

7.7 Alcatraz: An Untold Story of Indigenous Resistance

Thu, Oct 06, 2022 1:24PM 48:50

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

alcatraz, indigenous peoples, land, treaty, indigenous, sioux, black hills, people, protest, government, community, columbus, island, untold story, day, indigenous people, activists, oaks, resistance, article

SPEAKERS

Jasmine Bradshaw

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:00
You're listening to the First Name Basis podcast, Season Seven, Episode Seven, "Alcatraz: An Untold Story of Indigenous Resistance."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:15
Teaching our children to be inclusive and anti-racist starts with us within the sacred walls of our home. First Name Basis is designed to empower you with the competency you need to be a leader in your family and a change maker in your community. Together, we will wrestle with hard questions and use the answers to create the world we want, a world that reflects our values of inclusion, compassion, and courage. I'm your host, Jasmine Bradshaw, and I am so excited to be on this journey with you.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 00:51
Hello, First Name Basis fam. I am so glad you are here. Today I have a really exciting untold story for you. So if you are new around here, we have a series called Untold Stories. And they are everyone's favorite episodes, including mine, honestly. They're so interesting to make. I mean, they take me hours and hours and hours. But I learn so much and so do you. I hear from all of you that they are for sure your favorites. So I'm super excited to get into this untold story with you today. We also have "I mean, I'll put them in the show notes" but we also have "The Untold Story of Thanksgiving," "The Untold Story of Christopher Columbus," "The Untold Story of Dr. Seuss..." What else? Oh, "The Untold Story of Fried Chicken.: That's one of my favorites. Oh, it's just my favorite favorite episode. So today, I'm bringing you an untold story of Indigenous resistance. Because Indigenous Peoples Day is coming up. We are so excited around here, and I have been doing so much reading about the day and about the activism around the day. So I just want to share so much of what I've learned with you.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 01:55

Okay, so unfortunately, I do have to start with a trigger warning, because we are going to be talking about harm and violence against Indigenous people. So please take care of yourself, especially if you are a member of the Indigenous community, just know that we love you, we're supporting you, we're uplifting you. And you can come back if you have the time and space and energy, or you don't have to. Just do what is best for you. And of course, I always give a trigger warning for those of us in the Black community as well, because so much of our history is intertwined. So it's honestly, it's like you never know what's gonna come up when you're talking about these things. But oppression is oppression, and it's really hard. So trigger warning to anyone who really needs to hear it. And you can carry this today if you want to, or you don't have to. We just want you to take care of yourself.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 02:45

The other thing I wanted to tell you is that we have a resource email going out. So a lot of times when there's a holiday, or some big cultural event, we will usually send out a resource email for you and your family or you and your students so that you can start to think about how am I going to approach this with my kiddos? What are we going to do to honor this day or talk about this day? What activities should we be engaging in? Or are there any events that you can go to in your area, so that you can really take the time to talk about the importance of the cultural celebration or the cultural event that's coming up. So we have a resource email for you all about Indigenous Peoples Day. And in our resource emails we always try to include stuff for our kiddos and stuff for the grownups. So there will be activities to do with your children or with your students, but then there will also be opportunities for you to learn as well, because a lot of times, this is stuff that we're learning about as adults. So if you're interested in getting the Indigenous People Day resource email straight to your inbox, just go to firstnamebasis.org/indigenouspeoples. I'll leave that link in the show notes.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 03:52

And as always, I want to remind you, if you are already on our email list, it will come to you automatically. But if not, go ahead and put your email in and we are sending that email out on Thursday. Now, if you're listening to this after the fact that you're like, "What Thursday?" like, "What are you talking about?" It's okay. You can go and enter your email and it will come straight to you. So if it doesn't come right to your inbox, just know that it's coming on Thursday, or if it's past Thursday, put in your email and it will come right there. It's firstnamebasis.org/indigenouspeoples. Okay, two more things before we jump in. So the first thing is that I am going to use the term "Indian" in this episode when referring to historical names of things or when quoting Indigenous peoples themselves. And I really want to make it clear that I do not use this word outside of this context. And I don't think anyone else should be using this word either unless they are a member of the Indigenous community. So if I say the word "Indian," it is just because I am naming historical things or quoting from someone, but I don't use that word, you know, in my normal everyday life. It reminds me of the word "Negro." Like I definitely, it's not a word that I use and not something that I feel comfortable hearing from other people. But if I'm talking about something historical or quoting from someone, I will use it, if that makes sense.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 05:08

Okay, the other thing is I really went back and forth on whether or not I should just do an interview for this episode instead of a solo episode. Because obviously, I am not a member of the Indigenous community. So I was thinking a lot about how important it is to center Indigenous peoples on this day. And I was also thinking about, as a Black person, it's kind of hard when someone comes up to me during Black History Month and is like, "Tell me about like a really basic thing about Black history that I could easily google myself," you know. And so instead of doing this as an interview, I thought it was almost as important for my anti-racist journey and my process to do all of this research myself. And I chose sources that do center Indigenous voices and interview Indigenous peoples, and I will be quoting from them, but I chose not to do an interview because I feel like that's part of the process of honoring Indigenous Peoples Day is doing this work myself to learn more about the community and more about the untold stories. I hope that makes sense and resonates with you.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 06:11

As I was researching Indigenous Peoples Day and trying to figure out what it looks like to honor and respect this day as someone who's not Indigenous, I was reading an article from NPR, where Mandy Heuvelen was quoted, and she says this, quote, "There are no set rules on how one should appreciate the day. It's all about reflection, recognition, celebration, and education. It can be a day of reflection of our history in the United States, the role Native people have played in it, the impacts that history has had on Native people and communities, and also a day to gain some understanding of the diversity of Indigenous peoples." End quote. She really names so many great options for recognizing Indigenous Peoples Day.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 06:53

And what I want to do to recognize today is share this untold story of Indigenous resistance. One of the things that I learned early on in my anti-racist journey was the truth about Black resistance. I mean, we know about the Civil Rights Movement, and a few things that go along with that. But I feel like I was either inadvertently or explicitly taught this myth when I was growing up in elementary school, that enslaved people were pretty docile and didn't often fight back against their enslavers. You might have heard me talk about this before, but there is a podcast on Teaching Tolerance called Teaching Hard History, actually, sorry, they changed their name to Learning for Justice, they used to be Teaching Tolerance. So in their podcast, they talked all about the importance of understanding the resistance of enslaved people and the resistance of the Black community as a source of power that comes behind our identity. And so as I was thinking about Indigenous Peoples Day, and how we would recognize today, I thought, wouldn't it be really powerful for me to " and all of us as a whole in this First Name Basis family " understand better, different aspects of Indigenous resistance and kind of go deep on one of the stories? Because to me, it's so powerful to learn the nuances of resistance stories, because I think it really shows a community's values. I mean, haven't you noticed that like, when you're in the thick of something really difficult or really tough your commitment to your values really comes to the surface? Like I think that when we look at these resistance stories, we're able to see what are the true values of this community and how are they living

those out. So with all of that background knowledge in your back pocket, I want to share with you one really interesting story of Indigenous resistance, and that is the occupation of Alcatraz. So this is the untold story of the occupation of Alcatraz.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 08:51

And the occupation of Alcatraz was a protest that was a catalyst for what historians call the Red Power Movement. Now, I was a little bit hesitant to use the term Red Power; I wasn't sure if it was something that I should be saying as someone who's not from the community. So I did a little bit of digging, of course, and I found this quote, "'Red Power' is a term coined by Indigenous scholar Vine Deloria, Jr. in the 1960s to describe the rise of a pan-Indigenous Civil Rights Movement occurring across North America. The American Indian Movement, AIM, is often affiliated with Red Power." End quote. And that comes from the University of Alberta. So the Red Power movement is happening in conjunction and in parallel to the Black Power movement, so that's where the name comes from, and I believe it is embraced among the Indigenous community. If I'm wrong, please let me know and I'll stop saying it, but I just wanted to make sure that we have the history on that. So let's dive into Alcatraz.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 09:52

Now you've probably heard of Alcatraz, but if not, Alcatraz is an island near San Francisco and actually started out as like just the lighthouse and then it turned into a military prison. And then in 1934, it was converted into a federal prison. So I think that's what a lot of us know about it, like the fact that it was a federal prison. And it remained a federal prison from 1934 until 1963. So it was a federal prison for quite a while. So it was soon after the prison closed down in 1963, that Alcatraz became the site of an extremely influential protest by the Indigenous community. So there were like a handful of reasons why these Indigenous activists decided to do this protest at Alcatraz. But two of the reasons were the ones that stuck out to me the most. The first was that they were protesting the policy of termination, and just the treatment of Indigenous people as a whole. I mean, we, we know some of the history around that, right. So if you're like me, and you're thinking, "What is the policy of termination? That sounds really bad," quote, "The policy of termination sought to assimilate Native Americans into American society by attempting to end the US government's recognition of tribal sovereignty, in an effort to terminate Native American Tribal citizenship in favor of American citizenship." And quote, I was just like, the name of it itself, "policy of termination," like, yucky. Can you think of anything else that has the term "termination" in the title? Yeah, not not good, not good. And we still have people who deny the genocide of Indigenous peoples here in this country, like, really. So that was the first reason they decided to move forward with this protest at Alcatraz, the policy of termination.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 11:38

Now, the second reason, oh, my gosh, this is so interesting. So when Alcatraz was closed down in 1963, the federal government decided to declare the island as surplus land. And then after they did that, they just gave the land to the city of San Francisco. So this is happening, and the people in San Francisco are kind of hearing about what's going on at Alcatraz and how it was designated surplus land by the government. And there was a woman named Belva Cottier. She

was a Sioux social worker, and she was living in San Francisco. And she heard about Alcatraz, and she remembered a clause in one of the treaties that the US government had signed with the Sioux Nation. So I was reading this ancient article in the "San Francisco Examiner," written by a journalist named Jerry Kamstra. And it was kind of funny because it's called "The Grim Plight of the..." I think the title probably finishes with something. But it was this website where I wasn't able to read the whole thing. And everything I needed was in the first page. So I don't actually know the entire title of the article, but I will definitely link it if you're interested in paying the money and finding out the rest of the title. But basically, in this article, "The Grim Plight of the Ellipses," Belva Cottier was interviewed, and she was talking about how she got the idea to use the treaty in the protest. So she says, quote, "There was a tiny clause put in the treaty that stated, whenever federal land becomes surplus, it would revert to the Indians. We tried to get a copy of the treaty from the government in Washington, but they wouldn't send us one. We also tried to get one from the Indian Center at Pine Ridge, South Dakota, but were unsuccessful there, too. Finally we went to Bancroft Library at the University of California and found a copy of the treaty, we made copies and distributed them at the Indian Center." End quote, so Bella is Sioux and you better believe she knows the treaty that the US government has signed with the Sioux. And so she's like, "I remember in this treaty that there was this little tiny clause that said, if there is surplus land, then the US government will give it to the Indigenous community." And so when she sees that Alcatraz is designated as surplus land by the federal government, she's like, "We should be having that," right? Like, "That should be for us." Isn't she so freakin brilliant. I was like, "Go, Belva!"

J Jasmine Bradshaw 14:17

Okay, so then y'all know that I decided to obviously research this treaty because I was like, what? What's in it? I have to know. So this is the Treaty of Fort Laramie. And it was signed in 1868 by the Sioux and the Arapaho Indigenous tribes and the United States government. So the Sioux is a cluster of tribes including the Dakota, Lakota and Dakota, and the treaty actually creates the Great Sioux reservation and it includes this chunk of land west of the Missouri River and the Black Hills, which is sacred land to the Sioux people. So the Black Hills is a really, really special place for this Indigenous community, and as it was common with most treaties, the Indigenous peoples had to relinquish power over 1000s of acres of land that the government had promised them in earlier treaties. So the US government had said yes, like all of this land is yours, because you were here first, and you should have it anyway. And then they ended up signing this Fort Laramie treaty, because there was lots of fighting, and the government shrunk the piece of land that they run. So they had a reservation, and then they had the very sacred piece of land, the Black Hills.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 15:38

Now, you probably won't be very surprised to hear that it didn't take long for the treaty to be broken. And guess who broke it? The United States. Shocker. So the treaty was broken in 1874 when General George A. Custer led an expedition into the Black Hills looking for gold. So as I mentioned, the Black Hills is a really sacred area. The Sioux are using the Black Hills to hunt because they are nomadic hunters. And this General General Custer is leading a bunch of people "like I was imagining, like 10 to 12 people, it's like between like 400 and 800 people" looking for gold all over the Black Hills. Well, lo and behold, they found the gold in the Black Hills. And when they found it "when I say "they," I mean General Custer and the United

States government "when they found it, they started sending miners to dig up a gold. So this land is incredibly sacred to the Sioux. And they're using it for hunting. And then all of a sudden, the US government is coming in and trying to dig up a bunch of gold. And of course, the Indigenous peoples were like, "No, you signed this treaty saying that this was our land and that you would leave us alone." And so they started trying to fight them off. So the gold miners were like, "Hey, US Army, we need your help while we steal resources from the Sioux on their sacred land." And the Army was like, "Okay, sure." The US Army comes and they're fighting with the Sioux because the government wanted the gold.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 17:09

So I found this article in the National Archives that talks about the treaty. And I really don't like most of the wording because it's pretty sympathetic to the colonizers. But I wanted to read one part of it. It says, quote, "Soon the Army was ordered to move against wandering bands of Sioux hunting on the range in accordance with their treaty rights." End quote. So even the National Archives is like, "Yeah, this is not right, what was happening, they were hunting where they were supposed to be hunting, in accordance with their treaty rights, and the army was attacking them."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 17:42

So this all goes on for a couple of years, and then in 1876, General Custer is with some of his troops on the land when they come across a group of Sioux and Cheyenne. And in the words of the National Archives, quote, "Custer's detachment was annihilated." End quote. So even though the Sioux and the Cheyenne were able to successfully fight off Custer and his detachment, the US government continued to fight with the Sioux over this land. The government knew that the Black Hills was a really sacred region for them, but they really did it anyway. And then after another year, in 1877, they further broke the treaty, and they just stole the land from the Sioux. So they redrew the boundaries of the reservation and claimed the Black Hills as US land instead of land that belongs to the Sioux. And it's so important for you to understand that the Sioux were originally nomadic hunters. So when the boundaries of the reservation were redrawn by the US government, they were forced to transition into a farming lifestyle. And they really didn't. I mean, that wasn't their culture, like they weren't nomadic hunters. And so now they take away their hunting land, and they're like, "You have to be farmers." And this Sioux was like, "Wait a minute, the land that we're on, the reservation that we're on, the soil is not good for farming." And the government was like, "Okay, well, too bad." Yeah, I know, not a good look for the United States.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 19:15

But it's important to understand that the Sioux never stopped fighting to get their land back. It's almost like an untold story of resistance within an untold story of resistance. Like, untold story of Indigenous resistance inception. But basically, they never stopped fighting. And the thing is, when all this was happening, they didn't have an official legal way to fight back against the US government. They had to actually petition the courts for the right to argue their case. And they didn't even win those rights until 1920. And then they were in a legal battle with the

federal government until 1980. 60 years they were in an official legal battle. I mean, it's been longer than 60 years, but 60 years in this official "US official, I should say" quote unquote "official" legal capacity with the federal government.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 20:09

So finally in 1980, the Supreme Court ruled that the US had, quote, "illegally appropriated the Black Hills." And they awarded over \$100 million in reparations to the Sioux. But remember at the beginning when I was like, it is in times of struggle and in the toughest times when you're able to see the values of a community. Well, this next part, I feel like really proves that. So they are awarded over \$100 million in reparation. And the Sioux Nation refuses to take the money. Like they say, "Nope, we do not want that money, because the land was actually never for sale. It's our sacred land that we want back. We don't want money." Can you even with, like, that amount of legit commitment to who they are and their values? That money, \$100 million, is now worth over a billion dollars. Like, let that sink in. And they just said, "No, the land was never for sale. What we want is to have it back."

J Jasmine Bradshaw 21:13

A few years ago, there were pages of the original treaty on display at the National Museum of the American Indian, and tribal leaders were invited to come and see the pages up close. And one of the leaders was Chief John Spotted Tail, and he works for the President of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. And he said, quote, "We'd like to see that land back." He said, "From the time we signed it, we were put into poverty. And to this day, our people are still in poverty. The United States does not honor this treaty and continues to break it. But as Lakota people, we honor it every day." End quote. I was so grateful to read what Chief Spotted Tail had to say about this, because he is the great-great-grandson of one of the leaders who had originally signed the treaty. So I'm just imagining like him growing up with his elders talking to him about the importance of this land, and why they denied that \$100 million and instead wanted the land back.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 22:14

I actually read the entire treaty, because that's who I am. And one of the quotes that stuck out to me about the treaty that I noticed while I was reading it says quote, "Nine of the treaty's 17 articles focus on the integration of native peoples into the white man's way of life." And that is so true. There were so many, like pieces of it that were like "We're going to teach you about our religion, and we're going to build your school and we're going to do all these things." And we know the outcome of that, like we know what happened. Terrible, terrible, terrible abuse at the hands of the US government. Mark Hirsch, who is a historian at the museum said quote, "This is a classic broken treaty. It is such a negative example of a treaty abrogated by the United States in which the US shows profound lack of honor and truthfulness." End quote. And the director of the museum, Kevin Grover, who is a member of the Pawnee tribe, he said, quote, "One thing I know about Indians: they do not give up. And I suspect that this issue will continue into the future. And I really do believe that one day something at least resembling justice will be done with regard to the Sioux Nation's right to the Black Hills." End quote.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 23:28

Do you want to hear the, I was gonna say cherry on top, but cherry on top connotes like a good thing. Do you want to hear the most disgusting cherry on top? Like this cherry is rotten and gross? Well, Mount Rushmore is in the Black Hills. Yes, the mountain where they carved the faces of US presidents, some of whom were enslavers, is literally on this sacred land that they will not give back to the rightful owners, the Sioux Nation.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 24:04

Okay, so that is the story of the Fort Laramie treaty. And now going back to Alcatraz, that is the treaty that Belva Cottier thought of when she was like, "Wait a minute, I remember that there was this clause inside this treaty that said that if there was surplus federal land that it belonged to the Sioux." So in that same article from the "San Francisco Examiner," she goes on to explain that they hired a lawyer named Elliot Leighton in to study the treaty and tell them what he thought, like "Do you think that it's possible for us to really claim this land as ours because of what this treaty says?" So Elliot Leighton studies the treaty and he tells them "Yeah, like, go ahead. I think that it says it in there. I think you're right, and I think that you should go for it." So they decided that they're going to have a protest on Alcatraz and tried to claim this land as their own. Belva explains that it's really important that they have members of the Sioux tribes specifically, because that's who the a treaty was originally made with, between the Sioux and the Arapaho and the United States.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 25:10

So finally on March 8 of 1964, a group of Sioux activists went and claimed the island. Their leaders were Richard McKenzie, Mark Martinez, Garfield Spotted Elk, Virgil Standing-Elk, Walter Means, and Allen Cottier. So they go to Alcatraz and they say, "Okay, according to this treaty, this is our land." And they're on the island for four hours until the authorities come and they say, "Hey, if you don't leave, we're gonna give you a felony." So they left but nobody gave up, like they didn't think "Oh, this is definitely the end." Even the United Council of the Bay Area Indian community considered writing a proposal to turn Alcatraz into an Indigenous cultural center.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 25:55

So it had been a while since their original protests on Alcatraz. But things got really serious in 1969, because the San Francisco Indian Center burned down. So all of a sudden, you have an entire community that is missing their centerpiece. I mean, it was a place that provided jobs, health care, legal assistance, and, of course, opportunities to bond as a community. So the San Francisco Indian Center burns down on October 10, of 1969. And that's when the Indigenous community in San Francisco was like, "Okay, we have to try this Alcatraz thing again." So almost exactly a month later, on November 9 of 1969, activist Richard Oakes, Jim Vaughn, Joe Bill, Ross Harden, and Jerry Hatch organized a group of about 75 other activists, including students, from the Native American Student Association at UC Berkeley. They organized all these people to go occupy the island. And so the plan was they had hired five boats to take all the protesters to Alcatraz. But when the day came, the boats never showed up. Like they were

just waiting at the dock and the boats never came. And so what they did was they found this Canadian businessman, his name was Ronald Craig. And he owned this gigantic yacht called the Monte Cristo. And they convinced him to take the five leaders to the islands. So they were like, "Hey, we were supposed to be going to Alcatraz. Our boats never came. Can you just take the five of us?" And he said, "Yeah, yes." So they get on this boat with this Canadian business guy, and they feel like somebody's probably onto their plan, because of the fact that the boats didn't show up there. Like something is fishy. And so it's fishy. Pun intended. So instead of having Ronald Craig, the owner of the yacht, drop them off at Alcatraz, they just have him pull up next to it, and then they jump off, and they swim the rest of the way to the island, which that's kind of bananas, because one of the reasons that they made Alcatraz into a prison is because the water around it is really rough, like the currents are super strong, and the temperatures really cold. So the federal government thought, "Oh, this would actually be a really good place for a prison because the inmates wouldn't be able to escape." So imagine how hard it was for them to jump off this yacht and get to Alcatraz, they swam there. So after they get there, the Coast Guard are basically right on their heels, and they remove them pretty quickly. But later that day, they go and they gather a bunch of the activists that were originally supposed to go with them the first time and they go right back. So they find some boats, they get a bunch of people on the boats, and they go back to Alcatraz for a second time on November 9. Richard Oakes, who was one of the leaders of the protest explained that it was super important to them because they really wanted to turn Alcatraz into a safe place for Indigenous peoples.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 28:52

I was reading this article by the University of Massachusetts, and they said that they planned to make Alcatraz quote, "A refuge for Native Americans by building a Native American study center, spiritual center, museum, and other facilities dedicated to assisting Native Americans." End quote. So after their community center burns down they're like this would actually be a really great place for us to have a new community center and a spiritual center and a really awesome opportunity for us to kind of have a gathering point for our people for them to feel safe. So the group of activists doesn't get kicked off of the island this time, they sleep there overnight. And in the morning, they proclaim the island as Indian land by rite of discovery, which is so cool. Think about that for a second.

J

Jasmine Bradshaw 29:38

So Richard Oakes, you know, the leader that I referenced, he gives a speech and his speech is known as the Alcatraz Proclamation, and it starts off to the great white father and all his people. Now, I'm not going to read this speech word for word, because I don't think that's technically allowed to do on a podcast. But I encourage you to go read the whole thing because I was like, Yeah, I'm like, cheering with them as I read the speech. It's so good. But I'll tell you about it. So this is a proclamation made by the leaders as they're occupying Alcatraz. And basically, they created this proclamation to mirror the treatment that white people in power had given to them for so long. So it sounds ridiculous. Like the things that they're saying sound kind of ridiculous. But it's showing how ridiculous it is that Indigenous peoples were and are treated this way by the US government. So it starts, like I said, by saying that they're claiming this land by right of discovery. And then they go on to say, quote, "We wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with the Caucasian inhabitants of this land, and hereby offer the

following treaty. We will purchase Alcatraz Island for \$24 and glass beads and red cloth, a precedent set by the white man's purchase of a similar island about 300 years ago. We know that \$24 in trade goods for the 16 acres is more than was paid when Manhattan Island was sold. But we know that land values have risen over the years." End quote, so they're saying that we're going to pay you \$24 in beads and cloth, and you're actually getting a good deal, because that's more than you paid for the entire island of Manhattan. They also know that at the current time, in 1969, California was paying the Indigenous community 47 cents per acre, and that their offer \$24 is actually \$1.24 per acre. So they were being very generous. So they go on to explain that they will give white people a portion of the land and that they will provide administration over the land using the Bureau of Caucasian affairs. And then they say that they will generously help the white people living on the land by providing them with guidance in the Indigenous way of life. They say, quote, "We will offer them our religion, our education, our life ways in order to help them achieve our level of civilization, and thus raise them and all their white brothers up from their savage and unhappy state. We offer this treaty in good faith and wish to be fair and honorable in our dealings with all white men." End quote. Can you even with how cool this is? Like, yes, this is amazing.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 32:26

So they conclude by explaining that Alcatraz is totally suitable to be their land, according to, quote, "the white man's own standards," because they're highlighting how low the standards really are, by listing that there is no running water, no health care facilities and no educational facilities. So basically, they're saying, "You give us land just like this all the time, that doesn't have the resources that we need." And the list is longer than that. But the last item really hits you. They say, quote, "The population has always been held as prisoners and kept dependent upon others." End quote. I just thought that was really poignant, that they are at a site of a previous federal prison. And they're saying that the government would see this land as fit to give to the Indigenous community, even though it doesn't have everything it needs, would keep them in this state where they're dependent upon others.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 33:26

Now, I hope that you're not hearing this and thinking that an Indigenous reservation is a bad place to be. Like, there is so much of love and community and strength in the reservation. And I think that it's important to note that they're saying this because the federal government is not giving the Indigenous population the support that they need or deserve, and that they are surviving in spite of all of that. So all this happens in the course of two days. They went to the island, got kicked off by the Coast Guard, went back with a bunch of other people, slept there overnight, gave this proclamation. And then after the proclamation, they were escorted off of the island. So the leaders of the movement decided that they wanted to try one more time. I mean, I told you, these Indigenous communities, like they do not give up, they keep going. And they said, "We're gonna go again, we're gonna go one final time, we're going to try to occupy the island of Alcatraz." And on their final attempt they were successful.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 34:32

So on November 28, of 1969, a group of 79 Indigenous activists made it to Alcatraz under the cover of darkness. So it's nighttime they get on these boats, people of all ages, I mean, men,

women, children, and they call themselves the Indians of All Tribes, IAT. And it's really speaking to their collective experience as Indigenous peoples. And here is like a totally bananas really, really bonkers thing. So there were six children in total on the island. At the beginning, more children ended up coming later on. But at the beginning there are six children and one of those six children was actor Benjamin Bratt Yes. As in the voice of Ernesto de la Cruz in "Coco" and Eric Matthews from "Miss Congeniality" like the other agent alongside Sandra Bullock. Yeah, he was there. He was there when he was a child. Isn't that totally bananas? I saw that and I was like, and this is what makes it an untold story episode, because you never know where you're gonna find. It's so wild and so cool. So Benjamin Bratt is there, all these Indigenous activists are there, and they were able to occupy the island for 14 months. They were there from November 20 of 1969 to June 11 of 1971. They were able to set up a school, a daycare center and a health clinic. And at the height of the occupation, they actually had over 400 people on the island.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 36:09

So one of the policies that they had at Alcatraz, when they were occupying the island was no drugs and no alcohol. The leaders were like that would just bring too much trouble. And unfortunately, as more people started to come, they weren't heeding to that policy. Like they weren't listening. And so the protests really broke down when people started coming and they weren't following the rules, and they started to bring drugs and alcohol with them. And then Richard Oakes, one of the leaders of the protest, his daughter, Yvonne Oaks, she passed away. She was only 12 years old, and she fell from a high distance in one of the buildings. She, they were playing in there and she fell down, and she was in the hospital for a little while, but then she passed away. So after Yvonne's passing, Richard and his family left. They were like, Okay, this is kind of, you know, having a rough time. And so after his family leaves, their protests really winds down, and that's when it finally concludes. On June 11, of 1971. Now, just because Richard Oakes left Alcatraz did not mean that he left his activism behind. I mean, he continued as an activist for Indigenous rights until he was killed. I was reading about it and it said, quote, "An unarmed Oaks was shot and killed in Sonoma, California following a dispute on September 20, 1972. Oaks's killer, Michael Morgan, testified as acting in self defense and was initially charged with voluntary manslaughter but was eventually acquitted of all charges. Many Oaks supporters allege that the assassination of Oaks was both in cold blood and racially motivated." End quote. I mean, self defense. Where have I heard that before? That sounds all too familiar to those of us who are Black. It's so frustrating.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 38:00

And now Alcatraz is managed by the National Park Service, and you can go take a tour of the prison. I mean, it's, it's kind of a rough ending to the story. But one of the sources that I was reading was a lesson plan from an 11th grade history teacher. And at the end of the lesson, he had written up some reflection questions from his students. And one of the questions said, "Although Native Americans eventually abandon the Alcatraz occupation, do you think the occupation was a success?" And I thought about that a lot as I was doing this research. I'm like, "Do we feel like that was successful?" And I was like, "You know, of course, like, look at all they were able to do." But then I read this piece from the University of Massachusetts library. And this is what they had to say about the success of the protest. Quote, "The occupation, despite not meeting the original goals of the protest, was still considered successful as it ended the US government's policy of termination and launched a wave of protests across America in the

name of Native American Rights. Credited with starting the Red Power Movement, the occupation of Alcatraz was one of the most visible protests for Native American rights and a number of subsequent protests emerged across America as a result." End quote. So yeah, they didn't get to turn it into a community center, but they were a huge catalyst for the Red Power Movement.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 39:26

And within the Red Power Movement was when the idea for Indigenous Peoples Day came about. So super cool, full circle moment, if you ask me. Like this is directly connected to Indigenous Peoples Day, and I didn't even realize that when I started researching it. I thought, I really want to learn more about this resistance. I really want to recognize Indigenous Peoples Day by learning a story and going deep into the history. And then it's like directly freaking connected. It's so cool.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 39:59

So let me tell you a little bit about Indigenous Peoples Day. So the Red Power movement came right on the heels of the civil rights movement and in conjunction with the Black Power movement. So Indigenous Peoples Day is proposed during the 1977 United Nations Conference on Discrimination Against Indigenous Peoples. So Indigenous activists are working to get Indigenous Peoples Day recognized, especially in place of Columbus Day. And finally, in 1990, in South Dakota, there was a resolution passed and South Dakota became the first state to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. And guess what's in South Dakota: part of the Black Hills. It's all connected, my friends, it really is all connected.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 40:46

So in 1992, activists in Berkeley, California replaced Columbus Day with celebrations of Indigenous peoples. And 1992 was a really significant year because it was the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival. And so they really felt, like, the push for replacing it, replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. Like if we were going to do it, this would be the year. So it's really cool that they were able to do that in California. And they called it quote, "A day of solidarity with Indigenous people." End quote. In an article that was talking about this activism in Berkeley, it said, quote, "By the time we get to this anniversary, people in Berkeley are reintroducing the question of what happened to the continent's Indigenous people. As we're marking what happened to European descendants, we're also understanding at this point that America is not just a nation built by and for Europeans, but it's also a nation of Indigenous nations that are still here with us, that are still vibrantly operating their own governments in self-determining ways." End quote. Now, I really love this quote, but the part where it says that the US was built by Europeans, I mean...that's just...we know enslaved people did most of the hard work to build this country. That is a fact.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 42:04

So if we fast forward to 2016, Phoenix "shout out Phoenix! I mean, I don't live there anymore, but I'm still down for a shout out" became the largest urban area to vote to

any more, but I'm still down for a shout out to become the largest urban area to vote to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day instead of Columbus Day. And then in 2019, an undergraduate student at Columbia University, his name is Dylan Baca. He is of the White Mountain Apache Tribe and the Navajo Nation. I'm pretty sure he's from Arizona, and then he just chose to go to school at Columbia. So he partners with Arizona State Senator Jamescita Peshlakai, and they created the Indigenous Peoples Initiative with the goal of telling a more positive and more accurate story about Native Americans and replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. I love to see this partnership between someone who is a student and someone who was serving in the Arizona Senate. Like that is so cool that activism can come from so many different places. So they're doing this activism in 2019 to get Columbus Day replaced. And then finally, a DC council votes to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. And over in Louisiana, Baley Champaign of the United Houma Nation successfully petitioned Governor John Bel Edwards to make the change from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day. And then finally in 2021, just last year, President Biden issued the first ever presidential proclamation of Indigenous Peoples Day. President Biden said quote, "For generations, federal policies systemically sought to assimilate and displace Native people and eradicate Native cultures. Today, we recognize Indigenous peoples' resilience and strength as well as the immeasurable positive impact that they have made on every aspect of American society." End quote. Unfortunately, Columbus Day is not gone. They're trying to like have them side by side, which is so gross, like ironic, but feels very United States if you know what I mean.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 44:15

So President Biden made a another proclamation about Columbus Day, and he was talking about Italian Americans and he was also talking about the harm perpetuated by Columbus and other colonizers. He said, quote, "Today we also acknowledge the painful history of wrongs and atrocities that many European explorers inflicted on Tribal Nations and Indigenous communities. It is a measure of our greatness as a nation that we do not seek to bury these shameful episodes of our past, that we face them honestly, we bring them to the light and we do all we can to address them." End quote. So I appreciate what he's saying, but I kind of wish he would just do away with Columbus Day. I don't think it would be burying the past to have Indigenous Peoples Day instead of Columbus Day.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 45:02

One other cool thing I have to tell you about is that in other states, they have similar celebrations to Indigenous Peoples Day, but they have them under different names. So there's a chart and I'll link that in the show notes so you can look at the chart. But a cool thing is that Hawaii celebrates Discoverers' Day, where they honor Polynesian explorers on the second Monday in October instead of Columbus Day. So I thought that was really, really cool.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 45:26

I want to end this untold story, this untold story of Indigenous Resistance and a little bit of an untold story about Indigenous Peoples Day and how it came out of the Red Power Movement. I want to end with a quote from Baley champagne, a citizen of the United Houma Nation. She says Indigenous Peoples Day is about quote, "celebrating people instead of thinking about somebody who actually caused genocide on a population, or tried to cause the genocide of an

entire population. By bringing Indigenous Peoples Day we're bringing awareness that we're not going to allow someone like that to be glorified into a hero because of the hurt that he caused to Indigenous people of America." End quote.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 46:07

Oh, my goodness. I hope you love this untold story episode. I hope that you learned a lot. I mean, I always do. And I hope you'll go and listen to the other untold story episodes, I want to remind you that we have a resource roundup email coming atcha all about Indigenous Peoples Day. So if you want some resources about talking to your children, or students, and if you want some resources for yourself " we always put resources for kiddos as well as adults " go to firstnamebasis.org/indigenouspeoples. I will put that link in the show notes and I will also share it on Instagram. But please don't worry; if you're already on our email list, it is automatically coming to you. You do not need to sign up again. So get on the list so that you can get all of the awesome resources right into your inbox.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 46:49

And I hope you have a really powerful, reflective, enjoyable, Indigenous Peoples Day and you take some time to learn about the Indigenous peoples in your community.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 47:00

All right, I love you so much. I'll talk to you soon.

J Jasmine Bradshaw 47:05

My friends, thank you for being here. I hope you can feel how much I believe in you, and how deeply I know that when we work together, we can make real change in our communities. Any of the books or podcasts or articles that I reference will be linked in the show notes. If you are looking for more detailed notes, be sure to head over to our Patreon community. On our Patreon site I provide all of the outlines that I use to make the episodes, and everything is linked there so you don't have to take furious notes while you are listening. And don't forget to join us over on Instagram @first name.basis. If you're interested in partnering with First Name Basis or doing some kind of collaboration, please email us at hello@firstnamebasis.org. All right, have a great week, my friends, and I will talk to you again soon.