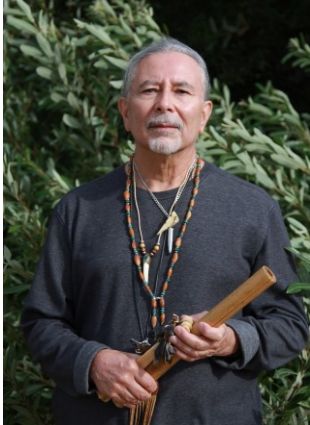


CONTEMPORARY VOICES**California Native American Reflections on Resilience and Mission History****Gregg Castro****t'rowt'raahl Salinan / rumsien and ramaytush Ohlone
Cultural Director of the Association of Ramaytush Ohlone**

We've always been here, and we're still here, and we're always going to be here. Those are the three messages. And how do we do that? I think they knew who they were and they knew where they came from. And from my own studies of our stories especially our origin story, right, not too far—you can see it, actually, from Mission San Antonio—you can see our sacred mountain. The one that tells us where we came into the world, at that place. Sta'yokale is its name.

Our stories of origin that tell us we came from Sta'yokale, we know that's at the beginning of the world. So, we know Sta'yokale has always been there. Things like missions have not. But Sta'yokale is always there. Trees and flowers and plants, even mountains and streams change. Sta'yokale is always. And I think if I can compare it to my ancestors, especially in the mission, I know what it does for me when I stand in front of the graveyard and I can see Sta'yokale there. And I sing it a song, and I feel like it's singing back to me sometimes. And I feel like it gave some comfort to our ancestors suffering in those missions, because they could still see Sta'yokale every single day. You couldn't not see it. And the missionaries couldn't do anything about that unless they locked you in their dungeons. Otherwise, if you're out and about and doing anything, you can see Sta'yokale and I can't imagine some of those elders and ancestors not saying prayers while they were doing their work. Enslaved in the mission, they're still saying songs and stories and prayers to Sta'yokale, to the ancestors that they feel still are there. And I think that's what sustained them and I know it sustains me to a certain level.

The mission system's such a small part in time. Huge impact, obviously. Outweighs anything else. But still, time-wise, we've been here twelve, fifteen thousand years, and the missions were only here,

what, seventy years or something like that? The colonizers have only been here 250 years. That's like maybe a season out of one year in the lifetime of our people.

The missions were created by people that came from a faraway place, that didn't understand us. Didn't understand our culture, didn't understand our land. Didn't understand the way we live. And thought they had a better way. And they are starting to understand that was wrong. But that's taken hundreds of years. And in the meantime, a lot of suffering occurred. But we're now healing from it. We're now healing from the missions, because they were not good for us. Maybe for other people, but not for us.

And our healing, our medicine, is remembering who we are. And remembering the things we're supposed to do—stories, songs, dances. They're all prayers, and they're all rituals that we need to do to remind ourselves all the time of who we are. That's what the mission means to me, is the mission tried to get us to forget that. But it couldn't do that. Nothing can get us to totally forget. There's still a spark within all of us, our elders tell us. And we're now awakening to it.



Olivia Chilcote

San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians (Luiseño)
Assistant Professor of American Indian Studies, San Diego State University

For most of history, the narrative of the missions has been very one-sided. It has primarily been from the perspective of the Spaniards. And hasn't given a full or accurate picture of what Native peoples' experiences were, what their lives were like, how their lives changed, the resistance and persistence that happened as a result of Spanish colonization.

As a young girl growing up, I had the fourth-grade mission unit that I had to partake in. And I was able to use that as an opportunity to educate my teacher and my classmates about who the Luiseño people are. And we went on a field trip of the San Luis Rey Mission, and my mom came to be one of the chaperones. And so she was able to tell all of my classmates and the other teachers who came the Native side of the story. And so I think that that was something that was really a unique

experience for the other students, to be able to hear about that from an actual descendant of the San Luis Rey Mission.

And so I just really wanted to draw attention to the fact that the missions are just one small part of our Native history, and we were around way longer than the . . . We were around before the missions ever came, and we're still here after they ended. And I've always grown up with that teaching. My mom always says it in that we're—the Spanish were just one small part of our story and we will just keep moving forward with knowing who we are. We were the ones whose lands were taken, whose culture and languages were impacted. There's no way to fully understand the impacts of Spanish missionization without hearing from Native people and our perspectives on it.

We still deeply feel the impacts of the mission system today. One of the most apparent ways is that we don't own the land that the mission currently occupies. I believe that the Catholic Church and the California Department of Parks and Recreation should give the land back to tribes that were affected by the various missions, because those are our lands.



Corrina Gould

Confederated Villages of Lisjan Nation

(Lisjan Ohlone, Karkin Ohlone, Bay Miwok, Plains Miwok, Wappo, Delta Yokut, and Napien [Patwin])

Tribal Chair

For thousands and thousands of years, my ancestors were connected to this land. There was a relationship that was built. We understood how to interact with the land. We weren't apart from it, but we were a part of it. And so when the missionaries came, they came with this whole different ideology from this Western way of being. This different way that was not from this area. And it devastated my tribal people in a whole bunch of different ways. It changed our food ways. It changed the way we ate and how we gathered, and whether or not we were able to gather. We weren't allowed to have ceremonies. And so when we talk about ceremonies, we're talking about somebody's spiritual belief systems. And so people might go to churches or mosques or synagogues today.



It was the same with Native people. They had their own spiritual way of being. But when Spanish missionaries came here, they told us we couldn't practice those things that have been in place for thousands and thousands of years. We weren't able to speak our own language anymore. We were forced to learn Spanish, a foreign language. Imagine someone coming into your home and speaking a language that you never heard before. And in this language, they tell you you have to leave your house. You have to leave everything you believe in, all your language, all your ceremonies. The way you dressed. The way you ate. And you had to practice what they brought with them. Something totally foreign. They brought diseases, things that my ancestors had never seen before. And it caused devastation. And so my ancestors died by the thousands.

And then they brought this idea of slavery. This idea that you can own a person. That those people had to work for you for free for the rest of their lives. Once they got baptized in the Spanish church, they became the property of the Spanish church, and they could no longer do the things that they wanted to. And if they wanted to run away, they wanted to go home, back to villages, they had people that would chase them down and would murder them. Or would beat them for days and days.

There's wonderful ways that people that are colonized resist. They resist through stopping work when people are forced to work. They run away and force people to come after them. They practice their language and their songs underground, which means in secret so that nobody knows. So that they could pass those songs down. And so our ancestors were resilient in that way. They remembered how to do the baskets. And they remembered how to prepare the food.

And I think that that's one of the amazing things, is that we also—because there were many different tribes that were brought into the missions from around the same areas—that they were able to speak in each other's languages. They were fluent in each other's languages. And so they were able to share their songs with other tribes. And sometimes those tribes took it home to their own territories, and now are bringing them back to where they belong. So, my great-grandfather had songs that he sang. And the people that are in Tuolumne know those songs, the Miwok people, and they said, "Now, it's time to bring those songs back home." So that we could reawaken it from being asleep.

We're still here, and our voices are strong, and our ancestors have passed down language and song, and a good heart. And I think that that's what holds us in this place. That we're not invisible anymore. That people are hearing our stories. And that they want to work with us to ensure that the next seven generations survive.



Priscilla Ortiz-LaChappa
lipay Nation of Santa Ysabel (Kumeyaay)
2022–2023 Miss Kumeyaay Nation

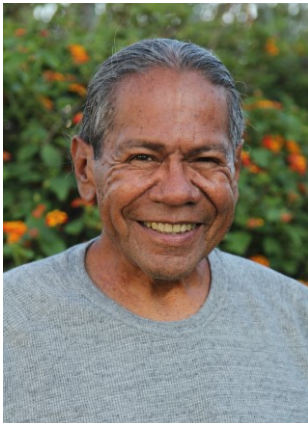
I think the resiliency has always been inside of us as Indigenous people. People who have always been connected to this land. I think that's where our resilience comes from, is from our land. You know, we prayed with everything around us, to everything. When we gathered, we gathered with intentions of what we were going to use this for, and how it would be providing for us. And how will it later provide for the plant or the animal that we're using. And our ways continue. Today, we still use our plant knowledge. We still pass it on to our kids. So, I will say that's a form of resiliency that we have—you know, our knowledge.

Growing up, my mom and my grandmas, they're actually very honest with me about what happened with our families in the mission systems. I was very blessed to be gifted that knowledge at a young age. But I also regret not speaking up in class. Because I'd hear the romanticized version. I'd hear, "The Indians helped the colonizers learn how to plant and they lived happily ever after. They traded with each other and in exchange for learning how to grow plants, they got a good religion." And I really regret sitting back and just listening to that, and thinking in my head, "That's not what my grandma said." I should have rose my hand and said something. But that's why I'm taking the opportunity right now to speak up on it so that kids in the grade school system can hear about this true history. Because it shouldn't be up to a young girl my age, at twelve, ten years old, having to speak up. This should be curriculum that's already taught. So, I'm really glad that we're doing this project.

Because like I said before, we were a whole society, and we still are a whole society with our own

customs, our own values. Our own ways of respecting our elders and our parents and our grandparents. Our perspective being told, it reignites that knowledge within our people. That we can talk about how things were before and how they continue to be. What we continue to practice. Like I said, we still do our ceremonies, we still speak our language. For other Native people to hear that, it can inspire them to learn their language. To talk to their grandparents before it's too late. And then also just because I believe it's fair. And I think it's time for the Native American history to be told and shared within the school system, alongside African American and Asian American history.

I'd share with students that the missions have a deeper history than what's in our textbooks, and the two pages that are shared within our textbooks. And it's not to push down on whatever religion that you have. It's to let you be more informed that not just guns and swords are weapons. People use religion as a weapon. And I think that was a large weapon that was used against our people. And you should learn about that because it could happen to you too.



Stan Rodriguez

Iipay Nation of Santa Ysabel (Kumeyaay)

Director, Kumeyaay Community College

Commissioner, State of California Native American Heritage Commission

The missions, and the destruction of the missions, was an act of resistance. And yes, that resiliency is a big part of that because the resilience of our people. And our people fought, our people burned those missions down, executed them, because that was an example of resistance. So, when we speak our language, that is resistance. When we carry on our traditional ceremonies, our songs, our dances, that is resistance. When we reside in our traditional territory, even through encroachment, that is resistance. All these things are done because we as Kumeyaay people, we are a people of the past, the present, and the future.

We are not going to leave. We are going to continue to live. And that is something that we wish all people to know. And although catastrophic damage has been done to our people, with our culture and our language, we have language classes. We're teaching people. We're doing immersion to bring

back speakers, to have more people using the language. We want to bring this back in our community. We want to revitalize it. So, in the end I would tell you this. We are not victims. Victims are people who are powerless.

There's twelve Kumeyaay reservations in the United States, in San Diego. And another four to six in Baja California, Mexico. The international border has cut right through our territory. The border wall has been built—barriers to keep people from coming in and out. However, our people are in contact with each other. We continue to share and learn from each other. We have more speakers of the language in Baja in Mexico than in the United States. That hasn't stopped us from coming together and developing programs and working together. Creating these opportunities to share and to grow. Song cycles, stories go back and forth through that border wall. It's more of a speed bump for us. So, all these things are part of our resistance to keep our language, to keep our culture, to keep our history growing. For us to know who we are.

So, for us, our greatest revenge, the greatest revenge we could possibly do, is our success by bringing back our language, our culture, our songs, all these things. And that revenge is not done from hate, but it's done from love for our people. Because we're telling everybody, everything that you tried to do with us has been unsuccessful because our Maat Haaw, our spirit is strong.



Greg Sarris

Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (Southern Pomo, Coast Miwok)
Tribal Chair

The first mission in this area that was established in San Francisco, Mission Dolores, so many of our people were taken across the Bay into Ohlone, totally other territories. And eventually, as more and more people died and the Spanish padres and army needed a workforce, labor, for the missions, they went further and further into tribal territories. Marching more and more Indigenous folks, people from different nations, into the missions. Fifty, a hundred miles away, they would march them in because they needed a labor force.



So, it was indeed a slavery. And we were bunched together with many folks from survivors in the missions from different tribes, language groups, language families, all of that. So, the disruption was deep. The environment, which was basically our sacred text—an outcropping of rocks, the creeks, had stories and so forth associated with them—became unrecognizable.

We don't just need to be sad. We need to say, "What can we learn about this? About how we think about and look at other people?" How might this history have been different if the Spanish didn't feel entitled, didn't feel superior? And wanted to talk and ask questions of the Indigenous people they encountered? What would have happened that instead of domination and colonization, there was dialogue?

The lessons of what happened in this history are more important today than ever. When you give another person the opportunity, the equal opportunity to talk, and you can listen, it provides a way to learn. What we can learn from the other person. What we can learn about ourselves. If the Spanish and the Indigenous people, my people here, had talked to one another, we might have taught the Spanish ultimate ways, the Europeans, to live in harmony and peace with the landscape for millennia, as we had. Instead, a lack of . . . when othering another person and not listening, and assuming your way is right precluded the opportunity to grow and for all of us to survive. We must look at this lesson and see the dangers of othering people.

Our survivance has been something so miraculous despite these things. So, the missions have been the beginning, in many ways, of the end. But the beginning, if you will, also, of our miraculous survivance in the face of it.