

American Indian studies and Palestine solidarity: The importance of impetuous definitions

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Introduction

Palestine is now a legible theme in the field of American Indian studies. I am less confident about the legibility of American Indian studies in Palestine solidarity communities, particularly the academic groupings in which Palestine exists as a site of inquiry. (I do not use the more trenchant *Palestine studies* because I locate this site of inquiry in multiple fields: ethnic studies, American Indian studies, Indigenous studies, American studies, literary criticism, sociology, anthropology, history, Asian American studies, critical race theory, and Middle East studies. Palestine studies is fundamentally an interdisciplinary concern.) This essay articulates a rationale for why American Indian studies is useful to the study of Palestine. The main factor of this rationale suggests that American Indian studies is indispensable to the basic imperatives of Palestine solidarity.

In particular, I examine recent debates about academic freedom, faculty governance, donor influence, and the suppression of radical points of view in context of the colonial logic by which universities are animated. I synthesize recent controversies on campus around pro-Palestine sentiment and then situate them in broader questions of educational decolonization. I further explore what it means to conduct radical work within fundamentally restrictive institutions; how the university embodies specific geographies of conquest; why Palestine solidarity work on campus must necessarily engage American Indian communities; and where sites of intellectual and political interaction might produce useful tension. A survey of recent

scholarship around Indigenous nationalism—a term meant to identify struggles for self-determination, liberation, sovereignty, or decolonization—illustrates that in many ways Palestine is theorized in the absence of its strongest advocates. This is not to say that Indigenous theorists ignore Palestine. To the contrary, I suggest that advocates of Palestine limit their material and theoretical range by too frequently ignoring the work of American Indian and Indigenous studies.

A few more terminological qualifications: I am not shy to confess that I experience difficulty in attempting to encapsulate certain ideas within the constraints and ambiguities of terminology. This problem is especially dogged in relation to the catchall of *Palestine solidarity*, which accommodates scholarship, activism, law, media, and international relations. The rough usage I deploy identifies or tries to coalesce activity in the service of Palestinian liberation (cultural and geographical). How does solidarity work in an academic setting? To answer this question, we must first contemplate the parameters of an academic setting. To limit it to teaching and research, or to the peculiar topographies of campus, as most would, tacitly reinforces firm distinctions between public and private intellectual spaces. An academic setting can be found in any site of critical engagement or project of transformation. Yes, this is an impetuous definition. It is also a definition that demands recognition of work that informs or sustains material and decolonial politics. That possibility is crucial to scholarly practices seeking to extend (or undermine) the limitations of the disinterested professoriate maintained by self-appointed guardians of objectivity.

I am not interested in solidarity beyond its ability to organize some type of meaning to processes of Palestinian decolonization. In other words, as pertains the phrase *Palestine solidarity*, the adjective is much more important than the noun, which serves to inversely modify what precedes it. Solidarity anchors various academic pursuits around the specter of Palestine, though the pursuits are not limited to it. In an academic setting, then, Palestine solidarity describes work in some way committed to Palestinian liberation. That commitment need not include speechifying or protest (though it certainly can). It can entail measured commentary or theoretical intervention, pedagogical reflection or classroom praxis, epistemological analysis or close reading. If Palestine exists on campus as both subject and object, then it is crucial to map its desires and imperatives. I view solidarity as an elemental feature of Palestine studies, in much the same way that decolonial praxis influences American Indian and Indigenous studies.

Extant scholarly traditions animate this conception of Palestine. In *A Shadow over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America*, Keith Feldman (2015) assesses a rich history of Palestinian theorization deeply concerned with the material realities of dispossession and the potential conditions of liberation. He writes,

Scholars of Arab descent committed to Palestinian national liberation theorized the emergence, contours, and effects of racism in shaping the social terrain in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Organizations like the Palestine Research Center, the Institute for Palestine Studies, and the Association of Arab American University Graduates produced a historically nuanced critique of Zionism as an extension of settler colonialism, one predicated on sharp racial distinctions not

only between Arabs and Jews but also between northern European Jews and their trans-Mediterranean, Arab Jewish, and Black counterparts. (pp. 35–36)

Feldman illustrates that a body of critique arose from Palestinian society (in both the homeland and diaspora), which foregrounded the later versions of anti-Zionist work that now carve an increasingly significant niche in academic spaces. Although Feldman discusses a post-1967 epoch, we might legitimately extend the tradition to the era of British Mandate rule in Palestine—for example, by citing George Antonius’s landmark *The Arab Awakening*, which describes the rapid formation of a national consciousness.

There is a long tradition among Palestine scholars, artists, and politicians of naming the colonization of North America as both a precursor and complement to Zionist settlement. Dating to the 1960s, Fayeze Sayegh and Walid Khalidi both situated Palestine in prior and concomitant sites of settler colonialism, including North America.¹ Their work had a profound influence on the ethos of anti-Zionism, which in many of its historical and contemporaneous manifestations is fundamentally global. More recently, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Magid Shihade have produced copious work assessing the global dynamics at play among ground-level advocates of Palestinian liberation.² Each scholar, along with a broader community of thinkers and theorists, treats Palestine as an embodiment of a set of worldly ideas in addition to thinking about its issues as a discrete socio-political and economic space. No contradiction exists between these two approaches. Rather, they illuminate the ability of creative thinkers to disaggregate particularities.

I conflate Palestine studies and Palestine solidarity because scholars and activists have already enacted this type of conflation throughout the era of Zionist colonization. I merely endeavor to render something extant into something explicit. I propose that Palestine solidarity in the United States cannot rightly limit itself to analysis of Zionism and Palestinian liberation. To be clear, it has never limited itself solely to these concerns, but neither has it fully grappled with the consequences of doing Palestine solidarity work on the lands of other dispossessed peoples. It is critical for those working on issues of justice in America to avail ourselves of Native scholars and organizers in whose ancestral lands we operate. Through their work, we can contribute to decolonial projects in the spaces we inhabit while simultaneously reinvigorating our commitment to global sites of injustice.

American Indian studies and academic unfreedom

On August 2, 2014, I was two weeks from beginning a position as associate professor in American Indian studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) when I was

¹See further Walid Khalidi, *Palestine Reborn* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1992); and Fayeze Sayegh, *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine* (Beirut: Research Center, Palestine Liberation Organization, 1965).

²See further Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, “Human suffering in colonial contexts: reflections from Palestine,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 4.2 (2014): 277–290, DOI: 10.1080/2201473X.2013.859979; and Magid Shihade, “Not Just a Picnic: Settler Colonialism, Mobility, and Identity Among Palestinians in Israel,” *Biography* 37.2 (2014): 451–473.

summarily terminated for delivering tweets critical of Israeli policy and Zionist ideologies. (This is merely the headline version of events. The factors underlying the termination are quite more complex than a wayward Twitter feed.) The university's decision resulted in a storm of remonstrations from a cross-section of scholars and free-speech advocates who viewed it as a violation of the first amendment and academic hiring protocol. As of this writing, much work has been produced about the matter, but the majority of it elides the location of my hiring and firing. I have little desire to proffer a self-defense or rehearse longstanding debates about extramural speech and academic freedom. Rather, I suggest that the story of my firing illuminates useful features of the vexing relationship between American Indian studies and the corporate academy, especially as those vexed relations can be enacted through the specter of Palestine.

The location of my hiring and firing in American Indian studies (AIS) is a crucial aspect of this story, perhaps its most important one. We have to consider what it means to the field that it could so flippantly become a target of managerial acrimony (in general, but also in relation to specific circumstances at UIUC). Similarly, we have to consider the discourses justifying UIUC's decision because their assumptions reproduce age-old narratives of the need for oversight of Native communities. If the forthcoming analysis can be reduced to a single observation, it would be this: The precariousness of American Indian and Indigenous studies in institutions motivated by a pervasive and unnamed colonial logic has been illuminated by the conditions informing American Indian studies at UIUC and by a particular nationwide reaction to UIUC's decision that implicitly devalues AIS as a field and Native peoples as sovereign agents.

The conditions that envelop American Indian studies at UIUC are explainable largely by racism and colonial orthodoxy. The university's erstwhile mascot, Chief Illiniwek, embodies, or broadcasts, much of the racism. Formally "retired" in 2007 by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the presiding body of college athletics, the chief remains an integral part of campus, community, and state culture. Before his retirement, various movements sought to outlaw the chief; after he was retired, those movements have continued in response to the chief's omnipresence on campus and throughout Champaign-Urbana. A majority of UIUC alumni opposed the retirement; many of them sent messages of protest or threatened to withhold donations. As a result, folks affiliated with the American Indian Studies Program are often scapegoated or subject to racist discourse, some of it invective. The chief's presence thus creates an environment of constant harassment for UIUC's Indigenous residents.

The chief is more than a culture war, though that is how he is most frequently understood. Natives and their supporters tend to view the mascot in more allegorical fashion. For instance, a 2007 statement by the American Indian Studies Program supporting the chief's retirement argues, in context of "knowledge and understanding of the histories of American Indian peoples and their cultures," that "the ability to critique and set aside images that confine the perception of an entire people to a limited and narrow existence. Stereotypical images, negative or positive, are barriers to understanding, and they miseducate the public about Native Americans" (para. 2). For the chief's supporters, the mascot symbolizes a landed tradition of state culture, but for Natives,

he represents continued social, economic, and political injustice. Nearly every analysis of the chief, favorable or not, examines his effect on Natives, but in reality the chief exemplifies majoritarian angst. He is a visual symbol of the settler's attempt at belonging in America.

UIUC's administration at best tolerates the chief's continued presence, and at worst encourages it. He is the omnipresent but often unacknowledged protagonist in management's decision to strip American Indian studies of its hiring autonomy. Even the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which investigated UIUC for violations of academic freedom (and determined the institution to be guilty), found the chief's role in my firing to be relevant: "In interviews with this subcommittee, the issue of the Chief came up repeatedly in the context of the AIS program's advocacy for the mascot's retirement, which made AIS a target of hostility for those who insisted on perpetuating the tradition" (2015, p. 6) The chief, we must remember, enacts and symbolizes this hostility, but he is the result of much larger problems of ongoing colonization.

The chief might also be an unwitting emblem of the discourses rationalizing UIUC's behavior, which initiated a farrago of troublesome assumptions about the viability of American Indian studies and the sustainability of Native communities. Numerous faculty around the country suggested that the hiring process was flawed or corrupt; that I lack the requisite qualifications to teach in American Indian Studies; or that my scholarship is of an inferior standard (ergo, the American Indian Studies Program should not have selected me for the position). I have been defensive about all three propositions since I first heard them, but here I resist the temptation to correct the record because greater matters are at stake. I will simply point out that no evidence has yet been presented to indicate corruption or substandard scholarship.

The greater matters I reference exist in the tacit authoritarianism of these narratives. By impugning the competence of the search committee and the ethics of the department more broadly, supporters of UIUC's management rendered American Indian studies knowable according to the erstwhile induction of neoliberal common sense. American Indian studies can be knowable via the regressive strictures of doctrinal mythology, which, among other things, posit an objective analyst as the ideal scholar. Typical valuations of scholarship rely on doctrinal mythology and therefore discount forms of engagement and theorization that inform American Indian and Indigenous studies (along with a host of other fields, particularly those clustered in ethnic studies). That the faculty in the American Indian Studies Program at UIUC are inherently unqualified to evaluate their own departmental growth underscores the dangers of these smug and uncreative conceptions of intellectual labor.

Department faculty member Vicente Diaz (2014) states the issue forthrightly in his assessment of American Indian studies critic Cary Nelson, who has offered a barrage of statements reproducing the disenfranchisement of the field since my termination:

Nelson has no qualifications in this case; he has no research or teaching or published record in comparative native studies, of indigenous cultural and historical studies. I know of no colleague or scholar in my field who cites his work for how it helps us better understand the complex and fraught histories, struggles,

perspectives, expressions of indigenosity as a category of existence and category for analyses, or as a category for analyzing the fraught line between power, politics and academic inquiry. (“Let’s play ball” section, para. 1)

Diaz spares diplomacy in his analysis, which is less a condemnation of a wayward colonial prison guard than a defense of the very survival of his vocation. If we extend the logic of tacit authoritarianism vis-à-vis Native departmental sovereignty, then in essence its purveyors desire the eradication of American Indian and Indigenous studies, even if they are too refined to make that desire explicit.

We also must consider the physical realities of UIUC. Like other land-grant universities, the place itself is an artifact of colonization. To conceptualize UIUC as a rarefied institution exempt from the travails of its own history is to imply that its colonial origin has died and been replaced by something more benign. The continued ubiquity of the chief and management’s opprobrium toward American Indian studies renders that implication excessively optimistic. The university is a monument of history dispensed through the stateliness of permanent structures. Campus exists as a magisterial architecture of an unresolved past and a contested future. In this environment, Indigenous peoples inhabit a sort of dual mascotry: one in the service of colonial self-affirmation (the chief) and the other as the raw material of diversity pamphleteering (which itself is a form of colonial self-affirmation, though a less self-aware version). UIUC is fully reliant on the existence of Natives, but only if those Natives can be simulated through the poses of colonial playacting.

Through my hiring and termination we have a distinct material example of American Indian studies and Palestine as a joint endeavor. My hiring illuminates a move toward inter/national praxis, while my firing underlines the precariousness that attends American Indian and Indigenous studies in U.S. academe. (The AIS Program was in the process of transitioning to Indigenous studies, in part to accommodate work on the Pacific.) The study of Indigenous peoples has always entailed specific challenges, from methodological debates to institutional marginalization, but in an era of restricted budgets (excluding management) and increased corporate dominion, pressure points intensify. Their intensification arises from a preponderance of neoliberal conventions extending off campus to phenomena such as legislative hostility to higher education, plutocratic governance, and economic disenfranchisement, which affect protocol all the way to the level of academic departments. Campuses both arbitrate and internalize socio-economic iniquity.

With this context in mind, we are forced to consider an obvious question: Is Palestine the tipping point of American Indian studies in the neoliberal imagination? That is to say, does the presence of Palestine in American Indian studies summon additional burdens that imperil the future prospects of the field (to say nothing of its present)? The question may be obvious, but the answer is far from self-evident. Instinct might suggest that in the case of UIUC, Palestine helped actualize a heretofore mediated form of oppression. A quick reading of the situation suggests that the considerable force of Zionist pressure, combined with extant forms of susceptibility derived

mainly from colonial racism, finally dissolved a tenuous association between corporation (UIUC) and collective (American Indian Studies Program) based on the inherent weakness of toleration and diversity as relational principles.

Yet it is worth considering whether American Indian studies in fact exerts a different type of pressure on Zionists—one to which they are not fully accustomed. If we put Natives at the center of the imbroglio, then it opens interesting possibilities for the exploration of Zionism's fragile id when it comes to violent projects of self-fulfillment. Many Zionists can accept recognition of the vicious process of state-building in America because they do not implicate themselves in it and because U.S. colonization widely (though inaccurately) is seen to be completed. Regarding Israeli colonization, on the other hand, there is no equivalent sense of moral or historical distance. (I accept that these observations generalize, but would argue that they accurately describe a visible discursive phenomenon that, while nuanced and localized, produces consistent philosophical outcomes.) The convergence of American Indian studies and Palestine implicates the Zionist in two sites of colonization. A certain anxiety attends the recognition given that plenty of Zionists are unwilling to acknowledge even the existence of Israeli colonization.

The question of Jewish whiteness also bears on this anxiety. To argue whether American Jews are properly white misses the point. Neither whiteness nor Jewishness is a stable category, so we can recognize unresolved, amorphous tension around the question of race and American Jews. There have undoubtedly been political and rhetorical moves to inscribe American Jews as normatively white, however. By relentlessly aligning itself with the grandeur of American values, Zionism makes a bold statement of assimilation into a settler majority. A quandary emerges: If American Jews are white, then they accept complicity in U.S. colonization; if they are to evade that complicity, then they must disavow themselves of white normativity, which deifies the mythos of American conquest. Any narrative that juxtaposes U.S. and Israeli colonization, then, undermines the tidy, insular logic of Zionist redemption.

U.S. colonization is not limited to whiteness, though, even if the vagaries of whiteness as a civic taxonomy inform its disposition. In turn, the anti-Zionism inherent to Palestine solidarity is an especially rich source of analysis. (I argue below that those involved in Palestine solidarity should not divest themselves of responsibility for U.S. colonization.) In the framework of UIUC, examining the university's decision in light of department and field rather than individual shows how inter/national kinship disrupts the corporate machinations of campus governance. Management responded with a heavy hand in my case because there was no refined strategy of informal recrimination to summon (or assert itself). Campus governing conventions rely on equilibrium between repressiveness and the participation of the repressed in their own repression. American Indian studies has to alter its very mission if it is to play the role that most university leaders desire of it, usually to enrich some version of a diversity portfolio. Challenging Zionism is not conducive to this desire.

Much of the value of American Indian and Indigenous studies exists off campus, which complicates our ability to fathom these tensions. I speak not of the research that professors

routinely conduct in faraway places, but the location of the fields' imperatives in national communities. The project of American Indian studies at UIUC, therefore, required a sort of global engagement that already contravened its ideal positionality in the eyes of management. Extending focus to Palestine enabled decolonial commitments fundamentally restricted in other departments for reasons of both methodological conservatism and lack of imagination.

My hire invited pro-Israel agitators to defend a commitment to ideological supremacy in a space generally beyond their realm of remonstrance. As the connections between Native and Palestinian decolonial organizing continue to increase, however, it is likely that Zionist pressure will become a regular feature of American Indian and Indigenous studies (as it already is in numerous fields). This pressure will not merely seek to curtail criticism of Israel, but will actively bolster state and administrative power. After all, one of Israel's main geopolitical duties is to act as a guarantor of U.S. colonial interests. Palestine solidarity activists and scholars must respond with interventions of their own, not in order to muddle American Indian and Indigenous studies but to perform the recognition that our obligations toward the dispossessed are not limited to Palestine. They first and foremost encompass the American ground on which we stand. Academic freedom is mostly ephemera. We should take it as a given that Natives and Palestinians have restricted access to its protections, as does anybody inhabiting bodies or spaces that in the normative imagination so readily become deviant. Restrictions on academic freedom can produce various forms of punishment, but the maintenance of academic freedom is not our primary goal. If it were, our academic freedom would not be systematically restricted in the first place. Emphasis on the injustices to which committed scholars react is a more useful place to invest our energy. The goal is to make academic freedom obsolete.

On issues that are not ours

A refrain I sometimes hear from those in American Indian or Indigenous studies is that Palestine is a worthy issue, but extraneous to their concerns. I have no idea how many people believe this refrain to be true or adhere to the insularity it produces. Nobody, as far as I know, has conducted a survey of strategic preferences or assessed attitudes among Native academics vis-à-vis Israel-Palestine. My observation is anecdotal, drawn from numerous memories of roundtables, conference panels, chitchat, and informal alliances. Sometimes a conversation will address what to do or say about Israeli war crimes, if anything at all.

I do not endeavor to convince my colleagues in American Indian and Indigenous studies that they are obligated to condemn Israel's behavior. I am disinclined to suggest any sort of obligation at all. I see the issue, despite its disaggregation and diffuseness, as an analytical possibility. On-the-ground organizing and contemporary theorization in Indian Country (and elsewhere) point to increased efforts at inter/national camaraderie. As I will illustrate in the following section, recent scholarship is effectively addressing developments in Indigenous politics, scholarship, and activism. I am most interested in the potential of Palestine solidarity to

make itself useful to American Indian studies and to contribute in meaningful ways to those political, scholarly, and activist developments.

The idea of non-Natives as a homogenous mass of settlers is apocryphal and unproductive. The obvious exception is the population descended from the transatlantic slave trade, part of a constellation of groups Jodi Byrd (2011) usefully deems “arrivants,” a category that provides shading to the settler/native paradigm. It can appear silly to allot various communities into different categories; it, in fact, is silly if the point is to merely reaffirm the categories, which amounts to an intellectual parlor game. A more worthwhile goal is to explore the ethnic cartographies of America for the purpose of addressing complexities that inform the viability of decolonization. *Settler* is a term with great moral persuasion, one that summons notions of violence in the service of citizenship. It is not a term, however, that easily lends itself to uncluttered discernment, even if it effectively describes a political and economic demographic. What, for instance, of wartime refugees, such as Somalis, Hmong, and Iraqis? Inca-speaking migrant laborers from Central America? I am less interested in where these groups fit within a settler-native spectrum and more interested in how their complicated experiences might allow them to more helpfully engage Native struggles for justice. They have more impetus to be attuned to continued Native dispossession than, say, the white landowners on an Indian reservation or immigrants who operate liquor stores just on the other side of the county line. I do not wish to imply that war refugees or their descendants necessarily have good politics, or that settlers necessarily do not. Rather, I suggest that differing positionalities offer different opportunities at effective solidarity. Mapping the social dynamics of the U.S. polity allows us to emphasize settler colonization as a primordial site of contestation—one whose patterns influence nearly every manner of economic, gendered, and racial interaction.

As a quick aside, the same complexities attend to the Jewish Israeli population. It is easy to apply a crude label of *settler* to a native of Brooklyn in a West Bank settlement. It is less easy to be so crude in relation to other demographics (though this does not preclude the accuracy of the noun *settler*): those of Iraqi background who were coerced through Israeli violence into emigration; the Yemenis who were airlifted to Israel and suffered terribly once they landed; Ethiopian Jews who experience strident racism and whose women have faced sterilization; Nazi Holocaust refugees of the mid-1940s. When members of these groups or their descendants pick up guns and fulfill their army service, they become unambiguous enforcers of settler colonization. Nevertheless, these groups have mutable relationships with the colonial state and thus mercurial interactions with the Palestinians. Working through these entanglements will be of great benefit to the future of Israel/Palestine.

Returning to the American landscape, some folks are deeply implicated as settlers while others do not overtly enact colonization, but it is not contradictory to observe that all non-Blacks and non-Natives are morally implicated in U.S. and Canadian colonization—at least in the sense of bearing a moral obligation to end it. In this framework, the location of U.S.- and Canada-based Palestine solidarity work assumes tremendous importance. Palestinians and their allies in America have done strong work engaging cross-ethnic organizing, but they must consistently

take initiative rather than waiting for overtures of Native solidarity. This kind of initiative can reverberate across the Atlantic: Acknowledging a mutual obligation as settlers offers a terrific basis for Jewish-Arab organizing that elides the raw psychological power of the Holy Land. Investment in projects of American decolonization foregrounds a disciplined commitment to justice in Palestine.

What does it mean for multiethnic communities to devote themselves to the cessation (or reversal) of Israeli colonization when they conduct that work in spaces that are themselves colonized? There is no singular answer, but raising the question constitutes an important purchase of consciousness. In *Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the Limits of Academic Freedom* (Salaita, 2015), I consider the question in an autobiographical reflection, recalling my family's position as immigrants in cultures of race and belonging that nearly erased Indigenous peoples. All immigrants of color have such experiential possibilities, but they need to be actualized through the difficult work of demythologizing the narratives of U.S. industriousness and colorblind merit. There can be no philosophical transition to a global decoloniality without a rejection of the self-confident rhetoric that conceptualizes American history as settled and thus immune to the reversals of nationalist insurgency.

Decolonizing America

American Indian and Indigenous theory, if we can even put forward such a category, does not follow any particular formula. (I do not mean to imply that there is no such thing as American Indian and Indigenous theory; instead, I want to indicate that it is not nearly as hermetic as the terminology might indicate.) Qualifying under the rubric of “theory” is any analysis that treats the structural conditions of economy, governance, culture, identity, violence, or discourse. Palestine solidarity has much to gain by studying Native theorists. Once thus educated, it will have more to contribute.

American Indian and Indigenous theory are wide-ranging. In studying these areas of theory, one notices, despite tremendous philosophical and methodological variation, some consistent themes:

- a devotion to centering Indigenous peoples within their own points-of-view;
- emphasis on the destructiveness of a globalized elite that facilitates plutocracy (and emphasis on class and international capital more generally);
- engagement with the various traditions of racial analysis in both popular and scholarly writing;
- reorganization of static, and statist, notions of kinship, belonging, and citizenship (legal, discursive, and cultural);
- discrete understandings of Indigenist politics shaded against, but in conversation with, Marxism, anarchism, postcolonialism, and other traditions of the global left;

- a desire to recover or rethink gender roles and sexuality in both community and academic settings;
- recognition of the importance of theory with material uses; and
- unwavering belief in the importance of survivance and a corresponding dedication to the well-being of The People.

In his magisterial *Red Skin, White Masks*, Glen Coulthard (2014) explores each of these themes. He declares,

Native thinkers and leaders are coming on the scene intent on changing things, entirely. With the last stores of our patience, Native writers, musicians, and philosophers are trying to explain to settlers that their values and the true facts of their existence are at great odds, and that the Native can never be completely erased or totally assimilated. (p. x)

Coulthard leverages this plainspoken declaration into a treatise on the failure of the liberal state (Canada, specifically) to accommodate Native demands for autonomy, though the concept of autonomy in Coulthard's usage is explicitly liberationist. Indeed, he argues passionately for a rejection of the framework of recognition as a solution to continued Native dispossession and an extrication of Native polities and political identities from that framework.

Coulthard offers an analysis of class and cultural politics that exceeds in range and intensity recent studies that address comparable issues, but his overarching critique is in keeping with trends in American Indian and Indigenous studies. I outline those trends above, so there is no need to rehash them. Coulthard organizes them into complex assessments of Indigenous peoplehood entrapped by the systematic iniquities of modernity, often through the practice of neocolonialism. We see in this type of approach a profound concern with global economies of neoliberalism, imperialism, and patriarchy even in context of profoundly local approaches. A consistent theme of these approaches is the idea of discrete national communities as global agents in dialogue with forces of transnational commerce.

Penelope Kelsey (2012) argues “for a gathering together of the many threads that constitute tribal identity as part of Indigenous imaginings of nationhood” (p. 29). We see again the specificity of autochthonous nations envisioned as part of a global context. Kelsey contemplates “how we might theorize Indigenous nationalisms that respond to post-contact complexities of community formation while de-emphasizing settler definitions of identity that have infiltrated current understandings of Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty” (pp. 23–24). Her use of the verb “infiltrated” intimates that settler definitions of identity consciously overwhelm the Indigenous and that less compromised understandings of Indigeneity are recoverable. She does not endeavor to eliminate but to de-emphasize those settler definitions, a move that grants a certain permanence to the epistemologies of settlement and asks for

methodologies devoid of nostalgia in return. These matters are best accomplished, Kelsey argues, across national boundaries.

Audra Simpson's *Mohawk Interruptus* (2014) provides a useful complement to *Red Skins, White Masks*. Simpson examines the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk as a specific national community that nonetheless offers insight into conflicts and tensions besetting Native nations around the continent. The book's subtitle, *Life Across the Borders of Settler States*, points to inter/national theorization, the word *life* signaling multi-textured concerns. Simpson undermines numerous colonial shibboleths around citizenship, recognition, and sovereignty, reorganizing those concepts around Indigenous personhood and community. There is no way to reduce her argument to a singular thesis; she examines a centuries-long Haudenosaunee (and, more broadly, Native) rejection of incorporation into cultural and juridical paradigms of the colonial nation-state. To so consistently reject those nation-states, Simpson illustrates, is a continual assertion of sovereignty as a basal form of cultural and political identity.

Of particular relevance to this essay is Simpson's (2014) formulation around the physical and symbolic documents of Mohawk independence:

If a Haudenosaunee person is to travel internationally . . . on a [Haudenosaunee] Confederacy passport, then the very boundaries and lawfulness of the original territorial referent is called into question. The entire United States may then be "international," which, some would argue, it was prior to contact and still is. Like Indigenous bodies, Indigenous sovereignties and Indigenous political orders prevail within and apart from settler governance. This form of "nested sovereignty" has implications for the sturdiness of nation-states over all, but especially for formulations of political membership as articulated and fought over within these nested sovereignties. (p. 11)

Simpson offers a startling amount of intellectual material in this passage. I am most interested in her usage of the terms *international* and *nested*. She implies that the liberal state is not as sturdy as its mythologies indicate, in large part because Indigenous peoples are nested within their boundaries in ways that dislodge statist jurisdiction. The industrialized North American nation-state is not unified in its own administration and cannot therefore be named as ascendant. It is international not only in imperial commitment, but also within its internal composition.

Simpson juxtaposes this form of internationalism with Mohawk praxis, which precedes and modifies the Canadian and U.S. polities. Her supposition that the land now known as the Canada and the United States was international (which I render inter/national) before European contact illuminated a kind of cultural and discursive commerce that offers considerable opportunity for dialogue. The commerce is also physical, entailing the transit of bodies as well as the right to travel with the documents of one's choosing. This right is not simply a matter of claiming national belonging or performing sovereignty, but also a rejection of colonial jurisdiction. Similar actions, symbolic and tangible, occur throughout the world, a collective

project to conceptualize different ways of existing as citizens in the nested spaces of self-determination.

The global dynamics of Simpson's analysis resonate in much recent scholarship. Chadwick Allen (2012), for instance, assesses these possibilities using the term trans-Indigenous (like much of his work, mainly in relation to American Indians and Maoris). Allen writes, "Whether mourned as loss or celebrated as survivance, the realities of contemporary Indigenous identities describe multiple kinds of diversity and complexity; often, they describe seeming paradoxes of simultaneity, contradiction, coexistence. These qualities are the contemporary Indigenous norm rather than its tragic exception" (p. xxxii). The norm Allen identifies functions as something of an aggregated disaggregation, from which his notion of the trans-Indigenous derives much of its meaning. He thus grounds American Indian and Indigenous Studies in distinct nations even as it disencumbers them from the dissonance of modernity.

Patrick Wolfe provides productive complements to Coulthard, Simpson, Kelsey, and Allen. In "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native," Wolfe (2006) suggests that "settler colonialism does not simply replace native society tout court. Rather, the process of replacement maintains the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim" (p. 389). Here, a dialectic of Indigenous resistance and colonial domination produces unsettled histories on disputed geographies. Wolfe later notes,

Settler colonialism was foundational to modernity. Frontier individuals' endless appeals for state protection not only presupposed a commonality between the private and official realms. In most cases (Queensland was a partial exception), it also presupposed a global chain of command linking remote colonial frontiers to the metropolis." (p. 394)

Wolfe shows how the particulars of Israeli colonization arise from longstanding strategies of foreign settlement on other continents, conditioned by the European metropolises from which Zionism emerged. The colonizer's desire to create a new man in a new world relies on mythologized landscapes isolated from any possibility of native agency. A crucial element of native agency exists in the desire so ably illuminated by Coulthard to speak clearly about the injustice and unsustainability of conquest.

Taken together (though they are far from identical), the pieces I cite, along with the broader theoretical context in which they exist, demand the primacy of Indigenous perspectives, but also recognize the global economies of Indigenous dispossession. The possibilities of Indigenous liberation are indivisible from that recognition, which entails analysis of class, race, gender, culture, sexuality, and governance. Inveterate focus on one's immediate national community still exists and remains a necessary feature of decolonization, but global approaches have shown themselves capable of benefitting local priorities.

I do not want to wander too deeply into the moral and methodological preferences of Native scholars. My reflections in the previous paragraph are most germane in relation to Palestine, an example of the indispensability of Native theory to Palestinian decolonization. As

Keith Feldman, Sunaina Maira, Nadine Naber, Edward Said, and many others illustrate, Palestine has long entailed international perspectives. The main question confronting us is how to optimize those perspectives in relation to the multivalent labor of Palestine solidarity.

Palestine in the world

To provide more heft to the notion of a Palestine disaggregated from its own geography, we can engage the work of John Collins and Mark Rifkin. Each scholar raises his analysis in a distinct framework whose complementary structures offer useful analytical possibilities.

Collins (2011) mainly is concerned with “a Palestine that is globalized and a globe that is becoming Palestinized,” (p. x) a formulation, through the verb *becoming*, that accepts Palestine’s globalization while conceding that the globe’s Palestinization is incomplete (p.x). He attributes this dialectic between Palestine and the globe to a handful of factors: the so-called “new historians” in Israel who (belatedly) exposed the state’s founding mythologies; the work of Palestinian writers in proffering transnational connections; the strength of Palestinian culture in diaspora; “the global flow of the technologies of violence” (p. 6); developments in worldwide media (including social media); and the importance of Palestine to the populations of many countries. (I would add the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement to Collins’s list.) Plus, Collins notes, modern Palestine has always been functionally globalized, colonized by the Ottomans and the British and then falling victim to a settlement project profoundly international in nature.

For Collins (2011), these developments would have been impossible were it not for worldwide skepticism about Israel’s self-image as exceptionally humane. This self-image effectively juxtaposes Israel with the divine immanence of U.S. nationhood (and, to a lesser degree, with other colonial ventures). Dislodging Israel from its self-image requires concomitant assessment of a set of historical narratives from which the idea of the Zionist state emerged. Collins asks us to consider an international Palestine not merely from the point of view of liberatory agitation, particularly throughout the southern hemisphere, but also in conjunction with the considerable global capital invested in Israeli colonization. He claims that Palestine has emerged as a focus of attention for activists connected with the broader global justice movement that has targeted a whole range of hierarchical, undemocratic and predatory structures associated with global capitalism and US imperialism. The most recent US Social Forum, for example, held in Detroit in June 2010, featured an entire program devoted to Palestine including a “People’s Movement Assembly,” multiple workshops, cultural events, and a solidarity mural. (p. 8)

This passage first appears to conceptualize global Palestine as an extraordinary phenomenon, but in reality Collins treats it as an inevitable feature of innate forces governing world politics: capitalism, imperialism, colonization, trade, technology, militarism. Palestine, then, is not exceptional. That self-image belongs to the Israeli colonizer. The fact that Palestine is understandable as a palimpsest of prior (and concurrent) episodes of settler colonialism makes it

all the easier (and more necessary) to understand within the framework of our actual world rather than the ethereal teleology of self-mythologies.

Mark Rifkin, whose wide-ranging work on Indigenous peoples exhibits international commitments, recently turned his attention to Israel/Palestine. That turn has resulted in a creative approach to a well-worn topic. He does so by reassessing two terms common in discussion of Zionism and Palestine solidarity:

When these concepts—apartheid and settler colonialism—are treated as if they referred to the same thing, which they often are within scholarly accounts of Israel/Palestine, the notion of indigeneity tends to vanish, in that the political goal for Indigenous peoples gets envisioned as full belonging within the nation-state rather than as acknowledgment of their distinct modes of sovereignty and self-definition. That process of conceptual collapse, which I will address in this essay, significantly truncates the meaning of Indigenous self-determination in ways that not only have implications for thinking Palestinian peoplehood(s) but for engaging Indigenous peoplehoods more broadly, given the ways that the case of Israel/Palestine (like that of South Africa before it) itself transits transnationally and comes to serve as a prism through which to view other political struggles. (Rifkin, in press, n.p.)³

The distinction between “apartheid” and “settler colonialism,” in Rifkin’s reckoning, is far more than semantic. Apartheid tacitly supersedes settler colonialism, which in turn prevents serious understanding of Israel’s history or of its present behavior. In Rifkin’s language, Indigeneity “goes missing” when we use the frame of apartheid, despite the fact that Israel and apartheid South Africa share important features.

Rifkin (in press) later argues, “In contrast to the narrative of apartheid as an institutionalized racial cleavage within citizenship, settler colonialism names the imposition of the state over top of existing peoples, whose prior presence makes them Indigenous” (n.p.). This notion of the Indigenous coheres to my sense of the term vis-à-vis Palestine. Rifkin does not base Indigeneity in Palestine on historical narratives or rights-based paradigms, but on precolonial inhabitation. More specifically, this model of Indigeneity does not distinguish between Jew and Arab; the distinction exists between Israeli settler and pre-Zionist denizen. Viewpoints that raise Israel-Palestine in an apartheid setting elide, even if unintentionally, a proper focus on garrison colonization, though apartheid illuminates significant elements of the so-called conflict. Rifkin is less interested in convincing readers to disavow an apartheid frame altogether than he is in centering settler colonization as the foundation of Israel’s very existence.

To develop this argument, Rifkin (in press) points out that

³Quotations transcribed from draft version.

with respect to Israel, this dynamic characterizes not only the invasion and occupation of the lands seized in 1967 but the campaign of institutionalized terror and ethnic cleansing (al-Nakba) through which the state was founded; the continuous programs of “transfer” and displacement within 1948 borders; the demolition of legally unrecognized Palestinian houses and villages in the Occupied Territories and pre-1967 borders; the deferral of any substantive Palestinian governmental authority over lands claimed by Israel; the denial of, or highly constricted access to, vital resources, such as water; and the denial of the ability of exiled Palestinians to return for fear they will reclaim their lands. (n.p.)

This critique of the Israeli state lends itself to emphasis on sovereignty and self-determination as analytic (and political) categories. To accept Rifkin’s critique is to reject longstanding claims of Israel’s “right to exist.” The act of rejection is not of great consequence, however. More critical is the reframing of the Palestinians’ claims to inhabitation on ancestral land from one of demography to ontology. Those claims to inhabitation encompass a range of demands in keeping with the imperatives of Indigenous peoples throughout the globe: autonomy, sovereignty, self-determination, stewardship.

The perspective Rifkin employs is not new, but it is novel. Palestinians have long attempted (with some success) to raise claims as an Indigenous people in both legal and discursive capacities. Rifkin seeks an imaginative shift among those invested in Palestinian decolonization. By situating Palestinians as subjects of a contested geography and not victims of limited access based on biology or ethnicity, Rifkin puts Palestine in conversation with worldwide settler colonialism. Here it allows the dimensions of Zionist messianism and exceptionalism to become more recognizable and thus quite less messianistic and exceptional as it would like the world to accept.

I read Collins and Rifkin together because Rifkin effectively enacts Collins’s notion of a global Palestine. We see in both authors’ arguments how Palestine can be imaginative: imagined in creative ways and also constitutive of a worldly imagination. These imaginative possibilities are essential to any understanding of American Indian studies and Palestine solidarity.

The new comparisons

Let us survey a few noteworthy interactions between Native and Palestinian decolonization, though what follows is not exhaustive. These interactions occupy two broad categories: organizing alliances and discursive connections.

Perhaps both categories prevail in a 2015 art exhibit titled “*The Map is Not the Territory*”, which examines the “parallel paths” of Palestinians, Native Americans, and Irish. The touring exhibition, curated by Jennifer Heath (2015), “looks at relationships and commonalities in Palestinian, Native American and Irish experiences of invasion, occupation and colonization—not as novelty or polemic, but as history and current world events” (p. 15).

Comprised of painting, sketches, photography, and text, “*The Map is Not the Territory*” offers three national artistic traditions in physical proximity. Heath and her collaborators sought a particular sort of political art, featuring artists who “confront history, investigate personal and political dialogue and reflect the multiple truths in Korzybski’s dictum [that ‘the map is not the territory’]” (p. 15). The art is self-consciously trained on the complex afterlives of colonization.

Of special interest are the spatial arrangements that exist around terminologies like *map* and *territory* in conjunction with visual artifacts. Those artifacts are meant to represent sentient cultural traditions. The artistic objects are compelling on their own, but even more powerful in conversation with their contemporaries. Overt articulations of Native, Palestinian, or Irish peoplehood are not self-contained. The exhibit features a fair amount of spatial and political transgression. Visual artists and producers of text work across the comparable cartographies of settler colonization. The most notable feature of the exhibit is its transit. Many art shows travel to different settings, but “*The Map is Not the Territory*” was curated for that purpose. Its design rejects, perhaps undermines, the spatial restrictions of colonization. It seeks different audiences in disparate places, while binding those audiences to a common thematic frame. If we recall Jodi Byrd’s creative uses of the term *transit* as something that identifies a constant movement of state power into new geographies, then it becomes easier to imagine the utility of decolonial art whose very display exists in transition.

It is with great surprise and pleasure that it is possible to connect “*The Map is Not the Territory*” to Gilles Deleuze. In 1982, Deleuze conducted a brief interview with Elias Sanbar, founder of the *Journal of Palestine Studies*. The interview, which quickly transforms into conversation, shows Deleuze to be a sharp political in addition to theoretical thinker. He begins the interview by observing,

Something seems to have ripened on the Palestinian side. A new tone, as if they have overcome the first state of their crisis, as if they have attained a region of certainty and serenity, of “right” (*droit*), which bears witness to a new consciousness. A state which allows them to speak in a new way, neither aggressively nor defensively, but “equal to equal” with everyone. (Deleuze & Sanbar, 1998, para. 7)

The interview occurred well before the initiation of a formal peace process, so Deleuze does not speak necessarily of material gains, but of an ontological presence in Israel and the West that had long been cleansed of Palestine’s existence. His formulation “the first state of their crisis” implies that future crises will happen or that an extant crisis has yet to culminate. The ripening of Palestine, then, portends changes of an indeterminate nature.

In order to provide concrete possibilities, Deleuze contextualizes his analysis by turning to American history. Noting that Sanbar insists “on the comparison with American Indians,” Deleuze suggests,

There are two very different movements within capitalism. Now it is a matter of taking a people on their own territory and making them work, exploiting them, in order to accumulate a surplus: that's what is ordinarily called a colony. Now, on the contrary, it is a matter of emptying a territory of its people in order to make a leap forward, even if it means making them into a workforce elsewhere. The history of Zionism and Israel, like that of America, happened that second way: how to make an empty space, how to throw out a people? (Deleuze & Sanbar, 1998, para. 7)

Preceding this passage is the strange claim that “the Palestinians are not in the situation of colonized peoples but of evacuees, of people driven out,” (para. 7) a condition Deleuze also ascribes to Natives.

It is difficult to cosign Deleuze’s observation, for Natives and Palestinians fit the dynamics of colonized societies according to every conceivable criterion. Natives, for instance, do not exist simply in exile, but also in ancestral landbases subsumed by both U.S. jurisdiction and capital. Palestinians, too, inhabit this condition, especially in the Occupied Territories, though many have made compelling arguments that Palestinian citizens of Israel are similarly colonized.⁴ We might grant that Deleuze speaks of colonial desire, distinguishing the United States’ and Israel’s ethnic cleansing projects from, say, the transatlantic slave trade or King Leopold’s conquest of the Congo, which necessitated a surplus of subjected labor. In this sense, he is mostly correct: the U.S. and Israel desired uninhabited land, in keeping with a particular biblical mythos constitutive of the virginal landscape that racial violence was tasked to produce in the absence of the barrenness both colonies so forcefully hypothesized. Neither colony, however, fully declaimed the utility of native labor—both, in fact, often relied on it. Therefore, while colonization in America and Palestine looks significantly different than in South Asia or Indochina, capitalist strictures do not allow for the sort of tidy bifurcation Deleuze proposes. Sanbar’s response is unsurprising:

We are . . . the American Indians of the Jewish settlers in Palestine. In their eyes our one and only role consisted in disappearing. In this it is certain that the history of the establishment of Israel reproduces the process which gave birth to the United States of America. (Deleuze & Sanbar, 1998, para. 9)

He does not fully agree with Deleuze, though the disagreement is implicit. Whereas Deleuze speaks of material consequences, Sanbar examines mental phenomena: “In order to succeed, the emptiness of the terrain must be based in an evacuation of the ‘other’ from the settlers’ own heads” (Deleuze & Sanbar, 1998, para. 12). Sanbar’s distinction between physical and psychological disappearance is crucial. It allows for an accommodation of global colonial

⁴See further Magid Shihade, *Not Just a Soccer Game: Colonialism and Conflict Among Palestinians in Israel* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

paradigms that Deleuze's analysis forestalls. The imaginaries of settlement factor into those paradigms in ways that supersede mere class interest (though they are always attached). Yet even here Sanbar limits his scope to foundational settler ideologies. Neither Natives nor Palestinians were erased from the colonial imagination; both people were critical to the colonizer's ability to imagine a new identity. For Natives and Palestinians, the presence of settlers is inescapable, but the settler can never escape his own erasures. He is constituted precisely by what he wishes to expunge.

The Deleuze–Sanbar conversation is useful in terms of what it illuminates about its own historical moment and in revealing how far inter/national critique has developed in the past 35 years. Deleuze and Sanbar did not have the benefit of a huge body of Native scholarship—certainly not of the magnitude that now exists, anyway. In recent years, comparisons of the type they proffer do better at recognizing the ongoing nature of U.S. and Canadian colonization and are thus better able to relate the conditions of Native life to Palestine. Let us peruse a few examples.

A good starting point is a 2002 essay by Gyasi Ross in the *Progressive*. Discounting (though not rejecting) a sense of kinship with Palestinians based on mutual displacement and Indigeneity, Ross explains that “this fraternal feeling for my brothers and sisters in Gaza and on the West Bank is due to a much more basic and primal feeling of fear: the realization that what befalls one oppressed group inevitably befalls others” (para. 3). Here a notion of historical symmetry guides Ross's interest in Palestine. He expresses interest in disrupting violence that long precedes Zionism: “My sense of kinship with Palestinian people thus comes from a reminder of my own people's suffering, and from an interest in stopping such suffering from happening ever again” (para. 8). Invoking the “genocidal atrocities” of U.S. colonization, Ross declares that “every person who strives for humanity also has a strong interest in preventing those same atrocities from occurring in another place at another time to another group of people—in this particular situation, to the Palestinians” (para. 4).

This argument avoids the sort of theoretical heft we see in the Deleuze–Sanbar conversation or the eager articulations of kinship evident in “*The Map is Not the Territory*,” but it presents an ethical point of view common to inter/national discourse: Suffering is never local. It is a helpful point of view in light of the material relationships among settler-colonial states. Chronicling a long list of Canadian government crimes against Indigenous communities, performed under the aegis of neoliberal marketeering, James Cairns (2013) concludes,

So while settler colonialism in Canada has always been about the violent displacement of indigenous peoples, the Harper government's passionate defence of Israel and attacks on opposition to Israeli apartheid is also connected to its determination to defeat resistance to its agenda, at home and abroad. Canada not only supports but partners with and profits from Israel's domination of Palestine. (“Matrix of control” section, para. 8)

The impetus for a Western head of state to support Israel surpasses geopolitical convenience. It is a question of neoliberal economy that binds support of Israel to a constellation of regressive global policies—and to an image of history that is not actually historical.

In 2013, journalist Max Blumenthal attended the Aspen Summit, a gathering of policy and military officials moderated by CNN anchor Wolf Blitzer. One of the speakers, recently retired CENTCOM (Central Command) chief General James Mattis, proclaimed that the “War on Terror” is of indeterminate length, like “the constant skirmishing between [the U.S. cavalry] and the Indians” during the 19th century (para. 3). Blumenthal reports a disturbing array of what he calls “extermination fantasies,” with Institute participants speaking openly of “smoking” and “killing” people in the southern hemisphere. Mattis’s invocation of the Indian Wars is of a piece with the nomenclature of American weaponry—Chinook, Apache, Black Hawk, Lakota, Kiowa, Creek, and Cayuse helicopters, Huron transportation aircraft, and Tomahawk cruise missiles, not to mention referring to enemy territory as “Indian Country”—and recapitulates well-worn notions of civilizational, in addition to geographical, conflict.

Mattis did not deploy a metaphor—or, perhaps we can say he was not solely being metaphorical. He shared a distinctive vision of the United States’ role in the world, one derived from the messianism of an engagement with Natives containing no beginning or end. The extermination fantasies Blumenthal witnessed are not just an extension of prior colonial practice or the habitual vocabulary of an imperium, but an understanding of exceptional achievement animated and renewed by the logic of conquest. That the U.S. is fundamentally a stranger to both geographies only adds power to the achievement’s mystique.

Yet there is almost always a critical omission in these narratives. As so many before him, Mattis imagines some abstruse endpoint to the Indian Wars, though judging by the healthy state of Native nationalisms, the history he takes for granted is not quite settled. Take this declaration from Knesset member Miri Regev, in response to the accusation that she wants to transfer an entire population (the Palestinian Bedouin of the Naqab Desert): “Yes, as the Americans did to the Indians” (qtd. in Kane, 2013, para. 3). Let us consider Regev’s analogy as a historical fragment—that is, as a rhetorical device that misreads history in order to buttress the conduct of injustice in the present. We can begin with tense: Regev approves of what Americans *did* to the Indians. In her mind, the doing is evidently done. She forecloses, or at least ignores, the possibility that Americans still do stuff to “the Indians.”

Regev inhabits two myths. Only one of those myths helps her cause, which is to invoke the permanent victories of American history in order to justify the desire for a comparable outcome in Israel. This myth might be called the discourse of divine fulfillment. We have thus far covered it in some detail. The other myth Regev inhabits is that of a supra-historical existence for Natives, who are not agents in the push and pull of Americana, but an absence to be periodically marched across a stage of diplomatic grandiosity. There is much analytical potential in recognition of the second myth. It can act as a basis to debunk the discourse of divine fulfillment and expose the tenuous philosophical edifice upon which settler colonization

proceeds. We might say that the increasing ubiquity of this myth reveals just how profoundly the settler colony relies on material advantages in the absence of moral or discursive heft.

It is not an easy myth to unravel, but the attempt is worthwhile. When Regev and others use Native dispossession to rationalize the colonization of Palestine, they center the settler as the only worthwhile historical actor in dialectics of geopolitical violence. However, they overlook the impossibility of total victory because they are incapable of ascribing normal human impulses to the Native, despite so much evidence to the contrary. In turn, they entrap themselves in the same structural limits by which they are constituted. The invocation of Natives as a justification of Palestinian dispossession, in fact, acts as an endorsement of continued Palestinian resistance. Regev and fellow ethnonationalists are not the only ones to juxtapose a Native past with a Palestinian future for the sake of rhetorical persuasion. It happens sometimes within the Palestine solidarity community. While there is appeal in positioning a misunderstood Palestine amid a tragic history with which many Americans are at least abstractly familiar, this familiarity belongs to the realm of mythology. As such, it enlivens the death of the Native subject. Palestine solidarity activists, even with the best of intentions, ought to assiduously avoid this formulation.

For example, activist Moe Diab, who does excellent, invaluable work, noted in 2013 as Israel contemplated the infamous Praver Plan, which was to displace numerous Bedouin from ancestral lands,

The international community must increase pressure on the government of Israel to reverse this racial discriminatory plan, which violates International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law, before its [sic] too late and this goes down as another Native American-like tragedy in history. We must stop it now before, our kids are reading about the ethnic cleansing and destruction of a native population and their once preserved culture and unique traditions. (para. 3)

In terms of its content, Diab's statement is comparable to Regev's. Their desires, not their appraisals, differ. I see no need to proffer a moral critique of those desires, as it detracts from less obvious but more important analytical possibilities.

It makes perfect sense for Diab to fret over the fate of Palestinian tribespeople facing state-sanctioned displacement. The destruction of numerous Native nations is an obvious and attractive corollary. That Diab references it is no surprise; it is the context of the logic that is troublesome. If we recall that in numerous cases Native nations have been the victors in conflict with settlers and that conflict of some variety remains a crucial feature of both Native and U.S. governance, then the analogy does not work for two reasons: 1) it misreads the existing interplay of American governance and Native nationalism; and 2) it implies that displacement of Palestinian Bedouin would be permanent based on tacit acceptance of the settler's linear induction. To concede permanence to a settler state's legislative or ideological violence reinforces, if only implicitly, the settler state's self-appointed authority. We can avoid this problem at a moral or rhetorical level by ameliorating the temporal disjunctions of any comparison of Natives and Palestinians: Natives are not a defeated precursor to impending

Palestinian dispossession, but contemporaneous agents who directly inform the conditions of Palestine, just as Palestinians directly inform the conditions of Indian Country.

Palestine solidarity does little service to Native peoples by reifying U.S. history as the petrified underpinning of an Israeli resurrection. Our conceptions of colonization and decolonization should be more dynamic and more attuned to the possibilities of unconventional wisdom. The alliances increasingly formed among Native and Palestinian scholars, activists, and civic groups make clear the impossibility of Native defeat. To even acknowledge the existence of Natives is to accept that they were not defeated. Palestinians are way too familiar with the pain of an unacknowledged existence to ever consciously withhold that sort of acknowledgment.

American Indian studies and Palestine solidarity

Finally we arrive at the question of American Indian studies and Palestine solidarity. (We actually have engaged the question throughout this essay, just not explicitly.) A quotation in *Al Jazeera* from former Ardoch Algonquin Chief Robert Lovelace moves us in a good direction:

Colonialism is a worldwide scourge. It has been going on for hundreds of years. And the outcomes are now hitting really full force: the poverty, the displaced people, the migrants. It's time for all aboriginal people to stand up and to recognise that our liberation, our freedom and our justice are tied together with all the peoples in the world who are oppressed, whether they live in Mexico, or Latin America, the United States, or in Africa or in the Middle East or in the Far East. (qtd. in Zerbisias, 2015, "Political and personal" section, para. 5)

The quote itself is not earth-shattering (though it is strong). The setting in which Lovelace delivered it underscores its power: Lovelace spoke from Messina, a port city in Sicily, moments before he boarded a flotilla headed to the Gaza Strip in June 2015 in order to break a long and crushing Israeli siege. The location of the comment matters because Lovelace deployed it as mission statement, not simply a proposition.

In describing his impetus for joining the Freedom Flotilla, a journey fraught with the possibility of harm or even death, Lovelace chose to underscore a worldly politics rather than solely fixate on Palestine. He thus views his act of resistance as one that has consequences for Indigenous peoples on numerous continents, which can only be the case if the evolution or resolution of the Palestinian struggle has far-reaching consequences, a point few would contest. Because few would contest this point, we can identify an extant basis for inter/national paradigms vis-à-vis the work of Palestine solidarity. Lovelace stepped onto the flotilla in order to participate in a dangerous act of civil disobedience against a murderous Israeli regime.

American Indian studies should be important to Palestine solidarity, then, because it encompasses a world whose deep concern for the well-being of Palestinians illuminates the geographies to which our ideas and actions must travel in order for our minds and bodies to

achieve liberation. Moreover, the articulations of Palestine solidarity that occur in America are already embroiled in local politics, if only unconsciously, and are therefore obligated by ethics and efficacy to analyze the conditions of state power in relation to the Native nations on whose lands that solidarity occurs. Finally, the turn to inter/national paradigms in various theories of decolonization necessitates a corresponding internationalization of the so-called Holy Land, a recognition increasingly evident in the material and intellectual spaces of Palestine solidarity. Pertaining to the final point, at no time has theorization of America or Palestine been strictly provincial. I speak mainly of a body of work responsive to, and in many ways ahead of, the coagulation of power among a hermetic global elite. These days, decolonization seems extremely difficult, but it is quite easy to identify its targets. This relationship of easy identification with extreme difficulty is causal.

There are many ways to produce an analysis of American Indian studies in relation to Palestine solidarity, but, given the context of this piece and my own professional location, I am most interested in scholarship and academic labor in the United States. Research and campus organizing centered around or concerned with Palestine has long produced transnational outcomes. We are at a point where enough is happening specifically around Natives and Indigenous peoples that it is possible to evaluate observable phenomena and think closely about the implications, pratfalls, and possibilities of growing inter/national strategies and methodologies. In academic settings, the precariousness of Palestine renders those possibilities more interesting. Palestine is precarious vis-à-vis its undesirability and its destabilizing potential. Conjoining it to American Indian studies maximizes the anxiety it induces among those guarding institutional respectability (as determined by neoliberal convention).

I propose five points to illustrate the importance of American Indian studies to Palestine solidarity:

1. Palestine has already become important to American Indian studies. Reciprocity is essential because we have to account for the cartographies of its transit.
2. Important aspects of Palestine solidarity occur on land colonized by the United States or Canada. Just as the actions of diasporic Jewish communities in America influence the conduct of Israel, organizing around Palestine in American landscapes affects Palestinian nationalism. Both phenomena interact with Native politics. Acknowledging and assaying those interactions is an ethical imperative, not just a scholarly mandate.
3. Israel practices violence against people other than Palestinians. While Palestinians experience the lion's share of Zionist brutality, the brutal practices of Zionism have disturbed people around the globe, including Indian Country. Settler colonization does not belie tidy hierarchies, but authorizes them. We need not reproduce those hierarchies. It is more useful to untangle the complexities of a dialogic ethnonationalism, instead.
4. American Indian studies contains a long history of creative, insightful theorization around matters of great concern to Palestine solidarity: colonization, foreign settlement, self-determination, demography (including demographic manipulation), sovereignty, legal

dispossession, messianic fervor, land claims, cultural recovery, repatriation, identity, citizenship, and representation.

5. The continued existence of Palestine as a global issue demands close analysis of specific comparative possibilities. We need not seek phenomena that are perfectly analogous, but material interactions that strongly correlate. For much of its modern history, Palestine has provided opportunities to examine correlations around the special relationship between the United States and Israel. These days, correlations are plentiful around matters of Native-Palestinian decolonization.

If we remember the examples I provide above of today's Indigenous theorization, then we can easily situate ourselves in transnational paradigms. The articulation of national aspirations, in conjunction with a global focus, specifies local forms of decolonization. Even the most hidebound national liberation movement must navigate issues beyond its dominant purview.

Palestine has eroded as a landscape or as a polity, but it has thrived as an idea, and as an ideal. This disparity informs a broader problem of the world: the maintenance of decolonial energy against violent market forces that constrict access to wealth, movement, resources, and citizenship. We can imagine better worlds, ones free of plutocracy and military occupation, but we possess too little material power to transform imagination into comprehensive results. This viewpoint is not defeatist. In contrast, it augurs a sort of hopefulness bordering on naiveté. It asks us to consider the practical usefulness of transnational approaches in addition to their intellectual or imaginative value. The only salvageable things in this world are the futures we manage to keep alive. Our memories must therefore remain larger than the restraints of the colonizer's imagination. We have to create the world in which we intend to reside. That world, unlike the current one, must be amenable to our existence.

I reject forms of solidarity that treat U.S. and Israeli colonialism as linear phenomena and that, as a result, conceptualize Palestine as a palimpsest of Native history. Serious engagement with American Indian studies quickly reveals this approach to be a bit too tidy and convenient. A major element of decolonization is undermining the tidiness and convenience of accepted wisdom. American Indian studies, like the communities it engages, is a living phenomenon that both precedes and portends the rites of conflict in Palestine. We can locate the dynamics of neoliberal governance within an understanding of Indigeneity to offset the dogmas of a new left too often enamored of modernity. The point is to shift analysis from the industrialized world in the direction of Indigenous stewardship. Palestine has an important role to play in this project, as its intellectual history illustrates. Its relationship with American Indian and Indigenous studies will go a long way in determining its effective development as a global avatar, one that works to liberate Native communities rather than visualizing them as artifacts of a tragic history.

I recall numerous conversations with friends who identify as Indigenous upon their return trips from Palestine. The overt cruelty of Israel's occupation inevitably stands out as something they find shocking and difficult to process. It is easy to see comparable colonial practices in America and Palestine—the style and location of colonies, state appropriation of resources,

wildly divergent economic disbursements, the garrison nature of the settlers, the state's investment in a set of narrow mythologies—but the spatial dynamics and blatant security structures in Palestine register differently than they do in most cases in North America. Many Indigenous travelers to Palestine experience firsthand the ill treatment of anybody who is not Jewish (as determined by the Israeli state). Those with dark skin come in for special malignment. These visitors come closer than anybody to inhabiting the lived experience of a Palestinian, especially if we take into consideration the iterations of colonial suppression accumulated in their own nations.

These trips, often formal delegations, are now common. They provide an effective way for Palestinians to share the pain and joy of their lives with outsiders, who can live the culture of Palestine as guests, well-fed and cared for meticulously. Most Palestinians of the Occupied Territories are barred from travel, so it is important that people of the world come to them (as difficult as Israel often makes it). The visuals of Israeli military occupation can be disconcerting. I know of nobody who has visited Palestine without returning deeply affected. One reason is that direct engagement with Palestine circumvents the mediating presence of U.S. corporate media. Another reason is that unless one manages extraordinary avoidance, the severe oppression of an entire people is everywhere visible. Severe oppression is everywhere visible in the United States, as well, but it can be easy to miss if one conceptualizes American iniquity as a myth. In the end, the spatial dynamics of Palestine and the explicit trappings of racialized Israeli jurisprudence mark the geography of the Holy Land in ways that many find shocking. The resilience and good humor of Palestinians can also leave a profound impression on the visitor.

I raise these points—kind of a sanguine view of Palestinian society, of which I am profoundly fond—to illustrate that conversations about solidarity need not be confined to the rarefied spaces of academic theorization. Nor do our conceptions of American Indian studies need to be confined to teaching and research. I have no gripe against theorization, or against teaching and research, but American Indian studies inhabits the same vastness of its eponymy. It includes Natives traveling to a colonized land across the ocean and being deeply moved and provoked by the experience. I doubt the need to convince the reader that Natives visiting Palestine is a noteworthy phenomenon for American Indian studies. What do those visits mean for Palestine solidarity? Here our analysis can take a number of useful forms; let us think about the question primarily as one of methodology.

If Indigenous peoples regularly visit Palestine and write moving pieces about their experiences, then it seems pretty obvious that the phenomenon is worth the attention of the academic fields devoted to the study of Palestine and the Palestinian people. What leads these peoples to Palestine? What do they see that affects them? Why are they so eager to connect those sights to their own experiences of colonization? How do those connections broaden or challenge how we think about Palestine as both a symbolic and political geography?

We cannot properly address these questions without first engaging American Indian studies (and, preferably, Indigenous studies more broadly). In the field, we encounter dynamic analyses of cultural knowledge, history, political movements, jurisprudence, identity, and

intellectual traditions. Many of those analyses look familiar to the advocate of Palestine solidarity; some of them are profoundly specific to a set of unique conditions. We further learn that the variability of belief and practice in Native communities makes comparison of viewpoints and ceremonies extremely difficult, likely impossible. (For example, while the intellectual class in most Indigenous communities is highly likely to sympathize with Palestinians, this sympathy might not exist as strongly among those representing different socio-economic strata.) The basis of comparison exists within the architecture of the decolonial—its theorization, material emphases, and global imperatives. In other words, we are best served comparing for the sake of practicable forms of cross-cultural organizing, in recognition of the planetary nature of plutocratic and neoliberal dominion that maintains colonial structures.

I do not believe that the limitations of comparison actually limit our ability to evoke wide-ranging materials to compare. Nor do they forestall the possibilities of kinship among peoples who seem to have little in common beyond having been colonized. (The operative word is *seem*; communities generally share more in common than they differ as a general rule.) When Robert Lovelace calls Gaza “the world’s largest Indian reservation,” he emphasizes possibilities of kinship in addition to proffering a comparative analysis (“Bob Lovelace,” 2015, para. 1). Consider his perception of the Gaza Strip, which, by the physical standards of most Indian reservations, is tiny (twice the geographical area of DC). To call it the “largest” Indian reservation, then, appears incongruous, unless we understand Lovelace to be deploying symbolism. Gaza is large in the world’s imagination precisely because it is condensed into such a spectacular emblem of settler-colonial violence. Lovelace asks us to consider Gaza not as a place of mutual interest, but as an articulation of a common history, one of concern to the Native even at a level of self-interest.

J. Kehaulani Kauanui (2012) likewise speaks in terms more personal than mere geopolitics. Following a trip to Palestine, she reflected, “There’s a particular Hawaiian connection for me when it comes to the question of Palestine. . . . I started to pursue that connection very seriously [in the mid-1990s] . . . and I’ve been pursuing those connections ever since.” Kauanui describes the participation of a Palestinian judge, Asma Khader, at the 1993 Hawaii International People’s Tribunal; Khader’s testimony deeply influenced the way Kauanui thinks about Palestine and Hawaii as corresponding sites of colonization. (Unlike with the majority of North American Indian nations, the U.S. colonization of Hawaii roughly coincides with the timeline of Zionism.) Her identification of a “particular” Hawaiian connection to Palestine highlights a personal investment that supersedes what many academics idealize as detached scholarship. Kauanui owns her attraction to Palestine based on her love of Hawaii. It is another example of kinship in action—and a corresponding example of the desire of Indigenous scholars to improve the conditions of the communities from which they emerge (along with those they encounter along the way).

American Indian studies should be important to Palestine solidarity precisely because AIS accommodates this sort of personal investment. Too many Native scholars have called upon Palestine for us to consider the encounter an aberration or a passing fancy. More critically, the

practice of Palestine solidarity in Native nations confers to advocates of Palestinian liberation a particular accountability to the well-being of those national communities. What does it mean to conduct the work of Palestine solidarity in spaces that are themselves still colonized? It means that our notions of decolonization should never treat Zionism as an isolated occupation; we have an opportunity to examine its earliest origin, instead.

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