Using a critical anti-racism approach, contributors to this volume demonstrate and document the resistance and futurity possible when students, educators, administrators, policymakers, and community members engage in critical anti-racism education. Relying on contemporary educational issues and personal/political reflections, this collection of essays brings together a variety of new insights on anti-racism praxis. This volume speaks to readers who are working with or seeking new conceptual framings of race, white supremacy, and Indigeneity in order to work towards a politics of decolonization. *New Framings on Anti-Racism: Resistance and the New Futurity* provides new theoretical directions and practical applications for people engaged in the field of anti-racism.
New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance
New Framings on Anti-Racism and Resistance

Volume 2 – Resistance and the New Futurity

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There are many questions that can be asked when interrogating anti-racism education. How do we respond to the continuing historical significance of race in education as broadly defined? This book sets out to theorize the connections between race, anti-racism, and Indigeneity, drawing on the broader implications for decolonization and education. Extending on some of the early theorizations on decolonization (see Fanon, 1963, 1967; wa Thiong’o & Mignolo, 2007), I will contend that part of the new framings of anti-racist practices of today must be geared towards developing a framework for decolonization (see Dei & Simmons, 2010). Decolonization is not possible without critical education that embraces Indigenous worldviews and counter philosophies of education. Decolonization must be tied to anti-racist education. The possibilities of decolonization connect to the question of identity and how we centre culture, body politics, history, and memory in counter knowledges. One reason why identity is important is that it is linked to politics of resistance and decolonization.

The pursuit of anti-racism education for anti-colonial and decolonial ends will look differently today than ever before. Despite past and ongoing anti-oppression struggles things have not changed much. The historical atrocities against Indigenous, racialized, colonized peoples are still ongoing. Mis-education, genocide, and the dispossession of Indigenous lands have left a painful legacy. As part of the colonial nation building project, there is a desire to erase Blackness and Indigeneity. To disrupt the everyday functionings of a society built on White supremacist assumptions and foundations, we need to look towards other knowledge(s) to dismantle this one-dimensional mindset. We must indeed be careful not to centre Whiteness in ways that may dislodge the saliency of other lives.

New framings of anti-racism cannot dismiss the ‘permanence’ of skin colour as a marker for social differences. A closer proximity to Whiteness and White identity is rewarded in society. To understand this feature of human society we must use a discursive prism that shifts from binaries. In Dei (2017a) I argue for a clear distinction between a ‘Black-White binary’ and a ‘Black-White paradigm.’ The ‘Black-White binary’ assigns fixed notions of skin colour racial identity, creating an oppositional division of two sides (Black and White). Our society is complex and therefore we need to move away from such binaries and simplistic readings. A ‘Black-White paradigm’ is simply a prism or lens of reading social relations and relations of power. It speaks to the relative importance of skin colour as constructed, and yet acknowledges the saliency of Blackness and body politics. This saliency of Blackness is at the root of anti-Black racism, and particularly the placing of Black and African bodies at the bottom of a racial hierarchy. The paradigm is significant for anti-racism and anti-oppression work, because it acknowledges the saliency of
race, skin colour, and anti-Black racism. As many have noted skin colour and anti-
Blackness operate to fix peoples of African-descent in a state of permanent visibility,
hypervigilance, and selective invisibility (Deliovsky & Kitossa, 2013). A social
construction of Blackness (as transgressive and deviant), along with the imagined
ideal Black/African phenotype, is deeply grounded in Western culture and upholds
the ‘Black-White paradigm,’ as well as the “perceived Black physical formidability”
(see Wilson, Hugenberg, & Rule, 2017; Deliovsky & Kitossa, 2013). Anti-Black
racism has been a particularly negative reading, (re)action, and concrete response to
Blackness and racism directed at the Black/African body. Such readings, responses,
and practices are framed by racist thoughts (e.g., alleged sub-humanity of the Black/
African subject and our supposed roots in a dark, uncivilized, deviant and criminal
world, see also Dei, 1996; Benjamin, 2003). It is important to emphasize that the
‘Black-White paradigm’ is not a negation of the colonial impact of Indigenous
peoples. It does not speak to a hierarchy of oppressions and neither does it efface
the intersections of identities. It simply offers us a lens for reading race relations
and the understandings of how a particular thinking process serves to structure and
justify significant social relations, practices and histories in our communities (see

Every day we have witnessed the ongoing struggles of racialized, colonized, and
Indigenous communities in our institutions and workplaces. These struggles take
form in anti-racism as radical decolonial resurgences. These struggles cannot be
individualized nor made to stand apart from a collective challenge. The endeavours
cannot also be about individual prejudices, biases, and discriminatory actions.
They must be about institutional and systemic changes that draw from collective
community resources and knowledges. These struggles must unmask power,
privilege and dominance; they are enactments of Whiteness. It is for this reason that
anti-racism teaching must embrace a radical pedagogy of decolonial praxis. Such a
pedagogy must decenter Whiteness, especially when we consider the way racism is
continually naturalized and normalized.

This book will be a part of the anti-racism journey by taking up some key
questions: How do we build on the tenets of a critical anti-racist theory (CART)
to inform anti-racist practice? How do we bring critical scholarship of race and
anti-racism to understand ongoing manifestations of anti-Indigeneity, racisms, and
Euro-modernity? How do we as educators link our teachings to broader questions of
identity, representation, and imperial global power? How do critical studies on race
and anti-racism help us to rethink and reframe new questions of educational futurity?
How can we explain the ‘post’ in the ‘post-racial’ when racism is in vogue in the
corridors of power everywhere around us?

New framings of anti-racism should inform readers the ways colonial and neo-
colonial systems have sanctioned and continue to sanction Indigenous genocide,
racialized violence, social deaths, and dispossession of Black/African and Indigenous
peoples’ lands and resource through systemic innocence, denials, and practices
of erasures. We need anti-racism to interrogate nation state colonial citizenship,
to trouble the discursive myths and mythologies of ‘White settler innocence’ and imperial benevolence, and the ways the sovereignty of Indigenous communities and Black/African populations’ humanity are continually stripped away. We need anti-racist epistemes to inform critical educational practice to question colonial settler subjectivity and the imbrication of anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity.

One way to do this is to acknowledge how education centres Eurocentricity on all learners. The ‘universal learner’ is often assumed not to have any race, ethnicity, gender, class, or sexuality. Many of us seem to have a problem with counter and oppositional discourses that challenge or subvert Blackness as a “badge of inferiority” and would want to diminish the fact that African “enslavement was truly a living death” (Asante, 1991, p. 176). When Afrocentric discourses affirm Blackness and Africanness it is countered as another version of Eurocentrism. So why is there a ‘problem’ when counter educational paradigms and approaches (e.g., Afrocentricity and Indigeneity) call specifically for centering the African/Black and Indigenous child? Can we perhaps trace this paradox or conundrum to the fact that the universal learner ends up being the archetype of the Euro-colonial body.

We are at a historical juncture where it is hard to meet many folks who will openly admit to extolling the virtues of racism. People are fully aware that to do so would invite legitimate and understandable charges of being racist. This contributes to what I have called the ‘discomfort of speaking race.’ So we may have folks who may be rightly deemed “closest” racists. We should call them out. Similarly, there is the hypocrisy of those who decry racism and yet hold in their inner thoughts very racist beliefs, occasionally embodying these thoughts for their advantage. If we are vigilant in the pursuit of anti-racism many of these hidden truths will soon be laid bare. We have no choice because racism is a form of colonial and imperial violence that denies dignity to all peoples. “New Framings on Anti-Racism: Resistance and the New Futurity” is a call to action. The authors of this collection seek to expose the different manifestations of racism in contemporary times.

REFERENCES

FOREWORD


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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The chapters collected in this edition communicate the lived experiences, struggles, and successes of students and educators engaged in anti-racism work. We would like to extend our thanks to the contributors. They share our passion for anti-racism education and are the next generation of community leaders who will build on past struggles and climb new heights in the pursuit of social justice and excellence in professional life and community service.

We would also like to thank Professor George J. Sefa Dei for entrusting this project in our care. Thank you for creating and fostering a space where we had the opportunity to learn from others, to engage in meaningful exchange, and to teach, listen, and explore in an environment of mutuality and solidarity.

As editors, we learned a great deal from this experience and were able to support each other in a way that highlighted the power of solidarity. We have a deep respect for each other’s lived experiences and approaches to anti-racism education. We are grateful for each other’s patience, kindness, and optimism.

From Arezou – I would like to thank Tyler for challenging me to see the complexity through which racism manifests, and for never letting me fall back on the black/white binary. To Kobra and Ali, thank you for setting me on this path.

From Joanna – A special thank you to my partner Simon who supports me in all that I do. To all of the ‘other mothers’ in my life: thank you for your wisdom and unwavering support. And to my parents: thank you to my father who is a constant source of encouragement, and finally to my mother for giving me pride in my racial identity and for always teaching me to fight for what is right and just.
INTRODUCTION

On-going processes of globalization and transnational migration, coupled with capitalist modernity, have exacerbated the continued significance of race. It is important for scholarship and research to come together to assist particularly disenfranchised groups as we articulate our social existence and collective destinies. Some of the questions that this volume seeks to address are: How do we build on the tenets of critical anti-racist theory? How do we use critical scholarship on race and anti-racism to counter conventional discourses of black/white binaries? And lastly, how do we account for the persistence of white supremacy in a context of racial hegemony?

This book is intended to generate important enquiries into the teaching and practice of anti-racism education, by way of working through conversations, contestations, and emotions as presented in a year-long course in, “Principles of Anti-Racism Education.” Throughout the collection, contemporary educational issues are situated in personal/political conversations as voiced through pedagogues, practitioners, and scholars in order to present new insights on anti-racism praxis. Our aim is to demonstrate the resistance and futurity possible when students, educators, staff, administrators, policymakers, and community members engage in critical anti-racism education.

This book will build on existing scholarship by asking new questions that have implications for decolonial, futuristic praxis. We hope to move the discussion beyond schooling and education (broadly defined) and also ground our analysis in other institutional settings. This volume will foreground current debates on issues of immigration, racialization, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, and the violence of settler colonialism by pointing to new framings of anti-racism. It looks at the question of anti-racism and the politics of futurity as a re-imagining of community and social change. It is comprised of ten essays from scholars, activists, and educators dedicated to frameworks of anti-oppression.

Sandra Hudson, in “Indigenous and Black Solidarity in Practice: #BLMTOTentCity,” discusses how the colonial nation-building project of Canada is built on falsehoods that further erase the historic and ongoing atrocities against Black and Indigenous peoples. Hudson draws from Black Lives Matter’s 2016 occupation of Toronto Police Service Headquarters as an example demonstrating the actualization of Black and Indigenous solidarity in resurgent political movement building.

In “Racism in the Canadian Imagination,” Arezou Soltani explores how Canada’s erasure of racial oppression in its past and present imaginings is in tune with liberal traditions of nation-building. By embodying a politics of shame and utilizing the myth of the American Dream, Canada is able to present itself as a multiracial and multicultural plurality whilst keeping racism in the periphery.
Celine Gibbons-Taylor in “So Mi Like It: An Analysis of Black Women’s Sexual Subjectivities,” provides a thought provoking engagement with Afro-Caribbean artists in subverting and challenging colonial, white supremacist, hetero-patriarchal norms that have been assigned to the bodies of Black women. Gibbons-Taylor demonstrates the resilience of Black women’s subjectivity in interrogating the fixed imagery of hypersexualization and deviancy associated with the construction of Black womanhood. Here, we learn the different ways in which Black woman revalue and redefine their sexuality and gender, presenting a transformative politic that engages with anti-colonial, anti-racist, and Afro-futurist Black feminist teachings.

In “Anti-Black Racism, Resistance, and the Health and Well-Being of Black Bodies in Public Education,” Joanna Newton draws on her lived experiences in education, and the lived experiences of her family and colleagues to explore how Black bodies in public education experience racism. Newton employs Critical Anti-Racism Theory (CART) to examine these experiences of anti-Black racism and the impacts they have on the health and well-being of Black bodies. Newton suggests that CART is an important theoretical tool for understanding the experiences of Black bodies in public education in order to transform educational spaces to ensure the health and well-being of Black bodies.

In “Interculturalism in Peru and Québec: A Functional Project?” María Roxana Escobar Nañez provides a cross-cultural examination of interculturalism in both Peru and Québec as a way of interrogating dominant hegemonic discourses of multiculturalism. By situating the conversation in both Peru and Québec, Escobar Nañez highlights the various ways in which governmental policies have used interculturalism to control culturally diverse populations. She presents critical interculturalism as a decolonizing and anti-racist project, whereas the state works to create a multi-centered society in which there is a plurality of knowledges, bodies, and identities respected within the state.

Lauren Katie Howard in her paper titled, “The Subversion of Whiteness and its Educational Implications for Critical Anti-Racist Frameworks,” aims to move conversations of whiteness and white supremacy away from questions of privilege to a critical interrogation of the ongoing violence of Indigenous peoples through land theft and dispossession. Changing this dynamic requires direct intervention in disrupting the normal functioning of society built on white supremacist foundations. Howard provides an insightful analysis on breaking down black/white binaries by reimagining whiteness studies as a decolonizing practice that focuses its attention on settler colonialism.

In “Moving to and/with: Understanding the Construction of Race and Privilege” Marco Bertagnolio exposes the mechanisms through which white power and privilege operate in maintaining its hegemonic stronghold. Whiteness as a cultural value is so pervasive in society that it is both the obvious and hidden norm against which most things are measured. By embodying a decolonial mindset of “and/with,” Bertagnolio shifts our focus away from dichotomous forms of thinking in order for white bodies to create alliances with racialized peoples and engage in anti-racism work.
Sabrine Jeanine Azraq in her piece, “Palestine: BDS as Refusal and Resistance in the Settler Colonial Academy,” discusses the pivotal role the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement plays in dismantling the ongoing zionist settler-colonial project in the land of Palestine. This piece provides a pragmatic approach to the role that intellectuals, students, and academics can play in interrogating racism within the academy.

Through her own lived experiences, Christine McFarlane in “Anti-Racism and Decolonization in Education from an Indigenous Perspective,” discusses the impact of colonization and racism on Indigenous peoples through processes of assimilation. McFarlane powerfully conveys the importance of anti-racism theory to decolonize Eurocentric models of education in order to centre Indigenous knowledges.

Lastly, Percy Konadu Yiadom in “Interrogating Child Labour from an Anti-Racism Prism,” uses anti-racism theory as an entry point to address Western and non-Western perceptions of child labour in Africa. His aim is to highlight the contradictions and dilemmas that arise when addressing the issues of child labour in developing countries.

Combined, these collections of essays take up questions around new conceptual framings on race, white supremacy, and Indigeneity for the politics of educational and social futurity. We would also like to note that the thoughts of the contributors do not reflect those of the editors. We were entrusted to maintain the integrity of each chapter and to honour the voice of each contributor. At the heart of this volume is our abiding commitment to anti-racism praxis. It is our hope that this collection provides new theoretical directions and practical applications to anti-racism work.
1. INDIGENOUS & BLACK SOLIDARITY IN PRACTICE: #BLMTOTENTCITY

ABSTRACT

Hudson discusses Black and Indigenous solidarity using Black Lives Matter’s 2016 occupation of Toronto Police Services Headquarters as a point of analysis for future possibilities. The creation of this space was anti-colonial and was supported through solidarity built between Black and Indigenous community members. This chapter investigates the solidarity that was built between Black and Indigenous Torontonians through resistance action in relation to its historical location and contemporary considerations. Following a description of the occupation, this chapter examines the political relevance and anti-colonial principles embedded in the praxis action. It then discusses the necessity of an anti-colonial orientation in Black liberation struggles on this land, given the twin genocidal project of land dispossession and enslavement. Followed by a discussion on the ways in which contemporary discourses of multiculturalism act to destroy claims to land, self-determination, and liberation for both Indigenous and Black people living under Canadian colonialism. Hudson then considers possibilities for solidarity between Black and Indigenous people, and compares on-the-ground experiences to problematic theoretical discussions raised in the academy. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of potentialities for movement building between both communities.

Keywords: anti-racism, anti-Blackness, white supremacy, racism, decolonization, solidarities, Black futurisms, police violence, Black futurities, praxis, Blackness, police, social justice, state violence, violence, anti-violence, post-secondary education, academia, critical studies, critical anti-racism, direct action, logics of white supremacy, slaveability, multiculturalism, movement-building, Black liberation, liberation

INTRODUCTION

On Friday, March 21, 2016, Ontario’s Special Investigations Unit (SIU) announced that no charges would be laid on the Toronto police officers involved in the homicide of Andrew Loku. The SIU had released a bare bones public report justifying their decision to safeguard the police officers responsible for the death of Andrew Loku.
In the weeks following, Black activists created a resistance strategy that moved Toronto’s Black community, and sparked resistance actions across the country. As part of the resistance strategy, the activists erected an unprecedented “tent city” in front of the Toronto Police Headquarters; an encampment occupation that lasted over two weeks. The context under which this action takes place may come as a surprise to those who have been deceived by Canada’s denial of racism, but the statistics reveal an anti-Black, racist landscape that Canada’s very construction is meant to deny.

Though less than three per cent of the Canadian population is Black, they make up over 10 per cent of Canada’s incarcerated population. In Toronto, the SIU has never recommended investigating a police officer for killing a Black person, though at least half of all people killed by the Toronto police since the 1980s are Black (Morgan & Bullen, 2015). These statistics are a result of a long historical connection between white supremacy and colonization which begins with the very history of policing in the colonies of the Americas. Never forget that the police were created for the purpose of capturing Black enslaved people who had liberated themselves. To add to the troubling statistics, there have been other incidences of police brutality where officers have killed Black civilians in suspicious circumstances, creating a potential for widespread Black mobilization within the City of Toronto.

The Black Lives Matter – Toronto coalition reimagined possibilities for creating an Africentric, transformative community where members were truly cared for and held through interdependence and revolutionary ideals of justice. The creation of this space was truly anti-colonial and sparked solidarity between Black and Indigenous community members, which is necessary for the possibility of creating transformative futures. Though the action was an occupation of space, the organizers of the demonstration were careful and deliberate in ensuring that the occupation did not recolonize land and render Indigenous communities invisible. The theoretical framework of organizers led to their understanding that colonization is reified through white supremacy and anti-Blackness.

Described crudely, colonization in a Canadian context is typically understood to be a process concerning the theft of land from Indigenous people to white settlers, including the strategies of genocide and cultural erasure employed by white settlers. But organizers also understood colonization as the process by which Black people have been removed from their lands and forced to work for settlers, including the strategies of genocide and cultural erasure levelled upon enslaved Black people. With this understanding, the praxis that culminated in Tent City prioritized Black and Indigenous solidarity in order to expose anti-Black murders by state forces. Thus, simultaneously raising the question of anti-Indigeneity by the state as an intertwined process. This chapter will investigate the solidarity that was built between Black and Indigenous Torontonians through resistance in relation to its historical location and contemporary considerations.

I will discuss Black and Indigenous solidarity using Toronto’s Black Lives Matter March 2016 15-day occupation of Toronto Police Services Headquarters as an
example for future possibilities. Following a description of the occupation first called #TentCity and then established as #BlackCity, I will discuss the political relevance and anti-colonial principles embedded in the praxis. I will then discuss the necessity of an anti-colonial orientation in Black liberation struggles on this land, given the twin genocidal project of land dispossession and enslavement. I will then discuss the ways in which contemporary discourses of multiculturalism act to destroy claims to land, self-determination, and liberation for both Indigenous and Black people living under Canadian colonialism. Using the example of #BlackCity, I will then discuss possibilities for solidarity between Black and Indigenous people, and compare my personal on-the-ground experience to problematic theoretical discussions raised in the academy. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the potential for movement building between both communities.

As the author of this chapter, I must disclose my own relationship to this resistance action. I am one of the co-founders of Black Lives Matter – Toronto, a Toronto-based chapter of the international #BlackLivesMatter movement. As a Black, Afrikan woman from a working-class background, I felt a strong sense of grief, anger, and isolation when I heard in September 2014 the news that Peel Police had murdered another Black man, Jermaine Carby in Brampton (CBC, 2014b). I was even more frustrated that the incident did not spark the ire in mainstream media that such an injustice should have. Just one month earlier, Michael Brown was murdered by police in Ferguson, Missouri (CBC, 2014a); his body lay visible in the street for over six hours. Canadian mass media treated this incident differently than that of Jermaine Carby’s. It was far more heavily covered, discussed, and critiqued. This is one of the methods that hegemonic powers use to create Canada as an “innocent,” “post-racial” nation vis-à-vis the United States of America.

BLACK LIVES MATTER – TORONTO AND POLICE VIOLENCE: A BRIEF HISTORY

Black communities in Toronto have a long history of organizing against police brutality. In the late 1980s, following a spate of police killings of Black people, the Black Action Defense Committee (BADC) was created by community organizers to hold police accountable and mobilize Black communities against anti-Black policing. After several high-profile actions, BADC was successful in playing a significant role in the establishment of the SIU. Though a significant victory at the time, the SIU has been co-opted by forces with an interest in shielding police officers from being held accountable. Currently, the SIU is largely run by former police officers, and operates with little transparency or public accountability.

On August 9, 2014, Michael Brown was murdered by Officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri. After months of protest, a Grand Jury was set to decide whether or not Darren Wilson would face criminal charges on November 24, 2014. Demonstrations and vigils were being planned in major cities across the United States following the decision (McClam, 2014). Known as an organizer in the
community with a particular interest in issues of racism and anti-Blackness, I was asked several times if I knew whether or not there would be solidarity vigils for Michael Brown in the city of Toronto. No one had asked me anything similar with respect to Jermaine Carby. I decided to organize a solidarity vigil with a double purpose of showing solidarity in the killing of Michael Brown and subverting the myth of Canadian racial innocence. With that action, Black Lives Matter – Toronto was born in November 2014.

#BlackLivesMatter is a movement that began in the United States after the acquittal of George Zimmerman, a Florida man who murdered a Black child, Trayvon Martin (Garza, n.d.). The movement draws from historical Black liberation movements, and differs in its reliance on social media and dedication to an anti-patriarchal, anti-heterosexist, and anti-cissexist frame. Women and transfolk are highly visible within this transfeminist iteration of a century long struggle for Black liberation. In the United States, the movement has been criticized for its nationalist tendencies and failure to imagine and enact a Black liberation struggle as one that is necessarily global. The inclusion of Black Lives Matter – Toronto was a direct challenge to this frame, and our contribution has been to advance issues of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism.

In joining our American counterparts, we found ourselves struck by the pervasive myth of anti-racism in Canada. Our contemporaries were at times surprised to learn that the progressive country they had always imagined north of the 49th parallel experienced many of the same white supremacist, anti-Black social issues that Black Americans struggle against. Such disbelief is not isolated to our contemporaries in the United States. Members of Black Lives Matter – Toronto have consistently had to contend with the disbelief that anti-Blackness in policing, education, migration, and health care are real and present issues.

In Canada, as in the United States, Black activists are often confronted with demands to prove the claims we make in respect to anti-Blackness. Whereas in the United States, statistics are readily available to quantify the ways in which anti-Black racism interrupts the lives of African people below the 49th parallel, such forms of evidence are scantily available in Canada. In fact, a major form in which anti-Blackness operates in colonized Canada is the active and passive refusal to collect and provide information. Despite calls throughout the years to collect race-based data with respect to education and policing, governments have consistently refused, while simultaneously challenging activists to prove their claims.

As Black people throughout colonized Canada can attest, there is no magic barrier at the 49th parallel that has evaporated anti-Blackness from the white supremacist society of the North. Despite pervasive cultural myths, the anti-Black genocidal history of the British Empire with respect to African people, continued and evolved in contemporary imperialist Canada in much the same way as it has in the contemporary American Empire. And though we lack the statistics and transparency that our kinfolk to the South often have access to, there are academics and community organizers that expose Canada’s brand of anti-Blackness.
There is a long history of police violence against Black bodies in the city of Toronto. Despite years of protest and resistance from the Black community, the decision-makers in charge of addressing these issues have often avoided implementing scores of recommendations and submissions made by various groups, including BADC, the African Canadian Legal Clinic, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and the Ontario Ombudsman (Law Union of Ontario, 2014; Urban Alliance on Race Relations, 2000; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003; Ontario Ombudsman, 2008; Ontario Ombudsman, 2014). In recent years, these issues have become underscored in the public realm with Black community resistance to carding and police brutality in policing. When Toronto Police murdered Andrew Loku, Black Lives Matter activists were told by Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Executive Director Steve Lurie to trust in the process of Ontario’s SIU. Lurie had seen video footage of the incident (which occurred in CMHA housing). His conclusion was that there was absolutely no way the SIU could do anything other than recommend that the officers involved be charged.

Over six months later, the SIU quietly released to the media the facts of their decision after business hours on a Friday night. They decided that the officers involved should not be charged. Shortly thereafter, Black Lives Matter – Toronto activists convened a meeting and decided that we would camp outside of Toronto City Hall and create a tent city. After the first few nights, heavy-handed police repression led to the action moving from Toronto’s City Hall to Toronto’s Police Headquarters. After the police attacked protesters and confiscated our tents, the action, originally intended to last 12 hours, became an indefinite expression of what a community could look like (Hudson & Diverlus, 2016).

Though the majority of the inhabitants of Black Lives Matter – Toronto’s Tent City were Black, there was space made for allies of all stripes, and all inhabitants were supported and valued. Of our allied participants, the solidarity and support of Indigenous communities was key to our action. The organizers’ ability to recognize the resistance action as a site of possibility was transformative.

From Time: Settler Colonialism as a Site of Black & Indigenous Genocide in Canada

In order to fully appreciate the possibilities for transformative change through Black and Indigenous alliance, one should have an appreciation for the ways in which the white supremacist colonial history of this land enacted similar forms of violence on both Black people and in Indigenous communities. The British form of settler colonialism enacted brutal centuries-long genocide on Indigenous populations across the world. The “Dominion of Canada” was an active participant in these genocides, benefitting from the destruction of Indigenous societies from South America to West Africa.

To understand the ways in which settler colonialism enacted its destruction on African and Indigenous bodies in Canada, it is useful to invoke Andrea Smith’s
concept of the Logics of White Supremacy (2010). For Smith, white supremacy operates with three logics: Disappearance, Slaveability, and Orientalism. To these concepts, I will add another logic for investigation: The logic of One True History.

Disappearance

With respect to communities Indigenous to the land, white supremacy had to enact a logic of disappearance (Smith, 2010). White colonizers needed to create a lasting logic of themselves as “native” to this land. This is a logic that persists today, despite its obvious impossibility. Presence and visibility of Indigenous communities challenge the white supremacist assertion that Canada is a white nation. Accordingly, Indigenous communities were made to “disappear.” In addition to intentionally isolating reserve communities that diminished throughout the years, white colonizers created a racist understanding of Indigeneity predicated on primitivity that was dependent upon “blood purity”. Under the Indian Act, only when children with Indigenous ancestry are born to Indigenous women are they recognized by the state as Indigenous. Over the years, miscegenation contributed to the gradual “disappearance” of Indigenous communities in the eyes of the British and the subsequent Canadian state. Through residential schools, these strategies of disappearance were amplified causing significant harm in Indigenous communities, resulting in cultural and literal genocide.

Slaveability

With respect to Black communities, the white supremacist colonizer needed to enact a logic of slaveability (Smith, 2010). There was colonial work that was seen as unfit for white colonizers, such as agriculture and housework. Despite Canada’s cultural myth of innocence with respect to the international enslavement of Black people in white states, Canadians not only used the labour of enslaved Africans, but Canada was also built upon the profits the British empire gained through its use of free labour (Austin, 2010). Additionally, traders who took part in the trade of sugar, cotton, salt, and other plantation goods were all benefitting from and engaging in the enslavement of Africans and contributing to the logic of slaveability.

The logic of slaveability resulted in a different genocidal process than the logic of disappearance. Rather than relying on purity, the colonizer needed to multiply its labour supply. Instead of using racial purity as a marker of slaveability, the white supremacist logic enacted the “one drop” rule: so long as one had a veritable “drop” of African ancestry, one was unfit to be considered fully human. The result of such a process was to exclude African people from humanity in the eyes of the colonizer (Cooper, 2007). Enslavement was a permanent condition that literally stripped tens of millions of African people of their right to live. Watching our lives end became leisure. And even if one did survive, survival was equivalent to social death (Cooper, 2007).
Orientalism

The final white supremacist logic considered by Andrea Smith is that of Orientalism. The Orientalist logic imposes borders upon the earth as markers of innate human value, civility, and worth. Orientalism provides white supremacist colonizers with the logic necessary to declare themselves superior to all societies outside of white nations, giving them dominion over the world (Smith, 2010).

One True History

I add to Andrea Smith’s three identified logics the additional white supremacist logic of One True History. Anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, and other forms of racism persist in part because of the idea that there is one version of history that white people have exclusive dominion over. It is expressed through the Eurocentric dismissal of oral histories and the reliance of the written word as irrefutable truth. It is expressed through an almost scientific reliance on the “white encoders of history” to tell us “truths,” even when we accept that there are obvious reasons as to why we should not rely on white supremacist historians to teach us African history. Despite what Canada has constructed for itself as myth, Brown (2008) makes it abundantly clear that Canada cannot escape the truth, once one digs below the superficial veneer:

Daniel Defoe, writing in 1713 about the slave trade, plantation slavery, and the mercantile triangular trade among Great Britain, Africa, the West Indies, and the Americas, summed up the tangled web of total exploitation of Africa and Black people as follows: “No African trade, no Negroes, no sugar, no sugar islands, no islands no continents, no continent no trade: that is to say farewell to your American trade, your West Indian trade.” (p. 385)

The logic of One True History results in the denial of Canadian enslavement, because officials responsible for census data did not include Africans in their accounts (Brown, 2008). Such logic also results in the history of the Underground Railroad in the public and contemporary imagination being dreadfully incomplete. Canada is mythologized into a promised land for escaped slaves because the history of Canada’s enslaved population crossing the 49th parallel into the United States for freedom is unwritten. The first large-scale escapees of enslaved people that could be deemed as an “underground railroad” movement, journeyed from the Canadian towns of Amherstberg and Sandwich to Detroit. This piece of Canadian history is virtually unknown in Canadian popular consciousness (Cooper, 2007).

This movement of enslaved people was sparked by the brutalization of an African woman by a Canadian slave owner and is also virtually unknown, as are Canada’s attempts to recover its lost “property” (Cooper, 2007). Canadian whiteness imagines borders representing a significant shift in principles, despite the colonial, imperialist history of Canada. It also mythologizes all Black people living in Canada as recent
immigrants, despite our presence on this land dating back to the 1600s. As stated by David Austin (2010):

In other words, power, in this case state and corporate power, is facilitated and exercised through the production of truth, that is contrived narratives designed to maintain power, order and authority, and to make laws and produce wealth; truths by which we are judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying. (p. 20)

The idea of One True History also allows the other logics to continue unchallenged, despite their obvious contradictions. In what whiteness wants to imagine as a post-colonial and post-racial present, the logics of disappearance and slaveability persist, despite liberal superficial rejections of the current manifestation of these social harms in popular consciousness. So the one-drop rule continues to define Blackness. It also leads to a situation where contemporary state leaders, such as former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, are able to absurdly claim without irony that Canada “has no history of colonialism” (Fontaine, 2006). As Wolfe (2006) states, “as opposed to enslaved people, whose reproduction augmented their owners’ wealth, Indigenous people obstructed settlers’ access to land, so their increase was counterproductive. In this way, the restrictive racial classification of Indians straightforwardly furthered the logic of elimination” (p. 388), and continues to further that logic today.

The implementation of the One True History also allows for a society in which white supremacy can continue without widespread challenge. If Black and Indigenous folks lack the ability to participate and advance politically and economically due to their own socio-economic status (Smith, 2010), then whiteness has no responsibility for its continued marginality and oppression. The One True History convinces society, including Black and Indigenous people that we are entitled to life, dignity, and “freedom” if we “do as we are told” and agree to surveillance and restricted social mobility.

A careful contemplation of these logics reveals a troubling notion: all people, even those who are not white, can be implicated in the logics of white supremacy. Whether white, Black, Indigenous, or non-Black racialized people, white supremacy’s hegemonic status is dependent upon mass buy-in. Indigenous people can (and have, historically) contributed to the logic of slaveability, at their own peril. Black folks can (and have, historically) contributed to the logic of Indigenous disappearance, at their own peril. In order to truly tackle white supremacy, each of these pillars must be attacked without reinscribing or strengthening another pillar. A failure to do so runs the risk of turning racialized and Indigenous people against one another, thereby contributing to the logic of white supremacy while attempting to attack another. Bonita Lawrence and Zainab Amadahy (2009) commit this error when they attack the logic of disappearance, acknowledge the logic of slaveability, and contribute to the logic of One True History, which I will discuss in detail later.
MULTICULTURALISM AS AN ANTI-BLACK, ANTI-INDIGENOUS PRACTICE

Central to Canada’s brand of white supremacist colonialism, and what differentiates it from the United States, is its reliance on multiculturalism. Heralded as a progressive concept, multiculturalism is lauded in Canada’s cultural mythology as a harbinger of tolerance, equality, and social harmony. In fact, the very existence of Canada’s Indigenous and Black populations are a destabilizing antitheses to this cultural lore. Far from a progressive bastion of justice, multiculturalism is in fact a shield against legitimate claims of justice for Black and Indigenous people.

As Walcott (2014) reveals, Canada’s official Multiculturalism Policy enshrined in law by P. E. Trudeau in 1971 had nothing to do with racial equality or harmony between ethnicities. Rather, “the policy’s intent was to manage the non-French and non-English peoples of the nation” (Walcott, 2014, p. 127) and to ensure that in a rapidly diversifying post-war population, the English and French ethnicities would be accepted as “native.” Walcott (2014) discusses a cultural shift in discourse from identifying the English and French settlers as European races to differences in language. A discourse meant to designate white settlers as raceless and the “founders” of this land.

These “founders” have cleverly hidden a violent past with respect to interactions with other races through a Multiculturalism Policy that relies on a belief of benevolence. Such a belief requires one to ignore Canada’s genocidal history with respect to Black and Indigenous communities, and additionally, its violent treatment towards Asian migrants. “Ultimately, the combination of positive, that is to say contrived, mythology and absented histories serves to marginalise, exclude, alienate and pathologise,” says David Austin (2010, p. 23). It becomes clear that a policy of multiculturalism is hypocritical, and requires a history of ultimate and fatal anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity in order to exist. Walcott (2014) further identifies that, “from the very beginning...[Canada] had no intention of allowing those racialized as others to participate or shape what the nation might become” (p. 131). However, multiculturalism sells us a reality in which all those living above the 49th parallel should be able to equally participate in a democratic system. Black and Indigenous struggles for change are obfuscated from the mass social consciousness, and met with intransigence and victim-blaming.

What happens to Black and Indigenous people under a system of multiculturalism? The state attempts to control Indigenous people by using the legitimacy it gains through multiculturalism with the rest of the population by handing out “rights” while maintaining its white supremacist colonial status. As David Austin (2010) discusses, “‘First Nations’ collective rights and identities are at times acknowledged by the state in return for, as Glen Coulthard argues, tacit recognition and legitimisation of the state’s authority – but only in so far as Indigenous claims to land and identity do not fundamentally threaten state-corporate interests” (p. 22).

Multiculturalism exists also as a specific appeal to non-Black racialized people. It is a promise that they can participate in the nation-state as equals distinguished from
dehumanized Black and Indigenous communities (Smith, 2010). It provides migrant communities with a proximity to whiteness that relies on anti-Blackness. Similar to the ways in which white supremacy can be employed to fracture the working class by allowing white blue-collar workers to assume superiority over their Black class brethren, so too can multiculturalism be employed to fracture non-Black racialized people in the struggle against white supremacy. In short, multiculturalism does not view racialized people as actors with agency. We exist as a force that threatens the mythology of white people as the legitimate source of power in this land, and as such, we must be controlled.

There is no group of racialized people more threatening to the state than Black and Indigenous people. Our very presence on this land, our history, and our contemporary predicaments exposes the myth of racial harmony, and multiculturalism is the myth employed to repress our power. It is beneficial, therefore, that we unite in our challenges to state violence against Black and Indigenous bodies.

BLACK LIBERATION & INDIGENOUS SOLIDARITY IN PRACTICE

The discussion above is a sampling of the theoretical underpinnings that informed the praxis of the Black Lives Matter – Toronto, Tent City project. I stress that these theoretical discussions are merely a sample; the action also operated with strong anti-patriarchal and anti-heterosexist principles, which were essential to its success and development. But for the purpose of discussing Black and Indigenous solidarity, I will leave the discussion of the theoretical frame intact.

As discussed by Trask (1991), resistance movements with small populations and border constrictions must build coalitions with other groups in order to be successful, and to effectively challenge the settler colonial genocidal state. As discussed above, the very existence of Black and Indigenous people destabilizes the Canadian state. An alliance, therefore, has powerful possibilities for movement-making and resistance actions. As our contemporary situation exists in Canada, the police brutality resistance, refreshed by the actions of Black Lives Matter – Toronto, was an ideal issue with which to create a coalition. The state targets Black and Indigenous bodies for policing, incarceration, and surveillance like no other bodies in existence on this land. Black and Indigenous populations are chronically overrepresented in prisons and in communities regularly under surveillance by police officers.

This is the context under which Black and Indigenous communities came together to create Black City. Quite frankly, there was no pre-established plan for a strong Indigenous presence in the action. As mentioned previously, the action was never expected to last more than 12 hours, but after we moved to Toronto Police Services and committed to staying as long as we could to demonstrate the power of our community, a solid and permanent Indigenous presence developed amongst our allied groups. The relationship that developed was one that would not have been possible without the theoretical framework that underpinned our actions.
When our Indigenous allies came to join us at the camp, a relationship that respected our specific histories developed. Through waking hours, a Mohawk Warrior Flag, an Iroquois Confederacy Flag, and a Two Row Wampum Flag was flown by an Indigenous ally; in their other hand, a photo of Andrew Loku. A space was carved out specifically for Indigenous members of Black City and Indigenous medicines were brought to the site every day. Indigenous communities entered in conversation with us so that we could establish a respectful process for using the space that we intended to honour in the ways that the traditional caretakers requested of us. Indigenous activists cleansed the space each day with sage and other sacred medicines and established expectations for ceremony and interactions with police officers should they arise. Similarly, upon entering the space, members from Indigenous communities respected our goals and our plans for using the space. We made clear that our community project would accept all allies, and that we had measures in place for interactions with the police for Black participants. Each day that we extended our action, we furthered dialogue with our Indigenous allies. Processes for food distribution, diverse spiritual practices, and health and healing were negotiated together. And our Indigenous allies always respected our decision-making and leadership. Once established, our partnership was very visible and intentional.

This partnership felt natural, but we must recognize that it is a partnership that must be intentional and continually renewed. Black communities can be anti-Indigenous, and Indigenous communities can be anti-Black. It is crucial for both our communities to resist the myths sold to us by the state, lest we end up tacitly supporting white supremacist logics. If Black communities buy into the logic of disappearance, white supremacist settler colonial logic is upheld within Blackness. If Indigenous communities buy into the logic of slaveability, white supremacist settler colonial logics are upheld within Indigeneity. If either community buys into the One True History logic, we are tacitly supporting white supremacist settler colonial logics at the cost of erasing our own shared histories. Showing the power of Indigenous people as essential caretakers, lawmakers, and spiritual leaders in Black City were anti-colonial and revolutionary acts that rendered the settler colonial state as impermanent. Both groups should be conscious of how white supremacist logics may permeate their thinking in order to actively resist such thought.

THE ACADEMIC PROBLEMATIC

Unfortunately, much of the discourse surrounding potentialities for Black and Indigenous solidarity in the Americas resides in the academy. I say “unfortunately” not because it is not an important site for imagining transformative possibilities. Rather, I mean to point out that it is crucial for such discourse to be shared and developed both within and outside the academy, through on-the-ground struggles; a praxis exercise. Current popular discourses within the academy contemplating decolonization with respect to Black communities are highly problematic, and
rely on white supremacist logics to create a narrative wherein Black presence and Black historical and present experience of genocide in the Americas is positioned as subordinate to Indigenous struggles (Churchill, 1983; Lawrence & Amadahy, 2009). As argued by Smith (2010), such problematic analyses fail to take into account the “intersecting logics of white supremacy”:

When Native struggles become isolated from other social-justice struggles, Indigenous peoples are not in a position to build the necessary political power to end colonialism and capitalism. Instead, they are set up to be in competition rather than in solidarity with other groups seeking recognition. This politics of recognition then presumes the continuance of the settler state that will arbitrate claims from competing groups. (p. 7)

Claims made by Lawrence and Dua (2005) and Lawrence and Amadahy (2009) in their discussions of Indigeneity and Blackness are anti-Black and are squarely in service of white supremacist logic. They rarely place blame or responsibility on whiteness, white supremacy, or colonization; instead they opt to critique and blame Black scholars. For many of their questionable claims, they could complete an analysis that places the responsibility on the shoulders of the colonizers. Shockingly, they almost entirely place blame on the shoulders of Black people struggling for liberation. In order to make such offensive claims they must use the White supremacist tool of anti-Blackness.

For example, Lawrence and Amadahy (2009) describe the movement of recently escaped or freed Black refugees to Canada from what is now referred to as the Caribbean and the United States as a project of settlement. They do this without recognizing that Canada did not even exist in the way that it does now. This framing relies on the One True History of white supremacist logic. These lands were, by and large, colonized by Britain, America, Portugal, or France. It did not matter where the escaped Black refugees were heading – they were escaping enslavement and death only to be faced with it again under the rule of white colonization in every instance, unless they gained passage to Liberia and Sierra Leone. They were escaping across imaginary borders that had not yet been cemented in global consciousness as they have now become for many today. The authors chisel these borders onto their history in an anti-Black project of ascribing blame and a colonizing identity to Black people. Even if the borders had been drawn up throughout the history of slave escapes, why would one reference them in a decolonization practice? It only serves to recolonize the land and the people who have experienced the grave genocidal project of the colonizer in its imagining. From a decolonization paradigm, we must reject the very existence of these borders and see them for what they are: strategic constructions that benefit solely the white supremacist settler logic.

In another example, Lawrence and Amadahy (2009) describes immigration to Canada as white-only, completely erasing the history of enslavement on this land, and falling prey to the white supremacist logic of inherent slaveability. Black people were brought to Canada enslaved. There were no cotton fields and cane fields, but
then, as today, there was work to be done that white supremacy deemed unfit for white hands. This retelling of history is in the service of the colonizer – it absolves white people in Canada of their responsibility to Black people and denies the very simple truth that the wealth that was being amassed across the colonies from the enslavement of Black people and the dispossession of Indigenous lands was not hindered by imaginary lines. The cane fields of Jamaica benefited the fur traders of Canada. Academics and activists alike should not allow the colonization of the land to limit our contemporary critical analysis (Austin, 2010).

Another example that demonstrates the ways in which a competition between Black and Indigenous struggle is constructed by Amadahy and Lawrence (2009) is in their conclusion, “whatever emerges from relationship-building between Black and Indigenous communities should take place” (p. 131) within a fundamental framework of how Indigenous peoples relate to non-Indigenous peoples. This erases the importance of Black healing and Black frameworks for solidarity and attempts to establish power relations between the two diverse groups. From my own on-the-ground experience, I suggest that groups engaged in this coalition building between Black and Indigenous resistance movements should acknowledge that both groups have anti-white supremacist strategies for relationship-building, which can mutually strengthen a common struggle for decolonization and liberation.

In Sharma and Wright’s (2009) critique of Lawrence and Dua (2005), they trace the idea of the settler-colonial category, including all non-Indigenous people, back to a pre-multicultural and neoliberal time and relate it to the popularity of racist “ideologies of incommensurable ‘differences’ among ‘cultures’”. They conclude by rejecting arguments put forth by Lawrence and Dua (2005) stating that “we are especially interested in liberatory strategies of critique and practice that do not reproduce the ruling strategies of colonial modernity, the colonial state and nationalisms, and that open up spaces for radical critique and resistance” (p. 128).

In academic discussions surrounding decolonization, it is crucial to involve discussions of the responsibilities white settlers have to both Black and Indigenous groups. In doing so, we can recognize how Indigenous and Black people have been manipulated by white supremacists in ways that are counter-productive to their respective struggles of liberation (Wigmore, 2011). We must be conscious not to reproduce these missteps, lest we continue to work in the service of white supremacy.

There are important questions that have been brought up through the academy, many of which have yet to be thoroughly theorized. For example, Lawrence and Amadahy (2009) question what relationships should be forged by people “forced to live on other peoples’ lands” (p. 119) in order to resist colonial settler-hood in their contemplation of Black and Indigenous communities. If we are to recognize white supremacist logics, we should push this question further: what relationships should people, living and benefiting off of the capital generated for centuries by Black bodies, forge with Black communities in order to resist colonial settler-hood, white
supremacy, and capitalism? It is clear that Indigenous liberation struggles and Black liberation struggles are related and intertwined decolonization struggles. Andrea Smith’s (2010) concept of white supremacist logic makes it clear that the struggle for Black and Indigenous freedom requires liberation for each group. The academy should be cautious to ensure that in discussing these concepts it is not reinscribing colonial relationships onto colonized bodies.

CONCLUSION & POTENTIALITIES FOR MOVEMENT BUILDING

Shortly after the close of Black Lives Matter – Toronto’s Black City, a state of emergency was announced in the Northern Ontario First Nation of Attawapiskat (Forani, 2016). The community has been devastated by Canada’s continued colonial project, leading to a spate of suicide attempts by youth as young as 9 years of age. The declaration of a state of emergency came as Black Lives Matter – Toronto was holding a private healing and debriefing session for participants of Black City. The Indigenous participants notified us, letting us know that they had been inspired by Black City, and may need our solidarity in the coming days. Sparked by the events of Attawapiskat, shortly thereafter, an Indigenous activist group called upon us to support another occupation action: #OccupyINAC (Da Silva, 2016). Toronto and Indigenous organizers in coalition with Black Lives Matter – Toronto, occupied the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) office. Once again, our mutual solidarity was impossible to ignore. The presence in the media made it clear that Black activists would be using their own resources, contacts, and tools to benefit Indigenous communities.

During these actions, both groups acted with respect and solidarity for each other that leant to our ultimate success in mobilizing our respective communities and forcing power-holding decision makers to act. The potential for both groups to enact transformative change by continuing to work in coalition is boundless. We should roundly reject white supremacist logics that see us competing with each other for scraps at the bottom of the white supremacist lowerarchy. We should never forget that in some ways, we are the most dangerous groups to the white supremacist state structure. Our very existence proves its injustices and attacks its legitimacy. The possibilities stemming from our solidarity and coalition are nothing short of revolutionary.

The potential for decolonial, Africentric futurities inherent in the coalition between Black and Indigenous communities is exciting. White supremacy has historically attempted to prevent these communities from coming together and has benefitted from the genocide of these groups, as well as from the particular ways Black and Indigenous people have been implicated in particular logics of white supremacy. My hope is that strategies like the one taken through #BLMTOTentCity will open up possibilities to creating alternative futures that effectively and radically dismantles our white supremacist present.
NOTES

1 Though I don’t have a formal media analysis to justify this, a cursory search of terms in Canadian media will show the disparity that I refer to.

2 I refer here to escaped enslaved people as refugees, as this most accurately describes their global location and predicament.

REFERENCES


