

DIALOGUE

a journal of mormon thought

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CONTENTS

SPECIAL ISSUE: MORMONISM AND INDIGENEITY

ARTICLES AND ESSAYS

Racial Categories: Indigenous Australians and Mormonism, 1850s to Present	<i>Brenton Griffin</i>	1
Finding Agency in Captivity: Resistance, Co-optation, and Replication Among Indentured Indians, 1847–1900	<i>Matthew Garrett</i>	33
The Lamanite Dilemma: Mormonism and Indigeneity	<i>Monika Brown Crowfoot</i>	57
Rubik's Palimpsest: Searching for My Indigeneity	<i>Daniel Glenn Call</i>	65
Diné Doctor: A Latter-day Saint Story of Healing	<i>Farina King</i>	81
To Be Native American—And Mormon	<i>Lacey A. Harris</i>	87

ROUNDTABLE

<i>Latter-day Saint Indigenous Perspectives on Columbus</i>		
Introduction		101
The Complications of Columbus and Indigeneity at BYU	<i>Farina King</i>	105
I Am Giving Columbus No More of My Time	<i>Roni Jo Draper</i>	109
Considering the Next Generation of Indigenous Children	<i>Sarah Newcomb</i>	111
Efforts to Change the Culture of Columbus Day	<i>Darren Parry</i>	113
Columbus Day and the “Rest of the Story”	<i>Eva Bighorse</i>	114
Time to Let Go of Columbus	<i>James Singer</i>	117
When Unnecessary Overinterpretation of Scripture Hurts, It Must Cease	<i>Brian D. King</i>	119

POETRY

Lacing	<i>Tacey M. Atsitty</i>	123
Candy Dish Sonnet	<i>Tacey M. Atsitty</i>	124

FICTION

Tatau	<i>Lehua Parker</i>	125
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BOOK REVIEWS

- Brigham Young Wanted Every Thing
From the Indians *Corey Smallcanyon* 129
Will Bagley, ed., *The Whites Want Every Thing:
Indian-Mormon Relations, 1847–1877*
- Unerasing Shoshone Testaments of Survival,
Faith, and Hope *Farina King* 134
Darren Parry, *The Bear River Massacre*
- On Truth-Telling and Positionalities *Roni Jo Draper* 138
P. Jane Hafen and Brenden W. Rensink, eds.,
Essays on American Indian and Mormon History
- An Excellent Historiography into
the Complexities of Mexican Mormondom *Brittany Romanello* 143
Elisa Eastwood Pulido, *The Spiritual Evolution
of Margarito Bautista: Mexican Mormon
Evangelizer, Polygamist Dissident, and
Utopian Founder, 1878–1961*
- Heavy Lifting on Broken Ground *Michael Austin* 148
Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman,
Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon
- A Book of Verbs is Something to Hear *Jake Johnson* 156
Michael Hicks, *Spencer Kimball's Record
Collection: Essays on Mormon Music*
- “Babbling on toward Ephemeral Patterns” *Jonathon Penny* 160
Patrick Madden, *Disparates*
- Call to Action: Hope of Nature *Mette Ivie Harrison* 165
George B. Handley, *The Hope of Nature*
- Delightful Futuristic Mormon Morality Tale
Offers Teaching Tool for Progressive Parents *Christopher C. Smith* 168
Matt Page, *Future Day Saints:
Welcome to the New Zion*
- Poetry as Ceremony *Michael P. Taylor* 171
Tacey M. Atsitty, *Rain Scald*
- FROM THE PULPIT
- Jesus Christ, Esq. *Jason R Steffen* 175

RACIAL CATEGORIES: INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS AND MORMONISM, 1850s TO PRESENT

Brenton Griffin

In February 2008, then prime minister of Australia Kevin Rudd stood before the nation and apologised to Indigenous Australians, people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, for the so-called “Stolen Generations.”¹ These infamous eugenicist policies of forced removal and institutionalisation, in existence from the early to late twentieth century, aimed to eradicate and later assimilate Australia’s native populations.² As a result of these programs, Indigenous families and communities were gravely fractured, and decades of intergenerational trauma has followed, compounded by subsequent government policies.³ Within this speech, Prime Minister Rudd retold the life story of Lorna “Nanna Nungala” Fejo, a Warumungu woman from the Northern

1. *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (Commonwealth of Australia, 1997); Doris Kartinyeri, *Kick The Tin* (North Melbourne, Victoria: Spinifex Press, 2000).

2. Peter Read, “Reflecting on the Stolen Generations,” *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 8, no. 13 (July/Aug. 2014): 3–6; Noah Riseman, “The Stolen Veteran: Institutionalisation, Military Service, and the Stolen Generations,” *Aboriginal History* 35 (2011): 57–77.

3. Katelyn Barney and Elizabeth MacKinlay, “‘Singing Trauma Trails’: Songs of the Stolen Generations in Indigenous Australia,” *Music and Politics* 4, no. 2 (2010): 1–25; Dylan Lino, “Monetary Compensation and the Stolen Generations: A Critique of the Federal Labor Government’s Position,” *Australian Indigenous Law Review* 14, no. 1 (2010): 18–34; Ngitji Ngitji Mona Tur, *Cicada Dreaming* (Adelaide, South Australia: Hyde Park Press, 2010).

Territory.⁴ Lorna Fejo was torn from her family as a toddler, but later in life became an activist, health worker, and respected elder within her community.⁵ What was not acknowledged in the prime minister's address, however, was that Fejo was a long-committed member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.⁶

Baptised in 1973, not long after a significant change in Church doctrine and policy, Fejo's story represents a new era of LDS engagement with Indigenous Australians in the second half of the twentieth century. In response to the National Apology, the Australian Mormon Newsroom published a story about Fejo and her tireless work in the realm of Indigenous activism and health, for which she has received numerous awards.⁷ This article described Fejo's emphasis on "keeping [families] together . . . and that love is passed down the generations," as well as her forgiveness of the Aboriginal stockman who participated in her forced removal when she was four years old.⁸ That Fejo, who instructed the prime minister on his National Apology, is also a Latter-day Saint is an example of the place Indigenous Australians have within both Oceanic and global Latter-day Saint history.

4. Darren Coyne, "Waiting for an Apology: Hundreds Will Put Pressure on Rudd to Keep Promise," *Koori Mail*, Jan. 16, 2008, 1, available at <https://aiatsis.gov.au/collection/featured-collections/koori-mail>.

5. Lorna Fejo, "The Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture Program," *Aboriginal and Islander Health Worker Journal* 18, no. 6 (November/December 1994): 16; Lorna Tennant, "Women and Land Rights: Kiuk and Wagaidj Women in the Darwin Area," in *We Are Bosses Ourselves: The Status and Role of Aboriginal Women Today*, edited by Fay Gale (Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1983), 84–86.

6. "Mormon Grandmother Helps Australian Prime Minister Say 'Sorry,'" *Mormon Newsroom*, Apr. 8, 2008, Canberra, Australia, available at <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/mormon-grandmother-helps-australian-prime-minister-say--sorry->.

7. "Mormon Grandmother Helps Australian Prime Minister Say 'Sorry.'"

8. "Mormon Grandmother Helps Australian Prime Minister Say 'Sorry.'"

This article will examine the complicated status of Indigenous Australians within Mormonism, particularly in relation to the racialised doctrines of the Church, from the 1850s to the present. Throughout most of Mormonism's history, Indigenous Australians occupied an ambiguous place in Latter-day Saint theologies of race and lineage. This stands in stark contrast to other Indigenous groups throughout the world, particularly within the Pacific and the Americas, whose ethnic identity has been cosmologically deliberated since the nineteenth century.⁹ From here, this article will argue that throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Latter-day Saint missionaries largely avoided preaching to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and Church leaders prioritised the conversion of non-Indigenous Australians. Due to perceived physical similarities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those of African descent, Church leaders initially believed that Indigenous Australians were under a divine curse, seriously limiting missionary engagement with these populations.

In 1964, the First Presidency wrote to the Australasian mission president and deemed Indigenous Australians to be “not of the Negroid Race.”¹⁰ This theological ruling stated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander converts were eligible for priesthood ordination. Following the First Presidency's 1964 letter, and the missionary efforts that prompted its ruling, the Australian Church has experienced growth

9. Hokulani K. Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai'i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Bruce A. Chadwick and Thomas Garrow, “Native Americans,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, edited by Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992): 981–85; John-Charles Duffy, “The Use of ‘Lamanite’ in Official LDS Discourse,” *Journal of Mormon History* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2008): 118–67.

10. Leonidas DeVon Mecham and Janet Frame Mecham, comps., *Book of Remembrance: Australia LDS Missions, 1840 to 1976*, 57–58. (A special thank you to Cecily Watson for supplying the photographs of this source from her mother Marjorie Newton's collection of sources.)

in the number of both Indigenous and Australian converts. There are two important stories about this outcome. First, the ambiguous racial lineages within Mormonism continue to be important for making sense of Indigenous identity within LDS cosmology. Second, for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Mormonism presents a way to address intergenerational trauma through its genealogical programs, particularly in relation to the twentieth-century eugenicist programs of the Australian government. As shall be explored, there is evidence of a synthesis between the doctrines, scriptures, and institutions of the Church and contemporary Indigenous issues. This is as the Church's vast genealogical resources have helped to reconnect families shattered through the oppressive imperialism of the Australian government. Many Indigenous Australians see Mormonism as uniquely equipped to help address the trauma caused by Australia's complicated history of racialised colonialism and violence.

The historical arc traced here shows how the incremental reception of peripheral ethnic minorities in the Church complicates historical narratives of racialised doctrines and institutions within Mormon history. As the Australian example shows, it was not just the civil rights movement in the United States or expanding missionary work in the African diaspora, especially Brazil, that prompted Church leaders to reimagine racial categories, including reassessing the scope of the priesthood ban, but also continued growth amongst Indigenous groups throughout Oceania, including Fiji and Australia.

Race in Latter-day Saint Teaching

In order to understand the place of Indigenous Australians within the Church, it is important to first briefly contextualise the complexity of race within Mormon doctrines and history. In regards to theology, this includes the historical belief that African peoples, due to their lineage, had inherited both the "curse of Cain" and the "curse of Ham," separate

but interrelated afflictions of supposed divine disfavour.¹¹ In Latter-day Saint cosmology, the former curse, named after the son of the biblical Adam, was apparently evidenced by dark complexion, whilst the latter was based upon the scriptural cursing of Ham, the son of Noah.¹² Latter-day Saint doctrinaires have referred to Genesis 9, in which Noah curses his grandson Canaan, the son of Ham, to be the “servant of servants.”¹³ Moreover, the LDS Book of Abraham narrates Ham’s marriage to the Canaanite woman Egyptus, for which his progeny was cursed with not being able to receive the priesthood.¹⁴ These particular scriptures, as well as others, have been used in Latter-day Saint theology as justification for the Church’s historical support of slavery and segregation, both within the United States and globally.¹⁵ Moreover, they have been used as the canonical basis for the Church’s barring of African peoples

11. For more detailed information regarding race, scripture, and blood in Mormon thought, see: Newell Bringhurst and Darron T. Smith, eds., *Black and Mormon* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); Matthew L. Harris and Newell G. Bringhurst, eds., *The Mormon Church and Blacks: A Documentary History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015); Armand L. Mauss, “The Fading of Pharaoh’s Curse: The Decline and Fall of the Priesthood Ban Against Blacks in the Mormon Church,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 14, no. 3 (Fall 1981): 10–45.

12. Fred C. Collier, comp. and ed., *The Teachings of President Brigham Young, Vol. 3, 1852–1854* (Salt Lake City: Collier’s Publishing Co., 1987), 49.

13. Genesis 9:20–27.

14. Letter from Joseph Smith, Jr. to Oliver Cowdrey, *Latter-day Saints Messenger and Advocate* 2, no. 7 (April 1836): 290; Abraham 1.

15. Harris and Bringhurst, *The Mormon Church and Blacks*, 27; Lester E. Bush Jr., “Mormonism’s Negro Doctrine: An Historical Overview,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1973): 14; Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1958), 107–08; G. D. Watt, comp., *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 10 (London: Daniel H. Wells Publisher), 251.

from the priesthood and temple for much of the Church's existence.¹⁶ However, in June 1978, the First Presidency announced in general conference that all racial restrictions on the priesthood and temple had been removed.¹⁷ As a result, there was radical institutional change that allowed members of African descent to receive priesthood and temple ordinances, as well as opened up missions in geographic areas where the Church had not formally proselyted.

There has been burgeoning academic literature over the past few decades in relation to Mormonism's racialised theology and the effects it has had on the development of the worldwide Church. For example, Armand Mauss, in his 2003 book *All Abraham's Children*, explores the evolution of the Church's racialised doctrines, cosmology, and institutions over the last two centuries. Mauss succinctly contextualises the religious milieu of the Church within the broader cultural environment in which it formed and developed. Similarly, W. Paul Reeve's 2015 book *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* notes the consistent tensions between Mormon and broader American identity. For instance, due to the Church's history of mass emigration, polygamy, and its cosmological view of Native Americans, Reeve argues that Mormons were seen by broader American society as a "pariah race."¹⁸ He posits that as Mormonism grappled with this identity crisis, it began to expand and entrench the belief that Latter-day Saints were a theologically and racially "chosen people."¹⁹

16. D. Dmitri Hurlbut, "The LDS Church and the Problem of Race: Mormonism in Nigeria, 1946–1978," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 51, no. 1 (2018): 1–4; Mauss, "The Fading of Pharaoh's Curse," 11–15.

17. Official Declaration 2, available at <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/od/2?lang=eng>.

18. W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 24–34.

19. Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 40.

Likewise, Max Mueller's 2017 book *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* investigates the scriptural-based racial hierarchies that existed within Mormonism from its inception in 1830. As with Mauss and Reeve, Mueller argues that Latter-day Saint doctrines were not created within a vacuum but instead were the result of and reaction to an increasingly varied American, and worldwide, culture. However, along with these overarching histories of Mormonism, identity, and race, there is also a vast, nuanced literature that examines unique aspects of these complicated themes. For example, there is scholarship that discusses the adaptation of Mormon cosmology, rituals, and racial hierarchies within Oceania, Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas, the Caribbean, and the Indian subcontinent.²⁰ Although local distinctions exist, there is general consensus amongst scholars that the Church has a multifaceted history with racial theology and identity throughout the world.

20. See, for example: Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land*; Hokulani K. Aikau, "Indigeneity in the Diaspora: The Case of Native Hawaiians at Iosepa, Utah," *American Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (Sept. 2010): 477–500; Booker T. Alston, "The Cumorah Baseball Club: Mormon Missionaries and Baseball in South Africa," *Journal of Mormon History* 40, no. 3 (2014): 93–126; Jennifer Huss Basquiat, "Embodied Mormonism: Performance, Vodou, and the LDS Faith in Haiti," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 37, no. 4 (2004): 1–34; Chiung Hwang Chen, "In Taiwan But Not of Taiwan: Challenges of the LDS Church in the Wake of the Indigenous Movement," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 3–31; Mark L. Grover, "The Mormon Priesthood Revelation and the São Paulo, Brazil Temple," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 23, no. 1 (1990): 39–52; J. B. Haws, "The Freeze and the Thaw: The LDS Church and State of Ghana in the 1980s," in *The Worldwide Church: Mormonism as a Global Religion*, edited by Michael A. Goodman and Mauro Properzi (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2016), 21–41; Hurlbut, "Mormonism in Nigeria, 1946–1978"; Shinji Takagi, *The Trek East: Mormonism Meets Japan, 1901–1968* (Draper, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2016); Taunalyn Rutherford, Joe Chelladurai, and Vinna Chintaram, "Race and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in India," *Mormon Studies Review* 7 (2020): 52–60.

Indigenous Australians in Early LDS Racial Thought

Of significance to the contextualisation of Indigenous Australians' ambiguous place in Mormonism was the conscientious pivot by mid-nineteenth-century missionaries to proselyte actively amongst various Indigenous groups in the Pacific. This began with the *Māohi* (Native Tahitians) in 1844 before spreading to the *Kanak Maoli* (Native Hawaiians) by 1851.²¹ As part of this emphasis, a cosmological connection was made between Oceanic peoples and Mormon theology, wherein they were believed to be related to the peoples mentioned in the Book of Mormon descending from a character named Hagoth, who sailed away never to be heard from again.²² Hokulani Aikau and Ian Barber, amongst others, have noted that there is continual ambiguity as to whether Pacific Islanders are classified as Lamanites or Nephites, though in the popular imagination there remains a connection between Polynesian racial origin and Latter-day Saint scripture.²³ This has permeated into

21. R. Lanier Britsch, *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-day Saints in the Pacific* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 4, 96–97.

22. Alma 63:5–8; R. Lanier Britsch, “Maori Traditions and the Mormon Church,” *New Era*, June 1981, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1981/06/maori-traditions-and-the-mormon-church?lang=eng>.

23. For more detailed discussions about race, scripture, and Latter-day Saint theology within the Pacific, see: Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land*; Ian Barber, “Between Biculturalism and Assimilation: The Changing Place of Maori Culture in the Twentieth-Century New Zealand Mormon Church,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 9, no. 2 (1995): 142–69; Ian G. Barber, “Matakite, Mormon Conversions, and Māori-Israelite Identity Work in Colonial New Zealand,” *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 3 (July 2015): 167–220; Selwyn Katene, ed., *Turning the Hearts of the Children: Early Māori Leaders in the Mormon Church* (Wellington, New Zealand: Steele Roberts Publishing, 2014); Marjorie Newton, *Tiki and Temple: The Mormon Mission in New Zealand, 1854–1958* (Draper, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2012); Grant Underwood, “Mormonism, the Maori and Cultural Authenticity,” *Journal of Pacific History* 35, no. 2 (2000): 133–46; Grant Underwood, ed., *Pioneers in the Pacific: Memory, History and Cultural Identity among the Latter-day Saints* (Provo: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2005).

the modern day, as Hokulani Aikau makes clear in her book *A Chosen People, A Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai'i*: “within the Church framework Polynesians are understood as being ‘cousins’ to Native Americans and thus descended from one of the Lost Tribes of Israel.”²⁴

However, Indigenous Australians have been excluded from this Book of Mormon racial genealogy, ostensibly due to perceived similarities to African peoples. By the early twentieth century, Church leaders posited that Indigenous Australians and African peoples were racially linked. However, this reflected the wider racialisation of Indigenous Australians in Western pseudoscience and religions, which equated appearance to assumed heritage, character, and abilities.²⁵ For example, throughout much of the twentieth century, British-Australian racial theorists generally suggested that Indigenous Australians were of African descent, and Aboriginal peoples were referred to as “Australnegers” in German anthropology.²⁶ This almost-universal conflation was the basis for the exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the theological developments that cosmologically associated Pacific Islander ethnic identity with Latter-day Saint scriptures.

Nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint missionaries were the first of their faith to describe Indigenous Australians and provided the early racial analysis in their religious idiom. Their impressions of Indigenous Australians tended to be racist, condescending, and dismissive. For example, in 1854, John Murdock, who was assigned to preach in

24. Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land*, 42

25. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 209–10.

26. It is important to note that there was a wide variety in nineteenth-century racial thought and pseudoscientific theories. For discussions on this, please see: Antje Kühnast, “Theorising Race and Evolution: German *Anthropologie*’s Utilisation of Australian Aboriginal Skeletal Remains During the Long Nineteenth Century” (PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2017), 149–55; Kay Anderson and Colin Perrin, “How Race Became Everything: Australia and Polygenism,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 5 (2008): 972–73.

Sydney, compared the native peoples of Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas in a report of his proselyting efforts:

New Zealand, 1600 miles from this [Sydney] with much population, of both Europeans, and Native, the latter industrious, and intelligent, the young can talk, read, and write the English; But the natives on this Isle are more indolent than the American Indians. On Vandeman's [Tasmania] there is none, for they have been all removed by the English.²⁷

However, there is little evidence that Murdock had any contact with Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, as he was solely focused on the British-Australian colonies.²⁸ The other journals and autobiography of John Murdock contain no further references to Indigenous Australians, nor do the journals of William Hyde and John Warren Norton, both of whom served missions in various Australian cities during the nineteenth century.²⁹

Like these early missionaries, for the most part of the next century Latter-day Saints ignored Indigenous Australians. The available historical reports and records of the Australasian missions between 1895 and the 1950s do not indicate any references to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, bar two exceptions.³⁰ The first is a 1912 photograph in

27. John Murdock, Journal and autobiography, circa 1830–1867, Church History Library, MS 1194, p. 104, available at <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record?id=e8018e8a-058f-4a05-844b-357b250c1d0d&view=browse>.

28. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 209.

29. Murdock, Journal and autobiography; John Warren Norton, Missionary journal, 1857–1858, Church History Library, MS 14686, available at <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=886cd34a-fe2b-456e-81aa-276ff5c98ad1&crate=0&index=0>; William Hyde, William Hyde diary, 1852–1854, Church History Library, MS 9358, available at <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=1f609865-6fe1-48c2-a862-59d3a82df19a&crate=0&index=0>.

30. Australia Sydney South Mission manuscript history and historical reports, 1895–1970; volume 1, Church History Library, LR 108712, p. 168, available at: <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=aa192eba-317a-4186-a89f-d7a12be39916&crate=0&index=0>.

the first volume of *Australasian Mission History* showing three missionaries with two Aboriginal men, one of them labelled the “king of their tribe,” all of whom are holding boomerangs.³¹ As this source contains no further information or reference, it is arguable, then, that Indigenous Australians, whilst known to missionaries and ecclesiastical leaders, were seen as “exotic” but not viewed as serious targets for proselytisation. It should be noted, however, that only the first volume of this record is open to research; there are three additional volumes, as well as numerous sources from various Australian missions, but these are restricted in the Church’s archives. Further examination of currently unavailable sources may reveal additional information.

In the second, Joseph B. Gunnell, who served in the Australian Mission from 1922–24, wrote a description of the “White Australia Policy,” which denied immigration to anyone not of Northern European descent from the early 1900s until the 1950s. He wrote, “No negroes, Japanese, Chinese, or Indians are allowed to live in Australia. It is called white Australia. Soon after Australia was discovered, the natives lived on reservations like our Indians do here.”³² This racially restrictive policy was first eased to attract Southern European workers in the post–World War II period, before allowing Pacific Islanders and Middle Easterners entrance into the country from the 1970s.³³ Gunnell’s

31. Australia Sydney South Mission, 168.

32. Joseph B. Gunnell, Missionary journal, Church History Library, MS 20462, available at <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=247db0e7-f2dd-448d-a0b8-f6a6fa8f5eb8&crate=0&index=0>.

33. Margaret Allen, “Shadow Letters and the ‘Karnana’ Letter: Indians Negotiate the White Australia Policy, 1901–21,” *Life Writing* 8, no. 2 (2011): 190–91; Anne Barton, “Going White: Claiming a Racialised Identity through the White Australia Policy,” *Indigenous Law Bulletin* 7, no. 23 (2011): 17; Paul Hamer, “‘Unsophisticated and Unsited’: Australian Barriers to Pacific Islander Immigration from New Zealand,” *Political Science* 66, no. 2 (Dec. 2014): 100–04; Gabriella Haynes, “Colouring In: Defining White Australia’s Internal Frontiers,” *Agora* 49, no. 2 (June 2014): 5–7.

brief summary again stands as an extremely rare discussion of race in Australia in LDS sources.

This lack of discussion about Indigenous Australians may have a number of plausible explanations. These silences in the records may reveal the lack of contact that many early Latter-day Saint missionaries had with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as their priority to preach to ethnically British and European Australians. Historian Marjorie Newton posits that this was largely due to what is termed the “tyranny of distance”: during much of the Church’s existence in Australia, it was immensely difficult for missionaries to travel beyond major cities and towns.³⁴ This was compounded by the fact that the main urban centres of Australia are far removed from each other and it was difficult to maintain enough communication to establish branches of the Church.³⁵ John Murdock’s journals indicate the accuracy of Newton’s arguments, as he wrote of the disappointment that nineteenth-century missionaries experienced as they were not able to travel “without purse or scrip.”³⁶ The American custom of welcoming itinerant preachers into homes was not part of the Australian cultural milieu.

Besides distance, the small number of LDS missionaries in Australia also contributed to the lack of significant contacts. Clarence H. Tingey, who served in Australia as a young missionary in 1917 before becoming mission president, explained in a 1973 interview that the largest issue facing the growth of the Church in Australia was resistance from the government. Tingey reminisced that during his time as a younger missionary, the Australian government had ruled that no more than ten missionaries could enter the country at a time.³⁷ Although the

34. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 159.

35. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 178–85.

36. John Murdock, *Journal and autobiography*, 101.

37. Clarence H. Tingey interview, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1973, Church History Library, OH 133, p. 16, available at <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record?id=6f4277ff-24de-4d67-9a01-5a5b6dalc078&view=browse>.

number was doubled under Tingey's time as mission president, this was still a small contingent of missionaries for such a vast continent. As a result, Australia has always had relatively low conversions. Whilst tens of thousands left Britain and Europe for Utah in the nineteenth century, fewer than a thousand left Australia during the same period.³⁸ Even after the end of the Latter-day Saint migrations, the Church in Australia remained small, particularly in contrast to the rest of the Pacific, which saw a boom of conversions in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century.³⁹

The meagre efforts at proselytising in Australia encountered further limitations to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The perpetual marginalisation of Indigenous Australians was rooted in systemic measures, both geographically and ideologically.⁴⁰ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were predominantly situated either within the interior of the continent or on distant coastal islands, far removed from urban centres. Even the significant numbers of Indigenous Australians who lived in major cities and towns from the eighteenth century were closely monitored by various government

38. John Devitry-Smith, "The Wreck of the *Julia Ann*," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (Apr. 1989): 6–7; Ann Lazarsfeld-Jensen, "The Lost Tribes of Mansfield: How An English Market Town Was Won by the Mormons in Mid-Victorian Times," *Culture and Religion* 17, no. 2 (2016): 148–61; Marjorie Newton, "The Gathering of the Australian Saints in the 1850s," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (Apr. 1987): 9.

39. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 174.

40. Harry Blagg, Neil Morgan, Chris Cunneen, and Anna Ferrante, *Systemic Racism as a Factor in the Over-Representation of Aboriginal People in the Victorian Criminal Justice System*, (Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission, September 2005); Beverley Raphael, Patricia Swan, and Nada Martinek, "Intergenerational Aspects of Trauma for Australian Aboriginal People," in *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*, edited by Yael Danieli (Boston: Springer Publishers, 1998), 327–28.

agencies.⁴¹ There were legislative bans that barred many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from housing within urban centres, and restrictions on movement, marriage, and employment were enforced.⁴² As a result, many Indigenous Australians remained on the periphery of Australian society until the mid-twentieth century, as most lived on missions, reserves, and rural townships, and those who lived in urban centres were under government restraints.

But geography and access alone cannot fully explain the lack of contact. As noted above, LDS leaders also engaged in racialised thinking in regards to Indigenous Australians, and thus they were subject to the same exclusions from full participation as those of African descent. For example, in 1921, Hugh Cannon reported at the end of David O. McKay's apostolic world tour that "Church members in Australia are all white, practically no work being done among the Aborigines."⁴³ This open admittance is important, as it reveals that Church leaders were not oblivious to the fact that missionary work had not been done amongst Australia's First Peoples.

The lack of missionary work between 1850 and 1950 was not entirely passive but rather the result of LDS racial teachings at the time. In 1938, a missionary reported about an Aboriginal family in Bundaberg, Queensland:

Mrs. Grace and her family have asked for baptism but from orders we have received from the president of the mission they are not anxious to

41. Kay Anderson and Jane M. Jacobs, "From Urban Aborigines to Aboriginality and the City: One Path Through the History of Australian Cultural Geography," *Australian Geographical Studies* [now *Geographical Research*] 35, no. 1 (1997): 12–22.

42. Fay Gale and Alison Brookman, *Urban Aborigines*, Aborigines in Australian Society, vol. 8 (Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Australian National University Press, 1972).

43. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 210.

have them come into the Church. Apostle Smith and Rufus K. Hardy [who were touring the mission at the time] also told us . . . they are of the Negro race.⁴⁴

It is apparent that this Aboriginal family was explicitly barred from baptism, despite the fact that it was not policy throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to deny African people baptism or confirmation into the Church.⁴⁵ However, it appears there were informal prohibitions at work, even if they were not official Church policy. Nevertheless, this source does highlight the fact that the Church hierarchy perceived Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be cosmologically linked to African people.

Racial Recategorisation and New Missions

With these racial genealogies linking Indigenous Australians to Africa, the LDS map of available missionary work was constrained for the first century of LDS presence on the continent. In the second half of the twentieth century, these racial categorisations underwent significant changes. By the 1950s, non-LDS racial theorists had started to make distinctions between Australia's native ethnic groups and recategorise them. Anthropologists began to emphasise an interconnectedness between Torres Strait Islanders and other Pacific peoples.⁴⁶ This development was mirrored by ambiguous government classifications of

44. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 210.

45. Bruce R. McConkie, ed., *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, vol. 2 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Publishing, 1954), 55–56; Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 265.

46. Anderson and Perrin, "How Race Became Everything," 973; Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press, 2002).

Torres Strait Islanders as Polynesian and Pacific Islanders for a time.⁴⁷ These racial recategorisations were characteristic of the post-WWII era in LDS thought. Ian Barber points out that Native Fijians were considered “not of the Negroid races” and granted full Church privileges in 1958.⁴⁸ A new racial map was emerging in LDS thought that would transform how ecclesiastical leaders distinguished between various ethnicities, even if previously perceived as connected.

These new categorisations connected some Indigenous Australians to the Pacific rather than to Africa and may have influenced the Church to send a small group of missionaries to Thursday Island, in the Torres Strait, in 1961.⁴⁹ These efforts led to some success for the Church.⁵⁰ Fred E. Woods, in his article “Making Friends Down Under,” claims that although missionaries were at first treated with suspicion by Torres Strait Islander communities and at times were called “white witch doctors,” acceptance was quickly forthcoming.⁵¹ According to Woods, the first convert to the Church on Thursday Island was May Tatipata, who belonged to a Muslim family; she was baptised on May 5, 1961.⁵² Moreover, in 1962, the local newspaper *Torres News* reported

47. Anna Shnukal, “Torres Strait Islanders,” in *Multicultural Queensland 2001: 100 Years, 100 Communities, A Century of Contributions*, edited by Maximilian Brändle (Brisbane: Multicultural Affairs Queensland, Department of the Premier and the Cabinet, 2001), 4.

48. Ian Barber, “Faith Across Cultures: Research on Mormonism in Oceania,” *Mormon Studies Review* 6 (2019): 64.

49. Fred E. Woods, “Making Friends Down Under: The Beginnings of LDS Missionary Work on Thursday Island, Queensland, Australia, 1961,” *Mormon Historical Studies* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 106–07, 123n61.

50. Shnukal, “Torres Strait Islanders,” 11.

51. Woods, “Making Friends Down Under,” 121n48.

52. Woods, “Making Friends Down Under,” 123n61.

that subsequent Mormon missionaries were received with traditional dances before they began to proselyte.⁵³

Previous scholarship on changes to LDS teachings on race have understandably focused on the civil rights politics in the United States.⁵⁴ Other studies have pointed to pressures on missionary work in Brazil and Africa as a context for changing LDS teachings on race and priesthood.⁵⁵ However, it is significant that in places like Australia, more incremental changes to LDS racial hierarchies and lineages were remaking LDS racial boundaries, setting in motion precedents to the revelation ending the connection between race and priesthood completely. These missionary efforts amongst the newly recategorised Torres Islanders may have prompted mission president Morgan Coombs to inquire to senior leaders about priesthood ordination, long unavailable for Indigenous Australians. Newton argues that by this time, there were also other Aboriginal individuals and families who had joined the Church, particularly those who had been adopted by European-Australian families during the tumultuous years of the Stolen Generations.⁵⁶

Coombs wrote to the First Presidency on November 28, 1963 seeking guidance on the question. In 1964, the First Presidency responded, setting new policy based on racial categories.⁵⁷ This letter reads in full:

Dear President Coombs, since receiving your letter of November 28, 1963, we have given some consideration to the question therein raised:

53. "Four Mormons Visit the Island," *Torres News*, Thursday Island, Queensland, May 1, 1962, 12, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/255802411>.

54. Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 218–20.

55. Grover, "The Mormon Priesthood Revelation and the São Paulo, Brazil Temple," 39–53.

56. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 210.

57. Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 94.

namely, the advisability of conferring the priesthood upon people in Australia of aboriginal blood who have joined the Church. We are pleased to give our consent to the conferring of the priesthood upon such of these brethren as may otherwise be worthy, in the event that there is no definite evidence that they have Negroid blood. Signed David O. McKay, Hugh B. Brown, and N. Eldon Tanner.⁵⁸

The letter signalled new approaches to Indigenous Australians and authorised full membership privileges to them. The key to this change was in separating them from “Negroid blood,” though the letter itself did not opine on the racial origins or genealogy of the First Peoples at all. No further context or explanation for the 1964 letter is mentioned in Coombs’s 1974 interview with Charles Ursenbach.⁵⁹

Few sources exist from this period, but one sheds some light on the practices of LDS missionaries in response to this letter. The childhood memoir of multi-award-winning Wiradjuri author Kerry Reed-Gilbert, *The Cherry Picker’s Daughter*, describes her Mormon baptism in 1966, in the central New South Wales township of Leeton, roughly six hundred kilometres (four hundred miles) inland from Sydney. She reminisces:

We’re going to Church again, but this time, it’s the Mormons. We go to them for about six months while we’re in Leeton, this time doing the oranges. . . . Mummy makes ‘em a cup of Milo every time they come and visit. They’re not allowed to drink tea or coffee so it’s Milo instead. We’ve all gotta have it when they’re here. . . .

We go to Church and put our money in the tin, but sometimes it’s hard to do that; we need the money, too. We do it, anyway. . . . The Mormons baptise us all and cousin Billy, too, in the Murrumbidgee River, which is just right for us ‘cause we’re river people.

The Christening takes place five days after my tenth birthday: 29th October 1966. We all gotta dress in white, then they take us out in the

58. Mecham and Mecham, *Book of Remembrance*, 57–58; Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 210.

59. Morgan S. Coombs interview, Mar. 30, 1974, Salt Lake City, Utah, Church History Library, OH 192, available at <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/assets?id=03533c5d-190e-4249-a46c-1d7454f61894&crate=0&index=0>.

water and dunk us under. I come up spluttering as they hold you down so the water goes up your nose. We have a big barbeque in the park when it's over.

Reed-Gilbert's baptism was in 1966, only two years after the approval for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to receive the priesthood. The reminiscence does not include any discussion of whether the men in the family were ordained to the priesthood, nor how long the family remained connected to the Church, but the precise dating of the memory makes it especially useful to shed light on fresh conversions of Indigenous Australians during this period in the immediate wake of the Church's new racial categories.

Unofficial LDS Racial Classification

The 1964 letter authorizing priesthood ordination for Indigenous Australians who were not of African descent did not explain where these peoples fit into LDS racial cosmology. The lack of affirmative classification in the 1964 First Presidency letter meant that other Latter-day Saints set their task to establishing racial genealogies. There are a number of sources that explore the cosmological place of Indigenous Australians within Mormonism. At least one famous Church writer, W. Cleon Skousen, touched on the subject in his 1973 book *Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Volume 3*. As this book was written after the 1964 letter to President Coombs but five years before the 1978 revelation on priesthood and race, it is an immensely useful source to contextualise the development of the place Indigenous Australians have within the racialised hierarchies of Mormonism. In this book, Skousen first chronicles the canonical migration of the Book of Mormon figure Hagoth and his followers into Polynesia. Following this exegesis, Skousen writes two pages regarding Indigenous Australians and Fijian peoples:

As the Polynesians drift west, they began to mix with other peoples coming east. Some of these were of much darker skin than the Polynesians and the question arose as to whether there would be any of

these who would come under the restrictions of Priesthood service because of their lineage. The President of the Church ruled that the dark-skinned aborigines of Australia and the Fiji Islanders were not under the restriction. At the time this ran contrary to the conclusions of anthropologists who considered both of these people to be of the Negroid extraction.⁶⁰

Skousen then quotes early-twentieth-century Anglo-Maori anthropologist, doctor, and museum director Sir Peter Buck/Te Rangi Hiroa, arguing that “Australian aborigines” are “Dravidian stock” and “not Negroids” but rather related to Mediterranean peoples. Skousen then offers his own commentary:

It should be noted that the Dravidians were the first settlers in India after the Great Flood, and were later driven south by the Aryan races who followed them. The dark brown Dravidians were looked down upon by the Aryans. They may have very well occupied a status in the early period similar to the role of the Lamanites in America after the division of Lehi’s descendants. Dravidians often have light brown hair in their youth and medium brown skin, but exposure to the elements often turns them as black as the Negroid peoples as they mature.

The Fiji islanders have some characteristics which anthropologists have identified with the oceanic Negroid migrations, but they, too, will turn out to be Dravidians or some similar racial origin mixed with the Polynesians. Meanwhile, they are not encumbered by Priesthood restrictions which, of course, indicates something about their descent.⁶¹

Despite his emphasis on racialised physical characteristics, Skousen’s teachings were not an aberration but reflected one effort at integrating Indigenous Australians into LDS racial categories. In this period, Indigenous Australians were assigned a feasible, unofficial place within Latter-day Saint cosmology that separated them from African people. The native inhabitants of Australia and Fiji were not considered

60. W. Cleon Skousen, *Treasures from the Book of Mormon, Volume 3: Alma 30 – 3 Nephi 7* (Utah: Verity Publishers, 1973), 149.

61. Skousen, *Treasures from the Book of Mormon*, 149.

by Skousen as part of the Book of Mormon's Hagoth mythology of the Pacific Islanders either. Instead, Skousen argued that they were the descendants of a people who may have "occupied a status . . . similar to the role of Lamanites" to the Aryan races in Europe, central Asia, and India, which for him thus explained their priesthood eligibility. In the 1980s, at least some other American Latter-day Saints believed that Indigenous Australians, as well as "South Sea Island natives," i.e., those from Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and New Caledonia, were descended from Book of Mormon peoples.⁶² The options remained open in part because of a lack of any official explanation, and the intense interest in racial categorisation LDS members held in this era.

Contemporary LDS Racial Categorisation

Before 1978, the stakes of racial categorisation and an accurate racial cosmology were vital because of the restrictions placed on LDS members of African descent. Discerning the cosmological origins of various ethnicities was a key interpretive goal in the racial mapping of the Church in order to maintain racial hierarchies. After 1978, however, when Spencer W. Kimball announced a revelation ending priesthood restrictions based on race, the stakes were different. Establishing racial connections was no longer relevant to missionary work, baptisms, or priesthood ordination. However, the cultural need to explain where Indigenous Australians fit into the LDS sacred past, from the biblical myths and Book of Mormon accounts, fuelled further speculation even after 1978.

Some sources shed light on the popular imaginations about racial lineage, increasingly coming from Indigenous members of the Church themselves. At a weeklong gathering in 1994 in which Indigenous

62. Richard Broome and Corinne Manning, *A Man of All Tribes: The Life of Alick Jackomos* (Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006), 273.

Australians from across the continent attended daily temple sessions in Sydney (the only temple in Australia at the time), Indigenous members “completed ordinances for the whole of the Larrakee [Larrakia] Tribe in the Northern Territory.”⁶³ In addition to temple worship, these members participated in cultural events, held a testimony meeting, and joined one another in dance. During the activities, some members reflected on their racial identities and their connection to LDS teachings about racial origins. Wiradjuri woman Donna Ballangarry, who resided in Liverpool, Sydney, was quoted as saying:

The Aboriginal people have always been a deeply spiritual people . . . and the Church provides an opportunity for us to express that spirituality. Our dreamtime legend says that the Aboriginal people came to Australia from the waters the same way Lehi sailed to the promised land, and that’s one reason why we find it so easy to accept the Book of Mormon.⁶⁴

This reading into and assertion of Indigenous histories within the silences of Latter-day Saint cosmology is important to note, as is the synthesis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and Mormonism. It is evident from this quote that Ballangarry was able to utilise the scriptures and official theology of the Church in order to understand and contextualise her own Aboriginal heritage.

These kinds of speculations revealed a continued interest in the importance of racial genealogy to LDS thought, long after priesthood restrictions remained a relevant factor. At a special fireside held in the

63. Amanda Meyer, “Aborigines Gather for Temple Work, Meetings,” *Church News Archives*, Feb. 5, 1994, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/archives/1994-02-05/aborigines-gather-for-temple-work-meetings-140721>; Amanda Meyer, “Aborigines Gather for Temple Work, Meetings,” *Deseret News*, Feb. 5, 1994, <https://www.deseret.com/1994/2/5/20766557/aborigines-gather-for-temple-work-meetings>.

64. Meyer, “Aborigines Gather for Temple Work.”

Parramatta meetinghouse this same week, Elder Lowell D. Wood of the Seventy and First Counsellor in the Pacific Area Presidency, “reassured . . . Aboriginal Latter-day Saints that they are from the house of Israel.”⁶⁵ Elder Wood’s assertion did not clarify whether it was in relation to a literal descendancy, as is claimed about Pacific Islanders and Native Americans, or if this is a reference to the doctrine of “adoption” into the house of Israel through Church ordinances.⁶⁶

The ambiguity of these claims and of Indigenous Australian lineage remains unresolved throughout LDS culture. Matthew Harris’s 2018 article “Mormons and Lineage: The Complicated History of Blacks and Patriarchal Blessings” examines the way that LDS patriarchs (local leaders charged with giving once-in-a-lifetime “blessings” for LDS members that are written down and kept with personal records) identify the sacred lineages of individuals. Such lineages are meant to describe which “tribe” of the house of Israel a member belongs to, with attendant duties and blessings, and this becomes an occasion for continued LDS racial theorizing in popular and official venues. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members are included in Harris’s list of ethnic minorities for whom local patriarchs throughout the Church have struggled to pronounce lineage, as well as “African Americans, Black Africans, Black Fijians . . . and Philippine Negritos.”⁶⁷ Such ambiguities preoccupy some Latter-day Saints because of the way that racial genealogies remain important in LDS thought, calling for a need to answer the question.

65. Meyer, “Aborigines Gather for Temple Work.”

66. Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, 34–35.

67. Matthew L. Harris, “Mormons and Lineage: The Complicated History of Blacks and Patriarchal Blessings, 1830–2018,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 51, no. 3 (2018): 100; D. Newell Williams, Douglas A. Foster, and Paul M. Blowers, eds., *The Stone-Campbell Movement: A Global History* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2013), 16, 109–13.

Indigenous Representation in LDS Publications

Racial categories, however, are playing a smaller role in the representation of Indigenous Australians in LDS thought. Since the 1980s, there has been a growing number of articles published by official organs of the Church that contain important perspectives from Indigenous Australians.⁶⁸ As these are published by the Church, it is important to briefly highlight the limitations of these sources. Most evident is the way in which (presumably non-Indigenous) writers and editors obfuscate and diminish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, beliefs, and customs in their zeal to express the positive nature of the Church.⁶⁹ Similarly, as the purpose of these sources is to provide “faith-promoting” content, there is a tendency to sanitise contemporary Indigenous struggles within a homiletic framework. Moreover, a number of authors comment on the fact that those they write about are “full-blooded aborigines.”⁷⁰ This demarcation of Indigeneity has connotations within the context of forced removal and assimilation;

68. Tracy Matenga, “Torn Apart in This Life, United for Eternity in the Next,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2019, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2019/03/aus-eng-local-pages/local-news-003?lang=eng>.

69. See, for example: Grace Madsen Pratt, “People of the Dreamtime,” *Friend*, Sept. 1981, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/friend/1981/08/people-of-the-dreamtime?lang=eng>; Robert G. Moodie, “Missionary Work in the Central Australian ‘Outback,’” *Ensign*, Feb. 1982, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1982/02/news-of-the-church/missionary-work-in-the-central-australian-outback?lang=eng>; Marianne Walters, “Aboriginal Ancestors Left Few Traces,” *Church News Archives*, Mar. 19, 1988, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/archives/1988-03-19/aboriginal-ancestors-left-few-traces-153536>.

70. Colin Robert Nilsen, “To Do My Best,” *New Era*, Oct. 1994, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/new-era/1994/10/to-do-my-best?lang=eng>; Moodie, “Missionary Work in the Central Australian ‘Outback.’”

for much of Australia's history, these definitions maintained various racialised hierarchies with accompanying political restrictions.⁷¹

Church publications tend to focus on human-interest stories or celebrations of the accomplishments of Indigenous members of the Church. The October 1994 edition of the *New Era* contains an interview with Colin Robert Nilsen, an Aboriginal man from Queensland who served his mission in the "immigrant areas" of Western Sydney in the early 1990s.⁷² Although he faced some racial abuse due to being Indigenous, Nilsen stated: "Every time I knocked on a door, people were a bit surprised because they thought Mormon missionaries were mostly white Americans and white Australians. They had never seen an Aboriginal LDS missionary before."⁷³ The story celebrated diversity and inclusion in LDS culture.

Other publications promoted the achievements of LDS members, emphasising their faithfulness in the Church as a part of their success. In 2000, Lorna Fejo, mentioned in the beginning of this article, received an award for her program "Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture." The *Australian Church News* (LDS) published a brief article about her accomplishments. The author lauded Fejo's work in helping domestic violence victims, lowering infant mortality rates, and improving general health amongst Indigenous communities. The story concludes with a quote from Fejo: "I have to carry the Book of Mormon in my handbag," she said. "I have to read it everyday."⁷⁴ Moreover, in 2001, Bangerang Latter-day Saint Eddie Kneebone, a renowned lecturer, writer, and activist, received the Catholic Pax Christi

71. David Hollinsworth, "Discourses on Aboriginality and the Politics of Identity in Urban Australia," *Oceania* 63, no. 2 (Dec. 1992): 137.

72. Nilsen, "To Do My Best."

73. Nilsen, "To Do My Best."

74. Sarah Jane Weaver, "Service to Aboriginal Women Lauded," *Church News Archives*, Mar. 30, 2000, <https://www.thechurchnews.com/archives/2000-04-01/service-to-aboriginal-women-lauded-119885>.

International Peace Prize.⁷⁵ In response, the Church published an account of his accomplishments:

Brother Kneebone has lectured about Aboriginal culture, history, and art to young Australians, seeking to promote social awareness and acceptance between people of different backgrounds. He also writes extensively on Aboriginal culture to assist in the education of public service workers and those involved in health care, police services, and the army.⁷⁶

Although brief, these sources explore the actions of Indigenous Australian Mormons, who have been recognised for their contributions to social work, health, academia, and cultural reconciliation.

Besides these narratives about accomplishment and personal interest, Indigenous Australian Latter-day Saints have also expressed the ways in which the eugenicist programs of the Australian government ruptured families of the Stolen Generations, and how the Church and its resources helped them amend these wrongs. The Church has published some of these stories, including one by Aboriginal woman Tracy Matenga in the March 2019 “Australia Local Pages” of the *Ensign*. This source explores Matenga’s own struggles with the Stolen Generations and how the Church has assisted her in dealing with Australia’s violent colonialism. Born to a “young Aboriginal girl who lived in the dormitory system” but adopted by a European-Australian Latter-day Saint family, Matenga describes a spiritual experience she had as an adult:

Without warning, a vision opened to me. I saw an Aboriginal woman standing in front of me. Three small children were clinging to her dress as they wept. The mother wept also as a man in a blue uniform came

75. “Eddie ‘Kookaburra’ Kneebone: An Educator Who Inspired through His Art,” *Aboriginal Victoria*, <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/eddie-kookaburra-kneebone>.

76. “In the Spotlight: Australian Member Wins International Peace Prize,” *Ensign*, Mar. 2002, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/2002/03/news-of-the-church/in-the-spotlight?lang=eng>.

into view and began pulling the children away from her. The mother and her children were screaming and crying, and then suddenly, they disappeared. I began to cry uncontrollably at the scene that I had just beheld. . . .

I researched my family history and found one of the children from the vision. She was now an elderly woman. I discovered that she had in fact been taken from her mother, along with her brother and sister, as a result of the assimilation policy. My heart ached for her as it did for all my people who were “lost” in the spirit world.

Doing this work was hard and at times it felt like no progress was being made. . . . [Eventually] a woman named Mrs. Howell, who had spent decades researching and recording Indigenous family history . . . told me that she had a gift for me, her original list of approximately 3,000 indigenous families, and their records. . . . She made me promise to do all I could to help my people with their genealogy. I spent the next 15 years actively keeping that promise and making use of that list and files that went with it. This miracle was one of countless miracles I encountered on my journey.

In 2016, after Mrs. Howell had passed away, I called her husband about the files as I was working with another Aboriginal family on their genealogy. I was shocked to discover that he had donated four trailer loads of the files to the local university, who had passed it on to the local library. I knew that neither organisation had any idea how sacred these files were and was terrified of what might become of them. . . . They were being kept in a dark basement in the library, as this was not a family history library and they didn't have much use for the files.

My father . . . knew the landscape and the history of the area and warned me that flooding was imminent. The months that followed were filled with regular phone calls to the library, desperate warnings of flooding, and a plea to remove the files from the basement and into the care of the Church. Tropical Cyclone Debbie hit in March 2017. Parts of the town were submerged under 11.6 metres of murky floodwaters.

As the flood waters rose, I waited, helpless. I prayed desperately for Heavenly Father to protect the files. It took three weeks for me to get through to the library. I felt sick as I asked the librarian about the files. She reassured me that all the files had been pulled from the basement and thrown onto the second floor just moments before the flood waters

had entered the basement. When I heard those words the relief in my heart was immense. Perhaps the intensity of my relief was because it was not only my relief that I was feeling, but the relief of thousands of individuals desperate to be found.

The Indigenous family files have now been digitised and are currently in paper form and on memory sticks. Once tribal elders have cleared any privacy concerns and given permission, the public will have access.

Australia's Indigenous people on the other side wait with hope that hidden treasures of family history that were thought lost or forgotten will be found, preserved, protected, and shared with our people. . . . This is God's work; he wants us to succeed and he *will* help us if we do all we can. Awaken the heritage within you.⁷⁷

Such stories of LDS adoption of Indigenous children are not uncommon.⁷⁸ There are a number of themes and ideas that can be gleaned from this important source. Firstly, from the perspective of some Indigenous members, the Church's vast collection of family histories and genealogical technologies has been able to connect them to a past that has been shattered by violent colonialism. Additionally, it shows how the intergenerational traumas associated with Australia's violent colonialism are viewed by Indigenous Australian Mormons through the doctrines, rituals, and scriptures of the Church. The Church's emphasis on the family, forgiveness, and reconnection with ancestors are central.

Matenga's story illustrates a broad role that the Church may play in contemporary Indigenous interests. Various state governments throughout Australia have contracted the Church to digitise the official records of South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and New South Wales.⁷⁹ However, this process has been scrutinised by a number of

77. Matenga, "Torn Apart in This Life."

78. Newton, *Southern Cross Saints*, 210.

79. "Why Does the Mormon Church Want State Records? And What Do They Do with Them?" *ABC Radio Adelaide*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-07-05/why-does-the-mormon-church-want-state-records/9943288>.

journalists who discovered that zealous members had performed temple ordinances by proxy for a number of famous Australians without the permission of their living descendants.⁸⁰ Included in this list were early-twentieth-century Tasmanian Aboriginal activist Truganini and Australia's first Indigenous federal parliamentarian, Neville Bonner, who was elected to represent Queensland in 1971.⁸¹ Such controversies have been compared to the activities of Church members who performed proxy ordinances for victims of the Holocaust, for which there has been considerable backlash.⁸² Thus, the baptism of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whilst perhaps part of the Church's efforts to grant salvation, has nonetheless been condemned. Nevertheless, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have utilised the Church and its genealogical resources is an important example of the synthesis of Mormonism and contemporary Indigenous issues.

Conclusion

Indigenous Australians have historically held an ambiguous and varied place in the history of Mormonism. This was due to a number

80. Liam Mannix, "Mormon Church Baptising Thousands of Dead Victorians—Atheist or Not," *The Age*, Melbourne, Victoria, Mar. 10, 2017, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/mormon-church-baptising-thousands-of-dead-victorians--atheist-or-not-20170307-gus640.html>; Ben Schneiders, "Menzies, Ned, and the Don: Mormons Baptise Prominent Australians After Death," *Sydney Morning Herald*, Sept. 23, 2018, <https://www.smh.com.au/national/menzies-ned-and-the-don-mormons-baptise-prominent-australians-after-death-20180922-p505ds.html>.

81. Sneider, "Menzies, Ned, and the Don." For a biography of Truganini, see Cassandra Pybus, *Truganini: Journey Through the Apocalypse* (Sydney, New South Wales: Allen and Unwin, 2020).

82. Bernard I. Kouchel, comp., "The Issue of the Mormon Baptisms of Jewish Holocaust Victims and Other Jewish Dead," *JewishGen*, <https://www.jewishgen.org/InfoFiles/ldsagree.html>.

of factors, including Mormonism's scripturally based racial hierarchies, the limitations of early missions, and the marginalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within Australian society. Arguably, these nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Mormon missionaries did not encounter Indigenous Australians, and thus did not report on their eligibility for proselytisation. These silences can be interpreted, moreover, as an emphasis on the Church's desire to preach amongst white Australians. As such, whilst the Church grew slowly within Australia for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was almost exclusively British and European colonists who were sought for conversion. Until the 1960s, Latter-day Saint theological developments and doctrines, as well as a racist cultural milieu within Australia, saw Indigenous Australians marginalised in the Church due to their perceived connection with African peoples. Though it is not necessarily the case that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were actively barred from the Church, these members were denied ordination to the priesthood based on race. Furthermore, there were no efforts to preach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait individuals and communities until the 1960s. By the mid-twentieth century, though, this became problematic, as there were Indigenous Australians who wanted to participate fully in the Church, including those adopted by Latter-day Saint families.

Moreover, as has been argued, developing anthropological ideas and changing government classifications, both within Australia and globally, may have complicated the Church's view of Indigenous Australians. As explored, missionary success in the Torres Strait Islands may have further led the First Presidency to articulate in 1964 the eligibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to receive the priesthood. Thus, it was not only the civil rights movement in the United States or the expansion of missionary work in the African diaspora that led to a reassessment of the scope of the priesthood ban, but also the growth of the Church amongst Indigenous groups in the Pacific, including Australia and Fiji.

In the decades that followed, Indigenous Australians have embraced Mormonism, despite a lack of official scriptural exegesis of their origins in LDS racial cosmology. However, individual members have read between the silences and asserted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories within sacred Church cosmologies. With this, there is evidence of a synthesis of contemporary Indigenous concerns with the doctrines and institutions of the Church by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Latter-day Saints. Most evidently, Indigenous Australian members have been able to utilise the Church's genealogical resources to create a connection with ancestors and heritage that has been ruptured by violent Australian colonialism. This brief history reveals dramatic and subtle reversals in LDS teachings and practice related to indigeneity and a complex and evolving interest in racial genealogies that continue to play multiple roles in LDS lives.

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"Pieces of Me," 16 x 20", oil on linen,
by Kwani Winder, 2019

KWANI POVI WINDER explores her Santa Clara Pueblo Tewa heritage through painting and draws on her religious beliefs when portraying a native figure. Through her paintings, she seeks to preserve, share, and educate about her unique heritage.

FINDING AGENCY IN CAPTIVITY: RESISTANCE, CO-OPTATION, AND REPLICATION AMONG INDENTURED INDIANS, 1847–1900¹

Matthew Garrett

When Mormon settlers entered the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, they brought with them their institutions and attitudes. These included a perception of Native Americans as fallen Israelites who, the Book of Mormon promised, would someday join Mormons in Zion. Latter-day Saints never quite realized those expectations in New York, nor in Ohio, Missouri, or Illinois, and upon entry into the Great Basin, Mormons once again found Indians largely disinterested. Salvation preached by Brigham Young and others had less effect on local Native Americans than the perpetual encroachment on their lands. Despite a theology that foreshadowed cooperation, Mormon–Indian relations remained heated, particularly during the Walker War (1853–54) and Black Hawk War (1865–68). Historian W. Paul Reeve has noted that “the idealistic spiritual vision sometimes suffered” as the “model of

1. *Dialogue* seeks to follow Gregory Younging’s *Elements of Indigenous Style* in its editorial commitment to respecting Indigenous knowledge and scholarship. The author of this piece has requested to deviate from *Dialogue*’s current house style guide, including using the term “Indian” and not capitalizing the term “indigenous,” both of which reflect the school of thought he is presently engaging.

redeemable Lamanites occasionally devolved into unredeemable.”² Nevertheless, Mormons did not fully abandon their theological obligations to their Lamanite brethren, and a myriad of outreach programs emerged, including missions and demonstration farms, most notably the Washakie Colony on the modern-day Utah–Idaho border. Still, the most far-reaching effort to absorb Native American converts often centered not in converting and transforming adults but rather their children.

Between 1847 and 1900, Mormon households absorbed no fewer than four hundred Native American children as part of a clearly manifest policy to redeem Indians from the “thralls of barbarity” or even eminent death at the hands of rival bands. Justifications aside, hundreds of Native American youth found themselves encompassed by white Mormon society. According to a comprehensive index developed by Richard Kitchen and Michael Bennion, half of these captives were under five years old at the time they joined Mormon families, and the remainder effectively ranged from five to ten years old.³ They grew up in a liminal status, not quite Indian and not quite white, and scholars have sparred over their status as slaves, servants, or adopted family members.⁴ Indeed, that unresolved debate is echoed in this article, and for the purposes of this work I use the term “indentured” to refer to

2. W. Paul Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color: Race and the Mormon Struggle for Whiteness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 78.

3. Michael Kay Bennion, “Captivity, Adoption, Marriage, and Identity: Native American Children in Mormon Homes, 1847–1900” (PhD diss., University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2012), 245; Richard D. Kitchen, “Mormon-Indian Relations in Deseret: Intermarriage and Indenture, 1847–1877” (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2002).

4. Brian Q. Cannon, “Adopted or Indentured, 1850–1870: Native Children in Mormon Households,” in *Nearly Everything Imaginable: The Everyday Life of Utah’s Mormon Pioneers*, edited by Ronald W. Walker and Doris R. Dant (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), 341–57; Andrés Reséndez, *The*

these Native Americans as an imperfect compromise title in between loved adoptee and chattel slave. In truth, however, a broad spectrum likely existed.

The presence of indentured Indians in nineteenth-century Mormon society is a well-known secret enjoying a recent revival of interest. Trained scholars and lay historians have related these experiences over the past decades, beginning with work by Juanita Brooks, Kate Carter, and the Daughters of Utah Pioneers.⁵ More recently, Brian Cannon revisited the topic in his 2017 presidential address to the Mormon History Association.⁶ Additionally, genealogically-minded Mormons have long traced lineages that included Native American household members and even celebrated their diverse origins, perhaps in part recognizing the fulfilment of LDS theology regarding the blossoming of the Lamanites; such narratives often emphasize the triumph of civilization evidenced by a portrayal of Native American progenitors as clean, industrious, faithful—as redeemed. Consequently, family memoirs may be more informative of colonial ideology than actual experiences of indentured Indians. There is a temptation to categorize these historical actors in either of two tropes: dupe victims or empowered converts. How should twenty-first-century readers authentically understand the

Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 266–72.

5. Juanita Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 12, nos. 1–2 (1944): 1–48; Kate B. Carter, *Heart Throbs of the West*, 12 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1939–1951); Kate B. Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 20 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958–1977); Kate B. Carter, *Treasures of Pioneer History*, 6 vols. (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers), 1952–1957).

6. Brian Q. Cannon, “‘To Buy Up the Lamanite Children as Fast as They Could’: Indentured Servitude in Nineteenth-Century Mormon Society” (paper presented at Mormon History Association Annual Conference, St. Louis, Mo., June 3, 2017).

experiences of nineteenth-century indentured Indians? This essay seeks to answer that question to some extent by surveying relevant historical models and comparing them against the experiences of indentured Indians to reveal diverse behavior and agency among those people.

Models for Locating Agency

The difficulty in locating agency among long-marginalized people attracted historical attention several decades ago. The postmodern critique revealed hidden power structures and emphasized subtle choices by historical actors to navigate therein, essentially shifting the focus of history from a triumphant saga to a multiplicity of narratives centered on resistance. Foucault, Derrida, and others deconstructed power systems and led scholars to reconsider longstanding assumptions. When fused with nationalistic manifestos from Fanon to Deloria, a new ideological tide jolted the course of scholarship toward the marginalized. Historical works like Emanuel Ringelblum's *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto* and Eugene D. Genovese's *Roll, Jordan, Roll* revealed how subjected people forged their own existence despite oppressive circumstances. The 1985 publication of James C. Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* marked the zenith of the disempowered voice, and in 1990 Scott followed up with a global model of discursive resistance hidden both within and away from "the public transcript."⁷ From that position of

7. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963); Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969); Emanuel Ringelblum, *Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto*, translated by Jacob Sloan (New York: Schocken, 1974); Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); James C. Scott, *Weapons of the*

strength, postcolonial studies advocates drew from subaltern studies to challenge linear historicism, which we see in such works as Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*.⁸

These seismic shifts in historiography parallel the emergence of New Indian History that sought out overlooked sources and perspectives to reconsider the indigenous past. Scholars turned to oral histories and ethnohistory to reconstruct narratives with Native people—their motivations and actions—at the center. Detailed recordkeeping surrounding boarding schools drew that topic to the forefront of study where scholars sought ways to highlight indigenous agency. K. Tsianina Lomawaima's watershed history of Chilocco Indian School argued that “no institution is total, no power is all-seeing” and concluded that Native American students at boarding schools “were not passive consumers of an ideology or lifestyle imparted from above” but rather “actively created an ongoing educational and social process. . . . Indian people made Chilocco their own.”⁹ Deconstructionist theory paired with non-traditional sources enriched Native American history and abrogated longstanding Turnerian frontier narratives that portrayed indigenous peoples as little more than exotic foils in conquest epics. These new works not only put Native Americans at the center but sought to do so through methods that challenged Western hermeneutics.

The triumph of New Indian History centered on the once-marginal, but it also stripped the movement of its unifying feature, academic opposition, and this victory created a bit of a quandary for such

Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985); James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990).

8. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000).

9. K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 164, 167.

practitioners accustomed to challenging the status quo. In the American Historical Association's December 2012 *Perspectives* newsletter, Oxford historian Pekka Hämäläinen pondered on the future of Native American history. He warned that some "fear the field is running out of steam, having exhausted its creative momentum." He further cautioned, "When subfields become new orthodoxies, they tend to stiffen and become reactionary. This is a particular concern for Native American history."¹⁰

While a postcolonial framework is valuable in locating unseen resistance, it also imposes that assumption on the past when it may not exist. It tends to limit the allowable behavior of historical actors to colonizer or resister and obviates the range of subtler attitudes in between. As J. Edward Chamberlin laments, postcolonialism "often fudges the awkward questions." He explains, "It is not all that interested, for example, in the way in which immigrants to the Americas, many of them fleeing colonial regimes of one sort or another, discard their mother tongue in favour of the language . . . of the settler society."¹¹ Postcolonial studies, that is, struggles to articulate anything other than resistance. By virtue of this imposed binary, indigenous people are thereby trapped in a reductionist past that strips them of agency.

This inflexibility points to a second shortcoming of postcolonial studies: even in focusing on marginalized peoples, decolonization perpetuates the binary structure created by the now-defunct master

10. Pekka Hämäläinen, "The Futures of Native American History in the United States," *Perspectives on History* (Dec. 2012), available at <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/december-2012/the-futures-of-native-american-history-in-the-united-states>.

11. J. Edward Chamberlin, "From Hand to Mouth: The Postcolonial Politics of Oral and Written Traditions," in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, edited by Marie Battiste (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), 133.

narrative. Rather than produce a new model for understanding history, it simply reverses the focus of the old. Scott Richard Lyons explains that postcolonial studies “do not deconstruct binaries so much as flip the script” and essentially leave the colonial structure in place by way of *de-* and *post-* prefixes instead of embracing something new.¹² Such an approach validates Chakrabarty’s critique that colonialism reaches beyond physical occupation to extend into discursive power derived from European structural colonization, which lingered well beyond political decolonization. And equally disturbing, this approach tends to descend into lazy essentializing. Homi Bhabha colorfully explains that such works have “roots stuck in the celebratory romance” erected in opposition to the “homogenizing of the historical present.” He argues that “the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence,” not simply declaring opposition to the old.¹³

12. Scott Richard Lyons, *X-Marks: Native Signatures of Assent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 10.

13. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 8–9. To that end, Bhabha proposes a methodological approach intended “to show how historical agency is transformed through the signifying process” and how historical actors engage “a discourse that is somehow beyond [their] control.” Bhabha moves beyond postcolonial binaries to insist on a third space where the two collide, allowing the disempowered to appropriate both occidental and oriental expectations to produce a unique and self-defined identity able to functionally operate in that unbalanced power structure. Similarly, Manuel Castells proposes three types of identity that function much as a Hegelian dialectic wherein the “legitimizing identity” clashes with the “resistance identity” to produce something new from “whatever cultural materials are available to [historical actors]” and which “redefines their position in society.” This phenomenon, he notes, forces the “transformation of the overall social structure.” That is, the seemingly disempowered are not powerless. Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 8.

Despite the valuable advances of postcolonial studies, the practical effort of locating identity and agency in long-overlooked peoples continues today. This is especially difficult in populations who left few records and did not always take a predictable role in resisting the more easily recognized system of power. Women's history has long struggled with the same issue, particularly Mormon women's history. Outside scholars have struggled to understand how LDS women could support polygamy or reject the Equal Rights Amendment, and assumptions of coercive patriarchy diminishes the agency of those women. Marnie Anderson has observed the same phenomenon among Japanese women, whose agency is little understood by those who cannot conceive of their leadership in activism.¹⁴ In either case, the obstacle to agency is that people of the past are not behaving as academics would have them act. A singular story of resistance, and the right kind of resistance, dominates the now-preferred narrative.

The dangers of this myopic vision are the focus of a popular TED talk by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie; she warns of the power exerted by writers who enjoy "the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person." The "single story," she explains, reduces individuals, flattens experience, and "robs people of dignity."¹⁵ Her comments echo the warning of Western History Association president David Edmunds, who in 2007 raised alarm about "academics [who] have urged that scholarship conform to a new orthodoxy defined through the rhetoric

14. Marnie S. Anderson, "Women's Agency and the Historical Record: Reflections on Female Activists in Nineteenth-Century Japan," *Journal of Women's History* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 38–55.

15. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story," TEDGlobal 2009, July 2009, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript?language=en#t-1099236.

of post-colonialism.”¹⁶ To be clear, postcolonial studies adds much to our understanding of marginalized peoples, but this model of resistance cannot overshadow the diversity of lived experiences. We ought to remember Adichie’s injunction: “Show a people as one thing over and over and that is what they become.”

This shortcoming of binary and conflict-ridden assumptions in women’s history led Harvard professor Catherine A. Brekus to outline a new model of agency centered on six tenets. First, it should allow for the “reproduction of social structures as well as the transformation of them.” That is, resistance is not the only intentional response; sometimes historical actors willingly participate in a colonized system. Second, a new model must abandon the “implicit association of agency with freedom and emancipation” because individuals often seek subtler goals. Third, intentionality of ordinary people is relevant. Fourth, agency is relational and actions of one require acquiescence of others, even lesser empowered individuals. Fifth, “agency must be understood on a continuum” because “almost everyone has some degree of agency.” Sixth, “agency is shaped by cultural norms and cultural constraints.” And seventh, we must remember that “agency takes place within structures as well as against them.”¹⁷

What Brekus contributes is an understanding that while social relations may include resistance, even subtle “every day forms of resistance,” they may also include replication and manipulation of social structures by ordinary people. The challenge, then, is to read between the lines and discover how historical actors articulated their agency. Certainly, individuals masked passive resistance in illusions of

16. R. David Edmunds, “Blazing New Trails or Burning Bridges: Native American History Comes of Age,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 14.

17. Catherine A. Brekus, “Mormon Women and the Problem of Historical Agency,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 78–85.

obsequiousness, deference, compliance, or flattery, but so too could those be genuine manifestations of authentic ideological support. We may not be able to delve into the mind of a person who authored no text and is known only by the sanitized and hagiographic presentation of others, but we ought not to assume anything, and the “critical fabulation” now threatening ethnic studies deserves no place in historical narratives.¹⁸

The Mormon–Indian Context

In applying this model to nineteenth-century indentured Indians in Mormon society, an assortment of behaviors gain legitimacy as indicators of agency. Some indeed resisted, and they did so in a multiplicity of ways. Others strove to comply with the all-surrounding culture and advance therein, with mixed success. Despite bumping up against the limits of integration, these Native Americans who found themselves in Mormon communities acted out behaviors that should not be viewed simply as products of colonization or failures to uphold some anticipated response. Rather, as Brekus indicates, they illustrate conscious decisions that must be accepted as their own. But the first step in exploring these potentialities is to examine the context and constraints that produced this unique institution in Utah.

Though eventually interpreted as a means to redeem Indians, Mormons’ entry into the Indian slave trade began with reluctance. The longstanding Spanish slave trade drew indigenous laborers to mines and missions by way of Navajo and Ute middlemen. These equestrian Natives raided deep into Goshute, Paiute, and Shoshone lands and seized captives from rival bands. A lucrative triangle trade developed

18. As defined by its chief advocate, “critical fabulation,” is a self-reflexive device whereby historians “imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done.” Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 11.

between Santa Fe, San Diego, and modern-day northern Mexico. Male captives sold sometimes for double the price of female captives, though the latter could also be useful as domestic workers for Spanish estates.¹⁹ Traveler T. J. Farnham passed through the Southwest and observed, “The New Mexicans capture the Paiutes for slaves; the neighboring Indians do the same, and even the bold and usually high-handed old beaver-hunter sometimes descends from his legitimate behavior among the mountain men streams for this mean traffic.”²⁰ By July of 1847, enslaved people constituted a full third of New Mexico’s twenty thousand recorded residents.²¹

Mormon invasion of the valley escalated the practices as the Saints further strained indigenous resources and thereby exacerbated slave trafficking. Competition for resources promoted Ute raids but also the outright surrender of Paiute children to European traders who offered food and supplies in return. Paiutes and Goshutes faced a hard existence on a dry bleak landscape surviving on a diet of nuts, roots, insects, and small game. Their near-starved condition made them easy prey for mounted raiders and seemingly bountiful traders who acquired children through both coercive and voluntary exchanges.²²

19. Daniel Webster Jones, *Forty Years Among the Indians: A True Yet Thrilling Narrative of the Author’s Experiences Among the Natives* (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1890), 50; LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail: Santa Fe to Los Angeles* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark, 1954), 260.

20. T. J. Farnham, *Life, Adventures, and Travels in California* (New York: Cornish, Lamport & Co., 1852), 377.

21. Sondra Jones, *The Trial of Don Pedro León Luján: The Attack Against Indian Slavery and Mexican Traders in Utah* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000), 48.

22. Stephen P. Van Hoak, “And Who Shall Have the Children? The Indian Slave Trade in the Southern Great Basin, 1800–1865,” *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (1998): 4–6.

The purchase of Native American slaves required Mormons to consider the status of such children; what would be their place in society? In February 1852, the Utah Territory legislature legalized slavery in typical paternalist language. The following month, the legislature passed an Indian-specific law that likewise required that masters provide proper food and clothing but further mandated the education of Indians purchased from captivity and raised in Mormon homes. And unlike the prior law intended for African slaves, the Indian-specific legislation defined Indians as “prisoners” prior to purchase and “indentures” thereafter, contracted for no more than twenty years (effectively released them in young adulthood, as would be an apprentice).²³ Much as other religious groups who sought to “civilize” Native Americans, Mormons hoped this lengthy tenure would allow ample time for sufficient acculturation into American culture. When Governor Brigham Young addressed the legislature, he characterized the policy as “purchasing them into freedom, instead of slavery” that otherwise awaited them in Mexico.²⁴ The difference between these laws suggests a tiered notion of subjected peoples in which Mormons prohibited the integration of African slaves while in theory tolerating or even encouraging the eventual amalgamation of Native Americans. Indeed, the African slavery law outright forbade miscegenation, while no such clause existed for indentured Indians.

Despite a codified receptivity to indigenous people, the status of indentured Indians in Mormon society remained complex. Both Mormon theology and legislation allowed and anticipated their incorporation into LDS communities. However, sporadic violence and

23. *An Act for the Relief of Indian Slaves and Prisoners*, as quoted in L. R. Bailey, *Indian Slave Trade in the Southwest: A Study of Slave-Taking and the Traffic in Indian Captives* (Los Angeles: Westernlore Press, 1966), 209–12.

24. Journal History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, June 9, 1851, microfilm, BYU Archives.

longstanding American ethnocentric biases also shaped Mormon perspectives of Indians and surely minimized cooperative relationships. According to Kitchen and Bennion's index, only a fraction ever enjoyed marriage and fewer still received culturally valued ordinance work (e.g., baptism, temple rites, etc.) extended to Mormons in good standing.²⁵ But to portray indentured Indians in Mormon communities merely as victims, or passively acted upon by external circumstances, underestimates their agency and neglects their own meaningful decisions. Despite restrictions imposed by a power structure largely beyond their control, Native Americans raised in Mormon homes made daily choices about how they would engage that structure. Even those who sought assimilation into Mormon society faced obstacles. In the context of their physical and cultural location, indentured Indians exhibited a variety of ways, ranging from active resistance to sincere adoption and internalization of that system, and even the co-optation and replication of the culture and theology for their own purposes.

Agency Among Indentured Indians in Utah

As one might expect, outright resistance against a power structure emerges as the most recognizable form of agency. In the case of indentured Indians, some simply fled their new captors. One pioneer family recalled that "Susie's sister," purchased at age five, frequently cried for her native home and routinely attempted to escape to a nearby Indian community.²⁶ Paiute Nellie Judd successfully fled after a sibling warned that "the food of the white folks would kill the Indians if they eat it."²⁷ Those who could not escape countered in other ways, using what James

25. Bennion, "Captivity, Adoption, Marriage, and Identity," 252.

26. Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," 46.

27. Mary Minerva Dart Judd Autobiography," typescript. Harold B. Lee Library, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, UT, 28.

C. Scott termed as “everyday forms of resistance.”²⁸ Shem Parkinson survived the Bear River Massacre only to be taken captive by Mormons. Their family memories indicate that the child “pulled a knife on his foster father” until “neighbors restrained him.” The twentieth-century recollection faults “deep-seated hostility the boy felt” toward “white men.”²⁹ Less dramatic resistance surely played out in other ways. Betsy Hancock recalled that her Indian sister intentionally irritated her until it escalated to violence, and ultimately, she ran away.³⁰

Indentured Indians also employed more passive resistance like that described in Eugene Genovese’s work. Wilford Woodruff took custody of a Paiute boy, Sarakeet, at age thirteen. Woodruff recounted that the child exhibited “saucy” moments, stole money, and repeatedly attempted to run away. When sent to cut wood in the nearby grove, the seventeen-year-old failed to return home until a search party located him meandering the canyon. On another occasion, he abandoned his position at the molasses mill, which resulted in significant injury for Woodruff’s five-year-old son.³¹

Even as some indentured Indians sought to resist, openly or covertly, others seemed to adopt Mormon values and strive for normative cultural aspirations. Most dutifully attended school, half received baptism, and just over one-third entered into marriage, most often with a spouse of European descent. Low overall rates of marriage expose exclusionary racial attitudes held by some Mormons but also reflect the

28. Term coined by Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 36.

29. Lester Parkinson Taylor, *Samuel Rose Parkinson: Portrait of a Pioneer* (Provo: Claymont Co., 1977), 70–71.

30. Melva Shurtliff Green, “Betsy Jane Hancock Shurtliff,” in *Chronicles of Courage*, compiled by Lesson Committee (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1990), 56.

31. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journals, 1833–1898* (Midvale, Utah: Garland Publishing, 1976), 6:159, 411–12.

horrific impact of disease, which extinguished half of these indentured Indians by the common age of marriage. Still, the fact that so many entered mixed-race marriages at a rate far above the general Anglo-European population suggests divided attitudes, and treatment surely ranged from repulsion to acceptance to even adoration.³²

Regardless of limitations faced by Indians among Mormons, many embraced their surrounding culture. One family memoir recalls the purchase of Minnie Viroca, whom they “raised as their own.” She received an education, secured steady paid work in domestic services, and mothered four children. Another family record recalls the addition of a young girl, Sylvia, during the Black Hawk War. Her family recalled, “She easily adopted the way of the white man. She was obedient and trustworthy.”³³ Ida Ann Rice, the darling of the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, similarly is recorded as a compliant and industrious woman who developed domestic arts, served others, married a white man, bore children, and dutifully practiced her Mormon faith.³⁴ While we might apply some skepticism to these sources, we cannot simply ignore them.

What are we to make of these Native Americans and their actions: masking, begrudged obsequiousness, pragmatic resignation, or active and sincere conversion? James C. Scott insists that compliant behavior under the watchful eyes of a dominant society should not be understood

32. In Bennion’s impressive study, he found that 45 percent of Indian women married, mostly to European men, but only 28 percent of Indian men married. In his index, women accounted for 86 percent of known marriages. This may reflect a gendered rate of acceptance, the ease of adding peripheral spouses in a polygamous society, or some other fact. Bennion, “Captivity, Adoption, Marriage, and Identity,” 155–56, 245, 247, 251, 252.

33. Carter, *Heart Throbs of the West*, 1:159.

34. Lesson Committee, comp., *Chronicles of Courage*, vol. 5 (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1994), 402. See also Carole Gates Sorensen, *Ida Ann: Beloved Bannock Papoose* (Las Vegas: Copa Publishing, 1997).

to imply “ideological support, even from the most apparently faithful compliance.” Still, “no social context is entirely free from power relations,” and so we are left in a bit of a historical quagmire: how do we determine the mind and intent of past actors?³⁵ Scott might tell us to find the hidden transcript, but without sufficient record produced by these Native Americans, we are left to the family traditions, which are likely skewed by their own motivations. Troubled as these sources may be, they suggest that Brekus’s assertion of intentionality in acquiescence may at times be more appropriate than a postcolonial model of resistance, which is unsubstantiated by the limited sources. Resistance likely occurred in some instances, but it should be conceivable that some indentured Indians might have alternatively chosen to internalize cultural expectation and even perpetuate the system, thereby finding a place for themselves therein.

Other examples more clearly point to the possibility that Native Americans internalized Mormon values and structures. Jacob Hamblin’s adoptive son, Albert, not only converted and labored on his father’s behalf but also expressed unique spiritual experiences. He related visions and dreams of ministering among his own people. Hamblin wrote, “Sometime before his death he had a vision in which he saw himself preaching the gospel to a multitude of people. He believed that this vision would be realized in the world of spirits. He referred to this when he said that he should die before my return home.”³⁶ Paiute Mennorrow, renamed Anna, lived an exemplary Mormon adult life: she attended Relief Society, dutifully conducted genealogy work, and attended the temple. Ironically, this Native American woman even served in the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, suggesting she adopted an

35. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*, 325–26.

36. Carter, *Heart Throbs of the West*, 1:163.

unearned nostalgia perpetuated by that organization.³⁷ Her experience suggests that despite limitations, Native Americans may have enjoyed an ability to participate in and benefit within the cultural constraints.

A Navajo woman named Janet personified an extreme example of how Native Americans might harness LDS power structures to reproduce Mormon social structures. When she rejected a potential suitor, her adoptive parents took issue with her choice. She countered, “There is only one man that I have ever seen that I would like to marry . . . and that man is Dudley Leavitt.” Family lore described Leavitt as “twenty-nine years old, a perfect physical specimen, with a shock of brown hair, clear blue eyes, and a sense of fun.” But Leavitt never considered the young woman in such a way, and he already had three wives, one he had wed only six months prior. Undeterred, Janet’s family turned to apostle George A. Smith, who pressured Leavitt to take Janet as a fourth wife, promising “in the name of the Lord that you will be blessed.” Leavitt capitulated, and Janet secured her preferred mate.³⁸ In this way, young Janet mobilized the power structure for her purposes, turning down one and securing another who seemed unavailable.

Despite Janet’s success, indentured Indians surely faced limitations they could not circumvent. When Tony Tillohash returned home from a stint at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, he revisited his adoptive home intent on courting a childhood acquaintance. He suffered rejection with instruction that he “marry among his own people,” and he did just that.³⁹ Similarly, when Lucy Meeks’s relationship with John McCleve culminated in a pregnancy, he denounced her announcement of their wedding plans as “a cursed lie” and promptly committed suicide

37. Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage*, 1:207–08.

38. Juanita L. Brooks, *Dudley Leavitt, Pioneer to Southern Utah* (1942), 45–47.

39. Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier,” 47.

rather than face the prospect of marrying an Indian.⁴⁰ Lucy Meeks's experience suggests that racism frequently prevented Native Americans from accessing or influencing the Mormon power structures.

The overall low rate of marriage suggests that Native American men and women often struggled to find suitable spouses, and that inability surely took on particular significance in a culture concerned with large families and progeny, and where motherhood largely defined womanhood. Still, as in other ways, Native Americans accessed and employed those values to replicate their version of those ideals. Susie Leavitt, a captive young woman purchased by the aforementioned Janet and Dudley Leavitt, found marriage unavailable in adulthood and bore children out of wedlock. Church authorities summoned her to defend her behavior, where she testified that "I have a right to children." She continued, "No white man will marry me." She explained that she could not return to her tribe, and left in this liminal status she defiantly claimed her rights of womanhood. She concluded, "I have them because I want them. God meant that a woman should have children."⁴¹ Like her adoptive Native American mother, Susie learned to harness shared cultural institutions—in this case motherhood—to her advantage, while simultaneously reproducing it on her own terms: without marriage. The historical record suggests she was, thereafter, accepted within the community. Her example demonstrates how Native American actors not only internalized and adapted Mormon values but possibly also

40. Priddy Meeks (1879–1882) "Journal," BYU Library 1937 Typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Provo, UT., 36; Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," 37. As W. Paul Reeve has illustrated, parallel to Mormon visions of Indian uplift and personal empowerment through marriage to Native Americans, Mormons also knew and at times perhaps even subscribed to the national narrative that viewed such unions as foul symptoms of "racial regression and civilization's decline." Reeve, *Religion of a Different Color*, 86.

41. Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," 45.

tweaked the larger structure to allow for their modification. By claiming an element of Mormon culture through unconventional means, Susie Leavitt challenged the orthodoxy of nineteenth-century Mormons as well as that of twenty-first century scholars who only see shades of resistance without recognizing her embrace of Mormon culture.

Susie's is just one example of how formerly indentured Indians faced rejections and other cultural limitations but also worked to elude them to some degree. Paiute Alma Shock Brown won favor in the community for rescuing white Mormons from Indian depredations, but when his adoptive father remarried, his new stepmother would not tolerate him. He told his father, "I must leave now, but with you I could live forever." Though he found refuge with another family, the repudiation of this grown child by his adoptive father remains heart-wrenching. When Native American Cora Keate's white husband abandoned her, she secured a divorce and steady work in the Silver Reef mining camp for a "very satisfactory salary." There she met and married widower Albert Hartman, who had previously adopted three Indian children.⁴² Though not always successful, Native Americans clearly proved resourceful in maneuvering the cultural constraints of Mormon society.

With that power, limited as it was, Native Americans shaped much of their own experiences. Perhaps Shoshone Frank Warner best exemplifies the height within Mormon society to which such an Indian could rise. At two years old, Warner survived the Bear River Massacre. His adoption provided him an education up through college, he served several missions, served as a bishop, and married twice, both to white Mormon women. While on his mission to the Fort Hall Reservation, he recorded his vigorous efforts—well outside the reach of his adoptive family or culture—to convert reservation-bound Native Americans. His writing exhibits a deep conviction in the Book of Mormon as a literal history of Native Americans. He preached that it chronicled a

42. Carter, *Heart Throbs of the West*, 1: 157, 160.

historic era of “harmony” drowned out in apostasy and a “curse that now follows us as an Indian Race.” To others he preached “of the great blessing” that awaited Native Americans who joined his cause.⁴³

Warner’s devout faith in Mormonism cannot be discarded as mere acquiescence; he, and surely others, embraced LDS theology. And what are we to make of such examples? These historical actors cannot be robbed of their agency and discarded as simply unauthentic to suffice present-day agendas. Just as those who resisted or co-opted Mormon values deserve recognition as genuine, so too do the actions of Warner and others who embraced cultural and theological precepts of Mormonism. Native Americans must be permitted to adopt, integrate, and replicate foreign structures without threat of surrendering some quintessential Indianness. Scott Lyons explains, “indigenous communities are and have always been composed of human beings who possess reason, rationality, individuality, an ability to think and to question, a suspicion toward religious dogma or political authoritarianism, a desire to improve their lot and the futures of their progeny, and a wish to play some part in the larger world. Surely, these characteristics are not the exclusive property of ‘white’ people or the ‘West.’”⁴⁴ And this is why a postcolonial approach centered on binary conflict is moribund; it cannot address the complex operation of cultural adaption in the continuum where humans operate. We may not always understand motives and intentions, and undoubtedly power structures limit choices and shape manifestations, but historians should tread carefully when making assumptions about the motives of past actors.

A final vignette conveys this complexity in not only using but co-opting discursive power structures. One indentured Indian, raised by Mormons from age five, recalled that she did all she could to meet

43. Frank W. Warner, (Missionary Journal Dec. 1914,” MS 14428, LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Accessed June 14, 2017. <https://eadview.lds.org/dcbrowser/000253117/>.

44. Lyons, *X-Marks*, 12–13.

Mormon expectations. "I kept myself clean and careful, and I learned everything I could." However, "When I was grown up, I wanted a man. No white man would marry me." She eventually married a Native man, Jim, and moved in with him and his mother in his Moapa village. Even still, her white acculturation proved troublesome, and Jim's mother frequently pointed out her inadequacies. When her husband sent her to the store for groceries, she earned her mother-in-law's scorn as she also purchased a new pair of corsets and material to sew new dresses. She recalled that "I just couldn't get along without corsets. . . . I had been trained to wear them and my back ached so if I left them off. Besides, I didn't look nice without them." The rigidity of corsets well symbolizes the white culture she had been shaped by, unable to return to Native roots and even preferring the imposed structure and appearance. Her mother-in-law "made such a fuss" that the wife told her husband he must choose between his marriage and his tribe. When he chose the latter, the corset-wearing wife departed. What options remained for a woman too Indian for Mormons and too Mormon for Indians? She considered returning to white society as a domestic worker but worried she might become an "old maid" or bear children out of wedlock. Instead, she relocated to the Santa Clara reservation in search of a spouse.⁴⁵

Empowered as she may have been, her options existed on a limited continuum, constrained at times by an imposed structure that many indentured Indians adopted as their own. She and other Native Americans shared a difficult experience, so much so that one such Native American, Lucy, who seemed to very much embrace Mormonism later concluded that it was a "mistake" to have "ever supposed she could be a white girl." She concluded, "Indian children should be left with their own people where they could be happy; when they were raised in white homes they did not belong anywhere."⁴⁶ The experience of Native

45. Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," 46–47.

46. Brooks, "Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier," 38.

Americans in nineteenth-century white Mormon society is peculiar and diverse, but each had to reconcile inevitable cultural boundaries attached to their observable differences, and yet for most it became the only culture they knew.



Much as these experiences exemplify, Hokulani Aikau's recent study of Mormon Polynesia found that ethnic and religious identities "had been knotted together" in a way too complex to simply decolonize, as she had initially intended. As Aikau explained, "the story is not that simple." She found that indigenous people played an active role in navigating power structures and used their mixed identity as a means to "meet their own cultural, familial, and communal needs."⁴⁷ To restrict victims of settler colonialism to resistance-only foils in the twenty-first century narrative is to colonize them yet again.

Aikau and other scholars are beginning to complicate Mormon–Indian relations in a way that moves beyond simplistic binaries to find how individuals operated within an imbalanced power structure.⁴⁸ This more thoughtful approach is already manifesting in a few works beyond the scope of Mormon–Indian relations and is a much-needed reform in this field.⁴⁹ This article likewise adds to that literature by

47. Hokulani K. Aikau, *A Chosen People, a Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai'i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 185–86.

48. See also Matthew Garrett, *Making Lamanites: Mormons, Native Americans, and the Indian Student Placement Program, 1947–2000* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016).

49. For example, several works on Indigenous religiosity and cultural change in New England stand out as exemplars. See Linford D. Fisher, *The Indian Great Awakening: Religion and the Shaping of Native Cultures in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); and David J. Silverman, *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2010).

way of nineteenth-century Native Americans raised in Mormon homes. In seeking their own self-interests, these youths employed a variety of strategies, which certainly include, but cannot be limited to, resistance. Native American actors must also be permitted to consciously appropriate, recreate, adapt and co-opt, and even embrace and replicate elements of a foreign culture, even when engaged within a framework of colonization. These indentured Indians well exhibited the diverse power dynamics that weighed on each of them, as well as a full spectrum of responses to secure their own self-interests.

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"Diego Naranjo," 8 x 10", oil on board,
by Kwani Winder, 2019

THE LAMANITE DILEMMA: MORMONISM AND INDIGENEITY

Monika Brown Crowfoot

Many times throughout my childhood, I heard various church members or my parents tell me that we had to choose between being Navajo and being Mormon. Our family went to church, prayed, and had family home evening regularly. Church was our culture. I remember talks referencing the Book of Mormon scripture: “For there are many promises which are extended to the Lamanites; for it is because of the traditions of their fathers that caused them to remain in their state of ignorance. . . . And at some period of time they will be brought to believe in his word; and to know the incorrectness of the traditions of their fathers; and many of them will be saved for the Lord will be merciful unto all who call on his name.”¹

We continually receive lessons on love and acceptance at church, and yet racial segregation, racial hierarchy, and plain old racism are still prevalent amongst the whisperings in corners of the chapel bathrooms and at private gatherings, and it slips into Sunday School teachers’ mouths. Maybe it isn’t the “Lamanite” who needs to forsake the incorrect traditions of our forefathers. Maybe it’s the belief in racial hierarchy that we need to forsake. Maybe it’s the idea and labels of “-ites” that we need to abolish.

In 2006, President Gordon B. Hinckley gave a general conference talk condemning racial hatred.² Unfortunately, President Hinckley’s

1. Alma 9:16–17.

2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Need for Greater Kindness,” Apr. 2006, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2006/04/the-need-for-greater-kindness>.

words have not penetrated the hard hearts of members who persist in spreading destructive racial divide within their social circles. Perhaps these people find it comfortable to sit in the privilege of their ancestor's stories—stories and ideologies that give them a sense of power over other people.

I've weathered their slurs: their drunken Indian jokes, their poor Indian jokes, their dirty Indian jokes. I've weathered their judgment that the strength of my faith depends on the lightness of my skin. And in all of these situations, I wonder if the "incorrect teachings of our forefathers" didn't pertain to a particular race but the divide we cause ourselves when we enact, perpetuate, and encourage racist ideas and actions.

While many Americans were dancing to '50s and '60s jigs, twirling poodle skirts and boasting perfectly styled coifs, hanging out at the local malt joint, my parents were being torn away from their families by government officials. They were forced into boarding schools at around the age of four and five. Their beautiful long hair was shaved off and butchered. They were issued "civilized" clothing resembling prison wear. They were beaten if they spoke their native language.

I grew up on the Navajo Reservation in Window Rock and St. Michaels, Arizona. At home, my parents, who were bilingual and fluent in Navajo, spoke strictly English to my six siblings and me. It was at school that I learned about my Navajo culture and heritage. I dressed up in traditional Navajo attire on few occasions during Traditional Days at school. Other than that, our household, like many others on the reservation who were LDS, didn't practice cultural Navajo beliefs. I never had a Kinaalda (Navajo puberty ceremony), prayed with corn pollen, or learned or attended cultural dances unless they were part of the Navajo Nation Fair. I strived to be different than the rest of my Navajo peers. Somehow, not speaking Navajo or having an accent gave me a sense of pride. I pored over Book of Mormon scriptures referencing Nephites and Lamanites and memorized the stories of Lehi, Abinadi, and Moroni, casting off the Navajo creation stories because I believed that they were incorrect traditions.

I was four years old standing with my friends singing “Book of Mormon Stories” in Primary class, one stubby arm held behind my head with two fingers in bunny-ear position to represent the Lamanites’ feathers. I don’t know if, at the age of four, I knew that Lamanites and Native Americans were the same thing. But I do remember knowing that I was considered a Lamanite.

I was twelve when I took my first temple trip to the Mesa Temple with the youth group. It was a six-hour drive and we had stopped at a park halfway through for a picnic. My Young Women leader rubbed her arms and said to the Young Men leader, “I’m going to miss my brown skin when we get to the celestial kingdom.” I stood aghast, realizing for the first time that this had always been the message and the goal. We were all working so tirelessly to be righteous so that one day our skin would become lighter and lighter until we no longer were cursed, wicked Lamanites. It suddenly became clear why my mother continually reminded us to keep out of the sun so the brown of our skin wouldn’t grow darker.

It wasn’t until I left the Navajo Reservation that I began to realize what Indigeneity meant. I noticed the rest of my Indigenous peers at Brigham Young University convene in their respective multicultural clubs, though everyone wanted to be part of the Polynesian clubs. It was there at the various gatherings where I learned traditional dances and songs. It was there where I decided to take two semesters of Navajo language. I had often longed to escape the barren deserts of the Navajo Reservation, and now that I lived along the Wasatch Front, I missed the red rocks and sandstone. I missed the sound of my language. The company of fellow Indigenous peers consoled me in the absence of dewy aromatic sagebrush back home. Home, where I didn’t have to wear turquoise necklaces to demonstrate how Navajo I was. Home, where my ancestors had lived for thousands of years before me.

I sat in my Book of Mormon 101 class on the first day feeling jittery. I was the only brown person there out of more than one hundred students. The professor began with a discussion on Nephites. “How do you think

they looked?” he asked. He made a big sweeping motion with his arms, “They looked like all of us. Fair complexions, blonde hair, and blue eyes. They were beautiful people like all of us.” I shrank in my seat, hoping no one would detect the “wicked” dark-skinned Lamanite that I was.

I often brushed aside the racism I came in contact with on the BYU campus. I never spoke out when two guys walked past exclaiming loudly so I could hear, “How did Indians even get admitted to BYU? Don’t they need a passport? It doesn’t matter, it’s not like they’ll graduate anyhow.” And I just smiled when the old lady at church came over to pat me on the shoulder and say sweetly, “It’s so nice to see Lamanites at church. We used to have a Lamanite stay with us for a time.”

It was within the BYU’s Tribe of Many Feathers Club and the Pacific Islanders choir, One Heart, where I felt most at ease. A sense of belonging stirred up inside me when I was around these new friends. There was a newfound appreciation that began to build as I watched fellow students perform the jingle dance, fancy dance, grass dance, and hoop dance. I had taken these parts of my culture for granted, seeing only savagery, until I witnessed their healing beauty and felt the drumbeat in time with the pounding of my own heart.

I married my BYU alum husband, who is from the Blackfoot tribe in Canada. We have four children. I wanted to believe that Happy Valley could be happy for my brown-skinned family and me. We’ve moved from Utah to Switzerland to Wisconsin to Hopi land to the searing Phoenix desert to the Pueblo of Zuni, and now we find ourselves making a home in Canada. It wasn’t until I had my four children that I pushed back on old racist notions and became active in learning and teaching my children about their Navajo, Blackfoot, Oneida, and Mohawk heritage. We visited with our newfound Oneida relatives when we lived in Wisconsin. Our Oneida grandmothers held my children close as they talked of basket weaving, Turtle Island, and clanships. There was a rich love and tenderness toward our culture that I hadn’t fully developed myself. And now as I came face to face with it, watching

the Tiny Tots at summer Pow Wows dressed in their regalia, it finally hit me how precious this knowledge and connection was.

Even if I wasn't raised to cherish my Indigenous culture, I'd make sure my children would. My children's heritage blended like spice into a flavorful pot of corn stew paired with piping hot bannock fresh out of the oven. It was beautiful and fragrant and nothing to be ashamed of.



Shame.

I grew up ashamed of who I was. This dark skin, I was told, was a curse. My black eyes and thick black hair were not the idealized beauty of blue and wispy yellow. There was shame in dancing because it was beastly and wrong. There was shame in traditional dwellings because they were dirty and too archaic. In everything that was my culture there was shame. Consciously or subconsciously, I was made to feel it, and perhaps others with small minds hoped that I would spread this shame and finally extinguish whatever pride our people once had.

There was a constant battle going on in my head. On the one hand, Mormonism and its doctrines of eternal families and life after death brought me extraordinary comfort. My brother died when he was fourteen and I was fifteen. Believing that I could see him again and forever be sealed to him kept me going on the days I wanted to end it. It was a thousand times more when I looked in each of my babies' black glassy eyes that I knew some of these teachings were good. On the other hand, the most racist situations I've ever experienced were with well-meaning Mormons.

Church members taught that Black and Indigenous people were "less valiant" in the premortal existence. They taught that Black and Indigenous people lacked faith and knowledge and, in some instances, even intelligence. These same teachings were passed down from generation to generation—in subtle and not-so-subtle manners—so much so that there are white nationalist subgroups of Latter-day Saints.

My fourteen-year-old son came to me after church one day and said that his white peer in his Young Men class had told him he asks too many questions. He continued saying, “I know why you ask too many questions. It’s because you lack faith, and you lack faith because you have the curse of Laman.”

There are many good pieces of doctrine, doctrine that uplifts and brings God’s children together in love, harmony, and equality. This doctrine is easy to accept and teach and talk about. Unfortunately, there are also outdated opinions of racial hierarchy masked as doctrine still being taught in Sunday School classes today. But rarely do church members talk about racial hierarchy and why it could be detrimental to God’s children. Rarely will anyone oppose and correct the Sunday School teacher and tell them that it is wrong to spread inappropriate ideologies passed down from their forefathers. However, having brown-skinned babies and a wider view of the world from all the moves we made over the years, I knew I could not be silently complacent during lessons that caused divide or spread prejudice instead of love.

Maybe it isn’t only the parables of the Book of Mormon that I should learn. Maybe it’s the stories of the Oneida and their willingness to serve others, or the Blackfoot and their tales of endurance and survival, or the Navajo and their counsel for continual education that I need to hold most dear to my heart. The teachings from our Indigenous elders in combination with all that is good and love-centered doctrine is the harmony I’d been searching for.

I’d learned to cherish my culture and to pass that love of heritage down to my children. They are happy in their skin. They are happy in their brightly colored regalia and their shiny jingles that sway in time with the melodic prayers they send up to the Creator. They find a peaceful calm as the drum beats in time with their hearts. They comfort those in need of comfort. They grieve with those who grieve. They lose themselves in the service of their fellow beings. They love one another.

My Indigenous husband graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School. He's a licensed attorney who has been a prosecutor and a judge. A wide array of criminals have passed through his courts. Wickedness is not exclusive to a shade of skin pigmentation. Criminals exist in every culture, in every race, in every shade of human. The world does not exist in categories of righteous races and wicked ones.

And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land, because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people.

There were no robbers, nor murderers, neither were there Lamanites, nor any manner of -ites; but they were in one, the children of Christ, and heirs to the kingdom of God.³

If God has proclaimed there are no more manner of “-ites,” we should believe him. Let us do away with divisive language. I am not a Lamanite. My husband is not a Lamanite. My children are not Lamanites. The uneducated notion that two stubby fingers held behind my head can portray all Indigenous people is ultimately false. We are descendants of chiefs, warriors, and peacemakers. Our ancestors were basket makers, agriculturalists, shepherders, hunters, rug weavers, artists, and canoe makers. We are Diné, Oneida, Siksika, Akwesasne, and Anishinaabe, with our own stories and histories passed down from the tender and powerful voices of our elders. We are the Indigenous peoples of North and South America. We are of the land, living the best we can in harmony with all of God's creations. We live in harmony with our cultural teachings interwoven with our spiritual teachings. We are children of God. We are Indigenous and we are unashamed.

3. 4 Nephi 1:15, 17.

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"Hope of Youth," 14 x 11", oil on linen panel,
by Kwani Winder, 2020

RUBIK'S PALIMPSEST: SEARCHING FOR MY INDIGENEITY

Daniel Glenn Call

From my youth I was blessed with a God-shaped hole in my identity. I knew I came from somewhere, that my ancestors were whole and bore a cultural armor that it was my right to claim. But knowledge about those people, without whom in Mormon theology I cannot be made perfect, was obscured as surely as an ancient manuscript whose text has been scraped away, leaving only the barest impressions in stubborn particles of clinging ink. I am a man searching for what once was, seeking for what was lost in darkness to shine forth as light.

Sensing that I did not live in a community that could give this to me, I followed a lifelong strategy of seeking what light and knowledge I could find. Most of what I have has come through conversations with family, decades of study, pursuit of partnership with the divine, meditation on tiny details from my life, and plain old intuition. Learning the vocabulary that would enable me to talk about this pursuit and ask the right questions is an enterprise that taught me to recognize that nationality, ethnicity, race, spirituality, ideology, and economic orientation would likely be entangled in this search, and that while they are significant parts of the story, indigeneity is still something discrete.

My indigeneity is the part of my identity conferred on me by my ancestors from the Andes Mountains. Centuries of invasion and colonization nearly extinguished it. It has survived in some form and I carry it in my body, spirit, and practice. I find traces of my family's past in fragments of language, in pain and in pride, and in longing.

Even today, after decades of seeking, I haven't reached solid conclusions about every aspect of my roots so much as assembled a small fleet

of possible identities to connect me to the past and orient me in the present: Lamanite, Aymara, person of color. All of which are identities I love, all of which bring insights that have nurtured me, all of which sometimes turn their guns on each other. People who think they know their history, perhaps, can never grasp the scale of my hunger. Talking tenderly about the role of the identifier Lamanite in my family history, for example, has brought me ridicule or pity from academic circles. Owning my Aymara roots once triggered the person with whom I was speaking to launch into a microaggressive analysis of my brow and nose, clear giveaways that I was not like her.

These are my body's stories.

Lamanite—I have been given much

Right around the time when I was six or seven I noticed that whenever my mother would go up to bear her testimony, she would cry. This made me uncomfortable, of course, since I associated her crying with me or someone else in the family having hurt her through our misbehaviors, and I initially wondered if we had done something to cause her to cry in front of the congregation. Listening to her during these moments was always tough for me, and I came to realize after a while that my siblings shared in my discomfort. For years I would squirm, grumble, or doodle monsters on any available paper—anything to block out the actual content of her testimony each time she approached the pulpit. At some point, though, my curiosity finally won out and I began to listen, trying to understand what it was she would say that was so difficult that caused her to cry. In almost every testimony she bore, she would eventually say the words “I am proud to be a Lamanite.” This was the utterance that always made her voice tremble, usually bringing her to tears.

Sometimes she would say it like she was melting down with emotions. A couple of times she said it with defiance, as though the

congregation were about to shower her with arrows. Once she said it as a call-out in direct response to another congregant's less-than-sensitive remarks at the pulpit. Another time, following a sister who publicly wrestled with shame and anguish for what she perceived as personal shortcomings owing to her own Indigenous upbringing, my mother swiftly rose to bear her Lamanite testimony as though it were a blessing of healing. Every time, she cried.

Why did this make her cry? Why did this count as part of her testimony? The woman who raised me with hopes that I become a missionary, who guided me to the temple, left her family on another continent in the wake of a bloody coup d'état. One of the first lessons she taught me was that for her, believing in God meant publicly acknowledging being a Lamanite. I internalized this, and along with it, I absorbed another lesson that holds sway over me to this day: to declare my Lamanite heritage to anyone else is an act of vulnerability. It invites admiration, skepticism, derision, discomfort, colonization, and/or rejection.

Another important facet of my identity came into focus not at church but through a regular practice in our home. Among the cassette tapes and already outdated 8-tracks that filled a corner of my childhood home, there was an aging stack of records near our stereo. I was generally forbidden from playing with them, although I would occasionally pull them out to just look at the artwork. From time to time, usually on Sunday afternoons, my parents would put on one of their old, treasured records and give it a spin. During these moments, our whole family would sit together in the living room, sometimes intently listening to the music, sometimes playing, drawing, or writing with it in the background. Radio and cassettes were for fun and entertainment, but records were a family event that felt like my parents were trying to communicate something to us, be it the beginning of the Christmas season, a great find at a garage sale, or an important artist that they felt charged to introduce to us.

In the collection there was a 45 from Chile that sat protected by nothing more than a blank white sleeve but found its way with the greatest of care to the record player at least once a year. With every playing, time slowed down in our household as my father wrapped his arm around my mother and they both seemed to look off into some horizon we kids couldn't see. We only knew that we needed to be respectful—there was no mocking or parodying of these songs, as happened with so many of the tracks on other albums.

On one side there was a tune that clearly imitated the folk song “500 Miles,” sung with all due mournfulness, but by an ethereal choir. A couple times throughout, the slow rhythm was jarred to life with a furious *quena* solo before settling down once again to its standard meditation. I was told that my mother sang on this disc. Her participation in the local youth group afforded her the opportunity to travel over one thousand miles to a national church youth conference, where her group won a songwriting contest for their version of the song, and the prize was to record it in a professional studio. The words included lines such as:

No debes avergonzarte como ayer (You shouldn't be ashamed like before)

Debemos estar unidos y luchar (We should be united and fight)

Satanás no podrá contra ti y tu poder (Satan won't be able to withstand you and your power)

Lucha fuerte, joven santo y entenderás (Fight well, young saint, and you will understand)

Si entendiste la razón del color tu piel (If you understood the reason for the color of your skin)

Se humilde y progresa por tu bien (Be humble and seek progress for your own good)

Lamanita, lamanita, lamanita ese soy yo (Lamanite, Lamanite, Lamanite, that's me)

Y a los ojos de mi Cristo el mejor (And in the eyes of my Christ, the best)

For her, the value of identifying as Lamanite went well beyond the nostalgia of thinking back to her youth. Over years of conversation and eavesdropping, I pieced together a larger picture of how she grew up. After her father was killed at work when she was only months old, the family survived poverty and trauma through the resolve of her iron-willed mother and an extended family network that clung to their indigenous roots at a time when doing so was stigmatized. Schools were still trying to kill the *indio*, the entertainment industry was only interested in emulating the Euro-fantasy, and the state was a distant and shadowy entity that cared little for the welfare of the northernmost region. Every institution with which she interacted assailed her with the message that she ought to be ashamed of her indigenous roots, to adapt to the modern ways.

When my mother met with Mormon missionaries at age fourteen, it was the first time that she heard a contrasting message. Prior to this encounter, the history she had learned conferred on her a story of inferiority, failure, and defeat, preparing her to accept the erasure and assimilation of her people. But as she studied the Book of Mormon, years of pain and violence were put into new light as she learned about and embraced her identity as a Lamanite. She came to see herself as a descendant of people who enjoyed an ancient divine promise, a tradition of prophets, social experiments, written language, wondrous miracles, and a personal visit from the resurrected God she had grown up worshipping. Previously seeing no place for herself in the modern world, she had planned on finding refuge as a nun, but the promises given to the Lamanites infused her with hopes for a normal life.

The words of the song from that old 45, which she helped pen and bring to life in the studio, were an indelible part of her testimony—the same testimony she bore in tears born of prejudice, poverty, and iron resolve not to be cut off from the past: “I am a Lamanite.”

If Lamanite was belief and hope, however, it lacked a materiality I longed for. I couldn't touch the culture of the Lamanites. No one

finding an object buried beneath the earth could promise us it had been touched by a hero like the Anti-Nephi-Lehi. I could hear Lamanite in my mother's voice, but I wanted something I could see laid out in photographs.

Aymara—What I have found

I was looking for lost treasures.

Sometime during my kindergarten year, my childhood fascination with treasure hunting found focus through a PBS children's show whose title I never knew. In it, a group of friends raced around the globe in a rickety sky ship in search of an ancient artifact. Picking up on my obsession, and combining it with my growing love for reading, my parents gave me *The World's Last Mysteries*, a hardbound Reader's Digest volume consisting of twenty-five beautifully illustrated chapters on various archeological sites around the world, for the rites of passage associated with my eighth birthday. The embossed Maya calendar on the glossy hardbound cover won me over before I could even crack it open. I had some books in my collection, but this was the first book that felt important. By receiving it at the time of my baptism, I felt initiated into a group of treasure hunters. In hindsight, I now see that the pull to find things hidden or lost is something I had in common with Joseph Smith. Like him, I ended up finding vastly different treasures than what I initially set out for.

It took me years to actually read the book's words, since every time I cracked it open, I got absorbed in the photos, drawings, and captions. Some of the content bordered on Illuminati/Heyerdahl-level speculation, especially the chapter on the Tunguska event titled "Did a Black Hole Hit Siberia?" complete with a nightmare-inducing illustration. But all sensationalism aside, these were my first proper introductions to Egypt's pyramids, Stonehenge, Angkor Wat, Zimbabwe, Harappan civilization, Teotihuacan, the giant Olmec heads dotting Mesoamerican

jungles, and the prehistoric settlement at Çatalhöyük. Along with these chapters, I found readings that introduced me to the moai of Rapa Nui, majestic Machu Picchu high up in the Andes, and the mammoth geoglyphs in the Nazca desert. As they spied me reading these chapters, my parents took special care to assert that each of these sites was a part of our tradition. They did not know much about them, had never visited any of them, but wanted me to feel connected to indigenous sites in South America.

Rapa Nui sits nearly 2,300 miles from Chile but was annexed in 1888. Ethnically and historically, its people have little in common with my Chilean ancestors. As much as anyone else, I stand in awe of the joyous beauty and ambition of Inca architecture, exemplified by Machu Picchu's terraces and the startling precision with which Sacsahuamán's gargantuan stones were cut and placed; yet I know that they were empire builders who demanded exhausting tributes from subjects. I still know embarrassingly little about the Nazca, only hearing about them when I must explain yet again to a neighbor or student that the lines they left were not in fact created by ancient extraterrestrials. But even though I have no direct ancestral claim on the accomplishments of these magnificent civilizations, I swell with pride when I tell others about these places and their builders. My connection to them and to the land felt even more complete and tangible when in 2002 I went to visit my grandmother after she was forced to relocate from a city neighborhood in Arica to Azapa Valley just a few miles away. Her home sat at the base of Sombrero Hill, which had its own set of petroglyphs whose ancient purpose is unknown. It turned out that the makers of this monument (ca. 1000–1450 CE) probably weren't my ancestors either.

Things came even more into focus when during the fall quarter of my first year at college, in an introduction to cultural anthropology course, I was assigned to write a paper on a cultural group of my choice. My initial desire to focus on the Incas was rejected due to a lack of ethnographic sources, but digging through what I was able to find in the

campus library, I came across the Aymara. As I read and learned about them, I felt as though the scales fell off my eyes. I had been mistaken in claiming the Incas. Having seen maps of the Inca Empire that included northern Chile, I concluded that my ancestors were the Incas, failing to make the connection that an empire includes conquered people. The Aymara were one of many ethnic groups forced into vassalage in the Inca Empire, and a quick phone call home confirmed that this was our tribe.

Somehow, I made it through eighteen years of my life without the word Aymara making an impression on me, without even knowing the right word to name my indigeneity. I went through several emotional stages at this realization, including embarrassment at my own ignorance, grief for the experiences lost during this gap, and resentment toward the institutions that hid this from me. I gradually found some comfort in the realization that most people I know in the US live with a similar hole in their lives, scooped out to make way for other modern identities. Still, I was eager not to accept the losses history hands us, but to continue my learning.

And as I studied, I began to recognize traces of Aymara left in our lives. With time, I was able to recognize that some pieces of our language and culture had survived, infiltrating the colonizers' tongue. Whenever a baby was near our family, we never heard the Spanish word *bebé* and instead heard everyone in the family using *guagua*. Often while my mother scrubbed the collars on my father's business shirts, she referred to the stains as *chuño*, a traditional freeze-dried potato, usually ground up and used to thicken soups. On one trip where we took a bus tour approaching the Altiplano, I sampled a coca leaf tea at the exhortation of our guide (the folk wisdom maintains that it helps adapt to the thinner atmosphere at that altitude). My Abuelita Elena, who lived in this harsh environment until she was well into her teens, saw me sipping on my tea. Later she shared with me a few other preparations one can make with coca, including poultices and topical ointments. Just as fascinating

as the knowledge of how to make them were the conditions that called for them.

When we were children my mother shared stories about her family, and these often included elements of the supernatural, especially the ones that took place up in the mountains. Some time after I learned to speak Spanish, I approached my Abuelita for more stories. She sat me down and took me on a tour of the Andes in prehuman times, when only the moon and stars shone over the earth. I learned of little people who walked the earth then, who had to go into hiding when the sun was created. She told me how they sneaked into the house seeking her firstborn one day while her husband was away and she was doing housework, but they scattered from sight when they realized that she saw them. These stories connected me to a worldview I had been missing, and her telling them to me bound me to a family tradition that my cousins had grown up with.

Javier Mamani was one of these cousins who helped me in my quest. I first met Javier during a family trip to Arica in 1987. At first he was just one face among a crowd of family members at a memorable Sunday gathering. So much happened during the dinner, and my inability to speak Spanish at the time prevented me from connecting meaningfully with any family members. It wasn't until 1996, when Javier came to visit me during my mission in Santiago, that we forged a bond. He had served in the same mission a few years before and wrote to me a lengthy but unassuming letter asking if we could meet up. I arranged to have him over to our apartment in the heart of the metropolitan area, a stone's throw from the temple. I was so wrapped up in being a missionary in the big city that I initially didn't see him walking among the crowd when he approached. There he was all of a sudden, much shorter than me, slight of build, jet black hair grown out just barely bushy, carrying a package from my Abuelita. As we ate and swapped stories I noted that the woman whom we paid to regularly come in and prepare our meals (and who gladly agreed to prepare a little extra for

my cousin) was disappointed and even a little disdainful to see that I had brought an *indio* into our fifteenth-floor apartment. I ignored the missionary practice of eating according to a schedule and moving on to the next thing, prioritizing family over the rigid obedience that I had learned to prize by then.

We met again a year later, this time at his home in the desert north. He gave me a traditional Aymara shirt, complete with multicolor embroidery near the collar and pocket. Javier died not long after—he suffered from epileptic seizures, and one eventually overpowered him. Beside the bed where they found him, there was a handwritten poem that his mother shared with me, expressing hope for the future as a child of God. Over two decades later the shirt still hangs in my closet, and I treat it with the utmost care, wearing it only a couple of times a year on special occasions. Of all my cousins, Javier was the one who most shared my intense love and hunger for a renewal of our indigeneity. His loss hurt me deeply and heightened my sense of responsibility to carry on with our search for the pieces of identity that we've lost over the years.

My parents once arranged for us to take a day trip up into the mountains along with Abuelita Elena. The highlight destination was supposed to be Chungará Lake, but it wasn't until the dinner stop in rustic Putre that the excursion took on personal significance. I never knew until that day that this town tucked away in the mountains was my Abuelita's childhood home. After a memorable dinner at a humble restaurant on the plaza, we ambled around town, heading east, then north. I was so struck by the age and weariness of the streets, trying to take it all in, that I couldn't even think of a single question to ask her.

Now I have no shortage of them. The small school near the plaza bearing features of modern mass-produced educational architecture couldn't have been around when she lived there. Did she even have access to a school? As we walked past fifty or so homes, buildings, and workplaces, there didn't appear to be anyone on the streets. Did she

know her neighbors? Did she have time and desire to play in the streets? What did children play? What had changed? Was it always like this? Did her family play a role in civic or economic matters? I saw no design in our wandering up and down the streets other than just getting to know the town, and I felt perfectly fine with this. And then suddenly we stopped in front of a dirt-colored brick wall with a rusted metal door and Abuelita declared that she was pretty sure this was her childhood home. We snapped a photo and then turned around and started wandering back to the plaza where our vehicle awaited us. Part of me wishes that we had stayed a lot longer at Putre and that I had knocked on that door and found out who was living there at that moment, what they were doing. My soul reaches out to that door, and I dream of returning to Putre someday, although I don't know who my guide would be this time. The details I'm hoping to find might only be accessible through a combination of historical imagination, ethnographic reconstruction, and family folklore.

As I have come to identify as Aymara, I also recognize and celebrate that this makes me part of something even bigger. In the US this entity is sometimes called "Native America," comprising the hundreds of tribes and nations from south to north. We never formed a solid political unit, but as more evidence comes to light, we have a clearer idea of the hemispherical scale of commerce, science, and cosmology that we shared. I feel love for my siblings in this extended family and a desire to hear them and learn what I can from them.

And yet . . . do the hard-earned fragments of history we've found make up for all that is lost? I know that some bits of Aymara language and tradition seeped deep enough into my family culture to avoid being wiped away by centuries of colonial rule, but how much do those subtle impressions leave me sharing with Indigenous Americans a continent away? Even with all my study and work, I still feel blindsided when I fill out a census or similar document and have to classify myself as "American Indian" or "Some Other Race," knowing that the America they have

in mind is not the America I know, but also feeling that checking or not checking either box somehow furthers the erasure of our lineage.

Sharing Time—teaching ethnic studies from the perspective of a POC

After fifteen years of teaching Spanish—and helping to build up a social justice and community engagement-oriented program, which makes me beam with pride—my principal approached me with an offer: would I be willing to teach our school's inaugural year of ethnic studies in 2019–2020? The proposal tantalized me. At the beginning of my career, my hope was to extend my undergraduate work in anthropology by teaching social studies. Although social studies was my main endorsement, Spanish was always in higher demand. What is more, I learned through years of circulating through professional conferences that being a male POC Spanish teacher was a bit unusual. I had grown used to the idiosyncratic space that my workplace had asked me to occupy and was hesitant to try something new. But, in addition to my experience and having never abandoned my orientation to the social sciences, I saw that I was the only candidate who brought a marginalized ethnicity to the position. I learned that this would be critical to the success of the class.

My experience with teaching ethnic studies opened a field of possibilities, many of which included blessed chances to continue my personal work. In the first week of class, we welcomed a Puyallup tribal historian who helped us establish a practice of land acknowledgement. As she educated us about her people and traditions, we learned about Leschi, a Nisqually leader for whom a local tribal school is named. With the little time we had left in the period, our guest gave us some background on the conflicts and wars that led to his execution, but my students wanted to know more. Not a single one of them could recall learning about him in their other classes, and I, having grown up out of the state, had only a faint idea of local history. The following day in

class we brainstormed some follow-up inquiries and ended up pursuing the rumor that there was a monument to Leschi somewhere in the vicinity of Fort Steilacoom, where he was hung. With a bit of sleuthing we found the strip mall where there rested a granite boulder engraved with an explanation that the gallows where US soldiers killed him was constructed about two hundred yards away, in an aging neighborhood. My students and I were stunned. Just days ago, this piece of local history was unknown to us, and we felt cheated and hurt that this atrocity would be kept from us. One perceptive class member asked us to imagine what it must feel like to the Indigenous people in our community who have known this story all their lives and know that most of the rest of us were kept ignorant of it. This formative experience in our class set most of us up for a semester of study guided in part by a recognition of the loss of our ancestral ways and a commitment to understand how and why this happens, as well as what we can do to revive them.

One year is hardly enough to make me an expert teacher in this discipline, but I have learned a handful of principles that enrich both my professional work and the pursuit of my Indigenous identity:

Holism: the teacher must bring their whole, authentic self to the classroom. I am not teaching a prescribed curriculum to the class so much as modeling how the themes and practices of our discipline demand that we look critically at all aspects of our lives and communities and then take action to dismantle oppression and achieve equity. This means that at times I discuss the facets of my own identity and the ways in which oppression has been a part of my personal and family histories.

Solidarity: we seek to create not only empathy toward the oppressed but also unity with them by taking actions to support their cause. We consider how people from across the globe joined to denounce the Dakota Access Pipeline. We join forces with local organizations to support immigrants who have just been released from the detention center in our community and to communicate with those who are still detained. We take turns each week acknowledging the lands on which we live and the people who have cared for them since time immemorial. When possible, we invite them and other marginalized people to our

learning space to share with us their knowledge and help us refocus our attention.

Regeneration and revitalization: we look for and celebrate ways in which Indigenous people and people of color around the Americas are revitalizing their life-sustaining traditions, whether it be the tongue of the Puyallup people being taught at the local tribal schools, the wisdom and presence of elders on Hawaii being turned to for guidance during the Mauna Kea protests, or the gastronomical feats of a Navajo/Diné chef who combines traditional ingredients with modern cooking techniques.

Throughout the semester, parents, educators, and community members regularly joined us, sometimes as invited guests, sometimes hoping that they could be a part of the discussion, and once in a while just lingering outside our circle of seats, finding something in our class that healed a wound opened in some other part of the school. My own misgivings about the fragmented state of my own indigeneity quickly dissipated as I saw the thirst that people of all ages showed for this type of curriculum. I learned that having the completely intact identity I longed for was not requisite to do this kind of work effectively. The scars and the desolate places help me relate better to people who have had similar experiences, binding me to them.

“I am large, I contain multitudes”

Dear Reader, if these recollections and reflections leave you believing that I am just a confused adult, grasping for something missing from my past, then you are beginning to understand my predicament. The puzzle that best describes what this feels like is the Rubik's Cube: I know what the end product is supposed to look like, but just as I begin to see a pattern and a logic to my twisting of the pieces, the world twists me by rearranging the stickers, revealing a different pattern below the surface that suddenly feels like the right solution, or even superimposing a new motif on top of what I thought were the originals. An outsider to my

lived experience might interpret being Lamanite or Aymara or a person of color as confusion, like trying to finish three different puzzles, only one of which can be fully solved, and only to the exclusion of the others. Why not just choose one?

I would cease to be me if I did this. Discarding any of these indigenities to focus exclusively on one is not the path I choose. Like Walt Whitman, I can lean into being a walking contradiction, happy with the multitudes of generations, lives, and longings that I carry in me, even if they don't coexist in perfect harmony. My roots are in my mother's tearful Lamanite testimony, my cousin's colorful Aymara shirt, my students' hunger for a justice in which our modern society faces wrongs by which the past forged our present. To some, it may seem strange that an ethnic studies teacher counts himself as a Lamanite, to others that a Chileno Aymara finds shared cause with the Lakota and Diné. I understand if others don't see the same Rubik's palimpsest I do, if they struggle to make sense of what I find meaningful. To me, even those differences suggest that we are linked. What family is there that doesn't fight or hurt itself, even while acknowledging that something holds them together?

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"Survive the Storm," 14 x 11", oil on linen panel,
by Kwani Winder, 2020

DINÉ DOCTOR: A LATTER-DAY SAINT STORY OF HEALING

Farina King

“They say that they are like firemen. They know what they signed up for. They must fulfill their call for duty.” This is what my mother told me when I asked why my dad had to continue working in the clinic during the first waves of the coronavirus outbreaks in 2020.

We come from the Kinyaa’áanii, Towering House, clan of the Navajo Nation. We call ourselves Diné. My father is born for the Tsi’naajinii, Black Streak Wood People, clan. He is in his seventies and has been practicing medicine since the late 1970s. He is a family and community medicine physician who retired from the Indian Health Service but has continued to practice medicine in Monument Valley, Navajo Nation for several years. I used to joke that he would work until he died, but I now sense that fear every day. Service, care, and healing have been his purpose. His forebears were hataalii—Diné healers—before him.

My father is one of my heroes, but I never imagined that he would be a hero on the frontlines against COVID-19. He told me and my family in a Zoom video meeting from his trailer in Monument Valley on Easter of 2020: “I do not do what I do because I’m a hero. I do it because I care.” He works with some Diné elders who are over ninety years old, and some of his patients only speak Navajo—his first language that now only a few medical practitioners in the world know fluently like him. Since time immemorial, Diné have passed on teachings of *Si’qh Naaghái Bik’eh Hózhó*, simply translated as “walk in beauty” or “live to old age in beauty.” Healing is an essential part of this never-ending journey and cycles through generations and time, as we

constantly seek to restore balance and harmony—*hózhó*—in all things within and around us. My father's stories, as a Diné Latter-day Saint convert, have illuminated varied meanings of *hózhó*, faith, and healing.

Our Diné ancestors have faced many *naayéé'*, monsters, and not only survived but thrived as a people through generations. In oral tradition, the Hero Twins defeated *Yé'itsoh*, who was covered in metal, and then applied the monster's broken armor for common purposes such as cutting knives. The twin heroes did not kill all the monsters that have plagued humanity such as poverty and sickness. Diné heroes have come and gone, continuing the fight against the monsters of their eras. Growing up, my father heard the stories of warriors such as Monster Slayer and Child Born for Water and of their mother *Asdzáá Nádleehé*. He learned that the twin heroes could not defeat the monsters alone, and they continued to develop their strengths. Little did he know then, as a child, that he would one day fight the *naayéé'* of disease through medicine.

When my father was young, his kin called him “*ashkii yázhí*,” or “little boy.” He was the youngest son in his family. His grandmother, *bimá sání*, told him and his siblings stories at night in their hogan, especially during the winters. He remembers how she recalled the Long Walk, when our Diné ancestors marched eastward under the removal force of the US military. *Bimá sání* showed him the census number that she tattooed on her wrist so that she could always know it for rations that the government provided as part of the negotiated terms after Navajos returned to their ancestral homelands. They remained, however, restricted by the US government and by the marked boundaries of a reservation. *Ashkii Yázhí* learned Diné *bizaad*, the Navajo language, from his mother and *bimá sání* before he was sent to an Indian boarding school by the time he was five years old. As *Ashkii Yázhí* cried with the other boarding schoolchildren who longed for home, one of the dorm aides started to sing about Jesus. That was the first time that my father remembers hearing the name. He had no idea who that was. But

the song comforted him, and he later claims that he was feeling the spirit of Christ with him at that moment.

As an oral historian, I have interviewed my father on several occasions. In particular, I have asked him about his boarding school experiences and his conversion to the Latter-day Saint faith. I once interviewed him in his native tongue, Diné bizaad. The interview was brief because of my limited ability in the Navajo language, but I am grateful that I was determined because one of his responses continues to resonate with me. My father told me that the Navajo language is sacred: “Díí Saad díyíín nahalin.” He has reminded me to always value our ancestral language, stories, and people. Diné bizaad and Diné stories connect us to beings beyond this mortal world—it connects us to our past and ancestors.

As media, stories, and cries of my people and community have shown the rampage of Dikos Nstaaígíí-19—the coronavirus monster—in Navajo Nation, I reflect on my father’s ongoing story of healing as a Diné doctor. I have been asking my father questions more frequently, trying to understand, document, and share the struggles that the Navajo Nation and Diné health services are facing with COVID-19 outbreaks. My father once told me that he decided to become a doctor during his mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. After a series of conversations in the spring of 2020, I had a moment to pose the question to him: “When and why did you decide to become a doctor?” His response inspired this narrative, because he answered with a story.

Ashkii Yázhí’s father was a hataaíí, like his grandfather. His father raised him with ceremonies while preparing Ashkii Yázhí to become a healer according to Diné ancestral practices and knowledge. During a break from his studies at Brigham Young University, Ashkii Yázhí visited home to announce to his family that he had joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was excited to share his joy and testimony of the Latter-day Saint faith, especially with his father.

But Ashkii Yázhí's conversion infuriated his father, who then banned him from their home and family. Although he grieved the prospects of never seeing his father and family again, Ashkii Yázhí chose soon after to become a missionary for the Church. On his mission application, he intentionally omitted any information about his Diné background and claimed residency in Idaho, but he was still assigned to the Southwest Indian Mission that included the Navajo Reservation.

In 1969, during his mission, Ashkii Yázhí and his mission companion, Elder Anderson, were visiting and teaching Diné families in the Whitehorse community. They tried to serve the people whom they visited. For one family in particular, Ashkii Yázhí and Elder Anderson helped tend to the children and changed their diapers without being asked. One day when they came to visit the hogan, the pregnant mother of the home, Mary Smith, started to go into labor. She begged the missionaries to drive her to the nearest hospital in their pickup truck. The father stayed with the small children while the missionaries rushed with Mary to the hospital. Elder Anderson drove the truck, and Ashkii Yázhí sat in the back of the truck with Mary, who was lying down on a set of blankets and sheepskins that they arranged for her.

On the bumpy dirt roads, Mary's cries and moans intensified. The baby's black head of hair began to appear, and Ashkii Yázhí was the only one there to catch *awéé'*, the baby, in the truck bed. Mary told Ashkii Yázhí how to tie the umbilical cord. When they finally arrived at the Crownpoint hospital, Ashkii Yázhí and Elder Anderson assisted Mary with *awéé'* and the umbilical cord still connected. Mary Smith would then always tell people that my father, Ashkii Yázhí, delivered her baby. My father recounted this story with a knot in his throat and teary eyes, sharing how he thought that after these experiences on his mission: "Maybe, I will be a doctor." This is when he started to envision himself as a Diné doctor.

In early May 2020, I had to tell my father that his sister, *shádí*, was dying from the coronavirus. I woke up that morning, thinking about

my aunt and crying. I just knew that she was struggling. Then, my cousin called to tell me that my aunt was getting worse. Through tears, my father's voice quivered as he tried to console me: "It's okay to cry. We will see her again." Many of my father's loved ones, like his own father, were never baptized in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints before they passed on. When possible, Ashkii Yázhí goes to the temple for his family with faith in eternal life and happiness. Before Church officials closed the temples due to the COVID-19 pandemic, my father and mother would go to the temple every week. My father firmly views the temple as a sanctuary and a holy place, while he also recognizes the sacred mountains and homelands that bimá sání, his father, and ancestors taught him to know. Healing underlies *Si'qh Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhó* as a cycling journey and process of restoring balance and well-being. Ashkii Yázhí did not become the healer that his father expected him to be, but he has continued the path of healing and walking in beauty that his father would have honored.

In remembrance and honor of nihimá Florence and other victims of Dikos Nstaaígíí-19. "They called her Náánábaa'—She Returns from War."

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"The 5th Hoop," 20 x 20", oil on board,
by Kwani Winder, 2020

TO BE NATIVE AMERICAN— AND MORMON

Lacee A. Harris

Editor's Note: This essay was previously published in Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought volume 18, number 4, as part of a special issue in 1985 dedicated to Mormon–Native history and interrelationships. The issue especially focused on President Spencer W. Kimball's influence on this topic, who had recently passed. Dora Rose Hartvigsen England and Eugene England Sr. and their children personally funded the publication of this issue. Lacee A. Harris's personal essay "To Be Native American—and Mormon" may be the first known piece written by an Indigenous person published in Dialogue. I include it here not only for its historical significance in Dialogue's history of addressing this topic of indigeneity, but also because of its significance as a historical text itself, capturing a different era of LDS engagement with Native Americans, coming of age in the 1950s and 1960s as the Church was embarking on major missionary, outreach, and assimilation projects.

"Lamanite! I am not a Lamanite. They are a wicked people. I am not a wicked person."

I can well remember my father, Albert H. Harris, saying this, both in church and to anyone else who would listen. Born on the Northern Ute Reservation in 1920, he was mixed blood. His father, Muse K. Harris, was Ute and my grandmother, Ivy Mae Harris, was anglo, a second-generation Latter-day Saint of pioneer stock. My father's grandmother, Great-grandmother Mary Reed Harris, said her own grandmother had been baptized by Brigham Young (Mildred Miles Dillman, comp. *The Early History of Duchesne County* [Springville, Utah: Art City Publishing Company, 1948]). Thus, the LDS Church had had a seven-generation impact on my family by the time I was born.

Although I remember my father's protest at being classified as a Lamanite, I never inquired about his background or youth, or his other feelings about the Church. He had served as president of the Fort Klamath Branch of the Klamath Falls Oregon Stake, on the high councils in Roosevelt, Utah, and Billings, Montana, and had held other stake positions. Still, by the time I was twenty-eight, he was dead in his Salt Lake City home, just before his fifty-first birthday, of alcohol-related causes. I don't remember what his bishop said at the time of his death. I remember that the Ute elders on the reservation spoke highly of his efforts to keep the traditional ways alive. As I look at the pattern of his life, I wonder if it was the strenuousness of that struggle to live in both worlds that moved him toward his early death.

My parents met when they were students at the Phoenix Indian School before my father entered the Army Air Corp in 1942. My mother, Lucille Davis Harris, is a Northern Paiute from the Reno-Sparks, Nevada, area. She was not a member of the Church at the time. I was the oldest of their five children. My younger siblings were Lucille who died two hours after she was born, Linda, 1949, Suzanne 1952, Jon, 1954, and James, 1956. When I was five, my mother was converted. I remember the excitement of driving to Vernal, Utah, for her baptism. (We went to have ice cream afterwards.) I remember being called up front so I could see the ordinance; but if anyone explained the significance to me, my memory did not retain it.

Three years later at age eight, I was also baptized, but I still recall no explanations. I remember the short pants, the cold floor, the warm water, and the warmer congratulations of many people who seemed very happy for what I was doing. But I had no clear concept of what baptism meant.

My childhood memories of religion are of Sunday meetings, not of home discussions or activities. I remember very long Sundays of getting dressed, sitting in long meetings listening to speakers talk about subjects I didn't understand, watching the big boys passing the sacrament

and wishing I could too. When I was about seven years old, we moved to Roosevelt, only eight miles but a whole world away. I enjoyed being in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, but I don't recall any lessons that made an impact. Being an Indian, being a Mormon were never mentioned. My Indianness, like my Mormonness, was just there.

My father was a realty officer for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and we moved relatively often. When I was ten or eleven, we moved to Klamath Agency on the Klamath-Modoc Reservation just north of Klamath Falls, Oregon, lived in agency housing, and went to church in a small branch about twelve miles away. None of the other LDS children were my age so all my friends were non-LDS. After a year, I returned to Roosevelt, Utah, to live with my grandparents.

Soon afterwards, I had my first disappointment at Church functions. At Scout camp where Order of the Arrow candidates were to be chosen, all the other boys assumed that I would be chosen for this "Indian" group. So did I. I was crushed when I wasn't and began losing interest in Scouting, even though I continued going because most of my friends were active.

When I was in the seventh grade, my father's work took him to Window Rock, Arizona, where we lived at the Navajo Agency at Window Rock and attended church sixty miles away in Gallup, New Mexico. It was so far away we attended only Sunday meetings. About seven months later, I went to live with my aunt and uncle, Floyd and Helen Wilkerson.

During ninth grade, I was junior high band vice president, ninth grade seminary class president, and junior high student body vice president. I don't think being either LDS or Indian had anything to do with either position, even though many of my schoolmates were LDS. At the end of the school year, I rejoined my parents who, by now, were in Muskogee, Oklahoma. I attended school there until halfway through my junior year. My main interests in the Muskogee branch were Scouting and MIA. There was only one boy my age and we didn't

have a great deal in common, although we were friends and home teaching companions. The LDS students from Basone Junior College, an Indian junior college, however, were very helpful and so were some of the missionaries in the area. I was called to my first Church teaching position—teaching the Blazer class—at age fourteen. I really enjoyed that.

However, in retrospect, although I met with a great deal of kindness and was included in many activities that were happening, I don't recall any adult leader—teacher, Scout leader, priesthood quorum advisor, or MIA instructor—who seemed interested in establishing a personal relationship with me or who seemed concerned about my personal spirituality. The lessons, as I recall, did not seem aimed toward action.

I was starting to feel different. I knew I wasn't a Lamanite because my father said we weren't. I knew I was an Indian but I didn't know how that fit into the Mormon system of anglos and Lamanites. The more I grew to understand my Indianness, the less I understood how I fit into the Church. In Oklahoma, surrounded by Indians of many tribes and nations, I was conscious of real pride in being an Indian. It was also in Oklahoma that my sense of being Mormon sharpened, thanks to the loving sacrifice of James C. and Delia Watkins. My "foster father"-to-be, James C. Watkins, was a safety engineer for the Corps of Engineers, US Army, stationed briefly at Muskogee. They had two girls, Carol and Sharon, and one boy, James. Carol was two years older than I, Sharon was six months older and James at that time was four years old. I am not really sure why they invited me to live with their family. I am not even sure why my parents agreed. I was fifteen years old. I'm glad that both did agree, for I wonder sometimes where I would be today without the Watkins family and all the help and sacrificing they did for me. This was not a part of the Church's formal placement program. When they moved on to Salina, Kansas, they asked me to go with them.

I accepted on a lark, more or less, as an adventure. My father said, "Take him, if you think you can handle him." My mother said,

“Okay. . . .” It is only in retrospect that I sense my mother’s pain and hurt that I would so casually leave the family.

The experience of living with an anglo family was valuable, however. Not only did I have to adjust to two older foster sisters and a younger brother, I had to fit into a family that did not allow me the same freedom given to an eldest male child in an Indian family. Delia later told me, “Lacey, that first year with you was pure hell.”

James’s work caused him to move a lot too. I attended the last part of my junior year in Salina, Kansas, where the family did a lot of square dancing. The first part of my senior year was in South Dakota. I finally graduated in Anchorage, Alaska. I wasn’t particularly involved in Church, except for social activities and Sunday meetings, although I was elected president of what my memory tells me was the first seminary class in Anchorage, Alaska.

I had never looked farther ahead than being out of high school. I didn’t date much—we were on the move too much and we usually lived out of town or on-base. But fortunately, Carol began attending BYU and mentioned its Indian Education program. The school sent the forms, I filled them out, and meanwhile my family had moved to Palm Springs, California, about the time we moved to Alaska. I had already lived among the Klamath, Modoc, Navajo, Creek, Sioux, Cherokee, and other Oklahoma tribes. Now I added the Agua Caliente Indians of Palm Springs.

I was accepted by BYU and, in 1962, moved into Taylor Hall in Helaman Halls with forty other fellows, all anglos, on my floor. There were only thirty-five Indians on campus that year. While I stayed with my foster parents, my parents helped out by sending money, clothes, and letters which didn’t get answered too often. I am still a poor letter writer. I had been given lots of freedom to make my own choices—given lots of information about the effect of those choices—but was allowed to choose. So when I chose to go to BYU, my parents were happy that I had decided to go to college after high school. The fact that

it was BYU was even better. The fact that it had an Indian Education program made it even better for them.

I ran into some problems at BYU. One was family prayer every night. The idea was to help the floor be more cohesive, give announcements, discuss any school problems, then have a family-style prayer before bed. Usually about 9:30 the floor chaplain would go around and round everybody up for “the event.” Another big concern was the idea of *having* to go to Church Sunday morning. It was not mandatory, just a lot of peer pressure, hammering, kicking, and loud noise to get everybody up for Church. By this time, I figured I was old enough to decide for myself if I wanted to go to Church. I didn’t need someone telling me to go. Since I was the only Indian on the floor and in my dorm building, it was easy to see when I missed. The student ward was made up of one wing of Taylor (120 men), as far as I remember, then two of the women dorms from the Heritage complex.

As a first-semester freshman, I took a mandatory Book of Mormon class and really began to learn about the Lamanites. The more I learned, the more I felt that the Church really had no place for us as “Indians.” We only belonged if we were Lamanites.

I felt that the teachings of the Church were excellent and I did not doubt the teachings of the Book of Mormon about the Lamanites as apostate survivors of great nations, but taking that story personally was too much for me. Were those Lamanites *my* Indian people? My people were good, deeply spiritual, in tune with the rhythms of the earth and with their own needs. How could we be descended from a wicked people? How could I be a descendant of wickedness and still be good without repudiating the heritage that made it possible for me to accept Mormon goodness?

These were difficult questions for a college freshman, and I found myself avoiding more and more the all-anglo ward. I was drawn to the BYU Indian Education Tribe of Many Feathers, the Indian club on campus, with its warmly welcoming activities. Our club advisors

sincerely cared about us but I still felt, uneasily, that they were trying to make us into something we weren't.

My nineteenth birthday had passed. Everyone assumed I would go on a mission, and I routinely sent in my papers, asking for the Southwest Indian Mission, then the only Indian mission in the United States. Six months before I left, in January of 1964, the Southwest Indian mission was divided into the Northern Indian and the Southwest Indian and I was sent to headquarters in Holbrook, Arizona. That meant I had to learn the Navajo language and culture.

I had expected to enjoy my mission experience and I did. I had two mission presidents, J. Edwin Baird and Hal Taylor. In Arizona, I started in Pinon, and went on to Chinle, Many Farms, Lukachukai, Dennehotso, the Gap, Tuba City, Inscription House, and Chichinbitso with a stint in Cortez, Colorado, among the Ute Mountain Utes. We worked hard. No one had quite found the right set of lesson plans for Navajos, and we went through four or five during my two years. Some of the Navajo elders helped translate the lessons into Navajo and we learned to read, write, and speak the language.

Although there are inevitable differences between two people who live together twenty-four hours a day, I liked most of my companions. Six were Anglo and three were Indians, all Navajo. Many of the Anglo elders were fine missionaries, good at the language, and hard working. Some of them loved the area and people, leaving only with deep regret. Others never got over the culture shock, waited out their two years with impatience, and contributed little.

Ironically, it was in the mission field, serving the Lord full time that I first became fully aware in the center of my being of some of the cultural differences between Indian and Anglo Mormons. Some of my Anglo companions left me with bitter memories of patronage, of being left out of decisions, of being told in subtle ways that I wasn't equal in ability or capacity. A pattern of occasional comments and offhand judgments began to take shape about the people we were teaching and

working with: “lack of commitment,” “Indian standard time,” “a reservation Indian.” Some of the anglo elders were disappointed that some of the people didn’t want to hear our stories, as the lessons were called by the people, and never realized that they were communicating “we know what’s best for you” by not listening to what the Indian people were saying. In their eagerness to help, many missionaries unwittingly crossed the line between assistance and taking over.

When I returned to BYU in the fall of 1964, the fifty-eighth Ward, an all-Indian unit, had been organized. We had heard about it in the mission field and were excited about it. I loved the ward but, newly sensitized to paternalism, it bothered me that our bishop was anglo when all the other officers were Indian. One of the events early in that school year of 1964 fall semester was a pre-announced talk by our bishop on interracial dating. It seemed to be an issue for him. A number of us showed up with non-Indian dates and sat on the front row. It was a joke—yet it wasn’t. Something in me was starting to feel pushed around, and I wanted to push back.

Another problem that year was our bishop’s discouragement of our dances and “ceremonies.” Again it seemed to be an issue for the Church, an unwritten issue. Some of us protested. Why would the Church sponsor the Polynesian Center cultural ceremonies and dances, while we couldn’t have our own? Policy, our bishop explained briefly. Could he show us where, we wanted to know? He became vague. We pushed harder for an explanation. Several of us were called before one of the university vice presidents to discuss “code violations.” We were not violating any rules; but I learned in the session that we were questioning the wisdom of the Church leaders by asking “inappropriate” questions. We only wanted to know why we couldn’t be who and what we were—Indians. To us part of being Indian was our dances and ceremonies. They had cultural, not spiritual, significance to us because none of us had the right to practice or conduct any of the real spiritual ceremonies. Many of us went home for those.

We all wanted to graduate, so we stopped taking our questions to our bishop.

In retrospect, the difference between our two situations seems clearer. Polynesian dances have become detached from their philosophy and values. Doing them was harmless entertainment—good exercise. Indian dances, on the other hand, had living connections with our past, our values, our other, non-Mormon identities. They could corrupt us. We didn't know how or where, but somehow they would.

By my junior year, I had changed my major twice and married Alberta Acothley, a Navajo from Tuba City, Arizona, in the Salt Lake Temple on 17 May 1968.

It was interesting that I had known Alberta's family before I knew her.

She was working in Oakland, California, when I was in Tuba City, and the branch president helped to convince her to go to the Y. She lived in the women's dorms of Helaman Halls so we all ate in the common cafeteria. I saw her eating alone and wanted to meet her, so I went over to eat lunch with her. She was kind of shy and quiet, not like her brother Bobby, who I enjoyed knowing very much.

The fall after our marriage, I was asked to serve as second counselor for the BYU fifty-eighth ward. The ninety-second and ninety-seventh Indian wards were founded that first year of our marriage. When the ninety-second ward was formed, I was asked to be first counselor with Kenneth Nabahe as bishop and Lynn Steele as the second counselor. We were the first all-Indian bishopric at BYU.

I still had lots of questions. Most of us did. But the intellectual stimulation of my graduate program (master of public administration), the happiness of our marriage, and the joy of serving others gave me the courage to keep on working. I tried to fit into what the Church seemed to be asking. I tried to belong.

I worked as a sanitation engineer the first three years of our marriage. Our first two children, Brenna and Bron, were born in Provo. In

keeping as much as possible to our Indian ways we picked anglo names that reflected something about the child. The two names are Welch. Brenna, means “raven haired maiden.” When she was born, she had a full head of hair about two inches down her back. My son’s name means “the brown skinned warrior” or “the brown skinned one” depending on what name book one looks at.

In 1970, I graduated with a B.S. in history. I hadn’t completed my master’s but we moved to Riverside, California, where I was director of special services and taught a history class for the community college in Riverside. Our third child, a daughter, was born in Riverside, California. Since her mother didn’t want all “B’s,” her name is La Donna Mae, “the maiden lady.” Each of them also has names given to them from their grandparents. There I also started growing my hair long after years of short-haired dress codes at BYU. I wanted to show my culture and heritage again. I wanted an outward sign of my background. California’s famous climate was too much for me, though, because of the smog; and when an offer came to be the University of Utah’s Indian Education advisor, we came back in February 1973.

We moved into an all-anglo ward. I taught Gospel Doctrine class in Sunday School while Alberta took care of the children. I enjoyed teaching; I tried to help them understand how the gospel related to me and my culture. I could feel myself expanding in some new ways and I felt that the ward members supported me. In 1975 we started to attend the Indian Ward in Salt Lake City, Fifth Ward in Templeview Stake, now in Wells Stake. We felt more at home among the Indian people. I was called to be executive secretary with an all-Indian bishopric. Milton Watts was bishop. We were together for two years.

It was a good life. When people asked if I was Mormon, I would say, “Yes, but I’m Nuchee, Northern Ute, first, then Mormon.” Alberta and I talked about the teachings of our separate tribes and how these values corresponded with those of the Church. Our children were learning to speak Navajo and could tell some of the old stories. We loved each other and were proud of our children.

Then in October 1975, Alberta became ill. It was hard for her to breathe and she complained of chest pains. Neither of us had ever been seriously ill before. We were frightened and confused. In the latter part of October, the pain intensified and I took her to Holy Cross Hospital. I waited for a long time with a friend, Thorn Garrow, a Mohawk from New York, during her examination. When the doctor came out after he had been researching his diagnosis, he blew my world apart with a few short sentences. Alberta had a rare lung disease and would probably die within a year.

The next months are a blur in my mind. In looking back on the experience, I see that Alberta was much more accepting of her death than I was. It's not that she wanted to die but she accepted the fact and lived each day as it came even though the thought of leaving the children was very painful. She asked me to remarry so the children would continue to have a two-parent home.

The doctor thought that washing down the whole house might help Alberta breathe easier, and the whole ward turned out to do it. It didn't help, but the concern and love did. As Alberta was hospitalized at increasingly frequent intervals during that agonizing winter and the following spring, the Relief Society sisters would bring food and try to help out with the children. Bishop Watts and both his counselors were quiet, consistent supports, dropping over, calling, just letting me know they were with me during this time.

While Alberta was hospitalized—permanently in April—my mom helped out with the children. Brenna and Bron were in school so La Donna was the one that needed constant care.

The doctor had taught me some simple exercises to help Alberta breathe more easily, and I would spend many hours each night, trying to help her get enough breath into her tortured body that she could sleep. Brenna and Bron also learned how to do them. We had her name put on prayer rolls in several temples. The home teachers administered to her. As a bishopric, we administered to her. I took her to anglo specialists and brought in both Navajo and Mohawk medicine men. Every pain-free

breath I took was a petition to the Lord to spare her. Nothing worked. She died on our eighth wedding anniversary to the day, 17 May 1976.

We held the funeral in a local funeral home, the Deseret Funeral Home, but I insisted on Indian elements. Blankets, belts, bracelets, beads, and money went into Alberta's casket. I gave away most of Alberta's possessions as was proper, and cut my hair as a sign of mourning. La Donna Mae was two and a half years old. The University of Utah College of Nursing helped me enroll her in a nursery school for half a day and the ward members helped me find a babysitter for the other half day. A traditional Indian family would have had blessings but I didn't. Somehow, I didn't want to acknowledge my grief even when I couldn't deny the pain. I felt very alone; I felt that half of me had died. The ward members had their own lives to lead. My people on the reservation and my own family were too far away.

Since my wife's death, Fifth Ward has had four bishops, and our ward has been moved to two new buildings. The bishops were good men, all very supportive of me. I have not remarried. I quit work to go back to school three years ago.

My faith in Mormonism is still strong. It is important to me that both my Indian people and the Mormons believe that the earth was created spiritually before it was created physically, that the purpose of this life is to gain experience, that our lives are to be lived so that our Creator can be proud of us individually and as a people, that the Son of God came among us to teach us how to live. We have traditions around the numbers three, twelve, and thirteen, that are reminiscent of Mormon ways. Ceremonies allow those who are authorized to bless, marry, and heal. Fasting and prayer are ways to spiritual power in both cultures.

Yet many of my questions are still there, too. When people tell me that my traditions develop from the Book of Mormon, I ask, "Then why do I have to give up those traditions to be a Mormon?" When people say, "You don't have to give up anything good. Mormonism just builds on something that is better," I say, "Why must I abandon the foundations to have the rest of the building?"

A problem for me is that I see the LDS culture as a separate structure from LDS teachings. With all my heart I accept those LDS teachings and want them for my children; but the LDS culture has become more alien, not more familiar, as the years have passed. I think sometimes of that LDS culture—of that first generation of Saints, all of them converted to a shockingly radical new religion, trying in faith to build together a new community. From their efforts, ironically, have come the culture that now tells us that we are not converted unless we accept the culture as well as the teachings—or even seems to urge us to accept the culture, never mind about the teachings. As I have talked to many Indians, they too feel that the culture of the Mormons gets in the way of the teachings.

I may be wrong. I have been wrong before. I know that all people must abandon parts of their culture to accept the gospel. Many of my Indian brothers and sisters have given up their cultures to become Mormon—to be acceptable to their anglo Mormon brothers and sisters. How long do they last? The teachings of the Church allow us to be both Indian and Mormon, but to expect Indians to be anglo Mormons puts an enormous strain on some of the Indian people. Some feel they must choose between being Mormon and being Indian. Yet those who abandon their roots and their heritage altogether, trying to be white except for their skins, do not seem to be either happier or more successful.

It shouldn't be a conflict. We shouldn't have to choose. In both my ward and among my people, I am called "brother." I feel that responsibility in both settings. I feel the potentiality of that reward. And I remember my grandmother, the first Indian member of the Relief Society in the Uintah Basin. After years of faithful service, she went back to the traditional ways. For her, the gap got wider and wider until she had to choose. Surely, four generations later for me and my children, it should be possible to retain the beauty and the blessedness in both ways.



"Alcove House Kiva (Bandelier)," 16 x 20", oil on linen,
by Kwani Winder, 2019

LATTER-DAY SAINT INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON COLUMBUS

Introduction

When Brigham Young University (BYU) hosted Clark B. Hinckley’s presentation about his book *Christopher Columbus: “A Man Among the Gentiles”* for Education Week 2019, many community members responded with concern.¹ In his presentation, Hinckley claimed that Christopher Columbus was inspired and guided by God to discover the Americas, which student reporter Emma Benson quoted and publicized in her article “Education Week: Why Christopher Columbus Matters” in *The Daily Universe*, BYU’s newspaper.²

The reverence for the myth of a heroic Christopher Columbus reveals unresolved and festering issues in the relationships with Indigenous people at BYU and in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Roni Jo Draper, a BYU professor of teacher education and a member of the Yurok Tribe, responded to Benson’s article by questioning the teachings and memorialization of Columbus in Church settings.³ The attention to Hinckley’s presentation and its disregard

1. See Clark B. Hinckley, *Christopher Columbus: “A Man among the Gentiles”* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2014).

2. Emma Benson, “Education Week: Why Christopher Columbus Matters,” *Daily Universe*, Aug. 22, 2019, <https://universe.byu.edu/2019/08/22/education-week-why-columbus-matters/>.

3. Roni Jo Draper, “Readers’ Forum 9/10/19,” *Daily Universe*, Sept. 5, 2019, <https://universe.byu.edu/2019/09/05/readers-forum-9-10-19/>. See also Anne Wallace, “An Indigenous, LDS Perspective on Columbus,” *Daily Universe*, Oct. 15, 2019, <https://universe.byu.edu/2019/10/15/an-indigenous-llds-perspective-on-columbus/>.

of Indigenous historical perspectives and experiences stirred many in the Latter-day Saint community, including Northwestern Band of Shoshone Chairman Darren Parry, who spoke out on social media against Hinckley's depiction of Columbus.

Hinckley's remarks reflect a common interpretation in the Church. Church officials, General Authorities, and Sunday School manuals, including the 2020 *Come, Follow Me* manual on the Book of Mormon, unquestioningly indicate that Columbus was the man who Nephi saw in 1 Nephi 13:12.⁴ Many Latter-day Saint scholars, including De Lamar Jensen, have portrayed Columbus as a God-fearing man.⁵ Such defenders of Columbus often highlight his letters, wherein he attributes the success of his voyages and fair weather to God: "Thither, by the goodness of God and the wise management of the admiral, we came in as straight a track as if we had sailed by a well known and frequented route."⁶

Columbus credited God as the source of his success, but scholars need to properly contextualize this language. Robert Ellwood II argues that religion is intrinsically embedded in Western language.⁷ Columbus used religious language to secularly speak because religion was his language. His language is not, however, a reliable compass to evaluate his ethics. Rather than relying on Columbus's self-descriptions, it is necessary to gauge his character by his actions, or as Christ taught:

4. See *Book of Mormon 2020: Come, Follow Me—For Individuals and Families* (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2019), 15.

5. De Lamar Jensen, "Columbus and the Hand of God," *Ensign*, Oct. 1992, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1992/10/columbus-and-the-hand-of-god?lang=eng>.

6. Doctor Chanca, "Second Voyage of Columbus," in *Select Letters of Christopher Columbus: With Other Original Documents, Relating to His Four Voyages to the New World*, edited by R. H. Major, 2nd ed. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1870), 25.

7. Robert S. Ellwood Jr., *Words of the World's Religions: An Anthology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 2.

“Ye shall know them by their fruits.”⁸ Ten years after Columbus’s first arrival to what became known as Hispaniola, a young Bartolomé de las Casas visited the island, and he bore witness to the destruction that Columbus’s men inflicted upon Indigenous peoples, including the Taíno.⁹

They forced their way into native settlements, slaughtering everyone they found there, including small children, old men, pregnant women, and even women who had just given birth. They hacked them to pieces, slicing open their bellies with their swords as though they were so many sheep herded into a pen. They even laid wagers on whether they could slice a man in two at a stroke, or cut an individual’s head from his body, or disembowel him with a single blow of their axes. They grabbed suckling infants by the feet, and ripping them from their mothers’ breasts, dashed them headlong against the rocks.¹⁰

Such an account, among many others, tarnishes any claim that Columbus should be considered a hero.

To Indigenous peoples of the Americas, the legacy of Columbus does not resonate the same way that it does with most non-Indigenous Latter-day Saints. Indigenous Latter-day Saints, present and former, often diverge from this traditional narrative because they see depictions of Columbus as genocidal and destructive. In a keynote speech at a luncheon with the leadership of the NAACP in Salt Lake City, Elder Gary E. Stevenson stated: “We do condemn all racism, past and present, in any form.”¹¹ Although he applied this principle to the interpretation

8. Matthew 7:16.

9. Robert Ellsberg, “Las Casas’ Discovery: What the ‘Protector of the Indians’ Found in America,” *America* 207, no. 13 (2012): 6.

10. Bartolomé de las Casas, *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 15.

11. Sean Walker, “‘We Are All Part of the Same Divine Family,’ Elder Stevenson Tells Salt Lake NAACP,” *KSL*, Jan. 20, 2020, <https://www.ksl.com/article/46706963/we-are-all-part-of-the-same-divine-family-elder-stevenson-tells-salt-lake-naacp/>.

of a Book of Mormon passage that reads, “dark skin as a sign of a curse,” the same principle needs to be applied to the interpretation of settler colonialism and conquest.

Shortly after Hinckley’s address in August 2019, BYU associate professor of history Rebecca de Schweinitz collaborated with other BYU affiliates and Farina King, assistant professor of history at Northeastern State University, to organize an event at BYU to further discuss the topic. On October 16, 2019, BYU professor David-James Gonzales moderated the roundtable “LDS Native American Perspectives on Columbus,” which featured the voices of four Native American scholars, Farina King, Roni Jo Draper, James Singer, and Michalyn Steele.¹² The audience filled the room and some people could not stay because the space was filled to capacity, indicating that even among the BYU community, there is a desire to confront Columbus’s legacy. Much of the content in this published roundtable derives from the “LDS Native American Perspectives on Columbus” roundtable at BYU, with additional discussion by Sarah Newcomb, Darren Parry, Eva Bighorse, and Brian D. King, all of whom have connections with Indigenous Latter-day Saint communities. These essays confront dominant Latter-day Saint understandings of Columbus by offering Indigenous perspectives on his legacy and memorialization. While few doubt that Columbus possessed remarkable skills as a seafaring navigator, these scholars denounce his ethics and treatment of Indigenous peoples whom his crew mercilessly slaughtered, raped, and enslaved, and they question the presence of Columbus mythology within Latter-day Saint teachings.



12. See Nathan Wanlass, “Native American Panelists Discuss Columbus Controversy,” *Daily Universe*, Oct. 20, 2019, <https://universe.byu.edu/2019/10/20/lds-native-american-panel-discusses-perspectives-on-columbus/>; and FHSS Videos, “LDS Indigenous Perspectives on Columbus,” YouTube video, 47:35, Oct. 28, 2019, <https://youtu.be/MYaXk65flaE/>.

The Complications of Columbus and Indigenous Identity at BYU

Farina King (Diné)

The Indigenous peoples of the Americas have held their own sets of values and beliefs since time immemorial. Indigenous peoples have rejected the Doctrine of Discovery because it suggests that the United States government is entitled to Indigenous land. I believe that BYU and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints need to recognize that colonial constructs such as the Doctrine of Discovery and the belief that Columbus was sent by God hurt Indigenous people, including students and their communities.

The Doctrine of Discovery stems from the response and action of Pope Alexander VI who issued the papal bull *Inter caetera* in 1493 to justify European rights to conquer and colonize “discovered” lands. Many Europeans like Pope Alexander VI (and Columbus) did not acknowledge the civilizations nor the humanity of Indigenous peoples. The United States continued the Doctrine of Discovery to perpetuate conquest of Indigenous homelands, including what would become the state of Utah, through ideas of Manifest Destiny.

Some Christian denominations and Americans have started to reject the Doctrine of Discovery. Indigenous peoples have called on the current pope to repudiate the doctrine.¹ Unfortunately, in my own church there has been little movement to correct these wrongs. *The Daily Universe* publication of “Education Week: Why Christopher Columbus Matters,” and BYU’s invitation to Clark B. Hinckley to

1. United Church of Christ, “Doctrine of Discovery: The Repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery,” accessed Feb. 9, 2020, https://www.ucc.org/justice_racism_doctrine-of-discovery; and Gale Courey Toensing, “Indigenous Delegates Ask Pope to Repudiate Doctrine of Discovery,” *Indian Country Today*, Dec. 21, 2009, updated July 26, 2018, <https://doctrineofdiscovery.org/indigenous-delegates-ask-pope-to-repudiate-doctrine-of-discovery/>.

present his book—without an Indigenous perspective or rebuttal—reaffirms that the Doctrine of Discovery is still in strong effect.

Columbus was a carrier of extreme violence. We should not celebrate him. Rather, we should honor the survivors and the perseverance and contributions of Indigenous people, and BYU needs to move toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Consider the statue of Massasoit, leader of the Wampanoag, by sculptor Cyrus Dallin on the BYU campus in Provo, Utah. The *Daily Universe* has published several articles about this statue. For instance, Adrienne Andros's article "Indian Statue a Welcoming Symbol" quotes a BYU tour guide who said that "Massasoit was an Indian who greeted the Pilgrims coming to America in the 1600s."² However, the statue distorts memories and histories of colonialism that involved wars, violence, destruction, genocide, and dispossession of Indigenous peoples such as the Wampanoag. Massasoit's own son, known as King Philip or Metacom, sought to repel the European colonists and defend his homelands—he and his people, including allies of Wampanoag, Nipmuck, Pocumtuck, and Narragansetts, were brutally suppressed by the New England colonizing forces. King Philip was beheaded, his body mutilated and displayed, and his wife and child were enslaved and sent to Bermuda.³ These histories are not included on the plaque of Massasoit's statue at BYU. The Latter-day Saint university was established on Indigenous lands—Ute homelands—but there is no monument to them. Rather, many Utes to this day have tense feelings toward "Mormons" or those who affiliate

2. Adrienne Andros, "Indian Statue a Welcoming Symbol," *Daily Universe*, Feb. 4, 2002, <https://universe.byu.edu/2002/02/04/indian-statue-a-welcoming-symbol/>.

3. See, for example, Eric B. Schultz and Michael J. Tougias, *King Philip's War: The History and Legacy of America's Forgotten Conflict* (New York: Countryman Press, 1999), 290. See also Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2018); and Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Vintage, 2009).

with Brigham Young and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Scholars Lisa Blee and Jean M. O'Brien's recent book, *Monumental Mobility: The Memory Work of Massasoit*, notes that "Indigenous people insist on a reckoning with the past and the present that refuses narratives of frozen Indians in a place sanitized of the violence of settler colonialism."⁴ I agree.

While I attended BYU, between 2004 and 2008, I never thought much about how I was occupying and navigating a space with layered histories of Indigenous meaning and significance. I knew nothing about what the lands, mountains, and waters mean to Ute people, and what it has meant to their ancestors since time immemorial. I felt that Indigenous presence was almost invisible, and I had to almost cry out in my classes, dorms, and other campus places to find those who understand what it means to be Native American, or Indigenous.

BYU once boasted the largest Native American student body in the United States during the 1970s. The Church, under the leadership of Spencer W. Kimball, especially between 1960 and 1985, concentrated on American Indian education through programs such as the Indian Student Placement Program (ISPP), Indian Seminary, and BYU Indian Education. These programs pipelined American Indian youth to BYU for their post-secondary education, which catered curriculum, activities, and groups to their needs. However, BYU has since lost much of its support for and even recognition of Native Americans and Indigenous peoples. After interviewing about one hundred Latter-day Saint Native Americans for the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies between 2007 and 2008, I can confirm with testimonies of BYU Native American students that it is isolating, difficult, and even hostile in certain circumstances to attend BYU as someone who identifies as Native American.

I propose an effort to embrace the mantle of education and truth-telling by reinvigorating Native American studies at BYU. Native

4. Lisa Blee and Jean M. O'Brien, *Monumental Mobility: The Memory Work of Massasoit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 118.

American faculty, students, and studies need greater support at BYU and beyond, especially by considering Native American and Indigenous studies courses as general requirements and enabling these classes to reach and engage with more students and people, Native and non-Native. BYU and other scholarly institutions should also prioritize hiring Native American faculty and staff with direct ties to Native American communities. From my experience, I have observed that BYU has not prioritized hiring Indigenous people and that, in recent years, they have not dispensed the necessary resources to recruit and support Native American students and faculty, who are grossly underrepresented at this institution. In 2021, the newly formed BYU Committee on Race, Equity, and Belonging shared a report that acknowledges the need to better support Black, Indigenous, and people of color on campus, and I hope to see the university follow their recommendations with immediate attention.⁵ By hiring Native American faculty and requiring Native American and Indigenous studies as general requirements, for example, it sends a message to Native American students and communities that their histories and perspectives matter.

Perhaps with such changes we might begin to heal through heeding and cease the problematic and hurtful teachings that drive a wedge between us. The Columbus myth continues to repulse diverse Native American and Indigenous peoples and those who understand their perspectives. These interpretations are taught as truths, but they have blinded and misled many Latter-day Saints of all backgrounds from comprehending the complexities and realities of the past and their constant relevance to our present and future.



5. Shane Reese, Moises Aguirre, Ryan Gabriel, Lita Little Giddins, Vern Heperi, Carl Hernandez III, Jon McBride, Stephani Perkins, and Michalyn Steele, "Report and Recommendations of the BYU Committee on Race, Equity, and Belonging," Feb. 2021, <https://brightspotcdn.byu.edu/12/58/d61b3164487da5946d13471e7567/byu-race-equity-belonging-report-feb21.pdf>.

I Am Giving Columbus No More of My Time

Roni Jo Draper (Yurok)

In 2017, the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints issued a statement condemning “white supremacist attitudes.”¹ As a member of the Church who also knows the history, erasure, and pain of my Indigenous ancestors,² I find the continued admiration of Christopher Columbus by fellow members of the Church difficult to reconcile with messages that condemn white supremacy.

I have heard many Saints claim that Nephi prophesied in 1 Nephi 13:12 of Columbus. Meanwhile, the wording of the introduction to 1 Nephi 13 (not the scripture itself) describes the chapter as a prophecy of the “discovery and colonizing of America,” which can be quite misleading. The Americas were not discovered, as they were already heavily populated; thus, to describe them as being “discovered” would be very inaccurate.³ Must it be Columbus? Must “the many waters” described in this passage represent the Atlantic Ocean? For Indigenous peoples, there are many waters all around and within the Americas. We know, for example, that the Pacific Ocean is dotted with islands and peopled with great boat builders and ocean navigators with the capacity to make their way to the Americas. There is no reason that we must accept that

1. “Church Releases Statement Condemning White Supremacist Attitudes,” *Mormon Newsroom*, Aug. 15, 2017, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/church-releases-statement-condemning-white-supremacist-attitudes?lang=eng>.

2. Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846–1873* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2016).

3. See Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York: Random House, 2005).

Columbus is the referent here, especially when we are aware of his crimes.

My concern is that the celebration of Columbus is not simply about an interpretation of a vague prophecy but rather an expression of white supremacy. Defenders of Columbus sometimes suggest that Indigenous peoples are better off since the arrival of white settlers from Spain, Portugal, England, and other regions of Europe. While Columbus retains credit for opening the Americas for trade, this trade has disproportionately benefited white people at the expense of people of color. Both Indigenous peoples, who were never the recipients of the wealth taken from them and their land, and the African peoples, who were deemed property fit to build the New World, suffered under this trade. The early Indigenous peoples were enslaved, driven out, and/or massacred. Their cultures, languages, ceremonies, and ways of life have nearly been lost due to forced removals, the separation of children from their families, the prohibition of language and ceremonies, and so forth, all designed specifically to solve the “Indian problem.” Much of this violence continues today. Reader, please understand that suggesting that the cultures of non-white peoples were “primitive,” “savage,” “amoral,” or otherwise “uncivilized” until white people “discovered them” and “fixed them” is a narrative steeped in white supremacy.

I find it wonderful to read Nephi’s words of prophecy and promises as oriented toward the future still. He was writing of the possibilities available if people lived with the Spirit of the Lord. Clearly not all of the words of Nephi have come to pass, so maybe there are many things still yet to come, and many waters to cross.



Considering the Next Generation of Indigenous Children

Sarah Newcomb (Tsimshian Tribe of the First Nations)

The year was 1984 in Reading, Pennsylvania, and an elementary school was practicing for a Thanksgiving play. Children were on stage dressed as Pilgrims, Native Americans, pumpkins, and turkeys while teachers rushed around helping excited kids learn their parts. I was just seven years old, a small girl with waist-length black hair wearing a paper feather and headband.

As I looked around at the other children, I was surprised to find that I was the only Native American child. Suddenly, I felt alone, never having considered before how I was different. This one seemingly inconsequential moment would stay with me, setting me on a path of endless curiosity about the history of the first people of this land.

In the following years, I would ask many questions such as: “Where did all the people who looked like me in this part of the country go? What happened to them?” I was taught that Indigenous people had not been protected because of the unrighteous choices of their ancestors. I learned about Lehi’s counsel in the summary of 2 Nephi 1: “Lehi prophesies of a land of liberty—His seed will be scattered and smitten if they reject the Holy One of Israel.” I was taught how Lehi’s prophecy was connected to 1 Nephi 13:12, which mentions a sea traveler often believed to be Christopher Columbus, although the scripture never states his name. I was raised with manifest destiny teachings alongside religious beliefs.

In January 2018, an LDS missionary taught me the following: “Lamanites became the Native Americans who were in the Americas when Columbus came and settled the land. That’s why there was no religion established in the land when Columbus came, because the

Lamanites didn't believe in Christ."¹ My people had no religion? This was an offensive and completely incorrect assumption. Columbus settled the land? It was already home to millions of people. As jarred as I felt, I was not surprised. Beliefs about history take time to correct.

The truth about the horrendous actions of Columbus upon a peaceful people is heartbreaking for the Indigenous people of this land. The Mormon idea that the people were not protected due to their ancestors' unrighteousness lays the fault of genocide at their own feet. To say Columbus was guided by God himself only adds to that pain. Who carries that pain?

Indigenous people have long borne the scars of assumptions and labels. Each generation has been raised carrying the weight of appropriated ancestry and interpretations of scripture taught as fact. Changes need to be made so that the children we are now raising do not incur these same wounds. Though these are difficult issues, they are not without hope. All around us are beautiful and determined people striving to improve the world. Correcting these issues need not weaken us but instead unite us as we include and celebrate the survival of the first peoples of this land. Let us be honest in our dealings with our fellowman and show honor to Indigenous children through that.



1. This is a direct quote, not a memory, that was recorded and transcribed by Sarah Newcomb with the missionary's permission.

Efforts to Change the Culture of Columbus Day

Darren Parry (Northwestern Band of Shoshone)

As I approach the subject of the legacy of Columbus, I want to start by saying that we, as Indigenous people, seek to bring light and truth to the world. As a child, I learned about the history of my people from my grandmother who raised me and from my elders. When I attended school, I learned the history of Native Americans from another perspective. As I've gotten older, I realize that history is always about perspective. I remember the quote attributed to Winston Churchill, "History is written by the victors," and I realize why history is rarely written by Native Americans.

Hopefully this is changing and we can learn a more accurate history. In October of 2017, the Salt Lake City Council passed a resolution that declared the second Monday of October Indigenous Peoples Day. Members of the Northwestern Band of Shoshone lobbied the Salt Lake City Council to make this happen. I am currently reaching out to Utah legislators asking them to make the change statewide, and I have received support from Democrats and Republicans.

States across the country are changing, and Utah does not have to be left behind. There are eight federally recognized tribes in Utah, and they all have their own voice. We are trying to bring to light the aspects of Columbus's legacy that were not taught in my childhood classrooms. In essence, we are trying to make Native American history more accurate. I realize that I can't change the past, nor do I want to change it, but I can change the future, and that is why we are working to celebrate the lives and legacies of Indigenous people who live in Utah. Martin Luther King Jr. taught that some of the greatest crimes in history were not caused by hatred but by indifference, and it is time for good people to stand up and make a difference.



Columbus Day and the “Rest of the Story”

Eva Bighorse (Cayuga and Diné)

Fall of 2010 was the beginning of my last year as an undergraduate at BYU studying public health. I had just returned from an internship in Washington, DC with the Office of Minority Health (OMH). The fall semester came with the usual angst of upcoming colonial holiday narratives. “But this is your last year at BYU,” I told myself, “You’re now a pro at managing the dismissive and lonely conversations about Native American culture and stereotypes. You got this!” Then, I received an indelible impression to organize a public educational event on the BYU campus for Columbus Day. The purpose of the event was, first, to raise awareness of the full legacy of Columbus by acknowledging the devastating consequences of his voyage for the Indigenous population of the Americas. Second, it was to generate dialogue among BYU students that genocide is not the Lord’s will. The third priority was to use the awareness and dialogues to synthesize solutions to modern systemic racism of this history. Hopefully, this would create a meaningful and enriching experience for students and faculty, both Native and non-Native.

I sent an email to trusted colleagues and administrators from the Multicultural Student Services Office with whom I had previously worked and volunteered in order to find out how to organize such an event on campus. There was no response for several weeks, until I received a kind invitation to lunch from the Dean of Student Life. The dean encouraged me to organize the event as long as I followed the office guidelines on how to host a public educational event on campus. First, it had to be called a “demonstration,” and second, I had to obtain two faculty advisors and one department chair sponsorship with signatures and the college dean’s approval.

My first request to the history department chair seemed the most logical, but it was immediately rejected with no explanation. My next attempt was to approach the religion department, so I started with my

religion professor. I knew the dominant narrative within the Church regarding Columbus was one of glory, and it was supported in large measure by interpretations of the Book of Mormon and Church leaders.¹ My professor referred me to the department's expert on Columbus, who respectfully declined my request to sponsor the event as he was no longer the department chair, and he attached quotes from past Church leaders supporting his opposing view.

Feeling a little defeated, I turned to a Latin American history professor, Jeffrey Shumway, who offered moral support and encouragement for the cause. As I was waiting outside the professor's office, I overheard two history professors speaking openly to each other in the hall close to where I was standing. One asked the other: "Have you heard about that girl who is trying to organize a Columbus Day demonstration?" The other responded while laughing: "Yeah. I don't want to receive a call from a General Authority in the middle of the night asking about historical interpretation of 1 Nephi 13." It was clear to me that as much as I wanted to give voice to an unpopular Indigenous perspective on the holiday, my own voice was mute. I privately cried out my feelings of loneliness, and I remember questioning my own sanity. *What am I doing? Is this worth it? Am I wrong?*

This experience taught me that I had very few friends in the Church who were able to comfortably talk about Columbus or issues of modern systemic racism. In my final attempt, I walked into Renata Forste's office, who was then serving as the sociology department chair, and gave my pitch. I shared with her the stories of my previous failed attempts to seek sponsorship, and she asked me to check with BYU's David M. Kennedy Center of International Studies to see if they would sponsor me, and if they would not, she assured me that the sociology department would. After working with sociology faculty advisors Carol Ward and Cardell Jacobson, the BYU Office of Student Life approved my

1. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 1 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 91.

application for the demonstration. I had two weeks to plan the actual demonstration and panel discussion, plus I had to keep up with my coursework and weekly rehearsals for a performing arts group.

To my surprise, I felt the most resistance from fellow Native students and staff, many of whom were my friends and colleagues. The demonstration had stirred some discomfort and controversy. The advisor for a Native student club that I regularly supported would not allow me to make an announcement at a club event. And then, a few nights later, my house was egged in the dark.

On the morning of the event, my heart was racing and I felt anxious. The demonstration took place on the front quad of the Joseph F. Smith Building at 10:00 a.m., right in time for high foot traffic. I instructed nine of ten students to lie upon the concrete ground, while one in ten remained standing to symbolize that 90 percent of the Indigenous population was decimated after the arrival of Columbus. Comparative literature professor George Handley showed up the morning of the demonstration to support the event with his teenage children.

History professor Jenny Pulsipher had prepared a table and a blank journal for students passing by to write any thoughts or comments about the demonstration. The event was covered by the local news as well as by Alfredo Carrera from BYU Broadcasting. One passing student commented: "I think this is an excellent, valuable effort. I believe that many are simply unaware of how their perspective of an event has been skewed from childhood. I appreciate the opportunity to be aware and thus more sensitive to the views of my brothers and sisters." Another student wrote: "An excellent, fact-driven event. Awareness of 'our' actions, past and present, breeds understanding, compassion, and cultural harmony." Overall, I would say the demonstration and discussion were a success.

I learned a valuable lesson about intellectual freedom and faith-based institutions. Although the pursuit of truth is Christ's way, by design, truth will challenge faith in understanding God's will, and that is part of the journey.

Time to Let Go of Columbus

James Singer (Diné)

For me, as a Native American member of the Church, I approach the hero worship of Columbus perhaps more critically and apprehensively than the average member would. I was taught that he was a man of God and vital to the Restoration of the gospel. This ideology promotes the supremacy of whiteness and justifies the moral necessity of conquering and oppressing Indigenous peoples and stealing their lands so that settler-colonial society could persist in perpetuity. By itself, this is abhorrent, but moving beyond that and choosing to incorporate Columbus as a part of the Church's teachings is dangerous.

Establishing Columbus as kicking off the events of the Restoration means accepting a kind of circular reasoning that eliminates agency. Here's that logic: "The genocide of Native Americans happened so that America could be established, where the Restoration would take place." This statement, like many things pertaining to Natives, is accepted as normal and coherent, though I doubt other tragic events could be justified in the same way. Imagine if someone were to say that the Holocaust happened so that the Jews could establish Israel. Or that the enslavement of millions of Africans was necessary for the American Civil War to occur. They are connected events, but it is too simplistic to think that *a* directly led to *b* and furthermore, that *a* by necessity *had* to lead to *b*, or even that *a* justifies *b*.

More than once I've witnessed this dubious logic deployed to explain away the suffering of Natives and their near-complete annihilation. To my face, I've been told that although tragic, it was prophesied, and so completely *acceptable*. The Lamanites were wicked, they say, so their descendants had to be destroyed at a later date. Whatever happened to "men will be punished for their *own* sins"¹ and not for the sins of their fathers?

1. Articles of Faith 1:2, emphasis added.

In response, I have detailed the horrific actions Columbus perpetrated, hoping to cast doubt on his assumed role as man of God. Under his command, he and his men murdered for sport and fed the bodies to their dogs, sometimes while the victims were still alive. Columbus wrote about the demand to rape girls as young as nine or ten. To this, I'm told that sometimes God uses bad men to fulfill his word.

Maybe I just do not understand the mind and will of God. I have always believed in a God of love and mercy. I cannot imagine he would delight in the bloodshed of so many of his children and then watch their descendants remain in an oppressed and marginalized position in society. From a viewpoint that all events happen because they serve some future good that privileges the "right" group, it is easy to see the good Columbus did for that group. But ignoring the devastating effects it had on Native peoples means we choose to employ a dishonest and incomplete outlook. The excuse goes beyond insensitivity; it is essentially the promotion of white supremacy justified in the name of God. I believe we, as a church, have to be better than that. We have to rise to a level worthy enough to be called God's church. That's why I believe it is time to let go of Columbus.

In 1978, God revealed to the leadership of the Church that racial hierarchy was undeniably wrong and antithetical to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This truth was so important that it was canonized, making it so everyone could enjoy full membership in the Church, irrespective of race.² That is why I am hopeful that we, as a church, can accept that venerating Columbus as a man of God and necessary for the Restoration is wrong—morally and logically. We don't need a revelation from the Lord to tell us that. He already sent it.



2. "Official Declaration 2," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1978, <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/scriptures/dc-testament/od/2?lang=eng>.

When Unnecessary Overinterpretation of Scripture Hurts, It Must Cease

Brian D. King

I am not a member of any Native American tribal nation, neither do I claim Indigenous heritage. I am a white American, and three of my four grandparents trace their family back to Mormon pioneers. Members of my family created Utah state Indian policies during the nineteenth century. Like many white people in this country, I grew up with the belief that Christopher Columbus discovered America, and like many Latter-day Saints, I believed that Nephi saw the Italian explorer in his vision as described in 1 Nephi 13. Over the years, my beliefs have shifted, and so should the beliefs of other Latter-day Saints.

Regarding my relationship with the Church, I am no rebel. I am a faithful member. But I believe we need to reconsider how we interpret 1 Nephi 13. Roni Jo Draper suggests that Nephi could have seen a Pacific navigator, and I have heard others claim that Nephi may have seen Bartolomé de las Casas, who condemned slavery and the murder and mistreatment of Indigenous people.¹ The “man among gentiles” could have also not been a man at all. Men and women are used symbolically in the scriptures to refer to ideas. The “great and abominable church,” or the “great whore of all the earth,” is not a person, nor is it a church. It is any teaching that contradicts Christ. John of Patmos describes four horsemen in the sixth chapter of Revelation. Again, these four riders are not understood to be literal people. Four is a number that represents the spatiality of the earth, and the horsemen figuratively represent pestilence, war, famine, and death. In Revelation 18:23, he describes a bride who does not keep her covenants. Alonzo Gaskill indicates that

1. See, for example, Russell Stevenson, “Why Columbus Isn’t Who Mormons Want Him to Be,” *Rational Faiths* (blog), Mar. 12, 2015, <https://rationalfaiths.com/why-columbus-may-not-be-who-mormons-want-him-to-be/>.

the bride is not a person, rather she represents the New Jerusalem.² Prophets use symbols to teach theoretical concepts, and there is no reason that Latter-day Saints should not believe that the “man among the Gentiles” was not a man at all.

There is a cost to the overinterpretation of scripture, particularly this scripture. The brunt of this cost is borne by those who are most negatively affected by the legacy of Columbus. He brought disease, genocide, slavery, and land theft to Indigenous peoples. Latter-day Saints who cling to this traditional interpretation are compelled to justify his sins. Native American Latter-day Saints are taught that these things were the will of God. While they are taught that humankind is to love one another, they learn that this Christ-bearer³ followed a completely different set of ethical standards, which casts doubt on prophetic revelation. The gospel of Columbus is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, and Latter-day Saint theology allows a space for its adherents to reject the legacy of the Italian explorer, which is why Indigenous Latter-day Saints seek to revisit the interpretation of this scripture and to reassess the legacy of Columbus. All Latter-day Saints, whether they identify as Indigenous or not, need to listen to these voices and perspectives if they are to better understand their own biases.

2. Alonzo L. Gaskill, *The Lost Language of Symbolism: An Essential Guide for Recognizing and Interpreting Symbols of the Gospel* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 191.

3. Etymologically, Christopher literally means “Christ Bearer.” The suffix “-fer” means bearer.

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"In the Light," 30 x 20", oil on linen,
by Kwani Winder, 2019

Lacing

Tacey M. Atsitty

VII.

Sometimes I kneel down to play a game
from my childhood. Only then can I feel
grains of gravel, each pebble digs in so real.
Sometimes I act as though I am the same,
a young girl, rope in hand, at the tetherball game:
I blare out rule after rule and feel them peal
within me, as though I'm chanting to be healed
from some minor infraction. It's lame,
to say the least, to be kneeling alone

with socks full of holes—so he came to play.
From the lining of his vest, he took out jacks
and a small rubber ball. “You’re not here alone,”
he said before throwing his with mine. “Let’s play
until the sky breaks from the throwing of our jacks.”

Candy Dish Sonnet

Tacey M. Atsitty

Already the heart-shaped dish on my end table
 lies combed bare: long strips dug out
 ===== a cleaning out
 ===== a scratch in grain, table

scraps lain out so comely, meaning to love
 or hold cacao or almonds—those striae
 of protein. *A deep cut*, I tell the butcher,
I'll take the heart as soon as you can give it:

a gift to the first child I come across. Crows
 in trees lean in with every crumple the butcher
 paper makes in my hand—soon the branches
 will be as naked as bone china, and we, like

the skeletal sky, reach out for any sweet filling,
 each drip-drop chocolate kiss staining our fingers.

TACEY M. ATSITTY {atsitty@hotmail.com} Diné (Navajo), is Tsénahabiłnii (Sleep Rock People) and born for Ta'neeszahnii (Tangle People). Atsitty is a recipient of the Truman Capote Creative Writing Fellowship, the Corson-Browning Poetry Prize, Morning Star Creative Writing Award, and the Philip Freund Prize. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Cornell University. Her work has appeared in numerous publications. Her first book is *Rain Scald* (University of New Mexico Press, 2018).

TATAU

Lehua Parker

Uncle Akumu has tattoos. Big, thick *pe'a* lines shout his ancient Samoan genealogy as they crisscross his thighs. On his arms he carries his own story. There's Auntie Lani's name surrounded by vines and *pua fiti*. There's a manta ray and turtle, a bullet with RIP for cousin Ikaika, and something I can't make out that's covered in swirls and shark teeth that rolls over his shoulder and down his back. When I ask Uncle about it, he just says some things are better remembered than displayed.

Uncle Akumu is cool.

When I tell Bishop I want tattoos like Uncle Akumu, he frowns.

"No, you don't," he says. "The Church forbids *tatau*."

But I do.

I say, "I want to be just like Uncle Akumu."

"No, Kilionā," he says. "You want to be like Jesus. Does Jesus have tattoos?"

Of course I want to be like Jesus. We sing songs about how we want to be like Jesus in Primary as he looks down from his poster. Sister Sinaloa says Jesus knows everything, like if you asked him for help with your math homework, he'd know all the answers.

But Jesus also tells you to figure it out for yourself.

Read.

Ponder.

Pray.

I read, ponder, and pray, but I still don't know the answers.

When I ask Uncle Akumu for help, he laughs his great booming laugh. He takes my math paper off the counter and wraps his arms around me.

“Math is hard,” he says and rubs my head. “Good thing you smart.”

He sits next to me and shows me how six times five is thirty. How eleven divided by seven is one, remainder four, and how two goes into eight four times. Pretty soon my homework’s done. Tomorrow when Mrs. Tui calls on me, I’ll have the answers.

Jesus knows all the answers to all my questions, but Uncle Akumu helps me get my homework done.

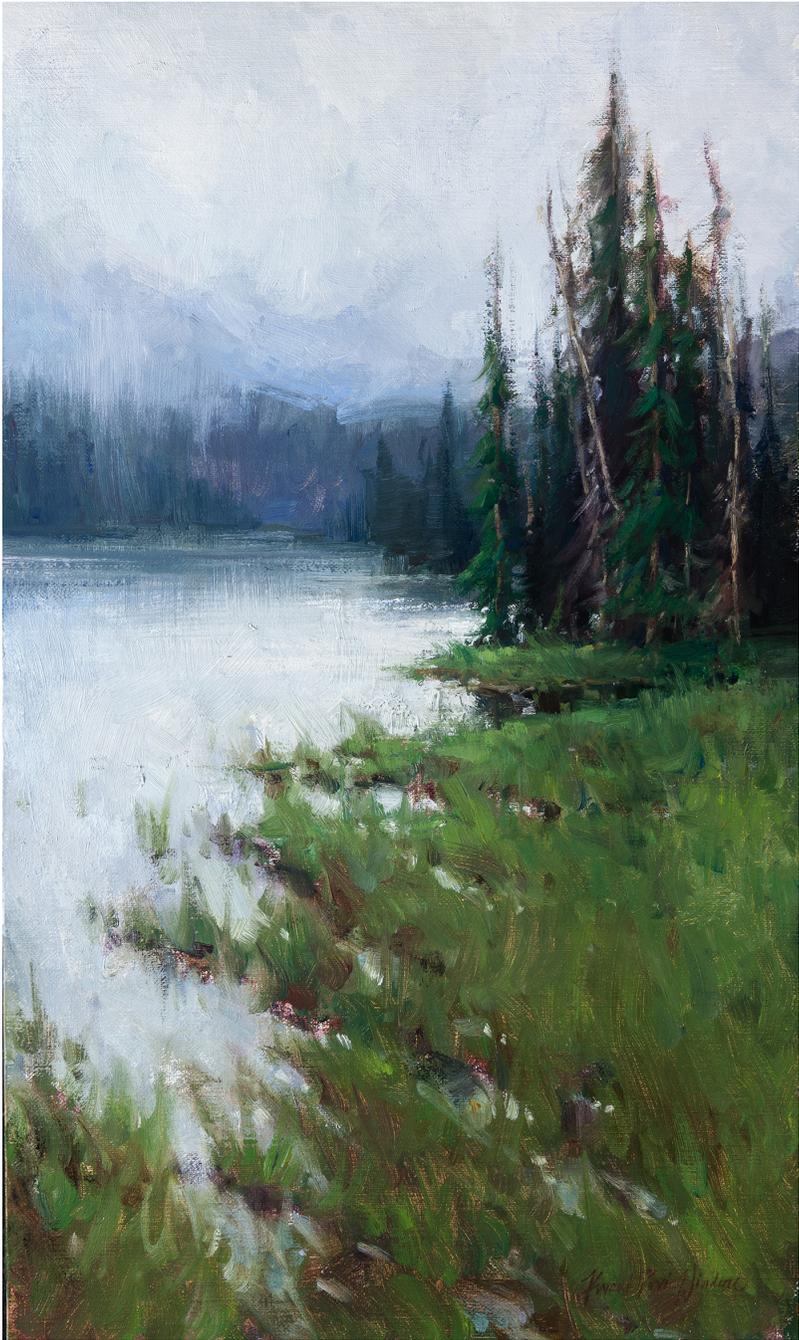
That’s why I want to be like Uncle Akumu, tattoos and all.

Maybe Jesus is really like Uncle Akumu, only we can’t see his tattoos under his red robes.

Maybe Bishop never looked.

THE END

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"Peace Before the Storm," 20 x 12", oil on linen,
by Kwani Winder, 2019



"Gia's Pot," 12 x 9", oil on linen, by Kwani Winder, 2020

Brigham Young Wanted Every Thing from the Indians

Will Bagley, ed. *The Whites Want Every Thing: Indian-Mormon Relations, 1847–1877*. Norman, Okla.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 2019. 559 pp. Hardcover: \$55.00. ISBN: 978-0-87062-442-1.

Reviewed by Corey Smallcanyon

Will Bagley is a historian who has written and edited more than a dozen books on Mormon (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) history and the American West. His best known work is his book *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (2002), which won multiple writing awards. Working with the Arthur H. Clark Company, he launched *Kingdom in the West: The Mormons and the American Frontier*, a sixteen-volume documentary historical series with Bagley as the series editor. *The Whites Want Every Thing* is the concluding volume in the series.

The increasing availability of new sources over time is “the key reason this volume is needed,” writes historian Floyd O’Neil in the introduction (17). With the introduction of “long-sequestered primary sources” such as the 2016 publication of the Council of Fifty minutes by the LDS Church, it would be beneficial for the reader to know what additional sequestered documents are being introduced by Bagley (20, 59). The years of meticulous research collecting documentation from journals, letters, reports, recollections, and much more offer the reader a glimpse into the complex issues with the confrontation of ideologies among the Native Americans, Mormons, and other Americans. This

is not a history to promote faith but to provide a perspective from the people who experienced it.

Bagley makes a bold claim and advertises that the book's "primary focus is on Native perspectives after 1847" to "let long-silent voices speak" (20). The issue of whose voice is actually being used is a concern: Bagley admits that some may not be Native at all, since the "sources, collected over decades, are mediated translations of white records of what whites said Indians said" (20). He apologizes, writing that "if ends justify means" by amplifying forgotten Native voices, then it's okay (25).

The book consists of eleven chapters, which could be divided into three sections: colonization, conflict, and resistance. The book is organized in chronological order, starting in 1847 with the arrival of the Mormons into the middle of Native American lands that the Mexican government claimed control of, and chronicling the Mormons' interactions with the Natives until Brigham Young's death in 1877. Chapters 1 through 10 discuss the interactions from 1847 to 1859, covering at least one or two years in each chapter. Chapter 11 is packed; Bagley tries to cover multiple key events from 1859 through 1877 to quickly conclude the book.

As Bagley points out, "The wealth of available material imposes its own problems" (20). The amount of subject matter that needs to be covered during the time frame Bagley has chosen warrants at least two books. A number of Native interactions that merit coverage are glossed over or neglected completely, including Native-Mormon interactions on the Mormon Pioneer Overland Trail, Brigham Young's Indian farms, the call for missionaries to intermarry with Native women, the various Indian missions, the interaction with the Navajo, the interactions with the Hopi, Brigham Young's time serving as the superintendent of Indian Affairs in Utah, and the Church's multiple attempts to relocate Natives living in Utah onto reservations away from Mormon communities.

In this volume, Bagley reintroduces a greatly debated issue: what is the Church's doctrine and policy toward Indigenous peoples? Here, he deals specifically with Brigham Young and the Natives located in the boundaries of the State of Deseret who were living along the main roads of travel. Bagley shares a quote from religious studies professor Peter J. Thuesen, who told the *New York Times* in 2013, "There's this paradoxical sense in which the Lamanites are both a rebellious and wicked people, but they're also key central actors in the Mormon scriptural drama" (523). Within the Native-Mormon narrative, Natives are divided into the Spiritual and Secular worlds with polarizing views:

Spiritual: peaceful, good, noble Indians; Lamanite brothers; assimilated converts; white and delightful; obedient Indians.

Secular: violent, bad, ignoble Indians; bloodthirsty savages; segregationist non-converts; dark skin is a curse; disobedient Indians.

The Whites Want Every Thing starts with Joseph Smith prophesying that Native Americans were to hold a special role within the Mormon Church. This prophecy was twofold: first, in the spiritual view, Natives were to help usher in the Millennium, the Second Coming of Christ (42). Second, in the secular view, the newly converted Natives were to assist the "destroying angel" in ridding the nation of Gentiles (non-Mormons) by becoming the "battle axe" of the Lord (46). Bagley refers to the latter as "secretive Lamanite teachings," which gives a glimpse into the Mormon belief that Natives were to help lay waste from coast to coast (57, 59).

Bagley concludes that Joseph Smith's hope of having a militarized Native American front is evident beginning with the first LDS mission to the Natives, and even the Church's theocratic organization known as the Council of Fifty was supposedly used to "enlist Native allies" (54). With the Church being pushed farther and farther west, it came closer and closer to Indian country, which encouraged the Church to find the Native group who would help bring in the Millennium. Even the death

of Joseph Smith couldn't stop the Church's twofold mission. Brigham Young claimed that he was then given "the keys of the Kingdom to the Lamanites" (58).

One of the problems Bagley runs into with having a supposed secretive teaching is that there is little documentation to support some of his claims. "What practical results did Joseph Smith's secretive Lamanite teachings have during his life?" he asks. Besides agitating people, "not much" (57). This is not a new idea per se: numerous government officials and military leaders made multiple complaints about the Church's attempts to create allies with Native Americans and use them to attack their non-Mormon neighbors. Since a large portion of the book consists of quotations, little room is left for exploring some of these ideas.

Bagley writes that after Chief Walkara, a prominent Ute leader, died, Young was upset because he lost a military foe, and one of the reasons they tolerated Natives was because "[b]y and by they will be the Lord's battle ax in good earnest" (338). As the hysteria of the Utah War confronted the Mormon kingdom, Bagley states that Young attempted to enlist Native support, but "Young's Utah War strategy collapsed when the raid on Fort Limhi ended his dream of a Lamanite alliance" (456). Once the Utah War came to an end, "Native people joined the ranks of Mormon villains" because they did not follow Young's orders (459).

One of the more controversial statements in the book is that Young's failed attempts to militarize the Natives "blunted the murderous edge of genocide practiced across the American West" (527). This can be interpreted as such; even though one might not see Young as a savior to the Natives, his actions still saved the Natives. Bagley also claims that Young's actions "encouraged the racism that still thrives in Mormon Country." This history created an environment that has allowed Mormons to "erase history" and decry "cancel culture," forgetting its violent past and creating a new mythology that incorporates "almost every pioneer Mormon family" in faith-promoting stories about Native interactions (527).

The more significant question that Bagley asks is: was Brigham Young a friend of the Indians (522)? Summing up Young's relationship with the Indigenous community, Bagley writes, "It often seemed the left hand of Mormon Indian policy had little conception of what its right military fist was doing" (212). Just as Mormons had a binary view of Natives, so did the Natives toward the Mormons. As Walkara and Young tried to reconcile relations, Walkara said that Young's "message seemed heartfelt, but he spoke with 'two tongues and two hearts'" (300). The simplest answer to Bagley's question is, "The sources are rife with contradictions," and in any case, the "Mormons did not spare Native people from the abuse that tribes suffered elsewhere" (525, 521).

This book is a welcome addition to our growing understanding of Utah's Native history and Native Americans' relationship with the Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century. With a large portion of the book dedicated specifically to quoting numerous primary documents from Mormons and Native Americans, *The Whites Want Every Thing* offers a vital resource to the ongoing discussion and debate about Brigham Young's Indian policy.

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Unerasing Shoshone Testaments of Survival, Faith, and Hope

Darren Parry. *The Bear River Massacre: A Shoshone History*. Salt Lake City: By Common Consent Press, 2019.

Reviewed by Farina King

Although Darren Parry claims to not begrudge the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, he does not hold back when addressing the injustices and wrongs that his people have faced at the expense of the Utah-based denomination. The former Chairman of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation's book unerases and shares the story of his people leading up to, surrounding, and following the Bear River Massacre of 1863 through his narrative and attached appendices. While several of the chapters examine the horrifying conflict between the Shoshone people and white settlers, Parry also looks at his family's close relationship with the Church and how it relates to Mormon history. As a practicing member of the Church and a child of mixed European-American and Shoshone heritage, Parry embodies the intimate entanglements of Mormon white settler colonialism and Indigenous perseverance in what is now identified as the Intermountain West.

Parry refers to a variety of sources from historical documents, photos, histories, and scholarly literature. But his most unique and unquestionable source is the oral tradition and stories of his Shoshone people and ancestors. He also shares Shoshone documented sources from oral histories and other private and personal collections to illuminate perspectives and lived experiences of his people that are often silenced and overlooked, including in the appendices. Parry follows in the footsteps of his paternal grandmother, Mae Timbimboo Parry, who advocated for Shoshone history and the acknowledgement of the Bear

River Massacre, one of the worst mass killings in American history that left “more than 400 dead children of that Great Spirit who created us all” (52). Parry and his grandmother are direct descendants of massacre survivors and Shoshone leaders.

European Americans have historically framed the Shoshone and other Indigenous peoples as thieves and lowly criminals. This irony occurred among Christians, including Latter-day Saints, who claimed that they knew the true religion that could bring salvation to Native Americans, who were viewed as “pagans” and “ignorant.” Parry also underscores the “irony that these Mormons, who were pushed from their homelands as victims of hate, would soon do the same violence to others” (30). Intentionally, these settlers prioritized land grabs, dispossession, and removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands. Settlers coveted Indigenous land and justified their force and displacement of Indigenous peoples in myriad ways including the simplistic viewpoint that the land was “wilderness” unused by Indigenous peoples, who did not know what was good for themselves.

Parry’s Shoshone ancestors struggled to coexist with white settlers who encroached and depleted their resources. Indigenous peoples resisted and retaliated when settlers or their livestock crossed boundaries. This is the “theft” that white settlers accused Shoshone people of committing, which they used to justify “punishment” such as a Latter-day Saint bishop Henry Ballard did when he wrote: “‘The Lord raised up his foe [referring to Colonel Patrick Connor, leader of the Army] to punish them [the Shoshone] without us having to do it’” (31). The punishment, however, was an excuse to subjugate and demoralize the Shoshone.

In the Massacre at Boa Ogoi, Bear River, the US Army was the butcher and executer of this “punishment” and violence to crush the hope and influence of Indigenous peoples. Connor’s militia tortured, raped, and attacked Shoshone people in a genocidal affront. Yet, this travesty is remembered as a “battle” to this day. Some communities

have started to revise the narrative, thanks to the work of Parry and others who have called out the human injustice and crime of massacre and genocide, but there are still claims that the violence turned from a “battle” to a “massacre.” It was never a battle. It was a last-ditch effort of desperate Shoshone men and warriors protecting their families and loved ones.

Parry points out the different monuments that have been erected, never by Shoshones but by Mormon settler descendants, marking in stone a distorted history. Only recently, in 2021, did the International Daughters of Utah Pioneers replace the plaque of the “Battle of Bear River” with one of the “Bear River Massacre.” While we debate history and monuments, Parry’s book exemplifies how monuments are not history. They are representations and appropriations of history for propagating certain values of the groups that create and initiate the monuments. They reflect the respective groups that install them—their values, their sources, and their empowering stories.

Sagwitch, Darren Parry’s ancestor and a massacre survivor, nearly begged to join the Church—the same church in which members called for the extermination and punishment of his people. The missionary George Washington Hill initially turned him away, but he later baptized him and 101 of Sagwitch’s people in Boa Ogoi, distinguishing them as Latter-day Saint converts (68). Parry refers to Sagwitch’s dream and prophecy that he would join the Church (67). Some scholars have dismissed this telling of the dream and Sagwitch’s conversion, but oral tradition must be considered and respected.

Even though Shoshone converts like Sagwitch and his family dedicated hours of labor to building the Logan Temple and paid tithing for its construction, and even though massacre survivor Yeager Timbimboo spoke at a general conference in 1926, Latter-day Saints continued to wrong the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation into the 1960s by evicting them from their homes in Washakie, Utah, and only compensating them with fewer than two hundred acres (124). They also set

fire to Shoshone homes during this period to dispossess them of their land (87).

In the appendices, a number of the testimonials include references to how those of Washakie were othered or marked as different, even outcasts, among diverse Shoshone peoples and communities because they were “Mormons” without a land base (126). Parry now embarks on many great journeys with and for his people. As readers, we follow and learn from his connections and sources of these intimate ties that formed through the violence and struggles between different peoples who converged at Boa Ogoi and the ancestral homelands of the *Newe*—Shoshone. And, for many of us, this is the first time that we hear a Shoshone, *Newe*, perspective.

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On Truth-Telling and Positionalities

P. Jane Hafen and Brenden W. Rensink, eds. *Essays on American Indian and Mormon History*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019. 440 pp. Hardcover: \$45.00. ISBN: 9781607816904.

Reviewed by Roni Jo Draper

I struggle with beginnings. I always just want to get to it. However, allow me to take a bit of time to introduce myself before I tell the story of my experience with the collection *Essays on American Indian and Mormon History*. I approached the book as an Indigenous, Latter-day Saint woman, steeped in both my Yurok culture and my Mormon faith—one by birth and one by conversion. I come by my indigeneity via the land at the meeting of the Klamath and Trinity Rivers at the Old Village, Weitchpec, in what it now Northern California.

I also approached the review of this book as a non-historian. Perhaps that accounts for my apprehension, why I procrastinated, why I fretted, why I doubted my own abilities. Meanwhile, I am an educated woman—educated in the Western sense of education, not quite fully colonized—and not at all disinterested in colonization, race, culture, ceremony, and the histories of peoples and pasts that have shaped me and my futures. Thus, I took my responsibility to read the words of the authors with care—for me, for the authors, for my grandchildren, and for you, the reader. I knew that the authors would be sharing stories of peoples and places and events that I hold precious, and I worried that the authors of the essays would distort Indigenous knowledge and intentions in order to preserve the names and reputations of Church leaders. I also understood that the authors might seek to shame the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a sort of recompense for the early and ongoing settler colonialism its leaders and members have

brought, and continue to bring, against the Indigenous peoples of North America. Brenden W. Rensink, in the concluding chapter, explains that the aspiration of the book is to question “settler colonialism, Mormon tradition and doctrine, ethnic and racial issues, and Native histories broadly” (248). Indeed, what I encountered upon opening the book’s pages was unashamed and unapologetic truth-telling.

I will confess that sometimes I plodded through the pages more slowly than I do for my other daily professional reading. I imagine that some of that lies in the fact that the ideas and events and places and people described in the various essays represented new ideas for me. And new ideas take time to consider. Other times, my reading took time simply because of the sheer complexity of the stories being told. For example, Max Perry Mueller shares a story of the encounters between the Timpanogos Ute leader Wakara and the LDS prophet Brigham Young—two formidable men. Their story, like other stories throughout the book, is complicated by how it has already been told, how the already-told story has a presumed hero and a presumed villain, and how the new story doesn’t flip the hero/villain binary so much as it complicates it. And so it is throughout the book: the authors offer their essays not in an attempt to set any stories straight but to offer more to the stories, and usually that means the missing Native voices. Returning to the case of Wakara, more could be added to the story because more records became publicly available via new technologies. Thus, new literacies continue to make possible new stories. I read slowly, took long breaks, sat with stories, returned to new-old stories, and concluded my reading gratified.

The book opens with a proper introduction followed by a selection of poems and a couple of personal narratives by Indigenous LDS people. These pieces grounded me, they set me at ease, and they felt familiar, like listening to my aunties or uncles, or sitting in testimony meeting. I knew I could read them and let the words move through me without judgment, without evaluation, without analysis, and I appreciated the

peace and calm that settled in my body as I prepared to read the essays that followed. The poems and the personal narratives let me know that I could breathe easy here. I read the poem “Evensong” twice the first time, and then twice again every time I returned to it, to notice both the Native and LDS imagery it brought to my mind and how beautifully it did so. I kept forgetting that I had a job to do as a reader and eventual writer of this review, and I grinned in my heart for Tacey Atsitty for that song. And so it was for the remainder of the book.

The editors presented the essays in two parts. The first part they titled, “Native Experiences with the Early LDS Church, Interpretation of Mormon Scripture, and Literary Representations” and the second part they titled, “Native Mormon Experiences in the Twentieth Century.” Often edited books suffer from the unevenness of the storytelling and the feeling that some chapters shine while others offer little of value. However, the strength of this collection is the subjectivities that multiple voices offer to the discussion of histories of Native Americans and Mormons. Moreover, as Elise Boxer points out in the first chapter, “The use of diverse Indigenous histories and perspectives must be included to diversify current Mormon-Indian historiography” (5). And indeed, the various authors deliver on that, presenting histories of Mohawk, Iroquois, Seneca, Ute, Sioux, Haudenosaunee, Navajo, Catawba, and other Indigenous peoples as well as including perspectives from Native individuals from Pawnee, Cherokee, Oglala Lakota, Cheyenne, and other North American Indigenous nations. (Although I will note that the farthest west any author got was Nevada, with a discussion of the Paiute author Sarah Winnemucca.) I appreciated the multiple voices, especially as I moved from Thomas W. Murphy’s telling of the story of the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake to Lori Elaine Taylor’s story of Handsome Lake in the very next chapter. I appreciated the multiple voices again as I moved from Megan Stanton’s account of the LDS Indian Student Placement Program in chapter 10 to R. Warren Metcalf’s account of the same program in chapter 11.

Moreover, instead of being confused by contradictions presented by adjacent authors, I felt comforted by them. Growing up Indigenous, I knew better than to seek one, objective truth; rather, I grew up surrounded by an expectation of subjectivity. I knew well that if my father told me one thing and my gram told me another thing that seemed to contradict my father, the challenge was on me to figure out how they were both right, and not to discount either. I appreciate that the authors of this book placed the same trust in me. I came away from my reading of these essays with a sense of what I already knew—namely, that many LDS leaders of the far and near past view the Lamanites described in the Book of Mormon as a fallen people of Israel in need of rescue and redemption. Thus, the project of missionary work and programs among the Native Americans, as Jay H. Buckley, Kathryn Cochran, Taylor Brooks, and Kristen Hollist explain, is to “gather this scattered branch of Israel to the truth” (190). Ultimately, my reading confirmed that LDS pursuits, including the westward migration of the Saints, were part of the greater American project of settler colonization that included the erasure, assimilation, and annihilation of Indigenous peoples and cultures in the interest of occupying lands and controlling resources. And still, many accounts were shared throughout the book of Native individuals finding peace, sanctity, and veracity offered in the teachings and doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

My reading of the essays, however, was not without frustration. I found myself often wondering about the positionality of each author—their relationship to the land, to Mormonism, to indigeneity. This is not to say that one positionality offers more validity than another. On the contrary, I found myself equally convinced by the description of positionality offered by Michael P. Taylor, a non-Indigenous person, as I was by the positionality of Farina Noelani King, a Diné Bikéyah woman. What I appreciated is that both of these authors let me know. They simply revealed to me their relationship to the land, a fundamental

practice of Indigenous peoples and, thus, I believe, ought to be a practice of those who endeavor to write about Indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, and futures. Here, I will beg the pardon of historians reading this who may be thinking, “Well, that is not how our discipline works.” I would respectfully remind those readers that Indigenous peoples have been around longer than the discipline of history itself, so it may be time to adopt this practice prior to storytelling. I also find reassurance from P. Jane Hafen and Brenden W. Rensink when they explain that non-Indigenous peoples can begin to decolonize spaces by asking themselves questions including, “Who is telling the story and the history?” (xvii). I agree completely. It is time for historians and other scholars to make their positionality more transparent to their readers.

Finally, I end my experience with this collection of essays with my own imagining for future collections of essays. I look forward to more stories told of Indigenous LDS peoples, cultures, and histories. I look forward to those histories centering the lives of women, non-binary people, Two Spirits, children, and people of every circumstance. I look forward to those histories engaging our imaginations around various critical theories that allow us to examine race, queerness, feminisms, (dis)abilities, spiritualities, and any of the other ways that humans might move through the world. I look forward to those histories including more voices and testimonies. And I look forward to those histories including how we can come closer to God, our Creator, by engaging in the knowledges and practices that Indigenous peoples have to offer the world.

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An Excellent Historiography into the Complexities of Mexican Mormondom

Elisa Eastwood Pulido. *The Spiritual Evolution of Margarito Bautista: Mexican Mormon Evangelizer, Polygamist Dissident, and Utopian Founder, 1878–1961*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. 356 pp. Hardcover: \$99.00. ISBN: 9780190942106.

Reviewed by Brittany Romanello

The Spiritual Evolution of Margarito Bautista: Mexican Mormon Evangelizer, Polygamist Dissident, and Utopian Founder, 1878–1961 by Elisa Eastwood Pulido is a commitment worth making. This volume, written as an extension of Eastwood Pulido's doctoral dissertation, withholds no detail as it weaves a nuanced and important history that typically goes unmentioned in most US Mormon spaces. Given that I, too, work at the intersections of race, migration, and Mormonism, I praise Elisa for identifying her own positionality while noting the kinds of historical negotiations nonwhite Church members have had to make. She recognizes the ongoing dualities of those who identify as Indigenous, Mexican, and Mormon without making one person's experience a monolith of representation. She also is truthful about Bautista's moral shortcomings, including his sexism and racism. The book maintains a balance by elucidating his dualistic experiences—of both radical acceptance and mobilization to do good and the marginalization, assimilation pressures, and ultimate rejection by both Anglo and Mexican Church leadership. Indeed, Eastwood Pulido succeeds in giving us a historical portrait of Margarito Bautista that accounts for “his achievements and his failures, his gifts as well as his flaws” (4).

Chapter 1 builds a foundation for the reader by introducing them to religious authority in Mexico. This backdrop, which highlights historical

Indigenous sovereignties, knowledge systems, and caretaking of the land throughout Mexico before European contact, is essential if readers are to better understand the colonial contexts of Mexico before and during Bautista's lifetime and how they intersect with Anglo Mormon colonization of the area. The author gives detailed accounts of how the social and spiritual exclusion of Indigenous Mexicans, beginning in 1519, continues even today throughout the region. In chapter 2, we see how this history shapes the motivations and interactions of Anglo Mormons as they utilized the US–Mexico border to their advantage. Early leadership, including prophet Joseph Smith, saw the Church as a pathway for salvation and assimilation of Indigenous peoples, whom LDS scripture calls “Lamanites.” Early missionaries sent to the borderlands using Spanish Book of Mormon excerpts taught Mexicans about their “true” heritage, encouraging them to embrace being a “chosen” people. Eastwood Pulido describes how this missionary work also led to increased Mormon migration into Mexican colonies, serving two pragmatic purposes: increasing Church membership and allowing white Mormons to escape scrutiny from the US government for practicing polygamy.

Chapters 3 and 4 offer an account of Margarito Bautista's conversion to Mormonism, describing how his worldview and lived experiences were shaped by the legacies of subjugation and violence associated with the Catholic Church. The Bautista family was well known for defending and protecting locals' farms from *hacendados*, who stole or intimidated locals into donating land to make way for Spanish-style *haciendas*, similar to the European feudal system. Bautista expressed admiration for Indigenous rebels who sought land reclamation, and for the Liberation Army of the South, or *Ejército Libertador del Sur*. Bautista found a testimony of the Church, and he also believed that Mormonism could provide an avenue by which Indigenous Mexicans could advocate for reparations from the socioeconomic marginalization they experienced on both sides of the border.

Bautista believed that if Mexicans would assimilate with Anglo ideals just enough, they could mobilize and assert their true supremacy as the chosen people described in the Book of Mormon. Bautista merged his own background as an Indigenous Mexican with the ideas of US Mormonism, positioning himself as an important mediator between cultures. Eastwood Pulido is careful to thoroughly convey the dichotomy Bautista often experienced as an Indigenous Mexican within the Church. On one hand, Bautista was a powerful force in shaping the direction of Mexican missionary work and inclusion among first-generation Church members, and on the other, he was still subjected to the xenophobia, racism, and discrimination of white Anglos while working as a gardener and landscaper in both Mesa, Arizona and Salt Lake City, Utah, which boasted heavy Mormon populations. The author includes many instances in which Bautista is fetishized, exoticized, and held up as a type of model minority Lamanite in Church spaces, while at the same time, whenever debating Anglo leaders about the scriptures, stirring activism within LDS communities, or discussing polygamy, he was minimized, underestimated, or dismissed for that same “Lamanite” background. It is a raw disjunction many Church members or readers from marginalized backgrounds may find themselves all too familiar with.

Much of chapters 5 through 7 continues to describe the complexities that molded Bautista’s experience as an Indigenous Mexican Mormon. Again, Eastwood Pulido is painstakingly careful in her narrative, pulling from not only Bautista’s personal writings (including the development of his five-hundred-plus-page magnum opus) but other accounts of that time period that document Bautista’s rise and fall from within US LDS Church society. Only a decade or so after his influence began attracting many Mexican nationals to Mormonism, Bautista found himself being rejected and criticized for his “controversial” teachings while in Mexico (93). During his mission throughout Mexico, he found that many Anglo missionaries from the US had not bothered to

teach alternate accounts of Joseph Smith's history, polygamy, or other doctrine that he considered the "meat" of the gospel. He was frustrated that the Mexican Mormons were not being entrusted with or given the same access to enrichment, knowledge, and leadership positions considering their divine and chosen heritage as described in the Book of Mormon.

This open criticism and declaration of the supremacy of Mexican members, specifically those who oversaw Indigenous lands and traditions, led to Bautista's increased popularity within the Mexican Church but a fall from favor back at Salt Lake City headquarters. Bautista found himself increasingly frustrated with being used by white leadership as a model minority while simultaneously spoken down to when implementing any type of ideology that would bolster Mexicans' ability to self-govern and establish independence from the US Church. Eastwood Pulido describes Bautista's journey as a spiritual evolution many times throughout these chapters, with Bautista ultimately realizing that Anglo American authorities of the Church would continue to do "little to foster the empowerment that would allow Mexicans to take their place as spiritual authorities in their own right" (107). These chapters show the reader all the happenings and circumstances that would eventually lead to Bautista's personal spiritual revolution, which to outsiders like white US Mormon leadership would look like a rebellion and even apostasy.

The final chapters, 8 and 9, outline Bautista's role in the Third Convention, which would end with a large schism as Mexican Church members left mainstream LDS practice. The US leadership's response to dissidents, who were asking for equal representation and self-governance that would better promote cultural sensitivity and social egalitarianism, perpetuated the same cycle of discipline and excommunication that we have seen occur throughout LDS historical practice. Bautista and many other male Mexican leaders expressed resentment of white Mormon paternalistic treatment of their communities, US ethnocentrism, and

the US Church's interference with Mexican members' political participation in Campesino and Zapatista social movements. Eastwood Pulido illustrates how Bautista's disenfranchisement both from the US LDS Church and, later, the Third Convention, led him to spend the rest of his life in his own version of a polygamous "utopia" called New Jerusalem, isolated from many with whom he used to associate. Despite his shortcomings, it is unfortunate that Bautista's contributions to the growth and well-being of the early Church in Mexico have long been overlooked, if not in many cases completely erased from mainstream LDS historical or social discourse. Most Latinx members I have interviewed in my own research have never heard of Margarito Bautista or the Third Convention, which I find troubling. Additionally, I have seen many times in my life already this same pattern of social activists who were once highly valued in Church communities being rejected and then disfellowshipped or excommunicated when their passionate efforts are seen as a threat to the status quo. It seems that the institutional approach toward those considered Mormon dissidents often results in community erasure unless the caretakers of history ensure that changemakers are remembered.

Overall, I think *The Spiritual Evolution of Margarito Bautista* is an excellent historiography that offers a view into the complexities of Mexican Mormondom. In my own academic research, I have found that although almost a century has passed, many Latinx Mormons are still encountering the same dichotomies, exotifications, and exclusions that Bautista (and many others) documented in their lifetimes. Many non-white members have expressed the same feeling of needing to be model Mormons while being excluded from their right to autonomy, sovereignty, and equity within US Church spaces. With Latinx membership being one of the only areas of consistent growth in the US Church, and numbers throughout Latin America staying strong, Eastwood Pulido has provided Church members and leadership with an important historical record that is as relevant today as it was a hundred years ago. I

hope as we enjoy the complicated story of Margarito Bautista, we will do more than read. I hope we consider the lessons of history by turning inward as individuals to address our own biases, while also reflecting on the ways US Mormonism has historically benefited from and perpetuated practices of racial oppression and erasure. I hope we will commit to listen to those who have been minoritized or marginalized within LDS spaces. I hope we will commit to act as agents for equitable inclusion and change. I hope we, too, will *evolve*.

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Heavy Lifting on Broken Ground

Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman, eds. *Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 443 pp. Paperback: \$36.95. ISBN: 9780190221935.

Reviewed by Michael Austin

Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon cannot quite be described as “groundbreaking.” It covers ground, the editors acknowledge right up front, that has been broken many times before. In their introductory essay, Elizabeth Fenton and Jared Hickman describe the “the clockwork reiteration, at least once a generation, of a specific

scholarly gesture that combines dutiful nomination of and practical inattention to *The Book of Mormon* as an object of Americanist literary study” (1). A footnote to this passage gives nine examples from prominent Americanists writing between 1945 and 2016—each lamenting that the Book of Mormon has never received the attention it deserves and, at least tacitly, inviting colleagues to take up the challenge. The problem lies not in breaking the ground but in figuring out what to do with the ground once it has been broken. *Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon* is a seed-planting book that, if properly cultivated, could lead to bumper crops in the various disciplines of American studies.

Before going further, we must articulate the actual void that the volume attempts to fill. Those of us who spend a lot of time in the corner of the academic world called “Mormon studies” will not likely perceive a shortage of books and articles about the Book of Mormon. What about Terryl Givens? What about Grant Hardy and Joseph Spencer? What about the Maxwell Institute and its whole journal dedicated to articles about the Book of Mormon? I can barely walk through my living room barefoot without stepping on a half a dozen books about the Book of Mormon, most of them based on reasonably good to excellent scholarship. Where, exactly, is the deficit that a book like this needs to address?

The answer, of course, is that there is a dearth of scholarship about the Book of Mormon everywhere *but* the Mormon studies community—including academic work on the history, literature, and culture of the United States. As the editors point out, and as generations of Americanists have confirmed, the Book of Mormon has been as consequential as any text of the nineteenth century: *Moby Dick*, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, *Leaves of Grass*, and *Democracy in America*, just to name a few. But one would not know this by looking at the major anthologies and journals devoted to nineteenth-century texts or by studying nineteenth-century American history or literature at most US universities. People in these fields may occasionally glance at the Mormon migration or read *Angels*

in America, but the actual text of the Book of Mormon remains a mystery to all but the most specialized, or the most Mormon, Americanist scholars.

Fenton and Hickman suggest a reason for this, which, I think, is correct: Americanists don't study and write about the Book of Mormon because its status as a sacred text for sixteen million people makes it dangerous to put under an academic microscope. Simply suggesting that the Book of Mormon should be studied as a nineteenth-century American text has the potential to offend millions of people. And calling Joseph Smith an "author" could set off a riot—albeit a very polite riot with homemade refreshments. Conversely, a scholar who treats the Book of Mormon as something other than a nineteenth-century production—as, say, a work of prophecy or even as a historical record from pre-Columbian America—risks being labeled a propagandist and excluded from the ranks of serious academics. Nobody wants these problems—better to write about Melville and take one's chances with the whaling industry.

A book like *Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon* can do a valuable service to anybody who wants to study the Book of Mormon as an academic text by creating connections with scholarly discourses that already exist. The volume's seventeen essays grouped into four sections come from both familiar figures in Mormon studies and well-known Americanist scholars. This diversity of perspective is one of the book's great strengths, as it both incorporates and transcends the body of Book of Mormon scholarship that comes from within—and is rarely ever read beyond—the cultural boundaries of Mormonism broadly defined.

The collection begins with a set of three essays in a short section titled "Plates and Print." Two of these essays situate the Book of Mormon within some aspect of nineteenth-century print or material culture. Jillian Sayre's "Books Buried in the Earth: *The Book of Mormon*, Revelation, and the Humic Foundations of the Nation" explores how

the Book of Mormon's origin narrative worked in concert with other "buried history" narratives to tie the new American nation to a mythic and magnificent past. Paul Gutjahr, who explored the material history of the Book of Mormon in his 2012 *The Book of Mormon: A Biography*, continues with an interesting coda to his earlier work that documents the influence of Orson Pratt on three early editions, including the Deseret Alphabet edition of 1869. Pratt, he explains, did more than any other person to shape the way that the Book of Mormon looks in print by dividing it into the chapters and verses still in use today.

Though it fits uncomfortably into the section's theme of material culture, R. John Williams's "The Ghost and the Machine: Plates and Paratext in *The Book of Mormon*" may well turn out to be the most important essay in the volume. Williams explicitly challenges the critical maneuver known as "bracketing," or holding questions about the origins and truth claims of the text in abeyance while discussing less controversial (or, at least, less offensive) things. Bracketing has allowed a generation of practicing Latter-day Saints to talk about the Book of Mormon in scholarly venues without having to take positions that would alienate either their fellow scholars or their fellow saints. This move has made a number of intellectually stimulating readings of the Book of Mormon possible by removing obstacles to critical inquiry that some Mormon scholars find insuperable. But, Williams argues, it is ultimately impossible to bracket these kinds of questions in any text. And it is critically irresponsible to study the Book of Mormon this way because the bracketed items are precisely the questions that make it worth studying in the first place.

The essays in the second section of *Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon*, "Scripture and Secularity," all try to answer the question, "What other things familiar to nineteenth-century Americans does the Book of Mormon resemble?" Answering this question is crucial because it provides ways to connect scholarship on the Book of Mormon to other areas of research. And the answers themselves are

fascinating. Grant Hardy, for example, gives an overview of the different ways that the Book of Mormon connects itself to the King James Bible. Eran Shalev explores other works of pseudo-biblical writings popular in both England and America at the time. And Samuel Brown argues that the Book of Mormon breaks down distinctions between written and oral texts and stands with one foot in the oral narrative tradition. This section also includes Laura Thiemann Scales's essay "'The Writing of the Fruit of Thy Loins': Reading, Writing, and Prophecy in *The Book of Mormon*," which extends the above connections in an important direction by comparing Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon to the work of other early Americans who identified themselves, or were identified by others, as prophets—including Ann Lee, William Miller, Robert Matthews, and Nat Turner.

All of these essays show us that the Book of Mormon came out of a culture obsessed with prophets, saturated in the language of the Bible, and determined to connect their young nation to the sacred history they inherited from their Old World ancestors. The Book of Mormon resonated with this culture because it gave theological significance to the New World. It situated America within the world defined by the Christian Bible—which began with the creation of the world, ended with a prophecy of its destruction, and had therefore to include everything that happened in between. The section concludes by pivoting from the fiery theology of nineteenth-century America to its no less flammable politics with Grant Shreve's "Nephite Secularization; or, Picking and Choosing in *The Book of Mormon*," an admirable close reading of passages from the Book of Mormon that reflect early American debates about the separation of church and state.

The third section of the volume, "Indigeneity and Imperialism," is by far its most coherent and connected set of essays. These selections address the fraught topics of race, gender, and colonialism in the Book of Mormon. Given the stated goals of *Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon*, these are vital issues to explore because they

connect to the interests of a large number of contemporary Americanist scholars. Fortunately, the Book of Mormon gives us a lot to work with. For one thing, as Elizabeth Fenton explains in “Nephites and Israelites: *The Book of Mormon* and the Hebraic Indian Theory,” it is the most notable example we have of the nineteenth-century belief that American Indians descended from the lost ten tribes of Israel. Fenton surveys other examples of this theory—such as James Adair’s *The History of the American Indians* (1775) and Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* (1825)—and situates them in a larger discussion about whether or not Native Americans should be included in the human genealogy outlined in the Bible. “*The Book of Mormon*,” she explains, “explicitly takes sides in a debate that extended from the colonial era into the nineteenth century, asserting without qualification that Amerindians are the descendants of Adam, one branch of a family tree extending from a single root” (278).

The essays in this section steer away from making Mormons the straightforward bad guys of the colonial narrative. In “How the Mormons Became White: Polygamy, Indigeneity, Sovereignty,” Peter Coviello acknowledges the problematic nature of the Lamanite story while pushing back against “the reading of *The Book of Mormon* as plainly and conventionally racist” (259). The actual text is more nuanced than that, he insists, as was the behavior of Mormon settlers toward the Native Americans they encountered in the Great Basin, which sometimes, but by no means always, acknowledged their kinship with “*The Book of Mormon*’s surviving remnant” (260). Nancy Bentley takes the idea of kinship even further in her essay, which sees kinship as a major theme of the text and argues that “*The Book of Mormon* joined ongoing conversations among Smith’s contemporaries about the deep history of human kinship in general and of Americans’ ancestors in particular” (234). Kimberly M. Berkey and Joseph M. Spencer use the narrative of Samuel the Lamanite (Helaman 13–16) to reject the argument that the Book of Mormon can be dismissed “as straightforwardly

racist or misogynistic on the grounds that it presents misogynistic and racist persons and peoples in the story it tells” (314). And the section ends with anthropologist Stanley J. Thayne’s description of his interviews with a Catawba woman—and a deeply believing member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—who reflects on the strong sense of her own Lamanite identity that she derives from the Book of Mormon.

The final section of the book—titled “Genre and Generation” to continue the theme of alliterative appellations—is really a collection of essays that don’t quite fit anywhere else. I don’t say this to complain. Most final sections are collections of things that don’t fit anywhere else, and this section contains some of the strongest essays in the book. This is especially true of Terryl Givens’s opening contribution, which asserts that the Book of Mormon resonated deeply with its original audience by redefining the biblical covenant between humanity and deity. Earlier covenant theology, Givens argues, privileged the New Testament at the expense of the Old. Protestants spoke of a “new covenant” that replaced the law of Moses with the grace of Jesus and relegated the rituals of the Jews to types and shadows that foretold the coming of Christ. The Book of Mormon, on the other hand, “fully encompasses and unifies the diverse strands of history, scripture, and gospel dispensations into one” (348).

The fourth section continues with an essay by Amy Easton-Flake discussing the ideals of masculinity in the Book of Mormon in reference to the larger nineteenth-century Protestant conversation about ideal manhood. Next is Zachary McLeod Hutchins’s essay zeroing in on the Book of Mormon’s description of Christopher Columbus (1 Nephi 13:10–12) and making it the basis of an important discussion of genocide and the necessary ambiguity of “revealed truth.” Both the section and the volume conclude with Edward Whitley’s whirlwind survey of almost two hundred years of American poetry inspired by the Book of Mormon.

Americanist Approaches to The Book of Mormon leaves some important things unsaid, says some things that don't really need saying, and it doesn't always come together into a focused and coherent whole. But every edited collection ever published has these same issues, so they are neither interesting nor particularly important to talk about. This is an impressive collection of essays from a diverse group of scholars that does a lot of heavy lifting that has never been done before. Every selection in the volume opens or creates a set of potential connections between the Book of Mormon and the vast scholarly enterprise called "American studies"—and it delivers these connections to the rest of us in the Mormon studies community with the not-insignificant imprimatur of the Oxford University Press. Whether or not the conversation continues—and whether or not this excellent volume of essays helps to create a space within American studies for serious examinations of the Book of Mormon—largely depends on what the rest of us do with the gift.

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A Book of Verbs is Something to Hear

Michael Hicks. *Spencer Kimball's Record Collection: Essays on Mormon Music*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2020. 232 pp. Paperback: \$17.95. ISBN: 978-1-56085-286-5.

Reviewed by Jake Johnson

A book of essays has an upward inflection; it sounds like a question. To *essai*, in French, is to *attempt*. To *try*. But this is not the essay's reputation. Ideals of ironclad arguments, footnoted discoveries, academese, and the red-inked, professorial *careful!*s have spoiled for numberless students the otherwise dignified practice of tinkering in the mind's garage. An essay is less a noun than a verb, and a book of verbs may as well be a thing to hear.

Which is my where my experience with Michael Hicks's latest book both begins and ends. *Spencer Kimball's Record Collection* is new, but Hicks himself probably needs no introduction here. He has written more, and more candidly, about Mormon musical life than just about anyone else. In my mind he is a likeminded ragamuffin—a convert, like me, to a peculiar religion and a convert, like me, to a peculiar field of study. Musicology and Mormonism are more alike than you might presume, and Michael Hicks can't help but force the comparison. He admits in this book that he is a stranger in strange lands, among strange folks, committed to even stranger values of listening, hearing, voicing, and sounding belief. In the rich baritone of this funkier-than-average Saint, Mormondom sounds different.

This is a collection of ten essays that range in topic from hymnals to blackface minstrelsy to *Book of Mormon* the musical to Joseph Smith's playlist. Throughout, Hicks makes a case for listening to Mormonism. Listening to your faith can be blood sport for the unaccustomed. We learn, for instance, how Emma Smith's divinely-appointed hymnal grew

deaf in the ears of Church leadership—her selections of pietistic hymns that bespoke early Mormonism’s preference for an intimate and indwelling Christ gradually losing favor to the militant and jostling tones of revenge, restoration, and re-placement of the post-Nauvoo years. Hicks asks us to consider this sonic example of how shifting values toward hymnody “overrode the woman’s intimate divine impulse.” “That’s how the church left Emma Smith,” he plies, “and why you should care” (50).

There are other honest, difficult moments to read. Hicks tracks the perennial favorite hymn “Love at Home” to the blackface group Christy’s Minstrels’ romanticizing of plantation life. He recounts in delicious detail the whims of Church authorities granting or withholding permission to publish accounts of Mormon musical life (“When you are telling the old stories in ways that differ from the people holding the keys to the files,” he notes, “you are in trouble” [207]). There is terrific possibility in even his subtle acknowledgement that, unlike the situations where we find ourselves, Joseph Smith could hardly be expected to have encountered anything in his displaced and frontier life that would have challenged him aesthetically. “Would one expect Smith to favor music as radical or as daring as his theology or social manipulations were?” Hicks prods, adding, “If he did, would he be drawn to it or snub it?” (23). Given that holding the often radical theology of Mormonism against its often unassuming and quieted worship voice can sometimes feel like a strangely labored task, Hicks’s is a stunning question to raise, leaving readers to imagine *what, exactly, is* the function of the modern Mormon aesthetic if it fails to reflect the complex and entangled ideas it holds together. The question also invites concerns for how perhaps the more potent aspects of Mormon theology lose their sting when the triumphant shouts of restorative possibilities are muffled by the reverence of a four-part choral harmony that always seems to resolve neatly, ever so nicely, in Mormon throats every Sabbath the world over.

Hicks maintains opposition in all things, however, and his humor and good nature buoy the weight of his critical listening. The essay

on Elder Price in *Book of Mormon* is a playful satire of a satire. I guffawed when learning that the font used to advertise the LP *The Mormon Pioneers* was the same one we now associate with psychedelia in the 1960s. But the title essay delivers the most for me. After unexpectedly inheriting his pick of Spencer Kimball's record collection, Hicks uses the material leftovers of a prophet's listening habits to raise whimsical, witty, but nevertheless serious questions about the world-making of our ears. To tell of your musical tastes is to admit something deeply personal, to perhaps risk a great deal—an anxiety that anyone ever granted control of the stereo in a car full of new friends knows well. Hicks asks us to listen to Kimball's listening. By doing so, he asks, don't we know the man differently? What can we truly know of a prophet if we have never thought to know him by his choicest jam sessions? What does Mormonism become when we listen to it?

This way of thinking may be a grind in a faith uniquely held in place by historians, the lay and the professional. In my experience, sound rarely factors into the mix. Hicks's work is not the only nor the first to interrogate the sonic and performative dimensions of Mormonism—John Durham Peters, William L. Davis, Megan Sanborn Jones, Peter McMurray, and others have been doing the Lord's work, too—but largely an *acoustemology* of Mormonism sputters behind the loud engine of its history. “Without that history we have nothing” is how Gordon B. Hinckley neatly put it—a startling admission coming from the living mouthpiece of a loquacious God.

No, we are not nothing in our listening. Listening is fundamentally a *something* for Mormons. Like *Spencer Kimball's Record Collection*, Mormonism too is a book of verbs. This is a religion founded upon a book that *whispers* from the dust. A book first *spoken* into existence. By a farm-boy prophet who *heard* before he *saw*. The tilted ear is what Mormonism first inspired, Joseph's thick tongue its first casualty. Whatever Joseph saw in the grove—and he himself could never quite be sure of those details—the fact of sound has always seemed to me the

longstanding miracle. It is the sonic fabric of Mormon past and present that drapes across those gold plates. *This is my Beloved Son. Hear him.*

Which is how this book matters. “Everything we know is something vibrating,” as Thomas Watson once said. Telephones, gravity, prophecy, Tchaikovsky: vibrations beget knowledge. Mormonism vibrates too. It is *something*. Hicks shows here that its relationship with America is like an extended game of Telephone, Mormonism’s currency in this country trading in reverb—bodies and voices attuned to one another in harmony so tight that “America’s choir” became its brand manager. The Mormon journey across the distance and decades of America is as much an echo as an archive. But we won’t know that unless we look up and listen.

If you haven’t met Michael Hicks’s work, let this book of essays be your introduction. You may be disappointed with some of his findings, but you won’t be the same for knowing them. Hicks moves through Mormonism like a shape-note melody. He is Mormonism’s Eve, whose voice, in Robert Frost’s imagination, modulates Eden’s cacophonous canopy. “Never again would birds’ song be the same / And to do that to birds was why she came.”

It is something to listen, after all. It is something to try.

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“Babbling on toward Ephemeral Patterns”

Patrick Madden. *Disparates: Essays*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. 186 pp. Paperback: \$22.95. ISBN: 978-1-4962-0244-4.

Reviewed by Jonathon Penny

*Alphabetize your
karma, sever your qigong,
jinx your wifi code.*
—Disparates, 134

I want to suggest that *Disparates* is less disparate than it claims to be, that there is a running theme or a coherent message that bubbles up through the macadam of its thirty-one distinctive essays. But I think I only suspect this, perhaps in part because of the recurrence of devices (“dialogues” with other writers) and figures (family, mostly, and a friend or two who make more than one appearance), and a gainly insistence on strangeness throughout: if the collection has a rule, it is the Rule of Un-expectation.

The title of one of Madden’s essays, “The Arrogance of Style,” provides a clue to his overall sensibility: the rhythmic, omnipresent *contreculture* irreverence of the comic essayist. “Up yours, Strunk & White!” he seems to say.

His own style, even in playful departures from already playful variations on standard prose, is the perfect union of Victorian lugubriousness and modernist minimalism, which is *not* to suggest it is the proverbial lovechild of Dickens and Hemingway but is rather a *real marriage*: a tumultuous and somewhat practiced negotiation, and all the more productive for it.

The negotiation, as in “In Step with . . . Montaigne,” is expressed further in Madden’s “dialogues” with other writers. Madden “features” other writers, in much the same way a nineties pop diva might feature

a rapper, playing off ideas he likes, principles that capture or spark his own imagination, and difficulties that score and tend his stubborn play. Anxious of influence, torn between lovers, caught between *scintillae* and the charity of his disposition, Madden “plays” in and with the tension of style as a matter of choice, of intention, and not merely of accident or expression.

Ultimately this is a negotiation or a conflict (though “conflict” is too strong a word: the “play wrestle,” then, of the child uninhibited) in Madden himself. In “*Alfonsina y el Mar*,” he reflects on his own tendency to advise others to “[c]ontrol [their] metaphors” and “give them some relation to your subject, or at least a relation to one another” (59). Given Madden’s assiduousness, his confessed willingness to critique, his own writing feels like a surrender to forces more chaotic and divine, to the creative madness of allusion and the unstoppering of bottles, the wanton unwrapping of chocolates without consulting the key.

Game, illusion, or extended aside, the essays remind us or show us as if we already know what Madden is telling us: we supply the connections between the disparate things—our minds dream up connections, fill in the gaps in a Rube Goldberg machinery in which we are, simultaneously, parts.

For example, in “Order,” the essayist (not just Madden) tells stories, weaves phrases, and follows the leads of language and of life, of life and of language. This is discovery, not invention; this is equally invention, not discovery. I suspect that much of fiction is akin to this in its capturing and dissemination of truth, however unintentionally, and that much of what passes for truth is entirely a fabrication, or lifted from somewhere else: that the deeper truths of human telling are fictions or plagiarisms or both. Even when Madden’s play strains credulity, playfully or confessionally (143), it all *feels* true and of a piece¹ until, and

1. Borrowing, if perversely, from Shakespeare, Madden writes early on, “Your witness *makes real* these words and in effect transports, even (in a small way) *resurrects, me*” (32).

especially when, out of stubborn play, “the essay veers, requires both my and your consciousness to care and to make something” (104).

And the essays *do* veer, requiring something more of us and of him. In “Beat on the Brat,” Madden describes a brutal assault on a developmentally disabled teenage girl by peers and occasional associates of his (104), near enough to slam the screen door on an otherwise simple and sweet adolescence: hers *and* his (though mostly hers, he’s mindful). There but for the grace, we murmur, might we be both victim and villain. The event is marked in a rumination on a labored and half-assed celebrity repentance—a portrait of the essential and sometimes delayed acceptance of growth—but it has changed things, irrevocably (122).

You see, for much of the collection—in “Solstice,” for instance—one feels as if one is inside a complex, sustained, erudite dad joke. And then the joke ends, and shit gets real, and the only comfort to be had is the assurance that thus it has always been, and always will be: suffering is peppered, one can hope, with moments of relief or even jubilation that are themselves real and not figments of some powerful one’s imagination: real joy, real relief, even in and among suffering.

Elsewhere, near and far from me, my fellow beings spun other Poké-stops and attended other wedding receptions; joyed and sorrowed at goals and misses; sat writing staring at other mountains, or oceans, or forests, or brick walls, or trash heaps; made futile efforts to stave off the encroaching entropy. Others danced and drummed and sang, some at monuments long ago constructed to mark the northernmost place where the sun stood still in the sky. Underneath it all, the earth wobbled slightly as it spun unaccountably fast, imperceptibly fast, as it continued its seemingly interminable revolutions, barely noting the significance of once again leaning fully toward the sun. (148)

So while it isn’t true that the book is frivolous/playful right up until the end—“Repast” and “Expectations” are both meditations around Madden’s mother’s life and passing that precede the turn—it feels like it is. Perhaps this is because of the way these middle meditations are framed: against a backdrop of play, protectively, to stem the tears. Perhaps also

because Madden has already called his own sobriety of mood into question: “So what?/So there” (30); and, “Too aware, too intentional, have I become” (45).

But I suppose that groundwork—the core uncertainty that he is ever serious, or ever should be—is what makes the swerve all the more poignant. In “Inertia,” Madden “smile[s] at the incongruities of existence, the recursions and extrapolations, the way experience seems to close upon itself but refuses to shut” (87). Nay, I know not “seems,” I want to reply, grasping at certainty. But maybe he’s right. “Seems” is all we know, and—the ending of this one is masterful—*insisting upon* and *producing* open-mindedness, aperture, and the feeling that one has been invited to a party at which one might be the only guest, and quite possibly also the host.

We arrive, after all and perhaps, with “Chesterton, recognizing/describing/excusing/asserting the essay that ‘does not know what it is trying to find; and therefore does not find it’” (61). These essays—the essay/the *essay*—are embodiments of that principle: we still haven’t found what we’re looking for, perhaps because what we’re looking for evolves with us, in advance of us, and looking back makes that poignantly and sometimes painfully clear. So we don’t stop looking. We can’t. Essays—these essays—“juxtapose / mundane and queer, believe the / weight, reckon the fazing” (128). Incidents of tension and accidents of intention are all there is, even when there’s purpose.

The book doesn’t stay entirely serious once it veers, anymore than it had been altogether frivolous before: “Against the Wind” and “Pangram Haiku” are satyr play, and pleasant relief. “Plums” follows as well, with a little WCW thrown in to keep Shakespeare, Bono, and Seger company in ever-gentle and productive play: there is sweetness to soften the bitter taste of suffering, no more real than pleasure or joy, but always, as always, sharper and louder.

So take it as I give it: shit does, indeed, get real. And then consider that this settling into seriousness feels organic, though it may not be.

Perhaps Madden became self-conscious of the otherwise frivolity of his process and its conceit, or perhaps arrived quite naturally at something profounder—by the very form of association he had been following all the while. Perhaps these materials were already in the collection but dropped in other locations and one or the other, writer or editor, decided that their poignance was wasted where they were, that drawing this collection to a close was like drawing a life, or a screenplay, to an ending: less a denouement than a recognition that serious things live alongside the strange and playful. I don't know. But *Disparates* ends beautifully, the quiet seriousness of the last essays providing the strangeness that has pervaded and shaped the whole, even as they step away from play for its own sake and see in play a way to deeper and more sober reflections, the finding of truths and not just trinkets, even if it wasn't looking for them.

Q: So, Dr. Penny, should I purchase, borrow, steal, download, but in any event read *Disparates*?

A: Yes, and then be sure to send the author all your many questions, the less relevant or apropos, the better.

Or better yet:

Drink the water.

Memorize the lyrics, ideally inaccurately.

Weep when appropriate.

Laugh when natural.

Essay daily.

Enter into joy.

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Call to Action: Hope of Nature

George B. Handley. *The Hope of Nature: Our Care for God's Creation*. Provo: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2020. 315 pp. Paperback: \$16.95. ISBN: 978-1-62972-726-4.

Reviewed by Mette Ivie Harrison

The Hope of Nature is structured with three sets of three (I might be tempted here to make a Star Wars three trilogies joke, but I will refrain for the sake of a serious forum). As a reader, I was surprised at the original trio because none of them attempted to convince me that global climate change is real through a recitation of facts or charts. That does come later, in the second trio, "Climate Change and the Poor," written with geology professor Summer Rupper. Handley explains in later essays that he doesn't feel that science and data are his strong suit. Thus, most of the essays argue that being an environmental activist is consistent with Mormon theology, and then further, that Mormon theology demands environmental action, going back to founder Joseph Smith and the retelling of the Creation story in the book of Moses.

Handley is, in my opinion, at his best when he talks about his own personal experiences. His recounting of his visit with writer Marilynne Robinson (along with poet Lance Larsen), his essay on the Provo River delta, and his final essay about his own engagement on the Provo City Council are strong and stirring essays. I admit my bias here as one who has stepped away from full activity in Mormonism, but I was less engaged with quotations from past leaders of the Church. I found myself actively jolted by quotations from Brigham Young, who is still revered as a prophet of the Church despite his violent racism. It is hard for me to take advice on environmentally sound practices from either Young or Joseph Fielding Smith. Joseph Smith himself is only barely

more palatable to me as a guide to a better spiritual life or relationship with God and/or nature.

Nonetheless, I appreciated the reminder of what were once core doctrines of Mormonism, including the idea that body and spirit are indivisible, that all physical things were created first spiritually, and that we have an obligation to build the kingdom of God on earth. I have written regarding statements by modern General Authorities about our obligation to be stewards to the environment and have been saddened by the political reality that most Latter-day Saints easily dismiss these exhortations because of our faith's attraction to the larger conservative movement in the US since the 1980s. Unfortunately, many LDS have decided that abortion is a higher crime than global climate change and its effects on the poor. When Handley reasonably asks why Latter-day Saints aren't moved by the obvious problems all around them, a part of me wanted to shout, "Have you never heard of *Saturday's Warrior*?" My childhood was blissfully safe after listening to the *Saturday's Warrior* songs dismissing global warming and exclusively blaming Satan for discouraging us from having children.

But really, Handley lays out a more nuanced view of the religious reasons that Latter-day Saints are inclined to reject global climate change in "The Restoration of All Things" (220). The parable of the talents leads some Mormons to believe that nature must be "improved" upon and not left to its original state. Then there is the problem that our view of the future is that the earth will be turned into a heaven. Also, there is the imperative to have children (cue *Saturday's Warrior*), so that is a priority over stewardship of the earth. Then, finally, many Mormons consider hastening the end of the world to be important work, as it is understood to be a form of ushering in the Millennium.

On the other side, Handley argues that there are doctrinal or theological reasons for Latter-day Saints to champion environmental

activism. The earth and humans and God are all “interwoven” spiritually and temporally, and thus the earth should be treated with respect as another spiritual creation of God, equal to humanity. Furthermore, it is wrong for some people to use up resources that others have no access to, especially if we are truly asked to embrace the law of consecration. King Benjamin’s speech reminds us that we are nothing in comparison to God, and to nature. We should be humbled by it instead, and our free will must be used to enact stewardship. Then there are “selfish” reasons, such as the pleasure of being in nature, and the warning that the end is near, which means that we will be called to account for our sins, including those against nature itself.

Overall, I found the arguments of the book to be persuasive. If I have one major complaint, it is the dearth of female voices quoted throughout the text. In the first trio of essays, I could not find any women quoted (though they are in footnotes). Later, in the essay with Rupper, we hear from more women, and Marilynne Robinson is quoted. I find myself frequently frustrated with this problem among progressive Mormon men and also progressive ex-Mormon or post-Mormon men. There is not enough reflection on what angle of truth is perpetuated. I feel like this may be my hobbyhorse, and people may tire of me bringing it up over and over again, but it’s true: women need to be quoted and treated as equal sources and authorities in every way, including in academics, history, and environmental science.

It took me some time to figure out who the intended audience of this book was, because it seemed clear to me that those who do not believe in global climate change or in being responsible stewards of the planet are unlikely to read it. Handley seems to be speaking exclusively to the small choir of Latter-day Saints who are committed to environmental issues. It only became clear to me in the last essay, “The Blessings and Paradoxes of Environmental Engagement,” that although Handley is speaking to this choir, he is also trying to get them/us to see

that local engagement in politics and engagement with those we see as being on “the other side” is the only way that change can be made. And this call to action is something I am still sitting with.

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Delightful Futuristic Mormon Morality Tale Offers Teaching Tool for Progressive Parents

Matt Page. *Future Day Saints: Welcome to New Zion*. Self-published, 2020. 58 pp. Hardcover: \$25.00. Color illustrations.

Reviewed by Christopher C. Smith

After his death and resurrection on Earth, Jesus Christ traveled to New Zion—a planet in the Kolob star system—and appeared to its six-eyed alien inhabitants, whom he named the Othersheep. He explained to the Othersheep that they had been created by Celestial Parents, and that on other worlds throughout the galaxy lived celestial siblings who would one day emigrate to New Zion. He commanded them to prepare the world for their siblings’ arrival (3). The first ship to arrive, in the year 2806, brought green-skinned creatures from the planet Siro. Nine more groups of alien emigrants followed, until the last arrived in 2841 bearing Earth’s humans (4–7).

Such is the premise of Matt Page's self-published graphic novel *Future Day Saints: Welcome to New Zion*. Less a novel than a collection of short stories set in the same universe, *Future Day Saints* includes maps, coloring pages, a line maze, and full-page teasers for a graphic novel series and toy line. It's unclear how seriously Page means for us to take the toy ads, since he also includes a full-page ad for a vinyl ska album by the band "Adam-Ondi-Skaman," with a release date of 12/2/2929.

The coloring pages imply a young target audience, and *Future Day Saints* is appropriate for children. Page's past work has exhibited a dark sense of humor, and his illustrations have sometimes included tiny penises. No penises appear in *Future Day Saints*, although the Satan character "Morning Star" bears an ambiguous nubbin in his groin area (16). The book contains no adult language and only bloodless violence. The heroes explicitly telegraph that they would never kill a spirit brother or sister, though they don't mind leaving a scar or two (39).

Though appropriate for children, *Future Day Saints* offers plenty to engage an adult Mormon reader. Clever Mormon inside jokes sprinkle its pages. The book's heroes include a being called "Triple Combination": a three-headed person in Native American garb who serves as New Zion's official record-keeper (13). Its villains include Mister Cain, who in keeping with Mormon folklore is tall, hairy, and Bigfoot-like (16). Another villain, Natural Man, is a "compulsive liar with no moral compass" and a suspiciously presidential yellow toupee. Kinderhook, a "sentient hole in the universe," is incapable of shaking your hand; but if you offer, he'll always try (17).

Future Day Saints's progressive Mormon ethos will be familiar to *Dialogue* readers. It celebrates the diversity of emigrants to New Zion, with each group of arrivals having its own distinctive body shape and variety of skin tones. The third group to arrive, the Starlings, are one-and-a-half feet tall. The fifth group, the MooNees, are all arms and mouth. "Their unusual appearance made the New Zionites reconsider the meaning of the ancient teachings that the Celestial Parents had created all beings in their image" (5). The seventh group, the Gazelem,

“don’t eat, drink, or communicate verbally” and lack “any distinct gender variations” (6). Most fun of all are the Selasi. Every Selasi individual has “a distinctly different appearance,” including a Liahona-shaped person, a beehive-shaped person, and a person in the shape of gold plates (7–8).

Page explicitly treats this variety as “beautiful and diverse” (8). One short comic portrays children of the various peoples attending school together, and another shows the family tree of a half-human, half-Othersheep person (8–9). The resurrected Christ, we learn, appeared to the people of each world in their own body shape, though in every shape his body bore the crucifixion’s wounds (3, 11). A full-page illustration shows a human man and his daughter at an art gallery, looking at paintings from each culture showing Christ in different body shapes. “But which one is right?” asks the daughter. “They all are,” her father replies (11).

One short comic offers a futuristic spin on the old folktale of the incognito Christ. A human man gives his last crust of bread to a hungry Starling. The Starling eats his fill and then gives back the remainder, which is somehow enough to sate the human’s hunger. Later the human meets the same Starling, who is dehydrated from thirst, and gives him water. The Starling offers the cup back, and it forever after slakes the human’s thirst. After a few more such encounters, the Starling eventually is unjustly imprisoned and asks the human if he would be willing to die in his place. The human says yes, and the Starling reveals himself as the resurrected Christ and praises the human for his charity to a stranger (43–49).

Another parable warns of the dangers of blind obedience to Church leaders. One of New Zion’s heroes is the Good Bishop, a “sincere and easygoing” religious leader who sincerely wants to help his parishioners. “You can trust him with your secrets and with your life.” Unfortunately, one of New Zion’s villains is the Bad Bishop—the Good Bishop’s perfect doppelgänger. The Bad Bishop cannot be trusted, and he poses as the Good Bishop to fool people and to lead them into dangerous situations. It’s critical, then, to avoid blind faith and to trust your feelings when dealing with leaders (15, 40).

Thus, in addition to being fun for both children and adults, *Future Day Saints* may also offer a powerful teaching tool for progressive Mormon parents. Its heartwarming morality tales offer a helpful balance to some of the one-sided tribal authoritarian ideas that children may encounter at church. In this way, the book far exceeded my expectations. Page's vision of a possible Mormon future is achingly beautiful, and not just because of his skillful art.

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Poetry as Ceremony

Tacey M. Atsitty. *Rain Scald: Poems*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018. 88 pp. Paperback: \$18.95. ISBN: 978-0-8263-5867-7.

Reviewed by Michael P. Taylor

*O Holy People, show me how I am human,
how I am soon to sliver. Stay please, for woman
or man's sake. Succor me from a telestial state,
where I long to be self-luminous in a slate
of granite. How easily I fall to shards, a hand*

left to wane ungathered.

—Tacey M. Atsitty, “Evensong III”

In August 2018, I had the honor to sit down with Tacey M. Atsitty (Diné) and discuss her debut book of poems, *Rain Scald*. Among other things, we discussed her path to poetry, her poetic process, her imagined

audience, thematic through lines in her work, and her emergence as a poet of note within the ever-expanding field of Native American and Indigenous poetry. Throughout our conversation, she emphasized her responsibilities to her Diné and broader Indigenous communities, her devotion to her faith, and her commitment to her craft. As she described, “Even though I’m a Native writer, I’m a woman writer, I’m a Mormon writer, I’m just a writer. . . . I’m just a poet.” Despite the humility with which Atsitty articulates herself, *Rain Scald* is anything but just another book of poems. “Poetry,” she explained to me, “is language, and language is what was used to form this world.” She continued, “I see poetry as ceremony.”¹ Indeed, *Rain Scald* invites readers into an intricate, simultaneously painful and resiliently beautiful ceremony of creation, of being and becoming human.

Since this initial conversation, I have read and discussed *Rain Scald* alongside undergraduate and graduate students, literary scholars, and Indigenous community members, each experiencing a uniquely individual ceremony, inviting us to reconsider our understandings of language and land, repentance and revelation, sexuality and spirituality. All the while, Atsitty has conducted readings of her poetry across the country, from her alma maters of the Institute of American Indian Arts, Brigham Young University, and Cornell University to an ever-increasing itinerary of COVID-19-induced virtual readings. Alongside her readings, her poems continue to be featured in flagship online and print journals and literary anthologies, including *New Poets of Native Nations* (Graywolf Press, 2018), edited by Heid E. Erdrich (Ojibwe), and *When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry* (Norton, 2020), edited by Joy Harjo (Mvskoke). Atsitty is currently a PhD student in the creative writing program at Florida State University.

1. Interview with author, August 2018.

Rain Scald is organized into three sections: Tséyi' (Deep in the Rock), Gorge Dweller, and Tóhee' (a Navajo ceremony used for calling rain). In each section, Atsitty moves fluidly through poetic forms and languages—English and Diné Bizaad (the Navajo language)—free from didactic agendas or generic limitations. She interlaces allusions to Navajo stories and practices with LDS primary songs and sacred spaces, providing informative notes to guide readers through her intermixing of cultural and religious identities. In each section, Atsitty writes with a certain graceful force that is at the same time both jarring and healing, allowing readers entrance into a self-determining world within which Atsitty's—to some—contradictory identities and worldviews engage in procreative tension and transformation. As she describes, "I don't sit down and say, I'm writing for my people. Not Navajos, not Mormons, not women. . . . Not academics. . . . I write for me. I use the language that is most true to the experiences, or the most beautiful to express the experiences I'm writing about."² In other words, *Rain Scald* is not a decolonial text that focuses heavily on the structures and systems of settler colonialism. As Atsitty described to me, her poetry is perhaps not what academics are looking for to support their decolonial critiques. Instead, *Rain Scald* "is just an Indigenous story. It's a human story." Atsitty's forty-two-poem story delicately sutures together her experiences of being Diné, Mormon, and a woman, but above all, as her concluding poem, "Evensong," so wonderfully attests, of being human.

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2. Interview with author, August 2018.



"First Frost," 9 x 12", oil on linen panel,
by Kwani Winder, 2019

JESUS CHRIST, ESQ.

Jason R Steffen

I begin in the New Testament, in the book of 1 John, a text written by someone presumed to be John the Beloved:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.¹

I want to focus on one word in particular: *advocate*. The original Greek word in this verse in John is *paraklétos*, one translation of which is a defense attorney.² The Latin cognate of *paraklétos* is *advocatus*: “one called to aid (another),”³ from which we get the English *advocate* as well as the French and Spanish words for lawyer: *avocat* and *abogado*.

One could, therefore, say that John is describing Christ as a defense attorney.

I like this because I am by profession a public defender—that is, a criminal defense attorney appointed by the court to represent those who cannot afford to hire counsel for themselves. It is surprising to hear Christ referred to as a lawyer, though, because I am aware that lawyers are not universally loved—especially those who defend accused criminals. This seems to have been the case even in Jesus’ time, as lawyers,

1. 1 John 2:1–2, NIV.

2. See Blue Letter Bible, s.v. “Strong’s G3875 – paraklétos,” <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?t=kjv&strongs=g3875>.

3. Online Etymology Dictionary, s.v. “advocate (*n.*),” <https://www.etymonline.com/word/advocate>.

together with Pharisees, are considered hypocrites.⁴ In the Book of Mormon, lawyers fare no better—for example, Alma says that the people of Ammonihah are in danger of destruction in part because of their wicked lawyers.⁵

So why would John use a term (*paraclétos*) that could be understood by the readers of his day to refer to a lawyer when describing the role of Jesus Christ?

Moreover, this is not an aberration, for there are quite a few scriptural references to Christ as *advocate* in contexts that sound decidedly legalistic. For example, Moroni says that Christ “hath answered the ends of the law . . . wherefore he advocateth the cause of the children of men.”⁶

Indeed, the more I think about this, the more I like the idea of Christ being a lawyer—and not just any lawyer, but *my* lawyer. To understand why, let me briefly explain one aspect of what I do as a defense attorney.

If you know anything about the legal system in our country, it will not surprise you to learn that most people who are charged with a crime end up pleading guilty, meaning they admit to having broken a law. When this happens, they are then sentenced by a judge—in other words, the judge explains what will happen to the person who has broken the law. This takes place at what is called a sentencing hearing.

In some cases, the sentencing hearing is a mere formality because the parties have agreed beforehand about the defendant’s sentence. For example, the defendant might have agreed to serve exactly sixty months in prison, and so all the judge does is formally impose those sixty months. There are no surprises, and my job is just to stand there and make sure that the agreement we reached is followed.

4. See, e.g., Luke 11:46.

5. Alma 10:27.

6. Moroni 7:28.

In other cases, however, the defendant goes into the sentencing hearing not knowing exactly what is going to happen. In those cases, my job is to try to convince the judge to give the defendant a sentence that is less severe than what the prosecutor has demanded. For example, the prosecutor might argue that the defendant should go straight to prison, but I argue that he should be put on probation instead.

When I am advocating in this way on behalf of my clients, I frequently focus on what kind of person they are, what their background is, what challenges they are facing in life. Remember, the person at this point has admitted to doing something wrong, so the facts of the case are not in dispute. The only question is what should happen to the person.

It is very common that I will say something along the following lines: Judge, my client did get caught with the drugs. But what you need to understand is that she was introduced to drugs by her parents when she was ten years old, and she's been addicted to them ever since. She also suffers from mental illness. But look at what she's done. She's held down a job for a year, she's gone through two different drug treatment programs, and she's been off drugs for over three months. Three months might not seem like a lot of time, Your Honor, but considering her history, that's a big step.

And then I ask the judge to give her less jail time, or put her on probation, or whatever it is that we hope the judge will do in that particular case.

The bottom line is that part of my job is advocating for mercy on behalf of my clients based on their circumstances, their history, the kind of person they are. As the renowned criminal defense attorney Bryan Stevenson puts it, "Each of us is more than the worst thing we've ever done,"⁷ and my job is to explain to the judge what that "more" is.

7. Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 18.

So now that I've told you a little bit about what I do for a living, let me explain why I think this can help us understand something of what the scriptures mean when they speak of Christ as an advocate—in effect, a defense attorney.

Consider that the scriptures speak of God as a judge: at “the great and last day,” Jesus tells the Nephites, “all people, and all kindreds, and all nations and tongues shall stand before God, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil.”⁸

But just as people who are brought before a judge in Minnesota have the right to a licensed Minnesota attorney to advocate for them, likewise, when we stand before the bar of God to be judged, we do not have to stand alone—for Christ stands with us, as our advocate.

To understand how this helps us, consider that a good defense attorney will both know and care about his or her client. If I don't know anything about my client, then I'm not going to be able to make a convincing argument to the judge that this person has redeeming qualities that should keep her out of prison. And if I don't care about her at all, then I'm probably not going to sound very convincing when I give the judge this information.

Christ certainly knows us better than anyone else could. He knows us even better than we know ourselves. Everything we have felt, he has felt; everything we have suffered, he has suffered: “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . . Surely he hath borne *our* griefs, and carried *our* sorrows.”⁹ On my best days, I as an earthly lawyer can feel empathy for a client whose life experiences I have some understanding of. But I could never approach the depth of understanding that Christ has for each of us. And while I try to care about my clients' welfare, I could never love them the way Christ loves each of us. He wants nothing more than to spare us punishment for

8. 3 Nephi 26:4.

9. Isaiah 53:3–4; Mosiah 14:3–4.

our sins. There are many times when I wish I could spare my clients the punishment required by the law. But, frankly, I don't feel this in every case. And here is another difference between a worldly lawyer and Christ our Advocate: his boundless love for us, his charity, truly will never fail.

Moreover, Christ will never abandon us. As a lawyer, once I close a client's case, I sometimes don't think much about them anymore. This is partly because I have so many cases that I can't realistically remember every one that crosses my desk. But sometimes it is a conscious act of abandonment; on my worst days, I tell myself, "I'm glad it's not me—and anyway, that guy got what he deserved." By contrast, Jesus Christ will never forget us, never give up on us. He knows that none of us really deserve his grace, in the sense that we could never merit it by our works. And instead of thinking "I'm glad it's not me," he makes our problems his problem. He makes our punishment his punishment. He steps between us and the executioner, taking upon himself the "demands of justice."¹⁰ And he does this because he loves us.

To make this more personal, I ask you to imagine with me that you have passed away and are brought "before the pleasing bar" of God to be judged.¹¹ My caveat is that while I am going to imagine this as a literal courtroom, this is of course a human conceit. There is a lot we don't know about the final judgment. There is certainly a lot we don't understand. The scriptures are not even always consistent about exactly who is doing the judging—for example, Christ is mentioned as both an advocate and a judge. Nevertheless, while I want to be clear that this is just a way of imagining what must be an experience beyond mortal comprehension, I think this is a useful exercise to think about our relationship with Christ and his role as an advocate.

10. 2 Nephi 9:26; Alma 42:15.

11. Moroni 10:34.

So let's use our imagination. I picture myself in a heavenly courtroom. The judge's clerk and court reporter are, of course, angels; there is a bailiff who might be the archangel Michael, holding a flaming sword. God himself is seated in the judge's seat—instead of a black robe as in a human courtroom, he wears a holy robe of purest white. I picture myself sitting at the defense table. I imagine God saying something like, "Mr. Steffen, please rise. You have been accused of sinning against me." Now note that while in earthly courts there is a prosecutor to offer the condemnation of the accused, God has no need for this because, as Alma puts it, "our words will condemn us, yea, all our works will condemn us . . . and our thoughts will also condemn us; and in this awful state we shall not dare to look up to our God."¹² That is, we condemn ourselves—even the most vain among us will be forced to recognize their "nothingness" when they come face-to-face with God.¹³

So there I stand, unable even to look at my Father in Heaven as he reminds me of the evidence against me—as he reads a complaint listing all the things I have done wrong in my life—all my sins and shortcomings, all the ways I have chosen to cut myself off from his presence. And then I imagine him saying, as earthly judges do, "How do you plead?" which is just to say, "What do you have to say for yourself?" And I, of course, have no recourse to say anything other than the truth: "I am guilty!" There is nothing I can say that will change what I have done: the people I have hurt, the opportunities I have wasted. Overwhelmed by the consciousness of my own failings, I feel the force of Alma's words: "we must come forth and stand before him in his glory, and in his power, and in his might, majesty, and dominion, and acknowledge to our everlasting shame that all his judgments are just."¹⁴

12. Alma 12:14.

13. Mosiah 4:11; Moses 1:10.

14. Alma 12:15.

At that very moment, as I realize I have nothing to say to justify myself, no reasonable claim to innocence, just as I am about to drown in the despair of the damned, I feel Christ putting his hand on my shoulder. I realize he has been seated next to me in this heavenly courtroom at the defense table, and he now stands and whispers, “Let me handle this,” and then addresses the Father on my behalf.

“This man is my brother,” Christ says, “and I know him well.” He proceeds to tell God all there is to know about me—not just about my sins, but also my good works; not just my failures, but my triumphs. He will say something like, “I know he doesn’t look like much, and he hasn’t done very much, and his progress wasn’t as great as others’—but his heart was in the right place, and he had to repent so many times, he became quite good at it!” He will remind my Father of all the times I tried so hard to keep that one particular commandment, even though I never quite succeeded. He will ask God to consider all those hours I spent praying and studying the scriptures and serving in the Church, even though my prayers were never very powerful, my knowledge of the scriptures never very deep, and my service modest at best.

And then, because those few good works fall far short, finally Christ will get to the most important part, which is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants section 45: “Father, behold the sufferings and death of him who did no sin, in whom thou was well pleased; behold the blood of thy Son who was shed, the blood of him whom thou gavest that thyself might be glorified. Wherefore, Father, spare [this] my br[other] that believe[s] on my name, that [he] may come unto [us] and have everlasting life.”¹⁵

And I realize in that moment that Christ’s role as an advocate goes so far beyond just knowing me, caring about me, and standing with me—though of course it includes all of those things. Christ cares so much about me as his “client” in that heavenly courtroom that he is

15. Doctrine and Covenants 45:4–5.

willing to condescend to come to earth, live as a mortal man, suffer in the Garden of Gethsemane and then on the cross, all so that I could be spared the “demands of justice.” And he did this, not just for me, but also for you.

And so, with Jesus’ hand still on my shoulder, and with tears in my eyes, I imagine God looking down at us and smiling, and saying to us both, “I find the defendant, Mr. Steffen, innocent through the blood of his Advocate and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

So as followers of Christ, let us repent, let us have faith, and let us be grateful for our Savior, who takes upon himself our sins, our weaknesses, our crimes—and through whose sacrifice alone we can hope to be acquitted and recommended to God.

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"Forgotten," 8 x 10", oil on linen, by Kwani Winder, 2020

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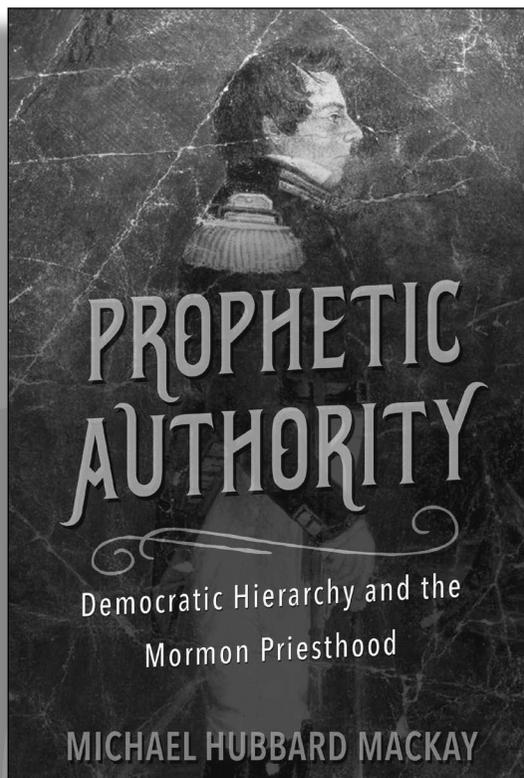


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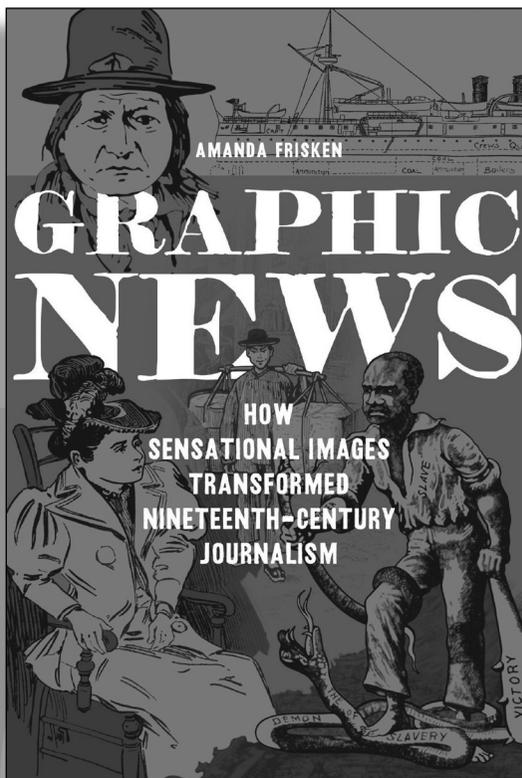
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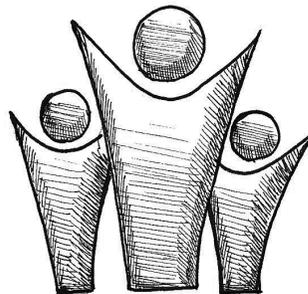
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Women, Gender, and Families of Color

Women, Gender, and Families of Color is a multidisciplinary journal that centers on the study of Black, Latina, Indigenous, and Asian American women, gender, and families. Within this framework, the journal encourages theoretical and empirical research from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and humanities including comparative and transnational research, and analyses of domestic social, political, economic, and cultural policies and practices within the United States.

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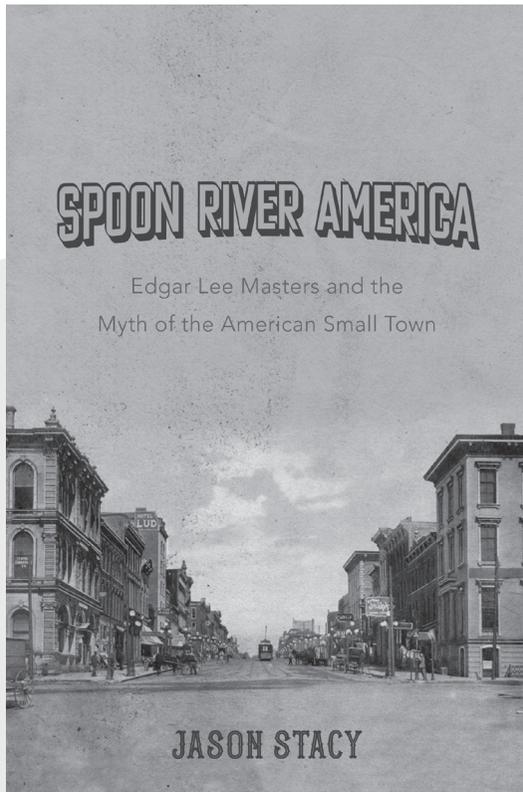


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