

Animating Resistance

Association of Latina and Latino Anthropologists

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Anthropology as Public Pedagogy



The horned serpent serves as a witness to the events that unfold during the Pueblo uprising. Warren Montoya

On January 25, President Trump signed a presidential memorandum pushing forward construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The action sparked a new wave of protests across the nation in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux and their allies, who vowed to continue in the struggle to protect their homeland from contamination. Expecting violent confrontations with the militarized corporate-state to escalate, the Water Protectors ceremoniously incinerated their camp and chanted songs of healing as they departed. The battle will now be waged in the courts. The displacement of Indigenous people on their very own land vivifies the legacies of settler colonialism. Yet, as people from over 300 tribes and nations from across the Americas gathered at Sacred Stone Camp over the

past few months, we also witnessed the rise of a Hemispheric Pan-Indian movement. While this collective action is remarkable in its own right, it reflects a long history of Indigenous rebellions and decolonial movements in the Americas.

The 1680 Pueblo Revolt stands as another Pan-Indian coalition, leading to one of the most successful revolutions in the history of the Americas. The Pueblo Revolt, which historian, Joe Sando of Jemez Pueblo, termed, the “First American Revolution,” remains a living example of Indigenous coalitions that materialized under conditions of crisis. In the upper Rio Grande region of New Mexico, the Pueblos and their Navajo and Apache allies rose up against Spanish occupiers, effectively banishing them from the region. For many of the Pueblos, this event marks the beginning of the modern era, a declaration of sovereignty that continues to be evoked in community gatherings such as the annual Pueblo Convocation in Albuquerque, and commemorated in individual Pueblos on August 10, the day of the uprising. The Revolt is also recognized publically in museums such as the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center.

Critical moments of Indigenous resistance are too-often ignored and erased from the master narratives of US history taught in schools and touted in popular culture that mythologize the horrors of genocide in the form of a glorified Western imaginary.

More recently, Red Nation, an activist group based at the University of New Mexico, staged a protest in September 2016 of the Entrada Pageant, a public drama that reenacts the Spanish reconquest and Pueblo submission, performed during Santa Fe’s annual Fiesta. The protesters interrupted the pageantry of men portraying Spanish conquistadors chanting, “Slay! Slay! Slay like Po’pay!,” recalling Po’pay, the Tewa religious leader who orchestrated the rebellion. The intervention followed a more subdued locally organized silent protest the year before. Both actions offered a powerful counterpoint to the conquest and conversion narrative that the **Entrada** commemorates. While the Pueblo Revolt is a living history and continued source of inspiration in northern New Mexico, critical moments of Indigenous resistance are too-often ignored and erased from the master narratives of US history taught in schools and touted in popular culture that mythologize the horrors of genocide in the form of a glorified Western imaginary.

Pueblo artists also draw inspiration from the Pueblo Revolt to take traditional art forms in new directions. Internationally renowned ceramicist and fashion designer, Virgil Ortiz from Cochiti Pueblo, stages a futuristic Indigenous rebellion in his recent exhibition at the Denver Art Museum, **1692/2080**. Ortiz animates his storyline with cosmic warrior figurines, costumed insurgents, and sci-fi backdrops. Jason Garcia’s graphic novel-inspired, **Tewa Tales of Suspense**, depicts Po’pay as

a brawny superhero on an epic quest to protect his homeland from invaders. Acclaimed Cochiti potter, Diego Romero, paints intricate scenes of the uprising on his pots. These contemporary artists recast the Pueblo Revolt reaching new audiences and engaging youth in Pueblo history.



Po'pay emerges from the kiva with a vision of unified Pueblos and a return to the old ways. Warren Montoya

It is within this genre of decolonial contemporary art that we created *Frontera! Revolt and Rebellion on the Rio Grande* an animated documentary that positions the Revolt as a defining moment in the making of the US-Mexico borderlands. The film was one of the few animations to screen at the *Visual Anthropology Film Festival* at the 2015 American Anthropological Association Conference. **We collaborated with Pueblo and Chicana/o artists and musicians to tell a multivocal history that also speaks to present-day realities of racial violence, inhuman immigration policies, and the continued struggle for indigenous sovereignty and decolonization.** Through animation, song and humor, *Frontera!* translates archeological, ethnographic, and archival research into a popular and accessible format intended for a wide audience. This public pedagogical approach attempts to surface the colonial legacies of the US-Mexico borderlands through the lens of Indigenous resistance and solidarity. As public media, the work is available online and is being screened in university classrooms, community gatherings, and film festivals. We have developed interdisciplinary **lesson plans for middle school, high school and university** levels with the goal of engaging students in a decolonial history of the US-Mexico borderlands.

Making anthropological knowledge accessible to diverse audiences beyond academia through alternative media platforms is more important than ever. We live in an era of mass deportations, inhumane immigration policies, and increased militarization of the border, but the southwest is also an expansive homeland with a deeply rooted history and present. For Native American and Chicana/o communities, this place is where our ancestors emerged and dwell and where we live and thrive. *Frontera!* tracks between these two images of the borderlands—one marred by waves of conquest, domination, and violence and another that continues to be Pueblo land, Indian Country, Aztlán.

If you are interested in accessing lesson plans and/or to obtain the *Frontera!* DVD, please contact, John Jota Leños at jleanos@ucsc.edu.

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