

feral feminisms

issue 4 • summer 2015



COMPLICITIES, CONNECTIONS, AND STRUGGLES:
CRITICAL TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST ANALYSES OF
SETTLER COLONIALISM

Edited by Shaista Patel, Ghaida Moussa, and
Nishant Upadhyay



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**Complicities, Connections, & Struggles:
Critical Transnational Feminist Analysis of Settler Colonialism**

Shaista Patel, Ghaida Moussa, and Nishant Upadhyay



Patrick Hunter, "Harvest Moon" (12"x16" Acrylic on canvas 2011). <http://patrickhunter.ca>

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We would like to begin by acknowledging the peoples on whose (colonized) land we live. This issue is being produced on the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples.

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As we set out to write our Call for Papers for this issue, we, the editors, were not certain about where to begin or head. We knew that we wanted Issue 4 of *Feral Feminisms* to engage with questions of the anti-colonial and/or decolonial and anti-racist scholarship of diasporic people of colour living in white settler-colonial nation-states. However, we wanted to engage with these questions in a language that did not homogenize all bodies of colour, that was careful about respecting the different histories and presents of Black bodies, and that showed a critical understanding of the different histories and presents and different bodies and different power relations that organize our bodies here along multiple axes of race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, religion, citizenship, language, and countries of birth. This was a difficult task and one at which we very successfully failed. The failure was not just ours, though. It was the failure of our political imaginations and theoretical conceptualizations, which are not that of any one individual. This was the failure of language, of the terms and bodies from which we began. It was the failure of our anti-racist and anti-colonial politics. One thing we learned through writing the Call for Papers is that what we learn in graduate school is less about our research in terms of content or how we learn to frame our questions. It is more important to begin to engage with the limits of our knowledge and of learning how to live within those limits. Our failure and recognition of power and limits were many. There was a lot we did or did not do in terms of ethical or critical engagements with violent erasures.

Editing one issue of a journal does not make anybody expert. We have so many questions in response to the ones that arose from this issue. We wrote this editorial in the form of three questions that we had and our responses (that is, more questions) to them. These questions and responses came out from the conversations we three have been having over the period of the last year when we set out to write our Call For Papers. We are presenting this issue and this editorial with an acknowledgement of our limits and with the hope that our shortcomings will be critiqued and eventually forgiven. It is not an easy task to write anything within the context of intense violence marked by ongoing Indigenous land dispossession, manifestations of new and old forms of slavery and Black death, Islamophobia, the deaths of over 500 children once again in Palestine last summer, ordinary white settler citizens' ongoing violence, the abandonment and killing of Black and other racialized bodies, dehumanized and mutilated refugee bodies, death and disappearance of Indigenous women, occupations of lands of people of colour, drone strikes charring bodies of colour, environmental degradation and exploitation. We set out to engage with these violences and fell short of a critical engagement, and sometimes that was because of what we could not see or understand beyond knowing that we are complicit in keeping these systems of violence ongoing. However, what we do know is that these violences highlight the need for more critical engagement with race in local, transnational and intersectional ways. We also thought that something has to be said so that even a journal issue guest edited by graduate students of colour, with Indigenous and Black scholars and artists and other scholars and artists, has the potential to act as an intervention. And interventions are always partial. We understood this even when we began thinking about the name of this journal. We understand the name of this journal to be specifically anti-Black but we also hoped that it will be changed eventually. Our hope is also that this issue will raise more questions and encourage more conversations about race, anti-Blackness and Indigeneity in the future.



What brought us to the question of anti-colonial and decolonization politics of diasporic people of colour living in white settler colonies in this issue and in our scholarship and activism?

Ghaida: I'm hesitant in answering this question because my "motivation" wavers. Writing editorials feels like saying "I was here too... This whole time, I was here too behind these pages that other brilliant people wrote. I chose them, I read them, I asked them to change things... I hid behind them, but I was there too, and yet, now, I don't know what to say, I don't know if I should say it, I don't know why I got into this in the first place." I was tempted to write this editorial as a list of 100 questions, but hiding behind these questions seemed evasive in the face of a deeper question: "How do I write when I have nothing brilliant to say?" While part of me feels like turning back because these conversations are complicated and contentious and I'm a young scholar who is predisposed to saying all the wrong things... I feel like there is more at stake by not having these conversations. I'll start with why I feel pulled by this conversation, why I want to invite it and why I deem that, although my experiences, thoughts, or knowledge are not singular or special in any way, engaging in these questions seems necessary to me at this point in time. I teach and learn in most of my waking hours and I still believe that the work that we do as scholars—as tainted and constrained as it can be and often is—is meant to matter, when it either fails or succeeds, or when, more often than not, it both fails and succeeds. The title of co-editor that I have taken up refers mostly to my role in deeming the questions and themes laid out in this issue and the people engaging in them important enough to be featured in conversation. My awareness and politicization concerning settler colonialism and violence targeting Indigenous peoples more broadly is perhaps more recent than some. Living on someone else's land was always my experience here as a racialized immigrant, but not until pretty late in my life did I start to know of this land as Indigenous land. I grew up in a very white neighborhood in Québec and we weren't taught much in school about Indigeneity, colonization, settler colonialism, or even race, for that matter. My politicization around violence against Indigenous people came in tandem with my politicization on other issues such as sex, gender, class, and race. These were still pretty basic understandings—not until two years ago, in the context of a graduate seminar, did I become aware of dynamics that placed Indigenous people and people of colour in any type of relationship. It forced me to rethink dynamics beyond me/whiteness, Indigenous peoples/whiteness, all the while still being aware of the settler-colonial white-supremacist context in which I live. I am still very much wrapped in the complexity of this shift. And while this story isn't about me or my journey, I think it's important not to erase this point-of-entry because it has been formative of the motivation behind this issue. To a large extent, too, after reading Lawrence and Dua (2005) and Sharma and Wright's (2009) articles, now widely used as academic entry points into this conversation, I've felt that there is little space to engage critically with these texts. In the academic context, I have experienced fixations over the terms "settler of colour" and pre-formulated and deep-seated arguments in favour of one text or the other. I hear people who whole-heartedly agree and whole-heartedly disagree and very little honest conversation that leaves room for complexity or for asking what possibilities these conversations are opening and closing. My role as a co-organizer for the "Decolonizing Anti-Racism" Social and Political Thought conference at York University in 2014 added to this questioning. For instance, how can we hold both complicity and common grounds as two presences that sometimes cancel each other out, sometimes fuel alliances, and other times are used to uphold each other? How are white settlers using current discourses to further marginalize and oppress racialized people by acting as gatekeepers or "good confessional settlers"? How is recognition of complicity acting as a substitute for,



technique, or absolved of something beyond recognition? How are the politics of language signifying “good and bad politics” and limiting when and how we speak of what needs to be spoken about? How do some “critical” subjects gain currency and value and what does it mean when critical theory aligns with state policies? What makes this subject so contentious that never in my years in academia have I seen more heated debates than on the question of people of colour being settlers (and how is this fixation perhaps taking away from a larger project that was intended by the introduction of this idea in the first place)? Most importantly, how do we move beyond self-reflection and acknowledgement towards that something more that is needed? I hoped that this issue might bring some answers to these questions or more importantly open up discussions that are complex and un-easy (if not unsafe) to answer. In this way, my hesitation for engaging is my motivation to engage.

Nishant: After the 2014 Social and Political Thought graduate conference at York University, Ghaida approached me to be part of the project. Apart from the excitement to work with Ghaida and Shaista on what sounded like an exciting and a much-needed project, the impetus to join was also to bring in a critical engagement with race into the analysis of settler colonialism. For the last few years I have tried to engage, both in the academy and outside, as to what it means to be a racialized, brown, queer, upper-caste South Asian person on stolen lands. As non-Indigenous, non-Black, and non-white persons in the white-settler state, our presence here is often ambiguous, contested, and contradictory. As we discuss below, not all people of colour are situated similarly and homogeneously in the settler state. Furthermore, these complexities and contradictions need to be worked out and race needs to be understood more rigorously within the mechanics of white-settler colonialism.

I am not saying scholarship and activism on and against settler colonialism has effaced questions of race. Rather, I want to say the questions have not been taken up as urgently by people of colour. For Indigenous scholars, activists, and artists, the materialities and struggles against settler colonialism and white supremacy are different and we need to recognize those differences. Within the academy, and often outside, white people have taken a monopoly on questions of settler colonialism. I think the recent rise in settler-colonial studies is a testament to that. White scholars and activists are given much more credibility for doing this work than even Indigenous scholars. We know that community organizing and resistance led by Indigenous women and two-spirit folks continually goes unrecognized, whereas academic and “solidarity” work by white folks gets valorized and celebrated. The domination of settler-colonial studies by white academics and activists erases Indigenous scholarship and the scholarship of people of colour and Black people that challenges settler colonialism and white supremacy through other disciplines. Indigenous scholarship is not settler-colonial studies, even though Indigenous scholars may work within it. As people of colour, we need to find ways to engage more with Indigenous and Native studies rather than with settler-colonial studies. For me working on this issue is a way of seeking new ways of theorizing race within settler colonialism, even if a bit over-ambitiously.

Shaista: My academic and political investments are in theorizing ways of building solidarity between Muslims, other racialized peoples, and the Indigenous peoples of Canada. After 9/11, the heightened sense of racial injury I experienced as a Muslim woman was the foundation of my activist and academic work. As I navigated various spaces between the U.S. and Canada, I was constantly angered about how brown bodies were racially profiled in predominantly non-Muslim (mostly white) public (and private) spaces. I was angry at the racism directed against me, at my body, and at the bodies of those who looked like me. Furthermore, I was willing to live up to the



stereotype of the angry Muslim to defend myself against anyone who thought that I needed any kind of saving from my “culture.” My Master’s thesis was a study of the post-9/11 *Anti-terrorism Act* of Canada in which I examined how racial violences against Muslims have been legally sanctioned and actively participated in by ordinary Canadian citizens. Later in my Doctoral studies I began to read up on Canadian settler-colonial histories and the contemporary routinized exercise of colonial violence against Indigenous peoples of North America. It was then that I began to understand how this labeling of Muslim bodies as terrorists was the legacy of a white-supremacist settler-colonial governmentality that continues to label Indigenous peoples of this land as terrorists and then targets them for disappearance and death. As I reflected on colonial violence, my politics became guided by the question of who are these other bodies being targeted and whose lands I now live on. How could I live on this land, on which my presence was facilitated through the very colonial and racist institution of citizenship, and talk about violence directed at my body and at my people, without situating that violence and my work for social justice within the history of a nation-state literally founded on the dead bodies or presumed to be always-already dead and erased nations of Indigenous peoples? Of course these questions too are very partial, and constituted through several other erasures of bodies and histories. I have come to realize that I am not even sure anymore of the kinds of questions I should be asking in my scholarship. Indigenous feminist scholarship has been central to how I came to critically think about Canada as a white settler colonial space and make connections between questions of Indigenous sovereignty and Western imperial and colonial projects outside of North America. I first came to think about these connections through works of scholars such as Lee Maracle (Sto:Lo), Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux), Jodi Byrd (Chickasaw) and Zainab Amadahy (Black and Cherokee) and so many others. Indigenous feminist scholarship is asking us to reframe our (immigrant and settler) demands for social justice in ways that I did not consider before engaging with their scholarship. I credit them and their words for demanding from all of us not only critical anti-colonial and anti-racist scholarship-organizing related to our present/presence here but also a reframing of futures that have less violence, wars, genocides and more humanity, peace, justice and compassion.

How do we understand our complicity in white-settler colonialism and in other systems of domination? Why is this question of complicity important for us as people of colour (PoC)?

Shaista: Talking about the complicity of people of colour in white-settler colonialism usually traces along the same coordinates as white people’s complicity. Discussions of complicity more or less turn into questions of the settlerhood and settlerness of people of colour. In various activist and academic spaces here in Toronto, I have seen the question of complicity often being addressed by determining which person of colour has what privileges and to what extent one is a settler. Some common scenarios include:

- 1) Acknowledging settler privilege through a ritualistic performance of confessions (long live Freud’s couch) where people of colour and white people go through the laundry list of their privileges, recounting the ways in which they are complicit in white-settler colonialism in Canada: heterosexuality, Canadian citizenship, socio-economic privileges, cisgender, etc.
- 2) Usually a white man or a man of colour (in PoC-only spaces) challenges those people of colour identifying as settlers. He/They ask the most dreaded question: “Is a refugee a



settler?” and then consumes the next two hours of the meeting by specifying how refugees are not settlers, how only migrants with certain privileges are settlers, how the point of confessions is not to go back home, who has home, who can leave, etc. Soon, it's 10pm and we all want to leave and go home to watch Netflix. We are so burnt out that we lose the significance of the context and work that had first called us together.

3) White people (usually tearfully) admit to their settlerness but at the expense of their whiteness. These confessions do the work of placing people of colour on an equal footing with white people, while suspending the violence of whiteness and white supremacy. It then becomes the responsibility of people of colour to call out these white people on racial erasures and on their colonial histories and presents, which are different from colonized pasts and racialized presents of people of colour. Soon, once again, it is 10pm...

The scenarios above illustrate situations that people of colour have often been in in various activist (and academic) spaces that engage with discussions on white-settler colonialism, Indigenous sovereignty, and our place here. Discussions of complicity, for us, have often been framed in the language of our settlerness (by us and even by white settlers). However, the term “settler of colour” is taken up more enthusiastically than ever before by the generation of mostly graduate students and activists who are taking up questions of our place on this land and rejecting the settler state's invitation to become docile and grateful immigrants. However, sometimes we frame it as a progress narrative where the activism of our parents and grandparents here in 1970s to late 1990s is understood as simply a fight for inclusion while we, the generation born in 1980s and 1990s, are better, more radical, more critical, more anti-colonial. While the critiques we have are needed, the more important questions to ask is what have been the shifts in white settler governmentality to allow us to imagine ourselves as settlers of colour in this moment (rather than as immigrants only)?

What happens when complicity with the white settler state is framed through the term “settler of colour”? Is such recognition of ourselves necessarily more political? In the late 2000s, I wrote a letter to a Marxist theory journal asking the question, “Where are the Settlers of Colour?” The immense circulation of that letter definitely pointed to the fact that we people of colour are asking questions about our complicity, about our place in keeping colonial violence ongoing while at the same time fighting racial injustices against our bodies. However, since then, I have often feared that in an era of the neoliberal state's (empty and apolitical) apologies and (irrelevant) recognition of its “past” (but never the present), naming bodies of colour as settlers and then debating who is not really a settler in the same way as I am, has done nothing for letting us think about how deep, complicated and transnational the question of our complicity is in not only white settler colonialism but also in white supremacy. Words become empty (and therefore dangerous) when the failure of our political imagination does not allow us to consider the multiplicity of violence(s) and complexities of resistance narratives and strategies.

Complicity, I believe, is like the nine-headed hydra with its heads all raised at the same time. As somebody really struggling with thinking about complicity in more historical ways as well, I am not asking you to let go of the term “settler of colour” if this is indeed how you identify. But I am asking that we all think more critically about the question of complicity more broadly as well, and as something beyond the confessions saved for our meetings. In her book, *Pedagogies of Crossing*, Caribbean feminist scholar, Jacqui Alexander (2006) writes, “neither complicity (usually cathected onto someone else) nor vigilance (usually reserved for ourselves) is given to any of us *before* the fact of our living” (272, emphasis in original). As people often coming from post-



colonies, with broken connections with our histories, it is then important to consider how is it that we live and in this living what have we forgotten or even forgotten what we have forgotten? If we begin to remember, how much more complexity will our reading of our place here require?

Certainly, as is shown by that letter I mentioned and perhaps even what I am writing here, I have forgotten a lot. But even thinking about how I am living this complicity requires me to ask whether my analysis of complicity as a Pakistani Muslim woman should begin here or does it begin back in the city of my birth, Karachi, where there are forsaken areas marked by police violence? Where there are areas known as the Harlem of Karachi (officially known as Lyari) where intense violence happens because of anti-Blackness and areas where class-privileged, brown-skinned Pakistanis like myself would never go? And these are the “far flung” areas where the domestic servants working in our homes come from. These areas exist in my city and yet they are a different world to us class-privileged, born-with-foreign-passports Pakistanis. Should my mappings of complicity begin with accounting for my last name and the caste privileges, which cemented my right to different passports and promised an easier entry and place in the diaspora (Soundarajan and Varatharaja 2015)? Some of these questions are a call to expand the limits, forms, and histories of our understanding of my complicity. So perhaps we need to expand on the kinds of projects to which we can ethically commit. Let us have discussions about the connections which have always existed and through which we exist, so that I/we do not continue to set up fences around what we find ourselves complicit in.

As I said before, I write this as somebody whose work is reflective of several forgettings and failures (of political imagination). Having little understanding of the complexity of systems of oppression that have constituted Canada, my letter in that journal made sense only through some prominent erasures of not only the ways in which people of colour are deployed by the white settler state to work for it, but also of Black bodies upon whose labour the white nation-state is hinged. Along with complicity and settler of colour, I think we also need to be careful about who we refer to by “people of colour”. Over the last few years, I have been carefully thinking about what terms such as “people of colour” do for our politics and fight for freedoms and liberations. I am less willing to be arrogant enough to suggest that we do away with a term of politicized non-belonging adopted by Black women and immigrant women in North America who often came together to fight for life and freedoms against the white settler state. But this term also keeps demanding from us an examination of the heterogeneity of bodies, histories and power relations that constitute it. As Alexander discusses in relation to the category “women of color”:

We are not born women of color. We become women of color. In order to become women of color, we would need to become fluent in each others’ histories, to resist and unlearn an impulse to claim first oppression, most-devastating oppression, one-of-a-kind oppression, defying comparison oppression. We would have to unlearn an impulse that allows mythologies about each other to replace *knowing* about one another. We would need to cultivate a way of knowing in which we direct our social, cultural, psychic, and spiritually marked attention on each other. (269, emphasis in original)

This unlearning of colonial and racist readings of Others and cultivating ways of ethically beginning to know the Other, to acknowledge and recognize the Other in ways that is outside of liberal forms of recognition practiced by the white settler state is perhaps one of the more important challenges for all those of us who see ourselves as people of color. Recently, I have been noticing the term non-Black people of colour in circulation. It is a term to tell brown-skinned people of colour that we are not the same as Black people, that our histories are different and that we cannot talk about complicity as settlers here without simultaneously thinking about



our complicity in anti-Blackness since the white settler state is also the plantation state. For me, this term has also prompted questions about how am I taking up questions about violence against my body.

If our task as theorists-activists is to constantly think about what concepts do for us, for our fights, rather than what we can do for the concepts then perhaps thinking about adding modifiers to the term PoC is very much needed. These same erasures also made my article on Muslim feminist activism in *The Feminist Wire* possible. Encouraging my fellow (brown) Muslims to seek alternative and creative ways of confronting and challenging Islamophobia and not asking the white settler state for justice, I asked fellow-Muslims to begin with an understanding that Islamophobia is also a white settler colonial state project. However, in one paragraph, I stated that Muslims arrived in North America in 19th century while “forgetting” that hundreds of thousands of Black Muslims were brought to these lands chained and caged on slave ships. In Canada itself, Black Muslim bodies remain incarcerated in housing projects that often have a direct pipeline to prisons. Rather, I should say, from plantations to prisons. Police brutality against Somali Muslims and other Black bodies here is no secret, even if (structurally) ignored in our (non-Black) resistance narratives. So then, how does talking about settlerness and settlements make any sense through these erasures of Black Muslims and Blackness? What does it mean to think of Muslim bodies as only and always Brown? Where and how do we engage with anti-Blackness in diaspora and in the very constitution of white settler colonialism? If the term settler of colour signifies an acknowledgement of our place in the workings of white settler colonialism, then do we also use/invent new terms for talking about my anti-Blackness as a Brown Muslims? How can we talk about Islamophobia here without letting go of it as simultaneously a white settler project that is also anti-black? My own anti-Blackness comes from not only the dinner table conversations I heard every day growing up, but also from my lack of knowledge of histories and from the very limited understanding of what Muslim bodies should look like.

All of this is to say that I am less excited by the question of whether or not people of colour are indeed settlers, and that nothing terrifies me more than being confronted with the “Is a refugee a settler?” question. Such dangerously rhetorical questions are meant to flatten structures of oppression and our histories into mere categories on questionnaires. Also, in these cases, settler becomes about a degree of privilege, translated into degrees of settlerness. If I own any property here, am I more of a settler than those who do not? Is an immigrant of colour who has been here for only two years less complicit than a “Pakistani-Canadian” born here? The discussions which often frame the coordinates of complicity become just as exhausting as the scenarios with which I opened my response.

Lastly, I want to say that some of us came here from post-colonies where we received a colonial education that instilled in us all the skills required for upholding white supremacy. Unlearning what we were taught in schools means beginning to recognize each other as Alexander tells us. Unlearning also means thinking about our place in these systems of domination and subordination and to talk about our complicity and understand that surely our complicity has taken many forms and it has preceded our bodies and last few decades of presence here. Maybe those of us in academia can begin with who are we reading? Are we following certain “trends”? The question is not only one of whose bodies we are standing on, but also whose bodies and scholarship we continue to exploit in order to present ourselves in solidarity with Indigenous and Black people here. Or, in order to get the next publication out.

Ghaida: Mostly here I’m interested in when acknowledgement or recognition of complicity results in catharsis. I’m sure there’s more to it than that, yet it seems like recognition holds the



most value in the circles I move in. “You forgot to mention you’re a settler”—that’s how it happens sometimes. How do we move beyond this? Can we have conversations where complicity isn’t formulaic, or abstract, but rather based in the ways we think, act, and live...and how do these ways we think, act, and live need to change in the concrete?

Nishant: When talking about racialized complicities, the conversation usually starts, and often ends, at the term “settler of colour.” As someone who got politicized around settler colonialism by reading Bonita Lawrence and Ena Dua’s (2005) critique of anti-racist organizing, I do take the term “settler of colour” seriously. I think it is critical and it does—and has the potential to do—a lot of anti-colonial political work. I do, however, understand the limitations of the term. Obviously not all people of colour are complicit in the settler colonial project. First, we need to understand that racialized peoples are differently situated than white settlers. Secondly, race, caste, gender, class, sexuality, ability, religion, migration status and histories all determine people’s positioning in the settler state.

The term “settler of colour” has been more than formative in developing a personal understanding of my own privilege and complicities, as well as my academic and political work, in the settler state. However, I am moving away from the homogenization of all people of colour as settlers of colour. As Tiffany King’s piece says in this issue, we need to create new grammars to understand these complicated processes. I think we need to go beyond the term and find new ways of understanding racialized complicities and privileges. Complicity cannot be theorised in isolation. Complicity in one structure does not erase complicities in others. Rather, they are always enabled by, and enable other structures of complicity. How were people theorizing these complicities before the phrase became cool and sexy? How did people understand their positions in the settler colonial state? How are we as people of colour committed to decolonization of Indigenous nations and lands? How do we understand complicities through and within other structures of racial violences like anti-black racism, Islamophobia, exclusionary citizenship? As South Asian (Indian from India, to be precise), how do I engage with my complicities in structures of brahmanical supremacy, which maintains interlocking systems of violences through caste, Indigeneity, religion, nation and occupations? If we think of structures of violences and oppressions, intersectionally and transnationally, As Dhamoon argues in her essay in this collection, then complicity is not limited to just one structure. We need to look at these questions historically and contemporarily, as well as thinking about the future.

That said I also don’t buy a complete rejection of the phrase. We can’t just say all people of colour are not settlers of colour and hence the term is not valid. That rejection has created binaries, and produced toxicities and frictions. We know through our experiences how working through our complicities is difficult. Firstly, geographies of settler colonialism and white supremacy have ensured that Indigenous peoples and peoples of colour don’t have many spaces to interact and come together. Further it has created frictions and tensions between these communities that are often hard to unsettle. This is not to say that these communities have had not interacted before, lived together, and fought together. What I am trying to say is that there are models of these intimacies, proximities, and alliances to build on contemporarily. And the debates around the term “settler of colour” make this work even more difficult. The resistance to the term in academia as well as in activist spaces has closed off many spaces instead of creating new(er) ones. We need to work with frictions but not make them so toxic that the analysis and work stops. While I understand the critique of performative self-identification as settler, I am also wary of not naming the complicities. What happens when we do not name? What gets invisibilized when we stop explicitly naming and identifying our presence as non-Indigenous peoples on these lands? This is the tricky thing about identity politics or ally identity politics. But



naming itself is a very limiting political act as it may not be critically intersectional. Yet it still does something...

I think coming to an understanding that Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples have colonial and racial pasts, presents, and futures, albeit in different, complex, and varying ways is the common ground for alliances and solidarity. But often anti-racist and anti-colonial work stops there. We need to analyze the complexity, contradictions, and complicities in these global, yet localized, processes. We also need to bring an analysis of heteropatriarchy and capitalism to the work of organizing and theorizing together. This, too, is discursive and it is difficult to go beyond these words. In activist, academic, and artist works, including in my own work, I have seen how we are limited by words and theorizing concepts. We have very few models available to demonstrate ways of organizing together and often the differences in power between our communities prevent us from imagining new and alternative relationships of solidarity. I think the words fail because we remain too obsessed with being politically correct, too insecure in drawing inter-connections and solidarities with other communities and too scared of taking risks and experiencing failure. My understanding is informed by my own experiences of academic and activist failures. We need to let go of ourselves, and make ourselves vulnerable—going beyond political fights and ego—and we need to be more willing to ask what is really at stake when we are aligned with the settler state. I don't necessarily agree with the idea that non-Indigenous peoples can be Indigenous and decolonized if they are in solidarity with struggles of Indigenous self-determination. For me it's not about Indigenousization or decolonization of the self (although the latter is crucial work that everyone needs to strive for). I believe we need to develop our understanding that Indigenous lands first need to be decolonized before we ourselves can claim to be decolonized. We need creative and ethical ways to develop relationships of solidarity with Indigenous nations in order to effectively support struggles for Indigenous sovereignty across Turtle Island.

What is our relation to transnational feminisms? What connections do we see between transnational feminist analyses and questions of settler colonialism, Indigenous sovereignty, and race? What are the limitations of transnational feminist frameworks within settler colonial contexts?

Ghaida: The choice of using “transnational feminisms” in the call out title for this issue has had mixed results. On the one hand, I think that a fair amount of submissions did engage with this approach, though not always explicitly. On the other hand, I think perhaps it was a deterrent—it closed off conversations and left out some submissions that would have otherwise been submitted. People may have thought, “oh that's not what I'm working on,” or “that's not what I'm doing” even though their work might very much be relevant to the conversations we are seeking to generate. There was admittedly a very small response by Indigenous people for this issue, and while I cannot claim the reasons for that, a part of it might have been that transnational feminism might not seem so relevant when settler-colonialism is only recently being discussed in academic circles and that transnational feminism has been mobilized by some to dismiss calls for nationhood and sovereignty, or in general hasn't really engaged with settler-colonialism studies and Native studies. At the same time, we did make that choice for specific reasons, perhaps with the hope that it might help converse about some of the questions we were raising, such as what kinds of alliances are possible, and what kinds of complicities are involved in these relationships (that not only include individual people and their own places individually, but also take place between countries and between histories of colonization). And those questions are still very



much relevant. For example, how are policies that infringe on Indigenous peoples' self-determination, the securitization of Canadian state borders, and imperialism abroad working in tandem? These conversations are where we meet. This approach perhaps helps us move our understandings of complicity and alliances beyond rhetoric, focusing on the ways we use where we are situated in the world, how we got there, and how we are pulled by structures that are larger than us to collaborate in dismantling these structures, even if that means dismantling parts of ourselves.

Nishant: While there are many definitions for transnational feminism available, there are three fundamental aspects which stand out for me and which make transnational feminism a crucial lens for the work we hope to do. First, transnational feminisms is defined by a deep and critical commitment to anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist, and feminist frameworks. Consequently, it focuses on intersectional, interlocking, overlapping, cross-cultural analysis of gender, race, class, sexuality, and nationality. Second, transnational feminisms emphasizes questions of the geopolitics of epistemology, knowledge production, and the role of the intellectual and the academy. Third, it offers a commitment to rupture and destabilize the geopolitical boundaries of nation-states and the academy, bringing "here and there" together into one frame.

There is a marked absence of meaningful acknowledgment, engagement, and theorization of settler colonialism within transnational feminisms. There are two ways in which transnational feminist analysis has not taken into account questions of settler colonialism. First, in theorizing gender through intersecting processes of colonialism and capitalism, there is no room for Indigenous women in the analysis. For instance, Mohanram (1999) in her sharp critique of Mohanty's now-classic essay "Under Western Eyes" has shown how Mohanty symptomatically reproduces the third world woman as homogenous across histories and geographies, a frame which Mohanty herself critiques. Further, Mohanram argued, there is no space for the struggles of Native American women in Mohanty's analysis. To her credit, Mohanty (2003) acknowledged this limitation in her revised essay "Under Western Eyes' Revisited" and argued that Indigenous women's struggles do not follow a post-colonial trajectory and cannot be addressed easily under the categories such as "western" and "third world." Alexander and Mohanty further elaborate: "If to talk about space is to talk also about geography then to talk about geography is to talk about land, and the fierce contestations over land that are at the centre of both neoimperial and colonial land appropriation" (Alexander and Mohanty 2010, 39). It is hence urgent to theorize white settler colonization as it continues to be: "an important dimension of the spatialization of power at this very moment in history" (39). However, indigeneity and gender still remain under-theorized by transnational feminists. The second shortcoming is the theorization of nations and nation-states. There is often an impulse amongst transnational feminists to reject all forms of nations and nationalisms. Obviously, this doesn't sit well with Indigenous feminists who have struggled for generations against the colonization of their nations and lands. Given that transnational feminist scholarships primarily come out of white settler states, these shortcomings are critical and need to be further interrogated.

There were obvious limitations in our analyses that are reflected in the CFP and the majority of the submissions we received. Given that we extended our deadlines to get submissions from Indigenous and Black authors and artists, there is obviously something missing in a transnational feminist analysis. Maybe it is our positioning as transnational diasporic people of colour that allows us to engage with transnational feminist scholarship; without this positioning, other folks may not feel as connected to or passionate about transnational feminisms. There are more obvious links between transnational feminisms and



Black feminisms; however, as pointed to above, the same cannot be argued for Indigenous feminisms.

In spite of these shortcomings, I think there is room to think about a transnational feminist analysis of settler colonialism which offers us to think transnationally and intersectionally, as Rita Dhamoon's paper demonstrates. It allows us to think about race and colonialism in local and global contexts, and it helps us centre gender in the conversation. Further, it enables a critical theorization of migration in both local and global contexts. I think bringing transnational feminist analysis to an understanding of settler colonialism in this political moment lets us draw connections between the destruction of lands, waters, and recourses by settler economies in Indigenous economies to the exploitation of racialized and migrant labour within these economies. It helps us make sense of the settler security state that deports people of colour, targets Indigenous sovereignties and incarcerates, and often kills, Indigenous, Black and people of colour at higher rates than white settlers. It allows for an understanding of gender and white heteropatriarchies that affect, in very different ways, Indigenous, Black and racialized communities, and targets women, trans and queer bodies specifically.

There is clearly still much work to be done before transnational feminist analyses can effectively critique settler colonialism and engage with the work of Indigenous feminists. To begin with, the national in the transnational will need to be further decolonized before transnational feminisms can ethically engage with ongoing projects of colonialism in Indigenous nations. However, I believe that transnational feminisms has an important role to play in challenging settler colonialism and can be used to work in solidarity with the decolonization of Indigenous nations.

Shaista: What accounts for the transnational part of feminist politics? Who does transnational feminist politics? Chickasaw scholar, Chadwick Allen (2012) writes that the "transnational" is the "old and ongoing story of story" (2). The story that began before Christopher Columbus set out to look for India. It's the story of present that began before our forgetting of what we have forgotten. I do not know what it means to situate my work in transnational feminist studies as a field of study in Canada, but I hope that the connections I am making between the "Old World" and the "New World" in my scholarship are transnational, in that they follow links that are beyond the boundaries of the nation-states, temporalities and violences.

But the question of who is seen as doing transnational studies is an important one. Is some theorizing always already transnational? For instance, are calls to end the heteropatriarchal white settler plantation police nation-state not calls for other means of connecting and knowing? For Indigenous and Black feminists, (white settler, genocidal, plantation) nation-states have never been the place of hope, and every feminist engagement has eventually been about ending it. Can we acknowledge that Black feminist writers theorizing the slave body and slave ships are already doing transnational feminist work? As Black scholars remind us, Blackness is always transnational, always larger and bigger than the borders of nation-states. What can we name as more fluid, vibrant, and transnational than the Atlantic and the Black bodies buried deep in its' heart? So some fields of study and their projects become limited to the local while in actuality the bodies they centre and the ontological and epistemological questions they ask are always already transnational, anti-racist and anti-colonial in scope. For those of us who work with the question of violence against Indigenous, Black and other bodies of colour, we are required to pay attention to the fact that these violences are intimately connected across spaces and times. As I said above in my response to the previous question, for some of us, the question of complicity here as people living on stolen land, requires



that we look into our histories and that we pay attention to all bodies who continue to demand that we ethically engage with violences. Paying attention to such questions moves us across continents, from past into present and back into the past and so forth. It asks us to trace the contradictions of the Empire which places us as both victims of violence but also as perpetrators of violence. As Lisa Lowe (2015) reminds us in her groundbreaking work on the intimacies of the four continents of Asia, Europe, Africa and Americas, “There is an ethics and politics in struggling to comprehend the particular *loss* of the intimacies of four continents, to engage slavery, genocide, indenture, and liberalism as a conjunction, as an actively acknowledged loss within the present” (207, emphasis in original).

I want to end by thinking about the question of violence against Indigenous women and women of colour as an example of a question that is always already transnational. The response of the state and mainstream feminist movement to violence against non-Black women of colour, always seen as immigrants regardless of whether or not we were born in Canada, becomes about our culture only. We become marked by our seemingly backward and monolithic culture as women who must be saved from our “death by culture” (Narayan, 1997) by the benevolent state and its machinery of Non-governmental organizations that often do little than take a “band-aid” approach to addressing violence against our bodies. Violence then becomes about the heteropatriarchal private sphere where only brown men beat up us women of colour. Equally importantly, as several anti-racist feminist Canadian women of colour scholars such as Sunera Thobani, Sherene Razack and Yasmin Jiwani, among others, have shown, such markings by culture also aid in the invasion of Muslim countries so that even drone strikes and charred bodies of colour can be defended as a feminist project of saving brown women from brown men (even as brown women literally lie dead under the rubble). And this narrative continues as women of colour refugees and immigrants continue to be deported to their “countries of origin” where some become targeted for (more) violence. Bill S-7, The Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, is not just about Muslim bodies within the Canadian borders or at its borders. Its work is transnational. Similarly, looking into murders of Black women demands looking into police brutality that upholds the Master/Slave relations of power into the present moment. Looking into Black women’s deaths brings to fore intimacies of the four continents and the intimacies of the Old World and the New World. At what point does one begin or end their analysis on violence against Black women? I do not know. This work is transnational. Indigenous women on the other hand are seen as a dying race and their deaths (at the hands of the white state and its ordinary white settler citizen subjects) needs to continue if Indigenous sovereignty has to be suspended and superseded by the white settler colonial sovereignty of Canada. Their disappearance and deaths continue with impunity as the government (regardless of which party is in power) has continued with its sham inquiries into murders and disappearances of Indigenous women. Deaths of both become necessary albeit for very different purposes. One “set” of deaths is integral for the settler colonial governmentality to safeguard its national colonial sovereignty and the other guarantees access to imperial and colonial capitalist gains outside of the nation-state’s boundaries. Such critical readings of violence against women here are therefore always transnational. It was also this critical understanding of transnational which informed our Call for Papers for this issue. While not all of the pieces use the framework of transnational feminist studies per se, each submission engages with the transnational by challenging the borders of the white settler nation-state and engaging with bodies that were either never supposed to be here or at least not as (fully) human bodies in white settler spaces.

I understand that transnational feminism in academia comes out of particular historical moments in the US and Canadian academy. We, people of colour, are deeply indebted to the field of feminist studies that challenged the monolithic reading of “Third World Women,” paid



attention to the question of power, and conceptualized new forms of transnational solidarities and collaborations. My point is not that transnational feminist studies as a sub-field is not important. I heartily agree with my co-editors on their take on transnational feminism, and greatly appreciate Rita Dhamoon's call for transnationalism and intersectionality to be brought into conversation with white settler colonialism. What I have been thinking about is that we think critically about who gets to say that they are doing transnational studies. Also, as contributors and editors in this issue have stated, how and where are the Indigenous bodies placed in transnational studies? Does our scholarship continue to adhere to the vertical hierarchy of the white settler always above the Indigenous while claiming to read for horizontal and asymmetrical relations of power among the differently colonized and racialized?

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A Feminist Approach to Decolonizing Anti-Racism: Rethinking Transnationalism, Intersectionality, and Settler Colonialism

Rita Dhamoon

In this paper, I consider three organizing concepts that prompt challenges to decolonizing anti-racist feminism: intersectionality raises questions about how far this lens can go beyond identity and left-liberal discourse to address issues of class inequity; transnationalism prompts issues about whether the nation is a site of liberation or oppression; and settler colonialism raises questions about how best to navigate power differentials within the margins. By putting feminist, critical race, and Indigenous approaches into conversation, I contend that we must rethink the concepts of transnationalism, intersectionality, and settler colonialism in the service of dismantling manifestations of settler-colonialism.

Introduction

In 2005, Mi'kmaw scholar Bonita Lawrence and South Asian scholar Enakshi Dua published "Decolonizing Anti-Racism," which has since provoked an explosion within some anti-racist circles, both in academia and social-activist spaces. Their article critiques people-of-colour for failing to address colonial forces affecting Indigenous peoples in settler nations, identifying people of colour as settlers who benefit from Indigenous dispossession. My goal in this paper is to offer a response to this debate that is informed by feminist theory and also seeks to decolonize feminist and anti-racist praxis. I contend that in responding to colonial manifestations of anti-racism, feminists must wrestle with three specific anxieties: 1) the tension among feminists between the nation as a site of liberation or conversely as a site of oppression; 2) how to navigate differentials of power within various interconnected forms of heteropatriarchal and neoliberal racisms and colonialisms; and 3) the simultaneity of being a member of an oppressed group and being structurally implicated in Othering. In various ways, these issues are emerging organically in social justice movements, rather than the academy, where some are already making connections across different kinds of anti-patriarchal, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and decolonial agendas. While my larger study of different colonialisms and racisms tracks the ramifications of these tensions for political coalitions and actual sites of collective organizing, this paper considers some theoretical challenges that Indigenous struggles pose for non-Indigenous feminisms. As bell hooks has argued, theory that seeks to be transformative often begins from a place that strives to make sense of what is happening and to "imagine possible futures, a place where life could be lived differently" (1994, 61). My aim is to make sense of the tensions over decolonizing racisms that have ensued in anti-racist feminist spaces and open up ways to imagine possible alternate futures. One way to do this is for feminists to revisit three organizing concepts to comprehend our contradictory roles in settler-colonial projects so that the latter can be dismantled: transnationalism, intersectionality, and settler colonialism.

How can feminist conceptions of transnationalism, intersectionality, and settler colonialism address tensions over decolonizing racism? A underlying impulse in asking this



question is how to avoid depoliticizing or reducing feminist concepts to hegemonic agendas, and instead critically engage intersectionality, transnationalism, and decoloniality in ways that are not collapsed amorously around difference and that do not reproduce the very forms of power they aim to dismantle. In responding to these questions, I aim to offer a “decolonizing anti-racist *feminist* approach” to power and identity that integrates considerations of intersectionality, transnationalism, and settler colonialism. I emphasize the feminist dimension of my project as a way to signal that I am building on, extending, and reformulating the project of “decolonizing anti-racism” outlined by Lawrence and Dua. Fundamentally, this paper questions what is theoretically and politically at stake in a decolonizing anti-racist feminist approach to power and identity.

Decolonizing Anti-Racism?

People of Colour as Settlers

Lawrence and Dua’s call to decolonize anti-racism starts from a critique of anti-racist theory and practice, which they argue tends to exclude Indigenous peoples and perspectives and “is premised on an ongoing colonial project” (2005, 123). This exclusion, they contend, effectively makes settler domination an Indigenous issue rather than one concerning people of colour (as well as whites) and effectively advances contemporary colonial agendas (Lawrence and Dua 2005). They argue that decolonization politics in particular is often equated with anti-racist politics or seen as merely one component of rather than foundational to a larger anti-racist struggle (Lawrence and Dua 2005). The failure to make Indigenous presence and experiences foundational to anti-racism, analyses of slavery, and diaspora and migration studies also has the effect of falsely placing colonialism in the past and missing the multiple projects of continuing settlement on Indigenous lands. Indigenous experiences and issues are distinct from that of other non-whites because of the practiced and ongoing forms of direct military-state intervention; policies specifically formulated to destroy Indigenous peoples, their culture, and identity, including their access to land; policies and practices of genocide, displacement, and assimilation directed specifically at Indigenous peoples (Lawrence and Dua 2005); the legal system, including the rule of law, which pre-empts Indigenous sovereignty; and because “returning the land is never on the agenda” despite legal decisions regarding land claims and treaties (Lawrence and Dua 2005, 125).

As such, Lawrence and Dua conclude that Indigenous peoples are not just another interest group whose claims should be measured against the needs of ethno-cultural groups, but rather are colonized peoples whose subjugation continues not only through structures of whiteness but also the settlement of people of colour in Canada (and other settler nation-states like the US and Australia). They argue that:

[P]eople of color are settlers. Broad differences exist between those brought as slaves, currently working as migrant laborers, are refugees without legal documentation, or émigrés who have obtained citizenship. Yet people of color live on land that is appropriated and contested, where Aboriginal peoples are denied nationhood and access to their own lands. (Lawrence and Dua 2005, 134)

This position has been at the centre of controversy in anti-racist academic and activist circles.



People of Colour are not Settlers

Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright (2008-9) agree with Lawrence and Dua on the importance of attending to the specificities of oppression faced by non-whites, the failure of a civil-rights and multicultural approach, and the need to produce liberatory strategies of critique that do not reproduce the ruling strategies of colonial modernity and state formations. Though their analysis emphasizes a critique of racial and neoliberal hegemonies, I focus on their work because it effectively denies the constitutive feature of settler colonialism, namely the relevance of Indigenous dispossession.

Sharma and Wright (2008-9) refuse the idea that all migrants are settler colonists and also critique the goal of Indigenous (and nation-state) nationalism because, as they argue, nationalisms reproduce colonial logics and are linked to “neoliberal practices that have further globalized capitalist social relations and to the related neo-racist practices” (2008-9, 123). For Sharma and Wright, inequities between variously forced, less-than-voluntary, or even fully voluntary migrants and/or their descendants should not position people of colour as settler colonists; to position migrants of colour as settler colonists is to conflate migration and colonial processes. As such, they critique Lawrence and Dua’s position because it requires that “the only way not to be a ‘colonizer’ is to remain on the land with which one is associated [...] [even though] ironically, migration is often one response of people who have been colonized and dispossessed of their prior livelihoods” (Sharma and Wright 2008-9, 123).

Sharma and Wright rightly punctuate that different migration processes and contexts should not be conflated (Lawrence and Dua also note this), and that migrants have various forced and voluntary trajectories of movement across geopolitical and cultural borders. However, Sharma and Wright then use this variation to dismiss the significance of settler colonialism, specifically because they do not account for the ways in which the ability to settle in a new place may be premised on structures of continuing colonialism premised on Indigenous dispossession. Ultimately, they conclude that the naturalization of Indigenous connection to the land fosters neoliberal and neo-racist modes of belonging through autochthony (i.e., the state of being native to a particular area) and is contrary to challenging ruling practices and relations.

While there are a number of possible critiques of the arguments advanced by Sharma and Wright, I focus here on their conceptions of power, settler colonialism, and nation. Rather than reading Lawrence and Dua’s call as one of accountability within the margins, Sharma and Wright adopt an Oppression Olympics framework, whereby groups are positioned as if they are competing for the mantle of the most oppressed, without disrupting hegemonies of power. Put differently, Sharma and Wright must erase the colonizing processes and effects of Indigenous difference in order for migrants of colour to hold the mantle of the most oppressed. In doing so, they fail to attend to the relational and relative degrees of differentiation among and between migrants of colour and Indigenous peoples that are produced in the service of the settler nation. Sharma and Wright also repeatedly suggest that Indigenous peoples are obstacles to migrant freedoms (Saranillo 2013), and wrongly imply that Indigenous liberation is intrinsically about expelling non-Indigenous peoples. They imply that Lawrence and Dua have created this binary, but they repeatedly deny and depoliticize the differences between Indigenous peoples and other non-whites; for example, they assume the differences between Natives and non-Natives are a “dualistic hierarchy established by neo-racist thought” (Sharma and Wright 2008-9, 6) and they deny historical Indigenous continuity of title because such claims too are deemed to be neo-racist. In other words, for migrants of colour to be assigned their due attention in liberation struggles, Sharma and Wright need Indigenous peoples to disappear, which is an inherently



conservative and imperialistic logic. As Heidi Stark (2014) notes, Sharma and Wright fail to recognize that one “ruling strategy” is to naturalize the erasure of Indigenous dispossession; moreover, the liberation goals advanced by Sharma and Wright are presupposed by the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and cultures.

Further, Sharma and Wright wrongly assume that settler colonialism is defined as “the forced movements of enslaved Africans, the movement of unfree indentured Asians, or the subsequent Third World displacements and migrations of people from across the globe, many of them indigenous people themselves” (2008-9, 121). Rather, settler colonialism can operate without the forced movements and displacements of migrants of colour as its constitutive features are the attempted/actual eradication of Indigenous peoples, unhindered access to land, and the naturalization of colonial state-based sovereignty as legitimate. The problem for liberation struggles is thus not so much about whether migrants are settler colonists, but rather how migrations and the movement of non-whites are enabled and regulated by a global system of nation-states and corporations in the service of settler colonial projects *and vice versa*. Accordingly, anti-racist work should be directed against hegemonies of migration and Indigenous dispossession as interconnected manifestations of white-supremacist capitalism, of which some hegemonies are based on societal and state-produced colonial hierarchies that privilege non-Indigenous peoples, including people of colour, at the expense of Indigenous peoples. Thus far, as Lawrence and Dua note, there has largely been an erasure or conflation between racisms and colonialisms even in some anti-racist circles, which ultimately overlooks, for example, the variations of racisms and colonialisms against Blacks, Muslims, Chinese peoples, and Indigenous peoples. Sharma and Wright also express concern about solidarities, but it seems to rest on a blatant conservative denial of uneven colonial processes of settler dominance.

Finally, Sharma and Wright’s claim that all nationalisms are deemed antithetical to decolonization is deeply rooted in western colonizing ontologies. Critiques of nationalism are of course important—I agree with Third World feminists that some nationalisms can be exclusionary, neoliberal, and exploitative, especially of women. However, Sharma and Wright make two assumptions about nationalism that preclude its liberatory potential: first, that autochthony is “deeply embedded within the processes of capitalist globalization” (2008-9, 124), and second, that nationalism inevitably replicates nation-state formations of exploitation and regulation. These assumptions are themselves bound to western ontologies of nation, whether liberal or Marxist, in which it is assumed land is always a commodity whether privately owned or collectively/commonly shared, that man can/must master nature in/as the nation, and that decolonial conceptions of nation about sharing land are not available. These colonizing and indeed patriarchal ontological frames limit Sharma and Wright because they do not imagine social identities outside of “ongoing practices of ruling” (2008-9, 126); they deem sovereignty to be intrinsically about “planetary expansion and dominance of capitalist social relations” (2008-9, 128); and they start from the premise that those who seek nationalisms (including Indigenous peoples) “also share—or strive to share—the racist control of people’s mobility across and through spaces claimed by various ‘nations’” (2008-9, 128). Not only do Sharma and Wright conflate Indigenous nationalisms with Eurocentric modalities of nationalism, of which expulsion, exclusion, containment, and management of non-white subjects is a constitutive feature, they close off decolonial conceptions of nation and land and, in doing so, they depoliticize nationalism, contrary to their claim.

In contrast, there are existing ontologies of nation that refuse hierarchies of power and still open decolonial modes of governance. For example, Glen Coulthard (2014) grounds his



critique of colonial recognition in Indigenous conceptions of nationhood that centre land as an “ontological framework for understanding relationships” that are non-exploitative and based on material survival, constitutive meanings of identity, and relationships between humans and between humans and the environment (60). Decolonization for Coulthard is about considering “land as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations,” not as a struggle *for* land (2014, 78). By ontologically closing off conceptions of nation that transcend the nation-state, Sharma and Wright do precisely what they critique by effectively depoliticizing forms of nationalism advanced by marginalized peoples. Moreover, they conflate immigration and colonialism because they dehistoricize nationalizing and transnational imperial processes (Saranillio 2013) while simultaneously depoliticizing linkages between practices of immigration and colonialism that advance modes of nation-building. Ultimately, while I take seriously their point that migrants variously arrive in circumscribed contexts (whether “freely” or involuntarily), contra Sharma and Wright, it is the differential impact of settlement on Indigenous peoples and on people of colour, and not just the intention of migrants of colour, that should matter to decolonizing and anti-racist feminist practices. The differential impact of settlement does not serve migrants of colour any more than it does Indigenous peoples (although for different reasons), for the effect is to consolidate colonial and racializing formations of the nation-state. As such, settler colonialism has to be confronted directly rather than downplayed.

Some Middle Ground?

Scholars such as Melissa Phung (2011), Robinder Sehdev (2011), and Beenash Jafri (2012) seek some middle ground between categorizing people of colour as settlers and attending to the different racial and colonial forces of power that govern their lives. Phung (2011) agrees with Lawrence and Dua that people of colour are settlers, but aims to identify ways to mitigate the complicity of settlers of colour, who she argues are not easily equated with white settlers. She asks, if being a settler means coming to Canada or being Canadian, then how are all settlers equal when not all Canadians are equal or come to Canada in same way? Whereas white settlement was based on colonial administration, land cession, treaties, land acquisition, and control, Phung importantly notes that people of colour engage in the process of indigenization of white settlers when they work towards achieving, and manage to achieve, upward class mobility on terms set by dominant European-based norms. As an example, Phung notes that in settler-labour narratives of the early 19th century, Chinese labourers were scripted as hard workers and also through discourses of the “yellow peril” (Phung 2011, 294). For Phung (2011), not all settlers are the same; instead, she argues that there are variations in history, representation, and material experiences. In the end, while she does not explicitly develop a typology of settlers, the implication of her conclusion is that there are degrees of being a settler. Sehdev adopts a critical race lens informed by Indigenous traditions to add nuance to the category of “settler” with the goal of promoting solidarities between Indigenous and non-white, non-Indigenous peoples. From Sehdev’s perspective, any rights of people of colour to belong “on this land [Canada] is made possible by treaty, and it is therefore incumbent on us to reconsider our strategies for social justice with treaty in mind. We have played a crucial part in nation formation, but this is a settler nation whose borders extend to absorb Aboriginal people without regard for their sovereignty” (Sehdev 2011, 265). While white hegemony sees people of colour as outside of the nation or inconsequential to it (unless there are economic benefits) and colonial processes in Canada negatively affect people of colour, Sehdev argues that the impact is significantly different for Indigenous peoples. There are, for example, material benefits for people of colour for not being part of the Indian residential-school legacy, which radically



alienated Indigenous people from their families, cultures, communities, forms of knowledge, and connections to the land. In particular, she continues, while non-Indigenous people of colour are not sovereign on this land and did not enter treaties, when they submit to the authority of the state (even as they contest that authority), they are represented by the Crown through treaty (Sehdev 2011, 268).

Whereas white Europeans and colonial agencies have adopted a linear understanding of treaties, often disregarding or pulling back on treaty commitments, Sehdev draws on Indigenous scholarship to argue for the need to adopt an Indigenous conception of treaty, such as that of the Two Row Wampum (Gus Wen Tah) (2011, 270). The Two Row Wampum is based on mutual peace, respect, and friendship, and contains a spiritual dimension. In this conception, treaties are meant to educate everyone and shape the terms of communication, not serve as tools of genocide and settler colonialism. While Sehdev is careful to note that non-Indigenous peoples may not fully understand Indigenous protocols around treaty (2011, 266), her point is that people of colour are called upon to ensure the domination of Indigenous peoples by the Canadian state. This occurs through participation in technologies that link colonialism to racism, such as parading ethnic diversity in the service of Euro-Canadian self-congratulation and Canadian myths of multiculturalism.

Jafri follows Phung and Sehdev, but specifically argues that a distinction between “settler complicity” and “settler privilege” is useful in locating racism against people of colour while also accounting for a differential settler location from racialized subjects marked as white. She states:

When people refer to “settler privilege,” they are referring to the unearned benefits to live and work on Indigenous lands, and to the unequal benefits accrued through citizenship rights within the settler state. However, for people of colour the benefits of being a settler are accrued unevenly. These privileges or social advantages are contingent on things like nationality, class, gender, and migration status. When we account for systemic inequities, underemployment and the racialization of poverty, for most people of colour there are few “benefits” associated with being a settler. Thus, if we follow the logic of a settler/non-settler binary, an argument about people of colour having settler privilege quite easily falls on its face. Many people of colour are settlers without (or with limited) settler privilege. (2012, n.p.)

Since complicity does not circulate in the same ways as privilege, Jafri insightfully argues that rather than approaching settlerhood as an object that subjects possess, it is better understood “as a field of operations into which we become socially positioned and implicated” (2012, n.p.). As Jafri rightly notes, the distinction between settler privilege and settler complicity reformulates the focus from the moral character of non-Indigenous individuals to the strategies and relations that produce social and institutional hierarchies.

Feminist Questions and Anxieties

In outlining these emerging schools of thoughts, I seek to map what is at stake for liberation struggles. Specifically, my assessment of the tensions that have arisen from these fraught debates indicates that at least three questions arise for feminists committed to decolonization and anti-racism across geopolitical and embodied borders:



- How should feminists navigate the sometimes conflicting political goals of being included within the nation-state, dismantling the nation-state as a site of disciplinary and repressive power, organizing at the level of non-state nations, and mobilizing at the transnational level?
- How should feminists respond to considerations of difference between and among gendered racisms and colonialisms that are created and governed by state-based practices and global hegemonies, specifically to account for varying degrees of penalty and privilege in the margins?
- What decolonial obligations arise for non-Indigenous feminists, including feminists of colour with their own colonial and imperial legacies, when living on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples in this era of patriarchal neoliberalism and white-supremacist-nationalist frames of security and terror?

I contend that these questions require feminists to revisit three key organizing concepts and forms of politics, respectively: transnationalism, intersectionality, and settler colonialism.

Transnationalism

Does the “transnationalism” of transnational feminism foster liberatory agendas or does it inhibit them? Like most political concepts, transnationalism is contested, but two dominant frames seem to have emerged: first, transnationalism “from above,” a process deployed by multinational corporations, financial institutions, global media, and other elite-controlled macro-structural actors seeking to overcome the borders of nation-states for the extension of a neoliberal global market and sometimes with an agenda of universal human rights (Lionnet and Shih 2005, 5-6). Second, transnationalism “from below” describes “the sum of the counterhegemonic operations of the non-elite who refuse assimilation to one given nation-state” (Lionnet and Shih 2005, 6). Some scholars theorize transnationalism beyond this binary of above and below. Lionnet and Shih theorize transnationalism as “the creative interventions that networks of minoritized cultures produce within and across national boundaries” (2005, 7). The transversal movements of culture are, for Lionnet and Shih (2005), about the multiplicity or creolization of minority experiences within and beyond nation-states without the necessary mediation of the centre.

While there is no singular transnational feminist theory, transnational feminisms generally reject “transnationalism from above” and tend to operate instead at the ground-up and/or meso-levels of crossing borders. Transnational feminisms have emphasized the liberatory potential of solidarity across borders of the nation-state and cultural contexts, without assuming a global sisterhood that reifies the First World-Third World dynamic (Mohanty 2003). Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Mohanty (1997) state that a feminist transnational approach is:

- 1) a way of thinking about women in similar contexts across the world, in *different* geographical spaces, rather than as *all* women across the world; 2) an understanding of a set of unequal relationships among and between peoples, rather than as a set of traits embodied in all non-U.S. citizens [...]; and 3) a consideration of the term “international” in relation to an analysis of economic, political, and ideological processes that would foreground the operations of race and capitalism. (xix, original emphasis)



Alexander and Mohanty (1997, xii) specifically emphasize that a transnational feminist approach links the local, regional, and national to larger, cross-national processes and that the people, rather than the state, should be the chief agents in defining the global economic and political processes that structure their lives.

While there is some contention among feminists about the relationship between transnational feminism, global feminism, Third World feminism, and postcolonial feminism (for example, see Mendoza 2002 and Herr 2014), in general, transnational feminism is characterized by the following: it is directed by non-elites; it centres the multiplicity of feminisms across national borders; it is critical of the patriarchal and masculinist nation and of western feminisms that presume commonality of oppression; it emphasizes that women from the Global South should have epistemic privilege of their experiences and, in the case of some feminists, the voices of Third World immigrant women in the West are equally important; and it requires historical specificity of different women's social locations. Overall, these feminist interventions into theories and practices of transnationalism have centered around mutually constituting relations of heteropatriarchal, capitalist, racial, and colonial authority, as well as the possibilities of transformative change that arise from feminist practices of resurgence and resistance oriented towards coalitions across borders.

Yet, I contend, even some critical feminist conceptions of transnationalism are subject to colonizing formations that specifically ignore or downgrade Indigenous feminist forms of nationhood, and thus undermine feminist praxis that is attuned to multiple, inter-related oppressions and resurgences. Indeed, as Herr (2014) notes, in contrast to Third World feminisms that tend to be neutral or supportive of some nationalism, some transnational feminists—for example, Grewal and Kaplan (1994; 1999)—claim that all forms of nationalism are inherently oppressive for women. This assumption, I argue, hinges on how we understand nations and the specificities of struggle. I want to foreground two ways that feminists can re-conceptualize transnationalism while also guarding against conceptions of nation that depoliticize and/or erase differing avenues of liberation. Both are place-based, and I theorize them from my particular location as an anti-racist feminist of colour of Sikh origin living in the settler-colonial nation of Canada, whereby my understandings of colonialism are deeply informed by my own family's historical struggle against British colonialism in India and colonial racism against South Asians in Britain (where I grew up) and Canada (where I now reside).

The first feminist re-conceptualization of transnationalism involves an anti-colonial approach to nation. In Canada, struggles over nation necessarily invoke contestation between the sovereignty of the *settler nation-state* (Crown sovereignty) and *Indigenous nations* (Indigenous sovereignties). These competing conceptions of nation operationalize a centre-periphery dynamic and are ontologically incompatible because the nation-state itself is a settler-colonial structure and form of governmentality. As Andrea Smith (2008) states: Whereas nation-states are governed through domination and coercion, indigenous sovereignty and nationhood are predicated on interrelatedness and responsibility. In opposition to nation-states, which are based on control over territory, these visions of indigenous nationhood are based on care and responsibility for land that all can share. (311-312)

In this anti-colonial feminist approach to nation, the nation-state is a site of struggle, but it is also decentered because insurgent and resurgent models of governance do not look to settler nation-states for liberation. This approach also does not see Indigenous men as the root cause of problems facing Indigenous women; rather, the problem is the imposition of colonial heteropatriarchal structures in/as the nation-state.



My claim is that this anti-colonial approach to transnationalism need not be limited to movement across borders of nation-states (i.e., nation-state to nation-state), but can also be put to work to attune our attention to the battleground of the settler-colonial nation-state and Indigenous nationhood in the wider global context of white supremacy and capitalist flows of migration and labour. As Alexander and Mohanty noted in the 1997, the nation-state matters because the state (particularly the postcolonial state) facilitates the transnational movement of capital within national borders and is, therefore, instrumental in the reconfiguring of global relationships; and because capitalism and these processes of recolonization structure the contemporary practices of postcolonial and advanced capitalist/colonial states. (xxiii) Accordingly, an anti-colonial approach to transnationalism requires feminists to undertake two kinds of projects: one, to disrupt the presumed/naturalized legitimacy of heteropatriarchal settler nation-states; and two, to identify linkages across various gendered formations of the nation. For example, we must make links between a critique of transnational corporations that exploitatively extract natural resources on traditional Indigenous territories with state support, global markets that exploit Third World women's labour for the benefit of the West, and Indigenous and women of colour organizing against these modalities of gendered colonialisms and racisms, some of which are grounded in Indigenous conceptions of nationhood. Transnationalism might also be re-conceptualized in a second, decolonial way, so as to shift from the feminist transnationalist tendency to assume that nations (and not just nation-states) need necessarily be transcended. Specifically, rather than conceptualizing transnational relations in terms of nation-states and through a binary of centre-periphery, nationhood can be conceptualized beyond the scope of the state and through a centre-to-centre dynamic of relationality. This conception is a formation of nation that Sharma and Wright ontologically preclude. Here, I am specifically signaling that while transnationalism studies generally has been directed towards the immigrant as the archetypal transnational subject as well as decentering the nation, Indigenous studies, including some Indigenous feminisms, is invested in conceptions of nation rooted in culture, language, and land.

For example, Bauerkemper and Stark (2011) emphasize that Anishinaabe nationhood is inseparable from the people's relationship to and protection of the land, and that transnational relations between Indigenous nations can "cultivate productive obligations toward one another through socio-familial structures that transcend political and territorial lines" (2011, 3). While they indicate some dangers of nationalism, Bauerkemper and Stark locate transnational in the connections and interactions among various Native nations: "In our use, the phrase 'Indigenous transnationalism' describes the linkages, cross-references, and movement of ideas, practices, and obligations between indigenous nations" (2011, 8). This conception of nation is consistent with transnational feminists who emphasize the relationships between marginalized peoples, but it also challenges transnational feminisms that decentre the nation, where relations *between* Indigenous nations are key to facilitating the production and maintenance of Indigenous peoplehood. For Bauerkemper and Stark (2011), Anishinaabe nationhood is intrinsically transnational because cultural practices of diplomacy, intellectual traditions, kinship networks, stories, and customs are rooted in intranational alliances among Anishinaabe peoples and international treaties with other Indigenous nations as well as colonial states. This form of *lateral transnationalism* both challenges the inevitability of settler nation-states and also locates nationhood as a potential site of liberation.

Yet as history has shown, nationalism itself is not free of power. Masculinist and heteropatriarchal forms and practices of nationalism, including anti-colonial nationalisms, have adversely affected cis-women, queer, trans, and two-spirited peoples in different ways (Arvin,



Tuck, and Morrill 2013; Green 2008; Alexander and Mohanty 1997); as such, transnationalist feminists are right to remain suspicious of nationalism and nation-states. However, contrary to Sharma and Wright (2008-9), who contend that it is necessary to free liberation struggles from nationalist discourse, I argue that the specificities of nation and the global have to be contextualized to assess their liberatory potential: nationalism is not intrinsically good or intrinsically bad across all struggles for justice. Intersectionality can serve as a theoretical and political tool to navigate the specificities of subjectivity and subjugation and the specificities of collective action against hegemonies of nation and power. However, this requires intersectionality to go beyond liberal frames of identity and not be limited to legal battles against state agendas.

Intersectionality

Like other research paradigms and political projects, intersectionality is contested and burgeoning (Dhamoon 2011; Hancock 2007; Hankivsky 2014; McCall 2005). An intersectionality-type lens generally refers to “the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axes of differentiation—economic, political cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential—intersect in historically specific contexts” (Brah and Phoenix 2004). An intersectional-type framework starts from the premise that distinctive systems of oppression such as racism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity need each other in order to function; they are co-produced and productive of unequal material realities. Further, individuals and groups can simultaneously experience privilege and disadvantage because of how forces of power intersect and interact (Crenshaw 1991; Collins and Chepp 2013). In addition, this lens foregrounds various standpoints and the relationship between them, so as to underscore that social issues are related (Collins and Chepp 61). Finally, my approach to intersectionality focuses not only on specific intersections/interactions, but also on critiques of what Patricia Hill Collins (2000, 18) calls “the matrix of domination.” The matrix of domination is “the overall social organization within which intersecting oppressions originate, develop, and are contained” (Collins 2000, 228-9). As a research paradigm and political tool, intersectionality (or at least some version of this focus on the co-constituting forms of power) has gained wide support among some feminists of colour and Indigenous feminists as a way to counter oppressive and exclusionary forms of white western feminisms that presume a homogenous form of patriarchy and a universal sisterhood.

Yet some feminist theorizing of intersectionality can also elide into dominant frames of politics that generate anxieties about feminist goals and collective action. Here, I build on critiques that illuminate how intersectionality does not always go beyond narrow forms of identity and left-liberal discourse to address issues of class inequity because of its origins in legal discourse, which requires categorization of identities (see Bhandar 2013; Brown 1997; Dhamoon 2011; Monture-Angus 2007; Puar 2007). The preoccupation with intersecting identities (and categories) has, in my view, been at the expense of sustained critical feminist focus on the relations of penalty and privilege within and across national borders. Certainly some nonwhite feminists (Third World feminists, postcolonial feminists, anti-racist feminists, Black feminists, Indigenous feminists, Latina feminists) have identified the importance of differing degrees and forms of penalty and privilege (one need only look to the work of bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, Patricia Hill Collins, Chandra Mohanty, and Andrea Smith), but differentials of power *among* marginalized peoples has not gained the same prominence as the



fact of intersecting, interlocking, multi-dimensional forms of power and identity. Yet such uneven degrees and forms of penalty and privilege among marginalized subjects are constitutive of a matrix of domination.

To make the connections across different forms of racism and colonialism, feminists can supplement and reconfigure intersectionality by integrating other concepts and tools. One such complementary and expansive concept is that of “cacophony,” developed by Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd (2011) in *Transit of Empire*. Byrd (2011) challenges scholars of postcoloniality and racialization to activate Indigeneity as a condition of possibility in ways that implicate diasporic subjects in the colonization of the Americas (xxxix). Byrd (2011) urges those concerned about racialization and colonization to “cacophonously understand that the historical processes that have created our contemporary moment have affected everyone at various points along their transits with and against empire” (xxxix). Byrd’s (2011) use of cacophony is helpful for a feminist approach to decolonizing anti-racism. She evokes cacophony to counter how “U.S. colonialism and imperialism domestically and abroad often coerces struggles for social justice for queers, racial minorities, and immigrants into complicity with settler colonialism” (Byrd 2011, xvii). Cacophony is an analytical interpretative tool for Byrd, one that can reveal the interstices between dynamic differentiations that function within imperialism at the site of indigenous worlds (2011, 54). She states that we need:

an act of interpretation that decenters the horizontal struggles among peoples with competing claims to historical oppressions. These vertical interactions continually foreground the arrival of Europeans as the defining event within settler societies, consistently place horizontal histories of oppressions into zero-sum struggles for hegemony and distract from the complicities of colonialism and the possibilities for anticolonial actions that emerge outside and beyond the Manichean allegories that define oppression. (Byrd 2011, xxxv)

By vertical struggles, Byrd means the interactions between the colonizers and colonized, and by horizontal interactions she means the different minority oppressions that converge and diverge. Cacophony helps us trace “how colonial discourses have functioned in geographies where there are multiple interactions among the different colonialisms, arrivals, and displacements at work” (Byrd 2011, 67). These different voluntary and forced arrivals and departures of nonwhites are intrinsic and systemic to the settlement of different and differential people of colour on Indigenous lands, which should be a concern for feminists of colour. However, this process of systemic implication is not one-dimensional; that is, the dispossession of Indigenous peoples is not a meta-structure. Thus, further to Byrd, and as intersectionality-type theory and practice reveals, there are multiple co-constituting horizontal struggles of gendering, sexuality and desire, capitalism, and ableism that interact with the cacophony of colonizer-colonized and other minority oppressions. This idea is consistent with Black feminist insights that there are “varying amounts of penalty and privilege from the multiple systems of oppression which frame everyone’s lives” (Collins 1990, 230). This understanding of power is important for at least two reasons for a feminist theory of decolonizing anti-racism. First, because gendered processes of differentiation are inseparable from other systems of colonial and racist domination (and resistance), marginalized peoples are systemically (even if unintentionally) operating within, across, and through a matrix of interrelated forms and degrees of penalty and privilege; a feminist praxis of decolonizing anti-racism must therefore address these systems of power if we seek to disrupt the matrix of domination. Second, there



are power relations between various incarnations of oppressed-oppressor and variations among colonial- and racial-gendered processes of subject formation that have to be central to any liberatory political organizing. As such, a feminist praxis of decolonizing anti-racism cannot obscure one struggle at the expense of others because they mutually (albeit differently) structure white-supremacist capitalist heteronormativities.

An intersectionality-type lens can thus be deployed to emphasize that we are all differently and differentially implicated in the conditions that structure and uphold a matrix of domination. As such, there is a falsity to the idea that any subjects are innocent of exercising power (Fellows and Razack 1998). It is this idea of marginalized peoples being structurally implicated in hegemonies of power that often gets obscured by feminist theorizing of intersectionality. Yet some versions of intersectionality can be put to work to develop a feminist praxis of decolonizing anti-racism. Such praxis has to address how state agents and corporations operationalize various processes and practices of settler colonialism to regulate different Indigenous peoples and people of colour relative to one another, which I address next.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism raises questions about the epistemic and material violences that implicate non-Indigenous peoples in Indigenous dispossession, that is, how feminists of colour (anti-racist feminists, Third World feminists, transnational feminists, postcolonial feminists) might navigate subjectivity and collective action in the context of heteropatriarchal racial capitalism and their concurrent structural (even if unintentional) implication in settler colonialism.

Patrick Wolfe (2006) approaches settler colonialism as a logic and imperative constituted by extermination. He argues that settler colonialism deploys the discourses of race, religion, and civilization—as do colonialism, imperialism, and empire—but the primary motivation for elimination in settler colonialism is access to territory. Territory, Wolfe states, is “settler colonialism’s specific element,” whereby the dissolution of native societies is necessary in order to erect a new colonial society on expropriated land (2006, 388). In the early stages of settler colonialism, both the Industrial Revolution and agricultural development required colonized land and labour as well as military force. As a practice of coming to a land to stay there, Wolfe rightly positions settler colonialism as a structure not an event (2006, 388). In the case of Canada, this structure is naturalized and given legitimacy when European settlers are remade as indigenous to the land, “the original founders.” Further to Wolfe, this particular form of genocide secures land not only through a politics of termination (i.e., literally killing “the Indians”), but also through practices of relocation (e.g., residential schools and reserves) and containment (e.g., forced private ownership of land, requirements to carry “Status Indian” cards).

While transnational, postcolonial, and women of colour feminists have advanced our understandings of coloniality, imperialism, and racialization to identify the gendered, white supremacist, and capitalist dimensions of power beyond foundational denials of settler colonialism by such scholars as Sharma and Wright, the focus on settler colonialism remains under-theorized within mainstream and even women of colour feminisms. Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill (2013) specifically identify five challenges to gender and women’s studies that arise when Native feminism addresses the connections between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. First, feminists should not *only* look to inclusion in the models of governance and community that settler nations are founded on (Arvin, Tuck, Morrill 2013, 16); they should



also look toward disrupting Eurocentric systems of creating and managing binary-based gender roles, modern sexuality, and the nuclear family. Feminist projects of decolonizing anti-racism must look beyond legal rights and towards a radical rejection of the nation-state as a site of liberation. Second, beyond including Indigenous women-identified people, inclusion into gender and women's studies and the settler nation-state should be problematized because these sites of struggle are too often based on hierarchies of otherness (Arvin, Tuck, Morrill 2013, 18). Third, feminists need to be proactive in their critiques of settler colonialism and not rely on Indigenous peoples to teach them (Arvin, Tuck, Morrill 2013, 19), which, I suggest, requires feminists to decolonize anti-racism by building alliances without appropriating Indigenous feminist theories or trying to "save" Indigenous women-identified peoples from their supposed Indigenous male oppressors. Fourth, feminisms broadly need to recognize the persistence of Indigenous epistemologies (Arvin, Tuck, Morrill 2013, 21); from my view, this acknowledgement specifically adds to feminist praxis of decolonizing anti-racism because it advances another dimension for challenging constructions of land as extractable capital and denials of Indigenous sovereignty and further invites feminists to transcend the man/nature divide and integrate cosmological, ecological, and spiritual worldviews into theory. Finally, Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill urge women and gender studies scholars to question how this field of study and the academy at large "may participate in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples lands, livelihoods, and futures" (2013, 25); this challenge requires a feminist praxis of decolonizing anti-racism that disrupts the disciplining logics of gendered colonialism and that specifically confronts whose land we are on when we do academic and activist work.

Clearly, feminists must contend with certain anxieties if we want to decolonize anti-racism, specifically in terms of the legitimacy of the nation-state as a site of liberation, the goal of inclusion, epistemological privileges in the mainstream and margins, how to build alliances attuned to power differentials, and how we, as feminists confronting local and global inequities, might benefit from dispossession. Further to Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, some feminist tools can also serve to attend to these challenges transformatively, even if only partially. In particular, my usage of feminist insights of intersectionality turn attention to the interactive *processes* of dispossession and settler governmentality, whereby settler colonialism is not only a structure but also a process, an activity for assigning political meanings and organizing material structures driven by forces of power. This process-oriented approach emphasizes that the dispossession of lands is temporal and ongoing, dynamic and continuous, and that the productive capacities of settler colonialism function to make and consolidate hierarchies of Otherness (e.g., among gendered people of colour, among Indigenous people, and between people of colour and Indigenous peoples across borders of the nation-state).

In addition, feminist intersectionality-type frames can challenge the reductive elements that presume that settler colonialism is a meta-structure of sorts, and instead focus on global capitalist colonialisms that construct and organize gendered subjects differently. This reconceptualization in some ways addresses Sharma and Wright's criticism that there are variations in migratory journeys and arrivals; however, my argument starts from the position that Indigenous peoples have a unique sovereign connection to land and territory. Moreover, from a decolonizing anti-racist feminist perspective, settler colonialism too is subject to an interlocking effect, as social formations of domination are not singularly reducible. Settler colonialism is not a meta-structure; however, when viewed as such, it becomes a system that is deemed to determine all other relationships and ideas, including its culture, institutions, rituals, and governing structures, such that formations of capitalism, imperialism, sexuality, and



patriarchy are seen as derivative of this meta-structure rather than as co-constituted and varied in operation and effect.

A feminist account of intersecting forces of power can be deployed to illuminate that settler colonialism is a) composed of a series of structures and processes, and b) also part of a series of structures of domination or a matrix of domination, rather than a meta-structure of sorts. In other words, settler colonialism is both generative of and generated by intersecting and interactive forces of power. Intersectionality foregrounds the multiple intersecting manifestations, mechanisms, and adjoining socio-political processes of settler colonialism, including land dispossession and repossession, patriarchy, ableism, heteronormativity, capital accumulation, and white supremacy. In foregrounding the multiplicity and interconnectedness of varying degrees and forms of difference, a more complex conception of settler colonialism emerges. The stability of settler colonialism as a natural, stand-alone, one-dimensional, primary structure is decentered while still centering a critique of the work of power, including the gendered dispossession of Indigenous lands and sexist neoliberal and neo-racist migratory structures and processes. In short, the mechanisms and effects of settler colonialism are always-already intersectional, which must be reflected in feminist conceptions of coloniality and racism.

The implications of this interconnectedness are significant for a feminist praxis of decolonizing anti-racism across nation-state borders. Precisely because oppressions are interconnected, collective action has to confront multiple dimensions of the matrix of domination simultaneously, including how different migratory processes and colonialisms serve hegemonies of state-based nation-building and global systems of capitalism. Furthermore, collective organizing necessitates alliances and coalitions, not only across groups and issues, but also *within* groups, precisely because there are varying forms and degrees of power at play in the margins as well as between various relational centres and peripheries. In addition, there must be active refusal of the Oppression Olympics in which groups compete for the mantle of the most oppressed (e.g., genocide against Indigenous peoples versus migratory processes between the Global South and Global North) because this ultimately consolidates tactics, discourses, and institutions of domination.

Conclusion: A Feminist Approach to Decolonizing Anti-Racism Across Borders

I have identified some key anxieties that feminists must confront in decolonizing anti-racism in the current context of global neoliberalism. Specifically, *transnationalism* prompts urgent issues about how to navigate gendered, capitalist, colonial global forces of neoliberalism and racism, settler formations of the nation-state, and non-state forms of nationalism simultaneously. *Intersectionality* provokes issues of whether the gender-race-class mantra will be displaced to account for colonialism “in the margins.” Yet we must ask how far intersectionality can seriously go beyond narrow forms of identity and left-liberal discourse to address heteropatriarchal, racist, and colonial forms of class inequity across and within geopolitical borders and, I would add, other systems of discipline that remain under-theorized, such as ableism. *Settler colonialism* raises questions about the epistemic and material violences that implicate non-Indigenous peoples in Indigenous dispossession, and how feminists of colour (Third World feminists in western and non-western places, transnational feminists, postcolonial feminists, and anti-racist feminists) might navigate subjectivity and collective



action in the context of colonial formations of heteropatriarchal, racial capitalism and concurrent systemic implications in settler colonialism.

There are, however, tools within some strands of feminist theory and practice that can help navigate the above issues in order to address the anxieties that inevitability arise in decolonizing anti-racism. Specifically, by putting critical anti-racist, feminist, and Indigenous perspectives into conversation with one another, I have proposed that a feminist praxis of decolonizing anti-racism can mitigate the depoliticization of critical concepts and hegemonic agendas by re-conceptualizing and integrating key insights of transnationalism, intersectionality, and settler colonialism. This intervention indicates the following political praxis:

Transnationalism

- Actively intervene in the contestation between the sovereignty of the nation-state and Indigenous nations, while confronting different gendered racisms;
- Support anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalist lateral transnationalisms that go beyond the nation-state and a centre-periphery dynamic.

Intersectionality-type frameworks

- Disrupt the interacting multiplicities of gendered racisms and colonialisms that aggregately consolidate white supremacy, colonialism, racism, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism through such systems as migration and settler colonialism;
- Disrupt the cacophonies of power that interact across subjects and local and global contexts in the service of consolidating and extending a matrix of domination;
- Confront the systems of implication in which interactive modes of domination organize marginalized subjects through relative and relational forms and degrees of penalty and privilege.

Settler colonialism

- Be open to the rejection of the nation-state as a feminist site of liberation;
- Build alliances by learning and actively engaging with multiple struggles across hegemonic borders of gender, sexuality and desire, race, coloniality, labour, dis/ability, the movement of bodies, capital, territory, and land;
- Question the presumed ontologies and epistemologies that frame practices of liberation and goals of collective organizing, including the divide between human and non-human life forms;
- Confront the temporality of various gendered colonialisms across space and recognize the continuity of settler dispossession as a site of patriarchal, imperial governance that is connected to past and present colonialisms, both locally and globally;
- Be responsible towards the interconnectedness of struggles at local, national, and transnational levels and the differences within and across social categories, including women of colour, Third World women, and Indigenous women.

These are guiding principles for a feminist praxis of decolonizing anti-racism, rather than a checklist. Precisely because a matrix of domination is constantly shifting, appropriated, and being re-made in response to various centres of power and the resistances of denigrated peoples, feminists will inevitably collapse into depoliticizing and hegemonic frameworks, for we cannot confront all aspects of the matrix at the same time. This pitfall should not make us despondent,



but should instead confirm that different kinds of critical feminisms can and should undertake different political projects that take seriously transnational, intersectional-type, and settler-colonial forces of power across geopolitical, spatial, temporal, material, and embodied borders.

Acknowledgements

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feral feminisms

**Complicities, Connections, & Struggles:
Critical Transnational Feminist Analysis
of Settler Colonialism**

issue 4 · summer 2015

*A Feminist Approach to Decolonizing Anti-Racism:
Rethinking Transnationalism, Intersectionality,
and Settler Colonialism*
Rita Dhamoon

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Interview with Zainab Amadahy

Zainab Amadahy in conversation with Feral Feminisms' Guest Editors

ZA: Before answering the questions I want to be clear about who I am and where I come from. These days I identify as someone with Cherokee heritage. I do not have status or band membership and have never lived in a Cherokee community. My knowledge of my African and Cherokee roots go as far back as the Reynolds tobacco plantation where both sets of ancestors were enslaved. My father was raised by his half-Cherokee grandmother. Both of his parents were mixed “Black Indians.” I am mixed race and the mix is far too vast to explain here—but, growing up, my primary ethnic identity was African American (though I always acknowledged and honoured my Cherokee ancestry). Since coming to Toronto, I have learned from and worked with the urban Native community around cultural revival and other struggles. I have been very kindly accepted into this community. So that is my social location, and it will certainly impact how I respond to these questions. Thank you.

FF: You have facilitated conversations between Indigenous and other racialized people on fostering solidarity relations. What are some of the things you would like those people of colour who understand ourselves to be in solidarity with Indigenous peoples to keep in mind?

ZA: First is a reminder that we all have a lot of healing to do and to be kind and patient with each other. There are so many ways that we can support and help each other based on our different yet similar experiences with racism, colonialism, and imperialism. I really like what Andrea Smith has to say on this topic, as she reminds us with “[Heteropatriarchy and the] Three Pillars of White Supremacy” not to assume that we face the same problems and that solutions to our problems are transferrable across communities. Also, that we need to be mindful that “solutions” that might work for one community can present difficulties to other communities. I would further ask people to interrogate how they relate to land as individuals and communities. It is this relationship that is foundational to the decolonization process.

My last thought has to do with how people of colour sometimes centre Eurocentric knowledge and affiliate with groups in which Eurocentric ideologies prevail. I’m not one to believe that there is nothing to learn from white folks’ stories, mythologies, and philosophies. I’m just more concerned about what it does to our sense of self, our understanding of history, and our relationships if we continue to reference and give priority to Eurocentric knowledges in our work. If we take Marxism as an example, I can certainly respect that knowledge (and there are scholars who have made a case that Marx was heavily influenced by Haundenosaunee and other Indigenous worldviews). I can respect those racialized theorists and activists who have critiqued and expanded Marxist, socialist, and anarchist theory as well as action. Even within my lifetime I’ve seen Indigenous and African American activists positively influence the development of Marxism. All knowledge is definitely valuable.

Still, I feel there is often great value in centering our own wisdom traditions and cultural knowledges. It helps us break out of colonized thinking, which is infused with notions of white supremacy. That’s not to say that any knowledge is above critique or inherently makes folks less likely to exploit and abuse others, but it is to recognize that there is some amazing



wisdom and knowledge in our own cultures—in many cases older than Marxism—that has been devalued, ignored, ridiculed, and denigrated for centuries, and racism and colonialism are the reasons why.

The more I work with other racialized folks who are in touch with their cultural wisdom traditions, the more I realize the depths of those teachings. You don't need Marxism to teach you about equity, social justice, and right relationship with the land when you have Patanjali or Yoruba masters or ubuntu or Laozi or Kemetic wisdom or Tich Nhat Hanh or Indigenous Elders from across the Americas, et cetera. When you defer to Marxism and other Eurocentric knowledges, you are appendixing your struggles and knowledge ways to "The Struggle," something I discuss in my controversial article, "Why indigenous and racialized struggles will always be appendixed by the left."

All racialized folks know what it feels like to be dismissed, underestimated, ignored, or worse. So why do it to ourselves? There are amazing philosophers, political scientists, and wise people from our own cultures who can inform our personal growth as well as our movements and relationships.

FF: What would you like those who consider ourselves to be allies of Indigenous peoples to know and understand about decolonization?

ZA: Firstly, to understand and appreciate how many opinions there are on this question. Since you ask, here's mine.

I prefer to think of decolonization as indigenization and I like the thinking of folks like Jeanette Armstrong and Bob Lovelace on this issue. As I understand their teachings, land is core to the question of indigenization—not bloodlines, skin colour, or cultural heritage. To be indigenous is to take direction on how to live from a specific place (a bio-region) where all of life-forms model sustainability, interdependence, and "good mind" in relation to how to live well in that area. To people like Bob and Jeanette, anyone can become indigenous to a place. In our context on Turtle Island, taking direction from the First Peoples who have the longest standing relationships with these lands is a first step.

When you ultimately tease out the teachings and implications of understanding indigeneity in this way, it has implications for all the affairs of two-leggeds: governance, economy, education, health care, forming and maintaining community, land tenure, food production, equity issues, et cetera. Fundamentally, it would involve a huge shift of mindset because if you can't understand and imagine an alternative to the current dysfunctionality of colonial society, then you can't transform it.

This doesn't mean, by the way, that everyone has to "become Indian." You keep your stories and identities but everyone's culture is modified to fit what is sustainable on this land. I think that is healthier and more desirable—in fact, it's more survivable than modifying culture to fit the colonial Canadian or U.S. mythologies. First Nations oral historians that I've heard recount numerous stories of how people, communities, and whole nations made cultural adaptations in line with the dictates of The Land and Our Relations in order to survive, thrive, and grow spiritually. The Anishinabe migrations, the Great Law of Peace—these are stories that talk of cultural adaptations to realities that existed in that time. Adaptation isn't anything to worry about. Mother Earth's laws are very kind and generous until you try to control Her or make Our Relations subservient to humans, the weakest of all species. That's when you get into trouble and fundamentally why the world is in such a mess today.



This understanding of indigeneity also doesn't suggest that old treaties and the spirit of those treaties made with the First Peoples do not need to be upheld by all parties until other types of agreements are fairly negotiated and a comprehensive restructuring of the global political economy takes place. However, I know that there is some concern that even if the treaties were upheld, particularly the modern ones, our ecosystems and the survival of our species would still be in jeopardy.

The bottom line is that we need to start looking at a different way of relating to land and resources if we, as a species, are to survive. To me that's the core of decolonization and, from what I understand, Indigenous Natural Laws prioritize right relationships with land, resources, and communities. Under these laws, ecosystems are valued for their intrinsic existence rather than what we can consume from them; sustainability is valued. And, while I don't want to idealize, Indigenous ways of building relationships across two-legged communities appear to me to value and respect peace like nothing we've seen under colonialism and imperialism. The feminine/female is also highly valued, as is cooperation and equity.

This is an unfortunately long-winded answer to the question. I suspect it just raises others but I can only offer so much in this format.

FF. You wrote an article with Bonita Lawrence (to add to the conversations between Indigenous peoples and Black people in Canada) about relationships to land and fostering solidarity relations. How do you think that article was taken up? What sort of conversations or spaces have been facilitated since the article was published?

ZA: While I've heard that some people disagree with the article to greater or lesser extents, no one has ever taken the time to write or discuss with me their specific concerns, so I don't know what they are. I'm not an academic and don't feel pressured to keep up with the latest publications on the issue. I have seen it referenced from time to time, in positive and useful ways.

I've been told that some noted African American scholars are concerned that the struggles of African-descended folks will lose their position of centrality in anti-racist work and that, for them, an analysis of North American colonialism needs to be centred around the enslavement and subjugation of African bodies—as does all social justice work—otherwise it's not valid.

I disagree about the centralization of African enslavement in social justice analyses and work, as my writings indicate, but completely understand the fear that drives this kind of thinking. In fact, I wrote about it in that paper. Anti-Black racism in Native American communities, particularly those that have expelled their African-descended or mixed-race members, is a reality. Though I think there's been some excellent work done at the community level by Native American and mixed-race activists on this issue in the last several years (if not longer) and my impression is that it's less intense than it once was. I could be very wrong about that, but since I don't function in those circles, I wouldn't know for sure.

Bottom line for me is that indigenization, as I've referred to it above, is a comprehensive struggle where land issues (to which we are all connected) are centralized. I have come to look at the ideal of solidarity as akin to the process of homeostasis in the body. We used to think the brain was directing what went on in the body, but new and emerging science tells us that there is more equity among organs and cells than previously believed. Our individual cells display a level of consciousness. They communicate with each other bio-chemically and through the nervous system, responding directly to each other's needs, often



bypassing the brain. The heart sends more directive signals to the brain than that organ sends back. All parts of the body, from the subatomic to the level of organs, cooperate in the interest of physical and mental wellbeing. The point is that right relationship among communities and individuals requires constant multi-way communication and adjustment. And the key adjustments are made in response to the land. Land is life.

So all of our stories are part of the larger narrative, for better or worse. Struggling to centralize our community's narrative over others just polarizes. This may sound like it contradicts what I say above, but the difference is that I advocate centralizing your story for you, not for everyone. To dictate that your story has to be central to everyone's is kind of... hmm, what's the word... colonial? It's like the difference between saying "your story is interesting but mine matters most," rather than saying "my story is most important to me, yours is most important to you but all stories matter and we can benefit from sharing those stories to come to a deeper understanding of each other as we work together to co-create a better world."

If we don't strive for right relationship with each other and the land that sustains us, we're just engaged in a power struggle. And that never ends well.

In terms of spaces, I've been part of efforts to create opportunities for the sharing of stories across communities and building relationships in the interest of sustainable living. My writings, fiction and non-fiction, certainly deal with this. I know that there are many artistic projects doing the same. Space doesn't permit me to get into specifics but I'm excited about the work going on and how it will impact the future. They're mostly small, off-the-grid projects, many of which are not known to "activists," but they are modeling the change we seek.

Generally, the vast majority of people who have contacted me about the essay I wrote with Bonita are very supportive and often thank me for co-writing it. I know it can't be the final word on the issue, but nothing ever should be. Relationships across communities are dynamic and as changeable as everything else in nature. So there will always be a need for discussion, analysis, and new ideas. I'm honoured to have been able to contribute to the ongoing discussion.

FF: Would you like to share any critiques on how Indigenous solidarity work is done by people of colour in movement-based activism?

ZA: I haven't been an active activist for some time due to family issues, my need to pay rent, and my own spiritual transformation, which has led me to prioritize work that isn't always recognized as activism. Consequently, I may not be on top of what's going on anymore, though I read a lot and participate in online activist networks. I get the sense that, in some ways, a lot has changed for some activists and they are working at building relationships with Indigenous communities in order to find ways of decolonizing together. For other activists, that is less true and they lack a cohesive analysis of how struggles, histories, and oppressions interact and fortify each other. In sum, I think there will always be tension in our relationships, but if we consider that to be healthy and to be a catalyst for working to keep the peace, then it's all good.

FF. How (or does) coalition-building help with the work of healing from pain passed down (and still presently emanating) from colonialism and racialization? We ask this question in relation to Indigenous peoples and other people of colour.

ZA: It doesn't always provide healing, as the above discussion suggests. That being said, I'm not sure that the way activists have gone about coalition-building in the past is appropriate or effective in these times. At the same time, I celebrate efforts around the tar sands, pipelines,



mining, et cetera which involve complex relationships across borders (geographic and otherwise) and have many clear victories to celebrate. To be perfectly honest, I'm a huge believer in storytelling and story-sharing. I think that quote from Louis Riel, "My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who give them their spirit back," pretty much says it all for me.

Changing the narrative is crucial to changing our relationships. Artists are key in changing the narrative. Some of the best activists I know are artists, particularly storytellers. They speak the language of the heart and, to reference emerging science again (though I could just as easily reference many Elders I know), emotions play a huge role in how we think. The human brain cannot make a decision, hold an opinion, or construct a rational argument without being informed by feelings. Feeling-informed thoughts impact action—for better or worse.

My personal experience with coalition-building is that it is most effective over the short term for accomplishing specific, focused goals. That's great. But decolonization/indigenization is not a short-term or a focused endeavor. It's a huge shift in consciousness that will inform new ways of living on this planet. Coalition-building will have a role to play but the pivotal roles will be around land-informed community building.

Even more pivotal will be cosmic, spiritual, and Earth-based forces that are acting upon us now, raising our level of consciousness. But I don't think this is the place for a discussion on that.

Back to the question around healing—we have to think of the concept as a process and not a static outcome. Furthermore, healing doesn't happen in isolation. We heal and grow in relationships. We know ourselves only in relationship. So if establishing and maintaining right relationship across communities (including the non-human ones) is the goal, then the process takes care of itself.

FF: What are you working on now? What can we look forward to reading or seeing?

ZA: Thanks for asking. I penned and acted in a sci-fi short that should be out soon. My fiction and non-fiction books are available for sale and there are tonnes of free resources on my site—many discussing these issues. I'm currently facilitating professional development trainings for community organizations as well as self- and collective-empowerment workshops for activists, artists, students, et cetera. Finally, I blog twice a month for Muskrat Magazine. In the meantime, I continue to do research on the implications of emerging science for decolonization/indigenization and there will be more publications coming. For more information on my activities, visit swallowsongs.com.

ZAINAB AMADAHY is an author, researcher, and educator. Among her publications is *Wielding the Force: The Science of Social Justice*, which explores how emerging science has relevance for spiritual development, social justice, and community organizing. Zainab is a frequent contributor to *Muskrat Magazine*. She has also worked for a variety of community organizations in the areas of Aboriginal services, Indigenous knowledge reclamation, women's services, immigrant settlement, and community arts. Zainab has written extensively on questions of solidarity and decolonization of Turtle Island. In 2008, she co-authored an important and widely read book chapter, "Indigenous Peoples and Black People in Canada: Settlers or Allies?" with Mi'kmaw scholar Bonita Lawrence.



The Right to Remain: Reading and Resisting Dispossession in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside with Participatory Art-Making

*Aaron Franks, Andy Mori, Ali Lohan, Jeff Masuda, and
the Right to Remain Community Fair Team
All photographs by Trevor Wideman*

The Right to Remain Community Fair Team are coordinator Ali Lohan and community peer arts facilitators Quin Martins, Andy Mori, Herb Varley, and Karen Ward. The RRCF is the arts phase of the three-year "Revitalizing Japantown?: A unifying exploration of Human Rights, Branding and Place in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside" community research project, in partnership with Gallery Gachet, the Greater Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizen's Association, the Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre, PACE, the Potluck Café Society, the Powell Street Festival Society, the Strathcona Business Improvement Association, and the Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall.

Powell Street Festival/Oppenheimer Park
Tent City Postcard Project, August 2014

Reflection, in response to Nishant
15 November, 2014

Dear Nishant,

Thank you for your interest in the Right to Remain Community Fair (the RRCF) currently taking place in Occupied Coast Salish Territories. We are glad you enjoyed our work at the Powell Street Festival in August (<http://www.powellstreetfestival.com>). As neighbourhood artists with the RRCF we are contributing to the research project "Revitalizing Japantown?" (www.revitalizingjapantown.com) through a peer-led series of participatory arts workshops for and by DTES residents and allies. One element is that labeling neighbourhoods can be a way of gentrifying them. Maybe there is a need for "counterlabels"? Maybe, if marketable new "lifestyle" names like "JapaGasRailtown" (<http://twitter.com/cuchillovvr>) are commodifying



Front of Postcards: (1) from Powell Street Festival goes to the Oppenheimer Park Tent City campers: Asahi Men's Baseball Team, Paueru gai, Vancouver; (2) from Oppenheimer Park Tent City campers to the Powell Street Festival goes: Tent City, Oppenheimer Park, Vancouver, August, 2014

The Right to Remain Community Fair:
Participatory Art as Research in The
Downtown Eastside

"Revitalizing Japantown?: A unifying exploration of Human Rights, Branding and Place in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside" (www.revitalizingjapantown.ca) is a three-year community research project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada that links the current rapid gentrification via capitalist accumulation in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver to prior colonial appropriations from First Nations, Japanese, other racialized residents, as well mental-health system survivors and low-income people.

From June 2014 through January 2015, we are working with Gallery Gachet (<http://gachet.org>), the Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre (NNM) (<http://centre.nikkeiplace.org>) and six other partners to engage low-income residents in a Right to Remain Community Fair (RRCF) in

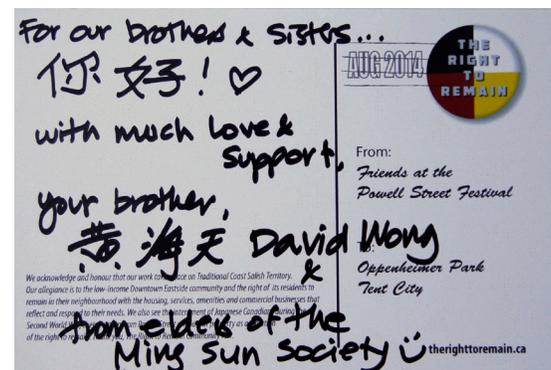
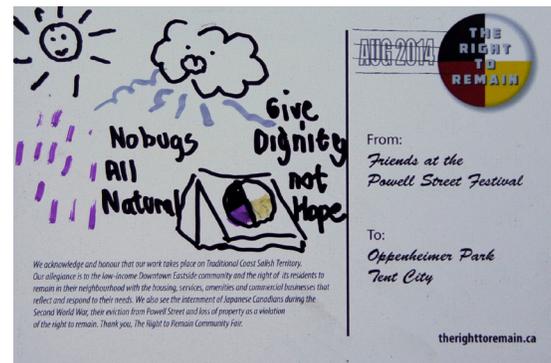
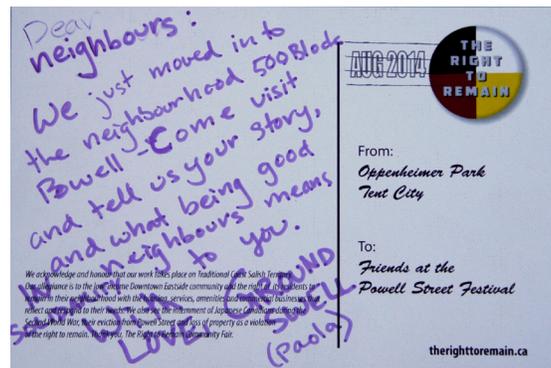


the culture and class of the people who built the area, we need to counter with names that represent and respect the lives of those who have been and are still being pushed out?

“Japantown” refers to an old portion of the Vancouver Downtown Eastside neighbourhood around Powell Street that was allocated for Japanese migrants to Canada (*Nikkei*) beginning in 1877. Its residents were evacuated shortly after Pearl Harbor in light of the wartime paranoia and racism that became institutionalized at all levels of government (Adachi, 1976). So in my mind the revitalization of “Japantown” could only really mean a reinstatement of its residents and heritage there, but the issue is more complicated than that. Is it in the interest of some to gloss over history? The *Nikkei* obviously weren’t the first to be violently displaced out of the area. The DTES was one the earliest places of Indigenous settlement in what became Vancouver.

An Indigenous RRCF community artist has said that through his time dealing with the development of the area he came to realize that there had been a whole series of displacements from this patch of land. The first one chronologically was the regional Indigenous peoples, then the internment of Japanese immigrants, then the black residents displaced by freeway viaducts around Hogan’s Alley (see <http://www.blackstrathcona.com>), and presently those of low income and marginalized residents who have no property ownership (Blomley, 2004). Each time this has happened it has violated residents’ “Right to Remain” in what one local “Revitalizing Japantown?” participant says “has always been a

Postcards from Powell Street Festival to the Oppenheimer Park Camp:



Top to Bottom: postcard from Paola; postcard from Lane; postcard from David.

Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. The Fair features monthly Human Rights Arts Workshops and presentations at valued DTES spaces like the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU), Aboriginal Front Door (AFD), the Interurban Gallery, and the Carnegie Community Centre. In March–April 2015 and October 2015–January 2016, Gachet and the NNM will host separate exhibits inspired by these workshops, their participants, and their arts process.

Art can celebrate and gather people (and gather people in celebration); it can also accuse and scream. Both and all variations in between are possible. In this spirit the Fair hasn’t looked to make “good,” celebratory, or educational art about Human Rights. We have worked with partners and residents to develop the Fair because the ethic of relationship-building behind participatory art as research stands in opposition to the current development model in the area, which has roots in the neighbourhood’s colonial history. This is a development model in which:

[T]he Low Income community in particular, which is overrepresented by its racialized communities, indigenous, and particular migrant communities, is at a disadvantage as the area becomes reconceptualized as an “artist district” without an analysis of class. (Gachet staff member, interview, 2014)

Art is an exchange of experience, not just economy.

It’s often said that the DTES has the highest concentration of artists in Vancouver, and quite possibly Canada. The observation can serve

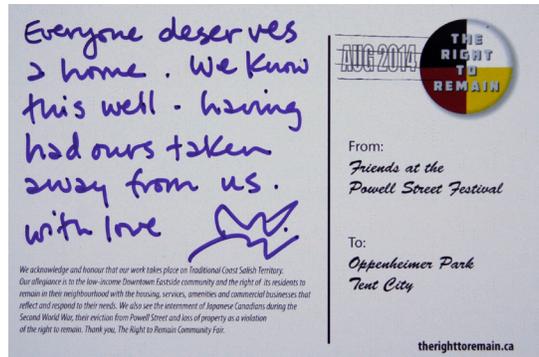


poor person's neighbourhood."

The links between this series of displacements struck us again during the RRCF when the Oppenheimer Park Tent City sprung up to highlight both the plight of the homeless and the Supreme Court decision on native land rights. This coincided with the Powell Street Festival, an annual street festival that reclaims for the August long weekend this area of Japantown to celebrate its culture and *Nikkei* culture generally. The festival organizers showed respect for the occupation of the park that they would normally use for the event by relocating to nearby streets and sidewalks, showing solidarity in the struggle for the Right to Remain.

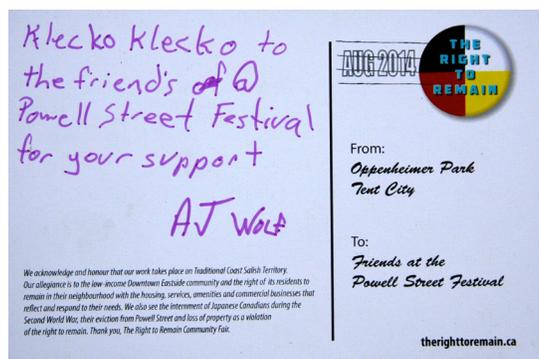
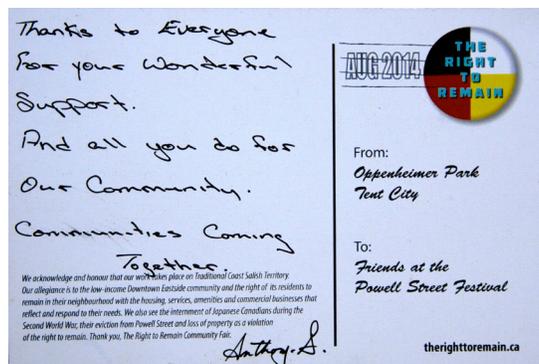
In a "Revitalizing Japantown?" arts team brainstorming session for the Powell Street Festival we hit upon an idea. Why not have the festival participants write postcards of encouragement to the Oppenheimer Park Tent City and vice versa? This would bridge communities across the divides of history by showing common concern for the Right to Remain. Human Rights should not be abstract gifts from the powerful—the Right to Remain is the right to self-identified homes, identities, ways of making a living, and tools for resisting colonialism and gentrification linked by racist economic exploitation.

I did the graphic design of the postcards, choosing images from the men's Asahi Baseball team, a legendary local Japanese Canadian baseball program before the war. A second set of postcards designed with a photo of the Tent City occupying the very area of the baseball diamond where the men once stood was also made, to lend a bridge across time in the same location.



Postcard from Pia.

Postcards from the Oppenheimer Park Camp to the Powell Street Festival:



Top to Bottom: postcard from Anthony; postcard from AJ.

many agendas and has been repeated so often that it might be cliché. It's not a precise equivalent, but "highest concentration of artists in Vancouver" can have the same lazy effect as "poorest postal code in Canada," as generic celebrations of "concentrated artists" (just add water...) smother the neighbourhood with profit-ready notions of "edgy" and "vibrant."

The City of Vancouver's recent Local Area Planning Process (LAPP) report (City of Vancouver, 2014) devotes a Chapter (14) to Arts and Culture. The Chapter opens by presenting "art and culture" in the DTES as a thing that comes into being through three areas of increased investment and capacity: Improved Arts and Culture Facilities; Art in Public Places; and Increased Opportunities for the Creative Economy (p.143). In a planning document it's not surprising that art is (re)placed into the community in this way, as Facility, Place, and (Creative) Economy. Even though it may not be a building or coordinate on a map as in a "Facility" or "Public Place," the "Creative Economy" is no less specific in how it locates art in the DTES.

While it shouldn't surprise us, it's nevertheless important to remember that handling art this way mediates our encounters with the artist's affective labour and, more importantly for the political economy of the DTES, mediates artists' relationship with the place they call home. Rather than more opportunities for art-making for artists who live in the DTES, the "spatial fix" creates more opportunities for investment in art as an engine for gentrification in the DTES. All artists have a right to be paid for their craft and to sell



Once implemented at the Festival, over 30 postcards were written and signed by festivalgoers, assisted and encouraged by myself and RRCF arts team members Ali Lohan and Quin Martins. Using a rapidly obsolete medium reinforced the performative aspect of replicating historic communication practices. Arts team members Herb Varley and Karen Ward had the task of taking the Tent City postcards to Oppenheimer Park for its occupants to sign and send back to the festival. There were formalities, obstacles and issues of trust in order to get those postcards signed and sent back, but it was still being carried on well after the PSF ended.

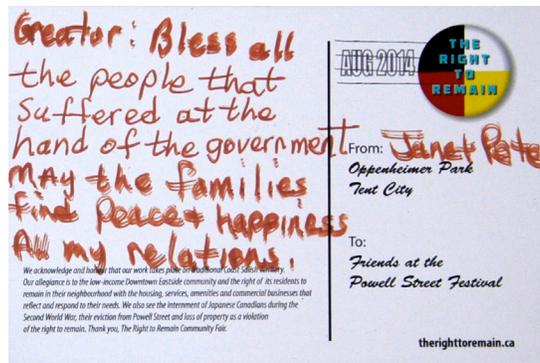
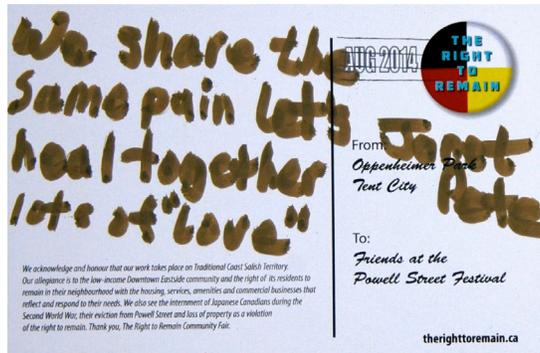
I feel the postcard project to be a great success as a living history “lesson” in the personal craft of handwritten cards of solidarity turned into group petitioning and in the acknowledgement of Human Rights, all touched on at once. It also reminded us all of how the Powell Street Festival was originally born of a call for activism and Japanese Canadian redress, and that historic apologies still hang in the air waiting to be said, with their attendant responsibilities.

- Andy Mori, artist

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Adachi, K. *The Enemy That Never Was*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1976.

Blomley, N. *Unsettling the City: Urban Land and the Politics of Property*. New York: Routledge, 2004.



Top to Bottom: postcard from Janet; postcard from Janet.

their work and skills if they choose. When it comes to clichés the stale romance of the starving artist has had a longer shelf life than most. But it is very doubtful that “increasing opportunities for the Creative Economy” means improved resources (never mind sales) for the many practicing artists of long standing who live in the DTES yet reap no benefits from gentrification.

Art to repossess the DTES (and its image)

Elsewhere in the LAPP document, the city refers to strategies to “accelerate vibrancy” (see the section on “Built Form,” p.70). But people and places aren’t simple particles that one can slow down and speed up. A strategy of “accelerating vibrancy” to “increase opportunities for the Creative Economy” (p.143) plays out as an accumulation strategy that rubs out the concrete complexity of life—the complexity of meeting needs, of what change is—through the abstract space of development. Living, changing, and meeting needs while under the threat of dispossession and marginalization demands an art that exchanges more than just money.

The individual and collaborative artworks emergent out of the RRCF embody this, as does Andy’s personal description of the creative postcard exchange between homeless campers “occupying” Oppenheimer Park (unceded Aboriginal territory) with their tents and longhouse and members of the Nikkei diaspora attending the Powell Street Festival. And while many of the works created during the RRCF (e.g., the dioramas below) contain direct messages of resistance, there is more to their aesthetic than polemic, or ‘giving voice’:



Dioramas – (workshop at VANDU, facilitated by Karen Ward and the RRCF Team):



[I]n terms of the trauma and suffering which is part of—in especially the low-income communities, marginalized, displaced communities—everyday experience...one of the differences...is thinking through these elements as an element of quality, not an element of marginalization. (Gachet staff member, interview 2014)

The motto of Gallery Gachet, a Community Partner for the Fair, is “Art is a Means for Survival.” The Right to Remain Community Fair approaches art as a means for shared debate, healing, pleasure and pain, and an understanding of what it has meant and means to survive in the DTES in the past, present, and future, using the tools of Human Rights and art-making. The “Revitalizing Japantown?” team of researchers, students, residents, and community organizations are privileged to work in a community where art, creativity, and the complexity of living are considered basic parts of knowing, history, and politics, rather than frills and add-ons.

- Aaron Franks, “Revitalizing Japantown?” research team member

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"Homeland Security" – Herb Varley

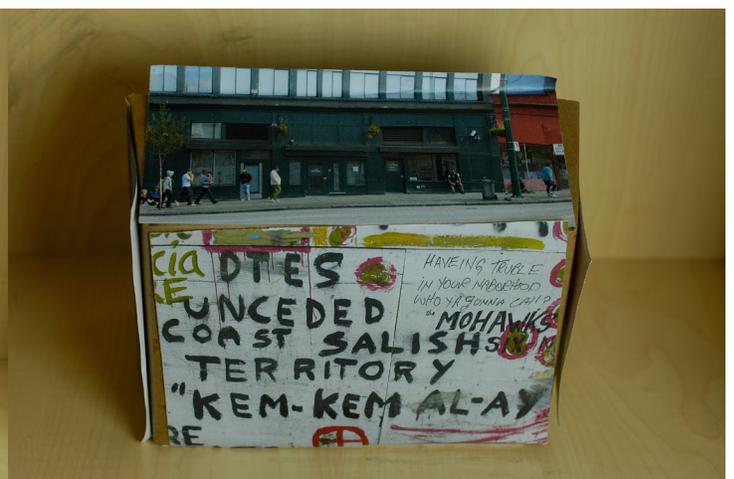
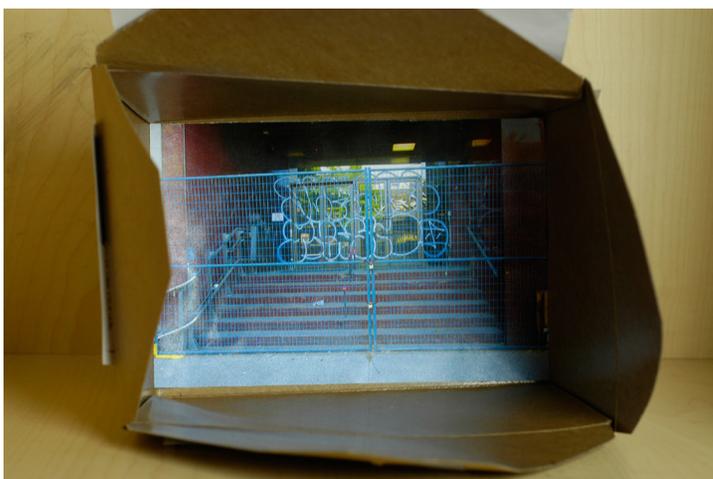


feral feminisms

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Critical Transnational Feminist Analysis
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issue 4 • summer 2015

The Right to Remain
Aaron Franks, Andy Mori, Ali Lohan, Jeff Masuda,
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Top: "Homes Now" – DJ Joe
Bottom: No Title - Doronn Dalzell



"Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Centre" - Tracey Morrison



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THE RIGHT TO REMAIN COMMUNITY FAIR (RRCF) was a year long community art-as-research component of the SSHRC-funded community research partnership “Revitalizing ‘Japantown’?: a unifying exploration of Human Rights, branding and place in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside”. The RRCF Team is Ali Lohan, Quin Martins, Andy Mori, Herb Varley, Karen Ward and Trevor Wideman. Aaron Franks was RJ-RRCF project Coordinator and is a postdoctoral researcher in Cultural Studies at Queen’s University, Canada; Jeff Masuda is project Director and Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in Environmental Health Equity in the School of Kinesiology and Health Studies (Queen’s).



Reading the Landscape of U.S. Settler Colonialism in Southern O‘ahu

Ellen-Rae Cachola

This study used a walking tour to examine Filipino diasporic settler awareness of the structural violence that Kanaka ‘Ōiwi endure in Hawai‘i. Military infrastructures and hotels in Waikīkī evidence the Westphalian state that occupies indigenous commons, recruiting natives and immigrants to participate in the settler-colonial state as dehumanized subjects. Naming settler colonialism as a Westphalian governing system illuminates how local occupation is integral to occupations in other parts of the world. This framework offers a common language for indigenous and diasporic settlers to create new models of local and international relationality.

Introduction

Debates on the discourse of settler colonialism illuminate multiple perspectives on the Westphalian system of government that creates relationships of dominance and submission between diasporic¹ settlers² and indigenous peoples to a land. These debates elucidate established structures of power that socialize and teach people to internalize and participate in relationships that disavow those at the bottom of the Westphalian state’s Eurocentric system while internalizing the values and aspirations of those at the top. Drawing from Anthony Hall (2005), Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright (2008-2009) place critical attention on an international system that requires indigenous and people-of-color activists to play into “possessive individualism” in organizing strategies that replicate complicity in “legal motifs of landownership that emerged from specific historical conditions in Western Europe and Creole nationalisms of America” (as cited in Sharma and Wright 2008-2009, 131). Indigenous organizing must contend with the settler colonial state they are embedded in and resist, in order to re-assert control over their lands. I use this framework to illuminate the hegemony of settler colonialism in Hawai‘i as part of the transnational Westphalian inter-state system that links Pacific Island and Asian countries, such as Hawai‘i and the Philippines, possessions of U.S. Empire. In “Decolonizing Antiracism,” Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua (2005) critique anti-racist scholars for failing to centre indigenous epistemologies and values in their understandings of racism, both ignoring and participating in the ongoing process of indigenous colonization. I take up the challenge of this criticism by writing from the perspective of a diasporic settler who recognizes the system of oppression that occupies Kanaka ‘Ōiwi lands on the southern coast of O‘ahu, and passes down this cognizance to other diasporic settler youth. Dean Saranillio (2013) explains that the purpose of this awareness is not to identify “who is and is not a settler, but rather to question the political and pedagogical work that settler colonialism does to open one’s visual world to the consequence of aligning oneself with the settler state” (Saranillio 2013, 282). Attending to this perspectival shift, I analyze data collected during a walking tour that reveals the transformation of the southern coast of O‘ahu into a militarized and commercialized landscape that diasporic settlers have benefitted from in the form of



employment and access to upward mobility. I argue this transformation is part of a broader process that establishes a Westphalian form of government in Hawai'i, which extends into other Pacific and Asian countries. This translocal narrative can contextualize the discourse of sovereignty of Kanaka 'Ōiwi in ways that resonate with diasporic settlers, rethinking the latter's alignment with the dominant American narrative in Hawai'i. Indeed, diasporic settlers might see the violence against Kanaka 'Ōiwi parallel the type of violence occurring upon indigenous peoples in their own ancestral countries and histories. But, I do not want to equate the experiences of diasporic settlers with peoples indigenous to a territory. Rather, the approach of this article is to focus on the structure of government that produces immigrant/indigenous hierarchical relations in a particular place. This structure is not unique to a single place but has been established across many places, and continuously produces diasporic peoples who would become settlers upon another's indigenous lands.

This article will first define what the Westphalian state is and how it manifests itself through the institutional and teleological functions of the military and tourist institutions of the southern coast of U.S.-occupied O'ahu. Data for this analysis was gathered through a walking tour that I organized as an Ilocano diasporic settler mentor for other Filipino diasporic settler youth who were enrolled in a high school in Kalihi, Honolulu. The purpose of this walking tour was to teach diasporic settler youth how to read the landscape as a medium that features militarization and commercialization, particularly through the Waikīkī hotel industries that employ some of these students' parents. This teaching experience revealed how the settler state recruits indigenous and immigrant settlers to participate in its development. The structural violence that the military and hotel industries cause on indigenous lands, and the case of sexual harassment against immigrant women at Hale Koa hotel, reveals how the settler state abuses both indigenous and diasporic settlers of color. The knowledge of what else exists besides the settler state in their host land may not be clearly evident to diasporic settler youth. For the indigenous people of Hawai'i, courage to resist settler colonialism stems from the fact that they can genealogically connect themselves to land that their ancestors lived upon and governed according to a different political jurisdiction. Within indigenous discourse, the land that settler diasporic youth stand upon is technically not theirs. Rather, diasporic settlers were brought to that place to contribute to the settler jurisdiction. Invoking diasporic settler connection to indigenous jurisdictions requires forging meaningful connections to their own ancestral lands and histories rather than be limited to settler identities and histories. This unfamiliar terrain means connecting the histories and cultures from another part of the world, to the histories and cultures of resistance under settler state. To address this gap, I conclude with thoughts on how focusing on the problem of the Westphalian state can lead to re-envisioning another international and intercultural model of relationality that indigenous and diasporic settler populations can participate in to co-create inter-state systems that resist the violence of the militarist/capitalist system of government that was imported into the Pacific.

Settler Colonialism as the Westphalian State

The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) was signed by European princes to bring peace after the Thirty Years' War. Once controlled by the Holy Roman Empire, the treaty delineated the sovereignty of nation-states. According International Relations Scholar, L.H.M. Ling, the goal of the Westphalian model of governance was to protect territorial sovereignty and inter-state commerce (Ling 2014, 11). The units of sovereign nation-states would maintain and build upon



military installations left behind since the Holy Roman Empire to protect their individual borders (Verie 1648). Nations were responsible for creating their own industries and for trading with other nations. The institutionalization of inter-state trade between nation-states innovated mercantilism into capitalism. In *Caliban and the Witch*, Silvia Federici (2004) describes how enclosures were created to destroy self-subsistent societies, thereby dispersing populations into urban, manufacturing centers where they are dependent upon wages. This process coincided with the rise of state-supported militaries, who occupied the territories of populations resistant to changes in land tenureship (Federici 2004). Despite acts of resistance, the desires of capitalist elites would endure through brutalizing the commoners. In *Security, Territory and Population*, Michel Foucault (2004) argues that war was a necessary feature of the Westphalian state because if one nation exceeded its territorial boundaries or upset inter-state trade, the militaries of surrounding nations would be called upon to regulate the excessive or disruptive rogue state (Foucault 2004, 244, 299). Thus, the perpetual preparation for war was a necessary component of the Westphalian nation-state and inter-state system.

The experience of enclosing the commons in Europe would export into non-European lands, such as indigenous North America and the Pacific. Louis Althusser (1970) describes the modern cities of European nation-states, with institutions such as banks, schools, churches, media houses, the military, the asylum, the clinic, and the factory. The creation of European settler towns in indigenous North America would construct similar institutions and also name the land they occupied according to European people's places of origin (Ford 2010, 5; Smith 2002, 53). These settler towns became contact zones where settler and indigenous peoples would trade and interact. They became sites of competing narratives of place. Settlers driven by capitalist culture desired more land, creating campaigns to dehumanize indigenous populations so that they would be annihilated from the lands that settlers wanted to control, or to assimilate them into their settlements. The Anglo-American settler state grew across the North American continent, fueled by the ideology of Manifest Destiny. By the end of the 1890s, the Anglo-American empire reached the Pacific border. American industrial production was booming at the expense of the low-paid working classes. The American economy could not absorb enough of its production and turned to international markets to sell its goods. Island territories such as Puerto Rico, Cuba, Guam, Hawai'i, and the Philippines came into the purview of capitalist classes to expand its markets (Foner 1975). The establishment of American militaries and businesses in these territories prompted new questions about the rights of the people who lived there. The U.S. Supreme Court decided that each would have different political statuses in relation to the United States. However, what was common among the court rulings was that their governments would allow U.S. military facilities to be hosted on their lands, and support trade with the United States (Ramos 1996, 240-241; Torruella 2007, 304; Thompson 2010, 254). This brief history of American imperialism narrates the establishment of the Westphalian orders in the Pacific and contextualizes the settler colonial government in Hawai'i as an explicitly Westphalian form of government that is related to the occupation of indigenous North America and other U.S. island territories.

Methodology of Reading Settler Colonialism

Chicana muralist Judy Baca (2009) writes about land as a medium that records memories and stories. She writes, "The land was [...] recording all that had occurred there in the field. I needed only to listen to the land to hear the story." She discusses her experiences walking along



the shores of the cape now known as Plymouth Rock. She encounters a granite monument inscribed with a phrase, “The people of Provincetown were overcome with joy that at last their town would be recognized as the first home of the Pilgrims.” In response, she writes, “I cannot help but wonder why they were thrilled given the profound consequences to the indigenous people of that landing [...] I am anxious to feel this land and its memories, which had such profound consequences to millions [...]. I find myself worrying as I walk trails here, that children in the inner cities of the U.S. walk on concrete everyday never placing their feet in soil enough to learn to listen to the land” (Baca 2009).

Baca’s methodology inspired my process for organizing a walking tour of Waikīkī for Filipino diasporic settler youth from Farrington High School in Kalihi, Hawai‘i. Farrington is situated in a working-class neighborhood of Honolulu and is comprised of students of various ethnicities, the most prominent being Filipino (56%), Samoan (13.3%), and Part-Hawaiian (9.1%) (Evaluation Section, Planning and Evaluation Office 2005, 2). Between 2013 and 2014, I worked as a mentor for an afterschool leadership program at Farrington High School. This community reflects a youth population that resonates with my own experience as a daughter of Ilocano³ immigrants born and raised on Maui and growing up with other students of diverse Asian, Hawaiian, mixed-race, and Pacific Islander descent. During my undergraduate years, I developed a critical consciousness around militarization and demilitarization movements by working with American Friends Service Committee-Hawai‘i Office. It was not until graduate school that I developed political consciousness around local identity politics, sparked by the Hawaiian sovereignty discourses of Haunani K. Trask and the Asian Settler colonial discourses of Dean Saranillio, Candace Fujikane, and Eiko Kosasa. These discourses were instrumental in developing my conceptual awareness of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi reclamation of lands and culture as acts of decolonization that challenge Asian immigrants to rethink Americanized narratives of place and identity. Asian descendants of laborers who were recruited to work in the Euro-American owned plantation, hotel, and military enterprises in Hawai‘i originated from poverty and political turmoil in their own lands, and were taught to aspire according to capitalism as hope for a better life. The walking tour to Diamond Head and Fort DeRussy was a way to “listen to the land.” I wanted to communicate the questions and values of being a politicized diasporic settler to other Filipino youth through the walking tour.

Data Collection

The walking tour was inspired by DeTours (Grandinetti 2014), alternative tours of places on O‘ahu led by demilitarization activists Kyle Kajihiro, a 4th-generation Japanese local man, and Terri Keko‘olani, a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi woman. DeTours draws upon environmental justice tour methods, bringing people to militarized sites to see and experience the environmental and social costs of militarism in Hawai‘i (Kajihiro 2008). I was inspired by this way of teaching the ethics of development and decided to use my position as a mentor to organize a tour of Waikīkī, located on the southern coast of the island of O‘ahu. The tour started at Diamond Head State Monument, then moved to Fort DeRussy in Waikīkī to re-iterate histories of the destruction and transformation of Kanaka ‘Ōiwi commons into commercialized and militarized sites. I gathered content from inscriptions on plaques at each site, from historical information found on websites, and news articles. At Fort DeRussy we focused on Hale Koa, a U.S.-Army-owned hotel, which was a site of sexual harassment case involving a military-veteran-turned-parking-manager and his staff of Asian women. These examples illuminate the intertwined relationships



between militarization and tourism on indigenous commons as part of American empire-building in the Pacific. The Hale Koa case in particular became a lynchpin to discuss the history of militarization and presence of Westphalian settler-colonial systems that links the occupation of Hawai'i to other Asian Pacific countries such as the Philippines. This connection demonstrates how indigenous discourses of decolonization through demilitarization of land open up discourses for diasporic settlers-of-color to discuss their own historical experiences of colonization and militarization, positioning the Westphalian state as a common problem that indigenous and diasporic settlers can address collectively.

The Commodified Landscape of Waikīkī

The Westphalian settler colonial structure in the southern coast of O'ahu transformed the food-secure landscape of the indigenous commons into dried-up real estate for commercial and settler development. Early Hawaiian settlers arrived on O'ahu around 600 AD and transformed the marshes of old Waikīkī into hundreds of taro fields, fishponds, and gardens. They constructed an irrigation system in the 1400s, taking advantage of streams descending from Makiki, Mānoa, and Pālolo valleys. Waikīkī became a productive agricultural area. By the time of European arrival, Waikīkī had already been a center of population and a political power on O'ahu (Young 2013). With its fishponds, taro fields, and groves of coconut trees, Waikīkī became an important residence for O'ahu *ali'i* (chiefs) and a large population settled along the shoreline. According to the Diamond Head National Monument brochure, at least four *heiaus* (temples of worship) were built between Diamond Head Crater and Waikīkī.

The 'Apuakehau stream flowed from Mānoa Valley and entered Waikīkī by flowing along western border of what was once the fertile 'Ainahau estate of Princess Likelike on the eastern side of Waikīkī. The Kuehaunahi streamed flowed from Pālolo and emptied near what is now 'Ohua and Kalākaua Avenues in Waikīkī. The Pi'inaio Stream from Makiki emptied at Kālia, a wide delta, where Fort DeRussy is located today (Young 2013). Kālia was also the site of 13 acres of fishponds filled with 'ama'ama (mullet) and awa (milkfish). These fishponds were known as "royal ice boxes" because of the amount of food they provided for the *ali'i* and their guests and were also home to the *mo'o* deities—lizard or dragon guardian spirits of fishponds—who protected their caretakers and punished those who abused their responsibilities (Kanahele 1995, 130). Following the Great Mahele in 1848, many fishponds and dry-land agricultural plots were still being farmed, but at a reduced scale. During this time, Kanaka 'Ōiwi began to be displaced from their ancestral lands as plots were sold to private individuals. In the 1860s and 1870s, Japanese and Chinese immigrants replaced taro with rice fields and raised fish and ducks (Kanahele 1995, 129).

Construction of Fort DeRussy began in 1909 and Batteries Randolph and Dudley in 1911. Walter Dillingham, a land developer, saw the real estate potential of Waikīkī if the wetlands were dredged. In 1920s, Dillingham directed the creation of the Ala Wai Canal to cut off the natural flow of the Makiki, Mānoa, and Pālolo streams into Mamala Bay (waters off Waikīkī beach), benefitting real estate owners in the area. In the 1950s, more high-rise hotels were built along Waikīkī beach. Ka'iulani Avenue, Kalākaua Avenue, and the Outrigger, Royal Hawaiian, and Moana Hotels, paved over where the 'Apuakehau stream emptied into Mamala Bay. When it rains, the natural flow of the 'Apuakehau stream returns, flooding the Outrigger Hotel parking lot (Chan and Freeser 2006). The severing of streams that fed the indigenous Hawaiian commons was instrumental to drying up the lands of Waikīkī, transforming it into



real estate useful for the emerging tourism industry. In 1901, the Moana Hotel was the first hotel built in Waikīkī, followed by the Royal Hawaiian Hotel in 1927. In 1908, the U.S. military acquired 72 acres of land and started draining the fishponds of Kālia.

The Army Corps of Engineers began the construction of four military reservations between Honolulu and Pearl Harbor in 1908 (U.S. Army Museum of Hawai'i 1976). The coastal defense of Honolulu dates back to 1809 when Kamehameha I built a fort at the entrance to Honolulu Harbor, also known as Fort Upton, housing Battery Hackson, Battery Hawsin, and Battery Hasbrouck. According to the Hawai'i Army Museum Society, Kamehameha I incorporated western military technology and strategies to unify the islands. In analyzing the power struggles within social movements in the Hawaiian community during the 1970s, Kanaka 'Ōiwi activist Soli Niheu stated: "in movements that have only one leader, that is the often the beginning of the end. Even with Kamehameha, the centralized power contributed to the destruction of our people to a certain extent" (Niheu 1999, 57). Niheu infers that Kamehameha I's rise to power contributed to the early foundations of the Westphalian state in Hawai'i in which his lineage's centralized rule over the islands could integrate the islands into global systems of trade. Although indigenous peoples of Hawai'i actively protested the United States' encroachment over their sovereignty, they were also being swept into the process of western imperialism spreading across the Pacific. By 1920, there were five forts and over a dozen gun batteries between Pearl Harbor and Diamond Head. One was Fort Armstrong at Ka'akaukui Reef near the Honolulu port quarantine station. Battery Tiernon was built in 1909 (Willford and McGovern 2003, 15). A second was Fort DeRussy, located on Waikīkī Beach. Here, Battery Randolph was developed in October of 1911 and Battery Dudley was built at its right flank in August 1911 (U.S. Army Museum of Hawai'i 1976). The third was Fort Ruger, which incorporated the Diamond Head volcanic crater to anchor the eastern end of the defense.

Among the Kanaka 'Ōiwi, the traditional name of Diamond Head is Lē'ahi, which translates to "brow of the ahi fish." The fish's profile is seen from the shores of Waikīkī below. Lē'ahi also has a second meaning, "wreath of fire," because indigenous Hawaiians lit navigational fires at the summit to assist canoes traveling offshore (Diamond Head National Monument 2012). There were five *heiau* or temples located on the summit or around the crater. The *heiau* at the summit, where the Fire Control Station is located, was dedicated to the god of the wind, La'amamao (Schuler 2008), to protect against strong updrafts that could put out the navigational fires of the early Hawaiians (Diamond Head National Monument 2012). In the 1700s, the name Lē'ahi was changed to Diamond Head when western explorers mistook the calcite crystals in the crater as diamonds (Schuler 2008). Diamond Head was selected to house Fort Ruger because its crater walls served as a natural defense. From its summit, ships could be seen from Koko Head to Pearl Harbor. Fort Ruger began in 1908 with the construction of Battery Harlow on the outer slopes of the crater. This fort hosted mortars on the outside of the crater in order to cover Honolulu and enemy landings coming in north of the crater (Willford and McGovern 2003, 16). The mortars at Battery Harlow were aimed to fire over the crater and far out into the channel south of O'ahu. With a range of eight miles, the mortars could reach Honolulu and Pearl Harbors. The target locations were plotted and transmitted from the Fire Control Station at the summit (Diamond Head National Monument 2012).

The Fire Control Station at the summit of Diamond Head was built between 1908 and 1911 as part of this coastal defense system. The station served as an observation post for spotting enemy ships approaching O'ahu. In 1908, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built a trail up the steep interior face of the crater. This trail led to the Fire Control Station Diamond Head at the summit. The station was camouflaged in the crater walls, and was designed with



tunnels and underground command posts into the mountain; it was considered an engineering marvel of its time. The batteries at these forts housed large caliber artillery to defend O'ahu from an ocean attack coming from the south. The U.S. military used the summit as an observation station, with instruments and plotting rooms. On the second level, observers could triangulate targets using signals from the observation station on nearby Mount Tantalus. Information would be gathered from the third level station and then sent to Battery Randolph at Fort DeRussy in Waikiki to inform the direction of the heavy guns (Diamond Head National Monument 2012). Most forts and batteries on Fort Ruger in Diamond Head were deactivated by 1943 and Fort DeRussy was decommissioned in the 1970s. These military institutions and infrastructures were part of the U.S. Southern Defense complex recommended by the Taft Board to protect Honolulu and Pearl Harbor (U.S. Army Museum of Hawai'i 1976). The goal of expropriating Kanaka 'Ōiwi from their commons was to assert a settler jurisdiction to develop Hawai'i as one node amongst a U.S. imperial network of military bases expanding across the whole Pacific.

Immigrant Experiences Under the Westphalian Settler State

The militaristic and commercialistic infrastructural and institutional development of O'ahu's southern coast also negatively affected immigrants who came to settle this land under United States jurisdiction. The Hale Koa Hotel is one site of violence against immigrants. The Hale Koa Hotel, located next to Fort DeRussy in Waikiki, serves U.S. military personnel and their dependents when they stay on the island. This is the location where Filipina staff workers Ernestine Gonda and Joyce Alcover accused hotel parking manager, human resources manager, and military veteran John "Jack" Lloyd of sexual harassment. Between 2004 and 2005, Ernestine Gonda worked for Lloyd in the Hale Koa Hotel. She reported to the human resources manager that Lloyd constantly harassed her by rubbing her back, offering to take care of her financially and giving her an Easter card illustrating a man with an erection. The manager challenged Gonda's claim, accusing her of dating Lloyd in the past and stating that she had no proof of such harassment. She responded that dating Lloyd was not her interest, and that her complaint about the sexually explicit card, signed by Lloyd, was evidence enough. She sent her complaint to the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) at the U.S. Army's Fort Shafter in Honolulu (Wu 2007). There, she was told it was too late to take action, even though the harassment was ongoing. She approached the Army Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Command, owners of four military hotels worldwide, but they also did not respond to her complaints. Critics claim that Lloyd's position as an EEO counselor for the Hale Koa hotel influenced the suppression of Gonda's claims in the Army bureaucracy. Sexual abuse and rape in military institutions and culture often do not lead to any action by military authorities. This pattern was brought to light in the Tailhook Scandal of 1991 when 83 women and seven men reported sexual assault during a conference of naval officers at the Las Vegas Hilton (Morris 1996, 657). The organization Stop Military Rape found that while 66% of women in the military report sexual assault and 27% report being raped, only 2-3% of alleged perpetrators are ever court-martialed (Lydersen 2007). In order to avoid further harassment by Lloyd, Gonda took a pay cut to become a cashier in another department. Yet she continued to be harassed by Lloyd, which drove her to leave the hotel (Lydersen 2007).

In 2002, Joyce Alcover also reported that Lloyd made lewd comments, kissed her hand, and grabbed her. She filed documents with the EEO. Lloyd remained at his job in the garage.



When he discovered that Alcover reported him, he used his authority to reprimand her. During her pregnancy, Alcover was not allowed to switch shifts or reduce her workload when she experienced sickness. Eventually Lloyd was reassigned, but he continued to taunt her (Lydersen 2007). UNITE HERE!, a labor union representing the hotel workers at Hale Koa, heard multiple complaints against Lloyd. A community movement of labor and immigrant rights advocates emerged to support these women. According to the organization Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE), Alcover's voice helped others to come forward with their own testimony about sexual harassment by Lloyd. Four workers, of Vietnamese and Filipina ancestry, filed class-action complaints on alleged sex and race discrimination (Lydersen 2007). An independent Army investigation confirmed the allegations of sexual harassment filed with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Hale Koa agreed to hold sexual harassment awareness workshops, but community interfaith leaders were not invited to shape the agenda. A settlement stated that Lloyd could no longer work at the Hale Koa Hotel and changes were to be made at the management level and in the human resources department (Wu 2007). Despite this victory, the structure of militarization still stands. Hale Koa continues to operate, embodying the tourist-military infrastructure that normalizes the presence of militarism and capitalism on O'ahu. Meanwhile, Pearl Harbor, Kaneohe Marine Corp Base, Fort Shafter, Schofield Barracks, as well as other military facilities throughout the islands continue to occupy indigenous Hawaiian commons, sustaining the grip of U.S. Empire over other indigenous lands.

Languages of Resistance that Bridge Resistance

Naming the settler state as a Westphalian state assists indigenous and diasporic settlers to analyze objectively how this system of government affects both groups. The hotel/entertainment industry in Waikiki was created to cater to visiting troops on Rest and Recreation (U.S. Army Museum of Hawai'i 2002). Despite Haunani K. Trask's critique of the hotel industry as the "prostitution of Hawaiian culture" (Trask 1993), immigrants and indigenous people continue to work in these industries to survive. Tourism is accepted as a job for local populations even though the work is one of customer service to paying foreigners, establishing an unequal power dynamic between hosts and guests. Noelani Goodyear-Ka'opua argues that change should be meaningful to the day-to-day lives of people (2011, 35); given that people may feel complicit in the problem, change can only occur if they can see pathways for them to participate in the alternative. She describes movements that demand a "multiplicity of approaches across gender and ethnic lines, and strengthening international indigenous networks" (Goodyear-Ka'opua 2011, 52). This language of resistance would help "understand and alleviate multiple axes of oppression," as they emphasize the "collective mobilization of the people themselves, in direct action for their own liberation" (Goodyear-Ka'opua 2011, 53).

Goodyear-Ka'opua's language is relevant in the context of Hawai'i, where the language of demilitarization and sovereignty is not just for indigenous Hawaiians, but also for diasporic settlers who make their home in Hawai'i. The violence of the tourism-military complex is not limited to Hawai'i, but is also present in other lands touched by United States militarism and occupation. Authors Sandra Sturdevant and Brenda Stoltzfus (1992) have chronicled the presence of military bases in the Philippines, Okinawa, and South Korea. War and civil unrest have displaced indigenous peoples who become the impoverished men, women, and children recruited into the sex-trafficking industries of urban centers, catering to the Rest and



Recreation of troops and tourists. Bar and brothel economies contextualize the instances of sexual violence and feed into patriarchal cultures that repress men, women, and children for the economic development of towns situated next to military bases (Sturdevant and Stoltzfus 1992). Vernadette Gonzalez describes how United States military bases that link the Philippines and Hawai'i have been transformed into tourist sites. They create public nostalgia for the military narratives of these places, obscuring how war creates traumas of violence and dispossession. Gonzalez describes how these touristic-military economies recruited the aboriginal Aeta populations around Subic Bay region. The Aetas are culturally and economically marginalized by the modern Philippine state. Yet it was the United States military that provided them jobs, such as guides for jungle warfare trainings and touristic activities, that emerged after the closure of U.S. military base in Subic in the 1990s (Gonzalez 2013, 182-183).

Analysis of militarization brings attention to the structural coercion of regional populations that have been increasingly caught within the networked industries of American empire. Since 1997, the International Women's Network Against Militarism has gathered women activists from the countries of South Korea, Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Australia, Guam, Republic of Belau, Marshall Islands, Hawai'i, U.S., Puerto Rico, and Vieques to discuss how national security is being defined in terms of militarization and corporate development in and across their nations. In order to rupture the hegemonic discourse of security as militarized security, they created the concept of genuine security, arguing that "the physical environment must be able to sustain human and natural life; people's basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, health care and education must be met; people's fundamental human dignity should be honored and cultural identities respected; people and the natural environment should be protected from avoidable harm" (Women for Genuine Security 2007). This network highlights the work of historical and contemporary communities across many militarized nations who believe that the harm of militarization can be avoided if we prioritized systems of government that do not depend on warfare, violence and exploitation.

The IWNAM's process of coming together has been challenging. The structure of interstate system creates inequality between people of different countries. People with U.S. or European passports can move easily between countries, than people with Philippine passports. Philippine currency holders must pay exorbitant amounts of money to convert to the Japanese yen or U.S. dollar. There are language hegemonies: English language is known as a global lingua franca, making it difficult of non-English speakers to participate in fast-paced conversations. These built-in inequalities were confronted at international gatherings because women from privileged positions would embody particular assumptions, but in fact, were behaving in oppressive and hegemonic ways with others. Challenging and questioning taken for granted privileges between dominant and subordinate identities in the group were part of alliance building processes to experientially and politically understand what it would take to build solidarity as women toward a different meaning of security (Cachola, Kirk, Natividad, Pumarejo 2009). Similarly, L.H.M. Ling defines the hyper-militarization of the world as a product of imbalance in international relations. "Multiple Worlds" are the worlds of subalterns of different countries and cultures that have been disciplined, converted, and exploited by "Westphalia World." "Westphalian World" are groups of people in every nation who depend on the labor of, and are intimate with, subalterns. But, the Westphalian World disavows the subaltern's capacity to govern themselves in order to justify and maintain systems of domination and exploitation against them, within and outside their borders. The symbol of the yin and the yang visualizes the interplay between "Multiple Worlds" and the "Westphalian World," where a part of each is within the other. However, Ling conceptually describes the



imbalanced yin and yang of the global order due to the “Westphalian World” encroaching upon more space than “Multiple Worlds” (Ling 2014). Ling suggests Thich Nhat Hanh’s concept of interbeing to address this imbalance: rather than “Multiple Worlds” absorbing the tendencies of rigid separation and ignorance of the “Westphalian World,” “Multiple Worlds” can choose to perform a different kind of relationship based on transforming “Westphalia World” through committed, ethical engagement (Ling 2014, 22). This model of international and intercultural relationality is exhibited in the IWNAM’s own process, as they seek to create a different kind of culture of international relations, among women who come from Westphalian Worlds and Subaltern Worlds, that begins to transform each individual who participates in the gathering; that individual would then take that ethic—a non-hegemonic way of seeing and being with difference—to their own country contexts.

If we consider the distorted yin and yang symbol to represent the discourse of indigenous sovereignty as the “Multiple Worlds” being dominated by the settler colonists as the “Westphalian Worlds,” we can then also recognize that there are aspects of each within the other. The goal of the walking tour in Waikīkī was to begin talking to diasporic settler youth about the hegemonic nature of the Westphalian settler state on the indigenous lands of O’ahu and how our communities have participated in that domination. Yet we should not be afraid to heed indigenous discourses because their message also informs who we are and where we come from, knowledge that we might have forgotten, ourselves former subalterns that have been disciplined, converted, and assimilated into the Westphalian World. Diasporic settlers can heed the call for indigenous sovereignty by opposing militarization of indigenous lands, not only by passively listening to indigenous voices, but also by actively engaging in consciousness-raising among diasporic settlers, asking them to examine their own relationship to the settler state and how they operate in and benefit from it. Can knowing the violence of this system on indigenous people cause diasporic settlers to make ethical decisions and to interrupt their participation in the system? Can this project cause diasporic settlers to rethink their own trajectories of success and create new narratives of what it means to settle on someone else’s lands? Will it cause settlers to reflect on their own colonial indoctrination in their host land, and even cause them to examine indigenous histories in their ancestral homelands?

There was no survey at the end of the walking tour to measure its effectiveness in conveying these values to the youth. However, one student who participated in the walking tour later took part in a poetry slam team comprised of young women of *haole* (White), Chinese, and Black-Filipino descent that represented Hawai’i in the Brave New Voices 2014 competition. Mentored by a Kanaka ‘Ōiwi poet, they performed a piece as non-indigenous Hawaiians, speaking in both English and Hawaiian, about the need to learn Hawaiian history and the failure of the education system to teach them. The powerful poem expressed their alienation from Kanaka ‘Ōiwi history, but also an affinity to the indigenous jurisdiction as non-indigenous youth born and raised in the islands (Gordon et al 2014). Perhaps the call to learn Kanaka ‘Ōiwi history was also a call to reclaim the suppressed history of who they are.

Conclusion

Anti-colonial and anti-capitalist activists need a language of resistance that can bring indigenous and diasporic settlers together against a failed system of government that continues to produce inequalities and injustice both locally and internationally. Placing attention on the Westphalian nation-state and inter-state system as the name of the unjust settler-colonial system can



facilitate an objective focus on a structure of government as the producer of relations of dominance and submission between social groups in and beyond a defined territory. In Hawai'i, this system is evidenced through the physical, institutional features of hotels and military facilities on the landscape, networked across multiple lands across the Asia-Pacific region under American imperial jurisdiction. As the Hawaiian sovereignty movement has been naming settler colonialism as an impediment to their sovereignty and access to land, this conversation has called upon diasporic settlers to decolonize themselves and their own youth. Diasporic-settler modes of decolonization are unique to their experience within the settler state as they must confront their own indoctrination by the state and trace their own genealogies to indigenous histories and ancestral lands, to resist and dismantle the legitimacy of the Westphalian system that reifies structural violence and displacement today. These moments create a space where indigenous and diasporic settlers prepare themselves for co-creating a world that departs from the Westphalian standard.

Notes

1. I draw from James Clifford's notion of diaspora as among the varieties of indigenous experiences. Diaspora refers to peoples dispersed from their own indigenous lands, who have extended kin networks outside of their "traditional lands," and who survive and even thrive through colonial and postcolonial orders (Clifford 2007).
2. I use "diasporic settlers" to refer to the indigeneity that exists within "immigrants" who also have heritages of being self-sufficient and close to the land, but may have been distanced or alienated from this knowledge due to processes of colonization and globalization. In this paper, diasporic settler refers to Filipinos or other immigrants of color that come from Asian or Pacific Islander countries.
3. Ilocano is an ethno-linguistic group from the northwest coast of Luzon, Philippines. Filipino is a catch-all term that reflects the collective of ethno-linguistic groups that are part of the Philippines. Filipino also refers to the national language of the Philippines, which is informed by Tagalog and other dialects.

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Interview with Dr. Tiffany Lethabo King

Dr. Tiffany Lethabo King in conversation with Feral Feminisms' Guest Editors

FF: Tiffany, can you share with our readers about how you have theorized the connections between slavery and white-settler colonialism? What is different about the Canadian context?

TK: Looking for these connections was initially quite challenging. I was trying to theorize a relationship between slavery and white-settler colonialism that went beyond articulating that they were intersecting systems that met up every now and then. I wanted to show how slavery and white-settler colonialism fundamentally gave one another their structure, form, shape, and even momentum. I had to focus on some key sites where this co-articulation or possibility of talking about them at the same time could occur. For example, I looked at some depictions of enslaved bodies in the work of filmmaker and novelist Julie Dash. Dash produced visual moments where one could see the legacy of Native genocide and white settlement on the actual bodies of formerly enslaved women. As an artist, Dash was able to make visible the ways that the violence of the genocide of Native people and the subsequent clearing of the land to make the plantation left their mark on Black enslaved flesh. Dash's visuals made this theoretical work possible in a way that is still difficult within academic theory.

However, I did find some academic theory helpful, particularly the work of Frank Wilderson. In his book *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structures of US Antagonisms*, Wilderson's (2010) configuration and deployment of the term "Settler/Master (Human)" throughout the book allows one to think about the Settler (associated with Native genocide) and the Master (associated with slavery) as inseparable. Because of Wilderson's work, I was able to see that the Settler—who is often sequestered off to the frontier and locked in dialectic with the Native—is the same individual as the Master who is relegated to the space of the plantation, and therefore locked in a Hegelian struggle with the Slave. Within Wilderson's ontological discussion, the Settler and the Master are one and the same.

These artistic/conceptual and theoretical moves by Dash and Wilderson helped me theorize the connection between slavery and white-settler colonialism. Their work helped me articulate a connection that went beyond naming either as an epiphenomenon of the other. This work helped me see and read for the connections better. With these new ways of seeing and thinking, I was able to come up with new terms that gave me analytic units like the "Settled-Slave" and the "Settlement-Plantation." I now had a new grammar that was capable of helping me think about and talk about slavery and white-settler colonialism simultaneously.

As far as the differences between the Canadian and U.S. contexts are concerned, I would have to say that Canada's archive on slavery is not as voluminous as the United States'. Canada's archive is newer and doesn't contain anywhere near the sheer number of texts and images that the U.S. or Caribbean archives do. Further, the U.S. landscape is often imagined as one big plantation. Slavery does not haunt the Canadian imaginary in the way that it does in the U.S. Black scholars in Canada still have to labour really hard to convince Canadians that slavery has shaped the nation-state. I had much more material and scholarship to draw upon in U.S. archives in order to theorize the intersections.



FF: In your dissertation, you centre the Black female body. Please tell us a bit more about it.

TK: Black feminist scholarship has often used slavery as a point of departure for re-theorizing gender. For example, Hortense Spillers', Jennifer Morgan's, and Saidiya Hartman's work, which I relied upon heavily, focus on the discursive construction and material uses of Black-femaleness as a condition of possibility for the institution of slavery. Black-femaleness becomes this open sign within the symbolic economy of slavery. It can be turned into virtually anything: productive labour, reproductive labour, and anything else imaginable. It is within Black feminist scholarship that we see this robust theorization of Black fungibility or the unending exchangeability and use of Blackness at the site of Black-femaleness. To gender Blackness as "female" is to make Blackness more malleable and flexible as opposed to making it, as Sylvia Wynter says, "another genre of" the liberal stable human (i.e., white womanhood). What this means, is that gender as a discourse when applied to Black bodies is about making these bodies ever malleable. It is not about imposing coherent humanizing gender upon Black bodies.

What I found particularly useful about Jennifer Morgan's work *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (2004) is that it articulates the ways that the Black "female" body becomes essential to the productive and reproductive work of slavery as a project of spatial expansion during the early years of settlement in the West Indies and in the low country (coast of South Carolina and Georgia). It is due to this contextualization of the enslaved Black "female" body within the project of settlement and expansion that I could begin to think about Black "female" bodies as metaphors for and units of settler space. I will also say that Katherine McKittrick's work in *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and Cartographies of Struggle* (2006) theorizing Black women as geographic subjects was also extremely important for how I was able to think with the Black "female" body in my work.

FF: What is your understanding of decolonization?

TK: For me, decolonization is a process that has to do with working ourselves out of ways of thinking, feeling, and desiring that keep us stuck. A part of that work is realizing that we don't have to want or need the toxic (for lack of a better term) things that we have learned to depend on. This kind of change is generally really scary, hard, and can be lonely. We also can't always predict what this (decolonial) work will look like and require of us. It can be so many things. It's hard to say what it is or is not. However, I do tend to recognize it when I feel it.

I think that on a fundamental level the process of decolonization requires that we are undone and unmoored by the idea of living in a way that requires mass death (in its various forms) in exchange for other's self-actualization. By become undone, I mean it really has to fuck us up in our core and make us relentless about seeking out and making alternatives possible. And also realizing that the alternative can be much more pleasurable than the current situation that we are merely surviving. Also, decolonization is not just about the ascetic project giving things up but fundamentally about creating new and pleasurable ways of living.

FF: Who are some of the scholars/theorists who have greatly influenced your thinking and work?

TK: It was at the University of Toronto that I was introduced to the work of Sylvia Wynter. More specifically, it was the ways that Katherine McKittrick and Rinaldo Walcott were deeply and sincerely engaged in an ongoing dialogue with Wynter that was really inspiring and made



me pick up her work. Wynter's essay "1492: A New View" allowed me to think about the ways that the very construction of Blackness in the 15th century helped inform the project of Conquest, Native genocide, and settler colonialism.

Jacqui Alexander's work and presence at the University of Toronto at the time also helped me think about how to theorize my work with INCITE! in a way that honoured it and allowed it to function as a serious site of engagement in my scholarship. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory and the Sacred* (2006) gave me the courage to take on the sacred as a real site of analysis and force in my work.

Further, the ways that scholars like Katherine McKittrick and Sherene Razack were working with space and critical geographies helped me analytically and methodologically. Thinking about the different relationships of Settlers, Black people, and Native people to space/geography was essential for thinking about their relationship to the category of the human. Additionally, thinking about spatial processes and landscapes also provided my dissertation with a methodology or a way of tracking the connection I was trying to elaborate. I must also mention Zainab Amadahy and Bonita Lawrence as important influences. Specifically, their Black and Native dialogue with one another in the article "Allies or Settlers?" is a great model of committing oneself to an ongoing and difficult conversation. It's a good example of how the substance of political work is not always about "getting it right, but about committing to the process."

As far as scholarship on slavery, anti-blackness, and genocide is concerned, my theorizations of the settler colonial project in relationship to slavery and Settler self-actualization would not be possible without the work of Afropessimists and Native feminists. My theorization of Black female flesh as trope for space that animated the Settler's conceptualization of space and spatial expansion would not be possible without Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Jennifer Morgan, and Frank Wilderson's work. Finally, the work of Native feminists that has often been in conversation with Black feminist scholarship has shaped this project in some important ways. The openings that Haunani Kay Trask, Audra Simpson, Paula Gunn Allen, Marie Guerrero, and J. Kehaulani Kaunani created for thinking about Conquest, colonialism, and settler colonialism in relationship to slavery also made my work possible. And finally, Andrea Smith's contributions –however we categorize them in this moment –were also critical to my thinking.

FF: You have worked with INCITE! Toronto. Did that work inspire your PhD project? If so, how?

TK: The work I did with INCITE! Toronto was invaluable to my work. In fact, my experience with INCITE! gave birth to my project. Our unique conversations, ceremonies, and creative and political work that centered on the Black and Native members of the group required me to shift. The work transformed me in powerful ways. Quite honestly, I tend to have a really difficult time putting the significance of this work into words. One reason why I struggle is because the impact and meaning of this work continues to unfold and reveal itself in new ways that my words can't always keep pace with. Secondly, the work that we did forces me to struggle for a language that can do it justice. What I mean is that I struggle to find a way of talking about this work that doesn't allow people to dismiss it.

I really want people to engage the work. Often when people talk about the kind of transformation that they experience from committing to work that is about staying in relationship with or being ethical to one another, it is dismissed as corny and apolitical. This is



particularly true when Black, Native, and Women of Colour use language like “sacred” and “decolonial.” People tend to roll their eyes or be really condescending. It tends to be brushed off as touchy-feely work that is provisional to true political work.

Our struggle to confront hard questions like, “how have and how do our respective struggles to survive the horrors of genocide and anti-Black racism fuck one another up?” was demanding. I can’t express what hard work this was. We had to think about the ways that surviving genocide and slavery/anti-Black racism (Conquest) set up some impossible terms for Black and Native peoples on Turtle Island. Terms that often required a kind of “either I/we die or you/y’all die” kind of thinking and living. We struggled to find ways to imagine and live our lives outside of that dynamic. We worked really hard with one another in ways that took a considerable toll on us emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually.

This kind of work exceeds that of coalitional politics. And I don’t want it to be easily reduced to that. We often found ourselves at an impasse and could not move forward. This work required that we rethink and question our own investments in and desires for traditional notions of Black freedom and Native sovereignty. The kind of work that requires an unsettling of the self and the way one thinks pushed me to rethink traditional ways of theorizing anti Black racism and Black life. I think this is the legacy of that work.

FF: What would you like to tell racialized students working through questions of white-settler colonialism, connections, and complicity to remember as we continue to do this work?

TK: I think that we should always be struggling for analytic precision. It’s easy to rely on the terms and language that have currency and legitimacy in academia. For instance, it was important for me and other Black folks in Canada and the U.S. to push back against the discourse of “settler.” This resistance to the term is motivated by a number of different things. First, on a very gut and visceral level it is a resistance to a very sloppy conflation that discursively makes white settlers’ and Black people’s relationship to Native people an equivalent one. White settlers and Black people are not ontological/structural equivalents in this hemisphere.

Secondly, my own need to find new and more precise vocabulary is motivated by a sincere desire to think about how Black life and political projects may bump up against and conflict with Native people’s work to end genocide and white-settler colonialism. As a Black person committed to Black liberation, I am also deeply invested in Native life and liberation. These dual commitments in my work can also be tracked in Black intellectual and political thought in this hemisphere. My commitment to both of these projects demands that I be very specific about how Black and Native life is entangled in this hemisphere. Being analytically precise honours both of these struggles and forces us to “do” our politics better. Black people can’t use political and analytical models developed by white settlers.

I think that non-Black racialized students also need to attend to the historical specificity of the ways that their own relationship with Native peoples, the land, and white settlers has been and continues to be structured. “Settler” may not always be the best term to do this complicated and important intellectual and political work. I would encourage racialized students to begin to develop new language to describe and analyze their relationship to Native people, Black people, white settlers, and the land. Settler-colonial studies as a disciplinary formation has historically been preoccupied with theorizing whiteness and its relationship to Native people. This is an important project but I am not convinced that it is capricious and flexible enough to be extended to racialized people. We can always use new language. This is



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*Interview with Dr. Tiffany Lethabo King
Dr. Tiffany Lethabo King in conversation with
Feral Feminisms' Guest Editors*

something that I am continually working out in my own process of writing my book manuscript. I need to struggle for even more precision and stretch my tongue to speak in new and relevant ways.

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Hybridity & Diasporic Writing

Charlotte Henay

This piece is intended as a collection of experiences, images, words, and re-membrances connected to being and becoming Indigenous. As a mixed-race Black Indigenous woman in exile, I story in thinking about Black and Native relations in the Americas, local and diasporic. I speak, too, about water, keepers of water and drowning. I have dreamt my mother resurfacing from underneath turquoise salt only to be dragged down again. There doesn't seem to be any logical or reasoned place to start, other than where I am, which becomes the beginning. In being and becoming Indigenous, living and embodying re-surgence, re-membling and re-storying, the ongoing conversations with my mother, ones I could only have with her after her death, are barometer and compendium. Only in the journey back is there any coherence in the *whatcomesnext* to the work of living into the story without shame, so that I can continue to tell it; so that others like me can tell their own. I am concerned with what sparks the debate about who is Indigenous, to which place, belonging, and then, nationhood. There's no accident to the realization that the more I learn about being and becoming Indigenous, the more I realize how little I know. The discourse of extinction is insidious, powerful, and thriving. It's an ironic position to be, in-between, when who you are is so intimately involved with what you do.

I find a requirement of this work is suspending the need to be certain, paradoxical in a world of scholarly theorizing and supported statements. Indigenous scholars/tellers, are expected, in academe, to back it up, explain our perceptions, theories and conclusions. Indigenous Methodologies re-story our intuitions. Still we fight the perception that these same knowings, ineffable and refusing quantification, are wannabe reconstructions of a disappeared past. I have always been interested in untold stories and entirely alienable hidden truths.

The wind is howling outside. I have to struggle with it to remember. Moments ago the thought was at my fingertips, waiting for the page. Erased before it found breath. Absence is prevalent in this work, a function of existing on the peripheries of essentialized understandings of land, place, nation, Indigeneity, and Blackness, A feature of in-between that is wholly here and *justwhoIamnow*. My mother was the truth-teller in our family. She hinted at painful secrets, talked about obscured origins, left out the details. My thoughts and ancestral connections are scattered across continents and generations. I collect these stories, here, to reach back into a *tribalography* (Howe 2002, 29). Mothers' re-search has become so much more than an analysis of today and what we read of how we got here, rather it's a re-construction, feminist, Indigenous, mine, ours. In the process of navigating what is understood as Creole Indigeneity my stories pay attention to how being and becoming catch us up in our own webs, ogre-faced spiders waiting to drop an inextricable weaving on the unsuspecting, each other.

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THE ROAD TO LETTING GO

when i first lit the sweetgrass i was lazy
smudge bowl littered with leftover prayers and whispered conversations
matches and ash
it's cold outside can't see the base of the tree cushioning my falls from grace
briefly smoking ceremony protests reticence
begin anew speaks the wind in a language i do not remember

what to keep what to throw away strategic decisions made in ship holds
cast aside decolonizing moves that pimp peoples in fetishized re-collections of
desires re-settle re-inhabit re-package re-move
traces of indigeneousness the only good indian
dis-appear in homo-gene-eye-ity my self
determination dis-engages with piecemeal cobbling of methodologies and alliances creeping up on
you in a rhetoric of in-collusion
give back my belief in this waste-land along with that moral rectitude
in my hunger for the past i encounter my ancestors they name me stranger

decolonizing is an English word
inextricable bonds between means and ends ask me
when have i ever felt safe
implications of both question and answer bear the stickiness of
my insides draped across my head and through my hair
how will we recognize ourselves in this garb who will we become spitting
images of forced negotiations questioning the imposition of
colonial histories on our communities

my mother's specter rises from the ocean springing forth in a spray of turquoise and salt, eyes open.
she is talking to me though i can't hear her she is frustrated she can't get my attention it's important
why was i never a listener? i hear her voice calling me from the nether parts of the house when i am
alone chaudy cha-u-ddddy chaaaaaadyyyy shoddy

makeshift booty refusing to stay buried bodies
hefted overboard into
the channel
can it be about mothers and not mothering
this taking apart of the pieces of my soul repair them make them
whole living into the story
is this how i am to remember
bridges scare me clench teeth squeeze eyes shut
unnatural seeing spirit
called to meet when we listen to you
my voice is not always my own

WHERE DO I BEGIN

miscegenated into dominance
creolized
touristified
craving childhood reminiscence
glue repels
worn out
even my own veins are anathema
they itch on the inside
i can see them stretched out over continents and honeycomb rock
beach. ocean. building.
limestone stair
draped
pulsing over canopy beds and louvered windows
in their imaginary absence i feel the ache
nostalgic of a lost limb
i want to toy with
the stump of my identity before i am snuffed out
whooooooooohhhhhh
into extinction
recognition and repair for stitched arteries leak into the in between

time space place
mothers' land-ed periwinkle ackee johnny cake
flickering across world views
is a wake
for my grandmothers
they come
when I call
nighttime vigil for my child wrapped in bright made from anguish
transmuted hatreds
bred into coffee
cream
set aside the gin
in a heartbeat
burn for spirit
breathe for mothers
is there another story for me in there?
sick handed down
healing policing ourselves so industrious we are relieved
even of our own agency
tired
I ride bitch alongside my own freedom *wordsajumbleofprogress* in my
mouth teeth unbound i come to meltdown
silver shackles
molten anger and memory
I want
those trees and degrees very badly
discovered
bags of Bacardi caps and beetle runs no exception
to the craving that has powe-red
this reconstruction resurgence becoming
i don't need you
to tell me this is my
inheritance
i recognize it on the death certificate

floating
i have never lived
Arawak Pequot Taino Creek Seminole ways spinning
through blue holes *lickuhduhtarbrusssssh*
waiting under water eyes open
sucker
fish hitches onto my hips i don't see
the barracuda
until
the only recourse is to
scamper leaping snagged propellor
bleeds diluted ancestry into salt
uncle not my uncle spear his only companion *down down down* no
breath
dancing with our mother for dinner
trailing fingers in night sea skimmed by hungry mouths
yellowtail come up
half
gone disappeared by the tickle beneath my fingers over gunwales
rocked by waves
headless
snatched back i cradle what's left
my cousin swims with sharks
guffaws at my foreign sensibilities
settles



almost went back but for intergenerational manference
hisfatherandmymother gave a whole new meaning to us
callineachudduhsistabruddah
love
affairs marred by cockroaches and vegas showgirls widely available
blackness
be-come home legacy insufficient to repatriate
me singlehandedly i caught tossed fruit drove drunken revels home to
gunpoint
encounters
under lamplight and thought this was ancestral
practice well
by that time
that's what we had left

my mother capers beneath liquid
merciless thieves of our children's bones
you can drink these finite ripples in a land where i keep
dogs' and white folks' secrets
swallow the lost
escapees diasporic neocolonial self-mutilating
nation states hand over heart we are all
punishing each other believe it
is a form of love
will my hands cramp with arthritis jagged with dysplasia tongue twisted
with acculturation and appropriation
soaked in an inland sea of lies
genetically marked into authenticity on landscapes of souls spill that
milk don't touch
each other love each other know each other
sever *rightfromthegetgo*
filth
reprobates
ancestry to cut your teeth on
my
that looks lovely
better

i watched that bird flip broken wing longer than i could bear
couldn't leave it
couldn't help it
called in a rescuer
provided a box
cold as shit why daydream about faraway folks who look like me smell
like me
come on
brown emergent from purulent chrysalis no iridescence here
it's a bat
looks like a moth
excruciating stretching wet
wings spitted roasting someone *lickitup*
there's a piece stuck
between
your teeth

eyes close
hold my belly
trees fall spirit walkers culled not indigenous
to
this
land

decisions made by creole bankers developers citizens
related to me by choices some others made now
i understand what she meant
said she came to realize she lives in a black country
home not her own since she don't belong
the way they say we ought to since she won't crawl
into the skin they've stretched out for us
a moulted remnant of my-the-ological proportions
can i get an amen



CHARLOTTE HENAY is a mother, teacher, writer, storyteller and researcher. She works to counter Indigenous extinction myths through storywork and lyric scholarship, Indigenous methodologies, and re-membering. Charlotte writes about cultural memory and grandmothers' gardens as an activist for (de)colonial, Indigenous, and Afro-futurities. She has a background in critical race theory, education administration, and teaching. Charlotte's visual art work has been shown at York University's Crossroads Gallery and 416 Gallery for MIXEDArtTO. She received her M.Ed in Sociology and Equity in Education from OISE/University of Toronto. Charlotte has been an administrator and consultant in First Nations, mainstream and international education contexts, and is currently a Ph.D. student at York University in Language, Culture and Teaching.



Anti-Capitalist Decolonization and the Production of Racialized Masculinities in Noam Gonick's *Stryker*

Ruthann Lee

My essay examines the production of racialized masculinities in Canadian director Noam Gonick's 2004 film Stryker. Stryker draws on the crossover politics of hip-hop to indicate promising forms of alliance and resistance to colonization. The portrayal of Indigenous and Asian/Filipino youth gangs in Winnipeg, Manitoba illustrates how racialized masculinities are unevenly produced under neoliberal multiculturalism. Stryker also demonstrates how the sexual regulation of Indigenous women upholds the twin projects of settler-state colonialism and late global capitalism. I argue that drawing attention to subjugated Indigenous women's narratives remains imperative in theorizing radical models of citizenship, nationhood, and sovereignty.

Always present, Native eyes watched each wave of newcomers—white, black, or Asian—establish themselves on their homelands. Histories of racist exclusion facing people of colour must detail the removal of Native peoples.

—Bonita Lawrence and Ena Dua, “Decolonizing Anti-Racism” (2005, 134)

Introduction

In Canada, strategies of decolonization are necessarily varied and complex. Joyce Green contends:

Decolonization in the Canadian context requires, first, the understanding of the historical colonial process. Then, it requires substantive power sharing to ameliorate the inequitable, unjust, and illegal appropriation of indigenous people's territories, resources, and political autonomy. Decolonization implies fundamental change in the Canadian federation, constitution, and political culture (“Decolonization” 54).

Although critical scholars often conflate the politics of anti-racism and decolonization in Canada, a growing body of scholarship argues that, under settler-colonial rule, anti-racist strategies can and must be distinguished from practices of decolonization (Lawrence and Dua 2005; Tuck and Yang 2012; Walia 2012). My essay contributes to this effort by examining the production of racialized masculinities in Canadian director Noam Gonick's feature film, *Stryker* (2004).¹ *Stryker* features a young Indigenous male protagonist and offers overlapping representations of non-Indigenous racialized masculinities. The film depicts present-day tensions between Indigenous and Asian youth and signals how the settlement of Asian diasporic communities intersects with the ongoing theft and colonial occupation of Indigenous lands. *Stryker* is thus relevant for analyzing how diasporic and Indigenous masculinities are constituted *relationally*.



Contemporary anti-racist and Indigenous feminist scholars problematize the difficulties of creating meaningful and sustained political alliances between Indigenous and diasporic communities in Canada (Amadahy and Lawrence 2009; Haig-Brown 2009).² These discussions are significant given the ongoing negotiation between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state over claims to land and national sovereignty. Recent public debates have involved the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Prime Minister Stephen Harper's controversial promise to redress the historical harms and institutionalized violence against Indigenous peoples caused by residential schools (Regan 2011). These debates are linked to emerging research on the social movement known as Idle No More, which signals the growing support of non-Indigenous people who wish to honour the political and ethical concerns of Indigenous peoples regarding land claims, public education, treaty rights, environmental protections, and violence against Indigenous women in Canada (Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014; Walia 2013; Dobbin 2013). As a movement for social and environmental justice, Idle No More urges activists to examine their relationships to land. It uses Indigenous feminist epistemologies and the framework of relationality to guide political action and efforts at decolonization.

Despite the now axiomatic recognition that race, class, gender, sexuality, age, dis/ability, religion, language, and nation intersect, there remains a dearth of scholarship that theorizes identities as *relationally* lived and produced under the conditions of settler colonialism (Wolfe 1999; Kaur Sehdev 2011). Building on feminist theories of intersectionality, relationality acknowledges that individuals and collective groups are differently situated within the settler-colonial logics of white supremacy, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy (Smith 2006). A relational analysis problematizes the ideological opposition between marginalized/subordinate and privileged/dominant identities (Friedman 1995; Shohat 2001). It examines how differently marginalized people are invited to participate in related but distinct modes of oppression, including practices of Indigenous genocide, anti-black racism, Orientalism, and environmental destruction (Smith 2006). The analytic power of relational theory lies in the recognition that strategic political alliances among different social groups are most powerful when they are not based solely on shared victimization, but rather when they acknowledge that any group can be complicit in the victimization of another. In this way, resistance strategies more effectively challenge interlocking systems of oppression by keeping all subjects accountable. Correspondingly, my essay suggests that an Indigenous feminist and relational analysis of racialized masculinities in *Stryker* offers helpful insights for (re)imagining practices of solidarity among Indigenous and diasporic groups in North America.

I propose three lines of discussion and analysis. First, *Stryker* draws on the crossover politics found in the contemporary hip-hop cultures of Indigenous and black youth to indicate promising forms of alliance and resistance to colonization. Second, *Stryker*'s vivid portrayal of contemporary Indigenous and Asian/Filipino youth gangs in Winnipeg, Manitoba illustrates the uneven production of racialized masculinities in neoliberal multiculturalism. *Stryker* not only reminds viewers that Indigenous peoples have consistently challenged white supremacy and land theft, but also gestures to the ambivalent relationship between Indigenous peoples and newer non-white ethnic groups in Canada. Finally, *Stryker* demonstrates how the sexual regulation of Indigenous women upholds the twin projects of settler-state colonialism and late global capitalism. Overall, I argue that drawing attention to subjugated Indigenous women's narratives remains imperative for theorizing radical models of citizenship, nationhood, and sovereignty.



Racialized Masculinities and the Crossover Politics of Hip Hop

The *Stryker* is a gritty and at times exuberant fictional portrayal of a present-day racial gang war between Indigenous and Filipino youth on the streets of Winnipeg's North End, a poor neighbourhood where much of Winnipeg's Indigenous population resides. The film follows one *stryker* (Kyle Henry), or prospective gang member (Gonick 2004), an unnamed "fourteen year-old Native arsonist from a northern reserve whose arrival in the city serves as a catalyst in this fierce battle" (Gonick 2). After setting fire to an abandoned church on Brokenhead First Nation Reservation, the *stryker* flees the scene of his crime and travels aboard a freight train, winding up in the North End of Winnipeg. Upon arrival, the *stryker* witnesses a violent car jacking where an Asian Bomb Squad (ABS) gang member loses a large cocaine shipment to a group of Indigenous teens from the rival Indian Posse gang. In the film, Omar (Ryan Black), the leader of the ABS, controls the North End's illicit drug and prostitution trade. Omar and the ABS lose control of the North End when Omar's nemesis, the "girl thug" Mama Ceece (Deena Fontaine), returns to lead the Indian Posse and reclaim her North End turf after serving time in prison. Throughout the film, the *stryker* is a silent, emblematic witness to the intense battles between the two rival gangs.

Layered over a powerful hip-hop soundtrack, the opening photo-montage of *Stryker* depicts some of the political history that shapes the current social realities of the characters in the film, including archived images of Treaty One (Anishinaabe) territory, herds of wild bison, Indian residential schools, and portraits of Indigenous children and families being escorted by white Christian reformers onto newly established reservations. The images overlay illustrations of Indigenous uprisings, including the Red River Rebellion of 1869-1870, led by revolutionary Métis leader and Manitoba founder Louis Riel. The images are chronologically sequenced and transition into present-day photographs of Indigenous youth handcuffed by police.

Stryker's opening montage is reminiscent of African-American hood films that were popularized in the 1990s alongside the commercialization of hip-hop, such as *Boyz N the Hood* (1991, dir. John Singleton) and *Menace II Society* (1993, dirs. Albert and Allen Hughes). As a genre, hood films originated in the United States and detail coming-of-age hardships for young black men in the inner city. The films incorporate hip-hop music alongside themes of urban poverty, street gangs, drug use and trafficking, racism, and violence in African-American neighborhoods. Hood films rely on the Hollywood cinematic metaphor of the cityscape as "both a utopia—as a space promising freedom and economic mobility—and dystopia—the ghetto's economic impoverishment and segregation" (Massood 88). In this way, hood films not only portray destitution and racial containment but also "[celebrate] the continued existence and the possibilities of African American communities and African American cultural production" (Massood 94). *Stryker* draws on this genre to explore Indigenous community dynamics in a poor urban landscape. Winnipeg-born film director Noam Gonick, who is white, queer, and Jewish, describes the political imperative that guided the film:

After generations of genocide at the hands of this place we call "Canada," I saw the surfacing of Native street gangs in Winnipeg as an army of resistance. During the arson epidemics of the last few years, when the city was being burnt to the ground, I cheered these kids on—the gangs pushed back at an impossible situation thrust on them by birthright. It's the oldest story in Canada, and one which we rarely admit to ourselves—but there is an apartheid in effect here—gasoline sniffing, teenage prostitution, crack use, are all symptoms of this system. Native teens are told how to make it on white middleclass terms, told that it's the only way to transcend their situation. But away from this evil coercion, within the gang underworld, I have



found an amazing sense of camaraderie and a belonging to something pure and raw. Gang family life mimics the abusive ways of the superstructure, yet as misguided as it can be, I admire the impulse to resist. (5)

Gonick's first short film *1919* (1997) was awarded at the Toronto Worldwide Short Film Festival, and his subsequent feature film, *Hey, Happy!* (2000), debuted with much acclaim at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival (Scott 2006). *Stryker* premiered at the prestigious 2004 Venice International Film Festival and was featured in a New York City MoMA exhibit in 2010. Given his success as an emerging Canadian filmmaker, Gonick received several state-funded artist grants to produce *Stryker*.³ As a white filmmaker, Gonick's privileged access to arts funding and exhibition contrasts starkly with the institutionalized barriers experienced by Indigenous filmmakers.⁴ Gonick acts as both an advocate for Indigenous resistance and an agent of state multiculturalism.⁵

With regard to the former, *Stryker*'s reception has been overwhelmingly positive among Indigenous audiences and communities, particularly Indigenous youth who reside in Winnipeg, many of whom Gonick consulted while directing the film. Several of *Stryker*'s cast members are Indigenous rap artists and musicians with no prior acting experience, such as the Beat duo "REZOFFICIAL" from the central Alberta Four Nations Reserves. *Stryker* also integrates an original hip-hop score by Alberta-based Indigenous MC HellnacK (Karmen Omeosoo). *Stryker*'s slice-of-life representation of gang culture in Winnipeg's North End clearly resonates with Indigenous youth audiences in Canada.

Its popularity also gestures to the cultural influence of hip-hop more broadly. Jenell Navarro explains that since the late 1970s, African American hip-hop has been a musical genre that has responded to racism, classism, and state violence. In the 1980s, Indigenous hip-hop transpired to address related concerns and "continues to be one of the latest culturally specific forms of hip-hop that uses music and culture as a means to voice opposition to structural and environmental racism, poverty, and oppression in the United States" (Navarro 102). Many scholars investigate the increased global circulation of African-American hip-hop in various national contexts. Patricia Hill Collins argues: "The music of hip hop culture [...] follows its rhythm and blues predecessor as a so-called crossover genre that is very popular with whites and other cultural groups across the globe" (300). Among others, Collins underscores the contradictory position of African-American youth as both commodities/suppliers and consumers of hip-hop in emerging global markets. Similarly, George Stavrias maintains that the postmodern tropes of hybridity and multicultural diasporic flows that are characteristic of hip-hop's globalized forms "can be adopted or adapted to express the concerns of ethnic minorities everywhere" (45). Although the cultural expressions of hip-hop vary widely in different locales, Cristina Veran enthusiastically discerns: "Into this polyglot gumbo of aesthetics and performance, presentation and expression today, Indigenous youth are rocking the planet anew, fusing hip-hop's expressive elements of MCing, DJing, b-boying, and aerosol graffiti art with their own traditions of oratory, music, drumming, dance, and the visual arts" (278). Generally speaking, hip-hop is a mode of self-expression with a powerful impact on Indigenous youth. *Stryker*'s portrayal of Indigenous masculinities testifies to this contemporary urban aesthetic movement, which comprises part of Indigenous people's ongoing social activism and global political organizing. Canadian film critic Ioannis Mookas comments that *Stryker*'s incorporation of Indigenous hip-hop parallels the situation of black youth in the U.S.: Recognising that Indians occupy the same structural underclass position in Canadian society that blacks do in the US, *Stryker*'s key innovation is to situate native youth as authentic subjects of, and shareholders in, this transnational hip hop culture (n.p.).



Although the cultural histories of Canadian Indigenous and U.S. black youth cannot be conflated, the clothing styles, music, beatboxing, deejaying, breakdancing, emceeing, and graffiti art presented by Indigenous youth in *Stryker* signify Indigenous adoption of hip-hop lifestyles that are largely inspired by African-American oppositional politics. The urban and poor Indigenous youth in the film critically appropriate and modify these cultural forms to express personal and collective political concerns. Stavrias remarks that both African-American and Indigenous “traditions” are blurred in Indigenous hip-hop:

Negotiating relations between traditional cultural practices and modernity, Aboriginal culture is actually a culture in the making and hip-hop is a powerful tool in helping Aboriginal youth with this negotiation...The rap itself enacts traditional knowledge through storytelling (52).

The cultural currency of hip-hop also grants Indigenous youth access to public performance and airtime through their self-expressions of art and music (Ritter and Willard 2012). Although Indigenous articulations of hip-hop might be read as a form of American cultural imperialism provoked by global marketing pressures, a relational reading of racialized masculinities makes evident that the heightened visibility of black American youth culture enables existing and new possibilities for political solidarity between diasporic and Indigenous groups.⁶ Additionally, the shared cultural expression of hip-hop signals a history of interconnection and intergroup struggle between Indigenous and black peoples, which is an important and emerging area of scholarly investigation (Amadahy and Lawrence 2009; Smith 2014; King 2014).

Of course, Indigenous hip-hop is not impervious to the messages embedded in commercialized hip-hop, including the idea that sexism and homophobia are endemic to authentic “thug” life. As Tricia Rose points out:

[H]ip-hop has become a breeding ground for the most explicitly exploitative and increased one-dimensional narratives of black ghetto life [that include] the gangsta life and all its attendant violence, criminality, sexual “deviance,” and misogyny. (3)

It is notable that no Indigenous female artists or characters in *Stryker* perform hip-hop, although in several scenes Mama Ceece nods appreciatively to the raps and improvised rhymes of the Indian Posse’s male beat boxers. The Indian Posse’s lyrics frequently celebrate and pay tribute to Mama Ceece, suggesting male reverence to Indigenous female leadership. In this manner, *Stryker*’s representations of Indigenous gang life subvert distorted stereotypes of Indigenous masculinities as, for example, “highly masculinized noble savage[s]...brutal animalistic warriors, or sad victims of Darwinian destiny” (Swanson 1). Nonetheless, not all aspects of Indigenous hip-hop expressed in the film are necessarily oppositional, “positive,” or politically progressive.

(Not) Our Home and Native Land: *Stryker*’s Relational Masculinities

Even though *Stryker* highlights many of the harsh social realities that comprise life in the North End of Winnipeg, it also incorporates elements of the fantastic and bizarre, reflecting Gonick’s foundational ties to queer cinema (Waugh 2006). More specifically, the film’s portrayal of



racialized queer and female masculinities troubles heteronormative models of settler citizenship in unexpected ways.⁷ To complicate matters, the film designates Omar, identified as Métis, as the unexpected leader of the Asian Bomb Squad. The ABS consists mainly of young, second-generation Filipino men.⁸ Omar is not a conventional “thug”; for instance, he once worked as an exotic dancer at a gay bar and his girlfriend, Daisy (Joseph Mesiano), is a transsexual sex worker.⁹ *Stryker*'s portrayal of contemporary racialized masculinities—which include queer and female masculinities—both transgress and reinscribe stereotypical notions of urban Indigenous and Asian youth. For example, the hyper-masculine representations of the Indian Posse and the Asian Bomb Squad are inflected with suggestive moments of homoeroticism and queer sexualities. Throughout the film, Omar's ABS gang members don flamboyant and revealing costumes and they are sexually objectified as homoerotic eye candy in prolonged shower and body-building scenes. Several of the most colourful and amusing scenes feature a group of Indigenous transgender and transsexual sex workers who launch raunchy in-jokes and campy retorts. Stryker finds temporary refuge among these Two-Spirit women and establishes a friendship with Daisy, a Métis trans-woman and Omar's ill-treated girlfriend.

In a similar vein, Mama Ceece breaks from the standard male representation of gang leadership as a fierce, young, Indigenous, butch lesbian who has no qualms about beating up her unfaithful teenage girlfriend, Ruby (Nancy Sanderson), and castigating her all-male Indian Posse. Although problematic, Mama Ceece and Ruby's turbulent relationship represents a profound disruption to conventional (mis)representations of Indigenous women who either appear, in the heterosexual-fantasy style of Pocahontas, as a beautiful and virginal Indian princess—the willing yet innocent helpmate to white European men—or as a squaw drudge, a sexually licentious and ugly “beast of burden” (Stevensen 57). Both stereotypes serve to rationalize an Indigenous woman's servitude—she is a slave to men. The Indigenous lesbian is neither of these. By queering the portrayal of gang life in Winnipeg, *Stryker* complicates, re-imagines, and opens up new possibilities for the racialized, sexualized, and gendered dynamics of gang culture.

Stryker also illuminates how the antagonistic colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples in relation to white settlers is far less ambiguous than that of Indigenous peoples vis-à-vis non-white groups. Indigenous opposition and resistance to white supremacy and settler invasion are resolute in the film, perhaps most blatantly expressed in a scene where the character of Gloria (Joy Keeper), an Indigenous elder, yells at three white women walking along a North End street, “Get the fuck off Native land! We're taking it back, you white bitches!” In contrast to conventional Hollywood representations, no white characters are portrayed with any sympathy in the film. For example, in addition to providing a degree of comic relief, the character Cody (Nick Ouellette), a young, white, homeless man, is portrayed as a foolish yet opportunistic snitch who delivers information between the rival gangs. Indian Posse members eventually beat Cody to death.¹⁰ Likewise, even though the local police force contains both white and Indigenous officers, the sordid routine of the “starlight tour”—where policemen assault and drive an Indigenous person to the outskirts of the city and leave them to die of exposure in sub-zero temperatures—is perpetrated by a white male officer in the film.¹¹ *Stryker*'s most demonized character is the licentious Talia (Dominique Rémy-Root), a white, Eastern-European immigrant woman and foster mother to Omar and several Indian Posse members. The film suggests that Talia has had sexual relationships with many of the Indigenous boys who have lived in her care. Talia makes numerous explicit sexual gestures toward the reluctant stryker after he is placed in her custody.¹² Eventually, in a presumable act of revenge, the



stryker sets Talia's house on fire. Mama Ceece and the Indian Posse members jeer and watch in satisfaction as it burns down.

In contrast to *Stryker's* unforgiving portrayal of whiteness, relationships between Asian and Indigenous youth are not clear-cut. The Asian Bomb Squad members initially show respect and defer to Omar, their Métis gang leader. They party and share drugs with Omar and the Indigenous sex workers he employs. However, Omar steadily loses control over the North End as Mama Ceece recruits more members to the Indian Posse. Mama Ceece gains power by convincing boys from the Deuce Crew, a former enemy Indigenous gang, to join her posse, because "Native peoples gotta come together, take back what's ours." Once the ABS members realize that Omar is no longer in power, they abandon him. One ABS member justifies the betrayal by stating: "he's not even one of us." This refusal of loyalty and the racial gang wars between Indigenous and Asian youth reflect how the neoliberal multicultural state promotes a divide-and-conquer strategy that pits one cultural group against another to deflect attention away from the shared but uneven effects of colonialism and capitalist exploitation. Rather than operate as an inclusive framework, *Stryker* suggests that multiculturalism functions as an official tool of the state to reproduce racial inequalities.

The post-1970s liberalization of immigration and citizenship policies, reinforced by Canada's 1988 *Multicultural Act*, is often regarded as a significant advancement for race relations; Canada has since been upheld as a global model for intercultural pluralism and governance (Kymlicka 1996). Nevertheless, liberal multiculturalism not only reproduces essentialist understandings of group identities, but also generates hostility among different marginalized groups as they compete for state recognition and material resources (Bannerji 2000; Mackey 2002; Gunew 2004; Walcott 2000).¹³ More recent scholarship reveals that diasporic and Indigenous groups are asymmetrically positioned within a framework of neoliberal multiculturalism and settler-state colonialism in the Americas (Lawrence and Dua 2005; Amadahy and Lawrence 2009; Jafri 2012). Multicultural policies privilege immigrant populations and distinguish Indigenous peoples as a group that requires special consideration. Yet specific government legislation in relation to Indigenous peoples has not emphasized the protection or celebration of Indigenous culture but has rather promoted the aggressive assimilation of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples (Bourgeois 2009; Todd 1990). Accordingly, multicultural discourse and its associated critiques deflect attention away from the decolonization struggles of Indigenous peoples, especially in relation to land claims and sovereignty (Walia 2012). Echoing the insights of many Indigenous scholars, Richard Fung clarifies:

Aboriginal protests aren't simply racial, but also national struggles. They are not primarily expressions of anger at discrimination...but a defense of land and historical rights against encroachment...Federal and provincial governments didn't so much attempt to appease as to squash such protests, precisely because the stakes are much higher—they challenge the legitimacy of the colonial state. (in Gagnon et al. 85)

Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) argue that homogenizing various experiences of oppression under the umbrella of colonization is a "move towards settler innocence" and a form of colonial equivocation that flattens out and undermines Indigenous sovereignty. Fung expounds: "Diasporic Africans and Asians in the Americas have different histories from each other and, in turn, from those of Native peoples: slavery is not indentureship is not internment is not head tax is not residential schools. The ways that we various 'others' are integrated into and excluded



from [Canadian] culture may be related, but they are also marked by crucial differences” (19). Multicultural conflicts over rights and inclusion are further exacerbated in an identity-driven and individualized era of neoliberalism and late global capitalism, which promotes ethnic, racial, sexual, and gender differences “so long as they do not fundamentally challenge the dominant economic order” (Gilroy 100). Himani Bannerji (2000) points out that ethno-racial communities in Canada more often engage in class politics with the intention of upward mobility rather than in the interest of social and economic justice.

Correspondingly, *Stryker* portrays marked class asymmetries between Filipino and Indigenous communities in Winnipeg and uneven degrees of social mobility among Filipino and Indigenous youth in Canada. For example, in contrast to members of the Indian Posse, the wealthier Asian Bomb Squad members drive sports cars, wear designer clothes and leather jackets, and spend leisure time working out at the gym.¹⁴ No Asian youth are visible in juvenile detention. The film hints at internal class and gendered dynamics within the Filipino community in an early scene when Orville (Tri Cao), a member of the Asian Bomb Squad, is turned away by his mother after being beaten and robbed by members of the Indian Posse. In this scene, Orville’s mother refuses to let her son inside the house where she works as a domestic helper in fear of losing her job. Arguably, the reaction of Orville’s mother suggests his own family’s economic scarcity and poverty rather than a strategy of upward mobility.¹⁵ Nonetheless, the mother’s response draws on constructions of Asians as dutiful, law-abiding, hardworking, and aspiring “model minorities.” Anti-racist scholars argue that Asians are only desired as immigrants, workers, and students when they benefit Canada’s socioeconomic imperatives and disavowed when they challenge the sociocultural status quo (Coloma 2013). The recent “Too Asian?” controversy in *Maclean’s* magazine concerning race and representation in Canadian universities exemplifies the paradoxical position of Asian diasporic subjects who are often regarded as perpetual foreigners and threats to the national body, but are simultaneously seen as domesticated “model minorities” who are ranked higher among black, South Asian, Latino, Indigenous, and other racialized groups (Gilmour et al. 2012). Asian Canadians thus occupy a conflicted position as marginalized citizens in a settler nation with global economic aspirations. *Stryker’s* portrayal of Asian masculinities signals this precarious positioning of Asian Canadians within a multicultural settler state. The film also suggests that it is untenable to blur or equalize the colonial struggles of Indigenous peoples and diasporic communities in Canada. However, Indigenous feminist theories of relationality offer radical and alternative ways to define and imagine citizenship beyond a nation-state framework.

Conclusion: Indigenous Feminisms and the Decolonization of Racialized Masculinities

Ironically, throughout the film, Mama Ceece shows a callous disregard for other females and queers. Mama Ceece appropriates the masculinist and chauvinistic fantasies of thug life; she is an abusive butch lesbian who hits her girlfriend and hurls homophobic slurs at her gang mates. Indeed, regarding the representation of Indigenous women in the film, Mookas purports: “Taken together, Mama Ceece and Ruby make for an unusually complex representation of young Indian womanhood” (n.p.). Chris Finley provocatively suggests that a way to decolonize the Indigenous body and dismantle the heteronormative Pocahontas myth that serves to justify imperial expansion and gendered colonial violence is to “recover the Native bull-dyke.” Finley elaborates: “if the Native woman were read as queer, her heterosexual desire for white settlers to invade her nation would not be for the universal truth of love, since the sexual desire for



white men would not exist" (35). *Stryker's* portrayal of young Indigenous lesbians engages with this decolonizing process and also underscores how Indigenous women are faced with some of the highest social stakes in Canadian society.

For instance, Mama Ceece's release from prison gestures to the escalating rates of Indigenous women's incarceration and the over-representation of Indigenous people in Canada's criminal justice system. Patricia Monture contends: "For Aboriginal women particularly, the rates of over-representation continue to climb, more than doubling in number between 1981 and 2002" ("Confronting Power" 26). Andrea Smith and Luana Ross further clarify: "the majority of Native women in prison are there as a direct or indirect result of abuse" (3). Moreover, Ruby and Daisy are sex workers who are vulnerable to physical, emotional, and verbal assaults that occur both on and off the job. Although *Stryker* depicts this violence as solely perpetrated by other Indigenous characters, namely Omar and Mama Ceece, "Native women are assaulted more often by white men than by men of their own group: 60% of the perpetrators of sexual violence against Native women are white" (Smith *Conquest* 28).¹⁶

Daisy and Ruby are shown to be fully capable of defending themselves against Omar and Mama Ceece's attacks, but it is useful here to recount feminist analyses that link the sexual violation of Indigenous women's bodies and the overall disregard for sex workers to institutionalized racism, sexism, and heteropatriarchy. More specifically, feminist insights reveal that the sexual colonization of Indigenous women remains a crucial aspect of strengthening white male capitalist patriarchy in the Americas (Razack 1998; Smith and Ross 2004; Smith 2005; Jiwani and Young 2006; The Cultural Memory Group 2006). Smith and Ross elaborate: "If the women of a nation are not disproportionately killed, then that nation's population will not be severely affected [...]. The constant sexual violations of Native women demonstrate the colonial desire to control Native women's sexuality" (2). In another study, Andrea Smith suggests that Indigenous women who reside on lands rich in energy resources are particularly threatening to government and capitalist enterprises because of their ability to reproduce the next generation of people who can resist colonization (*Conquest* 78). Likewise, Bonita Lawrence identifies how Indigenous women and their descendants have been systematically disenfranchised by the Canadian state for over a century. Until 1985, the *Indian Act* forcibly removed tens of thousands of Indigenous women from their communities for marrying non-status or non-Indigenous men ("Gender" 15). By contrast, Indigenous men retained their Indian status, access, and privileges to land and resources despite marrying non-Indigenous women. By and large, this worked to divide Indigenous communities by denying land and other entitlements to certain Indigenous families. It also introduced and escalated conflicts between Indigenous men and women. These conflicting relations are only too well depicted in *Stryker*.

Indigenous feminists frequently articulate Indigenous forms of nationhood organized around a system of inter-relatedness and mutual responsibility rather than the individualized logic of rights-based citizenship. Patricia Monture explains: "Any hierarchical ordering of either the notion of collective rights or individual rights will fundamentally violate the culture of Aboriginal people. Such a violation, whether it favours or prioritizes the individual or collective, can only result in one thing—the further destruction of Aboriginal cultures" (*Thunder* 184). Indigenous nationhood is based on responsibility for the land rather than control of territory, fundamentally challenging Western legal concepts of land as property and commodity. The emphasis in Indigenous feminist theory on forming a responsible relationship to land rather than commodifying it radically counters corporate and state interests and reflects how decolonization struggles are linked to anti-capitalist movements.



In *Stryker's* closing scenes, Mama Ceece and the Indian Posse are shown at large party getting high, laughing, dancing, and celebrating their reclaimed territory and victory over Omar and the Asian Bomb Squad. Mama Ceece and Ruby cuddle affectionately in a corner while the hip-hop soundtrack blasts. The celebratory scene transitions to a close-up shot of the stryker as he awakens from unconsciousness. He finds himself among a herd of bison in a frozen field after being picked up by police, beaten, driven out of the city, and left to die. Dazed, the stryker walks up a snowy hill and gazes intently at the bright Winnipeg skyline as if ready to meet his future. The closing scenes suggest the powerful and enduring connection between land and Indigenous resistance.

Stryker's portrayal of Indigenous and Filipino youth gangs in Canada illustrates how the complex, contradictory, and shifting relations between Indigenous and diasporic communities are produced within a white settler state. Overall, Indigenous feminist perspectives highlight subjugated Indigenous women's narratives, which remain critical to theorizing radical models of citizenship, nationhood, and sovereignty. In this regard, placing diasporic and settler narratives in relation to Indigenous sovereignty movements enables a fuller and more complex understanding of how citizens of *all* backgrounds can participate in the ongoing process of decolonization.

Notes

¹ By "racialized masculinities," I refer to the social construction of race and gender and the historical, economic, political, and cultural processes through which modernist categories of race and gender are linked and (re)produced. The concept of racialization emphasizes that all designated racial categories are performed and historically produced. Racialization reveals the processes wherein, for example, Indigenous subjects become racialized subjects and other bodies become racially unmarked as white. For a salient discussion of racialized modernity and the white European invention of race, see Barnor Hesse (2007).

² I use the term "Indigenous" inclusively to denote First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples in Canada. These concepts reflect the contemporary limits of colonial languages in regards to more accurate and respectful terms for the territory's First Peoples. Since the 1970s, Indigenous peoples in Canada have referred to themselves as "First Nations" to contest the Canadian Constitution's reference to the French and English as "founding nations" of Canada. However, "First Nations" does not include Métis and Inuit peoples, whom I include in my argument. For a discussion of competing Indigenous categories in Canadian legal discourse, see Joe Sawchuck (2001).

³ *Stryker* obtained production grants from TELEFILM CANADA, Manitoba Film and Sound, Government of Manitoba, Manitoba Film and Video Production Tax Credit, Canadian Television Fund, The Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit, Centre for Aboriginal Resource Development, and the Manitoba Arts Council.

⁴ For example, despite the development of the Aboriginal People's Television Network, a national, Winnipeg-based Indigenous broadcasting company, bureaucratic conflicts often prevent the production of feature films by Indigenous people (Mookas 2005). Mohawk scholar and curator Steven Loft comments: "Undoubtedly there will be those who question



Gonick's choice of subject (how dare this white, Jewish, liberal, etc., etc.), and that is as it should be. It is obvious that Gonick has invested a great deal of time and energy [...] with actual Winnipeg street gangs including the Indian Posse [that] serves to ground the film [...]. Cultural authority and appropriation are difficult and sensitive topics, but they need to be engaged if we are to get beyond simplistic notions of who is allowed to speak about what [...]. Gonick may have to deal with some of the fallout of these, but they should not divert from the accomplishment that *Stryker* is" (n.p).

⁵ I give thanks to my anonymous *Feral Feminisms* reviewer for this astute and helpful point.

⁶ Jenell Navarro draws on Audra Simpson's and Andrea Smith's (2014) concept of "theoretical promiscuity" to analyze Indigenous feminist land ethics and cultural resistance in Indigenous hip-hop: "Black Studies and Hip-Hop Studies [have] theorized particularized histories and the present conditions of colonization and considering these with, rather than against, Native scholarship leads us to multiple possibilities for enacting present and future change for everyone, not just for Native communities" (114).

⁷ I rely on Bobby Noble's definition of female masculinities: "female masculinity references a range of subject positions—drag king, butch, female-to-male (FtM), trans man, both operative and non-operative, trans-gendered man, stone butches—simultaneously constituted by irreducible contradictions between (de)constructions of 'bodies' misread in a certain way as 'female' and yet masculine" (5).

⁸ The urban gangs of Winnipeg are primarily comprised of Indigenous youth (Grekul and LaBoucane-Benson 2008). According to a 2006 census report, Winnipeg hosts the second-largest Filipino immigrant population in Canada, comprising roughly 5.6% of the overall population. Métis and "North American Indian" groups in Winnipeg account for 6.2% and 5.3% of the total population, respectively.

⁹ Gonick wryly comments: "Omar is all about masculinity in crisis—a failure to live up to the archetypal movie thug. The idea of gangsters pimping for and carousing with other men dressed as women might seem like a stretch, but I've taken little artistic liberty here" (7).

¹⁰ Gonick explicitly states: "in this script no Native people would die—a new-style cowboys and Indians movie" (6).

¹¹ For a critical analysis of the "starlight tour" phenomenon, see Joyce Green (2006).

¹² To an extent, Talia's presence in the film reflects a reality of post-war immigration history in Canada and the city of Winnipeg, and Stryker arguably vilifies a white Eastern European immigrant woman. However, the historical abuse that occurred in Indian residential schools (which continues in present-day foster homes) implicates white male religious and administrative authorities as the major perpetrators of sexual violence against Indigenous women and children (Razack 2002; Smith 2005; The Cultural Memory Group 2006).

¹³ Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis add: "Multiculturalism also constructs the various immigrant communities as internally homogenous in terms of class, ideology and politics.



State recognition is provided to a specific and usually male and conservative leadership within ethnic communities. As multiculturalism usually constructs difference in mutually exclusive terms, this can give rise to fundamentalist leaderships who are more easily perceived to be 'the authentic other'" (27).

¹⁴ Gonick describes how race and class divisions informed his portrayal of the characters' differing motivations for gang membership: "My idea of the Asian Bomb Squad is that, after the allure of fast cars and fast girls wears off, they will, like many recent Filipino arrivals in Winnipeg, quickly ascend to the middle class and leave the ghettos behind. But these Indian kids are ten generations in, and few of them can ascend that way" (in Mookas 2005).

¹⁵ Thanks to Gulzar Raisa Charania for raising this argument.

¹⁶ For examples of the organized responses to the cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada, see The Cultural Memory Group (2006), "First Nations Women Remembered" in *Remembering Women Murdered by Men: Memorials Across Canada*. Contributors to this volume underscore that Indigenous women who are most often subject to racial and sexual violence are also women with the least access to the resources needed for public memory-making.

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On Assumptive Solidarities in Comparative Settler Colonialisms

Dana M. Olwan

On December 23, 2012, a large group of Palestinians from occupied Palestine and diasporic Palestinians from the settler-colonial states of Canada and the United States issued a statement in support of the Idle No More Movement and Indigenous rights to sovereignty and self-determination. This article explores the assumptions and politics of solidarity that inform this statement and what they reveal about the current historical conjuncture of alliance and coalition-building amongst Palestinian and Indigenous people. By pointing to shared histories of settler colonialism between Indigenous peoples and Palestinians, it situates alliance politics within a broader context of critical relatedness, mutuality, and reciprocity. It thus explores what assumptive relationship between these two peoples has meant for movements and struggles against the settler-colonial state of Canada and what type of challenges this interpretive and political framework may pose to anti-colonial pursuits that seek to create more just worlds across varying but interconnected contexts of occupation, coloniality, and settlement.

Introduction

On December 23, 2012, a large group of Palestinians from occupied Palestine and diasporic Palestinians from the settler-colonial states of Canada and the United States issued a statement in support of the Idle No More Movement and Indigenous rights to sovereignty and self-determination. The statement, circulated repeatedly on pro-Palestinian and anti-Palestinian websites, blogs, and news sites, asserts the following:

Indigenous people have risen up across Canada in the Idle No More movement, a mass call for Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination and rights, against colonization, racism, injustice, and oppression. As Palestinians, who struggle against settler colonialism, occupation and apartheid in our homeland and for the right of Palestinian refugees—the majority of our people—to return to our homeland, we stand in solidarity with the Idle No More movement of Indigenous peoples and its call for justice, dignity, decolonization and protection of the land, waters and resources. (“Palestinians in Solidarity,” 2012)

In addition to its support of Indigenous struggles against colonization and oppression, the statement recognizes the “deep connections and similarities between our peoples,” including our shared histories of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Urging us all to “idle no more,” from Turtle Island to Palestine, the statement resonated with various community activists, organizations, and academics.

Emerging from a very local Canadian context of targeted legislative attacks on Indigenous governance and sovereignty, the Idle No More movement was shaped in response to Canada’s past and ongoing legacy of the colonization of Indigenous lands, lives, and bodies. This movement offers an alternative to the vision of economic extraction and environmental destruction driving Canadian state interest in and utilization of Indigenous lands. Idle No More,



as Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Simpson (2013) tells us, “is [an] alternative [that is based in] deep reciprocity. It’s respect, it’s relationship, it’s responsibility, and it’s local.” Through multi-pronged cultural, rhetorical, and political strategies, the movement confronts exclusionary state policies and practices while reimagining Canada’s borders and boundaries and the state’s relationship to Indigenous people. Linking a critique of global capitalism with a contestation of settler colonialism, Idle No More teaches us about decolonization at a time of war and empire. As a movement encompassing a series of acts, Idle No More contests conditions of colonialism and occupation while highlighting how these conditions structure the daily lives of Indigenous people across a variety of spaces. The movement thus brings our attention to the situated contexts in which oppression becomes articulated and resisted and so compels us to understand our collusions with and contestations of hegemonic powers, both of settlement and coloniality, and our differential roles in these processes.

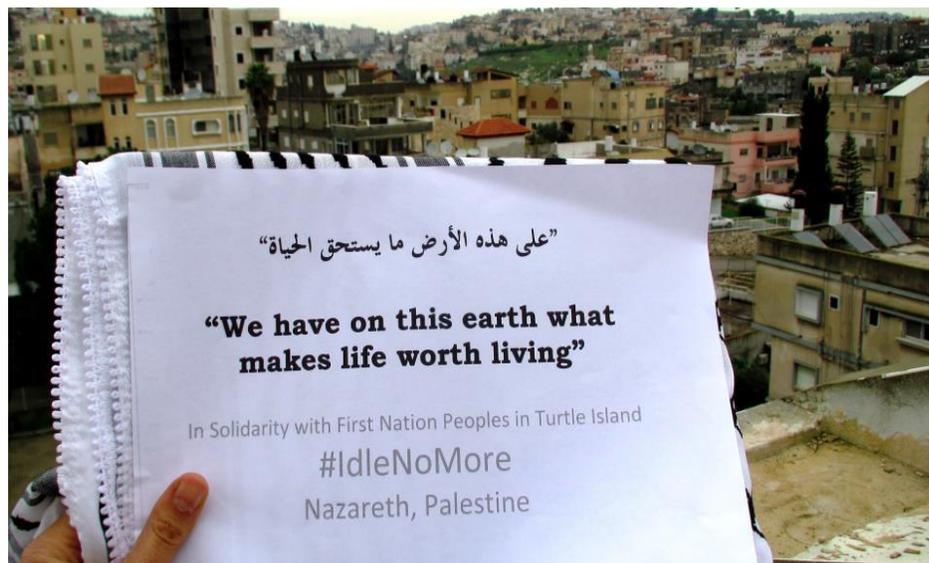
As a Palestinian residing in the United States and an immigrant of color to Canada, I support Idle No More and endorse the Palestinian statement’s message of solidarity with Indigenous people and its resolute support of Chief Theresa Spence’s courageous hunger strike. The urgency of the statement of support, and its demand that Palestinians take action against the ravages of colonialism and occupation on this continent, resonate well beyond the boundaries of the Canadian state and thus carry an important message about the possibilities of decoloniality. Almost three years after its publication, and as a signatory to its message, this statement and its undergirding conceptions of solidarity continue to simultaneously inspire and trouble me. In this paper, I explore the assumptions and politics that inform this statement and what they reveal about the current historical conjuncture of alliance and coalition building amongst Palestinian and Indigenous people. By pointing to the shared and simultaneously varied histories of settler colonialism between Indigenous peoples and Palestinians, I situate alliance politics within a broader context of critical relatedness, mutuality, and reciprocity. In particular, I am interested in examining what the implied (and sometimes even stated) natural or assumptive relationship between these two peoples has meant for movements and struggles against the settler-colonial state of Canada and what type of challenges this interpretive and political framework may pose to our anti-colonial pursuits as feminists committed to creating more just worlds across varying but interconnected contexts of occupation, coloniality, and settlement.

As I will argue, the underlying logic of this statement is instructive because it reveals both the limits and possibilities of solidarity as a politically essential framework for mobilizations and struggles. In addition to turning to this particular historical moment of alliances between Palestinian and Indigenous peoples, I explore an example of queer resistance to state inclusions and migrant justice work in the shadow of the Canadian settler-colonial state. Drawing on feminist and queer theorizations of alliance politics, I rethink what it means to rely on assumptive solidarities or likely alliances between and amongst Indigenous peoples across disparate—yet interrelated—temporal, historical, and geopolitical contexts. In other words, I want to think about alternative visions of solidarity that are not, in the words of Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández (2012), “simply about entering into a state of solidarity—to *be in solidarity*—which might suggest feelings towards, but about actions taken in relationship to someone” (54; emphasis in original). By looking at separate but connected instances of solidarity, I argue for the importance of moving towards an understanding of solidarity that does not conceptualize innocence or sameness as prerequisites for liberation movements and justice struggles, and that challenges assumptions of mutuality and commensurability between different settler-colonial contexts.

Connecting Indigenous Solidarities

The Palestinian statement of alliance with Idle No More was the result of serious efforts by Palestinian and Indigenous activists in Canada to create historical and material linkages between our struggles. As evidence from activist researchers shows, solidarity work amongst Palestinian and Indigenous peoples is not a recent phenomenon but can be seen as early as 1970s with the establishment of a formal working relationship between the Canada Palestine Solidarity Network and the Native Study Group, both members of the Third World Peoples Coalition (Krebs and Olwan 2012). With the passing of time, such co-operations have not vanished or ended but have, in fact, been strengthened and renewed by the re-articulation of the Palestinian struggle through a comparative settler-colonial lens, as evidenced in the works of various student activist organizations in Canada, including Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR), the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA), and Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA). Campaigns to raise consciousness about the mutuality of Palestinian and Indigenous struggles are not exclusive to university campuses but have also transcended the confines of the ivory tower, often highlighting these links in public spaces. Importantly, this work has also included support for Indigenous confrontations against past and ongoing state theft of Indigenous lands and resources, such as the Six Nations Lands Reclamation Struggles in 2006. This truncated historical account is worth exploring in order to better understand the different forms of solidarity and alliance that has existed between Indigenous and Palestinian people in Canada. Such research can help challenge romanticized accounts of solidarity that gloss over power asymmetries. While recognizing the importance of this task, this article does not delineate this history and focuses, instead, recent forms of Palestinian solidarity activism that centre around the Idle No More movements.

During the height of Idle No More activism, Palestinians enduring Israel's policies of ethnic cleansing and its geographies of dispossession and displacement posted messages of solidarity with Indigenous people through Twitter and Facebook. Citing the late Mahmoud Darwish, one note read: "We have on this earth what makes life worth living," a message of solidarity from Nazareth, Palestine.



1. Picture taken in Nazareth by Nayrouz A.H.



In an interview about the deepening connections between Palestinians and Indigenous people in the wake of the Idle No More movement, Stó:lō author and activist Lee Maracle has noted that, although solidarities have existed for decades, this movement has “‘crystalized’ the relationship” even further (Ditmar 2013).

Solidarity work between Indigenous people and Palestinians, while present for decades and largely transformative in its goals and politics, has also struggled with some organizational and structural difficulties that are worth exploring to discuss more carefully and honestly the past and ongoing relationships of alliance and network building. As Palestinian organizing around the Six Nations Lands Reclamation Struggles in 2006 reveals, mobilization efforts in support of Indigenous people often function through the imperative of crisis and its logic of management (Krebs and Olwan 2012). Rather than creating long term, sustainable, and ongoing relationships of solidarity, crisis management as short-term solidarity inhibits possibilities for transformative solidarities. Similarly, efforts by pro-Palestinian student and activist organizations to involve Indigenous people in pro-Palestinian work taking place on Indigenous lands often do not envision Indigenous activists as empowered decision-makers within such groups. Instead, Indigenous people and their struggles for self-determination and sovereignty are sometimes tokenized at the personal, organizational, structural, and systemic levels.

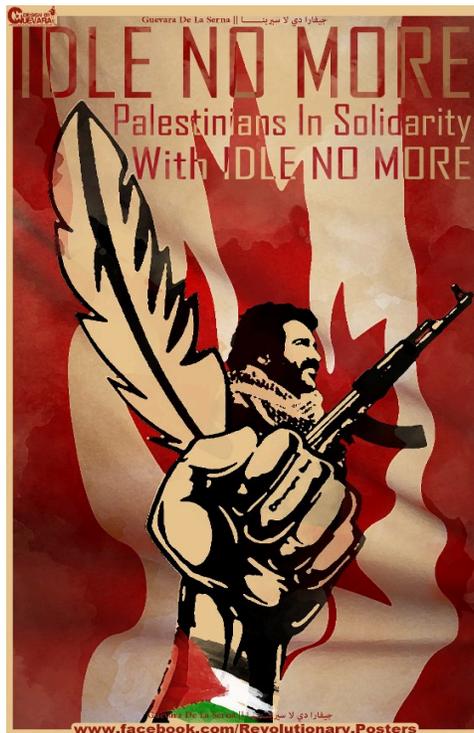
More alarmingly still, some pro-Palestinian groups also replicate the ways in which settler-colonial states use Indigenous people and their cultures to fulfill performative acknowledgments of occupied lands and resources. This tokenism includes incidences where Indigenous activists are invited to provide opening ceremonies for pro-Palestinian events that sometimes do not integrate a critique and explicit challenge of Canadian and United States settler coloniality and thus normalize the violence of such states. This type of activism renders invisible what Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2007) has described as the “profoundly *asymmetrical* and *non-reciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to [indigenous] people by the colonial-state and society” (6; emphasis in original). In other words, they repeat a settler-colonial logic that conceives of indigeneity in terms that are both familiar and nonthreatening and that serve to strengthen non-reciprocal and hierarchical colonial relationships.

Taken collectively, what do these disparate and truncated accounts of solidarity and its difficulties reveal? Furthermore, how do these narratives structure relationships between Indigenous and Palestinian people in Canada and beyond? To address these two questions, I will return briefly to the Palestinian message of solidarity in support of Idle No More. Although this message performs the important political function of showcasing Palestinian support for Indigenous rights, it also recasts this particular Indigenous moment—which has its roots within the historical realities of land treaties, resource theft, and expropriation as they relate to Canadian state policies and practices—through the analytical lens of the Palestinian struggle. As its authors write in response to the Canadian government’s record of support to the Israeli state:

[Stephen] Harper [Canada’s Prime Minister] and his government’s expansive praise for Israeli settler colonialism and apartheid is simply the other side of the same coin that attacks Indigenous self determination and plans massive resource extraction on Indigenous land. (“Palestinians in Solidarity,” 2012)

While this claim may be true, how does this analysis—which aims at expanding our critique of settler colonialism and recognizing its interconnected local and global manifestations—end up narrowing its scope and minimizing its power? How does this lens end up emphasizing ahistorical commonality and mutuality to the detriment of historicized differences and distinctiveness? In this statement, we see how sometimes divergent Indigenous and Palestinian concerns are distilled into singular, indistinguishable, and uniform sites of mutual struggle and resistance. In the genuine desire to find solidarity between and amongst our peoples, we often unconsciously disappear the particularities of one another’s histories. In this context, an overreliance on assumptions of inherent relationality, mutuality, and connection lends credence to what Zainab Amadahy refers to as the unwillingness and inability of the Palestinian solidarity movement to “interrogate the complexities of settler colonialism on Turtle Island” (2013).

A move away from interrogating such complicities is also evident in the image that accompanied the Palestinian statement in support of Idle No More. In this figure, we see an activist wearing a checkered Kuffieh who stands behind a fist that holds a gun and a feather—an image that is meant to couple Palestinian and Indigenous struggles in imaginative and political ways. All are set against a backdrop of the Canadian flag. Here, the Canadian flag represents the Canadian state. Importantly, this image powerfully foregrounds the Idle No More movements and reasserts Palestinian support with it. Here, both struggles are presented as one and the same and both are tied together by imagery that points to the Canadian state’s complicities in shaping the colonial and oppressive realities of both peoples. While the Canadian state is certainly responsible for the legacies and conditions of coloniality under which Indigenous people live and die, is the Palestinian struggle shaped by the same realities or relationship to this state? Asking this question does not deny the importance of this image or its message. Rather it seeks to point to the limits of a commensurate framework of solidarity that inadvertently disappears differences between oppressed and colonized.



2. Poster accompanying Palestinian statement of solidarity with Idle No More. Designed by Guevara De La Serna.



Although a relational framework of solidarity helps us recognize similarities and mutualities in struggles, it also runs the risk of disappearing the particularities and specificities of settler-colonial states and the regimes of violence they enact against Indigenous peoples. How do we read for overlaps between the Israeli occupation of Palestine, the settler colonial systems in Canada and the United States, and the gendered violence against Indigenous people that such states produce in each of these contexts? What sort of framework is needed to consider these seemingly different spaces as interconnected, without losing an analysis of the specificity of violence in each case? How do we theorize the struggles for sovereignty of Indigenous and Palestinian peoples and what connections do we draw between different people's struggles for different bodies, lands, and resources? To address these questions, I examine another instance of collective organizing and activism in recent years against the settler-colonial state of Canada: queer activism for migrant justice and against queer inclusion by the nation-state.

Im/Possible Alliances in the Shadow of the Settler State

On September 24, 2012, a large group of queer Canadians were surprised to find in their inboxes an email from the office of Jason Kenney, then Canadian minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism. Addressed to the minister's queer "Friends," the mass email lauds Canada's foreign policy and reminds queer Canadians of the state's commitment to "take a stand against the persecution of gays and lesbians, and against the marginalization of women in many societies" (CBC News 2012). Among other national accomplishments listed in the letter, the Minister highlights Canada's leading role in resettling Iranian queer refugees who have fled, in his words, "often violent lives in Iran, to begin new and safe lives in Canada" (Ibid). The mass email, which was neither issued in response to a letter by self-identified queers, nor collectively solicited by migrant groups concerned with the national or global status of LGBTQ or women's rights, perplexed its recipients who could not comprehend how the state had determined or ascertained their queerness. An article in *Xtra*, a mainstream queer Canadian newspaper, asked, "Has Immigration Minister Jason Kenney been emailing you? Maybe it's because you're gay" (Ling 2012).

As activists and scholars have shown, queer rights—like women's rights before them (and in tandem with them)—have become indices of state sovereignty and power. In this context, the Minister's letter and its exclusive focus on the LGBTQ rights of queer Iranians recuperate Canada's reality of settler colonialism and advance, instead, an image of a welcoming and migrant-friendly host nation-state. While Muslim communities in Canada continue to be targeted for state surveillance and control, Canadian state practices invite queer asylum seekers to trade on "Muslim sexuality" and the War on Terror for fleeting assurances of inclusion and belonging (Puar 2011). In what follows, I use Kenney's letter and the response it has solicited from queer activists and allies as an entry point into a broader discussion about the possibilities and limits of national and transnational solidarity work in queer and non-queer contexts. Specifically, I am interested in addressing a question posed by Shaista Patel about how our strategies of resistance and solidarity can "[challenge] the violence of occupation in the white settler colony of Canada and in other spaces" (2013). This evidence of state-sponsored pinkwashing speaks to the specific ways in which Canadian settler colonialism is reinscribed on and by queer bodies and spaces. I use this story to extend my discussion of solidarity politics in settler-colonial contexts and to showcase the ways in which solidarity politics are not only



messy and complicated but also how they become differently formed and articulated in the geographies of occupation and settler coloniality. The previous sections have highlighted the trouble with a too-easy reliance on histories of similarity and alliance; this section extends this discussion to raise questions about queer activism in settler-colonial nation-states.

Issued two weeks after Canada's severance of diplomatic relations with Iran and its formal listing as a state sponsor of terrorism under the Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act (2012), Kenney's letter demonstrates how targeted, regulated, and sometimes outlawed sexualities become intertwined with official national state agendas and politics. In this context, the inclusion of queer migrants evidences Western states' inherent goodness, openness, and generosity, and their willingness to fulfill what Sarah Lamb (2013) describes as the promise of "greater safety, security, and vitality to (worthy) sexual citizens" (233).

In 2002, this illusory promise of security was granted to some queers when the Canadian state provided formal recognition to non-married "same sex" and opposite sex couples for purposes of immigration sponsorship. Under the amended Immigration and Refugee Act, queer couples in "good faith" relationships could file for Canadian citizenship if able to render legible to the state their queer bodies, identities, and practices. To be extended the state's protection and concomitant citizenship rights, queer asylum seekers fleeing gender or sexual persecution became compelled to provide discursive, material, and physical evidence authenticating their homosexuality to Canadian decision makers. In this Western fantasy of queer life, predicated on what Palestinian queer activists from Al-Qaws have termed the "politics of visibility" (Hilal 2013), queer migrants become known to the Canadian state precisely through its capacity to liberate and then violently incorporate them into its national rhetorics.

For many migrants, failure to provide proof of sexual marginality and deviance before arrival to Canada is tantamount to death. Take, for example, the story of Leatitia Nanziri, a self-described lesbian from Uganda, whom Canadian officials were prepared to deport because the Immigration Review Board did not perceive her account to have "the aura of a genuine recounting of actual events and experiences" (quoted in Justin Ling 2012). In violently discounting Nanziri's sexual identity, the board argued that they did not have sufficient evidence that demonstrated that she had ever been in intimate relationships with women. Having been raped repeatedly by state officials for her suspected homosexuality, Nanziri had not engaged in visibly public or definitively "out" lesbian activities that could evidence her queerness. As such, Canadian officials did not consider her a worthy subject of queer inclusion and sexual asylum.

To understand why some queers (and some women) come to occupy a central place in Canadian discourse, one needs to consider the historical context in which the bodies of nationalized queers are regularly used to assert state superiority and extend techniques of border management and control. As Anna Agenthengelou (2013) has recently argued, "sovereign worlding power is inconceivable without a legal and moral obligation to one's queers as well as the larger international community's queers" (454). Rather than view this instrumentalization of queer bodies primarily at the discursive or affective levels, it is important to note that the selective and opportunistic state interest in queer inclusions has already charted a new Canadian racial and sexual landscape that is most clearly evidenced in current migration policies and practices.

While the government can trumpet its cooperation with the Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees and use the admittance to Canada of 150 queer Iranian asylum seekers in the past four years as a shield against charges of Islamophobia, migration-justice activists cannot overlook



the fact that such inclusions have coincided with increased incarcerations and deportations that amount to more than 7,500 removals of failed refugee claimants in 2013 alone. This number includes the “voluntary” removal of Victoria Ordu and Favour Amadi, two Nigerian students at the University of Regina deported by Canadian officials for the crime of working off campus without proper permits. Here, stories of queer Iranian and Muslim inclusions like the ones touted by the Canadian state mask the anti-Blackness propelling unjust immigration policies regularly articulated on the bodies of Black migrants in white Canada.

Thus, to celebrate stories of inclusion, one must willfully ignore how they are defined by the increased shift from permanent settlement to precarious and temporary belonging for a majority of peoples. As migration-justice groups such as No One is Illegal have shown, the Conservative government has adopted harsher family reunification measures and introduced a two-year “conditional” permanent resident status for the sponsored partners and spouses of immigrants and Canadian citizens. Under the guise of fiscal responsibility, the government has also cut federal health refugee programs and lowered the salaries of temporary migrant workers. Together, these migration policies do not simply usher new or unusually precarious forms of belonging but also enshrine racial and sexual differences at the national level.

To their credit, some queer migrant groups and activists in Canada have responded creatively and proactively to exercises of state violence, cooptation, and manipulation such as the one exemplified in the Minister’s unsolicited and self-congratulatory email. While various queer organizations focused their criticism of Kenney’s email on state surveillance of queer bodies and its incursion on personal privacy and sexual freedoms, the response of queer migrant groups struck a different chord, one that is explicitly inspired by emergent and growing critiques of queer inclusion. Refusing to be made complicit in a state-sponsored practice of pinkwashing that seeks to conceal Canada’s hawkish policies towards Iran, the authors of the letter condemned the Minister for his attempt to “instrumentally highlight the homophobia faced by LGBT people” (Various 2012). Respondents opposed the racism inherent in Canadian immigration policies that jeopardize the lives of both queer and straight asylum seekers from around the globe. Reminding the Minister that the targeted migrants are “friends, lovers, family [...] and community members” (ibid), the statement focuses its criticisms on Bill C-31, a bill which has granted the Minister of Citizenship the right to refuse asylum applications from “bogus” refugee claimants and determine asylum eligibility based on country of origin. This dissident response reveals the power of a queer “counter-public” that takes up “racism and war as queer issues” and thus refuses, in the words of Jin Haritaworn (2012), to “loyally repeat the nation” (75).

The refusal of queer activists and allies to participate in a politics of solidarity that re-centers the nation-state provides insights into the dangers of queer organizing that works to obscure or deny sexual imbrications in national inclusion projects. As Michael Connors Jackman and Nishant Upadhyay explore in an important article on the reification of the white settler nation-state in queer movements in Canada, “non-Native queer movements can naturalize settlement and colonialism and claim normative and national queer citizenship” (2014, 200). Or, as Scott Morgensen writes, “In this moment of engaging solidarity, thinking queerly can highlight how our acts articulate many forms of coloniality” (2015, 310). Against this backdrop and history of colonial forms of queer movements, the above-cited example of queer activism against the settler-colonial state of Canada can offer hopeful insights into a radical queer critique and the promise of global solidarity in the face of what feminist scholar Sunera Thobani (2002) labels “war frenzy” (5). However, it also raises important concerns regarding the elision of settler-colonial critique and resistance from queer purview. In stating



this point, I do not seek to absolve myself from such criticism, nor do I wish to participate in what Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack (1998) have aptly called the “race to innocence” (335). Rather, I am interested in exploring the politics of queer resistance to state incorporations. If the very founding of the Canadian state is predicated upon the dual process of appropriation of Indigenous lands and resources and the consolidation of racist immigration policies that target Black people and people of color, how can a critique of queer inclusion decouple itself from a critique of settler colonialism? How can we speak of violence against queer migrants in the Canadian context without speaking of colonial violence against Indigenous and Black bodies—queer and straight? How can we confront the violence of queer inclusion without resisting the violences of genocide, dispossession, elimination, and exclusion that structure the daily realities of Indigenous life in Canada today?

While I am unable to provide definitive responses to the questions that I raise here, inherent in them is the belief that the struggles for Indigenous sovereignty, migrant justice, and anti-colonial activism are interlinked. In this political moment, queer and Palestinian activism against state inclusions in Canada—and elsewhere in North America—require attending to the complexities and complicities of settler colonialism in ways that might have the potential to be, as Harsha Walia (2013) argues, “transformative, healing, and revolutionary” (276). This example, then, compels us to question the ways in which alliance and solidarity politics can work to dismantle the very structures and capacities of the settler-colonial state that seduce, lure, and imbricate. Rather than suggest that this work is easy or clear-cut, I use this evidence of queer activism at a critical national juncture to point to the ways in which refusals of queer inclusion must be understood in relation to, and not just in opposition with, the very structures of colonial powers they may ultimately wish to dismantle. As such, solidarity work is necessarily relational, demanding that we concede our imbrications in colonial webs of domination and resistance. Queer activism in settler-colonial contexts—such as Palestinian activism and solidarity efforts with Indigenous people in Canada and the United States—must not be situated in a framework that too readily assumes marginalization and innocence as building blocks for liberatory movements. Instead, activism must always concede complex power differentials amongst groups whose struggles, though intertwined, might also diverge. I thus return to an examination of Palestinian and Indigenous solidarities to offer ways to think through the complicated geographies of alliance politics and their critical potentials and limitations in struggles against settler-colonial states.

The Seductions of Solidarity

The In 2013, Ryan Bellerose, self-identified Zionist Métis Native-rights activist, penned a strongly worded op-ed in which he rejected the assumption of a shared history between Indigenous and Palestinian people. He wrote the article, “A Native and a Zionist,” was written in response to the Palestinian statement in solidarity with Idle No More. Bellerose argues against the “co-opting of today’s native struggle to the Palestinian propaganda war” and he refuses to “allow the Palestinians to gain credibility at our expense by claiming commonality with us” (2013). Widely circulated on Zionist and pro-Israel sites, Bellerose’s letter eschews Indigenous alliance with Palestinians in favour of solidarity with Israelis. Bellerose writes that the “The Palestinians are not like us. Their fight is not our fight” (2013). To convey just how different Palestinians are from Indigenous people, Bellerose reminds us that Palestinians did not become dispossessed through systematic colonization “but [had] lost the land they want by



waging a needless war on Israel” and that they “persistently refused peace overtures and chose war” (2013). Rather than dismiss this account as the ravings of a fringe right-wing individual, I want to urge solidarity activists and academics to pay attention to the uncomfortable and even mainstream questions Bellerose raises about the politics of assumptive alliance and solidarity. Namely, if alliance between Indigenous people and Palestinians is neither divinely ordained nor biologically scripted, what are the specific tools through which this much needed solidarity could be sought, built, and fostered?

An instance that illuminates this point is Palestinian and Indigenous contestation of Native American poet and activist Joy Harjo’s visit to Israel. In spite of numerous appeals by many Indigenous scholars—including Robert Warrior, Director of American Indian Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and activist scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui—Joy Harjo broke the Palestinian issued call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions when she chose to receive funds and perform at Tel Aviv University. In response to her critics, Harjo promised to visit Ramallah and meet with Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank. Harjo’s act revealed an unwillingness to heed calls for solidarity and betrayed an inability to understand the far-reaching consequences of her individual actions on a fellow colonized people. Palestinians who wrote against Harjo’s visit recounted how, growing up in occupied Palestine, they learned about Indigenous people and their struggles, finding connections with Native Americans. Others wrote of their grief and sense of betrayal at Harjo’s refusal to heed the boycott and recognize the similarities between Native American and Palestinian struggles (Al Atshan 2012; Abu Nimah 2012).

These responses can rest on assumptions of shared and common struggles and expectations of Indigenous solidarity that sometimes elude reciprocity. This logic reveals much about the dangers of comparative settler-colonial frameworks and affective solidarity politics, especially ones that rely on emotional connections instead of working through political alliance and support in mutual and reciprocal ways. If Palestinians assume affinity with Indigenous people, does it necessarily follow that Indigenous people must feel that way about us too? In asking these questions, I seek neither to demonize nor trivialize the positions taken by fellow activists and scholars in highlighting Harjo’s act and its meaning for Indigenous peoples. Rather, I am interested in interrogating the uses of a settler-colonial framework in comparative contexts of colonial subjugation and Indigenous resistance and the ways in which such a framework can sometimes create expectations and assumptions of solidarity and that are not always based on reciprocal and relational work.

Although a settler-colonial framework helps us recognize similarities and mutualities in struggles, it also runs the risk of disappearing the particularities and specificities of settler-colonial states and the regimes of violence they enact on Indigenous peoples. Settler-colonial critique opens up the possibility of recognizing this fact, and thus can play a large part in shaping mobilizations against personal and collective forms of violence across a variety of national and international contexts. Writing on the advantages of a settler-colonial analytical framework and critique in a recent issue of the *Journal of Settler Colonial Studies*, Omar Salamanca, Mezna Qato, Kareem Rabie, and Sobhi Samour (2013) remind us that a comparative settler-colonial framework is useful precisely because “[i]t brings Israel into comparison with cases such as South Africa, Rhodesia and French-Algeria, and earlier settler colonial formations such as the United States, Canada or Australia, rather than the contemporary European democracies to which Israel seeks comparison” (4). More importantly, though, Palestinian settler-colonial critique extends recognition of the “fact that Palestinians



are an indigenous people” and thus this form of critique serves to “[align] Palestine scholarship with indigenous and native studies” (ibid).

Heeding the calls of Indigenous scholars in the United States and Canada reminds us that applying a settler-colonial critique and engaging in relational forms of solidarity—however consciously, ethically, or responsibly—do not exonerate us from responding to Indigenous calls for sovereignty and land reclamation or to confronting the complexities of genocide, ethnic cleansing, occupation, and colonialism in the settler-colonial states of Canada and the United States. Nor does theorizing settler-colonial links across disparate but interconnected geographies of gendered violence inculcate us from what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) name as an analytical “fantasy that is invested in a settler futurity and dependent on the foreclosure of an indigenous futurity” (14). Based on their challenge to non-Indigenous “arrivants” and settlers, how can we enter this critique as a process with—rather than for—others who are engaged in potentially mutual, but possibly incommensurate, liberation struggles (Jodi Byrd 2011)?

To answer these questions, it is important to consider how a politics of solidarity—aiming to expand our recognition of the local workings of settler colonialism and its interconnected global manifestations—can end up emphasizing ahistorical commonality and mutuality to the detriment of historically situated differences and distinctiveness. Echoes of these questions have shaped solidarity efforts and analyses across various sites of solidarity. It cannot be assumed or given, but must be relational. It is developed by constantly challenging the politics of short- and long-term alliance and through reworking our relationships to one another in non-hierarchical and non-dominant ways. Writing on the politics of solidarity with Palestine, Lyn Darwich and Haneen Maikey invite us to recognize the importance of “invest[ing] in building proactive long-term strategies under the unifying vision of decolonization and liberation” (2014, 283). While Darwich and Maikey’s articles focuses on the liberation of Palestine from Israeli occupation, violence and colonialism, they are both clear that such decolonial struggles must be framed within “interconnected frameworks of homonationalism, cultural imperialism, and settler colonialism” (283). By paying attention to the interconnections between these frameworks and struggles, we might be able to dislodge or challenge assumptions of solidarity with Indigenous people that fail to interrogate our own relationships to histories of settler colonialism on this continent.

For pro-Palestinian activists committed to working towards solidarity with Indigenous peoples, such theorizations can help us reconceptualize our alliance politics in ways that are intimately informed by “sustained investigations of power itself” (Morgensen 313). Here it is useful to heed the words of Harsha Walia who reminds us that solidarity work requires “cultivating an ethic of responsibility within the Indigenous solidarity movement [which] begins with non-natives understanding ourselves as beneficiaries of the illegal settlement of Indigenous peoples’ land and unjust appropriation of Indigenous peoples’ resources and jurisdiction” (2012). In the case of Palestinians living in Canada, this work may often involve recognizing and confronting our own complicated positionalities as migrants who live on occupied Indigenous lands and who have, at times, been incorporated into the settler colonial state of Canada – however uncomfortably, unwillingly, or precariously. Rather than erase such recognitions from solidarity efforts, I suggest centering them by continually rejecting the promises of inclusion and illusions of belonging extended by the multicultural settler-colonial state.

To that end, this article argues against appeals to solidarity that rely too easily on assumed, rather than shared, connections between Indigenous, queer, and Palestinian struggles.



Solidarity is easy; it requires no work, no engagement. Assumptive solidarity is romantic—allowing us to imagine allies in unimaginable and unlikely spaces and places. It is a form of solidarity that diminishes fears of our Others, rendering them same in our minds and hearts. Assumptive solidarity is dangerous, as it makes our allies' causes and forms of resistance appear less foreign, less threatening, and less cumbersome. Assumptive solidarity does not move us; it moves others to us. It does not transform our relationships with one another or with the lands on which we live, nor does it require our sustained, long-term, and wide-ranging commitments to work that is, at times, difficult, uneasy, and complicated. This form of solidarity is comfortable; it is felt affectively but never experienced materially, situationally, or historically. While enticing, this form of solidarity does not move us closer to those whom we wish to be in alliance with, nor does it directly confront or transform the conditions under which we come to encounter one another. Instead of this model, I want to commit to working toward responsible, ethical, and mutual forms of solidarity that are historically situated and politically conscious. Those movements are built on relational understandings of one another's past and current dreams and desires—ones that simultaneously recognize the potential mutualities and various incommensurabilities of struggles for justice against settler-colonial states.

Notes

1. For the full statement, see <http://uspcn.org/2012/12/23/palestinians-in-solidarity-with-idle-no-more-and-indigenous-rights/>.

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