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Cowboys, Indians, and Aliens:
White Supremacy in the Klamath Basin, 1826-1946

by
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A senior thesis submitted to the Department of Gender & Women's Studies
and the Department of Ethnic Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree of Bachelor of the Arts

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June 12, 2015

Cowboys, Indians, and Aliens

White Supremacy in the Klamath Basin, 1826-1946

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Sir:

I am here for the purpose [of] putting the Modoc Indians upon this reservation ... You are directed to remove the Modoc Indians to the Klamath Reservation, peaceably if you can, but forcibly if you must.

T.B. ODENEAL, OREGON SUPERINTENDENT OF INDIAN
AFFAIRS, TO ARMY LIEUTENANT COLONEL FRANK
WHEATEN, NOVEMBER 25, 1872

INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL PERSONS OF JAPANESE ANCESTRY
LIVING IN THE FOLLOWING AREA: ... Pursuant to the provisions
of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 34 ... all persons of Japanese
ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above
area by 12 o'clock noon, P. W. T., Sunday, May 9, 1942.

WESTERN DEFENSE COMMAND AND FOURTH ARMY WARTIME
CIVIL CONTROL ADMINISTRATION, MAY 3, 1942

If there be those who would say we can't do this to citizens, let them remember that we took this country from the Indians, killed thousands of them, arbitrarily moved other thousands from their homes to far-distant lands, and to this day have denied them the rights, privileges and duties of citizenship. If we could do that to the Indians, we can do something about the Japs. Let's do it now!

W. M. MASON, UNDATED LETTER TO THE EDITOR,
SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER

1. Introduction

My grandfather was considered an enemy of the United States by the time he was ten years old. In 1942, he, his three younger siblings, and their parents were forced to leave behind their home and community in Los Angeles, CA to be incarcerated with nearly 120,000 other people of Japanese ancestry as wartime hysteria portrayed all Japanese/Americans¹ as racially threatening to the US. They were sent first to the War Relocation Authority's concentration camp in Jerome, AR, then to Rohwer, AR, and—ultimately—to the Tule Lake Relocation/Segregation Center in far northern California.

I set out on this research project seeking to make sense of the World War II-era incarceration of my family at the Tule Lake camp from a geographical perspective informed by ethnic studies and feminist theory; however, beginning my investigation with the history of anti-Asian and anti-Japanese sentiment leading up to World War II felt insufficient—something of fundamental and foundational importance was missing. The Tule Lake camp was located in the Klamath Basin, a region that straddles the California-Oregon border. The Basin's history of exclusion and violence in the name of white supremacy can be traced back decades before any Japanese/Americans were confined there behind barbed wire and guard towers. As with the rest of the continent, the region was originally inhabited by many autonomous groups of Indigenous peoples; however, by the outbreak of World War II, this Indigenous presence was virtually gone.

In light of this erasure, I began to wonder if violence against Native people, particularly the Modoc Indians, informed the treatment of Japanese/Americans in the Basin seven decades later—and, if so, how? As the epigraphs above demonstrate, clear linkages connect the two sets of experiences across temporal distance and unique relationships with racism. The research questions that have animated my research include: How has racial difference been articulated through conceptions of space, place, mobility, and belonging? How have relationships between the logics of settler colonialism, slavery, and Orientalism manifested in the Klamath Basin since the mid-1800s? How did the Japanese/Americans incarcerated at the Tule Lake Relocation/Segregation Center navigate and interact with the legacies of Indigenous dispossession and genocide? I turned to the emerging field of settler colonial studies to provide a theoretical framework that would allow me to put the histories of Native Americans and Japanese/Americans in conversation with each other to provide a more complete account of the

ways in which the Klamath Basin has been—and continues to be—shaped by ongoing and interlocking processes that uphold white supremacy.

My methods were entirely historical and archival. Many of my primary sources came from electronically accessible archives, such as the Japanese American Relocation Digital Archive, the Japanese Evacuation and Resettlement Study, and the Online Archive of California. I also examined local newspapers from the Klamath Basin in microfilm format. These materials—which were produced by a variety of actors, including government officials, white researchers, Japanese/American researchers within the actual camps, and white residents of the Klamath Basin—provided invaluable texture and depth to my project.

This is fundamentally a project of what Nahum Chandler calls “desedimentation”—a process through which “layers of sedimented premises” that uphold various ideologies, discourses, and ways of being and knowing are made to tremble.² The power of desedimentation lies in instigating a “destabilization of ground, field, or domain, a movement that could expose sediment that had been deeply locked and fixed in place, or set into relief new lines of possible concatenation, or turn up old ground into new configurations of its elements. Such a practice, that is, might turn up new soil on old ground.”³ The treatment of Japanese/Americans during World War II is, in many ways, intellectual “old ground.” It has been the topic of many scholarly works produced over the last seven decades; however, many of these works approach the subject in ways that don’t necessarily examine underlying assumptions of the systems and structures of the modern liberal state. As a result, the current literature is often limited to discussing oppression and violence in terms of citizenship and rights—legal rights, human rights, civil rights, and so on. While these approaches do have a role to play, they tend to take categories like “American” at face value without interrogating the formation and utilization of the categories

themselves—what does it mean to be American? Who has access to identifying as American? What are the operations of power that have shaped and re-shaped the boundaries of Americanness? Settler colonial studies and Indigenous critical theory offer the potential to reframe these issues by asking different kinds of questions that might lead to desedimentation of some of the most fundamental foundations of the white supremacist nation.

My research is situated in a key moment in the trajectory of settler colonial studies as a field of interpretation and analysis. Seminal works on settler colonialism, such as those by Lorenzo Veracini and Patrick Wolfe,⁴ have primarily focused on Australia and Aotearoa / New Zealand as settler societies—scholarly work that theorizes the settler past, present, and future of the continental United States in similar ways is still nascent. In recent years, those who do ground their analyses of the US in settler colonial studies—among them Dean Itsuji Saranillio, Haunani-Kay Trask, John Mack Faragher, Margaret D. Jacobs, Andrea Smith, and Manu Vimalassery⁵—all locate in the emerging field a unique potential to make sense of American history and encourage other scholars to do the same.

Settler colonial studies and Indigenous critical theory encourage relational approaches to research. Questions of comparison can often degenerate into basic assertions of similarity and difference, but questions of relationality enable further discussion about how these similarities and differences interact with and inform each other. In the context of settler colonialism, recuperating relationality is fundamental to enacting what Saranillio calls a “settler of color critique of US Empire”: “While not uncomplicated, placing Asian American and Native histories in conversation might create the conditions of possibility of using settler colonialism against itself, where social justice-oriented Asian Americans might conceptualize liberation in ways that are accountable to Native aims for decolonization.”⁶

This paper consists of four major sections, each of which explores in detail a particular theme or set of themes of white supremacy in relation to the Klamath Basin. These sections are organized in (loose) chronological order. The first section concentrates on the establishment of white settler communities through acts of genocide and other forms of elimination of Indigenous life. The second takes up questions of immigration, race, and labor in the context of Orientalism. Third, I turn to the discourses and considerations that animated white Americans' responses to the so-called "Japanese Problem" along the West Coast in the wake of Pearl Harbor. The final section discusses the Tule Lake Relocation/Segregation Center itself as a frontier-like space structured by the complex interactions of multiple systems of white supremacy. I close by returning to the possibility of desedimenting white supremacy through strategic research practices, asking, "What does the end of a settler colonial society look like?"

2. Land: Settler Colonialism and the Consolidation of Empire

The Violence of Exploration

The history of the modern US West is, first and foremost, a story of genocide. Scenes of extreme violence played out across North America as the United States expanded westward during the 18th and 19th centuries. Manifest destiny, or the belief that white Americans⁷ had a divine right—a religiously mandated duty, even—to occupy the continent from coast to coast and to remake the land into the world's foremost example of capitalist power, relied upon settler colonial conceptions of space, race, and sovereignty that required uprooting Indigenous communities and eliminating their existences in both material and discursive ways. The extension of US empire by any means necessary, as Reginald Horsman notes, was a project of white supremacy from the outset:

By 1850 American expansion was viewed in the United States less as a victory for the principles of free democratic republicanism than as evidence for the innate superiority of the American Anglo-Saxon branch of the Caucasian race. In the middle of the nineteenth century a sense of racial destiny permeated discussions of American progress and of future American world destiny.⁸

To white Americans, the West represented a space of almost unlimited opportunity for the pursuit of the purported “American ideals” of individualism, capitalism, and private property ownership. Westward movement to the backcountry “served as a means of gaining access to enough land for existing modes of agricultural production as well as to the kind of personal independence (for White men) that constituted the basis for political subjectivity and participation.”⁹ These opportunities, however, came at the expense of Indigenous peoples across the continent, whose very existence within a settler colony challenges its legitimacy, thereby justifying the total elimination of all things Indigenous through a multitude of overlapping mechanisms.¹⁰

From the outset, US-sponsored incursions into the Klamath Basin and Modoc land were motivated by this promise of white acquisition and backed by the threat of Native dispossession. The first documented interaction between the Modocs and white settlers took place in late 1826, when a party of explorers traversed the land with a dual mission of charting “new” territory and identifying suitable sites for the expansion of the booming fur trade.¹¹ Though the first moments of contact were not marked by outright conflict or hostility, the journals and other documents published by members of the initial expedition served as catalysts and guides for a more-or-less steady influx of white explorers and settlers into the Klamath Basin as early as 1846. This discourse of “exploration” and “discovery” illuminates two key elements of settler colonial expansion: first, the denial of Indigenous presence and humanity, and, second, the centrality of the profit motive.

One of the many ways in which settler colonialism enacts violence is through the reconfiguration of narratives of time, space, and humanity to center the settler state. This process assigns emptiness to indigeneity in all dimensions. In other words, Indigenous ways of being in and relating to the world, Indigenous histories prior to colonization, and Indigenous peoples themselves are rendered invisible and nonexistent, as indigeneity is interpreted as mere lack or absence in direct opposition to the indisputable presence imposed by the settler. As a result, settler narratives often emphasize the establishment of settler communities through uncontested arrival in vast, uninhabited spaces, in which the settler way of life is imagined to be the only possibility—that is, through ascribing territorial, populational, and ontological forms of emptiness to the lands and peoples being colonized.

Settlers routinely placed Indigenous peoples outside of the category of “human” by linking them to savagery, monstrosity, and animality in the process of “transforming indigenous peoples into the homo nullius inhabitants of lands emptied and awaiting [settler] arrival.”¹² Sir Walter Raleigh described the indigenes of the East Coast as having “their eyes in their shoulders, and their mouths in the middle of their breasts,” while another white explorer-settler believed them to be “wild and savage...[living] like herds of deer in a forest.”¹³ Prospectors flocked to the West Coast in the late 1840s and early 1850s in response to multiple discoveries of gold in California and Oregon, and the rapid inflation of the area’s white population provoked the Modocs’ first instances of armed resistance in the form of sporadic raids on incoming wagons. This, in turn, sparked a series of merciless massacres of entire Modoc communities—often as retribution for actions wrongly attributed to the Modocs in the first place. The rhetoric of dehumanization fed directly into these acts of genocidal violence, as one settler recognized in his personal notes:

The majority of the first emigration to Oregon were from Missouri; and among them it was customary to speak of the Indian man as a buck; of the woman as a squaw; until, at length, in the general acceptance of the terms, they ceased to recognize the rights of humanity in those to whom they were so applied. By a very natural and easy transition, from being spoken of as brutes, they came to be thought of as game to be shot, or as vermin to be destroyed.¹⁴

In a twist of brutal irony, even as the controlling image of the “Savage Indian” permeated public discourse, the most horrific acts of savagery were perpetrated by white men¹⁵ who sought and gained bloody reputations as “Indian fighters,” often with the blessing of the state:

In Oregon the legislature, the subordinate Indian agents, the Methodist clergy, and the Know-Nothing political party—all were directly implicated in systematically carrying on “Indian wars.” The destruction of the Indians was advocated openly. During this period of agitation a slump in the mining industry left many miners unemployed. These unemployed were supported for many months at good pay as soldiers of the state, their only duties being to go out in bodies and kill Indians—women, “the very seeds of increase,” and children included.¹⁶

The discursive characterization of Modocs and other indigenous peoples as non-/sub-/inhuman rendered them materially disposable, enabling white settlers to kill them with impunity in their insatiable quest for territorial acquisition.

Mark Rifkin draws upon Agamben’s theorization of the state of exception and applies it to the frontier as “a place paradoxically within the state yet beyond it” in order to explain how such rampant and indiscriminate acts of violence were legitimated and rendered juridically illegible by the settler government.¹⁷ In this theoretical trajectory, the frontier describes a non-fixed region that is both spatially and legally peripheral to the nation; however, while it cannot rightly be considered wholly included in the nation (yet), it is nevertheless structured by the sovereignty of the state in significant ways.¹⁸

In the particular context of US history, the extension of American sovereignty over the frontier exemplifies the ways in which the continent could be divided into two categories under the rubric of Manifest Destiny and its attendant investment in predetermination: the territory of

the United States, and the soon-to-be territory of the United States. The westward movement of the frontier through the iterative re-categorization of particular spaces from the latter to the former, the subsequent extension of US sovereignty into these spaces, and the westward movement of white settlers were entangled in a relationship of circular causality. In the Western conception of the nation-state, national identity is based on a sense of shared political community in a distinct spatial location—a relationship in which “people and territory must, as it were, belong to each other.”¹⁹ As early “pioneers” moved beyond the legally established edge of the country, they brought with them the discursive trappings of nationhood. At a point determined by a combination of factors, such as political expediency and/or the accumulation of a critical mass of American settlers, the US invariably acquired the territory in question through legal treaties and one-sided declarations.²⁰ The continued flow of settlers into the newly annexed land then reinforced the nation’s claims to it and solidified the white settlers’ federally-sanctioned sense of spatial entitlement. Settler trespass into spaces inhabited by indigenous peoples and/or claimed by other colonial powers was thus continually underwritten by national policy, as settlers remained “confident that American sovereignty would soon follow in their wake” in what Lorenzo Veracini describes as a “powerful and self-fulfilling expectation.”²¹ In the mid-1800s, the Klamath Basin was located squarely within both the literal and figurative space of exception known as the frontier. The incomplete extension of American sovereignty over the territory enabled white settlers to further the project of total acquisition—that is, the project of appropriating land and resources in the name of the US and systematically removing Indigenous peoples while awaiting formal incorporation into the nation—by any means necessary, without holding them accountable to any legal or juridical system.

The Rise of Settler Capitalism

As Indigenous peoples were emptied of their humanity through discourses of savagery, their ways of life and modes of subsistence were likewise delegitimized and targeted for eradication. Rifkin proposes “bare habitance”—the necessary geopolitical corollary to Agamben’s bare life—as a mechanism of inquiry into the disparate legitimacy ascribed to different (and especially competing) modes of inhabitation, land tenure, collectivity, and occupancy.²² The economic system of white supremacy is one of exploitative racial capitalism, in which non-capitalistic societies and ways of relating to biotic and abiotic habitats are either 1) seen as inferior and, thus, requiring—or even inviting and/or awaiting—capitalist intervention, or 2) made completely illegible within capitalism’s grid of intelligibility in the first place. In other words, white supremacist capitalism produces itself as the only possible system, interprets and reduces all others to lack of capitalism, and sets about supplanting them and imposing itself through violence. At the same time, however, settler capitalism as it has been implemented in the US did not exist on its own prior to colonization; it came into being through the violent establishment of settler colonies predicated on genocide. Manu Vimalassery, citing Donald Denoon, “argues against this ‘vision of settlers arriving with capitalism in their bones,’” proposing instead, “settlers’ relations with Indigenous peoples [were/are] the basis for the development of settler capitalism.”²³ Settler colonialism, as Patrick Wolfe emphasizes, “destroys to replace”²⁴—this replacement is not limited to human populations, but extends to all aspects of existence and relationality.

White supremacist capitalism, enacted through settler colonialism, reduces people and their habitats to resources awaiting exploitation and centers the ability to generate profit as the sole metric of value. As a result, the American settler subject comes into being through

relationships of domination and control in which disruption and destruction are commensurate with white heteropatriarchal masculinity:

In early times America was primarily a rural and a small town country. Then the immigrant who came to the colonies as the young republic had to be made out of pioneer stuff, which meant that he was a wilderness conqueror by nature, that he was willing to fight Indians and to build a farm by cutting down the forest and moving the rocks. He was also essentially a family man who brought with him the women of his own race. Biologically speaking this was real colonial conquest.²⁵

Many Indigenous scholars resist the idea that settler colonialism involves the theft of land from Native peoples, arguing instead that the process of colonization creates the concept of “land” itself. Andrea Smith calls this the “thingification of land,”—the reduction of the complex interactions of humans and the biospheres and habitats in which they are embedded to a unidirectional relationship of extraction that gives meaning to notions of commodification and ownership.²⁶ Indigenous forms of radical, non-capitalistic relationality, which often emphasize interconnectivity and alternate measures of value that place humans into familial and mutually supportive relationships with their surroundings,²⁷ were forcibly denied recognition within the rubric of capitalism and delegitimized through settlers’ “war on waste.” The concept of “waste” encompasses the “uncultivated land and idle labour [of] the commons”²⁸—that is, spaces and places not being harnessed by humans to generate profit through agriculture and/or industry, and actions and activities not structured as individualized wage labor, respectively. Settlers argued that Indigenous ways of life did not make adequate use of the fertility and richness of the soil and that settler agriculture would, ignoring the ways in which the land only possessed such qualities because of Indigenous effort, care, and stewardship. Furthermore, agrarian capitalism, with its emphasis on resource extraction and preoccupation with profitability, often left these habitats more thoroughly depleted than ever before:

These “incredibly fertile” lands can be named as “waste lands” only because these lands, and their produce, do not carry exchange value in market terms. The fertility of these

lands results, instead, from generations of Indigenous work. “Improvement”, that prating index of [political economist Adam] Smith’s analysis, which has been updated as “development” and “growth” in more recent times, is an impoverishment of the value in use that has been produced in these “waste” lands. Improvement is the rapid leaching of mineral, plant, and animal abundance of a place to produce market crops, resulting in the production of actual waste lands, in both exchange and use terms.²⁹

Unable to comprehend non-monetary forms of value and relationality, settler capitalism routinely wrought destruction and ultimately produced that which it purportedly sought to eliminate (i.e., waste), generating a kind of loss that can and will never enter into its profit-oriented calculations.

Characterizing land as mere waste flags it for subsequent incorporation into the settler nation through the racialized doctrine of improvement, the process of extracting monetary value through the extension of agrarian capitalism by white settlers. Within this paradigm, Indigenous modes of relating to the world were doomed from the start, since “the colonising impulse simply assumed the ‘Indian’, like the peasant, to be incapable of occupying and improving land as private property,” thereby legitimating the process of systematic settler colonialism by equating settlement with the reduction of Indigenous “waste”.³⁰ To Adam Smith, settlers’ efforts to “improve” land were a necessary remedy to the supposed failure of Indigenous peoples to occupy land “properly” (i.e., in a manner compatible with white supremacist capitalism):

The colony of a civilized nation which takes possession either of a waste country, or of one so thinly inhabited, that the Natives easily give place to the new settlers, advances more rapidly in wealth and greatness than any other human society. . . . The colonists carry out with them a knowledge of agriculture and of other useful arts, superior to what can grow up of its own accord in the course of many centuries among savage and barbarous nations.³¹

Adam Smith’s invocation of Indigenous savagery and barbarity is key, since, as Andrea Smith argues, participation in profit-generating labor is the category “that divides the human from the non-human” within settler states.³² As a result, the conversion of Indigenous ways of life into “wasteful idleness” reinforces the racial narratives of dehumanization leveraged by white settlers to justify genocide.

Reservations about Reservations

As more and more white settlers arrived and claimed Modoc land for themselves, the actions of the Modoc leaders began to reflect hopelessness and despair—militant resistance faded into resigned and pained surrender in the face of inevitable deprivation at the hands of the invaders and the wholesale destruction of their homelands. One chief’s characterization of the initial years of conflict reflects this shift: “I think if we kill all white men, no more come. We kill and kill but, all time, more come and more come like grass in spring. I throw down my gun. I say ‘I will fight no more. My heart is sick. I am old man.’”³³ Meanwhile, white Americans across the nation continued to deploy discourses of dehumanization as justification for the war on waste and the drive for improvement. Writing in response to ongoing settler conflict with the Modocs, one New York newspaper advocated accelerated and aggressive military conquest of Indigenous peoples by declaring, “The Indian, converted into a demon, defies civilization, and the land he encumbers is wanted for the plough.”³⁴ In 1864, the war-weary Modocs agreed to relocate—along with several other tribes—to a reservation approximately 50 miles north of their homeland in exchange for governmental promises of “fair compensation,” protection, and the provision of food and other supplies; however, the reservation was located primarily on land inhabited by the Klamath Tribe, a traditional enemy of the Modocs.³⁵ Though relocation to the Klamath Reservation might seem like an action willingly undertaken by the Modocs, a decision made under conditions of coercion cannot rightly be considered consensual. Offering the Modocs an opportunity for existence outside of the constraints of settler colonial violence would have been antithetical to the creation and consolidation of settler empire, since “all settler projects are foundationally premised on fantasies of ultimately ‘cleansing’ the settler body politic of its [Indigenous] alterities.”³⁶ Thus, the only decision the Modocs were able to make was between

cooperating forms of extinction: immediate disappearance through bloody extermination, or “deferred genocide” rendered as a slow dying-out on the reservation.³⁷

By this time, California and Oregon had both become US states, signaling the complete, formal, and legal extension of white settler sovereignty to the region. Rifkin notes that “the production of national space depends on coding Native peoples and lands as an exception,” resulting in a “relation of ban”: “He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold. ... It is literally not possible to say whether the one who has been banned is outside or inside the juridical order.”³⁸ The reservation is the spatial manifestation of the nexus of biopolitics and geopolitics, wherein settler entities govern and manage both bare life and bare habitation. On one hand, the understanding of national identity as a reciprocal relationship between land and people served to justify the encroachment of white settlers into indigenous territory, facilitating their movement and sense of entitlement to land; on the other, it also functioned as a means of actively restricting the Modocs’ mobility and claims to space. By setting aside portions of the land as reservations, the US explicitly rooted racial distinctions in the landscape through the language of space and mobility, sending a clear message about which bodies are authorized to move through and inhabit space, and in what ways. It is important to note that the designation of reservations as the “rightful” place of Indigenous peoples was not a recognition of full sovereignty, but an example of the nation’s investment in “constructions of politically unequal spaces.”³⁹

After nearly a year of conflict with the Klamath Tribe on the reservation and disillusionment with the US Government’s failure to uphold their end of the bargain adequately, a group of approximately 400 Modocs left the reservation and returned to the Klamath Basin.⁴⁰

In the months that followed, government officials pressured and finally persuaded the Modocs to leave the area and give a confined life on the reservation one more chance. Upon their arrival at the reservation, however, the Modocs suffered renewed ridicule and humiliation at the hands of the Klamaths for their “surrender” to the government. Fed up with the discriminatory practices of the Klamaths and the inaction and apathy of the US officials who had pledged to support and protect them on the reservation, the same group of Modocs left the Klamath reservation and returned to the Klamath Basin yet again in mid-1870.⁴¹

As long as the Modocs remained on the Klamath Reservation, the settler state could continue to undermine the authenticity of their indigeneity; by excluding the Modocs from their original homelands, the settler state enacted what Veracini terms “ethnic transfer,” characterized as the forcible deportation of Indigenous communities, “either within or without the territory claimed or controlled by the settler entity. Wherever they end up, they cease being indigenous.”⁴² Although the Klamath Reservation was only 50 miles away from the original Modoc land, even that amount of spatial separation sufficed in severing any claim to legitimacy that stemmed from an Indigenous connection to land. Through the simple act of re-entering the land from which they had been violently expelled, the returning Modocs threatened to disrupt the settler fantasy of white entitlement.

The settler’s response to the Modocs’ second return to the area highlights a crucial moment in the re-casting of the Klamath Basin into what Andrew Baldwin calls a “geography of whiteness”—“spaces, places, landscapes, natures, mobilities, bodies, etc....that are assumed to be white or are in some way structured, though often implicitly, by some notion of whiteness.”⁴³ In early 1872, the white settlers came together and drafted two petitions—one addressed to Alfred Meacham, then Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Oregon, and the Army with 46

signatures, the other to the governor of Oregon with 65—urging the government to forcibly remove the Modocs from the Klamath Basin permanently.⁴⁴ Legally speaking, the 1864 treaty by which the Modocs agreed to move to the Klamath Reservation formally ended their claims to the land of the Klamath Basin, providing a facial justification for the consolidation of lasting white settlements in their stead. The Modocs' return activated latent settler fears, not only because they believed violent clashes with the Modocs would resume, but because the Modocs' mere presence on land that no longer "belonged" to them posed a threat to the authority and legitimacy of the settlers' carefully crafted system of private property ownership reliant upon compliance with hierarchical and racial territorial divisions.⁴⁵ As Rifkin notes:

The assertion of US control over the space claimed as internal to the nation; the carving of that space into nested jurisdictional hierarchies; the enactment of privatizing forms of property-law materialized through practices of documentation, surveying, and sale; and the sequestration and regulation of particular plots of land...cumulatively contribute to the construction and experience of an environment in which Indigenous peoples appear to have no place.⁴⁶

Settler sovereignty relies upon a sense of security generated through this strict private property regime, which, in turn, "produces affect that is encapsulated in a sense of home and place, mobilising an affirmation of a white national identity" rooted as much in producing and maintaining Indigenous absence as in an actual sense of shared sociopolitical belonging and community among the settlers themselves.⁴⁷ When the settlers formally petitioned government and military officials to deport the Modocs back to the Klamath Reservation, they reinforced a burgeoning sense of collectivity and commonality predicated upon the wholesale eradication of the Indigenous alterities that challenged their settler sovereignty. In other words, an alliance against the mere presence of non-white people in defense of material and ideological land ownership catalyzed the transformation of what was once a loose collection of scattered residences into series of relatively close-knit communities for the decades to come. In response

to the settlers' discontent, Meacham was replaced as Superintendent by T.B. Odeneal, who undertook the project of Indigenous elimination even more readily. In November of 1872, Odeneal directed the US Army to round up the Modocs and place them on the Klamath Reservation, authorizing the military to use force if necessary.⁴⁸ With these orders, the implicit war on waste gave way to its more overt cousin—the Modoc War.

Despite the drastic numerical asymmetry between the US Army and the Modocs—400 soldiers threatened 60 Modocs by January 1873—the Modoc War lasted approximately six months and ultimately became one of the nation's most costly wars against Native Americans.⁴⁹ The Modoc fighters utilized their superior familiarity with the rugged terrain of what is now Lava Beds National Monument to defend a fortress-like natural formation known as “Captain Jack’s Stronghold” against repeated assaults, inflicting heavy losses upon the Army without exposing themselves to similar casualties. As Laleh Khalili argues in her study of the rise of modern counterinsurgencies, Indigenous tactics of guerrilla warfare that emphasized mobility, unpredictability, and environmental knowledge have long plagued colonizing military forces. Frustrated by his fellow colonists’ ineffectiveness against indigenous resistance, one New England preacher lamented in the early stages of colonization, “They doe acts of hostility without proclaiming war; they don’t appeare openly in the field to bid us battle,” while another acknowledged that the settler forces were at a disadvantage on unfamiliar ground: “every swamp is a castle [or fortification] to them, knowing where to find us; but we know not where to find them” (brackets in original).⁵⁰ After a series of events that included factionalism among the Modocs, the murder of US General Edward Canby, and the subsequent betrayal of Modoc leaders by an opposing bloc within the tribe, the four principal Modoc leaders were captured by the Army by early July of 1873 and executed by October of that same year. The remaining 157

Modocs who had left the Klamath Reservation were sent first to Nebraska, then to the Quapaw Reservation in Oklahoma's Indian Territory, where they were further decimated by disease.⁵¹

Settler Indigenization

With the Modoc “threat” removed for good, the number of white settlers in the Klamath Basin rapidly inflated and the frontier dissolved into officially recognized cities, towns, and communities rooted in whiteness. A series of human interventions into the landscape—including the draining and subsequent reclamation of Tule Lake itself and the introduction of a complex irrigation system capable of supporting the white settlers’ extensive agricultural projects—ushered in a new era: that of the homestead. The first of eleven periods of homesteading was announced in May 1916 and officially implemented in April of the following year. Thirty-five homestead units, encompassing close to 3,000 acres altogether of the newly produced agricultural land, were made available to applicants, among whom winners were then selected by way of a random drawing. According to the edition of the Klamath Falls Evening Herald published on the deadline of the application period, only certain groups of the population were permitted to apply in the first place:

The applicants include men from all trades and professions: lawyers, bankers, dentists, farmers and many others. Among the applicants are fifteen women. Only single women or married women not living with their husbands are permitted to file. Only Americans or foreigners who have taken out their first naturalization papers are permitted to file on the lands.⁵²

The second round of homesteading, undertaken in 1922, maintained these requirements and established a system that gave priority to veterans, particularly those who had fought in World War I, that would continue in future cycles. For the first 90 days of the filing period for a given round of applications, only veterans who could provide proof of honorable discharge from the armed forces were allowed to apply; non-veterans could only apply for any remaining homestead units after the preferential filing period had ended.⁵³ In addition to transforming the land in

tangible ways, homesteading and reclamation were also examples of “rite[s] of settler possession” that discursively reinforced settler sovereignty by reducing land to real estate and collectively celebrating, performing, and ritualizing human (i.e., white settler human) control and dominance over the nonhuman and the dehumanized.⁵⁴

After more than three decades of exile in Oklahoma—alternatively conceptualized as three decades of uncontested white ownership in the Klamath Basin—the surviving Modocs were granted the opportunity to return to the Klamath Reservation despite objections from white settlers. Note that the Modocs’ movement was only undertaken with the permission of the US government, demonstrating the totality of settler sovereignty in determining how, when, and where Indigenous peoples are allowed to exist within a settler state. “Whiteness,” Rifkin says of the mechanisms of settler power, “instantiates a property logic in which subjectivity, placemaking, and political belonging turn on the exertion of a right to untrammelled ownership and in which that process of manufacturing legitimacy for non-Native occupation appears as a self-evident, unquestionable, and invisible frame through which to assess Indigenous voices, claims, and presence.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, even though a small number of the Modocs did elect to return to Oregon, they were only returning to be re-enrolled on the Klamath Reservation. They were still categorically denied the opportunity to inhabit their original homelands of the Klamath Basin free of governmental regulation, and were still confined to a “severely circumscribed space [of] monitoring and surveillance” and subject to the control of settler entities.⁵⁶

Though it is beyond the scope of my argument to determine whether or not such a return could truly pose a significant threat to settler authority, the mere possibility of renewed proximity to indigenous Others was enough to activate settler anxieties. White settlers in the Klamath Basin reacted to this potential challenge to their regime of power—whether they

consciously acknowledged it as such or not—by clinging desperately to the falsified narrative of their community's violent origins:

The expected arrival of a number of Modoc Indians at the Klamath Indian Agency ... has revived memories of the incidents that led to the exiling of the Modocs from their former haunts ... Now it is understood that a number of them are on their way here, and when they arrive they will receive their allotments the same as though they had never rebelled against the government ... Their exile from their former homes for the past thirty-two years is deemed by the government sufficient punishment for their obstreperous conduct.⁵⁷

This excerpt of an article published in the Klamath Republican reflects some of the many psychological tensions that structure settler consciousness. Andrew Zimmerman proposes applying the Freudian concept of “screen memories” to classic colonialism (which Veracini then extends to settler colonialism) in order to understand the ways in which settler consciousness emerges from “compromises between an unconscious recognition of the importance of an experience and an equally unconscious desire not to recognize the experience at all.”⁵⁸

Confronted with the impending return of indigenous Others to the original scene of settler violence, the white settlers of the Klamath Basin were reminded of the genocidal conditions of their entrenchment in the region. Since settler authenticity and sovereignty depends upon a “sustained disavowal of any founding violence,” even these “revived memories” are merely screen memories that re-write settler history, allowing for the misrepresentation of indigenous attempts to resist extermination as rebellious and “obstreperous conduct” deserving decades of punishment through spatial restriction and confinement.⁵⁹ The settler need to disavow foundational violence results in a collective alteration of memory, so that “even when settler colonial narratives celebrate anti-indigenous violence, they do so by representing a defensive battle ensuring the continued survival of the settler community and never as founding violence per se.”⁶⁰ In this formulation, the settlers emerge as the ones who have done no wrong; settler amnesia enables the elision of settler accountability and justifies wars of extermination by

reconceptualizing them as reactive attempts to defend a mythical settler polity that is imagined to have existed prior to—and independent of—settler violence against Indigenous peoples.

Settler amnesia and the disavowal of founding violence set the stage for the performance of a particularly insidious form of settler establishment and consolidation through which settlers seek to indigenize themselves. Eve Tuck and Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández characterize the production and maintenance of screen memories as part of a larger system of “elaborate track-covering” required by settler colonialism in order to “achieve the settler’s ultimate aim, which is to resolve the uncomfortable and precarious dis-location as usurper, and replace the Indigenous people as the natural, historical, rightful and righteous owners of the land.”⁶¹ As actual Indigenous peoples are displaced both materially and conceptually, settlers come to see themselves as indigenous inhabitants of the land in a process “driven by the crucial need to transform an historical tie (‘we came here’) into a natural one (‘the land made us’).”⁶² Since settler colonialism seeks replacement as its end-goal, the moment of “successful” settler indigenization is a crucial milestone in establishing a white supremacist empire. Settler indigenization thus serves as a temporal anchor point from which settlers rewrite the past by foreclosing the possibility of continued authentic Native existence and erasing histories of actual Indigenous peoples, while also constraining the terms on which non-indigenous populations enter into and interact with the settler society in the present and future.

3. Labor: Orientalism and the Defense of Empire

Exogenous Exploitation

The profit motive that animated the initial project of white settler accumulation continues to structure the population of a settler society even after Indigenous communities have been

materially eliminated. In its incessant quest for profit, agrarian settler capitalism requires the production of a workforce in which “one’s own person becomes a commodity that one must sell in the labour market while the profits of one’s work are taken by somebody else.”⁶³ As settler hegemony entrenches itself and uplifts the capitalist white settler as the only “proper” inhabitant of an area, it also impels the arrival of a variety of subjugated “exogenous Others”—those who, like settlers, come from outside the settler colony but are excluded from full membership within the settler polity—to serve as “unfree labor to transform the land and its products into vessels of exchange value” that can then be exploited by white settlers.⁶⁴ The relationship between Indigenous peoples, colonizers, and labor highlights one of the crucial distinctions between settler colonialism and classic/franchise colonialism. While classic colonialism, such as the British colonization of India, also operates on the oppression of Indigenous peoples, it ultimately depends on them as a source of cheap labor within the colony; however, since continued Indigenous presence in a settler colony has the potential to destabilize settler authority entirely, exploiting Indigenous labor would be counterproductive—thus, the settler project must draw its laborers from elsewhere.

In a “successful” settler society, “the [subordinated] labor that is mixed with the land is not native but geographically alienated.”⁶⁵ In the context of the United States, therefore, settler colonialism has operated “through a triad of relationships, between the...settlers, the Indigenous inhabitants, and [Black] chattel slaves who are removed from their homelands to work stolen land.”⁶⁶ Slavery, one of Andrea Smith’s three pillars of white supremacy, depends on the reduction of Black people to property and inherent enslavability.⁶⁷ As the anchor of capitalism, it operates in tandem with settler colonialism: “Land, in being settled, becomes property. Settlers must also import chattel slaves, who must be kept landless, and who also become property, to be

used, abused, and managed.”⁶⁸ For reasons outside the scope of my research, the horrific system of chattel slavery upon which much of this nation was founded did not extend to the West Coast; however, the logics that animated it did. The interlocking foundations of white supremacy required a labor force that could be manipulated and subordinated in the service of white accumulation and profit. Asian immigrants filled this role throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in California.

Yellow Peril, White Terror

Racial anxieties towards Asians first swept the nation as Chinese immigrants entered the country in large numbers to take part in the boom of the Gold Rush era. These migrants were part of the “free global movement of [unfree] labor” that began in the seventeenth century and, according to historian Mae Ngai, “reached its apogee in the second half of the nineteenth century, as people the world over moved from capitalism’s rural peripheries to its industrializing centers.”⁶⁹ In his 1936 study of race relations in the United States, Dutch social anthropologist Bertram Johannes Otto Schrieke argued that “race prejudice was subordinated to industrial necessity” during the early years of large-scale Chinese immigration;⁷⁰ however, changing economic conditions soon put Chinese workers in more direct competition with their white counterparts. Questions of immigration, labor, and belonging were then articulated through the language of racial animosity, leading lawmakers to bar all Chinese immigration in 1882.⁷¹ The first legislation of its kind, the Chinese Exclusion Act set a legal precedent for declaring all Asians racially incompatible, inadmissible, and undesirable.

If genocide can be considered the process through which white supremacy consolidates imperial and (settler) colonial projects, Orientalism—the logic through which the West defines itself and “marks certain peoples or nations as inferior and deems them to be a constant threat to

the wellbeing of empire”—is the process through which it defends them.⁷² Orientalism emphasized the racial difference of Asian immigrants to the US, constructed such difference as inherently threatening to and irreconcilable with the interests, identities, and values of the white nation, and relegated Asians to the status of “permanent foreigners” on the margins of society.⁷³ By the early 1920s, the racialized discourse of permanent difference had been codified into law, as the Supreme Court ruled that Asians were racially ineligible to become naturalized citizens.⁷⁴ Both Native Americans and Asian immigrants were thus categorically placed into a framework of exception to be managed by the government, though the specific circumstances and goals of their respective classifications as such differed.

Rendered fully excludable under federal immigration policy and legally incapable of accessing the formal rights, benefits, privileges, and protections of citizenship, Asian immigrants were biopolitically banned from participating in the political community of the territory in which they lived. Giorgio Agamben discusses the ancient Roman legal figure *homo sacer* as the embodiment of bare life and an inversion of the sovereign, since both sovereignty and bare life are characterized by paradoxical relationships to law. The sovereign is simultaneously included in the juridical order as a member who is beholden to the letter of the law (at least superficially) and located outside/beyond it through the power to suspend the juridical order and application of law entirely—that is, the power to declare a state of exception (recall that the extension of sovereignty into *Modoc land* was concomitant with the creation of the frontier as a violent space of exception). *Homo sacer*, in contrast, is the object of such exception, and, as that which is banned, “is delivered over to its own separateness and, at the same time, consigned to the mercy of the one who abandons it.”⁷⁵ The logic of Orientalism and the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of those banished as *homo sacer* operate in parallel: both systems bring something into

being through oppositional relationships with a constitutive outside that is ultimately rejected as Other. Just as settler capitalism emerged through tension with and dominance over Indigenous ways of being, the West cannot exist without the spectre of the Orient, and sovereignty must arise from the banishment of the abjected homo sacer; in each of these relations, “the inside relies on the outside for its coherence and for the cognition of its limits.”⁷⁶

The Othering imperative inherent in Orientalism is more concerned with the production of a subject onto which it can project potential threats to empire than it is with the specifics of the populations that inhabit this subjectivity. Chinese exclusion therefore served as a template for the racialization and restriction of subsequent waves of immigration from the Asiatic Barred Zone, a region created by the Immigration Act of 1917 that extended from Afghanistan, across the Asian continent, to the Pacific Islands.⁷⁷ As Japanese migrants entered the country, in part to fill the labor vacuum created by violent and exclusionary discrimination against the Chinese, they were collapsed into the “Asian” category through the generalized discourse of “Yellow Peril”—the racist fear that Asians of all ethnicities would “one day unite and conquer the world” through a combination of military invasion, economic control, and cultural imperialism.⁷⁸

Japanese immigration to the United States began in earnest during the latter half of the 19th century after centuries of Japanese isolationism. The Japanese government issued nearly 1.2 million passports between 1885 and 1924, over 750,000 of which were to emigrants bound for the continental United States, even though the 1907 Gentlemen’s Agreement drastically limited the number of Japanese immigrants granted entry.⁷⁹ Though many of these immigrants came from rural areas of Japan and had previous farming experience, those that didn’t were often funneled into the economic niche of agriculture due to racial discrimination in their respective occupations along the West Coast, such as exclusionary labor union policies, on-the-job

harassment, and threatened or actual physical violence.⁸⁰ White Californians in the agricultural and railroad industries initially celebrated the arrival of the early Japanese immigrants as cheap laborers. By 1920, commercial agriculture along the West Coast (as well as parts of the Southwest) differed greatly in its relationships to immigrant labor relative to other industries. While other sectors of the national economy (such as manufacturing) achieved growth primarily through technological developments that reduced labor demand, analogous advances in agriculture, such as the introduction of improved “irrigation technology, the completion of regional railroad lines, and the invention of the refrigerated railroad car...promoted the development of large-scale production of fruits and vegetables,” ultimately entrenching further the industry’s dependence on controllable labor.⁸¹ The harvesting of these crops could not be mechanized in the same way as grain production, resulting in a demand for “a migratory agricultural proletariat.”⁸² Natsu Taylor Saito argues that white employers often favored importing Asian immigrants in particular as workers because the mechanisms that rendered them permanently foreign also made them easily exploitable, controllable, and—perhaps most importantly in this context—disposable. “When no longer needed, the foreign workers could be easily disposed of,” she writes; “The supply could be shut off and the workers deported or, as in the case of the Chinese bachelors, they would die without reproducing.”⁸³ A 1910 report by the California State Commissioner of Labor explicitly pinpointed Japanese immigrants as the ideal worker for producing fresh fruits and vegetables:

It was stated that Japanese or some form of labour of a similar character—capable of independent subsistence and quick mobilization, submissive to instant dismissal and entailing no responsibility upon the employer for continuous employment—was absolutely necessary in the California orchard, vineyard, and field if these vast industries were to be perpetuated and developed. Such labour had to be drawn from sources beyond the United States.⁸⁴

Japanese immigrants' adaptations to being forced to work under abusive conditions by white employers were interpreted as inherent characteristics attached to Japanese ethnicity rather than the products of relationships of racial domination.

As the Japanese immigrant population exceeded American employers' demand, eagerness to exploit gave way to overwhelming fear of losing dominance. "The [white] farm-owners found that the Japanese were not so easily controlled as the Chinese had been," Schrieke observed,

They had all the vices of the latter and none of the virtues. Where the Chinese were docile, the Japanese were aggressive. They demanded better employment and housing conditions, violated contracts, struck when the strike would be most inopportune for the farmer, and were eager to become land-owners. . . . Soon the Japanese were virtually in control of the berry, potato, flower, and truck-garden markets in almost every community of any size.⁸⁵

The portrayal of Chinese immigrants relative to the Japanese during this period illuminates the ways in which the Orientalist logic of Yellow Peril was extremely malleable and capable of strategically overlooking its own contradictions. While Schrieke's comparisons uplift the Chinese worker as the ideal subordinated laborer imbued with a sense of nostalgic desire, others considered Japanese immigrants as an updated iteration of archetypical Asiatic threat. This view was particularly prominent in San Francisco, a major hotbed of anti-Asian sentiment, as the San Francisco Chronicle declared: "The Japanese is no more assimilable than the Chinese and he is not less adaptable in learning quickly how to do the white man's work, and how to get the job for himself by offering his labor for less than the white man can live on."⁸⁶ The slippage between these two positions—Chinese vs. Japanese on one hand, Chinese as prototype for Japanese on the other—was so great that they could both be articulated nearly simultaneously by the same person; Schrieke himself frames his analysis in terms of the latter only a single page after deploying the former strategy:

Part of this awakening anti-Japanese opinion was contributed, of course, by the already existing unfavourable stereotype of the Oriental and by the slumbering anti-Oriental tradition of the Coast—the element dormant in its mores and impressed on it by the antecedent Chinese experiences. This complex had only to be aroused by similar emotional associations or stimuli in order to become active again and to produce the same reactions and attitudes.⁸⁷

Put in terms of Veracini's formulation of settler colonialism as the management of a particular population economy, the Chinese could only be represented as "virtuous" in relation to the equally "debased" Japanese; however, in the grand scheme of white settler society, distinctions between the two were ultimately eclipsed by the construction of a homogenized Asian subject that was not only debased, but "hopelessly so."⁸⁸

When Logics Collide and Collude

Commercial agriculture in the western US was also structurally distinct from forms of agriculture implemented elsewhere in the country. While "the yeoman farmer had metamorphosed into a businessman who esteemed not land but 'land values'" across the nation by the mid-nineteenth century, the rapid pace of settler colonial land acquisition and consolidation in the West was particularly conducive to the creation of exceptionally large agricultural monopolies. As a result, family-owned and operated farms were scarce in the West compared to the midwestern and plains states; however, a large percentage of the family farms that did exist in California were owned by Japanese/Americans by the early twentieth century.⁸⁹ Over the span of two decades, approximately 6,000 Issei farmers had acquired more than 210,000 acres of farmland across the Western states, Texas, and Florida.⁹⁰ Schrieke describes these successes in the explicit language of the same war on waste that had animated white settler accumulation and expansion decades earlier: "Here the Japanese were the pioneers who reclaimed the land from the desert and blazed the trail for the horde of other nationalities that followed. The Imperial Valley was turned by the Japanese from its unhealthy barren state of

wasteland into the richest and most productive district in the state of California” (emphasis mine).⁹¹ Far from being heralded as a victory for US settler empire through improvement, however, the drastic gains in Japanese landownership were met with intense panic among white Americans, causing “California legislative activities [to become] more and more threatening to the Japanese.”⁹² In an attempt to curtail the economic power of Japanese immigrant farmers, California passed the Alien Land Law of 1913. This piece of legislation—the first of its kind in the nation, but by no means the last—prevented US residents who were ineligible for citizenship from purchasing land and imposed restrictions upon their ability to lease land already in their possession.⁹³ Though the law did not explicitly target Japanese landowners, the language of ineligibility served as a proxy for the racial motivations that undergirded the policy.

The logic of the Alien Land Law exposes the intersections of bare habitance and bare life. Settler colonialism prescribes and demands particular methods of inhabiting land (i.e., “improvement” through settler capitalism) as part of “the geopolitical project of defining the territoriality of the nation.”⁹⁴ This process is buttressed by the concomitant “biopolitical project of defining the proper ‘body’ of the people.”⁹⁵ The two are bound in a both/and relationship rather than an either/or one; in order to rightly claim full membership within a settler state, one must “properly” enact both the occupation of territory and the embodiment of subjectivity according to the dictates of settler sovereignty. Examination of the latter condition has often degenerated into “positivist discussions over who is and is not a ‘settler’.”⁹⁶ In response, Scott Lauria Morgensen’s work shifts attention away from efforts to define the settler/non-settler distinction (a question of status/identity) in favor of attempts to interrogate the relationships between various groups of people and the structures of settler colonialism themselves (a question of subject production). In *Spaces between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous*

Decolonization, he asks: “Who, under what conditions, inherits the power to represent or enact settler colonialism?”⁹⁷ This question is particularly fraught for Japanese immigrants, who were caught in the coercive convergence of all three logics of white supremacy in one way or another: constructed as exogenous Others through settler colonialism, as perpetual foreigners through Orientalism, and as commodified laborers through anti-blackness/slavery.

Andrea Smith argues that white supremacy upholds and reproduces itself by offering those oppressed through the logic of one pillar of white supremacy the seductive “prospect of being able to participate in the other pillars.”⁹⁸ The seductive power of white supremacy is inherently deceptive and premised upon false promises—at least for all who are categorically denied access to whiteness. Complicity in the logics of white supremacy has historically served as an avenue through which groups on the threshold of whiteness (such as immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe on the East Coast) eventually become racialized as white—and, thus, become the beneficiaries of white supremacy and the inheritors of settler colonial power themselves—but the same cannot be said of those who are both literally and figuratively held at a greater distance from whiteness. The specific situation of Japanese immigrants in the post-Alien Land Law period reveals that one’s participation in one pillar can actually reinforce one’s own oppression within another. The logic of anti-blackness/slavery requires that the commodified worker remain separated from the profits that arise from labor. If labor, even that which is still undertaken as improvement, ultimately benefits a population categorically excluded from national belonging and racialized as the irredeemably foreign Other, it can then be interpreted as potentially threatening the project of settler empire instead of simply contributing to it. Rather than allowing them to reap the rewards of settler colonialism in full, Japanese immigrants’ participation in its mechanisms through agrarian capitalism on commodified land is precisely

what sedimented the linkage between Asian and threat. Therefore, determining whether or not Japanese immigrants can be considered settlers is not a particularly useful endeavor—even though they were able to align themselves with the geopolitical aspect of settler colonialism with relative success, that very same success categorically precluded their ability to be biopolitically complicit as well.

Inv/Asians and Competing Colonial Regimes

Even as the settler consciousness strives to disappear into itself and thus enable its violences to become fully forgotten, it can never escape self-inflicted paranoia, for as Veracini states quite bluntly, “settlers fear revenge.”⁹⁹ Veracini discusses the spectral figure of the not-quite-gone/not-gone-enough indigene (such as the returning Modoc) as the primary source of settler paranoia and fear—the Othered immigrant serves as its exogenous counterpart. The consciousness of the invading settler is so fraught with being compelled to forget and yet unable to escape the haunting fear of retribution that he (and I do mean he, given the commensurability of patriarchy and settler colonialism) sees invaders at every turn. In this sense, the perceived threat to empire is not necessarily one of Indigenous decolonization, but of the frightful possibility of an alternate colonization by a competing power.

The conflation of immigration with invasion, which interprets migrants as “agents, or potential agents, of foreign states,” has historical roots in the era of Chinese exclusion. In 1893, the Supreme Court argued that Congress has an uncontested power to take action against racially excludable migrants as a matter of national defense:

If...the government of the United States, through its legislative department, considers the presence of foreigners of a different race in this country...to be dangerous to its peace and security, their exclusion is not to be stayed because at the time there are no actual hostilities with the nation of which the foreigners are subject. The existence of war would render the necessity of the proceeding only more obvious and pressing.¹⁰⁰

The Court's declaration underscores the ways in which Orientalism enables the white supremacist nation to be engaged in a "constant state of war to protect itself from its enemies" by reading enmity and aggression into those who are irrevocably cast as foreign.¹⁰¹ The 1939 report *Immigration and Conquest*, which was commissioned by the New York Chamber of Commerce and alternately titled *Conquest by Immigration*, upheld congressionally mandated Asian exclusion as the defense of one settler colonial regime against the possibility of another:

The problem of oriental immigration was presented to the Pacific coast shortly after the development of the American far West by the people of the United States. There law and order were established and maintained by the American pioneer. . . . The western coast of America did not present an attraction to the oriental until American occupation, its consequent establishment of law and order, and the development of Pacific trade made the American west coast safe and accessible to the people of Asia's east coast. Then oriental immigration began, but the American people through the action of Congress in 1922, exercising their undoubted sovereign right, passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which caught the oriental problem before it had reached proportions which would have rendered it insoluble. Such timely solution was an act of major consequence to the future development of the American people, since the preservation of national institutions depends principally upon the conservation of the race which builds them.¹⁰²

By conflating race with nationality, non-white immigrants were seen as pseudo-soldiers in service to a competing country whose ultimate goal was the dismantling of the institutions of white American settler society.

In some respects, early-twentieth-century Japanese foreign policy did lend itself relatively easily to a narrative of colonialism that animated settler fears along the West Coast. With the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the Japanese government formally ended its period of isolationism. According to Eiichiro Azuma and Dean Itsuji Saranillio, "The Meiji government understood that in order to be considered a 'civilized' nation, Japan would have to 'partake in the practice of colonization'."¹⁰³ This practice was explicitly adapted from the precedent of American settler colonial violence. Saranillio describes Japanese efforts to colonize Okinawa, Taiwan, China, and Korea as the country's "own form of manifest destiny" and argues that

Japan's "colonization of the Ainu in Hokkaido in 1869 was modeled after the conquest of Native Americans by the United States."¹⁰⁴ Among the principles adopted by the Meiji leaders in 1868 was the decree: "knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule."¹⁰⁵ This and other actions on the part of the Japanese government "attached a nationalist meaning to the act of migration, seeing overseas settlements as economically and politically tied to the state's collective purpose," and were construed by the white American public as evidence of Japanese imperial aggression and hostility.¹⁰⁶ Threatened by Japan's military victories in the Russo- and Sino-Japanese Wars, many Americans believed that Japan would soon turn its imperial eye to the United States. Framing immigration as the beginning of an ultimate racial showdown, US Senator James D. Phelan of San Francisco declared: "the civilization of East and West have met for a great trial of strength. One must dominate."¹⁰⁷

Regardless of the colonial overtones of the Japanese government's official policies, the Japanese migrants themselves can hardly be considered to be scheming operatives of Japanese imperialism across the board. Questioning whether migrants are actually "proxies for foreign troops" as the dominant paradigm of immigration as invasion claimed, Ngai argues that "immigrants have historically pursued not the political interests of states but individual and family improvement. Even when politically motivated, migration is more often a matter of escape than one of conquest."¹⁰⁸ White Americans demonstrated a remarkable inability to distinguish between the actions and attitudes of the Japanese government and those of the Japanese/Americans living in the US, a phenomenon that would continue throughout World War II with disastrous consequences for the latter. As a result, the individual Japanese/Americans along the West Coast became racialized as collective agents of Yellow Peril.

Immigrants from Japan seeking agricultural work in the US were subsumed into a rhetoric of militarized invasion heralding the ultimate downfall of white US empire: “According to the Report of the United States Industrial Commission there was in 1900 in the State of California ‘a great army of Japanese coolies, upwards of 20,000’ who monopolized agricultural labor. ... The people shouted: ‘We are going to be overrun!’ and ‘California shall not become the Caucasian graveyard!’”¹⁰⁹ In Schrieke’s words, “Every Japanese was readily believed to be conniving with the Japanese Government for the ultimate destruction of America.”¹¹⁰ The discourse of the supposed Asian invasion even found its way into the purportedly “neutral and objective” fields of scientific inquiry and natural history by way of racially motivated eugenics; Harry Hamilton Laughlin, the author of *Immigration and Conquest* and a leading American eugenicist (who, incidentally, ultimately inspired many of Hitler’s ideologies), identified three species that, in his view, exemplified the kind of establishment of dominance through migration and settlement that a “successful civilization” should strive to achieve: “Among many other zoological forms which have ... made conquests of their new domains by effective migration and reproduction within the United States, might be mentioned the English sparrow and, still more recently, the Starling in the eastern part of the country. The Japanese beetle among insects is proving its mettle as an invading warrior.”¹¹¹ Though not necessarily conclusive evidence one way or another, it is worthwhile noting that, of the three species named, two are birds of European origin with a relatively established pattern of dominance within the US, while the third is a Japanese insect likened to an ongoing military invasion.

The language of colonization was applied explicitly to ethnic enclaves. Terminal Island, also known as East San Pedro or Higashi San Pedro, was a small fishing community in Los Angeles County. Of all the ethnic enclaves in the area, it was the only one in which

Japanese/Americans constituted a majority of the population.¹¹² The community was born when a small group of Japanese fishermen went into business together in San Pedro just after the turn of the century. They carved out a niche for themselves by specializing in catching and drying abalone, a foodstuff in which white Americans had no interest; however, hostility directed at their operation drove them to relocate to Terminal Island, where they soon established permanent residences and businesses. According to historian John Modell, “the colony outgrew its pioneering period” (emphasis mine).¹¹³ Such a statement might seem innocuous enough if separated from its settler colonial context; however, it is representative of a larger trend of representing Japanese communities along the West Coast as intractable hotbeds of Japanese imperial and/or colonial activity. Senator Phelan, always one to be outspoken in his virulent Orientalism, spoke at the City Club of Los Angeles in 1919 on the “dread” of the Japanese in Los Angeles:

Time has shown that there is no assimilation by marriage of Asiatics and our people. The Japanese remain permanently a foreign colony. ... Where races cannot mingle there is no democracy, and incidentally the situation results in a lowering of the standards of the civilization. ... Of course, we would not submit to that, so the situation would result in local more or less sanguinary conflicts.¹¹⁴

Phelan’s message is clear—Japanese/American communities were spaces marked by inassimilable foreignness, threats to the “civilized West,” and should have been eradicated through violent bloodshed if necessary.

While the three pillars of white supremacy that Andrea Smith identifies all deal with dimensions of difference imbued with violence and power, Orientalism appears to be unique in that it allows for the difference of the Other to manifest as racial superiority rather than inferiority. In white Americans’ fears of perceived Japanese colonial and imperial enterprises, a recurring theme is not so much revulsion to the thought of being “overrun” by an inferior race, but terror at the possibility of being “dominated” and “mastered” by a superior one. Modell

identifies this trend in his study of Japanese/American communities in Los Angeles:

“Californians’ fears were kindled more by an unyielding suspicion that, although the white men had prevailed more than amply on earlier racial frontiers, in California the Japanese were destined to win.”¹¹⁵ One member of the Los Angeles County Anti-Asiatic Society wrote, “The Japanese consider us inferior, and they sneer at us in their complacency. They call us rabbits, and rabbit-hearted, always filled with terror. They believe we are a race of ape-men, and dream their dreams of yellow domination, when they shall be slave drivers and we the cringing slaves,”¹¹⁶ illuminating one particular way in which the three logics supported and underwrote each other simultaneously. The settler, enabled by genocide and colonialism to think himself the native (and, thus, rightful) inhabitant of the land, fears the shadowy Other from the Orient, who in his precarious imagination might yet wield the power to subvert his whiteness and reduce him to property in a capitalist regime as he himself has Black people.

Among white Americans, these attitudes towards Japanese/Americans were influenced as much or more by possibility as actuality. Baldwin argues that geographies of whiteness are structured through invocations of futurity as well as historicity: “From tropes of uncertainty, Utopia, apocalypse, prophesy, hope, fear, possibility and potentiality, the future shapes the present in all manner of ways. For instance, in politics, rights are often suspended to safeguard against future events of insurrection, catastrophe, and terror.”¹¹⁷ The future and the present are thus engaged in a mutually-constitutive-yet-oppositional dialectic that mirrors the processes from which the Other and the homo sacer emerge, since “the future is very often already present in the present not as a discrete ontological time-space, but as an absent or virtual presence that constitutes the very meaning of the present.”¹¹⁸ Drawing from this increasingly expansive articulation of temporality, white settler anxieties towards the possibility of Japanese

colonization become a matter of fearing what could be rather than what is. Schrieke's writing reflects this mindset: "The potential abilities of the Japanese were feared. The thought of a rapidly growing population, composed of highly efficient persons integrated into a powerful national machine, aroused apprehension."¹¹⁹

In this framework, any gains achieved by Japanese immigrants could be construed as another step towards a future in which whiteness no longer reigned supreme. The success of Japanese immigrants in agriculture and other industries, imbued with the language of racial superiority by white Americans, thus exacerbated fears of future Japanese colonial domination. As early as 1920, Phelan and his ilk pursued a campaign against the Los Angeles Japanese fishing industry "on grounds of illegal registry as well as super-efficiency, maintaining that behind this convincing front the fleet hid its real functions: espionage and the smuggling of Japanese laborers."¹²⁰ In an atmosphere that conflated nationality, ethnicity, race, economic subsistence, and imperial dominance, success slid easily into suspicion: "An old anti-Japanese bugaboo, the Japanese-American fisherman, was again recalled, and legislative harassment was threatened. Earlier, the Japanese fisherman had posed an economic threat; now he seemed the agent of a skillful and aggressive military foe."¹²¹ One farmer, when asked about the prospect of importing Japanese labor into his agricultural region, exclaimed, "By God, they are damn good farmers—a hell of a lot better at it than we Americans—and they might be good at farm work here, but I do not think it would be wise to bring them in because some farmers feel badly toward them and I feel sure we would eventually have trouble if they were brought here."¹²²

The Alien Land Law itself was an extension of this logic; it implicitly, if not explicitly, recognized that land acquisition is a primary staple of settler sovereignty, and subsequently read Japanese agricultural success as an establishment of Japanese settler power that challenged the

future of America's own settler nation. This legislative attempt at racialized dispossession was largely devastating to the Japanese agricultural community, but Japanese farmers continued to make gains despite this significant setback. Those with US-born children often transferred property ownership to them—as US citizens by birth, the Nisei did not fall under the purview of the Alien Land Law. Attitudes toward the Nisei in the context of agriculture and landownership illuminate the ways in which anxieties around immigration, settler legitimacy, and the future of white supremacy all converged upon the heteronormative nuclear family as a reproductive unit.

Laughlin and other eugenicists urged lawmakers to impose restrictions on immigration based on racial and biological grounds rather than economic or political ones. They argued that “the immigrant into the United States was to be looked upon, not as a source of cheap or competitive labor, nor as one seeking an asylum from foreign oppression, nor as a migrant hunting a less strenuous life, but as a parent of future-born American citizens. This meant that the hereditary stuff out of which future immigrants were made would have to be compatible racially with American ideals.”¹²³ While immigrants of color themselves could be exploited for labor and marginalized legally, politically, and socially, any children they bore on US soil would automatically become formal members of the nation through birthright citizenship. Therefore, Laughlin believed the state had a vested interest in preventing immigrant reproduction through any means. While Chinese immigration to the US had overwhelmingly been composed of single men who engaged in long-term sojourning between the US and China until they acquired enough wealth to return permanently to their places of origin, Japanese immigration was characterized by a much higher ratio of family migration with no intent to return to Japan.¹²⁴ In discussing the history of migration within Europe, Laughlin says, “German armies were accompanied by their

wives, children, and cattle. They settled upon the invaded territories; this was real conquest—conquest by permanent immigration.”

American-born Japanese children, according to this logic, were the ultimate embodiment of the “settler nightmare of losing control” through non-white immigrants “infiltrating and subverting the population economy from within” (emphasis in original).¹²⁵ Recognition of Nisei success, particularly in education, was a backhanded compliment through which dominant white society both attributed accomplishments to inherent racial qualities and cast mere schoolchildren as foreign competitors. One Oregon newspaper described the Japanese/American community in Washington’s Puyallup Valley as follows: “Most of the Japanese in the valley are American born. The ‘smart little Jap kids’ go to the public schools in the valley communities of Fife, Sumner and Puyallup, where they sometimes outshine their occidental schoolmates in studies through superior industry and concentration.”¹²⁶ M. L. Darsie, an educational psychologist from Stanford University, conducted a study “judging social and moral traits,” and concluded, “the Japanese students were equal or, in many respects, superior to the average children of other races in California, including American children.”¹²⁷ In contrast to the dominant narrative of the American Dream that upholds personal initiative as the pathway to success and belonging, Nisei accomplishments reified their exclusion from Americanness and reinscribed their inassimilability with white society.

Locating competing settler potential in the Japanese/American family enabled white Americans to target Nisei by denying them the material and discursive benefits of citizenship. Mae Ngai proposes the figure of the alien citizen—“an American citizen by virtue of her birth in the United States but whose citizenship is suspect, if not denied, on account of the racialized identity of her immigrant ancestry”—to explain this paradox of political inclusion and exclusion:

“Alienage, then, becomes a permanent condition, passed from generation to generation, adhering even to the native-born citizen.”¹²⁸ Washington state Attorney General Smith Troy, speaking to a committee established to assess the supposed Japanese threat to national security, said, “I include in the term ‘aliens’ both alien and native Japanese.” The racially motivated rhetorical effacement of Nisei citizenship was similarly evident in the removal orders ultimately issued along the West Coast in 1942, which were addressed to “all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien.” Saito argues in response, “When a citizen is no longer identified as a citizen, but as a ‘non-alien,’ the presumption of foreignness has supplanted nationality.”¹²⁹ While incarcerated at Tule Lake, high school senior Toru Noji confirmed the widespread understanding of foreignness as a pseudo-hereditary condition in a sociology essay: “The second generation Japanese is not an individual first and incidentally a member of the Japanese race: he is a ‘Jap’ first, endowed with all the undesirable attributes of the stereotype, and only incidentally a particular individual ... [The Nisei] are unable to escape the racial prejudice that attaches to their parents.”¹³⁰

The goal of the Alien Land Law was to prevent the establishment of potential Japanese colonies in on US soil; however, since white Americans commonly believed that the Nisei posed even more of a threat in this realm than their immigrant parents, the Alien Land Law failed to address the “Japanese Problem” adequately. In a 1929 letter, California Governor William D. Stephens repeatedly emphasized distinctions between “us”—the white American public—and “them”—the racial enemy—that underscored the tacit logic of unassimilability that haunted all Asians, regardless of actual citizenship status: “The people of California are determined to repress a developing Japanese community within our midst. They are determined to exhaust every power in their keeping to maintain the state for its own people.”¹³¹ As a result, “the people of California” and “the Japanese” become mutually exclusive categories in the eyes of the

public, despite the fact that a full two-thirds of the Japanese/Americans ultimately incarcerated during World War II were citizens by birth.¹³² In 1942, E.M. Seifert, president of the Central California Vegetable Grower-Shippers Association, wrote to a member of Congress to encourage him to “take the necessary action to make California safe for Americans,” employing a “think of the children!” strategy in which Nisei were explicitly excluded from the imagined political body of the future:

For the protection of future generations of Californians and Americans, no Japanese even though he be born in America, should be permitted to own land. ... If the Japanese can own land, they will eventually outnumber the whites: they cannot be assimilated. ... You and I and thousands of other Californians know that if the Japs are permitted to own or lease land (when I say Japs I mean American born as well as aliens) it will only be a question of time when they will own all of the best farming land on the Pacific Coast... I am thinking of the generations of Americans to come who although they are not yet here, are looking to us to protect them and keep our beloved country in our hands and not give it away to the Japs.¹³³

The denial of full citizenship to the Nisei rests upon the indigenization of white settlers and the subsequent construction of white “nativity.” Drawing upon the falsified settler imaginary that projects white hegemony backwards through time immemorial, Senator Phelan (unsuccessfully) ran for reelection in 1920 with the campaign slogan, “Keep California White!” and implored California voters to “Save Our State from Oriental Aggression.”¹³⁴ Schrieke, writing from a moment when the imminent expiration of the Chinese Exclusion Act heightened anti-Asian activities in California, noted: “[The California Joint Immigration Committee, known before 1924 as the Japanese Exclusion League of California] defends the present [Chinese] Exclusion Act in the interests of state and nation with their Caucasian civilization, in order that California may remain what it has always been, and God Himself intended it shall always be—the white man’s paradise”¹³⁵ (emphasis mine). In these brief excerpts, the language of settler amnesia—that is, the consolidation of white settler empire through violence and its subsequent forgetting and denial—goes hand-in-hand with the language of Orientalist defense. Similarly,

one of the key anti-Japanese groups in California at the time was called the Native Sons of the Golden West.¹³⁶ These white men (for their membership was entirely white), whose families could probably only have had ties to California and the rest of the “Golden West” for no more than a generation or two, were able to self-identify as “native” because of the thorough elimination of actual Indigenous histories.

When the category of “nativity” is used as a proxy for both the formal and informal dimensions of belonging, its boundaries become exceptionally porous. Proximity to whiteness ultimately supersedes actual place of birth as the operative determinant of access to the rhetoric of nativity. As hostilities against the Japanese/Americans along the West Coast reached fever pitch in the early 1940s, white immigrants established an ethos from which to argue for Japanese exclusion by emphasizing their own uncontested identities as Americans. In a 1942 letter to the editor of the Klamath Falls Evening Herald, Malin, OR resident H. J. Elzner described himself as follows: “I came to this country with my folks at [a] tender age. My native Czechoslovakia is practically nothing to me. I like to think of myself as [more of] an American than anything else.” He then went on to leverage his “Americanness” to lend credibility and legitimacy to his “militant...attitude[s]” toward “Japs.”¹³⁷ In Seattle, 67-year-old Karl R. Paykull was found guilty of disorderly conduct after he dragged an 11-year-old Nisei boy—who was working as a school crossing guard with the Junior Safety Patrol—half a block down the street. “I can’t understand why a Japanese should be on the patrol when we are at war with Japan,” Paykull said. When asked by the City Attorney if he himself had been born in the United States, Paykull simply responded, “No.” He had, in fact, been born in Sweden.¹³⁸ Los Angeles County District Attorney Clyde Shoemaker, who was described as “the most violent anti-Japanese voice in S. California,” employed a similar strategy at a state level:

I came to the State of Calif. at the age of three and have resided here since that time. I know every county and almost every town in the State. I represent the Western, the California, point of view. As a Californian, I have seen the Japs move in and take over some of the best parts of the state. I have seen the threat to our land, our property and our institutions. ... As a Californian, therefore, I feel completely justified in taking a stand in no uncertain terms on a problem so close to Calif. and to Calif alone.¹³⁹

Claiming nativity and emphasizing uninhibited discursive belonging served as a means through which these white men were able to establish authenticity and credibility while simultaneously denying equal legal and social recognition to the Nisei. They demonstrated that nativity and belonging were categories reserved for whiteness—white immigrants were able to access it more readily than either Indigenous people or people of color with birthright citizenship.

4. The Japanese Problem: Wartime White Supremacy

Confronting the Japanese Problem

The bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese military on December 7, 1941 instantly brought the nation's racial anxieties to a head. White Americans, particularly along the West Coast, felt vindicated in the suspicions and fears they had been nursing for decades. The attack was taken as proof of Japanese/American "disloyalty" as the general public assumed that civilians residing along the coast had colluded with the Japanese military. The quotidian activities of Japanese/Americans were rendered as strategic actions specifically designed to aid Japan: in the white imagination, fishermen were secretly signaling Japanese forces from their boats, farmers were perfectly poised to undermine the nation's food sources, and the very formations of ethnic enclaves and Japanese/American communities were intentional acts of infiltration. This generalized panic sparked a nationwide conversation about how best to "solve" the so-called "Japanese Problem" of the Western states.

Expressions of white American fears toward the Japanese/American population drew directly upon their racialized Otherness and attached an element of unintelligible difference to them. In a discussion among state and local government officials in Seattle, WA, one white man declared “that he has found it ‘exceedingly difficult to divine the Oriental,’” and urged the forcible removal of all Japanese/Americans from the West Coast.¹⁴⁰ These discourses that portrayed Japanese/Americans as fundamentally unreadable as an extension of their permanent inassimilability were sharply contrasted with the treatment of people of Italian and German descent living in the US. Ben Beery, a prominent Los Angeles-based lawyer and the “chairman of the Americanism Committee of the American Legion,” articulated the view of disloyalty as a universal characteristic attached only to Japanese ethnicity: “We can tell a good German from a bad German and we can tell a good Italian from a bad Italian. We can understand these people and can make valid judgments. But the Japanese are a different matter. Our criteria fall down when it comes to the Japanese. There is no way of telling a good Japanese from a bad one.”¹⁴¹ While suspicion was applied across the board to anyone of Japanese ancestry—and even to anyone who was perceived to be Japanese, including people of Chinese and Korean ancestry—white people were given the benefit of the doubt even if their relationships to actual enemies of the US were significantly more substantial and proximate. “Adolf Hitler’s nephew, William Patrick Hitler...may be serving in the United States navy soon,” the Klamath Falls Herald & News reported in 1944, “Hitler, a British subject who listed the German dictator as his uncle on his draft questionnaire, apparently has passed his physical examination and probably will be accepted for service in the navy.”¹⁴²

The tendency to deny Japanese/Americans consideration as individuals rather than a monolithic and threatening bloc was paramount in the federal government’s ultimate decision to

remove all people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast. As removal—euphemistically known as “evacuation” to the general public—entered the national consciousness as a possible solution to the Japanese Problem, the blanket assumptions of disloyalty left Japanese/Americans little room to contest discriminatory treatment.

John Hassler, Oakland city manager, said he felt the best way to handle the situation would be to evacuate all Japanese, regardless of whether they asserted their loyalty. He said he believed the Japanese could best show their loyalty by leaving the proscribed areas at the government request. They could return later if their loyalty was determined by investigation. On the other hand, he would have Germans and Italians investigated before they were removed.¹⁴³

Following Hassler’s logic, two options presented themselves: either Japanese/Americans could “show their loyalty” by complying with the very actions that reified their supposed disloyalty, or they could protest the racist removal orders and, by virtue of speaking out, embody that same disloyalty.

Toward Removal

Racial fear found a partner in capitalist greed as the prospect of mass removal gained popularity across the nation. After the war, Ronald E. Jones, president of the Oregon State Farmers Union, said in correspondence with Edward N. Barnhart, an assistant professor at UC Berkeley, “My own reaction was that the individuals who made the most noise regarding evacuation stood to profit by the evacuation.”¹⁴⁴ White Americans, who had both despised and coveted the relative success of Japanese/Americans since the earliest waves of immigration from Japan, saw in the wartime panic an opportunity to deprive Japanese/Americans of their wealth and livelihoods, thereby securing increased profits and assets for themselves. This trend revived settler colonial patterns of dispossession in the name of white acquisition and incorporated them with Orientalist tendencies to locate threatening competition in the Other. For some white Americans with a vested economic interest in Japanese/American removal, this combination

even touched upon the spectre of genocide and mass death: “The vegetable industry ever since December 7 [the Pearl Harbor bombing] has joined in every movement to eliminate Japanese growers from the vegetable picture and to move them at least 300 miles East from the Pacific coastline or preferably, 300 miles due West.” According to this white man’s perspective, which was echoed by countless others across the country, the “appropriate” response to Pearl Harbor was not one of simple temporary segregation and exclusion, but of permanent elimination through fatal violence.

Since agriculture in California was primarily a large-scale endeavor, proponents of forced removal were backed by the institutional power of organized labor and agribusiness associations. These agriculture- and labor-oriented organizations, along with veterans organizations like the American Legion and anti-Japanese staples like the Native Sons & Daughters of the Golden West, formed a loose coalition united by a common goal: ridding the West Coast of the racial and economic “menace” posed by Japanese/Americans in the name of defending white settler capital. Leaders of these organizations were vocal in their demands, lobbying members of local, state, and national governments and publishing and distributing printed materials to sway public opinion. As Barnhart wrote in his research notes, “The Western Grower Association (prior to January, 1943, the Western Growers Protective Association), which describes itself on its letter-head as representing ‘The vegetable and melon industry of California and Arizona’ came out publicly in favor of the exclusion of all Japanese from the coast, and its president was active in writing various public officials urging this action.”¹⁴⁵ Veterans associated with three local groups of the American Legion in Washington State urged the “immediate removal of all enemy aliens under whatever plan would appear the best in the interest of national defense” by writing “resolutions addressed to national officials of the veterans organization.”¹⁴⁶ While the Legion’s

rhetoric of “national defense” might be considered at least facially neutral, others—such as Austin E. Anson, managing secretary of the Salinas, CA-based Central California Vegetable Grower-Shippers Association—explicitly broadcasted the racial motivations of their actions:

“We’re charged with wanting to get rid of the Japs for selfish reasons ... We might as well be honest. We do. It’s a question of whether the white man lives on the Pacific Coast or the brown men. They came into this valley to work, and they stayed to take over. ... If all the Japs were removed tomorrow, we’d never miss them in two weeks, because the white farmers can take over and produce everything the Jap grows. And we don’t want them back when the war ends, either.”

Infuriated that the Japanese/Americans had not played into the role of an easily controllable and subordinated labor force as prescribed by white supremacy, Anson saw removal as the perfect opportunity to reset the racial status quo and reconsolidate white economic, social, and political dominance.

White Americans rallied together against Japanese/Americans based on the same concept of racialized economic competition that had structured white fears toward immigrant populations for generations; however, this model was premised largely on myth and imagined conflict. In discussing riots and mob violence against the Filipino workers who ultimately filled the vacuum caused by the extraction of Japanese/Americans (as they themselves had filled the demand left by Chinese exclusion), Ngai argues that the Filipino and white workers did not actually compete for the same jobs. She calls Asian workers “familiar and convenient scapegoats,” particularly to unemployed white workers, and says, “The perception of widespread job competition was, in fact, fueled by long-standing racial animus towards Asiatics. The central element of this hostility was the ideology of white entitlement to the resources of the West. That outlook overdetermined race relations and created the problem, both real and imagined, of economic displacement.”¹⁴⁷

The anxieties upon which white mobs acted was quite real. The economic/labor conflicts that generated these anxieties, on the other hand, were not.

Defending the Home Front

With the impending removal looming over them, Japanese/American farmers were once again caught in an irreconcilable contradiction created by white supremacy and the demands of a nation at war. As the technologies of modern warfare expanded during the twentieth century with both World Wars, so too did the institutional and societal support needed to sustain military operations. The terms home front and war effort both rose to prominence during these periods of global conflict to describe an ever-widening sphere of civic participation and cooperation that made war possible in both a logistical and an affective sense.¹⁴⁸ These terms solidified a growing understanding that, during times of war fought elsewhere, the civilian population of a nation operated in conjunction with the military and had an obligation to participate in a consolidated system of social, economic, and political support. As a result, the nature of warfare expanded beyond the confines of the physical battlefield, encompassing all aspects of the domestic¹⁴⁹ nation-state. As such, the home front became a place of conflict itself—a place where national identity, patriotism, and belonging were contested, defined, and defended.

Implicit in the American notion of the war effort is a twin sense of singularity and sacrifice. The singular nature of the war effort—that is, the idea that there is one monolithic war effort rather than several/multiple war efforts—indicates that there is one relatively defined set of practices that would contribute to the military success of the nation. In other words, war effort creates a “right” way to perform national identity, and, by extension, “wrong” ways of behaving that fall outside of the shared national mission. “Proper” contribution to the war effort during World War II entailed willing patriotic sacrifice. For Japanese/American farmers, this sacrifice came in the form of planting and maintaining crops—all at their own expense—knowing that they would be removed from their homes and farms before the harvest season. White Americans

desperately wanted to eliminate the Japanese/American population, but the nation couldn't afford to lose the crops they produced. Nobumitsu Takahashi, the agricultural coordinator of the Northern California District Council of the Japanese American Citizen's League, estimated in March 1942 that Japanese/American farmers would "lose approximately \$100,000,000 in investments." He continued, emphasizing the drastic impact such an upheaval would cause throughout the nation, "Due to the complexity of the economic system, billion-dollar investments by others (Caucasians) will also be lost. ... In other words, the economic structure of the vegetable industry, both wholesale and retail, will be seriously weakened. These damaging effects of such nature will in no way bolster the United States war effort or the morale of its citizens."¹⁵⁰ To this end, Lawrence I. Hewes, Jr., regional director of the Farm Security Administration, declared that "keeping the Japanese lands in production is a basic war measure."¹⁵¹

Evaluating conduct through the rubric of the war effort enabled the delineation of the "true American" in opposition to the Other. This model leaves no room for ambiguity and operates on the mentality of "either you're with us or you're against us"—thus, any actions or ideologies categorized as "wrong" are constructed as putting the nation at risk and actively undermining national security. Failure to accurately perform patriotism—an already-fraught and arbitrary concept depending on one's subject position within society—then renders one an enemy of the nation at large. For Japanese/Americans, the stakes were particularly high. Although excluded from full participation and membership in American society through Orientalism, they were still expected to contribute to the war effort. As with the blanket assumption of disloyalty on racial grounds, compliance with white demands was compulsory and even the slightest whisper of dissent was taken as immediate proof of enmity.

Japanese/Americans were thus coerced into participating in the same war effort that sought their permanent exclusion under threat of punishment. US Army General John L. DeWitt “warned the Japanese they must settle their affairs immediately. ... Any neglect of crops is sabotage.”¹⁵² A similar exhortation was announced in Seattle: “A warning to Japanese potential evacuees that they will be summarily dealt with if they fail to plant or take care of growing crops pending evacuation was sounded here yesterday by Charles M. Ross, field officer for the Wartime Farm Adjustment Program.”¹⁵³

The national need to affirm the proper embodiment of citizenship was so profound during World War II that it even found ways to permeate the amnesia that otherwise erases Indigenous people from settler consciousness. The Klamath Falls Evening Herald published an article in February 1942 titled “Modoc Warriors’ Descendants Aid Uncle Sam in Bond Sales”:

Descendants of Modoc War veterans, whose forebears gave the United States army a bitter fight in the rugged Lava Beds, are now buying bonds at \$500 a whack to help the United States army win a war. A check of the list of defense savings bond buyers among the Indians of the Klamath reservation shows that many of them are related to the members of Captain Jack’s band of Modocs who held off the United States troops for months in 1872-73. There are even among them descendants of the leaders who were hanged by the army at Fort Klamath after the war. But no trace of bitterness remains as the Indians line themselves up for Uncle Sam in his fight with the axis powers. “Let’s forget the Modoc war and remember Pearl Harbor!” That’s the way the Indian attitude was expressed by Cain Schonchin, whose great uncle was Schonchin John, head man under Captain Jack and one of the four leaders executed at Fort Klamath. ... This attitude, according to B. G. Courtright, Klamath agency superintendent, is typical of the Indians of the Klamath reservation. The Indians are well aware of the realities of war. “It would be just like those Japs to take a crack at our 320,000,000 forests,” said one Indian. “When we buy bonds, we’re helping Uncle Sam protect us.” ... Also on the list are several Riddles, descendants of the Modoc war’s noble and romantic figure, Winema, the woman peacemaker. ... She labored in vain to make her people see the futility of their rebellion against the whites, and she was credited with saving a white man’s life at the bloody Canby massacre. ... Four [Modoc leaders] were hanged for the Canby massacre. Others were exiled to Oklahoma, but a number came back to this country and settled on the reservation where their descendants are now proving their good citizenship by buying defense bonds.

This article exemplifies an informal version of what Veracini calls “transfer by indigenous/national ‘reconciliation,’” a process in which Indigenous and settler entities engage in some form of rapprochement that purportedly relegates all conflict to the past.¹⁵⁴ Though there was no formal/legal reconciliation in this particular instance, the emphasis on the Modocs’ familial relationships to the Modoc War-era leaders lent them an air of credibility that enabled them to speak for their community and gave symbolic weight to their apparent forgiveness of settler colonial violence. As a mechanism of transfer, reconciliation reinforces settler sovereignty by “contributing to the extinction of otherwise irreducible forms of indigenous alterity,” and constitutes “a powerful act of relegitimation and settler self-supersession.”¹⁵⁵ In the resulting population economy, the only remaining Indigenous presence is one that has been fully assimilated and incorporated into the national body politic. Furthermore, framing the purchase of war bonds as one avenue through which Indigenous peoples secure the capitalist and militarist “protection” of the US reinforces the representation of Native Americans as requiring paternalistic management as wards of the settler government.

The positioning of Indigenous peoples in opposition to Japanese/Americans is key; confident that it has extinguished its Indigenous enemies, settler empire turns its attention to an exogenous one. As settler colonialism seeks to transfer sovereignty from the indigenes to the settler, Orientalism seeks to transfer constructions of enmity and danger onto the population most easily characterized as threatening to its empire. If Indigenous people no longer pose the most immediate threat to settler authority, they can then be seduced into “join[ing] US wars to spread ‘democracy’.”¹⁵⁶ In other words, indigeneity within a settler state can only be acknowledged if doing so ultimately reinforces—both discursively and financially, in this case—the operations of the US as an Orientalist war machine.

The language of advancing the war effort on the home front policed Japanese/Americans' bodies as much as it did their material assets and possessions. While white people wanted to destroy economic competition, real or imagined, by preventing Japanese/Americans from being farm owners and/or operators, they saw potential for them to be used as a controllable labor force in the areas in which they were ultimately confined. In this sense, the discourse of the war effort and its attendant threats of punishment for failure to conform served as the mechanism by which Japanese/Americans were forced into the narrow role predetermined by white supremacy. After surveying public opinion to determine what the government should do with Japanese/Americans after removing them from the West Coast, George D. Dean wrote, "The belief is general, perhaps unanimous, it would be far better to utilize the Japanese in some essential war effort than allow them to twiddle their thumbs in the reception center at government expense."¹⁵⁷ In a vein of thought that harkens back to portrayals of the "idle Indian" on the reservation, white Americans argued that Japanese/Americans should be made to work—as long as the fruits of such labor ultimately rested in white hands.

While the white population of the nation overwhelmingly agreed with this conjoined strategy of labor and confinement in theory, finding a location where Japanese/American laborers would be tolerated proved to be a difficult process in practice. The prevailing white opinion across the country might be summed up as, "Yes, the Japanese should definitely be put to work—but not here." According to a report by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, "Two-thirds of the West Coast respondents...rejected the use of the evacuees, and nearly all of these spoke in racial or nationalistic terms. Within this group were several farmers who had taken over land formerly operated by the evacuees and who consequently had an economic interest in opposing their return."¹⁵⁸ Drawing on white Americans' desires to avoid hosting even a tightly

regulated and incarcerated Japanese/American population, Frank J. Taylor published an article documenting the removal process in *The Saturday Evening Post* titled “The People Nobody Wants.”¹⁵⁹ Even in the few places that were willing to accept the use of Japanese/American labor, white privilege and entitlement still structured the kinds of opportunities that would be granted to Japanese/Americans. “Opposition would develop if Japanese workers were used while any white laborers were still available,” Dean advised the War Relocation Authority. Not only did white Americans feel that Japanese/Americans should only be given work if the local white population was fully employed, the intensity of their hostility necessitated spatial segregation as well: “Violence easily might occur if Japanese and whites were worked in the same field.”¹⁶⁰ Note that this passive construction normalizes racial violence perpetrated by white Americans by removing agency and responsibility. Deliberate actions that both stem from and reproduce racial hierarchy through bloodshed are reduced to something that might simply just happen. White geographies, therefore, are geographies of violence—from their foundations in settler colonialism, to their maintenance against real and imagined threats, to their attempts to secure themselves for future white generations.

The Basin on the Brink of War

The Klamath Basin was the epitome of white rural homogeneity when World War II broke out. Dean described the Basin’s residents as “particularly proud that this is ‘a white man’s country’. They intend to keep it so. ... There are no Japanese in the Tule Basin nor in Klamath County. The last census [1940] showed only twenty two Negrose [sic] out of a population of some 40,000. Few Mexicans are brought in during the harvest season to work in the sugar beets but are moved out when the harvest is completed.”¹⁶¹ Most residents were born in the US; when the government ordered Italian, German, and Japanese residents to register with local officials in

early 1942, 147 “enemy aliens” reported to the Klamath Falls Post Office—none were Japanese, and Italians outnumbered Germans four to one.¹⁶² By 1937, a total of 25,225 acres of farmland had been parceled out in 408 homestead units, ninety-two percent of which were still being farmed by World War I veterans at the outbreak of World War II.¹⁶³ Agriculture was the lifeblood of these communities; the primary crops included “potatoes, barley, wheat, alfalfa, sugar beets, oats and clover and flax seed.”¹⁶⁴

In declaring the Klamath Basin “a white man’s country,” the settlers brought the violence of Native genocide and their subsequent erasure from history full circle, solidifying the region as a prime example of what Sherene H. Razack aptly calls a “white settler society” structured by “national mythologies” of settler indigeneity.¹⁶⁵ Settler amnesia accomplishes the “disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery, and the exploitation of the labour of peoples of colour,”¹⁶⁶ but settler colonialism also requires the projection of an alternate narrative (i.e., a screen memory) that fills the void created by erasure—after all, settler colonialism is inherently a project of replacement. Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández describe settler amnesia as settler colonialism’s “covering of its tracks,” which it accomplishes “through the circulation of its creation story. These stories involve signs-turned mythologies that conceal the teleology of violence and domination that characterize settlement.”¹⁶⁷ On February 5, 1944, *The Klamath Falls Herald and News* reported the death of an 89-year-old resident under the heading “W.H. Thompson, Pioneer, Dies”: “Thompson, a native of Massachusetts, came to the Klamath country about 63 years ago, when many Indians but few white people lived here. At the time of his arrival he was serving in the U.S. Army and was stationed at Ft. Klamath.” The rest of the brief obituary details some “highlights” of his military career, including his participation in the “Meeker and Thronberg [sic] massacres and also the Ute campaign.” While the obituary did acknowledge both the initial

Indigenous inhabitation of the Klamath Basin and the violent clashes of the frontier period between Native Americans and white American settlers and/or military forces, the two are represented as disconnected. Indigenous death and displacement only figured into settler mythologies as coincidental to settler life and replacement, rather than foundational. Causality and responsibility are thus continually denied—violence happened, but violence was not committed.

Do not make the mistake of thinking that the circulation of settler creation stories ceased with the passing of the original settler generation, for these processes continue to operate just as strongly in the present. Take, for example, the official history of Puyallup, WA—the former home of the “smart little Jap kids”—as published on the city’s website:

The story of the Puyallup Valley started with its geological formation far back in the mists of eons past. Its development is told in the story of pioneers who settled it, cleared the land and built its small cities in the last half of the 19th century. In the early 1830's the first European settler of the Puyallup region, Dr. Tolmie, in the company of an Indian guide and several other natives, passed through what he called in his journal the "Poyallipa" valley, the indigenous people who lived here for thousands of years numbered about 2,000. ... It was their hospitable spirit that gave this tribe the name "Puyallup" which translates to "generous people." ... Through many years of development, Puyallup has transformed to a booming scenic community with an interesting and profound history.

Settler colonialism’s astounding ability to incorporate paradoxes shines through yet again, as the city’s history simultaneously romanticizes Indigenous-settler relations and completely ignores Indigenous history by skipping directly from geologic formation to settler development. The mechanisms of elimination are disavowed entirely as Indigenous disappearance is attributed to Native “hospitality” and “generosity” and histories of iterative violence are simply “interesting and profound.”

Even as settlers attempt to forget and replace, settler consciousness is also structured by a concomitant sense of nostalgia, which idealizes the “rough frontier” as a more true, virtuous, and

authentic way of life. This narrative “reads American history as decline,” arguing that “the prescriptive ‘good community’ is located in some past time, is seen to have suffered irretrievable declension, and is imaginatively reconstructed in order to critique the dislocation and anomie of contemporary life.”¹⁶⁸ Wistful yearnings for a bygone era are especially prominent in representations of white American masculinity, such as Laughlin’s nostalgic exaltation of the rugged frontier man who exerted dominance over the Indian and feminized nature simultaneously, white wife and children in tow, as the “true” conqueror. Rather than ignoring settler histories as moments of shame to be minimized, settler nostalgia uplifts them as points of pride and calls for their emulation as a means to regain a form of brash authenticity that has supposedly been lost within society.

The Klamath Basin, as a nearly all-white rural area with extremely strong ties to prominent histories of Native genocide, provided a particularly conducive environment for the perpetuation of settler nostalgia. This symbolic temporal displacement gave white residents increased access to forms of violence that generally vanished with the “closing” of the frontier: “Nowadays it is in the rural regions that most of the outbursts of racial feeling occur, especially in the districts where the pioneer code is not forgotten and the frontier spirit is not yet lost.”¹⁶⁹ This frontier spirit was certainly alive and well in the Klamath Basin. In March 1942, a white landowner in Merrill, OR invited “three Japanese men, a woman, a girl, and a baby” from Tacoma, WA to live and work on his farm, since he himself had no farming experience. Shortly after their arrival on March 29th, gossip among the area’s residents inflated their number from a mere six individuals, to six whole families, and finally to 600 Japanese farmers. Infuriated, they planned to convene an armed vigilante mob on the night of March 31st to dole out their violent

visions of “justice.” After getting word of the white residents’ intentions, Klamath County Sheriff (reluctantly) took the six into protective custody until the violent rage subsided.¹⁷⁰

Politically, the Klamath Basin was as conservative as one might expect of a rural area overwhelmingly populated by white veterans. A campaign stop for Republican electoral candidates in late 1942 drew a “highly enthusiastic” crowd of approximately 100 of the area’s residents, who then “shaped [plans] for an active wind-up campaign on behalf of the Republican ticket.”¹⁷¹ In his reports to the WRA, Dean noted that the Basin’s residents had an extreme “distrust [of] brass hats, big shots and brain trusters” and were “intensely patriotic. . . . They claim to have a larger proportion of the eligible population in the armed forces than any other selective service district in the United States.”¹⁷² Public opinion was firmly set against the Roosevelt administration’s New Deal policies, which a newspaper editorial characterized as having “been dead for two years,” claiming that “it was knocked out by the war while dying on its feet.”¹⁷³ The white residents were also staunchly anti-Japanese, as evidenced by the creation of a “Jap Eradicator club . . . among members of the Merrill Service club.”¹⁷⁴ If the “frontier spirit” was to be truly resurrected during World War II, the Klamath Basin was as prime a regional candidate as any.

Siting Spaces of Exception

Given the Klamath Basin’s demographics, politics, and unique positionality within the mechanisms of entrenched white supremacy, how, then, did it come to host the largest, most infamous, and most volatile of the War Relocation Authority’s concentration camps for the removed Japanese-Americans? While many governors publicly declared their opposition to the possibility of the WRA siting a camp within their respective states, some residents of the Klamath Basin actually actively solicited one. The Basin’s negotiations with the WRA took

several months and can be split into three rough periods characterized by shifts in the dominant attitudes of the white residents.

The first period began on February 11, 1942, when the Evening Herald announced, “Location of a concentration camp of enemy aliens in the Klamath basin near Tulelake is under consideration, it was learned at Wednesday noon’s meeting of the Klamath county chamber of commerce directors. Purpose of the project, it was reported, would be to provide farm labor in this area.”¹⁷⁵ The Basin’s farmers feared drastic labor shortages would compromise the harvest of the 1942 potato crop, and some hoped to gain a temporary supply of “enemy alien” labor; however, public opinion was split even at this early stage. The proposal “drew immediate critical comment from some of the chamber directors,” and a follow-up meeting to discuss the matter further was scheduled for that same evening.¹⁷⁶

The white residents’ concerns stemmed directly from the ideological, material, and discursive operations of patriarchal White sovereignty “to reproduce and maintain its investment in the nation as a white possession.”¹⁷⁷ Opposition to the construction of a concentration camp in the Basin emphasized “the general undesirability of bringing foreign labor into the territory, and possible after-effects when the war was over.” The deciding vote was skewed, since only employers of farm labor were allowed to participate, but the community ultimately set out to request a camp from the WRA and the Army; however, the farmers’ desire to acquire cheap labor was mitigated in part by a comparable desire to prevent non-white presence in the Basin:

Sentiment at the meeting... was divided but strongly in favor of a request, first for a camp without Japanese aliens, but failing in that, for a camp with Japanese. Clark Fensler of Tulelake, who brought back information on the camp possibilities, will be sent to San Francisco this week to take the request to army authorities. Fensler did not know whether it would be possible to ask for and get a camp excluding Japanese aliens, and made up only of Germans, Italians or both. A majority of those present at the meeting voiced their dislike of having Japs in the area, but it was finally voted to request a camp with Japs if it was impossible to get one without. However, it was hoped that by making a request for

the camp, the wishes of the people would be respected and a camp of white aliens were obtained.¹⁷⁸

One woman objected to this proposed plan on economic grounds, asking, “Are they [the farmers who were allowed to vote] really concerned about the county’s welfare, or are they thinking primarily of cheap labor? ... Slavery was abolished once, so why start it again?”¹⁷⁹ Though she recognized and vocally challenged the exploitative nature of the plan, she was also careful to emphasize her racial attitudes by declaring that she had “no sympathy for any Japanese aliens” in order to ensure her criticisms would not be dismissed as traitorous to white supremacy.

The second period began when Clark Fensler returned to the Klamath Basin and reported that the Army intended to incarcerate Japanese/Americans in the Basin instead of honoring the request for “white aliens.” Despite the initial agreement to accept a camp of Japanese/Americans, even if such acceptance was notably less enthusiastic, the Basin’s residents were soon metaphorically (if not literally) up in arms in defense of their community’s integrity as a white region. The Klamath County Chamber of Commerce, which had been instrumental in soliciting the camp in the first place, “went on record as opposed to the establishment of an enemy alien concentration camp in the Klamath basin.” The Chamber of Commerce was supported both formally “by the Klamath county Pomona grange, which refused to advocate the proposed camp,” and informally by local labor union leaders, who “said the sentiment among the unions appears opposed to the plan” even in absence of organized action.¹⁸⁰

The racial motivations of this change in attitude were made quite explicit. The editors of two local newspapers, both described as “highly intelligent, respected, and influential” described their opposition as “simply... a case of just not wanting the Japanese.”¹⁸¹ H. J. Elzner, the immigrant from Czechoslovakia who saw himself as “American,” was particularly outspoken:

We could not jeopardize our individual and collective interests any more than by permitting any enemy alien camps in the Klamath basin. And where Japs are concerned,

I'm down right militant in my attitude. ... Any nation that preaches and practices that their race is of divine origin and superior to other races and nations, and who think they are the pre-destined rulers of the world, who moreover don't stop at anything to accomplish this goal, to my rather hard notion, should be wiped off the face of the earth. ... We farmers are small cogs in immense war machinery and it is our duty to safeguard the welfare, not only of ourselves as farmers, but as fellow members of this great America of ours. We have to remove all potential and actual danger from our midst—not invite it.¹⁸²

Ironically, his articulation of Japanese military strategy can be applied, nearly word for word, to the violence enacted across the North American continent by white settlers in the name of manifest destiny—from the element of divine sanction, to the belief in racial superiority, to the emphasis on predetermined fate, to the use of ruthlessly brutal and unrelenting tactics—yet his self-righteous vitriol obscures and forecloses any possibility of reflexivity and self-awareness. Elzner's stunning feat of ignorance lends somber veracity to Lisa Lowe's claim that, in the context of liberal empire's violent defense of the ideals of freedom and democracy, "the affirmation of the desire for freedom is so inhabited by the forgetting of its condition of possibility that every narrative articulation of freedom is haunted by its burial, by the violence of forgetting."¹⁸³ As he surveyed the vehement opposition of the Basin's residents during this period, Dean noted that "they did not have the faintest idea what a reception center meant," and documented some of the wilder rumors that spread like wildfire throughout the community:

The Japanese would only live at the camp and would be allowed to work in the fields without supervision.

They would be permitted to go into Tulelake and Klamath Falls whenever they pleased—to sit on the stools at lunch counters alongside white residents, or to get "liquored up".

The government was going to loan the Japanese money to buy farms in the area.

Leased lands were going to be seized without compensation to leases for for Japanese agricultural activities.

Five hundred Negroes were to be brought in to guard the camp.¹⁸⁴

As with the Merrill incident, these rumors whipped white residents into a potentially violent frenzy. “Passing time was marked by increasing hostility and there were open threats that: ‘let ’em come; we’ll take care of them in our own way.’ And I’m inclined to believe they would have,” Dean said.¹⁸⁵

Once again, white fears were animated largely by questions of futurity and permanence. As the presence of seasonal Mexican migrant laborers in the Klamath Basin demonstrates, the entry of exogenous Others into the region was only acceptable if their stay was temporary. These fears were hardly unique to the Klamath Basin; as the WRA and the Army engaged in similar conversations about camp siting across the country, they found that “few farmers among those willing to accept the evacuees as seasonal labor favored their permanent residence in the community.”¹⁸⁶ Anson’s earlier declaration (“We don’t want [the Japanese/Americans] back when the war ends”) proved that the communities from which Japanese/Americans were extracted saw removal as a permanent solution to the Japanese Problem; on the other end, the prospect of prolonged/permanent Japanese/American residence in the places to which they were confined heralded the very creation of such a problem in regions that otherwise had none.

One of the objectives of using incarcerated Japanese/American agricultural labor was to contribute to the ongoing settler project of improvement and development for the benefit of white homesteaders who would then be able to take over the land and farm it after the war. This was especially important for the Klamath Basin, since the camp was to be located on Bureau of Reclamation land that was extremely fertile, but required substantial irrigation efforts to reach its full productive potential.¹⁸⁷ The language of reclamation itself reinforces white settler entitlement to commodified land and resources, and was a crucial element of settler acquisition and improvement: “In the jargon of that day, irrigation projects were known as ‘reclamation’

projects. The concept was that irrigation would ‘reclaim’ arid lands for human use. ...

Irrigation's supporters believed reclamation programs would encourage Western settlement, making homes for Americans on family farms.”¹⁸⁸ By framing the natural world as something to be reclaimed rather than (violently) claimed, white settlers constructed settler possession of and authority over the landscape as something that temporally preceded their actual presence in that space. White ownership was thus retroactively applied to the land as an inherent characteristic that settlers were simply reviving. The success of this latest iteration of homesteading depended upon the temporary labor of Japanese/Americans followed by their ultimate departure from the region. The white settlers of the region were particularly disturbed by the possibility that “citizen-Japanese would be able to qualify for homestead lands if they desired to remain in the area after the war.”¹⁸⁹ To this end, Elmer Shirrell, the inaugural director of the Tule Lake Relocation Center, intentionally sought to structure the concentration camp to dissuade permanent residence: “He does not want to make Tule Lake too attractive for its inhabitants; he does not want the project life to become so attractive that it will deter evacuees from leaving.”¹⁹⁰

The third and final period began when the WRA and Army formally confirmed their plans to establish the Tule Lake Relocation Center in early 1942, despite the vehement objections of the white Basin residents. White settler anxieties were somewhat soothed by the government’s reassurances that the establishment of the camp would not challenge the overall racial status quo of the Basin. The residents were informed that—contrary to the rumors—the Japanese/Americans would “not be permitted to wander at will throughout the area nor to mingle with the white children in the public schools,” and that they would be kept strictly under guard.¹⁹¹ While the residents were “depressed that the Japanese are coming in,” Dean was ultimately “able to appeal to them successfully on the ground that the evacuation was a matter of

military necessity which had been decided upon by the United States Army. The general reaction among the veterans was that ‘what is good enough for the Army is good enough for my money.’”¹⁹² Earl Reynolds, the executive secretary of the Klamath County Chamber of Commerce announced that Chamber’s yet-again-transformed opinion was that “the camp location is a matter of military decision beyond questioning,” and noted that “government agencies will find a spirit of cooperation has supplanted opposition.”¹⁹³

The white settlers’ newfound sense of acceptance after the issue was re-framed as an opportunity to support the decisions of the military opens up an avenue to interpret and make sense of the ways in which the burdens of war were distributed unevenly. Patriotic sacrifice in the name of the war effort for the white residents of the Tule Lake Basin simply entailed tolerating and accommodating the presence of an incarcerated and controlled population of exogenous alterities near their communities, while people of Japanese ancestry were forced to endure tremendous hardships and injustice under heightened scrutiny. Clearly, the practical meaning of “doing one’s part” to ensure the success of the United States in World War II depended upon a person’s (or group of people’s) specific relationship to broader conceptions of national identity, citizenship, belonging, and race.

Movement as Colonization

The twin narratives of settler amnesia and settler nostalgia were both entangled in the massive project of Japanese/American removal as the coerced relocation officially began. When the initial clearance of Japanese/Americans from the West Coast ended in late October 1942, the Klamath Falls Herald & News described the effort as “a movement without parallel in the nation’s history,” ignoring the fact that the nation itself arose from the analogous elimination and displacement of Indigenous peoples.¹⁹⁴ Dillon S. Myer, who served as the director of the War

Relocation Authority from 1942 to 1946 and as the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs from 1950 to 1953, wrote in his 1971 book *Uprooted Americans*, “The evacuation and establishment of relocation centers were actions without precedent in American history.”¹⁹⁵ In one of his reports for the UC Berkeley-based Japanese Evacuation and Resettlement Study, researcher Robert Henry Billigmeier wrote:

America has had long experience in migrations and the settlement of new communities. Much of our national history revolves around the movement of peoples westward into unsettled areas. There have been widespread migrations before in the national experience—migrations even of religious and racial groups. But the forced mass evacuation of a hundred thousand persons of a certain racial stock is without parallel in American life.¹⁹⁶

Most tellingly, this excerpt was accompanied by a handwritten annotation—perhaps added by Billigmeier himself, perhaps by a colleague or other reader—that simply said, “Indians?” In the face of settler amnesia, even this simple acknowledgement of Indigenous elimination is imbued with uncertainty and cast as a foggy and incomplete memory.

At the same time, white Americans did resurrect the displacement and subsequent confinement of Indigenous peoples on reservations as templates for Japanese/American removal. This attitude is evident in W. M. Mason’s letter to the editor of the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* that opened this paper as an epigraph. To Mason and others who shared his mindset, the question of whether or not the US could justifiably force an entire racial/ethnic group to leave their homes was clear-cut: since the violent enforcement of Indigenous transfer through displacement was well within the US’s settler sovereign power, a similar approach to the Japanese Problem was easily reconciled with settler consciousness. In this particular context, settler nostalgia combined idealization of the settler colonial logics and mechanisms of the past frontier era with narratives of modern progress and innovation: “Edward H. Spicer and other anthropologists among the WRA community analysts...claimed that the forced migration of 1942 was bigger and better

than its forerunners: a marvel of human engineering, ‘a magnificent tour de force, as different and superior in technique and administrative management from the transfer of Indians as the oxcart differs from the latest bomber.’¹⁹⁷ By describing differences between the Native American and Japanese/American experiences of coerced migration as analogous to teleological developments in the technologies of war, these WRA anthropologists reified the status of settler empire as a machine of warfare and exclusion, the operations of which come to bear both internally and externally in mutually supportive ways.

The eastward movement of Japanese/Americans was interpreted through three contradictory paradigms of movement as colonization that operated in parallel. First, drawing upon the discourse of Orientalism that portrayed Japan as a competing colonial threat, some white Americans viewed Japanese/American removal and incarceration as the simple transplantation of the ethnic enclaves previously described as imperial colonies of Japan. In his article “Japs in Our Yard,” Frederick G. Murray declared, “Wherever the Japanese have colonized, their settlements have remained Japanese,” emphasizing the heightened danger white Americans read into concentrated populations of the perpetually foreign Other.¹⁹⁸ While the Japanese/American presence in the relatively populous regions of the West Coast was already seen as threatening the white American nation, the prospect of moving entire communities into the continent’s interior, where they would supposedly have access to the mechanisms of settler colonial consolidation, intensified the perceived threat:

Most of us do not realize that permanent relocation centers are already planned in [six] sparsely settled states. . . . These permanent relocation centers throughout the western States may become a dangerous proposition. There will be no vested powers in these remote regions to discriminate and restrict—hold the race in ‘Little Tokyos’ as there was in California. In wide-open spaces and under the benevolent hand of the Government, the Japanese will be left more to themselves; with their high birthrate and economic efficiency, these centers will grow beyond all bounds. It is easy to seize power in a sparsely settled State.¹⁹⁹

This discourse of alien colonization once again invoked permanence and potentiality in order to influence present actions in the defense of an as-yet-unrealized future of whiteness.

The second narrative of colonization is nearly identical to the first, but for one crucial distinction: rather than colonial subjects of Japan, the Japanese/Americans were represented as members of the American (settler) colonial project. This view was most prominently advocated by government officials, who maintained a vested interest in building public support among white Americans for the logistically and symbolically challenging process of mass removal. Newspaper discussions of the construction of the Minidoka concentration camp in Idaho drew upon this narrative structure:

The 10,000 Japanese will come from the Pacific Coast under direction of the War Relocation Authority. They will be put to work to convert into farmland 68,000 acres of what is now a sagebrush-covered waste adjoining the town of Eden in South-Central-Idaho. Migration of Japanese here formerly was regarded as undesirable by state officials, but now they view it as a boon in many respects. Besides making a productive farming area out of the Eden Desert, the camp was seen as a new source of farm labor, as an aid to the food-for-victory program, and as a means of pioneering a thinly-populated section.²⁰⁰

While Japanese/Americans were thus portrayed as the next iteration of American settlers, their inclusion was still partial and temporary—Idaho governor Chase A. Clark agreed to the construction of a camp in his state, but only after securing the government’s assurance that the Japanese/Americans would leave the area after the war.²⁰¹ In other words, their “Americanness” was still contingent upon their usefulness in service to white supremacist interests; once this utility was outlived, they were to be excluded yet again.

Some members of the Japanese/American community, particularly Nisei leaders associated with the Japanese American Citizens League, were complicit in reproducing this discourse. “Without waiting for the Army to move them bodily, the Nisei launched their own Go East, Young Japanese movement”²⁰²—a direct allusion to the popular exhortation, “Go West, young man!” that animated the westward migration of white settler men chasing authentic

embodiments of American frontier masculinity. The American colonial paradigm of Japanese/American movement explicitly used the language of colonialism, referring to the displaced migrants as “colonists,” “settlers,” and “pioneering vanguards.”²⁰³ Japanese/Americans used these terms to describe themselves and their conditions as well. While it might seem hard to imagine why they would choose to align themselves with the very discourses used to oppress them, doing so might have enabled them to reap precious tangible benefits. Given the national atmosphere of racial hostility that slipped so easily into violent outbursts, emphasizing American patriotism and loyalty by playing the part of the willing and eager American settler might have ultimately shielded Japanese/Americans from additional harm and danger.

The third narrative mimics representation of the transportation of Native Americans to reservations as benevolent and paternalistic acts of protection of “vulnerable” populations by the US government (ignoring, of course, the ways in which the government and its white subjects produced that very same vulnerability in the first place). Washington State Attorney General Smith Troy urged “the immediate mass evacuation of all Japanese, both alien and American-born to prevent ‘violence’ against them,” and declared, “This is necessary not only for our protection but for the protection of the aliens themselves as well.”²⁰⁴ Mayor Earl Riley of Portland echoed this sentiment, arguing that removal would be an act of “mutual protection.”²⁰⁵ Attitudes in this vein ranged along a spectrum. At one end, white Americans approached Japanese/Americans with something akin to pity and idealistic dreams of saving and helping them. Lucille Collins, a teacher at the Tule Lake camp’s Tri-State High School, said, “I was eager to come here because I felt that I might be of help to a group of people who needed sympathy and understanding. . . . Here was an opportunity to show these people that, in spite of the fact that the Constitution had been violated by the action taken against them, their American citizenship was worth

holding.²⁰⁶ Raymond Greene, a fellow Tri-State High teacher, articulated a view closer to the opposite end of the spectrum:

In the heat of excitement people are susceptible to the nearest waves of thought and feeling. The Japanese people are no exception. In this country they fell into the influences of the leaders of Japan rather than those of the United States because of the family, language and race nearness. This made it necessary for the protection of this country's safety and the safety of these people a segregation immediately until sane thinking and sound judgment could become the basis for making decisions both by those peoples and their neighbors. It was fortunate that an organization such as the WRA was formed to take this unfortunate misguided people into custody.²⁰⁷

According to Greene, Japanese/Americans shared equal responsibility for the racism and discrimination they faced. In this construction, the WRA becomes not only a benevolent protector, but an almost heroic institution for which the Japanese/Americans should feel nothing but gratitude. Taken together, these three discourses of colonial movement—which are analogous to representations of the Japanese/American as the alien, the cowboy, and the Indian, respectively—set the stage for the complexities of white supremacy as it unfolded in the Tule Lake concentration camp.

5. Reanimating the Frontier: Inside the Crucible of Disloyalty

Spaces of Exception, Spaces of Confinement

The first group of Japanese/Americans arrived at Tule Lake on May 27, 1942; by September 1942, a total of 15,279 people were incarcerated at the camp.²⁰⁸ The entire facility encompassed 5,688 acres of land, but the incarcerated were confined to the main 1,286-acre camp area.²⁰⁹ The central element of spatial confinement and surveillance reveals the operation of Tule Lake as a space of exception. Giorgio Agamben's discussion of the Nazi death camps applies equally here: "What matters here is that...a state of emergency linked to a colonial war is extended to an entire civil population. The camps are thus born not out of ordinary law...but out

of a state of exception and martial law.”²¹⁰ Confinement within the camp stripped away all differences among the incarcerated population—at least from the perspective of the white public—and reduced them all to symbolic status as enemy aliens. For the Nisei, “the camp open[ed] up a location within the state in which persons who are linked to the space of the nation by birth can be managed as ‘bare life,’ as mere biological beings bereft of any/all of the legal protections of citizenship.”²¹¹ The juxtaposition of the incarcerated homo sacer-esque Japanese/American with the free white residents of the Basin is key, since white sovereignty depends on the “settler capacity for unrestrained mobility.”²¹²

Though it had been decades since the Klamath Basin was considered part of the original frontier by the time the Tule Lake camp opened, “the ‘frontier’ has less to do with particular plots of land or regions [or particular time-scapes] than with a concept/feeling that persists as a means of designating a particular settler structure of feeling, one that requires the existence of a place paradoxically within the state yet beyond it.”²¹³ The concentration camp can thus be considered a reactivation of the frontier; like the reservation, it delineates a particular spatial location in which the “normal” operations of law and sovereignty are suspended—a place in which those who are confined therein are “at once excluded and included, removed and at the same time captured,” held on the margins of society and yet still subordinated to white settler sovereignty.²¹⁴ The government’s decision to rely upon spaces of exception and confinement to address its complex racial problems also reanimated some of the tensions and challenges previously posed by the banishment of Native Americans to reservations. Testifying before the US Senate Military Affairs Subcommittee in January 1943, Dillon S. Myer said, “I sincerely believe, gentlemen, that if we don’t handle this problem in a way to get these people absorbed as best we can while the war is going on, we may have something akin to Indian reservations after

the war.”²¹⁵ His statements demonstrate that, whether or not Indigenous peoples are actually present in a particular time and place, settler consciousness remains preoccupied with and haunted by its relationships with them.

Japs and Savages

One way in which the Indian reappeared within white Americans’ dealings with Japanese/Americans is through the projection of the discourses of savagery, barbarity, and dehumanization that once targeted the former onto the latter. White fears were largely animated by the inscription of a constant and immediate sense of mortal danger onto the Japanese/American subject. A newspaper from the Pacific Northwest declared, “The Japanese are beasts when they cut loose. ... They stop at nothing,” identifying an enormous and inhuman capacity for brutal violence as an essential characteristic of Japanese ethnicity.²¹⁶ One mechanism that accomplished this inscription was the reduction of the Other to a caricature that could then be deployed in any circumstance to conjure up notions of threat and/or inferiority instantly—settler colonialism reduced the Native American to the savage, and Orientalism reduced Japanese/Americans to the Jap. The ubiquity of the Jap slur flowed seamlessly into other forms of dehumanization. In his analysis of the attitudes and practices of Tule Lake’s white staff and administrators, Billigmeier states,

A considerable number of people refer to the evacuees, especially among Caucasians, as the ‘Japs’. Often the reference is even more offensive. For example, Mr. Bergman, a plumber from Tulelake employed on the project, has the habit of calling the evacuees ‘monkeys’, not only in reference to evacuees when in the presence of Caucasians but even in addressing the evacuees themselves. He has absolutely no regard for their feelings.²¹⁷

While this discourse obviously served to legitimate violence against Japanese/Americans, it also had material consequences for the operations of the concentration camp as a whole. Commenting on a standoff between a white staff member and the Japanese/American workers, Billigmeier

criticizes, “Mr. Rouner failed in the furniture factory. The failure was so complete that as long as he remained in charge of that factory, the evacuee workers refused to go back to work. He was not willing to respect them as human beings and treat them accordingly.”²¹⁸

When the discursive linkage of the Jap to the savage did not spark sufficient fear and outrage among white Americans, they even explicitly likened Japanese/Americans to Indians. Tom Yoshio Kobayashi, a Japanese/American man who worked as a warden for the camp’s Internal Security but was involved in the late-1943 upheaval within the camp that ultimately prompted the Army to seize control from the WRA and impose martial law for several months, was described by a white researcher as “heavy set, weighs about 200 pounds, is about 5’10” tall, has a round face, high cheekbones, looks almost like an American Indian, combs hair straight back.”²¹⁹ The researcher’s reports of the conflict reinforce this overt association: “Kobayashi let out a weird yell, similar to that of a coyote, to call other members of the gang to his side. The cry and the yelling of the gang in general was heard by several of the WRA staff who described it as similar to what is the general idea of Indians on the warpath.”²²⁰ These depictions are especially notable because of their extreme vagueness—they don’t compare Kobayashi to members of a specific Indigenous group, but instead draw upon generalized stereotypes of the violent Indian. Interpreted through Jodi A. Byrd’s theory of racial Indianness as transit, these representations were attempts to “make ‘Indian’ those peoples and nations who stand in the way of U.S. military and economic desires.”²²¹

Civilizing the Enemy

The discourses of savagery applied to both Native Americans and Japanese/Americans were accompanied by a persistent narrative of redeemability that influenced governmental policies and attitudes toward each population in parallel ways. Despite the Indian’s supposedly

inherent barbarism, white settlers believed he could be “uplifted” out of his savageness. Richard H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Boarding School, summarized this perspective in his motto: “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”²²² The federal government officially took on this purpose with the 1824 creation of the Office of Indian Affairs, which emphasized “‘civilizing’ its clientele, insisting on their adoption of Euro-American ways in landownership, farming techniques, and family values.”²²³ The WRA’s attitudes decades later drew upon similar principles, as the administrators hoped to “cultivate an administered democracy that would teach good habits of citizenship to the incarcerated population.”²²⁴ Thomas James has described the WRA’s policies as “peculiar training for democracy”—and peculiar it truly was, for it highlighted the direct contradictions embedded within American notions of democracy and freedom. In a letter to the editor of *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, a local woman wrote,

We have for horrible examples the concentration camps of Old World countries. American concentration camps should never be as these others. Very definitely they could be made stepping stones to a realization by these aliens of what Americanism really is. Millions and billions of dollars are being appropriated for defense in its many phases. What better form of defense than to put instructors in each camp to train these people in the American way of life, to show them what true liberty is and how to use the freedom which they have been given in these United States?²²⁵

The thought of using concentration camps—spaces literally defined by unfreedom, coercion, and control—as places to extoll the virtues of American democratic freedom is so ironic, it would be amusing—that is, if it did not underwrite the destruction of entire ways of being in the name of white supremacy and American exceptionalism.

In the early months of the Japanese/American incarceration, government policies demonstrated a keen interest in promoting the “American” ideals of democracy and freedom through community development. Early administrators encouraged the incarcerated’s efforts to install a system of representative government within each camp. Their actions and policies reflected a highly idealistic attempt to create planned communities supported by federal services

in which hardship would be overcome through what Thomas James has called “enlightened social engineering”²²⁶—to them, the incarceration was a less-than-fortunate circumstance that nevertheless represented an opportunity for “democratic ideals” to prevail through the transmission of national social, cultural, and political values to an otherwise-idle and -captive population. In other words, while the American public at large generally thought of the Japanese/American as inherently un-American and dangerous, the WRA believed that they could be made genuinely American, and set about leveraging confinement itself as the springboard for instilling democracy.

The mechanisms of settler replacement take many forms. Attempts to empty the indigenous segment of the settler population economy not only sought the outright destruction of Indigenous peoples themselves (through physical removal, extermination, etc.), but the destruction of Indigenous cultures, identities, and ways of being. The “civilization” and “democratization” of those deemed threatening to white supremacist settler empire forcibly severs Indigenous peoples from themselves, leading Clyde Warrior, a Ponca Indian of Oklahoma, to ask, “Is this the American way of hollowing out the insides of people?”²²⁷ Within this rubric of forcible “civilization” and assimilation, value was assigned to Indigenous peoples and Japanese/Americans according to their compliance with the white settler norms imposed upon them. The Bureau of Indian Affairs “linked their affirmation of indigenous Indian cultures to praiseworthy ‘loyalty’ to America. [John Collier, director of the BIA] lauded Indians for their contribution of land, savings, and skills ‘in the service of their country’ during World War II; likewise, Billigmeier noted the “distinct tendency” among white Tule Lake staff and administration “to regard evacuees as good in proportion to their assimilation.”²²⁸ In other words, elements of Indigenous and/or Japanese/American culture that could be appropriated and

reframed as beneficial to the US were allowed to remain, while the overwhelming remainder was targeted for eradication and subsequently supplanted by “American” values.

As citizens by birth, the Nisei were especially susceptible to the discourse of civilization and Americanization. The Issei were still racially ineligible to become citizens, and, already facing threats of deportation to Japan after the war, had relatively little to lose if they resisted the WRA’s civilizing mission (indeed, they were already considered a lost cause in many ways); on the other hand, American identity and citizenship held significantly more weight to their US-born children, who ultimately expected and hoped to return to a “standard” American life. The graduation speeches written by some of the Tri-State High senior class of 1943 reflect the extent to which many of the Nisei aligned themselves with the government’s project of pressured assimilation. One young woman wrote, “Today we realize that we have been cut away from the main stream of American life but this is only temporary. At one time or another all of us will once more resume our normal way of living on the outside again. Through our preparation here in camp, we can and we will do a great deal toward leading America in its solution to its many social, economic, and racial problems” (emphasis in original).²²⁹ Not only did she wholeheartedly internalize the camp’s “peculiar training,” she argued that such training put the Nisei in a unique position to be democratic leaders of American society in the future. Another graduate articulated a similar understanding: “Democracy will not be handed down to us on golden platters, nor will it be sprinkled upon us like magic flakes. We must fight for it and fight hard. Your job and mine, as Nisei, is to take the first steps in blazing the trail.”²³⁰

These particular Nisei students approached “democratization” and “civilization” with acceptance, appreciation, and even gratitude, but some of their peers went further in utilizing the discourses central to the maintenance of white supremacy. They reproduced and participated in

these narratives in their pursuit of the full inclusion within the boundaries of American identity that they were constantly denied as the perpetually foreign racial Other, but Indigenous Hawaiian scholar Haunani-Kay Trask argues that “identification as ‘American’ is national identification as a colonizer, someone who benefits from stolen Native lands and the genocide so well documented against America’s Native people.”²³¹ Another student, embodying the ideals of the “Go East, Young Japanese” movement, addressed his peers in militaristic language highly reminiscent of Manifest Destiny:

The story of the building of our American empire has been one of crisis after crisis which were manifested in wars, depressions, labor and internal strife, racial prejudice, and countless other obstacles in the path of progress. ... We [the Nisei] may consider ourselves as an army—an army engaged in a struggle against those forces in the outside world which use as their weapons, prejudice, racial animosity, and hate with the ultimate purpose of depriving us of our sacred rights as Americans. ... Although the majority of us are still confined in relocation centers all over the country the vanguard of our army has already begun to fight. How? By leaving the uninspiring life of the centers to resettle in the Eastern states of this country. We are beginning to realize, for the present at least, that our destiny as Nisei lies in the industrial cities of the East and plains of the Midwest. Our fulfillment of this destiny lies in two steps. The primary step is relocation and the secondary step is assimilation.²³²

Similarly, an editorial published in the Tri-State High newsletter about the 1943 Fourth of July minimized the exclusion faced by Japanese-Americans by engaging in narratives of American exceptionalism used to justify imperialist intervention into other countries in the name of spreading democracy:

[The] Fourth of July will have greater significance to us, this year than ever before, as the second year of camp life begins. ... Though our loyalty to the United States, which was accepted before, is being questioned by various groups and evacuation was declared constitutional, we realize what little freedom minority groups of other countries have. Patriotism to us, has a new meaning, having been put to test. This nation was found on the basis of individual freedom. Therefore, niseis as citizens, should see that the principles which our fore fathers believed in and which we believe in, shall never be taken away.²³³

In Trask’s formulation, oppression and violence are structured by multiple overlapping and interlocking binary oppositions, which produce “a pyramidal view of the world, an intricate

arrangement of power relations that help diverse non-White settlers to see their interests as aligned with the formation of a settler state.”²³⁴ The multiple-binary model is, in many ways, an alternate articulation of Andrea Smith’s concept of white supremacy as a system of pillars in which non-white people can be both oppressed and complicit. Both theories offer an understanding of why and how Nisei students were able to see themselves as part of the same imperial system that operated against them.

Education for Extinction

Though the racial discourses of disloyalty and foreignness applied to the Nisei had been deployed to justify the erasure of many of the legal protections of citizenship, the WRA administrators could not dispense with such a large group of US citizens entirely. They realized, at least in some capacity, that treating American citizens in the concentration camps as irrevocably disloyal and un-American would likely plant feelings of betrayal and distrust of the government among even the most staunchly pro-American Nisei. Guided by officials who already had backgrounds in overseeing New Deal policies and social reforms, the WRA turned to education as a mechanism through which to promote the development of a citizen Japanese/American population with a strong attachment to democracy in the most undemocratic of places.

The public school system implemented at Tule Lake provided a unique entry point into this mission. Schools in the camps were staffed by credentialed white teachers and administrators and qualified Japanese/American assistant teachers, providing an unparalleled interface between Nisei youths and white adults in the context of formal instruction and learning.²³⁵ The initial goal of public education at Tule Lake was twofold: first, to reaffirm American national identity among the Nisei, and second, to indirectly educate the immigrant Issei about American values

and ways of life through their citizen children.²³⁶ The involvement of white teaching staff echoes the structure of the Indian Boarding Schools that operated throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s. Education policy regarding Indigenous youths was guided by the dominant view that Native Americans' supposed inferiority stemmed from being less "developed" than white Americans, and that "schooling could provide the necessary curriculum to civilize these representations of earlier forms of human life, which meant to make them more like their white teachers."²³⁷ Like the public schools designed at Tule Lake decades later, "the central thought [of the Indian Boarding School curriculum was] preparation for citizenship."²³⁸ White educators thus became role models for both Native and Japanese/American students; their patriotic duty was to tap into their pupils' always-imperfect/-incomplete potential to become "proper" American citizens in their own image through systems of schooling that David Wallace Adams has called "education for extinction."²³⁹

Once the government announced its intention of rounding up all West Coast Japanese/Americans, educators across the Pacific states scrambled to determine the structure and purpose of schooling within the WRA facilities. Stanford University's graduate-level Curriculum Development program held a seminar during the summer of 1942 that proposed specific curricular procedures for the WRA to utilize in its concentration camps.²⁴⁰ Administrators at all ten facilities ultimately decided to adopt a particular curricular model known as the community school at the primary and secondary educational levels. Community schools can be distinguished from other educational models by their attention to the context in which they are embedded:

A "community school" may be defined as a school which bases its curriculum on the life of the community in which it is located. It is founded upon the principle that the child is a responsible member of society, and as such needs a full understanding of the organization and social forces of his community. The curriculum of the school is designed with this basic principle in mind. The community school is an instrument to be used by the community in coping with its problems.²⁴¹

If the purpose of the community school is to ground education in the material conditions of its social milieu with the aim of addressing specific needs and issues within that community, then it becomes both a site for the transmission and the production of knowledge. In the specific case of Tule Lake and the other WRA camps, the community school had no shortage of “problems” to help community members “cope with.” To this end, seniors at Tri-State High School participated in a class called “Problems of Democracy,” in which they learned basic principles of sociology and research methods and applied them to their own conditions of confinement.²⁴² Though students were encouraged to examine their experiences through a somewhat-critical lens, the propagation of democratic ideals remained the ultimate goal of education at Tule Lake. As such, the Problems of Democracy course was a continuation of the WRA’s forward-looking approach to cultivating a democratic future—it acknowledged the paradox of undemocratic confinement within a supposed democracy as a shortcoming that, through perseverance and patriotism, the Nisei could ultimately remedy in a future America more strongly committed to democratic freedom.

The Problems of Democracy course sought to teach Japanese/American students elements of American history and culture in such a way that would strengthen, rather than mitigate, their feelings of attachment to and belonging within the American public. The Bureau of Indian Affairs’ policies were even more explicitly designed to use strategic lessons on American history to promote goodwill toward white American society. The Bureau’s 1901 Course of Study for the Indian Schools of the United States instructed educators,

Always seek to create a spirit of love and brotherhood in the minds of the children toward the white people, and in telling them the history of the Indians dwell on those things which have showed nobility of character on the part of either race in their dealings with the other. . . . It is not desired that American history be studied with much detail, but rather a general view of it given the pupils. They should know enough about it to be good, patriotic citizens, but valuable time should not be used in learning minor details.

They should learn a few important dates, such as that of the discovery of America, settlement of Virginia, Declaration of Independence, etc. . . . Show [the federal government's] liberality in providing a free education and training for the Indian children, and that after they leave school it expects them to make use of their education and support themselves.²⁴³

Historical learning in both institutions was thus imbued with the political agenda of generating a docile population of alien/Othered citizens with only a sanitized understanding of US history. By denying Indigenous and Japanese/American students the opportunities to develop legitimate critiques of the United States that didn't fall into assimilationist narratives, the Indian Boarding Schools and the WRA schools both denied students knowledge of the traumas they suffered at the hands of the government and urged them to take responsibility for preventing future injustices by encouraging their participation in the very systems that produce and require such violence in the first place.

Instruction in language, like history, was carefully implemented in both institutional environments to maximize the Americanizing potential of the schools. The curriculum of the Indian Boarding Schools declared, "Special attention should be given to language, articulation, enunciation, and purity of English of pupils in every grade. As soon as a pupil falls behind his grade, because of imperfect English, he should receive special drill."²⁴⁴ Education at Tule Lake also emphasized English, but came with an additional element of urgency. Native American children sent to the boarding schools were isolated from their families and communities in an environment where English was made the default; however, since entire multigenerational Japanese/American communities were removed and confined together in the WRA concentration camps, the Japanese language influence was stronger in the camps than it had been elsewhere. As a result, administrators intended to act quickly and decisively to curb the proliferation of written and spoken Japanese among the young people in the camps. In an address to the newly hired white teachers, Tule Lake director Elmer Shirrell said,

The colonist students have lost the growth of a whole summer of American community life. It is a burden on our souls. They used to hear English, and now they hear more Japanese than they ever heard before. . . . The schools must make up for lost time in keeping before them the principles of American ideals. . . . We must lean backwards to emphasize American things. We must pick up the ground lost in their command of English. If you ask my advice, I say devote twice the time to written English and spoken English.²⁴⁵

Education for extinction was not limited to academic and scholarly pursuits—it also set about teaching “acceptable” ways of life by linking learning with labor. Estelle Reel, Superintendent of Indian Schools, remarked, “The Indian . . . is just starting on the road to civilization.” She argued that the purpose of the Indian Boarding Schools was to make the Indian “a willing worker as well as an inquiring learner.”²⁴⁶ Classroom learning went hand-in-hand with vocational training, particularly in the areas of agriculture, land management (i.e., settler capitalist improvement), and irrigation. Similarly, Tule Lake operated on a model that combined agricultural production through incarcerated labor with education: “[The] Tule Lake Project is expected to produce. . . . But hand in hand with the business production, we must train colonists—this is a learning opportunity, and if we are not ready to offer that opportunity, we [the WRA] have failed.”²⁴⁷ Toru Noji’s high school sociology essay highlights the overlap between labor and education in the Tule Lake schools:

Here in Relocation Center, the creation of a self-government [sic], self-supporting community . . . is a tremendous task in which the schools share responsibility and opportunity. It is through these schools that the future workers of the community are produced. . . . The schools are endeavoring to use the work opportunities on the relocation projects as a training center and so to gear the projects into the general employment needs of the country.²⁴⁸

As the initial process of siting the WRA camps demonstrated, evaluating the “employment needs of the country” played a key role in determining the operations of the Tule Lake camp. In both

Tule Lake and the Indian Boarding Schools, education—both academic and agricultural/vocational—was training. Once trained in the “proper” ways of being, knowing, and working, Japanese/Americans could then be reformed and assimilated by “putting them to work on the land.”²⁴⁹

Labor among Locals

Examinations of American settler colonialism repeatedly underscore the centrality of particular arrangements of land and labor in constructing national identity and solidifying settler sovereignty; therefore, the project of Americanization within the concentration camps hinged upon the implementation of “proper” labor regimes—that is, regimes of settler capitalism. The WRA was incredibly strategic in its siting decisions with respect to labor issues; by placing its camps in areas that were relatively remote with abundant opportunities for agricultural work, “WRA officials tried to use nature as an instrument for social control by locating the camps in places where they could isolate Japanese Americans and procure their labor in the name of assimilation and patriotism.”²⁵⁰ Aided by years of experience in pre-war agriculture, Japanese/Americans “toiled on the land and made the desert bloom;” however, their efforts were constantly constrained by primacy of white profit. Take, for instance, the WRA’s reactions to gardening as a recreational activity among Japanese/Americans. An incident report filed by the WRA on September 3, 1944 reads: “Yoshimitsu Ishizaka of #7404 observed using hose to water garden, which is against project regulations.”²⁵¹ Gardening and farming are two relatively similar activities; however, one was encouraged and even demanded, while the other was a punishable offense. The difference lies in their relationships to settler capitalism. Gardening did not further white locals’ economic interests, and was therefore unacceptable.

Tule Lake's most drastic conflicts over labor occurred in late 1943 and early 1944 as the incarcerated Japanese/American population was subjected to heightened scrutiny. In February of 1943, all Japanese/Americans seventeen years old or older were required to complete a questionnaire that would supposedly determine their loyalty. Question 27 ("Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?") and Question 28 ("Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any and all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance to the Japanese Emperor or any other foreign government, power, or organization?") soon became infamous and controversial for their ambiguity and embedded racialized assumptions about the national and/or political alignment of those who were incarcerated. Answering "no" to either question, refusing to answer, or answering "yes" with an additional comment qualifying an affirmative response were all grounds for proving a person's disloyalty. Those who were determined to be disloyal were removed from the camps they were in and relocated yet again—this time to Tule Lake. The "loyal" population of Tule Lake was redistributed to the other nine camps and the facility officially became the Tule Lake Segregation Center, temporary home to the most suspect of the already-suspect.

By mid-1943, Tule Lake effectively operated as a maximum-security prison camp guarded by "1,000 military police...tanks...an eight-foot high double 'man-proof' fence," and surrounded by towers equipped with spotlights and machine guns.²⁵² The facility quickly became the largest of the War Relocation Authority's camps as thousands of "disloyal" inmates from the other camps flooded in, peaking at a population of over 18,700—more than 3,700 over its intended capacity.²⁵³ As a result of the overcrowding, militarization, and general frustration and anger due to repeated segregation and racial exclusion, "Tule Lake plunged into a bitter history

of riots, organized protest, military repression, factional conflict, beatings, and murder.”²⁵⁴

Discord within the camp led to the imposition of martial law from November 4, 1943 to January 15, 1944.

The conflict was compounded by a strike among the Tule Lake agricultural workers following segregation. According to the local news, the “disloyal Japanese at Tulelake refused to harvest the big crop that had been raised there. It was understood that one basis of the strike was disloyal evacuees’ unwillingness to produce crops for loyal evacuees elsewhere.”²⁵⁵ To attribute the strike solely to the supposed “disloyalty” of those who remained at Tule Lake is to present an account that is incomplete at best, and, at worst, disingenuous. The WRA’s own analysts reported:

One of the chief causes of these strikes is the fact that the compensation received by the evacuees for labor is low in comparison to comparable work outside of the Project and that the Federal Government has been very slow in making payments after the labor has been completed. At the present time some of these wage payments are six to eight weeks in arrears and some of the evacuees are suffering real hardship because they do not have this money to buy essentials such as shoes.²⁵⁶

The wages available to Japanese/Americans were abysmal: twelve dollars per month for common labor, sixteen for semi-skilled labor, and nineteen for professional labor.²⁵⁷ In contrast, the “loyal” Japanese/Americans brought in as strikebreakers by the WRA were paid \$1.00–\$1.45 per hour.²⁵⁸ As Manu Vimalassery argues, “The price of labor does not arise from simple exchange, but through exchange mediated by unequal power.”²⁵⁹ The agricultural strike infuriated the Basin’s white residents. In response to agitation by white farmers, the WRA relinquished a 2,318-acre tract of farmland it had leased from the Bureau of Reclamation in 1942. News articles were careful to emphasize that the land would once again be farmed by white operators, who would supposedly be better equipped to secure its maximum productivity, prevent its relapse into racially coded waste, and uphold the systems of settler colonialism,

Orientalism, and anti-blackness that had collectively structured the region since the early 1800s.²⁶⁰

6. Epilogue: Imagining Endings

As scholars continue to expand understandings of the operations of white supremacy, at least one central question remains: What might decolonization entail in the context of ongoing settler colonialism? There is no clear singular answer—since settler colonialism is a mechanism that seeks to disappear into itself until it is no longer recognized or acknowledged, naming it in order to narrate its end can be a daunting prospect. Settler colonial studies as a field generally problematizes the very notion of postcoloniality: “Scholars of extractive colonialism have set the terms of debate; the narratives they tell of colonization, the rise of nationalist movements, and decolonization and independence have a different trajectory than that of settler colonialism. Thus the term ‘postcolonial’ is very problematic within settler colonies, where dispossession is ‘a perpetual process’.”²⁶¹ Furthermore, settler colonial projects are so deeply entangled with other systems of white supremacy that challenging one necessitates challenging others simultaneously.

As World War II came to a close, national conversations about the Japanese Problem became preoccupied with its own question about endings: What in the world was the US going to do with the approximately 120,000 people of Japanese Ancestry it had uprooted and forcibly confined elsewhere for years? The phrase “what in the world” is more than a colloquial expression in this case. An opinion that was especially popular among veterans involved permanently expelling the Japanese/American Other from the space of the nation proper and confining them to an exterior territorial possession:

The only solution, far sighted and safe for our own country, is to relocate the American-born Japanese citizens from the United states mainland in the Territory of Hawaii and other Pacific islands in our possession like Guam, Wake, Midway, Samoa, and others.

Here our American-born Japanese citizens would find congenial homes. . . . The main reason why the Japanese are safer in Hawaii is that the islands form a territory governed from Washington—quite different from a self governing State. . . . [BREAK] These Japanese in the Pacific islands would be American citizens living under the flag and in their own racial habitat. With their darker skins and black hair, the Japanese are biologically suited to all these islands. The families would thrive.

The American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars were among the organizations that advocated this particular solution. This attitude illuminates the ease with scenarios constructed as “problems” of white supremacy through one logic are redirected and channeled into supporting another. Therefore, articulating a thorough challenge to the proposed banishment of Japanese/Americans to one of the nation’s colonial possessions would require resistance to US imperialism as a whole.

The malleability of white supremacy impels its opponents to adopt similar flexibility in imagining possibilities of decolonization. Andrea Smith describes decolonization as “indeterminate,” and “a gesture toward a thing that we cannot see.”²⁶² While this seems terrifyingly open-ended, it also presents unique opportunities for creativity and recognition of a vast field of potentiality. The project of decolonization is a positive one—it doesn’t just entail the destruction of white supremacist foundations, but also provides for the collective creation of a new world “constituted through radical relationality...that breaks with Western subjectivity.”²⁶³

Symbolic changes, acts, and gestures can help shift discourses and narratives toward decolonial projects; however, symbolism “quickly becomes a false beacon, serving to distract more than act” if it is not accompanied by a concomitant commitment to material changes and massive reconceptualizations of indigeneity and settler privilege.²⁶⁴ To avoid decolonial movements that are constrained to identity-based activism that might ultimately reify divisions between the logics of white supremacy, Dylan Rodriguez suggests organizing around the “differential impacts” the logics have across identitarian categories.²⁶⁵ An impact-based

approach avoids tendencies toward “flattening difference” and assuming that different histories of oppression are always either “in solidarity or falling into the pitfalls of difference”—the solution, Saranillio argues, is in “complex unity.”²⁶⁶

This project can and will be painful, as recognitions of otherwise-unnamed privilege and power often are. Non-white settlers might be tempted to draw upon the specifics of their own oppressions in an attempt to negate the fact that they too benefit from ongoing settler colonialism; however, Candace Fujikane counters, “Honoring the struggles of those who came before us, however, also means resisting the impulse to claim only their histories of oppression and resistance. ... As we are inspired by our family histories of struggle, we also recognize the suffering of those who came before us does not change the fact that they entered into a settler colony, however temporary or permanent they imagined that settlement to be.”²⁶⁷ The costs of challenging white supremacy are more than outweighed by the rewards—decolonization is fundamentally about rejecting violence. It offers ways of enacting new forms of relationality that seek justice through accountability and interconnectedness. While decolonization can take many forms, it must be an active process, because the nature of white supremacy is such that it reproduces itself in the face of passivity and inaction. As Nahum Chandler argues, when confronted with such an all-encompassing system, “We can only respond, make a choice—a decision—in short judge, in other terms, be responsible. We must act as if we were responsible. For, we will, always, be responsible.”²⁶⁸ Accepting and honoring this responsibility is merely the beginning of an imaginative and collaborative process that might ultimately bring decolonial futures from the realm of possibility into that of reality.

Notes

1. I use the term “Japanese/American” to describe all people of Japanese ancestry residing in the United States because it encompasses some of the complexities of a diasporic population racialized as not-fully-American. It includes both Issei (immigrant-generation Japanese) and the Nisei (the Issei’s US-born children). The use of the slash, as opposed to a hyphen or a space, comes from David Palumbo-Liu and Jodi A. Byrd. The slash “signals those instances in which a liaison between ‘Asian’ and ‘American,’ a *sliding over* between two seeming separate terms, is constituted.” This “sliding over” emphasizes the historical indeterminacy of Asian/American status within the United States, while at the same time it destabilizes both the Asian modifier and the American baseline. (Byrd 208)
2. Nahum Dimitri Chandler, *X: The Problem of the Negro as a Problem for Thought* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013), 173, <https://muse.jhu.edu/books/9780823254101/>.
3. *Ibid.*, 20.
4. Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8.4 (December 21, 2006): 387-409, doi:10.1080/14623520601056240.
5. Dean Itsuji Saranillio, “Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters: A Thought Piece on Critiques, Debates, and Indigenous Difference,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–04 (September 13, 2013): 280–94, doi:10.1080/2201473X.2013.810697; Haunani-Kay Trask, “Settlers of Color and ‘Immigrant’ Hegemony: ‘Locals’ in Hawai‘i,” in *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i*, ed. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008), 45–65, <http://muse.jhu.edu/books/9780824861513/9780824861513-8.pdf>; John Mack Faragher, “Commentary: Settler Colonial Studies and the North American Frontier,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 4, no. 2 (December 17, 2013): 181–91, doi:10.1080/2201473X.2013.846389; Margaret D. Jacobs, “Parallel or Intersecting Tracks? The History of the US West and Comparative Settler Colonialism,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 4, no. 2 (December 17, 2013): 155–61, doi:10.1080/2201473X.2013.846390; Andrea Smith, “Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy,” *Global Dialogue* 12, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2010): N.p; Manu Vimalassery, “The Wealth of the Natives: Toward a Critique of Settler Colonial Political Economy,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–04 (September 13, 2013): 295–310, doi:10.1080/2201473X.2013.810701.
6. Saranillio, “Why Asian Settler Colonialism Matters,” 282
7. For the duration of this paper, I use the word “Americans” in reference to citizens and residents of the United States out of linguistic convenience; however, I acknowledge that the popular usage of the term does not encompass the full geographical expanse of the Americas and the people who claim belonging therein.

8. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 1.
9. Mark Rifkin, "Settler Common Sense," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–04 (September 13, 2013): 329, doi:10.1080/2201473X.2013.810702.
10. Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 33.
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