

What Is Settler Colonialism? (for Leo Delano Ames Jr.) [Abstract]
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The question that titles this article is deceptively simple. It invites answers that do not, and cannot, exist. One can only address the remainder of a settler colonial project, particularly one as successful as the United States. It is impossible to write about that which cannot be known, and yet there is an ethical imperative to do so. In looking for answers to the question of settler colonialism, I have only a narrative, one that tries to resist the seduction of identity-based claims and yet writes through and pauses on identity's shadows, reversals, and ambivalences. The intimacy and obligation of what Gayatri Spivak has called ghostwriting, and the expectation of failure entailed within it, animates this piece of writing. The ghosts here are not only my grandfather, his mother, or my Native American and Palestinian comrades, family members, and loved ones. The ghosts are everything that happens in the act of writing itself, the affective registers of documenting, living, dying, and struggling with the question and the successes of settler colonialism.

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