

KICKING BEAR, "ADDRESS AT THE COUNCIL MEETING OF THE HUNKPAPA SIOUX,  
GREAT SIOUX RESERVATION" (9 OCTOBER 1890)

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Abstract: Kicking Bear's 1890 speech to a Council Meeting of the Hunkpapa Sioux called the Sioux Nation to join the Ghost Dance, a movement that sought a return of the buffalo and the expulsion of European-Americans from Indian Country. Kicking Bear worked to define the American Indians as the "chosen people," an appropriation of the U.S. government's expansionist and exceptional ideologies. In the process, Kicking Bear fostered a sense of familialism, binding Natives to their ancestors.

Key Words: Kicking Bear, Ghost Dance, American Indian rhetoric, prophecy, pan-Indianism

Kicking Bear, a Lakota Sioux of the Minneconjou Band, was born in the spring of 1853 in present-day South Dakota, to Black Fox (father) and Wood Pecker (mother). Although Kicking Bear's final resting place is unknown, most historians, anthropologists and ethnologists agree that this minor band chief of the Minneconjou passed away in May 1904 and is buried somewhere in the vicinity of Manderson, South Dakota. He lived his entire life in the Manderson area and took his vision quest, an adolescent rite of passage through which Plains Indian boys discovered their calling, in the nearby Black Hills.<sup>1</sup>

During Kicking Bear's fifty-one years, he built a reputation as a leader of both the Minneconjou Band and the pan-Indian movement known as the Ghost Dance.<sup>2</sup> The Ghost Dance ritual sought to stimulate a return of American Indian land and the buffalo herds that sustained their way of life. Through continual pleas to the Great Spirit and deceased Native leaders (referred to as fathers by the movement), the dance also called for the expulsion of European-Americans from Indian Country, particularly the Black Hills of South Dakota, which was, and still is, considered the spiritual birthplace of all Sioux descendants.<sup>3</sup>

Kicking Bear, a Dakota Sioux by birth, rose to prominence among the leadership class of the Lakota when he married a niece of a Minneconjou Sioux chief in the 1870s.<sup>4</sup> At the time of his marriage into the Minneconjou, Kicking Bear had already proven himself a worthy Dakota warrior. He raided not only European-American expeditions seeking land, westward roads, and transcontinental rail lines in the wake of the Homestead Act of 1862, but also the Crow Nation, which was continually at odds with the Sioux over territory and buffalo rights throughout the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> With his marriage, he became a minor chief, a post that would allow him to attend a

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founding meeting of the Ghost Dance Movement on the Piute Indian reservation in Utah during the spring of 1890. Kicking Bear's representation of the Minneconjou Lakota at the meeting and his subsequent promotion of the Ghost Dance would elevate him to social and historical prominence in Sioux cultures. At its core, the Ghost Dance Movement that Kicking Bear helped lead was primarily a response to U.S. governmental expansion across the North American continent.

As settlers moved ever closer to Native reservations, the U.S. government's encroachments into Indian Country increased to accommodate the burgeoning numbers of European-Americans.<sup>6</sup> A foundational motivation for this expansion was the U.S. government's insistence that Americans were a modern-day "chosen people."<sup>7</sup> Following suit, the elevation of the U.S. nation to God's "favored group" included an errand, which involved the cultivating of barren land and the civilizing of "savages" in these open expanses.<sup>8</sup> This exceptionalism can be traced, in part, to Puritan minister Samuel Danforth's "A Brief Recognition of New England[']s Errand Into the Wilderness" wherein it was argued that "You [Puritans] have solemnly professed before God, Angels and Men that the Cause of your leaving your Country, Kindred and Fathers houses, and transporting your selves with your Wives, Little Ones and Substance over the vast Ocean into this waste and howling Wilderness, was your liberty to walk in the faith of the Gospel, and your enjoyment of the pure worship of God according to his institution."<sup>9</sup> In other words, God had chosen the early European settlers as the group to tread forward into the wilderness, and in return God expected the "word" to guide them. According to Prucha, this "doctrine of discovery" and exceptionalism related to a divine errand for the U.S. nation, as well. That is, the U.S. government granted itself, through God, the "right of preemption ... the right to acquire title to the soil from the natives [sic] in the area" based on "absolute dominion."<sup>10</sup> This ideology, eventually, was labeled "manifest destiny" in the first third of the nineteenth century.

The leaders of the Ghost Dance Movement took umbrage with the U.S. government's rationale for encroachment rooted in spirituality and, subsequently, countered this religious justification with a similar discourse. In the course of inspiring a rejuvenation of Native lifeways, a return of the buffalo and the expulsion of European-Americans from Indian Country, Ghost Dance rhetoric demonstrated how God (paired synonymously with Great Spirit) actually supported American Indians as the "chosen people." The other side of this argument involved characterizations of the U.S. government as having fallen from grace. Kicking Bear's address at the Council Meeting of the Hunkpapa Sioux, in particular, attempted to unite the Sioux Nation, and its smaller bands, in joining the Ghost Dance Movement by constructing American Indians as a spiritually-elevated group of people. In this way, Native discourse appropriated U.S. governmental arguments of manifest destiny and exceptionalism. Such appropriation spoke to the ways that American Indian spirituality was conflated with U.S. governmental ideologies, thus alluding to a resistance by rupturing the government's own ideas. Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird call this rhetorical tactic, "reinventing the enemy's language."<sup>11</sup> Simultaneously, Kicking Bear's speech re-envisioned Natives as "chosen people" by linking them through familial language and binding them to their ancestors.

### *Contextualizing the Speech*

At the close of Reconstruction, as the United States turned its attention toward completing its expansion across the North American continent, the Sioux Nation found both its land and culture under attack.<sup>12</sup> Historian Guy Gibbon describes the Sioux Nation during the 1870s and 1880s as a devastated people who lived in fragmented, mixed communities on reservations. They had suffered "total military defeat, most of their territory had been taken from them, and they were expected to learn farming and English."<sup>13</sup> Ostensibly, the three great Sioux tribes, beaten in battle and crushed in spirit, were nearing full assimilation as American wards.<sup>14</sup> The roots of Sioux denigration can be traced to the 1830s removal policies of President Andrew Jackson and a series of unfair mid-nineteenth century treaties (e.g., the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1858 that ceded to the United States large tracts of Sioux land). Yet, the period between 1868 and 1889 proved nearly fatal for the Sioux Nation.

The U.S. government's seizure and parceling of Sioux territory began in 1868 following bitter confrontations between U.S. surveyors and the western edges of the Sioux Nation. In 1863 the Bozeman Trail was constructed to provide a quick passage for European-Americans through Sioux-held land in Montana and South Dakota. Predictably, as U.S. traffic swelled along the trail and more European-Americans encroached on Native land, Sioux raids correspondingly increased, sparking in their wake numerous armed confrontations. After five years of bloodshed, representatives from the Lakota Tribe agreed, through a Second Fort Laramie Treaty in 1868, to withdraw from the Bozeman Trail and to surrender some fifty square miles of land in exchange for the payment of twenty dollars per each farming adult.<sup>15</sup> The treaty officially demarcated the new Great Sioux Reservation, a restricted area on which the Sioux were to remain. Furthermore, the treaty, while benevolent on its face, "stipulated and agreed that no white person or persons shall be permitted to settle upon or occupy any portion of the same" area confirmed as Native-owned.<sup>16</sup>

In the late 1870s, the Great Sioux Reservation and its inhabitants fell victim to further pressures from European-American settlers. In 1874, gold was discovered in the Black Hills, prompting European-Americans to swarm the Sioux Nation's land in South Dakota. Historians have noted that "there was a clamor by settlers to open a large portion of the land for sale. Some settlers even moved onto the reservation illegally."<sup>17</sup> In short, the Fort Laramie Treaty had been violated by the U.S. government. What followed was a Native defensive deemed the Sioux War of 1876-1877; the war culminated in the defeat of George Armstrong Custer's Seventh Cavalry at the Battle of Little Big Horn, and concluded with the escape of Chief Sitting Bull (Hunkpapa Lakota) from the northern United States into Canada.<sup>18</sup>

After the Sioux War of 1876-1877, which the U.S. military eventually won, the federal government moved the western boundary of the Great Sioux Reservation from the 104th to the 103rd meridian, "thus slicing off another fifty-mile strip adjoining the Black Hills."<sup>19</sup> In 1883, the federal government forced the Sioux Nation to "cede to the United States all of the Great Sioux Reservation, as reserved to them by the treaty of

1868, and modified by the agreement of 1876."<sup>20</sup> The reservation's land base dwindled, yet again, as the treaty made way for more gold-seekers.

In 1887, Congress passed the General Allotment Act (also known as the Dawes Act), which reduced the size of reservation lands and allowed the surplus land to be used by European-American settlers. These reservation lands had earlier been given to American Indian nations "for all time forever," but as settlers moved west in droves and desired more area, the siphoning of land from reservations became the U.S. government's primary solution.<sup>21</sup> The Dawes Act came to represent both a means "to accommodate homesteaders and to assimilate indigenous nations in the west."<sup>22</sup> Regarding the latter effect of allotment, the Dawes Act sought, in a paternal way, to "grant the habits of civilized life" to American Indians.<sup>23</sup>

At first, the Sioux Nation was not impacted by the Dawes Act, but two years later, the U.S. government passed the Sioux Act of 1889, which forced the Sioux Nation into allotment.<sup>24</sup> Rather than "protecting the [Sioux] from intruders, the federal government broke the Great Sioux Reservation into six separate reservations" to partition land away from the Sioux Nation, and to restrict Native mobility.<sup>25</sup> Seemingly, the new tracts were meant to divide the Sioux Nation, hence weakening its collective energy and power, and to carve away more land for European-American settlers.

The Sioux Nation, though encumbered by the U.S. government's violation of the Fort Laramie Treaty (as well as the allotment policy of the United States), did not sit by idly as its land and customs were threatened at the hands of U.S. assimilation. In the aftermath of the Sioux Act of 1889, several Lakota leaders agitated for a return of tribal territory and dignity. Kicking Bear, in particular, ascended as both a spiritual and physical leader of the Sioux resistance. Kicking Bear sought a way to salve the wounds of his once-powerful and united Sioux community. On a spiritual journey to a Piute Indian reservation in Utah in spring of 1890, Kicking Bear and a number of other Sioux chieftains discovered a means to recover the community of the Great Sioux Reservation: a practice known as the Ghost Dance.

The Ghost Dance originated with Wovoka (Piute), a self-professed Indian prophet who "foretold a promising new world, a world in which all the white people would soon disappear and the buffalo would return and all the dead Indian ancestors of long ago would rejoin the living in a new way of life."<sup>26</sup> Kicking Bear firmly believed that dancing in the fashion that Wovoka taught would usher in this new world. According to Wovoka, the more Kicking Bear and his parishioners danced, the sooner the Great Spirit and the Sioux's ancestral "fathers" would descend to the earth, removing U.S. influences and re-supplying the buffalo population decimated by European-American development.

Interestingly, because Native nations in the upper midwest (i.e., Sioux) and west (i.e., Piute) came into closer contact with European-Americans, Christianity was slowly introduced into Native spirituality.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, the allotment policy's program of assimilation included the "gradual Christianizing" of indigenous people.<sup>28</sup> American Indian nations, like the Piute and the Sioux, integrated the Christian god and Jesus Christ into their spirituality, veritably making them interchangeable with the Great Spirit.<sup>29</sup> This point becomes important as Ghost dancers relied on an amalgam of Native spirituality

and Christian myths in its quest for pan-Indian unity in the face of European-American expansion.

The Ghost Dance did not so much promise a new world as a return to past times. In this sense, the Ghost Dance served the function of cultural revival.<sup>30</sup> The dance emphasized neither economic and political aims nor the instrumental goal of persuading European-Americans and the U.S. government to return the Black Hills. Instead, Kicking Bear, perhaps the most active champion of this movement, sought renewal through prophecy, a messianic rhetoric that summoned a savior to rescue the world.<sup>31</sup> His prophecy for a recovered community excluded European-Americans as supportive allies or hostile enemies; European-Americans, ultimately, were to disappear with the coming of the Great Spirit (God; Jesus Christ) and "your fathers the ghosts" (1).<sup>32</sup> Overall, Kicking Bear's reliance on the Ghost Dance fulfilled consummatory ends; that is, it reconstituted a collective identity for the Sioux Nation, especially as a chosen people.<sup>33</sup>

Oral prophecy, in the vein of Kicking Bear's discourse, is said to be "more important than [simply] the counterpart of the white man's written record ... it reasserts the powers of Indian mythology and cosmology over mere chronology."<sup>34</sup> Orality and prophecy allowed Native cultures to make sense of socio-political changes and to transcend a conundrum or travesty by looking to both the past and the future.<sup>35</sup> Kicking Bear's prophecy arose in response to the exigencies of the Fort Laramie Treaty, the Dawes Act of 1887, and the Sioux Act of 1889. As indigenous people experienced the difficulties of reservation life, religions like the Ghost Dance and rhetors such as Kicking Bear gained prominence and promised that the "peoples' despair would turn to joy and they would be reunited with their loved ones in the Above World."<sup>36</sup> Kicking Bear encouraged looking beyond the current state of Sioux displacement and toward a unification of the past (ghost fathers) with the future (Sioux renewal).

Another important note is that traditional Sioux spirituality meshed well with the Ghost Dance's insistence on connecting with the past and the rooting of Native existence in the land. One reason for this was the Sioux's tendency to integrate Christianity into their worship of the Great Spirit and the land.<sup>37</sup> The Ghost Dance, as conceived by Wovoka and discussed by Kicking Bear, intermingled Christianity with Native spiritualities in this same vein. The second reason for the seamless overlap of the Ghost Dance and Sioux spirituality was the "practice of dancing," specifically, as a mode of "celebrating" the Great Spirit (God; Jesus Christ) and the land.<sup>38</sup> Dancing in Sioux cultures was conceived as a way of creating unity and strength, and proving to the divine and the land that the Sioux worshipped and appreciated the gifts bestowed by these entities.

### *Interpreting the Speech*

In terms of the immediate exigence for the Ghost Dancers, recall that the U.S. government bolstered its "assumptions of racial and cultural superiority as well as an insatiable desire for land, expansion and empire" with providential permission and heavenly support of its "errand" into the wilderness.<sup>39</sup> That is, the U.S. government viewed American Indians and their territories through the lens of *terra nullis*, the notion

that Native land was "an uninhabited or unimproved wasteland" that God wished to be populated by Europeans instead of "aboriginal peoples."<sup>40</sup>

U.S. governmental identities in the nineteenth century were deeply entrenched in this self-professed charge of expansion into new lands and civilizing so-called savages in the "wilderness" both with the support of divine providence. The mission was used to justify how the United States "conquered" others and "establish[ed] and perpetuate[ed] histories" that naturalized a hierarchy where the federal government possessed considerably "greater importance" than "others" like American Indians.<sup>41</sup> This "manifest destiny" rationalized the U.S. government's intrusion during the allotment era, but also its encroachment on Sioux territory in the 1890s. The latter led directly to the Ghost Dance Movement's popularity on the Montana and South Dakota reservations of the Sioux Nation.

Manifest destiny as a term derives from nineteenth century journalist John O'Sullivan's now classic interpretation of the U.S. nationalist projects sponsored under the Jackson, Tyler and Polk administrations during the early 1830s through to the 1840s. To O'Sullivan, America's westward movement was ordained by a higher power, and demanded that Americans fulfill such a divine plan as central to its destiny as a "superior" people.<sup>42</sup> He worried that opponents of western expansion by "thwarting our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our *manifest destiny* to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions," would counteract the momentum of U.S. nationalism.<sup>43</sup> O'Sullivan's term stuck over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup>

This grand motivation was needed to remind the U.S. government that God was on its side in its conquest of North America. Of this, Lens argues that "Americans believed that in furtherance of the great law of self preservation, nature had given them a special right to expand. They were like the ancient Israelites, a chosen race ... carrying progress forward wherever they went. They were not trampling on other people, they were opening up new vistas for them."<sup>45</sup> With God on its side, the nineteenth century U.S. government commenced expansion to fulfill its desire to grow the nation's economy and to secure more land for white settlers.<sup>46</sup> But, American Indians did not simply relent to this expansionist dominance. Again, the Ghost Dance Movement was championed as a way to combat the U.S. government's many intrusions into Native territories.

The analysis that follows considers the ways that Kicking Bear supported and promoted the Ghost Dance Movement upon his return from the pan-Indian meeting with Wovoka. Part of his speech unified his American Indian audience as the chosen people and, in turn, argued for the ways that the Great Spirit (God) rejected European-Americans who were similarly claiming this role. His appropriation of this strategy reflected the ways that Native spirituality melded with European-American ideologies of exceptionalism. Concurrently, Kicking Bear's speech constituted American Indians as chosen through the use of familial discourse and connections with Native ancestors.

In 1890, Kicking Bear accepted an invitation by Chief Sitting Bull to teach his Hunkpapa council about the Ghost Dance. In the speech, delivered to an all-Native audience and remembered, translated, and recorded by fellow Minneconjou Short Bull,

Kicking Bear set about recounting his travels to Utah and his worship at the feet of the prophet Wovoka. As an introduction, it should be noted that Kicking Bear's oration is organized temporally in a three-part structure that moves through time from the present, then to the past and, finally, to the future. Kicking Bear began his speech by discussing the present condition of the Sioux Nation and by providing a rationale for his visit before Sitting Bull's Hunkpapa band. He noted, "My brothers ... I bring you word from your fathers the ghosts, that they are now marching to join you ... [I] am sent back with a message to tell you to make ready for the coming of the Messiah and return of the ghosts in the spring" (1). He then hearkened to the past as a basis for moving into the future.

He began in the present by building his credibility with the Hunkpapa through the enactment of a familial rhetoric, one that united both the speaker and audience as family through such words of "brothers" and "fathers" (1). He intimated that he, in the present, acted as a prophet to the Sioux Nation; he alone brought "word from your fathers the ghosts"; he had been entrusted by the Great Spirit and his surrogate, Wovoka, and hence crafted a prophetic ethos (presence and character) for himself (1). Sitting Bull and his band were instructed to listen, then, to Kicking Bear as he brought forth a sacred message from the Great Spirit.<sup>47</sup> And, this message involved all who were related to each other as what the Great Spirit referred to as "my children, the red men" (5). As he attempted to argue that the Great Spirit looked down on them equally as his Native children, such familial discourse might well have helped to ingratiate Kicking Bear to his audience.

Kicking Bear then moved to the past by detailing his 1890 travels to Utah where he met Wovoka and learned the Ghost Dance. An American Indian narrative that communicates a meaningful expedition is called the "journey myth" by Native researcher William Clements. The journey myth comes replete with an individual's specific details of the journey and an extrapolation of those individual experiences to "more universal morals or purposes."<sup>48</sup> Kicking Bear, for instance, spoke of leaving his teepee and journeying to a land of Native revival. He said, "I traveled far on the cars of the white men, until I came to the place where the railroad stopped ... Two suns had we traveled, and had passed the last signs of the white man-for no white man had ever had the courage to travel so far" (2). His narrative centered on Native experiences and a dearth of European-Americans. That he was journeying to meet with the Great Spirit, and that the Great Spirit only wanted to speak with "the red people, my children" and not whites were signs that Kicking Bear and the other Native representatives were, indeed, chosen (5).

In discussing these travels, Kicking Bear connected with his audience by evoking a pastoral setting in which "the white man" was absent (3). He generalized his experience to the Nation. If the Sioux's problems stemmed from the presence of European-American intruders, American homesteaders and U.S. Indian agents, then the land that Kicking Bear described, perhaps, colored the audience's bleak outlook with a semblance of vibrancy and energy. There was, he insinuated through his mythic tale, such a place; he had been there and it was from this land that hope emanated. What retained robustness for both Kicking Bear and his audience was the anticipation that the

"ghosts" would return to earth and make the Nation's very own Black Hills a haven for the Sioux (5). Kicking Bear's task as he moved forward with his journey story was to convince his audience that they were the preferred race to populate this new Eden.

To that end, Kicking Bear reminded Sitting Bull's followers that the Sioux were the "chosen people for all future time" throughout the speech (6). As anointed people, the Sioux citizenry was asked to perform the Ghost Dance to encourage its fathers and the Great Spirit to return to earth. Kicking Bear built identification with his audience by enlisting them as veritable evangelists; they, as the chosen, were to spread news of the ghosts. In other words, they were given a spiritual errand. Kicking Bear narrated that the Great Spirit "told us to return to our people, and tell them, and all the people of the red nations, what we had seen; and he promised us that he would return to the clouds no more, but would remain at the end of the earth and lead the ghosts of our fathers to meet us when the next winter is passed" (6). Only through the communitarian undertaking of the Ghost Dance could the prophecy of Wovoka come to pass.

The principal way that Kicking Bear's call for unity as a "chosen people" manifested was through a call to dedicate themselves to the Great Spirit, a rhetoric reminiscent of Danforth's early Puritan sermon. In Kicking Bear's report of the prophecy, the "chosen people" would be reunited with their land and loved ones through the return of the Great Spirit:

Then from an opening in the sky we were shown all the countries of the earth and the camping-grounds of our fathers since the beginning; all were there, the teepees, and the ghosts of our fathers, and the great herds of buffalo, and a country that smiled because it was rich and the white man was not there ... And he told us that he was going to come again on earth, and this time he would remain and live with the Indians, who were his chosen people (3).

Kicking Bear communicated this personal glimpse of the promise land as a persuasive tactic in promoting the Ghost Dance among the Hunkpapa Sioux. If they heeded his word and performed the dance, they, too, would see the promise land. Their experience with the camping grounds, ancestors, buffalo and "rich" earth would not be an ethereal vision, however, but rather a material reality. As the "chosen people," the Sioux Nation, Kicking Bear said, could satisfy the Great Spirit's wish so that even a personified "country" would smile upon the plentiful land and expulsion of "the white man" (3). The appropriation of the U.S. government's errand into the wilderness myth is resonant here, as Kicking Bear relied on its power, but resituated it within Native nations.

Kicking Bear moved into the future by noting that the Sioux, as the "chosen people," had fulfilled a moral inheritance to the Great Spirit (3). As Kicking Bear relayed, the Great Spirit admitted that it was time to choose new people to replenish the earth, and that American Indians had been overlooked for far too long. The Great Spirit's point was clear, Kicking Bear argued:

Take this message to my red children and tell it to them as I say it. I have neglected the Indians for many moons, but I will make them my people now if



they obey me in this message. The earth is getting old, and I will make it new for my chosen people, the Indians, who are to inhabit it, and among them will be all those of their ancestors who have died, their fathers, mothers, brothers, cousins and wives—all those who hear my voice and my words through the tongues of my children (5).

Those "red children" who obeyed and danced would be saved during the coming of the earth's new beginning. To this effect, the Great Spirit continued, "... the sea to the west I will fill up so that no ships may pass over it, and the other seas will I make impassable. And while I am making the new earth the Indians who have heard this message and who dance and pray and believe will be taken up in the air and suspended there, while the wave of new earth is passing" (5). This quotation, in particular, harkened to a Noah's Ark story, wherein the earth was made over anew in the wake of humankind's sins. In Wovoka's iteration of the story, American Indians were innocent. Though the Great Spirit may have sided with European-Americans in the past, s/he was ready to choose a new people for a new future. The Great Spirit reminded Wovoka and Kicking Bear of his conversation with the Evil Spirit (Satan): "... [I] told him [Evil Spirit] that he could have the whites to do what he liked with, but that [I] would not let him have any Indians, as they [are my] chosen people for all future time" (6). Here, the Great Spirit insinuated that European-Americans had transgressed their manifest covenant, and had fallen from grace. In fact, the Great Spirit was willing to offer his European-American children, who had sinned, to the Evil Spirit.

The theme that European-Americans had been rejected as a chosen people (reminiscent of European and European-American discourses in the eighteenth century claiming that God shunned, as Roy Harvey Pearce writes, the "rude and uncultivated ... Indian savages ... incapable of civilization") continued on in the speech.<sup>49</sup> Of course, in this version of the story, American Indians were the favored group. Kicking Bear, for instance, claimed that the Great Spirit would prevent European-Americans from extending their railroads into the promise land in the West and would halt them at the threshold of the Sioux Nation. He hearkened to the Great Spirit's promise: "I [the Great Spirit] will cover the earth with new soil to a depth of five times the height of a man, and under this new soil will be buried all the whites, and all the holes and rotten places will be filled up" (5). Note the similarity of this prophecy to the biblical story of Eden, in which all the serpents were covered and forced underground. Once the whites and all the "rotten places" were gone, Kicking Bear concluded that the Great Spirit would once again cover the land with "sweet-grass and running water and trees, and herds of buffalo and ponies will stray over it" (5). The Great Spirit's favor could be curried by Native dedication to the Ghost Dance.

Such favor would also be granted if the Sioux honored their past, specifically their collective ancestors who died fighting back the ebb of European-American encroachment. Kicking Bear argued that Native forebears would not have perished in vain if the Sioux chose to honor them, and the Great Spirit, through the dance. Kicking Bear's audience owed it to the Great Spirit and the ancestors to accept the "new" world. If they did as the Great Spirit said, their ancestors would return avenged and satisfied.

The Great Spirit offered a final call to action: "Go then, my children [Kicking Bear and the others learning the Ghost Dance], and tell these things to all the people and make all ready for the coming of the ghosts" (5). Only when the past (the ghosts) merged with the present (the dancers) could the future commence (the resurgence of Native people and the replenishing of the land).<sup>50</sup>

### *The Legacy of the Speech*

Following Kicking Bear's speech, Sitting Bull's band and the neighboring Lakota publics of Chiefs Big Foot, Short Bull, and Red Cloud, adopted the Ghost Dance as a cultural recovery practice.<sup>51</sup> Importantly, the Lakota form of Wovoka's ritual was "less interested in accommodation" than the Piute Nation's practice.<sup>52</sup> Kicking Bear's teachings, conveyed between October 1890 and December 1890, especially emphasized the ruination of European-American cultures. Not surprisingly, "government agents entrusted with civilizing the Lakota were angered by the strengthening of traditional Lakota culture, the abandonment of (work) while people gathered to dance, and by prayers that were directed at their imminent destruction at the hands of God."<sup>53</sup> Ultimately, the Ghost Dance was banned, its leaders were jailed, and the movement was forced underground. Big Foot, a Hunkpapa Sioux, often led the Ghost Dance despite the U.S. government's ban. During one of Big Foot's organized dances, in the early morning hours of December 24, 1890, nearly 200 of his dancers were massacred by a torrent of bullets and Howitzers, effectively ending the practice.<sup>54</sup> Kicking Bear was also captured around this time for assisting Big Foot with staging Ghost Dances. As punishment for leading the allegedly dangerous and savage Ghost Dance, Kicking Bear was forced to tour with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, a traveling "living history" carnival that featured the major and minor chieftains of Little Big Horn, the Sioux War of the 1870s, and the Ghost Dance.<sup>55</sup> Kicking Bear, upon returning to the United States from a European tour with Buffalo Bill, was not heard from again until his death (apparently of natural causes) in 1904.

The Ghost Dance Movement of the 1890s did leave behind a legacy among contemporary American Indian activists. Though it ostensibly faded for decades, the Ghost Dance was revived by the American Indian Movement (AIM) in the 1960s. AIM was concerned with neocolonial conditions that American Indians faced in urban cities. Colonialism in the nineteenth century involved the U.S. government moving Native people to reservations and taking or "conquering" their land in the process.<sup>56</sup> Neocolonialism is a contemporary extension of colonialism that suggests that a powerful group controls by *both* material conditions and discursive or symbolic conditions. As Raka Shome maintains, "whereas in the past, imperialism was mostly about controlling the native [sic] by colonizing territorially, now imperialism is more about subjugating the native [sic] by colonizing discursively."<sup>57</sup> Discursive conditions include the ways that American Indians are constructed in the entertainment media (i.e., Hollywood westerns), represented in such myths as Columbus Day and Thanksgiving, and are caricatured in such cultural practices as "Indian mascotting."<sup>58</sup> Members of AIM were upset over material circumstances such as "slum housing conditions, high unemployment rates,

police brutality, lack of public education and the welfare system" for American Indians.<sup>59</sup> They were also angry over the myths that had been perpetuated about Natives as disappearing, unintelligent, uncivilized and violent.<sup>60</sup> Throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s, AIM protested such conditions by taking over sacred locations in U.S.-Native history, such as the site of the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890, to garner media and public attention for their causes.

Scores of AIM members occupied the Wounded Knee site in 1973 and staved off U.S. Marshals and National Guard units for several weeks. While holding their defensive positions, AIM revived the Ghost Dance Movement as a way to build community. As Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior report, AIM leader Russell Means joined the dancing and noted: "The white man says that the 1890 massacre was the end of the Indian wars, the end of the Indian, and the end of the Ghost Dance. Yet here we are at war, we're still Indians and we're still Ghost Dancing again."<sup>61</sup> The spirit of Wovoka and Kicking Bear had returned. And, just as the U.S. government attacked Ghost Dancers in the 1890s, so too did the government "shut down" the dancing by attacking AIM's occupation sites in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>62</sup>

The U.S. government's attempts to shut down the movement, however, did not break the will of AIM and like-minded groups. AIM, in particular, cites the Ghost Dance as a motivating factor in building unity: "The movement was founded to turn the attention of Indian people toward a renewal of spirituality which would impart the strength of resolve needed to reverse the ruinous policies of the United States, Canada, and other colonialist governments of Central and South America. At the heart of AIM is deep spirituality and a belief in the connectedness of all Indian people."<sup>63</sup> The "chosen people" theme supported by Kicking Bear and his spiritual movement has seemingly remained with contemporary Native agents for social change. Such a longitudinal impact speaks to the legacy of Kicking Bear's discourse, whether or not he was able to prevent the U.S. government from fulfilling its "manifest destiny" across the North American continent.

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#### Notes

1 W.C. Vanderwerth, *Indian Oratory: Famous Speeches by Noted Indian Chieftains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 243.

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2 According to Gregory A. Waselkov, pan-Indianism is the strategy of individual American Indian nations joining together into a collective front. This unity, that crosses tribal lines, involves "religion ... and Indian political and military unity." See Gregory A. Waselkov, *A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 77. For more on early nineteenth century efforts of pan-Indianism, see Alvin M. Josephy, *The Patriot Chiefs: A Chronicle of American Indian Resistance* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 132.

3 William S.E. Coleman, *Voices of Wounded Knee* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 9-12.

4 The designation of "Sioux," derived from the French translation of the Anishinabe word for snake (*Nadowe-is-iw*), is an outdated and sometimes homogenous name for the three-branched indigenous Nation that includes the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota tribes. For the sake of clarity, however, I will use this historical and contemporary designation. For more information on Sioux genealogy, see Donna Hightower Langston, *The Native American World* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2003).

5 Vanderwerth, *Indian Oratory*, 243-244.

6 Jason Edward Black, "Remembrances of Removal: Native Resistance to Allotment and the Unmasking of Paternal Benevolence," *Southern Communication Journal* 72:2 (2007), 185.

7 Anatol Lieven, *American Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 5.

8 Myra Jehlen, "Why Did the Europeans Cross the Ocean? A Seventeenth Century Riddle," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, eds., Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), 42.

9 Samuel Danforth, "A Brief Recognition of New England[']s Errand Into the Wilderness," in *American Rhetorical Discourse*, 2d, ed., Ronald F. Reid (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1995), 36-52.

10 Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 7.

11 Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird, ed., "Introduction," in *Reinventing the Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native Women's Writings of North America* (New York: Norton, 1997), 31.

12 Though the designations of "tribe" and "nation" are both correct when attributed to individual, unique, or collectively distinct American Indian groups, I use the term "nation" (lower case when discussing groups in general; upper case ["Nation"]) when speaking of a particular indigenous group. "Tribe" as a descriptor has come to represent a diminutive, powerless "group of people united by ties of common descent from a common ancestor, community of customs and traditions, adhering to the same leaders." In a sense, here, "tribe" is more taxonomic than political. "Tribes" exist apart from land, governments, negotiating power, and sovereignty. A "tribe" is defined by naturalized characteristics of ancestry, descent, and customs. Alternatively, a "nation" is "a body of people, associated with a particular territory, that is sufficiently conscious of

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its unity to seek or to possess a government peculiarly its own." Notice, here, that a "nation" is active and conscious; it seeks government and possesses governmental ideologies. To refer to American Indian groups as "tribes" is to construct them in a passive light, while elevating their American counterparts as decision-makers, governments, sovereigns, and confederations. As Steven Newcomb (Shawnee/Lenapee member and Indigenous Law Research Center fellow) contends, "If you were in a conversation with a representative of a member state of the United Nations, and referred to that country, nation, or state as a 'tribe' (for example, the 'tribe of the United States'), your remark would spark an immediate and sharp response. No nation-state representative would allow his or her country to be referred to as 'tribe.' In fact, that representative would feel highly insulted because the Western mind immediately associates the word 'tribe' with 'primitive,' 'uncivilized,' 'backward,' and 'inferior.'" With Newcomb's argument in mind, I use "nation" to demarcate American Indian groups, therefore using "the most powerful terms in the English language to express ... political identity." See Steven Newcomb, "On the Words 'Tribe' and 'Nation,'" *Indian Country Today* 24:26 (8 December 2004), A3.

13 Guy Gibbon, *The Sioux: The Dakota and Lakota Nations* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 134.

14 Richard Morris and Phillip Wander argue that the period prior to the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 found "displaced tribal identities in favor of the Indian" at times so severe "that Native Americans had become recognizable." That is, their identities had been merged with white characteristics to the point of near erasure. See Richard Morris and Phillip Wander, "Native American Rhetoric: Dancing in the Shadows of the Ghost Dance," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 165.

15 For a complete graphic account of the changing boundaries within the Great Sioux Reservation between the 1850s and 1890s, see Coleman, *Voices of Wounded Knee*, 9-12. For a narrative account of the rankled negotiations involved in the Fort Laramie Treaty, see Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 416-444.

16 "Treaty with the Sioux of 1868" in *The American Indian and the United States: A Documentary History, vol. IV.*, ed., Wilcomb Washburn (New York: Random House, 1973), 2517-2525. The Great Sioux Reservation existed within present day South Dakota, which includes an area now known as the Pine Ridge Reservation, the site of Wounded Knee.

17 Gibbon, *The Sioux*, 135.

18 Bill Yenne, *Indian Wars: The Campaign for the American West* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Press, 2006), 288-290.

19 Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, 416.

20 Charles J. Kappler, ed., "Agreement with the Sioux of Various Tribes, 1882-83," *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. II.* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904).

21 Creek Indians of Oklahoma, "To the Committee on Indian Affairs, a protest

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against allotment of lands by the full blood Creek Indians" in *Library of Congress*, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs File, RG233, HR56A-H9.3. (1897, n.d.).

22 Black, "Remembrances of Removal," 185.

23 General Allotment (Dawes) Act of 1887, in *U.S. Statutes at Large*, 24, 388-391.

24 For the full Allotment policy, see General Allotment Act, February 8, 1887, *The American Indian and the United States: A Documentary History*, vol. III, ed., Wilcomb Washburn (New York: Random House, 1973), 2188-2193. For the Sioux Act of 1888, see Charles J. Kappler, ed., "Acts of the Fiftieth Congress, Second Session, 1889," *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Vol. I. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904).

25 Joe Starita, *Dull Knives of Pine Ridge: A Lakota Odyssey* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1995), 99.

26 Starita, *Dull Knives of Pine Ridge*, 97. For a complete biographical account of the Indian messiah, see Michael Hittman, *Wovoka and the Ghost Dance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

27 Robert Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1980* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 243.

28 Francis Paul Prucha, *The Indians in American Society: From the Revolutionary War to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 13-21. See also, Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

29 Vanderwerth, *Indian Oratory*, 243-244.

30 "A revitalization movement is a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture. Revitalization movements share a number of defining features: (1) they appear in the presence of extreme cultural stress during periods of rapid cultural change; (2) they originate in one or more hallucinatory visions by a single individual; (3) during the visions, one or more supernatural beings (God, the Great Spirit) appear to the prophet-to-be and outline a new way of life, (4) the new way of life is considered divinely sanctioned ... (6) in an evangelistic or messianic spirit, the prophet reveals his revelations to other people; and (7) as a revolutionary act, the revitalization movement encounters some resistance from the dominant regional power." See Gibbon, *The Sioux*, 153.

31 For more on American Indian prophetic oratory, see William M. Clements, *Orality in Native North America* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002).

32 Kicking Bear, Address at the Council Meeting of the Hunkpapa Sioux, Great Sioux Reservation, in *My Friend the Indian*, ed., James McLaughlin (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1910): 185-189. All the remaining passages from Kicking Bear's October 9, 1890, speech before a Council Meeting of the Hunkpapa Sioux, Great Sioux Reservation, are cited with reference to paragraph numbers in the speech that accompanies this essay. Note that in subsequent publications, the speech has become popularly known as, "I Bring You Word From Your Fathers The Ghosts." See Kicking Bear, "I Bring You Word From Your Fathers the Ghosts," in *Indian Oratory: Famous Speeches by Noted Indian Chieftains*, ed., W.C. Vanderwerth (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 244-248.

33 For further discussion of the consummatory function in contemporary and historical American Indian protest and movements for social change, see Randall A. Lake, "Enacting Red Power: The Consummatory Function in Native American Protest Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983): 127-142. With Lake's conception, we learn that "most (Indian) protest rhetoric is directed at movement members and other Indians for purposes of gathering the like-minded, and is addressed only secondarily to the white establishment" (128). Lake's argument varies from the more instrumental, or externally motivated, movement theories of Herbert Simons and Charles Stewart. For more on the instrumental, see Herbert Simons, "Requirements, Problems and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56 (1970): 1-11; and Charles Stewart, "A Functional Approach to the Rhetoric of Social Movements," *Central States Speech Journal* 31 (1980): 298-305.

34 Peter Nabokov, *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492-2000* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 469.

35 In a later article, Lake argues that Native discourse is "grounded in time's cycles, (it) seeks to renew the ties between this past and the present and thereby to enact a future." The spiritual belief of cycles allows easily for transcendence, as the materiality of the present pales in comparison to historical parallels and a hopeful, stoic posterity and an invigorated future. See Randall Lake, "Between Myth and History: Enacting Time in Native American Protest Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 129.

36 Gibbon, *The Sioux*, 154.

37 Alvin M. Josephy, *The Indian Heritage of America* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), 116-119.

38 Donna Hightower-Langston, *The Native American World* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley and Sons, 2003), 211.

39 R. Douglas Hurt, *The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), xiv.

40 Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 150.

41 David G. Gutierrez, "Significant to Whom?: Mexican Americans and the History of the American West," in *A New Significance: Re-Envisioning the History of the American West*, ed., Clyde A. Milner III. (New York: Oxford, 1996), 68.

42 See Lyon Rathbun, "The Debate Over Annexing Texas and the Emergence of manifest Destiny," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 4:3 (2001): 459-493.

43 John O'Sullivan, "Annexation," *The United States and Democratic Review*, Vol. XVII, July/August (New York: O'Sullivan & Gardner Publishers, 1845), 5.

44 See Hietala, *Manifest Design*, 8-9.

45 Sidney Lens, *The Forging of American Empire: From the Revolution to Vietnam—A History of U.S. Imperialism* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Press, 2003), 2.

46 Laura Anne Whitt, "Cultural Imperialism and the Marketing of Native America," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 19 (1995): 5.

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47 For a discussion of God coming to human beings through the "Word" and for research on the role of rhetoric in communicating between divinities and human disciples, see Michael J. Hyde, *Call of Conscience: Heidegger, Levinas, Rhetoric and the Euthanasia Debate* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001).

48 Clement, *Oratory in Native North America*, 12.

49 Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1967), 47.

50 Yenne, *Indian Wars*, 288-290.

51 Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, 437.

52 Gibbons, *The Sioux*, 154.

53 Gibbons, *The Sioux*, 154.

54 For narrative and documentary accounts of the Wounded Knee Massacre, see Coleman, *Voices of Wounded Knee*; Gibbons, *The Sioux*, 105-133; Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire Building* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Starita, *Dull Knives of Pine Ridge*, 115-133; Robert M. Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963); and Robert Allen Warrior, "Past and Present at Wounded Knee," *Media Studies Journal* 11 (1997): 69-75.

55 Vanderwerth, *Indian Oratory*, 243-244. For more on Buffalo Bill and his traveling show, see Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).

56 Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press), 14.

57 Raka Shome, "Postcolonial Interventions in the Rhetorical Canon: An 'Other' View," *Communication Theory* 6 (1996): 42.

58 See *Hollywood's Indian: The Portrayal of the Native American in Film*, eds. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1998); and Jason Edward Black, "Native Mascotting as a Neocolonial Discourse: Homologies of U.S. Colonial Ideologies and Pro-Mascot Rhetoric at the University of Illinois and Florida State University," in *CHIEEEEF! Indigenous Critical Theory and the End of Dancing Indians*, eds. Jodi Byrd, D. Anthony Tyeme Clark, and Debbie Reese (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press), forthcoming.

59 Hightower-Langston, *Native American World*, 328.

60 Nabokov, *Native American Testimony*, 360-362.

61 Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 230.

62 Hightower-Langston, *Native American World*, 328.

63 American Indian Movement, "A Brief History of AIM," accessed June 2007, <http://www.aimovement.org/ggc/history.html>.