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The People's Home

May 17–June 3, 2018

Winston Street 1974



United American Indian
Involvement, Inc.

“The People’s Home: Winston Street 1974”

May 17 – June 3, 2018

For more information: www.thesedaysla.com

The United American Indian Alliance Photographic Project by Nancy Marie Mithlo, Ph.D.

What does it mean to be an American Indian living in Los Angeles today? What did it mean in the 1930s when American Indians were cast as one-dimensional characters in Hollywood? What did it mean in the 1940s when the military recruited and hired Natives to work at the shipyards for the war effort? Just what exactly was developing at 118 Winston Street in 1974 when the majority of photographs featured in “The People’s Home” were taken? Clearly, every era presents unique research challenges that require not only careful historic analysis, but also sensitivity to the deep nuances of working with American Indian communities. Ethical concerns of parity and transparency in research are basic requirements, but this work also necessitates a certain bravery and commitment on the part of community partners.

When we excavate untold stories, we are unsure what might emerge. While great beauty and wisdom may be found, unhealed wounds might also be exposed. Are we ready for that? What strategies do we use to address these moments? We each bring unique talents to the discovery of hidden histories. Can we trust the process? Can we trust each other? This is new territory and as we traverse the distance, we rely upon each other for guidance.

In 2016 the United American Indian Involvement (UAII) partnered with Occidental College’s Center for Community Based Learning and the Special Collections and College Archives to care for and share this amazing photographic collection known as the UAII Photographic Project, numbering 4682 images. Since that time, we have sponsored numerous meetings and public presentations to make this legacy better known and to garner support for the demanding work ahead, including further scanning, cataloguing and conservation, as well as collection of oral histories and interpretation. This inaugural exhibit “The People’s Home” celebrates what is believed to be the first long-term partnership between Occidental College and an American Indian community organization.

UAII was established as a nonprofit 501(c)3 by Marian Zucco and Baba Cooper in 1974 to provide shelter, food and a welcoming place for American Indians living on the streets of Skid Row in downtown Los Angeles. Through the U.S. government program of relocation (1956-1979), American Indians were encouraged to leave their homes on reservations throughout the country and to move to urban areas, including Los Angeles, in hopes for a better opportunity for jobs and education. The reality was a life of struggle.

We are grateful for the opportunity to host “The People’s Home” in the exact same space where the photographs were taken over 40 years ago, due to the generosity of Stephen and Jodi Zeigler of These Days. It is fitting that this historic moment is additionally hosted by the University of California Los Angeles American Indian Studies Center and the Native American Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) during NAISA’s tenth annual meeting May 17-18, 2018.



United American Indian Involvement Photography Project, catalogue number PC 1_231-a (unidentified)

Interview with Joseph Quintana (UAI Development Director) The Changing Narrative of Our History

I represent tribal members from over two hundred Native nations, of whose concerns often go left unheard. For many of them, their grandparents called this place home, their parents called this place home, and now this is the place they have decided to raise their families and prepare other generations to live and grow. As Native people, we have left an indelible mark here, but that history goes unshared and this invisibility has marginalized our presence. How do we continuously evolve and share these histories so we know where we come from, or the people and faces who've allowed us to remain, because the narrative is there, it's just not being shared.

Our story, it's a human story of hope, resilience, and ingenuity. It's everybody in Los Angeles not knowing or unable to relate to the complex struggle that you matter and culture matters. I think back to the public events held, the pow wows, LA is happy with that story. LA wants to see that part of Indian people. The culture, the dancing, the singing and the joyous Indian. And the public sees the prayer and they want to take part. But the part of the story that delves into our day to day lives, you know us reaching beyond the stereotypes: dressing in suits to lead the board meeting, us dressing in jeans for that construction job, us dressing for work, or those of us wearing the same clothes for a week because we're homeless. It's challenging to understand the complex nature of how American Indians' daily life really is.

Community Building – Nation-Building

We're a product of this termination, relocation, migration for jobs and a western education. All of these things that were meant to alienate us. And when they did alienate us in the city, the only way that we were able to get by was banning together.

We're a product of the people who were fighting for civil rights era, out of the sixties, when that time was needed. When we needed to bring people together and say we're not going to lose everything, all of the essence of what it means to be Indian. We're going to fight to hold those pieces together. It's not the full narrative, it's not the whole story of who we are. But we're going to make that pan-Indian community, we're gonna make it work in some way. And they did. They, the people who came before, were successful at that and bringing us to where we're at. But now we're at a point to say, well that worked for forty years, now what does this generation do to be successful?

I think you're really talking about nation building, if you're talking about community development. From this perspective that the group has done what it could within those



United American Indian Involvement Photography Project,
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boundaries in order to retain that knowledge, that cultural knowledge, the connection of who we are as Indian people. Other urban groups, or other urban environments, you might get something similar but it's not going to be the same thing that has happened here and that is what makes this place, its community and people, unique.

The UAI Photographic Project

The UAI archive project gives us an opportunity to relay a story within the pictures themselves to both the Native and non-Native public. This collection is important because it propels a narrative into the conscious of this generation developing their perspectives and historical identity. They've never seen the pictures. That's why it's so important that

we assert the narrative now. Visually it has to be there for them. They have to be able to relate in some way to those people - in the color of their skin, that they look like their own relatives, or that they may be their own relatives. They're never going to know how difficult it was on the streets, they're never going to know how it was to live in that area, to be downtown at that time to struggle with homelessness, to see people shooting up or struggling with addiction, to see the alcoholics, to smell that breath of an alcoholic. They're never going to know any of that stuff. But what we can do is to relay some type of connection and provide tangible evidence that is not only an urban construct, but Indigenous.

I think we really have an opportunity to do something a little more engaging, something people haven't seen. Our own people haven't seen this, that's why I think that it's important that we share our own perspectives of it. Because we all have a way that we're perceiving, not only the photos, but the context of the American Indian here in an urban environment. That's the power of the pictures. The circumstances may have been this way, but you don't have to live or walk the same path. We can assert our own path and begin a new community story.

Celestina Castillo, Director of Occidental College's Center for Community Based Learning

It is an honor to be part of the collaborative creation of an archive of over 4000 photos from United American Indian Involvement and to arrive at a point of sharing a selection with the community and general public. At times, we do not realize how important our own photos, stories, and experiences are in helping to anchor future generations in a sense of community and belonging. The photos in these exhibits and the archive are not only a history of UAI, but of Native Americans in Los Angeles. I am extremely excited about this project, as it has engulfed me in images that tell an array of rich and robust stories that are often overlooked. The Tongva, and Native Americans in general, are frequently assumed extinct or not present in Los Angeles. These photos are evidence of a deep-rooted community that has persevered, thrived, and grew despite all odds. They allow people to see that Native Americans from across the country have called Los Angeles home for generations. As someone who grew up in Los Angeles, disconnected from the larger Native community until my 20s, these photos are for my children and future generations. I want them to know they are part of a long-standing community in the city. They allow me to confidently say, "We are still here, we have been here, and we will always be here."

I am also proud to say that the Center for Community Based Learning (CCBL) at Occidental College has a long-term commitment to this project and our ongoing partnership with UAI. This work adds to the curriculum at Occidental College. Students have an opportunity to learn skills in archival creation, methodologies, and approaches, as well as engage community members and contribute to this amazing project. In addition to the CCBL, numerous other departments and organizations at Occidental have contributed funds, time, and expertise towards the success of the project. A special thanks to the Special Collections and College Archives, the Institute for the Study of Los Angeles (ISLA), the Center for Digital Liberal Arts (CDLA), OxyArts, Media Art and Culture Department, History Department, Urban and Environmental Policy Department, the Diversity and Equity Board (DEB), and the Undergraduate Research Center (URC). We greatly appreciate all the support from all the students, faculty, and staff who have contributed to this ongoing project.

Stephen Zeigler, These Days

I first learned about UAI in early 2009 from a Native man named Standing Bear whom I met on the sidewalk outside the building. We made eye contact and after nodding and saying hello he said to me, "You know, you have a big spirit following you." When I asked him what he meant he began telling me stories about the building from his time there in the 1970s and 80s. I became fascinated with learning more about the history of the building. Deep in the LA Times archives at the LA Public Library I learned about people like Baba Cooper, Robert Sundance, and Dave Rambeau who were all instrumental in the founding and continuation of UAI. Over the years I have met many people who stop by the gallery and tell me stories of the time they spent here and what the neighborhood was like twenty to thirty years ago. For me it has been an unintentional education into a darker side of American history and the resilience of its first people who, in 1974, came together out of love and empathy to ensure not only that they survive, but that they thrive.

Decolonizing the Archive by Kelsey Martin

For centuries, Non-Native academics barred Native American people from constructing and documenting their own questions, research, and histories. The willful omission of Native communities from research about their people resulted in inaccurate and destructive information, which was touted by researchers and academics as truthful accounts. Consequently, prejudice and discrimination dominated the rhetoric around Native people. To this day the aftermath of this form of research forces this vast community to contend with pervasive stereotypes that limit access to jobs, education, and general upward mobility in broader society. There is no hasty remedy for the immense harm academic research has wrought on Native people. However, approaching research in a manner that empowers the Native community to control and inform their own questions, research, and histories is a valid starting point. The United American Indian Involvement Photo Archival Project is built on this historical tension and aims to begin to right this fundamental wrong by pursuing community based research informed and controlled by UAI and its community members.

I began working on the United American Indian Involvement Photo Archival Project in the spring of my undergraduate sophomore year. As one of the few Indigenous students (Chamorro) on my college campus, I was honored to be chosen for this work. During the summer of 2017, I was awarded the Andrew W. Mellon study grant through Occidental's Summer Research Program that allowed me to continue to pursue the project. I had the support from Dr. Nancy Marie Mithlo, Celestina Castillo, Dale Steiber, Anne Mar, and Joseph Quintana; all of whom contributed their scholarly and community knowledge to this project.

The United American Indian Involvement Photo Archival Project is built on questions informed by the voiced interests of members of the UAI community. The central question to this investigation: How do Indigenous archival protocols intersect with Western archival standards of curation? The research sub-question(s) are as follows: (1) How does the creation of a community archive with urban Native Americans in Los Angeles allow this community to tell their own story? (2) What tools does this community want to use to build this archive and what does that say about their goals and more broadly, their cultural values? (3) How do the varying standards of archival management regarding knowledge acquisition and sharing, speak to the values of the urban Native community in Los Angeles?

The methodology employed in this project derives itself from the pedagogy of community based research. Three tenants of this pedagogy, reciprocity, partnership, and community engagement, were of particular importance when constructing a methodological approach. Reciprocity in this context requires that all members within a partnership benefit from the work that is taking place. Partnership is founded on idea that every member of a project brings unique knowledge, skills, and lived experiences that create the foundation of the work. Community engagement centers the idea that the community is a hub of knowledge that can and should only be accessed to uplift and empower the interests of the community through relationships built on mutual trust and dedication.

I am thankful that this project is progressing at the rate that it is and for all of the support we have received from UAI, Occidental, and other important scholars and collaborators. The United American Indian Involvement Photo Archival Project is still in its infancy and I look forward to seeing how this interdisciplinary work grows throughout the years.

Acknowledgement

Our generous sponsors at Occidental College include Center for Community Based Learning, the Institute for the Study of Los Angeles, the Department of History, Center for Digital Liberal Arts, OxyArts, Media Arts and Culture Department, Urban and Environmental Policy Department, the Diversity and Equity Board and the Undergraduate Research Center (URC). Special recognition to Dale Stieber, Special Collections Librarian and College Archivist and Anne Mar, Assistant College Archivist/Metadata Specialist for their outstanding support of this initiative.

Center for Community Based Learning: Occidental College

The mission of the Center for Community Based Learning (CCBL) is to institutionalize curriculum-based civic engagement. The CCBL's civic engagement approach, based on community organizing practices, aims to enrich students' learning and commitment to social responsibility. The CCBL brings together students, faculty, and community partners as co-thinkers and collaborators, in order to solve social justice related issues. Since its creation in 2001, the CCBL has developed resources and provided leadership to institutionalize community based learning at Occidental College. The goal of community based learning is to enhance student learning and faculty engagement by connecting academic study and civic education through reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationships with the greater community. The CCBL also collaborates with other offices on campus, as well as state, national, and international networks.

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THESE DAYS

THESE DAYS is a gallery, store, and publisher located in downtown Los Angeles. Though their interests are varied, These Days' embrace of creative rebellion and nonconformist culture, communities, and artists is apparent in everything they curate. In 2016, These Days began publishing with work by Gusmano Cesaretti, Ian Reid, Sean Maung, and Estevan Oriol. The store features collectible and out-of-print photography books, zines, art and design objects. THESE DAYS is owned and operated by Stephen and Jodi Zeigler, both of whom are 4th generation Angelenos.

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UAIi "The People's Home" team members: L to R, Dr. Mishuana Goeman (Tonawanda Band of Seneca), Associate Professor of Gender Studies, Chair of American Indian Studies IDP, Associate Director of American Indian Studies Research Center, UCLA, Joseph Quintana (Kewa Pueblo), UAIi Development Director, Celestina Castillo (Tohono O'odham), Director, Occidental College Center for Community Based Learning, Jodi Zeigler, These Days Owner and Operator with Stephen Zeigler (Stephen Zeigler and Nancy Marie Mithlo not pictured).

"The Archive Project was started because the photos we collected over the years were only loosely stored and not shared with the community who helped build and guide our terrific organization, United American Indian Involvement Inc. (UAIi). The images we uncovered shows the resiliency of our American Indian people, and the inspiring story of how we continue to come together. UAIi will always have oral history but with the added value of a visual historical narrative, we can share our story with the future generations." —UAIi CEO Jeremy Billy

Established in 1974, the United American Indian Involvement, Inc. (UAIi) is a 501(c)3 private, non-profit organization offering a wide array of health and human services to American Indians/Alaskan Native (AIAN) living throughout Los Angeles County. UAIi has grown from a small community-based organization providing social services to AIAN living in the Skid Row area within the City of Los Angeles, to a multidisciplinary comprehensive service center meeting the multiple needs of AIAN countywide.

United American Indian Involvement, Inc.

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