

May 20, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: In favor of the passage of H.R. 5444 / S. 2907 - Truth and Healing Commission on the Indian Boarding School Policies in the US

My Grandmother Maria Arvizu attended and lived at the Ft. Yuma Indian Boarding School in Winterhaven, California from the very young age of 6 years old to 17 years old. She attended there from the years 1919-1936. I fortunately was able to find her school records digging through the National Archives in Riverside, CA many years ago. She was only six years old when her parents were forced to put her and her siblings in the Native American Indian boarding schools across the US. She was horrifically abused and sexual assaulted over the years there. We have stories spoken and written of the brutality of the matrons, staff members and nuns and priests from the Catholic Church. My dad shared with me that she told him she was horrifically beat and raped in the bathroom. Unfortunately, she passed away at the age of only 47 years in 1960 and left the family saddened that she was raised in this brutal way and forced by the government to be taken away from her family and raised by a military style “educational system” ie “re-education” camps of the Native American children. My dad is her first child, and you can only imagine what happened life was like for us. My Great Grandmother who is also named Maria had three of her children die in the Indian Boarding schools due to neglect and yet to be found.

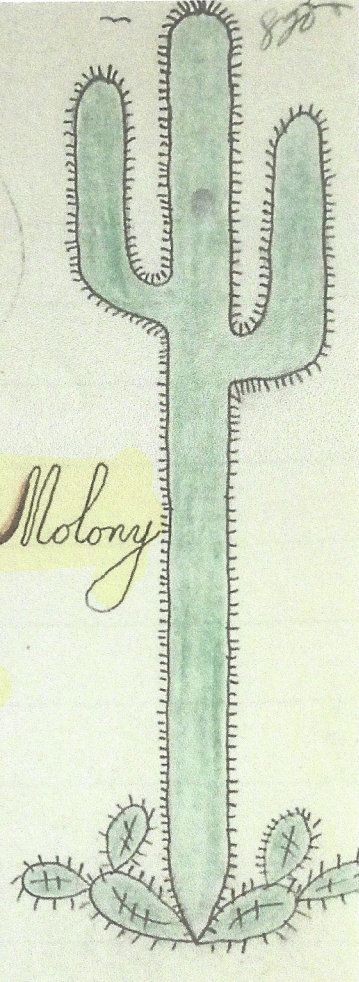
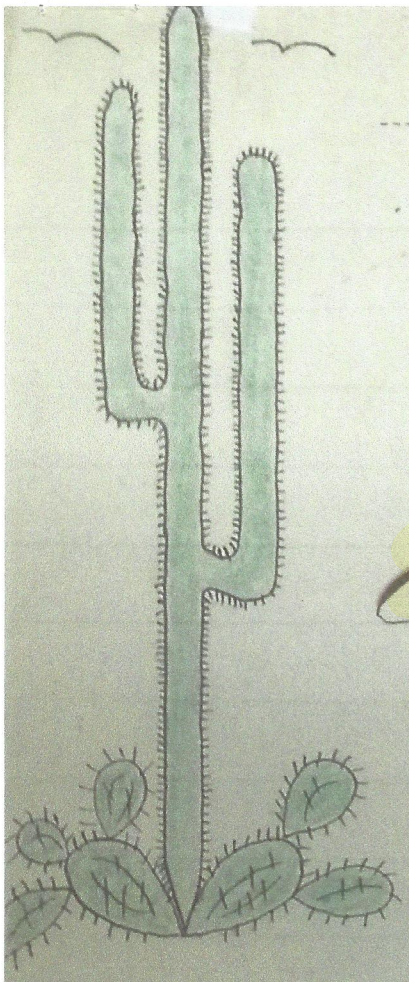
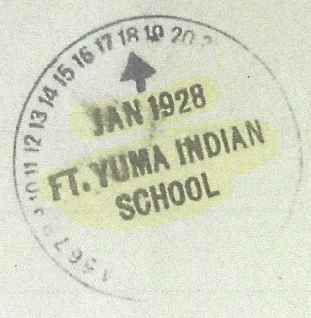
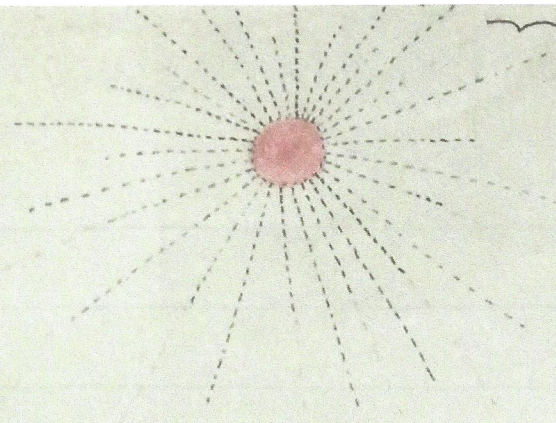
I also have video testimony from other students that attended the Indian boarding schools and the horrific brutality the children had to endure without knowledge of their parents. I was told they sometimes beat the children to death. I was privileged to be able to interview my Grandmother’s cousin Virginia who lived to be 94 years old, and shared some shocking stories (audio). She also attended Ft. Yuma Indian Boarding School and the Sherman Institute in California where she was abused in every ways. Her daughter Virginia is alive and would probably be happy to share her mother’s experiences shared to her from her mother. More research needs to go into the “outings” these children were subjected to.

I will attach a document I found at the National Archives in Riverside CA of a letter written about the neglect and abuse documented by an employee of the United States Reserve Service. He states the Superintendent of the School does not care. This is a rare find and it even mentions it in the letter that if anyone where to read this letter which is addressed to the “Superintendent” overseeing the boarding schools, it may be exposing to them. I heard horrific stories of beatings, sexual abuse, constantly having to live in fear at these schools. The trauma is seen for generations.

I hope my Grandmother’s and many other relatives horrific experiences will not go untold and these bills pass for the healing of all the children and families affected by these policies. I’m for the passage of H.R. 5444 / S. 2907. Thank you to the Natural Resources Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples of the United States.

Sincerely,
Sonia James

Attachment: Letter from John Baptiste Molyneux Molony, U.S.R.S. dated 1928.



John Baptiste Molyneux Molony

U. S. R. S.

Yuma, Arizona

1 . 13 . '28

Dear Friend Mr. Jolley

Greetings - I have once again the pleasure of writing to you for permissions and to tell you a few things that have happened in the old year. Things that if they were made clear to you, may-be you would not feel, so bitter towards me. You know for the immoral name that was attached to Sherman Indian School some few years ago, but they cleaned it up and today

it gives a good education backed with a sound morality to the wards of the Government. Certain things have happened at Fort Yuma not only last year but years before that, I can more easily (only for your enlightenment Sir) put on paper without shame than by word of mouth and there are other things so shameful that I couldn't either write down or talk. At those times unfortunately you were threatening me with jail. Last year that filthy alcoholic beverage known as canned heat had made inroads even among the children of the school and even they could get it in Mr. English's time. Those in charge knew not where the stuff was coming from but I did and I warned two Indians (adults) of the law with regard to aiding and abetting minors in obtaining alcoholic stimulants and about transporting children or other irresponsible or incompetent persons to towns where intoxicating liquors are sold. A little while ago the football team went to that "famed" oasis, Calxico and they had a chance by walking a few steps: obtain highly intoxicating liquor. Nobody cared only "crazy" John who had warned them before hand. The little

boy told me when he returned that an Indian had invited him over to have a drink but he refused and said "John would'nt like it" and the Indian one of the canned heat tribe said: "Oh dont mind John, — Mr Jolley says he's half crazy and the little boy said "John is not crazy". This little boy Sir has already tasted "canned heat" and I'm sorry to say has been drunk several times although he is not yet 15 years old and I remember when the little fellow was so nice and mannerly and innocent and certain good people had a higher education in store for him but suddenly the "innocence" had gone out of his eyes and that was the end for him. He is a pretty good fellow now but he has a "tough" manner; too much so for a boy of his years. Well Sir before I tell you a little more I suppose you have read what the Scripture says against those who directly or indirectly are responsible for scandalizing little children.

"They who scandalize my little ones: it were better that a millstone were tied about their neck & that they were drowned in the depths of the sea.

You know last summer I was accused of sending

certain boys home. Why simply because you wouldn't listen to me and Father couldn't interfere and you might think Sir that Father was behind my actions nothing of the kind. He even gave me the "works" until I had explained to him why I sent Juan Valisto my Godson home to his people and Marcellino the son of my good friend Panchohalaga. I told you once that Juan's Father wanted him home but you forgot all about it, and the filth I had seen going on in the toilet and I thought of the promises (sacred) I had made for him when he was baptised and afraid that he might delve in such beastliness I told his Father and his Father said "He'd sooner his son knew nothing than to know evil things worse than drunk" and he asked me to send him home and I gladly paid his fare and I was conscious of the worst kind of trouble but I went ahead with it. You wouldn't see your own child delve in pitch so why expect me to forsake my Godson when he needed me worst. Regarding this immorality it is not fit to write Sir. I was tipped off regarding it but

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passed it up as impossible and preposterous and it was only by mere accident that I made an amazing discovery and I told Father about it & I am certain that if it were not for my interest in Juan Valisto I might never have seen what I did, and Mr Jolley it is one effect of having no privacy in the toilet. This may be pretty plain talk Sir but you will try and understand it is coming from a real friend who never at any time had harbored bitterness towards you in spite of the fact that you threatened me with jail. If I was sure of getting 15 years in the Federal Penitentiary I would have done the same thing I went ahead forsaken by all because I didn't think but I knew I was right. You'd have done the same thing because I have always taught the children to look up to you as a good white Father and not to be afraid to bring their little troubles to you just like when the late disciplinarian was swearing and using the Holy Name in profanity in front of the children. Two little Catholic boys told me that they were going to tell the White Father and I said go ahead. he will be very angry to

hear it; but he will make everything right for you and one of them added questioningly: "Is he really a white Father to us John?" & I said - sure he is when he knows his little red children are not treated in the right manner.

Well Sir I started out to tell you what I saw a few lines back but I could'nt. I would'nt know how to describe it, and if this letter, ever came by other hands; it would'nt be nice; but as I have said before: to me, such a thing, seemed impossible of happening. Anyhow what's the use? Nobody seems to care. I have seen little children drunk on canned heat staggering around. I saw one; a big boy with his shirt off yelling and whooping results of canned heat. Well Mr. Jolley that is enough to see and describe with my pen without going any further to describe other things. These conditions gave me food for thought so I thought up a plan and it was this. I made out in my own illustrated handwriting copies of a pledge and I got the Indian children to sign them on

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their tribal honor after first explaining all about "The Tribal word of Honor" and impressing them through pictures and long talks ~~of~~ the terrible effects of alcohol upon young people and scaring them a little with something about "drunk" that they knew nothing about. They all signed the pledge of honor not to drink any intoxicating liquor until they are 25 years old and I know Mr Jolley that every boy has kept his pledge and that is over two years ago and there is a certain Indian who is on the Hill at the present time saw those papers and the boys signatures and told me that - "I'm afraid John they wont understand" but they have understood. Some of them have said to me once in a while - "John I keep my promise to you."

Well Sir I do not want to take ~~y~~ up your time with my long letter but I will tell you one other thing ? " Better hold on to your Seat

One day as I was walking around on the campus (before you told me to get off and I retreated to the Mission) I came upon two little chaps squatted on the ground. They were evidently very interested in something

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and they were having quite a time with me another trying to gain possession of something that look unusual to my eyes. As I drew near one little fellow looked up at me and said "look John what I got" I said - "What you got" So I took it in my hand and a casual look disclosed what I thought was just a pill and while I was further examining it and asking the little boy was he sick and other questions the "pill" along with the other one the other child had; that he was about to chew on, turned out to be Morphine tablets so I asked him where he got them he said a nigger in the jail gave it to the other boy. Well I say Mr Jolley again "What's the use"? Nobody cares but "crazy" John and they've ^{run} me off. I showed it to an Indian this killer drug and "happy dream producer" and I held it in the palm of my hand and I said; look !! and he looked and he asked me what was it and I told him and he said where; and I said school-children and I walked on and he suggested showing it to you sir but I said Mr Jolley is not my friend. he accuses me of agitating; without proof and others have poisoned his mind against me so what's the use. I have an educational knowledge of drugs sir but my ignorance of how confirmed dope fiends use the needle

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is pitiable but never mind I have been shown how by several of the children who took great pleasure in ~~be~~ being able to show me how its done. They just acted the part.

One other time a boy I was teaching the Lords prayer too and had been doing so for nearly a month every day. He got through with the prayer and he recited something that he badly wanted me to hear it is as follows (not much you will say but its the straw that shows how the wind blows)

:- Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall

Humpty Dumpty fell off the wall and said
"Oh Jesus Christ"

I found out where he learned it and from whom but as I said before Sir. Nobody cares

The few incidents mentioned are just a drop in a bucket but they are on a parallel with the worst but as I said before. I think you will see me now as a friend wanting to see things go well with the Superintendent (The White Father). This will be my last chance to tell you these things because in September next I'm leaving the United States for New Zealand and I'm never returning

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Now about the permissions that I want. I intend to take a trip to Los Angeles at the end of February and I want to take with me three boys. Joe Benedict the night-watchman my friend has promised his car to me and I would ask you Sir to please fix it so as Joe can be away for a week the length of time I intend staying. The boys are of the Papago Tribe. They are Valentine Montana, Mahaya Thomas and Adolph Lewis. I have told them of the wonderful time in store for them. to include Catalina Island, Venice, Long Beach, Los Angeles, and Mount Lowe. I've been to all these places many times over and I'm known better in the California Mountain Districts than I'm known in dear old Yuma. Most places they call me "Indian John" — Joe Benedict is tickled at the prospect of going too so I hope Mr Jolley you will ^{fix} things like you did last year. I know the boys will have the greatest time of their life and Valentine is such a funny little boy. He is going to have a great time.

Concluding this my letter

I Remain Dear Sir
Your Sincere Friend
John B. Molony

Best Wishes to the Madame + a happy New year to you both.