

By holding the U.S. government and U.S. churches accountable for boarding school abuses, Native peoples have an opportunity to demand adequate funding for healing services. Survivors should make their demands now, because the U.S. government is cutting tribally controlled education and social services programs and state governments are increasingly supporting "English-only" laws, which threaten the survival of indigenous languages.

We could also use a reparations framework to demonstrate that "services" provided by the U.S. government (health care, public assistance, education, etc.) are not services to be taken away in times of economic crisis or otherwise. Rather, these are reparations owed to communities of color for human rights violations on the part of the U.S. To make such radical demands effectively, it is clear that we need a global reparations movement that unites all colonized peoples.

## Chapter 3

# Rape of the Land

As discussed in Chapter 1, Native peoples have become marked as inherently violable through a process of sexual colonization. By extension, their lands and territories have become marked as violable as well. The connection between the colonization of Native people's bodies — particularly Native women's bodies — and Native lands is not simply metaphorical. Many feminist theorists have argued that there is a connection between patriarchy's disregard for nature, women, and indigenous peoples. The colonial/patriarchal mind that seeks to control the sexuality of women and indigenous peoples also seeks to control nature. Jane Caputi states:

Violence against women remains protected by custom, indifference, glamorization, and denial. Concomitantly, the culture, language, traditions, myths, social organizations, and members of gynocentric cultures, such as those of North American Indians, have been slashed and trashed. Moreover, as I will demonstrate, the basic myths, motivations, and methods behind genocide—the wasting of the organic and elemental worlds and the attempted

annihilation of the planet—are rooted in gynocidal and misogynist paradigms.<sup>1</sup>

A common complaint among colonizers was that indigenous peoples did not properly subdue the natural environment. This reasoning became the colonizer's legal basis for appropriating land from Native peoples. For instance, Governor John Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay colony declared that "America fell under the legal rubric of *vacuum domicilium* because the Indians had not 'subdued' it and therefore had only a 'natural' and not a 'civil' right to it."<sup>2</sup> George E. Ellis said that the Indians "simply wasted everything within their reach.... They required enormous spaces of wilderness for their mode of existence."<sup>3</sup> Walter Prescott Webb reasoned that free land was "land free to be taken."<sup>4</sup> This notion that Native peoples did not properly use land and hence had no title to it forms the basis of the "doctrine of discovery" which is the foundation of much U.S. case law relating to Indian land claims.

This principle as articulated in *Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. William McIntosh* (1823) held that the U.S. federal government holds "exclusive right to extinguish the Indian title of occupancy, either by purchase or conquest" by right of discovery. According to the Supreme Court, "The title by conquest is acquired and maintained by force. The conqueror prescribes its limits."<sup>5</sup> The justification for conquest was that "the tribes of Indians inhabiting this country were fierce savages, whose occupation was war, and whose subsistence was drawn chiefly from the forest. To leave them in possession of their country, was to leave the country a wilderness."<sup>6</sup>

The courts did not rule that Native peoples had no claim to land at all; rather, they had no right to transfer land to another party. "It has never been contended, that Indian title amounted to nothing... Indian inhabitants are to be considered merely as occupants, to be protected, indeed while in peace, in the possession of their lands, but to be deemed incapable of transferring the absolute title to others."<sup>7</sup>

And certainly, even today, colonizers justify the theft of Native lands on the grounds that Native peoples did not or do not properly control or subdue nature. For instance, among the

Christian Right, John Eidsmoe contends that Christians never stole Indian land. He argues that since Native people did not privatize land, and since these communities had not been "established by God," Europeans had a right to seize the land from them.<sup>8</sup> And furthermore, while Christianity may have been forced on Native people, "millions of people are in heaven today as a result."<sup>9</sup> And as Pat Robertson writes,

These tribes are... in an arrested state of social development. They are not less valuable as human beings because of that, but they offer scant wisdom or learning or philosophical vision that can be instructive to a society that can feed the entire population of the earth in a single harvest and send spacecraft to the moon... Except for our crimes, our wars and our frantic pace of life, what we have is superior to the ways of primitive peoples... Which life do you think people would prefer: freedom in an enlightened Christian civilization or the suffering of subsistence living and superstition in a jungle? You choose.<sup>10</sup>

### *Controlling Nature?*

Unfortunately for the colonizers, nature is not so easy to subdue and control. As we find ourselves in the midst of environmental disaster, it is clear that no one can escape the repercussions of environmental damage. Yet colonizers attempt to deny this reality by forcing those people who have already been rendered dirty, impure, and hence expendable to face the most immediate consequences of environmental destruction.

Marginalized communities suffer the primary brunt of environmental destruction so that other communities can remain in denial about the effects of environmental degradation. The United Church of Christ's landmark study on environmental racism, *Toxic Wastes and Race*, found that race is consistently the most statistically significant variable in the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities. Three out of every five African Americans and Latino North Americans live in communities with toxic waste sites. Half of all Asians, Pacific Islanders, and American

Indians live in communities with uncontrolled toxic waste sites.<sup>11</sup> People of color are also disproportionately affected by workplace hazards. For instance, pesticide exposure among primarily Latino farmworkers causes more than 300,000 pesticide-related illnesses each year.<sup>12</sup>

American Indian lands are a particular focal point in the struggle for environmental justice. It is not an accident that virtually all uranium production takes place on or near Indian land.<sup>13</sup> Nor is it a coincidence that to date, more than 50 reservations have been targeted for waste dumps.<sup>14</sup> Military and nuclear testing also takes place almost exclusively on Native lands. For instance, there have been at least 928 nuclear explosions on Western Shoshone land at the Nevada test site. Fifty percent of these underground tests have leaked radiation into the atmosphere.<sup>15</sup> Native peoples, the expendable ones, are situated to suffer the brunt of environmental destruction so that colonizers can continue to be in denial about the fact that they will also eventually be affected.

As a case in point, Native Americans for Clean Environment (NACE) was one of the organizers of the campaign to stop the Kerr-McGee Sequoyah Fuel Facility (a uranium conversion facility) in Oklahoma. In its campaign, NACE discovered that Kerr-McGee was using radioactive wastes to make fertilizer. Kerr-McGee was eventually closed down, although it has not cleaned up its nuclear waste at this plant. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission also allowed Kerr-McGee to use this fertilizer on 15,000 acres of hay fields in Oklahoma, where cattle are grazed before being sold on the open market. The only health study conducted on the cattle revealed that 10 percent of the cattle had resulting cancerous growths. A frog with nine legs was discovered in a nearby pond.<sup>16</sup> These effects were deemed "normal" by Kerr-McGee. Clearly, non-Native peoples are affected by radiation poisoning.<sup>17</sup>

Another example of environmental racism is the plan to relocate all U.S. nuclear wastes into a permanent high-level nuclear waste repository in Yucca Mountain, which is on Shoshone land and located on an active volcanic zone, increasing the risk of radioactive leakage.<sup>18</sup> To encourage the opening of these facilities, George W. Bush pushed for this plan to fuel the "war on terror," and in 2002, Congress approved the repository at an estimated

cost of \$3.25 billion. Waste storage is scheduled to begin by 2010. While Indians are once again on the frontlines, the Shoshone are not the only people affected by the creation of this repository; it will also impact the people who reside near freeways where the waste will be transported. (The repository on Yucca Mountain will receive nuclear wastes from throughout the U.S. — only five states would not be affected by the transportation of high-level radioactive wastes.)

Furthermore, the effects of environmental contamination are global. "Depleted" uranium is the byproduct that results when enriched uranium is separated from natural uranium in order to produce fuel for nuclear reactors. Chemically toxic, depleted uranium is used by the nuclear industry to produce deadly weapons that have been used on peoples around the world. It is an extremely dense, hard metal and can cause chemical poisoning to the body in the same way as lead or any other heavy metal. Depleted uranium is also radioactive, and it spontaneously burns on impact, creating tiny glass particles which are small enough to be inhaled. With a half-life of 4.5 billion years, it poses a long-term threat to human health and the environment.<sup>19</sup>

Depleted uranium was used against the peoples of Bosnia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. During the Persian Gulf War, the U.S. blasted Iraqis retreating from Kuwait with depleted uranium. The area where it was used is now known as the "Highway of Death." People who live in the area continue to suffer increased birth defect and cancer rates. Depleted uranium has also been linked to the "Gulf War Syndrome" suffered by U.S. soldiers.<sup>20</sup>

### *Sovereignty and Environmentalists*

Because the environmental issues that impact Native peoples eventually impact everyone, it would seem logical that mainstream environmental organizations would naturally find themselves allied with Native peoples. But while there have certainly been important alliances, environmentalists have actively

opposed Native treaty rights in many cases. For instance, environmental groups, like the Sierra Club, Audubon and Earth Action, formed the Alaska Coalition in 1970 to protect Alaska's national parks and refuges. In the 1980s, it organized primarily to stop the drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, home to the Gwich'in people in northeast Alaska. The drilling in the proposed 1991 Johnson-Wallup bill would have destroyed 40 percent of the caribou that the Gwich'in depended on for subsistence. As part of their strategy to prevent drilling in the refuge, the Alaska Coalition backed a compromise bill that would provide incentives for oil drilling in the lower 48 states. Since a large percentage of oil reserves in the lower 48 are on Indian land, this legislation would have continued to jeopardize Native people.

When activists confronted Sierra Club president Michael Fischer on this position at the People of Color Environmental Summit in October 1991, he denied that the Sierra Club supported the bill, even though his support for the bill had been widely reported. Then later, he contradicted this denial in his correspondence with Chicago Women of All Red Nations (WARN). The rationale for this support was that "we had to take a little of the bad with...all of the good" and "on sovereign Indian lands only Indians themselves have the authority and responsibility to make the decision [to drill for oil]."<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, indigenous peoples do not have full authority to decide because, under U.S. law, as decided in *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* (1903), it is the U.S. Congress that has full "plenary power" to decide the fate of indigenous peoples and lands. In fact, from the perspective of the U.S. government, the term "reservation" indicates that the U.S. owns title to these lands but "reserves" them for use by Indian peoples. There is no reason to believe that decisions made about oil drilling will ever be solely in the hands of Native peoples. Fortunately, neither bill passed, although the threats against the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge continue today.

Tension between Native peoples and mainstream environmentalists was also generated by the spearfishing struggle in northern Wisconsin in the late 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>22</sup> In 1989, the federal courts recognized the right of the Chippewa to spearfish in ceded territory. As a result, a number of anti-Indian hate groups,

such as Stop Treaty Abuse (STA) and Protect America's Rights and Resources (PARR), were formed. When the Chippewa attempted to spearfish, these groups would mobilize white people to flock to the boat landings and physically and verbally harass the spearfishers and their allies. Some local environmental and animal rights groups sided with the harassers, and even disallowed a Native speaker from speaking on Earth Day in Wisconsin. They agreed with the assertion made by the hate groups that the Chippewa were "overfishing."

These activists failed to see the bigger picture. Around the same time as the spearfishing fights, corporations had begun mining for natural resources in northern Wisconsin. Their first efforts in the early 1980s had been derailed by a united Indian and non-Indian opposition. Clearly, the courts' recognition of the Chippewa's right to hunt, fish, and gather posed an additional threat to these companies and should have bolstered the hopes of the environmentalists. If their mining operations degraded the environment so the Chippewa could not use it, then the tribe could argue that their operations violated treaty rights.

By not defending treaty rights, these groups risked losing an important legal weapon that could be used to prevent mining companies from coming in and polluting the area. As Native activist Justine Smith argues,

Animal rights and environmental organizations played right into these divide-and-conquer techniques of mining companies. Through their narrow definition of animal rights, they did not pick up on the fact that the treaties retaining the Chippewa's right to hunt, fish, and gather in the ceded territory in Wisconsin was (and is) one of the best protections against potential widespread environmental degradation... What happens to Native peoples and Native nations will eventually happen to everyone. *Defending and protecting Native rights and sovereignty is a first step toward preservation of the global community* (emphasis added).<sup>23</sup>

Fortunately, as other scholars have documented, the Chippewa were able to create coalitions with sport fishers by demonstrating that mining companies were the real threat to Wisconsin. They then mobilized these coalitions to pressure the governor of Wisconsin into supporting a moratorium on mining.<sup>24</sup>

Similar politics erupted over the Makah whaling controversy in Washington State beginning in the late 1990s. The Coalition for Human Dignity documents how animal and environmental rights groups, such as the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) and the Progressive Animal Welfare Society, collaborated with far-right Republican legislator Jack Metcalf to oppose the Makah. Metcalf has openly spoken at the meetings of overtly racist and anti-Semitic organizations and has called for the abrogation of Indian treaty rights. These groups, instead of developing strategies to negotiate their differences with the Makah that respected Native sovereignty, advocated for the U.S. to abrogate its 1855 treaty with the Makah that guarantees their right to whale hunt. What these “environmentalists” did not consider is that if they had been successful in legitimizing the abrogation of one treaty, it would have the effect of delegitimizing all treaties. They would be destroying the efforts of Native peoples across the country who are opposing corporate control through the use of treaties. Many of the leaders of these organizations, such as Dave Forman, Farley Mowat, and Paul Watson of SSCS, are also promoting an anti-immigration platform in environmental groups such as the Sierra Club (as I will discuss later in this chapter). Also collaborating with SSCS is Brigitte Bardot, ally of the leading neofascist political party in France, the National Front. She is also overtly anti-immigrant, particularly anti-Arab and anti-Muslim. In *Le Figaro*, she stated: “Now my country, France, my homeland, my land, is with the blessing of successive government again invaded by a foreign, especially Muslim, overpopulation to which we pay allegiance.”<sup>25</sup>

### Humans Versus Nature

One reason for tensions between Native and mainstream environmental activists is the environmentalists’ use of rhetoric—usually concern for the well-being of the earth—that obfuscates colonialism and racism. For instance, in his discussion of deep ecology,<sup>26</sup>

Michael Zimmerman argues in favor of eradicating the dualism between humans and nature: “Only by recognizing that humanity is no more, but also no less, important than all other things on Earth can we learn to dwell on the planet within limits that would allow other species to flourish.”<sup>27</sup>

Yet some deep ecologists and other environmental theorists apply this theory inconsistently. For instance, writers in *Earth First!* journals have said that “the AIDS virus may be Gaia’s tailor-made answer to human overpopulation” and that famine should take its course in Africa to stem overpopulation.<sup>28</sup> And as the platform for Deep Ecology states: “The flourishing of nonhuman life requires...a decrease [in human population].”<sup>29</sup>

Such sentiments reinforce, rather than negate, the duality between humans and nature. They imply that humans are not a part of nature, and that their destruction would not also mean environmental destruction. In addition, it is noteworthy that the people who are targeted as expendable (people with AIDS and Africans in the foregoing examples) are people of color or Global South people who have the least institutional power or access to resources in society. Once again, the notion that certain populations are inherently “dirty” or “polluting” prevails, even within environmental discourse.

While these may be extreme examples, I often hear pro-population control environmentalists say that the world would be much better off if people just died or that the world needs to cleanse itself of people. Again, this sentiment assumes that people are not part of the world. This sentiment also assumes that all people, not just those with wealth and institutional power, are equally responsible for massive environmental destruction. It is racist and imperialist to look at the people who are dying now from environmental degradation (generally people of color and poor people) and say that it is a good thing that the earth is cleansing itself. As Native activist Marie Wilson, a Gitksan-Wet’suwet’en tribal councilor, says,

I have to say that the Indian attitude toward the natural world is different from environmentalists. I have had the awful feeling that when we are finished dealing with the courts and our land claims, we will then have to battle the environmentalists and they will not

understand why. I feel quite sick at this prospect because the environmentalists want these beautiful places kept in a state of perfection: to not touch it, rather to keep it pure. So that we can leave our jobs and for two weeks we can venture into the wilderness and enjoy this ship in a bottle. In a way this is like denying that life is happening constantly in these wild places, that change is always occurring. Human life must be there too. Humans have requirements and they are going to have to use some of the life in these places.<sup>30</sup>

### *Native Women and Environmental Destruction*

Katsi Cook, a Mohawk midwife, argues that attacks on nature are also attacks on Native women's bodies, and by extension, attacks on the bodies of Native children.<sup>31</sup> Toxins are generally stored in fat, and during pregnancy and lactation, women's fat is metabolized, exposing fetuses and newborns, at their most vulnerable stages of development, to these chemicals.<sup>32</sup> According to the National Wildlife Federation, most people receive up to 12 percent of their lifetime dose of toxic chemicals in the first year of their life.<sup>33</sup>

In a similar vein, a 1996 University of Minnesota study found that the children of farmers who rely on pesticides have a higher rate of birth defects than the children of those who do not. The highest rates were among children conceived in spring, when crops were most intensely sprayed.<sup>34</sup> A Michigan study found that 11-year-olds whose mothers had consumed Lake Michigan fish during pregnancy scored six points lower than their peers on IQ tests.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike adults, children cannot excrete or store contaminants, so they are more vulnerable to toxins. Some studies are underway to determine if environmental toxins, such as DDT, PCBs, dioxins, mercury, lead, benzene, and toluene, disrupt the endocrine system. It is believed that these chemicals mimic naturally

occurring hormones secreted by the endocrine system, which regulates immunity, reproduction, behavior, metabolism, and growth, disrupting it and having an effect like DES (diethylstilbestrol)<sup>36</sup> on pregnant women. This theory may explain why certain toxins are correlated with lower IQs in children, reduced fertility, genital deformities, and abnormalities within the immune system.<sup>37</sup> In addition, certain toxins bioaccumulate, becoming more concentrated as they move along the food chain.<sup>38</sup>

Indigenous peoples living near the Arctic, such as the Inuit, are at particular risk because the region lacks the soil and vegetation that absorb pollution elsewhere. In addition, the cold temperatures prevent the toxins, emitted from industries largely in the U.S., from breaking down. These toxins make their way into the fat of whales, walrus, and seals, which form the diet of indigenous peoples in the Arctic, who have few other food options. Notably, there have been a number of reports of animals with abnormalities, including seals without hair, and polar bears with reproductive organs of both sexes.<sup>39</sup>

This combination of a high-fat diet and toxins in the fat that have bioaccumulated seems to have contributed to disproportionate reproductive health problems among indigenous women in the Arctic. For instance, in Nunavut, Inuit mothers' breast milk has twice the level of dioxin as does women's breast milk in southern Quebec, even though there are no sources of dioxin within 300 miles of Quebec. The major source of this dioxin pollution is the U.S.<sup>40</sup>

In 2002, a Centers for Disease Control study found that the U.S. government had underestimated the impact of another environmental toxin — radiation poisoning — on Native communities because researchers did not factor in the large amount of fish consumed by some communities. (During fishing seasons, fish may be all that some families eat.) Radiation poisoning may be linked to the astronomical rates of lupus, an immune system disorder, among Nez Perce women living near the Columbia River in Washington State. Wastes from the Hanford Nuclear Reactor, which began production of weapons-grade plutonium in 1943, were improperly disposed of in the river. And while most of Hanford's reactors were closed down in the 1960s, nuclear wastes

will likely remain in the area until 2030.<sup>41</sup> Today, the incidence of lupus among Nez Perce women is five times greater than among other Native women.

One tribal member, Justine Miles, reports that she has suffered lupus, several miscarriages, broken bones, endometriosis, life-threatening infections, and meningitis.<sup>42</sup> Jane Caputi writes of the devastating impact of the Hanford Nuclear Reactor on nearby residents, including this narrative by Tom Baile:

As “downwinders,” born and raised downwind of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington, we learned several years ago that the government decided—with cold deliberation—to use us as guinea pigs by releasing radioactivity into our food, water, milk and air without our consent. Now, we’ve learned that we can expect continuing cancer cases from our exposure in their “experiment.” Is this what it feels like to be raped?<sup>43</sup>

Baile’s narrative illustrates how environmental racism is another form of sexual violence, as it violates the bodies of Native and other marginalized peoples. As mentioned in Chapter 1, a patriarchal system based on violence operates by appearing “normal” and attacking alternative systems that might challenge its legitimacy. Similarly, the effects of environmental degradation are often not questioned because they are termed “normal.” Comments Baile: “Unknowingly, we had been seeing the effects for a long time. For us, the unusual was the usual!” The effects he perceived to be “normal” included the following:

I was born a year after my stillborn brother. I struggled to breathe through underdeveloped lungs, and suffered to overcome numerous birth defects. I underwent multiple surgeries, endured paralysis, endured thyroid medication, a stint in an iron lung, loss of hair, sores all over my body, fevers, dizziness, poor hearing, asthma, teeth rotting out and, at age 18, a diagnosis of sterility.<sup>44</sup>

In areas where uranium is mined, such as the Four Corners (where the Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada borders meet) and the Black Hills in South Dakota, Indian people face skyrocketing rates of cancer, miscarriages, and birth defects. Men and women who grew up in Four Corners develop ovarian and testicular cancers at 15 times the national average.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, Indian women on Pine Ridge in the Black Hills experience a

miscarriage rate six times higher than the national average.<sup>46</sup> And on the Akwesasne Mohawk reserve in New York, one of the most polluted areas in the country, the PCBs, DDT, Mirex, and HCBs that are dumped into their waters are stored in women’s breast milk.<sup>47</sup> Through the rape of the earth, Native women’s bodies are raped once again.

Perhaps the indigenous women who have suffered the most devastating effects of environmental racism are the women from the Marshall Islands in the Pacific. After World War II, the U.S. exploded a bomb that was 1,300 times more destructive than the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; this test was the first of 66 nuclear tests conducted in the Marshall Islands. The people from one of the islands, Rongelap, were directly in the fallout and have continued to suffer cancer and major birth defects (including “jelly fish babies” —babies born without bones), and from the contamination of their food sources since the first explosions. Residents were told that the effects of the radiation were not serious until 1982, when a study by the U.S. government found that the island was too unsafe to live on. With the help of Greenpeace, the residents of Rongelap relocated to another island. One midwife of the islands describes the islanders’ rage:

We are very angry at the U.S. and I’ll tell you why. Have you ever seen a jelly fish baby born looking like a bunch of grapes, so the only reason we knew it was a baby was because we could see the brain? We’ve had these babies—they died soon after they were born.<sup>48</sup>

Between 1954 and 1958, one in three births in the Marshall Islands resulted in fetal death.<sup>49</sup> Neal Palafox, associate professor of family practice at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu and an advocate for Pacific Islander health, points out that the rate of hepatitis B, a risk factor for liver cancer, is approximately 30 times higher in the Marshall Islands than in the mainland U.S. In women of the Marshall Islands, cervical cancer mortality is 60 times greater than in the mainland U.S., breast cancer and gastrointestinal cancer rates are five times greater, and lung cancer rates are three times greater.<sup>50</sup> Among men, the lung cancer mortality rate is nearly four times greater than overall U.S. rates, while oral

cancer rates are 10 times greater. Lijon Eknilang of the Marshall Islands provided this testimony of the impact of nuclear testing:

Not long after the light from Bravo, it began to snow in Rongelap. We had heard about snow from the missionaries and other Westerners who had come to our islands, but this was the first time we saw white particles fall from the sky and cover our village.

Of course, in 1951, Marshallese children and their parents did not know that the snow was radioactive fallout. My own health has suffered very much as a result of radiation poisoning. I cannot have children. I have had miscarriages on seven occasions. On one of those occasions, the child I miscarried was severely deformed—it had only one eye. I have also had thyroid surgery to remove nodules. I have lumps in my breasts.

Marshallese women suffer silently and differently from the men who were exposed to radiation. Our culture and religion teaches us that reproductive abnormalities are a sign that women have been unfaithful. For this reason, many of my friends keep quiet about the strange births they have had. In privacy, they give birth, not to children as we like to think of them, but to things we could only describe as “octopuses,” “apples,” “turtles” and other things in our experience. We do not have Marshallese words for these kinds of babies, because they were never born before the radiation came.

Women on Rongelap, Likiep, Ailuk and other atolls in the Marshall Islands have given birth to these “monster babies.” Many of these women are from atolls that foreign officials have told us were not affected by radiation. We know otherwise, because the health problems are similar to ours. One woman on Likiep gave birth to a child with two heads. Her cat also gave birth to a kitten with two heads. There is a young girl on Ailuk today with no knees, three toes on each foot and a missing arm.

The most common birth defects on Rongelap and nearby islands have been “jellyfish” babies. These babies are born with no bones in their bodies and with transparent skin. We can see their brains and hearts beating. The babies usually live for a day or two before they stop breathing. Many women die from abnormal pregnancies, and those who survive give birth to what looks like purple grapes that we quickly bury.<sup>51</sup>

Native Hawai’ian activist Haunani-Kay Trask reports that the life expectancy on the Marshall Islands has sharply declined to what it is now—only 40 years.<sup>52</sup> Mililani Trask notes that the

people of the Marshall Islands have been genetically altered as a result of these tests. Some communities have decided to stop reproducing and go extinct.<sup>53</sup> Some area activists believe that the testing was a planned effort by the U.S. government to examine the effects of nuclear radiation on humans.

Many Marshall Islanders have complained that many of the studies that have “proven” that they are not suffering from radiation fallout are studies funded by the Department of Energy.<sup>54</sup> Medical research often conveniently overlooks the environmental causes of disease, placing the blame on Native peoples themselves. Governments and multinational corporations are then left unaccountable for their policies of environmental contamination. Native bodies will continue to be seen as expendable and inherently violable as long as they continue to stand in the way of the theft of Native lands.

### *Environmental Racism and Sexism*

In 1991, environmental justice activists converged in Washington, D.C. to formulate the principles of environmental justice at the People of Color Environmental Justice Summit. This summit was called because activists felt that mainstream environmental groups were divorcing environmental issues from larger social justice issues. Participants adopted the Principles of Environmental Justice, which called for environmental protection within the context of “political, cultural and economic liberation.”<sup>55</sup> A follow-up summit was held in 2002 in Washington, D.C. to assess the work of the environmental justice movement and forge strategies for future work.

While the analysis and organizing of the environmental justice movement is exemplary, it often marginalizes women of color. That is, women of color are suffering from not only environmental racism but environmental sexism. This intersectionality is advanced in what Betsy Hartmann calls “the greening of hate.” The greening of hate describes the phenomenon of people who



acknowledge the importance of environmental destruction, but place the blame on the Global South, immigrants, and people of color (primarily women of color) for this destruction.

Drawing on Malthusian logic, some population alarmists assert that "overpopulation" is the primary cause of poverty and environmental destruction in the world: population grows geometrically, they claim, while food production grows arithmetically. According to this logic, eventually the number of people on the earth must outstrip the earth's "carrying capacity." In much of the populationist literature, overpopulation is "the single greatest threat to the health of the planet."<sup>56</sup> Even the more moderate populationists, such as the Sierra Club, blame population growth for,

profound consequences for the global environment, including species extinction, deforestation, desertification, climate change, and the destruction of natural ecosystems. These global environmental impacts pose a significant threat to the earth's sustainability and impact our quality of life.<sup>57</sup>

Since the fertility rates of the industrialized world are stable at replacement levels, population control advocates can devote their time and energy to the burgeoning growth rates in the Global South and immigration issues in the U.S. In effect, women of color, immigrant women, and women from the Global South then become the perpetrators, rather than the victims, of environmental degradation.

One flaw of the Malthusian argument is the underlying assumption that "natural fertility rates" are always high and checked only by the vicissitudes of famine, war, and disease. To the contrary, women have always had means of controlling reproduction. Ironically, colonial powers often tried to stamp out traditional means of birth control to ensure a large supply of cheap labor and a captive market for their finished goods.<sup>58</sup> In recent years, Nestle has discouraged breast-feeding, a natural birth spacer, in order to increase sales of its infant formula among Global South women: more babies means more formula, more formula means more babies. As Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva note, the population of India was stable until the advent of British colonialism.<sup>59</sup>

Poverty, starvation, environmental degradation, and overpopulation are the direct result of specific colonial practices. When colonization forced women into cash economies, it became necessary for them to have more children in order to raise more cash crops. Also, increased mortality rates that have resulted from the effects of colonialism and structural adjustment programs motivate women to have more children in hopes that some will survive. Over the last 25 to 30 years, structural adjustment programs have cut social services in the Global South, making children necessary for old age security and for helping with women's increased workloads. In fact, by the age of 15, children in the Global South have repaid their parents' investment in their upbringing.<sup>60</sup>

Some populationists say population growth contributes to starvation. Yet there is actually enough food produced in the world to sustain every person at a 3,000-calorie-per-day diet.<sup>61</sup> However, land is used inefficiently in order to support livestock for environmentally unsustainable Western meat-based diets. The same land that is used to maintain livestock for 250 days worth of food could be used to cultivate soybeans for 2,200 days.<sup>62</sup> By cycling our grain through livestock, we end up with only 10 percent of the calories for human consumption as would be available if we ate the grain directly. In addition, food produced in the Global South is often exported to pay off debts to the World Bank rather than used to meet local needs. Consequently, even countries that are stricken by famine export food.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, rather than look at the root causes of environmental destruction, poverty, and rapid population growth, population alarmists scapegoat "overpopulation" as the primary cause of all these problems, allowing corporations and governments to remain unaccountable.

This "greening of hate" particularly victimizes women of color. A glaring example is the work of Center for Research on Population and Security, headed by Stephen Mumford and Elton Kessel. Mumford and Kessel have been involved with a number of mainstream environmental organizations to form a National Optimum Population Commission, which would determine how many people should live in the U.S. to promote ecological

sustainability. These same individuals are involved with the Federation of American Immigration Reform (FAIR), and have stated on the BBC's *Human Laboratory* that immigration is a threat to the national security of the U.S. To forestall this national security risk, Mumford and Kessel globally distribute a drug for sterilization, Quinacrine.

Quinacrine is a drug that is used to treat malaria. It can also be inserted into the uterus, where it dissolves, causing the fallopian tubes to scar and rendering the woman irreversibly sterile. Family Health International conducted four in-vitro studies and found Quinacrine to be mutagenic in three of them. As a result, Family Health International and the World Health Organization recommended against further trials for female sterilization, and no regulatory body supports Quinacrine for sterilization. However, the North Carolina-based Center for Research on Population and Security has circumvented these bodies through private funding from such organizations as the Turner Foundation and the Leland Fykes Organization, which has been distributing it for free to researchers and government health agencies. Field trials are underway in 11 countries, with over 70,000 women sterilized. In Vietnam, 100 female rubber plant workers were given routine pelvic exams during which the doctor inserted the Quinacrine without their consent.

Thus far, the side effects linked with the drug include ectopic pregnancy, puncturing of the uterus during insertion, pelvic inflammatory disease, and severe abdominal pain. Other possible concerns include heart and liver damage, and the exacerbation of preexisting viral conditions. In one of the trials in Vietnam, a large number of cases in which women had serious side effects were excluded from the data.<sup>64</sup> Yet Mumford and Kessel publicly stated at the Beijing U.N. Conference on Women that they plan to supply Quinacrine to clinicians in the U.S. for female sterilization. Other physicians seem to be following suit. For example, a clinical trial on Quinacrine is currently underway at the Children's Hospital of Buffalo under the supervision of Jack Lippes, M.D. And in its July 2002 newsletter, the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights reported that Quinacrine sterilizations were advertised

and offered at Family Planning Inc., a private clinic run by Randall B. Switney, M.D., in Daytona Beach.

Despite the attacks they've made on women's reproductive rights, mainstream environmental organizations cooperate with Mumford and Kessel in campaigning for an optimum-population commission. Yet in their efforts to further population control, many environmentalists argue that the need to control population takes precedence over women's reproductive freedom. Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute favors China's one-child policy, as did the late Garrett Hardin, activist and author of *Tragedy of the Commons*. Hardin, former vice president of the American Eugenics Society, was a popular thinker in the environmental movement, and sat on the board of Washington D.C.-based Population Environment Balance. In a 1997 interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Hardin argued that the problem is not simply that there are too many people in the world, but there are too many of *the wrong kind of people*. "It would be better to encourage the breeding of more intelligent people rather than the less intelligent," he said. In fact, Hardin argued that the one-child policy was not strict enough, and that he supported infanticide as another viable component of population control.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, at an ecofeminist conference, Population-Environment Balance, an anti-immigration environmentalist group, advocated that "at risk" teenagers be subjected to mandatory Norplant.<sup>66</sup>

### *The Population Paradigm*

Rather than being caused by overpopulation, significant environmental damage is actually caused by the environmentally destructive Western development projects, such as hydroelectric dams, uranium development, militarism, and livestock production. These projects ultimately benefit the wealthy living in industrialized countries, which are responsible for producing over 75 percent of the world's pollution.<sup>67</sup> Development projects also cause unparalleled environmental damage, such as damming

programs that flood entire biosystems or projects that rely on massive deforestation. More than one third of World Bank projects completed in 1993 were judged failures by its own staff, with some countries experiencing a success rate of less than 50 percent.<sup>68</sup> Any damage done by indigenous people, peasants, and Global South farmers cannot compare to the damage done by multinationals and the World Bank, so the claim that stopping the "overpopulation" of peasants and indigenous peoples in Global South countries will "save the environment" is baseless. Furthermore, Fatima Mello of FASE (Federation of Educational and Social Assistance Organizations—a Brazilian environmental and development NGO), notes that in Brazil, a higher density of population in certain areas of the Amazon often helps to *stop* encroachment by the World Bank or multinational corporations and their environmentally disastrous projects.<sup>69</sup>

Related to these neocolonial policies is the resulting immigration to the U.S. from poor countries/the Global South. As the U.S. extracts resources from the Global South, people naturally follow these resources to the U.S. Yet, some mainstream environmentalists complain that the U.S. is now "overpopulated" by immigrants. Immigrants, Garrett Hardin claims, cause "global warming, species extinction, acid rain, and deforestation. . . Immigration. . . is threatening the carrying capacity limits of the natural environment." Because of "their excessive reproductive rates," immigrants cause mass environmental damage, "compete with our poor for jobs," and burden the taxpayer through "increased funding obligations in AFDC, Medicare, Food Stamps, School Lunch, Unemployment Compensation, [etc.]."<sup>70</sup> The Garrett Hardin Society links concerns about the environment to concerns about terrorism on its Web site:

The fact is that the huge annual legal immigrant flow (1.5 million in 2001), coupled with hundreds of thousands of illegal crossings, not only provides opportunities for terrorism, but also causes population growth, which increasingly stresses our overburdened environment. The threats to our national security from massive legal and illegal immigration are immediate and increasing daily. Are we prepared for another 9-11?<sup>71</sup>

Anti-immigration forces also lead a campaign in 1998 to get Sierra Club members to pass an anti-immigration platform under the rationale that immigration was destroying the environment. Fortunately, this campaign was defeated through the leadership of a San Francisco-based environmental justice organization, the Political Ecology Group.<sup>72</sup> Then, in 2004, anti-immigration activists tried to take control of the organization by running for five open seats on the board of directors. However, all of the anti-immigration candidates were defeated by a landslide. Board members have agreed to ask members again if the Sierra Club should take a position on immigration.<sup>73</sup>

Again, anti-immigrant environmentalists presume that all people consume equally. But the impact of an immigrant family living in a one-bedroom apartment and taking mass transit pales in comparison to that of a wealthy family living in a single family home with a swimming pool and two cars. Much of the environmental decline in this country has nothing to do with population growth or individual consumer choices. For example, in the 1930s and the 1940s, General Motors, Firestone, and Standard Oil (or Chevron) bought out and dismantled the electric trolley systems in Los Angeles and 75 other cities to create demand for their products.<sup>74</sup>

Such organizations ignore the consumption patterns of the more well-to-do, the role of U.S. businesses, and the role of the U.S. military in causing environmental degradation. Despite these facts, increasingly, right-wing environmental organizations, such as Carrying Capacity Network (CCN), Population-Environment Balance and Negative Population Growth, are urging a closing of the borders in order to "save the environment." Underlying these politics is an ideology implicitly based on eugenics. Virginia Abernathy of CCN and Population Environment Balance has advocated withholding aid to poor countries because, she incorrectly argues, poor people have more children.<sup>75</sup> CCN has argued, "The Anglo-Saxon civil culture of the nation must continue to reign supreme in the interest of stability and prosperity for everyone."<sup>76</sup>

Unfortunately, some of these groups have used the rhetoric of "women's liberation" to support their white supremacist

population control ideology. CCN argues that true feminists must restrict the immigration of non-European cultures into the U.S. because they are too sexist. "There's a choice to be made between feminism and multiculturalism... [The West] is the only civilization that made an effort to overcome its sexist traditions."<sup>77</sup> The influence of the eugenics movement is also evident in the work of the Pioneer Fund, a eugenics organization started in 1987 by a millionaire, Ron May, who advocated sending African Americans back to Africa. The Pioneer Fund has also supported Nazi eugenicist work and eugenicist research in the U.S., including Charles Murray's "bell curve" studies, and it funds FAIR, the anti-immigration organization, which was very active in organizing around the anti-immigration ballot in the Sierra Club in 1997-1998.

Notably, many members of the Sierra Club, including Allan Weeden, belong to FAIR. Weeden controls the multimillion-dollar Frank Weeden Foundation, which funds environmental and population/immigration groups, including FAIR. It's been estimated that Weeden spent over a million dollars to pressure Sierra Club members to vote for the anti-immigration platform on the Sierra Club ballot in 1998.<sup>78</sup> Popular population alarmist/environmentalist Paul Ehrlich of CCN also sits on the executive board of FAIR.

Another initiative on the part of the anti-immigrant sector of the environmental movement is the campaign to pressure George W. Bush to create the previously described National Optimum Population Commission. The NOPC would determine an "ideal" population size for the U.S. and answer the following question: "How many people can we support in perpetuity under the most favorable circumstances with the highest quality of life?" The commission would determine an "optimum" population based "upon an assessment of the nation's climate, geography, renewable resource base, cultural preferences and other factors." NOPC recommendations would likely include drastic reductions in legal immigration and sharp decreases in birthrates, particularly among poor women and women of color.

Some environmentalists have also espoused immigration restrictions, opposed family reunification, and advocated coercive contraceptive policies for immigrant women. For instance, Bill

DeValle, a leader in the deep ecology movement, has said that he will support immigration into his "bioregion" only if immigrants promise to have no children, if they do not bring their families with them, and if they devote their lives to preserving the environment.<sup>79</sup> Anti-immigration activism also negatively affects immigrant women's reproductive health because it drives women underground and makes it more difficult for them to organize and access health care.

Not surprisingly, many far-right organizations are finding the xenophobic and racist agendas of these organizations attractive. The Aryan Women's League has described their strategy for gaining public legitimacy:

The way to do this is to make ourselves known as environmentalists and wildlife advocates. There are many groups out there helping wildlife and the environment. They are not necessarily white power advocates like ourselves, but if we make contributions to these groups, we achieve two things, 1) we break out of our media stereotype and 2) we gain recognition.<sup>80</sup>

One of the reasons why this racist ideology is so popular is because it is the continuing legacy of sexual violence against Native peoples and peoples of color that has rendered them inherently impure and dirty in the U.S. psyche. The images proffered by the environmental movement are ones in which Native peoples are depicted as "ruining *our* environment." "They" are crowding "us" out. Women of color, who have the ability to reproduce the next generations, are a particular threat, and consequently their fertility must be monitored and controlled.

For instance, Paul Ehrlich describes his conversion to population politics:

I have understood the population explosion intellectually for a long time. I came to understand it emotionally one stinking hot night in Delhi a few years ago. The streets seemed alive with people. People eating, people washing, people sleeping. People defecating and urinating. People clinging to buses. People herding animals. People, people, people... Since that night I've known the feel of overpopulation.<sup>81</sup>

As another example, I was giving a talk at a population conference. I asked everyone to tell me what word came up when

they thought of India. Almost everyone said “dirty,” “polluted,” “crowded.”

In 1990, I spoke to a largely white audience in Illinois on the issues of mining in northern Wisconsin. After explaining the devastating impact mining companies might have on Native peoples and non-Native peoples in the area, the response I received was, “But don’t you think the *real* reason Native peoples have environmental problems is because they’re having too many children?”

The racism in the population movement, as well as in society at large, is usually more subtle. Consequently, racist ideology is often framed by “race-neutral” language. For instance, anti-immigration activists may argue that they support immigration restrictions, regardless of race. Nevertheless, when mainstream (and far-right) activists are pushing immigration restrictions, they are thinking about protecting “the border.” When they talk about population reduction, they usually have Global South women in mind, since the First World is at replacement-level fertility rates.

Often, in my experience, population control groups will assert that they are concerned with eradicating economic inequality, racism, and colonialism. However, since these organizations address these issues through a population paradigm, inevitably their efforts are directed toward reducing population growth of all peoples in theory and of people of color in reality. In 1998, I gave a presentation about population control at the Environmental Law Conference in Eugene, Oregon. Several audience members contended that their groups, while concerned about population growth, were equally concerned about eradicating racism, colonialism, and sexism. So I asked them what percentage of their organizing was actually devoted to working on those issues. Every single person answered “none.” With allies like this, it is no wonder that the statement made on this issue at the first People of Color Environmental Justice summit was, “We’re not interested in controlling our population for the sake of your population.”

## Chapter 4

### “Better Dead Than Pregnant” The Colonization of Native Women’s Reproductive Health

The notion that communities of color, including Native communities, pollute the body politic continues to inform the contemporary population control movement. People of color are scapegoated for environmental destruction, poverty, and war. Women of color are particularly threatening, as they have the ability to reproduce the next generations of communities of color. Consequently, it is not surprising that control over the reproductive abilities of women of color has come to be seen as a “national security” issue for the U.S.

In particular, Native women, whose ability to reproduce continues to stand in the way of the continuing conquest of Native lands, endangering the continued success of colonization. As Ines Hernandez-Avila notes, “it is because of a Native American woman’s sex that she is hunted down and slaughtered, in fact, singled out, because she has the potential through childbirth to assure the continuance of the people.”<sup>1</sup> David Stannard points out that control over women’s reproductive abilities and destruction of women and children is necessary to destroy a people. If the women of a nation are not disproportionately killed, then that