

UNSETTLING THE GOLD MOUNTAIN:
ASIAN AMERICANS IN DECOLONIAL RESISTANCE

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This thesis examines Asian American identity within the context of North American settler-colonialism. Through interviews with seven individuals, I place focus on the experience of settlers as they/we challenge the colonial logics which deny sovereignty to indigenous peoples. Understanding decolonization as a multitude of processes determined by indigenous peoples, and which challenge the colonial institutions of white supremacy and capitalism, I look at the ways which Asian Americans can enact solidarity. This thesis seeks to engage in the self-critical dialogue that is necessary for collective action against oppressive institutions. At the same time, it begins to imagine relationships that defy colonialism and embrace an ethic of responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION

"An ethic of incommensurability, which guides moves that unsettle innocence, stands in contrast to aims of reconciliation, which motivate settler moves to innocence. Reconciliation is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler future... Incommensurability acknowledges that these questions need not, and perhaps cannot, be answered in order for decolonization to exist as a framework."

- Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yangⁱ

"To live in diaspora is to be haunted by histories that sit uncomfortably out of joint, ambivalently ahead of their time and yet behind it too. It is to feel a small tingle on the skin at the back of your neck and know that something is not quite right about where you are now, but to know also that you cannot leave. To be unhomed is a process. To be unhomey is a state of diasporic consciousness."

- Lily Choⁱⁱ

*"Brah, I know I'm not from da maddahland/
but on da oddahand I'm from a braddah's muddaland/
Anoddah land full of natives that was overruled/
so each oddah we undastand."*

- Krys Stilezⁱⁱⁱ

In the summers of 2012 and 2013, I travelled to the McCloud River, the unceded territory of the Winnemem Wintu tribe, to support the revitalization of their Balas Chonas (women's coming of age) ceremony. Each year that the tribe has reintroduced the ceremony to its accustomed location on the river (now an arm of Shasta Lake due to extensive damming) recreational boaters and non-cooperation from the US Forest Service have threatened to disrupt the ceremony. Though the Winnemem Wintu once occupied this land freely, they now must apply for permits and rent campsites in order to occupy what the USFS deems prime recreational land. Between paved barbecue areas

and outhouses, there are still fruit trees planted just a few generations ago by the tribe — before Christian boarding schools kidnapped Winnemem children, and before the tribe's federal recognition was terminated. Even when the ceremony is over, these fruit trees remain as reminders of whose land this is.

Over the several days of ceremony, supporters from outside of the tribe are included in many aspects of preparation and protocol. There are cooking and dishwashing to be done while members of the tribe support the ceremony's celebrant. Security tables at the campsite's gate greet volunteers and politely turn away Shasta Lake's vacationers. Other volunteers are posted upstream in rafts to watch for boaters or Forest Service agents. There is a palpable sense of the ceremony's sacredness, as well as a feeling of goodwill, of making new connections and supporting the tribe. Those of us who are not Winnemem represent a variety of backgrounds and politics: urban, rural, student, working, non-Native, Native, American Indian Movement, anarchist, white, non-white. At mealtimes, everyone eats together.

Attempts to build solidarity across the lines drawn by colonization, like at this ceremony on the McCloud River, undoubtedly raise the question of what it means to have access to this land and this water — what histories we inherit. For those of us who are settlers, our family histories often conspicuously lack any consideration of the people indigenous to the places we've lived. Still, indigenous people today carry the history of surviving genocide and, like the Winnemem, are continuing traditions rooted in place. Settlers like myself grow up with little knowledge of indigenous histories, instead imagining Native people and worldviews as part of the ancient past, with no bearing on the present.

As I consider my own genealogy in this context, I come to realize that my family's history cannot be separated from the history of Native North America. My mother's family, with the surname Chinn (陳), first arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area in the late 1800s when they sought opportunity outside of the war-torn and starved Pearl River Delta in Guangdong, China. Back then, Chinese immigrants called their new home the Gold Mountain or Gum San (金山), literally named for the riches that it promised. The only labor they were allowed to pursue— as tenant farmers, railroad workers and other undesirables – was the labor that settled the West, leaving future generations with mottled stories of searching for the American dream. On my father's side, our Japanese heritage bears a similar history, interrupted during World War II by the internment camps. As a college student raised to be middle class, the stories I hear from my family paint our settlement as an inevitability, the result of perseverance through unfortunate racism in pursuit of becoming American. This belief is not easily reconciled with the fact that these stories of arrival coincide with stories of indigenous removal – the system of “opening” land for families like mine. Even as I learn more about my history and make efforts to enact solidarity, I find myself feeling unsettled and, more than ever, conscious of my own roots.

In this thesis I aim to engage with the theory and practice of Asian American solidarity with Native American and First Nations peoples. Broadly, my questions call attention to intergroup relations and the workings of social power. How do the histories of Asian Americans, so often told as tales of progress, coincide and cooperate with the North American oppression of indigenous peoples? How does a politics and/or practice

of solidarity with indigenous peoples change the meaning of Asian American identity?
And finally, what place, if any, do Asian Americans have in decolonization?

Whose Land? Whose Vision?^{iv}

When my ancestors called this land the Gold Mountain, they were following in the footsteps of the European settlers who also viewed the territory as ripe for the taking. Already, settler-colonialism was well underway — the violent process by which newcomers expropriate indigenous land (resources) as they make their homes on it.^v Among these “newcomers” or settlers, race has played the role of distinguishing the exploitable from those who benefit from their labor. The Chinese and Indian (and later Japanese, Filipin@, Korean and Southeast Asian) people that arrived in the years succeeding the Emancipation Proclamation entered an economy that had previously relied upon enslavement of African peoples. At the same time, the “melting pot” theory advocated the eventual inclusion of all European ethnic groups into a unified white race — distinct from the expendable black and brown races. As a system for consolidating the spoils of colonization and slavery, white supremacy portrays race as natural, despite its fluidity across time and geography. What then comes with becoming a settler, or becoming white? How do race and settler-colonialism cooperate? For the purposes of this thesis, I will briefly provide background on settler-colonialism in order to emphasize the ways that settler futures are privileged over indigenous futures. My work here is inherently limited by my experience as a settler, therefore I cannot claim to speak for Native history or experiences. Countless Native scholars, artists and activists

produce work on these topics that are widely available in many media for further research.

When I speak of “futures” or futurity, I am referring to the sovereign right to survive physically, culturally and spiritually. In all respects, land is central to survival; settler-colonialism is then a relationship of inequality in which colonials seize all access to land, and therefore the wealth it provides to people. It is important to note that in expropriating land, colonials also displace whatever worldviews, ecological practices, foodways and languages that cohabitated with that land, replacing these aspects of life with their own. The violence involved in expansion becomes normalized as a natural process necessary to settler futures. This logic of genocide, as identified by Native feminist scholar Andrea Smith, requires that “indigenous people must disappear,” and must “*always* be disappearing” in order for non-indigenous people to have a “rightful” claim to land.^{vi} Indian boarding schools carried out this violent disappearance by forcibly removing children from their tribes and converting them to all ways of white Christian life at the cost of their own traditions and well-being; run by churches but funded by the United States and Canada, boarding schools are clear evidence that the logic of genocide lies close to the heart of these nation-states.

The normalized violence of colonization also extended to outright military campaigns by the United States and Canada that aimed to claim land by genocide. The 1830s saw the implementation of such policies as the Indian Removal Act which forced the removal of Native tribes from eastern states to “Permanent Indian Territory” to the west.^{vii} For the remainder of the 19th century into the 20th, the United States’ expansion was driven by a war whose opponents were also resisting new and unknown diseases.

What had been designated as “Indian Territory” was claimed by the United States in the name of Manifest Destiny. The formation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (initially by the U.S. Department of War) and the Department of Indian Affairs in Canada laid the groundwork for a relationship not centered in maintaining Native sovereignty, but in justifying paternalism and violence. In Northern California, state law encouraged settlers to engage in this genocide through payments given for the murder of Natives. Within what is now the United States, the indigenous population is estimated to have decreased by 95 percent between contact and 1900.^{viii} The dramatic decrease in indigenous population might mislead one to believe the myth that Native peoples meekly accepted defeat by superior military forces, when in fact, sovereign indigenous nations across the continent have engaged in resistance over the centuries that they have faced colonial interests. The Native nations in existence today — not to mention the living traditional ways, languages and communities — stand as testimony to indigenous resistance to colonization. For every place claimed by United States or Canada, there is likely a story of indigenous resistance and survival.

Though treaties theoretically outline the peaceful conditions of European settlement and friendship with indigenous tribes, these agreements have consistently been broken, manipulated and even contradicted by other colonial laws. The spirit of United States treaties scarcely reflected indigenous interests, as treaties themselves typically resulted in the cession of 80-90 percent of original territories, sometimes with additional treaties negotiated to claim more land.^{ix}

The Winnemem along with other Wintu bands, for example, negotiated a treaty with the U.S. government in 1851 which would have ceded a territory spanning from

Sacramento to the Oregon border in exchange for a 25 square-mile reservation. However, the state legislature refused to acknowledge aboriginal titles to native lands and would not ratify any of the 18 treaties negotiated by California tribes. Most tribes, including the Winnemem, received no land as a result.^x Following this attempt at a treaty, the tribe faced the encroachment of settlers spurred by the gold rush and the promise of lucrative salmon fish hatcheries on the McCloud and Pit Rivers. Even with sporadic allotments of land to some tribal members, the 1937 construction of the Shasta Dam claimed 4,800 acres of allotments and “hundreds of thousands of [acres of] communal tribal land” to flooding with no compensation.^{xi} Today, the tribe still struggles for their presence on the land to be recognized as one which predates the State of California by hundreds of years. As multiple generations of Winnemem are bringing back their ceremonies to the places where they’ve been held since time immemorial, they face the threat of an 18.5-foot dam raise that would submerge an estimated 39 sacred sites and further endanger any potential return of salmon runs.^{xii} Having been given no chance for free prior informed consent — the minimum due to a sovereign people, or any affected community — the federally unrecognized tribe must comment and lobby alongside any other non-Native group. Nevertheless, their success at garnering support shows that the federal government is not the only body capable of bestowing recognition; as the traditional chief of the Winnemem frequently pronounces, they can recognize their own sovereignty.

It is important to recognize that as legal structures deny indigenous sovereignty, so does dominant cultural consciousness in settler nation-states. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang contend, “Indigeneity prompts multiple forms of settler anxiety” because

it is a reminder that the “settler-colonial project” is incomplete.^{xiii} Most depictions of Native people within settler society, from children’s cartoons and novels to major films and fashion spreads, portray a narrow version of history cast with caricatures of noble chiefs, stoic warriors, mystical shamans and Indian princesses. These images soothe “settler anxiety” by only allowing indigenous cultures and people to inhabit the past or else fulfill the “disappearing Indian” trope. Anne McClintock calls this imaginary territory which Native people are displaced to “anachronistic space”—a designation that continues to disavow indigenous land claims.^{xiv} Through cultural images that figuratively remove Native people from the land, the ongoing history of settler-colonialism is purified and settlers can enjoy a one-sided resolution of the whole colonial problem. By “playing Indian” — by appropriating Native spirituality, arts, ecological practices, languages without consent from the people these things originate from — settlers can enact a fantasy of belonging to the land, and enjoy a sense of place without any accountability to any existing Native tribes or people.^{xv} Thus, colonization as a process of appropriating land paves the way for the appropriation of indigeneity as well.

Who then is indigenous? Tuck and Yang argue that “Indigenous peoples are those who have creation stories, not colonization stories, about how we/they came to be in a particular place - indeed how we/they came to be a place.”^{xvi} In contrast, settlers are those who only have stories of arrival, often glorifying pioneers entering new frontiers. As such, calling a settler state a “nation of immigrants” implies that if *all* of us are immigrants, then *none* among us is indigenous, and therefore we all have equal claim to the land. This language encourages the notion that all settlers occupy society on equal

footing, when in fact social inequality within the settler state stratifies on multiple levels. For example, the social construction of race serves to perpetuate inequality among settlers, with whiteness serving as the consolidation of power and social privilege.^{xvii} As a fluctuating category, whiteness has not always included all Europeans, but gradually incorporated Irish, Italians, Germans, Russians, Norwegians and other ethnic groups. Those who are not included in the definition of whiteness are then designated as the exploitable “other.” Within the context of settler-colonialism, race then serves to uphold what Tuck and Yang call a triad “settler-native-slave” relations.^{xviii} Racial definitions may shift to conditionally allow the “slave” access to settler spoils, but this inclusion, while appearing liberatory, does not require any change to the settler-colonial situation.

Liberation movements led by settlers of color are then limited in their scope to the privileges distributed among settlers, and cannot claim to also address the concerns of indigenous people. The Third World Liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, in which nationalist formations organized for the rights of Asian, Black and Latin@ communities serves as an example of how racial justice discourse cannot be equivocated with decolonization. While this movement was powerful in articulating a course of self-determination for disenfranchised communities, this often carried the assumption that their goals did not conflict with Native American sovereignty. For settlers to assume a “shared struggle” with indigenous people is dangerous, as it can serve to justify moves that further settle non-Native people without Native consent. Though the 60s and 70s also saw the American Indian Movement grow into a forceful voice for indigenous sovereignty, AIM’s goals cannot be confused with the goals of

other nationalist movements who largely represented settler interests, despite their global tone. Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle argue that the confluence of these movements may have brought more attention to issues facing Native Americans, but also resulted in the on-going challenge of differentiating indigenous sovereignty from civil rights.^{xix} Whereas sovereignty movements seek to uphold laws that recognize indigenous nations, racial justice, as it is commonly conceived, seeks to be included in the settler state. Decolonization then, cannot refer to both of these things.

Decolonization, if it is to be more than symbolic, must extend as deeply as colonization itself. Not only does land stand to be reclaimed, but also the stories, ceremonies, foods, songs and names that go with it. Because decolonization is fundamentally an assertion of sovereignty, it must be left to indigenous people to determine their own visions and courses of revitalizing and reclaiming these things from cultural genocide. Tuck and Yang acknowledge the gravity and scale of what decolonization can be.

Though the details are not fixed or agreed upon, in our view, decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted; that is, all of the land, and not just symbolically. This is precisely why decolonization is necessarily unsettling, especially across lines of solidarity... Settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and unsettles everyone.^{xx}

While settler-colonialism implicates everyone, decolonization demands indigenous leadership. For treaty tribes, federal Native law offers a framework for expanding on existing rights and exercising sovereignty. Where treaties are non-existent or inadequate for achieving change, popular movement has proven to send a clear message. From the Winnemem Wintu bringing their ceremonies and salmon back to the McCloud River, to bands of First Nations across Canada blocking oil pipeline

construction crews from entering their territories, decolonization is a very real goal for indigenous people.^{xxi} Current movements like Idle No More and resistance communities like Unist’ot’en Camp and Biimdasahwin are calling attention to the indigenous people at the frontlines who are using sovereignty to stand up to ecological destruction.^{xxii} As these movements gain visibility, they call for non-Natives to consider what their role is in supporting indigenous nationhood, and how that is different from advocating rights for a minority group.

How then do settlers relate to these movements? First, by allowing ourselves to be unsettled. As Tuck and Yang point out, “Settlers are not immigrants. Immigrants are beholden to the Indigenous laws and epistemologies of the lands they migrate to.”^{xxiii} This again evokes the bottom line of indigenous sovereignty while directing settlers in how they might relate to movements for decolonization. While decolonization itself, is not beholden to the futures of settlers, it does not necessarily demand that all settlers be removed. First Nations poet and scholar Lee Maracle speaks to a vision of sovereignty that involves those who are more than visitors living to the laws of the land:

You’re either a visitor, or you’re a citizen. If you’re just visiting, be a good guest: you come here and you return home. But if you plan to stay here, sink root here, then find out what the original laws are about, and live within those laws... As you respect and honor indigenous sovereignty, you also take on the law and the legal framework of people here. And it’s really quite simple: everybody eats, every woman has the right to a house, and everyone [has] access to the wealth of the land. There’s a caveat on that, this is where capitalism comes in, and the caveat is, take only what you need. Take only what you need. We need to consider that. And so there is no place for capitalism in this country.^{xxiv}

Maracle’s words call upon “visitors” to consider what respect of indigenous sovereignty could have looked like, and how a future based upon it can look. Decolonization does apply to everyone in the sense that it requires the revitalization of a place-based ethic, one which settlers do not have the privilege to ignore. It is a process

that requires those of us who are settlers to reckon with the benefits we receive from Native dispossession, and the ways that we can support sovereignty. This is necessarily a process that entails discomfort and a commitment to collectively overturning racist logics. Native Hawaiian nationalist Haunani-Kay Trask reminds us that “history does not begin with the present nor does its terrible legacy disappear with the arrival of a new consciousness.”^{xxv} Therefore, building a positive future means recognizing the legacies carried into the present, taking responsibility for long-term healing.

Asian American Settler-Colonialism

As I began to question my own complicity in settler-colonialism as a United States citizen, I was at first confronted with the ways that common conceptions of Asian American politics tend to lack any analysis of this topic. How does naming Asian Americans as settlers interact with the more-commonly understood concept of Asian Americans as victims of racism? Can movements for justice embrace both of these identities instead of choosing between racial justice and decolonization? These are some of the questions that I grapple with in the interviews that follow. In my own research, I also found that this dialogue is very much alive as a concern of both scholars and activists, though it has yet to arise as a priority of “mainstream” Asian American politics. To begin shedding light on this under-discussed intersection, Tuck and Yang offer the following strong and nuanced statement:

Settlers are diverse, not just of white European descent, and include people of color, even from other colonial contexts. This tightly wound set of conditions and racialized, globalized relations exponentially complicates what is meant by decolonization, and by solidarity, against settler colonial forces.^{xxvi}

Asian American literature and the recent field of diaspora studies speak to the complexities of these “tightly wound” conditions which involve experiences of war, loss of culture and relationship to place — in addition to arrival in countries based in inequality. Lily Cho’s perspectives on the diasporic subject offer moving testimony to a consciousness informed by displacement and separation from homeland, yet is hard-pressed to also acknowledge that diaspora involves re-settling on indigenous land. Lee Maracle directly engages Cho’s work to point out “that diaspora shares many features with colonialism and that its valorization of migration and mobility works against the claims of indigenous cultures”—this dialogue is vital to the creation of movements that truly work towards collective liberation.^{xxvii}

Hawai’i presents a vivid example of dialogue and conflict between Asian American identity and Native sovereignty. “Local” is a common term used by the descendants of Filipinos, Chinese, Japanese and Koreans living on the islands, and often distinguishes them from white haole settlers. Though it has historically empowered poor and working-class people of color in struggles against state oppression, it also obscures their role as settlers on Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) land. Candace Fujikane, an Asian American scholar and self-proclaimed fourth-generation Japanese settler living in Hawaii, acknowledges the settler claims present in her own past work on the presence of a “local nation” in Hawai’i. After Native Hawaiian nationalist Haunani-Kay Trask publicly critiqued Fujikane’s legitimization of Asian American re-settlement, Fujikane was compelled to hold herself accountable to Native Hawaiian sovereignty. “Even the attempt to ally ‘Locals’ with ‘Natives’ created the illusion of a ‘shared’ struggle without acknowledging that Asians have come to comprise that very political system that has

sought to take away from Natives their rights as indigenous peoples,” Fujikane writes in self-critique.^{xxviii} The example that she sets is an important one, as only this kind of reflexivity can address the question of solidarity.

Fujikane’s revised analysis reveals a painful truth about the goals of Asian American political ascendancy. Caught between rejecting identification with the white colonizer and our lack of indigenous claim to the land, Asian Americans—like other settlers of color—have interpreted political power within the settler-state as moves to liberation. Lisa Lowe points out that this dynamic is embedded in the very language of Asian American citizenship. “As the state legally transforms the Asian *alien* into the Asian American *citizen*,” it promises political freedom on the condition that the Asian American citizen renounces any experience of disenfranchisement under that same political system.^{xxix} Lowe argues that this classification obscures the true workings of capitalism and its false promise of multiculturalism. She writes, “Yet the historical and continued racialization of the Asian American, as citizen, exacerbates the contradictions of the national project that promises the resolution of material inequalities through the political domain of equal representation.”^{xxx} Here, Lowe poses that though Asian Americans have been granted legal inclusion, their racialization — or social exclusion — points to a system that continues to rely on systemic exploitation. This calls forth the fact that United States immigration policies honed between 1850 and 1965 (specifically to tightly regulate the immigration Chinese, Indian, Japanese and Korean “aliens”) laid the groundwork for today’s militarized borders. Not unlike the United States and Canada’s reliance upon Chinese labor to expand railways in the late 1800s, today’s border policy produces a class of legally precarious migrants — over 11 million

undocumented individuals in the United States, 1.4 million of whom identify as Asian — who become vulnerable to exploitative labor practices. Such a system relies upon the creation of citizens — and their commitment to pursuing ideals of racial inclusion — to continue extracting labor from new populations. As a function of the colonial nation-state, policing borders is thus a physical project of colonizing territory, and a racial project of inventing citizenship.

Most problematic, as Fujikane argues via Dean Saranillo, is the patriotic identification with the settler-state that comes with Asian American struggles against “intra-settler racism,” and the belief that this is the only course of political empowerment.^{xxxii} In 2000, these arose as vocal debates in Hawai’i as Japanese American Senator Daniel Inouye interfered with federal processes of negotiating Hawaiian self-determination—in addition to joining the Japanese American Citizens League in openly denouncing Hawaiian sovereignty leader Mililani Trask. The leaders of the organization Local Japanese Women for Justice, Eiko Kosasa and Ida Yoshinaga, issued a statement which made clear that Inouye did not represent all Asian Americans, nor did he have a right to include the oppression of Native Hawaiians in his vision of Asian American liberation.^{xxxiii} “We are not colonized,” says their statement, arguing that “Japanese settlers, in particular, have ascended to the ruling class and compete with the haole (whites) to control the colony of Hawai’i.”^{xxxiii} Kosasa and Yoshinaga’s statement represents a powerful acknowledgement of the contradictions present in Asian American politics, and begins to answer the question of changing the norm of Asian American settler-colonialism.

Haunani-Kay Trask describes resistance to the title of “settler” by Asians in Hawai’i, writing, “Local Asians also know, as we [Kanaka Maoli] do, that they are not First Nations people. But ideologically, Asians cannot abide categorization with haole. Their subjugation at the hands of haole racism, their history of deprivation and suffering on the plantations, demand an identity other than settler.”^{xxxiv} Yet, in settler-colonialism, there is no escaping culpability, and histories of racism do not erase this dynamic. Fujikane examines the pattern of re-territorialization, which claims that discrimination against Asian Americans entitles Asians to become “indigenous” to North America. She responds with this powerful statement:

One is either indigenous to a particular land base or one is not. Asian Americans are undeniably settlers in the United States because we cannot claim any genealogy to the land we occupy, no matter how many lifetimes Asian settlers work on the land, or how many Asian immigrants have been killed through racist persecution and hate crimes, or how brutal the political or colonial regimes that occasioned Asians' exodus from their homelands... The term “settler” is not about colonial intentions: most Asian settlers spend little or no time thinking about indigenous peoples. And that is precisely where the colonial problem lies.^{xxxv}

Fujikane does not argue that Asian Americans must become the colonizer, but that Asian American liberation is not complete without full acceptance of our responsibilities as settlers. The “colonial problem” that she references encompasses the logic of genocide which must be viewed as natural in order for settler-colonialism to continue. As Lowe’s analysis previously argues, it is a system reliant on non-resistance and the desire to join its inner circles. Similarly, scholar and artist Fred Ho writes, “The problem of race is that it primarily juxtaposes the political question as one of integration, as one of learning how to get along with one another, and not dealing with the question of returning land and territory and the battle for national equality.”^{xxxvi} Kosasa and Yoshinaga echo this sentiment as they call for an explicit recognition of

Native Hawaiian sovereignty and a commitment to actively support it, especially from the position of Asian American citizens.

It is not up to Asian settlers to predetermine the limits of Hawaiian government, lands, and resources. As Asians, we must hold those who represent and support the U.S. government accountable for its continued genocidal actions against Native peoples. We must recognize that whether those in charge of this colonial system are whites, Asians, or other settlers of color isn't the point. Nor is it how we divide the spoils of colonialism. Sovereignty is not about "race." It is about nationhood.^{xxxvii}

Though race remains an important concept in understanding the experiences of Asian Americans, it must be considered within the context of settler-colonialism. The recent inclusion of "Pacific" in the category of "Asian American" is illustrative of the pitfalls of equivocating racism with colonization. Asian American is already a broad term whose inclusion challenges efforts to understand the distinct experiences of the ethnic groups it encompasses, especially non-East Asian groups (Filipin@, Vietnamese, Laotian, Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese among others). The push to also include Pacific Island groups in this designation then further conflates the experiences of diverse people. As organizations change their names to represent "Asian Pacific" Americans, their moves to broaden the term "Asian" does not necessarily include solidarity against the genocide that those Native communities face. Indeed, they risk the same pitfalls criticized by Kosasa and Yoshinaga—pursuing empowerment that does not challenge the colonization of indigenous people, but colludes in it. Native Hawaiian scholar J. Kehaulani Kauanui calls out this empty inclusion as an attempt to appear more multicultural, while in fact denying self-determination among Pacific Islanders and thus denying any participation in their subjugation.^{xxxviii}

Unpacking the settler desire to re-territorialize at the expense of indigenous sovereignties harkens to Cho's concept of a diasporic subject separated from homeland. This evokes what Fujikane calls out as the "most profound of Asian American anxieties: the indigenous challenge to Asian American claims to America."^{xxxix} Indeed, Asian American politics are well-equipped to refute claims of non-belonging that are embedded in the racist logic of Orientalism, and the aforementioned racist immigration policies.^{xi} Yet, this results in the overt identification with colonial citizenship, which carries with it an appropriation of indigeneity. It is misguided, but convenient to defend this appropriation — or "moves to innocence," as Tuck and Yang name it — which participates in the settler pastime of seeking out Native American "blessings" that sanction our presence.^{xli} Just as Trask points out the flaws of embracing a "local nation," the Asian American identity cannot be overlooked as the possible site of reterritorialization. Harkening to Tuck and Yang's argument that indigeneity is marked by creation stories, stories of overcoming discrimination and racism have produced new "colonization stories" that replace the white settler with the Asian settler.

The field of Asian American studies presents promising opportunities for engaging in dialogue around the anxieties of Asian settler-colonialism and exploring possibilities for supporting indigenous sovereignty. One of the longest-running journals of the field, *AmerAsia Journal*, released a special issue in 2000 titled "Whose Vision? Asian American Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i," which brought together over a dozen contributors. In it, the journal examines its own relationship to Asian American settler identities and looks back on the changes made in 30 years of published work on the issue. Most notably, they make the following assertions:

1. The positioning of all Asian peoples in Hawai'i as settler groups. Despite their struggles under the haole plantation system, Asians are settlers-not indigenous to Hawai'i.
2. The recognition of Hawaiian sovereignty as a right due to a national people. Hawaiians are not a minority or a settler people. Therefore, their claims are not the same as other minority or ethnic claims.
3. The claiming of "local" identity or culture by Asian settler groups should not be confused with struggles of the Hawaiian people for their land, water, and other economic and legal rights.^{xlii}

These claims, made in the introductory pages to an entire issue dedicated to the topic, signifies a process of reflexivity among Asian Americans and Asian American institutions that is necessary not only in the context of settler-colonialism in Hawaii, but also across all occupied indigenous land. As settlers we, regardless of our interest in justice, carry certain investments in the preservation of the settler-colonial state. To bring to light all that is made invisible by colonialism – Native claims to land, contemporary Native people – means to confront the violence embedded in our citizenship, property, and places considered home. If decolonization is to involve the repatriation of Native land, then all settlers are implicated.

Just as colonization requires that settlers put down roots, decolonization calls for settlers to be accountable for where those roots were placed — to allow for a process of unsettling. Though it is challenging to acknowledge settler identity, naming the colonial situation is simply not enough. Institutions and individuals who represent racial justice stand to be held accountable also to indigenous nations' right to sovereignty. This sovereignty must include the right of indigenous people to set the course of their own decolonization, leaving settlers with the task of unsettling. In the interest of honestly examining the roots that Asian Americans — not to mention my own family — have placed in North America, I allow the following questions to guide my research:

1. How has Asian American citizenship participated in settler-colonialism?
2. How do Asian Americans' relationships of solidarity with indigenous sovereignty affect identity?
3. What place, if any, do Asian Americans have in decolonization?

I hope to examine the experiences of Asian Americans who have pursued their own processes of unsettling to find the larger possibilities within their stories. What work have they done, on themselves and for their communities? What questions remain to be answered?

I agree with Asian American Studies scholar Taro Iwata who argues that acknowledging these complicities of Asian Americans with other oppressions strengthens political agency which has long been denied within narratives of victimhood. By acknowledging the ways that Asian Americans are "both victims and potential victimizers," we are reminding ourselves that we, as not a single nation, but a collection of diverse ethnic groups, have the agency to determine our own futures.^{xliii} Understanding particular contexts and histories, especially in relation to other ethnic and racial groups, remains vital to developing a complex view of what it means to be Asian American. According to Iwata, "confronting our ancestors' problematic agency" is necessarily part of this comparative approach, to which I add that we must also do the same with the living generations.^{xliv}

METHODS

In any study of inequality, it is vital to look to or all sides of the situation. Not only must we trace where power has acted against someone's interests, but also pay attention to whom that power benefits, and who seeks to uphold it. Here, I hope to shed light on the terrain of Asian American settler-colonialism and how to disrupt the logics of genocide. I chose to examine this relationship through Asian Americans who are interested in supporting the sovereignty of indigenous people. As I have pointed out above, settler-colonialism is a well-established norm in "American" culture, including amongst people of color; how then, do Asian American settlers challenge a system which promises to benefit them as Americans?

While the root of these questions was my own limited experience with indigenous solidarity, I quickly realized that I would not get far on my own. This turned me toward those around me who I had begun to talk to about my own confusion about my role in solidarity. This began to structure my research around gathering stories and testimonies from other Asian Americans who, to my eye, challenged "conventional" images of Asian Americans. Rather than hem in thought according to how "Asian American" it is, I want to acknowledge that "Asian American" is a fluid category shaped by the changing faces of the people it labels. In many ways, I am continuing to define Asian American identity through my outreach efforts and selection of interviewees. Who I speak with is defined by a tenuous exchange of assumptions about background, and ascribed identity—however, in the course of our conversations, we also discussed the fluidity of the category of Asian American. Rather than fearing any form of assumption of identity, I hope that taking some risk to start dialogue can

precipitate more inclusive discussions in the future. Starting the conversation on Asian Americans in solidarity with Native Americans will ideally attract more voices, including those who I have not yet identified as having contributions.

The heterogeneity of the participants in this thesis project is a reflection not only of the multigenerational and multiethnic nature of the Asian American category, but also shows the difficulty of easily identifying Asian Americans who are interested in dialogue about decolonization. There exist very few organizations or formations expressly dedicated to Asian Americans in support of indigenous struggle; this meant that I began identifying participants through my own personal contacts. The connections I made were completely reliant upon subjective definitions of "indigenous struggle," "Asian American" and their derivatives, as well as upon the help of people with networks beyond my communities. For instance, I located two interviewees (Dennis Kobata and Mo Nishida), members of the early Asian American movement, by striking up a conversation with a distant relative about my research — immediately he referred me to names of acquaintances he had in Southern California. Similarly, online social networking brought me to two more interviews (Sid Chow Tan and Rita Wong) in Vancouver, British Columbia when I came across their names specifically in reference to First Nations solidarity. The remainder of my interviews came from those connected to more local social groups, people with whom I have had ongoing discussions with on the topic of decolonization (Emi Watada, Andrew Williams, Kim DeLeon). To my eye, these people represent both a vastly incomplete dialogue on solidarity, and an accurate reflection on my own process of building community around common values. Due to the nature and history of colonization across Turtle Island, these conversations are

necessarily far-reaching geographically and come in many voices. I hope that this is the beginning of bringing together those who may feel left out of mainstream discussions of what it means to be Asian American on colonized land.

Though participants in such a study would all typically go by pseudonyms, four participants featured here are referred to by their actual names. In the cases of Sid Chow Tan and Rita Wong, I quote from their published work and use their names for the sake of consistency. However, Dennis Kobata and Mo Nishida both declined the use of pseudonyms. Without ascribing excessive meaning to their choices, I hope that this inspires critical thought on the role of research in communities, especially among activists. Even under pseudonyms, the testimonies offered in this project reveal self-critique and internal discourse that is so vital to accountability and collective action.

As a researcher, I then serve as a curator and facilitator in this process of exploring Asian American identity in the context of settler-colonialism. In each interview, I began by asking general questions of the participant's background, and their connection to or knowledge of indigenous issues. With the exception of Rita Wong's interview by e-mail, I allowed for interviews to turn into free-form conversations about their experiences of identity and solidarity. The participants' answers have generously provided me with the material for searching out patterns and themes. How do they narrate their relationships to land, to culture and to indigenous communities? What are their motivations for – investments in – solidarity? How do they challenge dominant colonial ideas about indigenous people? How do they model different ways of inhabiting a settler-colonial context? What questions and insecurities do they have? The combined knowledge brought forth by these individuals represents a forming discourse

of Asian settlers in (and around) decolonization. Because there can be no final word on decolonization, especially made by settlers, this project more closely represents what Rita Wong calls a “listening for ethics.” As the designated “listener,” I then have the responsibility of acknowledging the limitations both of what participants were willing to tell me, and of what I was willing to hear.

UNSETTLING THE GOLD MOUNTAIN

Solidarity as Party Line

Mo Nishida has been with the Asian American movement from the beginning. As a young Japanese American growing up through World War II and the 1960s, organizing meant claiming an identity and resisting a strongly felt oppression. As a survivor of the wartime incarceration of West Coast Japanese Americans, the struggles he saw Native Americans engaging in resonated with his own experiences with systemic dispossession.

Yeah, I grew up here, born and raised in LA, grew up in the Japanese ghetto on the westside of downtown LA. Went to [internment] camp in Colorado in the Arkansas river valley in the southeast corner of Colorado, a place called Amache, three—three and a half years over there, caught a whole bunch of hell adjusting as we moved around finding a place to stay, and yeah... always felt a kinship with indigenous people but it didn't really begin to play itself out until Alcatraz [and] the Civil Rights era, but all of that put everything out in the open, including our own oppression. I was part of that generation that came of age in the 50s and 60s, and came to myself in the late 60s, early 70s, and never looked back since then.^{xlv}

Nishida's story offers a place to begin understanding how Asian American politics have related to indigenous movements. Living through the years when Executive Order 9066 enforced the Orientalist notion of Asians and Asian Americans as the foreign enemy, Nishida came to understand resistance as a deep questioning of the United States. For him and the other Asian Americans that he joined with, this led to a politics of solidarity with other "Third World" peoples. The Asian American movement that they fashioned took inspiration from, and coincided with, the movements of Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano and Native American young people (particularly the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, who popularized the model of a 12-point program among these groups). With a common radical political education, these groups

articulated a politics of solidarity that relied upon a narrative of shared struggle for self-determination. While the Black Panther Party remains emblematic of the time, Asian American groups like East Wind, I Wor Kuen and the Red Guard were not only active in their own communities, but felt called to act in solidarity with other nationalist struggles, as well. Nishida recalls:

At that time, even that early period of our movement's development, we took the position that all people of color have got the same problems stemming from the same economic base, and that we were mainly colonial subjects in this country, that we needed to support each other. And later on, I've taken on the thing that we needed to learn from Native peoples to learn how to walk on this land as caretakers, rather than just takers. Our position back then was that we're all in this boogie together and we're all fighting for self-determination, and need to be left alone in order to develop that, and that federal government and anybody else had no right to come in and oppress our people any more.^{xlvi}

This sense of embattlement, from internment and U.S. intervention in Vietnam, spurred the development of an Asian American politics that saw people across the "rainbow" fighting a common struggle for self-determination. It is important to note Nishida's addition of the need to give respect to Native people's particular connection to North America, or Turtle Island. Nishida's comment of having "later on" adopted this perspective points to a weakness of a politics of "shared struggle," particularly in the context of settler-colonialism, in which people of color are also settlers. Yet according to Nishida, perceiving a shared struggle with Native people moved them to participate in some of the American Indian Movement's most high-profile actions. In 1973, residents of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota joined with American Indian Movement activists to take a stand against a corrupt tribal government led by tribal chairman, Dick Wilson and his "goons." As the Native resisters occupied the town of Wounded Knee and armed themselves against Wilson's men and U.S. law enforcement, the standoff strategically called attention to the United States' support for corrupt tribal

governments, and the broader issue of Native nationhood.^{xlvii} Nishida recalls the decision of his majority-Japanese American organization, East Wind, to become involved with the occupation of Wounded Knee when AIM called for solidarity:

We took a position that the war in Vietnam had ended and the US was bringing the war home to the United States and they were attacking... there was the Indigenous struggle for self-determination, especially around mineral rights and all that kind of stuff was going on around there. So when the occupation of Wounded Knee took place, and... AIM put out the call to come to Rapid City, to come to Pine Ridge to break the blockade and expose the government, that's what we went to do was we help break the blockade, show our unity. When we marched, we always had a rainbow out in front, carrying our banner, right, that was black, brown, red, yellow, white.^{xlviii}

According to Nishida, supporting AIM against the United States was an extension of their opposition to the Vietnam War, which others claim had the effect of inciting pan-Asian solidarity.^{xlix} These factors collided with the escalation of Native activism that also included the occupation of Alcatraz from 1969 to 1971 and the Trail of Broken Treaties, a march on the capitol in that brought together participants from across the country.¹ The episode recounted by Nishida saw an intrepid group of 18-20 Japanese Americans from Los Angeles evading the FBI cross-country (by taking at least 6 different routes), and attempting three different entries to Wounded Knee, all foiled by law enforcement.ⁱⁱ Dennis Kobata, another young Japanese American that participated in the endeavor, remembers the general feeling of their activity being surveilled by the government once they became involved in the occupation.

It was a very nervous trip, 'cause people were worried about, you know since we had emphasized security so much, about what was happening, and we had been following the events that had unfolded. We knew that there was a lot of oversight by the federal government in terms of trying to break up the occupation, and so this was an event to show and build support, solidarity for those who were inside, as well as get there and us be taking food and medical supplies and other needed supplies into Wounded Knee.ⁱⁱⁱ

This marked Kobata's first visit to a reservation, and Nishida's second time being involved in supporting Native nationalist movement (the first being the occupation of

Alcatraz). Their group's assertion that Wounded Knee was the war "come home" from Vietnam was probably accurate, at least in the sense that what they encountered in South Dakota was a view into the systemic militarization of Indian country, and the use of technology developed for the US occupation of Vietnam.^{liii} Kobata recalls witnessing the Native leaders of the occupation defy law enforcement when their outside supporters saw it to be nearly impossible.

We all felt that it was part of a military or semi-military kind of situation. Because the amount of troops that they had, surrounding the occupation was tremendous, but daily, on a daily basis, Native peoples were going in and out, getting food and medical supplies to the people who were occupying Wounded Knee. So that was pretty amazing.^{liv}

Kobata's observations also extended to the ways that being Asian American informed his interactions with Pine Ridge residents. He remembers being asked what tribe he was from, a sign of recognizing non-whiteness across the vast distance between urban Asian American communities and Oglala Sioux territory. For Kobata, this was eye opening:

So I had to explain who I was, and I had to explain who we were in terms of Asian Americans from Los Angeles coming to y'know, help support what was happening in terms of the occupation of Wounded Knee, but uh, is explaining it to and having, more for myself, of an idea of who they were and y'know, like the extreme isolation that, like, the U.S. government had put them in. So a lot of these people had never taken one step off the reservation. Had lived their entire lives on the reservation. So, that's why they wondered who we were and, you know, what tribe we were from.^{lv}

Whether the experience of meeting their Native American comrades challenged their political views or not, the meeting itself was certainly enabled by a politics of solidarity. Yet within this notion of shared struggle, there are indications that Kobata didn't wholly believe that Asian Americans and Native Americans experienced the same oppressions.

I don't know if, you know like, even in a lot of my thinking I was thinking of it as indigenous people but they were people of color, they were Native Americans, and they faced the same things as a lot of other people of color, actually more accentuated for

them. But it was very interesting and seeing people I hadn't come across before that were so isolated, and the reality of living your entire lives on a single reservation in a fairly small geographic area.^{lvi}

Perhaps it was easier for the Asian American activists to identify with the oppression of indigenous people than it was to identify with the other white supporters, who as Kobata recalls, unwittingly incited his group's suspicion. Some of these "were sort of wannabe Native Americans," who appropriated knowledge of Native spirituality for their own enrichment.^{lvii} He also points out that it was "guaranteed" that snitches and spies were among them and informing law enforcement of their activities, which added suspicion to their encounters with white supporters. According to Kobata, there was a sense that being active in the Asian American movement warranted a different relationship to indigenous solidarity than for the average white supporter:

The Asian Americans, I knew all of them, they were folks who were active in the Asian American movement and who, yeah, had a better understanding than the majority of the white supporters who were there. Because a lot of them [the white supporters] were, you know, into the culture, a lot of them claimed — you still see this happening — that they were part Indian, part Native American. And whether that's true or not, I don't know. That was their claim.^{lviii}

Here, Kobata points out that even in this space of solidarity, race and cultural knowledge are factors in how each person conducts themselves and relates to the host community. In the case of the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee, according to Kobata, Asian American supporters were generally active in their own communities and practicing their own cultures and therefore were perceptive of others' cultural appropriation. As Nishida puts it, their support of AIM was seen as part of their own liberation — a reciprocal relationship that was not simply one-sided help.

Though Kobata and Nishida's group never made it across the blockade to Wounded Knee, the attempt over several weeks, he says, made lasting connections.

AIM organizers had new contacts in Los Angeles within the Japanese American community.

It was sort of a natural conclusion since they knew that there had been this support built, trying to raise moneys, trying to send people in to support their cause, so there was a lot more support and whenever there were speakers, AIM leaders, et cetera, [national] leaders who would come to LA, there would be contact with people who had helped organize this caravan that was hopefully going to Wounded Knee to support the cause.^{lix}

Still, Nishida recalls that it wasn't easy to explain to their Los Angeles community their reasons for traveling to South Dakota, especially while in the midst of organizing their own Serve the People programs. "All of us went up to Pine Ridge, so people wanted to know what the hell we were doing going way the hell up there," he says of the reactions they garnered.^{lx} According to Nishida, this confusion existed alongside support for their bottom line, "as far as in the movement itself, people understood the need for us to support the right of self-determination of oppressed people," he says.^{lxi} He points out that the most understanding came from first generation Japanese Americans.

I think one of the sectors that was most receptive to us was the poor Isseis, the Japan-born people. When we went to Alcatraz, the people that really gave, over and beyond what we imagined was possible, were those very Isseis, first of our people, who felt a relationship, a strong relationship with the Native peoples, and it had to do with a love of the land. So when we came back it was the same thing, the poorest people that understood why we had to go, the others just thought we were crazy! I can't just make a blanket kind of statement, but if I were to make a statement, I'd say probably that the community was just confused about us...^{lxii}

This statement points to the often-disputed core of solidarity, and how solidarity looks within an intergenerational Asian American context. Nishida's account of Issei supporters aiding the occupation of Alcatraz indicates motivations for solidarity that were rooted in experiences and values, not solely in a party line. The others who share their stories here also point out that older generations of Asian Americans have been particularly receptive to indigenous resistance to colonialism. Though these accounts

are anecdotal and dispersed, they point to an ethic of solidarity that is perhaps even rooted in knowledge that predates the United States.

The episode recounted by Nishida and Kobata describes one of many relationships of solidarity which make up an important part of Asian American history. In addition to answering the calls put out by Native American groups, other aspects of the movement were also engaged in establishing community centers in New York alongside Dominican and Puerto Rican community activists. Also relatively unknown were the activists working behind the scenes of Black nationalist movements such as Richard Aoki of the Black Panther Party and Yuri Kochiyama of the Republic of New Afrika.^{lxiii} These are just a few examples of Asian Americans who recognized their own oppression in others and were committed to justice everywhere. Between these individuals and small groups was a movement to invent an Asian American identity that encompassed social justice and solidarity, and bucked the image of the "model minority."

Of the Japanese Americans involved in supporting AIM during the Wounded Knee occupation, Nishida remains one of the few who retains strong ties with the Native community. He currently engages in not only organizing events to remember Japanese American internment, but also to advocate with Native communities against nuclear power. In the following comment, he references Issei and Japanese support for resistance to nuclear and coal development on indigenous land in North America. Here, he considers what he knows of Asian communities committed to indigenous solidarity.

Well [the] people that really understood what we were about were the Isseis, and they pretty much don't exist anymore. We have some sympathizers among the new Isseis coming over from Japan, we run into them occasionally at the Sundance and at the different ceremonies and stuff, so we don't have any organizational or strong ties with

them. We have connections with Sundancers in Japan, who know what's going on, you know at Big Mountain and that Peabody Mining company rip-off, or in the struggle in Japan. But in communities here, on Turtle Island, if one exists it's miniscule. Or it's not organized anyhow. But at some point we will begin to hook up. But that hasn't happened yet.^{lxiv}

According to Nishida, there has yet to be widespread Asian American solidarity with indigenous struggles. To his eye, it is not a matter of instilling new ideas, but rather recognizing old connections that go back to the arrival of the first Japanese. He says that this relationship “has always been there,” and that it remains an important, though small, part of our history.^{lxv}

As he advocates recovering this historical relationship, he also frames solidarity as a shared fight for freedom. “We wanna be free, then we need to help liberate the land, and [the] people that are obviously struggling for keeping the land, or nurturing and being caretakers of the land are the First Nations, they've been struggling from day one,” he says, invoking his self-proclaimed revolutionary nationalist politics.^{lxvi} There is some equivocation between the experiences of settler racism and colonization as Nishida claims the right of Asian Americans to engage in land liberation.

Whether it's me fighting here in J-town or Chinatown against gentrification, corporate giveaways, it's the same struggle they have over on the reservation, right, the corporate giveaways, people coming in and polluting and trashing the land, you know, it's the same struggle, just a different front. So yeah, my going there is a way of supporting myself. I don't make a division between that.^{lxvii}

The stories and testimonies that I feature here are a continued exploration into what it means for Asian American communities to view themselves in solidarity with Native peoples. While Nishida and Kobata speak to solidarity in the decades of strong cultural nationalism, the following voices speak to personal relationships and deeply held knowledge that informs their support for Native-led movements for decolonization. It remains important to question settler desires and privilege, but also understanding

what motivates solidarity — when it is requested — brings insight into the values at work.

Finding Kinship

“I guess a lot of us always start our own stories by our grandparents,” says Emi Watada, a Nisei (second generation Japanese American) member of the Winnemem Wintu Tribe of Northern California, who grew up in a small town in southwestern Idaho.^{lxviii} Living in an intergenerational household, she says that the influence of her grandparents instilled in her a foundational sense of being Japanese. This base of family, she says, represented the only safe space she knew, especially as she entered public school in the years following World War II. It was her grandfather and his brother who first came as greenhouse workers in the carnation business, then as railroad workers and finally as farmers. They settled on what she refers to as “recently stolen land” on the Snake River that is the historic territory of Northern Shoshone and Bannock tribes. It was under the guidance of her grandfather that she says she first formed ideas around the land and her place on it. “We spent a lot of time outside, and with Grandpa, and he taught us everything about living things, both my sister and I,” she says. Her grandfather, who was not from a port city but the inaka, or mountain village, was the first to inform her of the first people of the land. “Those were the only things I knew [about Native people], Grandpa saying they were here first.”^{lxix}

When Watada left home after college to be a teacher in Eugene, Oregon, she found herself without her base of support, and confronted with a world dismissive of her Asianness. Combined with the disillusionment engendered by the Vietnam War and

the draft, Watada remembers feeling alienated from her surroundings, and with little sense of connection to the place where she lived. “Eugene was a place I did not feel I belonged. There was no family, no community where I was stuck, on the other side of the Ferry Street Bridge.”^{lxx} Fortunately for Watada, by this time in the early 70s, her local colleges were beginning to offer classes that would introduce her to the language she needed to give voice to her experiences.

That dreary time in my life changed when I took some of the new classes offered at the University of Oregon and Lane Community College. The Black Experience class I took at LCC offered a lens through which I was able to analyze race in America, powerfully. And a UO folklore teacher influenced by Navaho people introduced me to the concept of world view. I felt my thoughts and experiences had credibility for the first time— enough so I could feel I had rights to my experience. Before then, I lived in a schizophrenic reality where Home and School/Work were two different countries.^{lxxi}

This struggle, of reconciling her Japanese upbringing with a "mainstream" white American culture, illustrates difficulties faced by other Japanese Americans and Asian Americans. The incarceration of 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans from the West Coast during World War II inflicted a traumatic loss upon those communities, turning expressions of their culture into un-American liabilities for generations to come. Watada's realizations on "worldview" describe the costs of acculturation: the gradual erasure of cultural identity. Though the stories and experiences across the Asian diaspora are not easily summed up, this conflict of finding self amidst assimilation remains a common theme for many. For Watada, finding a source of cultural identity in the absence of her family meant finding the "black hair and brown skin." In the same anthropology class that gave her the language to express herself, she was also first introduced to the local Native community when the professor suggested that she visit one of their events.

A professor gave us homework to attend the Indian Education Pow Wow in Springfield. There I saw grannies and children, a whole community. Hearing the drum, and the circle of proud people keeping their traditions alive in the middle of Eugene, Oregon opened a door out of my isolation for me.^{lxxii}

For Watada, the Native community represented the community that she had grown up in, her initial foundation of cultural identity, and it wasn't long before she became a more active participant in it. Though she did not do so pretending to be Native, she was involved to the extent that the community became an extended family. Years later, a Native elder would tell her mother, “You raised a good daughter for the first 20 years, and then we took over.”^{lxxiii} When her university's first class on the Asian American experience took place, resulting in the first Asian student union, it immediately united with the Native American student union, partly due to Watada's connections. Concurrent with the era of cultural nationalist movements that Nishida and Kobata spoke to, Watada experienced this as a turning point for her and other people of color.

I describe the early Seventies on campus as a liberation movement which was experienced by students of color together sharing our experiences, our talk stories, our histories, and struggling together to change the landscape of our campus so that we too had a place there. This solidarity movement was happening everywhere. When the UC [University of California] students went out into the desert to reclaim Manzanar as our history, AIM, and the Black Panthers, Chicano students went with us as well as the Issei and the Nisei... It was an exciting time.^{lxxiv}

In her experience, the liberatory act of recovering history and pride in oneself was a collective process—not just between Asian Americans, but between people who were doing the same work for their own identities. “It really did change me,” Watada says.^{lxxv} The convergence around Manzanar internment camp represents a powerful symbol of many communities joining in remembrance of what is still a source of silence and shame for Japanese Americans. As she and other young people organized their town's first Asian American community group, the Native community remained a space

where Watada felt she could continue to honor her heritage, and was simultaneously a network of people that was mutually supportive. She recalls the years where she made rent with the help of members from both the Asian and Native American student unions and traveled to reservations for the first time while driving friends to pow wows. The generosity she encountered at her first giveaway, a tradition where a person or family distributes all of their possessions to their community, especially impacted her.

I was a stranger but, you know, was gifted, and that sense of giving as a worldview, and the easy way of receiving, which is sooo not Japanese, I mean, it's hard for Japanese to receive anything, and just the way that Native people are, uh it kind of began to, I can't explain it. I think I felt safe for the first time in my life in the United States, if I were to put words to it. And, uh because I was born at the end of World War II, there was nothing ever safe about it.^{lxxvi}

For Watada, this feeling of safety harkened back to the teachings of her multigenerational family. She later adds that the worldview she encountered with Native people was more than about giving gifts, it was about inclusion as a way of life. In living and organizing alongside Native communities, Watada not only was around the "black hair and brown skin," but also did not feel pressure to deny the Japanese part of herself, as she had been her experience of white American culture. The difference, she points out, was that during the Vietnam War and the period of alienation she felt, she had "lost all hope in humanity," but learning about Native world views began to restore that hope.

It resonated because it was Grandpa's worldview too, because he was a man of nature too. It was such a healthy worldview, the kind of healthiness that comes from belonging to a place, that immigrants, we don't get to have. There was such a goodness in the worldview, it gave me hope that sometime when this whole place blows up... there will be a family in some canyon and the human being will have a chance to start over in a good way.^{lxxvii}

Watada's comment poignantly speaks to how she experienced a loss of place in addition to culture, both of which were tied to her ancestors. Her reference to

“immigrants” is applicable not only to Asian Americans, but also to anyone not indigenous to the continent; she recognizes that as a settler, one does not necessarily have access to that “healthiness” of place-based identity. As multiple commenters point out, this is often the source of appropriation of Native spiritualities by settlers, and the commodification of indigenous place-based culture. “Historically, a desire to live on Indigenous land and to feel connected to it—bodily, emotionally, spiritually—has been the normative formation of settlers,” writes Scott Morgensen in a sourcebook intended to guide non-Natives in supporting indigenous decolonization.^{lxxviii} Perhaps confounding Morgenson’s warning, Watada’s connection to Native teachings is also colored by the fact that they recalled her grandfather’s worldview, and formed a space where she did not claim to become Native, but more Japanese. “Around Indian people, I don’t have to deny my Japanese upbringing. I get to be who I am,” Watada says.^{lxxix}

Around 25 years ago, Watada began following the ways of the Winnemem Wintu tribe of Northern California with whom she had developed a close relationship (Watada later explained to me that “adoption” is not a Winnemem concept). As part of her responsibilities to the tribe, Watada has been involved in advocacy regarding their right to use their unceded lands for ceremony; because the federal government suddenly ceased to recognize them as indigenous people in the 1980s, they do not receive these rights under the American Indian Religious Freedoms Act. She says that her relationship with the Winnemem and commitment to their sovereignty has led her to “relearn” all of her formal education — science, literature, history — particularly the myths surrounding colonization. No longer deceived by stories of benevolent colonizers

and ignorant natives, Watada describes how a worldview of generosity can be misunderstood.

Witnessing for myself the indigenous cultural value of generosity wherever I visited, I began to look at historical narratives very differently. Stories of colonists believing they had bought Manhattan from the tribes for some beads seemed more insidious than merely taking advantage. Stories of Cortez believing that the gifting meant the Native peoples thought that he was a god misled by his white skin and the direction from which he came seemed more ominous. I began to see these stories as deliberate lies to whitewash what really happened — treachery, violence, genocide. As a stranger who was a recipient of the tradition and rituals of inclusion, gifting, generosity, sharing, respect wherever I went in Indian country, there was no mistaking the power of the welcome. What kind of people would be recipients of such an evolved form of generosity and ritual welcome and think only of advantage, their hosts slaves and themselves gods? I questioned that there were ever explorers or explorations but only war parties.^{lxxx}

In her career as a middle school social studies teacher, Watada says she has worked to teach her students history from many perspectives, especially those voices marginalized by dominant narratives. This harkens to her own experience with recovering hidden histories and finding community through them. Watada calls attention to the ways in which whiteness operates to erase the intergenerational teachings and experiences that Europeans brought.

The white kids, also—European-American kids also have to dig for their real history, because their history isn't kings and generals, their histories are workers, their histories are women and it's got children in it. And it's a different history, people who work the land, it's a different history than the one we teach—and dig for it. I think we see history as something that happens to us, and because it's someone else's.^{lxxxi}

Here, she expresses hope that through learning their own histories, young people will be empowered to seek out a just future. Watada's emphasis on the role of education in creating positive identities of solidarity is a powerful one. She points to the need to look inward at our own history, toward our ancestors for guidance. Of her time around Native teachings, she speaks to a desire for these to be recognized as the law of the land, and for more immigrants to learn from them.

Those are the stories I've learned from the elders that we never learned in school, the true meaning of living in the United States, what is really 400 indigenous nations. These

nations are still here and still holding to their original responsibilities to the Earth, to do ceremony for it, to tend to it, to defend it, to speak up and even risk their lives for Mother Earth. That's why I still say that the traditional indigenous peoples are the ones who hold the whole Earth together for everybody. We live in a country that defines itself by a lifestyle of using, wasting, and turning everything into profit even if it means to destroy earth. These lessons from the indigenous leaders would have and could still make all the difference in the world.^{lxxxii}

Her assertion that these stories make up the “true meaning” of living here recalls Maracle’s statement on the duty of those who are more than visitors to indigenous land. Watada also calls attention to the absence of the “take what you need” ethic that Maracle names as an example of an original law of the land. Watada doesn’t name capitalism outright, but certainly is aware that on a global scale, nations like the United States are consuming beyond their fair share.

She reflects her responsibilities to the Winnemem Wintu tribe by calling herself Japanese-Winnemem instead of Japanese American. By doing so, she recognizes the sovereignty of the Winnemem Wintu as a nation separate from the United States. Though she says that her tribe doesn't interfere with her identification as Japanese, others question how “Asian” she is now that she is a member.

Some of the Asian community may think I dropped being Japanese when I say I am a Winnemem tribal member, and that is far from the truth. I am tribal now, so that gives me a different relationship with America. My leader is Chief Caleen Sisk, not President Obama. I have the same relationship with him as a tribal person of a sovereign tribe. I voted for him. I put up a lawn sign. But on issues of federal recognition, of natural resources, of dams, coal mines, fracking, I stand with the Winnemem Wintu and other indigenous leaders. Now that I am a Winnemem tribal member, and we are not protected by the Bill of Rights because we are not federally recognized, I also find myself at odds with the federal government when its entities attack our ceremonies, and threaten our sacred lands. I like to think it is the upbringing of my Issei and Nisei elders who raised me to make this choice of conscience to follow the indigenous peoples on matters of what is good for Life.^{lxxxiii}

This questioning of her Japanese identity is also connected to her work with the tribe that often requires her to be outspoken against government policies. Within the Asian American community, she is asked if she is “pure Japanese” or “mixed,”

implying that one cannot fully embrace their Japanese heritage while simultaneously belonging to a tribe. But according to Watada, the invitation to become tribal was not a challenge to her Japanese identity.

When I was offered tribal membership, I felt awkward. Did that mean I couldn't be Japanese anymore? I should have known better that the tribe does not require a person to deny their family and upbringing as many Japanese were forced to in the USA during the [World War II] years. The tribe's offer was [simply] acknowledging that you are following the Winnemem way of life and bringing you into the family circle.^{lxxxiv}

In this way, she asserts that her tribal identity is more accepting of her being Japanese than the United States is, that it does not demand her assimilation to a dominant culture.

Watada's story presents a moving account of finding a community that allowed her to honor her own culture and elders. It is important, however, to remember that her relationship to these communities has spanned decades, and her tribal membership should not be mistaken as something owed to her, or something awarded to every good "ally." Membership is yet another aspect of tribal sovereignty that is too often questioned by non-indigenous people. While Tuck and Yang criticize "adoption fantasies" in which settlers imagine themselves to become Native so as to avoid guilt, Watada's membership to the tribe remains an act of the Winnemem's own sovereign right to determine their membership. Whether she is a tribal member or not, her active role in supporting the tribe's decolonizing goals is reflective of "foregrounding" Native nationalisms and sovereignty.

Now a retired teacher, she continues the work with the Asian American community organization she helped found in the 1970s, while maintaining connections between the local Asian and Native communities. Though few people fill a similar role in these communities, she shows that solidarity doesn't come solely from a place of

pragmatism or political agenda, but rather from a deeper place of recognizing one's ancestors and seeking out goodness.

No Homeland in Asian America

At the centers of both diaspora and indigeneity is the concept of land, or more precisely, homeland. As Cho points out in the epigraph, diaspora implies an un-homing process of losing homeland, and an unhomeliness that characterized by a permanent longing. In many ways, Asian American identity seeks to account for this loss that comes with migration—particularly when that migration was the result of forces of empire. Yet, as Native-led criticisms of diaspora studies indicate, attempts at resolving unhomeliness risk becoming colonization. This is apparent in the consequences of the aforementioned “local” identity, and even the term Asian American. However, confronting this desire to belong to a place, especially when it is someone else's homeland presents plenty of challenges. In the following interviews, I spoke with my own peers about these challenges, as well as how Asian American identity serves (or doesn't serve) them.

For Andrew Williams, a college student with Vietnamese, Indian, Korean and European heritage, identifying as Asian American means not always having to choose just one ethnicity, while acknowledging the feeling of being "Americanized."

As far as like the classifier Asian American, I do feel closer to that, I feel closer to the Vietnamese side of my heritage, and a little bit of the Indian side too, because Grandma was Vietnamese and Indian, and um, but, there's just, I'm a part of all these other, or I guess they're a part of me, areas, and I don't feel necessarily tied down to one region, and I'm also Americanized, so I think the term Asian American, that definitely fits me.^{lxxxv}

Yet, while it may fit more than any other one ethnic identity, Williams also admits that "Asian American" does not necessarily resolve feelings of belonging. He

evokes Cho's concept of "unhomeliness," of having many places of origin, but little connection to place.

I've got family in France, family in Africa, family in Vietnam, family in Idaho, probably and in other states too — I don't think, I don't have a connection to one spot on earth, necessarily... I know I've been like, transplanted from Asia to here, but because I've been Americanized and the language barrier is there, it's hard for me to feel a real physical connection to the land. I feel a very strong connection to the culture and the values in [Vietnam], but the land is hard for me. Maybe when I go back there, something will click and I'll be like, "yeah, this is home," but that said, just in America, here, I don't feel a connection to one spot, so it's hard for me, I have to really think and really try to empathize, try to understand the value of land to other people.^{lxxxvi}

Here, essentialized ideas of home are not enough, and Asian Americans like Williams are faced with the reality of not having the same knowledge of place that their ancestors (or even parents and grandparents) had. He also acknowledges that his lack of connection to place—that comes from being “transplanted” from Asia—may obscure his ability to understand people who retain their connection to place. This comment evokes the incommensurability of settler-colonialism—the indigenous tie to land that settlers will never have. Williams shows that it takes effort to acknowledge what one *doesn't* know, in particular for him as a settler to respect the value of land to others.

He has two friends in particular, both enrolled in Oregon tribes, who he says have exposed him to what it means to be indigenous today, through the issues that come up in their conversations and their reflections on identity. For Williams, this has opened up the opportunity to think about the experiences of Asian Americans alongside those of Native Americans. In particular, he draws a connection between his thoughts on an Asia he may never know, and how they think of their ancestral land before colonization.

Yeah, there's definitely a tie between the land and the people, for sure, it can uh, I think language just really informs how you think on a level so basic that it's easy to dismiss it. For me, I've never been to Asia, and I hear stories about Vietnam from my dad. And I think, "Oh wow, that would be cool to go and see that." And then I hear stories from [my friends] about what [Oregon] was like before all the clearcutting and stuff, and I think, "Wow, it would have been cool to see that."^{lxxxvii}

Indirectly, he draws a connection between two kinds of homeland: one left behind through migration and one forever altered by colonization. Like many Asian Americans raised in North America, Williams admits that he is not as knowledgeable about Asia as he would like, but he is weary of idealizing it as home simply because he wants to feel that he belongs there.

Korea? I'd love to go to Korea, I'm also, I'm hesitant to because I know that, I guess, not having been to either place, in my mind it's like an island of culture perfected, and it's kind of untouchable, these are the positive values of my heritage and stuff and they kind of exist in this imaginary frame, and if I go there, it might not be how I built it up to be, it probably won't be how I built it up to be. And it won't be devastating, I don't know, maybe it would be devastating, but it would be definitely be like—these are real places with real people, and it's not how you have formulated it to be, based off of Americanized versions. So I feel weird about that too, am I thinking like, oh, I saw *Mulan* so I know what Asia is like.^{lxxxviii}

His concerns about a “homecoming” to Asia revolve around how he would relate to the places there as anyone but a tourist seeking out the commodified versions of his culture. Here, he acknowledges the difficulty of only knowing these places as ideas and stories, and the need to reconcile those ideas with the “real places with real people.” In our conversation, he links the disappearance of these longed-for places back to the idea of what it means to be “Americanized,” referencing Christian ideas of environment as disruptive to the connection between people and the land.

That distinction between wilderness and normalcy, which is like living in a house — you know, the “brambly bush” is bad, but hardwood floors and granite countertops is [sic] good, you know... I guess there's definitely a link between people and land, and I think that um, the people who have a true understanding of the land are the people you need to listen to. If you're going to live there.^{lxxxix}

Williams implies a responsibility to the people who have resisted imposed ideas of “wilderness and normalcy.” Like Watada mentions, he implies that there is something important to be learned from world views that retain connection to place. For him, listening to this “true understanding” has involved participating in his friends'

efforts to revitalize their indigenous language of Dee-ni', a coastal Athapaskan language spoken from the Sixes River in Oregon to the Smith River in Northern California.

Though Williams is not learning it intensively, he is active in the method of revitalization by reclaiming domains, which involves gradually substituting Dee-ni' for English in everyday speech. As his friends practice this, he supports by learning along with them and, at times, using Dee-ni' instead of English. What he's learned about the language, he says, has been part of learning the true histories of Native Americans.

It makes it real to me... I feel like you really have to go digging for information on indigenous people, it's just not something that is out there, in popular culture, or just like, mainstream American education system as far as like, and I'm just thinking specifically high school and stuff like that. 'Cause you learn about [Cherokee] Trail of Tears, and all this like really really basic stuff, you know, and like reservations. So they know what reservations are, but then they don't know anything about tribal issues, and I'm not acting like I know a lot about tribal issues, but I definitely know more than I did. And the language, for me it just makes the experience of indigenous people more real to me... It's not like before they didn't exist, but you really think this is an established language system, and it's not slang, you know, like I've taken a linguistics class before, and you learn about pidgins and creoles and language dialects and stuff like that, and this is like a language system, so this is like a real established people.^{xc}

What Williams is describing could be explained as an unlearning of colonial logics — of genocide, the noble savage — and at the very least is a process of rehumanizing those whom the United States has supposedly replaced and erased. By learning Dee-ni', a language that has been tied to place since time immemorial, the existence of the people who speak that language, and their respective histories and worldview, become harder to deny. As he considers the meaning of colonization, he likens it to the same process that disconnects people from their homeland and culture.

I guess for me colonization, as far as I understand it is essentially, like assimilation, being Americanized, and but that's only because I live in America. The Dutch colonized and so did the French and so did the English, so, and other people, a Europeanization? But then also the Japanese colonized and other people have colonized, so it's not specific to one people, I guess. But I think it is specific to one idea, which is that you know better than the people you're colonizing, and you're going to show them how to live.^{xcii}

Here, he does make some equivocation between the assimilation experienced by people who arrive in the United States and genocide faced by indigenous people. Yet, he recognizes the important point that colonization delegitimizes indigenous knowledge as it progresses. At another moment in the interview, he describes a scene that is presumably characteristic of settler-colonialism, illustrating it with blatant nativism.

This is anecdotal and made up, but you think of just like a homesteader family somewhere in Kentucky or whatever, and they're like, "We've had the same home for generations," and that's their home to them, and they couldn't see it any other way. But what about indigenous people living there before you? They were definitely there longer, you know what I mean? And, I don't know, not everyone is like what I'm portraying here, but, "Well, survival of the fittest," "We beat them," "Blah blah blah," you know? It's just weird that they don't understand, like, that same love that you have for your plot of land, magnify that by like a hundred and that's how these people feel. And it's, I guess it's hard for some people to empathize, and also, across racial lines, it's hard to empathize, I guess.^{xcii}

With these hypothetical settlers, he portrays the racism and possessiveness that is associated with colonialism, while imagining them to be distant. Through this example, he shows that no matter how much settlers love the places where they live, indigenous people can have a much stronger connection to that same place. While it may be convenient to distance himself from the image of a backwards settler, his comments on lacking connection to a particular place also indicate that Williams knows that he occupies land as a settler and makes no effort to erase indigenous claim. In this sense, his feeling of non-belonging as an Asian American is already unsettling.

As he connects his understanding of decolonization to learning Dee-ni, Williams points out the ways that knowledge of Dee-ni' contradicts settled "Americanness."

America is telling me how to live and that I should be your cog in the machine and I should go to college and I should study in a field that is realistic and will get me a good job and will keep things how they are will keep me out of trouble, and I can raise kids to be middle class and they can do the same thing, and blah blah blah. So then, anything that doesn't pertain to that would be a waste of time. So, indigenous issues for the American government are a waste of time, they don't really, well, from what I've seen... supposedly they're like, indigenous people are wards of the state and the government's

supposed to take care of them, but it doesn't. And then... so to them it would be a waste of time to learn Dee-ni', like, "What's that going to accomplish? What are you going to do with that?" So in a way, it is a decolonizing act, but I don't know if I'm learning it specifically to be like, "Boom, take that Uncle Sam!" You know, right?^{xciii}

For Williams, learning Dee-ni' may not immediately register as a decolonizing act. However, he knows that it does not further the colonial goals of committing cultural genocide against indigenous languages and knowledge. By learning a language that supposedly has no value to the colonial state, and is being revitalized by descendants of its original speakers with their own goals in mind, Williams is participating in a form of indigenous-led resistance to colonization. As he learns Dee-ni', Williams is also conscious of the teachings that come with it, viewing it as part of an education beyond what the United States has to offer.

I feel a real sense of in-betweenness, falling in between, ah, cultures or heritage and not being totally rooted in one area or another. So, I guess for me, a draw of some of the indigenous teachings and stuff, you know, sayings or songs and stuff that I've learned from hanging out with [my friends] is just the, uh, rootedness of it is something that draws, is attractive to me. Like I said earlier, I'm also... I'm kind of like monkey in the middle, not on one side or the other. And there's like, here's like real truth, and it's not just 200 year old truth, American truth, right? It's like the nation is young and the ideals of it are young, and then it's expounded to be this big thing, like that's the only way things are and it's like it's so new, and then indigenous wisdom is from when time began. So I'd rather go with the one that is proven, isn't just the new kid on the block.^{xciv}

Echoing Watada's assertion that "indigenous people are holding it all together," Williams describes a mistrust for how deep the wisdom of a "200 year old truth" can be compared to the teachings that preceded it. While Williams expresses an admiration for indigenous wisdom, for him it is coupled with a drive to demystify his own culture.

And of course I wish I grew up in a home where we were bilingual, trilingual, that would have been awesome, fluent in Korean, fluent in Vietnamese, other things too, you know, if we had the resources to fly back to Vietnam, visit India, visit Korea, you know, do that a couple times a year, that'd be great. That didn't happen for me, but that doesn't mean that can't happen for my kids, you know, or for other people in the community. So, I think it's important to look at the things you wanted in your childhood and adolescence, not material things, but like community things, and then you didn't have those, and you recognize, realize the importance of those, so now it's even more important that you bring them in. 'Cause, if you just sit there feeling bad, then this next kid coming up is

going to feel bad too. You could have done something, and then you didn't do anything. So, that's important.^{xcv}

By hoping to better understand his cultures, Williams is not describing a wishful turning back of time, but rather a different way of moving forward. He speaks to the needs of future generations for cultural grounding and a sense of place. Though he may not have experienced culture in the way that his grandparents did, he can build community around what has survived.

Kim DeLeon is a third generation Filipina born and raised in Hawai'i, and expresses similar feelings of “in-betweenness” to Williams. When I asked about her feelings about being called Asian American, DeLeon addressed her relationship to each component of the term.

For Filipinos, we didn't really think of ourselves as Asian, it wasn't until I came here [to Oregon] that I thought of myself as Asian. I guess to throw in American in there, like, I guess I do identify with that, but because I came from a culture that's not so American, sometimes that kind of like confuses me in some ways... I don't consider myself like Asian like straight from the Philippines, because I wasn't—I was born in Hawai'i. I guess like that whole part about not being raised in the mainland makes it kind of weird for me to say American.^{xcvi}

For DeLeon, growing up in Hawai'i, away from the mainland United States presents a unique set of barriers to feeling comfortable as Asian American. Compared to Filipinos from the Philippines, she is not Asian enough, to the mainlander she is not American enough and to the Native Hawaiian she is not Hawaiian enough.

It's just, it's just awkward sometimes to consider myself Asian American, when there's this whole other culture that I'm leaving out. I may not be Hawaiian by blood, but the way I was raised was, like, it was just, I don't know. It was different.^{xcvii}

She remembers growing up predominantly among Pacific Islanders and feeling conscious of her non-indigenous background—not feeling “Native enough.” Her lack of genealogical tie to land did not go unnoticed, and the foregrounding of indigeneity in

her community created a climate where DeLeon are more conscious of their positioning in relation to it.

Because it didn't run in my blood, I didn't really feel like connected to my home in some ways, and it made me feel really distant from indigenous Hawaiian people... There was something that always bothered me about like, not being Hawaiian that made me feel like really like, "Oh, I don't know if I should identify as someone from Hawai'i just because I didn't have the blood in me."^{xcviii}

Her hesitance to identify as Hawaiian echoes Williams' consciousness of his own lack of tie to land. DeLeon also points out that this disconnect holds consequences, not only for her identity, but also for the land itself.

Just thinking about land back home in Hawai'i, I feel like because we don't really, because I didn't really understand the struggle and stuff, I never really did have much respect for resources, and land. I don't even know like how much of our produce like you know is... 'Cause I feel like a lot of our stuff is like shipped to us, and this is where I'm not really knowledgeable about stuff but, I don't even think about where our food comes from, yet if it comes from home, what happens to it? I don't know, it just makes me think, how do the Native Hawaiians feel, because we're not respecting the land enough, destroying it.^{xcix}

She draws a relationship between respect for the struggles of Native Hawaiians and respect for the land. As she admits how little she knows about the food systems that sustained her there, she expresses concern for the impact that settlers have on indigenous people via the land. Reflecting on how her family came to settle on Hawai'i, she acknowledges that they are on indigenous land. "It's just, it wasn't our land to begin with, my grandparents brought us here through the plantations, but even though I was born and raised here, I didn't feel like it was mine," she says.^c Here, she importantly points out that genealogy carries more with it than a feeling of belonging, but also an ethic of how to live in place respectfully. She implies that if the land was "hers" then she would have grown up feeling more responsible to it.

Because the land isn't exactly mine, I didn't feel connected with it. But now that I think about it, it is important to take responsibility for it, you know, I'm using the land. Because, you know, we're using up like resources and all this, and if you don't respect it,

it's all going to run out. I guess like it makes me think, like, how would Native Hawaiians feel, or how are they feeling right now? We turned our place into a tourist zone! And all these like tourists... even me, like I take responsibility, we just don't care where our trash goes that harms the environment... it makes me sad as well, to see that we're mistreating land that was, like, theirs. It, I don't know. I wish that we could really start caring.^{ci}

Though she recalls learning about Hawaii's history of colonization and participating in cultural activities through school, she does not credit this brief education with her feelings of injustice. In fact, she recalls feeling resigned about Hawaii's colonization, that nothing could be done about it.

Like we did touch upon the culture, but we never did get into it where we can like actually feel something. Like, well when I was in middle school, now that I think about it, we learned the hula, and I went to King David Kalakaua, and King David Kalakaua was who brought the hula back and I guess like, we did learn a little about Hawai'i being colonized, but I didn't feel like, like even though Hawai'i was taken over, we didn't feel like, oh, we could do anything about it anymore because that was in the past. So, yeah, we were just, I don't know, we just didn't feel anything after.^{cii}

This experience of learning about colonization as a past, isolated event reflects how DeLeon's education sought to resolve the "colonial problem." As an unfortunate historical event, colonization can only be mourned, but as an ongoing process, it places everyone in active roles. DeLeon speaks frankly to the mentality of not feeling responsible as a settler—as someone who can conveniently denounce their connection to place.

I didn't feel like I had a problem, because I was in the majority, like I did not feel oppressed, in that sense. It just made me, like, I guess it was there but it was just something like, "Oh, it's not my problem, I'm not Hawaiian." Like, it sounds really bad, but it's just how my thought process worked before. "It's not my problem, I shouldn't get involved."^{ciii}

Though this reveals the unattractive side of settlers, DeLeon's honesty reveals an important colonial logic: that settler-colonialism is the responsibility of the Native, not of the settler. This also speaks to the confusion that settlers—particular Asian settlers—may feel about what decolonization means to them. In fact, DeLeon mentions

noticing this contradiction in her perception of Native Hawaiian nationalism. Though the desire to contribute to a just cause was there, it also put her belonging into question.

Like I did know that there was some kind of like Hawaiian activism there, I just didn't feel, and I'm pretty sure like, I can only speak for myself, but I talked to another person who also felt like, you know you want to help them, but at the same time you feel like you wanna like, I don't know, by helping them you're kind of saying that you want—you're getting shoved off the island too, does that make sense? ... So I guess that's why I never really had that strong, like, solidarity with Native Hawaiians.^{civ}

DeLeon demonstrates a line of thinking that is common among non-indigenous people seeking to understand the meaning of decolonization. What is her role to be? And, suspecting that settlers are not necessary to decolonization, how does it impact her own interests? These are questions that DeLeon herself is conscious of asking, while at the same time she knows that she does not want to justify colonization.

Like what would it mean? Would that mean that I'd like have to like get off the island too? Like this is home to me too. So, in some ways, I kind of tried to justify Hawai'i being colonized because I was, like, brought into it. But you know, obviously that's not, I mean the way I was thinking wasn't like—I shouldn't have been thinking that way.^{cv}

DeLeon's questions are important—not so much because they need to be answered, but but because they need to be voiced openly. She demonstrates a true unsettling, that is, a deep examination of what it means to be a settler, and what investments that holds, however unpleasant. It is likely for this reason that DeLeon claims she sees few Asian Americans supporting Native Hawaiian activism. As she considers what it might mean for more people in her position to consider their role in settler-colonialism, she expresses hope — as Williams does — that the key lies in empathy.

Because there are a lot of Asian Americans back home, and I just don't see a lot of them going in front of the Queen Liliuokalani building when they have like these rallies, I just don't—maybe there are but in my experience I just haven't seen it, but the peers that I have around me, I feel like yeah, they also haven't been exposed to that too. But if they were, and if they knew about struggles that they [Native Hawaiians] go through today... they would actually like want to partake in it, they would feel moved.^{cvi}

However, regarding the role that Asian Americans can play in the struggle for full Hawaiian sovereignty, it is also necessary to consider what kind of support best serves the goals of decolonization. What kind of support is being asked for? What role are beneficial for allies to fill? For the solidarity that DeLeon hopes for, it is not enough for Asian Americans to “feel moved” to help—they must also be willing to accept direction from the movement.

Responsibility to the First Peoples

"No matter what my community has suffered, it pales, it pales to the 500 years of colonization that our indigenous brothers and sisters are dealing with, still, today," says Sid Chow Tan, a Chinese Canadian who immigrated as a baby from the Hoy Ping (開平) region of Guangdong (廣東), China to the prairies of Saskatchewan.^{cvii} His primary work has been with the Chinese Head Tax Family Society (check) as the lead organizer of the campaign to receive redress for the head tax and exclusion laws that targeted Chinese immigrants from 1923-1947.^{cviii} Though he mostly works in the Chinese Canadian community, he firmly believes in solidarity with the indigenous communities he grew up around. In his words, they share "the prairie connection":

I grew up with them. I grew up in a small town in Saskatchewan which was the territorial government of seven reservations, and of course we had the Chinese restaurant business in town, so pretty common story that way. My grandfather ran a restaurant [then grocery store] there for almost 50 years. Our business would not have survived without, you know, the Indians and the Métis.^{cx}

Tan's story parallels that of other Chinese immigrants to Canada who, while struggling to settle after immigrating, found refuge on First Nations reservations and farmed there, even leasing land directly.^{cx} As these stories are retold today, through documentary films and literature, what kind of story do they tell about the settlement of

Chinese immigrants in Canada? The documentary *Covered Roots: The History of Vancouver's Chinese Farms* describes Vancouver's first Chinese farmers and the relationship that some had with the Musqueam Nation; it features a Musqueam elder fondly recalling the Cantonese names of the "Chinese gardens."^{cxix} *Cedar and Bamboo* is a film that documents the shared history between Chinese Canadians and First Nations, focusing on mutual hardship and the influences that these communities have on modern-day British Columbia.^{cxii} SKY Lee features in her multigenerational novel on one Chinese Canadian family, *Disappearing Moon Cafe*, two generations of Chinese men marrying indigenous women and forming the base of the family's lineage in North America.^{cxiii} These stories of first contact between Chinese immigrants and First Nations have gone largely undocumented until recently, but the interest that it has garnered — from writers, filmmakers and others — begs the question of their significance. Do these stories serve to inform a comparative ethnic history, or do they problematically erase the violence of colonization? Tan, also a writer of these "contact" stories, sees them as speculative on the relationship between Chinese and First Nations. Like Nishida, who attests to the connection between Issei and Native Americans, allows him to imagine a course of history other than colonization. His own story, "Aiya! A Little Rouse of Time and Space," imagines his grandfather's first meeting with tribal leaders of the bands whose reservations Tan grew up on.^{cxiv} By Tan's rendering, his grandfather (Ah Yeh, or 阿爺, in Cantonese) finds common ground with his new neighbors and invites a harmonious relationship with them.

In my mind, Ah Yeh's seminal meeting with the Cree was simple, solemn, and about respect, consent, and trust. He would have introduced himself by saying he was pleased to meet the leaders of the Red Pheasant and Sweetgrass clan of the Cree people.

"Welcome to my café. My name is Norman and I am a cook. Together we can prosper so I can bring my wife and son to live among you. We have a common racist enemy so let us help each other. Like me, you do not have the vote so are treated as second class. We will talk more about this after you taste my cooking."

"Your face and words tell us you are a brother. Your offer to feed us shows you are generous and respectful. I am Len, chief of the Red Pheasant. We welcome you as our brother."^{cxv}

There is no way to know how these first interactions actually happened. By creatively rendering them, Sid expresses his values of “respect, consent, and trust,” producing a narrative that is not about conquest and colonization, but about a meeting between two nations, neither of which is Canadian. In important ways, Sid outlines a basis for solidarity and common struggle: the common racist enemy. He writes of the ways that his grandfather saw a natural alliance between communities. “Ah Yeh explained we are the people of jung gok—the middle or centre kingdom. It is natural for an affinity to exist between middle and lost kingdoms, more so since both had suffered under hun mor gok—the kingdom of the red hairs.”^{cxvi} This evokes the criticisms raised by Trask and Fujikane, who contend that “shared oppression” does not erase settler-colonial relations. Yet, by continuing to identify himself as an immigrant, he resists what Trask calls “immigrant hegemony,” in which he might identify with the Canadian state and aspire to achieve full settler status. With the language of “immigrant-settler,” he unsettles himself and occupies an undefined space in-between. Through his grandfather’s voice, he creates his own nation-to-nation (or “kingdom-to-kingdom”) relationship between China and the Cree Nation, one that entirely excludes Canada. However, without knowing exactly what these first encounters consisted of, it is dangerous to imagine that they were merely simple and solemn. The stories of Chinese and the peoples indigenous to North America cannot be told in one stroke. This brief

reading demonstrates how the lack of indigenous voices in the stories we tell alters our understanding of settler-colonialism.

Framed as gratitude, Tan believes in cooperation between First Nations and what he calls "immigrant settler" communities. His specialties, videography and media production, have been put to use documenting artistic events and rallies with both indigenous speakers and allies. I first encountered Tan in an online video recording of a press conference in which he represented the Chinese Head Tax Family Society alongside Grand Chief Stewart Phillip of the Penticton Indian Band and Charan Gil of the Progressive Intercultural Services Society, all voicing outrage at the British Columbian Liberal party's "ethnic vote strategies," which recommended apologizing for historic injustices in order to win ethnic votes.^{cxvii} It was at this event that Tan emphasized that there can be no comparison between anti-Chinese racism and colonization. Currently, he says he is working with Grand Chief Phillip, who is also the president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, on how to collaborate on advocating against deportations of undocumented migrants. According to Tan, this is the jurisdiction of First Nations and not the Canadian government, seeing as they hold the original laws of the land. In exchange, he says that he will continue to work within "immigrant settler" communities to build support for First Nations.

For Tan, building relationships of solidarity comes from the morals that he says he received from his grandfather.

I do this in gratitude to the First Nations, because our family would not have survived, I was taught pretty early that respect and consent are our highest values, and these are something that First Nations people have never given, been given respect or have given consent for what's going on, and it's important.^{cxviii}

Tan's invocation of "gratitude" resonates with a strong thread running throughout these interviews — the notion of responsibility to the original inhabitants of the land. In so many words, this was a sentiment expressed by each individual, and one that I have heard from others as well. This significantly overturns the underlying logic of genocide which dispossesses by exterminating indigenous people and cultures. Instead, it advocates a human-to-human relationship that values the sovereignty of those who originate on colonized land.

Rita Wong, a poet and educator, portrays it as a matter of upholding one's humanity to fully acknowledge what goes covered by settler-colonialism. As a second generation Chinese Canadian, she attributes her respect for land to the teachings of her Cantonese grandmothers and their own strong connections to it. However, being "schooled in ignorance through Calgary's colonial education system," she acknowledges that she had much to learn about the land she occupies.

As someone born in Calgary, I know that I have benefitted from the oil industry, while others have unfairly suffered from it; I feel that I have a responsibility to learn about the devastating price that has been paid, and to find ways to give back and to build better relationships than what colonization would consign us to. It means not being fearful, treading carefully, educating myself, listening, learning from my mistakes, and fostering both quiet courage and ethics.^{cxi}

Here, Wong frames the responsibility of settlers as a personal one as well. It encompasses being intentional and humble in one's conduct, and not presuming to know everything about another's struggle. For her, the intention to cause harm through her privilege is irrelevant to the responsibility that comes inherent to it. Like Tan, she refers to fostering more ethical relationships between communities, expressing a hope to change the dynamics predetermined by colonization. As Wong expresses in her poetry, these dynamics permeate relationships with both humans and the environment. Much of

her recent work, both poetic and educational, has focused on watersheds, involving collaborative artistic projects and advocacy based in urban Vancouver.

Wong's vocation as a poet draws attention to the importance of language to how we imagine ourselves, and or re-imagine the relationships that "colonization would consign us to."^{cxx} In both her written and spoken work, she refers to herself (and other settlers) as "uninvited or inadvertent guest," visitors who can "learn to be better guests," and a "visitor on Coast Salish lands."^{cxxi} Though she points out that labels vary with context, and that naming is "a very fluid and slippery process," her contributions of language are powerful towards making the goals of solidarity possible for many.^{cxxii} By referring to places as the homelands of their original inhabitants, Wong and others who do so are participating in a linguistic overturning of colonial logics.

I want to respect the communities who have been here for millennia, not to erase them or ignore them or shy away from the hard history, because we need the strength that honesty gives us in order to build a fuller future, a more grounded culture than what imperial delirium would reduce us to. This is the first critical community that needs attending to: the Indigenous peoples whose homelands we live on.^{cxxiii}

These words articulate an ethics of reciprocity that counters paternalistic charity and implies the sovereignty of those involved. By naming indigenous people as a priority, Wong moves toward the "foregrounding" that Fujikane says is necessary for Asian settlers to engage in. In Wong's practice of calling the places she inhabits by their indigenous names and the nations whose territories they are, further unsettles colonial presence. If cultural genocide acts by forgetting the names of indigenous people and places, then bringing them back into use serves the goals of decolonization. Just as Watada's Japanese-Winnemem identity recognizes her hosts, language provides an important domain for undoing colonial logics. Wong is clear in also defining these processes as reflexive ones that place the responsibility to act on the settler.

This is not only an ethical matter, but a practical one—if we care about respecting history, land and justice, we need to be working with these communities more closely, and we can't do so effectively unless we do our homework to decolonize ourselves, probably a lifelong process—several generations long, actually.^{cxxiv}

Here, decolonization takes on meaning as an internal process, different from the material, land-based decolonization advocated by Tuck and Yang. Yet, Wong's insights do not necessarily negate repatriation of land, as they illustrate what "foregrounding" might look and feel like for settlers.

For Watada, the concept of being responsible to one's hosts directly means responsibility to her adopted tribe. Her membership to the tribe does not simply absolve her of all feelings of being a settler, but commits her to a lifelong, generations-long, learning process.

I keep my mouth shut when I'm around the fire, I don't have anything to say unless the Chief makes me say something, 'cause I don't really, I'm just learning, you know? and also, I'm comfortable with that concept of the chief, it's like the Grandma, the Grandpa, it's not, like, a fearful subject of a king, it's truly authentic, that even a person born Winnemem, even if they're 16, they kind of know more than I do about being Winnemem. And being Winnemem, to me, is about how to live here. How are we supposed to live, with these things that grow here? And with the earth here?^{cxxv}

Here, she recognizes that she is not born tribal, that her genealogy does not make her indigenous, but that she chooses to follow an indigenous leader. As a descendant of immigrants, Watada implies that learning "how to live here" from indigenous people is important to respectfully inhabiting this land. Though I struggled at first to understand exactly what common themes I was hearing in my interviews with Watada, Tan and Wong, I gradually noticed that they have all altered notions of colonial citizenship in order to recognize their indigenous hosts. Transforming language then becomes a poetic tool in the disruption of colonialism.

"What Decolonization Means to Me"

Tuck and Yang are engaged in a dialogue in which they struggle to keep "decolonization" as a concept for indigenous people alone to define the terms of. This struggle is also demonstrated by various articles and manuals instructing non-Native supporters on how to respectfully be in solidarity.^{cxxvi} The resonance of "decolonization" among many settlers of color may come from the similarities they perceive between hegemonic racism—and its devastating effects—with colonization. The above-mentioned solidarity manuals make the important point that colonization for Native Americans and indigenous peoples has entailed the particular violence of genocide and state polices directed at their disappearance. Experiences of racism, while also destructive to cultural identity, cannot claim the same experience. Yet, for many settlers, "decolonization" remains a powerful concept that resonates with their own struggles to resist internalized (and external) racism. These resonances are significant in how they conceptualize common ground and mobilize settlers of color to support indigenous decolonization. At the same time, thinkers like Tuck and Yang, and Fujikane remind us to be cautious of our own settler interests.

Just as Watada spoke to being the only one with "black hair and brown skin," having Asian ancestry in the United States results — for many — in a lifelong conflict with the image of the white American. Williams shares his own experience with recognizing his own racialization, and the difficulty of building a strong sense of self when society portrays only caricatures.

You see stuff on TV and magazines and you realize how you are represented and how limited that is, and you see how white people are represented and they're represented like a kaleidoscope, they're all over the place, it's like a panoramic view, you know. Whereas, for Asian Americans, they're just here, and African

Americans, they're just here, and you start to think, "Oh wait, I can only be in this slot that I see," and you naturally feel, "Oh, but I want to have this whole circumference, right, the whole diameter, the whole area, I want to have all of that. Oh, I can't do that because I'm Asian. What if I was white? Now I wish I was white." And that messes you up, you know what I mean? Cause you're like, looking at yourself and you don't want to be yourself, you don't want to be how you look and everything that that means. It's not just I wish I was white but still have the Asian part, like the values and tradition, you want to get rid of the whole thing.^{cxxvii}

Here, Williams speaks to the ways that whiteness works to delegitimize ways of being that fall outside of its narrow scope. This highlights the deleterious effects of "Americanization": its denial of culture and tradition, its insistence on uniformity, its desire to clearcut. It is from this firsthand understanding of shame and loss around culture that Williams ventures to draw similarities with Native efforts to decolonize.

I don't know a whole lot, but I know that their [Native] struggles aren't so different from our struggles as Asian Americans, or struggles of African Americans, we're all working towards something similar.^{cxxviii}

As he has primarily been exposed to decolonization as language revitalization, it makes sense that Williams identifies with its aspects of honoring culture and sees it as similar to his own struggles. When I brought up indigenous cultural revitalization and whether it ever made him feel lacking in his own cultural knowledge, he referred to a strong sense of feeling encouraged to strengthen his own ties to culture through the means available to him.

I'm trying to be less like that in my life overall. Like, "Oh, this person has a lot of cool stuff and I don't have anything," you know? Sure you like take stock of the situation, "They have more, I have less," ok, but that's just that moment in time, and that doesn't define not only how I'm going to... live my life, but in this particular situation, that doesn't define how I'm going to reclaim my culture. It's not like, "Oh, I just don't have any resources... or I have resources but I'm not going to use them for some reason because I feel mad." It's just, I'm sure, you feel bad some days, but if you're going to do something you gotta do it. It takes some time to work up the courage and all that, "Do I really want to do this?" or whatever. But the resources are there, and I have resources and I plan on utilizing them. I guess they're people, I don't want to use them. I'm gonna ask for their help.^{cxxix}

Williams narrates the feelings of hesitance or anxiety that come with seeking out cultural knowledge that has faded away. In contrast to the white activists that Kobata encountered at the support camp at Pine Ridge, Williams expresses the desire to “reclaim” culture that is directly connected to his family. He speaks to a desire to appreciate all of the people around him who can offer this knowledge, and help him become better acquainted with his cultural roots. In particular, he mentions the ways that his grandmother continues to teach him though she has passed. For him, this informs an ethic of gratitude.

Yeah, it's not a “keeping up with the joneses,” like greedy, it's also like, what little I have, I am thankful for. You know, because some kids don't even get the time I spent with my grandmother, I had 15 years with her, which is awesome. A lot of the stuff she taught me, I feel like I'm still, like, I'll be doing something and be like, “Aw wait, that's what she meant by this thing that made no sense way long ago.” Which is cool, it means that she planted little seeds, and they're starting to sprout. But yeah, I'm grateful for that.^{cxxx}

Likewise for DeLeon, her consciousness around indigenous sovereignty coincides with a fresh awareness of the ways that colonization and racism intersect in her life. Her reflections reveal an education that did not help her contextualize her own experiences, let alone develop a critical analysis of oppression. For DeLeon, whiteness also acted as an eraser of history.

It's strange, where I went to school too, there were barely any white people in our class, but we're learning white history. I did not know about, you know, I did not learn about my culture of like how we've been suffering 500 years of oppression, I guess that's what makes me angry and sad too. I just don't understand why they wouldn't teach us our own history.^{cxxxi}

Particularly given the history of the Philippines’ struggles against Spanish colonization, knowing these histories could have made solidarity with Native Hawaiian struggles come more easily. Nevertheless, her reeducation—however recent—has had an empowering effect on how she understands her own racialization.

I guess I learned this earlier in the year, it's just like just changing the way you think. I guess a lot of the way we think is because of colonization... I didn't think that, um, you know that the color of my skin, like having it to be white, was part of colonization. I didn't even know, I just thought it was part of my Filipino culture. Um, because of that, because I learned about what colonization does, the way it makes you think, now I understand what decolonization is, it's relearning all of these things, like it doesn't matter if my skin is this way, it's supposed to be this way.^{cxxxii}

Though she is dismantling her community's white beauty standards, DeLeon is not directly engaged in all of what decolonization means in a settler-colonial context. Still, within her story of "relearning," recognizing white skin privilege is a first step in understanding other struggles. In the interest of understanding her own history more deeply, she has a newfound sense of purpose in hearing from older generations in her family.

It's really strange, I've never talked to my grandpa before, who was the actual one who worked in the plantations back home, like because I didn't feel the need to connect with him. But now I learned that—I didn't think that he knew how to speak English for some reason—he does know how to speak English... I just want to talk to him about, his experience, how it felt having to work like that. I don't know, just, like having to work like that with low pay...^{cxxxiii}

Here, DeLeon speak to an overcoming of her own internalized racism that silences certain voices. By listening to the stories of her grandfather, the first generation of her family to settle in Hawai'i, DeLeon opens up opportunities to develop an identity that goes beyond her role as a settler. This presents the same promise that Watada, Tan and Williams demonstrate with their recovering of traditions, languages, and who their families were before coming to North America.

Tan specifically calls for a reinvigoration of the spiritual practices that traveled with his ancestors from China, decrying the Christianization of Chinese communities in North America. He calls for the continued practice of the "spiritual sustenance of our forebears," such as the worship of Kwan Kung (關公), the deity that he says immigrants

brought with them for protection. He specifically calls out the conversion of many Chinese to Christianity as the source of divestment from social justice and more traditional knowledge. It is only by recovering figures like Kwan Kung that he says we can begin to talk about decolonization.

How is it that Asians, or particularly Chinese Americans, Chinese Canadians, that the history of Chinese North America has been told without reference to any spiritual sustenance, the fact is the spiritual sustenance of the first, what I call the lo wah kiu—old overseas Chinese, is what they called themselves?... How is the history of Chinese North America being told without reference to Kwan Kung?^{cxxxiv}

Through his own work, he is encouraging a “comeback” of Kwan Kung by incorporating him into art pieces and featuring him more prominently in community spaces. In one piece of art, he paints Kwan Kung watching over Chinese railway workers from behind the “two lions” mountain range in British Columbia. For Tan, this is an essential ingredient to working with indigenous communities. Like Wong, he thinks its crucial for “immigrant-settlers” to know where they come from, and that this is an aspect of personal responsibility linked to our support of indigenous struggles.

As she calls for closer alliances with indigenous communities, Wong encourages “decolonizing ourselves” as a responsibility that can span lifetimes, even generations.^{cxxxv} When I asked her to explain what she means by “a swell of decolonizing efforts,” she offered the following comment:

I think this means that people in the Asian diaspora needs to educate themselves about the indigenous histories and knowledges wherever it lands, and also that we, as Chinese or Asians, or whatever background, need to learn and remember our own histories, however fragmented they may come to be in terms of story transmission. We need to be grounded in acknowledging our own ancestors, flawed & violent & wonderful & contradictory & problematic & heroic & misguided & intelligent & wondrous as they may have been (probably all those things at different times for different generations/contexts), as well as respecting the ancestors and future generations of Indigenous peoples, and to embrace the relationships that bring us together.^{cxxxvi}

With this, Wong illustrates what responsibility might look like for Asian settlers in particular. This vision incorporates Iwata's proposal to engage with our ancestors as sovereign beings, not simply victims of oppression, but fully human. By recovering these histories, Wong implies that there is the potential to honestly understand one's role as a settler and, more importantly, build future relationships of respect that honor sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

When I began this project to understand the role of Asian Americans in decolonization, I had the narrow intent of learning how to “do” solidarity, while inwardly feeling plagued by feelings of settler guilt. Armed with a checklist of evasions and equivocations to watch for, I approached people who best fit the description of “ally.” The interview questions I started with focused on mechanistic notions of movement building and were mostly inspired by the political theories of coalition and strategy that I was immersed in. However, once I began interviewing, my questions elicited much deeper conversations about place, identity and home — conversations which seemed to defy any existing political lexicon I had learned. By the end, I found myself with shattered expectations and new relationships to be accountable to.

At the start, I had underestimated how significant my own background as a multi-racial Asian American would be in gaining me access to the stories I gathered. Through my Japanese background and knowledge of my grandmother’s experiences, I had a base for talking to Emi Watada about growing up Japanese after World War II, and to Dennis Kobata about the early Asian American movement. Likewise, once Sid Chow Tan learned that I understood Cantonese, he began to use untranslatable phrases that retain the histories of immigration shared by our families. As our conversations opened up discussions of uncertain relationships to land and place, especially with Andrew Williams and Kim DeLeon, I was also called upon to answer to my experience of diaspora. Each interview I initiated called upon me to bring forward some part of myself, and incorporate my own experiences into my research. As I realized the many

ways that these interviews represent a speckled constellation of my identities, it became clearer to me that solidarity must be founded in what we *are*, not simply what we *reject*.

While settler-colonialism is insidiously wrapped up in one's feelings of belonging — via the role of place in creating identity— unsettling does not have to be a process of completely losing oneself. Whiteness in the United States serves as a reminder that settling involves erasure of distinct ethnic heritage in order to access land and the spoils of colonization. As I interviewed my peers and elders about how they understood settler-colonialism, their racialization as non-white played an important role in allowing us to peel back colonial myths. Especially in the focus that their stories had on grandparents and cultural roots, participants demonstrated that solidarity requires an ability to imagine relationships that do not rely on colonial ideas of citizenship. This recalls Lowe's cautioning that the notion of Asian American citizenship operates by allowing exploitation to persist while promising political freedom. Lowe importantly points out that citizenship is not only a system of geopolitical borders, but also of social and cultural borders; as diasporic peoples migrate and gain tenuous access to the colonial nation-state, they are encouraged to forfeit cultural identity. Unsettling, as a recognition of the privileges of colonial citizenship, then calls for us to value the cultural ways which would otherwise be liabilities to citizenship.

Through these interviews, I learned that developing identities rooted in our own cultures and histories is no simple task. As Williams and DeLeon testify, the pressure to become American generates self-hate and especially encourages young people of color to reject images of themselves. Yet, attempting to develop a sense of belonging to place leads to the pattern of settlers appropriating the cultural ways of indigenous peoples.

This dilemma of posing reterritorialization against our own unhomeliness is necessarily impossible to resolve, unless we make efforts to learn and embrace our own roots, however fragmented they are. To this end, we need the knowledge of our ancestors just as much as our indigenous hosts need theirs.

As Williams points out though, nostalgia for homeland can also participate in essentializing the cultures of those forebears who first arrived in North America. This requires a willingness to accept more fluid notions of culture that can progress while maintaining a sense of identity and ethics. Neither settlers nor indigenous peoples have the luxury of returning to a pure past untouched by colonialism. In the same vein, traditional values are not necessarily without shortcomings, and can adapt to accommodate new realities. Indeed, this is what culture has done all along, but not without help from those who wish to see it survive. The future holds exciting possibilities for shaping cultures that embrace the values of our ancestors while learning from the communities around us.

As we move forward with building identities that do not rely on settler-colonialism, it is essential that we continue to hold Asian American institutions and other settler formations accountable to indigenous sovereignty — especially those which claim to represent all settlers. Groups like Local Japanese Women for Justice are inspirational in their efforts to outspokenly define new possibilities for Asian American politics. Their assertion that non-Native people have no place in deciding the course of decolonization affirms the possibility of a practice of solidarity that can follow indigenous leadership. This ethic of responsibility, also echoed by Watada, Tan and

Wong, demonstrates that there is a place for Asian Americans in decolonization, and it is to cede the space necessary for decolonization to take place.

Decolonization as an ongoing project is not accountable to the interests of non-indigenous people, but it is something that settlers must make every effort to understand on our own time. The implication of unsettling is that there exists no quick resolution to “the colonial problem,” only the “generations long” process of relearning. This presents opportunities for settlers to undergo their own exploration of culture, but also for everyone to accept indigenous leadership in challenging the colonial nation-state. As visitors, there may be privileges that we stand to lose with the liberation of the people of this land, but we also have ourselves to gain.

A Poem for Remembering

原來 is what you say when you're telling a story.

it means “as it turns out...”

原來: it's how you reveal what was — what has been — all along.

It combines two words:

原 — yùhn — which means “origin” (but also sounds exactly like 圓, the word for “circular”)

and 來 — loih — which means “to come,”

but if you relax your tongue into the village sounds not captured in written form, you can beckon with it: 來, 來!

原來 — it's just grammar

but it coaxes origins forward, introduces them to the present.

North America - 原來的北美洲...原來的金山...原來的龜島...^{cxxxvii} by any of its names.

原來 the source calls you back to where you belong.

the origins imply inevitability.

So how will this story go?

There was never resolution to our settler problem:

原來 we were never just victims; 原來 we never got permission to stay.

原來的土地...原來的水...原來的空氣...^{cxxxviii}

As it turns out, the land, water and air are still here, still feeding us.

The dull golden mountain of a turtle's back.

你叫什麼名字? What are your names? We should be asking.

Moving forward, we reach back.

We cite our sources by clan, by home village; by medicine, by spice.

The word for “continue” 繼續 sounds just like “chicken porridge” 雞粥.

Eating should never be forgetting.

But home is a place we've never been before.

原來 illusions, too, suffer from smog and english and dams.

Uncertain, humble and warm, home is the place we're crafting now.

來, 回家, 來^{cxxxix}

NOTES

- i. Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*. 1.1 (2012): 1-40. Web. 5 Oct. 2012. p. 35.
- ii. Cho, Lily. "The Turn to Diaspora." *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*. 17 (2007): 11-30.
- iii. Prometheus Brown and Bambu ft. Krys Stilez. "Mahalo (Produced by Just D'Amato)," *Walk Into A Bar*. Beatrock, 2011. MP3.
- iv. This title includes language borrowed from the issue of *AmerAsia Journal* that I reference in the next section, titled "Whose Vision? Asian American Settler Colonialism in Hawai'i."
- v. Tuck and Yang, p. 6.
- vi. Smith, Andrea. "Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy." *The Color of Violence: INCITE!* Ed. Andrea Smith, et al. Anthology. Cambridge, MA: South End, 2006.
- vii. Hill, Gord. *500 Years of Indigenous Resistance*. Oakland: PM Press, 2009. Print. p. 35.
- viii. Wilkinson, Charles F. *Blood Struggle: The Rise of Modern Indian Nations*. New York: Norton, 2006. Print. p. 45.
- ix. Wilkinson, p. 39.
- x. *Journey to Justice*. Winnemem Wintu. 2013. Web. 18 Oct. 2013.; Wilkinson, p. 332.
- xi. *Journey to Justice*. Winnemem Wintu. 2013. Web. 18 Oct. 2013.
- xii. Winnemem Wintu.
- xiii. Tuck and Yang, p. 9.
- xiv. McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*. New York: Routledge (1995). Print. p. 30.
- xv. Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1.1 (2012): 1-40. Web. 5 October 2012. p. 8.; Deloria, Philip J. *Playing Indian*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. Print.
- xvi. Tuck and Yang, p. 6.
- xvii. Omi, Michael, and Howard Winant. "Racial formations." *Race, class, and gender in the United States* 6 (2004): 13-22.; Ignatiev, Noel. "The Point Is Not To Interpret Whiteness But To To Abolish It." *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*. Berkeley, California. 1997.
- xviii. Tuck and Yang, p. 17.
- xix. Deloria, Vine, Clifford M. Lytle. *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty*. New York: Pantheon, 1984. Print.
- xx. Tuck and Yang, p. 7.
- xxi. Following the establishment of the continent's first salmon hatcheries on the McCloud River, overfishing and dam construction have almost completely depleted the

once-plentiful salmon runs. Despite their lack of federal recognition, the Winnemem Wintu, led by Chief Caleen Sisk are proposing the reintroduction of Chinook salmon from stock now living in Aotearoa (New Zealand) with the blessings of Maori people there. See Winnemem Wintu.

xxii. Idle No More began in late 2012 as a series of flashmobs and protests across Canada coinciding with Chief Theresa Spence's hunger strike which called attention to First Nations issues and their treatment under bill C-45. See "Ghosts of Indigenous Activism..."; Unis'tot'en Camp is a resistance community located in sovereign Wet'suwet'en territory and built to block the progress of oil and gas pipelines from eleven different companies. See *Unist'ot'en Camp*; Biimadasahwin is a project led by Ojibway women in northwestern Ontario to build homes and return to their traditional territory. See Biimadasahwin.

xxiii. Tuck and Yang, p. 6.

xxiv. Lee Maracle Speaking at May Day Assembly 2011. 2011. Film

xxv. Trask, p. 21.

xxvi. Tuck and Yang, p. 7.

xxvii. Cho, p. 28.

xxviii. Fujikane, p. 91.

xxix. Lowe, Lisa. "The Power of Culture." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 1.1 (1998): 5–29. Project MUSE. Web. 5 Oct. 2012.

xxx. Ibid.

xxxi. Fujikane, p. 76.

xxxii. Yoshinaga and Kosasa, p. 143.

xxxiii. Ibid, p. 144.

xxxiv. Trask, p. 6.

xxxv. Fujikane, p. 77.

xxxvi. Ho, Fred. "Indigeneity and Self-Determination." Conference on How Class Works. State University of New York-Stony Brook. 2008. Web. 4 Oct. 2012.

xxxvii. Yoshinaga and Kosasa, p. 146.

xxxviii. Kauanui, J. Kehaulani. "Asian American Studies and the 'Pacific Question'." *Asian American Studies After Critical Mass*. Ed. Kent A. Ono. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008. 121–143. Wiley Online Library. Web. 27 Feb. 2013.

xxxix. Fujikane, p. 83.

xl. Smith, "Heteropatriarchy," p. 68.

xli. Fujikane, p. 83.

xlii. Leong, Russell C. "Pacific and Native Hawaiian Studies in *AmerAsia Journal* 1971-2000." *Amerasia Journal* 26.2 (2000): iii-viii. Print. p. vii.

xliii. Iwata, Taro, p. 188

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- xliv. Ibid, p. 190
- xlv. Nishida, Mo. Personal Interview. 25 Sep. 2013.
- xlvi. Ibid.
- xlvii. Deloria & Lytle. p. 12-13
- xlviii. Nishida, Mo. Personal Interview. 25 Sep. 2013.
- xlix. Maeda, Daryl J. *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America*. U of Minnesota Press, 2009. Print.
- l. Wilkinson, Charles. 139-143
- li. Nishida, Mo. Personal Interview. 25 Sep. 2013.; Kobata, Dennis. Personal Interview. 16 Aug. 2013.
- lii. Kobata, Dennis. Personal Interview. 16 Aug. 2013.
- liii. Nishida, Mo. Personal Interview. 25 Sep. 2013.; Kobata, Dennis. Personal Interview. 16 Aug. 2013.
- liv. Kobata, Dennis. Personal Interview. 16 Aug. 2013.
- lv. Ibid.
- lvi. Ibid.
- lvii. Ibid.
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