#NoDAPL
putting theory into practice
dedicated to the women water protectors
at standing rock

By the Students of WMGS 105B: Feminisms: History, Theory, and Practice
Brandeis University, Fall 2016
introduction

On 1 April 2016, LeDonna Tamakawastewin Allard established the Sacred Stone Camp to protect the sacred waters against the Dakota Access Pipeline, a $3.7 billion project to transport some 470,000 barrels of oil from North Dakota to Illinois. The Oceti Sakowin and other allies created one of the largest grassroots revolutions at Standing Rock against powerful energy corporations and banks.

Brandeis University students have compiled this zine dedicated to the following themes: the indigenous women leaders of the movement, decolonization, sovereignty, settler colonialism, water and sacred space, indigenous water rights, reproductive justice, and the art of healing.

In the words of LeDonna Tamakawastewin Allard, the struggle is not over until the “Black Snake is dead.”

In solidarity with the water protectors of Standing Rock.
The women of Standing Rock are working collectively “out of a sense necessity to protect their own lives” and sacred spaces.

“A nation isn’t defeated until the hearts of its women are on the ground.” - Cheyenne Proverb

women are strong, women are healers, women will BIRTH a healthy future. The time now is for Rebirth

“water is healing. Through the protection of our water, we can find a way to bring healing to the earth & to people, and spiritual feminine leadership is bringing light to the way.” mni Wiconi!

“One of the most beautiful things I feel right now is that you see these amazing, empowered women who are stepping up and really reminding us young men, and men in general, that our role is to let women lead. [...] Women are supposed to lead with their hearts.” – Nakko Bear

“We don’t have a Dr. King. [...] We don’t need and can’t have a leader like Dr. King was. We Indians are a plurality.” – David Treuer

INCLUSION IS NOT ENOUGH. CHANGE THE CANON!

↑ Michelle Cook, Diné of the Walk Around Clan

↑ Jaslyn Charger, Cheyenne River Sioux

↑ LaDonna Brave, Bull Allard, Standing Rock Sioux
DECOLONIZATION, SOVEREIGNTY, AND SETTLER COLONIALISM

Body
- Genocide of Indigenous peoples is carried out on the bodies of native women who have the capability to reproduce
- Indigenous women face forced sterilization, rape, and other forms of violence

Land
- The pipeline is constructed underneath the indigenous land and potential to contaminate the water used by the Sioux Nation
- Corporations are granted legal status as people, but natural land aspects such as rivers are not.

Knowledge
- A non-Indigenous archaeologist was consulted in order to determine whether graves were desecrated by the pipeline.
- Indigenous children were forcibly educated away from their families at boarding schools which were intended to cleave them from their cultures.

Spirituality
- DAPL has desecrated sacred burial grounds and prayer sites. Currently there is no federal statute that expressly protects native sacred sites.
- Spirituality is also related to knowledge—native religious practices are not seen as sacred in the same way that Judeo-Christian practices are.

Settler colonialism: an ongoing social and political structure in which colonizers take over the land and make efforts to exterminate the Indigenous peoples there.

DECOLONIZATION
- Native feminist theory connects the sovereignty over one’s body to the sovereignty over one’s people and nation
- Native women resist colonization of their bodies through traditional healing practices, native midwifery, and organizing against sexual violence
- Indigenous peoples unified to file a lawsuit and form protests to protect the land that nurtures the entire community.
- Indigenous women stand to protect the land where their children live and have been buried.

Native/Indigenous Feminism is an act of decolonizing knowledge, and contests misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples and their lives in schools, the media, and the imagination.

"Allying one’s self with feminism should not require consenting to inclusion within a larger agenda of whiteness" (Arvil, Tuck, Morrill)

Protectors have focused on prayer as a form of protection. Camp Etiquette requests that protectors come in a prayerful manner.
- Although acknowledgment of Native religious practices has increased, it has yet to take hold in any substantial protection of sacred sites.
“How do we organize ourselves to survive this war? To keep our families, our bodies, our spirits intact.”

Haven’t we always borne jugs of water, children, poverty? Why not learn to bear baskets of hope, love, self-nourishment, and to step lightly?

Environmental Justice

Stop dakota access pipeline

IS THIS HOW YOU LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR?

STAND WITH STANDING ROCK

MNI WICONI

WHERE'S MY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

HOLY WATER

OVER MY SON'S DEAD BODY

NO DAPL

NO DAPL, NO DEPORTATION

Analyze less place Engelbrecht place

WOMEN'S HEALTH CLINIC

This water is our birthright

Camp of the Experience of Spiritual Justice

Environmental Justice Cannot
healthy water = healthy babies

"...but to also continue developing revolutionary paradigms that nurture cultural preservation of womanhood in Native American communities through ceremony." - Nicolle Gonzalez

The difference between poetry and rhetoric is being ready to kill yourself instead of your children. - Audre Lorde

eco justice = reproductive justice
PROTECTING WATER RIGHTS
by Alex Feldman, Bethany Clark, Avital Luny, and Misha Vilenchuk

The erasure of Native American sovereignty, a symptom of settler colonialism, is carrying its structural legacy today through the DAPL pipeline, relentlessly draining resources like water from Native Americans.

HISTORY
The relationship between the Sioux Tribe and the US government dates back to 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie, when the US government sought to guarantee safe passage for settlers during the Gold Rush. The remaining history is one of a traditional settler colonialism—a timeline of gradual indigenous dismissal to self-determination and political sovereignty. The US government further abridged its treaties with Native Americans half a century later, in 1948, with the construction of Oahe Dam. The construction of the DAPL pipeline reflects this mentality; the US Army Corps of Engineers did not regard Native American safety when considering the pipeline, yet concluded the route was not an option near North Dakota’s capital, Bismarck, because it was too close to the city’s water source.

WATER IS SACRED
Water is not only a clan symbol for many indigenous tribes, it is the basis of multiple myths in indigenous cultures. At least twelve tribes have water gods. There are at least four different kinds of water monsters in indigenous cultures and at least eight specific myths. The Gitaskog, a water serpent who’s mythology is shared by many of tribes from our own northeastern tribes, eventually was appropriated by northeastern settlers into becoming the current serpent “Champ” in Lake Champlain of Vermont. The Arapahos and the Cree believe that all springs and rivers originated with the Creator’s tears. Tribes across the country believe there are magical waters that can cure blindness and other ailments. The Lakota Sioux like those who reside in Standing Rock believe they came to be through a Great Flood. Water itself is sacred, in addition the land through which DAPL would run.

MNI WICONI: WATER IS LIFE
Water is not only sacred to Native Americans, but it is their essence. “Water is life” for all individuals, especially for the Native American people at Standing Rock who equate water to medicine. Yankton Sioux Elder, Spotted Eagle describes water as “the first medicine; it sustains us in our mother’s womb.” Yet, with the imminent danger of a working pipeline their only water source would be ruined, as seen by one protector from Cheyenne River who said, “When this proposed pipeline breaks, as the vast majority of pipelines do, over half of the drinking water in South Dakota will be affected... It must be stopped.” Yet, how can they raise their children without their “first medicine,” water? Thus, this is a feminist issue, as it relates to the experiences of all women, especially those women who have been most marginalized in our society, like the Native American women at Standing Rock.

According to Bell Hooks, “Feminism is the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men. It has the power to transform in a meaningful way all our lives.” This power to transform the lives of those at Standing Rock - helping to protect their water rights, can only be achieved through the rallying of all women, regardless of one’s race or class. The feminist goal to end sexist oppression can only be achieved through the elimination of group based oppression systems, which can be started by standing up for the women of Standing Rock.

“...A prophecy warned that this time would come. A black snake would arrive to destroy the Earth. It is now slithering across this land, disturbing what’s sacred and gearing up to poison the water.” - Spotted Eagle
Perhaps the most frequently repeated theme is that of women as associated with life, water, and therefore the River.

Women as Symbols

On December 5th, hundreds of protesters used mirrored shields to create what from an aerial view looked like a river. Both the concept of mirroring nature, as opposed to destroying it, as well as turning a shield, a representation of violence into art creates a powerful statement.

Photography and video, as important forms of visual art, capture the harsh reality confronted by protesters at Standing Rock. Much of the art that is produced is un-representable within the context of this presentation, as it is vocal (songs or chants) or in video form (example: the mirror shields).

We can train ourselves to respect our feelings and to transpose them into a language so that they can be shared.

-Audre Lorde

Women are central to the art that has come out of Standing Rock. Traditionally symbolically linked to water, Native women are celebrated in their role of life-givers and healers, as is the water which they protect. The art that has emerged from the Standing Rock protest thus not only speaks for the environment, but for those who identify as female as well.

We can train ourselves to respect our feelings and to transpose them into a language so that they can be shared.

-Audre Lorde

Reconceptualizing ‘production’ may help us to think about the kind of society we want to create.” - Heidi Hartman

ACCESSIBILITY/COMMODIFICATION

The above image was one I saw on Pinterest of all places a couple of weeks ago. The appropriation of the Native American symbol of the Black Snake for art and advertisements has led to its commodification. The line between indigenous voices being heard and used for Instagram-able posters has become blurred and problematic.
WHITE PEOPLE AT STANDING ROCK:

Do:

ASK TRIBAL ELDERS WHAT IS NEEDED
DO NOT EXPECT REWARD OR PRAISE
UNUNDERSTAND THAT THE BEST WAY TO HELP MAY BE
BY DONATING MONEY OR REQUESTED GOODS
RAISE UP NATIVE VOICES, NOT YOUR OWN
ASK YOURSELF WHY YOU ARE GOING

Do Not:

TREAT STANDING ROCK AS A FESTIVAL, PARTY,
RESUME BUILDER, OR CAMP
BRING A COSTUME
COLONIZE SPACE WITHOUT GIVING BACK
CONSTRUCTIVELY

THIS IS REAL.
THIS IS IMPORTANT.
TAKE IT SERIOUSLY.
bibliography + resources

works cited: feminist theory


works cited: websites

• https://www.democracynow.org/2016/10/18/midwives_at_dakota_access_resistance_camp
• http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2016/10/20/birthing-sacred-baby-born-water-protector-camp-bears-hope-166152
• http://karamariaananda.com/blog/women-of-standing-rock
• http://leannesimpson.ca/leaks-music-video/
• https://www.nlm.nih.gov/nativevoices/timeline/543.html
• http://www.pbs.org/newshour/roundup/military-force-criticized-dakota-access-pipeline-protests/
• http://www.rosysimas.com/myportfolio/we-wait-in-darkness-dance/

online resources

• LeDonna Tamakawastewin Allard: https://www.facebook.com/earthw7
• Indian Country Today Media Network: https://www.facebook.com/IndianCountryTodayMediaNetwork
• Indigenous Environmental Network: https://www.facebook.com/ieenearth
• Indigenous Rising Media: https://www.facebook.com/Indigenousrisingmedia/
• United Indians of New England: https://www.facebook.com/groups/UAINE
• Women at Standing Rock: https://www.facebook.com/Women-at-Standing-Rock-349264942131591

Introduction and Bibliography: Professor ChaeRan Freeze
Cover Art: Natalia Freeze (Belmont High School, MA)

Contributing Students: Jillian Baker, Molly Bartlett, Mingyue (Daisy) Chen, Bethany Clark, Gemma Curnin, Sarah Dublin, Alexander Feldman, Sarah Freeman, Yael Jaffe, Michael Josell, El Kane, Laura Katz, Ariana Keigan, Avital Lany, Caitlyn McQueary, BT Montrym, Tina Nguyen, Klana Nwaobia, Rachel Pfau, Alexandra Thomas, Michael Vilenchuk