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Philosophy of an Indian War: Indian Community Action in the Johnson Administration's War on Indian Poverty, 1964-1968¹

DANIEL M. COBB

When Lyndon Baines Johnson took the oath of office on November 22, 1963, he inherited a fragile, ambiguous federal Indian policy. The Kennedy administration had instituted reforms and deemphasized termination, but missed its opportunity to elucidate a coherent vision of its own. Indeed, scholars characterize the entire period from 1961 to 1975 as one of policy in transition.² Not until 1975, in the wake of Richard Nixon's Indian message of 1970, would Congress replace House Concurrent Resolution 108, the termination bill, with the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.³ But simply to glance over the preceding years, and particularly the administration of Lyndon Johnson, would ignore a period of dynamic and controversial change both at the federal level and in Indian communities. This article explores the Johnson administration's most provocative and contested innovation, the Community Action Program (CAP), and how its philosophy of "maximum feasible participation" served as the harbinger of tribal self-determination.

Daniel M. Cobb received his master's degree from the University of Wyoming in May 1998. He will be pursuing his doctorate at the University of Oklahoma, specializing in twentieth-century American Indian history.

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Cobb, Daniel M. "Philosophy of an Indian War: Indian Community Action in the Johnson Administration's War on Indian Poverty, 1964–1968." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 22, no. 2 (1998): 71–102. Philp, Kenneth R., ed. *Indian Self-Rule: First-Hand Accounts of Indian-White Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1995. Daniel M. Cobb. *The War on Poverty's Experiment in Public Medicine: Community Health Centers and the Mortality of Older Americans*. *American Economic Review*, Vol. 105, Issue. 3, p. 1067. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 26, Issue. 4, p. 441. CrossRef. In *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History 1964–1980*, edited by Orleck, Annelise and Hazirjian, Lisa Gayle, 31–62. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011. Google Scholar. McKee, Guian A. Lyndon B. Johnson and the War on Poverty: Introduction to the Digital Edition. Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 2010. Available online at <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/pdf/american-cent/WarOnPoverty-introduction-USletter.pdf> (accessed 24 June 2012). War on Poverty: The unofficial name for legislation first introduced by United States President Lyndon B. Johnson during his State of the Union address, on January 8, 1964, aimed at economically uplifting the United States. Overview. Lyndon Baines Johnson (August 27, 1908-January 22, 1973), also known as LBJ, was the 36th President of the United States, serving from 1963-1969. Johnson had served as Vice President in the Kennedy administration and assumed the presidency upon Kennedy's death on November 22nd, 1963. Johnson was reelected in a landslide in 1964; however, he did not seek reelection