



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



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

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, catalogue number PC 1_29-001 (unidentified)

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 Photographing 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 different 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.

Decolonizing the Archive by Kelsey Martin

For centuries, Non-Native academics barred Native American people from constructing and

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.

1600 Campus Road, Fowler 109, Los Angeles, CA 90041

Tel: (323) 259-1497 Fax: (323) 341-4944 Email : castillo@oxy.edu Facebook: Oxy CCBL
www.oxy.edu/center-community-based-learning

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.

118 Winston St, Los Angeles, CA 90013

Email: hello@thesedaysla.com

www.thesedaysla.com www.instagram.com/thesedays.la

“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. (UAI). The images we uncovered shows the resiliency of our American Indian people, and the inspiring story of how we continue to come together. UAI will always have oral history but with the added value of a visual historical narrative, we can share our story with the future generations.” —UAI CEO Jeremy Billy

Established in 1974, the United American Indian Involvement, Inc. (UAI) 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. UAI 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.