



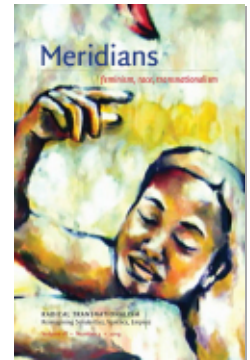
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Indigenous Feminist Notes on Embodying Alliance against Settler Colonialism

Abstract: How can we enact meaningful forms of solidarity across Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities? This essay, which focuses specifically on the context of settler colonialism in Hawai'i, examines existing or potential alliances between Indigenous feminisms and transnational feminisms. Written from a Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) feminist perspective, the essay looks to the foundational work of Kanaka Maoli scholar-activist Haunani-Kay Trask as a too often overlooked theorist of settler colonialism writ broadly. The essay also looks more specifically at Trask's theorizing of Asian settler colonialism in the Hawai'i context, in relation to contemporary examples of conflicts between Native Hawaiians and the state, as well as Native Hawaiian activists and white feminists. Overall, the essay questions how reframing Asian settler colonialism in more concerted conversation with Indigenous feminisms and transnational feminisms might provide space to move our practices of solidarity against settler colonialism, imperialism, nativism, militarization, and environmental destruction into a generative space for Kānaka Maoli and non-Indigenous peoples alike.

The last decade has seen the rise of settler colonialism as an academic buzzword in interdisciplinary cultural studies areas including American studies, ethnic studies, and gender studies. Settler colonialism is now often included in lists of the structural ills (including white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, imperialism, and so on) we ought to acknowledge and stand against (CESEC 2016). The most frequently cited description of settler colonialism is elegantly short and sweet: in the words of the late Australian scholar Patrick Wolfe, "The colonizers come to stay—invasion

is a structure not an event” (Wolfe 1999: 2). This description is useful. I cite it frequently myself in writing and teaching to get audiences to understand the ongoing, contemporary nature of colonialism in the United States and to de-link colonialism from a distant historical period in time.

While a greater recognition of settler colonialism is often a good thing, at least as a first step, there are politics to these citations. Wolfe’s work, alongside the work of other white male scholars (e.g., Veracini 2015, 2011, 2010), has captured the attention of the academy outside of Indigenous studies in a way that Indigenous scholars, who have long published on settler colonialism, largely have not.¹ For example, Kanaka Maoli scholar and activist Haunani-Kay Trask wrote about Hawai‘i as a settler colony from the early 1980s.² While her work is often taught or cited in reference to Hawai‘i, it deserves greater recognition and consideration as foundational to theorizing settler colonialism broadly. In an essay reprinted first in 1993 and then in 1999, Trask noted that settler colonialism “has as one of its goals, the obliteration rather than the incorporation of indigenous peoples” (Trask 1999: 26). As a result, Trask has argued, Indigenous peoples’ daily struggles for sovereignty and decolonization must be understood “not as a struggle for civil rights but a struggle against our planned disappearance” (Trask 1999: 26). In contrast to Wolfe and Veracini, Trask, alongside many other Indigenous women, feminist and/or queer scholars, centers gender and sexuality in her analyses of settler colonialism. Trask critiques how central the eroticization and exotification of Native Hawaiian women has been to settler colonialism in Hawai‘i, especially through the image of the hula girl perpetuated by the tourism industry (Trask 1999: 136–47).

When settler colonialism circulates as a theory primarily attributed to and advanced by white male scholars (however productive or well-intentioned their work may be), understandings of both how settler colonialism operates and how we might resist it are inevitably flattened, especially in regards to the importance of gender and sexuality to both settler colonialism and decolonization. This essay is about how Indigenous feminisms, as one important area of Indigenous studies scholarship, offer important theories and practices toward correcting the academic circulation of settler colonialism as a white male theory, particularly in rethinking how to embody feminist alliance in relation to resisting settler colonialism. I focus primarily on how Indigenous feminist embodiment in the context of Hawai‘i provides generative modes of understanding various communities’ different positions and responsibilities in the face of settler

colonialism, especially in regards to debates over theories and practices of Asian settler colonialism, a theory and critique first articulated by Trask. I further consider the connections and disconnections between Indigenous feminisms, whitestream feminisms (a term coined by Indigenous scholar Sandy Grande to critique the often unmarked whiteness of mainstream feminism), and transnational feminisms (Grande 2004).

Laura Briggs, Gladys McCormick, and J. T. Way have argued for understanding “transnationalism as a strategy for identifying the ideological work of the nation” (Briggs, McCormick, and Way 2008: 637). They argue “against writing histories or analyses that take national boundaries as fixed, implicitly timeless, or even always meaningful, and for a quite different role for history-writing and criticism—one that directly challenges the nation by revealing nationalism as ideology” (Briggs, McCormick, and Way 2008: 627). Drawing from this perspective on the transnational, transnational feminisms can be understood as analyses that identify the importance of hierarchies and oppression based on gender and sexuality to the ideological work of the nation. Transnational feminism has long insisted on the importance of thinking critically about the presumed similarities of women across the world and the dangers of imperial feminism that purports to “save brown women from brown men” (Alexander and Mohanty 2013; Spivak 1994). Transnational feminisms also insist that notions of gender and sexuality not be taken as traditionally timeless or inherently biological, but as having histories that are shaped in multiple ways by various forms of nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism.

Framed in these ways, transnational feminisms share much with Indigenous feminisms, which center analyses of gender and sexuality in the transnational processes of settler colonialism and decolonization. Indigenous feminisms have insisted on seeing settler nations from the perspective of diverse Indigenous nations whose histories far predate the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, among other countries. Indigenous feminisms also hold space for understanding the futures of Indigenous peoples as exceeding the current forms of settler nations, for imagining different ways of relating to each other and to the environment than might seem possible in the contemporary conditions of global capitalism. However, there are also deep tensions between transnational feminisms and Indigenous feminisms. At times, I have seen some white feminist scholars from the United States self-identify as transnational feminists or see their work, simply if it is based in countries outside of the

United States or examines movement between countries, as transnational feminist scholarship. That kind of identification is thus one based on claims to white professional expertise or experience with working with and/or analyzing the work of women of color elsewhere. When used in this way by white feminists, transnational feminism can therefore share a great deal with whitestream feminism. In this context, both whitestream and transnational feminisms might be labeled *settler feminisms*, after Scott Morgensen's apt critique of settler homonationalism, by which he points out how "settler colonialism must be challenged directly as a condition of queer modernities" and modern sexuality more broadly (Morgensen 2011: 2). In this essay, I use *settler feminism* to refer to non-Indigenous feminisms that are constituted by settler colonialism in the way Morgensen references, but also after the usage of *Asian settler colonialism* (as discussed further below) as a label that is potentially not only a critique but also (if taken up by settler feminists) an acknowledgment of how central a commitment to ending settler colonialism must be in order to form alliances with Indigenous feminists.

The reading of *transnational* as applying primarily to countries beyond the United States is a kind of settler feminism in that it often eclipses some Indigenous feminisms by not recognizing the presence of Indigenous nations within, and exceeding the boundaries of, what is now the United States (or other so-called First World countries). Relatedly, there is also tension at times between transnational feminist critiques and disavowals of the nation and the various forms of Indigenous nationalism that are central to Indigenous feminisms. Even as Indigenous feminisms critique many of the same aspects of nationalism that transnational feminisms do, Indigenous feminisms do not give up the importance of Indigenous nations to Indigenous lives. In fact, this conflict appears to have been central to why Haunani-Kay Trask distanced herself from identifying as a feminist. In a 1996 article, Trask noted that, "Given our nationalist context, feminism appeared as just another haole intrusion into a besieged Hawaiian world" (Trask 1996: 909). Further, she argued that "the answers to the specifics of our women's oppression reside in our people's collective achievement of the larger goal of Hawaiian self-government, not in an exclusive feminist agenda" (Trask 1996: 910).

Trask has been critiqued for her disavowal of feminism, particularly for failing to see or engage in deeper alliances between Indigenous feminisms and women of color feminisms. As Lisa Kahale'ole Hall incisively put it,

“Malcolm and Martin remain tropes for her public speaking, but not Angela” (Hall 2009: 27). By turning to Trask as a key example for thinking through how we change the citation politics of theories of settler colonialism and better recognize Indigenous feminist contributions, my goal is not to recuperate Trask as an Indigenous feminist or impose this label on her and her work. However, I do see the conflicts she grappled with in relation to the frequently white, settler nature of feminism as continuing to be central to thinking through and practicing alliances between various feminisms and between various academic fields that deal with settler colonialism. Also, her work is undeniably foundational to many self-identified Kanaka Maoli feminists and other Indigenous feminists, precisely because it offers rich analyses of connections between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. Accordingly, the challenge of referencing Trask’s work in relation to Indigenous feminisms is to maintain both the importance of her scholarship and activism to contemporary Indigenous feminists and not to forget the ways she disavowed the feminist label. Her disavowal resonates with contemporary Indigenous feminist critiques of whitemainstream, settler feminisms, while it also sits in awkward tension with the missed opportunities for alliances with other feminisms of color. In this essay, I attempt to unpack and maintain a recognition of such complications, in regards to Trask’s work but also to the conflicts between different types of feminisms, while pointing to areas of potentially fertile connection in building richer engagements with settler colonialism.

Indigenous Feminist Approaches to Decolonial World Building

Why turn to Indigenous feminism for theories of settler colonialism and decolonization? Feminism, from an Indigenous feminist perspective, can offer significant modes of building new relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Indigenous feminism is grounded in critiques of colonialism, particularly the gendered hierarchies that colonialism introduced and continues to maintain in many Indigenous contexts (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013; Goeman and Denetdale 2009; Smith and Kauanui 2008; Hernández-Avila and Tremblay 2002). While some have critiqued the notion of Indigenous feminism as “assimilated,” Indigenous feminists draw their feminism not simply from how feminism is defined by white women but from their own various Indigenous traditions of honoring women’s power, gender diversity, and gender balance: traditions that

have often been repressed by colonialism but are being revitalized with great care (Caffrey 2000; Miranda 2010). One key concept in Indigenous feminism is regeneration. As Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Simpson puts it, regeneration is a “process of bringing forth more life—getting the seed and planting and nurturing it. It can be a physical seed, it can be a child, or it can be an idea. But if you’re not continually engaged in that process then it doesn’t happen” (Klein 2013). Bringing forth more life, in multiple senses, holds particular salience to Indigenous peoples who have experienced genocide, dispossession, and cultural repression. Yet Indigenous feminism is also concerned with bringing forth different relationships and therefore different worlds for everyone, not only for Indigenous women or Indigenous peoples, who never live in complete isolation. My contention is that building alliances grounded in this kind of Indigenous feminist world building, in concert with other forms of intersectional feminism, holds the promise to bring forth not only new methods of combatting settler colonialism, imperialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, but also new relationships that could make such fights more sustainable for all of us.

Yet, so deeply engrained is the myth that Indigenous peoples have all died out or only exist on isolated reservations far away that I have been in rooms full of settler feminist scholars and activists who questioned and doubted that I and the other Indigenous feminist scholars I was with were actually Indigenous. I have also experienced in such spaces a refusal to believe that Indigenous women’s issues stem from settler colonialism, rather than Indigenous “culture,” “tradition,” or just Indigenous men. We have been the killjoys in rooms in which settler feminist (including transnational feminist) scholars insist on the importance of white and Asian women’s empowerment through their participation in settler colonial institutions, and who are upset and resistant to the suggestion that they at least acknowledge that that empowerment was built through Native Hawaiian dispossession.

Sometimes there are more patronizing responses. Once, after presenting as part of a panel of Indigenous feminists at a women’s studies conference, the first response from an audience member was, “Wow, I’ve never seen so many Native women present at a conference before.” There was no comment on the content of the scholarship we shared, only this wonderment at seeing real Native women. The comment appeared to be genuinely appreciative of the fact that we were a panel full of Native women. Yet, that apparent “good intention” did little to subvert the comment’s explicit

tokenizing: we were so unexpected in this academic, settler feminist space that the audience could only formulate responses to our very existence.

Changing such behavior and creating spaces that are productive for (not just inclusive of) Indigenous feminists is required for more substantial alliances between Indigenous feminists and other feminists. Alliance is a further focus of concern here because as the definitive citations regarding settler colonialism have coalesced around white male scholars, also lost in the shuffle, at times, has been a strong sense of alliance among those critiquing settler colonialism and other, interrelated structures of violence. Indigenous scholars and allied scholars of color have often carefully analyzed how intertwined settler colonialism is with heteropatriarchy, anti-blackness, xenophobia, and other forms of colonialism (King 2016; Mays 2013; Jackson 2012; Chang 2010). Yet, the academic attention given to settler colonialism as a white male theory has at times created or renewed a sense of competition between Indigenous peoples and other people of color, especially in relation to ideas about whether people of color should be considered settlers. This has sparked necessary conversations about alternative terms or deeper considerations of terms and geographic scope, including, for example, Robin Kelley's critique of Patrick Wolfe's work for allowing "settler colonialism on the African continent" to fall out of view and Jodi Byrd's use of *arrivant*, after poet Kamau Brathwaite's coinage, to signify "those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe" (Kelley 2017: 268; Byrd 2011: xix). Dean Saranillio, as discussed further below, self-identifies as an Asian settler scholar but also recognizes that a problem with Asian settler colonialism is that it "leaves no political space for people who want nothing to do with the term settler" (Saranillio 2018: 38).

Also in conversation with Trask's work, Saranillio accordingly suggests moving from "an analysis of settler colonialism that morally adjudicates competing identities without addressing the structure of settler colonialism and toward a kind of relational thinking that moves from a politics of identity to a politics of affinity" (Saranillio 2018: 41). Re-grounding critiques of settler colonialism in Indigenous feminism could help correct the ways that settler colonialism has circulated away from the embodied knowledge of Indigenous peoples and the relationships they often carefully hold with other peoples. In Hawai'i, as in many other settler colonial contexts, there are deep genealogies of alliances between Kānaka Maoli,

Asian Americans, and other working-class immigrant groups. Especially notable in Hawaiian history are labor organizing alliances among plantation workers and organizing for land and water rights during the Hawaiian Renaissance of the 1970s (Saranillio 2018; Goodyear-Kā'opua, Hussey, and Wright, 2014). In short, orienting citations of settler colonialism toward Indigenous feminisms allows us to substantially engage histories and futures of decolonization, in part through considering substantial forms of solidarity among Indigenous struggles and other anticolonial, antiracist, and antisexist struggles that have long existed and could be built anew in the future.

When I talk about the need to pay attention to embodiment and to Indigenous feminism in how the academy engages settler colonialism, you, dear reader, should know that this is a delicate request. Audra Simpson has written brilliantly about ethnographic refusal as the significance of stops, silences, or other impediments to knowledge production that may cause harm (Simpson 2007, 2014). As noted in my examples above, Indigenous women are—must be—careful with what they say: in print, in classrooms, at conferences. This is because we know that academia is dangerous, in multiple respects. Knowledge produced in these spaces has been, and continues to be, used against us and our communities. When we speak of the challenges we come up against in our families, our words might be used to paint those challenges as inherent to Indigenous people. The violence of colonialism is so often pinned on Indigenous peoples themselves. When we speak about indigeneity, it might be dismissed as essentializing, even as we speak about how culture and tradition are never things Indigenous peoples can take for granted, because of the difficult work of revitalizing and maintaining cultural traditions and relationships to land. These relationships are not essential in the sense that they are not magical and automatic features of Indigenous lives, but rather are practices and knowledge that communities work to keep alive despite constant threats from settler colonialism. There are also more personal dangers of the academy to Native scholars, especially women and LGBTQ, Two-Spirit, mahu, fa'afafine, or other non-cisgender scholars, who routinely perform astonishing amounts of what Sara Ahmed terms “diversity work” for universities while facing harassment from hostile colleagues and students (Ahmed 2017; Boyd 2012; Jacob 2012). Detailing those experiences is beyond the scope of this essay but forms part of the urgency of not letting the work of Indigenous scholars be overshadowed.

Thus, insisting on attention to embodiment is not insisting on essentialism, but on an attention to who is in the room, and/or on the page, and who is not. Recognizing embodiment is a way of reminding ourselves that in speaking about settler colonialism, we are not resolving it; that the diagnosis is not sufficient in achieving justice; that what is being diagnosed still negatively affects some of us more than others; that the work of diagnosing is riskier for some than for others. The problem with short and sweet descriptions of settler colonialism is that they make settler colonialism part of a critical litany that allows those who recite the litany to feel that they are over it, that they are sufficiently against it, even while they continue to perpetuate Indigenous erasure. Sara Ahmed writes of this phenomenon in reference to sexism and racism: “I suspect that criticality—the self-perception that in being critical we do not have a problem or that in being critical we are over it—is often used and performed in these academic spaces. I have called critical racism and critical sexism this: the racism and sexism reproduced by those who think of themselves as too critical to reproduce racism and sexism” (Ahmed 2017: 155). Ahmed’s description here resonates too with certain strands of settler colonial studies that engage Wolfe and Veracini but not Indigenous scholars. The erasure of Indigenous scholarship, and the frequent lack of a deeper acknowledgment of and commitment to Indigenous communities, does not register as a problem because there is a sense that simply by naming settler colonialism one is being critical enough. As I explore in the next section, the superficial alliance with resistance to settler colonialism is not sufficient, especially because so many non-Indigenous peoples still benefit from and uphold the structure of settler colonialism.

Against Asian Settler Mansplaining

Non-Indigenous people often charge Indigenous peoples with pretending authenticity or essentialism by pointing out Indigenous complicity with modernity. One example of this comes from February 2017, when Kānaka Maoli protested lack of community oversight in the cleanup of Iao Valley, the site of an ancient battle on the island of Maui, after flooding in September 2016. Rocks considered sacred to Kānaka Maoli were removed from the site and crushed. Maui mayor Alan Arakawa, who is sansei (third generation) of immigrants to Hawai‘i from Japan and Okinawa, stated on the local news: “It’s very simple. There’s no such thing as sacred rocks, first of all. The monarchy, started with Kamehameha and his lineage, declared

Christianity the religion of Hawai‘i. And Christianity, if I remember the Ten Commandments correctly, ‘Thou shalt have no false god before me.’ There are no sacred rocks in that religion” (HUOA 2015; Richardson 2017).

Arakawa’s comments denigrate Native Hawaiian culture and tradition around rocks and the specific history of Iao Valley, but they also imply that Kānaka Maoli are ignorant of their own culture and history.³ We can consider this as a kind of Asian settler mansplaining that carries serious effects. Arakawa suggests that because some Hawaiian ali‘i converted to Christianity (though, in fact, Kamehameha I did not) that all non-Christian Hawaiian traditions are false or invented (Kamakau 1961). Thus, Arakawa suggests that the idea of “sacred rocks” is ridiculous, and Native Hawaiian culture more broadly is laughable and fake. In cases such as these, it is clear that the need for a feminist analysis of Asian settler colonialism remains important, in order to be able to clearly mark and reject the ways that Asian Americans in Hawai‘i, especially local male politicians, often bolster settler colonial views of Native Hawaiians and urge the broader public to understand Native Hawaiian political and cultural movements as backward, ignorant, and inauthentic.

Asian settler colonialism provides a useful language with which to critique the actions of those like Arakawa, who is part of a longer history of Japanese American politicians with power in Hawai‘i (Sasaki 2016; Wu 2018). To name Arakawa’s actions as promoting Asian settler colonialism allows us to see how, at times (in contingent and never uniform ways), certain Asian Americans in Hawai‘i have been complicit with discourses and practices that damage Kanaka Maoli communities. We can think of the process of naming Asian settler colonialism similarly to how Sara Ahmed writes of the process of naming sexism and racism: “We need to acquire words to describe what we come up against,” a process which is difficult and also entails noticing that “violence is directed toward some bodies more than others” (Ahmed 2017: 34). Similarly, settler colonialism writ broadly came about as words to describe what Indigenous people come up against, because for a long time no one in the academy seemed to accept that other words (e.g., colonialism, racism) were appropriately applied to Indigenous people in countries including the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, who were all supposed to be assimilated, dead, and/or flattered by white peoples’ appropriations and distortions of Indigenous culture. Sometimes *postcolonial* was applied to Indigenous contexts in academia, but this trend existed in tension with many Indigenous

contexts in which colonialism was not even formally “post-” or past, but ongoing with no end in sight (Na’puti and Rohrer 2017).

It is in this context that we have to consider the coinage of *Asian settler colonialism* as a term “to describe what we come up against,” from the perspective of Kānaka Maoli. We needed language to highlight not only the different genealogies Kānaka Maoli hold in distinction from Asian Americans in Hawai‘i (since often people from the continental United States see Kānaka Maoli and Asian Americans from Hawai‘i as all equally “Hawaiian”) but also the ways that some Asian Americans in certain contexts have supported and continue to support the obliteration of Kanaka Maoli lifeways in Hawai‘i. As noted in the early pages of the 2008 volume *Asian Settler Colonialism*, edited by Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura, in a 1997 keynote address, Trask insisted on a shift from viewing Asians and Asian Americans in Hawai‘i as “locals” and “American immigrants” to settlers who were implicated in the U.S. occupation of Native Hawaiian land (Fujikane and Okamura 2008: xiii). To Trask, Asian settlers often “claim Hawai‘i as their own, denying Indigenous history, their long collaboration in our continued dispossession, and the benefits therefrom. Part of this denial is the substitution of the term ‘local’ for ‘immigrant,’ which is itself, a particularly celebrated American gloss for ‘settler’” (Fujikane and Okamura 2008: 4). Fujikane and Okamura’s edited volume collects the writing of a number of Asian American scholars who seek to take Trask’s critique to heart, in conversation with a number of other Native Hawaiian scholars.

Fujikane makes plain in the volume’s introduction that the utilization of the term *Asian settler* is not meant to deny the historic and ongoing racism and exploitation experienced by Asian Americans in Hawai‘i. Fujikane makes a powerful argument that “Honoring the struggles of those who came before us, however, also means resisting the impulse to claim only their histories of oppression and resistance” (Fujikane and Okamura 2008: 7). This is especially relevant in terms of the common narration of the history of Asian immigrant plantation labor in Hawai‘i, which emphasizes Asian immigrants overcoming poor labor conditions and racism and eventually working their way into a middle-class American dream (Takaki 1983; Okiihiro 1991). Such histories have generally erased the presence of Native Hawaiians, who are not seen as an important plantation labor constituency compared to Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, Portuguese, and Puerto Rican laborers. More broadly, these histories have ignored settler colonialism in Hawai‘i by taking for granted that Hawai‘i is, and was always

destined to be, the United States. This assumption is ahistorical, to say the least, because, as noted above, many Asian and other immigrants arrived to work on plantations when Hawai‘i was still governed by the Hawaiian Kingdom, until its overthrow in 1893. Hawai‘i did not become an official part of the United States until 1898, when the U.S. Congress voted for its annexation under the Newlands Resolution, which argued for Hawai‘i’s strategic position as a site for the U.S. Navy to refuel its ships on its way to fight the Spanish-American War in the Philippines (Silva 2004).

While the volume is attentive to class differences and distinct refugee statuses among the Asian Americans in Hawai‘i, Fujikane and others argue that *Asian settler* is an apt term for all Asian Americans in Hawai‘i because all derive some benefit from the structure of settler colonialism and “To focus only on the obvious differences among settlers evades the question of settlers’ obligations to indigenous peoples” (Fujikane and Okamura 2008: 9). The critique is aimed at fundamentally unsettling understandings of Hawai‘i as America, again following Trask’s insistence that Hawai‘i is not America and Native Hawaiians are not Americans (which she famously argued in a 1993 speech at a rally commemorating and protesting the one hundredth anniversary of the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom). Dean Saranillio’s contribution to the volume puts it this way: “By shifting our perspective from viewing Hawai‘i as the fiftieth state of the United States to recognizing Hawai‘i as a colony under U.S. domination, terms that at one time seemed commonsensical now ring hollow and look perversely constructed as rhetoric that functions to obscure the colonial domination of Native Hawaiians” (Saranillio 2008: 257). Saranillio’s point is that Asian Americans in Hawai‘i can shift the framing of how their communities’ histories and futures are told from always placing their stories in relation to the United States toward placing their stories in relation to the ongoing struggle against U.S. settler colonialism in Hawai‘i.

Missed Feminist Connections

Just as with the Asian American and Native Hawaiian solidarities I have discussed above, a similar shift in framing is also necessary in practicing settler feminist alliances with Indigenous struggles. On January 21, 2017, a women’s march was held in Honolulu—one of the hundreds of women’s marches held across the United States in protest of the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump. At the Honolulu march, a group of Kanaka Maoli scholars, Indigenous feminist theorists, poets, and artists

performed, including ‘Ilima Long, Pūlama Long, Nālani Balutski, Joy Enomoto, Jamaica Osorio, No‘ukahau‘oli Revilla, Terrilee Keko‘olani, Makana Kāne Kuahiwinui, and Malanai Kāne Kuahiwinui.⁴ These wāhine (women) performers offered a creative interpretation of the words of Queen Lili‘uokalani, the last sovereign of the Hawaiian Kingdom who was overthrown by male American and British plantation owners with the backing of the U.S. Navy in 1893. The women’s march closely coincided with the 124th anniversary of that overthrow on January 17, 1893. No‘ukahau‘oli Revilla opened the performance by remarking on this fact and reminding the audience that, as Trask taught many, “Hawai‘i is not America,” but rather is unjustly occupied by the United States. Addressing the crowd, Revilla proclaimed that as she and her co-performers were present to

stand with you against hate, discrimination, desecration, overdevelopment, militarization, patriarchy and fear, we also give our bodies and our voices today as evidence that Hawaiians do, will struggle against U.S. occupation, that Hawaiian women will exemplify aloha as long-term, intersectional and ‘āina-based [land-based] justice, that aloha is not weakness, that aloha is not for sale. We give our bodies and our voices as promise. We promise to remember our Queen, to love our land . . . and we will get our country back. (Jayne 2017)

Revilla has written about a different version of this performance as a kind of mohala, or blossoming, which can refer to anything from “the physical blossoming of flower petals or an adolescent child to the metaphorical blossoming of an idea or the impact of a good question” and “a state of illumination wherein ideas, actions, or even bodies appear clear and developed” (Revilla 2017). In the mohala of the performance, Revilla shows how the performers used “our bodies and voices as evidence, as sites of transgenerational memory” that drew on individual performers’ genealogies as well as “the strength of the genealogy of resistance we share as Kanaka Maoli women, a genealogy to which Trask and Lili‘u are central” (Revilla 2017).

While this performance was shared with pride on social media by many Kanaka Maoli and allies, it also circulated with a story that the performance had been shouted down by a few haole (white) women in the audience. These women told the performers that they were disrupting the unity of the women’s march and that they should not be bringing up issues of colonialism when the day was meant to be simply about women. This was a

painfully disrespectful and ignorant response to a moving and powerful Kanaka Maoli performance. For one, the haole women ignored that the performance was clearly framed as one intent on building solidarity with the many other intersectional issues facing haole women and women of color in Hawai'i. Secondly, they failed to recognize the resonance between Kanaka Maoli women protesting the unjust overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and the women's march protesting Trump as the new leader of the United States, who failed to secure the majority of the popular vote. What the performers were offering was historic, deeply embodied inspiration and precedent for resisting the patriarchal, settler colonial, and imperial United States. The performance necessarily disrupted settler feminist understandings of Hawai'i as naturally a part of the United States and implicated white settler feminists in the ongoing settler colonial occupation of Hawai'i. This disruption could have been a *mohala* for settler feminists, as the performance offered significant genealogies of feminism relevant to all feminists in Hawai'i. The performance held an unfolding illumination of the incommensurability between settler and Indigenous feminists that must be recognized if true alliances are to be formed. In many ways the performance was therefore a gift, full of relevance for the current moment to a number of different audiences, settler and Indigenous, present at the women's march.

Yet, somehow, Kanaka Maoli wāhine, at the moment they simultaneously offered solidarity and support to all women and requested solidarity and support back, were perceived as against women. In other words, the performers were treated like killjoys, selfishly focusing on an issue that only held relevance to themselves. Sara Ahmed points out that killjoys are treated as problems when they bring up a problem; that the killjoy becomes the problem (Ahmed 2017). Here treating the performers as killjoys allowed the audience to ignore the multitude of ways that settler colonialism impacts everyone living in Hawai'i and that some benefit directly. The haole women who protested the performance also suggested that colonialism is not relevant to issues of gender and sexism. Yet, in fact, the instillation of patriarchy has been central to settler colonialism in Hawai'i and elsewhere. As the Kanaka Maoli performers were demonstrating, the significance of patriarchy to the history of colonialism in Hawai'i is clear from the life of Lili'uokalani, and from her own account of the Hawaiian Kingdom's overthrow in her memoir *Hawaii's Story by Hawaii's Queen*, published in 1898 as part of her larger efforts to keep the

United States from permanently annexing Hawai'i (Lili'uokalani 1898; Kualapai 2005).

Political cartoons published in popular U.S. magazines before and after the overthrow depicted Lili'uokalani as an illegitimate ruler because of both her gender and her race. Lili'uokalani, as a symbol of Hawai'i overall, is shown in one cartoon as a wild and savage Indigenous woman who needs to be broken by marriage to Uncle Sam. In other cartoons, Hawai'i is an unruly child being disciplined by Uncle Sam, along with other recently annexed territories and Native Americans (Silva 2004). Lili'uokalani steadfastly challenged all of these representations, maintaining a modern royal image and dedication to her people, even while unjustly imprisoned in Iolani Palace in 1895. Again, in the context of the Honolulu women's march in 2017, there was relevance and inspiration in Kanaka Maoli performers lifting up Lili'uokalani's story in the wake of the defeat of Hillary Clinton, who many expected would be the first female president of the United States. Kanaka Maoli women have long understood that the United States does not respect or recognize female leaders as legitimate.

Sometimes defensiveness, such as that demonstrated by the haole women's responses to the Kanaka Maoli performers, occurs because of assumptions that acknowledging Hawai'i as an unjustly occupied territory of the United States requires all non-Indigenous people to leave Hawai'i. But if we truly follow the words of the performance, and many other forms of Kanaka Maoli activism, there is a clear insistence on recognizing the ways that settler colonialism shores up other forms of oppression, including xenophobia and discrimination against immigrants, all of which can and should be fought together rather than thought of as competing agendas. The Hawaiian Kingdom, after all, was the first to welcome immigrants from the United States, Asia, and Europe. Despite that history predating Hawai'i's annexation to the United States, Hawai'i's multiculturalism has often been attributed to, and held up as an exemplar of, American ideals of democracy, especially when Hawai'i became a state. Deporting immigrants is the mode of operation of a settler colonial nation-state, not an Indigenous one. Rather, decolonization seeks to acknowledge and build different relationships that recognize land not as something to be owned and divided by borders (an inherently patriarchal project) but as the basis of life for all beings.

Overall, what happened in the defensive settler feminist response to the Kanaka Maoli performance at the Honolulu women's march is, in many

ways, not surprising. As mentioned above, Trask faced similar tensions between whitestream feminism and Kanaka Maoli nationalism decades before. While Trask's PhD dissertation examined the generative force of feminist theory and poetry, what she termed the "feminist Eros," she later distanced herself from feminism for being "just too white" and "aggressively American," and thus foreign in both style and substance to the Kanaka Maoli context (Trask 1996: 908–9). Trask never gave up confronting sexism both within Kanaka Maoli organizing and outside of the lāhui, but, similar to Black women who prefer the term *womanist* to *feminist*, she distanced herself from the feminist label (Phillips 2006).

Trask faced intense racism and sexism as a professor at the University of Hawai'i and beyond. Recalling the racist cartoon caricatures of Lili'uokalani in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, political cartoons in Honolulu newspapers in the 1990s characterized Haunani-Kay Trask as an aggressive, angry, and even savage Native woman, irrationally bent on antagonizing haole men who were seen as "proper" professors (Trask 1999: 169–81). It is important to recognize and remember that Asian settler colonialism originated as an embodied critique by a Kanaka Maoli woman who sought words to express the ways she saw certain Asian American people participating in perpetuating racism against Native Hawaiians and the dispossession of Native Hawaiians from land. Trask recognized differences between haole and Asian cultures, but rhetorically was very pointed in calling out Asian Americans who were not always strong allies to Native Hawaiians. That rhetorical forcefulness was (and often still is) arguably necessary in order to break the assumptions that everyone in Hawai'i shared a local identity.

Toward an Indigenous, Transnational Feminist Approach to Asian Settler Colonialism

The concept of Asian settler colonialism has been widely critiqued and rejected by a variety of scholars. Some focus their critique on what they see as a false equivalency between white settlers and Asian settlers, charging Native Hawaiian critiques of Asian settlers with fostering an anti-immigrant nativism (Sharma and Wright 2008). Others have more nuanced critiques that maintain the importance of challenging settler colonialism and allying with Native Hawaiian struggles toward decolonization, but argue that Asian settler colonialism is too starkly binary (Rohrer 2016). In considering these critiques, it is useful to acknowledge that the concept

of Asian settler colonialism, like much of Trask's work, is necessarily provocative and meant to be unsettling to a wide audience. So deeply engrained is the ideal of Hawai'i as a multiracial paradise without any racial problems, that acknowledgment of the significant differences among Hawai'i's different racial communities and the specific issues that Kanaka Maoli face has long been (and continues to be) difficult. Without Trask's work, the very idea of Hawai'i being an occupied settler colony would be even less widely understood or accepted today.

Could insisting on a feminist Asian settler colonial analysis help reframe some of the debates around Asian settler colonialism that have been unproductive? I believe it could, especially if the concept is re-grounded in a consciously intersectional, Indigenous, and transnational feminist perspective. One notable point of connection in this respect is the fact that Trask formulated the concept of Asian settler colonialism in the context of the 1980s and early 1990s Japanese bubble economy, in which Japanese investors bought up property, resorts, and hotels in Hawai'i. This context, I would argue, has too often been overlooked in critiques of Asian settler colonialism that tend to understand only Asian Americans or permanent residents of Hawai'i as the subject of Trask's critique. It is clear that she was targeting not only "local" populations of Asian Americans who had accumulated wealth and power in Hawai'i, but also the foreign investors who may never have permanently moved to Hawai'i but saw it as an idyllic vacation spot or lucrative business opportunity.

Perhaps this lack of attention to the ongoing transnational context of Asian settler colonialism is due to the subsequent crash of the Japanese economy in the 1990s (after the period in which Trask formulated the concept). It is also likely tied to the fact that self-identified Asian settler scholars have generally been those who are third or fourth generations of Asian immigrants who have long been local to Hawai'i. However, Japanese tourism remains the largest international share of the tourism industry in Hawai'i, in addition to more recent increases in Chinese tourism and the associated boom of Chinese purchasing real estate in Hawai'i (HTA 2017a, 2017b; Shimogawa 2016; Schaefer 2010). Without dismissing the power of the work of self-identified Asian settler scholars who ground their scholarship in the histories and ongoing work of Asian American labor and activism, often in solidarity with Native Hawaiians, what if we supplemented that work with stronger critiques of how Japan, and more recently China, have been complicit in settler colonialism in Hawai'i through tourism

and property acquisition? To articulate Asian settler colonialism in this way, while also maintaining an attention to the United States and concerns of gender and sexuality that Trask originally raised in her formulation of settler colonialism, which I would argue have also been too often overlooked, intersects well with transnational feminisms.

What does, or could, a transnational feminist analysis of Asian settler colonialism look like? Trask famously challenged would-be allies to the Native Hawaiian cause to not visit Hawai'i, because "we do not need more visitors, and we certainly do not like them" (Trask 1999: 146). Trask's challenge here is purposefully strident in order to unsettle the sense that many Americans have that they have a right to vacation in Hawai'i. Yet, this critique of the tourist industry in Hawai'i has sometimes been mistaken for a critique of any travel or movement to and from Hawai'i by non-Hawaiian people, and has potentially, at times, prevented transnational solidarities. Kanaka Maoli must be the leaders of decolonization in Hawai'i, but we cannot do it alone, and we cannot do it in a vacuum. Decolonization in Hawai'i requires the broader demilitarization of the Asia-Pacific as a whole, and environmental justice with respect to climate change, sea level rise, and long histories of pollution and contamination of Pacific lands and waters, including the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. We also need stronger solidarity within the Pacific Islands. As noted by Pacific studies scholar April Henderson, there needs to be more dialogue and connection between those parts of the Pacific that are still actively dealing with settler colonialism and those parts of the Pacific that are formally free and independent but still struggling to decolonize many of the legacies of colonialism that remain (Henderson, pers. comm., Feb. 3, 2018).

These struggles for demilitarization and environmental justice, like feminism writ large, must recognize the stakes and expertise of Indigenous Pacific Islanders and in turn support Indigenous movements for sovereignty and decolonization. My point in this article has not been to resolve the tensions and conflicts between settler, transnational feminisms and Indigenous feminisms, but to show that confronting them is necessary to building meaningful alliances between them. Sometimes the immensity of these struggles and the lack of understanding among non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples make the work of solidarity seem impossible. Yet, as Indigenous feminist scholar Dian Million has written, "Indigenism contains the seed for imagining what else our nations might be" (Million 2013: 179). Million acknowledges that that seed of imagination may be "a dark

star to peer at,” but it is also what keeps us fighting for “lifeways [that] may pose something other than illness and death” (Million 2013: 179). Feminist alliances must be able to hold space for negotiating our unease with difference for long enough that we move past such barriers. We have to build worlds in which other feminists believe that Indigenous women exist. More than that, we have to build worlds in which Indigenous women are recognized as activists, artists, and scholars with valuable knowledge and theories about our own lives and our communities’ histories and futures, which are not marginal or isolated from other communities, but often just erased and unacknowledged. With such recognition, Indigenous women should also be seen as essential allies to building just worlds for everyone. Despite the frequent lack of recognition, such alliances are thriving in a number of areas, from solidarities between land and water protectors at Mauna Kea and Standing Rock, to the International Women’s Network Against Militarism which has linked women’s activism challenging military occupation, sexual violence, war, and environmental degradation from Okinawa, Guam, Hawai‘i, South Korea, and the continental United States, among other sites (Summit Staff 2017). When more of our movements follow such examples, we can discover new modes of living a feminist commitment to end settler colonialism.

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Notes

- 1 The problem I am interested in addressing in this essay is not necessarily the content of Wolfe or Veracini’s work but the ways that this work circulates, often without acknowledging Indigenous scholars engaging the same issues. I have critiqued Veracini’s work elsewhere (Arvin 2015).
- 2 I use Native Hawaiian and Kanaka Maoli (the latter a Hawaiian language term) interchangeably to refer to the Indigenous peoples of Hawai‘i. Kānaka (with the macron or kahakō) denotes the plural form. Kanaka (without the kahakō) is used for singular and categorical forms.

- 3 A similar conflict happened in a heated debate between Haunani-Kay Trask and Joyce Linnekin (a white feminist anthropologist). Linnekin claimed that during the Hawaiian sovereignty movement in the 1970s that Native Hawaiians had invented many traditions, such as in respect to Kaho'olawe, an island used for bombing practice by the U.S. military, a practice Native Hawaiians sought to end. Trask critiqued Linnekin's stance as the attempt of a haole, self-styled expert on Hawaiian culture to undermine the legitimacy of Hawaiian political claims (see Linnekin 1983; Trask 1986, 1991).
- 4 Kepo'o Keli'ipa'akaua stood silently behind the other performers holding a sign with the word "Onipa'a"—a motto of Liliu'okalani, meaning steadfastness, determination. For more work by these performers, see, for example, Long 2017; Osorio 2018; Enomoto 2017; Revilla 2011; and Joy Enomoto's website (<https://joyenomoto.weebly.com>).

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