

Dusting off Displacement: Environmental Removal of OK Indigenous after the 1930's Dust Bowl

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RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

Q: Where did OK Indigenous migrate to after the dust bowl and how were they recognized after displacement?

1. Provide historical context for Indigenous displacement and migration as a response to climate change and extreme ecological events
2. Create statistics to reflect the displacement and settlement patterns after OK Indigenous reached California

POP AND ACADEMIC CULTURE

From an anthro-historical perspective pop culture representing the 1930s Dust Bowl era, furthers and actively encourages erasure and is reflected in well-known works such as Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (Wald, 2009) and lesser-known media such as Vorhaus' *Three Faces West* (Vansant, 2017). In the case of both Steinbeck and Vorhaus, whiteness has a dual meaning achieved with similar actions: reclamation and assimilation through colonization of land. The very origin of *Grapes of Wrath* (GOW) is intimately tied to erasure and sexism: Sonora Babb interviewed Dust Bowl migrants and was in the process of publishing them as a book when an editor passed her notes on to Steinbeck without saying they were Babb's original work, Steinbeck then used these notes to publish GOW (see Figs 3 and 4).

INTRODUCTION

Although much is known about removal and displacement of Indigenous people in periods such as the 1830s, 1880s, and 1950s, the 1930s are understudied in this regard. Although there are statistics for Dust Bowl migrants (Long and Sui, 2018) it is not known if Indigenous people are included and to what degree.

The Dust Bowl (see Fig 1) is used as a jumping off point for this study because the dust bowl event prompted what is called ecomigration, migration caused in response to the environment (ecology) and the dust bowl is also an extreme ecological event Indigenous people take center stage in this study because, aside from policy reforms, little is known about the lives of Indigenous people living in this region in the 30s and where they moved to after the Dust Bowl.

DATA AND METHODS

This study will be relying primarily on census data, specifically Indian Census data for Oklahoma and California from 1930 and 1940 respectively. Indian Census records will also be cross referenced with state censuses for the same decade in order to generate a baseline difference between State and Indian specific statistics. Methods for this section will be emulating a similar study conducted by van Lottum and Marks (2018) tracking internal migration from 1930-2000. In addition to reliance on census data, this study will use a Gravity Equation to tabulate movement from OK to CA. Results will be shown through Arc GIS software to illustrate movement correlated with population increases and decreases in CA And OK respectively. There will also be controls for urban primacy and returnees.

CONTEMPORARY CONNECTIONS

Results will address a critical gap in scholarly literature for a variety of fields ranging from Indigenous Studies to Environmental Studies and Anthropology. In addition to contributions to scholarly literature, results and methods can be taken and adapted to historic and contemporary studies of Indigenous migration throughout North America, as migration spurred by climate change is already happening in locations such as Alaska and Hawaii.



Figure 1. Migration routes

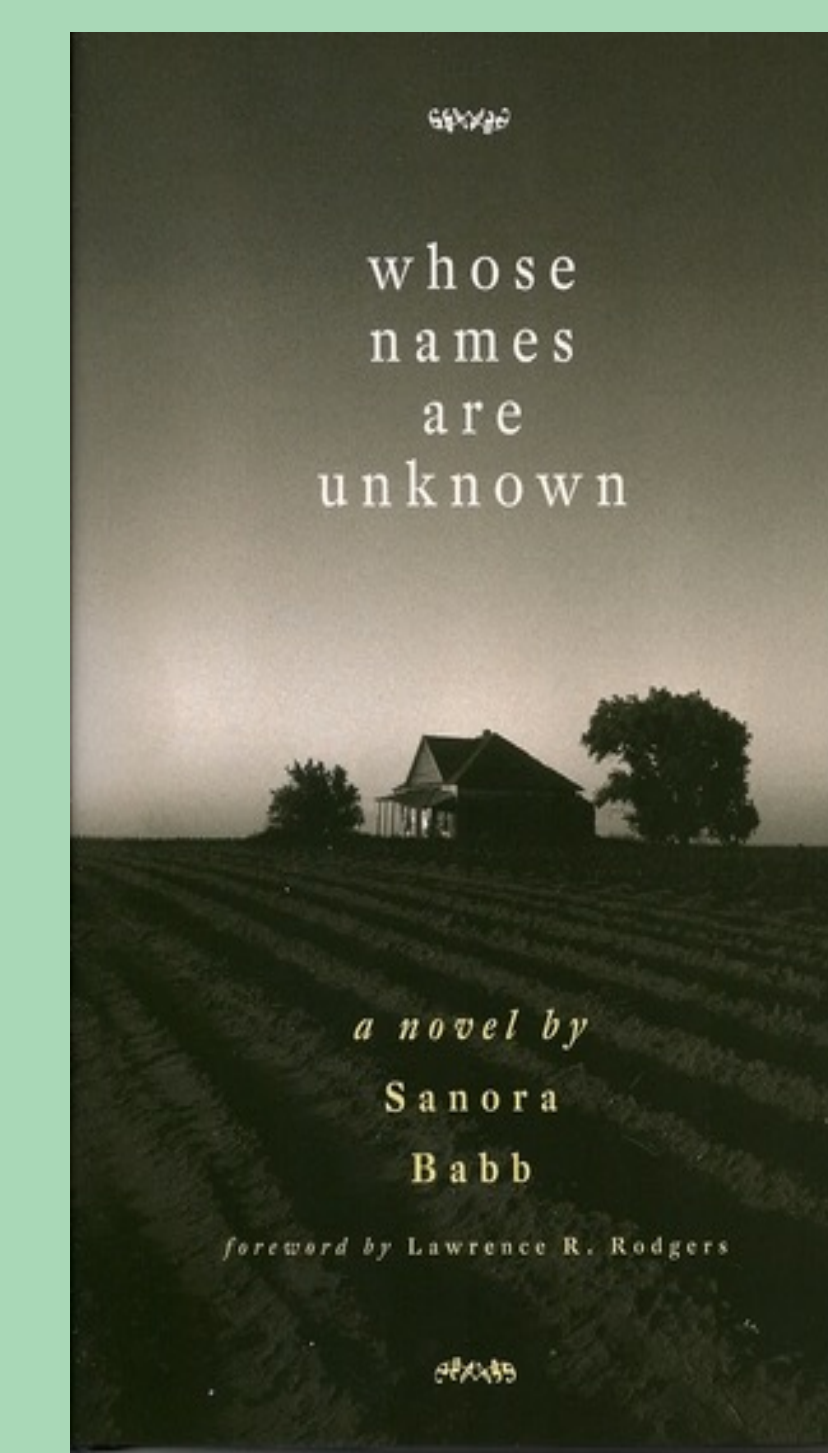


Figure 3. Whose names are unknown by Sonora Babb



Figure 4. Image of Sonora Babb

FURTHER DIRECTIONS

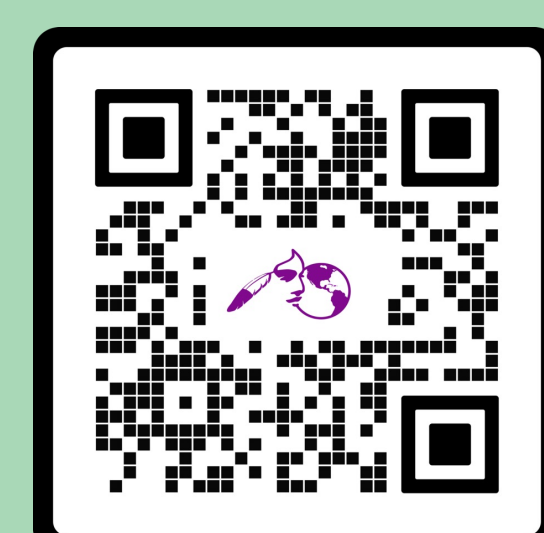
The research question and the project itself are quantitative at this stage. At the doctoral level, this study can be expanded and adapted for mixed methods, specifically for collaboration with Descendant Communities and Primary Witnesses in order to document and preserve family and community history while keeping that history within its community of origin. Outside of the academy, it is my hope that this research can be shared and built on by future generations of Indigenous Scholars.

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