

Towards the ‘tangible unknown’: Decolonization and the Indigenous future

Aman Sium

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada

Chandni Desai

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada

Eric Ritskes

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada

Abstract

On the occasion of the inaugural issue of *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, we examine the many contradictions, contestations and possible pathways to decolonization. In working to explore the many themes that the articles in this issue bring forth, we recognize that, despite our certainty that decolonization centers Indigenous methods, peoples, and lands, the future is a ‘tangible unknown’, a constant (re)negotiating of power, place, identity and sovereignty. In these contestations, decolonization and Indigeneity are not merely reactionary nor in a binary relationship with colonial power. Decolonization is indeed oppositional to colonial ways of thinking and acting but demands an Indigenous starting point and an articulation of what decolonization means for Indigenous peoples around the globe. This editorial works towards the possibility of a global Indigenous movement that strengthens and supports local moments for decolonization, and does so by exploring some of the many layers and questions that this necessarily entails.

Keywords: *decolonization, Indigeneity, sovereignty, Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous futurity, anti-colonialism, resurgence*

Introduction

In preparing this inaugural issue of *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, we were struck by the many visions and conceptions of decolonization that we encountered, many of which are presented here in this issue and many which this journal hopes to engage with in the future. This is not altogether surprising; decolonization is a messy, dynamic, and a contradictory process. We found that definitions of “decolonization” and who is “Indigenous”, despite their centrality to this project, remained open and, to a certain extent, remain unknown. This is once again not entirely surprising because, as Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson (2000) have told us, Indigenous knowledges, and subsequently decolonization we would argue, are so much a part of communities and individuals - so deeply embedded and part of their everyday life - that they cannot be codified or defined (p. 36). Decolonization, and the Indigenous knowledges that sustain it, are diverse and, due to the embedded nature, unique to particular contexts and geographies. How do we negotiate these particularities in an increasingly globalized (and subsequently homogenized) and connected world, especially when there are increasingly fewer options to remain isolated in attempts to maintain particularity? Is this negotiation decolonization? One thing is sure: the desired outcomes of decolonization are diverse and located at multiple sites in multiple forms, represented by and reflected in Indigenous sovereignty over land and sea, as well as over ideas and epistemologies.

We wish to explore some of the themes presented in this inaugural issue, recognizing that even within an issue such as this one there are contradictions and contestations that are not easily resolved. We hope that *Decolonization* serves as a continuation of discussions that already exist, as well as contributes to them in ways that spark further dialogue and, even more importantly, further action. For the three of us, as we write this, we are deeply aware of the need to begin with our own positionalities, with an inward look at our own histories, subjugations, privileges, contradictions, tensions, insecurities, rage, hope, optimism, and aspirations - each of these entangled with the others. We cannot exist in a world of contradiction without entering into contradictions, without being implicated in the multitude of contradictions that we choose, that are forced on us, and that operate around us. In writing this piece, we speak for ourselves and our particular histories and experiences.

Positioning decolonization

Decolonization does not exist without a framework that centers and privileges Indigenous life, community, and epistemology. In that regards, it becomes vitally important, despite our goals of understanding and promoting a global Indigenous undertaking, to center and recognize the local settler colonial contexts on which we, as authors, are situated. As we write this, we are on unceded Haudenosaunee and Mississauga land. We do not state this to signal a particular understanding of the complexity of issues, resistance and life that this statement entails, nor in belief of an (perceived and imposed) alliance with Anishinaabeg peoples. Too often talk of

solidarity and alliance gets co-opted in these ways, as ‘magic words’ to state and dispense with complexity, not understanding why they are said or what responsibility and action they might entail. We state these words as a contestation of colonial logic that, as Andrea Smith (2006) notes, “holds that Indigenous people must disappear. In fact, they must *always* be disappearing, in order to allow non-Indigenous peoples rightful claim over the land” (p. 68). The history of settler colonialism is one of displacement and replacement and we are each implicated in this. We state these words in recognition of the Anishinaabeg peoples’ continued right to this land, to sovereignty, and indeed, their right to exist beyond the often fetishized historical memory of settler colonialism. We do not need to state this to make it true, it simply is.

It is important to recognize this particular history of colonialism, and subsequent (temporary) interruption of sovereignty, because it affects each of us. There is no escaping complicity within a settler colonial state, especially for those of us who have settled here, though complicity looks different for each of us. Complicity cannot be collapsed into simple and neat categories without historicizing the political legacy of colonialism and the way in which it manifested and continues to manifest itself both here and across the globe. It is important to consider the process and logics of colonial modernity and white supremacy, the way in which Europeans defined and classified people – as human and non-human – and then used this as a basis to conquer land and subjugate populations through enslaving, indenturing in labour, genociding and warring (Wynter, 2003, Smith, 2006). It is crucial to consider the particularities of forced movement and involuntary migrations of various diasporas and their distinction from (European) settlers that colonized and settled various lands for the purpose of capitalist expansion rooted in notions and the epistemology of “possessive individualism” (Mohanram, 1999).

That being said, for those who have settled here, we have a history of interruption to recognize and rectify; as Waziyatawin (in this issue) notes, Indigenous peoples recognized, from the beginning, how Western thought and presence displaced and endangered Indigenous ways of knowing and relationships to the earth, as well as the earth itself. We have a responsibility to honor the Indigenous ‘laws of the land’ and to restore right relationships. Often the call for sustainability and ecological responsibility is framed from a settler vantage point, in belief that “this land is your land, this land is my land” so we must take care of it. For those of us who are not Indigenous to Turtle Island, we must recognize our particular responsibility to this land and its stewards. All of this is interwoven into this work and our beginning point.

As such, the starting point of decolonization is not a rejection of colonialism. Rather than replace the dominant with the marginalized, or as Fanon (1968) puts it, make it so “the last shall be first and the first last” (p. 37), the decolonizing project seeks to reimagine and rearticulate power, change, and knowledge through a multiplicity of epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies. Decolonization cannot take place without contestation. It must necessarily push back against the colonial relations of power that threaten Indigenous ways of being. Alfred (2009b) and others have suggested that decolonization can only be “achieved through the resurgence of an Indigenous consciousness *channeled into contention with colonialism*” (p. 48; emphasis

added). Indigenous knowledges are the starting point for resurgence and decolonization, are the medium through which we engage in the present, and are the possibility of an Indigenous future. Without this power base, decolonization becomes a domesticated industry of ideas. Decolonization is not always about the co-existence of knowledges, nor knowledge synthesis, which inevitably centers colonial logic. Whiteness does not ‘play well with others’ but, rather, fragments and marginalizes - so it must be asked: Co-existence at what cost and for whose benefit? Decolonization necessarily unsettles. In the face of the beast of colonialism, thirsty for the blood of Indigeneity and drunk on conquest, assimilation is submission and decolonization calls on those who will “beat the beast into submission and teach it to behave” (Alfred, 2009a, p. 37).

Alongside the question of how we engage colonial geographies is the question of how we engage colonial institutions. We are cognizant that we write from the (relatively) privileged position of the Western academy, an institution born from – and premised on – knowledge theft, muzzling, and selective storytelling. It is an institution that helped draw up the first blueprints of colonization, both here and abroad. Reyes Cruz (this issue) begins to ask: Can we in fact decolonize the Western Academy and its global appendages? Further, what are the costs of our membership in these institutions? What are we forced to give up and what is taken from us? Lastly, what are the possibilities and limitations of using the “master’s tools” to destroy and rebuild his house? Scholars who write about “decolonizing the Academy” have tackled these questions in greater depth (Miheusah & Waziyatawin, 2004; Dei, 2000).

In the larger scope of the discussion: Is it possible to decolonize institutions of colonial power (such as the academy, government, etc.), but, further, is it possible to decolonize *through* them? In the context of Africa, Thesee and Carr (this issue) explore the potential of Indigenous peoples achieving “mainstream visibility” – and a seat at the table of global social-economics – through international frameworks of recognition, particularly through the UN’s International Year for People of African Descent (IYPAD) in 2011. They highlight both IYPAD’s successes as well as glaring failures, arguing that the IYPAD ultimately functioned to continue African invisibility despite its promises of greater visibility on the world stage. They settle on the idea that, through a sort of anti-colonial advocacy, institutions like the UN can be forced into accountable, transparent and more symmetrical relationships of recognition. On the other side of this debate are those who call into question the productivity and possibility of looking to colonial structures for pathways to decolonization. Glen Coulthard (2007) believes that when we seek to be made visible through the acceptance of colonial institutions, we reinscribe the colonial as arbiter and validator, and recognize its authority to regulate and dictate Indigenous life (Coulthard, 2007). Through the example of resurging Indigenous governance on Turtle Island, T’hohahoken (2005) echoes Coulthard’s critique of “institutional power”, noting, “colonized people are self-governed. Free people are self-determined” (p. 157). When we read Thesee and Carr in conversation with Coulthard and T’hohahoken, we are forced to consider important questions: Does Indigenous peoples’ presence inside the halls of power indicate power? Can we decolonize through more equitable recognition from colonial institutions? These questions come

down to the difference between the politics of recognition and revolution, being made visible or changing the criteria by which we “see” the world. Within the academy and within other institutions, these are the questions we must reckon with on the path to decolonization.

In recognizing our location, both academically and geographically, we must re-emphasize the primacy of land and materiality in the decolonization struggle. As Tuck and Yang (this issue) remind us, too often decolonization becomes reduced to efforts to ‘decolonize the mind’ - those of us in the academy are often particularly guilty of this – and fails to recognize the very real, very physical effects that colonization has on peoples. This reminder is not a new one; Amílcar Cabral (1966) reminded us forty years ago that there is danger in seeing decolonization as strictly the liberation of the mind. He cautioned colonized peoples to remember that, much of the time, “people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone’s head. They are fighting for material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future for their children” (quoted in Idahosa, 2002, p. 1). For many colonized peoples, especially those living under the ongoing violence inflicted by settler-colonial nation states, decolonization is defined by the urgency of land struggle and by the restoration of traditional territories now separated by state borders. Colonization is devastating and decolonization necessarily goes beyond mental gymnastics and Western conceptions of ‘Reason’. Decolonization is an emotional process; not in the simplistic way ascribed to non-white peoples by White supremacy (Fanon, 1967), but in a way that goes beyond, goes deeper, goes further than reason can reach.

The mental, spiritual and emotional toll that colonization still exacts is neither fictive nor less important than the material; but without grounding land, water, and air as central, decolonization is a shell game. We cannot decolonize without recognizing the primacy of land and Indigenous sovereignty over that land. Lawrence and Dua (2005) poignantly remind us of this when they state: “To speak of Indigenous nationhood is to speak of land as Indigenous, in ways that are neither rhetorical nor metaphorical” (p. 124). What often gets twisted in this conception, and where possibility of failure lies, is when we fail to recognize that land, spirit, and mind are inherently connected – creating sharp separations has been an important part of the colonial project. Indigenous connections to the land are spiritual. Relationship to the land, and not in a romanticized or fetishized ‘noble savage’ sort of way, generates the knowledge (and theory) that is required for survival. The spiritual is not absent from theory or day-to-day decisions. Each of these (mental, spiritual, material) are wrapped up, entangled, and enmeshed in one another. Decolonization demands the valuing of Indigenous sovereignty in its material, psychological, epistemological, and spiritual forms.

As noted previously, despite our insistence on the local as vital to Indigeneity and our undertaking of decolonization, we are also curious about exploring the possibility of a collective, global Indigenous movement. What does it mean to understand that “Imperialism frames the Indigenous experience. It is part of our story” (Smith, 2012, p. 20)? The Indigenous is not merely an opposite of the colonial (as Martin Nakata reminds us in this issue), but Indigeneity and colonialism are indeed oppositional. How do we work with the oppositional in a way that takes direction from the full reclamation of Indigenous histories, present conditions, and visions for the

future? While, obviously, there are vast differences in how Indigeneity is lived, as well as how it responds to colonial intrusion, how can we understand similarities in experiences, in epistemologies, and in resisting continued colonial intrusion? Tuck and Wang (in this issue) begin exploring the incommensurability of decolonization with other movements around the world, but where do differences end and similarities begin? This is not a search for a pan-Indigenous identity but for relationships and alliances that can strengthen local decolonization movements.

Who is Indigenous?

As mentioned earlier, often the decolonizing project has had to, out of necessity, focus on reclaiming or restating the humanity of colonized peoples. Colonization has been determined to stand as the final arbiter of who is human. Integral to this process is the delegitimization of Indigenous humanity and life. In the process of reasserting Indigenous humanity, too often the rubric has remained a Western styled humanism that proclaims, ‘We are all Indigenous’, conflating Indigeneity with humanity. This approach is similarly deployed at times by the non-African world, which articulates an ‘Africa as the cradle of humanity’ stance to conclude that ‘we are all African’. We firmly reject this stance. Colonialism and its concomitant project of white supremacy have always seen and understood Indigeneity as different and threatening, working overtime to marginalize and erase Indigenous existence. A claim to a shared humanity is not decolonizing and works to reinscribe a racist framework of ‘color-blindness’. Such a claim necessarily falls back on religious (and subsequently secular) language of solidarity that believes the Sunday school notions of ‘we are equal under God’ (Gaztambide-Fernández, this issue), and erases and minimizes the power differentials that colonialism created and continues to maintain. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) argues, “The focus on asserting humanity has to be seen within the anti-colonial analysis of imperialism and what are seen as imperialism’s dehumanizing imperatives” (p. 27).

We also push back against the project of deciding who is Indigenous through colonial strategies of measurement and containment, of finding particular genetic, historic and communal markers by which to legitimize who can and cannot be Indigenous. This is particularly done through a policing of boundaries, especially under a binary system of Indigenous/non-Indigenous, which has a long history of colonial power taking up these tools of differentiation to divide and conquer, disenfranchise, and steal land from Indigenous peoples. What these delineations of Indigeneity look like differ depending on context and place but the intent and logic behind them is similar. In Africa, where Indigeneity and Indigenous governance existed before colonial rule, its formalization took place through legally inscribed identities of “native” and “non-native”. Indigeneity came to be defined along the lines of race and ethnicity. “The distinction between race and ethnicities was not the same as the distinction between colonizers and colonized” (p. 656), the hierarchy of races included both colonizers (from the master race) and the colonized (from subject races). Mamdani (2001) suggests that it is worth grasping the

difference between subject races and subject ethnicities. While both were colonized, the subject ethnicities were considered Indigenous and the subject races were considered non Indigenous, immigrants (ex: the Tutsi of Rwanda and Burundi). In the case of Rwanda, despite the social revolution that led to independence, the imposed racial and ethnic categories of colonial rule stayed intact and intensified the economic and political tensions, which eventually slid towards the 1990 genocide. Mamdani (2001) argues that though “we turned the colonial world upside down, we didn't change it“ (p. 9).

This understanding of ethnicity is not without its problems though. The use of ethnicity continues to sever, interrupt and re-name Indigenous identities. In Rwanda and Burundi, for example, the categories of Hutu and Tutsi did not exist prior to the eighteenth century, when colonial anthropologists divided local peoples by physical traits and lines of work. Some even going as far as measuring noses and cranium sizes to ‘discover’ biological differences that denoted a lesser humanity (Mamdani, 2002, p. 44). Little has changed since then. “Ethnicity” is often a residual of colonialism; it remains a measuring stick that exists as part of the state’s vocabulary to measure, contain and control colonized peoples, and it remains a dehistoricized stand-in for Indigeneity. Alfred (2009a) draws similarities between the concepts of Third World “ethnicity” and “Aboriginalism”, saying that both are part of “assimilation’s end-game, the terminological and psychic displacement of authentic Indigenous identities, beliefs and behaviors...Aboriginalism obscures everything that is historically true and meaningful about Onkwehonwe” (p. 126-127). In interrogating colonial markers of identity we must ask: How does Indigeneity get ‘captured’ and domesticated by colonial states, both here and abroad? How do state frameworks for recognition render some constitutionally Indigenous - and because of this, visible - while others are not?

In Canada, as in other Western settler-colonial contexts, discourses of multiculturalism have tried to place Indigenous peoples within a community of ethnic groups. As Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (this issue) rightly critiques multiculturalism, its project of ethnicity and culture is one of containment and empty signifiers, stripping culture of any power in order to fit it within a colonial paradigm. Even further, Indigenous peoples, who have occupied their lands since time immemorial become expelled by and then invited back into the settler nation-state as “Aboriginal”. This process unties the knots of history, loosens Indigenous claims to land, and reduces them to members of a multicultural minority, always located around the nation but never within it. Through settler constitutions such as Canada’s Indian Act, Indigeneity has been denied to many through gendered, racist policies that worked to make extinct Indigenous peoples, removing communities so that the land does indeed look ‘uninhabited’ and pristinely empty for settler occupation (Tuck & Yang, this issue; [Smith, 2010](#); Razack, 2002).

The project of articulating Indigeneity has too often taken up the tools of colonialism to police borders. Who decides that approximately 67.7 million people in India are Indigenous? How is it decided that the Maasai of Kenya are Indigenous but other communities who live in proximity to the Maasai are not? Should Indigeneity be self-proclaimed (in relationship with a particular community) as a strategy of resisting particular demarcations, or are the consequences

of self-proclamation far too dangerous? Relatedly, how is it that some geographies are considered to house Indigenous knowledges but not Indigenous people? Few scholars - including ourselves - have noticed that Indigenous discussions happening across borders too often only include Turtle Island scholars in dialogue with the South Pacific. What is missing from these current discussions of Indigeneity and decolonization? How does Indigeneity in South America, Asia, and Africa factor in?

This opens large questions to be answered, or perhaps to be unanswered: Can we articulate a diasporic Indigeneity? What effects do (in)voluntary movement, displacement, and globalized movement of knowledge have on local forms of Indigeneity, especially if we understand, as Dei, Hall & Rosenberg (2000) do, that Indigeneity is connected to occupation of particular land and places? Dei (in this issue) begins to explore the possibilities of Indigenous knowledge in diasporic education, but what changes when Indigenous knowledges from one place (in Dei's case, Africa) are brought into other Indigenous contexts (Turtle Island/North America)? In an increasingly globalized world, how do various contestations and Indigeneities interact across diasporic spatialities? How does this contrast or work with what Leanne Simpson (2001) argues, that as Indigenous knowledges become assimilated they become of little use to Indigenous peoples trying to advance their interests? What are the balances between assimilation and/or integration and cooperation for decolonization? How can Indigenous peoples form strategic alliances that both contest continuing colonial action at all levels, while respecting difference and local contexts? Indigeneity is full of contestation and contradiction, both within itself and in relation to outside forces – to what should be no one's surprise. But, as Linda Smith (2012) succinctly notes, often only Western cultures are allowed to be diverse and contradictory, while Indigeneity it expected to be 'pure', of one mind and aesthetic, and easily identifiable. As Nakata (this issue) notes, there are intricacies and complexities that have been underexplored; we hope that this journal becomes a space where these questions can be engaged in respectful and empowering ways

Decolonization: Theory vs. action

One of the greatest challenges in looking to understand decolonization in complex ways is bridging the divide of action vs. theory. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (this issue) remind us that “settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and unsettles everyone” (p. 7). They go on to explore how there is no room for settlers to claim innocence in the ongoing colonial violence and dispossession of Indigenous land. Importantly, however, we each also have the agency to participate in this violence (or resist it) through morally differentiated positions, levels of complicity, points of impact, and consequence. For this reason, what knowledge we choose to produce has everything to do with *who* we are and *how* we choose to act in the world. Transformative praxis can be measured by our ability to show scholarly courage and imagination in taking our ideas off the bookshelf and acting on them. Decolonization does not simply suggest that we refrain from becoming spectators to the knowledge we produce; it demands it. As Fanon

(1967) clearly laid out, “It’s no longer a question of knowing the world, but of transforming it” (p. 1).

It is this transformative action that Waziyatawin (in this issue) displays great imagination in outlining in the “endgame of empire,” asking what kind of world Indigenous resurgence hopes to bring about after it is gone. She encourages her readers to peek behind the colonial curtain to see that a central “facet of the colonial picture is an illusion of permanency and inevitability” (p. 76). Importantly, she also encourages her readers to recognize that there is life beyond colonialism; that a certain degree of hope, in both theory and practice, is necessary in defeating it. Colonialism may actively work to shape the world but it can also be made malleable, forced to show the cracks in its walls, and forced to retreat through struggle against it. As we witness the death throes of global capitalism and its insatiable appetite for Indigenous land and resources, we must also understand that, like a cornered animal, it will fight until the last breath in defending the privileges of colonial governments and extractive industry. According to Waziyatawin, this is the paradox of Indigenous resurgence at the end of empire: “while we have an opportunity to realize its emancipatory potential, if we do not succeed soon, the chances for the survival of all life will severely diminish” (p. 82). For this reason both decolonization theory and action are time sensitive.

The artificial divide between action and theory has been recently and concretely articulated in attempts to ‘decolonize’ the Occupy movement, one of the more high profile and recent attempts to bring decolonization into the ‘mainstream’. As Tuck and Yang (this issue) relate, Oakland became one of the more high profile sites where Indigenous peoples and their allies called on the Occupy movement to recognize what was painfully obvious to Indigenous peoples from the beginning – the land that Occupy sought to occupy was Indigenous land that had already been occupied for hundreds of years. As Waziyatawin (2011) reminded Occupy Oakland in her speech to them, Indigenous peoples were the first to understand and experience the brutality of twinned colonial expansion and capitalist exploitation, which included dispossession of the land protesters hoped to re-occupy. When Indigenous peoples brought forward these truths and sought to decolonize Oakland (in this case), they were met with resistance. Occupy leaders believed, among other things, that ‘decolonization’ was too academic and had little bearing on the active struggle they were carrying out. This failure to recognize decolonization, and subsequently colonization, as impacting every aspect of life highlights some of the serious failings of the Occupy movement. It also highlights how we, as those who seek to decolonize, have failed to make connections between theory and activism apparent and obvious. There is work to be done here.

Too often this theory/action divide is articulated as an organizer/activist vs. academic divide but this fails to understand a history of colonialism that has constructed Indigenous ways of knowing through an Enlightenment lens. Indigenous knowledges have been cast as primitive and physical, as ‘arts and crafts’ or as agriculture. They have been ‘hands on’ knowledges, lacking the sophistication and theory that European thinkers have crafted. Fast forward to more modern times and, in a settler colonial state such as Canada, Indigenous peoples are expected to

protest and organize but it comes as a shock when they enter the hallowed halls of academia, the place where theory is reported to live. Academics, such as Ali Abdi among many others, have worked to dispel the myth that Indigenous cultures are devoid of philosophy and ‘high theory’ but, to a great degree, Indigenous knowledges are seen as fictive, mythological, and grounded in opinion rather than fact. To gain legitimation in the academy requires, at minimum, recognition of the European theorists to legitimate Indigenous theories. There is work to be done here.

It is important to also recognize how this divide between theory and action has been gendered, with patriarchy determining that theory belongs to the masculine domain while action is deemed to be more instinctually based and, obviously then, feminine. As Grande (2004) and Smith (2006) remind us, colonialism and hetero-patriarchy do not exist independently of each other, these forms of domination constitute one another. Andrea Smith (2008) suggests that activism carries a certain masculine bravado, is inherently political (and thus supposedly in the masculine domain), and maintains certain patriarchal structures. In contrast, community organizing is considered more feminine, grassroots, organic, and not as politicized or confrontational. Similarly, Alfred (2009a) notes the masculinity of the ‘guerrilla warrior’ is reactionary and assumes male leadership in and over struggle. This creates a masculinized impression of revolution in which its ‘poster boys’ are those men deemed ‘strong enough to lead’, while women are ‘erased’ from resistance movements or see their contributions devalued. Leonard Peltier (2012), who at times has been held up as one of these ‘poster boys’, speaks against this masculinization, most recently on the occasion of his 69th birthday: “All too often people talk about the exploits of men and what they said and what they did, and all too often give no thought to the women who gave them life, the women who supported them, the women who cared for the children while they did what they did, who kept the home fires burning and families fed... However, the really true heroes in this are the women who do day after day what needs to be done, and give their children the values they need to stand up for what is right in this world.”

There is work to be done here. We cannot ignore these intersections because it is this complexity, this layer upon layer, which colonialism acts through and upon. If we are serious about decolonizing, we must be able to untangle the knots and respond to colonial oppression at all levels – we cannot pick and choose which struggles we wish to engage in. A strong analysis of heteropatriarchy is required in the project of decolonization. As critical scholars, activists, Indigenous peoples and supporters, we cannot ignore our ‘blind spots’ or engage in selective politics of struggle; the urgency of struggle does not allow us this luxury

Continuance

Theory and action are interlocking - one does not exist without the other. Theory must inform action, and action must inform theory. Those who are quick to act must be willing to integrate the theory that is derived from the communities they live in; this makes action sustainable, it gives support networks, and recognizes that actions have consequences beyond the immediate context. Those who are quick to theorize must be willing to act on what they believe in; this

deepens and contextualizes theory, teaches humility and cooperation, and brings a sense of immediacy and materiality to theoretical work. Mariolga Reyes Cruz (this issue) speaks of living in these contestations when she describes navigating her role as a ‘reluctant academic’, living “neither with god nor the devil,” in a space of contradiction and contestation.

We must recognize that theory is created on a daily basis in our communities, at the kitchen tables of our houses, in the forests, and on the fields of the land. Jeff Corntassel (this issue) speaks about the ‘everyday acts of Indigenous resurgence’ and this is the ‘our way’ that Taiaiake Alfred gestures to when he states, “We must do it [decolonize] *our* way, or risk being transformed by the fight into that (and those) which we are struggling against” (2009a, p. 131). Indigenous knowledges have sustained communities since the beginning, have been the anchor against the roaring storm of colonialism, and have regenerated and restored power, spirit and humility to individuals. There is much to be learned here. Mariolga Reyes Cruz (this issue) writes about how she is synthesizing knowledge and life in academia through her work on the land, learning new forms of work and knowledge, and contesting coloniality in new ways. It is in these daily and often intimate acts that decolonization resides, exploring and living with the contrasting claims of oppression and privilege, complicity and resistance. There is theory, sustenance, and power in these daily acts of resistance.

We must also recognize that, in this struggle for decolonization, that alliances and solidarity are not a given; it takes hard work to ensure that the tentative connections between Indigenous communities, between non-Indigenous peoples and Indigenous peoples, etc. exist and thrive (Gaztambide-Fernández, this issue; Smith, 2008). Community must be built, not assumed. This is especially true in the face of a neoliberal colonial force that emphasizes individuality, individual rights, and competition for destruction. Community is not easy, it is always threatened, and it requires embracing complexity and contradiction (Gaztambide-Fernández, this issue). Gaztambide-Fernández suggests that imaginatively we can construct new ways of entering into relationships with others, while recognizing this work will take more than imagination. At the heart of it, he articulates a pedagogy of solidarity as the possibility of recasting human relations as well as what it means to be human. Since the production of a “better” human was premised upon European Enlightenment and modernity (Wynter, 2003), central to the project of decolonization is the reformulation of the genre of the human through a multiplicity of epistemologies, ontologies and axiologies that remake the very way in which the human has come to be known and classified. This remaking may offer new directions and possibilities for decolonization.

What remains, for us, are questions; it takes humility to ask questions that do not have easy answers. There is power in questions and questioning, in being able to live in the understanding that not everything is known or knowable. Nakata (this issue) emphasizes the importance of questioning, even within already critical Indigenist spaces, and advocates a constant pushing of analysis to reveal holes in theory and practice. This questioning is necessary because, as stated earlier, decolonization is not interested in simply turning the colonial world upside down, but requires the courage and imagination to envision and construct a new future.

Indigeneity responds to the demands of contesting colonialism; it is creative and creates new solutions to new problems. This requires humility because, as Mariolga Reyes Cruz points out to us, decolonization is “moving towards a different and tangible place, somewhere out there, where no one has really ever been” (this issue, p. 153). There are others on this journey, each struggling and reaching for that tangible unknown of decolonization. Decolonization as a tangible unknown leaves room for dialogue and for dissent, as well as for coming together to each contribute to one another’s shared visions and goals. We don’t write this as a conclusion because the end of the story has not been written and, in truth, the story isn’t even linear in that way. Indigenous stories circle back, are performed and re-performed, and, with each telling and re-telling a new layer is added, a new truth revealed (Little Bear, 2005). We hope *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* is able to be part of this cycle, to support those who are telling and re-telling stories of Indigenous knowledge, power, community, and resurgence

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