

This week there will be lots of fireworks and many cookouts and much commentary in celebration of the American Revolutionary War. And... some mixed feelings.

Yes? There's so much pain in our country right now.

I love our country. I believe in its ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Like a young couple on their wedding day who pledge to love one another in good times and in bad, without yet understanding how that will call upon them each to grow, the Declaration of Independence cast a vision of nationhood that we are challenged to live up to; one which, as a nation, we struggle to define and redefine in concrete terms, and make our shared reality.

This growth we are doing—have been doing—involves coming to see one another differently, more wholly. Not just as wives, husbands, workers, children, rich, and poor. But as people each with the same inherent worth, dignity, and rights. It involves expanding our understanding of where and who we are as a nation, and of history. Having the courage to look beyond the usual stories that are told.

So today, I'm going to share a lesser-told story, about revolutionary war on this land. Not the one from 1776. Nearly 100 years earlier, there was another one. And if you didn't grow up in this area, you may not have heard of it, because it's not the kind of history that gets told in most history classes.

It's the story of what some call the first American Revolutionary War: the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. Also known as Po'pay's Rebellion, the Pueblo Indian Revolution, and the Pueblo Restoration. I've sought out native authors and voices, as well as other accounts, in order to put the story together. If you'd like to see some of those sources yourself, you can find the written version of this sermon when it is posted online this week- I'll list them at the end of the text.

The first American Revolutionary War, the Pueblo Revolt, took place on this land, where we are right now, during a time when the religious ancestors of Unitarian Universalism were migrants, new to the east coast of this continent, and were figuring out how to organize their churches.

During that time, this land was inhabited by Native American communities, and by the Spanish, who traveled north to this area from Mexico in the 1600s.

When they got here, they found an array of distinct communities of native people. Groups organized into distinct nations, and speaking different languages. The people of this land that the Spanish encountered were not one group, but many. But they shared a religious worldview, a lifestyle, and economy. And, they were not Spanish.

So the Spanish saw them as being more alike than different, and called them the Indios de los Pueblos. Many of you have heard *pueblo* in chants at marches- *el pueblo unido jamás será vencido*. The people united, will never be defeated. *Pueblo* means people or town in Spanish.

When we say the Pueblo Indians it sounds kind of funny to me because it sounds like saying the people Indians, and, well, it just seems obvious that who the Spanish encountered were *people* and that their descendants—who inhabit the same land today—are also people. But among the Spanish, there was disagreement about that. About whether native people were human, or whether they even had souls. Other native people the Spanish encountered were not referred to as Indios de los Pueblos, but as Indios Bárbaros. Barbaric Indians.

This is the story of how the Indios de los Pueblos became the original *pueblo unido*.

It is a religious story. The religion of the pueblos was one centered in peace, interconnectedness, and harmony. It valued respect.

The religion of the Spaniards revealed itself to be one of physical and ideological domination and conquest, a religion that did not value life.

The leader of the Franciscan priests who accompanied Spanish soldiers into this territory once burned 1600 masks in one swoop—ceremonial masks that played a sacred role in native tradition, connecting the people with the gods. Sixteen hundred- and that was just one incident.

Another time, Spaniards filled a kiva with sand to prevent the people from their ceremonies.¹ The Spaniards believed they had a religious mandate to stamp out native religion and force the people into Catholicism.

The native people believed in peaceful coexistence. The Spanish understood peace as the absence of violence. The pueblos understood peace as harmony and well being for all.

With the arrival of the Spanish came the arrival of new, deadly diseases. The Spanish taxed the native people by taking a portion of their food. They also forced native people to work in Spanish homes and fields—without payment. They cut off the ears of native people and hung them in Santa Fe plaza. They killed and enslaved others.

In the 1670's there was a drought. The Pueblos knew how to handle such a thing—they had lived in this area for hundreds of years. The Spanish, not so much. The pueblo people had stored up food for times such as this. The Spanish responded by raising taxes, which is to say, taking an increasing amount of the stored food. More than the Pueblos could spare.

And at the same time, the Spanish were escalating their religious persecution. In 1675, Governor Juan de Treviño arrested forty-seven men they identified as “sorcerers.” Three were hanged. A fourth hanged himself before the Spanish could do it. The rest were sentenced to prison and public lashings. When confronted by the pueblos, Treviño only agreed to release the men if the native people would give up “idolatry.”

One of the people arrested was a man by the name of Po’pay.

Po’pay was a middle-aged man. Probably born in Ohkay Owingay (San Juan Pueblo), about 30 miles north of Santa Fe. He was a war captain, which in the pueblos meant he was in charge of overseeing religious rituals, hunts, social events, and crops. Non native-historians have debated whether he was a war leader or a religious leader, but that question reflects a European perspective. In the Pueblos, religion was an important part of everything, so he naturally would have been both.ⁱⁱ

Po’pay, along with others, could see that the Pueblos’ way of life, including their religion was under a sustained attack. Not only that, the people understood their religious ceremonies and perspective to be intricately connected to the wellbeing and harmony of everything around them.

The native author Alfonso Ortiz writes

Although we...will never know for certain, it is very likely that Pueblo leaders viewed [the famine, disease, and drought] as signs that the spiritual keepers of the roads of life were displeased with the harsh new ways introduced by the invaders into this great valley of the Rio Grande, which they had bequeathed to the Pueblo people in a prior age.ⁱⁱⁱ

By interrupting native ceremonies and traditions, the Spanish were interrupting everything that was interconnected with those ceremonies and traditions: animal and plant life, rain, sun, river, and mountains. What the Pueblos did next, he says, reflected the people’s commitment to their beginnings. They wanted—and for their long-term survival they needed—to restore balance and harmony to the land. Balance and harmony that the Spanish were preventing with their violent presence and ideology.

Although they did not favor violence as a means of resolving conflict, the Pueblos’ attempts to live in harmony with the Spanish had failed. Something different had to be done.

Po’pay and other Pueblo leaders began to holding secret meetings to decide what to do about the thirty-two Franciscan priests and two or three thousand Spanish colonialists in the area. Not all the pueblos were represented at these secret meetings—some had publicly pledged allegiance with the Spaniards, and informing them of any plans could be dangerous.

Native tradition remembers Po'pay as having "the cunning of a fox and the determination and heart of a bear."^{iv} He quickly emerged as a leader among the leaders.

The Pueblo leaders knew a supply caravan would soon be arriving, and they agreed that it would be best to strike before that happened- before the Spanish could receive a new shipment of weapons and other supplies.

They decided that, barring any unexpected development, they would act on August 13th. But they needed a way to communicate the timing to people who weren't present at the meeting. One of the leaders present came up with a simple, clever solution. They would tie knots in strips of deer hide to correspond to the number of days left before the revolt. When the last knot was untied, then it would be time to act.

The group appointed two young men to carry the knotted deer hides to pueblos in the area: Nicolas Catua and Pedro Omtua. On the morning of August 8th the young men started out on foot- their only transportation option. The Spanish did not permit the native people to ride horses. But as they visited one pueblo and then the next, witnesses who were loyal to the Spanish observed them.

Within 36 hours, the governor, Otermín had received multiple warnings of an impending revolt. He sent a group of soldiers to find the two young messengers. They did find them, just south of Santa Fe, and brought them before the governor.

As word spread of the boys' arrest, tensions increased even more. The next day, August 10th, a priest arriving for mass at the Pueblo of Tetsugeh found the people not in the church, but in the hills, armed with bows and arrows, their faces painted red. The priest was killed, marking the beginning of the revolt, but the soldier that had accompanied him escaped, and took news back to Santa Fe. Meanwhile, runners from Tetsugeh took off in all directions to alert the other Pueblos that the revolution had begun, with three knots left on the cords.

By August 12th, the areas outside of Santa Fe had erupted in chaos.

Spanish homes burned, their contents and livestock taken. Two thirds of the Franciscan Friars were killed, along with 400 Spanish resisters. Catholic churches were especially targeted for destruction.

Then the Pueblo warriors attacked Santa Fe, where the Spanish refugees had fled. When the Spanish put up a fight, the Pueblo warriors cut off the city's water supply. The Spaniards fought back with all their might. But by the time they seemed to be getting the upper hand, Otermín could see that Santa Fe was a disaster. With homes and churches burned, no crops left in the fields, and no water flowing, the situation was hopeless.

And with that, the rebellion was successful. The Spanish retreated to what is now known as Juarez. And they stayed out, more or less, for over a decade. During that time they made a few attempts to return, and more violence ensued. But it wasn't until 1692, when the Spanish returned with the help of Pueblo allies, and promised a more harmonious coexistence, that they were able to stay once again. This time there would be no *encomienda*, or taxing of the pueblo food stores, and no forced labor.

The Spanish formally recognized the equal citizenship of the people of the Pueblos, and provided them with land grants. That the Spanish "gave" land grants sounds ridiculous since the Pueblos had inhabited the land for hundreds of years, but it proved to be important when Mexico gained its independence in 1821, and the land grants and rights of citizenship were honored.

When Americans arrived in 1846, Ortiz says, the Pueblos were still equal citizens under law. And even though Americans took away the Pueblos' right to vote, and stole some of the land away, he writes, "the pueblos are still living today where the Spanish invaders found them, while other Indian tribes... were moved to less desirable areas and lost much of their language and native religion."

As a result, the Pueblos retain much more of their native traditions and languages than other native peoples in North America. Ortiz traces that success to the legacy of the Pueblo Revolt, which also called the Pueblo Restoration because the people sought to restore balance and their way of life, and they demonstrated that they would not allow native culture and dignity to be destroyed.

Over the generations since, Hispanos (the descendants of the Spanish) and the Pueblos have lived side by side. Many native people practice both Christianity and traditional native religion. Many Hispano Catholics have Native American bloodlines. Culture and religion— and family trees—have mixed.

Which brings us to an interesting controversy today. Each year, New Mexicans—and tourists—celebrate the return of the Spanish with Fiestas in Santa Fe and Española, and in particular a pageant in July in Española known as La Entrada.^v People dressed in Spanish colonialist costumes, accompanied by priests, friars, a fiesta queen, horses, and mariachis, parade through town. There is a three-foot statue of the Virgin Mary, known as La Conquistadora, that was brought to the area by Don Diego de Vargas at the time the Spanish returned. There are re-enactments of seventeenth century Native American children being baptized into the Christian faith. Don Juan de Oñate, the first Conquistador to lead the Spanish into this place they called New Mexico, is also celebrated.

The festival is beloved to many northern New Mexicans who cherish their Spanish cultural heritage. But others, especially in the Pueblos, bristle at what is left out of these celebrations. Specifically, there is no mention of the violence and oppression perpetuated by the Spanish. In fact the Fiestas depict the return of the Spanish as a

peaceful event, but in reality there was violence both before, including the killing and enslavement of many more native people, and after. The Fiestas have also failed to acknowledge that not all Pueblos consented to the return of the Spanish, and the year they returned, the Spanish hanged 70 Pueblo warriors in the same spot where the Entrada celebration takes place today.

In 1977, the All Indian Pueblo Council and the eight Northern Pueblos officially expressed condemnation of La Entrada.^{vi} Recently, the fiestas have been accompanied by protests.

Last year, peaceful protesters were met with Santa Fe SWAT snipers who watched them from rooftops, and several Native American protesters were arrested, only to have all of the charges dropped in court.

After that, talks began between the sides, and many have expressed hope that the fiestas will be changed to celebrate cultural heritage in a way that is less romantic and more realistic, in a way that will not perpetuate racism and cultural amnesia by glossing over the oppression of native people.^{vii}

But the process is fraught.

This year, the City of Española canceled La Entrada. The city decided to stop organizing it altogether, and instead turn the tradition over to private organizations, after City Councilors could not agree on changes.^{viii} One Española city councilor who resisted changing La Entrada called it an attempt to make the celebration “politically correct.” He says the celebration is cultural and has sentimental value.

He accused those who want to change the way La Entrada represents history of catering “to one interest group instead of interests of all of the community.” Which is interesting, since La Entrada so far has been narrowly focused on the Spanish, and very few people—if any—are of only Spanish descent. In truth, before the Spanish ever arrived in this area, they had lived and intermixed with people in Mexico for three generations. Oñate himself was born in Zacatecas, not Spain.

In contrast, the mayor of Española, Javier Sanchez, believes that reconsidering what has been left out of La Entrada would serve not to take away anyone’s culture, “but to deepen and enrich the defining aspects of who [New Mexicans] are.”

Well, there you go. This process of learning. Understanding. Living into our nation’s high aspirations. We stand on ancient ground. Holy ground.

The principles of our Unitarian Universalist tradition include

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person,
- Justice, equity, and *compassion* in human relations,

- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all,
- And respect for the interdependent web of life of which we are all a part.

Our principles call us to be curious, humble, and good listeners toward those who are different than ourselves. To pray and work for the kind of peace that is not necessarily quiet, but is prosperity and well being for all. Every major gathering of our denomination begins with an acknowledgement that we are on native land. This was not always so. In the past, Unitarian Universalists, too, had to change the way we remember our history, to acknowledge that Unitarians also were deployed, in the 1800's, to convert native people to Christianity.

In 2009, the denomination publicly asked for and received forgiveness from the affected native communities. Today, our work toward peace includes a commitment to centering the voices of those who have been oppressed, marginalized, criminalized, deprived of rights, or over-policed. We will not be afraid to look, to listen. Are you with me?

Beloveds, right now we are part of a country that has been stunted, that has not reached the potential implied in its declaration of independence, because of a religious misunderstanding of nationhood. A couple of weeks ago, we heard white house officials claim that it is biblical to separate children from their parents at the border and lock them up. To create *orquestas* of wailing and rivers of children's tears.

That is religious malpractice. Our reading this morning, the poem *Home* by Warsan Shire counters the government's story about what's happening on the southern border today. That's the same terrain where the Spanish passed through, then retreated to, then passed through again. Terrain that has been taken from indigenous hands, given to the Spanish, then the Americans. Where a border was later laid down that crossed tribes, families, economies, and eco-systems.

No one leaves home

Unless home is the mouth of a shark

It counters the story that migrants have no regard for law. And it counters the story that law is the measure of morality.^{ix} It calls us, as our UU faith does, to question our assumptions... about what is right for a nation's leaders and its people to claim and to do.

The Pueblo Revolt—the Restoration—is a parable of religious tolerance, and the necessity and morality of true peace. It is also parable of broad based organizing. If people with no guns, no horses, and no metal armor, who speak different languages, could defeat and drive out militarized religious mal-practitioners in the 1600's in order to restore balance and affirm life and interdependence, then surely people of faith and conscience today, people who believe peace is not a silence won through

force but is about mutual well being, human thriving, and community- surely we can also dedicate ourselves to coming together with our neighbors, and we can reset this country to a moral course.

ⁱ Sando, Joe S. and Herman Agoyo, eds. “The Pueblo Restoration of 1680.” Po’pay: Leader of the First American Revolution. Clear Light Pub: Santa Fe, 2005. (17)

ⁱⁱ Sando 15

ⁱⁱⁱ Sando 3

^{iv} Sando 22

^v Hinojosa, Maria. “Of Bloodlines and Conquistadors.” Podcast. Code Switch. National Public Radio. <https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=613390087> 13 May 2018.

^{vi} Ortiz, Elena, and Jennifer Marley. “Pueblo Resurgence, White Revisionism: The Bloody Truth about the Santa Fe Entrada.” *The Red Nation*, 10 Aug. 2017, therednation.org/2017/08/10/pueblo-resurgence-white-revisionism-the-bloody-truth-about-the-santa-fe-entrada/

^{vii} “Fiesta Changes Offer Hope for Community.” *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, 10 June 2018, www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/editorials/fiesta-changes-offer-hope-for-community/article_685ba2f1-1f46-5222-b8cc-b02f8144995e.html

^{viii} Bennett, Megan. “Española Bows out of Fiesta, Oñate Commemoration.” *Albuquerque Journal*, Albuquerque Journal, 31 May 2018, www.abqjournal.com/1178932/espanola-council-cuts-commemoration-of-conquistador-onate.html

^{ix} You can find the poem here (or through online search): http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/lesson_1_-_home-poem-by-warsan-shire.pdf