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## **Introduction to Indigenous Performance: Upsetting the Terrains of Settler Colonialism**

### **Mishuana Goeman**

*As soon as I desire I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness.*

—Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Unexpectedly, a short, sweet video entitled *Smiling Indians* made the Facebook and e-mail rounds in Indian country and beyond.<sup>1</sup> The film received attention from National Public Radio and *Indian Country Today* to more local news sources such as the *Tulsa World*.<sup>2</sup> With the Internet, the film went viral because the contagious content appealed to a variety of audiences. The first frame, in bold black and white, delivers the context: “This film is dedicated to Edward S. Curtis.”<sup>3</sup> The intent is clear and succinct; it is, in the words of the creators Sterlin Harjo and Ryan Red Corn, meant to “proudly extend our middle finger to you. Thanks to your superiority of your craft no one thinks Natives smile.”<sup>4</sup> This special edition is about Native and indigenous cinemas, media, and visual art and the burgeoning accessibility to the craft of indigenous performance. The articles within complicate the received images that inform the everyday life of indigenous people living in settler colonial societies. In this four-and-a-half minute video of various close-ups of smiling Indians, Red Corn and Harjo complicate centuries of permeating “Curtis” prints of vanishing Indians by using their talents to frame the joy and power of smiling across a vibrant Indian country. Through the use of the virtual to circulate their craft, many Indians and non-Indians watched and smiled along with the frames in the short film

produced by the aptly named group 1491's. In being presented with beautiful aesthetic close-ups of contemporary Indians, we ponder the received images of the Curtis stoic Indian (with its own aesthetic beauty) and its ubiquitous and rooted mythology in the settler imaginary. The smiling Indians in the film demand you look at them, smile with them, and change your perceptions of vanishing Indians.

The film is an indigenous collaborative performance that acknowledges, and relies on, the boxed-in stereotype of stoic Indians that has abounded throughout the decades and was manifested through Curtis's portrayal of Indian bodies and the subsequent circulation of the numerous prints. Black-and-white tragic photos festered in American minds, proliferated in historic frame after frame as they were consumed as evidence of a new era, and circulated throughout various geographies and temporalities. The picturing of vanishing Indians accompanied times marked by the brutal repression of tribal peoples across the globe as nation-states clamored for fixed boundaries and fixed populations in order to exploit land and labor easily and systematically. These prints were instrumental in setting up the logics of elimination and procuring land in the West.<sup>5</sup> Curtis could not have known the magnitude of the images he created and the performances of Indian that would entail. But, in the vein of Patrick Wolfe's logics of elimination, these prints were not just an event commissioned by J. P. Morgan, but rather these images became the structure by which Native peoples continue to be viewed—as emotionless tragic figures.

Through its frame after frame of naturally smiling faces emoting the happiness of various generations, tribes, and phenotypes, and the pull of Laura Ottman's plaintive soundtrack "Can't Stop this Feeling," the 1491's demand that the viewer's gaze be

directed to the smiling, living, contemporary “Indian” subject. Its simple message—Indians smile, love, and enjoy life—is so missing from mainstream media. It is incredibly powerful as the audience views smiling Indian face after Indian face. The video, even though it circulated internationally, did not reaffirm a pan-Indian, homogenized image. The multiple faces in *Smiling Indians*, unlike the Curtis images, are much more difficult to fetishize; the viewer cannot easily disavow the presence of contemporary Indians. The fetish of Indians from the past, or that discursive site of the Native body which produces settler anxiety, is complicated by the presence of the living Native body on screen and in the scene. It is much more difficult to sustain discourses of Native people as only “true” if pictured as in a Curtis photograph or to carry forth an “I know that . . . but even so” position in which there is a disavowal of contemporary Native peoples and, thus, their political, social, and economic positions in settler society.<sup>6</sup> These are contemporary Native peoples who look back at us—they are acutely aware of colonial gazing and its history of temporalizing and yielding a national affection that keeps Indians in the permanent position of speaking solely from a victimized past.

In *Smiling Indians*, the repeated close-ups of changing faces on the screen, the resounding sound of laughter echoing throughout the film, and emoting smiling faces are an affective experience that produces a particular historical reverberation and significance. The very imperative sentence structure of the title creates a subject position for those within the film, and Indians write large. In the performative disruption of the “citationality” of Curtis, a new sociality is implied.<sup>7</sup> Here and throughout this introduction, I borrow from Judith Butler’s concept of performance as processes of material practices and effects that secure its logics through repeated occurrences, in this

case Curtis's prints and the logics of colonialism. According to Butler, the "performative is that discursive practice that enacts or produces that which it names."<sup>8</sup> Like many of the indigenous performances discussed in this special edition, the affective experiences of viewing indigenous performances compel us not only to question the circulation of Indian images but also to map new grounds of understanding indigenous people as creators of their own desired structures.

Even while the 1491's disrupt the common sense of the nonsmiling Indian and the knowledges that these images produce over time and put forth new possibilities for "seeing" Native people, the visual narrative is entangled with those Curtis images. The smiling Indians produce a much more complicated visual history than at first glance. Curtis laid out his intent "to make them [Indians] live forever—in a sort of history by photographs," which was founded on his self-stated belief that "they've crumbled from their pride and power into pitifully small numbers, painful poverty and sorry weakness. There won't be any left of them in a few generations and it's a tragedy—a national tragedy."<sup>9</sup> Yet this intent was not the only life of the photos as they have a life and interpretation of their own. Rather than be relegated to the fake, the wannabe, or the "romantic," Curtis images have a very affective hold on many Native people and are widely circulated and familiar in tribal communities. When teaching Native students, they may recognize a relative or the viewer may be pulled into the beautiful composition of a photo from their tribe. One friend designed a stunning traditional Northwest tribal wedding veil after studying multiple Curtis photos from the 1900s. The veil and her dress reflected her history as a woman from multiple Northwest tribes—it was contemporary wedding attire, reconstructed through the Curtis photos that reflected her desires and self-

representation. The use of these ubiquitous and easily accessible photos to recuperate tribal designs complicates the meaning of power relations in indigenous performance and visual embodiment. As Avery Gordon claims, “Complex personhood means that those called ‘Other’ are never that. Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society’s problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward.”<sup>10</sup> Great irony exists in the manifestations of Curtis’s photos in modern Native performances. *Smiling Indians* is indicative of the power in taking an alternative look at something that seems old hat, such as Curtis and the figure of the Indian, and processing it in new performances and analytical vehicles that reflect “complex . . . social worlds.”<sup>11</sup> The articles in this edition are about similar socialites, weavings, and entanglements.

I began with the Internet sensation by the 1491’s and will continue to discuss it and other youth projects, as the video demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between old forms of exploitation rendered possible through the figure of the Indian and indigenous strategies engaging redfacing, or the “transgressive” use of stereotypes to undermine the common sense of playing Indian that at times also “reifies” assumptions about Indians.<sup>12</sup> The 1491’s are not, as Michelle Raheja so eloquently elaborates regarding Native Americans in the context of Hollywood, at the “margins of cinematic history and culture but at its core, enmeshed in an evolving and sometimes paradoxical web of race, gender, citizenship and sovereignty on the virtual reservation.”<sup>13</sup> Indigenous performances continue to attend to colonial site/sight lines and to structure indigenous desires. This special edition pulls together a diverse group of essays from various

disciplines, geographical locations, tribal perspectives, and positions on performing indigeneity; the authors take another look at the epistemological frameworks that uphold settler societies and identities. What constructively ties the pieces together is a desire to produce new possibilities with the potential to unsettle the logics of settler colonialism and the hegemonic categories that form domination and exploitation of Native lands and peoples. In reevaluating “the Indian,” “Aborigine,” or the technologies that construct these images, new ways of seeing are initiated and new life worlds created. These knowledges counter, what Grace Hong refers to in her work on women of color feminism, “possessive individualism and its necessary but erased corollary, social death, [which] continues to perform powerfully epistemological erasures of alternative notions of subject and community, and to structure material conditions for racialized populations.”<sup>14</sup> This moment in the field of Native studies is exciting as new sites emerge and old sites are reconsidered that confront the dispossession of Native personhood and lands, a dispossession that occurs through a variety of registrars that greatly condition the daily existence of Native peoples. As other disciplines explore imperialism and its links to colonialism, the exploration of ongoing settler colonial relationships are necessary to rigorous scholarship—after all, images of “the Indian” abound, shaping material realities on a world scale.<sup>15</sup>

Visual culture is becoming more accessible to Native youth, and many great projects—across Indian country and in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia—exist that are either independent or are part of organizations that provide communities with cameras and editing equipment. With new technologies, indigenous people are able to express their worldviews and create visions for their communities and the world at large. For

instance, Klee Benally, who founded the Taala Hogan Infoshop and Outta Your Backpack Media in Flagstaff, Arizona, organizes much of his activist work around media justice and media literacy. Although the films, addressing a vast, undefined audience through YouTube, are of varying quality, the range of content and time periods addressed is striking. The link between historic violence and contemporary issues in these Native youth films turns the colonial gaze in multiple productive directions—not just onto Native issues and communities—and insists that we engage Native issues in relation to the issues of American colonization and empire, which form the current capitalist endeavors that touch upon everyone. The Flagstaff Native youth involved are particularly focused on thwarting the San Francisco Peaks development of a ski resort, which is run by making snow from treated sewage water. The peaks are a sacred area to many tribal nations in the Southwest and are an area with a fragile eco-system that is highly threatened by this development.<sup>16</sup> In these youth films, and other films that address the mass environmental colonization in Indian country, they use the power of the media and indigenous performance to address settler colonial power structures that have benefitted and exploited the vanishing Indian motif in order to deny Native land rights. Bruce Duthu turns to Curtis in order to discuss how the framing of Indians as “primitive” and “vanishing” found its way into law and subsequently into the material theft of Native lands, erosion of sovereignty, and eradication of Native peoples. Duthu reflects that part of the issue is that “both the tribes and Congress [are] prisoners of an imposed history . . . again dominated by reference to and perpetuation of the ‘dying race’ thesis, something the court explicitly adopts in the early passages of the Yankton Sioux case.”<sup>17</sup> In the case of San Francisco Peaks, the logics of the court do not just affect “Indians” but also all

those who rely on the earth for sustenance and water. The unknown effects on the environment that the development will produce have encouraged many to participate in this local struggle. This potential environmental disaster is reflective of larger indigenous struggles worldwide that also position indigenous peoples, through imaging them as simple and backward, as being in opposition to progress. Media may take a traditional and educational lens, such as in the work that Judy Iseke and Sylvia Moore undertake in their piece “Community-based Indigenous Digital Storytelling with Elders and Youth.” The format of this particular article is a performance—the authors examine the (re)construction and processes undertaken in group community projects. In its critical ethnography, the article is not only co-authored but is also self-referential regarding the process of how community-based projects work with museums and schools to produce films relevant to communities. Film projects and media are building a web of knowledge sharing, allowing for Native people not only to control the image presented of the self but also to create a nexus of new knowledges.

Native performances imagine different sets of power relations between Native people and settlers by presenting us with complicated visions that, rather than distance themselves from pop culture and its wooden Indian figures, cannabilize it, producing an imagined and imaginary in their visual sovereignty. Native youth, for instance, enact their responsibilities as Native youth, members of their communities, and citizens of the world. By accentuating Native community issues and placing those issues in a larger context, they draw participants into their struggles by advocating for collaborative politics, thus reminding their audience that the consequences of these issues will profoundly impact all of our material conditions. Benally’s focus on media as education is important, and, as he

states, “folks in ‘radical’ communities who don’t understand their locations in indigenous struggles or articulate their positions in them, they are complicit to the ongoing colonization of our people.”<sup>18</sup> Benally, in his performances, opens up new possibilities for Native youth, insisting that Native youth “turn negative into positive, be productive. We can make the world a better place.”<sup>19</sup> In this youth work, they are not merely making Indians visible and their worldviews digestible, but they use their craft and teach others to create a collaborative social justice politics among various peoples. This is the potential and power of indigenous performance.

Newer films with the latest technologies (or maybe especially because of them) continue to rehash the plots—inheriting romanticized images of Indians—that burgeoned with the mass circulation of dime-store novels that would eventually become nickel movies. Although the director James Cameron visited indigenous peoples in the Amazon—people whose lands are being flooded in the name of progress—his film *Avatar* grossed billions from the tired trope of vicious “colonizer” and “adopted” white savior. Even though the movie appealed to a new environmental awareness, somehow it does not translate into fighting for the rights of indigenous people in the Amazon who face mass destruction, people whose lands are an important part of the world’s ecosystem. Chris Finley’s “Violence, Genocide, and Captivity: Exploring Cultural Representations of Sacajawea as a Universal Mother of Conquest” roots out the relationship between American power and masculine desire in the popular film *Night at the Museum* (2006); it is so powerful that Theodore Roosevelt’s gaze facilitates the Indian model of Sacagawea to come to life. It is Roosevelt’s (Robin Williams’s) gaze followed by the spectator’s eye that continues the fraught romantic trope of Indian-white

relations, emptying out colonial violence and political realities. In this case, it was Roosevelt who defended the Dawes Act as “a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass.”<sup>20</sup> These contemporary simulations of Indians, just like Curtis’s early 1900 plates, are entangled in networks of power and capitalism. Indigenous simulations and performances have always been engaged in these circuits of capitalism and power structures.

Yet these popular and overrepresented hypersexualized phantasmagorias encourage a critical examination of the ways in which we, as Native people, are entangled in these images. The goal of this special edition is to examine the power of looking or being looked at along with the gazes’ and indigenous performances’ ambivalence at times, power of refusal, intricate meanings, and often-unexpected outcomes. With the exciting burgeoning of Native-produced histories, films, performances, musicians, and visual art, I believe it is timely to push theorizing around indigenous performances in order to gain a better understanding of the “circuits of cultural artifacts,” a term coined by Stuart Hall, to get at the discursive processes of representation by which “we give objects, people and events meaning by the frameworks of interpretation which we bring to them.”<sup>21</sup> Part of the productivity in delving into the meanings and interpretations of Native performances is redefining those terms that have become cliché. Kara Keeling notes that cliché, “when directed onto a perception . . . continues an arrested movement.” She distinguishes this from common sense:

My understanding that common-sense is a collective set of memory-images recognizes that a mental movement is involved in cinematic perception and that this movement . . . can become habituated or

“common.” I use the word *common* to mean “of or relating to community at large” and not as an intellectual judgment wherein it is counterposed with a higher form of rationality. I insist on thinking about common-sense not as a moment in the teleology of Reason, but as the condition of possibility for the emergence of alternate knowledges.<sup>22</sup>

In “Rabbits and Flying Warriors: The Post-Indian Imagery of Jim Denomie,” David Martinez, for instance, redefines *Indian humor* as that which is not an essential character but emerges from what Keeling terms as a “collective set of memory-images.”<sup>23</sup> Through Martinez’s examination of Jim Denomie’s visual art as “alternate knowledges” and its seeming contradictions, he complicates the definition of *Indian humor* as “contingent on one’s familiarity with Indian society, which does not necessarily mean that one has to be ‘traditional’ in order to appreciate it; rather, one has to have had the experience of interacting with a variety of Indian people, by virtue of which one becomes familiar with their hopes, struggles and travails.”<sup>24</sup> In Denomie’s art work, his production of “alternative knowledges . . . are capable of organizing social life and existence in various ways.”<sup>25</sup> Play in indigenous performances, which address the stereotypes rather than try to avoid them or point to “an” indigenous “Truth” (capital “T” intended), produces approaches that allow for the often-contradictory contemporary context of indigenous people living in an unpredictable world.

In her piece *Godi'nigoha': The Women's Mind*, Mohawk intellectual Deborah Doxtator sums up what is at stake in addressing the performance of indigeneity in its myriad forms and locations: “Perhaps some of the biggest lies that we are asked to believe as Native women are the insignificant place we can expect to have within the

‘real’ industrially conceptualized world and that our own world has disappeared.”<sup>26</sup> A large component of the “lies” that we are taught—and here I mean Native and non-Native peoples—stem from photography, television, film, YouTube, illustrations, dime-store novels, Harlequin romances, academic books, and a long line of other technologies in making Native people objects or things in the service of settler citizenship, settler colonialism, and US imperialism. The youth films created at the Taala Hogan Infoshop are indicative of the power of the indigenous media to redirect our efforts by putting forth contemporary realities of Native youth. These alternative forms of knowledge production imagine new possibilities and wider communities in which we all have something at stake. Although film as a source of creating awareness to indigenous issues is possible, there are many such sites/sights that also draw in and complicate the pop cultural gaze on imagined Indians.

This edition is a step to disrupt the frames of settler colonialism, not merely to uncover the “false” depictions of Indians in order to replace them with more “accurate” or “truthful” representations or authentic performances but also to examine the complex power relations that rely on assumptions about Native/indigenous peoples to uphold exploitive structures of settler states. The visual “replacement narratives” produced by Curtis monumentalize a nostalgic and invented past and a modernity in which Native peoples’ past and presence are absent. Jean M. O’Brien speaks to the consequence of the “creation of replacement narratives [that] permeated the very process of literary and historical production” so necessary in New Englanders’ claims to modernity, which depended on creating discourses of Indians who were “vanquished and replaced on the land.”<sup>27</sup> The replacement narrative also saturates the performances of settler societies and

produces the way that we “see” Native people in settler societies: “Ideas surrounding these acts of memory making and place making participate in the production and reproduction of assumptions about Indians.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, as the articles from various disciplines suggest, a close examination of how and why these images remain entrenched in the imaginations of all our communities must be addressed. Indigenous performances are a part of daily power struggles in a multiple array of locations: from historical narratives that naturalize conquest and erase violence, such as those taught in our children’s classroom in which California Indians benignly “helped” build the missions, to capital markets such as New Age stores, Ralph Lauren designs, or tattoo artists that rip off Native designs, to the flip discourse of everyday life in which the history and meaning of words become decontextualized, such as in “off-reservation” or “powwow” comments that all too often find themselves in sitcoms. These colonial logics are performed in the most seemingly benign and most overly exalted of places.

One aspect that resounds throughout this edition is the use of settler visuals and monuments to produce place and create citizens fomented in the construction of a settler history. In her analysis of visual artist Rebecca Belmore, “(Re)mapping the Colonized Body: The Creative Interventions of Rebecca Belmore in the Cityscape,” Julie Nagam argues that colonial place-making enacts violence on indigenous bodies and land. Nagam argues that Belmore’s performance art calls forth neocolonialism, which Canada does not want visible in its self-proclamation as a benevolent liberal democracy. The audiences, consisting of people on the streets of Toronto who are strolling through their everyday lives, are a necessary part of not only the actual event’s performance but also the performance of settler colonialism on a daily basis. By reconstructing the Canadian

metropole from the replacement narrative of commemorated civilizing processes to performing the place from which violence against indigenous bodies and land proceeds, Nagam complicates the entwined relationships among the city, rural, reserve, and First Nations–settler relationships. Nagam’s examination of Belmore’s embodied public art accounts for the “living histories of the indigenous bodies and bones that are buried beneath the ground of cityscapes.”<sup>29</sup> Belmore’s performance (re)maps landscapes, histories, and temporalities.

Controlling temporality has a tremendous political and social force, as we have seen in the influence of the Curtis photos. As Elizabeth Freedman states, “temporality is a mode of implantation through which institutional forces come to seem like somatic facts.”<sup>30</sup> Much of the “facts” about Indians are implemented through received Histories-with-a-capital-H. Indians and indigenous people come to be defined by a performance of temporality. Noelani Arista’s “Captive Women in Paradise 1796–1826: The *Kapu* on Prostitution in Hawaiian Historical Legal Context” complicates the historical grand narrative of Hawaiian colonization and thus problematizes the ongoing renditions of Hawaii as paradise. She addresses the historic performances of Native Hawaiians as they sought to maintain sovereignty and control in Hawaii from 1796 to 1826. Although not a visual piece or even a location that we might consider as performance, Arista uses the archive as a site to inspect not only the performances of the historical moment but also how the history of Hawaii is written in such a way as to enact a settler performance. Hawaii, in Arista’s discussion, becomes a consistently reiterated fantasy playground of islands and available women; these reiterations and circulated images sustain settler performances, erode the violence of ongoing occupation, and become a source for

citational practices. In utilizing her archival training and cultural knowledge of Hawaiian language and customs, Arista accesses an important archive that moves beyond the English-only documents that perform a certain narrative of Hawaiian history. The Hawaiian language documents unrest settler histories and contests the circulating images that continue to picture Hawaii as a discovered paradise and exotic land that is up for grabs. In doing so, she resists the replacement narratives and logics of settler colonialism found in such popular texts as James A. Michener's *Hawaii* (1959). She provides a way to examine the archive, much as Ann Stoler does in *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (2008), and exposes "grids of intelligibility [that] were fashioned from uncertain knowledge" and the "tone and temper they [official documents] convey [about] the rough interior ridges of governance and disruptions to the deceptive clarity of its mandates."<sup>31</sup> Arista gestures to how these historic performances of colonizers' and Native Hawaiians' *kapu*, or spoken law that is localized and specific to situations, become manifest in current depictions of Hawaii largely through "the desire for a union (and a narrative to naturalize it) on the part of the US that longed to own the 'aina (land) which it had claimed before the world as its *casus belli* on December 8, 1941."<sup>32</sup> Arista provides us with a narrative that accounts for "complex personhood" and Native Hawaiian "desires" in relation to dealing with various foreign entities. Rather than just refute the stereotype or assert that the colonial historians "just got it wrong," by taking another "look" at the archive in relation to desire and gendered colonial politics, Arista provides a stunning account of a complex political moment, in which gendered performances became key to the ways in which Hawaii still performs in the role of US empire.

Exploring the Native performance in relation to History-with-a-capital-H provides us an opportunity to replace the cliché, or that which is taken from its context and ambiguously circulated until the origin of its meaning becomes something else. In “Blood Memory and the Arts: Indigenous Genealogies and Imagined Truths,” Nancy Mithlo examines genealogy and the body in the contemporary visual art of Marcella Ernest (Bad River Chippewa) and Tom Jones (Ho-Chunk). The ongoing reality of colonization in everyday lives and its ongoing capabilities of separating one from his/her tribal origins are provocatively positioned in her article. Mithlo analyzes the aesthetics incorporated in these artists’ work that push us beyond the normalized debates of cultural authenticity and Native people. The nuance of identity performance in art, according to Mithlo, “provides the means to craft meaningful appraisals. . . . This work is something that a purely cognitive consideration of identity alone cannot accomplish.”<sup>33</sup> This article interacts nicely with Arista’s work, in relation to the often-mistranslated *kapu*, because it recovers the importance of genealogy; it decidedly focuses on the complex understanding of how blood comes to be a performative marker of the indigenous and a key to the biopolitics of settler colonialism. These artists refuse to be quantified or erased by settler logics that demand the erasure, purity, and phantasm of a constructed “Indian” and instead use relations to land, relatives, and even fragmented memories in order to reclaim Native presence. In this way, Mithlo debates blood’s performance as a disciplining power yet also troubles how it becomes incorporated in Native communities in order to divide as well as unite. A biopolitics of blood memory is elaborated through the performance and disassemblage of the simulations of the Native. By pulling blood together in the context

of visual sovereignty, Mithlo raises important questions about postmodern approaches to indigenous art.

The power of blood discourses to create meaning—in its visibility and invisibility—is perhaps why it is a reoccurring theme for visual and performance artists. It is the trope that, although it holds no biological rational and is only empirical in its record keeping, it continues to have real-world effects on Native people from a variety of communities—even those who don't typically use the US standards of blood quantum laws—and on settlers' property rights. It is an interesting quandary to focus our attention on that which lies under the skin, that which even when drawn has no absolute visual marker, but yet it is used incessantly in politics and in our social worlds. Kim Tallbear's work on blood, DNA, and racial ideology in relation to assumed "objective science" confirms that "science cannot prove an individual's identity as a member of a cultural entity such as a tribe; it can only reveal one individual's genetic inheritance or partial inheritance. The two are not synonymous."<sup>34</sup> Blood becomes the thing that becomes disinvested from its historical use as a biopolitical tool of settler management; it becomes the performed "real" measure of indigeneity, along with the performance of temporality. The visual sight/site of this marker of "belonging" demands a performance quality to it—for surely it is the performance of blood quantum not actual blood that matters. As Tallbear warns, the performance of blood politics can often "perpetuate racial ideology": "It is to accept that the blood of races are somehow fixed and divided, rather than being asserted as part of a political and ideological stance."<sup>35</sup> Blood performances have become part of an assertion of indigenous politics. Lani Teves's "'Bloodline Is All I Need': Defiant Indigeneity and Hawaiian Hip Hop" draws this out and further complicates the

performance of blood in indigenous-produced mediums by addressing the popular culture modes of Native Hawaiian hip hop artist Krystilez and the occupation of Hawaii. Teves not only interrogates Krystilez's mode of drawing attention to the problem of "bloodline" in both its uses and misuses but also questions what it means in a web of wider relations. Namely, how does his performance of hip hop problematically appropriate a contemporary blackface and misogyny in order to make visible Native land claims? Rather than dismiss this artist, however, Teves complicates the performance of indigeneity in hip hop by delving into the history of blood and Hawaiian homelands and the power of performance to claim them both. But the manufacture of any visible subject already constructed as different, and incorporating assemblages of differences, is complicated or burdened. How does the play between the legibility in blackness and the illegibility of the Native by the state operate in these moments? It is not enough to be visible, because that does not necessarily erase the history of the invisibility of Native politics, but we must find the venues that challenge the structures of domination and control that render only certain versions of Native people visible in the first place. Krystilez's performance should not be dismissed for its flaws. Instead, engaging the productive possibilities of the performance will aid us in understanding the interlinking oppressive settler modes, such as colonialism, orientalism, black bodies as black labor, and heteropatriarchy.

Confronting heteropatriarchy is a common theme throughout the articles because gendered performances are instrumental to the structures of the settler colonial state. Although Teves speaks to the gendered performance of Hawaiian hip hop as claiming space and homeland, Aileen Moreton-Robinson examines the way whiteness and the

national constructed Digger and surfer bodies dispossess aboriginal peoples, literally and figuratively, in “Bodies that Matter: Performing White Possession on the Beach.” Teves and Moreton-Robinson both work to reclaim the beach as Native land. Moreton-Robinson, for instance, turns the blood trope and masculine performance discussed in Teves to a much-needed focus on white possession and white male bodies claiming legitimacy as “first” inhabitants and thus an Australia that is seemingly a legitimate settler state. Moreton-Robinson examines the historic mobilization of the white body throughout settler history, predominantly in the homage paid to the Digger. The performance of the Digger is akin to a performance of first rights, and thus a critical analysis of white performance is an important step to unpack and unfound the claims of the Australian state as a legitimate entity. She takes the beach as a site where cultural “norms” became constituted during colonization through white embodiment, displacing aborigines from their territories and regulating them to the inner realm of Australia. Moreton-Robinson’s work with Aboriginal artist Vernon Ah Kee’s *CANTCHANT* creates a dissonance in the visual embodiment of settler-state imaginaries, and in doing so it is provocative in its affective sovereignty. Performance does a great deal of work in creating dissonance between our received notions of legitimate white subjects and colonial histories, thus creating possibilities of repossessing temporalities and genealogies.

Rather than exist outside white heteronormativity as discussed by Moreton-Robinson, Native communities in settler societies are profoundly impacted by its “normative” citational practices. In his article “Two-Spirits, *Nádleeh*, and LGBTQ2 Navajo Gaze,” Gabriel Estrada raises key and timely questions about the incorporation of

sexist heteronormative practices in our Native nations and the violences engendered as a result. Estrada presents us with an important intervention in Native cinema, namely queer Native documentaries' power to engage with tribal nations and communities. The visual narratives upset discourses of Native heteronormativity while addressing the difficult issues that Native lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit (LGBTQ2) people face in the making of straight Indians, such as exclusion of membership, cultural, and bodily rights.<sup>36</sup> These performances question the ingestion of statist norms in Native communities that are utilized to discipline Native bodies, particularly in relation to sexuality. Again, the biopolitics of indigeneity are used to discipline, this time in terms of relationships between peoples and between peoples and their communities. The work of these films is pivotal in imagining Native sovereignty beyond an incorporation of nation-state-defined sovereignty based on settler heteropatriarchy. These films, and Estrada's analysis, not only increase the visibility of transgendered Natives but also establish modes of potential activist collaborations. "Cinemas of sovereignty," a "seductive" term coined by Randolph Lewis, makes clear that film can push the limits of legal sovereignty as it is based on "authority," "autonomy," and "accountability."<sup>37</sup> While speaking of the cinema of sovereignty in relation to foundational filmmaker Alanis Obswamsin, whose work documenting state violence has been pivotal to Native films and communities since the 1970s, it is useful to think about the production of films that abound by Native artists who work in and with communities that want to exert control over the images locally so that their daily lives will improve. Like Lewis, I agree that we need to go beyond "survival filmmaking" and think about producing cinemas of sovereignty; however, I caution that we carefully think through the practice of sovereignty that excludes

marginalized members in its community. Indigenous filmmaking can, however, redirect goals and produce new socialities that are very important in imagining and producing healthy futures for indigenous peoples.

These articles bring a critical awareness to many issues that face Native communities, to new artists, and to the internalizing of heteronormative and state constructions of indigeneity in a self-destructive manner that furthers settler goals. Much work is left to do in the fields of Native American, American Indian, and indigenous studies, and even more work is left in the fields of visual studies, film studies, and cultural studies that must examine the performative sites (such as those discussed in these articles) as supporting settler colonialism. This special issue is only a gesture toward a minutia of interventions that critical examinations of the visual may produce and new knowledges that might arise as it becomes easier to access forms of Native performances. It is my hope, that as we grow as a field in indigenous studies that the visual constructions of the settler state, and what I term the *visual terrain of settler geography*, will be unpacked through careful examinations of the archives, artists, and everyday performances of indigeneity. Frantz Fanon, in speaking to the affective positioning of the colonized subject, states, “As soon as I desire, I am asking to be considered.” This quote reminds us of the power of indigenous performance to open up possibilities in the complex state of settler colonialism.<sup>38</sup>

## Notes

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1. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 218.
  2. See, e.g., <http://www.npr.org/blogs/pictureshow/2011/03/09/134394893/smiling-indians-depicts-a-lighter-side-of-native-americans> (accessed May 11, 2011).
  3. *Smiling Indians*, directed by Sterlin Harjo and Ryan Red Corn (USA: 1491's, 2011), <http://1491s.com/?p=24> (accessed May 11, 2011).

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4. Ibid.
  5. Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999), 163.
  6. Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Penguin, 1984), 357.
  7. Judith Butler's process of citationality is a way of reworking the performative. It rests on "cited" practices of power, in this case the repetitive images and process that have formed the image of the Indian. A citational politics, such as the 1491's short *Smiling Indians*, is a "reworking of abjection into political agency." It resignifies meanings, not merely to create a "reverse-discourse" or produce a "normative" Indian—one that speaks as a "True" Indian—but also to conceive performance as "assisting a radical resignification of the symbolic domain, deviating the citational chain toward a more plausible future to expand the very meaning of what counts as a valued and valuable body in the world." See Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 13, 22.
  8. Ibid., 22.
  9. Edward S. Curtis, Gerald Hausman, and Bob Kapoun, *Prayer to the Great Mystery: The Uncollected Writings and Photography of Edward Curtis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), xix.
  10. Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matter* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1997), 4–5.
  11. Ibid., 5.
  12. Michelle Raheja coins the term *redfacing* in *Reservation Reelism* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 2010) to discuss the complexity of indigenous performance and its ideological work, particularly in the context and history of the cinema. *Playing Indian*, an important term used by Phil Deloria, connotes the way that indigenous performance by colonists "define[d] custom and imagine[d] themselves a legitimate part of the continent's history." See Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 25.
  13. Raheja, *Reservation Reelism*, 12.
  14. Grace Hong, *The Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color Feminism and the Culture of Immigrant Labor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 20–21.
  15. E.g., the military operation that killed terrorist Osama Bin Laden, named Geronimo Enemy Killed in Action (EKIA), is evident of the misuse of Native images in American patriotism. The 1491's productive rebuttal to the anger many Native people felt was to produce the video *Geronimo, E-KIA*, which was found on YouTube and then circulated widely throughout Indian country and beyond. The reverberations of Geronimo's image for Native people are reflected in these ending lines, "We chase his legacy / not his truth. / Neither will be caught, / but one of them can be made up." Directed by Ryan Red Corn and Dallas Goldtooth (USA: 1491's, 2011), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7vKu7X4aNA> (accessed June 8, 2011).
  16. See picture story at <http://www.savethepeaks.org/> (accessed May 11, 2011).
  17. Bruce Duthu, *American Indians in the Law* (New York: Penguin Group, 2008), 82–90. Duthu provides compelling passages from the Supreme Court in which popular misconceptions of Indians guide the law.
  18. Interview with Klee Benally, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2U3NXO3o-hA> (accessed June 13, 2011).
  19. Stephanie Urso Spina, ed., *Smoke and Mirrors: The Hidden Context of Violence in Schools and Society* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 127.

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20. Theodore Roosevelt, *First Annual Message*, December 3, 1901; see <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3773> (accessed June 21, 2011).
21. Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 3.
22. Kara Keeling, *The Witches Flight: The Black Femme and the Image of Common Sense* (Raleigh, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 19.
23. Ibid.
24. David Martinez, "Rabbits and Flying Warriors: The Post-Indian Imagery of Jim Denomie," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011): XX.
25. Ibid.
26. Deborah Doxtator, *Godi'nigoha': The Women's Mind* (Brantford, ON: Woodland Cultural Centre, 1997).
27. Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010), 4.
28. Ibid., 56.
29. Julie Nagam, "(Re)Mapping the Colonized Body: The Creative Interventions of Rebecca Belmore in the Cityscape," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011): XX.
30. Elizabeth Freedman, "Introduction," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, nos. 2–3 (2007): 159–76.
31. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 2.
32. Noelani Arista, "Captive Women in Paradise 1796–1826: The *Kapu* on Prostitution in Hawaiian Historical Legal Context," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011): XX.
33. Nancy Mithlo, "Blood Memory and the Arts: Indigenous Genealogies and Imagined Truths," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011): XX.
34. Kimberley Tallbear, "DNA, Blood, and Racializing the Tribe," *Wicazo Sa Review* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 81–107. Also, for more work on the importance of blood and its incorporation into indigenous ideologies, see Chadwick Allen, *Blood Narrative: Indigenous Identity in American Indian and Maori Literary and Activist Texts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002) and Circe Sturm, *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
35. Tallbear, "DNA, Blood, and Racializing the Tribe," 96.
36. See Mark Rifkin, *When Did Indians Become Straight: Kinship, the History of Sexuality, and Native Sovereignty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
37. Randolph Lewis, "The New Navajo Cinema: Cinema and Nation in the Indigenous Southwest," *The Velvet Trap* 66 (Fall 2010): 50–61.
38. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 218.