement, decolonization, and the Cold War. By locating them as, at once, influenced by and shapers of the larger domestic and international histories of which they were a part, he shows how attending to Native people's experiences can contribute to a fuller understanding of politics in Cold War America. Finally, by de-emphasizing militancy, he provides a more complex and varied picture of American Indian activism during the 1960s.

Imagine Standing Rock Sioux activist and intellectual Vine Deloria Jr. sitting on a sofa in his den. A cup of coffee and a row of carefully aligned Pall Mall

Vine Deloria, Jr. Cold War imperative

cigarettes rest on a nearby end table. A box of donuts lies open on a coffee table in front of him. On this brisk fall morning, he is bedecked in a white sweatshirt and matching pair of white sweatpants. Over several hours, he methodically works his way through one smoke after another while telling stories about his tenure as executive director of the National Congress of American Indians during the mid-1960s. This is how I remember my first encounter with one of the towering figures of the twentieth century, a man who shaped not only the course of American Indian history but also the way we think about it. It was October 2001, a little more than five years before his passing. I was a doctoral candidate at the University of Oklahoma then, and the two days I spent interviewing him at his home in Golden, Colorado, fundamentally altered the way I conceptualize my work.

This chapter explores four important aspects of the politics of tribal self-determination during the 1960s—the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, the American Indian Chicago Conference, the War on Poverty, and the Poor People's Campaign. The analytical thread holding each of them together derives from one of the many poignant observations Vine Deloria made during our conversations. "At NCAI," he told me, "I was looking for some kind of intellectual format of how you would justify overturning termination and at the same time escape this big push for integration that civil rights was doing." To make this distinction, he situated tribal issues in the context of what he called "an era of resurgent nationalism among dark-skinned people the world over." He remembered telling tribal leaders, "If we're gonna say we're nations and we got sovereignty and our treaties are as valid as other treaties, then we gotta talk the language of the larger world."³

In arguing this point, Vine Deloria added his voice to a conversation that had been under way for more than a generation. Indian activists began drawing parallels between themselves and nations emerging from colonialism after World War I, but the advent of the Cold War following the Second World War added a new sense of urgency.⁴ In 1954 and again in 1957, Native and non-Native advocacy organizations launched aggressive campaigns for what they called an American Indian Point IV Program, a strategy that invoked President Harry S. Truman's plan to provide technical assistance and scientific training purportedly needed by developing nations to "modernize" their cultures, political systems, and economies. These reformers presented their appeal as more than just an alternative to termination (see table 3). They argued that it represented a Cold War imperative: if the United States expected to prevail in its ideological contest with the Soviet Union in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, they argued, it would have to demonstrate to the rest of the world that it treated the indigenous peoples within its own borders with justice and honor.⁵

*AID → workshop on Amer. Ind. Affairs
studying isn't betraying Indian culture*

Among the earliest and most eloquent advocates of this position was D'Arcy McNickle. Born on the Flathead Reservation to a Cree mother and Scots-Irish father in 1904, McNickle entered the Indian Service during the 1930s, just as Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier initiated the Indian New Deal, a wide-ranging reform agenda that intended to bolster tribal self-government. McNickle helped to found the National Congress of American Indians in 1944, before resigning from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) ten years later, disgusted by the advent of termination (see table 2). Like Deloria, McNickle believed that Indians shared "the world experience of other native peoples subjected to colonial domination." In the 1950s he set about extending "the process of decolonization to the United States" through an organization called American Indian Development (AID).⁶

In 1960 McNickle committed AID to sponsoring the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, a six-week program for Indian college students, initiated by University of Chicago anthropologist Sol Tax in the summer of 1956. At the outset, the workshops endeavored to offer course credit through the University of Colorado, provide an incentive for Indian youths to complete their degrees, and cultivate a new generation of leaders—a particularly important goal, given the threat that termination posed to many Native communities. The workshops metamorphosed into something greater still after Robert K. Thomas, a Cherokee doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago, placed his mark on the curriculum (figure 6).⁷ Through a combination of reading about Robert Redfield's anthropological work in Latin America, studying under Edward Spicer and Sol Tax, and reflecting on his own personal experiences, Bob Thomas began thinking about American Indians as a folk people adjusting to contact with and colonization by an urban industrial society.⁸

Thomas contended that Indian students, like their peers in so-called underdeveloped countries, traditionally received vocational training to learn specific skills. When they did go to college, they dropped out in inordinately high numbers because they felt marginal, and they felt marginal because of the messages they received about who they were and where they did or did not fit in. Under his direction, workshop students learned that they were not forsaking their relatives or somehow abandoning Indian culture by going to and succeeding in college. "These kind[s] of bullshit dilemmas are false and come from high school teachers," he seethed. When students recognized that the problems they confronted personally, within their families, and in their communities were not their fault and that they were not alone, they could see these problems for what they were, objectify them, and deal with them "intellectually instead of in a personal, secret, unformalized way." Social science would make this possible by serving as a

internal colonialism

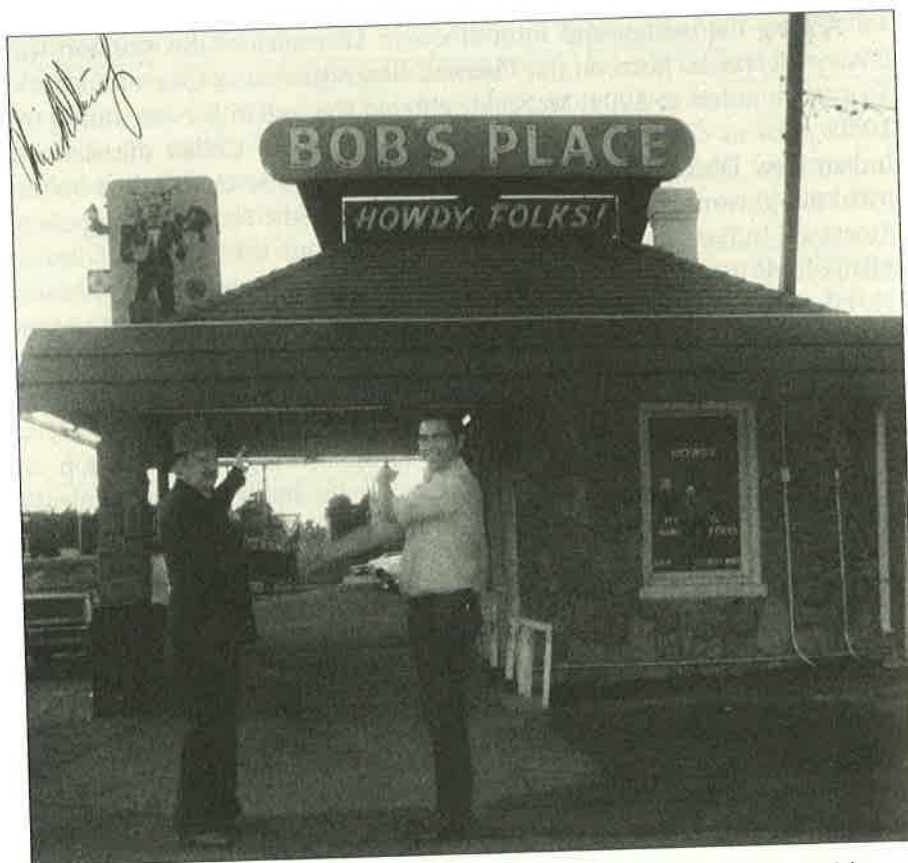


Figure 6. Cherokee anthropologist Robert K. Thomas and Standing Rock Sioux activist Vine Deloria Jr. shaped the intellectual development of several generations of Native youths. This dining establishment clearly afforded a photo op neither of them could pass up. Thomas not only went by "Bob" but also welcomed readers of a column he wrote for *Indian Voices* with the greeting "Howdy Folks!" Photo courtesy of Daniel M. Cobb.

vehicle for the liberation of their minds and, with it, the redemption of their communities.⁹

The curriculum Bob Thomas constructed compelled students to confront the idea of internal colonialism and to apply it to analyses of federal policies, their own communities, and even themselves.¹⁰ In 1962 Thomas asked workshop students to "[d]escribe the consequences for the world and social relations of a folk people under a colonial administration" and, even more pointedly, asked, "Is it possible for a government, given a colonial situation, to determine the destiny of the governed people and also to terminate their colonial status with success?" The final exam in 1963 read: "Compare the structure and consequences of colonialism or minority group

decolonization, ethnic pride

↳ leaders of the new generation

status in one of the following: India, Kenya, Ghana, Maori in New Zealand, aboriginal people in the Philippines, with the structure and consequences of the relationship between either American Indians or a specific group and the wider American society."¹¹

D'Arcy McNickle later remarked that the workshop experience served as "an awakening" for many of the students who attended.¹² The essays they wrote during their summers in Boulder lend credence to his assessment. "I had never before thought of the Indians as compared to colonialism," Frank Dukepoo (Hopi) reflected. "I thought colonialism existed only in the older countries like southern Europe or in places such as Africa."¹³ Clyde Warrior (Ponca) detected similar resonances. "Another thing I learned is that all over the world tribal peoples are coming in contact with the outside world," he noted, "and basically they all have the same reactions."¹⁴ What this young person—who was instrumental to the formation of the National Indian Youth Council in August 1961—meant by "same reactions" was, of course, rebellion. Makah tribal member and NIYC member Bruce Wilkie explained why: "[A]s long as there is a colonial agency set up to administer to Indian affairs," one of his papers read, "there will always be an Indian social problem."¹⁵

In a perceptive essay written in 1962, Sandra Johnson, another Makah from the Neah Bay area, extended a Cold War analogy to this discourse on colonialism and wove it into issues of identity. "It is not that Indians reject white culture, per se. It is that they reject white culture when they are forced to adapt to it by losing what they are and [what] they value. One does not painlessly reject oneself," she asserted. Searching for an appropriate metaphor, she asked how non-Indians might respond to the prospect of being forced to live under Soviet domination: "Many would cry, 'Better dead than Red.' And yet, another battle between the Reds and the Whites is being fought within our own borders. Given this different context it may be easier for white citizens to understand our cry which would sound more like, 'Better Red than dead.'"¹⁶

The workshop's emphasis on decolonization and ethnic pride clearly informed students' rejection of termination and assimilation. Moreover, many of the "Workshoppers," as they called themselves, carried these ideas with them as they went on to become elected tribal leaders, educators, doctors, lawyers, documentary filmmakers, artists, writers, and founders of activist organizations such as the National Indian Youth Council. From this generation arose persons who, over the course of the succeeding fifty years, would become influential promoters of change in Native America—youth activist Clyde Warrior, tribal leaders Mel Thom and Bruce Wilkie, filmmaker Sandy (Johnson) Osawa, former Institute of American Indian Arts president Della (Hopper) Warrior (Otoe-Missouria), lawyer Browning Pipestem

decolonizing various spheres
Cold war imperative again x anticommunism

(Otoe), tribal college administrator Phyllis Howard (Mandan), Stockbridge-Munsee community leader Dorothy Davids, Mary Hillaire (Lummi), Evergreen State College's first Native staff member, and many, many others (Warrior, chapter 16, this volume). All of them have been active in decolonizing a wide range of spheres, from art and education to mass media and federal-Indian relations.¹⁷

A second example of how international affairs shaped Indian politics during the 1960s can be found in the American Indian Chicago Conference. Seizing upon a United Nations proclamation that the 1960s would be the "Decade of Development," Sol Tax proposed a meeting that would bring delegates from across Indian Country to Chicago in order to finalize a comprehensive "Declaration of Indian Purpose." This statement would, in turn, be presented in person to John F. Kennedy, the newly elected president of the United States. The National Congress of American Indians endorsed the idea in December 1960, and D'Arcy McNickle quickly took the lead in authoring a draft document. Then, during the spring, Sol Tax coordinated a series of regional meetings in which Indian and non-Indian people discussed and critiqued it. Long an advocate of the Point IV philosophy, McNickle infused the initial statement with the spirit of international development. The final declaration even resurrected the Cold War imperative by intoning, "[T]he problem we raise affects the standing which our nation sustains before world opinion."¹⁸

Looked at from a different perspective, the Chicago conference reveals still another dimension to politics in Cold War Native America. Indeed, one of the untold stories of the event is the extent to which it was plagued by the politics of anticommunism. If the Chicago conference's proponents sought to harness the Cold War as a means of advancing a progressive agenda, its detractors used the fear of communist subversion as a bulwark against change. Earl Boyd Pierce, general counsel of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, proved instrumental in this regard. Born and raised in Ft. Gibson, a small town in Muskogee County, Oklahoma, he saw himself as a champion of the American way of life, venerated Federal Bureau of Investigation director J. Edgar Hoover, and kept an autographed copy of the zealous anticommunist's book, *Masters of Deceit*, in his personal library. Although he actively pursued Cherokee legal claims against the federal government, he was suspicious of strident acts of protest, such as civil rights demonstrations and antiwar rallies.¹⁹

The Chicago conference came under close scrutiny in January 1961 when the Inter-Tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes convened in Muskogee, Oklahoma.²⁰ Detecting a nefarious scheme, Cherokee principal chief W. W. Keeler, an executive for Phillips Petroleum, recalled a trip to the

fear of being accused of communism
Chicago conference, "American Indian Pledge" (1961)

Soviet Union he had taken in August 1960: Some Russians "took me aside and explained to me how they would like to work with me in working out plans to set up some *Indian Republics* here in the United States. [T]hey talked about *freeing the Indians*...they had the idea Indians are held as prisoners... they spoke of the Indians in leg-irons..." But that was not all. "They said it came from the reports of the *University of Chicago*." Earl Boyd Pierce added his own premonition that Sol Tax, D'Arcy McNickle, and others intended to lay a "booby trap" in Chicago that would culminate in nothing less than "an overall Governmental State."²¹

With deep suspicions in tow, Pierce traveled to Chicago in February to attend a meeting of Indian leaders who had been chosen to serve as the steering committee for the conference. He proceeded to bait the participants and to underscore that Indians were no longer sovereign nations—that they must remain loyal to the United States government.²² Repeatedly, the Cherokee general counsel argued that the Interior Department and the Bureau of Indian Affairs should be consulted before Indians took any definite actions. By being too forceful, he feared, they would come off as "an unhappy minority."²³ Pierce had to leave before the steering committee disbanded, and he suspected rightly that he had earned their derision.²⁴ He also knew that a tape recorder had been running throughout all but the first session. Upon his return to Oklahoma, he requested copies. An incredible game of cat and mouse followed, with Pierce pursuing what had become, in his mind, a "black plot against him" and assistant coordinator Nancy Lurie, an anthropologist and a former student of Sol Tax, doing all in her power to forestall the inevitable surrender.²⁵

In the months that followed, opponents of the Chicago conference spread rumors that Tax, a Jew whose socialist parents emigrated from Germany, was a communist in disguise.²⁶ If Pierce could not destroy the conference by whispering such intimations, he resolved personally to see that no one advanced a radical agenda. When the hundreds of tribal delegates finally descended on Chicago in June 1961, he and his allies worked diligently to secure passage of a stridently anticommunist "American Indian Pledge" that ultimately prefaced the "Declaration of Indian Purpose."²⁷ In ultrapatriotic prose targeting Tax and his allies, it denounced "the efforts of the promoters of any alien form of government." When representatives from the Chicago conference finally had their personal meeting with John F. Kennedy, it appears that the "American Indian Pledge" was the only part of the declaration the president actually read.²⁸

This aspect of the Chicago conference suggests that the intersection between domestic and international politics did not occur merely in the realm of ideas. Rather, it literally shaped behavior and, with it, the course of

decolonization x fear of communist subversion
War on Poverty (LBJ, 1965) → criticizing the BIA

* events. In this instance, the Cold War served as a powerful backdrop. Just as decolonization informed the organizers' embrace of development through democratic self-determination, fear of communist subversion inspired its opponents.

Another unanticipated manifestation of these ideational border crossings—one that extended into the realm of action—can be found in the strategy Vine Deloria carved out for the National Congress of American Indians. Upon assuming the executive directorship in 1964, not only did he adopt rhetoric reminiscent of that found in anticolonial movements across the globe, but he also used similar approaches for affecting change. In a study of Cold War foreign policy, historian John Lewis Gaddis observed that although "Third World" countries could not challenge the Soviet Union or the United States militarily, they could manipulate these world powers "by laying on flattery, pledging solidarity, feigning indifference, threatening defection, or even raising the specter of their own collapse and the disastrous results that might flow from it."²⁹ Under Deloria's direction, the NCAI engaged in precisely this kind of veiled resistance by adopting a carefully orchestrated play-off system involving several government agencies.

President Lyndon Baines Johnson unwittingly handed him the primary vehicle he would use to push for reform, when Johnson launched and then proceeded to escalate the War on Poverty (see table 4, 1964). Deloria immediately formed a significant relationship with James J. Wilson, an Oglala Lakota brought in to oversee all the War on Poverty's Indian programs in the spring of 1965. Channeled through what Deloria called "inside-outside politics," they seem to have agreed to use each other in order to manipulate the federal bureaucracy from within rather than confront it from without. Both of them well knew that the War on Poverty—and particularly the Community Action Program, given its direct funding of tribes and emphasis on local initiative—offered a potent critique of wardship and paternalism. Having the dubious distinction of being the quintessential symbol of these unsavory concepts, the Bureau of Indian Affairs became the central focus of their attacks.³⁰

* The political strategy Wilson and Deloria devised evidenced itself during the National Congress of American Indians' annual convention in Scottsdale, Arizona, in November 1965. Through the spring, summer, and fall of that year, the Office of Economic Opportunity, which served as the administrative headquarters to the War on Poverty, was embroiled in tremendous controversy, in large part because of the explosion of the Watts riot in Los Angeles. Members of Congress and city mayors intimated that federal money was being used to incite racial and class conflict. At the same time, the rising cost of the war in Vietnam meant potential budget cuts for the War on Poverty.

- Sargent Shriver attended the NCAI in 1965
- Deloria used it as leverage against BIA

R. Sargent Shriver, the director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, found himself fighting two battles. First, he argued with President Lyndon Johnson over how much money it would take to win the antipoverty campaign. Second, he had to struggle with city mayors and congressmen to save the grassroots-centered approach of Community Action.³¹

Vine Deloria and Jim Wilson understood that they could leverage these struggles to advance tribal interests. Networking with other Washington insiders, they suggested to R. Sargent Shriver that he attend the NCAI convention and use it as an opportunity to fight back. Given the depth of bitterness directed toward BIA paternalism and the popularity of Community Action in Indian Country, there could be few better places for Sargent Shriver to reaffirm his commitment to the idea of maximum feasible participation of the poor. This calculated maneuver paid off. "He was almost like a conquering hero returning," one observer remembered of Shriver's arrival at the convention. Deloria had a similar recollection of the event. "I can remember him coming into the hotel, and, by God, it took him ten minutes to get up on the podium.... All these people wanted to show him pictures of their projects or talk to him. Everybody was just shaking hands with him. I hardly had a chance to say two words to him, and I was running the whole thing...."³²

Shriver used his address to proclaim the Office of Economic Opportunity's commitment to tribal self-determination. Reservation communities, he argued, could be likened to underdeveloped nations, and, therefore, the same kinds of prescriptions for change applied to them. "[W]hite imperialism, white paternalism," he argued in a thinly veiled reference to the BIA, "cannot be replaced by the paternalism of experts, the imperialism of professionals." He also said, "The money is yours—because the whole basis of the poverty program is self-determination—the right of the people—individually and collectively—to decide their own course and to find their own way."³³ Deloria considered Shriver's performance a tremendous success. The War on Poverty received the positive media coverage it needed, while he gained additional leverage to use against the established bureaucracy. With OEO on his side, Deloria recalled, he could go to the BIA and say, "Okay, we'll listen to the commissioner, but this better be good."³⁴

Vine Deloria allowed the Office of Economic Opportunity to cultivate a romantic image of Community Action. But did that mean he really believed in it? Consider this remembrance from my interview with him: "I never liked most of the OEO people cause they were so...snobby, and they were all Ivy League people, you know?" They might talk a good game about empowerment and representation, he remembered, but they had no idea what it was like to live in poverty. "[If] you took one of these OEO guys and

put him in the towns we grew up in, they'd make a total ass of themselves," he stated flatly. "They'd be run out of town in a half hour."³⁵

This observation needs to be balanced with the following exchange Deloria had with a non-Indian social scientist named Murray Wax. Wax took particular umbrage at the War on Poverty's Head Start preschool program, basing his assessment on extended on-site evaluations in centers across Indian Country. "I have looked closely at poverty programs on Indian reservations and I assure you they violate the fundamental principle of Indian self-determination," he wrote to Deloria. "Do Indian parents really need Head Start programs so as to transform their children into Whites?!" Deloria offered a response rich with irony. "I don't believe you are understanding what is taking place in regard to poverty programs and Indianism—the more educated they get, the more nationalistic they get also," he wrote. "Head Start just provides us with a chance to get them a solid basis for becoming nationalists 2 years sooner."³⁶

Vine Deloria not only talked the language of the larger world but also walked the walk. "In any fight with an institution, the institution will always win because it's going to be there longer than you," he later explained to me. "So you gotta screw up the way it operates itself, turn it in on itself, create a crisis for it. And then, they'll give you what you want and alter things." In public addresses, congressional testimony, formal resolutions, and the pages of the NCAI's publications, Deloria proceeded to use innuendo, warnings of impending crises, fulsome praise, and caustic ridicule to play Congress, the Interior Department, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Office of Economic Opportunity, and even tribal leaders against one another. "The only way we're going to get anywhere," he later said in justification of this approach, "is to praise one agency while kicking the ass of another and get those two competing with each other."³⁷

This logic was certainly operative in Scottsdale in 1965, but another event in April of the following year may provide the single best example. By the spring of 1966, heightened anxieties over the resignation of one Indian Affairs commissioner and the appointment of another, rumblings of support for termination in the Senate, and rumors of the BIA's designs to take over the Office of Economic Opportunity's Indian programs permeated Indian Country. Amidst this tumult, Interior secretary Stewart Udall organized a policy meeting for federal employees and interested congresspersons in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Arguing that Indian people deserved the right to have a voice in making decisions that affect their lives, Deloria requested permission to send NCAI observers to the four-day conference. To his exasperation, Udall declined.

Deloria had had enough. Lkening the Interior Department to a giant

piñata, he remembered thinking, "Let's take the closest thing we have and hit that thing as hard as we can and see what's going on." To do so, he called an emergency meeting. In short order, two hundred representatives from sixty-two tribes descended on Santa Fe to hold countermeetings a mere three blocks away from Udall's closed session. Taking the civil rights movement as his model, Deloria sought to create a "media phenomenon" that would dramatize the BIA's complete disregard for basic democratic principles. For three days, the NCAI railed against the Indian bureau as a reporter from the *New York Times* recorded every detail.³⁸

Throughout the confrontation, members of the NCAI juxtaposed the "spectacular success" of local initiative via Community Action with the BIA's penchant for paternalism. The *New York Times* articles, according to Deloria, delivered the following message: "Here are the Indians who are managing their own affairs, and they've got poverty programs and everything. Here's the Bureau trying to put them back in the nineteenth century." Praising the War on Poverty while criticizing the Indian bureau fostered the kind of competition that Deloria hoped would prove advantageous to tribes. To be sure, the Office of Economic Opportunity could ill afford to lose one of the few friends it had left, and the last thing the much maligned BIA needed was to appear to be perpetuating dependency.³⁹

In the wake of Santa Fe, Deloria continued the strategy. "Certainly there has been no single program or theory of government that has caused such excitement on Indian reservations in 100 years as the Poverty Program," he expounded in the pages of the *NCAI Sentinel*. But in keeping with the strategy employed by other developing nations during the Cold War, he added a dire warning: "There is now a good chance for wholesale collapse of enthusiasm on reservations if the basic philosophy of the OEO is changed to conform to what is happening in the large cities." Through the spring and summer of 1966, black-white coalitions fragmented, calls for Black Power and welfare rights peaked, and the inner cities exploded. Through it all, the National Congress of American Indians continued to cultivate an image of Indians as the one minority group that Lyndon Johnson's administration could safely champion without fear of white reprisal. Why? To advance a nationalist agenda to promote tribal sovereignty.⁴⁰

After Vine Deloria resigned from the NCAI in 1967 to pursue a law degree at the University of Colorado, John Belindo (Kiowa/Navajo) carried his efforts forward. In March 1968 the organization scored a victory when President Johnson issued "The Forgotten American," the twentieth century's first presidential statement devoted exclusively to Indian affairs. The address did not renounce termination outright, but it did indicate that the Johnson administration wanted to end the debate by committing the federal government to a

policy of "self-help and self-determination."⁴¹ Showing himself to be equally adept at leverage seeking, Belindo assured Johnson's advisers that if the NCAI were given an audience with the president, then it would "include quotes like 'The Johnson Administration has done more for Indians than any other president'" and would also "support the President's Viet Nam stand."⁴² Following closely on the heels of the disastrous Tet Offensive in Vietnam, this must have been inviting, indeed.

The Poor People's Campaign, a massive six-week protest in the heart of Washington DC, revealed that even as the NCAI's patient incrementalism seemed to be producing results, the political climate was becoming increasingly radicalized. Less than two months after Johnson issued "The Forgotten American," thousands of poor whites, blacks, Chicanos, and American Indians converged on the capitol, taking up residence in Resurrection City, a makeshift community located just off the National Mall, and in churches and schools throughout the city. Together, they marched, picketed, testified before Congress, conducted sit-ins, and allowed themselves to be arrested—all in an effort to expose what they considered to be the grave injustices visited upon those who lived in America's shadows. Over the course of the Poor People's Campaign, a demonstration was staged outside the Supreme Court to protest the anti-treaty fishing rights *Puyallup* decision, and a spontaneous sit-in occurred at the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters.⁴³

Indian involvement in what many perceived to be a primarily African American demonstration created deep divisions within tribal communities. The National Congress of American Indians, as well as a number of tribal governments, refused to endorse the Poor People's Campaign. Although Vine Deloria understood the Indian participants' anger and reasons for being there, he questioned their tactics. "The temptation to be militant overcomes the necessity to be nationalistic," he later wrote in *Custer Died for Your Sins*. "Anyone can get into the headlines by making wild threats and militant statements. It takes a lot of hard work to raise an entire group to a new conception of themselves. And that is the difference between the nationalists and the militants."⁴⁴

Mel Thom did not see it this way. On May 1, 1968, Thom—a participant in the American Indian Chicago Conference, a student in the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, a founding member of the National Indian Youth Council, and director of the Walker River Paiute Community Action Program—stood as one with a multiracial delegation of the poor called the Committee of One Hundred as it met face-to-face with members from President Lyndon Johnson's cabinet. In an impassioned speech delivered before representatives from the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Thom spoke of poverty as a product of internal colonialism. "There is no way to improve

upon racism, immorality and colonialism; it can only be done away with," he railed. "The system and power structure serving Indian peoples is a sickness which has grown to epidemic proportions. The Indian system is sick. Paternalism is the virus, and the Secretary of the Interior is the carrier..."⁴⁵

By drawing analogies between Indians and others, and particularly by locating the struggle of Native people squarely in the context of decolonization, Mel Thom followed in the tradition of D'Arcy McNickle, Sol Tax, Robert K. Thomas, and even Vine Deloria Jr., though he came to a different conclusion. As he wove together issues regarding race, poverty, identity, and power, he made a demand not only for self-determination but also for national liberation. The time for talking was over. "The day is coming when we're gonna move," he warned during a second encounter with government officials, this time representatives from the Office of Economic Opportunity. "And when we move, like I said, watch out!"⁴⁶ As Mel Thom hammered his fist against a table, he offered an accurate premonition of things to come. Later that summer, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, members of an embattled urban community formed an organization they eventually called the American Indian Movement, and in California a small contingent of college students launched an abortive attempt to occupy and lay claim to Alcatraz Island as Indian land (see table 4). The rest, as they say, is history.⁴⁷

This analysis of the Workshop on American Indian Affairs, American Indian Chicago Conference, War on Poverty, and Poor People's Campaign illuminates several new dimensions of American Indian politics and activism during the 1960s. It shows how a generation of Indians and non-Indians situated themselves and the struggle for tribal self-determination in the context of domestic controversies involving race, class, and war, as well as global concerns over the rights of indigenous peoples and the Cold War. But talking the language of the larger world, no matter how conceptually powerful it proved to be, did not necessarily produce results—for it was one thing to speak, another to be heard, and still something different to be understood. Indeed, as Mel Thom stood in solidarity with the Committee of One Hundred, he had reached the point of exasperation for the very reason that Indian people had been listened to but not understood. Despite drawing analogies and assiduously pointing out parallels, the dominant society simply could not or would not make the translation. It is a problem that continues to this day.

Notes

1. Robert Bee, "Tribal Leadership in the War on Poverty: A Case Study," *Social Science Quarterly* 50 (December 1969): 676–686; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United*

States Government and the American Indian, 2 vols. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 1087–1109; Kenneth Philp, ed., *Indian Self-Rule: First-Hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers, 1988; Logan: Utah State University, 1995), 186–259; Päivi Hoikkala, "Mothers and Community Builders: Salt River Pima and Maricopa Women in Community Action," in *Negotiators of Change: Historical Perspectives on Native American Women*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 1995), 213–234; George Pierre Castile, *To Show Heart: Native American Self-Determination and Federal Indian Policy, 1960–1975* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998); Daniel Cobb, "Philosophy of an Indian War: Indian Community Action in the Johnson Administration's War on Indian Poverty, 1964–1968," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 22, no. 2 (1998): 71–103; Thomas Clarkin, *Federal Indian Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, 1961–1969* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000); and Daniel Cobb, "Us Indians understand the basics': Oklahoma Indians and the Politics of Community Action, 1964–1970," *Western Historical Quarterly* XXXIII (Spring 2002): 41–66.

2. Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996); Troy Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-Determination and the Rise of Indian Activism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); and Troy Johnson, Joane Nagel, and Duane Champagne, eds., *American Indian Activism: Alcatraz to the Longest Walk* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

3. Vine Deloria Jr., interview by author, tape recording, Golden, CO, October 18, 2001. The quote regarding "resurgent nationalism" is from Stan Steiner, *The New Indians* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1968), 44.

4. For examples of the earlier generation's rhetoric, see Frederick Hoxie, ed., *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001).

5. Daniel Cobb, "Indian Politics in Cold War America: Parallel and Contradiction," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* LXVII (Winter 2006): 392–419; and Paul Rosier, "They Are Ancestral Homelands': Race, Place, and Politics in Cold War Native America," *Journal of American History* 92 (March 2006): 1300–1326. For an extended discussion of the ethnocentric underpinnings of ideas such as modernization and development, see Michael Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

6. D'Arcy McNickle, *They Came Here First: The Epic of the American Indian* (1949; New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 284; and Frederick Hoxie, "Thinking like an Indian': Exploring American Indian Views of American History," *Reviews in American History* 29, no. 1 (2001): 9. Also see Dorothy Parker, *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

7. For more on Robert K. Thomas, see Steve Pavlik, ed., *A Good Cherokee, A Good Anthropologist: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Thomas* (Los Angeles: UCLA American Indian Studies Center, 1998).

8. "Carnegie Cross-Cultural Education Project-Miscellaneous" folder, Sol Tax Papers, NAES College Archives, Chicago. Seventh Annual Workshop on Indian Affairs Brochure, folder 195, box 23, and Staff Meeting, June 16, 1962, folder 211, box 24, McNickle Papers; Education for Leadership, p. 3, "Topical Files—American Indian Development, Sept. 1960–May 1962" folder, Robert Reitz Papers, NAES College Archives, Chicago. See also Robert Thomas, "Colonialism: Classic and Internal," *New University Thought* 4, no. 4 (1966–1967): 37–44.

9. Bob Thomas to Clyde Warrior, n.d., folder 31, box 3, National Indian Youth Council Papers, Center for Southwest Research, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. See also Rolland Harry Wright, "The American Indian College Student: A Study in Marginality" (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 1972), 20–21.

10. Students read works by Ruth Benedict, Karl Mannheim, Dorothy Lee, Everett and Helen Hughes, George Simmel, David Riesman, Robert Redfield, Bob Thomas, D'Arcy McNickle, Felix Cohen, and others. Workshop on American Indian Affairs 1963 Report, pp. 6–9, "AID Subject File Reports" folder, box 25, Helen L. Peterson Papers, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Suitland, MD.

11. Workshop on American Indian Affairs 1962 Report, pp. 6–7, 16, "Topical-Education-Summer Workshops-1962" folder, Reitz Papers; Workshop on American Indian Affairs, July 26, 1962, Final Examination, folder 211, box 24, D'Arcy McNickle Papers, The Newberry Library, Chicago; Gloria Keliiaa, untitled essay, "Workshops 1962 Student Papers 2" folder, and Georgianna Webster, untitled essay, and Ona White Wing, untitled essay, "Workshops 1962 Student Papers 4" folder, box 29; Workshop on American Indian Affairs 1963 Report, "AID Subject File Reports" folder, box 25, Peterson Papers; and Lenore LaMere, untitled essay, July 24, 1962, "Topical-Education-Summer Workshops-1962 Student Papers" folder, Reitz Papers.

12. Quoted in Parker, *Singing an Indian Song*, 196.

13. Frank Dukepoo essay, July 16, 1962, "Workshops 1962 Student Papers 1" folder, box 29, series 19, Peterson Papers.

14. Clyde Warrior essay on *Where Peoples Meet*, "Workshops 1962 Student Papers 4" folder, box 29, series 19, Peterson Papers.

15. Bruce Wilkie essay, "Workshops 1962 Student Papers 4" folder, box 29, series 18, Peterson Papers.

16. Sandy Johnson, "Final Conclusions," "Workshops, 1964 Miscellaneous Student Papers and Exams 2" folder, box 30, Peterson Papers.

17. I thank Denise Howard, a student in my 2005 senior seminar on American Indian politics and activism at Miami University, for compiling a complete list of workshop students, making this follow-up research possible.

18. American Indian Chicago Conference, "Declaration of Indian Purpose: The Voice of the American Indian" (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961), 4–5, 7, 16–18, 19, 20.

19. Earl Boyd Pierce (Cherokee), May 6, 1967, vol. 17, Doris Duke Oral History Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman. The copy of *Masters of Deception* is held by the Cherokee National Archives in Tahlequah, OK. For more on how anticommunism shaped Indian politics at the local level, see Daniel Cobb, "Devils in Disguise: The Carnegie Project, the Cherokee Nation, & the 1960s," *American Indian Quarterly*, 31, no. 3 (2007): 201–237.

20. *Five Civilized Tribes* refers to the Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole nations.

21. Report of the Meeting of the Inter-tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes, Muskogee, OK, January 11, 1961, 10:00 a.m., pp. 20–21, folder 36, box 82, Alice Marriott Collection, Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma, Norman.

22. Nancy Lurie to Alice Marriott, 3 March 1961, "Ma... (cont'd)" folder, box 8, series III, American Indian Charter Convention Records, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Suitland, MD.

23. Roy Stewart, "Indian Charter Groups Merit Long Look," *Daily Oklahoman*, April 2, 1961, A3.
24. Nancy Lurie to Sol Tax, 16 February 1961, "N. O. Lurie, Jan-Feb 1961" folder, box 8, and Nancy Lurie to D'Arcy McNickle, 22 February 1961, "D'Arcy McNickle" folder, box 9, series III, Records of the American Indian Charter Convention, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Suitland, MD.
25. Nancy Lurie to Alice Marriott, 3 March 1961, "Ma...(cont'd)" folder, box 8, and Nancy Lurie to D'Arcy McNickle, 22 February 1961, "D'Arcy McNickle" folder, box 9, series III, AICC Records. For Pierce's correspondence, see Earl Boyd Pierce to Nancy Lurie, 18 February 1961, Earl Boyd Pierce to Nancy Lurie, 20 February 1961, Earl Boyd Pierce to Nancy Lurie, 21 February 1961, and Earl Boyd Pierce to Nancy O. Lurie, 6 March 1961, "P general" folder, box 9, series III, AICC Records.
26. Alice Marriott and Carol Rachlin to Sol Tax, 9 April 1961, and Agenda for Meeting of the Inter-tribal Council of the Five Civilized Tribes of Oklahoma to Be Held at Muskogee, Oklahoma, District Court Room, Federal Building, April 12, 1961, 9:45 a.m., folder 36, box 82, Marriott Collection; D'Arcy McNickle to Sol Tax, 31 March 1961, "D'Arcy McNickle" folder, box 9, and Nancy Lurie to Alice Marriott, 3 March 1961, "Ma-(cont'd)" folder, box 8, series III, AICC Records.
27. Nancy Lurie, "The Voice of the American Indian: Report on the American Indian Chicago Conference," *Current Anthropology* 2 (December 1961): 495; and Nancy Lurie, "Sol Tax and Tribal Sovereignty," *Human Organization* 58, no. 1 (1999): 112, 114.
28. AICC, "Declaration of Indian Purpose," inside front cover; Clarkin, *Federal Indian Policy*, 80.
29. John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 154.
30. James J. Wilson, interview by author, tape recording, Rapid City, SD, 7 October 2001; and Deloria interview, 18 October 2001.
31. Susan Abrams Beck, "The Limits of Presidential Activism: Lyndon Johnson and the Implementation of the Community Action Program," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27 (Summer 1987): 547-548, 553-555; Michael Gillette, ed., *Launching the War on Poverty: An Oral History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 143; and Robert Alan Bauman, "Race, Class, and Political Power: The Implementation of the War on Poverty in Los Angeles" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1998), 76-79, 139-167.
32. James J. Wilson, interview by author, tape recording, Rapid City, SD, 5 October 2001; Forrest Gerard, interview by author, tape recording, Albuquerque, NM, 30 May 2002; and Vine Deloria Jr., interview by author, tape recording, Golden, CO, 19 October 2001.
33. Sargent Shriver, "Tribal Choice in War on Poverty: Rubber Stamp or Communal Decision?" *Journal of American Indian Education* 5 (January 1966): 8-13, quotes at pp. 12 and 8.
34. Deloria interview, 19 October 2001.
35. Deloria interview, 19 October 2001.
36. Murray L. Wax to Vine Deloria Jr., 29 April 1966, and Vine Deloria Jr. to Murray L. Wax, 2 May 1966, in author's possession. I would like to thank Murray Wax for giving me these and many other letters.
37. Deloria interview, 19 October 2001; and Deloria interview, 18 October 2001.

38. Deloria interview, 18 October 2001. See also Joe Herrerra to delegates of NCAI, n.d.; Vine Deloria to All Indian Tribes, n.d.; and Remarks of Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall at his Bureau of Indian Affairs Conference, Santa Fe, New Mexico, April 14, 1966, p. 2, "1966 NCAI Santa Fe Conference" folder, box 20, Earl Boyd Pierce Collection, Cherokee National Archives, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK. I have also drawn from Donald Janson, "Indian Bureau Parley Rebuffs Tribes," *New York Times*, April 14, 1966, reprinted in *NCAI Sentinel* 11 (Spring 1966).

39. For first quotation, see Janson, "Indian Bureau Parley Rebuffs Tribes." The second quotation is from Deloria interview, 18 October 2001.

40. Editorial, *NCAI Sentinel* 11 (Summer 1966).

41. *The Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, 1968-1969*, book 1 (Washington DC: GPO, 1970), 336.

42. Joseph H. Carter to James R. Jones, 28 February 1968, "EX IN Indian 3/1/68-9/30/68" folder, box 1, EX IN Indian Affairs, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX.

43. "Poor Marchers Besiege Supreme Court," *Washington Post*, May 30, 1968, A1, A12; and "Five Supreme Court Windows Smashed," *The Evening Star* (Washington DC), May 29, 1968, A1, A3.

44. Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969; New York: Avon Books, 1970), 270.

45. "Statements of Demands for Rights of the Poor Presented to Agencies of the US Government by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Its Committee of 100, 29-30 April and 1 May 1968" attached to Ralph Abernathy to Congressman Harris, n.d., folder 30 [1 of 3], box 48, Carl Albert General Collection, Carl Albert Center for Congressional Research and Studies, University of Oklahoma, Norman. On the Poor People's Campaign generally, see Robert Chase, "Class Resurrection: The Poor People's Campaign of 1968 and Resurrection City," *Essays in History* 40 (1998): 8, 10, 14-16, 20.

46. Poor People's Campaign, tape 381.238, Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Research Room, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD. Robert K. Thomas also predicted that the nationalistic youth movement would lead to violence.

47. Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 1-17, 127-136.