Denison Journal of Religion

Volume 17 Article 5

2018

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Recommended Citation
Johnson, Jayla (2018) "Transforming "Rights" to "Justice" and "Power": Reframing Attitudes on Environmental and Reproductive Health of Indigenous Women in the United States," *Denison Journal of Religion*: Vol. 17 , Article 5.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/religion/vol17/iss1/5

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THE DENISON JOURNAL OF RELIGION

Transforming "Rights" to "Justice" and "Power": Reframing Attitudes on Environmental and Reproductive Health of Indigenous Women in the United States

Jayla Johnson

Indigenous women across the globe share similar experiences with colonialism, especially towards their environmental and reproductive health. The consequences of the treatment and attitudes held towards Indigenous women are a global phenomenon. The public policies toward indigenous women in the United States, a global hegemon, may influence other countries' public attitudes toward indigenous women." This has the power to shape, influence and impact the way others regard Indigenous women's environmental and reproductive health. This paper argues that environmental and reproductive "rights" must be reframed as environmental and reproductive "justice/power," given that "rights" assumes that an individual has always had some form of control over their body and environment. In reality, Indigenous women in the States have never had such control even in the postcolonial America. This research will focus on the connections between environmental justice and reproductive justice for Indigenous women in the United States, which include Native American women, Native Alaskan (Eskimo) women and Native Hawaiian women. The issues that impact Indigenous women, including targeted acts of violence against their reproductive capacities and land, heighten health disparities within their communities, the impact of Christian fundamentalism on their spiritual/health practices, environmental degradation, and restrictive amendments (such as the Hyde Amendment), must be understood in a paradigm that particularly aligns with these women's post-colonial struggles to formulate methods of bringing justice and power to their communities. Indigenous women in the United States are never removed or exempt from their environment – the land they occupy is intrinsic to their culture, values and very survival; they feel the full consequences of colonization through the environmental injustices brought upon their land, and, subsequently, upon their reproductive health. The similarities in the treatment of Ingenious women among different groups in the United States demonstrates that these issues are not singular occurrences, but national, collective experiences of Indigenous women and their communities. Examining the factors behind colonization allows for further understanding of its influences on the intricate relationship behind the treatment of Indigenous

Published by Denison Digital Commons, 2018

women, and enables connections to be drawn between the mistreatment of Native women's environment to the reproductive oppression within their communities in the United States. For Indigenous women in the United States to obtain control over their reproductive and environmental health, they must first have the power to do so, and the power to disrupt the injustices colonization in the United States has brought against them. By reframing the language around environmental and reproductive "rights" to mean "justice/power," is it possible to begin the process of re-envisioning a more justice-oriented framework towards Indigenous women's environmental and reproductive health.

The Historical Impact of Colonization on Indigenous Women's Health

Colonialization has historically followed a process of steps to ensure colonialism's success that has always, ultimately, negatively affected the health of Indigenous people, specifically women. When colonialists first encountered Indigenous people, colonizers immediately view these individuals as lacking cultural, social and moral values. Denial and withdrawal from attempting to understand Indigenous people has often been the first step of colonialization, that affects the way others treat and view Native bodies. When Indigenous people are believed to lack cultural and moral values, their way of living is equated to a form of perversity. Alexander Whitaker, a colonialist in 1613, wrote of Native women as living "naked in bodie, as if their shame of their sinne deserved no covering"[1] thus associating their bodies as physical embodiments of their lack of moral, cultural and social values as claimed by the colonizers. If the values of Indigenous people do not mirror that of the colonizers', they will be viewed as underserving of integrity, and as violable at any given moment. Through systematic denial of Indigenous women's values, and withdrawing from actively attempting to learn from, and of, Indigenous culture, the reproductive and environmental health of Indigenous women will be subjected to the same treatment.

These acts of denial and withdrawal lead to the destruction and eradication of Indigenous people's environment; historically, this destruction has been in the form of eliminating physical representations of Indigenous cultures, including burning their art, destroying sacred sites and the destruction of their homes. To ensure the success of colonialization, colonialists will participate in the defacing of Indigenous people's values; since the colonialists already do not believe Native women have merit value in terms of their social, cultural and moral beliefs, the destruction against Indigenous women and men is easily completed and justified.

1 Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. (New York: South End Press, 2005), 10.

The destruction of Indigenous land is closely linked to the denial of Indigenous women as human beings with legitimate cultures and lives. The move to control occupied Indigenous land stems from the desire to control Indigenous bodies, specifically women's bodies and their reproductive capabilities. Indigenous people's practices are viewed as inherently dirty, and thus anything they are a part of, or possess, is just as "dirty" as well. The current environmental degradation of Indigenous land seen today is justified through the dialogue of Indigenous bodies as "dirty" – the contamination of Indigenous communities from pollutions and nuclear waste literally makes Native men and women "dirty" in the eyes of Western society, and only further reinforces industrial companies to use Indigenous grounds for their purposes that will only serve to result in more contamination and degradation, creating an endless cycle.[2]

As colonialization took a stronger hold, the new systems created within Indigenous societies, including churches, health systems and legal institutions, served to denigrate and belittle any continuing practice of Indigenous culture. Colonially trained medical practitioners will refer to Indigenous doctors as "witches" if their medicine is successful, and as ignorant and superstitious if their medicine fails to work as desired. Colonialists used their new systems to promote symbols of evil that alluded to Indigenous people within society. In modern colonial period, Christian churches built by the colonizers superimposed Western norms and cultures through their mission of "civilizing the Natives."[3] The Bible was cited during the colonial days to justify the enactment of converting other peoples and condemning Indigenous' religious practices as "false and idolatrous."[4] Indigenous women faced resentment from colonizers for seeking traditional, not colonial practices of health, and faced criminalization of these traditional practices and fines against them. In this light, colonizers sought to represent Indigenous people as "evil" and as "witches" to control their practices and to influence how others perceived them. Any traditional Indigenous culture that survived the above onslaughts is then transformed into the culture of the dominant colonial society. Anything of Indigenous culture that survived this onslaught formed the basis for economic exploitation, and symbols may be incorporated into modern dress – they are condoned as folkloric and as showing respect to the "old folks and tradition," and the remnants of culture are given token regard and used for further exploitations by

2 Smith, *Conquest*, 66.
3 Pui-Lan Kwok, *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue*. (New York: Paulist Press International, 2012), 78
4 Kwok, *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding*, 78.

colonialists.[5] The misappropriation of Native spirituality continues the same genocidal practices of their ancestors. The rituals are removed from their context and "repackaged for white consumption"[6] and profit, without respecting their integrity and usage in Indigenous communities. These historical processes of colonization have not disappeared but are rather now ingrained within society. The view of Indigenous people as culturally and morally incompetent, the destruction of their physical environment, the denigrations and belittlement of Indigenous societies and the exploitative tokenism on the remnants of Indigenous culture are all ongoing processes of the effects of colonialization that together ensure colonial control over Indigenous bodies and environments. Understanding the historical processes of colonization is vital in examining the reproductive and environmental oppression experienced by Indigenous individuals in the United States. Colonialization is at the center of this oppression, and to ignore its historical precedent over these issues is to subsequently ignore the root causes.

Influences of Christian Fundamentalism on the Health of Indigenous Women

The spiritual practices of Natives are intricately linked to the ways Natives treat their women, and these spiritualties are land based, tied to the region from which they originate.[7] In the Indigenous context, religion is a way of life, rather than a process of doctrinal practices like Christianity. Indigenous spiritualties and their understanding of the Sacred means that taking part in the spiritual practice of one's community is of primary importance. For the Lakota community, for instance, ending the practice and engagement of traditional beliefs, not the ending of the beliefs themselves, destroys their belief systems. When Indigenous communities struggle for control and ownership over their cultural and spiritual preservation, they are ultimately fighting for their land base that contains their culture and spirituality, given that Native religions are not usually proselytizing, and are often more practice-centered rather than belief-centered. Christian fundamentalists are defined by belief in a specific arrangement of doctrinal principles concerning other religious groups (like Jews), and the Bible. The enforcement of Christian fundamentalism onto Indigenous communities disrupts Native spiritualties, and, subsequently, the environmental and reproductive health of the Indigenous women. Christian fundamentalism is almost a barrier, separating colonialists from understanding and respecting the importance of land for Indigenous spiritual practices

5 Steve Talbot, "Spiritual Genocide: The Denial of American Indian Religious Freedom, from Conquest to 1934" (*Wicazo Sa Review*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2006, pp. 7–39), 26.
6 Kwok, *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding*, 78.
7 Smith, *Conquest*, 121.

and cultural practices that involve other women. Colonizers' failure to recognize Indigenous religious practices means the degradation of Indigenous environments, that are so closely tied to the importance of their spiritual practices, were never be considered problematic or harmful. The European colonizers who arrived in Indigenous communities driven by Christian beliefs and ideals, and following an adamant system of patriarchy, disrupted and dishonored the cooperation and balance between Indigenous men and women in the community.[8] The belief system of Christianity leaves little room for equal relationships. The idea of a "higher" being who knows all and controls all sets the stage for colonialists to create hierarchies and systems of patriarchies. Native women did not fit within this classification system of Christian colonizers; the system of patriarchy supported in Christian fundamentalism left women dependent and vulnerable to coercion and to distinct gender social ranks[9] that many Indigenous communities functioned without. The lack of hierarchies due to the lack of power hierarchies in their spiritual practices meant Indigenous communities had more systems of mutual responsibilities among the men and women there. The influence of Christianity and its redefinition of gender hierarchies decreased Indigenous women's autonomy by altering notions of sexual propriety.[10] Since women were not considered equal to the colonial Christian fundamentalists, they had no rights to their bodies or their environment. Evangelical Christianity holds that a person is "saved" through the professed belief in Jesus Christ as one's Lord and Savior. This belief transcends to how colonialists view Indigenous women, believing they are the only ones who can, and have the right to, "save" these women from their cultural ways; the narrative of white men saving brown women is promoted through colonialized Christianity, giving colonialists the false impression that their religious beliefs are superior to that of Indigenous women's. Colonialization equals thingification;[11] Christian fundamentalists advocate for the control over women's bodies and environments because they are simply just "things" that threaten possibilities for colonialist life. The years of sexual violence against Native women's bodies has always been framed in religious undertones that blamed this violence on the sinfulness and impurity believed to be embodied by Indigenous women. When the dominant society removes Indigenous spiritual practices from their land bases, it impairs their claim to sovereignty and undermines Native people's assertion that their land base is necessary for the survival of Indigenous peoples. Christian fundamentalism on Indigenous commu-

8 Marie D. Lewis-Ralstin, "The Continuing Struggle Against Genocide: Indigenous Women's Reproductive Rights (*Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2005, pp. 71-95), 73.
9 Lewis-Ralstin, "The Continuing Struggle Against Genocide," 73.
10 Lewis-Ralstin, "The Continuing Struggle Against Genocide," 74.
11 Smith, *Conquest*, 12.

nities resulted in the lack of protections and respect against Native land bases, and subsequently, against the Indigenous bodies that occupy these spaces.

Mainstream Discourse on Reproductive Health as Reproductive Oppression

The current, mainstream discourse surrounding reproductive health in the United States is reliant on ideology that specifically places responsibility for health and wellness in individual choices, rather than recognizing the systematic problems faced by women, especially Indigenous women, in the country. The emphasis on "rights" often creates an objective standard with individuality in mind. The mainstream idea that women should have access to their reproductive "rights" is to ignore the injustices being committed against them. The language of "reproductive rights" is a white, heterosexual concept that fails to address the needs of Indigenous women. Before Indigenous women can obtain or utilize their rights, they first must be in an environment that is not systemically oppressive to their health. The health disparities and environmental injustices experienced by Indigenous women are issues that need to be addressed and terminated before Indigenous women can ever obtain their "rights" that Western women have. Health is extremely social, and when mainstream ideologies of objectivity and individuality are conjoined, the social environment is often overlooked.[12] The fundamental role of race, class, sex and gender inequalities in contemporary societies stem from the histories from which such inequalities derive, creating a need for careful consideration and recognition of social relations throughout all attempts to understand the reproductive health of Indigenous women. The interactions between social, economic and political forces must be examined to understand how various reproductive experiences are created and the ways Indigenous women are shaped by them.

The pro-choice versus pro-life paradigm is a prime example of the way mainstream activism of women's reproductive health has twisted the rhetoric of "reproductive rights." The pro-life versus pro-choice model marginalizes Indigenous women, not to mention poor women and women with disabilities. This paradigm rectifies and veils the structures of white supremacy and capitalism that underlies the reproductive "choices" women make.[13] The language of "choice" is based on a set of assumptions that only applies to a small percentage of women who

12 B. Gurr, *Reproductive Justice: The Politics of Health Care for Native American Women* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014. Project MUSE), 26.

13 Andrea Smith, "Beyond Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life: Women of Color and Reproductive Justice." (*NWSA Journal*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2005, pp. 119–140), 120.

are privileged enough to possess multiple choices.[14] The concept of choice is connected to the possession of resources, creating a hierarchy among women through the basis of whom, and who is not, capable of making choices. Not only are Indigenous women placed in hierarchies from colonialist men, but also face hierarchies among women based on the resources they possess (or lack), which determines how they can participate in the paradigm of choice in reproductive health movements. "Choice" has shifted to a symbol of middle-class women's arrival as independent consumers, comprised of middle-class women who can *afford* to choose and has earned the right to choose (or to not choose) motherhood.[15] An element of this is the pro-choice movement's stance on contraceptives, who argue that women should have the "choice" of contraceptives. Yet, mainstream pro-choice organizations rarely discuss the issue of informed consent within their agenda.[16] In the First World, contraceptives are an issue of "choice" for white women, but are discussed as methods of population control for women of color and Indigenous women, as well as women in the Third World.[17] Indigenous women have experienced decades of sterilization abuse; in the 1960s and 1970s, Native women accused the Indian Health Service of sterilizing at least 25 percent of Native American women, and various studies have found HIS sterilized around 25 to 50 percent of Native American women between 1970 and 1976.[18] This mass sterilization abuse included IHS's failure to provide women with information about sterilization, failure to provide alternative methods of birth control, and the use of coercion to gain written consent for the procedure.[19] In contemporary society, Indigenous women are still proportionally much more susceptible to sterilization abuse, and do not have access to the choices Western women have, or are protesting for, when it comes to deciding whether to use contraceptives. The United States government agency personnel, including Indian Health Services, directed family planning initiatives towards Native women because of their high birth rate. Decades of denial and lack of recognition of Indigenous culture from colonialization has resulted in organizations and family planning personnel not recognizing that Native women have centuries of experience using various natural methods to prevent conception.[20] Instead, contraceptives are heavily encouraged onto, or forced upon, Native American women since these groups

14 Kimala Price, "What Is Reproductive Justice: How Women of Color Activists Are Redefining the Pro-Choice Paradigm?" (*Meridians*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2010, pp. 42–65.3), 46.
15 Smith, "Beyond Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life," 128.
16 Smith, *Conquest*, 100.
17 Ibid.
18 Jane Lawrence, "The Indian Health Service and the Sterilization of Native American Women" (*American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 2000, pp. 400-419), 410.
19 Lawrence, "The Indian Health Service," 400.
20 Ibid., 412.

do not view Indigenous women as having the "proper" (meaning Westernized) means to prevent conceptions.

As a political structure, and through State-endorsed social practices, patriarchy seeks to control women's bodies and opportunities regarding sexuality, parenting and labor; its interest in producing a national identity as a patriarchal structure means that its policies, laws and allocation of resources are assigned differently to different reproductive bodies, thus reflecting and reducing different reproductive experiences, specifically among Indigenous women.[21] The Hyde Amendment, a State-endorsed policy, perpetuates injustice and discrimination to Indigenous women. The elimination of federal funding for abortion services in 1976 resulted in the inability for IHS to provide abortion services, except in cases of rape, incest or endangerment of the mother.[22] The amendment is responsible for disproportionally affecting impoverished and minority women with restrictive abortion policies. Native women are not just concerned about the criminalization or decriminalization of abortion, but also about fighting for the life and self-determination of their communities, including issues of environmental injustices and sovereignty rights. The focus on life in the pro-choice versus pro-life movement, then, should not be concerned only with the birth of children, but about the quality of life for those who already exist. The so-called "right to life" is a hollow, rhetorical phrase if it does not also address environmental injustices, spiritual genocide and other issues that have significant influences on Indigenous women's reproductive freedom. A framework that does not rest on mainstream ideologies regarding women's reproductive health, this including the pro-choice/pro-life positions that are centered on population control policies and legislations that are oppressive to Indigenous women, is necessary to re-articulate reproductive "rights" into reproductive power/justice. As a woman at a pro-choice alliance meeting declared "who cares about reproductive rights; we don't have any rights, period,"[23] the injustices committed against Indigenous women in the form of environmental and reproductive oppressions must be severed first, before Indigenous women will ever have the opportunity of multiples "choices."

Environmental Injustice as an Attack on Reproductive Health

Environmental injustices are forms of gendered violence[24] which directly attacks, effects and violates the bodies of Indigenous women, and this destruction

21 Gurr, *Reproductive Justice*, 27.
22 Smith, *Conquest*, 96.
23 Smith, "Beyond Pro-Choice versus Pro-Life," 135.
24 Smith, *Conquest*, 66.

against Indigenous environments directly affects women's physical and cultural capacities to reproduce children and Indigenous culture. Indigenous women from the Marshall Islands in the Pacific continue to suffer from major birth defects from the contamination of their food sources since the testing of nuclear weapons and bombs conducted on the island in the 1940s and 1950s. For women who live on the island, they face higher cervical cancer mortality than women in the mainland of the U.S[25] experience higher incidences of miscarriages and reproductive abnormalities from the destruction of their land through nuclear waste and the dumping of pollution. Toxins are usually stored in fat, and during pregnancy and lactation, women's fat is metabolized, exposing the newborns and fetuses to these toxic chemicals when they are at their most vulnerable stages of development. Children cannot excrete or store contaminants, making them much more vulnerable to toxins. In areas that mine for uranium, including the Four Corners and Black Hills in South Dakota, Native women face heighten rates of reproductive cancers, miscarriages and birth defects.[26] In the Akwesasne Mohawk reserve in New York, one of the most polluted regions in the country, the chemicals released in their water (PCBs, DDT, HCBs and Mirex) end up being stored in women's breast milk. Just as Indigenous women are "hunted down and slaughtered…because she has the potential through childbirth to assure the continuance of the people,"[27] Indigenous women's environments are given the same treatment to sever the continuance of Indigenous people. Without a safe and healthy environment, a community cannot grow or thrive, making the control and destruction over Indigenous land necessary to further control women's reproductive abilities. The patriarchal system based on violence continues by appearing ordinary and normal, thus the violence committed through environmental degradation of Indigenous communities are normalized, and, subsequently, the effects on women's reproductive systems from this contamination are normalized as well.

Indigenous women living near the Artic are at risk, since the area lacks the soil and vegetation needed to absorb pollution, and the cold temperatures also hinder the toxins from decomposing or breaking down, toxins that are mostly emitted from U.S. industries within range.[28] The St. Lawrence Island (SLI) Yupik live just south of the Arctic Circle, and despite being quite a distance away from direct industrial contamination sources, this region acts a "cold trap" for persistent organic pollutants (POPs), as well as face effects from the abandoned military sites

25 Ibid., 67.
26 Ibid., 66.
27 Ibid., 79.
28 Ibid., 64.

on the island that contain fuels, pesticides, metals and solvents.[29] While traditional foods are the biggest source of exposure to toxins, the harvesting and consumption of these foods are a defining attribute of the SLI Yupik way of life – necessary for maintaining cultural identity. Indigenous communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental toxins through their living space and the cultural activities that put them in close contact with their environment. It is often the very participation of cultural activities and practices that contribute to Indigenous people's encounter with pollution and toxins. In this way, in our post-colonial era, dominant groups do not have to actively "kill" and eradicate Indigenous cultures as so in the past. Rather, Native women's very engagement within Indigenous cultural customs, such as hunting for food in their local environments and using the skins and furs of the animals for clothing, puts these women in direct contact with these environmental toxins, thus suffering at the hands of their own culture. Post-colonial eradication of Indigenous people has moved from direct to indirect suffering by the hands of the colonialists using their environment and cultural customs. In addition to concerns about the physical reproduction of Indigenous members, Indigenous women also face the concern about the ways environmental corruptions influence the reproduction of cultural knowledge.[30] In Aamjiwnaag, near Ontario, Canada, oral traditions – usually passed down from grandfathers during fishing or grandmothers during berry picking – and medicine gathering are being lost as these practices, are no longer initiated or practiced due to concerns of their food being contaminated. In the Akwesasne communities, Indigenous members report a loss of language and culture surrounding subsistence activities such as fishing, which are being deserted due to fears of exposure to contaminants.[31] The reproduction of culturally informed relationships through generations has been negatively affected by environmental degradation just as much physical reproduction has been affected by environmental contamination. Environmental destruction by the hands of the North American countries, like the United States and Canada, serve to eradicate Indigenous culture, violating the reproductive justice Indigenous women deserve, which includes the ability to raise children in culturally appropriate ways, and to reproduce culturally informed citizens within a clean and healthy environment.

Women's Reproductive Health and Justice Paradigm

The mainstream discourse surrounding reproductive health must be changed,

29 Marie Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* (Vancouver, CA: UBC Press, 2000), 1646.
30 Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, 1648.
31 Ibid.

the historical impacts of colonization, including its influences of Christian fundamentalism, must be recognized and the environmental injustices against Indigenous women must end for a reformation to occur in the current paradigm of women's reproductive health. A reproductive health movement that focuses on justice, rather than "rights" is necessary to fully incorporate Indigenous women into the reproductive health movement – a movement that is currently narrowly focused on abortion and changing the political atmosphere that is inclusive to only a small percentage of American women (mainly white American women) and leaves out the voices and issues faced by Indigenous women. What is often absent from the conversations surrounding women's reproductive rights are issues of colonialization and environmental injustices that have direct influences on constricting women's reproductive health. Highlighting the ways traditional narratives of reproductive rights have overshadowed Indigenous women's reproductive experiences will enable a creation of a reproductive justice paradigm that goes beyond abortion provision and reproductive politics. The root of creating a reproductive justice paradigm is first understanding that the many systems of oppression are mutually reinforcing.[32] By addressing racism, classism and sexism as interconnected elements with colonialization and oppressive structures of naturism/environmentalism the oppression of Indigenous women can be better understood and addressed. Reproductive justice can be used as a strategy to challenge the reproductive oppression faced by Indigenous women, which requires examining reproductive issues through an intersectional lens that acknowledges the simultaneous impact a person's race, class, and gender has in the discourse of reproductive oppression. A major aspect of reiterating women's reproductive health involves changing the language surrounding reproductive rights and the choice discourse. The emphasize on a woman's "choice" best suits the situation of, mostly, privileged women in Western, industrialized nations with an individualistic culture.[33] Given that reproductive health established as "rights" and "choices" is mainly accessible to privileged women, the reproductive rights movement can be seen to rely on and reinforce hierarchies between women. The current reproductive health movement uses the power imbalance between privileged women and non-privileged women to advance their ideals, rather than work against these structures to dismantle them. While reproductive rights movements usually do not mean to purposefully exclude women – in fact, most claim that they serve to

32 Rachel Stein, ed, *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 24.

33 Alyssa N. Zucker, "Reproductive Justice: More Than Choice" (*Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy,* vol. 14, no. 1, 2014, pp. 210-213), 212.

protect and fight for "all women" – the women who have access to participate in the dialogue surrounding the possession of multiple choices are the ones who can most easily align themselves with this movement, while the women who do not align feel most alienated from the movement's messages and activism. Reproductive justice cannot simply revolve around redefining "rights" and "choices," but must also include direct action used to address and end environmental injustices committed against Indigenous women. A reproductive justice paradigm is not possible without also challenging the correlations between the treatment of the environment and the treatment of Native women. Given that Indigenous women are linked to nature, the desire for colonialists to want to control nature stems from the inclination to control women. If attitudes of domination and control over the environment persist, it is not possible for Indigenous women to obtain justice, given their dependence on their environment; Indigenous women occupy lifestyles that are often directly involved with their land (i.e. spiritual practices that are land based), and are severely disrupted by the effects of post-colonial desire to obtain their land. The struggle for environmental justice and reproductive justice are, ultimately, two of the same battles for Indigenous women in their attempts to obtain power and control over their lives. These issues overlap due to the influences colonialization, religious dominance/colonialism, and mainstream ideologies regarding reproductive health have on the lives of Indigenous women. A new reproductive justice paradigm would not separate environmental issues from women's reproductive health issues, but would seek to tackle both together.

Conclusion

Indigenous women are at the center of the struggle for environmental and reproductive control over their lives and bodies in a colonized society. The experiences of Indigenous women of various groups, including Native women, Alaskan Eskimos and Hawaiians, in the United States can be seen to parallel each other in relation to the environmental and reproductive health issues they face and are affected by, despite occupying completely different habitats, living conditions and religious practices. It is necessary to examine health disparities, environmental destruction, colonialization, reproductive rights paradigm, and the influences of Christian fundamentalism on Indigenous women in the United States, in relation to one another within the reproductive health movement to change the current dialogue surrounding the paradigm of Indigenous women's health. Incorporating the struggles of Indigenous women that are not explicitly assumed to be related to reproductive health issues, including issues of the environment and post-colonial-

ism, means to completely envelop voices of women that are often lost in mainstream reproductive movements, such as Indigenous women. Indigenous women's reproductive health and environmental health are connected to issues of colonialization, religious fundamentalism and violence, in that these processes contribute to the ways their reproductive and environmental choices are constrained, violated and regulated; understanding Indigenous women in relation to nature and their bodies (cosmologies) contributes to the process of transforming reproductive rights into reproductive justice by incorporating Indigenous women's voices. Altering the language of environmental and reproductive "rights" to mean "justice/power," allows for a better and more encompassing framework and movement of inclusivity for Indigenous women in the United States, and subsequently, the unique problems experienced in regards to their environmental and reproductive health. Reframing women's reproductive paradigm is essential to integrate Indigenous women's voices into the movement and to change the current paradigm from a focus on privileged, Westernized women to a focus that includes all women, not just the select few.

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