

CLOSING THE CIRCLE

In *Decolonial Equity* by B. Allan and R. V. C. Hackett

DECOLONIAL EQUITY

- For Billie Allan and Rhonda V. C. Hackett, as Indigenous and Black scholars respectively, decolonial equity is not optional or abstract, but a mode of resistance for well-being and survival.
- Decolonial equity aims to refuse colonial oppression, false notions of multiculturalism, and insincere reconciliation efforts. Decolonial equity aims to articulate the interconnections of histories, Indigenous futurities, and the reimagining of equity.
- Decolonial equity is rooted in love and responsibilities to All Our Relations, and hope and desire for an equity beyond colonialism.

CRITIQUES OF TRADITIONAL EDI

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity work (EDI) and the construction of in/equity in settler colonial studies are racialized.
- Colonial institutions, systems and ideologies have the power to determine who is heard, validated or suppressed.
- There is an entrapment of Eurocentric frameworks in EDI that focus on risk management over relationality.
- The continued Eurocentric, colonial approaches take up energy needed for BIPOC relatives to turn to one another.
- EDI risks furthering ideas that ignore Indigenous Peoples and undermine their sovereignty and/or advance anti-Black racism.
- As of 2019, Canadian universities showed near gender parity in senior leadership, but marginalized groups remained underrepresented.
- The introduction of EDI in institutions can disrupt colonial ideas of equity that protect the institution foremost by centering Indigenous practices.
- Multiculturalism is performative antiracism that ignores responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples like respecting Indigenous sovereignty and land back.
- Efforts to hire BIPOC faculty, staff and recruit BIPOC students do not in themselves address the colonial systems that make institutions unwelcoming spaces for marginalized peoples.

CENTERING BIPOC VOICES AND MEASUREMENT RECENTERING VOICES

- There is a need for decolonial analysis in order to contextualize, historicize, politicize, and collectivize equity to steer away from colonial constructs.
- Allan and Hackett argue that fostering transformation in colonial institutions requires a decolonial analysis that reveals practices, policies and organizational structures that explicitly or implicitly further colonial relations of privilege, power, violence, silence and harm.
- Policies that mask the colonial systems must be made visible.
- Practices that protect knowledge of past and present Indigenous Ancestors should be prioritized and enacted in policies.
- Relationship, relationality and relational accountability must also be prioritized.
- EDI policies must centre Indigenous sovereignty and redress anti-Black racism.
- The tensions between Indigenous sovereignty and redressing anti-Black racism must be highlighted, especially in regard to land, given histories of slavery and colonial positioning of Black and Indigenous people as in opposition to one another.

THE CULTURAL TAX

- Cultural taxation refers to the increased and unrecognized workload for employees of marginalized groups. Decolonizing equity aims to redress the cultural tax.
- Cultural taxation can be fatal to careers, aspirations and racialized people.
- The implications for decolonizing equity for well-being, health, and sustainability can help redress the cultural tax.
- Decolonizing equity is harm reduction, health promotion and reconciliation for and with Indigenous Peoples, Black peoples and racialized peoples.

POVERTY OF UNMET NEEDS

- Grandmother Madeline Dion Stout (2018) uses the Nehiyaw word *kitimakisona* to describe the poverty of unmet needs.
- Unmet needs of colonization include not being granted humanity, dignity, choice, voice, histories, knowledge or acknowledgement.
- Colonization has failed to uphold Indigenous, Black and other marginalized voices and left needs unmet in regard to life choices and opportunities.
- It can be difficult to bear witness to another's unmet needs when the listener's needs are also unmet.
- Pie politics, the distribution of economic resources leading to inequality, in the economy of scarcity lead to the prioritization of one group or person's needs being centred and erasing other group's needs.
- When experienced between or among Black, Indigenous and racialized Peoples this poverty can be particularly painful, draining energy needed for collectivization.

MEASUREMENT

- How are institutions measuring and evaluating equity efforts?
- Equity measures like recruitment, retention, education, outreach, and conflict resolution may be assessed on the extent to which they worsen, resist or change colonial power relations and inequities.
- Decolonial equity should be assessed by those who are the target of and who face colonial inequities.
- An ethic of love and joy must be used.
- There is a need for active reflexivity, accountability and practices of repair to attend to heart-based realities of decolonial equity.
- Decolonial equity should be responsive to local Indigenous Nations whose territories it takes place on for further accountability to Indigenous Peoples.
- It is important to assess how equity initiatives respect and reflect local Indigenous Nations, honour the sovereignty and well-being of Indigenous Peoples and hold space for complexities of relationships, rather than a standard of perfection.

REVOLUTION OF REFUSAL

- Centuries of resistance and decades of inquiries and protest by Indigenous Peoples have created an anti-colonial consciousness about so-called Canada.
- Refusal enacted by Indigenous youth and communities.
- Refusal of anti-Black racism that has promoted a state-driven genocide in what we call Canada and the United States, as well as around the world.
- The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has galvanized an understanding of colonial violence and its manifestations in anti-Black racism.
- Anti-Asian hate during COVID-19 has continued efforts by Asian activists and communities to resist anti-Asian violence and unmask its colonial roots.
- The loss of life in COVID-19 reflected and deepened economic, political and social inequalities.

DECOLONIAL SOLIDARITY

WHAT IS IT?

- Decolonial solidarity is not about comparing oppressions. It features positioning needs in relation rather than in competition.
- Important to this is understanding what we're standing on and in relation to.
- Must account for ways of knowing, being and doing in relation to one another.
- Requires attention to and space for those who have been excluded to be meaningfully invited and allow for their self-reflection on generations of refusal of entrance into institutions and society.
- Representation as reflection highlights intergenerational presence in places that pretend marginalized people have never existed. Representational reflection is resistance, power and beauty.

BLACK SETTLER EXPERIENCE

- African descendants have a complex history as stolen people on stolen land. This history is ignored, depoliticized, decontextualized and dehistoricized.
- Decolonial solidarity can help problematize the settler/Indigenous binary that ignores the existence and experiences of African descendants.
- The settler/Indigenous binary positions Black life and death as complicit in settler colonialism, making it equivalent with whiteness within the binary.
- The settler/Indigenous binary doesn't clearly address racism, and specifically not anti-Black racism.
- This binary also disregards the experiences of those who identify as Black and Indigenous.
- People of African descent who were forcibly removed from their homelands by centuries of enslavement and presently by neoliberalism have had their Indigeneity removed.

HISTORICAL FLUENCY AND PRACTICES OF REPAIR

- Dr. M. Jacqui Alexander calls for becoming fluent in each other's histories and to resist comparison. A way of knowing that prioritizes social, cultural, psychic and spiritual attention to one another.
- Collectively, we must develop and use practices of repair for difficult moments of conflicting traumas, while ensuring that no abuse or violence is tolerated.
- Nehiyaw scholar Dr. Michael Hart calls for recognition of one another as both *being* and *becoming*: seeing who one is, how one is, and how everyone is in a process of becoming.
- Scholar Otrude Moyo points to the need to differentiate between practices of repair and reconciliation. Reconciliation asks the aggrieved to move on, to heal, to assimilate and make perpetrators comfortable, even among continued colonial supremacy and oppression.
- Practices of repair are rooted in desire for sustained community and the recognition of interconnectedness, regardless of whether we chose to be in a community or not.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

HEART-BASED

- It is critical to decolonial solidarity to attend to affect or heart-based knowing. Healing much be centered given the sometimes painful effects of equity work on minds, spirits, hearts and bodies.
- The transformative power and beauty of Indigenous knowledge systems must be prioritized in organizations that are used by Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous people alike.
- Settlers must learn from, not just about Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. This is a more authentic decolonial ethic of relational accountability to the places settlers live, love, learn and work on.
- This kind of decolonial work shows respect for Indigenous knowledge systems.

COMMUNITY

- Central to the decolonial solidarity and equity project are teachings of relationally, relational accountability and self-in-relation. Importantly, it also features a refusal to participate in the dehumanizing of another or the sacrifice of our own or another's dignity.
- Includes holding ceremonies of acknowledgement to work to heal the psychospiritual impacts of the injuries experienced. Practices of witnessing are vital to the directive of healing and include recognition of human dignity and spirit.

THE HOW AND WHAT

- Decolonial equity can be painfully slow work because it is rooted in an Indigenous ethic of focusing on the *how* of doing the work as a way of ensuring the *what*, or outcome of the work is meaningful.
- This requires what Dr. Alexander calls "revolutionary patience" and a decolonized sense of time. The path to decolonial equity is accountable to All Our Relations, including those that are more-than-human.
- The authors wonder if decolonizing equity is not a new endeavour, instead something very old and that lives in the knowledge systems of the land.
- Nuu-chah-nulth scholar Chaw-win-is and Inuk scholar Aviaq Johnston refer to the sustainment of Indigenous life before colonization, where civilization lived in fairness and union.

SUMMARY

- Decolonial equity requires decolonial solidarity: ways of knowing, practices, Indigenous-led measurement, collectivity, and relationality that centre antiracism and Indigenous sovereignty. The processes of listening, healing and practices of repair are integral to breaking down epistemic racism in all institutions and society as a whole.

References

Hackett, R. V. C. & Allan, B. (2022). Closing the Circle. In B. Allan & R. V. C. Hackett (Eds.), *Decolonizing Equity* (pp. 196-208). Fernwood Publishing.