

TAPE #43

RAMONA DUTSCHKE

Taped: June 1979

Reference: The Miwok Indians

I talked to my son, and he has some information you can start with. On how the people gathered and all that. My father's family came from the coast, because they are Coast Miwok. When the Missions were completed they turned the Indians out and chased them out of the area. My father came from the San Jose area. And there was such cruelty---and you don't read about that in the history books. In Sargent's history of Amador County they refer to Indian children as pickaninnys! I read it to the tribal council one night, and we had more fun talking about that. Ten years ago they would have been up-tight, they would have been highly indignant, and so ashamed. But now its a joke. They know that was one persons opinion, and maybe they looked upon us as just savages. The Indian people don't realize that these people were limited narrow and fearful of something.

I always say if you're a human being you have proplems, and peoples problems are all the same. It doesn't matter if your skin is white, or brown, or red, or whatever.

I do believe, however, that people are more open now. I notice that the Indian people are changing their attitude. At least since we have had the Amador Tribal Council. Its been four years now.

Before the people were shy and reserved. Now they seen to be able to discuss things more openly.

(Your heritage goes back a long way, after all.)

You know what happened to that heritage? I remember as a very small child that the important thing was not to be Indian. And to lose the Indian way. That was a shame, because we were ashamed to say we were Indians. It was considered a dirty word. (Can you tell me what the tribal system in this area was like before the white man came?)

My mother's family have always lived in this area. Back to my great-great grandfather. Beyond that, we don't know. They had a summer area and a winter area. They lived higher in the mountains in the summer, and they moved down to this area in the winter. This area, the Dutschke Ranch, was an encampment area, a winter area. I don't know how many Indians were involved, but there must have been many, many of them.

(Were they all Miwok?)

I think Miwoks stayed together, ^{Maidus} ~~XXXXX~~ stayed together---they are from the Sacramento area. Some of these Indians are still in the area, and some are still on the reservations. But there are not that many in California now. It's unique, inasmuch as everybody is kind of a free agent, in comparison with the Sioux nation and the Blackfeet and ~~NAVAYX~~ Navajho, where you have hundreds and hundreds of acres where these people live and call home. Here the reservations are so much smaller.

Now, as far as the tribal system is concerned, I would have to consult my son, Dwight. He would be able to help you with that. He lives in Ione; maybe you can get together with him.

He lives next door to my mother and father.

I know when they went hunting, they only killed the animals that they needed for food at the time. What they needed for winter was dried and stored. It was the same way when they gathered things. They always made sure there were enough plants left; they didn't just take everything. It was a way of conserving. And preserving for tomorrow. I believe that we are coming to the point where we are going to have to survive, and we're going to have to do away with out material things. The Indians had a few material things; their possessions that they could move around with them. Their housing was also so limited that they couldn't have much. Again, I say, their prime concern was just surviving.

(Did the Indians just back off when the white man moved in?) They were not aggressive, if that's what you mean. The Plains Indians were the aggressive ones. They were more advanced than the coastal Indians. They were beginning to farm in the South-West and the Mid-West, but the Indians out here had not reached that level. To progress means that you have to be aggressive. And they were very passive. It was easier to live out here, while the plains Indians had to scramble for everything. The Plains Indians had rough summers, and rough winters, and they had to fight the elements.

I believe that our Indians were very fearful of the white people. I know they feared the Spainards. The Spanish were extremely cruel. (Where did the Indians go?)

And what did they do? Well, I know they traded. With other groups of Indians that is. A lot of their costumes were trimmed with shells. So they must have traded with the coast Indians. And the coast Indians came for acorns or pine nuts. But they did trade with other peoples for other things. Instead of all travelling together, they must have had people that represented them.

(Did the white man physically throw the Indians out of the area?)

I don't know. These are things I should have asked my grandparents but our ways say that I can't delve into the past of my elders. This was Indian etiquette, if you will. Your business is your business, and what happened to you---unless you introduce the subject---is your business. If you do introduce something, then it's a clew that it's OK to talk about it. I was 50 years old before I could really question my grandmother! She was really of the old school. Do you understand now why its difficult for Indian people to be aggressive, because the old way was to be very reserved. And they were extremely truthful. And it is very difficult to grow up and discover that what people say they don't necessarily mean. So you see, these people were extremely reserved, and when other people moved in the Indians just withdrew to more remote areas. Some of the strong people could cope with this change and fit in with the white man, but the others were pratically destroyed. So, instead of saying, I have a right, they just moved on. I feel if there had been any kind of uprising, it would have been logged in the history books.

(What do you think of the Miwok Grinding Rock Park in Pine Grove?)

Well, they should explain what the place is all about. There should be a history of what that roundhouse means; how the people gathered. All that. My grandmother lived in a roundhouse for a while when she was a child. The Chief many times lived in the roundhouse, and sometimes was buried in the roundhouse.

(In Sargent's history it was mentioned that the Indians were buried by hanging them from the trees. Do you know anything about this?)

I don't know about the Miwok being buried in the trees. I think the plains indians did it. I don't know.

On my mothers side, lets see, my grandmother died about 4 years ago. She was 93. My grandfather passed away in 1955.

My fathers parents passed away when I was in my teens. But my mother's mother has always lived next door to me. You know, when you're brought up with that reserve, and that way of not asking questions, a lot of information and history is lost.

(Was it difficult for her to adjust?)

Well, my grandmother was raised in a wig-wam and lived to see the jet age. A lot happened to her in 93 years!

(What is the difference between wig-wam and teepee?)

Those are anglo words; not indian words. They are the same.

(Did your grandmother tell you stories?)

Yes, as children we would be allowed to stay with the adults if we were very quiet. And they were always telling fascinating things that had happened to them. Indian people are wery "mental", shall we say. And some of these weird things happened to them.

They had some kind of ESP. They are very ~~MYXKXKX~~ psychic.

You know, my grandmother told of an encampment near Oleta (Fiddletown) and how the medicine men would train their thoughts on someone in another area, and that other person would collapse and perhaps die. My grandmother remembers all this; if you believe it's possible. The indians were more into these mental things than the material. I think people are much more limited now because of this.

(Did they worship indian gods?)

Well, the way I was brought up was to believe in a supreme being. I think if you took the ten commandments and practiced them---that would be the way of life of the indian. But they lived by very rigid rules. But I'm not speaking for all indians, only from my family's viewpoint. They lived by very definite rules. As a result you know what the other person is thinking. You know how he feels and how he'll react. Because this person over here is living by the same rules and standards that you are living by.

If you said something and there was another indian here, I'd know just how that person would react, because he'd react the same way that I would!

All this, of course, developed over generations of being very ~~rigid~~ rigid. Their rules were not flexible. Now laws try to prove that they can be flexible.

(What can you tell me of the practice of banishment?)

As a small child there were certain people I could speak to and others that I couldn't talk to. Now, I wasn't given a reason why, but grandmother didn't have to.

(Living in this group society, did the kids have certain chores?)
 I don't really know. I feel that as a group they worked together in order to survive, but when they went to their own quarters, that was their province, their ~~escape~~. Your private life is your own. And no one has the right to infringe on your freedom; it's the only real freedom you have, that is the freedom within yourself. ~~EEK~~ Close your eyes and you are free of everything. Open them and you're part of everything else.

People don't understand this. What you do in your area is your own business. You can watch someone beating his wife, but it still is none of your business. This is what most people don't understand. There were certain rules, and if you didn't follow them you were banished. And to be banished would be worse than death. To know that people would say nothing and turn their heads for the rest of your life. And the person who was banished respected this law!

(Does the government make many demands when you want funding for Indian projects?)

Yes. And you do have to prove your degree of Indian blood. $\frac{1}{4}$ is usually the cutoff point. You should carry your papers with you to prove that you are of indian blood.

(How many Indians are in Amador County?)

Not many. About 150 or 160. Other counties around here have thousands of Indians, and that's where you have problems and prejudice. Where you have numbers, you have problems, and it's a shame.

(What about Digger Indians. Was that a slang term?)

They called the people of this area the Digger Indians, but they were Miwoks. In the 20's in this area the people burned the Digger name in effigy.

The actual Digger Indians were in the Klamath area. But to the white man and others an Indian is an Indian is an Indian etc. They'll say like, say something in Indian to me! So, you laugh to yourself, and tell them you don't speak the language. If they thought you were that stupid, they didn't bother to explain. The Miwok came from as far south as Fresno. They were even in Yosemite and that area.