

AMERICAN INDIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT

University of New Mexico

Tape Number: # 456

Tribe:

Informant: ① Mayor Alioto of San Francisco, ② <sup>Mr. Peronelli</sup> B.I.A. at Sacramento, and  
③ Gov. Reagan of California's press sec.

Informant's home address:

Band or Clan:

Date and location of interview:

2/5/70

① BIA Office - San Francisco  
② BIA Regional Office - Sacramento

Field Worker: Stanford, Dennis

Date of transcription: 5-70

Contents:

Views of Alioto and B.I.A. on the situation at the island and their feelings on rather or not the island should be given to the Indians. Also some conversation on the situation with Indians and re-location in San Francisco.

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Evaluation of Interview:

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TAPE NUMBER 456

ALCATRAZ

Mayor Alioto's Office  
Regional Office of BIA - Sacramento  
Interviewer - Dennis J. Stanford  
February 5, 1970

Views on Island  
Relocation in San Francisco

BIA - San Francisco Office

My name is Dennis Stanford and I am from the Department of History at the University of New Mexico. And we are gathering data on this Alcatraz situation for our Indian Studies Program and would be very much interested in having some comments from yourself and ----- if you could please. On exactly what the city stand is.....

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You mean in regard to the Indian occupation there, or do you want me to describe it?

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I Yes..

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Well, we really....the city is not involved whatsoever... it is a matter between the Indian group and the federal authorities. And we have no involvement of federal lands...

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QS. So that the city has pretty well stayed out of it?

A. Absolutely, we are not acting on the situation, we of course, are working with the community of San Francisco in regard to the problems here within the city, but in some of the leaders, well like Earl Livermore is one of our Human Rights Commissioners, so that he is an Indian and is taking a rather key part in Alcatraz. And in the Commission he is one of 15 members in our Human Rights Commission. But as an administration it is not a problem over which we would have any authority so that .... you might want to talk with him. Earl Livermore might want to be some one that you, if you haven't already, you might want to talk to.

QS. Yes, we have already been out to the Island, and interviewed the Indians. I kind of wanted to round out the picture from all sides....

A. Well this is one case in which it is not our area, and I think that the thing is that we wouldn't want to activate the situation, and we certainly were terribly grieved when that young Oakes girl fell to her death, and we were sympathetic with the Indians trying to demonstrate on the Island, the problems that they face in the country. Particularly those that have been moved from the reservation areas in to the large cities, I mean, they don't have enough property, I certainly demonstrated the point of the American Indian, well in modern society; dramatized demonstrated of course more effectively than anything I can think of. But serving in the specific moment of Alcatraz, we just have stayed out.

Q. Undoubtedly so.... some of the Indians, none of which are on the Council or Mr. Livermore, just you know, the average Indian out there feels that the city has some sort of plans for the Island, other than the Indian Center.....

A. That is true. Well a number of proposals have been discussed, there had been the thought that the city, that the government, the federal government, might be able to turn it over to the city, and if so they have a number of proposals for its development, both privately and publically as the park area. And privately as a tourist center....(????) I mean, there have been obviously it isn't the price of the Island itself, a priceless jewel in the Bay, and developed, and in terms of it being developed as an Indian Center, it is complicated of course, by funds, and I am no expert on the Island, but I think just the removal of those old cell blocks which would simply help the convertible use to some other use. Scores over the

million and a half and two million dollars. Before any construction can take place, you have a tremendous financial problem. And would it be, whether that would be, whether the Indians would find more worthwhile use of the money than trying to develop the Island with the transportation problems of boats, and water problems, like taking water out to the Island and all of that. I don't know, but it is just that I haven't..... But whoever goes on to the Island to develop it obviously is going to have a large amount of money behind it, other than public fund. And this is, the city, long before the Indian community went to the Island had considered it for public development included only could be developed. Privately however, it was under very strict planning controls by their own planning department, so it wouldn't have to be some ugly little affairs. I mean than we have the great hassle over Hunt, who was willing to invest the money and actually whether in that particular debate ended pretty well there, and followed by the current interest of some of the Indian occupation.

QS. Well then you would say that the city of San Francisco, then is ideologically in back of the Indians?

A. Well they are certainly sympathetic of their needs, to their needs, there is no question about that. But whether their needs can best be satisfied on that island or not remains to be a very big question.

QS. One other question, if I might, to get away from the Alcatraz situation, I am not from California, of course, and I don't know, the scene, But as I recall San Francisco is a relocation center for some of the reservations?

A. Yes.

QS. Has this created any problems or is it doing any good, or.....?

A. Well I don't know, I know that many of those who have been relocated here have found it very difficult adjusting in San Francisco. San Francisco is unique cause we have very, it tends to be a white collar community, office jobs, you know a commercial center, and there are very few jobs for persons who are unskilled. I think many find it very difficult to adjust here. And certainly the city itself is simply does not have the service to provide, nor does the federal government provide services. And we are trying to meet these, but it has been far from adequate. And I know, now I know some of these, some you know.... they are living in squalor and not through their fault but simply cause they do not have adequate income or can they find jobs and then it was all over.... it was very difficult. The person who would know would be this Earl Livermore, he has the Indian Center and he would know intimately the problems.

QS. Okay, well thank you very much sir.

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Press Secretary for Governor, State of California

QS. Yes, this is Dennis Stanford from the Department of History at the University of New Mexico and we are doing some work in our Indian Studies Program on current Indian issues and we would like if possible, some statement on the state and the Governor's stand on the situation out at Alcatraz.

A. Well he mentioned it once, the only statement that I can recall is at a Press Conference several months ago. And I just can't remember exactly what it was. I think he expressed sympathy for the Indians, but it seems to me that he wanted them just, their aim was really to take over the Island or to solicit some support for a solution of the problem. But the only thing that I can suggest is that you go through the transcripts of the press conferences to see exactly what he did say. Alcatraz as you realize is a federal grant that we have, and we have no connection with it.

QS. Yes, we are well aware of that, but we assume that the state would have some feeling one way or the other about the situation.

A. I don't really think outside of this one, well that is, through the situation there, through the press conference, he hasn't said very much. I am not much help to you....

QS. Is there some way that we could get a copy of this particular statement?

A. Let me try and find it, I don't know when it was, sometime in the fall and....

QS. Would you have any comments to make on the Pyramid Lake situation in relationship to the state of California?

A. I don't know if he has said anything on that or not.

QS. Well if he has, I sure would appreciate that dope as well.

A. Have you been out to Alcatraz?

QS. Yes, I brought several Indian students with me, and it has been real education for all of us. And I personally feel that it is a real good deal, it is a challenge for the Indians to make national stand and the unity thing is quite good. But what is good is the fact that this is a place that everybody in the United States has heard of. And can relate to, while if they talk about Pyramid Lake, or Blue Lake or Hoopla Valley, who in Pennsylvania had ever heard of it. And they won't get much sympathy from these other places, but I think that the Alcatraz situation may bring the plight of the Indians more to President Nixon's Silent Majority than just about anything that is more helping this cause for along while.

A. Yes, well I think that is the Governor's feeling as I recall correctly. That is such a bleak place that I just wondered if they have a white dinosaur or something...

QS. Well I can almost agree with that too.

A. It is a miserable place, when I worked for the newspaper a couple of years ago, I went out there, and did a story after it was closed, talked with John Hart at the time, they were suggesting that we needed some sort of a resort or something, a United Nations monument or something. It just isn't practical for any of these things, and I asked Hart what he thought about it, and he said, it would be a hell of a good place for a prison, and I think he is right.

QS. Well one thing that we should keep in mind is that even though the conditions out there are quite bleak, they are considerably better than most of the reservation conditions.

A. Well that may be.....

QS. So the Indians really don't mind. It is all a frame of reference here.

A. It is damp and cold and miserable..... I really don't envy anybody living out there.....

QS. Well it is quite nice, .....

A. It is a fascinating place, but..... it is a good place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there, Well listen, would you be interested in anything else they would have said, also? I will see if I can get some thing in our files.....

QS. Yes. Well anything on current India affairs, we are quite interested in. We are ofcourse, very interested in the Alcatraz situation but anything of the general nature, we wouldn't.....

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Mr. Perenelli - Area Director for BIA Office, Sacramento, California

QS. This is Dennis Stanford from the Department of History at the University of New Mexico, and we have some students that are doing a considerable amount of work in current Indian problems, and one of which is the Alcatraz situation. And we were wondering if you could give us some statement as to what the BIA and California is doing and thinking about this situation?

A. Well I think that I can give you a general statement, but I don't know if it will be too helpful or not.... The whole Alcatraz thing is centered around an urban situation at the moment, and the people who are responsible for dealing directly with that, and with meeting with the Indian leaders in the urban setting are the, what is called the Regional Council, Now the Regional Council is made up of area regional directors, from the Department of Labor, Health Education and Welfare, the Office of Economic Opportunity, let's see who else..... well those are three, I don't know if small Business Administration is in there or not.... probably Commerce might be in there as well. And so these are the people who have felt that the Service Administration in that.... in that they are custodian of the property. Now these are the individuals that have been almost in day to day contact with the Indians at Alcatraz. And we have the Bureau of Indian Affairs, We have had a jurisdictional problem has been,-----

We have been present, but we have been more or less in a subordinate role. As for instance, our efforts do not go into the urban area, our major efforts are primarily in the rural area. And so what are trying to do is to, in our role is to try to get the other major agencies that have resources available for urban situations to deal directly with the Indians and make these resources available to them. But that is about all I can really give you cause if I went into any greater detail I might be giving you something that might be running into some area, that may have some bearing on the negotiations that are going on right now with another party.

QS. What would I contact in this General Service Administration? ~~xxxxxx~~

A. Well call the Director of the General Service Administration, or you could contact. .... I guess he is the regional legal director from Manpower Training, ----- Tom Hannon is the GSA person.....

QS. Thank you.....

A. Now there is another person, Elaing Handi, she is a staff member to the Regional Council and she has put some material together and she might be able to help you more with the nitty-gritty than to any degree than the director himself. She is with the Department of Labor and she is there, in the Federal Building in San Francisco, something like 730 Golden Gate Street or something, I am sure that if you get to the Federal Building you will get her right number.....

QS. Well she sounds like she would possibly have quite a bit of data for us.....

A. She would probably be a very good contact for you.

QS. Thank you very much sir.....

end of tape