

Conclusion: Empire, Settler Colonialism, and Grounded Solidarities

The counterrevolution, feeding itself on the fears, ignorance, and deep-seated racism of the white workers and middle classes, and with millions of dollars at its disposal, can come to power almost overnight. The revolution needs time and patience to escalate the struggle and vision of the revolutionary forces to the point of no return.

James Boggs, *Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party*, 226

Democracy and Empire theorizes the material dependence of popular sovereignty and self-determination on the labor of racialized others, appropriated in conjunction with nature. The book contests the theorization of popular sovereignty in exclusively domestic terms by tracing the violent roots of the common wealth distributed among members of privileged collectives, a wealth that depends on the destruction of other peoples' collective projects, social reproduction capabilities, and community/family worlds. I reconstruct these features of popular sovereignty by tracing their entanglement with capitalism and empire, and theorize further the complex, contingent, but nonetheless structural racial formations and institutions through which privileged peoples rule over racial others and make their labor and land available for accumulation. I pay particular attention to moments of transition, in which the emancipation of white workers results in the fastening of racial rule to ensure the abundance of resources to satisfy their demands, as well as access by this group to land to settle, which depends on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the forced labor of Black and brown groups, whose fates intersect and mutually influence each other.

Democracy and Empire makes a case for theorizing together concepts and institutional orderings often studied in isolation, including the imperial government of mobility, immigration regulations of self-governing states, conquest, modernizing projects in the Third World, the racialization of kinship, and militarized surveillance of migrants. These processes have in common that they successfully segregate workers and create vulnerable populations for expropriative labor conditions. These workers are conscripted to work on expropriated nature in ways that are justified through racial ideologies that locate western societies atop the technological frontier, construct nonwhite peoples as naturally confined to dirty and strenuous work performed close to nature, and posit nature as an expendable and inert resource, existing only to be utilized and mastered by machinery. These forms of subjection were entailed by collective political projects led by the demands of white working classes for enfranchisement and of middle classes for upward mobility and a privatized family life. These trends gave popular sovereignty particular meanings and made self-determination into self-*and-other*-determination. The affective attachments and forms of rule that accompanied this trajectory reverberate in the reactionary forces gaining ground in the Anglo-European world today, a world still characterized by a racially unequal distribution of freedom and material benefits and dependent on nature and racial others globally.

In response to this diagnosis, the last substantive chapter interrogates the emancipatory remainders of popular sovereignty. It asks: if popular claims have historically involved a claim to appropriate resources that depend on the destructive treatment of racialized others and the land on which they dwell, what alternative collective claims for emancipation can be envisioned to eschew this dark side? King's "Beyond Vietnam" suggests that peoples (and theorists of popular sovereignty) need to grapple with the global exploitation and expropriation they authorize, and that its legitimacy depends on actively contesting projects of domination led by Western elites that coopt and shield oligarchs in the postcolonial world from radical anti-colonial democratic politics. If politics do not decidedly position themselves behind anti-colonial revolutionaries, they risk debasing their own ties of solidarity, making them "brutal," in King's words. Fanon's concern with the national consciousness of peoples in the postcolonial world joins King's call by explicitly singling out both colonial powers and coopted postcolonial elites as the strongest obstacles to deep democratization in these regions. Hence, reading King and Fanon together gives us an account of symbiotic imperial oligarchies who rely on state violence to lay the groundwork for capitalist accumulation,

stunting nonpossessive and solidaristic formations of the people who could have found common cause. The emancipation Fanon and King put forward to counter these alliances depend on a clear-headed understanding of peoples' positionality within global systems of oppression and the demands posed by the historical trajectory in which they find themselves.

The anti-imperial popular sovereignty that emerges from the joint reading of King and Fanon suggests the possibility of political kinship between differently located subjects who recognize and oppose a racial and capitalist project of accumulation supported by colonial and neocolonial relations of land dispossession and natural and human resource extraction. Few areas within political theory have been more active in theorizing relationality and difference within solidaristic relations than Indigenous political thought. Because of this, and because the political relations I theorize occur *on* settled land as the ground where the connected trajectories of mobility and domination of differently racialized groups occur, this conclusion turns toward Indigenous political thought to further flesh out a politics of solidarity that can face such oppressive structures. In so doing, my goal is to avoid what Max Liboiron (Red River Métis/Michif), following Unanga scholar Eve Tuck, calls "extractive readings," which look for material to use, unidirectionally. Instead, this is an effort to engage the field of Indigenous political thought humbly, without the pretense of mastering this broad and dynamic area,¹ and with a recognition of my indebtedness to the richness of their ethical accounts, critical assessments, and contestatory action. The insights I incorporate, moreover, both echo and occasionally challenge the framings the book puts forward, a productive and reciprocal tension that performs the very account of solidarity I construct with their help.

A core tension emerges when Indigenous political thought is read alongside popular sovereignty to theorize solidarity. The notions of popular sovereignty that have been theorized and criticized in *Democracy and Empire* for their imperial indebtedness presuppose a territory (i.e., the stolen land) and the definition of a people, even if iteratively and never unproblematically so. The demands of white settlers and the exclusions

¹ Liboiron, *Pollution Is Colonialism*, 35, Eve Tuck, "To Watch the White Settlers Sift through Our Work as They Ask, 'Isn't There More for Me Here?'," in @tuckeve, ed. Eve Tuck (Twitter, 2017). On reading humbly across fields, I follow Jared Sexton's account of "amateur" exchanges between Black and Native studies, as recounted in Tiffany Lethabo King, Jennell Navarro, and Andrea Smith, "Introduction: Beyond Incommensurability: Toward an Otherwise Stance on Black and Indigenous Relationality," in *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness*, ed. Tiffany Lethabo King, Jennell Navarro, and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 6.

of Black subjects and brown migrants take *place* in this space. Moreover, this grounded imperial people launches further claims on faraway lands and peoples' labor to obtain resources through force and distribute them at home, as Chapters 1 and 4 make clear. While King's critique of imperial popular sovereignty leaves out the settler colonial project to focus on class, racial, and global injustice, Black thinkers who were his contemporaries, such as James Boggs, open avenues for theorizing differentiated injustices, as does Fanon's own analysis of colonial space.² Boggs connects the prosperity of British America with the captivity of Black people, but further notes that this system was grounded in land "taken from the Indians," making all sections of the United States a party to defrauding Indigenous peoples or enslaving Black people.³ Fanon sees the violence of French colonization in Algeria in the *spatial* immediacy of empire, which collapses the geospatiality of the metropole and the colony in place and time.⁴ Rephrased, this means that, in settler colonies, on the very same land, one finds "white immunity and racialized violation, non-Native desires for freedom, Black life, and Indigenous relations."⁵

Engaging with Indigenous political thought allows for further theorization of these multiple positionalities, which include Indigenous, settler, slave, forced refugee, diaspora settler, migrant settler, and other statuses.⁶ These multiple statuses do not make the constitution of a people impossible but instead orient us to make the interrelations between these subjects the core of the "whole" that we should conceptualize. These interrelations include the widespread use of military force to both dispossess and exploit labor and land overseas and clear land domestically, or the use of similar mechanisms of confinement, forced labor, and destruction of kinship to target differently racialized groups in the metropole (Chapter 3). Chapter 4's Duboisian account of the subjection of land and labor in the colonies, upended by global integration into capitalist circuits of global

² Boggs, "Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party," 202.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Allison Guess Eve Tuck, and Hannah Sultan, "Not Nowhere: Collaborating on Selfsame Land," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society* June 26 (2014), Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), all cited in la paperson, *A Third University Is Possible* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2017), 3, 6–7.

⁵ paperson, *A Third University Is Possible*, 3.

⁶ Byrd, "Weather with You: Settler Colonialism, Antiracism, and the Grounded Relationalities of Resistance," 209, Candace Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai'i* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 14, paperson, *A Third University Is Possible*, 8–10.

accumulation, echoes how Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg thinker Leanne Simpson frames the interrelation between land and bodies upended by settler colonialism.⁷ If, for Simpson, subjects in settler space are “always already simultaneously positioned as both subjugated by settler state power and as settlers who often unwittingly support the state,”⁸ this book extends the spatial realm to consider the defrauding and devastation of overseas peoples, adding to the positionalities and interrelations inaugurated by the redirection of societies toward capital accumulation for the benefit of the metropolises.

To theorize popular sovereignty in this complex picture that maps waves of enrichment, oppression, dispossession, and partial emancipation across the globe, it is inadequate to center a collective defined by a common belonging and those demanding inclusion. It is instead necessary to trace a collective whose different belongings, trajectories, and struggles for emancipation overlap, bend, and spread out like the waves I referenced in opening this book. Another natural metaphor orients Potawatomi botanist Robin Kimmerer in her effort to face this quandary by focusing on a “round-leafed plant” that arrived with the first settlers and followed them wherever they went.⁹ With time, the gifts of this plant became clear: it could be cooked and eaten, the leaves could be made into a poultice to use as first aid for cuts, burns, and insect bites, and the seeds made good digestive medicine. While it is not possible to “become indigenous,” this plant, for Kimmerer, “became naturalized to place” by giving gifts and meeting its responsibilities.¹⁰ Thus, it is indeed possible to become *naturalized* to place: it requires contributing and taking responsibility in return for the provision of food by the land and the drinking water provided by the streams, both of which build one’s body and nurture one’s spirit.¹¹ This applies both to us as subjects that inhabit a place and to ecological relations that operate at the global level, which may be oriented toward giving and responsibility or may reproduce settler logics by consuming land and natural resources without concern for their regeneration or the deprivation of natives.

⁷ *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 43.

⁸ Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai’i*, 14.

⁹ Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013), 214.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 214–15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 214.

This discussion suggests that the problem with popular sovereignty as currently theorized is that it assumes both too much and too little. It assumes too much by taking for granted that the ground on which politics take place and the ground from which the wealth is obtained are not themselves a matter for interrogation. This means that popular sovereignty disavows its founding and continuous dependence on stolen land and wealth extracted from land and labor abroad, even though they are its conditions of possibility. But popular sovereignty also assumes too little by restricting its concern to the people, rather than interrogating how the people themselves are sustained, their lives made possible, and their societies shaped by the land, the water, the animals, and the wind that surround them.¹² In this sense, popular sovereignty is “forged *on* the land, not *with* the land,” a distinction introduced by White Earth Ojibwe scholar Winona LaDuke that has important political and conceptual implications.¹³

ECOLOGICAL POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY AND THE UNDOING OF ITS IMPERIAL AVATAR

The narrowing of popular sovereignty to “the people” excludes recognition of the dependence on nature that must be reciprocated. This recognition is blocked by the enchantment with technology and the myths of superiority and self-sufficiency it engenders, described in Chapter 4. The alienation that follows from this process blocks the potential for reciprocity because it depoliticizes nature as primitive and unsophisticated, a characterization that extends to the racialized laborers who work the land and justifies their devaluation. In contrast, an account of popular sovereignty that politicizes the relation to the occupied ground, its natural riches, and its inhabitants allows us to judge politically the behavior of newcomers or existing actors within communities: do they become naturalized or do they conquer, dispossess, and lay waste by overexploiting both the land and the labor of those they encounter? Do visitors aim to exchange fairly and reciprocally, and make sure to leave enough or produce anew for those who *are* indigenous to place? Or do they over-exploit and transform “wastelands” into cropland to fulfill their needs while imperiling the ways of life and subsistence of the natives?

¹² See, however, Paulina Ochoa Espejo’s recent work, which considers territories as watersheds, i.e., systems where institutions, people, the biota, and the land are interrelated and create civic duties that are overlapping, *On Borders: Territories, Legitimacy, and the Rights of Place* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹³ LaDuke, “Natural to Synthetic and Back Again,” ii.

This new construct, an *ecological* popular sovereignty, corrects the narrowness of popular sovereignty by recognizing the essential dependence of communities on nature, requiring relations of reciprocity toward nature, and caring for it by giving, sustaining, and regenerating it. Moreover, joining *anti-imperial* and *ecological* as modifiers of popular sovereignty finally allows for the theorization of this concept without disavowing or actively obscuring its material underpinnings. In particular, this way of theorizing popular sovereignty shifts the meaning of settler from an identity to a way of relating to other humans and to land,¹⁴ and provides parameters for evaluating political action for their (in)justice implications. It allows us to judge politically the act and quality of “settling” into a land, the underpinnings of our wellbeing and enjoyment of material and symbolic goods, and the character of the exchanges into which we enter. This kind of political judgement underlies Charlene Carruthers’s claim that “after more than three hundred years of labor” Black groups have a claim to steward US land, but not to extractive ownership.¹⁵ Stewardship of land figures as well in Winona LaDuke’s (White Earth Ojibwe) account of Indigenous relationship to land as open to “the possibility of relationality with all peoples,” rather than exclusive.¹⁶ This is consonant with Rob Nichols’s account of Indigenous peoples’ claim that the earth, which was stolen from them through the establishment of property, “belongs to no one in particular.” This because the act of stealing Indigenous land replaced the relationality between humans and the earth with control over “all objects and activities within that zone.”¹⁷ In contrast to this model of control, an ecological popular sovereignty that scrutinizes the forms of relationality underpinning its politics obtains through a solidaristic joining of wills to become naturalized to place wherever one goes, temporarily or permanently.

This work of scrutiny is also required to undo the racial constructions which determine what we see and what is occluded, and what power is able to do to subjects, making the dismantling of racial ideologies necessary for the undoing of settler occupation and the regeneration of land-based relations. Settler forms locate Indigenous peoples, slaves,

¹⁴ Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai'i*, 15, paperson, *A Third University Is Possible*, 14.

¹⁵ Charlene Carruthers, *Unapologetic: A Black, Queer, and Feminist Mandate for Radical Movements* (New York: Beacon Press, 2018), 136–37.

¹⁶ Winona LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2005), 8, in King, Navarro, and Smith, “Introduction: Beyond Incommensurability: Toward an Otherwise Stance on Black and Indigenous Relationality.”

¹⁷ Nichols, *Theft Is Property!: Dispossession and Critical Theory*, 31, 115.

forced diasporic settlers, and refugees in situations of anti-relationality that intensify the control of nature and its destructive use. But these interconnected forms of subjection can also lead to coalitions in opposition to extraction and the assimilation of land and humans to the goal of capitalist extraction.¹⁸

This brief discussion already opens new paths for thinking about a *we* that overcomes the trappings of imperial popular sovereignty. This *we* is constructed by tracing how particularly located subjects are imbricated in violent systems of settler or extractive colonial relations in “profoundly uneven and often complicit” ways.¹⁹ This work of clarification is at once the process of construction of a people, one composed of various groups that have been displaced, segregated, conscripted, bribed into compliance, and fastened to these roles and places through myth. This people constructs itself by re-cognizing its place and role in the imperial machinery and its capitalist goals of accumulation, without seeking salvation in assimilation or becoming blinded to solidarity with others by the morbid desire to partake of imperial wealth.

In this process of re-cognition and exchange, common imperial technologies are discovered, including the shared techniques of confinement of Indigenous peoples, Japanese-American, and Central American refugees, as well as the space of the Indigenous, Black, and Latino family as a site of intervention that facilitates accumulation and consolidates the white privatized family, both by making possible its social reproduction and by providing an opposition by which to define its normative shape. The stolen land paradigmatic of Indigenous dispossession reappears in the uprooting of Africans from their land and their trafficking as slaves; in the use of Black women’s bodies as land marked for settlement, industry, and waste; in the transformation of proletarian women into “basic means of reproduction” to make up for men’s land lost to the enclosures;²⁰ and in the land dispossession of Indigenous peasants in Mesoamerica, sent north to assimilate and bring back the “modernity” of settler colonial society. These joint readings make it apparent that the delimitation of Black political thought from Indigenous political

¹⁸ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, 75.

¹⁹ Michelle Murphy, “Against Population, Towards Alterlife,” in *Making Kin Not Population*, ed. Adele E. Clarke and Donna Jeanne Haraway (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2018), 120.

²⁰ See Chapter 3 and Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” 73, Tiffany Lethabo King, “Interview with Tiffany Lethabo King,” *Feral Feminisms* 4 (2015): 65, cited in paperperson, *A Third University Is Possible*, 16, Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 97.

thought, Asian American political thought, and Latinx political thought, and of all of these fields from the political theory of peoplehood and empire, prevents us from asking questions about the complex relations between these systems of domination, the struggles of emancipation different collectives enact, and the making and re-making of the subjects and political spaces involved in these relationships.²¹

This process of reciprocal recognition requires locating the physical points of encounter, but also the historical trajectories that brought these groups into contact. Hence, the demand by Martin Luther King and Frantz Fanon for peoples to face world history and locate themselves vis-à-vis revolutionary anti-colonial waves applies more generally to processes of people-making that must grapple with the distinct historical trajectories of groups in solidarity and joint struggle and with the overlaps and tensions within these trajectories. The fall of Dien Ben Phu and the US war against the Viet Cong, as noted earlier, motivated King, Fanon, and Boggs to reflect both on the continuities of oppression and the possibility of overpowering colonial powers. These continuities did not escape the Lakota (Standing Rock Sioux) thinker Vine Deloria, who saw in the “search-and-destroy missions in Vietnam” the bloody character of Indian dispossession repeated.²² These moments connect the present to historical events in ways that endanger accepted truths and commonsensical accounts of the past. They allow political actors to “seize hold of a memory as it flashes up,” before both the memory and its receivers are coopted by imperial ideologies of domination.²³ Yet this demand must further account for what LaDuke (White Earth Ojibwe) calls “the history of the land itself,” that is, “the land and its relationship to all the peoples who live, have lived, or will live here,” and how standard history both indelibly marked and disavowed the land.²⁴

Such a genealogy can expose and condemn demands of inclusion by the oppressed that presuppose a settler state as arbiter, or a focus on

²¹ This discussion is indebted to Tiffany Lethabo King, Jennell Navarro, and Andrea Smith’s superb consideration of the politics of the separation of the academic realms of Indigenous Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Black Studies, “Introduction: Beyond Incommensurability: Toward an Otherwise Stance on Black and Indigenous Relationality,” 2–6. While I have more explicitly covered thinkers from the Black radical tradition and, in this conclusion, Indigenous political thought, for Asian American and Latinx political thought see Fred F. Lee, “Contours of Asian American Political Theory: Introductions and Polemics,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 6, no. 3 (2018): 506–516, Raymond A. Rocco, Inés Valdez, and Arturo Chang, “Tradition and Disruption in Latinx and Latin American Political Thought,” *Manuscript on file with the author* (2023).

²² Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988 [1969]), vii.

²³ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 255.

²⁴ LaDuke, “Natural to Synthetic and Back Again,” ii.

Indigenous land sovereignty that does not attend to the lack of “place” for the descendants of slaves and forced migrants of color.²⁵ Such an approach depends on an articulation of history that wrests tradition away from the ideology of the elites, and refuses empathy for the victor, decidedly negating the imperial spoils and cultural treasures, whose origins are entangled with horror.²⁶ A similar call is contained in Du Bois’s short essay “Americanization,” which appeals to Irish, Hungarian, Jewish, Asian, and South Sea Islanders arriving in the United States to not “surrender their will and deed to the glory of the ‘Anglo-Saxon!’” who rules through brute force.²⁷ Kindred calls emerge from Indigenous thinkers highlighting the need to recognize multiple positionalities, meaning that in addition to those who are subjugated by the settler state and those who are settlers supportive of that state, there are also possibilities to break “the category of settler wide open by taking our places on the front lines of movements for deoccupation and decolonization.”²⁸ This is not to minimize the power of structures of domination, the entrenched character of particular positionalities, and the tensions within anti-colonial priorities. Instead, it is to note that this difficult task cannot follow without understanding history and the constant work of examining and learning about our and others’ positionalities. This is the realization that motivates Lee Maracle (Stó:lō Nation) to include in Indigenous peoples’ “sense of justice” oppressed subjects such as undocumented migrants and colonial subjects without access to certain privileges that Indigenous peoples do enjoy, despite the denial of nationhood and their being surrounded by settlers.²⁹ This is the same impulse behind White Earth Ojibwe Winona LaDuke’s recognition that

²⁵ Glen Sean Coulthard, “Subjects of Empire: Indigenous Peoples and the ‘Politics of Recognition’ in Canada,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 6, no. 4 (2007), Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*, vii–viii, King, Navarro, and Smith, “Introduction: Beyond Incommensurability: Toward an Otherwise Stance on Black and Indigenous Relationality,” 3.

²⁶ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 255, 56.

²⁷ W. E. B. Du Bois, “Americanization,” *The Crisis* 24, no. 4 (1922): 154.

²⁸ Fujikane, *Mapping Abundance for a Planetary Future: Kanaka Maoli and Critical Settler Cartographies in Hawai’i*, 14–15.

²⁹ Chantal Fiola, “Transnational Indigenous Feminism: An Interview with Lee Maracle,” in *Transnationalism, Activism, Art*, ed. Kit Dobson and Áine McGlynn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 162. See also Astrid Fellner’s account of Maracle’s work as being in productive dialogue with “border thinking” traditions, “‘To Live in the Borderlands Means ...’: Border Thinking and the Transcultural Poetics of Lee Maracle,” in *Le Canada: Une Culture De Métissage/Transcultural Canada* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2019).

citizens of the inner cities and citizens of traditionally colonized peoples both suffer from the exploitation of nature that fuels synthetic reality.³⁰

An emancipatory project emerging out of this historical scrutiny requires collective claims that reintegrate nature and the communal and self-determining projects of natives, while eschewing circuits of capitalist exploitation and accumulation that depend on settlement, forced and exploited labor, and accumulation abroad. This reframing requires what Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg thinker Leanne Simpson calls an anticapitalist grounded normativity, that is, “fundamental values and ethics regarding how we relate to each other and the natural world” that is necessarily anti-capitalist because it gives priority to values and eschews the creation and adoption of technology for the mere goal of accumulation.³¹ This grounded normativity entails, for Potawatomi philosopher Kyle Whyte, the vitality, cultural flourishing, and political self-determination of communities, which follow from the relationships established with “the plants, animals, physical entities, and ecosystems” of the places they live in.³² This means that as we imagine alternative societies, the relationship between nature, on the one hand, and culture and politics, on the other, should be a central realm of political debate. This grounded normative wisdom has affinities with Marx’s attention to the metabolism of labor and nature, and his stance against land ownership, which favors instead a vision of humans as merely temporary beneficiaries of the land, ones who must bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations.³³ Lastly, Simpson’s grounded normative critique converges as well with Du Bois by critiquing the glorification of technology and the devaluation of manual work as central to imperial capitalism.³⁴ Like Du Bois’s critique of the liberal arts education that paves the way for Black subjects to escape manual labor, Simpson condemns education that simply “shift[s] our children into the urban middle class” without embedding the means

³⁰ LaDuke, “Natural to Synthetic and Back Again,” v.

³¹ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, 73, 78.

³² Kyle Whyte, “The Dakota Access Pipeline, Environmental Injustice, and US Settler Colonialism,” in *Contemporary Moral Issues*, ed. Lawrence M. Hinman (New York: Routledge, forthcoming), 8.

³³ David M. Temin, “Custer’s Sins: Vine Deloria Jr. and the Settler-Colonial Politics of Civic Inclusion,” *Political Theory* 47, no. 3 (2018): 374, Marx, *Capital Volume III*, 911.

³⁴ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, 79–80.

of production in alternative economics and ways of living for humans and nonhumans.³⁵

These tasks of imagining alternative political arrangements must occur in tandem with processes of disalienation, including through the detachment from the all-powerful technologized mindset that Du Bois criticizes, and remains at play in the settler politics of tech-led green capitalism and the reliance on racialized labor for reconstruction after climate disasters.³⁶ Disalienated subjects would recognize, alongside LaDuke (White Earth Ojibwe), that technological catastrophes cannot be forever addressed by technological fixes, and ask anew, with Indigenous or land-based peoples, what the relationship of society to the land should be.³⁷

This process of disalienation and undoing requires a collective self-definition that posits humans as members of a minor species “badly in need of assistance from other forms of life,”³⁸ and requires another history, a proper “history of the land itself” which can ground the rethinking of emancipation as having to do with the land, not just the people.³⁹ This redefinition would shift societies away from political pledges of loyalty to particular governmental entities (“the Flag”) toward the expression of gratitude and acceptance of duties toward all of life.⁴⁰ Declaring loyalty to one another and gratitude to the Earth, water, animals, wind, plants, and other nonhuman forms of life is a political stance preferable to pledging allegiance to the US Flag and to a republic whose promises of liberty and equality are at best unfulfilled, at worst hypocritical,⁴¹ and are in every case dependent on settlement and overseas extraction. Ultimately, the question to center in enacting solidarity and searching for an anti-imperial collective *we* is how to conceive of a democratic politics of species and a declaration of allegiance to the natural sources of life,⁴² rather than a possessive attachment and demand for wealth

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁶ Sarah Stillman, “The Migrant Workers Who Follow Climate Disasters,” *The New Yorker*, November 1, 2021, Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, “‘The Sea is our Bread’: Interrupting Green Neoliberalism in Mexico,” *Marine Policy* 80, no. June (2017), Bruce Erickson, “Anthropocene Futures: Linking Colonialism and Environmentalism in an Age of Crisis,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38, no. 1 (2020).

³⁷ LaDuke, “Natural to Synthetic and Back Again,” iv, vi.

³⁸ Vine Deloria, *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion* (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003), 151.

³⁹ LaDuke, “Natural to Synthetic and Back Again,” ii, iix.

⁴⁰ Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, 112.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

grounded in the systematic destruction of these sources of life and the racialized subjects who labor alongside them.

The caretaking relation to land and all forms of life need not be a return to a romanticized past. Instead, as Du Bois's ecological account makes clear, what is required is a disalienated recognition of the inescapable dependence on nature that characterizes life as it is today and a contestation of the distribution of value so that it is rebalanced to reorient relations to nature and racialized labor toward the sustenance of life rather than accumulation.

This project dwarfs the technical matter of making sustainable use of natural resources within a capitalist system, in the sense that it presupposes a radical critique of private ownership of land, itself the basis of settlement and the transformation of nature into a resource. Without such a stance, there is no possible democratic project, neither in settler colonies nor in other territories whose land and labor are exploited to feed accumulation in the Global North. To the extent that imperial capitalism remains able to charge humans for the very right to occupy the Earth,⁴³ constructive relations with land and the attendant social relationalities must be sacrificed to capitalist accumulation.⁴⁴ To the extent that a joint political project can be envisioned among these groups, the different locations vis-à-vis regimes of settlement, (post)colonial extraction, and racial capitalist accumulation must be acknowledged, a process that will produce not one *we* but many,⁴⁵ for each of which the different tasks and implications of the dismantling of these structures and the repairing or reconstruction of relations must also be faced.

In many corners of the world the effort today is the opposite of this critical reconstruction of oppressive regimes and their interrelations. The tendency in the United States is one of closure to difference and to history, demanding the banning of books that might enlighten us about land-based relations, denying the legitimacy of the Black and Latinx vote that defeated Trump, and declaring the mobilities produced by imperial political projects in the Middle East and Central America *illegal*. This book traces the roots of these trends in the entangled character of democracy and empire, but it contains a parallel diagnostic of the possibilities for solidarity and coalition among those at the receiving end of imperial power, which emerges even more clearly in the actual solidaristic linkages

⁴³ Marx, *Capital Volume III*, 908.

⁴⁴ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "What Is to Be Done?," *American Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2011): 261.

⁴⁵ Liboiron, *Pollution Is Colonialism*, 24–25.

among activists struggling for Black lives in many areas of the metropole and connections drawn between anti-neoliberal revolts in Chile and Lebanon.⁴⁶ Or between anticapitalist, antiracist movements and Indigenous peoples resisting further encroachment of their land for fossil fuel extraction,⁴⁷ and between Indigenous peoples and anti-deportation activists.⁴⁸ In the many overlaps of these groups and their ability to bring their struggles together lies the basis of a collective language that can escape the fate of an imperial popular sovereignty.

⁴⁶ The Guardian, “The Guardian View on Black Lives Matter Worldwide: A Common Cause,” *The Guardian*, June 7, 2020, Declan Walsh and Max Fisher, “From Chile to Lebanon, Protests Flare over Waller Issues,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 2019.

⁴⁷ Leah Donnell, “At the Sacred Stone Camp, Tribes and Activists Join Forces to Protect the Land,” *National Public Radio*, September 10, 2016, IEN, “Indigenous Peoples Led Shutdown at Ft. Sill Immigration Detention Center,” *Indigenous Environmental Network Blog*, July 21, 2019.

⁴⁸ Lenard Monkman, “‘No Ban on Stolen Land,’ Say Indigenous Activists in U.S.” *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, February 2, 2017.