

That time we went to



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***Alternative Spring Break to Yakama Nation  
Lewis & Clark College  
Spring 2018***

## ***How Should You Read This Zine?***

Over spring break 2018, a bunch of Lewis & Clark College students from Portland, Oregon went on an alternative spring break (ASB) trip to the Yakama Nation in Central Washington to learn about the movement for environmental justice. We met with and hung out with community leaders and non-profit orgs to learn more about the history of the reservation, rural affordable housing, land and water rights for the Native community, and justice for migrant and trafficked farmworkers.

Although we could have learned about these issues in our college classes or through books, it's important that whenever provided the opportunity,

to actually get out of the "ivory tower"  
to integrate into the community,  
talk to people, learn their history and current issues,  
and most importantly, support the people-led and people-based solutions  
to these ugly problems.

The on-the-ground work for justice for people in Yakama, including all natives, all migrants, all economically vulnerable people, inspired us to put this zine together, to prop their struggles and their whitewashed histories, and to garner support for the peoples' who land we are on, and the exploited workers who literally put food on our table.

This trip was a struggle. We were meeting folks back to back, learning their stories, taking in their trauma deeply rooted in white supremacist land grabbing. It was hard to swallow it all in one week. Putting it on pages and sharing it with you, the reader, helps us process what we learned, and helps us fulfill our responsibility to the people who call Yakama Nation home.

There are resources throughout this zine where you can not only learn more, but begin talking to and engaging with community-based organizations to actually bring people's solutions into real life.

With warm, honest farts,  
the ASB Yakama Trip Harolds  
Amaris, Ariel, Ben, Can, John, Jowelle, Harold, Lani, Sam

## ***The U.S. Treaty With The Yakima: 1855***

Before this treaty, the area of Washington now known as Yakama Nation was split up and inhabited by 14 different Native American tribes. This treaty promised that the Yakamas would have the authority to govern itself and exclusive use of a 1.3-million-acre reservation. Prior to the treaty, the lands occupied by the tribes that formed the Yakama Nation ran from the Canadian border to south of the Columbia River, covering about a quarter of present-day Washington state.

Yakama Nation is only a small section of the lands that were once occupied by these 14 tribes. In addition to taking much of the Native American land in which these tribes resided for hundreds of years, it failed to recognize that many of the tribes were enemies. Being forced to live together on a small plot of land, the tribes began to fight. The Treaty of 1855 quickly led to the Yakama Indian war that began the same year the treaty was put into action.

The Treaty of 1855 was not signed by every leader of the 14 tribes, and many tribes did not agree to the secession of million acres of their land. It is reported that many of the tribes that did sign were explicitly threatened by Isaac Stevens, the territorial governor who was reported as saying that if chiefs did not sign the document, “they would walk knee-deep in blood.” In addition to being a problematic treaty due to fighting tribes, and lack of consent from many tribes being affected, the rules of the treaty have been repeatedly broken by the US government.

# ***The Doctrine of Discovery***

The Doctrine of Discovery can be traced back to the Papal Bulls of the 15th century that gave Christian European explorers the right to “claim” any lands that they discovered. The concept of the Doctrine can be formulated as a series of of United States Supreme Court decisions. The doctrine was Chief Justice John Marshall's explanation of the way in which colonial powers laid claim to newly discovered lands during the Age of Discovery.

Under the Doctrine, title to newly discovered lands lay with the government whose subjects discovered new territory. The doctrine has been primarily used to support decisions invalidating or ignoring aboriginal possession of land in favor of colonial or postcolonial governments. Marshall used the Doctrine to support decisions made in the US Supreme Court, referring to it as fact rather than a white self-proclaimed right to land that wasn't theirs. This Doctrine still governs United States Indian Law today and has been cited as recently as 2005 in the decision *City Of Sherrill V. Oneida Indian Nation Of N.Y.*

Recently, a lawsuit has been filed against President Donald Trump by the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Ute Indian Tribe, Ute Mountain Ute Tribe and Zuni Tribe in response to his decision to remove nearly 2 million acres of land from Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. This lawsuit was supported by Yakama Tribal Council Chairman JoDe Goudy in a resolution that was passed with a unanimous council vote. “The Trump administration’s continued acts of domination and dehumanizing towards Native Nations, including the recent destruction of public land protection for sacred lands, represents the latest step in centuries of oppression by the United States against the original and free nations including the Doctrine of Discovery adopted by the United States Supreme Court in *Johnson V. M’Intosh* in 1823,” the resolution reads.

Additional resources for accessing information about the Treaty of 1855 and The Doctrine of Discovery:

The Yakama Herald

[Doctrineofdiscovery.org](http://Doctrineofdiscovery.org)

[www.yakamanation-nsn.gov/treaty.php](http://www.yakamanation-nsn.gov/treaty.php)

[ctuir.org/treaty-1855](http://ctuir.org/treaty-1855)

[www.yakamamuseum.com/home-history.php](http://www.yakamamuseum.com/home-history.php)

## ***Environmental Issues: The Problems We Can't See Yet***

When thinking about the problems in the world, injustices like racial discrimination, poverty, or political disparities are the first ones we as a collective think about and argue over. They are prominent, easy to be covered in news, and something tangible that can be moved against. You as individual can march to the streets to stop gun violence or “Global Warming”, a term poorly pinned upon climate change, or any miserable injustice in this world. There are however things about the environment, simply not covered in modern media though, like for instance eutrophication. Eutrophication is the process by which fertilizers causes algal blooms in an aquatic ecosystem, essentially choking out the flora and fauna living below the surface of the water. These excess fertilizers come from agricultural water runoff: rain, crop irrigation, or floods through an agricultural center. Nitrates, phosphates, and other micronutrients are drafted into the water and eventually cause eutrophication in an area away from these places.

In the context of the Yakama reservation, this problem isn't bad in a localized way, it is far worse down the columbia river where all this runoff eventually ends up. Here's a short list of some of the environmental issues faced on the Yakama reservation: excess groundwater nitrates due to lack of “dairy nutrient” (the technical term employed by the dairy industry for cow manure) enclosures on Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) being properly insulated/regulated; collapse of water table (30ft to 1000ft in some areas); salt layer build up, a small layer of salt has begun to crust agricultural fields due to overwatering and a lack of new, nutrient rich topsoil; presence of nuclear isotopes in water along this section of the Columbia as a direct result of the Manhattan project; drought, cattle stockades, or CAFOs, have access to unlimited amounts of water meaning they far overuse water.

All of these problems add up to one massive lurking storm of terror. To add on to this, when a culture, such as the various tribes shoved into the Yakama reservation, has been slowly degraded, and broken by the stress of needing to conform to changing times, that culture is diminished and the people are left distraught. As a result of this, parts of the tribal council, the main system of government on the reservation, have disagreements about utilization of environmental resources in regards to economic benefit for their people versus impact on non-human environmental resources. When added up, these are not simply minor problems and they are not localized. Issues like this are becoming more and more problematic in rural farming areas. The farming regions of the US are drying up, not only in terms of their shrinking aquifers, but also the topsoils which are becoming more and more corroded with salts.

With such a desolate landscape to be working with, both literally and figuratively, it is hard to find hope. There are however organizations which focus on these problems and at every corner attempt to fight the large agricultural industry in the Yakima Valley, which frankly has no care for the affect their operations have on the people surrounding them. One of the organizations which attempts this, and that we personally met with, is the Friends of Toppenish Creek. They take action to hold the people at the head of these companies accountable for their actions. One of the points that they pushed on our group was that the best way to make change is to hold these issues in your mind and to continue attending school and learning, until you have the knowledge to make a difference in the world. They also made the note that you do not have to be in law to make these changes. Even if you hadn't gone to school or gotten a fancy college degree, it does not mean that you are disposable. Every person has the ability to contribute in some way.

I don't call 'em  
resources, because  
that means  
they are natural elements.  
I don't call 'em  
resources, because  
that means  
they are natural elements.  
their purpose is to be  
extracted.



Yakama tribal elders + activists share their  
wisdom with us regarding environmental justice.

*Being political all the time sucks. A lot of the community leaders we talked to during the trip used humor as a way to digest the politics. In some way, humor makes the political more real, and more easier to act on.*

*We used some of our time to just relax and have fun with each other. This also made it so we built trust with each other so that when we did have political conversations, we were able to hold each other in vulnerability and accountability. We watched Black Panther during our time in Yakama (the movies are not cheaper in the Reservation) but little did we know that this movie also intersected with environmental justice and people power.*





**“In times of crisis, the wise build bridges,  
while the foolish build barriers. We must  
find a way to look after one another as if we  
were one single tribe.”**

**“Just because something works doesn't mean it  
can't be improved.”**

⊕

**“They knew death was better than bondage.”**

⊕

**“I would make a great queen because I am  
stubborn — if that's what I wanted.”**

⊕

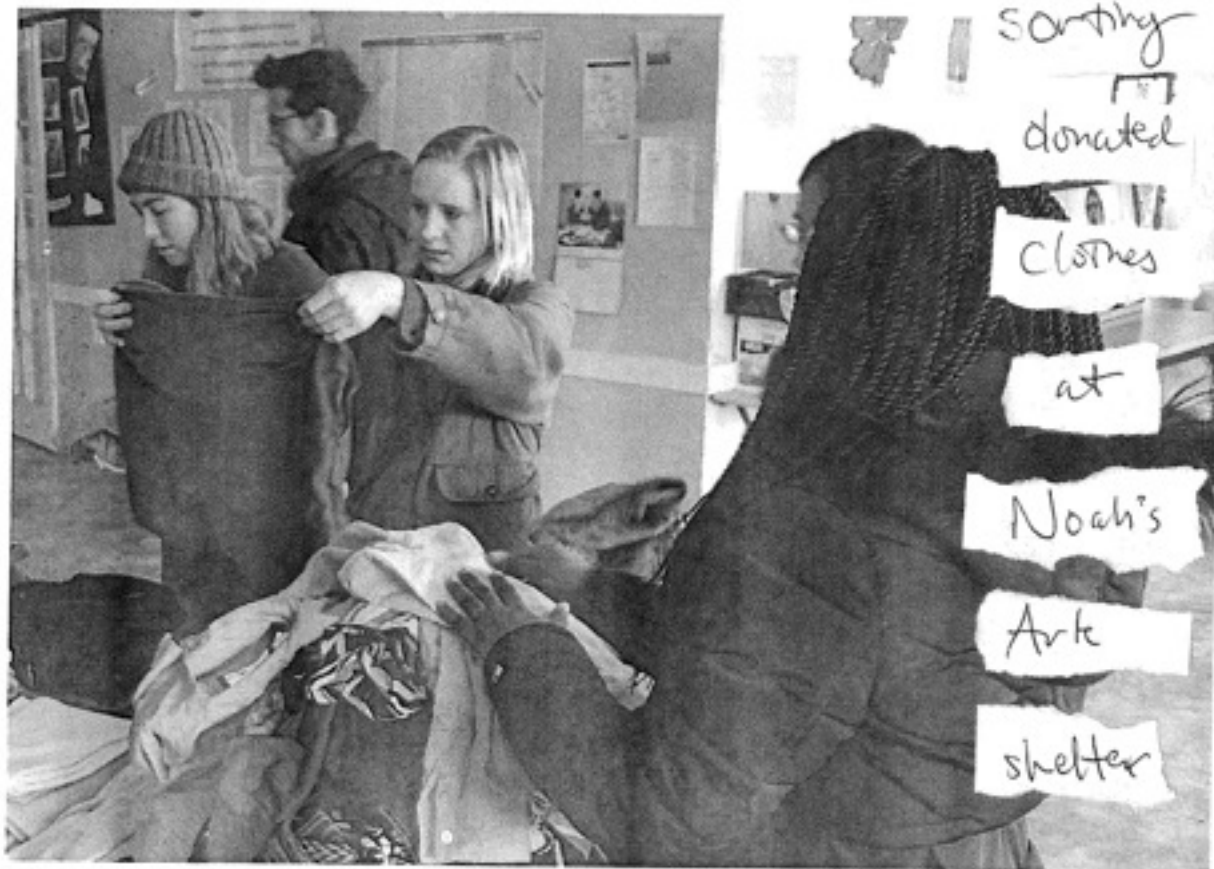
**“Guns... so uncivilized!”**

⊕

**“What does a nation of  
farmers have to offer  
the rest of the world?”**



We toured  
Heritage  
University, a Hispanic-  
Serving  
institution  
@  
Yakama  
Nation



***Affordable housing is a real issue on the reservation. Unlike urban areas, housing in rural areas are more spread out. Majority of the frequenters in Noah's Ark Homeless Shelter are Latino, the adults who sought a better life in America and yet still struggle for basic security.***

# ***Filipino Community Hall at Wapato, WA***



***cheesing in front of the Philippines map  
(Manong Ray!!! in the top left)  
all the other Harolds (everyone else)***



## *On Heritage University and Filipino Community Hall*

Heritage University used to be primarily Native students. Now, it's primarily Hispanic students. There's a lot of Hispanic residents on the reservation that migrate for farmwork.

In the reservation, there's a tiny town called Wapato that has 1,500 Filipinos. They've been migrating to Yakama since the early 1900s to work on the farms. Now they have a Filipino Community Hall, a non-profit cultural center to preserve their history and keep their heritage alive through the younger generations. Manong Rey (the president) was sharing how Filipino veterans from Washington, Alaska, Oregon, Idaho and Montana are finally getting recognition for their service in the Vietnam War. One of the aunties working at the restaurant was also sharing the most deployed for the Vietnam War came from their tiny town of Wapato. The high school counselors were like "well, you graduating high school. you're not going to college. why don't you join enlist?"

## *On Settler Colonialism among POC*

Sometimes, I feel the discussion of “settler colonialism” is limited. To me, settler colonialism refers to **active** land grabbing by settling and occupying on land, and displacing the government system with your own.

How can the Hispanics and Filipinos in Yakama be settlers when we don't understand why they came to reservation in the first place? How is forced migration and assimilation a choice when their homelands are in economic ruins? Do you truly believe that the United States had nothing to do with shattering countries' economies, and treating Latinx and Filipino immigrant labor as cheap and disposable?

Migration and assimilation  
are survival tools.



On our last day, we visited a branch of the Northwest Justice Project (NJP) located in Yakima City. NJP is a legal aid non-profit that helps migrant workers & low income people understand their rights in the U.S. as well as within the Yakama Nation. They're like social justice spies, dropping educational pamphlets and their phone numbers in special locations where harder-to-reach groups can access them.



I had no idea that migrant farmworkers in the U.S. are exploited to the extent that was described to us. Some of them live in conditions where thirty or more people are crammed into one house with no running water and rat infestations. Even though agricultural corporations are legally required to feed their H2A workers, many of them don't, or feed them infrequently, and people have starved to death under these corporations' "care".

If you see something, SAY something!

Northwest Workers' Justice Project (Similar to NJP, in Portland): 503-525-8454

Will you spread this

information or boycott

co.'s that violate human rights

Visit [www.farmworkerjustice.org](http://www.farmworkerjustice.org) for stories from migrant farmworkers in the U.S.

Why didn't I know about this?

The folks at NJP explained to us how recruiters are hired by corporations to go into different countries and get people to sign contracts to come work for them in the U.S., promising them food and housing accommodations. When they get here, those contracts are often broken. Not only do workers frequently experience being underpaid and overworked, but cases of sexual assault, social isolation, mental health disorders, and physical illness go completely untreated and swept under the rug. Formal complaints are met with threats to be deported. The struggle to save enough money for their own basic needs is compounded by the fact that H2A workers must pay their own way back to their home countries at the end of their contracts.



1-2-3-4 is it enough to put food on the table?



Do you know your rights? Can you teach others?

Why is legal proficiency a luxury instead of a basic part of education?



# Book List

Throughout the trip, community members recommended books that would be useful to understanding Native American perspectives and the historical roots of the issues impacting tribes today. One of the key points of action that community members underscored was the importance of being aware of the issues and understanding the impacts of history on the present.

Knowledge is power.

*Voices from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World-*  
by: R.S. ~~Sugirtharajah~~

*God is Red: A Native View of Religion* by: Vine ~~Deloria Jr.~~

*Pagans in the Promised Land:*

*Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* by Steven Newcomb



Does Jewelle Know

That

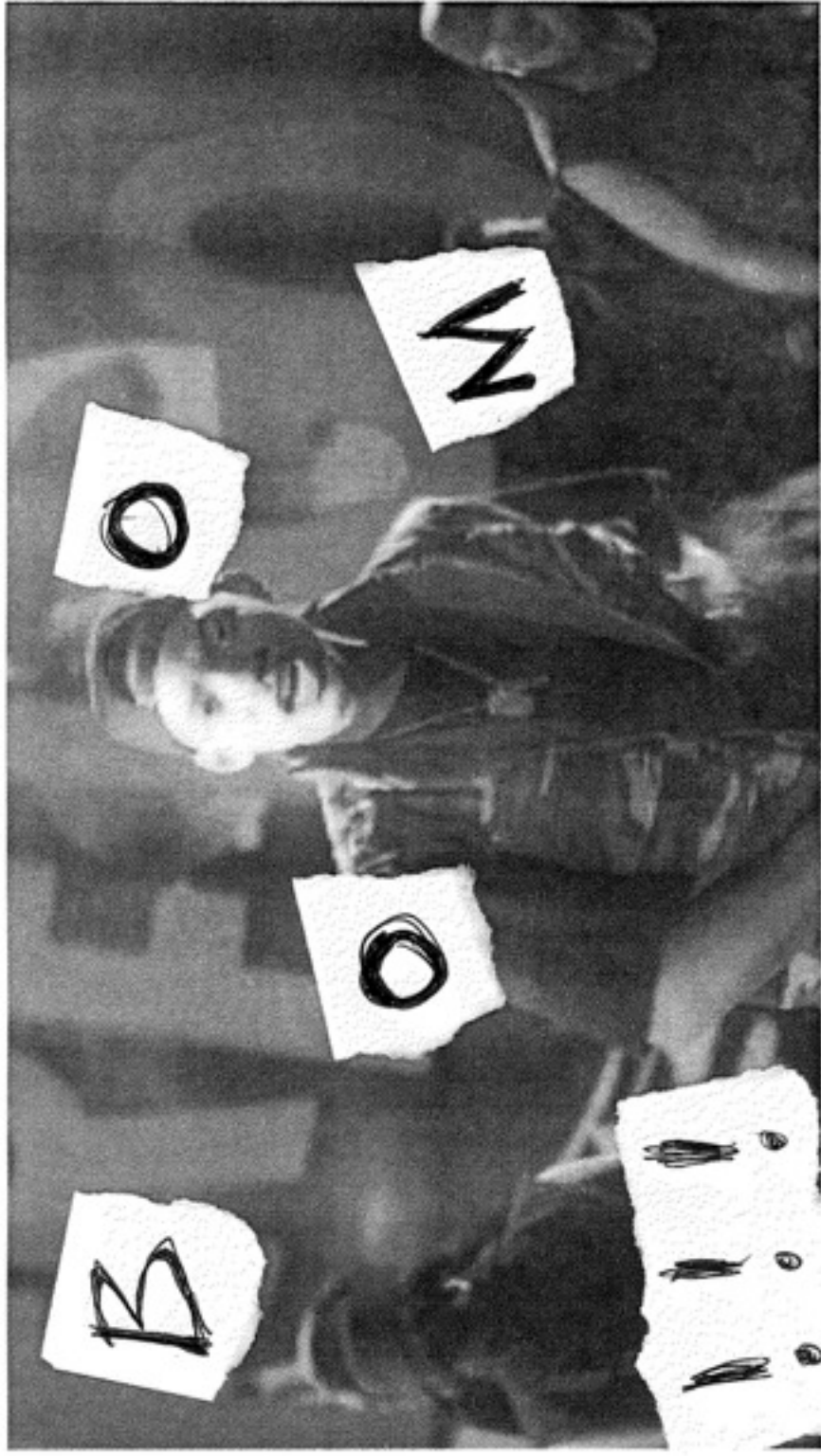
this

kitty

is a

Murderer?

Sometimes when working for social justice you need to  
take a break &



(shake - shake - shake the room)