OTHERWISE WORLDS

AGAINST SETTLER COLONIALISM AND ANTI-BLACKNESS

TIFFANY LETHABO KING JENELL NAVARRO ANDREA SMITH EDITORS

Otherwise Worlds

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BLACK OUTDOORS INNOVATIONS IN THE POETICS OF STUDY

A series edited by J. Kameron Carter and Sarah Jane Cervenak

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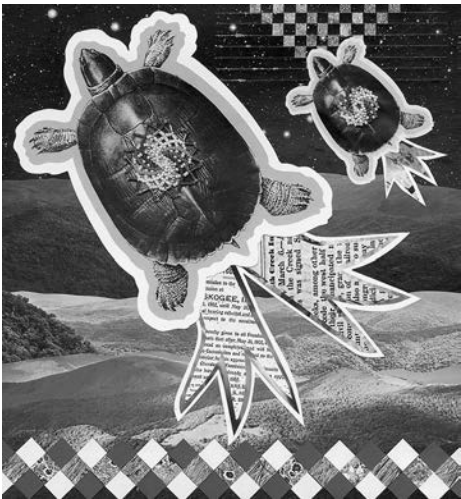

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We, the editors, have decided to give our proceeds from this book to support the work of Lifted Voices, an organization that works at the intersections of anti-Blackness and settler colonialism.

Lifted Voices is an action-oriented collective committed to defending the lives and rights of Black and Indigenous people, and to combating state violence in all its forms. Their Black and Indigenous membership offers workshops to people of conscience who wish to engage in protest effectively. From direct action 101 to advanced direct action and tactic-specific trainings, the workshops have helped allies around the country realize their visions of protest. Members of the collective also visit elementary schools to talk with young people about social justice work, including transformative justice, Indigenous resistance, prison abolition, and artful protest.

As an abolitionist collective, Lifted Voices also participates in defense committee work, organizing support for people who have been incarcerated for acts of self-defense. This solidarity work with imprisoned people has also involved bail fund drives—including an effort that freed twenty-two detained migrants in the summer of 2019. Lifted Voices believes in transformative justice, community-based accountability, and the need for a world without prisons. They also believe that marginalized people must explore the ways in which we have internalized our oppression and the ways in which we have perpetuated the oppression of others at the behest of white supremacy. They do this without any punitive aim and in the interest of transformation. By building community, building culture, and taking action in defense of ourselves and our lives, we lift our own voices.

For more information or to support the work of Lifted Voices, follow them at https://liftedvoices.org/.

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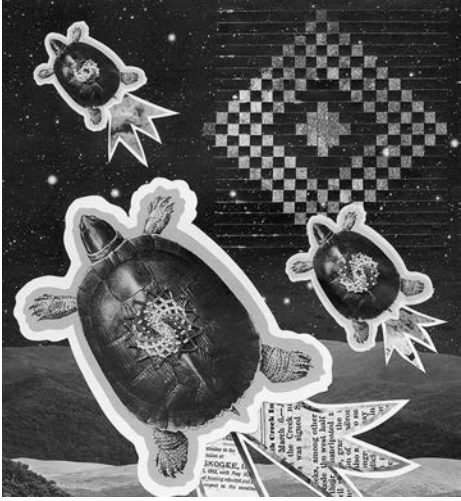

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Beyond Incommensurability

Toward an Otherwise Stance on Black and Indigenous Relationality

The relationship between Native genocide and anti-Blackness has been articulated sometimes in terms of presumed solidarity or comparison, such as the notion that Native peoples harbored runaway slaves and that Black fugitives assisted Native peoples in armed struggle against settler encroachment. Sometimes it has been articulated in terms of antagonism, such as the focus on Native peoples who owned slaves and on enslaved or indentured Black people who participated in settler raids on Native nations. Nowadays, it seems to be in terms of incommensurability, which asserts a lack of commonality/relationality between Black and Native folks. This project emerges from us thinking that all of these modes are insufficient. While certainly solidarity, antagonism, and incommensurability are distinct and no one mode of relationality can be presumed, at the same time it is illogical to presume we can talk about any mode without doing it in relationship with one another. If we submit momentarily to the popular position that Black and Native peoples and, by extension, Black and Native politics are at an impasse represented by their incommensurability, then the flip side of being stuck together—or this stuckness—is already a form of relationality. As a result, we think Édouard Glissant's "relation" seems to be a helpful starting point:

> Relation . . . does not act upon prime elements that are separable or reducible. If this were true, it would itself be reduced to some mechanics capable of being taken apart or reproduced. It does not precede itself in its action and presupposes no a priori. It is the boundless effort of the world, to become realized in its totality, that is to evade rest. One does not first enter Relation, as one might enter a religion. One does not first conceive of it the way we have expected to conceive of Being.[1]

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It seems that much analysis of the relationship between Indigenous genocide/settler colonialism and anti-Blackness tends to be prescriptive in that the analysis presumes a certain prescribed politic—whether it be a call for solidarity in a certain way or a call to reject solidarity. But analysis of relationality suggests something *otherwise*—that the relationality between genocide and anti-Blackness is not fixed and easily knowable. In addition, to borrow from Antonio Viego's *Dead Subjects*, there is an imperative in the academy to make Native peoples knowable and to presume that Black peoples are already known.[2] Thus, not surprisingly, the relationship between the two is presumed to be fully representable and it keeps Black and Indigenous communities in isolation from one another, which is a settler desire/dream.

Thus, we would prefer an approach that does not presume an "answer" but instead seeks to ask questions about the complexities of this relation, and hence the political possibilities that emerge from asking these questions and engaging in the process of relation. This desire not to presume an answer mediates any attempt to trace a genealogy to this conversation with the respective fields of Native studies and Black studies because to tell a story of either field tends to prescribe the outcome of any conversation between the fields. For instance, we could trace the development of Native studies through the influential work of Elizabeth Cook-Lynn's "Who Stole Native Studies" and Winona Stevenson's "'Ethnic' Assimilates 'Indigenous.'"[3] These works argued that Native studies should distance itself from ethnic studies (and presumably from Black studies by extension) because otherwise the field of ethnic studies would relegate Native peoples to a racial minority status rather than as peoples seeking decolonization. Cook-Lynn and Wheeler contended that engaging Native studies with ethnic studies, postcolonial studies, and so on, which do not share a concern for the liberation of Native peoples, could have the effect of domesticating Native studies into a multiculturalist project of representation within the academy instead of one that defended Native nations' claims to sovereignty. While there is much to be gained by tracing the genealogy of Native studies through these works, how does this genealogy presume that Black studies (or ethnic studies generally speaking) is fundamentally about articulating a racial minority status? Or we could center the work of Lee Maracle and Roberto Mendoza who argued that Native people and Native studies needed to be in conversation with radical political thought emerging from all sectors of society.[4] Such a genealogy would more easily enable a conversation between Native studies and other fields of thought. At the same time, their work often presumed a more Marxist

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framework as the point of conversation between Native studies and other fields. Thus, we wonder what might be enabled differently from a conversation that began from different theoretical assumptions? The point here is not to disparage the importance of these works. Rather, it is to say that to delimit the fields of Native studies and Black studies is to delimit the possibilities of conversations between the two. And to have this conversation is to simultaneously open up what the fields of Native studies and Black studies can be.

Similarly, mapping genealogies of Black studies might also work to stifle emergent, lesser known, and otherwise conversations between the two fields. For one, the task of periodizing the field and charting its geographic coordinates is already a contested project. Further, attending to how multiple forms and practices of Black study have turned their scholarly attention to Indigenous peoples might privilege some forms of knowledge production and their political projects over others. The aforementioned project requires a project of its own. For example, Arika Easley-Houser examines antebellum African American print culture (newspapers, political speeches, David Walker's *Appeal*) in order to track the ways African American writers thought and talked about Native Americans in the nineteenth century.[5] Easley-Houser argues that several different political projects, ranging from ones that sought alliances with Native peoples to comparative projects that tried to prove African American superiority to Native peoples and even investigations of Native practices of enslavement, motivated Black nineteenth-century writing on Native peoples.[6] Shortly after founding the Association for the Study of African American Life and History in 1915, Carter G. Woodson authored the article "The Relations of Negroes and Indians in Massachusetts" in 1920 in the *Journal of Negro History*. Throughout the twentieth century there were intermittent attempts on the part of Black individuals and institutions to document and study Black and Native histories and exchanges in America.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, militant anti-imperialist and anticapitalist activism animated by the Black Power movement in the US and Third World internationalism birthed the first Black studies programs. The strong ties between Black activism and the development of academic departments created fertile ground for conversations between Black and Native scholars and activists. Revisiting Black, Native, and ethnic studies' radical roots encourages a commemoration of histories of solidarity and shared struggle while it also exposes the pressure that universities put on fields like Black studies to "define" itself and distinguish itself from other ethnic studies programs like Native studies. In 1974, Robert Allen wrote about the ways

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that Black studies and ethnic studies were being "counter-posed" and forced into an "antagonistic relationship" with one another in the academy.[7] While this genealogical approach thus far has limited itself to Black studies in the US, recounting this history helps expose the ways that the settler colonial university worked (and continues) to pit fields like Black and Native studies against one another and prevent generative dialogue.[8]

After the establishment of Black studies departments, a noticeable uptick in scholarship by Black scholars on Black and Native American relations emerged after Jack D. Forbes's book *Africans and Native Americans: The Language of Race and the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* was published in 1993. In the first decades of the twenty-first century, several Black historians (Sharon Holland; Barbara Krauthamer; Tiya Miles; Celia Naylor; Fay Yarborough) have written books dedicated to the study of Black and Indigenous people in the Southeastern United States. Scholars began to pay particular attention to the practice of slavery among the Five Civilized Tribes. In 2006, Tiya Miles and Sharon Holland coedited the anthology *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds: The African Diaspora in Indian Country*. The contributors to the collection used a variety of interdisciplinary methods and rooted their work in primary sources, archival records, and Black and Native literary traditions that told stories of Black and Native relations in North America. *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds* emerged around the same time that the emergent field of (white) settler colonial studies was beginning to take shape in Australia and would eventually gain currency in North America.

In the wake of Miles and Holland's *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds*, Frank B. Wilderson III authored one of the first interdisciplinary Black studies texts that introduced a theoretical frame for elaborating the complex structural and ontological—political, economic, and libidinal—positions of Black and Native people in the United States. While Wilderson's *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of US Antagonisms* (2010) represents an important intellectual moment and opening for a discussion of Black and Red relations, the book—and his writings of late—trouble the notion that Black and Indigenous people can be in coalition with one another or even communicate with one another within the terms and parameters of academic and humanist discourse. Calling attention to the problems of humanist frames of interpretation like sovereignty, land, coloniality, and decolonization, Wilderson and Jared Sexton continue to argue for incommensurability. While this political and ontological impasse continues to shape contemporary academic dialogue, Black studies projects in Canada

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and the Caribbean offer different points of engagement and itineraries for thinking about Black and Indigenous relations.

A Black studies' reading practice that also attends to African diaspora studies as they unfold in the Caribbean and South America has the conceptual space to acknowledge philosophical, literary, and historical traditions that can attend to histories of both enslavement and colonialism. Black and African diaspora scholarship that emerges from the Caribbean and Central and South America directly engages questions of coloniality from theoretical and experiential perspectives. For example, Sylvia Wynter's body of work that traces the "epistemic revolutions" of Western humanism attends to the ways that Blacks (Negroes) and Indigenous (Indios) are made and remade as a perpetual limit point or outside to the boundaries of Man across various colonial formations. Rinaldo Walcott's chapter in this collection draws on this Wynterian tradition in order to elaborate the ways that the Canadian nation-state's project of multiculturalism, which expands to incorporate modes of Indigenous representation into its notion of the human/Man, does so at the expense of Black subjects in Canada. Shona Jackson's book *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* interrogates the vestiges of humanist violence in the modernist onto-epistemology of labor as a civilizing and modernizing agent for Afro-descended creole subjects in the Caribbean.[9] The Hegelian and colonial holdover that valorizes labor traps Black subjects within limited notions of agency and emancipation as it erases Indigenous subjectivity in Guyana.

Wynter's critique of humanism and its systems of overrepresentation has functioned as a crucial pivot point in Black studies that has enabled some scholars to break up the theoretical impasse presented by Afro-pessimist scholars like Wilderson and Sexton. Wynter's attack on the foundations of humanism itself allow for the emergence of a shared critique to emerge between Black and Native studies. Scholar and coeditor Tiffany Lethabo King, who takes Wynter's lead in her own work and focuses on interrogating the invention of the human, finds that this mode of critique also functions as a space of convergence for the fields of Black and Native studies. Rather than focus on genealogies or origin stories, *Otherwise Worlds* hopes to model practices of reading and listening that create new possibilities for thinking of, caring for, and talking to one another.

One of the conversations that this book emerged from was the Otherwise Worlds conference held in 2015 at UC Riverside. That conference attempted to promote intellectual and political exchange between Native and Black studies by focusing on how the analytics of anti-Black racism intersect with

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the analytics of settler colonialism. Both Black studies and Native studies have rightfully pointed out the problematics of developing "people of color" or "ethnic studies" projects based on a politics of equivalence (i.e., this racial oppression is like or similar to slavery or Indigenous genocide). However, it is often the case that rejecting a politics of equivalence becomes equated with calls for political or intellectual isolation. Instead, this project proposed to explore the relationality between these forms of racisms and colonialisms as well as explore the political implications of these relationalities.

At the Otherwise Worlds conference, one of the participants, Jared Sexton, talked about the exchange between scholars from Black studies and Native studies as being an exercise in daring to engage and speak to one another as "amateurs" reading in each other's fields. The act of speaking and reading "across" difference without the pretense of knowing, having mastered, or being able to parrot the already accepted assumptions, tenets, and prescribed politics of each discipline produced a space where misreadings and presumptions could surface and be interrogated in earnest. In addition, the willingness to be amateurs enabled us to engage each other as we are, rather than as completely perfected political and intellectual beings such that the only response that becomes enabled is a rejection of readings that lack this perfection. Such an approach also focuses on an ongoing process of continuing engagement rather than a fixation on writing as a final product that can stand for all time.

The Otherwise Worlds conference was an effort toward this kind of continuing engagement that produced generative moments in which participants were forced to slow down, feel the implications of their gaps in knowledge, and acknowledge how a lack of knowledge, attention to, or sustained engagement with each other created moments of impasse and isolation. The initial participants in this conversation included Black and Native scholars, organizers, and cultural workers. Many of the contributors to this collection (Maile Arvin, Ashon Crawley, Marcus Briggs-Cloud, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Chad Benito Infante, Tiffany Lethabo King, Jared Sexton, Andrea Smith, and Rinaldo Walcott,) participated in and or attended the 2015 conference. While in one another's company, attendees of the conference were able to witness the ways that settler colonial and anti-Black violence had been able to mediate Black and Indigenous relations with one another. This violent form of mediation functioned to sequester Indigenous and Black communities, including Black and Indigenous scholars in the academy, in ways that facilitated a lack of contact, missed opportunities for intimacy, and the subsequent production of amateurs that misread and misunderstood

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one another. To date, the political stakes of issues like the nation, rights, and sovereignty are the contested terrain that continue to create friction between Black and Native communities. This tension becomes particularly acute when discussing the respective politics and platforms of redress as they are articulated by liberal and "leftist" Black and Native activists and movements. For example, Indigenous communities in North America and the Caribbean continue to critique centuries-old Black-led struggles for reparations. Black movements for reparations for slavery continue to elide the fact that reparations, particularly when compensation is configured as land, requires the further consolidation of the US settler nation and affirms its authority to redistribute wealth and "Native land" as it sees fit.[10] Liberal Black politics that do not call for a redistribution of wealth, land, and resources but simply ask for inclusion in the national body via "civil rights" have also posed a problem for Native communities and their struggles to have treaty rights and Indigenous self-determination honored. Black politics that do not contest the very existence and idea of the United States present themselves as antagonistic to Indigenous survival and sovereignty. On the other hand, Black abolitionist politics that propose a move away from the very idea of the nation critique Native nations and their movements for sovereignty as overly invested in international, Western, and humanist models of governance that make survival untenable for stateless and nationless Black diasporic peoples. Movements for treaty rights and sovereignty that require recognition from and broker deals with the anti-Black US settler nation and international bodies on a nation-to-nation basis undermine the humanity of stateless and nationless Black descendants of slaves who are not legible on these terms. Thus, conference attendees and participants were able to recognize moments when Native political and intellectual thought centered land, nation, and sovereignty in ways that alienated and could potentially harm Black people. The dialogue that unfolded at the conference also brought to the surface instances in which Black critiques of Native sovereignty conflated Native understandings of the self, community, land, and self-determination with settler epistemologies and ontologies of being, autonomy, and humanity.

While the tension produced by amateur readings of one another's thought was not resolved at the conference, the process and dialogue of talking directly to one another is continued in this collection. While at the Otherwise Worlds conference, we collectively decided that we need to talk to one another because Black and Native political projects that seek to grapple with the ongoing legacy and afterlife of slavery, genocide, and colonization by negotiating with violent settler states continue to enact their own forms of

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betrayal against the Black and Native people "cut out of the deal." Black and Native communities must talk about and come to terms with the reality that Black and Native collectives who negotiate their terms of survival with settler states are forced to compromise the well-being of the other. Further, what we really want to talk to each other about and through is that rather than seeking redress and healing through the settler state, Black and Native people need to think with one another about what healing and redress would look like on otherwise or decolonial and abolitionist terms. Consequently, this collection presumes that is important to have the difficult conversations and to hear things from each other that may sound very critical of the presumptions we deem essential to our intellectual and political projects of survival. The only way for these conflicts to not have the last word is to go through them rather than to avoid them so that otherwise relationalities can emerge.

In this collection, artists, activists, and scholars such as Jenell Navarro, Lindsay Nixon, Se' mana Thompson, J. Kameron Carter, Cedric Sunray, Sandra Harvey, Chris Finley, Kimberly Robertson, and Hotvlkuce Harjo join and extend the conversation in ways that were unanticipated and continue to create generative dislodgings and improvising that require a commitment and process of moving in relation to one another. And this processual approach allows room for polyvocality in the dialogues and readings since every amateur at the table does not need to be an academic. Thus, resisting pretense, we do not deploy this complexity as simply a theoretical exercise but as one that is pivotal for organizing, sustaining, and working toward a "consent not to be a single being."[11] As Fred Moten also asserts in regard to understanding the Black radical tradition, "[it] is not antifoundationalist but improvisatory of foundations."[12] Similarly, the amateur or processual mode of engaging Black and Indigenous relationality also turns toward improvising what the "foundations" of these relations might entail. *Otherwise: something or anything else; something to the contrary.*

Acknowledging the necessity of moving toward something to the contrary, this project recognizes the conceptual limits of knowledge production from within the academy. The very machinations of the academy reproduce liberal thought, politics, and desires. One of the tendencies within the academic industrial complex, especially for those in ethnic studies, is often an imperative to represent one's field or one's "community" in a generally positive manner. Further, there is an additional impulse within disciplines that profess to produce critical social theory to establish that their particular analysis of what they deem the social and attendant radical politics can accord them a form of vanguard status. Even knowledge produced at the very

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margins of the academy can be folded into (and it sometimes strives for incorporation into) the inventory of products and commodities, like "radical politics," that the university can co-opt and claim, as another engagement of possession, as its own. This anthology remains aware of and vigilant about the ways that the academic industrial complex benefits from and rewards disciplines for carving out unique, irreducible, and incommensurable spaces of knowledge production in order to ensure their value and continued existence within the university.

This tendency to position one's field, ontological position, politics, and modes of knowledge production as incommensurable can inadvertently work in tandem with the need to present one's "community" or field as a benefit-added to the market of ideas within the academic industrial complex. This phenomenon to represent one's field as an added value and commodity form makes sense for the academy where those invested in the academic industrial complex persistently render Native and Black studies illegitimate and under constant attack. At the same time, this approach is generally not all that helpful in terms of promoting healthy organizing since Native and Black communities have both obviously been impacted by five hundred plus years of white supremacy, anti-Black violence, settler colonialism, and genocide. When organizing, we have to create strategies with our communities as they actually are and not in the way we represent them in the academy. Because this project aspires to be more than a "theoretical exercise," the contributors to this anthology both reach outside of the academy and manipulate the protocols of academic knowledge production in order to move into a space of inquiry and engagement that is otherwise. Part of that process of moving into a space of inquiry and engagement that is something new requires squarely addressing racial hostility between Native and Black communities, but not in a blaming way, in order to acknowledge that no community has escaped the violence of white supremacy unscathed. We understand the work of holding space for otherwise listening and engaging between Native and Black studies as processual growing pains. As both fields of study have continued to reshape themselves in distinct ways over the last few decades, we see the constant need for recalibration to address the ongoing practices and logics of anti-Blackness and genocide. Because we position this relationality as inescapably processual where the work of generative recalibration has no presupposed endpoint, we also see these inquiries as meaningful growing pains—pains because these conversations and practices of listening can be difficult and challenging, yet generative and meaningful because they can simultaneously result in relationality building,

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hope, and joy. The engagement of deeper connections between Black and Native studies/peoples can be indications of the ongoing failures of white supremacy, anti-Blackness, and genocide and lead us to better modes of getting free. *Otherwise: in a different way or manner.*

Furthermore, there tends to be social, political, and cultural capital that is accrued by representing one's community as uniquely as possible. For instance, Native peoples often feel an obligation to represent themselves as the most unique in order to warrant necessary resources. In the ways that Native communities often feel compelled to make unique demands upon the state and be recognized by other oppressed communities, Black people must also establish a unique position, ethos, and orientation to the world. Even as Black abolition and Indigenous decolonization profess to claim a certain ability to resist or evade certain forms of recognition, since as Glen Sean Coulthard has shown that these politics of recognition uphold frameworks of accommodation, mutuality, and reciprocity that attempt to render invisible the crimes of the settler state, there are still claims being made to a certain form of "specialness."[13] While certainly there is distinctness and "specialness," there is also commonality that is part of everyday life in a settler state, or as Christina Sharpe has stated, the "quotidian disaster" of slavery and colonial violence spreads everywhere and the ruptures are ongoing.[14] Therefore, organizing requires us to address our full realities where we have uniqueness, along with commonality, in order to live against the constant disasters of settler colonialism and anti-Blackness. For instance, Native peoples go to stomp dances *and* to the grocery store to assert our many layers of life. Black people are constantly making and remaking forms of life, survivance, and joy in the face of anti-Black violence *and* also make regular trips to the grocery store. We need an otherwise relationality because ordinary folks do not have to be "special" to deserve liberation. *Otherwise: in all ways except the one mentioned.*

Moreover, the inability to really think through these relations negatively impacts Native and Black struggles. For example, Native struggles are not just impaired because of the lack of solidarity with Black struggles. Instead, in some of our experiences with organizing, Native peoples always expected and requested solidarity from Black organizations, and usually received it, but it rarely occurred to Native organizers that they should act in solidarity with Black struggles. The reason was that Native organizers tended to see themselves as disappearing and thus had no capacity to help anyone else. By seeing Native organizers as "disappearing," we ultimately rendered ourselves permanently politically ineffective and powerless. Native people's inability

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to imagine solidarity with Black organizations was premised on a foundation that ensured that genocide would have the last word, and thus the need for them to reimagine relations with Black liberation differently is necessary, not only because solidarity might be helpful, but because the status quo operates out of a liberation paradigm doomed to fail—another settler desire/dream. It is noteworthy that in Latin America, where Indigenous struggles tend not to operate out of a vanishing paradigm, it is much more common sense that Indigenous peoples do ally with Black struggles.

Black struggles' unique burden to abscond from its position as captive and in some contexts strive for independence as colonized subjects has granted it the capacity to critique racial capitalism, colonial domination, and Indigenous colonization. Global anti-Blackness maps the world as a field in which relations of Black captivity are always at play. While anti-Blackness is certainly a current state of the world, the everyday specificities of anti-Blackness, as well as the modes of resistance to it, need to be attended to in order to assess the living and breathing relations between Black and Indigenous peoples all over the globe and, more specifically, in the Americas. For example, as Charlene Carruthers concludes her book *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements*, she poses questions to Black activists about Indigenous people, the land, and the future of their movements:

> There are still deep questions to answer and much work to be done. What claim do Black Americans have to the land Native peoples call Turtle Island? What claim to Indigeneity? Our lineage goes back centuries to slavery and Africa and the Caribbean. Processes of colonization, forced migration, and enslavement have stripped us from our land, and we have always had to fight for it. It is anti-Black to say that after more than three hundred years of labor we have no claim to steward this land. Stewardship, not extractive ownership, should be our North Star.[15]

While Carruthers argues that the movement for Black Lives "must foster transformative conversations among Black folks and Native peoples," must the conversation happen on the terms of liberal discourses like labor?[16] Scholars in Black studies like Michelle Wright and Shona Jackson have critiqued the ways that Hegelian and Marxian notions of labor and laboring are forms of self-actualization that distinguish modern subjects from Indigenous people and animals. The language (of labor) and ontologies (laborer-human) that we have inherited from Western philosophy, as well as socialism and leftist labor movements, contain baggage that posits able-bodied and

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non-Indigenous workers as contributors to civilization and, therefore, as owners of the land. For example, in the Caribbean and contexts where Black and other racialized people have been able to struggle for and win possession of the "postcolonial" nation-state and the land, Indigenous people continue to struggle to bring attention to their experiences with colonization. Varying notions of Blackness and Black subjectivities necessarily have different relationships with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous struggles. A more sufficiently diasporic approach to Black studies can provide a more nuanced assessment of the asymmetries and contingencies that exist between Black and Native appeals to liberal humanist forms of recognition.

Borrowing from Frank Wilderson's imperative to disappear into Blackness and lose one's human coordinates, it seems that part of the relation is to see how current models of understanding the connections between settler colonialism and anti-Blackness still operate within human coordinates. But it seems that this relation demonstrates that we do not simply look at the connection between two prior givens, but that relation itself helps to constitute Blackness and Indigeneity. Thus, an exploration of Relation requires us to imagine what different kinds of ontological possibilities might exist outside the coordinates of settler, anti-Black ontology. For instance, many of the contributions in this book address the need to tend to nonhuman relationality since there are many ontologies beyond the human scope that constitute "all our relations." Many of the chapters, including those by Andrea Smith, Marcus Briggs-Cloud, Jenell Navarro, Kimberly Robertson, and Lindsay Nixon, incorporate kinship making with nonhuman ancestors and relatives. Thus, the intellectual solidarity this work aims to foster can find its coordinates in Black and Native peoples alongside relations with nonhuman entities such as plant, animal, and star relatives. *Otherwise: in other ways.*

Perhaps one way to think beyond the coordinates of settler, anti-Black modes of being is to actively create otherwise ontologies. Creating the beyond and the otherwise necessarily takes us to Native and Black joy. Many Native and Black artists have led the way in conjuring these productive and beautiful visualities and relations that imagine an existence outside of settler colonialism and the afterlife of slavery. The work of Wendy Red Star in her *Thunder Up Above* series, the mixed media art of Soraya Jean-Louise McElroy titled *Ancestral Alchemy*, musical contributions such as the *Halluci Nation* album by A Tribe Called Red or Amai Kuda and M1's song "We Can Do It (Dirty Money)," and the visual art of Charmaine Lurch all point to

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Indigenous and Black futures—or present futures—to reorder how we live with one another and the world: an otherwise world. Laura Harjo has theorized this more beautiful existence as "radical sovereignty," where we must ask pertinent questions to begin to pull together the future world. For instance, Harjo has moved past traditional geographers' approaches to "scale" by thinking of Indigenous futures as a scale, and "jumping scale" to arrive at a liberatory site/sight. She asks: "How do we imagine futurity and what kind of tools can we apply that invoke radical sovereignty, refuse settler colonial practices, while embracing Indigenous and Mvskoke ways of knowing, that decolonizes how we engage with community to create a trajectory that has a beautiful path to a lush place?"[17] Similarly, Katherine McKittrick writes of how Dionne Brand's poetics reminds her "that the earth is also skin and that a young girl can legitimately take possession of a street, or an entire city, albeit on different terms than we might be familiar with."[18] By considering our human capacity to create and conjure a better world into existence, we have the potentiality to reorder the coordinates of our lives. This in no way erases the historical and present realities of genocide and slavery, but instead seeks to *feel* where we come from to arrive at where we want to be, together. An otherwise world then, feels our histories as Dian Million has argued, in generative ways so that our affective dispositions are part of the liberation paradigm.[19] *Otherwise: if not, or else.*

Moreover, otherwise ontologies could be understood as disruptions in the abjection of Black and Indigenous peoples from the realm of the human. While we realize in very material ways the fact of Black and Indigenous death as expected within the structure of settler colonialism, we also place emphasis on the ways in which our existence as resistance intervenes in these daily expectations. To live an otherwise life, to assert an otherwise being, or to create an otherwise world is to invest in decolonization, as Frantz Fanon has asserted: "Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder."[20] And, this disordering, this otherwise-ing if you will, serves to contemplate what further death, devourment, or destruction awaits Native and Black peoples if settler colonialism remains intact. As such, otherwise ontologies are rooted in life, the simple capacity to breathe (Ashon Crawley) and be. But these ontologies do not end here. They strategically employ imagination to flee from the brutal confines of settler colonialism. In keeping with the indeterminacy and fugitivity of this project, the writings in this anthology engage multiple forms: from essays, to zines, to artwork, to recorded conversations, to blogs. These multiple genres seek to engage the imagination in this work by asking such important

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questions as the following: how do we pull better worlds into existence? How do we carefully tend to relationships between Native and Black communities that lead toward liberation? How do we guarantee an otherwise world for our children and their children?

The Thematics of Otherwise Worlds

The thematics of the collection are titled with Glissant's aforementioned understanding of Relation in mind—especially the notion that Relation is "boundless" and, therefore, "evades rest." While the sections of this book are "Boundless Bodies," "Boundless Ontologies," "Boundless Socialities," and "Boundless Kinship," we acknowledge much overlap throughout many of the distinct pieces, which we see as a thread of possibility for operationalizing boundless Relation.

In order to bring this otherwise collection into the fold of university publishing we have organized the chapters into loose thematic groupings. While we hope that this overview provides the reader with a sense of what conversations we thought were important at the time (the last five years), this attempt to connect, organize, or make certain discussions intelligible to those reading outside of or across the disciplines of Black and Native studies is not intended to be deterministic. We are not providing a road map on how to move through the collection or to give primacy to certain scholarly conversations and their groupings. Instead, we encourage you to read and meander through the collection as you are so moved.

Boundless Bodies

The first thematic in the collection is "Boundless Bodies." In this portion of the book you will find essays that assert various modes of corporeal fugitivity and understandings on how we might free the flesh from the constraints and violence of settler colonialism and anti-Blackness. For example, Ashon Crawley's essay frames the discussion by pointing to an otherwise possibility for bringing Native and Black studies into conversation. Crawley attends to the ways that Hortense Spillers's flesh, Sylvia Wynter's conceptual itineraries, and Alexander Weheliye's reading of Spillers and Wynter trouble "theological and philosophical modalities of thought." Moving with and from the flesh, Crawley provides a breathtaking account of how the flesh's capacity for "vibration" has the potential to unmoor violence and suffering as epistemic

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points of departure in Black studies. He further contends that an otherwise possibility forces us to be able to challenge the very conceptual categories by which we articulate ourselves and our bodies. As he states, "When we want to imagine *otherwise* possibilities—*otherwise* worlds—we must abolish the very conceptual frame that produces categorical distinction and makes them desirable; we have to abolish the modality of thought that *thinks* categorical distinction as maintainable."

Similarly, Denise Ferreira da Silva's essay carefully contours the process and ethics of "reading the dead" and recognizes the disruptions created by Black feminist poethical labor like Spillers's flesh. Ferreira da Silva's black feminist poethical contribution focuses on the "flesh" and elaborates the ways that poethics break up the spatiotemporality of Western epistemology (separability, sequentiality, determinacy) and philosophy. Using Karl Marx's inability to account for Black and Indigenous land, life, and labor in his theory and law of value as an example, Ferreira da Silva outlines how Black and Indigenous life become unimaginable within Western equations of value. Hence, the assignment of no value to Black and Indigenous life.

Frank Wilderson's and Tiffany Lethabo King's conversation serves as a model of Black study and engages themes of the Black body in pain as an object of study, the field of Native studies, Saidiya Hartman's legacy and circulation within Afro-pessimism, and Wilderson's germinal work *Red, White & Black*. During the conversation, Wilderson discusses his relationship to Native studies and politics as he wrote *Red, White & Black* and how it has changed since then. In the latter half of the conversation, King is forced to contend with Wilderson's change of mind and heart about the potential for the Native's "grammar of suffering" of genocide and the Black's "grammar of suffering "of fungibility to speak to one another. This conversation grapples with the ways intellectual and political investments, as well as disenchantments, shape the way that each scholar approaches the ethical question of honoring Black and Indigenous life. This dialogue also challenges us to speak the "unspeakable" because even when sharp critiques are difficult to hear and may be critiques with which many strongly disagree, they open the possibility of otherwise conversations in the future. All of these works provide a foundation to reframe the lived experiences of Blackness and indigeneity as articulated in the other essays of the book. For instance, while Chris Finley's, Andrea Smith's, and Marcus Briggs-Cloud's essays in this volume speak to the foundational importance of land for Indigenous life, they articulate this importance in an otherwise manner—by not foreclosing what we understand "land" to be.

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Boundless Ontologies

The second section of the collection is "Boundless Ontologies," which highlights several essays that focus on the ontological status of Blackness and Indigeneity. For instance, Tiffany Lethabo King's 2016 article "New World Grammars" attempts a conceptual return to conquest. King argues that prior to the advent of white settler colonial studies, Native and Black studies shared the lingua franca of conquest. Conquest as a conceptual and dialogic space enables an interrogation of the violence of genocide and slavery that white settler colonial studies avoids. King argues that Black and Native studies' sustained attention to the anti-Indigenous and anti-Black violence required to make the human grapples with everyday violence and creates the ground for a more ethical encounter between Black and Native scholarly and political projects.

Jared Sexton's 2014 article "The *Vel* of Slavery" takes up settler colonial studies' and Native studies' articulations of injury and loss—loss of land and the political goals of recuperation. Through an interrogation of the political goal and horizon of decolonization and Indigenous sovereignty, Sexton argues that Indigenous and settler colonial studies remain animated by a desire for "resurgence, recovery, and recuperation." Sexton argues that the politics of abolition, specifically "degeneration, decline, and dissolution," pulls away from and radicalizes some of the central claims of decolonization. Black impulses toward abolition lead us to a "baseless" form of politics that assumes "nothing for no one."

Inspired by Wilderson's and Sexton's call to mediate on the ontological status of indigeneity, Andrea Smith contends that slavery cannot be equated with "stolen labor" and similarly that colonization cannot be equated with "stolen land." She argues that the Indigenous marks the creation of the division between the living and the dead or between the human and the nonhuman. Hence, colonization is not simply about stolen land, but about the creation of something called land that can then be stolen. She further suggests that Indigenous genocide works then through a synthesis of operations involving a disappearance of some into Blackness and some into whiteness. The disappearance of Native peoples into Blackness operationally disappears their disappearance, and it functions simultaneously with Indigenous disappearance into whiteness by making a disappearance into whiteness seem like a desirable goal.

Also building on the work of Wilderson, who argues in *Red, White & Black* that there is a "network of connections, transfers, and displacements between a genocided thing and a fungible and accumulated thing," Chad

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Benito Infante contends that there is paradigmatic intimacy between Blackness and Indianness through the lens of "the abject non-being of Black and Indian life-in-death that enables the (white) world." While focusing on violence, Infante takes a route less traveled or perhaps even unspeakable for some. In particular, he reworks James Baldwin's notion of "cool fratricide" as a heuristic to read "literary representations of vengeance"—or retributive violence against whiteness—in Black and Indigenous literature. For Infante, the possibility of the death of whiteness becomes a metaphysical bridge between Blackness and Indianness.

J. Kameron Carter similarly takes up the theme of whiteness as about the propertization of the Earth. In conversation with Ashon Crawley, Carter calls for a praxis of political and theological malpractice that challenges the "presumption of the givenness of the state as telos of society or social order." He contends that Blackness, as fundamentally beyond property, and its critique provide the foundation for what he terms Black malpractice, the antidote to settlerism and possibility for the creation of an otherwise world. Thus, while Black studies is often positioned in an orthogonal relationship to settler colonial studies, Carter suggests that the Black radical tradition provides a critical vantage point for decolonization. Thus, while Sexton's and Wilderson's critique of Native studies suggests that a land-centered approach within Native studies requires the speaking subject that depends on anti-Blackness, both Andrea Smith's and J. Kameron Carter's work suggest alternative articulations of land that create different possibilities for Native and Black studies, respectively.

As Winona LaDuke has argued, Indigenous relationship to land is not exclusive, although it is often presumed to be.[21] Consequently, she suggests that Native peoples' connection to land opens the possibility of relationality with all peoples rather than the vantage point by which to invest in an anti-Black quest for humanity. Thus, if Sexton and Wilderson suggest a politics without a demand requiring the loss of human coordinates, and if Silva suggests in this volume a reading of the dead that shows a different articulation of the "human" altogether, Native studies scholars in this volume point to land, not as that which establishes humanity, but as that which reconfigures what that means altogether.

Boundless Socialities

The third section of the book brings together many perspectives on Black and Indigenous sociality. As Fred Moten has argued, the attack on Black lives cannot be separated from the attack on Black *life*—Black sociality in all

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its vibrant formations. And, as referenced earlier in the collection in the conversation between Wilderson and King, the conversations between Native and Black studies are grounded in the daily realities of conflicts, tensions, and debates between Black and Native communities where our social lives are played out. Thus, this section provides space for "Boundless Socialities" to be written.

Maile Arvin analyzes the connections between anti-Blackness and settler colonialism in the colonization of Polynesia. She notes that anti-Blackness is an ordering logic of colonialism that demarcated Melanesian (Black) from Polynesian (almost white) identity. While this demarcation marks Melanesians as beyond salvation, Arvin notes that Polynesian proximity to whiteness serves the purpose of allowing whiteness to possess Indigeneity and thus lay claim to all that is Indigenous, which includes all forms of Indigenous sociality.

Sandra Harvey elegantly focuses on and parses how the production and surveillance of Black bodies, blood, and Blackness as fixed to slavery emerged alongside of and through Choctaw land allotment policies. Harvey scrutinizes the way that colonial archival power stages modern and "scientific" and cultural knowledge about the body, blood, race, and even language in the very organization of the National Archive's physical structure, the organization and storage of files, and even in the process of conducting interviews. Tracking the way archival power colludes in the emergence of the distinct racial logics of indigeneity and Blackness, Harvey argues that the archives are also complicit in surveilling Black people as attempts to pass out of Blackness or the state of enslavement. Specifically, she shows us that the National Archive, like other state entities, seeks to surveil and suppress Black socialities.

Informed by a similar archive as Harvey, Cedric Sunray reads his own embodiment as well as other white-passing Indigenous people in the context of the identity policing that occurs within the various Indigenous people's tribal politics of "who belongs" as a manifestation of anti-Blackness. Using archival materials from tribal newspapers and interviews that discuss the 2000 census, he tracks the ways that discussions of identity often work to displace nonwhite-passing and Black Indigenous peoples. As with Harvey, Sunray further tracks the anti-Blackness within the federal recognition process, and critiques identity policing within Native communities as essentially an anti-Black project.

However, as Marcus Briggs-Cloud's work suggests, Native communities, while complicit in anti-Blackness, are also constructed through Indigenous

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cosmologies and epistemologies that deconstruct anti-Blackness as well. He argues that anti-Blackness becomes present within Mvskoke communities at the moment when English becomes the means of communication over the Mvskoke language. Essentially, he argues, it is not possible to be anti-Black within the Mvskoke language. It is not until the English language allows for the possibility that the Earth, as well as some of Earth's peoples, can be understood as property that anti-Blackness can even be intelligible. His work echoes the scholarship of Leanne Simpson, whose work suggests that Indigenous freedom is based less on control of land as it is based on the love of land and all of creation, or what she describes as "connectivity based on the sanctity of the land, the love we have for our families, our language, our way of life. It is relationships based on deep reciprocity, respect, noninterference, self-determination and freedom."[22] Guided by this sense of decolonial love, Briggs-Cloud's essay suggests that Indigenous cosmologies could be a place through which Native peoples can rearticulate their relationship to Blackness that is consistent with precolonial Indigenous values.

Boundless socialities are also visualized in the artwork by Hotvlkuce Harjo. Harjo's generative work on southeastern tattoo revitalization, especially for southeastern women, asserts a Native feminist refusal of societal erasure. Their piece in this collection titled *Mississippian Black Metal Grl on a Friday Night* imagines otherwise ways to uphold traditional tattooing since their images beautifully blur any linear notion of time. Thus, Harjo's representation of time produces images that maintain a present future for southeastern women and their kin.

Boundless Kinship

While the relationship between Native and Black communities can be one of contestation and conflict, several authors and artists point to the otherwise possibilities of relationality between Blackness and Indigeneity. The fourth section of this book, "Boundless Kinship," aims to place essays and artworks together that recognize no restrictions on how Black and Indigenous peoples form kinship with one another. The work of Jenell Navarro and Kimberly Robertson points out the promise of what they term "radical kinship"—a way of realizing otherwise relationality and privileging Indigenous and Black women as conjurers of beauty, joy, and life. By reading relationality in Beyoncé's work, they posit a (re)indigenizing of kinship practices, even those between human and nonhuman subjects. Ultimately, these authors configure the inner and spiritual lives of Black and Indigenous

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women as a potent source of our fierce and glorious liberation. In tandem, the serigraph included by Robertson titled *Slay* provides a visual reality of Native feminist art and what actually must be "slayed" (settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, capitalist bullshit) to realize this dream of relationality or radical kinship.

Furthermore, Jenell Navarro and Kimberly Robertson provide an example of how to engage Indigenous and Black activism through art. In collaboration with JusticeLA they created a jailbed beaded in the colors of the four directions to call attention to the disproportionate incarceration of Native peoples in Los Angeles, California, and beyond. There were about fifty jailbeds dropped throughout Los Angeles County on Christmas Eve 2017, many of which called specific attention to the violent incarceration of Black folks as well. Navarro and Robertson's jailbed was dropped in front of the Walt Disney Concert Hall, a site in Los Angeles where Native slaves were once sold on the auction block in Los Angeles. This type of artivism provides a relational antidote to the academic industrial complex and its limiting modes of resistance to the prison system and calls attention to the need to undo all forms of Black and Native confinement in order to make an otherwise world possible.

Working on boundless kinship through art as well, Se'mana Thompson's zine covers from *Queer Indigenous Girl,* Volume 4, and *Black Indigenous Boy,* Volume 2, illustrate what Lindsay Nixon's chapter describes as "speculative visualities," which is an "artistic and aesthetic framework that projects Indigenous life into the future imaginary, subverting the death imaginary ascribed to Indigenous bodies within settler colonial discourse." As Thompson's artworks and Nixon's essay show, Indigenous and Black folks have already experienced the apocalypse, and now we must figure out how to coordinate love and kinship back into our lives to reorder all our relations with the entire biosphere. All of these works demonstrate what Michelle Jacob terms a Native feminist "decolonizing praxis" for building a future beyond genocide.[23]

Rinaldo Walcott sees possibilities in articulating the relationship between the colonization of Indigenous peoples and the creation of Black nonpersonhood. He contends that the engagement of Black diaspora studies with Indigenous studies highlights the fact that "the nation-state provides ethnocultural identities as the basis of an imagined care for the self that always seems to fall short of full human status and expression." This exchange then requires, not the reification of Black and Indigenous identity, but to recognize Indigeneity as a process that can lead to the creation of a "*pure decolonial*

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project [that] works the ruins of catastrophe to produce more hopeful tales of our present human intimacies and allow[s] the opportunity to reimagine the self anew again." Chris Finley similarly suggests that love and kinship are possible through the creation of what she terms "maroon communities," building on the work of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney. She contends that the insistence on absolute difference in Native, Black, and ethnic studies is at least in part due to the demands of the academic industrial complex, which requires the creation of academic territoriality to sustain itself. She asks, what would have to be abandoned to see not only difference, but togetherness and possibility? Thus, kinship is inclusive in its modes of togetherness when she states, "I'm talking about a deep way of being together. A place where we see the brokenness as a method of relatedness instead of seeking wholeness through comparison and loss."

While again we do not believe any of these authors or artists is attempting to prescribe fixed answers to the ongoings of settler colonialism and anti-Blackness in our world, we do see beautiful gestures of pushing the conversations around Black and Indigenous relations throughout the collection as new turns that hold promise for realizing the otherwise worlds of Black and Indigenous futures—futures realizable in our present lives. Ultimately, we ponder in this collection some of these questions: What can we offer one another to build Relation against all the anti-Black and anti-Indigenous antagonisms on our world? Must we continue to wait to hold space and conversations with one another, or can we just come together as "amateurs"? How can we build Black and Indigenous lifeways that are joyfully unbound and purposefully evade rest/stagnation/fixation? We invite you to continue to add inquiries to this list and think collectively about what an otherwise existence between Black and Indigenous peoples/studies could look like.

Notes

1 Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1989), 172.

2 Antonio Viego, *Dead Subjects: Toward a Politics of Loss in Latino Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

3 Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "Who Stole Native American Studies," *Wicazo Sa Review* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1997), and Winona Stevenson, "'Ethnic' Assimilates 'Indigenous': A Study in Intellectual Neocolonialism," *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 1 (1998).

4 Lee Maracle, *I Am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* (London: Global Professional Publishing, 1996); Roberto Mendoza, *Look!*

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A Nation Is Coming (Philadelphia: National Organization for an American Revolution, 1984).

5 Arika Easley-Houser, "The Indian Image in the Black Mind: Representing Native Americans in Antebellum African American Public Culture," PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2014.

6 Easley-Houser, "Indian Image in the Black Mind."

7 Robert L. Allen, "Politics of the Attack on Black Studies," *Black Scholar* 6, no. 1 (1974): 2–7.

8 The attempts by US universities to pit Black and Native studies against one another and frustrate attempts at interdisciplinary dialogue should be acknowledged, particularly in the face of contemporary celebrations of the field of white settler colonial studies and its new interest in anti-Blackness and settler colonialism. White settler colonial studies has been largely rewarded for its recent interest in comparative and cross-disciplinary work as it attempts to think about Blackness and Indigeneity simultaneously.

9 Shona N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

10 In the twenty-first century, the movement for reparations led by American Descendants of Slavery (referred to as #ADOS on social media platforms and YouTube) has been reinvigorated. Unlike its predecessor, the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America, which reached its apex in the 1990s, the American Descendants of Slavery movement focuses on the particular plight and justice claims of African Americans (Black people descended from people enslaved in the US rather than all African diasporic descendants of slaves) as citizens who need to be made whole or full US citizens through reparations. According to its founders, Yvette Carnell and Antonio Brown, this twenty-first-century movement for reparations seeks the full inclusion of African Americans into the "wealthiest nation in the world." See "Plantation Dynasties and the Bottom Caste of ADOS," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6m4Pe9j4qw. Rather than a call to bankrupt or undo the nation through reparations—and the redistribution of wealth, land, and resources—the American Descendants of Slavery movement for reparations seeks to share the wealth with the US settler nation.

11 Fred Moten, *Black and Blur*, vol. 1 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), Winona Stevenson, "'Ethnic' Assimilates 'Indigenous': A Study in Intellectual Neocolonialism," *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 1 (1998). Stevenson now publishes under the name Winona Wheeler.

12 Moten, *Black and Blur*, 13.

13 Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

14 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 14.

15 Charlene Carruthers, *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements* (New York: Beacon Press, 2018), 136–137.

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16 Carruthers, *Unapologetic*, 137.
17 Laura Harjo, *Spiral to the Stars* (Tempe: University of Arizona Press, 2018).
18 Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), ix.
19 Dian Million, *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights* (Tempe: University of Arizona Press, 2013).
20 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 35.
21 Winona LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2005), 8.
22 Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).
23 Michelle M. Jacob, *Yakama Rising: Indigenous Cultural Revitalization, Activism, and Healing* (Tempe: University of Arizona Press, 2013), 109.

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