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Environmental Justice & Sociology

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**Environment as a Form of Social Control:
Implications of Native American Reservations and the Prison Industrial Complex in
the United States**

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Abstract

Throughout history, capital-rich people have been in the position to impose policies that institutionalize their assets as powerful, which in turn institutionalizes their power and ability to assert control over others through controlling the environment in which we live (Bourdieu, 1986). In this essay I will explore how these power and control dynamics have produced a national environment that maintains white hegemonic structures in the United States by pushing people who lack socio-political capital into isolated spaces within the country. American Indian reservations and prisons are two examples of these environments produced by people disconnected from those who are isolated within them; the existence of these controlled spaces of maximized oppression negates what happens within them from consciousness of society at large, making them the most effective perpetuation of social problems in the United States. To make my argument, I define environment to incorporate physical as well as socio-political structures, and emphasize the effect of environmental justice or lack thereof on a person's positionality. The people who control institutional structures within the United States come from a certain positionality, so the environment they enforce caters to them; as a result, marginalized groups have been pushed into spaces that perpetuate racism and sexism. In the end, I argue that because environmental justice requires equitable control of people over their environment in all contexts of the word, environmental justice is a vital factor in ending structural and physical violence against marginalized groups in the United States.

Research Methods

For the purpose of this paper, I used content and discourse analysis as well as archival research. Given the broad scope of topics within my thesis, content analysis and archival research across varied literature was necessary to achieve an effective, cohesive argument to defend my argument. I used materials that spanned across a wide academic spectrum including anthropological, sociological and philosophical thinkers such as Erik Erikson, Pierre Bourdieu, and Murray Bookchin. Although interdisciplinarity is not explicitly discussed throughout my thesis, the integration of environmental justice issues with thought networks regarding social and personal fulfillment is vital to this argument, which is why I made sure to show the interdisciplinarity of my topic through the references used. Additionally, firsthand accounts are essential to ensure validity of experiences in the discourse, so I made sure to include works such as Angela Davis and Winona LaDuke, who have personal herstory in the topics they discuss.

Environment and Positionality

For the purpose of this essay, an environmental justice framework combined with influences from ecofeminism and social ecology will be used to define the implications of the word environment and the significance thereof. Ultimately I am positing that environmental control, not limited to the biophysical sense, inevitably results in control of socio-political relationships within a society; a person's environment and the relationships between a person and her environment ultimately effects their positionality, or the way she views and interacts with the world. In terms of my thesis, this means that the people who have been in control of the environment are those that have pushed

people of color into reservation and into prisons, which is reflect of the power and control dynamics that are egregiously present within these isolated spaces as well as that exist in the greater, national environment.

The spawn of the environmental justice movement, which began in the 1980s, ignited a sentiment that recognized the environment beyond a biophysical identification to an identification involving spaces in which people “live, work and play” (Pei-Wu, 2002). This paradigm shift was needed to emphasize the intersection of human and public health with environmental health (Taylor, 2000). Since the 1980s, environmental justice became popular rhetoric in a sect of the environmental movement, and even resulted in President Clinton issuing an Executive Order 12898 order federal agencies to consider environmental justice issues in their practices in 1994. Economic, political and philosophical theorists have integrated the environmental justice movement (EJM) into their discourse, and many ruminate over the movement’s far-reaching impact and implications.

In 1991, the First National People of Color Leadership Summit created and signed the Principles of Environmental Justice, which identified “Mother Earth” as a sacred space in which all humans deserve distributive and procedural justice regarding decisions involving allocation of environmental resources as well as equality in environmental health (First Nation et al., 1991).

Murray Bookchin, in his work *Ecology of Freedom*, coalesces environmental justice ideals into a philosophical argument regarding the relationship between human’s domination of the self-created world and humans’ domination of other humans, noting that the former exists because of the latter; this same observation of intersectionality is made by ecofeminists (Mies and Shiva, 1991). Bookchin’s synthesis identifies nature as a

“cumulative evolutionary process from the inanimate to the animate and ultimately social, however, differentiated this process may be”; in defining nature as such, he gets to the root of the EJM, which knows the environment to be the interface where all species interact and maintain a social coexistence (Bookchin, 2005). There is a first nature, a self-created natural, biophysical environment, a second nature, the human created environment and, finally a third nature, also termed social ecology by Bookchin, and is how first nature and second nature interact. Power and control dynamics are imminent within social ecology, which is what this essay will dissect (Bookchin, 2005).

The power dynamics that manifest in global society across micro and macro levels are inherent to social ecology and inevitably influence the positionality of persons. Positionality is a social theory that recognizes one’s societal position (both globally and locally) as a determinate of her or his viewpoints and experiences with the world (Pulido and Peña, 1998). The exacerbated concentration of wealth and power represent themselves in distribution of environmental health, which influences relationships of people with their environment congruent to their social hierarchy. In fact, recognition of environmentally racist practices is what initialized the EJM in the 1980s. Environmental racism is the inequitable distribution of environmental burdens and interaction with environmentally-determinant decision-making by minority communities; this, of course, is maintained because the people in control of the policy-making process as well as other trickle-down decisions are not minority communities.

A similar idea that contributes to this conversation was evolved by anthropologist Erik Erikson, who developed a theory of stages based on influence of a person’s cultural environment (Weaver, 1996). Erikson posits that cultural environment, which is influenced by positionality and, therefore, variation of environmental justice in the person

or culture's livelihood, affects the process of learning trust, autonomy, initiative, industry, identity and intimacy amongst individuals (Weaver, 1996). Erikson's work was based on his time spent observing the Sioux and Yurok tribes of northern California, who, because of their disengaging and marginalized cultural environment, many of their learned processes resulted in "mistrust, doubt, guilt, inferiority and role confusion" (Weaver, 1996: 29).

There have been many theorists across a wide spectrum of academia who recognize that environment goes beyond lines of physical space with socio-political relationships. In knowing such, it is evident that those who are in control of the environment determine how those living within said environment interact with the world on individual and societal levels. Thus, environmental justice ultimately aims for equitable control of the environment, allows for environmental, social and political equality of persons. Unfortunately, however, the history of and modern U.S. is riddled with environmental injustice, which is why people have been pushed into invisible spaces of violence within their own country.

Putting People of Color In a Box:

The Creation and Maintenance of Racialized Spaces in the United States

Native American Displacement

In this essay, I am discussing two manifestations of the same story within different time frames. In this section, what needs to be addressed is how white hegemony came to be in power in the United States, enabling wealthy whites to create the status needed to control the environment of this country. Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital

explains how these white racism came into power in the U.S. There are three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social. Since colonizers, who were of European decent and therefore of the constructed “white” race, began living in the United States territories, they began creating and expanding these three forms of capital. In doing so, they began creating a culture that violently overtook the rest. Through imposing their culture, white Americans have created a culture, which, to this day, continues to cater to the conditions they have created for themselves through embodied, objectified and institutionalized elements.

When addressing the issue of when white hegemony in the United States began, the narrative to initially refer to is that consisting of the relations between the Native populations and the colonizers. We all know the sensationalized story of Christopher Columbus, several different narratives exist surrounding the circumstances and occurrences of this story. Regardless of perspective, Columbus is a symbol, either of triumph or betrayal, and reaches far beyond this one man and one continent; he represents all the people that worked with him as well as all those who did and continue to do the same as he on a worldwide scale.

Columbus’ intentions and actions are questionable, but what is not, is the sentiment he left and the story he began on an already inhabited continent. Columbus began the tale of white male domination of the continent, which continues to prevail and abuse other communities today – the only slight shift that has been made is the weapon of destruction. Columbus arrived on already discovered territory and believed his gun, his weapon of control, entitled him to the land and its people. The Lucayans, Taínos and Arawaks violently repelled colonizer authority, but they did not have weapons that killed as swiftly as guns, and, therefore, they lost themselves and the land they had been living

on for centuries. Columbus claimed the land and its resources for the sake of capital for Spain, enslaving the Natives for mining and sexual purposes (Kasum, 2010). The fabricated tale of Christopher Columbus as a hero is an appropriate symbol for how American colonizers have violently subjugated the Indians since the beginning of their interactions with them, which has manifested in white—people of color relations ever since. Columbus and other settlers used guns as means to intimidate Natives off of already the land, which set the precedent to use physical and capital forms of intimidation to expand white power over the environment. Once the white government of the United States was established, it needed to begin making even bigger leaps in gaining control of more resources, specifically minerals and land.

One of the first discoveries made on Anishinaabeg territory was the Ontonogan Boulder, a 2500-pound copper extraction that both the Queen of England and U.S. officials knew about. Following this discovery, several treaties were contrived with the Anishinaabeg people to search for mineral resources in the Lake Superior area; by 1850, there were over one hundred copper corporations infiltrating Midwest grounds, slowly chipping away at the Anishinaabeg territory in the hopes of more capital to put into their pockets.

The White Earth Reservation, what the Anishinaabeg people's territory came to be known as, had a forest culture, with woodlands dense with hundreds of species of timber, which, of course, in the eyes of imperialistic whites, meant an outlet for more capital gain. From 1889 to 1890, eleven million board feet of lumber were cut from what was once Aninshinaabeg land. In 1890 to 1891, another fifteen million was taken, and by 1897, seventy million board feet became the annual amount of lumber cut down of this area. Some swam in the riches this environmental degradation produced, while the

Natives drowned in what it meant for their and Mother Earth's livelihood. This antagonistic relationship between the lumber megalomaniacs came to fruition when a movement of Natives resisted the building of a railroad so that lumber guru, Fredrick Weyerhauser, could move hundreds of thousands of pounds of his lumber. The military squashed the movement, and Weyerhauser's railroad was built (LaDuke, 1999).

Land, of course, was also needed for capital control. The colonizers cleverly created a façade of respecting the Indians through the establishment of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, which articulated that "laws bounded in justice and humanity shall, from time to time be made for preventing wrongs being done to them, and, for preserving peace and friendship with them" (LaDuke, 1999, 116). As well-intentioned this statement sounds, the reality is the treaties and laws created to supposedly preserve respect for Natives, in fact, obviously did the opposite. Between 1784 and 1894, 371 treaties were established between Indians and whites, as well as 720 land seizures (LaDuke, 1999). There are stories upon stories of Natives being stripped of their land through manipulative treaties that colonizers had Indians buy into, including what happened to the Anishinaabeg tribe in Minnesota, whose lands were claimed of them for the sake of mineral, lumber and land control by whites.

In the last two hundred and fifty years, the Anishinaabeg have overturned millions of acres of land to the U.S. government. Although the federal officials have argued that these land takings were established through mutually-agreed upon arrangements, many Natives, such as Fred Weaver as elder of the nation, argue otherwise, "Them land speculators came and tricked us out of our lands" speaking of his mother's 80-acres, "They tricked her out of that for \$50. Now that's a Boy Scout Camp" (LaDuke, 1999: 119). The idea of federal officials coming into agreement with Natives for land trade is

not an imminently malicious offering, but, giving Native money introduced a foreign form of commerce into Native culture that had no value to them prior to interaction with white people, not to mention a very disproportionate amount of compensation for what the Natives gave in return. To this day, the trade is even more unequal and undermining given that the money given to Natives and land given to whites have different reactions to inflation inherent within the white man's economy – the value of the dollar given to the Natives has decreased with inflation, whereas the value of the land remains proportionate to the inflation rates.

The United States bought over ninety-five percent of its present territory from Native people – continues to exercise “trust responsibility” or “plenary power” (LaDuke, 1999: 118). An investigation into the legality of Native land seizures by the U.S. government was initialized in the mid-1960s, and came to be known as the “2415 investigation” (LaDuke, 1999: 121). Neglect and improper intake of land transfer documentation by the Bureau of Indian affairs resulted in several hundred land titles whose legality needed to be investigated. Several cases were filed against the state as well the country as a result of the investigations, few in favor of the Indians. In 1977, *State of Mississippi vs. Zah Zah* established that the several of the land transfers that came out of the Nelson Act were illegal, and that justification for taking these lands as tax reimbursements was also illegal (LaDuke, 1999: 121).

Ultimately, Europeans, through violence towards and coercion of Native Americans, erected an environment through action and policy in the U.S. that has continued to reinforce white hegemony. Throughout the process of mineral and land seizures discussed in this section, American Indians were slowly pushed into smaller and smaller boxes of land on a territory they once roamed freely. Natives have thus become

socially invisible and have lost their autonomy behind the expanding and dominating white culture in the United States; for instance, both the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Services are white-dominated institutions used by the federal government to assert their power over Natives under a façade of working in the Native’s best interest. The dominating power of the white-environment of the U.S. manifests in the dynamics that have created the prison industrial complex in the country, too.

The Prison Industrial Complex

Over two million people are currently incarcerated in the United States, more than any other country in the world (Hattery and Smith, 2006). Angela Davis and Eric Schlosser began the discussion around the mass incarceration culture of the United States, referring to it as the prison industrial complex (PIC), which soon gained significant attention in academia and reform movements. A “fear of crime” environment has been created through a government of a certain white, upperclass positionality, allowing them to create and enforce policies that disproportionately harm people from other backgrounds, mirroring the history of Native-white relations in the same country (Schlosser, 1998). As the story of Natives in the country, the people most adversely effected by criminal policies in the U.S. have been pushed into these suffocating concrete boxes, making them socially invisible to society and the most vulnerable citizens of today.

Two of the most influential factors contributing to the creation of the prison industrial complex are neoliberalism and the war on drugs, both created by and ultimately reinforcing white hegemonic structures. Neoliberalism effectively reduced social programming in the United States while simultaneously encouraging extreme forms of capital gain, resulting in correctional institutions replacing other outlets for rehabilitation

and becoming avenues for profit (Hattery and Smith, 2006,). Shifting from the welfare state has encouraged a punitive culture rather than one of social services and community rehabilitation, creating an environment perpetuating fear. Politicians used this social feeling to their advantage, taking on a savior role in helping to save the country from a crime-ridden country during election season (Schlosser, 1998) (do Valle, Huang and Mari, 2006). Politicians, however, are not the only ones profiting from this culture; with the average cost per prisoner being over twenty thousand dollars, industries have recognized the money-making potential of prisoners (Hattery and Smith, 2006). The private prison industry has come to fruition, with over twenty-six for profit prison corporations with approximately one hundred and fifty facilities in over twenty-eight states (Davis and Shaylor, 2001). Currently, people can buy stock in the Corrections Corporation of America, the largest private prison corporation, which also has lobbyists at various capitols across the country (Davis and Shaylor, 2001). In some states, Connecticut being on them, there is more money spent on correction facilities than there is on education (Davis and Shaylor, 2001,).

Millions of dollars being funneled into the criminal justice system goes towards the enforcement of drug-related policies. Incarceration of nonviolent drug offenders has grown exponentially since former President Nixon declared the “War on Drugs” in 1972 , (Hattery and Smith, 2006). These policies are racialized both in the regulations themselves as well as the enforcement, having a detrimental impact on black communities in the country:

"Among those arrested for violent crimes, the proportion who are African-American men has changed little over the past twenty years. Among those arrested for drug crimes, the proportion who are African-American men has

tripled. Although the prevalence of illegal drug use among white men is approximately the same as that among black men, black men are five times as likely to be arrested for a drug offense" (Schlosser, 1998)

These disparities are the result of living within a white, upperclass environment. Some studies show that drug use is actually more prevalent in white communities, however, they rarely supply drugs, making them held less accountable in the drug trade even though both ends are equally responsible. A white woman addicted to heroin can go to her doctor to get a prescription for synthesized opiates, whereas the black woman who supplied it to her would get sent to jail; and, because of the war on drugs, today her charge would be harsher and sentencing longer than any time in history (Hattery and Smith, 2006). As proven by these patterns, the structures of United States are most violent towards those whose positionality contrasts most with the lawmakers.

The expansion of the prison industrial complex in the United States has benefited some at the cost of targeting and abusing minority communities, pushing them into boxes in a sense more literal than with the story of Natives. What is similar about those most likely to be incarcerated and Natives, is that both groups have lost their autonomy on their own country and have become socially invisible because they live within an environment that caters to white hegemony. Angela Hattery and Earl Smith articulated the relation between the two adequately in their "Sociation Today" article on the prison industrial complex:

"Like the Native Americans who became a landless underclass in the 19th century, repression rather than incorporation is the central mode of social control directed toward them (the underclass)" (2006).

The environment in the United States that caters to the positionality of wealthy whites, which is why both Natives and other people of color, mainly blacks, find themselves trapped in boxes on the land that is their home.

Exploiting the Imprisoned

Forcing Profit from Reservations and Prisons

Nuclear Industry on Native Lands

Pumping within the white hegemonic structures in the U.S. is a heart charged not by the dense blood of people, but by a weightless exchange of profit. Economic practice and policies aim to maximize economic revenues and militaristic power rather than maximize quality of life for all citizens. Living amongst institutions that protect money over people in such a power-hungry national has created horrific avenues through which marginalized groups of people are exploited; this reality plays out both in the imposition of nuclear waste and testing facilities on Native lands and in the booming prison labor industry. Indian Reservations and prisons in this country are already confined, racialized spaces that make their inhabitants invisible to the dominating American way of life. However, separating these populations from the mainstream does not fully take advantage of a space filled with people who lack powerful forms of capital.

Prisons and Indian reservations are spaces with amounts of people of color disproportionate to the United States population as whole as well as high rates of poverty among those “residing” in them; because of this, white America has preyed upon these areas for practices that they do not want to take on.

Indian Americans have already been pushed into small boxes within the American landscape, and yet these spaces are still trying to be infiltrated through manipulative means benefitting white power structures. Specifically, this manifests in the imposition of nuclear testing and waste sites on Native lands. Nuclear energy and weapons became a crucial investment to the U.S. beginning in the 1940s, and since then the federal government decided to grant over ninety-seven billion dollars in subsidies to the expansion of the industry (LaDuke, 1999). The mid-1990s, however, is when the majority of programs and entities were created in effort to target Indian lands for the location of nuclear activity, and entice cash poor Natives to participate in the program with lump sums of money.

In addition to offering large sums of cash to communities that they made poor, white America cleverly created entities with Indian allies that bought into their monetary incentives in exchange for further sickening of Native land and people. The establishment of the federal Administration of Native Affairs in 1974 created allotments of money that went to promoting the nuclear waste industry on Native lands. The Council on Energy Resource Tribes (CERT) and the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) were presented deals involving lucrative amounts of money from federal programs, and creatively encouraged the creation of nuclear facilities on Indian territory by initializing the idea with Monitored Retrievable Storage (MRS) programs (LaDuke, 1999). LaDuke, 1999 recounts how easily these programs came to fruition on a reservation in New Mexico because of the power dynamics involved in the process;

At a 1991 meeting of the NCAI, the Mescalero Apache Chairman explained that it was easy to get \$100,000 by signing up for a grant for no strings-attached research into the feasibility of siting Monitored Retrievable Storage (MRS). In

1992, the Mescalero Apache Tribe publicly advocated that Native communities host nuclear waste dumps on their sites and their lands. (LaDuke, 1999: 101)

In essence, many Natives felt as though they could not say no to what the government was offering them because of the money-hungry American structures their communities were struggling within; profound rates of poverty hover Native reservations, with twenty percent of households making \$5000 or less a year, a rate much higher than the national average (Anderson, 1995). It is imperative to note, however, that the existence of poverty within Native communities was imposed on them because of their forced assimilation over time into a capitalistic, currency-based economy. Many Natives have grievances toward being dragged into these structures because of poverty and manipulation they enable. When talking about the reasoning for entering the MRS program, Judy DeSilve, an Ojibwe woman, states: “Because we’re poor, we just settled for money. That’s probably what the government is counting on” (LaDuke, 1999: 103).

Free market strategies enable corporations to avoid accountability in favor of maximizing profit, which has resulted in entities such as the Private Fuel Storage (PFS) being created. PFS is a limited liability corporation, created by a coalition of some of the most influential utility companies in the nation. In 1997, the Skill Valley Goshute Tribal Council agreed to a forty-acre above ground storage facility. Nuclear testing sites have also been advocated for and implemented on reservations. One of the most well known testing sites is in Nevada, where over 1,000 devices were tested between 1951 and 1992 (LaDuke, 1999).

Prison Labor

As correction facilities have escalated as profit-making enterprises, corporate America has enhanced strategies to use them to their benefit, specifically through

expanding the use of prisoners as extremely cheap sources of labor. Many prisoners produce goods for corporations such as McDonalds, Sprint, Microsoft and Victoria's Secret (Hattery and Smith, 1996). At the expense of minor offenders, the private corrections industry "creates both demand and supply of prisons in order to sustain and ever-expanding market for their products and services" (D'Almieda, 2011).

Prisoners are forced to perform factory, manual and service sector work (Hattery and Smith, 2006). Factory work is the oldest form of work, dating back to when prisoners used to make license plates centuries ago. Currently, prisoners are paid roughly forty to fifty cents an hour, then shipping their products to various agencies (Hattery and Smith, 2006,). The most recognizable form of manual labor prisoners do is through partnership with the Department of Transportation; for this, prisoners may do landscaping or related work for free (Hattery and Smith, 2006). Service sector work is has grown most exponentially of recent years, through contracts that prisons have with various other corporations. In Monroe, Washington, inmates at Twin Rivers Correction Unit assemble Starbucks and Nintendo products during the holiday season (Hattery and Smith, 2006). Hattery and Smith note the contrasting views on the integration of service labor into prisons;

"... one can easily come to the conclusion that this is a positive movement in the evolution of prisons because it provides work, it teaches job skills that are transportable, and it allows inmates to earn some money while they are on the inside. However, critics, including many inmates at the Twin Rivers Corrections Unit, are skeptical of the underlying reasons for this evolution in prison industries. They do not necessarily believe it is indicative of a *rehabilitative*

movement in prisons, but rather is driven entirely by companies seeking another way to maximize their profits” (2006).

Overall, many researcher claim the current prison industry as modern African enslavement or racial segregation prior to the Civil Rights Movement (Weaver, 1998). Regardless of the validity of these comparisons, they have been made because of similarities of how people of color are abused in United States currently and throughout history. Given what has already been discussed in this essay, prisoners have in the United States have been made socially invisible under a system that already works against them, which has created spaces that perpetuate abuse and neglect of people of color at unjustly disproportionate rates.

A Gendered Nation

Suppression of Women’s Sexual Health on Reservations and in Prisons

Historical and current women’s sexual health practices on Native reservations and in prisons reveals how these environments act as aids to the social reproduction of women’s oppression under paternalistic structures that govern these social institutions. Myla Vicenti-Carpio articulates the influence of Western structures on women’s health within marginalized groups holistically in her article on the investigation done by the General Accounting Office over involuntary sterilization of Native women;

“Imperialism, capitalism, patriarchy, and Malthusianism have shaped social and socioeconomic standards by which many women and their fertility are valued. As capitalism and industrialization have expanded, so too has international interest in fertility control of ‘lower-class’ people” (2004).

In other words, women's sexuality has been demeaned into an entity to be controlled by outside sources rather than the woman who "it" belongs to; within socially invisible spaces, this reality is exacerbated. Vicenti-Carpio is one of many scholars to investigate how women's healthcare is effected by hegemony in the United States and close analysis of her work alongside others reveals how women's sexual health in the United States on reservations and in prisons has been used to perpetuate sexual oppression in ways so egregious they only could have happened in socially invisible arenas.

Sterilization of American Indian Women

Indian Health Services (IHS) was created in 1955 at the same time it was decided by white governance that the responsibility for the public health of Natives needed to be transferred from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the United States Public Health Service (Indian Health Services Online). What is important to note about the IHS as well as all the other federally-funded institutions is just that, they are operated and governed by white, upperclass citizens, who through these institutions they changed what healthcare meant to Indians and dictated their access to it. The disconnect in positionality between people in control and people given the healthcare enabled oppressive practices that do not happen in all-white spaces; for the purpose of this essay, we will focus particularly on how this played out in sterilization of American Indian women from 1973 to 1976.

The United States' General Accounting Office (GAO) began investigating coercive sterilization on Native reservations in 1976. The report covered just four of twelve areas in which IHS operate and found that approximately 3400 Native women aged between fifteen and forty-four years old were sterilized from 1973 and 1976 (Vicenti-Carpo, 2004). The Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) (currently separated into the Department of Education and the Department of Health and

Human Services) oversees IHS practices and ultimately came under fire by the GAO. Vicenti-Carpio notes that HEW lacked both enforcement of ubiquitous understanding of sterilization regulations among doctors as well as informed consent for patients (2004). Carefully interpreting the implications of these gray areas reveals the subjugation of marginalized groups of people that comes from the domination of paternalistic white structures.

Forty-two percent of the Native female population had been sterilized from 1973 to 1976, significantly higher than the rate of their white counterparts, who have never been subjugated to widespread sterilization in the United States (Vicenti-Carpio, 2004). This happened because of the enclosed, white-dominated environment in which it occurred; what happened to Native women and the lack of accountability for what happened to them would not have happened to white women. For instance, in 1972, a moratorium by the IHS was declared to deter the sterilization of women under 21. However, physicians still proceeded to do so, claiming that they were confused by when the regulation was supposed to be enacted (Vicenti-Carpio, 2004). There was no retribution for the physicians who performed these procedures. Similarly, several stories retold by Vicenti-Carpio illustrate that lack of notification that was given to the Native women regarding the procedure they were going through (2004). The IHS did not uphold policies of informed consent, which were supposed to be enforced by the HEW. Instead, women, like Norma Jean Serena, consented to sterilization while still experiencing the effects of the drugs given during childbirth; Norma woke up from her childbirth, sterilized, and staring at her own signature that allowed it, with no recollection of actually signing the form. Many women have stories of other physical ailments doctors used as an

excuse to encourage women to get hysterectomies or tubal ligations, even when the women did not come in with concerns related to birth control (Vicenti-Carpio, 2004).

Sexual violence is omnipresent within Native history and currently on Native reservations. Be it in the forms of reproductive injustice as discussed here, or in the forms of rape, domestic violence, or any other manifestation of women's oppression, sexism within Native populations intersects with and was inflated by colonialism. In her book *Conquest*, Andrea Smith recollects and dissects issues of sexual violence in Native societies from the inside and out, at one point concluding that past and current instead of the sexual abuse of women's has roots in colonialism, stating: "Native peoples' experiences of sexual violence echo 500 years of sexual colonization in which Native peoples' bodies have been deemed inherently impure" (2005: 13). As we see through how the IHS treated women, Native women's bodies are seen, as Smith puts it, as violable; if they were not, the egregious violence directed towards Native women would not exist, as it does not for their white counterparts. The experience of sexual violence among Native women (as well as all women of color) is "qualitative different" of their white counterparts, because of the neglected and subjugated environment that they live within during the experience (Smith, 2005: 8).

Healthcare Neglect and Women in Prisons

Similar to how Indian Health Services operates, prisons force a healthcare system upon those within the cell walls, a system which, in many cases, ostracizes the very people it serves because of prejudicial undertones of those who hold positions of authority. In particular, women's prisons suffer disproportionately in lack of medical care access compared to their male counterparts, even though research shows women as having more instances of morbidity, nonfatal chronic disease and report more physical

and mental health problems in general than men (Sudbury, 2002). Additionally, sixty percent of women in prison are women of color, a number disproportionate to their representation in society as a whole (do Valle, Huang and Mari, 2006). In addition, female prisoners have the potential to be pregnant, which makes them more vulnerable and having to give birth in jail, which has a higher likelihood of mortality than their “free” counterparts (Sudbury, 2002). Angela Davis, a pioneer of prison abolition influenced by her personal experiences behind cells walls, has written several pieces of literature regarding the dehumanizing structures women are forced to live in, particularly in terms of access to healthcare, which persist because discriminatory practices within obtaining the care as well as in the inadequacies in what care is given.

Power dynamics embedded in the medical system of correction facilities disenfranchises prisoners from involvement in their care, and enables those in control to deter prisoners from getting what they need. In a piece she written by Davis and Cassandra Shaylor, another renown abolitionist, entitled “Race, Class, Gender and the Prison Industrial Complex”, they recollect the following in regards to the oppressive culture of medical attention in prisons:

“In order to complain about inadequate medical care, women must first file written grievances with the staff person with whom they have a problem. In other words, the recipient of the complaint is the only person who ostensibly can provide them with the care they need. Because there is only one doctor on each prison yard, women prisoners have told outside advocates that they rarely complain in order to avoid retaliation and the denial of treatment altogether. This process clearly violates the spirit of Rule thirty-six of the MSR [Making

Standards Work], which encourages prison authorities to make confidential channels available to prisoners who decide to make complaints” (2001)

These imposed obstacles have resulted in egregious stories of medical neglect within prisons. Such as the life of Sherrie Chapman, who complained of breast lumps for ten years before getting treatment; by the time she was seen, her cancer had spread so vastly she needed two invasive surgeries, but still was terminally ill (Davis and Shaylor, 2001). Unfortunately, any form of treatment in prisons can be more problematic than what rights of prisoners ensure.

The standards of care in prisons are subpar and often ridden with discrimination towards the incarcerated persons. First of all, the prison environment is not conducive to pregnant women, many have miscarriages or other mental or physical problems during birth because of the highly stressful process of being transferred to hospital while in labor as a prisoner, requiring high amounts of security and other protocol. Additionally, gynecological checkups are not administered regularly within prisons, although many have materials needed for standard exams (Sudbury, 2002). In terms of mental illness in women’s prisons, which is often caused or exacerbated because of sexual or mental abuse while incarcerated, many women are thrown in solitary confinement to deal with their mental issues, which only worsens their mental state. Another popular prescription medication, instead of providing counseling or behavioral assistance like an inmate might want (Sudbury, 2002).

Overall, the power and control dynamics embedded within healthcare access in prisons obstructs prisoners from medical attention that is adequate for a human being. Women’s complaints can be ignored and their ailments can be improperly treated, but because the environment in which they live is controlled by the very people perpetuating

these wrongdoings, the potential for accountability or change is obstructed. Given the disproportionate representation of women of color in prisons, this situation proves that the produced environments created by white structures reproduces social norms that reflect those that exist in society at large.

Conclusion

Ending the Maintenance of an Environment Perpetuating Structural and Physical Violence Towards Marginalized Groups

“We’ve established the prison industrial complex as one moment in a broader history of colonialism and attack on the sovereignty of indigenous nations”

(do Valle, Huang, Mari, 2006: 137)

This essay is not the first to dissect the commonalities in treatment of the “underclass” (referring to relative positionality within imposed societal norms) within the white hegemonic structures of the United States. The pattern that plays out in the stories of Native reservations and prisons in United States is one of domination, one where people are being colonized and controlled within the landscape of their home. The most pressing issue within the context of this comparison is the persisting disconnect between those in control and those being controlled, and the patterns of racial and sexist oppression that result. People have been made vulnerable to the impacts of social and physical invisibility within their own country because they are not involved in the decision-making processes governing them. For as long as the underclass is excluded from decision-making processes effecting integrated social and physical institutions in the United States, there will not be environmental justice in this country; on the contrary,

structural and physical violence against marginalized groups will perpetuate, and people will continue to be pushed into invisible spaces in their own home.

Annotated Bibliography

Bookchin, Murray. 2005. *The Ecology of Freedom: The emergence and dissolution of hierarchy*. Oakland, CA: AK Press.

I will use this resource primarily for theoretical framework behind the intersectionality of human's domination of the biophysical environmental with the domination of humans by other humans. This is important because I use an all-encompassing definition of the environment, and Earth is a shared environment on all levels – physical, economic and social.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Richardson, J. 1986. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, pp. 241–58

Bourdieu's work put into words how the dominating class has been able to remain in control for so long: through the intertwinement of capital in three forms. People gain status through cultural and objectified capital, which have value because of institutionalized norms of capital.

D'Almieda, Kanya. 2011. "Profiteers of Misery: The U.S. Private Prison Industrial Complex". *Global Network Content Services LLC*. Retrieved on January 8, 2012 from ProQuest
<http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.lib.uconn.edu/docview/885064668>.

I used material from this source when discussing prison labor as well as details of the privatized corrections industry.

Davis, Angela and Christine Shaylor. 2001. "Race, Gender and the Prison Industrial Complex". *Social Sciences: Meridens: feminism, race and transnationalism 2(1)*. (Retrieved from Project Muse on January 8, 2012).

I valued this source because it was firsthand experience of life in prisons and the article was particularly useful in the section about healthcare access to women in prison's.

Do Valle, Alice, Vanessa Huang and Mari Spira. 2006. "The Prison Industrial Complex: A Deliberation". *International Feminist Journal of Politics 8(1)*. (Retrieved from Academic Search Premier on January, 8, 2012).

This article discussed neoliberalism, racism and colonialism within the prison industrial complex; I used it throughout my analyses about the prison system in the United States.

First National People of Color Leadership Summit. 1991. "The Principles of Environmental Justice". Washington, DC, 1991. Retrieved January 9, 2012

from University of Washington Online
(<http://depts.washington.edu/envhlth/ej/principle.php>).

I used this source when discussing the paradigm shift in the environmental movement, which declared a more holistic view of the word “environment” that reflected Native philosophy surrounding their relationship with “Mother Earth”.

Hattery, Angela and Earl Smith. 2006. “The Prison Industrial Complex”. *Sociation Today* 4 (2). Retrieved January, 9 2012
(<http://www.ncsociology.org/sociationtoday/v42/prison.htm>).

This piece gave a comprehensive look into prison industrial complex; I used facts from here when discussing prison labor, racism in prisons and the war on drugs.

Indian Health Services Online. Retrieved on March 26, 2012
(http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/physicalrehab/index.cfm?module=prs_history).

I used this site for historical context of the Indian Health Services in the United States.

Kasum, Eric. Oct. 11, 2010. *Columbus Day? True Legacy: Cruelty and Slavery*. HuffingtonPost.Com. Retrieved on January 9, 2012
(http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eric-kasum/columbus-day-a-bad-idea_b_742708.html).

I will use this article briefly when discussing the history of conquest of Native Americans by colonizers for the sake of land and power.

LaDuke, Winona. 1999. *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. South End Press: Cambridge, MA.

This book specifies how the lives of American Indians have been determined by policy creation and enforcement by people who believe they had immanent right to control the land. Because of these politically imposed realities, American Indian land has been destroyed for the sake of nuclear and natural resources that they do not profit from.

Making Standards Work. 1995. Penal Reform International. London, UK: Astron Printers Ltd. (Retrieved on January 17, 2012 from JSTOR).

I used this source when comparing what actually happens with healthcare in prison to what is supposed to be happening according to scholars who call for penal reform.

Meiners, Erica and Karen Benita Reyes. 2008. "Re-making the Incarceration-Nation: Naming the Participation of Schools in our Prison Industrial Complex". *Penn GSE Perspectives on Urban Education* 5(2). (Retrieved from Education Resources Information Center on January 10, 2012).

I used this piece when talking about the culture of fear that has been perpetuated by politicians and through the punishing and stigmatizing of certain neighborhoods in the United States.

Mies, Margaret and Vandana Shiva. 1991. *Ecofeminism*. Highland, N.J.: Fernwood Publications.

I used ecofeminism when talking about the intersectionality of oppression of women and oppression of nature.

Pei-Wu, Diana. Digital library of the commons. 2002. "Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism: An Annotated Bibliography". *Digital Library of the Commons for Institute for international Studies at University of California-Berkeley*. Retrieved November 19, 2011 (<http://antiochla.academia.edu/DianaPeiWu/Papers/369505/>)

This resource provided a basic but detailed overview of the present state of the environmental justice movement, as well as resources to find out more. I used this as a citation for basic information regarding environmental justice, most specifically regarding the idea that environmental justice goes beyond just the biophysical environment.

Pulido, Laura and Devon Gerardo Peña. 1998. "Environmentalism and Positionality: The early Pesticide Campaign of the United Farm Workers' Organizing Committee". *Race, Gender and Class* 6(1). Retrieved January 10 (http://antiochla.academia.edu/DianaPeiWu/Papers/369505/Environmental_Justice_and_Environmental_Racism_An_Annotated_Bibliography_).

This article introduced me to how environment effects a person's positionality, I used this idea in the part of my paper explaining why environmental justice effects a person's experience with the world.

Schlosser, Eric. 1998. "The Prison Industrial Complex". *The Atlantic Monthly*. UC-Santa Barbara Online. Retrieved on January 8, 2012 (http://www.ems.ucsb.edu/people/rightmire/ling12/Eric_Schlosser_Ling12_S10.pdf)

Schlosser was pioneer of bring the prison industrial complex to light. I use information from this source when discussing racism in the prison industrial complex.

Smith, Andrea. 2005. *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

This book is a comprehensive look at sexual violence on reservations; I used it when discussed structural violence on reservations.

Sudbury, Julia. 2002. "Celling Black Bodies: Black Women in the Prison Industrial Complex". *Feminist Review* (57-74). (Retrieved from JSTOR on January 19, 2012).

This article expresses a view on the experience of women of color in the prison industrial complex. I used this to explain the practices that oppress women's access to healthcare while incarcerated.

Taylor, Dorceta E. 2000. "The Ride of the Environmental Justice Paradigm: Justice Framing and the Social Construction of Environmental Discourse" *American Behavior Scientist* 43(4). Retrieved February 10, 2012 from ProQuest (<http://tk8nj5xn8a.search.serialssolutions.com/>)

I used this when discussing of the shift in environmentalism and related discourse to a justice-oriented focus.

Tucker, Cynthia. 1998. "Nonviolent Drug Offenders Only Waste Away in Prison". *The Atlantic Journal-Constitution*.

Tucker provides background information around the irrationality of putting nonviolent drug offenders in prison, which I used when discussing the racism in the regulation and enforcements of drug laws.

Vicenti-Carpio, Myla. 2004. "The Lost Generation: American Indian Women and Sterilization Abuse". *Social Justice* 31(4). (Retrieved from Academic OneFile on March 26, 2012).

I used this source when discussing historic issues of sterilizations on reservations during 1973-1976 that resulted in an in-depth investigation by the General Accounting Office.

Weaver, Jace. 1996. *Defending Mother Earth*. Denver, CO: Orbis Books.

This book provided insights into how Natives interpretation their relationship with the environment, as well recollections of the history of Natives and whites in the United States.