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WHAT CAN "SETTLERS OF COLOUR" TEACH US?

A CONVERSATION OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF DECOLONIZATION IN WHITE UNIVERSITIES

KEY TERMS:

CASTE:
it is a fixed social group into which an individual is born within a particular system of social stratification.

DECOLONIZATION:
is the process of reversing colonial domination, aiming to dismantle systemic oppression, restore Indigenous land, governance, rights, culture, and sovereignty.

SETTLER COLONIALISM:
refers to a system where settlers claim Indigenous lands while implementing a diversity of policies and strategies aimed at making Indigenous Peoples disappear as the rightful owners of the land**.** Settler colonialism is a structure and not an event.

WHITE SUPREMACY:
refers to the systemic and structural ways that Canada and the United States is still white-centred, white-dominant and white-identified. White suppremacy is an ongoing structure of society that gives advantage to white people at the expense of Indigenous, Black and people of colour.

WHAT CAN "SETTLER OF COLOUR" TEACH US?

- Shaista Patel's question "where are the settlers of colour" disrupts the centering of white settlers in settler colonialism.
- This disrupts the binary ways in which settler colonialism is often described as between white settlers and Indigenous Peoples.
- Naming settlers of colour disrupts the idea that all settlers fall into one category.
- Thinking about racialized settlerhood focuses on questions of ethics, complicity and accountability to Indigenous Peoples and Black people in white settler states.
- Discussions of settlerhood should focus on white supremacy and individual participation in racist and colonial violence towards Indigenous Peoples, Black and other racialized people.
- Questioning whether refugee or Black people are also settlers is dangerous because it shifts the focus away from the structural violences informed through white supremacy, which globally functions as a violent system of dehumanization.
- Settlerhood is about the power to uphold or support the settler colonial project of Indigenous genocide and dispossession.
- Discussions about settlerhood should center on the ongoing conquest and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples and attendant violences, such as anti-Blackness.
- Neither colonialism nor anti-Blackness in Canada are readily visible and everyone can be a participant either structurally or willfully.
- It is an everyday effort to not be anti-Black and anti-Indigenous.

WHAT IS A SETTLER?

- Settler colonial whiteness is about structural locations and enactments, rather than the individual or identity.
- Dr. Rita Dhamoon describes settling as a "way of being".
- Settler structural locations are not "fixed" by identity.
- There is constant opportunity and responsibility to identify and counter the genealogies of coloniality that continue to demand oppression.
- What might seem like "vague gestures" in family migration history point to continued histories lived, reproduced, and bumped up against in the present moment.
- Tiffany Lethabo King suggests "conquistador" to refer to white colonizers to make the the role of white settler colonizers in settlerhood very clear.
- "To settle" is active and ongoing.

WHAT IS WHITENESS?

- Whiteness does not live in only white bodies.
- Whiteness comes in the form of maintaining white supremacy through strategically condoning Indigenous dispossession, anti-Black violence, anti-muslim racism, casteism, xenophobia and many other structural violences.
- Expanding our understanding of whiteness without letting white people “off the hook” gives legibility to other questions like:
  - What does caste have to do with white settler colonialism?
  - What does Islamophobia have to do with strengthening the power of anti-Indigenous white settlers and their governments?
  - What does seemingly critical (decolonial) scholarship by South Asians achieve without an unflinching focus on caste?
- Whiteness disapears itself by living in bodies that resemble people who are marginalized.
- Whiteness does at least 2 things:
  - 1) demands a centering of white settlers; and
  - 2) makes demands on and attempts to curtail the relationships among Indigenous, Black and other people of colour.
- When Indigenous, Black, People of Colour (IBPOC) relationality is marginalized, this marks a “success” of settler-colonialism and neoliberalism.
- Discipline imposed by the state and its various institutions will never let Black, Indigenous, Muslim and other variously situated caste, class or citizenship marginalized People of Colour have any dignity of life or even life.

WHITENESS IN THE ACADEMY

- “Those who commit the murders write the reports.”
- In the context of academia, those willfully participating in and condoning genocides and murders are the ones sitting in deans' and chancellors' offices.
- Institutionalized approaches to equity, diversity and inclusion and reconciliation are often “feel good” approaches for white people and do little to actually address systemic racism.
- Settler colonialism is built on the elimination of Indigenous Peoples, and educative spaces perpetuate oppressive logics when Indigenous Peoples, knowledges and legal and political orders are erased, submerged and displaced.
- The academic field of political science and Canadian politics is a deeply colonial and liberal project that violently erases Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty and legal orders.
- Despite these ongoing realities, Canadian politics remains invested in telling a story of "progress."

WHAT CAN IT LOOK LIKE TO BETRAY WHITENESS?

- What are the conditions upon which Black, Indigenous and People of Colour have been invited into university spaces?
- The white supremacist university will “keep” people as long as they are “civil”.
- “Civil” meaning keep heads down, do not look up, not look back, not look sideways, and never look toward the future.
- Maintaining an ethical practice sits in deep tension with the reality that institutions are profoundly unethical.
- Engaging in ethical work in a site of deep colonization can be confusing because institutions pretend not to be what they are.
- “We must become undisciplined" refers to the ethic of being undisciplined, of refusing to work within the constraints of colonial paradigms and archives.
- Becoming undisciplined is pedagogical for attending to relationality.
- Being undisciplined is an ethical practice of asking important questions we have been disciplined into never asking.
- One conversation that we are taught not to have is about the whiteness performed and shored up by non-Black racialized people.
- Biting the hand that feeds you is a political and ethical practice.
- Do not stay quiet, do not wait for complacency and complicity to be recognized by the institution.
- Stories are passed on, listened to, taught, learned from, honoured, carried and created.
- We are accountable to stories, do work through them, and are in relationship with them.
- We must produce stories that save lives.

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