

Toypurina and the San Gabriel Mission Rebellion of 1785

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Introduction

Toypurina was a member of the Tongva tribe located around the San Gabriel Mission in present day Orange County California (See Figure 1). Renamed the Gabrielinos their close proximity to San Gabriel Mission, Toypurina's tribe recognized female leaders and believed in respecting the sanctity of all beings. The missionaries at San Gabriel forced the Tongva to build the mission and were abusive in their slavery and land alienation. Toypurina had a vital leadership role in rebellion against the missionaries in the San Gabriel Revolt (Castillo, 1994, p. 67-93). Toypurina continues to inspire California women to this day (See Figure 4).



Figure 1) While this map shows the Gabrielino land the Southern California tribe once possessed, the Gabrielinos and other Tongva nations have no reservation today. While there are an assortment of landmarks and memorials, the Tongva are not federally recognized, making it impossible to claim land for a reservation of their own. Photo courtesy of <https://smbasblog.com/the-tongva/>

San Gabriel Arcangel Mission

Throughout California, Spaniards established missions as the Spanish crown saw it their responsibility to convert "savages" into good Catholics. The San Gabriel Mission (See Figure 2) was the fourth one established and banned ceremonial dances, disrupted daily life, and took Native land (Beebe, 2007). 6000 Tongva who died of European diseases are still buried at the San Gabriel Mission (Blonski, D., & Taylor, C., 2011). While the missionary appears beautiful on the outside, the horrors that happened within their walls need to be exposed.



Figure 2) The San Gabriel Mission. Located on El Camino Real, this beautiful mission is a painful reminder of all the suffering Native Americans have gone through in US History. Photo courtesy of <https://parish.sangabrielmissionchurch.org/>

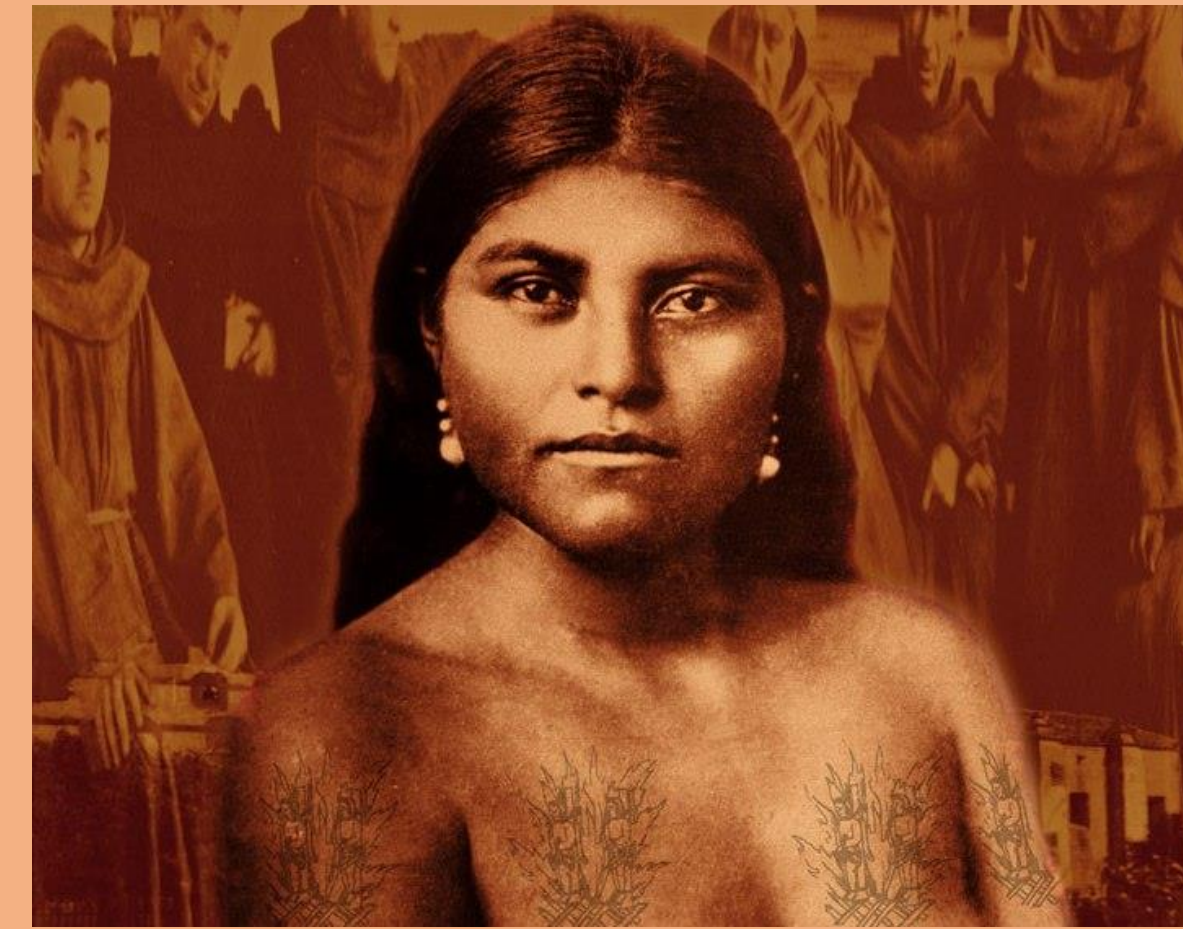


Figure 3) The only photo of Toypurina to date. A persuasive communicator and religious leader, Toypurina inspired many other Native American women in California to stand up to the Spaniards. Photo courtesy of <https://missionplayhouse.org/about/toypurina-2014>

Toypurina

The San Gabriel Mission was established in 1771, when Toypurina was 11 years old. She grew up in the *rancheria* Japchivit, where her brother was a *tumiar*, giving her power, respect, and social acceptance to become a *shaman* in her village (See Figure 3). Toypurina rose in Tongva society, her power across *rancherias* growing as her reputation as a respected religious leader and medicine woman grew. "Through her spiritual guidance, she had learned to speak many of the Tongva languages and became a persuasive communicator" (Marlow, 2018). After trial and few months of solitude, Toypurina converted to Catholicism and was baptized in San Gabriel (Johnson, 2007, p. 36). She was later moved to San Carlos, far away from her relatives to prevent involvement in further uprisings (Beebe, 2007, p. 26). While exiled she married a soldier, had four children, and died at age 39 (Johnson, 2007, p.39).



Figure 4) The more Americans learn about Native American sovereignty rights and the struggles they have endured, the better off we are as a society. Toypurina's courage symbolizes the long time resilience of Native Americans, making her a symbol for the need for education the unique philosophy and way of life Native American culture promotes. Photo Courtesy of <https://www.girlboss.com> (Bijou Karman, 2018)

The San Gabriel Rebellion

The Spanish soldiers and missionaries sexually assaulted the Gabrielinos, forced them into labor, tortured and killed them, forced them into religious conversion, and to live within the walls of San Gabriel. Like many others, Toypurina was "angry with the Fathers and with all the others at this mission, because they [were] living on their land" (Beebe, 2007, p. 18). This shared anger led to a rebellion among many Gabrielino *rancherias*, brought together by Toypurina (See Figure 5). Although the rebellion was short lived, it is through Toypurina's precedent that Native women continued challenging colonial domination and missionaries. Toypurina "placed [her body] on the line of fire and organized and led others to do likewise"; a perfect compilation of Gabrielino and Native American resilience (Castañeda, 1997, p.236-237).



Figure 5) A group of Gabrielinos being shamed by missionaries at San Gabriel Arcangel Mission. It is through exchanges, regulations, maltreatment, and encroachment of Gabrielino land that ultimately led to revolt. Photo courtesy of <https://youtu.be/CwAqAlkk7aw>

Word Bank

tumiar - village chief
shaman - medicine (wo)man; spiritual leader
rancheria - Tongva village
Tongva - people of the earth

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