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Our Sacred Waters: Theorizing *Kuuyam* as a Decolonial Possibility

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Abstract
This essay evaluates the conditions of the desecrated Santa Ana River in southern California, historicizes its destruction, assesses what is being done to clean it up, and provides tradition as theory to offer an approach to a solution that re-centers a Native view of land. The essay provides a tribal specific, Acjachemen and Tongva, understanding of lands and waters in contradiction to the Western dynamic of submission central to the dual logic of heteropatriarchy and environmental dispossession. It also provides a historical analysis of the monjerio and traces the colonial logic of domesticating Native women. The Santa Ana River is the largest riparian ecosystem in southern California. The river has been domesticated and desecrated through channelizing and entombing sections in concrete. This essay theorizes that the Western understanding of nature separated from humans produced the heteropatriarchal system the Spanish brought with them to California. This structure was meant to naturalize patriarchy and have Indians submit to the nuclear family arrangement. These logics continue into the present, in contrast to Indigenous traditional ways of life that accepted plural partnerships, and various sexual orientations. It also attempted to disconnect California Mission Indians from their creation stories and the sacredness of water. *Kuuyam*, the Tongva word for guests, is offered as a decolonial possibility based on culture and tradition in which settler relations to land can be reformed and settler colonialism can eventually be abolished.

Keywords: *Kuuyam, monjerio, decolonization, peoplehood, heteropatriarchy, environment*

Introduction

What does it mean when human-beings have relationships to places and waters that are currently no longer viable for a sustainable way of life? What do these relationships mean when Indigenous knowledges have been besieged by colonialism? Do these relationships dry up during drought and overflow during floods? Or do they persist beyond both famine and deluge, where the power of the earth is unrestricted by time? Winona LaDuke (2016) recently asked, "How do we grieve for the death of a river?" – an important question guiding my research. However, I do not want to continue mourning for the Santa Ana River; I want to bring her back to life and decolonize our sacred waters. The Santa Ana River is the largest riparian ecosystem in southern California.[1] However, it has been severely impacted by settlement to the point of no longer existing as a living river. What had previously been a perennial river before the arrival of settlers is now ephemeral and the water within its banks during the summer is primarily runoff from sewage treatment and irrigation (Bureau of Applied Research in Anthropology, 2007). Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2009) argued that "colonialism is best conceptualized as an irresistible outcome of a multigenerational and multifaceted process of forced dispossession and attempted acculturation—a disconnection from land, culture, and community…" (p. 52). Colonialism also anchors the colonizing populations to land, and through their settlement they invariably redraw and reconfigure Native relations to land/water. This essay traces both of these colonial processes through the history of systematic domestication forced on both Native peoples and their lands/waters. It also offers an alternative model meant to assist in the re-establishment of human-beings' organic relationships to land.[2]

The questions I begin this essay with ask the reader to think through the deeply felt impacts of cultural genocide, land dispossession and environmental destruction: what does it mean to be rooted to a place you have been dispossessed of? Rather than provide a precise answer, I will encourage the reader to envision a decolonized future in which we are no longer the dispossessed.[3] In order to provide a deeper representation of decolonial possibilities I will also offer a theorization of critically reformed relations between settlers and Indigenous space – as a step toward an abolition of settler colonialism.

The following essay provides research comparing the American development in southern California and its devastating impacts to the environment with that of the Spanish mission system vis-à-vis the logic of domestication and submission. Specifically, I argue that the monjerio, the all-woman dormitory functioning as prison, was institutionalized in order to enforce domestication through heteropatriarchy as a central tenet of Spanish imperial domination of its expanding empire. I also contend that the destruction of the Santa Ana River by the Americans is tethered to Spanish colonialism and both nations' western conceptions of civilization. Moreover, Native peoples continue to be subjected to the logics of white supremacy, capitalism, United States liberal domestication policies, and attempts to force them and their

[1] Several authors including Don Meadows provide the Tongva name Wanawna for the Santa Ana River. According to Kroeber (1908), the Serrano called the Santa Ana River near Highland, Kotainat (Qotainat).

[2] Explained by Tom Holm, Vine Deloria Jr. and many other Native scholars, organic relationships to land are living relationships in which human groups hold their lands in special esteem and view their homelands as sacred.

[3] I use the term dispossessed to establish that the Tongva and Acjachemen no longer have possession of our lands. We have limited ability to make or influence decisions of how our lands are used. This is not meant to suggest that the people have been dispossessed completely of our relationship to place.

lands/waters into submission to assist the expansion, growth and persistence of empire in the eastern Pacific. I argue that both sexual and gender violence (within the monjerio) and environmental degradation (of the river) are inextricable from colonialism. Within a Western episteme, these two are intimately related and inseparable. This inseparability is displayed in this article through what I have named a logic of domestication and submission. Stated differently, both the land and people in southern California have been subjected to a logic of domestication in order for colonization to both anchor the colonizer to place and dispossess the Native of their lands and ways of life. The changes enforced by the colonizer to both people and land/water was and continues to be non-consensual.

As a decolonial method, this article evaluates the conditions of the desecrated Santa Ana River, historicizes her destruction, and provides tradition as theory to offer a route towards a solution that re-centers a Native view of land.[4] As a problem/solution focused article, it is in the conclusion where I introduce the concept of *Kuuyam*, the Tongva word for guests, as a potential theorization assisting in the decolonization of place. *Kuuyam* is an Indigenous theorization that disrupts the dialectic between Native and settler through a Tongva understanding of non-natives as potential guests of the tribal people, and more importantly - of the land itself.[5] *Kuuyam* also disrupts the view of land and people as domesticable and instead understands place to be sacred and as having life beyond human interests.

Contradicting Worldviews and the Inextricable Violences of Colonialism

In my experience there are few people who know the name of southern California's largest riparian ecosystem.[6] Furthermore, there are fewer who know the significance the Santa Ana River has for the several tribes that have lived within its environmental zone since time-immemorial.[7] The people from these tribal nations, although forever changed due to colonialism, continue to understand that their lands and waters are special gifts provided by the power of nature giving them spiritual strength, sustenance, purpose and life (McGregor & Aluli, n.d.). Even if this connection is severed, the power of the land itself remains and the living relationships can be renewed. Moreover, their identities as indigenous are meaningfully related to the land and the river. This connection is analogous to an umbilical bond; what is put into her body is also ingested and fed on by us (McGregor & Aluli, n.d.). Stated differently, Indigenous peoples' beings (their ontologies) are inseparably attached to the earth and are affected by the

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[4] Don Meadows in his 1966 study *Historic Place Names in Orange County* provides Wanawna as the name of the Santa Ana River.

[5] Throughout I will use "land" to denote both land and water. I will also use "land and water" or "land/water" interchangeably. Land is affected by water and water is affected by land – they are interconnected.

[6] As a Teaching Assistant for courses in Ethnic Studies at UC Riverside I asked my students if they knew the name of the river that Riverside was river side to. The vast majority, over a thousand students, could not provide a name of the river.

[7] These tribes include the Acjachemen, Tongva, Serrano, Cahuilla and Luiseño. This article focuses on the Acjachemen (Juaneño Band of Mission Indians) and the Tongva (Gabrieliño Band of Mission Indians) – both of whom historically and contemporarily live on lands adjacent to the river and have a shared territory near the Santa Ana.

health of their land and water. The inability of non-Indian contemporary residents of southern California to identify a major waterway or understand its significance is telling of not only the loss of an important ecosystem with impacts to the diversity of plants and animals, but also of a much larger human disconnectedness from the earth. Due to this detachment and simultaneous environmental degradation, it has become increasingly important that our environments are protected and conserved for the benefit of all life. Correspondingly, humans have a dire need to renew, or continue, their distinctive sustainable connections to the earth in order to survive into the future. The above stated inability of humans to identify with their environments is inextricably connected to their failure to understand California colonial histories – which they have been inculcated into believing a romanticized Spanish imaginary in which the mission system and the Catholic priests, including Saint Junípero Serra, are viewed as benevolent and caring for their Indian children (Sepulveda, 2016). Similarly, they view the changes to the land as also benign rather than destructive when such domestications assist in the establishment of what they find desirable or beneficial.

During my first visit to the river a few years ago with my dad and Auntie Irene, to the land he had grown up on, the Santa Ana contained the worst smelling water I have ever been close enough to smell.[8] I can imagine the interior of the monjerio must have had a similar stench. Instead of flowing, it sat in stagnant pools of brackish water of a deep green almost black in color, potentially as part of a groundwater recharge program. The health of the river has been unmistakably impacted by domestication.

My dad had grown up on a ranch next to the river less than a mile downstream from the Prado Dam, near Green River Road and CA-91, during a time when the water was still fresh and flowed toward the ocean, naturally recharging the groundwater. Despite the impacts the river had already sustained, the stories both he and my grandparents would tell of living next to the river prior to the 1960s were always of a clean beautiful waterway in stark contrast to the foul water we encountered on our recent visit. One memorable story my grandmother would tell is of my dad as a boy playing with his dog in the river. My dad couldn't swim, but his dog wouldn't allow him to get away without swimming; the dog jumped on top of him and dunked him under the water holding him down. My grandmother always enjoyed telling that story. At the time, the water was clean enough for children to play in and to drink – they believed. The ranch that my grandmother had inherited was a section of the 1834 Yorba land grant Rancho Cañón de Santa Ana. Her land currently includes a housing development, and where their home was located is now part of the California State Park system. Although I felt the spirits of my ancestors by being on the land with my family, my challenging attempt to see it through their memories affected my resolve to decolonize our sacred waters and revitalize its environment.

There are several threatened, endangered and extinct species within the Santa Ana River ecosystem. Amongst these is the Santa Ana River Wooly-star, with its bright blue, funnel-shaped flowers. According to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, "Historical occurrences of Santa Ana River woolly-star are known from Orange County, but it has been extirpated from those locations" (California Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2015). It is reported that there are only 18 of these plants remaining, mostly in San Bernardino County (California Department of

[8] I have lived in the region of the Santa Ana River watershed for the majority of my life but had never experienced being next to the river, nor had I been on the land that my father had grown up on. Prior to the visit with my dad and Irene I had gone alone and found that the land was part of the California State Park through an attempt to trespass on our land in order to see it for myself. After my surprise that it was accessible I brought my family back to see it through their memories.

Fish and Wildlife, 2015). Many plants in the Santa Ana River watershed are and were used as food, for medicine, or for ceremonial purposes by California Indians. Destruction to the environment also comprises an inability to continue using certain plants, and additionally it has a gendered affect. Tribes often have a lack of access to plants unaffected by chemicals, pesticides and other pollutants. Women, who are the primary basket makers in southern California tribal communities, gather and use rhizomatous wetland plants such as *juncus textilis*. One method of producing basketry material is to split the rehydrated reed. For centuries women have been putting the reed in their mouths when splitting them. Indian women basket weavers using this method are therefore at a high degree of risk if the plants have been exposed to pollutants and pesticides. Another problem tribal members routinely face is inadequate access to gathering locations. They often have to apply for permits to enter their own traditional lands. This expressly affects tribes such as the Acjachemen and Tongva who do not have federal recognition.

Extinct animals within the Santa Ana River watershed include the southern California kit fox, the California grizzly bear, which is on the state flag, and the gray wolf. Prior to colonization, California was full of grizzly bears (*ursus arctos californicus)*, but they were hunted to extinction, often for sport. They were centerpieces of the rodeo during both Spanish and Mexican colonialism. They were lassoed and lanced as a sport showcasing man's dominance over the wild. The bear, unable to be domesticated for human purposes was seen as a threat to the rancho's cattle herds and their profit margins. Americans similarly found the grizzly to be a threat to their capitalist growth and continued the Spanish and Mexican colonial legacy of killing them to the point of extinction. This logic of dominating the earth was explicitly used against both the environment and the Indians – either to be exterminated or domesticated to extend the American project rooted in white supremacy, capitalism and heteropatriarchy. In contrast, southern California Indians largely did not hunt bears, instead they treated them with respect as an elder sibling. The above incomplete list of threatened, endangered, and extinct animals and plants demonstrates that all living things are affected by the logic of domestication and submission. These logics have literally besieged Native peoples in southern California and subsist into the present despite their actual unsustainability in glaring contradiction to Native worldviews and creation stories from which the sacredness of life is recognized in the environment.

In a Native spiritual perception of reality human beings have a sacred responsibility to the earth. Acjachemen creation stories tell of two beings: one above, one below, one in darkness and one in light - male and female - inseparable.[9] These two created the earth and sand, rocks, trees, and the first people, the *Kaamalam* (Boscana, 1846).[10] Acjachemen know the earth to be female, she fed the people and nurtured them; this is why they know her as female, as mother, and why they have a responsibility to protect her - not out of patriarchy, but out of responsibility as a reciprocal relationship.

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[9] There are variations of both Acjachemen and Tongva creation stories. Some of these differences are based on geographical differences between where the people lived who told the stories and how they related to them. The Acjachemen and Tongva creation stories share many cultural elements; these elements are also shared with other tribes in southern California. Here I am providing an Acjachemen version as I am more familiar with this version than I am other versions, particularly those that focus on *Chinigchinich*, the protocol (law) giver.

[10] The creation story as presented in the text is a collaboration of Geronimo Bosacana's 1846 manuscript and conversations with Acjachemen tribal members and family.

Tamaayuwut (Earth Mother) along with *Tuukumit* (Darkness) brought matter from the Milky Way, *Wanal Wanawut*, to create all life. *Wiyoot* (*Ouiot*) was created next; it was he who created humans. In one version of the Acjachemen creation story, *Tosaut*, a black rock was used to secure the earth in place. It was also from *Tosaut* that the ocean became salty and instead of flowing like a river, filled the space between the lands. As *Wiyoot* grew old, his children quarreled and some determined that they must kill him. *Wiyoot* was poisoned by Frog (*Wahawut*), after which others attempted to save his life through ceremony and healing from natural springs. The water coming out of the earth in the form of springs holds curative powers in an Acjachemen worldview. Springs are sacred places where spirits exist. From both their creation stories and lived experience Acjachemen know that water is sacred and a source of life and healing. *Wiyoot's* children who gathered from all four directions could not save his life. He died, his body was ceremonially burned, and he rose again to be *Moyla,* the moon, controlling the tides. *Wiyoot* was the first death and from his death, and *Chinigchinich*, the people acquired the ceremony for the dead, the funerary customs and protocols; many of which are still observed. Although I have shared but a brief version of the Acjachemen creation story, it is evident from my telling that the elements within the universe, including water, have sacred importance and are to be protected. Although the majority of Acjachemen and Tongva today are Catholic or another denomination of Christianity, due to colonial violences, and may not know or truly understand their pre-contact creation stories, I believe we continue to feel the essence of the stories and know deep within us that our lands and waters are sacred. Furthermore, the loss of these stories for humans is retained by the spirit of our lands and are never completely lost because of this. They are waiting to be re-learned, evaluated, analyzed and applied in ways I can only imagine.

Spanish Domestication

The monjerio was used as a tool of domestication and colonization; to make Native women useful for the Spanish project of establishing settlements in California. The Spanish concern with heaven and the return of their savior, stopped them from seeing that they were creating an apocalypse for the living. Edward D. Castillo (1994) explained, "At the age of six or seven, the female children were separated from their families and made to live in a carefully locked, all-female barracks called *monjerios*" (p. 75). Furthermore, Castillo (1994) wrote, "Great cultural damage and emotional suffering were caused by the dismemberment of native families" (p. 75). To domesticate unmarried women and girls into this project they were separated from their families, cut off from the teaching of culture that taught them about sacredness, the power of land and water, and responsibility to the earth. Through the monjerio, the Spanish priests attempted to end their worlds including the ceremonial telling and singing of their creation stories.[11]

The Spanish intended to disrupt the worlds of California Indians through their institutionalization of a gender binary in contrast to traditional cultural norms. Males and females were strictly separated through both their living quarters and through their labor. The only way for the women to be released from their imprisonment within the monjerio was through marriage, to submit to patriarchy and the heteronormative ideology of marriage between one man

[11] California Indian boys within the missions were also subject to a domestication policy. This was enacted through similar logics of domestication focused on their conversion to Catholicism and the Spanish labor system. They became subject to slave labor enforced through harsh punishment.

and one woman. This concept changed Indian familial relationships. It also enforced a gender binary profoundly felt by both those who were queer and whose gender was outside of Spanish/Christian categorization. According to Antonia I. Castañeda (1997), through the monjerio the Padres attempted to "control and remake native sexuality…" (p. 235). "In particular" she wrote, the domestication of "women's procreation, was driven as much by material interest as by doctrinal issues" (p. 235). In order to expand the Spanish empire in the eastern Pacific, "California needed a growing Hispanicized Indian population as both a source of labor and as a defense against foreign invasion…" (p. 235). As argued by Castañeda, the domestication of women into the Spanish world and economy was essential for an expanding empire. Yet, as Albert Hurtado (1992) argued, the attempt to completely disrupt California Indian traditions was not easy: "Christian ceremonies did not automatically eliminate older cultural meanings of Indian marriage, nor did they necessarily engender Catholic values in the Indian participants" (p. 378).

Despite being an integral part of the Mission and the growing Spanish empire, as one of the first buildings constructed on the frontier, the monjerio has routinely been overlooked by historians writing about Spanish California. Furthermore, heteronormativity and sexual violence is often not directly addressed in otherwise important historical analyses. Lisbeth Hass (1995) described the monjerio and provided a detailed explanation of how it functioned at Mission San Gabriel. She wrote, "at Mission San Gabriel a blind Gabrieleño would stand at the door and call the names of each girl who was supposed to enter for the night" (p. 28). A girl who missed roll call would be "locked up for having failed to arrive punctually" (p. 28). Haas also explained that the girl's mother would be "brought to the mission from her village the next day and punished..." (p. 28). However, in her explanation, Hass does not describe the monjerio as a place that endangered Indian girls or made them susceptible to sexual violence. Similarly, she does not describe the monjerio as enforcing heteropatriarchal norms. Moreover, the rape of Indian women is often told in a passive voice that deflects the issue and does not ascribe responsibility. For example, despite her well-researched book that focused much of its attention on both San Gabriel and San Juan Capistrano, as well as the Acjachemen and Tongva, Haas also used passive voice when rape of Indian women was concerned. She wrote, "Besides European diseases, moreover, syphilis had become a problem owing to rape and sexual liaisons between soldiers and Indian women" (p. 22). It almost reads as if she is uncomfortable using the word "rape" and quickly sidesteps and uses the word "liaison" to describe the relationship between soldiers and Indian women without acknowledging the inequity of power relations. Furthermore, she described these relationships as consensual, which some undoubtedly were, through the use of "liaisons." However, she does not analyze the structures of patriarchy in her study. Additionally, she does not ascribe a clear guilty party to the rape of Indian women, and her sentence does not have a clear subject.

The monjerio as Haas stated, increased the spread of disease with the close confines and lack of fresh air. For example, in the corner of the room was either a hole or a bucket where the women could relieve themselves. Barred windows were placed high on the walls in order to both keep them from escaping and to discourage communication between inside and outside. The dimensions of the personal space within the monjerio have been compared to that provided African slaves on the ships during the trans-Atlantic slave trade (Stannard, 1992). These cramped, dirty spaces allowed for the transmission of disease at high rates. Castillo (1994) concluded that the monjerio contributed to and institutionalized the spread of disease, stating: "Both contemporary observers and later scholars have identified these female barracks as major

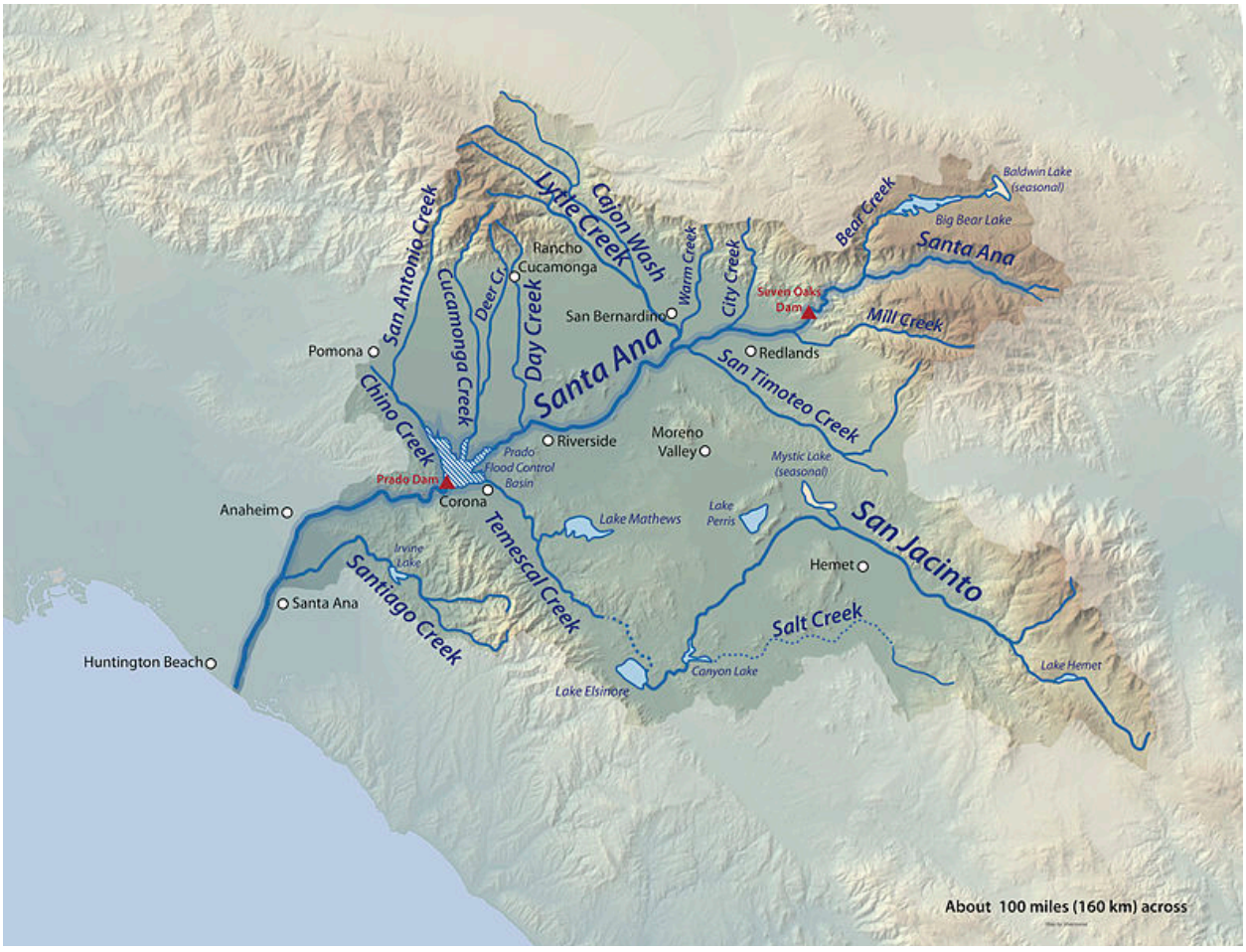
culprits in the spread of infectious disease" (p.75). The mission system comparably institutionalized the spread of infection through sexual violence. One of the diseases responsible for large numbers of Indian deaths during the Mission period was syphilis – a sexually transmitted disease. The monjerio not only increased infection but also provided opportunity for sexual violence against California Indians, perpetrated by both priests and soldiers.

Despite centuries of experience with evangelization and attempts at converting Indians in the Americas, according to Castillo (1994) "the Franciscans apparently never developed an effective policy to prevent the wholesale sexual exploitation of the native peoples whom they were supposedly helping" (p. 72). Castillo further clarified, "the problem was inherent in an 'evangelization' program that, in the final analysis, relied on military force to secure native acquiescence to Franciscan authority" (p. 72). This authority leading to sexual violence and what may now be referred to as sexual trafficking is most observable with the use of the monjerio. Saint Junípero Serra knew well that this was a problem. In 1771 Serra believed Mission San Gabriel to be "the most promising of all the missions…" However, he wrote, "this mission gives me the greatest cause for anxiety; the secular arm down there was guilty of the most heinous crimes, killing the men to take their wives" (as quoted in Castañeda, 1993, p. 16). Serra in describing the violence of conquest at Mission San Gabriel related how a soldier in his attempt to "get himself a woman… killed the principal Chief of the gentiles; they cut off his head and brought it in triumph back to the mission" (as quoted in Castañeda, 1993, p. 16). In another of his many letters Serra bemoaned in 1777, "In San [Juan] Capistrano it seems that all the sad experiences that we went through at the beginning have come to life again. The soldiers, without any restraint or shame, have behaved like brutes towards the Indian women" (Serra and Tibesar, Writings of Junípero Serra, Volume 3. p. 359). Although ambiguous in his word choices when describing rape, statements such as the above make it clear that Serra understood that sexual violence was symptomatic of conquest.

Russian voyager Otto Von Kotzebue provided a contemporary view of the monjerio in 1824 when he visited Mission Santa Clara. "These dungeons are opened two or three times a day," he reported, "but only to allow the prisoners to pass to and from church. I have occasionally seen the poor girls rushing out eagerly to breathe the fresh air, and driven immediately into the church like a flock of sheep by an old ragged Spaniard armed with a stick. After mass, they are in the same manner hurried back to their prison" (as quoted in Jackson & Castillo, 1995, p. 81). Although people had been living in California for over 10,000 years, for time-immemorial, the monjerio was the first prison: a racial and gendered institution targeting Indigenous women through a logic of domestication and submission (Sepulveda, 2016). Unfortunately, historians have largely overlooked the monjerio and the use of sexual violence against California Indians. Similarly, scholars investigating the origins of the prison have often disregarded California Indian enslavement, the use of the monjerio as prison, the persistent racialized policing of Native bodies, and land dispossession assisting in the formation of the modern prison. The institutions of the Mission, despite its abolition more than 150 years ago, continue to have profound effects on Native peoples through its use of the logic of submission and domestication.

Santa Ana's "Benders" and "Rampages"

Processes to dispossess Acjachemen and Tongva of their lands and their worldviews, which centered the importance of place, began with Spanish colonialism during the 18th century and have persisted throughout the American occupation. As Indigenous peoples whose lives depended upon their environments and the love provided by their mother earth, they understood and appreciated the changing seasons and lived accordingly. In pre-contact California, the Santa Ana River was expected to seasonally flood providing water for marshes and wetlands producing plant material, such as tule, used for many purposes including house and boat construction. The Santa Ana, the largest riparian ecosystem in southern California stretching from the San Bernardino mountains to the Pacific Ocean, also provided for a diverse animal habitat, such as waterfowl, steelhead trout and grizzly bear. It was seasonally a wide river during winter and spring and could have a slight flow by the end of summer. The Spanish named the river, Rio de Santa Ana. In English she is Saint Anne – the mother of Mary and grandmother of Jesus.



Shannon1. (2015). Santa Ana River Map. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Santa-ana-river-new.jpg

The historical record demonstrates the regular flooding of the river. For instance, in June 1884 the *Los Angeles Herald* reported, "The Santa Ana River is so high from melting snow in

the mountains that it is not fordable…" ("Items of Interest," 1884). In December 1889 the *Herald* again stated, "The Santa Ana river… [is] out of [her] banks… flooding the Newport district… causing great loss of crops and other property" ("Damage Caused," 1889). Again, in March 1895 it reported, "The Santa Ana River is on a *bender* and has broken over the levee. It is flooding the lowlands near Newport… There has been no damage yet, but some is certain to occur to the crops growing nicely" (italics added, "The River is on a Bender," 1895). The *Herald* in the same article stated, "A number of new houses are going up in Santa Ana and many more are in contemplation" ("The River is on a Bender," 1895). Despite the regular flooding of the Santa Ana River, the lower flood plain became an important location for American development and agriculture.

Underscoring the persistent patterns of flooding, in November 1900 the *San Francisco Call* reported, "The Santa Ana River is out of its banks to-night and flooding valuable farming lands in a new course to the sea. Low-lying celery lands south of here are partially submerged and much of the crop will be ruined" ("Santa Ana," 1900). In 1906 headlines narrated, "Santa Ana River Goes on A Rampage." And in 1910 the *Los Angeles Herald* reported, "The flood waters which covered thousands of acres in Orange county yesterday morning are subsiding, after having injured the celery crop to an extent of $50,000 or $76,000. The peat lands of Orange county, where the greatest body of celery in the world is annually grown, were covered with water, flooding the celery which was being harvested and shipped..." ("Santa Ana Flood," 1910). The flooding also temporarily blocked the Pacific Electric railroad between Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and Huntington Beach. Moreover, it reported, "Two bridges were washed out… The steel bridge of the Santa Fe at Yorba is badly damaged, swaying in the middle. Much trackage is washed out on the Santa Fe between Yorba and Olive" ("Santa Ana Flood," 1910). In 1916 bridges were once again obstructed by floodwaters, trains were stopped, and property was damaged ("Rain Swells," 1916). "Hundreds of people" it was reported, "were told to flee for their lives…" ("Flee Before Floods," 1916).

The authors who reported the flooding river often provided her with personification as is exemplified in an article from 1916 wherein the *Los Angeles Herald* stated, "The Santa Ana River, storm swollen to a width of mile and a half, is on a *rampage*" (italics added, "Flee Before Floods, 1916). Again in 1921 the "Santa Ana River [was] on a *rampage*" (italics added, "32-Year Rain Record," 1921). And in 1938 "the Santa Ana River [was again] on the *rampage*, smashing through man-made walls, and carrying dead cows, horses and chickens; parts of houses, thousands of oranges and all kinds of debris" (italics added, "Gray Describes Experience," 1938). In order to control and domesticate the river from her "rampages" and "benders" she was further channelized, dammed, diverted, and held in reservoirs. The domestication of the river simultaneously enabled its use as resource for irrigation, consumption, property, and electrical power. Her ecosystem was drastically changed in order to support further development of empire throughout her flood basin in Orange County. The Spanish project of domesticating Indian women through the monjerio is analogous to the American project of controlling the Santa Ana River. Both domestication projects were produced for the expansion of empire and the growth of capital. The purpose and operating logic within both of these projects was to produce authority and (dis)possession over the land/water. And ultimately, to domesticate the "wilderness."

Recognitions and Misrecognitions

The Tongva, otherwise known as Gabrieliño, are a Native American tribe much like the Acjachemen who had their traditional ways of life adversely disrupted through processes of colonialism. They often resisted colonization, sometimes through mere refusal, and as a result they continue to survive into the present, retaining cultural knowledge.[12] Tongva traditional territory extends across the Los Angeles Basin, the San Gabriel Valley, into Orange County, the Channel Islands, and the Inland Empire: from the mountains to the Pacific. The Tongva shared territory with the Acjachemen near the Santa Ana River and their cultures, histories and genealogies are interconnected. Prior to colonialism several of their villages were located near the Santa Ana River. Furthermore, sites of sacred importance continue to exist near the river such as the village of Genga, now known as Banning Ranch. The Spanish and their interconnected military and religious institutions forced the Tongva to build Mission San Gabriel, founded in 1771. This institution systematically reduced the number of Tongva villages. Once at the Mission, the Indians were forced into servitude and to obey both the Franciscan missionaries and the Spanish military. The mission structure affected the daily lives of the Tongva and changed their futures through the enforcement of Catholicism, patriarchy, and the labor necessary to support the mission. The white supremacist regime of the Catholic Church and Spanish military forced the Tongva to abandon many aspects of their traditional ways of life, spirituality, economies and governance. Nevertheless, they resisted the Mission system and defended their traditional ways of life and their lands against the invaders as exemplified by Toypurina and Nicolas Jose's 1785 planned attack on Mission San Gabriel.[13] In 1781 the Los Angeles Pueblo was founded and further displaced Tongva from the village of Yaanga. Following the Mission Period, the missions were secularized, the Mexican government took control of California, and land was re-distributed through grants principally acquired by Mexican and Spanish families. The Tongva maintained connections to the Mission and became labor for the ranchos occupying their lands. After the United States became the colonial power in California, in 1848, life for many Tongva continued under a system of regulated slave labor produced through systemic racism despite the state entering the Union as free. As larger numbers of settlers arrived into California on Tongva land, Native labor was not in as great of a need. Quickly, Los Angeles as a city developed from the earlier pueblo and extended its reach across the basin. This form of settler colonialism combined with acculturation and high rates of premature death since contact nearly erased the presence of the Tongva. Nevertheless, they survived as a people and are currently revitalizing and reclaiming their cultural knowledges, including their language, dances, ceremonies, canoe traditions, foods, arts and crafts, governance and their relationships to place. Today the Tongva are recognized by the State of California and consist of several bands that advocate for their continued cultural heritage.

Both the Acjachemen and Tongva are recognized by the State of California but continue to be un-recognized by the United States. Due to this misrecognition, neither were included in a 2013 report by the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation, "Overview of Disadvantaged Communities and Native American Tribes in the Santa Ana River Watershed,"

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[12] By refusal, I mean the myriad of ways the Tongva refused to accept colonization: from Toypurina's attempt to kill the priests at San Gabriel in 1785, to Narcissa Higuera Rosemyre's linguistic work in the earth 20th century as one of the last speakers of the language. Refusal for the Tongva can also mean the everyday continuance as Native people when colonial regimes continuously refuse to recognize them as living Indian people.

[13] Archivo General de la Nación (agn) Provincias Internas (pi), vol. 120, exp. 2, 31a–47b

despite their territories being assessed and the report providing a definition for "Non-Federally Recognized Tribe" (Bureau of Reclamation, 2013). The non-inclusion of the Acjachemen and Tongva highlight their susceptibility to continued colonial logics that simultaneously overlap that of tribes with federal recognition and those that are distinct. Although recognition by the state has recently been widely critiqued in Native Studies, and rightly so (Coulthard 2007, 2014; Simpson, 2011, 2015), one of the many consequences un-recognized tribes continually experience is exemplified in the above example: lack of contact and nation-to-nation consultation by the federal government for inclusion in early participation in actions taken within the tribe's territory. The report on the Santa Ana River Watershed included development along the river that could potentially impact tribes and their lands. Not including the un-recognized tribes is a direct violation of the U.S.'s obligation through its support of the United Nation's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, 2007).

The Spanish began transforming California Indian environments upon their arrival. For example, they forced Acjachemen at San Juan Capistrano to cut ditches called *zanjas* into the earth to irrigate the fields with alien crops. Similarly, Tongva were forced to make adobes and cut down trees in the mountains to build Mission San Gabriel. The Spanish soldiers taught Acjachemen to be *vaqueros*, and herd the cattle that depleted and sullied their water sources and ate their sacred plants. Through enslavement, California Indians did the work of transforming what they loved, the earth, to force her into submission. Years later, the Americans would continue the project of transforming the earth. Although they had a different language and culture from the Spanish, the Americans had the same conceptions of nature and Indigenous peoples. They saw both as wild, uncivilized, non-human, and ready for domestication: to be bent to the will of white supremacy in order to benefit "white life." This disparity in views surrounding land and the concept of "civilization" is critical to an evaluation of white supremacy and the creation of hierarchical human difference. This conception resulted in the Americans always-incomplete project of transforming the earth for their needs, to make it submit. By 1941, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had entombed and imprisoned the lower Santa Ana River in concrete. They had built a dam across her and regulated her flow. They argued that she was dangerous and in need of domestication. In 1938 she flooded and killed 19 people, left 2,000 temporarily homeless, and 68,400 acres covered with water (City of Santa Ana, 2006). Although she could be dangerous, in fact deadly, the larger reason for controlling Santa Ana was not to protect individual life, but to protect property and white life – to expand and nourish empire – devouring all that gets in its way. Orange County was growing; there was money to be made in development and real estate. Santa Ana had to be domesticated into submission so that white men could make their fortunes on the marketing of Indigenous homelands. The *Santa Ana River Vision Plan* stated, "The magnitude of the event [flooding] served as the impetus for construction of the Prado Dam, thus paving the way for the post-World War II building boom which began the conversion from large agricultural operations to housing and commercial development projects" (City of Santa Ana, 2006). The construction of the Prado Dam also flooded what had been a Native village transformed into the town of Rincon (re-named Prado). Its residents, predominantly Indian, Californio and Mexican, were dispossessed of their homes. Their cemetery was also disturbed, using part of it as a borrow pit for the dam. Even in death Tongva and Acjachemen are not beyond having to submit to the logic of domestication and submission. Their cemeteries are routinely threatened and disturbed by development.

Another significant flood occurred along the Santa Ana in 1969, two hundred years after the beginning of colonization. This flood according to the *River Vision Plan*, prompted "The

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers" to declare "the Santa Ana River to be the greatest flood threat west of the Mississippi River, thus spurring the creation of the Santa Ana River Mainstem Project, which installed concrete lining in the river channel" (City of Santa Ana, 2006). This crisis, similar to that of 1938, was followed by a development boom. The concrete lining imprisoned the river; it forced her into submission, domesticating her from her continuous "rampages" and "benders." Following her domestication, the subsequent decades saw increased property values in Orange County "spurring heavy residential, commercial and industrial development along the Santa Ana River, with little thought given to the river itself other than as a flood control channel" (City of Santa Ana, 2006). The communities that formed along her banks were disconnected from the earth and the lands they lived on. They took advantage of the capitalist markets during a brief period of time in order to destroy that which had manifested spirit for Indigenous peoples for thousands of years.

From a 2005 report, the *Santa Ana Integrated Watershed Plan* estimated that the 2,650 square mile Santa Ana River Watershed contained 5 million people and projected that within 50 years, an additional 5 million people would call this region home. In the report it stated, "This growth will certainly accelerate the pressures already on the region's limited water resources" (Planning Department, 2005). This large population correspondingly has an impact to the health of the river. Currently the river faces multiple environmental and urban strains that affect its ability to be used by both humans and animals in healthy ways. The Environmental Protection Agency assessment status deemed the river to be "impaired" –determining that sections of it cannot support its designated uses. Amongst these usages include: water contact and recreation, aquatic life support, cultural/ceremonial uses, for drinking water and in support of wildlife habitat. According to the Press Enterprise, testing of the river in 2011 "between Prado Dam near Corona and the Mission Boulevard bridge in Riverside… found elevated levels of lead" (Danelski, 2011). In other areas the river is polluted with lead and copper. While yet other regions and tributaries contain high levels of bacteria, often from "leaking sewers, septic tanks, pet waste and manure from dairy farms" (Danelski, 2011). The misrecognition of the river as a flood control channel has affected the ability of the river to be fully alive and the misrecognition of the Acjachemen and Tongva has similarly affected their ability to maintain sovereignty over their territories.

Currently there are river cleanup days where people pick up trash along the river. There are also projects to beautify the Santa Ana River and surrounding green spaces, increase usage of the Santa Ana River Trail, and engage the community to inspire protection of the river for future generations. These projects while honorable often do not address Native peoples or decolonization. This is not the fault of the organizers, because they probably have never thought of Indians as living environmental stewards. And most likely, they have never met a Tongva or Acjachemen, or view the land as continuing to be Indigenous space. It was never given to the colonizer, they never bought it, and they did not take it from us in any way that would be recognized as lawful through an international tribunal that included Indigenous nations. Still, this is not the fault of individual organizers. It is a structure, which often means as Indigenous nations that we have to continuously educate people about our very existence.

In 2005 a Task Force was established through the City of Santa Ana to restore the Santa Ana River. The Task Force's vision statement proclaims, "To restore a natural river corridor that enhances environmental, recreational and economic opportunities while increasing community pride, connectivity and quality of life" (City of Santa Ana, 2006). The river is still seen as advancing empire and economic opportunities; and nature is seen as a site of recreation instead

of containing spirit. Humans are centered within the city's restoration of the river, rather than the river itself and all of the varied life its environment can support. By centering humans and human interactions with the environment, the various restoration projects along the river are continuing the project of domestication despite their attempt to protect the environment. The Task Force began by brainstorming and identifying key stakeholders: "neighborhood groups, environmental associations, private business, governmental agencies and civic leaders…" (City of Santa Ana, 2006). Not surprisingly, the Tongva and Acjachemen were not included on their list of stakeholders.

It is unclear how vision plans like the one referenced above intend to restore the river when Orange County depends on it as a flood channel with its concrete barriers for flood control. However, I can envision the river restored, un-domesticated through an abolition of the flood control methods that currently entomb and imprison the river in concrete, not allowing it to recharge the underground water. In an Indigenous knowledge of the future, in other words Acjachemen and Tongva theory, the river will be what it needs to be again: free from channelization and dams, free from pollution, without invasive species, and alive with native plants and animals - in a living spiritual relationship with the Indigenous peoples of this land and their guests.[14] In the Tongva language we should be able to call our lands 'eyoopaviin – our place where water flows. Currently we cannot apply this word to the Santa Ana River. The abolition of the imprisonment of our sacred waters depends on an abolition of the logics of settler colonialism dependent on domestication and submission that have critically affected both the environment and Native people.

Conclusion: *Kuuyam* - "Guests"

On Friday, July 28, 1769 the Portolá Expedition reached the Santa Ana River near present day Anaheim. Miguel Costansó, a Catalonian engineer, cartographer and cosmographer kept a journal of their trip north from San Diego on Portola's failed mission to locate Monterey. (Fireman & Servín, 1970). In his entries he described the land, the waters and the Indigenous peoples they met along the way.[15] Catalonian soldiers, leather-jacket soldiers, Christian Indians from Baja California, and priests accompanied Portolá. They came not as guests of the Indigenous peoples, but as conquerors with regimented, institutionalized, and militarized hierarchical conceptions of human difference (Rodriguez, 2008). Within this hierarchy, gentile Indians, who had not been converted to Catholicism, were placed at the bottom. Their mission was explicitly to expand empire in the eastern Pacific. Upon reaching the Santa Ana River and what must have been the village of Hotuukgna, Costansó wrote: "It is a beautiful river, and carries great floods in the rainy season, as is apparent from its bed and the sand along its banks. This place has many groves of willows and very good soil, all of which can be irrigated for a great distance" (Costansó, 1769). Constansó's description of the river highlights the extreme

[14] The banks of the Santa Ana River, near Hotuukgna, have been the site of repeated homeless encampments and removals of said encampments. Decolonizing the river could also mean having Native peoples teach the homeless how to make our traditional homes (kiiy and kiicha), which are much more environmentally sustainable than the material many of the homeless currently use. Made out of willow and tule, these homes require a healthy river and marshlands for the native plant material to grow.

[15] The journals of these first land expeditions in California are silent on California Indian place names.

changes that the river has undergone since the first white people came in contact with it.[16] Additionally, his writing displays the flooding of the river that would later "rampage" and go on "benders" destroying American settlements and agriculture, creating crises leading to both environmental destruction and the development of Orange County; capitalism can accurately be understood as the enemy of mother earth.[17] Further, Constansó's journal exhibits Spanish conceptions of the environment - as something to be transformed and domesticated. Costansó further stated, "We pitched our camp on the left bank of the river. To the right there is a populous Indian village; the inhabitants received us with great kindness" (Costansó, 1769). Below is a recent image of the Santa Ana River in Anaheim facing downstream toward the Pacific Ocean near the location Constansó described in his journal (Downtowngal, 2011). The land described by Costansó has been unmistakably and dramatically damaged by colonialism. This image does not depict a living river. Instead, in comparison to the river Constansó described, it looks like an apocalyptic setting without a single tree, neither a willow or sycamore growing where there had previously been "many groves."

In the Tongva language the word for guests is *Kuuyam*. Portolá and the succeeding stream of settlers who came to California had the opportunity to be *Kuuyam* on the lands of California Indians; they were often welcomed as such. Costansó for example wrote, "Fifty-two of them [Indians] came to our quarters, and their captain or cacique asked us by signs which we understood easily, accompanied by many entreaties, to remain there and live with them. [He said] that they would provide antelopes, hares, or seeds for our subsistence, that the lands which we saw were theirs, and that they would share them with us" (Costansó, 1769). In Father Juan Crespi's diary from that same summer day, he used nearly identical language to describe their encounter with the village:

[16] Some of the first irrigation canals along the Santa Ana River were established for the 48,000-acre Rancho Santiago de Santa Ana owned by the Yorba and Peralta families, part of which was first granted in 1810.

[17] It should be noted that capitalism isn't the only economic system that views the environment as something to be conquered. Communist and Socialist nations have also invested in large scale water works, and other resource extractions, that transform the earth for human needs, often with damaging effects to the ecosystem.

About seven in the morning we set out, continuing our way to the northwest along the skirts of the mountains which we have on the right, to the north, and after traveling a league and a half we came to the banks of a river which has a bed of running water about ten varas wide [about 28 feet] and half a vara deep [17 inches]. It is not at all boxed in by banks. Its course is from northeast to southwest, and it empties through this place, according to the judgment of those who sailed to the bay of San Pedro. It apparently has its source in the range that we have in sight on the right, about three leagues from the road that we are following. The bed of the river is well grown with sycamores, alders, willows, and other trees which we have not recognized. It is evident from the sand on its banks that in the rainy season it must have great floods which would prevent crossing it. It has a great deal of good land which can easily be irrigated. We pitched camp on the left bank of this river. On its right bank there is a populous village of Indians, who received us with great friendliness. Fifty-two of them came to the camp, and their chief told us by signs which we understood very well that we must come to live with them; that they would make houses for us, and provide us with food, such as antelope, hares, and seeds. They urged us to do this, telling us that all the land we saw, and there was certainly a great deal of it, was theirs, and that they would divide it with us. We told him that we would return and would gladly remain to live with them, and when the chief understood it he was so affected that he broke into tears. (Crespi, 1769).

This experience of being welcomed by the Indigenous inhabitants as guests is repeated throughout the journals from the Portolá Expedition. For example, on the following day at another village Crespi (1769) wrote, "We made camp on a hill near the pool which has good grass for pasture. As soon as we arrived the whole village, which numbered more than seventy souls, came to visit us. They invited us to go to stay at the village..." Seven days later in the San Fernando Valley, Costansó (1769) wrote: "Near this [a spring] there was a populous Indian village, [and the inhabitants were] very good-natured and peaceful. They offered us their seeds in trays or baskets of rushes, and came to the camp in such numbers that, had they been armed, they might have caused us apprehension, as we counted as many as two hundred and five, including men, women, and children. All of them offered us something to eat…" As displayed in these journal entries, Indian people had well-established protocols of how to treat visitors as *Kuuyam*. This concept of *Kuuyam* can continue to be applied today. Settlers in California, and elsewhere, can be guests on the lands they live on. *Kuuyam* to the local Indigenous peoples, but more importantly, to the land itself which contains spirit and is willing to provide. The earth, which has been treated with disrespect by humans on a global scale, continues to be welcoming. Following the teaching of the earth, Indigenous peoples can also continue their traditions of being welcoming. However, this can be a slippery slope. One of the ways Indigenous peoples were colonized was through their own kindness - their willingness to accommodate and welcome other peoples. Yet, we must not turn away from our own traditions and values. The concept of *Kuuyam*, under current conditions, is difficult to the point of nearing impossible. However, the conditions of impossibility have been met and overcome by Indigenous ancestors in their audacity to survive (Lerma, 2015). Residents of Tongva land (Tovaangar), for example, can be *Kuuyam* and not act as colonizers or seek to further domesticate the environment for their own benefit. They can be welcomed guests, and not looked at by the Native community as settler colonizers– no matter their skin color, histories, or origins. The status as *Kuuyam* is neither demanded nor ordered. It is instead a relationship offered and chosen.

Kuuyam can disrupt settler colonialism. It can support bringing balance back to the environment, re-centering Indigenous peoples, and in decolonial struggles to revitalize cultural

elements such as the respect for those who transcend gender binaries. Within this relationship between *Kuuyam* and Indigenous peoples as hosts, both will have to put in effort to maintain relationships. This is not an easy alternative however; it will take immeasurable determination. Nevertheless, living sustainably has always included difficult sacrifices and should not be viewed as a utopic dream. Forming relationships has continuously been an Indigenous method to easing and avoiding confrontation and violence. Relationships form responsibility and protocol. *Kuuyam* is an abolition of institutionalized hierarchical conceptions of human difference that separate people by race, origins, religion, gender, and sexuality. Instead, *Kuuyam* establishes relations beyond difference in a non-hierarchical manner. The concept of *Kuuyam* is able to abolish hierarchical difference through its purposeful restoration of organic human-land relationships and Peoplehood (Holm, et al. 2003). Specifically, *Kuuyam* can assist in the abolition of white supremacist logics that demand domestication and submission. These relationships, of guest and host, are formed outside of western conceptions of property and hierarchies between wilderness and civilization. Decolonization through Indigenous theory, such as *Kuuyam*, is not based in going back to a former time but a decisive resolve for a future in which everyone recognizes our lands and our water as sacred sources of life. *Kuuyam*, as I am theorizing, is not an open invitation for settler possession of Native land. Instead, it is a defiant act of love for our lands; placing them above the needs of humans. An example of settlers showing that they are *Kuuyam* is their assistance in the recovery of the Santa Ana River – by giving back to the tribes who have been dispossessed. Within this recovery and the organizational structures that will be or already have been created, tribes must have representation in meaningful ways and there must be government to government consultation within which the environment and all creations are viewed as living entities and not as domesticable.

The concept of *Kuuyam*, admittedly in its early stages of theorization, is an intervention within Settler Colonial Studies which often decenters Native peoples and lands through both its theorization and institutionalization (Kauanui, 2016). For example, it is rare for works within the field of Settler Colonial Studies to ask the Indigenous peoples how they view and understand non-natives on their lands.[18] Scholars have engaged in unnecessary discussions and critique of the settler binary (native/settler) without including the voices of Indigenous communities or governments. Rarely have scholars in the field of Settler Colonial Studies attempted to provide an Indigenous centering when approaching an answer to the question of who is a settler. *Kuuyam* allows for a re-centering of place, and instead of dividing peoples into categories (and binaries) it allows all peoples to understand themselves as guests of the land – either they behave appropriately, or they do not. Either they act in ways that are respectful to the earth or they do not. This respect for the earth includes Native peoples ourselves – we also must recognize the sacredness of the land, including our genealogical responsibilities. We must not be complicit, but instead seek awareness of the ways in which we have been colonized. Once we are aware then we can begin the long process of decolonization.

The questions I began this essay with are complex: How do Indigenous peoples retain connection to place when those places no longer exist, or have been desecrated? The Santa Ana River is a distinct example of this dispossession for the Tongva and the Acjachemen. Their villages were located next to the river and their identities were connected to these places geographically, genealogically and through human-land relationships. These connections have

[18] In this aspect, Settler Colonial Studies operates similar to the field of Anthropology that has been widely critiqued, most famously by Vine Deloria in his chapter "Anthropologists and other Friends."

not been completely severed despite the attempts of the Spanish or through the environmental dispossession by the Americans. Yet, I'm careful not to romanticize indigeneity and its ability to withstand generations of colonialism; we have been critically affected and yet many of us remain defiant. Colonialism is an ongoing project and the effects of colonialism on Native peoples and land/water are not simply reversible or easy to decolonize. For example, even if the settler colonizers vanished tomorrow their legacies and disease, the *Wétiko* as Jack D. Forbes called it, remains (Forbes, 2008). Furthermore, many of the changes and affects to the environment are correspondingly challenging to move beyond. The path towards decolonization is markedly complex in locations such as Orange County where millions of settlers live, work, bury their dead, and have formed their own individual relationship with place. A settler relationship to land in southern California is predominantly informed through capitalism and its linear progression, in which the environment is subject to domestication and submission. Despite the trauma associated with the history of dispossession, decolonial possibilities remain. *Kuuyam* is a reimagining of human relationships to place outside of the structures of settler colonialism. *Kuuyam* is also a theorization that attempts to imagine a future for California Indians in which we can bring our lands and our sacred waters back to life. It is thoughtfully a continuation of our culture and traditions that prioritizes sacred human relationships with land and water.

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