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“Are you not then Ashamed?”: Liturgies for Living in a Time of Annihilation.

The Montana landscape in which I grew up is harrowingly doubled, a place not only of homecoming and homemaking, of grandeur and fruitfulness, but also of displacement and dispossession, of diminishment and annihilation. In witnessing the mass killing of Buffalo that led to their extirpation in the Judith Basin, Pretty-Shield reports, “The whole country there smelled of rotting meat.  Even the flowers could not put down the bad smell.  Our hearts were like stones.”  Those who have settled here in the wake of ecocide paired with attempted genocide are burdened by a history of thoroughgoing injustice to others, indeed, by the very uprooting and annihilation of the worlds of others. How might those who inherit this legacy continue to live in their home-places without being overcome and even undone by the shame of doing so?  Responding to this provocation, my talk engages in a personal meditation on how the shamefulness of history resists apology, which is to say, resists the attempt to live a life that can be justified.  In doing so, I  turn to the development of a notion of liturgical protest by elements of the anti-nuclear movement in Seattle, as well as to a notion of ceremonial revery cultivated informally in places like the First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park near Great Falls, Montana and the American Prairie Reserve near Lewiston, Montana.  The manner in which the deployment of nuclear weapons across the former range of the Buffalo is arguably the culmination of settlement coloniality will also be raised.