

American Indian Oral History Collection
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Narrator or Event: "The Indian Speaks" TV Programs: Val Cordova
(Taos/Tesuque), Sef Terouo (Sto. Domingo), Tom Vigil (Gicarilla Apache/Gemer)
Second Narrator:

Interviewer: Michael B. Husband

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Subjects: Panel Discussion by young BIA employees,
NCAI + Community Action on Indian Youth
Problems + BIA Problems.

Indian Youth
Problems
BIA

Comments:

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Tape #452
Panel Discussion - Young employees of BIA, NCAI
& Community Action Discuss Indian youth prob
January 18, 1970
Interviewer - Mike Husband
Side 1

Indian youth problems & BIA problems.

TAPED FROM THE KNME EDUCATIONAL SERIES ----"

This is the beginning of a new administration, the Pueblos and Apaches and other have elected and appointed their new officials, traditionally. This is the time to examine critically our respective programs including the ceremonial activities and social services. This is so to make it effective of our new decade of our existence in our tribal organization. It is of some concern among the tribal leaders as well as the younger. There has been urgent need for the Indian people to get together on behalf of the problems facing them, to prevent the federal and state authorities. To accomplish our objectives, our goals of the Indian people, traditionally Indian young people are not necessarily encouraged to express their opinion at home. However, only a few pueblos on the reservation encourage such things, that is to provide a form for Indian young people to discuss problems considered important to them. A widening gap between generations has caused young people to discuss problems considered important to them. A widening gap between generations has caused young people to become somewhat indifferent to community problems. As our elders are passing away to the happy hunting grounds they are leaving the younger generation, the young people of the parents to take over, that is leaving the younger generation somewhat in a confused situation creating conditions that are clouded and uncertain. The pressure of change and new ways are suddenly and gradually forcing the tribal leaders and elders towards a decision to assume initiative and look to the young people for some assistance and this is very encouraging, the young people have almost simultaneously have indicated some reactionary trend, here tonight we have a group of young people.....and we are certainly fortunate to have these young people to appear on the panel to discuss their observations and to them what indications appear to them as to what as far as Indian affairs in general is concerned.....I would like to turn to the panel, and first I would like to introduce our friend from Taos Pueblo and Tesuque, Val Cordova, and next to him, Sef Tenorio, Santo Domingo, and Tom Vigil of the Jicarilla

Apache and Jemez Pueblo but first of all before we continue on with our panel, it would be most interesting to the audience as well as the panel to know what capacity of what work we are doing in your own respective areas. Val would you tell us a little bit about yourself.

Yes, right now I am with the Eight Northern Pueblos Community Action program. I serve in the capacity of Adult Education director and also I direct the remedial program and in my capacity you might say that we are trying to get our people to get, what would you say, high school equivalency diplomas and also trying to encourage you young, especially those who are either at the borderline about ready to drop out of school or get pushed out of school, we are trying to encourage them to finish school and continue on with something else, that is the capacity that I serve in at this point.

Thank you very much and Sef....

At this present time I am with the Congress of American Indians, my work takes me around in the southwestern, south central part of the United States, serving American Indians, tribes on the reservations, our project is in the area of community economic development. Preferably this has given me some satisfaction because I always wanted to work with Indian tribes and discuss problems and offer what I can in solving some of their problems, so in general, we have been trying to work to promote better living standards, living conditions and economic development and so forth and of course this also ties in with other development involved in education and employment programs.

Thank you, Mr. Seferino Tenoiro, and now Tom Vigil....

I was a former employee of the staff of the Indian Community Action Project at the University and at which time I argued that you can affect change in the Bureau of Indian Affairs by working with them and so I went to work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs with the Personnel Management now, and I have to an extent, I think, created some change within

the little piece of Bureau that I am in, that I am particularly involved with and I feel that this type of involvement is what is needed. I feel that the most important resources that the Indian have is their youth and they have to be used and they can effect change if they go about it wisely.

Thank you very much, Tom. It will be most interesting in your, you are quite a traveled man, that you meet various people, various tribes and groups at different levels, and we would like to know from your own observations what you actually feel that in the course of your personal observations are concerned and how you feel, and what is to be done and what approximately could come out of this.....

Well, Joe isn't part of the reason for coming on this program is I came on this here expecting to say a few things that maybe would be causing some conflict among some of the organizations and I don't apologize for this. I think that we are all entitled to voice the kinds of things that we feel and I consider criticism necessity to bring out the common areas. Areas of inefficiency or where there is some good done. I think this is only a symptom of a disease you know look at this and accept it for what it is really worth. Then you really ignore the problem in itself so what we have to say here tonight is a, the views that we have as young people, not necessarily recognized leaders of any one group or organization, but as young people who are outside and in many ways compliment the type of work that our tribal leadership or tribal organization are trying to accomplish, so in the areas that I travel, I have seen alot of problems that have been created by either outside influences to the Indian reservation, and some coming from inside the reservation also, and I think that is what we were talking about as you go along discussing the Bureau of Indian Affairs and its effect on the Indian tribes, the philosophy that it has in promoting the Indians sympathy comes out in self-supporting Indians, this is also the objective of the University of New Mexico ICAP, the Congress of American Indians and the Economic and Industrial Development Project, but in many cases we see that there if we work with the basic problems which we tend to over look whether it be the tribal

leaders or whether it be interested members of organization, so I think that we can go along with using the tactics that we want, I have some comments that I would like to make on all areas, like I said, National Congress of American Indians, they do a better job serving the American Indian people, they work on several advocates of organized structures of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and I think Tom would expand more on what the feelings are and what is really being overlooked and make some statements on what kind of processes that we have to go through and what kind of changes are really going to come about. So, I think that it would be appropriate if we went to Val or Tom and they would.....

 Val would you have something to say?

 Yes, like Sef, I am going to come out with a few criticism, I hope that they are constructive but I do, I have gotten together with some of what you call the younger generation, and the tribal leader are trying to get a lead on a few certain standards but I think one of the basic criticism that I have is not only the tribal leaders but some of the state organizations that are a composition of tribes that are suppose to be running things that are for the welfare of our people and also NCAI for instance. It is my feelings that young men, his chance to get involved and I know everybody gets this, every federal agency that every other groups uses this word it is a magic word, involvement, and you know yet we only really pay for lip service for that word, we really don't give the young people a chance to express their feelings, their objections, and.....their.....for instance we had a group from Highlands to volunteer to conduct some voter registration programs you know on their own and let's say, that most of our people that leave the reservation are either immature or irresponsible and don't really have the welfare of the Indian at heart, so that when a person leaves the reservation they sort of suspect that he has become a brown whiteman or whatever you might call him. We don't give him the opportunity or the responsibility or the exposure that is necessary for this young man to really get at the problem and one of the problems that I had was I wanted to get into the area of federal employment for instance and we have. I don't know what you would call it, a self-perpetuation of a Bureau,

the Bureau of Indian Affairs, giving employment. It is just like say the welfare system you know, like who gets the highest jobs, the highest paid jobs, it is not the poor guy that benefits from it, it is the top executives you know the \$20,000, \$30,000 a year jobs, but this is the Bureau you know where the white man holds a top position, and you know the little guy, the janitors, the Indians, we hold they claim that they have 50% Indian employment. Yeah sure, janitors and clerks and so on.....

This is, , I hope that we can get into some of these a little deeper. But my point is, I think, that education is a help and it might be one of the backbones of the salvation of the Indians but I think if we get rid of this octopus, this bureaucracy that has us held in, it perpetuates itself, providing employment for people and yet if the Indian problem weren't there, where would these Indian people be employed, that is my question now.....I'll throw it out...

Okay, Tom

Well, I hate to go into desenting, I am always doing that and just the mere fact that I work for the Bureau, and it seems to be a favorite past time for people to strike at you because you are working for the Bureau, but like I said, I would like to change it, I think that the Bureau right now, like for instance the lowest guy is a janitor that is probably true in most cases, but the thing about it is we are going to have this thing as long as you have. Well, see the Bureau is under the civil service system, and the whole civil service commission's motto is the best man for the best job and most of the time, a lot of the time, this is the very fact that they operate on, and as long as you operate within this system you are going to perpetuate what you have unless through education and that is why I say that instead of the young men in college demonstrating, and I used to say the same thing too, and I say, this is what he is doing wrong, but the thing of it is, they don't want to go in there and change it, they would rather stay out here and criticize it and when they do get in there you know they are not going to try to change it. And one

other thing that I would like to say is, I think that the tribe to a certain extent should perform, I think that most of the valuable resources the tribe has at it's disposal is the young Indian himself, you know most of them want to come back and help their people and yet they are the same old people that, for instance I know an organization here in town who has, one of their members, where he has a couple of functions to do which are important which effects the Indian in the long run and yet they have representative of a committee in the city of Albuquerque in the State of New Mexico, representative people and I think that there are plenty of young people available to do and represent the Indians and maybe have more and try to get more concern in the future...

Can I ask you Tom, why do these people try to you know, it is sort of gobbling up all the cake instead of like spreading a few things around and my idea is like when a man spreads himself too thin you know, he doesn't do justice to either his position or to his people.

Well, I have a comment on that.....well, that is exactly the way that I feel, I feel that there are alot of qualified Indian people that, besides those that have already established themselves that they can go out and do away with the political personal gain that people have you know.....is just to get them a name and at the same time that organization also has a responsibility to fulfill, let me use the All Pueblo Council as an example. Has a man working there in one of the administrative positions in the All Pueblo Council. Yet this man is, not to personally attack a person, but this is the kind of thing that does not make us an effective program in the All Pueblo Council , is that this same person is also serving on the board at the medical center and also administrator in the Indian educational funds and supposedly a fellow of the Ford Program, like what kind of program do we have in Indian education, for example. We have Mr. Scott in Santa Fe how many people know, how many in Indian leadership know that he was sent by the president to do a program in Indian education.....and recently I was involved with, not by invitation, but as a concerned person to a meeting where they discussed that several of the super-intendents of the school districts were in, and they were discussing the administering of Johnson O'Malley funds

or on reservation program, and anyway one person that came up during the course of the meeting was Mr. Everett Scott who was supposedly working on Indian Education and is specifically interested in this program. The bad part about it is he didn't even show up. This type of a thing, I don't think that Indian people can afford, what about commissioner of Indian Affairs and the council that they have in Santa Fe and has breakfast with the assistant to the vice-president last Wednesday, and he just had breakfast and wasn't really interested in Indian Affairs. This is my personal feeling that if there is really going to be established leadership positions we need to utilize them to the fullest potential that they have.....

You know, I agree with what you say, I think a man is to assume a position of responsibility he should assume that responsibility and talking about different organizations one here is right here by the University of New Mexico, where we have an ICAP and supposedly have a board to make policy yet at a recent meeting, not too recent, our people were complaining that we were not getting services or that we were not getting this and that we did not have any power, or no say so in the program. So the administrators of this program threw it right back on our shoulders and said well, the reason that we don't provide the bonus things is because the board has no function, it does not meet and our main board members are well known tribal leaders and yet they don't assume the responsibilities. I think this is where I think a lot of people, I mean, if you are going to be elected to a position or if you are going to be appointed to a position you should assume that responsibility and please by the way, don't spread yourself too thin because once you do that you are ineffective any position. Let me point out the fact that, taking from the attitude of the young Indians, well you know this for yourself and taken from the contact you have with the young people and it is interesting to know how you feel about the current trend of, of the traditional manner in which our tribal officials are elected or appointed and you know yourself how these things are done.....and the fact that sometimes the appointments are made to certain individuals of course, sometimes for various reasons maybe the man is active traditionally and he happens to be well know and sometimes

on other occasions other groups that have constitutions and elect their officials through popular vote perhaps are somewhat partial and this kind of thing, sometimes confuses young people and sometimes builds up tension and frustration on the part of the young people, and I think it would be interesting just to note how you feel about some of these things... not to change, I know there is a respect for the manner in which the governmental system exists but then let's hear from some of you men....

I am going to make my comment on that very short....because I would like to hear from the other two, the thing that you have to realize now a days is that governor is appointed or either he is elected, it is a secular position where he has to deal with the outside just the same ways as he has to deal with the inside of the reservation and we need a man that can do both, and if he is traditional and sometimes isn't able to speak English, it is rather difficult for the man to operate and not that I am pushing the voting or knocking the traditional way of electing our governors, I think this is binding upon our people that are choosing the leadership, to realize that today we can not get away from the outside world, we have to realize that it is here and that it is making demands on us. And I think whenever someone is elected governor or governor staff, there whould be a realization that this man has to deal with the outside world, he has got to deal with government agencies and that he has got to deal with his own people himself. So I think the realization has to be made by the people behind the power.

That's fine.

You know, I come from a reservation where we have that practice, but my own personal feelings is I really am supporting for that sort of a things because this is part of our culture belief and this is what we identify ourselves with, and this is an intricate thing that an outsider couldn't understand what it was unless you grew up in it also. I would like to make the statement that two can be very effective because like we said earlier that there are some very talented people on those reservation that can help the governors in

administering their projects. And I think that they are getting around to that.....Recently as recently as 5 years ago in the office of Economic Opportunity, I think they can also help by presenting this program so that people can administer projects and you don't necessarily have to be the governors of these people assume those positions but from that we also have technical resources. I think that this has been understood a long time ago and another thing I wanted to say people should not tend to look at projects on reservations where you have to get permission for them to do certain things, people have to realize that these projects and organizations are there merely for the technical assistance or financial assistance for example, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, that is an office that the American Indian people can gain for themselves and this has to be practices and unless it is, like this is the objective of, it can never be fulfilled unless everyone realizes that, and if the tribes have the opportunity to come up with projects and we were talking about contracting services like from the Bureau of Indian Affairs that they now have to operate on our own reservations, this can be done, and I think that we have some very qualified people to do so. I think the first thing about it is that the people who are coming out of schools, they go to technical schools and they come out of there and go right to BIA for employment and they get caught in this bureaucracy and there is not a whole lot that they can do after that and if some of these people realized that if they went outside of the Bureau of Indian Affairs that they could be an administrator on some of these tribal projects, there has to be a willingness among them. The ICAP is the same example, the ICAP is not there to tell all the tribes what to do, it is not really there to tell them all that they have to have a report into the office of Economic Opportunity next summer, and to tell them all that when they start to train these people to do that many jobs, they go into so many programs, expanded programs to help the reservation with development, and this is their main objective and so this is my opinion. So, I think that we can have this leadership we can have both our culture and yet be developing on the other side by utilizing that human resources that we have.....

Well, I can see both sides of it, I come from Dulce and I come from Jemez, and not at the

same time though, and I have seen that both ways can be heard, it depends on the elective type system. I think you have to establish, I think both ways that you have to establish things that are important cause the people, like for instance I go to some of the pueblos and my wife she is from here, and the young people don't think that the governor has any type of authority or responsibility, yet he is making the decisions for all of these people, and I think that this is the type of relationship that the people should develop by the leaders telling these people that they have and by utilizing the young people and it effects them. And I think Mr. Tenorio is perfectly right by saying that I think we could have either system, by contacting one another. I can say for myself that the contracting that the Bureau does is probably the best, the only way that you can hire Indians, right where you want to cause you have Indian preference and this type of thing within the Bureau, but you can't really deal with it you know unless the person has the proper qualifications.

I want to thank the panel very much, Val, Sef, and Tom for the wonderful opportunity to hear with your respect to your ideas with young people. In closing I want to say this, it is important that Indian youth be helped to feel more secure and to establish itself in its own lives to prepare for the future, some pueblos and reservations are encouraging by working for a closer re-approachment between the generations believing these to be essential to the solutions of problems confronting the young Indian people. Many tribal leaders believe that if the Indian people in the southwest would vote in strength, elect Indians to local school boards and county commissions and eventually to state legislatures and to congress that it will serve them well. The tribal leaders feel again that they and the older generation find it difficult to adjust to so radical a departure from tradition and so we come again as we always do to the preparing of Indian young people of the future. If enough of them can have the opportunity, that is evident now, the future of the Indian people will be to that extent, secure, and they will be able to extricate themselves from the dark uncertainty that now falls down, we look forward to the day that we will be able to say that this, that they, which they have come out of great

tribulation. For this reason we must not falter. Until next Sunday, this is the Indian
Speaks.....

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WNEO BOND

B.B.W.

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