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INDIGENIZING AND DECOLONIZING FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

Decolonizing "Allyship" for Indian Country: Lessons from #NODAPL

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Abstract

In 2016, when #NODAPL first appeared in the mainstream media, many nonnative people approached me about how to support the water protectors. This question can be answered in a couple of ways: first, I might address the specific issue (actions that directly support those at Standing Rock), or second, I might respond more generally about how to be an ally to native people. The two responses highlight a current issue in Indian Country: should nonnatives serve as active bystanders—or should they be allies to native peoples? Being an ally has come under scrutiny, especially given its propensity for epistemic injustice. Some philosophers—such as Rachel McKinnon—argue for dismissing the concept altogether, requiring that individuals serve as active bystanders. Although this may be necessary to support individuals in the transgender community, it lacks the resources to fully address the needs of colonized peoples. In this article, I argue for the operationalization of "ally" in Indian Country insofar as it is subject to decolonizing treatment. Although there is a need for both bystanders and allies in Indian Country, the Indigenous people must define the concepts that are intended to serve them.

Keywords: Indigenous; Decolonization; #NODAPL; Allyship; Epistemic Injustice

Headlines publicizing the violence against the Sioux Nations demonstrating at Standing Rock appeared in the mainstream media in the fall of 2016, prompting many individuals to ask how they might support the water protectors. As one of two native professors at a predominantly white institution, I was asked this particular question multiple times by various people. Initially, it was not an easy question for me to answer. As a mixed-race member of the Muskogee Nation of Oklahoma, I keenly felt my lack of any special access to, or knowledge of how to support, the Sioux people.[1]

The question of how nonnatives should support Indigenous people is critical; threats to sovereignty and personal safety are part and parcel of what Indigenous people face today. Some recent examples include attacks on tribal sovereignty from federal governments, such as the Canadian Supreme Court ruling that the government "does not have to consult Indigenous communities when drafting new legislation," or a federal judge in the United States ruling that the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is "unconstitutional" (Aiello 2018; Kelly 2018). Other issues, like #NODAPL, are a threat to health and safety.[2]

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In an effort to answer the question of how to support the water protectors, I propose a couple of strategies based on the actions of the Veterans Stand for Standing Rock (VSSR) and #Black Lives Matter (#BLM) at #NODAPL. First, one might address the immediate needs of the protectors at Standing Rock, such as providing a coordinated response to a threat of violence. In other words, one might serve as an active bystander by placing oneself between the private security forces and the water protectors at Standing Rock. Unlike a bystander, who witnesses a situation but does not act, an active bystander "witnesses a situation [and] takes steps to speak up or step in to keep a situation from escalating or to disrupt a problematic situation" (Loyola 2018).[3] Of course, the actions of active bystanders need not necessarily be immediate; their actions may occur after the incident, such as when someone listens to a victim or provides medical care (MIT 2004).

A second, less specific, way to answer would be to suggest ways in which to serve as an ally either to the Sioux people, or to Indigenous people more generally. Unlike those of active bystanders, the actions of allies seem to imply an investment that goes beyond merely acting in the moment. The notion of being an ally, according to Rachel McKinnon, is ubiquitous within "queer politics and activism" (McKinnon 2017, 1). Allyship is often cultivated through some form of training, such as the Trevor Project or the Safe Zone Project.[4] There are various types of training for individuals on college campuses or in business.

So, what exactly is an ally? McKinnon draws on a sociological definition of ally previously provided by Kendrick Brown and Joan Ostrove (Brown and Ostrove 2013). Assuming intersectionality among human individuals, McKinnon says, "allies are dominant group members who work to end prejudice in their personal and professional lives, and relinquish social privileges conferred by their group status through their support of nondominant groups" (McKinnon 2017, 2; see Brown and Ostrove 2013, 2211). Having undergone some type of training, the individual's social identity then includes "ally."[5] This definition of ally departs from the previous conception of equals working toward a similar goal, such as the allied nations in World War II unifying to defeat a shared enemy. Instead, the sociological definition assumes that dominantly situated members of society to rectify societal ills by becoming informed and working for positive social change.

Can allies be active bystanders? Of course, but not all active bystanders are allies. I take the primary distinction between the actions of an active bystander and those of allies to be that we expect more from our allies. We expect a relationship with the groups allies intend to serve. In the case of Indigenous people, this relationship manifests itself as a sincere respect for the history, culture, and sovereignty of the people. Regardless of which name is chosen, active bystander or ally, Indigenous people who are currently living under colonialism would benefit from both.

Recently, however, some philosophers have challenged the value of allyship. Notably, McKinnon identifies serious harms, such as epistemic injustice, that can arise when allyship becomes part of a person's social identity. This is especially troubling if one considers the damage that results when those we trust fail us. I am sympathetic to McKinnon's claims concerning epistemic injustice occurring at the hands of putative allies, but I am not convinced that relying solely on active bystanders provides the resources to fully address the needs in Indian Country, or of colonized people.[6] The concept of allyship appearing in Brown and Ostrove 2013 arose from within the discourse of dominant society, and as such it preserves the hierarchical assumptions of settler society. Active bystanders are crucial to the protection of vulnerable individuals in society. Therefore, I argue for the operationalization of allyship in Indian Country, but only so long as the term undergoes decolonizing treatment. In order for any definition

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of ally to fully support Indigenous people while at the same time avoiding its potential for injustice, the concept must be stripped of any vestiges of colonialism.

Allyship and Epistemic Injustice

Although the actions of allies are generally thought to benefit the individuals of oppressed groups, the concept of allyship has recently come under scrutiny. As McKinnon points out, the use of the concept as part of one's social identity has the potential to do great injury to individuals in marginalized groups, such as those in the transgender community. For example, McKinnon identifies a form of epistemic injustice known as gaslighting that is associated with the use of an ally identity (McKinnon 2017, 3). Gaslighting, at least the form with which McKinnon is concerned, is when an individual (hearer) "doesn't believe, or expresses doubt about, a speaker's testimony," which prompts testifiers to question their experience or reality (3). In the context of epistemic injustice and marginalized communities, the hearer doubts the reliability of a speaker's report of a harmful experience or unjust treatment based on some aspect of the speaker's social identity (3).

McKinnon demonstrates how gaslighting might occur and the harms that may result by using an example of a trans woman, Victoria, who reports to an ally, Susan, multiple instances of mispronouning by a colleague. When Victoria confides to Susan about her experiences, Susan expresses doubt about the episode. Susan asks if Victoria was certain she heard the comments correctly. She further asks whether Victoria is being sensitive. In another part of the conversation, Susan doubts Victoria's testimony and even defends the offender by noting that he is an ally; Susan also privileges her own experience over Victoria's by claiming she doubts the perpetrator was capable of such behavior because she knows him well. From the initial exchange, Susan not only behaved badly by gaslighting Victoria; she also compounded the harms Victoria experienced.

According to McKinnon, Susan failed "to afford the first person (epistemic) authority of disadvantaged speakers its appropriate epistemic weight" (5). Susan did not accept Victoria's account as credible even though it was a report of Victoria's firsthand experience. Not only is there the harm of epistemic injustice when an ally fails, but other harmful consequences may also result. McKinnon notes that as a result of such interactions, allies could push victims into a "positive feedback loop" of increased emotions, which invites a further discounting of testimony, or the situation may result in "testimonial quieting" (4).[7]

The failure of allyship may affect the future relationships of the victim, or even worse, it could also lead to depression and feelings of isolation (6–8). The betrayal perpetrated by an ally can be so profound that the overall well-being of the victim may be permanently affected. Given these consequences, McKinnon suggests dropping the use of *allyship* and replacing it with *active bystanders*. Active bystanders, according to McKinnon, demonstrate their commitment to support oppressed people through their actions; they are known by their deeds and not by any button, decal, or signage (8).

Given McKinnon's argument and the historical injustices committed against Native Americans and First Nations people by putative allies, it seems reasonable to reject the use of *allyship* in Indian Country, opting instead for something akin to *active bystanders*. The history of Indian Country is replete with "allies" working in the interest of Indigenous people, and these actions have had harmful consequences as well. The actions of missionaries, the government, and others who sought to "civilize" the savage through policies of removal, assimilation, and termination were often blanketed in talk of improving the lives

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of the Indigenous people. Notably, those in power in the dominant society often committed those actions.

Yet in spite of the problems associated with allyship, I am not convinced that the term *active bystander* embodies the resources necessary to address the needs of people in Indian Country. As Scott DeMuth claims, "colonization is war," and it is a conflict that has not ceased (DeMuth 2012, 99). Today, Indigenous people's way of life is so affected by police actions and militarized responses that forward progress regarding relations with one's colonizers is nonexistent. Constant threats—such as revoking tribal recognition, the destruction of sacred places and environment, proposed reductions in treaty obligations, and the taking of Indigenous land—loom daily in the lives of Native Americans in the United States. The support of active bystanders, like those serving the water protectors at Standing Rock, is needed, but the Indigenous people living daily with colonization require more; they require continuous support. The circumstances demand more than an action at a discrete point in time. The issues are not always as evident as the threat of violence; the problems facing Indigenous people are subtle. For example, some tribes deal with food and water deserts; members of other tribes, like those in Nevada, must drive over 100 miles to vote.[8] The issues are numerous and demand long-term support in order to eradicate the institutions of structural oppression.

#NODAPL: A Call Only for Active Bystanders?

If the events on social media in the fall of 2016 prompt the question of how to best support the water protectors, then an answer to that question suggests becoming an active bystander. Cultivating active bystanders within society is critical because "if one develops strategies for how to respond to discrimination and harassment when one sees it happen, one will be more likely to (hopefully) appropriately intercede and assist the disadvantaged person" (McKinnon 2017, 8). An active bystander steps in as the need arises and may intervene in real time, such as calling out the racist behavior of an individual. Being an active bystander makes no epistemic demands on an individual. One need not know about the culture, history, or experience of a particular group of people to know that racist violence against one or more of its members is wrong and should be stopped. For example, a young man prevented another man from further harassing a Muslim woman on a Vancouver train by standing between the attacker and his victim (Kassam 2017). In this case, the young man did not need to know anything about the Muslim woman in order to step in and prevent further harm.

The actions of groups like Veterans Stand for Standing Rock (VSSR) and select chapters of #BLM corroborate the claim that active bystanders came to the aid of those at Standing Rock.[9] VSSR, a group of approximately 4,000 US military veterans led by Wesley Clark, Jr., joined the efforts of the water protectors in December 2016. Their initial mission was "a three-day deployment to 'prevent progress on the Dakota Access pipeline and draw national attention to the human rights warriors of the Sioux tribes'" (Linehan 2016). Concerned about the acts of violence against the water protectors, which were being committed by a heavily militarized threat that included both private security and law-enforcement officials, Clark mobilized the VSSR for a three-pronged mission: to serve as human shields, to call attention to the violence, and to provide logistical/financial support to the water protectors (Linehan 2016).[10] For example, videos appearing on social media revealed private security forces using attack dogs and intimidation tactics on protesters (Democracy Now! 2016).[11] As active bystanders, VSSR members placed themselves between the water protectors and

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private security forces with the goal of de-escalating the violence brought on by previous clashes, as well as by a December 5 evacuation deadline set by the US Army Corps of Engineers.[12] Given the focus of the assistance (occurring at a particular time/place and to address specific needs), I acknowledge that individual members of VSSR served as active bystanders at Standing Rock.[13]

Like VSSR, the members of some #BLM chapters (see note 9) also served as active bystanders. Members of #BLM traveled to Standing Rock to express solidarity with the water protectors, delivering financial and logistical support. For example, the New York #BLM contingent "collected piles of donated items—including school supplies, tents, blankets, sleeping bags, medical supplies, and coats" to be delivered to Standing Rock (Jegroo 2016, 3). A member of Equality for Flatbush, Imani Henry, stated that they were traveling to Standing Rock to "lend a hand in the kitchen, bring supplies, and do whatever is asked" (6). Still others, notably members of Copwatch Patrol Unit, were going to document the inhumane treatment of the water protectors and to "live-stream and document the police state that we all live in right now" (7). Given that the actions of VSSR and #BLM specifically addressed the needs of the water protectors at Standing Rock, the label of active bystander is apt for members of those two groups.

Although many members of VSSR and #BLM provided an invaluable service by functioning as active bystanders, I propose that some members also served as allies to the Sioux people and Indigenous people more generally. Notably, the actions undertaken by some members of VSSR and #BLM were less immediate, addressing issues that were not limited solely to the events in the fall of 2016. As we shall see, their actions were also informed by an understanding of the history, culture, and sovereignty of the Sioux people. I contend that when one compares the actions, rhetoric, and motivations of certain members of both VSSR and #BLM, the differences between the commitments of active bystanders and of allies become apparent.

The actions of some members of VSSR not only included addressing the immediate needs of the water protectors; members of VSSR also cultivated a relationship with the water protectors at Standing Rock by attending prayer ceremonies and participating in rituals (Dunn 2016).[14] When describing the actions of VSSR at Standing Rock, Clark stated, "some veterans will take part in a prayer ceremony … during which they'll apologize for historical detrimental conduct by the military toward Native Americans and ask for forgiveness" (MacPherson 2016, 5).[15] Cognizant of the historical oppression of Native Americans at the hands of the US government, some members of VSSR sought to acknowledge past injustices and seek a way to move forward.[16]

Some members of #BLM cited the common experiences of colonized people and the desire to work together to overcome shared problems, which signified that members were not only active bystanders, but also allies. As Ashoka Jegroo reports,

> Much like the indigenous tribes they're supporting, Black Lives Matter activists from New York City see themselves engaged in a fight against state violence, oppression, and exploitation. For these activists, black and indigenous struggles are intimately tied together. (Jegroo 2016, 7)

In the same article, Tara Houska, national campaign director of the Indigenous environmental-justice group Honor the Earth, identified the shared motivations behind joining the protest at Standing Rock. Houska notes, "We know that our communities are not only targeted by police and killed at a disparate rate by police officers, we also know that our communities are targeted at a disparate rate by these projects" (7). According to

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Jegroo, the activists from both sides—native and nonnative—have a shared starting point from which to cultivate their activism.[17] For example, Kim Ortiz, organizer of NYC Shut It Down, states, "we really need to stand in solidarity with the tribes out in Standing Rock because we know very well that all of our struggles are connected, and until we unite, we're never going to win" (2). The members of #BLM, who serve as allies, are not involved solely in a single, immediate response. Instead, they view Standing Rock as one of a myriad of issues that face colonized people living in the United States today. Members of #BLM in NYC organized a demonstration in Washington Square Park that included "hours of speeches, songs, drum-beating, and chants of 'water is life'" (3). Admittedly, the members used the event to fund-raise and gather supplies for those at Standing Rock, but they did so with the understanding that Standing Rock is only one of the many battles in an even larger war against colonialism.

The Need to Decolonize "Ally"

Groups like VSSR and #BLM supported the Sioux people at Standing Rock by serving as active bystanders, but if we examine the details of their motivations and actions there, some members of VSSR and #BLM were, and continue to function, as allies. Yet McKinnon makes a good point: there is something wrong with allowing allyship to become part of one's social identity. Once one considers the examples of VSSR and #BLM, it becomes apparent that the definition of allyship proposed by Ostrove and Brown fails to sufficiently address the needs of colonized people.

The VSSR and #BLM allies at Standing Rock were not necessarily from privileged groups, and it is difficult to locate the privilege they are relinquishing so that others may be treated humanely. If one considers the social makeup of the membership of VSSR, one recognizes that a good number of the military veterans are from historically disadvantaged groups.[18] Several of the members of VSSR were actually Indigenous people.[19] Reporter Adam Linehan states that although "many [members of VSSR] were motivated by a genuine desire to protect the Sioux people … others were Native American themselves, appalled that government forces were doing to their own people what they themselves had done on the government's behalf in places like Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan" (Linehan 2016, 24). Another account, provided by James MacPherson, includes the motivations of Steven Perry, a Vietnam veteran and member of the Little Traverse ban of Odawa Indians. In the article, Perry claims his motivation was that "the pipeline could pollute drinking water" (MacPherson 2016, 5). Still another example, C. S. Hagen's report about the initial organizing of VSSR, included input from "Michael James, an Absentee Shawnee, the warrior clan of the Shawnee tribe, [and] a veteran with the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Coast Guard" (Hagen 2016). For James, the reason for going to Standing Rock was more general; it was environmental (Hagen 2016). A majority of the individuals comprising the membership of VSSR were from marginalized populations within the larger society. The veterans drew from their personal experiences to support those at Standing Rock, but it remains arguable whether those actions arose from the yielding of their privilege.

Notably, VSSR did not deploy troops and resources solely in response to potential violence; rather, some VSSR members also acknowledged a long history of violence committed by the US government (notably the Department of War) against the Sioux people and Native Americans in general.[20] Some members of the VSSR did not simply serve as human shields for the water protectors, they participated in prayers, and they limited their interaction with the media in order to respect the voices of the Indigenous people at Standing Rock.[21] Finally, some members of VSSR and the water

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protectors found common ground in the experience of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), seeking healing as well as ways to help one another cope with the symptoms.[22] These actions go beyond our expectations for active bystanders.

Like VSSR, some members of #BLM appeared to function as active bystanders at Standing Rock, but upon closer inspection, they served as allies. As marginalized members of society, #BLM did not surrender their privilege or advantage to support those at Standing Rock. Rather, they identified as colonized people who also experienced the negative effects of colonization and sought to show solidarity with Indigenous protesters. Both groups face police brutality, disproportional incarceration rates, and racism in society—in fact, #BLM shared their prior experience of organization at the grassroots level as well as strategies for handling large protests, like that in Ferguson, Missouri (see Luibrand 2015). The #BLM chapters that supported the Standing Rock water protectors continue to support Indigenous children through the collection of school supplies (Jegroo 2016, 3). As a result of the creation of community, #BLM and the Sioux nations are able to communicate their needs and support each other.

Given the examples of some of the members of VSSR and #BLM at Standing Rock, I contend that the definition found in Brown and Ostrove lacks the resources to adequately capture the motivations and actions of these allies. First, it fails to recognize the contributions of anyone who is not a member of a dominant group. Upon further inspection, the definition reifies problematic assumptions that underwrite colonization, which can lead to the harms already identified by McKinnon, and it preserves a social hierarchy that allows for the introduction of paternalism. Allies, according to the definition, are members of the dominant society who act to end personal prejudice and "relinquish social privileges conferred by their group status" (McKinnon 2017, 2). Since allies are initially assumed to be members of the dominant society, a social hierarchy is built into this conception of ally, which may preserve a superiority of knowing how to best act, support, and advocate for those with a lower social status. In other words, the ally who is steeped in the workings of dominant society is credited with having a particular expertise while, at the same time, expertise is not granted to individuals from groups on lower social rungs.[23] This underwrites the problem identified earlier by McKinnon in her example of the conversation between Victoria and Susan; individuals who are members of groups with a lower social status are not afforded epistemic authority. As we have seen in the events of #NODAPL, however, allies need not only be members of the dominant social group, nor must they surrender any type of privilege in order to serve as allies. The individuals who served as allies at Standing Rock did not transcend their social position or relinquish their social power. Rather, they were cognizant of their social positions as members of groups that were differently, nondominantly situated.[24]

A second failing of the definition of ally provided by Brown and Ostrove is that although it assumes allies will act to reduce prejudice in their lives, it lacks any measure to ensure that the actions of the "ally" are sincere, or even efficacious. For example, accounts in the media also describe the presence of nonnative individuals at #NODAPL, "trashing the camps, mooching donations and treating the anti-pipeline demonstration like a Burning Man-style festival for hippies" (Richardson 2016). According to personal posts from Facebook cited in *The Washington Times*, the water protectors encountered individuals who entered camps, using food and resources "without any desire to participate in camp maintenance and without respect for tribal protocols" (Richardson 2016). Described in the article as primarily nonnative, "students, environmental activists and agitators," these individuals' actions stand in stark contrast to the actions of the VSSR and #BLM (Richardson 2016).[25] Although traveling a great

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distance and joining the protest for the environment, these individuals approximate the subject of McKinnon's title; they are *allies behaving badly*. When members of the dominant society believe that they can overcome their position of power and personal biases to attain equality with those they intend to support, they must critically reflect not only on their motivations for being allies, but they must be cognizant of their position in the social hierarchy.[26] The definition provided by Brown and Ostrove, however, demands little from allies who choose to act without consulting the people they seek to serve.

Allyship as part of a social identity depends upon the specificity and quality of training. A problem arises, however, when those who believe they are acting in the interest of marginalized groups fail to recognize their own prejudices in spite of having attended training. In the case of Indigenous people living under colonialism, Kyle Whyte identifies a key issue that is likely to limit the efficacy of nonnative individuals to serve as allies: the resilience of settler privilege (Whyte 2018, 2). Having settler privilege, according to Whyte,

> means that some combination of one's economic security, U.S. citizenship, sense of relationship to the land, mental and physical health, cultural integrity, family values, career aspirations, and spiritual lives are not possible—literally!—without the territorial dispossession of Indigenous peoples. (2)

Settler privilege is often implicit, and when made aware of it, individuals who benefit from it feel threatened. Settler privilege prevents nonnative individuals who wish to serve Indigenous people from actually seeing the dystopian and post-apocalyptic realities their colonial lifestyle has thrust upon contemporary Indigenous people.[27]

Intimately related to the problem of not recognizing one's social biases is that, as McKinnon points out, individuals (who believe themselves to be allies) frequently miscalculate their performance. McKinnon notes that people often "overestimate how good a job they're doing," even to the point of responding negatively to constructive criticism (McKinnon 2017, 8).[28] Given that people do not recognize their own biases/privilege and that they overestimate their performance at being allies, it seems unlikely that such individuals would be in a position to seek instruction or feedback about their performance from Indigenous people. This is especially the case if they have a certificate affirming their allyship status.

Thus, how we define ally, if we are to fill the need in Indian Country, is critical; the concept must undergo decolonizing treatment. Whyte suggests that in order to decolonize their thinking, allies must surrender their romanticism about native people along with the whitewashing of history that has erased the unique experience of native people from social memory (Whyte 2018, 4). Rather, allies must critically address the results of colonialism by

> stopping sexual and state violence against Indigenous people, reclaiming ethical self-determination across diverse urban and rural ecosystems, empowering gender justice and gender fluidity, transforming lawmaking to be consensual, healing intergenerational traumas, and calling out all practices that erase Indigenous histories, cultures, and experiences. (5)

Note that these demands extend beyond what we would expect of active bystanders. Being an active bystander merely requires acting in the moment, it offers little guidance for action, and it can preserve a social hierarchy that must be eradicated in order to appropriately serve colonized people.

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A Call for the Decolonizing of Terms

The examples of VSSR and #BLM at Standing Rock highlight the activities of both active bystanders and allies. As defined by Brown and Ostrove, however, allies have the potential to do harm. As McKinnon demonstrates, allies can subject members of socially vulnerable populations to epistemic injustice. In the case of Indigenous people, putative allies can act without attending to the experiences, culture, and even needs of Indigenous people, thus preserving a social hierarchy that insulates the "ally" from critical self-reflection. In order to prevent future harm to Indigenous people, the concept of ally must undergo decolonizing treatment to mitigate the threat of allies behaving badly. In this article, I have suggested that a decolonized understanding of allyship would be something akin to a relationship, one that requires an epistemic commitment on the part of the ally. Future work on decolonizing of *ally* should include requiring that those seeking to serve Indigenous people acknowledge the sovereignty of Indigenous people, where members of each group in the relationship of allies are epistemic equals. Like the members of VSSR and #BLM who were allies at Standing Rock, those seeking to be allies for Indigenous people should let the history and culture of the people they wish to serve inform their actions. They should not speak for Indigenous people, but instead, respect the wishes and goals of Indigenous people qua people, and not as a romantic ideal that prevents critical discourse (see Whyte 2018, 3–4). The problems in Indian Country demand the services of both active bystanders and allies.

Today, if I were to answer the people who asked me how to support the water protectors, I would respond by encouraging them to do their own research; they should learn about the people, the land, and the issue. At first blush, this may seem an unsatisfactory answer. However, I contend that by providing them with a quick response, such as suggesting they donate to a particular fund, I prevent them from investing in a meaningful relationship with those they wish to serve. In addition, I incur the risk of contributing to the same type of paternalism I am arguing against. By telling them to do their own research, I enable them to embark on a relationship with an Indigenous community and to listen to their specific needs. Having listened to the people, they can decide whether to be active bystanders or allies. Some members of VSSR and #BLM served as allies because they were in a position to best understand and, more important, respect the plight of the water protectors given that they had undergone similar treatment. Moving forward, I propose a new definition of allyship, one that includes Indigenous perspectives in order to cultivate the types of relationships that will discourage epistemic injustice.

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Notes

1 Coincidentally, I have nonnative relatives who worked on the pipeline as welders, and their reports of the activities taking place at Standing Rock were in line with their employers'. Although this made for interesting dinner conversation, it did not provide an unbiased perspective of the events taking place at Standing Rock.

2 A nonexhaustive list of other issues that Indigenous communities must address on a continual basis include extreme poverty, substance abuse, missing/murdered Indigenous women, disproportionate incarceration rates, health issues, and environmental threats (as well as the physical violence present at Standing Rock).

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3 At the University of Windsor, an active bystander is referred to as a pro-social bystander. The focus is on a positive pro-social response instead of just a response. I retain the use of *active bystander* in keeping with McKinnon 2017, but I assume that an active bystander is positively motivated to prevent or address bias, prejudice, and threats of violence.

4 See The Trevor Project at https://www.thetrevorproject.org/about/programs-services/trevor-ally-training/#sm.000×3xcpd16r7cvd111czufnmjtb2 or The Safe Project at http://thesafezoneproject.com.

5 McKinnon notes this is often signified with some sort of marker, such as "a sticker, sign, or plaque" or "a button, badge, or pin"—identifying the bearer as an ally (McKinnon 2017, 1).

6 I use the term *Indian Country* to denote not only the geographical spaces related to the American Indians and First Nations people, but also the political spaces and issues that affect them.

7 Kristie Dotson first identified testimonial quieting in Dotson 2011.

8 In October 2018, the US Supreme Court upheld North Dakota's voter ID law, which resulted in the disenfranchisement of Native Americans in the state. See Mukpo 2018.

9 Chapters of #BLM supporting the water protectors at Standing Rock include, but are not strictly limited to, New York, Minneapolis, and Toronto. Sub-groups operating within #BLM included Millions March NYC, Copwatch Patrol, and Equity for Flatbush. See Jegroo 2016.

10 Energy Transfer Partners, the company building the Dakota Access pipeline, hired TigerSwan, a private security firm, to help protect the drilling site near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. See Hageman 2018.

11 The accounts were also on mainstream media outlets; see CBS 2016.

12 Notably, the December 5 deadline happens to be the birthday of General George A. Custer, which leaves one to ponder whether it was selected as retribution for his demise at Little Bighorn.

13 Members of VSSR also served by building shelters, working in the kitchen, and performing other chores associated with caring for a large group of people. See Liu 2016.

14 A photo accompanying Dunn 2016 shows veterans undergoing a cleansing with sage.

15 Interesting to note is that not all members of VSSR agreed to participate in a ceremony asking the Sioux people for forgiveness (Linehan 2016, 19). This demonstrates the difference between the commitments between active bystanders and those who seek to develop a relationship with the Sioux people.

16 Wesley Clark Jr., organizer of VSSR, noted that "some of the veterans had served in the same military units that had fought during the Indian Wars" (Tolan 2016). In fact, Clark himself was an officer in the cavalry (Dunn 2016).

17 Standing Rock, in fact, is not the first time Blacks and Indians have supported each other against government-sponsored brutality, incarceration, and poverty. For example, Indians in San Francisco in the 1960s occupied Alcatraz under the banner of Red Power and the American Indian Movement (Joseph 2006, 212–15). In her biography, Wilma Mankiller notes the shared problems of American Indian and Black families who were relocated to the cities by the government and lived in the poorer neighborhoods, like Hunters Point in San Francisco. She notes that they shared the same problems: poverty, high rents, unemployment, and broken families (Mankiller and Wallis 1993, 154). Mankiller describes the solutions, militancy, and grassroots "breakfast programs and alternative schools" shared by members of these communities (154).

18 For many families of color (including my own), enlisting in the military provided a chance to learn a trade, earn money for college, or have a career.

19 One of the organizers of VSSR, Marine Corps veteran Michael Wood, Jr. noted, "No group in the country has served a greater percentage in the US military than Native Americans" (Lewis 2016).

20 Indian Affairs was the jurisdiction of the Department of War until 1849, when Congress transferred it to the Department of the Interior.

21 When interviewed, Clark told Linehan, "tribal elders didn't want him, or any other outsiders, leading a group of protesters. This was their fight, he said. All of the veterans Clark had beckoned to Standing Rock would now have to take orders from the Sioux" (Linehan 2016, 9).

22 Sam Levin reported that members of VSSR and water protectors were able to share experiences about PTSD, reaching a common understanding and healing (Levin 2016, 2–3).

23 In academia, for example, first-generation students are often described as not having the cultural capital for navigating the ins and outs of higher education, but little thought is given to changing the system. We opt to train and mentor, rather than consult first-generation students on how the system could best work for underrepresented groups.

24 I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer whose comments helped clarify these points.

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25 The examples of this particular type of environmental activist illustrates the failing of the older definition of allies (the WWII example) who share a common goal/threat. This is not the type of ally I have in mind for Indigenous people.
26 Again, I wish to thank the anonymous reviewer whose comments helped clarify these points.
27 It is important to note that nonnative individuals from other ethnicities also benefit from colonialism; my comments should not apply solely to white allies. I thank my second anonymous reviewer for this observation.
28 McKinnon cites the particularly egregious behavior of Piers Morgan when he was called out for misgendering Janet Mock. See McKinnon 2017, 8.

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