UCLA
UCLA Previously Published Works

Title
Conceptualizing Settler Colonialism in Nicaragua

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6pf5h7cz

Journal
Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development, 49(3-4)

ISSN
0894-6019

Author
Mayer, Joshua L

Publication Date
2021-04-09

Peer reviewed

Conceptualizing Settler Colonialism in Nicaragua

Joshua L. Mayer

University of California, Los Angeles

ABSTRACT: A growing body of literature has argued for the reconceptualization of Latin America as a settler colony. Contrary to the self-proclaimed decolonization of Latin American states upon their independence two centuries ago, the settlers who came to Latin America stayed and preserved the structure of settler colonialism to the present day. This article analyzes the case of Nicaragua through the conceptual frame of settler colonialism and examines an apt case study: the Indigenous and Afrodescendant communities of the Rama-Kriol Territory in southeastern Nicaragua, where I have conducted activist ethnographic research since 2014. The ongoing colonization of the Rama-Kriol Territory exhibits not only failures of the state to enforce legal protections of multicultural rights, but also the extension of a colonial logic of dispossession and elimination. The case of the Rama-Kriol Territory demonstrates the entanglements of Nicaraguan settler colonialism with international institutions, development banks, multinational corporations, and settler colonial projects around the world. I conclude that social scientific researchers should attend to continuing and emergent forms of Indigenous sovereignty. Amid the fading backdrop of liberal multiculturalism in Latin America, these assertions of

sovereignty pose a political horizon of decolonization and an end to settler violence, dispossession, and domination.

Introduction

This year's bicentennial of the independence of much of Latin America from Spanish rule ought to bring the structural nature of domination in those states to the fore. In Latin America, decades have now passed since Indigenous and Afrodescendant social movement mobilization opened a period of constitutional reforms that recognized multicultural rights (Paschel 2016; Van Cott 2000; Yashar 2005). Communal land rights have been legally recognized through internationally-funded titling programs throughout the continent, culminating in the titling of more than 200 million hectares to Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples (Bryan 2012). Yet this "territorial turn" (Offen 2003) has failed to guarantee Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples' physical control of the titled territories (Buntaine, Hamilton, and Millones 2015; Fabricant and Postero 2015; Finley-Brook 2016). This phenomenon raises the question of whether there are underlying factors preventing these interventions from having their intended effects.

As anthropologist Shannon Speed has declared, "Latin American states are settler colonial states" (2017:783).[1] Speed argues, in short, that Latin America underwent a process in which settlers came and stayed; in which settlers stole Indigenous land and forced Indigenous and Afrodescendant people to work the land for the settlers' benefit; and in which settlers claimed sovereignty to the

exclusion of Indigenous and Afrodescendant sovereignty. This article gestures at the power of this approach to reveal political entanglements, constraints, and horizons in ethnographic studies of the region, including the puzzle of the impediments to policy interventions aimed at recognizing Indigenous and Afrodescendant rights. I center the exemplary case of Nicaragua, where an autonomy regime for the heavily Indigenous and Afrodescendant Caribbean coast region was established in 1987 and where nearly a third of the country's landmass has been titled to Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples as communal lands. Bringing in ethnographic data from the Rama-Kriol Territory—an Indigenous and Afrodescendant territory that received a title from the Nicaraguan state in 2009— I argue that the settler colonialism analytic reveals historical and global continuities of phenomena that are visible in ethnographic data. On the flipside, I argue that this case demonstrates how adding cases from Latin America to the expanding ethnographic literature on settler colonialism may make visible certain aspects of the structure of settler colonialism that were previously obscured by geographical limitations.

I begin this article with a brief review of the social scientific literature on race, ethnicity, and settler colonialism in Latin America, exploring how settler colonial racecraft[2]—with anthropologists of Latin America as key collaborators— has obscured the structure of settler colonialism. The following section analyzes the Nicaraguan context, delving into the histories of colonization on the Pacific coast, the Caribbean coast, and along the frontier between the two. This leads to a specific analysis of ethnographic data from the southern Rama-Kriol Territory, a

territory that has now become a highly contested frontier of settler colonialism. I continue with an analysis of the global and historical continuities that have made possible—if not inevitable—this particular expansion of the settler colonial frontier in Nicaragua.

In light of this case study, the concluding section of the article discusses the potential implications of understanding Nicaragua, and Latin American states more broadly, as settler colonies. One critical implication of this conceptual shift, I argue, is that the settler colonialism analytic makes thinkable certain political horizons of Indigenous and Afrodescendant movements that have been sidelined in academia and international institutions during the multiculturalism era. The era of neoliberal multiculturalism, as Charles R. Hale has described it (2005; see also Speed 2005), has been characterized by state recognition of multicultural rights when made legible within logics of cultural difference, neoliberal governmentality, and acceptance of settler state sovereignty. By contrast, the settler colonialism analytic provides a direct solution: decolonization.[3] Indeed, on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, there is an ongoing history of sovereignty-based Indigenous and Afrodescendant movements that have sought total decolonization of the region since it was first annexed by Nicaragua. This ethnographic reality hints at the continued importance of anticolonial solidarities across Abya Yala, Turtle Island, and beyond.

I. Race, Ethnicity, and Settler Colonialism in Latin America

Over recent decades, a growing literature in Native studies, anthropology, and related fields has provided insights into two hegemonic projects of white supremacist modernity that have often been obscured with the complicity of social scientists. Studies of settler colonialism and Indigenous survivance have revealed the erasure of both Indigenous people(s) and indigeneity. This takes place as part of a structure in which the continued theft and occupation of Indigenous lands enriches settlers and permits the functioning of global capitalism. Meanwhile, in Latin America, social scientists have foregrounded an analysis of race where ethnicity and culture had previously dominated. This challenges the century-long ideological and material project of hegemonic mestizaje,[4] which purported that most of the continent had been—or would inevitably become—homogenized as part of twentieth century projects of nation-building. In this section, I review the confluence of these literatures in the interest of coupling their revelations. This allows for an understanding of how twentieth century Latin American racecraft has further obscured the structure of settler colonialism.

From the invasion of Abya Yala until the rise of scientific racism in the nineteenth century, ideas of race in Latin America, though unsettled, facilitated the emergence of settler colonialism. A well-rehearsed historical account of the emergence of race in Latin America notes that while the Spanish and Portuguese empires had considered African slavery categorically permissible on the basis of a supposed refusal of Iberian religious authority from the early fifteenth century, the permissibility of Indigenous slavery in the Americas was debated at the highest

5

levels of Iberian government through the mid-sixteenth century, including in the famous debates between Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Fray Bartolomé de las Casas (Wade 2010:24–27). Meanwhile, the variable treatment of people of 'mixed' Spanish and Indigenous descent Peru during the early colonial period as Spanish, Criollo, and/or Indian has led Marisol de la Cadena (2005:265) to conclude that mixedness was widely tolerated and privilege was allocated more along the lines of nobility in both societies than any fixed racial grounds.

Outside of such illustratively exceptional cases, colonization generally led to genocidal treatment of African and Indigenous peoples across Latin America, though there was significant variation. In the southern Mexican and Central American highlands, for example, Indigenous peoples were typically forced into colonial labor regimes—though not legally enslaved—on their own lands (Díaz Polanco 1997:23–64; Kramer 1994; Speed 2019:20–21). In present-day western Nicaragua, on the other hand, Indigenous peoples were rapidly enslaved and sent to areas of the Spanish Empire where labor was in greater demand, while the viceroyalty brought in enslaved Africans to their former homelands later on (Kinloch Tijerino 2012:54, 66; Wolfe 2010:178). Still, between the invasion and the late eighteenth century, categories of whiteness, indigeneity, blackness, and mixedness congealed even as racializable characteristics remained indeterminate. In general, Indigenous and Black people in Latin America were slotted into distinct categories: Spanish and Criollos were supreme, if distinct; Indigenous people were to be converted and paternalistically 'protected' as they were removed from their lands and exploited in slave-like conditions; Black people

6

were straightforwardly subject to forcible control and exploitation; and people of 'mixed' descent were subject to a wide range of racializations that could be based on faith, social status, and phenotype (de la Cadena 2005:264–266; Wade 2010:26).

The divergences of this history from colonial racecraft in North America have contributed to the obscuring of a settler capitalist mode of production in Latin America. Speed (2017; 2019:18–19) argues that the settler colonialism analytic has only rarely been applied to Latin America in part because of dogmatic interpretations of Patrick Wolfe's formulation of settler colonialism. Wolfe (1999) argues that settler colonialism entails a land-labor binary in which Indigenous peoples are eliminated so as to dispossess them of their lands and a laboring population is introduced by settlers to extract resources and generate surplus value on those lands. Speed shows that this binary needs only a slight modification to fit the Latin American context "because colonialism in much of Latin America has in fact been characterized by both land dispossession and labor extraction, to which indigenous peoples were simultaneously subjected" (2017:784). Further, in regions of Latin America like western Nicaragua and much of Brazil and Argentina, the land-labor binary played out much like Wolfe described it in North American settler colonial contexts: with the elimination of Indigenous people so as to dispossess them of their lands and the replacement of their labor with enslaved Africans. More important than the specific means by which settlers acquired land and labor is the fact that settler colonialism is, in Wolfe's (2006) classic formulation, a structure rather than an event. "Unlike

metropole or administrative colonialism imposed in other parts of the world, in Latin America white Europeans came to stay. And stay they did" (Speed 2017:785; see also Gott 2007).

Aside from the land-labor binary, social scientific scholarship that overemphasizes the nation-state and reinforces hegemonic ideas about race in Latin America have also obscured the structure of settler colonialism. Against the backdrop of the biologized racism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Boasian anthropological research minimized the salience of race in Latin America until the past few decades.[5] Critical to the erasure of race was the ideological work done by Mexican anthropologist Manuel Gamio, a student of Franz Boas whose ideas on national identity would eventually become dominant. In his widely read work of the revolutionary period, *Forjando patria*, Gamio all but explicitly recognized the settler nature of the Mexican state. He noted the divide in Mexico between what he described as eight to ten million Indigenous people and four to six million people of European descent, arguing:

> …we even find certain analogies between that situation and that of the former southern African republics—countries where the nation was always represented by those of European origin, leaving the Indigenous people relegated to servitude and passivity. … The separation, the divergence of these two great social groups existed not only during the Conquista and the Colonial Period, but became even deeper during contemporary times, as Independence—it must be said once and for all without hypocritical reservations—was carried out by the group of

European tendencies and origins and brought freedoms and material and

intellectual progress to that group, leaving the Indigenous group

abandoned to fate… (1960:9–10).[6]

Gamio's prescription for this settler domination was a nation-building project,

proposing mestizo identity—that is, the mix of Indigenous and European

ancestry—as the core of the emergent nation. He suggested that "indigenous

education would wipe away the vices and cultural deficiencies of Indians" (de la

Cadena 2005:273; see also Díaz Polanco 1997:4–5). That is, Gamio believed that

Indigenous differences from the economically and politically powerful criollos

and mestizos were rooted in cultural differences, rather than biologized racial

differences, and could be erased through education and intentional cultural

mixing. This served as the orienting purpose of the Inter-American Indigenist

Institute, which he directed for 18 years in the mid-twentieth century. Gamio's

ideas rapidly spread south, reaching Nicaragua in the early 1930s via Augusto

César Sandino and Central American Unionist thinker Salvador Mendieta (Gould

1998:155–162). The development of hegemonic mestizaje (see Hale 2002)

permitted scholars and political elites in countries where it took hold to dismiss

race as a divisive vestige of racial science and eugenics while claiming that all

were formally equal and able to access the same status through education.

Hegemonic mestizaje has served as a form of racecraft that obscures the

racial capitalist project of settler colonialism in Latin America. Jemima Pierre

developed the concept of racecraft, a portmanteau of race and statecraft,[7] to

clarify the ways in which the colonial state in present-day Ghana worked to

institutionalize racial ideologies such that they became hegemonic and served the colonial state's project of rule. Specifically, the colonial state racialized Black Ghanaians as both Black and as 'native' members of 'ethnic' and 'tribal' groups. The colonial state ruled indirectly through the incorporation of a class mediators—a ruling elite of each 'tribal' group—into the colonial state, demanding that this class adopt certain European norms. This technique of rule made it appear that the primary tension was not between white colonial rulers and Black colonial subjects, but between members of tribes and their rulers. "In this sense," Pierre argues, "*indirect rule was a racial project*" (Pierre 2013:19)—a racial project that deployed race to obscure race and cement white supremacist rule.

Though quite different in its operation, hegemonic mestizaje similarly serves as racecraft. Its advocates formed institutions that promoted the incorporation of indigeneity into national identity, demanding that Indigenous people and mestizos alike approximate whiteness in salient areas of cultural politics in exchange for citizenship. At the same time, this form of white supremacy would be obscured through the recasting of the nation as culturally mestizo. This transformation would aim to make the settler mestizo and make the mestizo a settler. Further, by casting the problem as a divide between the white and the Indigenous, the project of hegemonic mestizaje would erase or exclude Blackness. The precise functioning of this form of racecraft in Nicaragua will be seen in the following section.

Gamio's project of racecraft through hegemonic mestizaje was tied up with a broader nationalist project within the Boasian anthropology of that era. As Mark Anderson has shown, Boas himself viewed Latin America—Mexico and Brazil in particular—as key examples of racial arrangements developed through miscegenation that weakened social distinctions along the lines of race (2019:77–79). This analysis supported his stance that miscegenation was the optimal solution to racial conflict within the United States. Boas was fundamentally concerned with social integration into the nation-state, and this, in turn, was premised on the assumption that assimilation would take place into the white, settler nation-state. "This of course meant that Blacks could assimilate only by becoming biologically more white; they could not assimilate *as* Blacks" (Anderson 2019:79). Boas thus proposed to emulate Latin America's ostensible success in reducing the sociopolitical salience of race within the bounds of the nation-state through racial mixing. Many of his successors through midcentury would similarly look to Latin America as a case of limited racial conflict (Anderson 2019:129–130).

Hegemonic mestizaje—that is, of the sort proposed by Gamio—obscures the structure of settler colonialism through its proposition that Indigenous people may be included in citizenship regimes as the legal equals of settlers in exchange for assimilating into mestizo national identity. Of course, as research over the past three decades has repeatedly shown, mestizaje only masks the white supremacist structure of Latin American settler societies, which continue privileging whiteness and politically and economically excluding phenotypes perceived to be linked to

Indigeneity and Blackness (Moreno Figueroa 2010; Moreno Figueroa and Saldívar Tanaka 2016; Telles 2014).

Among anthropologists who accepted the story that hegemonic mestizaje in Latin America told about itself, two alternatives to race became dominant in studies of social difference: ethnicity and culture. Peter Wade traces ethnicity through three meanings: first, indicating a 'pagan' or 'heathen' group through its etymological origin in the Greek *ethnos*; second, primarily in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, meaning a supposedly biological group below the level of a race in terms of distinctiveness; and third, as a highly ambiguous concept employed by anthropologists in the mid-twentieth century to avoid the biological/phenotypical connotations of race (Wade 2010:15). In a review of challenges to the hegemony and ambiguity of ethnicity in anthropology, Faye V. Harrison (1995) identified the elisions present in the study of ethnicity and concluded that race is either smuggled into or ignored in these approaches to ethnicity. As Brackette Williams proposed,

> *[E]thnicity* labels the politics of cultural struggle in the nexus of territorial and cultural nationalism that characterizes all putatively homogeneous nation-states. As a label it may sound better than tribe, race, or barbarian, but with respect to political consequences, it still identifies those who are at the borders of the empire (1989:439).

She would later describe the type of hegemony manifested in mestizaje as a Gramscian 'transformist hegemony,' wherein homogenization need not be total. Rather, those ethnicized as distinctive from the dominant group "lack the political and economic power necessary to insist on a redefinition of what are ideologically defined as the core or the central ingredients of" the dominant, "putatively

homogeneous brew," and dominated groups' "new cultural products are either excluded from or absorbed into the homogeneous brew in ways that do little to reduce their marginalization" (Williams 1991:31). Ethnicization thus transmutes the overt domination of white supremacist racialization into a more obscured ideological struggle within the same structures of oppression where all differences are supposedly mutable if ethnicized subjects would only assimilate. As Jemima Pierre (2013:202–205) argues in the context of Ghana, the anthropological focus on local ethnic or 'native' identities—often imposed as a technique of divide-and-rule governance by colonial powers—makes the context of global white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy invisible, preventing an analysis of the broader terrain in which domination is exercised (see also Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre 2020).

Culture has served a similar and overlapping role in the obfuscation of racial oppression. Anthropologists have employed Boasian and Geertzian culture concepts to demonstrate the mutability of certain human traits that were at one point predominantly seen as bio-racially determined within anthropology. Yet the boundedness of Boasian and Geertzian culture concepts has allowed for them to become racialized at the same time that their proponents claim to conducting race-free analyses (Beliso-De Jesús and Pierre 2020; Harrison 1995; Mullings 2005; Visweswaran 1998). As the Boasian culture concept fed the rise of multiculturalist policies in Latin America since the early 1990s, the compatibility of multiculturalism with racial and settler colonial oppression has also become clear. Liberal multiculturalism disavows the structures of gendered, white

supremacist settler colonialism that allow for the establishment of the very settler state that implements multiculturalist policies. This form of multiculturalism treats those who dominate the state and international state system to be unmarked, 'tolerating bodies' (Brown 2006:45) while further entrenching the hegemony of liberal 'rationality' (Povinelli 2002:8). As Speed (2005) and Charles R. Hale (2006; 2011), among others, have noted, multiculturalism can convert radical, anti-racist, and anti-colonial demands for territory and autonomy into decontextualized and delimited claims for state recognition that fit with a neoliberal push for "restructuring society such that people come to govern themselves in accordance with the tenets of global capitalism" (Hale 2006:75).

The dominant tendencies in the anthropological study of ethnicity and culture in Latin America have made settler colonialism less visible as the structuring principle of dominance and oppression in the region. By making always already racialized markers of ethnicity and culture appear mutable, these concepts of ethnicity and culture facilitate the kind of transformist hegemony that Williams describes as simultaneously acknowledging difference, promoting homogenization, and reinforcing the dominance of unmarked dominant group—in this case, the settlers themselves (criollos) and mestizo elites. They also make indigeneity thinkable only as a set of culturally or ethnically distinct practices while erasing the specific racial configuration of Indigenous dispossession and Indigenous and African slavery in Latin America that constituted the key elements of settler capitalist accumulation. Multiculturalism is a particularly dangerous form of this erasure. It advances a formal, state recognition-based

regime as a mode of ostensibly promoting justice for Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples while necessarily conceptualizing the settler state as the recognizing entity.

In short, independence from European colonial rule did not mark the end of settler colonial domination in Latin America; it only served to transmogrify it into a less visible force within the trappings of the nation-state. Colonialism in Latin America is thus not simply a vestige of the explicitly colonial period from the invasion until independence from Spain, as suggested in concepts of "internal colonialism" (e.g., González Casanova 2009) and the "coloniality of power" (e.g., Quijano 2007), among others (Speed 2019:22). These concepts take Latin American states' independence to be a first step toward decolonization simply because settlers cut off European rule. The structure of settler colonialism in fact remains in place, now firmly and formally dominated by the settlers themselves.

II. Settler Colonialism in Nicaragua

Settler colonialism in Nicaragua has taken on diverse forms over time and across its geographies, but its structural persistence remains clear. This section analyzes these forms of settler colonialism in both western Nicaragua and the Caribbean coast region. I analyze them separately due to their markedly different histories before describing the history of the frontier between the two of them. This section is necessarily brief and incomplete for the purposes of this article, though many volumes have been written on the historical substance I am discussing. My purpose here is to explore the continuities and interpretations that

emerge from these histories when viewed with the settler colonialism analytic in mind.

Western Nicaragua

The Spanish-colonized Pacific region of the country exhibits clear features of settler colonialism. In all of present-day Nicaragua, there were an estimated 800,000–1,000,000 inhabitants immediately prior to the Spanish arrival in 1522 (Kinloch Tijerino 2012:38). Of those, around half a million Indigenous people were estimated to live in the western portion of present-day Nicaragua, around 200,000 in the central highlands, and some 40,000 in the Caribbean coast region (Newson 1987; in Kinloch Tijerino 2012:38). There was a high density of linguistic, cultural, and political diversity, especially in the western reaches of the country where many groups had migrated from present-day Mexico during the seven centuries prior to colonization (Kinloch Tijerino 2012:19–20). In a 1581 survey of the western region that had once been home to 500,000 Indigenous people, fewer than 16,000 people were counted in total, reflecting a combination of brutal warfare and local slavery by the Spanish, the arrival of European diseases, and the enslavement of some 200,000 Indigenous people who were sent to other reaches of the Spanish Empire (Kinloch Tijerino 2012:52–54). Those Indigenous people who had survived the genocide were concentrated in *reducciones* and subjected to the *encomienda* system described above. Despite the immense oppression of this period, Indigenous communities in western Nicaragua

retained some degree of political autonomy through to the formal independence of Central America from Spain in 1821 (Kinloch Tijerino 2012:chap. 3).

After the genocidal near-extermination of Indigenous peoples in Nicaragua, growing industries in the province—including cacao, cattle, lumber, indigo, mining, and shipbuilding (Kinloch Tijerino 2012:chap. 5)—led the Spanish settlers to bring thousands of enslaved Africans to replace Indigenous labor. Though the precise number of enslaved Africans imported to Nicaragua is not known, by the late eighteenth century, people of African descent accounted for a slim majority of the total population of Spanish-controlled Nicaragua. After the abolition of slavery, Afro-Nicaraguans continued to face subjugation, leading to two categories of strategies described by Justin Wolfe: "whitening or passing and race-based community formation" (2010:178). Neighborhoods and towns in different parts of the country were defined by their populations' African descent, and this granted a political identity to those communities. That is, one's relations to an Afrodescendant community could at times be more important than phenotype in terms of defining race in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (e.g., Wolfe 2010:184). To strive for improved life chances meant to either struggle as part of one's community or, for those able to pass, to abandon that community and seek inclusion in white settler society. Wolfe demonstrates that many leading Liberals of the mid-nineteenth century came from Black communities—especially the city of León's neighborhood of San Felipe—and sought a disavowal of race in Nicaragua's settler society. Specifically, these Black Liberals sought formal equality for all *ladinos*—that is, non-Indigenous people—

to the exclusion of Indigenous people, who were at that point viewed as outside of settler society and, at least in the case of Indigenous people of the Caribbean coast, incapable of civilization (Wolfe 2010:184–185). In short, a form of Liberal (and liberal) race-blindness emerged in this time period and competed with the Conservatives' racial exclusivism and overt white supremacy for hegemony in settler state politics.

In the early twentieth century, settler erasure of indigeneity advanced in Nicaragua amid a new wave of Indigenous dispossession and the arrival of the hegemonic form of mestizaje—for which Gamio had advocated in Mexico—in Nicaragua. Jeffrey Gould (1998) traces the dismantling of Indigenous communal lands and institutions across western and central Nicaragua in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, arguing that this was associated with the rise of the myth of a homogenously mestizo Nicaragua. Very rough demographic data indicates that somewhere between 40 and 70 percent of Nicaraguans were considered by data collectors to be Indians between the late eighteenth century and 1900; by 1920, census takers only classified four percent of Nicaraguans to be Indians (Gould 1998:16–17). This points to both the disruption of the politically autonomous communities that defined indigeneity up to the turn of the twentieth century—including the theft of their land bases by Nicaraguan and foreign elites—and the shifts in settler racecraft.

Building on the liberal race-blindness that had been advocated in the late nineteenth century, hegemonic mestizaje arrived in Nicaragua by the 1920s, erasing the presence of Indigenous peoples, their land rights, and their political

futures (Gould 1998), in addition to the total erasure of African descent and Blackness (Wolfe 2010). Gould argues that unlike the form of hegemonic mestizaje in Mexico, which praised abstract indigeneity as strengthening the nation and simultaneously subjugated Indigenous people, the Nicaraguan discourse of mestizaje by 1950 had "posited that Indians had ceased to exist at some forgotten time in the deepest recesses of historical memory" (1998:167). This was the result of a double-bind akin to that described by Jessica Cattelino (2010) in the U.S. context. In the hegemonic discourse, indigeneity was constituted by cultural difference and a lack of civilization. To be an Indian, according to this discourse, was to resist assimilation. That opened up a logic of dispossession: to be deemed an Indian was to be deemed wasteful with one's land and stubborn in the face of national progress, therefore justifying state intervention to privatize communal lands. On the other hand, Indigenous communities like Sutiaba were accused of being too assimilated, too educated, to be eligible for any form of political autonomy, which justified abolishing their political institutions and authority over communal lands (Gould 1998:48–49, 76). Of course, in practice, those communities deemed to be too assimilated still faced overt anti-Indigenous racism (e.g., Gould 1998:123). Within this discourse, there was no way to both be Indigenous and to have political autonomy and communal lands. Gould shows that some Sutiabas—especially those who had attended schools—at least partially accepted this logic, demonstrating the incorporative dimension of Nicaraguan racecraft. Although Sandinista forms of hegemonic mestizaje valorized indigeneity as a sort of primordial source for politics opposed

19

to imperialism and large landholders, they joined the Mexican form of hegemonic mestizaje in valorizing only abstract forms of indigeneity. This extinguished the possibility of seeing a future for autonomy of specific Indigenous peoples and instead motivated efforts at cultural, economic, and political assimilation.

Nicaraguan political projects of both the left and the right during the past half-century have relegated Indigenous peoples to symbols of historical resistance and nation-formation while their dispossession continues (Alianza de Pueblos Indígenas y Afrodescendientes de Nicaragua 2017; Gould 1998; Saldaña-Portillo 2003). Even so, the projects of Indigenous dispossession and settler sovereignty have not been completed in western Nicaragua, as demonstrated by the continued political salience of Indigenous communities like Sutiaba and Monimbó in resistance to both the Somoza military dictatorship and the current Ortega-Murillo regime. The National Council of Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific, Center, and North of Nicaragua, among other organizations, continues advocating for the recognition of communal land rights and political autonomy for these Indigenous peoples, posing a renewed and potentially counterhegemonic challenge to settler sovereignty and dispossession.

The Caribbean Coast

Unlike Pacific and central Nicaragua, settler colonial dispossession on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua—a region constituting approximately half of Nicaragua's present-day territory—was trivial until the final decades of the nineteenth century. From no later than the early seventeenth century until the

early nineteenth century, this region—then known to outsiders as the Mosquitia or the Mosquito Coast—was dominated by several interconnected groups of the Indigenous and Afro-Indigenous Miskitu people.[8] The Miskitu held significant sway along the Caribbean coast from the Yucatán to western Panama (Offen 2015). While the Spanish Empire claimed the region as part of Nicaragua and the General Captaincy of Guatemala, it was unable to enslave, convert, or militarily defeat the region's Indigenous peoples. Spanish expeditions to the region repeatedly failed to establish durable occupancy of territory due to successful resistance from the Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples of the region.

By the early eighteenth century, the Indigenous Miskitu people in the region entered into diplomatic and commercial relations with Great Britain. A Miskitu leader was recognized by the British as king of the Mosquitia, and other Miskitu groups were separately recognized by the British as having leaders of subordinate ranks (Gordon 1998:34). Great Britain established a superintendency in the Mosquitia and maintained extensive commercial relations with the Miskitu through several settlements and visiting vessels (Baracco 2019). The settlements—scattered and small, with minimal plantation agriculture—typically consisted of an elite class of Europeans and people of mixed ancestry, a small class of free Black and Indigenous people, and a majority of enslaved Black and Indigenous people (Gordon 1998:35; Offen 1999:276–279). Outside of the settlements themselves, larger land grants from Miskitu leaders to settlers were typically located on or beyond the frontier of Miskitu political control; indeed, Karl Offen argues that Miskitu leaders used land grants to settlers as attempts to

bring additional lands under their control (1999:291–292). Miskitu forces took part in raids of neighboring Indigenous communities and Spanish settlements, both as mercenaries for the British and of their own volition (Offen 1999:336–342). Recent scholarship indicates that British settlers were largely at the mercy of Miskitu leaders, depending on their protection and goodwill amid a lack of direct British government investment in settlement (Offen 2015). Settlers in the Mosquitia and in British colonies in the Caribbean were also dependent on the Miskitu for labor. Slaving of Indigenous people—the Rama, Mayangna, Ulwa, and Kukra peoples of the Caribbean coast, but also Indigenous people captured from central Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, and beyond—was a large component of Miskitu commerce with Europeans. Thousands of enslaved Indigenous people were sent around the Mosquitia and to British colonies as far as Jamaica and Virginia (Offen 2015:48–49).

Great Britain maintained treaty relations with the Miskitu from 1670 until 1783, when the Peace of Paris following the U.S. Revolutionary War recognized Spanish sovereignty and required the evacuation of all British subjects from the region. When the evacuation was finally enforced in 1787, with the departure of 537 free people and 1,677 enslaved Indigenous and Afrodescendant people (Goett 2006:127), a period of intense conflict erupted among different Miskitu groups. In the end, the Afro-Indigenous Zambo Miskitu emerged as the dominant group and successfully expelled the former British superintendent—who had defected to the Spanish—from the region (Gordon 1998:36; Williams 2013). A period of relative

autonomy followed this conflict as Spanish efforts at colonizing the region subsided.

Despite the Peace of Paris and the evacuation, the United Kingdom resumed official relations with the Miskitu king in 1837, appointing a superintendent for the region and declaring a protectorate in 1844 (Baracco 2019:20–22). With the abolition of formal slavery by 1841, the southern town of Bluefields became a population hub for Afrodescendant Creoles—many of them formerly enslaved in the Mosquitia, San Andrés, Providencia, and elsewhere in the Caribbean (Goett 2006:157–158). The confluence of the British return and this growing Creole population set in motion a political transformation that culminated in an emergent form of what Jodi A. Byrd (2011) terms arrivant colonialism—that is, the people brought by force to the Americas as part of the European project colonization enacted a form of colonization through their incorporation into that project (see also Jackson 2012). Under the influence of the British consul in Bluefields, the newly crowned Miskitu king in 1845 formed a council of state—a new legislative body that the consul proposed to "modernize" the Mosquitian government—that consisted exclusively of two white men and five elite Creoles (Gordon 1998:41). This council instituted English law in the Mosquitia and sought to open it up to further settlement and resource extraction (Gordon 1998:43–44), though the council's influence, especially in the northern reaches of the Mosquitia, appears to have been quite limited (Goett 2006:197).

The collapse of British military strength after the Crimean War and growing U.S. interest in the construction of a canal across Nicaragua and the

Mosquitia led the United Kingdom to cede underlying sovereignty in the Mosquitia to Nicaragua in the 1860 Treaty of Managua (Olien 1987). Despite the U.K. having always previously claimed that Mosquitian sovereignty resided in the Miskitu, not British, monarch (e.g., The Central American Question 1856), the Miskitu king and council of state played no direct role in the treaty negotiations; Miskitu sovereignty was simply ignored. This was the culmination of a lengthy period in which the U.S. had pressured the U.K. to replicate the settler colonialism of North America in the Mosquitia. For instance, in an 1856 discussion between James Buchanan, then the U.S. secretary of state, and the British foreign secretary, Buchanan argued, "Nicaragua should treat the Mosquitos within her limits as Great Britain and the United States treated their own Indians." Toward that end, he proposed setting aside a territory for the Miskitu "until their title was extinguished by Nicaragua" and, with respect to titles granted by the kingdom, employing the *Johnson v. M'Intosh* Supreme Court decision. That decision, Buchanan said, confirmed "the law of all European nations since the discovery of America ... [that] such grants made by Indians were absolutely void" (The Central American Question 1856). Ultimately, this invocation of settler colonial dispossessive logics in a region that was still far from a settler colonial reality succeeded in establishing a legal foundation for the gradual elimination of formal Indigenous sovereignty.

By the 1870s, settler and arrivant colonial dispossession began playing a more significant role in the daily lives of Indigenous and Black residents of the Caribbean coast. The Treaty of Managua led to the establishment of a Mosquito

Reserve in the region, which was to provide for limited self-governance under the rule of a Miskitu hereditary chief and a council of government that was dominated by Black Creole elite in the Caribbean port town of Bluefields (Gordon 1998:42). The Nicaraguan government soon began violating the Treaty of Managua by issuing land titles in the region (Olien 1987). Even after an 1881 arbitration decision by Emperor of Austria decided that only the hereditary chief of the Miskitu could issue titles (Emperor of Austria 2007), Nicaraguan titling to individual settlers and companies escalated in the 1880s and 1890s as U.S. fruit companies took a growing interest in exporting bananas and coconuts (Goett 2006:205–206). The contradictions of this situation culminated in the Nicaraguan government's 1894 military annexation of the Caribbean coast and termination of the Mosquito Reserve with naval support from the U.S. (Gordon 1998:60–62). Nicaragua's then-president, José Santos Zelaya, renamed the region after himself, declared Spanish the official language, closed all English-language schools, named a New Orleans businessman the mayor of the regional capital of Bluefields, and issued titles for vast swathes of the region to his family members, military officers, political allies, and investors from the U.S. and Europe (Gordon 1998:62–66). Land titles issued by the Mosquitia and the Mosquito Reserve were annulled, and, when not immediately retitled, were considered national lands that were open to be colonized by and titled to western Nicaraguans and foreigners (Goett 2006:206–209). U.S. businesses—centered around the fruit companies— came to dominate the regional economy, employing residents and hiring workers from the British West Indies to work on the plantations (Gordon 1998:66–69). As

U.S. banks financed Nicaraguan sovereign debt over the following decades, they effectively guaranteed that U.S. companies' interests would be protected (Hudson 2017). This contributed to the U.S. occupation of Nicaragua (1911–1934) and the subsequent Somoza family military dictatorship (1937–1979). In the latter period, the U.S. enclave economy of the region was supplemented by internationally supported colonization projects along the frontier. This transition marked the true arrival of settler colonialism in the region and will be discussed at length below.

Along the Frontier

The frontier of settlement in Nicaragua describes a shifting geographical space that remains politically salient. For much of the history of Nicaragua since the beginning of colonization, the frontier was a zone that contained both brutal colonial conflicts and agency for Indigenous peoples in a border area between two polities: settler Nicaragua and the Mosquitia. In the mid-sixteenth century, the frontier of Spanish settlement ranged from the Matagalpa communities of the north-central highlands to the Ulwa communities in the mid-central hill and the Votic (likely proto-Rama) communities of the southeastern jungles along the San Juan River. In the mid-sixteenth century, brutal attempts at forming *encomiendas* in the central highlands among the Matagalpa were met with rebellions and flight into the mountains to the east (Offen 1999:133, n. 16); the attempts generally failed as a result of these actions (Romero Vargas 1995:252–253). Four centuries later, after a wave of settler land theft in 1900s and 1910s, up to a quarter of all Indigenous people in Matagalpa—some 8,000 people—fled east into the former

Mosquitia (Gould 1998:54–55). Indigenous people also fled west into Spanish-controlled areas to escape conflicts with the Zambo Miskitu polity and its slaving expeditions. Indigenous people fleeing from the Zambo Miskitu were recorded as arriving in the Matagalpa area in 1730 (Romero Vargas 1995:222). The Indigenous people of Boaco appear to have chosen to separate from the Ulwa people whose descendants now live in Karawala on the Caribbean coast and lived with some degree of autonomy under Spanish rule, receiving a royal title to their lands in 1765 (Gould 1998:76–77; Romero Vargas 1995:219). Sixty-five enslaved Ulwas, Kukras, and Africans fled from Bluefields to Spanish-controlled territory in 1775, eventually making their way to the colonial capital of Granada (Romero Vargas 1995:232). Likewise, numerous Ramas fled from slavery at the hands of Europeans and Miskitu on the Caribbean coast toward Spanish settlements further inland during the eighteenth century (Romero Vargas 1995:264–269). Of course, the Zambo Miskitu also traveled west on their raiding and slaving expeditions, even raiding Granada itself. My point in recalling these episodes is to highlight the instability of state power in the region. In James C. Scott's (2009) terminology, this frontier could be considered a shatter zone in which those escaping domination—specifically, Indigenous people escaping settler colonization in the west and enslavement and Miskitu domination in the east—could find refuge.

This frontier served as a shatter zone for nearly four centuries until a qualitative shift in the eastward movement in the mid-twentieth century. Beginning in the 1950s, settler colonialism on the Caribbean coast transitioned

from relatively small numbers of large-scale landholders in a plantation-based U.S. enclave economy to a frontier model of mass quantities of mestizo settlers migrating further and further from inland areas toward the Caribbean. This resulted directly from the Somoza dictatorship's model of employing the Caribbean coast as a safety valve for mestizo and Indigenous smallholder dispossession in the Pacific and central regions due to land seizures for cotton cultivation and cattle ranching, as well as several natural disasters (Morris 2016:359; Riverstone 2004:62; Vilas 1990:133).

This process was not merely a natural consequence of forcibly displaced people seeking out lands; rather, the Somoza dictatorship received international support for opening the frontier to settler colonialism. As the World Bank promoted export agriculture as Nicaragua's path to development in the 1950s, international development experts wrote reports describing settlement as a technical solution to limited lands (cf. Mitchell 2002): the eastern half of Nicaraguan territory was occupied by only ten percent of the population and was not sufficiently 'productive' of the monocrops and livestock needed for export agriculture (Vilas 1990:132–135). The Somoza regime proposed land reform—under the motto "Neither men without land, nor land without men (Instituto Agrario de Nicaragua 1967)—and received support from the Inter-American Development Bank to relocate displaced people from the Pacific and central zones into settlements on the Caribbean coast (Kaimowitz 1996). Those settlements would eventually become major cities and agricultural hubs from which further waves of colonization have subsequently extended. Meanwhile,

between 1960 and 1983, some sixty percent of all World Bank loans to Central

America were for cattle ranching (Bermúdez et al. 2015), an activity that

exacerbated migration from the Pacific coast by depleting aquifers and

contributing to several decades of worsening droughts (de Castro 2016). After the

1979 Sandinista revolution, the Contra war brought intense conflict to the

Caribbean coast, and the subsequent right-wing government settled war refugees

and ex-combatants—the vast majority of whom came from the Pacific and central

regions—in Caribbean coast "Development Poles" (Romero 2018). As of 2021,

the frontier of mestizo settlement continues to progress steadily but unevenly

toward the Caribbean coast. Mestizos form demographic majorities across the

Caribbean coast region, and monthly reports of attacks and massacres arrive from

besieged communities. In 2020 alone, 13 Mayangna people were killed in settler

attacks. The following section will provide a more granular and ethnographic

account of the arrival of settler violence and dispossession in one area along this

frontier.

Connecting the Regions: A Settler Colony and Its Frontier

This historical account of three regions of Nicaragua paints a picture of the

contemporary structure of settler colonialism in the country. A settler structure

was installed early in western Nicaragua early in the process of colonization

through the genocide of Indigenous peoples, seizure of their lands, and use of

enslaved or otherwise unfree Indigenous and Afrodescendant labor on those

lands. On the Caribbean coast, centuries of Miskitu domination limited settler

incursions and dispossession until the rise of an emergent form of arrivant

colonialism, the region's formal annexation to Nicaragua, and the development of

a U.S. enclave economy under coercion from a military occupation and financial

pressure from U.S. banks. The frontier zone between these two regions, long a

shatter zone where Indigenous and Afrodescendant people could escape

domination, took on the form of a more traditional frontier of settlement with the

intervention of international development funds under the Somoza regime. This

sets the stage for what will be discussed in the next section: the Nicaraguan settler

state—its sovereignty at once compromised and bolstered by global racial

capitalist pressures—continues to advance settler colonization along the frontier,

belying the notion that it could serve as a protector of Indigenous and

Afrodescendant rights under national and international laws.

III. The Rama-Kriol Territory: A Case Study in the Global Entanglements of

Settler Capitalism

　　　　Elizabeth and Álvaro[9] arrived unexpectedly in the town of San Juan de

Nicaragua with several of their adult sons in tow. The Rama couple lived far up

Indian River, which winds its way from its mouth near the Caribbean far west into

the Indio-Maíz Biological Reserve. Like his parents and brothers, Álvaro was a

Rama man who established himself along Indian River in the aftermath of the

catastrophic Contra war of the 1980s, staking a renewed claim to the historical

core of Rama lands.

After several decades in which the settler frontier had gradually advanced east under the Somoza regime, the Sandinista revolutionary government (1979–1990) brought for the Caribbean coast vague promises of the recognition of Indigenous cultures and lands and the incorporation of the Caribbean coast into national development plans—yet always colored by the idea that Indigenous peoples would eventually be fully assimilated into a mestizo settler nation. From the perspective of the Sandinista leadership, Hale argues, the Indigenous people of the Caribbean coast "could only become revolutionary subjects by sharing in Mestizo-defined nationalism and class-consciousness" (1994:93). Skirmishes in 1981 evolved into all-out war in 1982, and the Rama and Afrodescendant Kriol communities in southeastern Nicaragua—surrounded by Sandinista strongholds to the north and Contra bases to the south—were heavily affected. Many fled to refugee camps in Costa Rica; some took up arms with the Contras or the Sandinistas, voluntarily or not (Goett 2006:217–218). The Sandinista government began negotiating a deal for regional autonomy with Indigenous and Afrodescendant leaders, which ultimately resulted in the 1987 Autonomy Statute (Baracco and González 2012). That statute, in addition to recognizing certain cultural rights, created two autonomous regions on the Caribbean coast with their own parliamentary governments, both of which have become dominated by mestizo settlers and, in recent years, members of the ruling Sandinista party (González 2016). During the negotiation of the statute, many Rama people worked to establish a Herderian rationale for their recognition as a people with a right to territory, including with the support of the Sandinista government. This

included efforts to record and promote the Rama language—which had been driven to near-extinction at the hands of Moravian missionaries since the mid-nineteenth century—and to claim Rama places through Rama language placenames and Rama resettlement in areas of their traditional lands that had been depopulated during the war or earlier.

Álvaro and Elizabeth's settlement along Indian River was a result of these efforts. They had developed a close connection with these lands over the years, setting up homes and planting in different areas from time to time. Like other Ramas who live upriver instead of in town, they preferred to provide for themselves from their various food plots and fishing areas. More senior Ramas who visited this area saw it as one of the last areas where it was possible to truly live off the land; settlement had already stripped most other areas of the territory of that possibility. Important plants and animals that were difficult to come by elsewhere in the region could still be found somewhat readily along Indian River.

In recent years, Álvaro, Elizabeth, and their children had gradually pushed further and further upriver, away from what they described as the commotion of San Juan—a town of several thousand accessible only by boat and airplane. San Juan itself is a key point of frontier confluence despite its geographical location nearly on the Caribbean Sea. The town was destroyed in the Contra war and was gradually rebuilt and repopulated in a new location by Ramas, Kriols, and mestizos. Today, its population consists of a strong mestizo majority, but Ramas and Kriols constitute sizable minorities. Ramas living up Indian River come down

to San Juan on a fairly regular basis to sell fish, plantains, coconuts, sugarcane, cassava, and other crops, and to purchase goods.

The family's arrival in San Juan on this particular day was no such commercial visit. Rather, they came to report to the Rama communal government that they had had to flee their home far up the river due to threats from armed settlers. This was only the latest in a series of threats made against families living up the river and the Rama and Kriol forest rangers. Although some settler families had lived in the area for decades and cooperated with Rama and Kriol authorities, several settler groups had been marking off massive plots of land and selling them to new settlers, among other abuses. Past Rama and Kriol forest ranger patrols had confronted a number of these settlers, but those confrontations had only led to an escalation in the threats. Community leaders' attempts to bring these threats to municipal authorities had also come to nothing. "We Rama no get no law," Álvaro's brother interjected at one meeting on the subject.

Over the course of several days, a plan emerged. Members of the Rama communal government would travel up Indian River with Álvaro, Elizabeth, a dozen or so of their family members, and four Rama and Kriol forest rangers. This group, hoped to be large enough to scare off any settler violence, would confront settlers along the river, gathering information about their presence in the area and informing them that they had broken Nicaraguan law by taking Rama and Kriol communal lands. I was invited to observe the expedition and assist with documentation for subsequent reports to state authorities. The community leaders delivered letters requesting accompaniment and assistance to governmental

institutions, including the municipal government, the police, the military, and the local office of the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources, but the officials either declined the request or refused to receive the letter. Our protection would come instead from Álvaro and Elizabeth's sons, who carried bows and arrows. They bragged that the settlers were more scared of their bows and arrows than of firearms; some settlers had asked nervously if the arrows were poison-tipped. Ten days after first receiving the report from Álvaro and Elizabeth, we set off from San Juan in three small boats with motors in varying states of health. After navy officials reviewed our boat manifests and searched our bags, we were on our way upriver.

Over the course of six days, we came across thirteen groups of people living along the river. Each time we came across a clearing, we landed our boats and climbed up the muddy banks of the full river. I pulled out my phone to take notes and photos, and the forest rangers pulled out notebooks, cameras, and a handheld GPS device to document the site. Our reception varied; some were totally unwilling to talk, but others were happy to tell their stories and explain how they came to live in this corner of the country. One consistent theme emerged: the "push factor" was typically a very forceful push indeed. Several had lived in this area for decades but had recently been pushed off their previous lands by some of the same armed settlers who had threatened Álvaro and Elizabeth. Two of the settlers we met—a father and son—were killed the following month amid the land conflict among the settlers, which in turn sparked a revenge killing of a family of five elsewhere along the river. Others came from the old frontier

zones. One family had been pushed off of lands further west by cattle ranchers who claimed to hold the title. Another family had been laid off from a palm plantation to the north and decided to look for a piece of land to work. Several referred to the hard economic times that had hit Nicaragua since the 2018 sociopolitical crisis, which had led to a drop in investments and tourism in the country and turned GDP growth negative for the first time in a decade. Many expressed to us that they felt they had a right to be in this area "as Nicaraguans," including two young brothers. They told us that the army had passed by their land a few months back, and one soldier admonished them, "If these were my lands, I would have put cattle on them a long time ago."

During our visits, community leaders invited the settlers who had lived in the area since at least the early 2000s to attend an open meeting on the last day of our trip to discuss the applicable Nicaraguan laws. On the day of the meeting, a dozen or so settlers arrived at a cluster of Rama homes along the river and sat on benches in Fernanda's home to await the presentation. Coconut bread and coffee were served to everyone in attendance. Each of the community leaders came to the front of the home in turn and presented on a particular aspect of the legal protections of the territory. One presented on Nicaragua's communal lands law (Law 445); another discussed laws regarding protected areas; a Kriol leader and forest ranger showed off a laminated copy of the communal title issued in 2009 to nine Rama and Kriol communities. An hour and a half into the presentations, attendees were getting restless. A settler in the back shouted out, "So do we get to

stay or not?" The laws were fine, he said, but they had nothing to do with the reality that the settlers were seeing.

The laws were indeed quite strong on paper. Nicaragua had approved Law 445 after the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ordered it to demarcate and title Indigenous communal lands in the 2001 case of *Awas Tingni v. Nicaragua*. Law 445 created a mechanism through which Indigenous and Afrodescendant communal and territorial governments could obtain state support—often supplemented by international development agencies and financial institutions— for the preparation of a detailed land claim (see Bryan 2011; Hale 2011).[10] After delaying the process for several years and facing domestic litigation, the state finally began issuing communal titles to these lands between 2005 and 2016, though disputes over the titling process remain. These titles take precedence over all other titles except agrarian reform titles and ordinary titles obtained prior to 1987 when the title holder has occupied the land since before 1987. Together with the Nicaraguan constitution, the law declares communal lands inalienable, indefeasible, and immune from seizure. It guarantees that 25 percent of state revenues from activities within communal lands will be distributed to the respective communal governments and requires that the regional and municipal governments consult with Indigenous and Afrodescendant communities prior to approving any project in their communal lands.[11] Critically, the law includes in the titling process a stage of *saneamiento*, or title clearing, in which non-community members living or carrying out activities within communal lands without a legal title must either reach a lease agreement with the communal

government or leave. Nicaraguan officials regularly tout these laws in international fora as evidence of the government's commitment to Indigenous and Afrodescendant rights.

Yet the settler in the back knew well that state authorities were not enforcing these laws. He must have experienced or known of interactions with authorities like that of the abovementioned young brothers who felt their settlement in the area was authorized by the soldiers who commented on bringing in cattle. The forest rangers allege that municipal authorities distribute packets of goods to settlers, and a non-governmental organization has documented the presence of government schools and health centers serving settlers within the Indio-Maíz Biological Reserve, including some within the Rama-Kriol Territory (López B. 2020). In this context, the notion that the police or military would force settlers to leave must have seemed absurd. The outburst ultimately led to the meeting's conclusion on an optimistic note: the settlers in attendance agreed that collaboration between long-established settlers and the Rama and Kriol communities would be key to stop further displacement and violence. The killings of seven settlers in the two months after that meeting both underscored the magnitude of the problem and the unlikelihood that this local level collaboration could solve it.

An analysis of Nicaragua as a settler state tied into global racial capitalism makes manifest the contradictions in expecting systematic enforcement of Indigenous and Afrodescendant communal land protections. The first component of this analysis is established in the prior sections of this article: that the

Nicaraguan state is a settler state; that settlers came and stayed, even though the settler category became transformed through settler racecraft; and that the frontier of settlement has continued to move from the center of the country toward the Caribbean Sea over the past century. Second is the domination of international financial institutions (IFIs) that surveil and coerce states in the interest of preserving the global structure of racial capitalism. When Daniel Ortega returned to the Nicaraguan president in 2007 at the head of the Sandinistas, interactions between his government and IFI representatives were prefigured by the experiences of other 'pink tide' governments. For instance, after Luis Inácio Lula da Silva's election to the Brazilian presidency in 2002, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditioned a much-needed $30 billion loan on maintaining a large budget surplus, thereby effectively forcing him to violate his pledge to end austerity (Mollo and Saad-Filho 2006). One longtime Sandinista official with access to Ortega told me in a recent conversation that, in light of this history and the experiences of the 1980s, Ortega decided in the 2006 election that his new government would immediately signal its cooperation with IFIs and the U.S. government. This also reflects a general shift in Ortega's political alignment leading up to 2006, when he gained support from prominent Nicaraguan business leaders and promised 'tripartite' negotiations of economic policies between the government, Sandinista-allied labor unions, and the private sector (Walters 2017). At the same time that the Ortega government announced universal and free education and healthcare, it also approved new austerity measures, fiscal controls, and free trade zones (Gutiérrez 2010). More recent years have seen glowing IFI

reports and the withdrawal of the IMF resident representative's office due to

Nicaraguan compliance with debt programs.

Compliance with IMF mandates—and the requisite generation of capital

for Nicaraguan elites and foreign investors that that compliance entails—has led

to an economic model that heightens settler violence and Indigenous and

Afrodescendant dispossession. Specifically, successive Nicaraguan governments

have prioritized an export-led growth model with an emphasis on primary

commodities. Under Ortega, agriculture and gold have been particularly targeted.

The focus on agriculture, according to the government's 2008 human

development plan, was "part of the strategy of foreign exchange savings and the

integration of the countryside into value chains" (Gobierno de Nicaragua

2012:170). Cattle and dairy production were the top priorities for government

capital investments in the agricultural sector. Pre-crisis IMF reports found that

GDP increases were "supported by buoyant agricultural exports" (International

Monetary Fund 2018), which narrowed Nicaragua's current account deficit and

reduced annual increases in the consolidated public sector as a percentage of GDP

(International Monetary Fund 2017:1). Between Ortega's election and the start of

the country's 2018 sociopolitical crisis, Nicaragua's total exports rose 99.7

percent while meat exports grew by 182 percent. Agricultural exports had gone

from 57 to 68 percent of all exports, and meat exports grew even faster, rising

from 25 to 29 percent of agricultural exports. At the same time, Nicaragua's

development promotion agency, ProNicaragua, has advertised that 60 percent of

Nicaraguan national territory is available for mining concessions, and mining

companies from Australia, Canada, Colombia, the U.S., and the United

Kingdom—including Anglo-Australian giant Rio Tinto—have participated in the

ensuing rush for concessions (Mittal, Mayer, and O'Neill 2020). Gold production

doubled in Nicaragua from 2006 to 2017 and appears on track to continue

increasing given the ongoing development of new mines (Jamasmie 2017). The

strategy promoted by the Ortega government and encouraged by the IMF has

grown Nicaragua's exports, generating the revenues and foreign exchange

reserves demanded by the IMF.

How, then, did the Ortega government so dramatically increase

agricultural production and goldmining concessions? The Ortega government,

like its predecessors, deployed settler logics of what Aileen Moreton-Robinson

(2015) terms 'the white possessive,' treating the Black and Indigenous territories

of the Caribbean coast as a reserve of supposedly empty lands for free use by

settlers. As discussed above, the hegemonic project of mestizaje structurally

positions mestizo settlers both as the inheritors of the European bio-racial

capacity to work and manage the land *and* as the inheritors of Indigenous links to

all lands within Nicaragua's borders through partial Indigenous descent—"as

Nicaraguans," as members of the supposedly homogenous mestizo nation (see

Gould 1998; Hale 1994; Saldaña-Portillo 2003). Most obviously, settlers have

poured into Indigenous and Afrodescendant territories, both pulled by the 'free'

lands and pushed by droughts, unemployment, or powerful landholders, among

other factors. Settlers may simply engage in small-scale agriculture, but many

also sell lands to cattle ranchers as pastures, either directly after claiming it or

after several years of raising crops on it. The cattle ranchers who follow—or, in rarer cases, directly take the lands themselves—typically use these pastures to fatten their cattle immediately before slaughter, taking advantage of the many gaps in Nicaragua's weak traceability system (Halverson 2020; Ríos and Mendoza 2017). For goldmining, larger mining companies have obtained massive concessions within Indigenous and Afrodescendant territories without the requisite prior consultation and free, prior, and informed consent; meanwhile, small-scale miners move directly into the territories and sell gold to the large mining companies (Mittal 2020; Mittal, Mayer, and O'Neill 2020). These small-scale miners have had serious impacts on Indigenous and Afrodescendant communities throughout the country, polluting their water sources with mercury and often violently seizing their lands (Jones 2021; Mittal 2020). Apart from beef and gold, logging has also played a significant role in Indigenous and Afrodescendant dispossession (Mittal 2020; Van Note 2020; Volckhausen 2020).

In short, Nicaraguan export-led growth is predicated on the existence of Indigenous and Afrodescendant communal lands that may be stolen at little or no cost for the sake of cattle ranching, gold mining, logging, and the relocation of settlers who themselves have been displaced by those activities. IMF requirements articulate with settler logics in Nicaragua to motivate the generation of capital through Indigenous and Afrodescendant dispossession. The Nicaraguan settler state, far from a guarantor of Indigenous and Afrodescendant rights, necessarily serves the settlers who inaugurated and perpetuate settler colonialism

41

through genocide, dispossession, and enslaved labor, as well as the international capital invested in the global projects of racial capitalism.

In the Rama-Kriol Territory, the reach of settler colonialism is being felt in increasingly intimate ways. Álvaro and Elizabeth's family, though particularly committed to living apart from settler society, is far from unique in their experience of settler violence and dispossession. Settlers continue to threaten violence against Rama people living upriver, and a steady stream of small-scale miners has been heading toward to a booming gold rush north of Álvaro and Elizabeth's home. Rama and Kriol people have had to endure settlers fishing with pesticides upriver from their homes (Betts et al. 2020) and a massive forest fire started by a settler who, only a year after being prosecuted for his role in the fire, was back on an illegal farm in the Rama-Kriol Territory (Mayer 2018). While Law 445 and the Rama-Kriol Territory's title represent significant concessions from the state won through decades of struggle, Álvaro's brother's spontaneous interjection—"We Rama no get no law"—represents a sentiment I have heard regularly in my research with the Rama and Kriol communities since 2014. Within the settler state, laws are never enforced for Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples, whose very existence and survival opposes the closure of the literal and metaphorical settler frontiers.

IV. Conclusions: From Multiculturalism to Sovereignty-Based Political Horizons

A diagnosis of settler colonialism in Nicaragua opens an analytical window to political forms and horizons that have been sidelined during the multiculturalism moment in Latin America over the past thirty years. The diagnosis of settler colonialism calls for a prescription of literal decolonization (Tuck and Yang 2012). The analytical frame of settler colonialism proposed in this article makes visible the contingent, historically specific reach of settler sovereignty, from its genocidal beginnings to its precarious expansion and its ongoing movement to erase remaining gaps. Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples navigate those gaps in their struggles against dispossession and erasure. Those struggles constantly reinforce the idea that the project of settler colonialism and the reach of settler sovereignty are far from complete and could still be turned back.

The Latin American liberal multiculturalist turn of recent decades has become the latest mode of settler domination and has suffocated certain political avenues and horizons. Specifically, proponents of liberal multiculturalism assume the stance of the settler state, as made clear in slippages like the use of the first-person plural in discussing who will be granted multicultural recognition.[12] From the outset of multicultural policies, the terms of debate are set by the settler state, which enshrines the "enlightenment obligation to public reason (critical rational discourse)" (Povinelli 2002:8) and rules out claims that fundamentally challenge liberal rationality and the state's role in policing it. Further, it establishes the dominant group in a given state as the "tolerating body" that determines what is tolerated and what is excluded by the limits of multiculturalism (Brown 2006:45).

Lastly, it means that it is the settler state that determines how recognized 'cultures' are constituted, which may result in the policing and exclusion of certain identities that are determined to be impure, hybrid, or threatening (Brown 2006:45; Hernández Castillo 2016:17–21; Hooker 2009; Muehlmann 2013; Rivera Cusicanqui 2012).

Specifically, proponents of liberal multiculturalism adopt a specific, white/unmarked racial identity and imperial mode of domination. Although it is intrinsic to liberalism to disavow the conditions of its own formulation, liberalism emerges from the project of empire and necessarily contains the stance of paternalistically and coercively forming its Others into appropriate colonial subjects (Mehta 1999:7–18). This often includes an insistence upon maintenance of European imperial modes of patriarchy and the 'protection' of women and children from deviations from that particular form of patriarchy (Brown 1995:chap. 6; Mehta 1999:11). As Sylvia Wynter (2003) has argued, enlightenment theorists have transformed the definitions of those who are considered to be free and empowered—from the Christian man to the 'rational'/economic man to the biologized-as-white/economic man—while maintaining the constitutive exclusion of those who are marked as colonized/female/irrational. Under liberal multiculturalism, it is the marked, recognized 'culture' that fits into this exclusion from dominance and control of the state. It is thus unthinkable within liberal multiculturalism that a 'cultural' group being recognized would itself determine what is to be tolerated within its

own group, much less that a practice of the white/unmarked dominant group might be "marked as *barbaric*" (Brown 2006:190).

On Nicaragua's Caribbean coast, the liberal multiculturalist regime of the last three decades has emphasized highly limited territorial autonomy and special political rights under the Nicaraguan constitution and Laws 28 and 445.[13] This has come at the expense of political alternatives that challenge settler sovereignty at its core. Longstanding movements for restoring the sovereignty of the Mosquitia—whether in the form of independence from Nicaragua or less-than-independent nationhood—have continued to exist alongside the political struggles formally recognized by the liberal multiculturalist regime (Baracco 2018; Gaitán-Barrera and Azeez 2015; Hale 2005). In my ethnographic research in the Rama-Kriol Territory, I have seen that these movements have been pushed to the margins as communal and territorial governments have been bestowed with recognition and funding from the settler state and international institutions and non-governmental organizations. Still, even many communal and territorial government leaders express a belief that sovereignty serves as the basis for their rights and claims—and that sovereignty is the horizon of their struggles. This finding of the coexistence of seemingly contradictory ends and means, beliefs and silent acceptances, is hardly novel—Speed (2008) describes such rights claims in Chiapas as "rights in rebellion," and Hale (2020) has recently analyzed strategies that "use and refuse" the spaces within liberal multiculturalism. My point is that an analysis of settler colonialism can help make sense of the specific embrace of

sovereignty-based discourses and strategies against the violence, dispossession, and domination of the settler state.

Literature on Indigenous sovereignty amid the settler colonies of Turtle Island is illustrative of the forms of contestation that are already taking place in Nicaragua. Building on the conceptualization of tribes as nations-within-nations in literature on U.S. federal tribal law (e.g., Barker 2011), humanistic and social scientific studies have described the relationship between Indigenous and settler sovereignties as "nested sovereignty" (Simpson 2014), "entangled sovereignties" (Dennison 2017), and sovereign interdependency (Cattelino 2008). Likewise, in Nicaragua, Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples—organized in communities, communal governments, territorial governments, political parties, social movements, etc.—have continued to assert their sovereignty and autonomy. Part of this comes through the quotidian practices of governance in their territories, including settling disputes, collecting rent from individual settlers and businesses, and collaborative projects with environmentalist non-governmental organizations, as I have seen in my ethnographic research with the Rama-Kriol Territorial Government.[14] Other strategies may include direct action and legal approaches that create space for these practices of governance. Ethnographic research in the multiculturalism era has pointed out the occasional usefulness—sometimes in lifesaving ways—of working through settler multiculturalist regimes amid other counterhegemonic and anti-colonial strategies (Goett 2017:8, 81; Hale 2020; Ybarra 2018:123). Social intimacy and the often feminized forms of work that

46

enable these practices of governance and resistance are also central to the construction and maintenance of sovereignty (Goett 2017; Mora 2017).

Taken as a whole, these multiple strategies make up a political project that far exceeds the confines offered by the multiculturalist settler state, instead challenging the very foundations of settler sovereignty. Researchers ought to attend to them as such. Particularly in a moment of instability in the liberal multiculturalist model in Nicaragua and the broader region (Hale 2020), it is crucial that analysts understand the coming political directions taken by states in the context of the structure of settler colonialism. The settler colonialism analytic points to the settler state's structural incapacity for granting anti-colonial and anti-racist claims. Only decolonization—an end to the *global* settler colonial project—can bring a definite end to the violence, dispossession and domination that Indigenous and Afrodescendant peoples in Nicaragua have faced in its many forms over the past five centuries.

NOTES

1 See also the contributions of M. Bianet Castellanos (2017), Juan Castro and Manuela Lavinas Picq (2017), Christopher A. Loperena (2017), Lourdes Gutiérrez Nájera and Korinta Maldonado (2017), and Baron Pineda (2017) to the same pathbreaking issue of *American Quarterly* on settler colonialism in Latin America. Richard Gott (2007) has also argued that Latin America is a settler colony and emphasized the importance of this framing in understanding white Latin American racial anxieties. Speed (2019) has further expounded the structure of settler colonialism in Latin America and advanced her concept of settler capitalism in her study of Indigenous women's migration across multiple settler colonies.

2 The concept of racecraft, as further explained below, comes from Jemima Pierre's *Predicament of Blackness* (2013).

3 Calls for decolonization in the face of settler colonialism are, of course, widespread both within and beyond academic contexts. For but one influential

articulation of the demand, see Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's (2012) article on the subject.

4 Mestizaje is the term for the category or project of mestizo-ness.

5 As Faye V. Harrison notes, this entailed both a shift toward a 'no race' perspective among anthropologists in the dominant center of the discipline *and* the subjugation of those anthropologists—often anthropologists of color—who have continued to study race (1995:48).

6 Translation by the author. The original reads: "…hasta hallamos cierta analogía entre esa situación y la de las exrepúblicas sudafricanas, países en los que la nacionalidad estuvo siempre representada por la población de origen europeo, quedando relegados los indígenas a la servidumbre y a la pasividad. … La separación, la divergencia de esos dos grandes grupos sociales existió no sólo durante la Conquista y la Época Colonial, sino que se hizo más honda en los tiempos contemporáneos, pues la Independencia, hay que decirlo de una vez sin reservas hipócritas, fue hecha por el grupo de tendencias y orígenes europeos y trajo para él libertades y progreso material e intelectual, dejando abandonado a su destino al grupo indígenas…."

7 Barbara J. Fields and Karen E. Fields (2014) have used the term "racecraft" to refer to the witchcraft-like qualities of race as it operates in society. I do not explicitly explore this dimension of race in this article, though I acknowledge its conceptual value.

8 Historical studies of the region have long pointed to the salience of the distinction between the Tawira (Indigenous) and Zambo (Afro-Indigenous) Miskitu, both among them and, perhaps to a greater degree, among European visitors (e.g., Gordon 1998:33–35; Offen 1999:chap. 5). While there was certainly a great deal of mixing between Indigenous Miskitu and Afrodescendant people over the course of Mosquitian history, John Thornton (2017) has reconstructed some of the specific ways in which the 1636 arrival at Cape Gracias a Dios of several hundred enslaved Africans—specifically, a group of Mbwila soldiers who had been captured by Portuguese forces the year prior—likely reshaped Miskitu society and forged the Zambo Miskitu group.

9 All names of Rama and Kriol people in this section are pseudonyms.

10 These communal and territorial governments were themselves enshrined in Nicaraguan law for the first time in Law 445. Though most communities had some form of elected communal government prior to the passage of Law 445, they would now be recognized and registered by the regional government in each of the autonomous regions, which has created an opening for the settler state to interfere in the internal politics of the communities and territories (Mayer 2019).

11 Nicaragua has also ratified International Labour Organization Convention 169, which has similar consultation requirements, and voted in favor of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which requires that free, prior, and informed consent be received from the community for such projects.

12 See, for example, Charles Taylor's (1992) use of the first-person plural in *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition."*

13 This liberal multiculturalist has deviated into near unrecognizability under the Ortega regime, but the foreclosures and erasures of the liberal multicultural moment largely remain.

14 Compare this with the case of the Rukullakta territory in Ecuador, where Juliet Erazo (2013) describes struggles to "enact sovereignty."

REFERENCES CITED

Alianza de Pueblos Indígenas y Afrodescendientes de Nicaragua (2017). Informe sobre la situación de los derechos territoriales de los pueblos indígenas y afrodescendientes de Nicaragua. Nicaragua.

Anderson, Mark (2019). From Boas to Black Power: Racism, Liberalism, and American Anthropology. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Baracco, Luciano (2018). Globalization, Governance, and the Emergence of Indigenous Autonomy Movements in Latin America: The Case of the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua. Latin American Perspectives 45 (6): 37-52.

Baracco, Luciano (2019). From the Kingdom of Mosquitia to the Mosquito Reservation: The Demise of British Imperialism on the Mosquito Coast and the Challenge of Nicaraguan Nation-Building. **IN** Indigenous Struggles for Autonomy: The Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, Luciano Baracco (ed.). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 15-32.

Baracco, Luciano, and Miguel González (2012). Introduction: The Autonomy Process on Nicaragua's Caribbean Coast. AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples 8 (4): 368-373.

Barker, Joanne (2011). Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Beliso-De Jesús, Aisha M., and Jemima Pierre (2020) Special Section: Anthropology of White Supremacy. American Anthropologist 122 (1): 65-75.

Bermúdez, Manuel, Selmira Flores, Milagros Romero, et al. (2015). ¿Es posible financiar la ganadería en la frontera agrícola de Nicaragua de manera sostenible? Policy Brief. Managua: Nitlapan UCA, IOB, and ADA Microfinance. https://www.ada-microfinance.org/download/1851/policy-brief-es-posible-financiar-la-ganaderia-en-la-frontera-agricola-de-nicaragua-de-manera-sostenible-.pdf (accessed March 22, 2019).

Betts, Joel T., Juan F. Mendoza Espinoza, Armando J. Dans, et al. (2020). Fishing with Pesticides Affects River Fisheries and Community Health in the Indio Maíz Biological Reserve, Nicaragua. Sustainability 12 (23): 10152.

Brown, Wendy (1995). States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Brown, Wendy (2006). Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bryan, Joe (2011). Walking the Line: Participatory Mapping, Indigenous Rights, and Neoliberalism. Geoforum 42 (1): 40-50.

Bryan, Joe (2012). Rethinking Territory: Social Justice and Neoliberalism in Latin America's Territorial Turn: Rethinking Territory. Geography Compass 6 (4): 215-226.

Buntaine, Mark T., Stuart E. Hamilton, and Marco Millones (2015). Titling Community Land to Prevent Deforestation: An Evaluation of a Best-Case Program in Morona-Santiago, Ecuador. Global Environmental Change 33: 32-43.

Byrd, Jodi A. (2011). The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism. First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

de la Cadena, Marisol (2005). Are Mestizos Hybrids? The Conceptual Politics of Andean Identities. Journal of Latin American Studies 37 (2): 259-284.

Castellanos, M. Bianet (2017). Introduction: Settler Colonialism in Latin America. American Quarterly 69 (4): 777-781.

de Castro, Camilo (2016). Seared by Climate Change, Nicaragua's Small Farmers Face Food Crisis. Al Jazeera America, February 24. http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2016/2/24/seared-by-climate-change-nicaraguss-small-farmers-face-food-crisis.html (accessed December 2, 2018).

Castro, Juan, and Manuela Lavinas Picq (2017). Stateness as Landgrab: A Political History of Maya Dispossession in Guatemala. American Quarterly 69 (4): 791-799.

Cattelino, Jessica R. (2008). High Stakes: Florida Seminole Gaming and Sovereignty. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Cattelino, Jessica R. (2010). The Double Bind of American Indian Need-Based Sovereignty. Cultural Anthropology 25 (2): 235-262.

Dennison, Jean (2017). Entangled Sovereignties: The Osage Nation's Interconnections with Governmental and Corporate Authorities. American Ethnologist 44 (4): 684-696.

Díaz Polanco, Héctor (1997). Indigenous Peoples in Latin America: The Quest for Self-Determination, Lucia Rayas (tran.). Latin American Perspectives Series, no. 8. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Emperor of Austria (2007). Award as to the Interpretation of the Treaty of Managua between the United Kingdom and Nicaragua. Reports of International Arbitral Awards XXVIII: 167-184.

Erazo, Juliet S. (2013). Governing Indigenous Territories: Enacting Sovereignty in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Fabricant, Nicole, and Nancy Postero (2015). Sacrificing Indigenous Bodies and Lands: The Political-Economic History of Lowland Bolivia in Light of the Recent TIPNIS Debate. Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology 20 (3): 452-474.

Fields, Karen E., and Barbara Jeanne Fields (2014). Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life. London: Verso.

Finley-Brook, Mary (2016). Territorial "Fix"? Tenure Insecurity in Titled Indigenous Territories. Bulletin of Latin American Research 35 (3): 338-354.

Gaitán-Barrera, Alejandra, and Govand Khalid Azeez (2015). Regaining Pre-Colonial Sovereignty: The Case of Miskitu Resistance. Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research 21 (3): 360-373.

Gamio, Manuel (1960). Forjando patria. 2nd ed. México: Editorial Porrúa.

Gobierno de Nicaragua (2012). Plan nacional de desarrollo humano, 2008–2012: documento borrador.

Goett, Jennifer (2006). Diasporic Identities, Autochtonous Rights: Race, Gender, and the Cultural Politics of Creole Land Rights in Nicaragua. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.

Goett, Jennifer (2017). Black Autonomy: Race, Gender, and Afro-Nicaraguan Activism. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

González Casanova, Pablo (2009). El colonialismo interno. **IN** De la sociología del poder a la sociología de la explotación: pensar América Latina en el siglo XXI, Marcos Roitman Rosenmann (ed.). Bogotá: CLACSO; Siglo del Hombre Editores, pp. 129-156

González, Miguel (2016). The Unmaking of Self-Determination: Twenty-Five Years of Regional Autonomy in Nicaragua. Bulletin of Latin American Research 35 (3): 306-321.

Gordon, Edmund Tayloe (1998). Disparate Diasporas: Identity and Politics in an

African Nicaraguan Community. New Interpretations of Latin America Series. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Gott, Richard (2007). Latin America as a White Settler Society. Bulletin of Latin American Research 26 (2): 269-289.

Gould, Jeffrey L. (1998). To Die in This Way: Nicaraguan Indians and the Myth of Mestizaje, 1880 - 1965. Latin America Otherwise. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Gutiérrez, Alejandro (2010). The Disconcerting "Success" of Nicaragua's Anti-Poverty Programs. NACLA News, February 17. https://nacla.org/news/disconcerting-%E2%80%98success%E2%80%99-nicaragua%E2%80%99s-anti-poverty-programs (accessed March 25, 2019).

Gutiérrez Nájera, Lourdes, and Korinta Maldonado (2017). Transnational Settler Colonial Formations and Global Capital: A Consideration of Indigenous Mexican Migrants. American Quarterly 69 (4): 809-821.

Hale, Charles R. (1994). Resistance and Contradiction: Miskitu Indians and the Nicaraguan State, 1894-1987. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hale, Charles R. (2002). Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala. Journal of Latin American Studies 34 (3): 485-524.

Hale, Charles R. (2005). Neoliberal Multiculturalism: The Remaking of Cultural Rights and Racial Dominance in Central America. Political and Legal Anthropology Review 28 (1): 10-28.

Hale, Charles R. (2006). Más Que Un Indio = More than an Indian: Racial Ambivalence and Neoliberal Multiculturalism in Guatemala. 1st ed. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Hale, Charles R. (2011). ¿Resistencia Para Qué? Territory, Autonomy and Neoliberal Entanglements in the 'Empty Spaces' of Central America. Economy and Society 40 (2): 184-210.

Hale, Charles R. (2020). Using and Refusing the Law: Indigenous Struggles and Legal Strategies after Neoliberal Multiculturalism. American Anthropologist 122 (3): 618-631.

Halverson, Nate (2020). In Nicaragua, Supplying Beef to the U.S. Comes at a High Human Cost. PBS NewsHour, October 20. https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/in-nicaragua-supplying-beef-to-the-u-s-comes-at-a-high-human-cost (accessed January 29, 2021).

Harrison, Faye V. (1995). The Persistent Power of "Race" in the Cultural and Political Economy of Racism. Annual Review of Anthropology 24 (1): 47-74.

Hernández Castillo, Rosalva Aída (2016). Multiple InJustices: Indigenous Women, Law, and Political Struggle in Latin America. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press.

Hooker, Juliet (2009). Race and the Politics of Solidarity. Transgressing Boundaries. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hudson, Peter James (2017). Bankers and Empire: How Wall Street Colonized the Caribbean. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Instituto Agrario de Nicaragua (1967). Breve historia del Instituto Agrario de Nicaragua desde su fundación hasta la fecha. Managua: Instituto Agrario de Nicaragua.

International Monetary Fund (2017). Nicaragua: 2017 Article IV Consultation—Press Release and Staff Report. IMF Country Report, No. 17/173. International Monetary Fund. https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2017/06/27/Nicaragua-2017-Article-IV-Consultation-Press-Release-and-Staff-Report-45008 (accessed March 22, 2019).

International Monetary Fund (2018). Nicaragua: Staff Concluding Statement of an IMF Staff Visit. International Monetary Fund. https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/02/06/ms020618-nicaragua-staff-concluding-statement-of-an-imf-staff-visit (accessed March 25, 2019).

Jackson, Shona N. (2012). Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean. First Peoples: New Directions in Indigenous Studies. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Jamasmie, Cecilia (2017). Gold Rush in Nicaragua — Production Doubles in Little over 10 Years. MINING.COM, August 16. https://www.mining.com/gold-rush-nicaragua-production-doubles-little-10-years/ (accessed January 29, 2021).

Jones, Katie (2021). Decades of Deforestation, Illegal Mining and Impunity in Nicaragua. InSight Crime, January 27. https://www.insightcrime.org/news/analysis/deforestation-mining-impunity-nicaragua/ (accessed January 29, 2021).

Kaimowitz, David (1996). Livestock and Deforestation: Central America in the 1980s and 1990s: A Policy Perspective. Jakarta: Center for International Forestry

Research. http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/SPubs/SP-LStock-n.pdf (accessed December 2, 2018).

Kinloch Tijerino, Frances (2012). Historia de Nicaragua. 4 ed. Managua: Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica, Universidad Centroamericana.

Kramer, Wendy (1994). Encomienda Politics in Early Colonial Guatemala, 1524-1544: Dividing the Spoils. Dellplain Latin American Studies, no. 31. Boulder: Westview Press.

Loperena, Christopher (2017). Settler Violence?: Race and Emergent Frontiers of Progress in Honduras. American Quarterly 69 (4): 801-807.

López B., Lidia (2020). Instituciones públicas avalan invasión a la Reserva Indio Maíz, denuncia Fundación del Río. La Prensa, September 4. https://www.laprensa.com.ni/2020/09/04/nacionales/2716666-instituciones-publicas-avalan-invasion-a-la-reserva-indio-maiz-denuncia-fundacion-del-rio (accessed January 29, 2021).

Mayer, Joshua L. (2018). Behind the Fire That Propelled Nicaragua's Uprising. NACLA, December 12. https://nacla.org/news/2018/12/12/behind-fire-propelled-nicaragua%E2%80%99s-uprising (accessed December 12, 2018).

Mayer, Joshua L. (2019). Negotiating Consultation: The Duty to Consult and Contestation of Autonomy in Nicaragua's Rama-Kriol Territory. **IN** Indigenous Struggles for Autonomy: The Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua, Luciano Baracco (ed.). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, pp. 99-130.

Mehta, Uday Singh (1999). Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mitchell, Timothy (2002). Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Mittal, Anuradha (2020). Nicaragua's Failed Revolution: The Indigenous Struggle for *Saneamiento*. Oakland, CA: The Oakland Institute. https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/sites/oaklandinstitute.org/files/nicaraguas-failed-revolution.pdf (accessed May 1, 2020).

Mittal, Anuradha, Joshua L. Mayer, and Katherine O'Neill (2020). Is Nicaragua for Sale? Foreign Mining Companies Are Eager to Buy. The Oakland Institute. https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/nicaragua-sale (accessed January 29, 2021).

Mollo, Maria de Lourdes Rollemberg, and Alfredo Saad-Filho (2006). Neoliberal Economic Policies in Brazil (1994–2005): Cardoso, Lula and the Need for a Democratic Alternative. New Political Economy 11 (1): 99-123.

Mora, Mariana (2017). Kuxlejal Politics: Indigenous Autonomy, Race, and Decolonizing Research in Zapatista Communities. First edition. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Moreno Figueroa, Mónica G. (2010). Distributed Intensities: Whiteness, Mestizaje and the Logics of Mexican Racism. Ethnicities 10 (3): 387-401.

Moreno Figueroa, Mónica G., and Emiko Saldívar Tanaka (2016). 'We Are Not Racists, We Are Mexicans': Privilege, Nationalism and Post-Race Ideology in Mexico. Critical Sociology 42 (4-5): 515-533.

Moreton-Robinson, Aileen (2015). The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty. Indigenous Americas. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Morris, Courtney Desiree (2016). Toward a Geography of Solidarity: Afro-Nicaraguan Women's Land Activism and Autonomy in the South Caribbean Coast Autonomous Region. Bulletin of Latin American Research 35 (3): 355-369.

Muehlmann, Shaylih (2013). Where the River Ends: Contested Indigeneity in the Mexican Colorado Delta. Durham: Duke University Press.

Mullings, Leith (2005). Interrogating Racism: Toward an Antiracist Anthropology. Annual Review of Anthropology 34 (1): 667-693.

Newson, Linda A. (1987). Indian Survival in Colonial Nicaragua. The Civilization of the American Indian Series, v. 175. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Offen, Karl (1999). The Miskitu Kingdom: Landscape and the Emergence of a Miskitu Ethnic Identity, Northeastern Nicaragua and Honduras, 1600-1800. Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin.

Offen, Karl (2003). The Territorial Turn: Making Black Territories in Pacific Colombia. Journal of Latin American Geography 2 (1): 43-73.

Offen, Karl (2015). Mapping Amerindian Captivity in Colonial Mosquitia. Journal of Latin American Geography 14 (3): 35-65.

Olien, Michael D. (1987). Micro/Macro-Level Linkages: Regional Political Structures on the Mosquito Coast, 1845-1864. Ethnohistory 34 (3): 256-287.

Paschel, Tianna S. (2016). Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Pierre, Jemima (2013). The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pineda, Baron (2017). Indigenous Pan-Americanism: Contesting Settler Colonialism and the Doctrine of Discovery at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. American Quarterly 69 (4): 823-832.

Povinelli, Elizabeth A. (2002). The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism. Politics, History, and Culture. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Quijano, Aníbal (2007). Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality. Cultural Studies 21 (2-3): 168-178.

Ríos, Duyerling, and Cristopher Mendoza (2017). Extensive Illegal Cattle Ranching Destroys Core Area of Nicaragua's Indio Maíz Biological Reserve. Mongabay Environmental News, August 28. https://news.mongabay.com/2017/08/extensive-illegal-cattle-ranching-destroys-core-area-of-nicaraguas-indio-maiz-biological-reserve/ (accessed December 8, 2018).

Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia (2012). *Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa*: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization. South Atlantic Quarterly 111 (1): 95-109.

Riverstone, Gerald (2004). Living in the Land of Our Ancestors: Rama Indian and Creole Territory in Carribbean Nicaragua. Managua, Nicaragua: ASDI.

Romero, Elízabeth (2018). Polos de Desarrollo fueron la raíz del conflicto. La Prensa, January 30: 5.

Romero Vargas, Germán (1995). Las sociedades del Atlántico de Nicaragua en los siglos XVII y XVIII. Managua: Fondo de Promoción Cultural, Banic.

Saldaña-Portillo, María Josefina (2003). The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development. Latin America Otherwise. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Scott, James C. (2009). The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia. Yale Agrarian Studies Series. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Simpson, Audra (2014). Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Speed, Shannon (2005). Dangerous Discourses: Human Rights and Multiculturalism in Neoliberal Mexico. PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review 28 (1): 29-51.

Speed, Shannon (2008). Rights in Rebellion: Indigenous Struggle and Human Rights in Chiapas. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Speed, Shannon (2017). Structures of Settler Capitalism in Abya Yala. American Quarterly 69 (4): 783-790.

Speed, Shannon (2019). Incarcerated Stories: Indigenous Women Migrants and Violence in the Settler-Capitalist State. Critical Indigeneities. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Taylor, Charles (1992). Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition": An Essay, Amy Gutmann (ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Telles, Edward Eric (2014). Pigmentocracies: Ethnicity, Race, and Color in Latin America. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

The Central American Question (1856). Daily News [London], January 19.

Thornton, John K. (2017). The Zambos and the Transformation of the Miskitu Kingdom, 1636–1740. Hispanic American Historical Review 97 (1): 1-28.

Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang (2012). Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor. Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 1 (1): 1-40.

Van Cott, Donna Lee (2000). The Friendly Liquidation of the Past: The Politics of Diversity in Latin America. Pitt Latin American Series. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Van Note, Sara (2020). In Nicaragua, Forests and Indigenous Communities Face Threats. Undark Magazine, September 16. https://undark.org/2020/09/16/nicaragua-deforestation/ (accessed January 29, 2021).

Vilas, Carlos M. (1990). Del Colonialismo a la Autonomía: Modernización Capitalista y Revolución Social En La Costa Atlántica. Managua: Editorial Nueva Nicaragua.

Visweswaran, Kamala (1998). Race and the Culture of Anthropology. American Anthropologist 100 (1): 70-83.

Volckhausen, Taran (2020). Massacre in Nicaragua: Four Indigenous Community

Members Killed for Their Land. Mongabay Environmental News, February 14. https://news.mongabay.com/2020/02/massacre-in-nicaragua-four-indigenous-community-members-killed-for-their-land/ (accessed January 29, 2021).

Wade, Peter (2010). Race and Ethnicity in Latin America. 2nd ed. Anthropology, Culture and Society. London: Pluto Press.

Walters, Jonah (2017). Capitalism a La Sandinista: Deciphering Nicaragua's "Market Economy with a Preferential Option for the Poor." NACLA Report on the Americas 49 (1): 7-10.

Williams, Brackette F. (1989). A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain. Annual Review of Anthropology 18 (1): 401-444.

Williams, Brackette F. (1991). Stains on My Name, War in My Veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle. Durham: Duke University Press.

Williams, Caroline A. (2013). Living between Empires: Diplomacy and Politics in the Late Eighteenth-Century Mosquitia. The Americas 70 (2): 237-268.

Wolfe, Justin (2010). "The Cruel Whip": Race and Place in Nineteenth-Century Nicaragua. **IN** Blacks and Blackness in Central America: Between Race and Place, Lowell Gudmundson and Justin Wolfe (eds.). Durham, NC: Duke University Press, pp. 177-208.

Wolfe, Patrick (1999). Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event. Writing Past Colonialism Series. London: Cassell.

Wolfe, Patrick (2006). Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. Journal of Genocide Research 8 (4): 387-409.

Wynter, Sylvia (2003). Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument. CR: The New Centennial Review 3 (3): 257-337.

Yashar, Deborah J. (2005). Contesting Citizenship in Latin America: The Rise of Indigenous Movements and the Postliberal Challenge. Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ybarra, Megan (2018). Green Wars: Conservation and Decolonization in the Maya Forest. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.