What’s Land Got to Do With It? 
Settler Colonialism and 
Academic Advising

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Acknowledging Land and Labor

◊ The University of Nebraska-Lincoln has benefitted from Indigenous dispossession via land grant cession, earning surface right royalties to this day. UNL sits on land across Nebraska belonging to Pawnee, Sioux, Otoe-Missouri, Cheyenne, Omaha, Sac and Fox of Nebraska, Ponca, Arapaho, Kansas, Ho Chunk, and Ioway Peoples.

◊ “We must acknowledge that much of what we know of this country today, including its culture, economic growth, and development throughout history and across time, has been made possible by the labor of enslaved Africans and their ascendants who suffered the horror of the transatlantic trafficking of their people, chattel slavery, and Jim Crow. We are indebted to their labor and their sacrifice, and we must acknowledge the tremors of that violence throughout the generations and the resulting impact that can still be felt and witnessed today” (Stewart, 2021, para. 5).
Agenda

- What is Settler Colonialism?
- Universities as Settler Colonial Machines: Advising as a Settler Colonial Practice
- Thinking About Decolonization and Advising: Co-Resisting the Status Quo
What is Settler Colonialism?
“A structure not an event” (Wolfe, 1998)

- Settler colonialism is a unique form of imperialist control that is about replacement, not just domination
  - White colonial efforts in Africa generally dominated through enslavement and local control (e.g., the colony replicates the metropole)
  - White colonial efforts in the Americas used extermination and replacement (e.g., the settlers accumulate “unoccupied” land and kill those who challenge them, or force them to assimilate)

- Effects of settler colonialism are ongoing
  - French left Algeria but British colonizers became “Americans” and “Australians” etc.
  - Resistance to settler colonialism and Indigenous revitalization is also ongoing
Organizing Features of Settler Colonialism

- Assumed racial superiority of settlers over Indigenous Peoples
- *Terra nullius* (empty land; Veracini, 2015, p. 37)
- Accumulation of land and resources
- Military and police power (to enact violence and forcible displacement in line with settler desires)
- Logic of elimination: “erase to replace” (Patel, 2019)
- Nostalgia and caricatures of Indigenous Peoples as part of the “past”
- Theft of labor (Patel, 2021, p. 56)
Universities as Settler Colonial Machines

Advising as a Settler Colonial Practice
Boarding Schools and Land Grants

✧ First USA colonial colleges had “Indian Boarding Schools”
  ✧ “Kill the Indian to save the man” (Patel, 2021, p. 62)
  ✧ Death, not graduation, was the overwhelming outcome of these ‘schools’

✧ Morrill Land Grant Acts
  ✧ Predicated on *terra nullius*, took and sold Indigenous lands to establish colleges and universities
  ✧ Many land grant institutions still retain surface or mineral rights to these lands (Lee & Ahtone, 2020)
Universities Still Use Settler Logics

- Accumulation and expansion of land control (Baldwin, 2021)
- Expansion and militarization of campus police
- Technologies of control, assimilation, and elimination via campus culture
- Invisibiliation of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty
- Nostalgia for a mythologized past
- Land usage and stewardship

Which of these have you seen in action on your campus?
Encouraging Extraction and Assimilation

- Many advising relationships are predicated on an imbalance of power
- Advisors often expect students to share aspects of their lives, histories, hopes, and dreams and are disappointed if they refuse
- Students are molded into the form of the institution: learning and conforming to its bureaucracy and demands
- Advisors expect students to submit to narratives about success based on predictive analytics
Sustaining the University

- Advising as a practice smooths over the oppressive features of the university to allow students to survive, but rarely thrive, while allowing the structure of the university to remain unchanged.

- Kind, well-meaning advisors can still perpetuate these dynamics despite an intention to help or care for students.

- Advising practice that merely upholds the way things are, or provides care work for students experiencing the oppression of settler colonialism, sustains a status quo that is predicated on oppression.
Thinking About Decolonization and Advising

Co-Resisting the Status Quo
“Decolonization is not a metaphor”

- Decolonization relates to the literal return of life, land, and sovereignty to Indigenous people (Tuck & Yang, 2012)
- It is not a metaphor or a synonym for diversity, equity, or social justice
- Metaphorical decolonization is often about restoring ‘settler futurities’ that comfort settlers and deny the importance of literal decolonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 13)
- #LandBack on social media is a movement for the literal return of land to Indigenous people

*What would relationships between settlers and Indigenous people look like if the assumptions that settlers are here to stay and will possess land as property in perpetuity are removed?*
Scyborgs (la paperson, 2017)

- la paperson (2017) writes about scyborgs as a Deleuzian machine within the colonizing machine of the university, disloyal to it and with decolonizing desires.
- “Scyborg—composed of s + cyborg—is a queer turn of word that I offer to you to name the structural agency of persons who have picked up colonial technologies and reassembled them to decolonizing purposes” (la paperson, 2017, p. xiv)
- “There is no freedom in the scyborg. It is not a liberated figure. Scyborgs are privileged. Scyborgs are technologically enhanced colonial subjects” (p. 70)
Refusing the University (Grande, 2018)

- Grande (2018) argues that “we…work within, against, and beyond the university-as-such” (p. 51) and asks, specifically thinking about connections between Black radical traditions and critical Indigenous scholars: “What kinds of solidarities can be developed among peoples with a shared commitment to working beyond the imperatives of capital and the settler state?” (pp. 59-60)

- Three commitments (Grande, 2018, p. 61): **collectivity** (refusing individualism), **reciprocity** (refusing un-answerability), **mutuality** (refusing disconnection)

- “Together we could write in refusal of liberal, essentialist forms of identity politics, of individualist inducements, of capitalist imperatives, and other productivist logics of accumulation. This is what love as refusal looks like. It is the un-demand, the un-desire to be either of or in the university. It is the radical assertion to be on: land. Decolonial love is land” (Grande, 2018, p. 62)
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Think, Act, and Relate Local

- What do you know about the people who are Indigenous to the land your institution rests upon? What is the institution’s relationship with those people?
- How is the land your institution occupies stewarded?
- How does your institution and your office support Indigenous survivance (Vizenor, 2009) and refuse demands for assimilation or narratives of erasure? How does NACADA?
Is Decolonial Advising Possible?

- Decolonization and ‘social justice’ are not interchangeable (Tuck & Yang, 2018), though a social justice-inflected advocacy approach to advising (Burton et al., 2017) will likely be part of enacting decolonizing desires.

- Puroway’s (2016) critical advising approach, based on the work of Paulo Freire, gets closer in its focus on using advising for transformation.

- How would we advise students in ways that don’t merely smooth over oppression in the colonizing institution? Is this possible?

- How would we approach advising relationships centered on responsibility and interdependence rather than metrics, analytics, and the desires of the institution?

- What spaces between the formal structures of the institution create openings for doing advising differently and desiring decolonization? Is advising already one of these spaces?
Accountability and Relationship

◊ To whom are settler advisors responsible and accountable when resisting settler colonialism in higher education and in advising?
◊ How can settler advisors cultivate relationships of mutuality with Indigenous students, faculty, staff, and community members?
◊ What are the risks of advisors becoming scyborgs (la paperson, 2017) and engaging in co-resistance with Indigenous people to refuse the university (Grande, 2018)? What could we gain? What is the impact of the status quo?

This is just the beginning.

“Decolonial love is land” (Grande, 2018, p. 62)
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