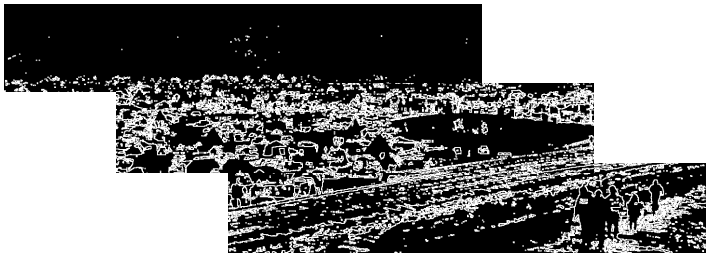
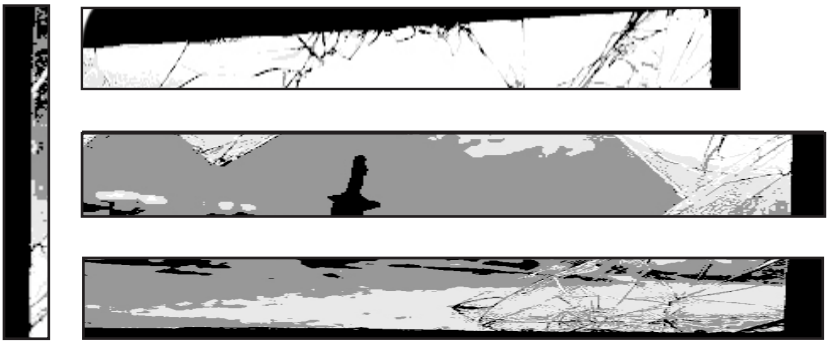
Why Don't We Get Out Of Here Together?

Resistant words against colonialism and white supremacy.
Towards an insurgent and lived anti-racism.



From the occupied territory of so-called Australia.
Stolen land, never ceded.

With respect for 230+ years of Aboriginal resistance and in solidarity with these struggles today and for however many tomorrows.



About

All articles published here originally from:
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Ideas that (hopefully) contribute towards confronting racism, white supremacy and colonialism. Searching for an anti-racism that is uncomfortable and insurgent.

Currently living in Naarm, on the lands of Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations. Previously based in the lands of the Gadigal and Wangal people of the Eora Nation.

Words of a brown migrant in a racist, colonial country. Trying to make sense and cleave a different path in how we resist and upturn these things.

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Resistance from Beyond the Coloniser State:

reflections from a few days at the DjabWurrung Heritage Protection Embassy

(from my notebook): *The embassy is spread across three camp sites, each a few kilometres apart. It is a beautiful stretch of bush, a land signposted by awesome gums with secret hollows and gnarly limbs - the sacred birthing trees of the DjabWarrung people. You feel the presence of history in this country, of lives having passed through here for millenia, existing in symbiosis with everything this landscape provides. And all fully framed by the stunning, imposing presence of the sandstone outcrops and ranges known as Gariwerd. The highway cuts through like a scar, and the state of Victoria now intends to prise it open, creating a seeping, exposed wound.*

DjabWurrung Heritage Protection Embassy[1] stands as a blockage against the incessant flow of colonising, state violence that attempts to wash away all trace of the cultural and environmental custodianship that Aboriginal people claim over this land. In this moment, that violence takes a most banal form – a state infrastructure project to widen the already existing highway between Melbourne and Adelaide. This would eradicate a site of sacred importance to the DjabWurrung people, including an 800 year old birthing tree that has seen over 50 generations born in the hollow of its trunk.

Whether colonising violence takes the form of banal infrastructure projects, voracious resource extraction, barely-disguised policies of assimilation or direct, brutal repression, the resistance of Indigenous people here, and around the world, takes on the urgency of a fight for cultural and bodily survival. It becomes a radical imperative for those of us who aren't Indigenous to act in solidarity with these struggles. However, in the face of such an onslaught, it often becomes difficult to see that such anti-colonial resistance contains an element beyond the immediate necessity to defend what's left and beyond restitution for the damages of colonisation. These struggles are also, more often than not, generative. That is, they foment the necessary conditions – outside of state control – to create collectively lived moments in the present that demonstrate potential ways out of the mess we find ourselves in. DjabWurrung Embassy is exemplary of this.

1. https://dwembassy.com/

the primacy of Indigenous struggle

One of the moments that has stuck with me from spending time at DjabWurrung was when Traditional Owner D.T. Zellenach asserted that this struggle was the center, the frontline. I wanted to ask what his full meaning was in saying that, but I figured that there were more immediate, important matters to attend to. The urgency of preparing to defend this sacred site and the birthing trees from destruction is enough to encapsulate the need to center this campaign. But I also felt that there were other layers that Zellenach was alluding to, a possible reference to unceasing ecological crises, the ravages of colonisation and capitalism that exploits and diminishes all of our lives and the environments that we exist in. So while the DjabWurrung Embassy has specific roots that determine it's importance in the here and now, it is also the center because it is a manifestation of resistance and alternative possibilities to the totalising, empty lifeworlds that capitalist, colonisation has spawned. Or rather it is one center, because this frontline is dispersed, taking new shapes in many different places: from the Ihumatao in Aotearoa to Mauna Kea in Hawai'i to Unist'ot'en and Standing Rock on Turtle Island and from those sites to everywhere*.

It has been interesting to note that, while the DjabWurrung campaign is about protecting trees, it is recognised and understood as being an Indigenous struggle around land and culture and not simply another environmental campaign. From my experience, this is rare in so-called Australia and reflects that it has been initiated and determined by the Traditional Owners themselves. This is an important shift in emphasis that contains a far greater radical potential. Environmental struggles are often too narrow in focus and mostly exist within a white, liberal framework of 'justice' that fails to properly account for the full scope of colonisation in the present. Yet, in being the center, DjabWurrung is also an environmental campaign. It stands as an alternative way to relate to and protect the environment which the colonisers simply never understood, or cared enough about, as it wasn't based in extracting maximum value. Now that the ravenous accumulation of colonisation and capitalism has provoked nothing short of endless crises, it is these sites of Indigenous land defence that will be at the core of any resistance, both for the necessity of staving off further catastrophe, but also because of the pre-emptive, intimate knowledge of country that has been retained.

When we come to recognise the primacy of Indigenous, anti-colonial struggle, it becomes increasingly evident that within these struggles a range of issues tied to the oppressive functioning of capitalism coalesce: exploitative resource/profit extraction (all profit extraction is exploitative), racism and white supremacy, environmental degradation, etc. This is to say, that as well as our responsibility as settlers to be accomplices in anti-colonial resistance, we can also find in these moments the most encompassing revolutionary way forward. Hate the drudgery of work under capital? Start here. Pissed off at racist, white

Australia? Start here. Sick of misogyny and toxic masculinity? Start here. Care about the environment? Start here. This doesn't mean that none of these issues arise within anti-colonial struggles or that such struggles explicitly provide resolutions to them. Instead, centering our action and solidarity in Aboriginal resistance is a pushing off point, a place from which the interconnectedness of oppressive systems is plain and new angles of attack become apparent.

* And certainly many more sites of resistance through Africa, Asia and Central and South America that also have commonalities. However, I used these examples because they are the most direct parallel due to existing in other similar, settler-colonial countries. Open to being told that's too reductive though.

generating collectivity from a space beyond

Although tension about possible eviction and the need to prepare for a physical defence of the site underscored some of my days at DjabWurrung, the most radical aspect is based in a different form of action, the moments where a collective presence ensures the ongoing functioning of the camp. At camp we find ways to sustain ourselves and each other and maintain the space. Food is cooked communally, but anyone hungry is free to walk into the kitchen and sort themselves a snack. Drainage ditches are dug, cleaning is undertaken collectively. Smokes and rides are offered and shared. The fire becomes a gathering place for folk to listen and have conversations. It is at once a generative space of solidarity with, and learning from, First Nations people, a

space of intentional radical collective presence and an act of direct resistance.

What i'm trying to describe is how – apart from the immediate task of defending sacred sites – being at camp was also a radical refusal of the isolating numbness of liberal individualism and acted as a living alternative. It replicates in a physical space some of what Harsha Walia describes in the essay 'Decolonise Together':

> "Decolonisation is as much a process as a goal. It requires a profound re-centring of indigenous worldviews in our movements for political liberation, social transformation, renewed cultural kinships and the development of an economic system that serves rather than threatens our collective life on this planet".

A cynic might be critical of the significant presence (at least during the days where eviction seemed imminent) of urban hipsters from Melbourne's northern suburbs, but in this case I find it surprisingly easy to push that cynicism aside. Instead, I feel that it points to the radical weight that the embassy carries and that flourishes in the acts of communal functioning and support that underride it. Anti-colonial struggles, and all revolutionary struggle, will involve putting ourselves outside our comfort zones and people bursting the bubble of Melbourne's all too well-intentioned, pretence of progressivism to actually do something that is collective and uncomfortably radical (and dangerous) is a good thing.

DjabWurrung is a liberated place outside the control of the state – even if only temporarily. A space of radical (anti-colonial) rupture. It is no hippie commune, as it's existence is not about dropping out, but determined as an engaged act of

resistance against the ongoing destructiveness of colonisation. These moments of rupture are ghosts, flickering errors emanating from within. The presence is both solid and grounded (situated as a real camp, as part of an immediate campaign defending living trees and sacred sites), as well as ephemeral and general (an example of an idea that can be taken and tried out again in other places as parts of further acts of resistance). Such spaces of encounter are precious. They may be situated at a specific site or be transient places. We should seek to create them in our everyday lives and connect them them with each other as a base for our opposition to the systems of violence that have been imposed on us. They will be for the future, but just as importantly about sustaining us right now as we generate our capacities for solidarity, collectivity and resistance.

(mis)understanding police, the law and violence

There was a galvanising sense of bravery that circulated in camp as people prepared for possible eviction. In the meetings of accomplices (ie, made up almost entirely of non-Indigenous folk), people were willing to put themselves on the line, risking arrest and where this wasn't possible found other ways to conceive of their action that would serve the collective act of resistance. However, as part of steeling themselves for what was to come, there were endless questions about the line where actions became arrestable, wanting specific details about what words you could say to police, how many seconds you had, etc. This at times frustrated the facilitators, who understood the importance of sharing information about legal rights and outlining what generally happens in these situations, but did not want to present this as a formulaic process. It is not formulaic because the police are not bound by rigid understandings of 'right' ands are not neutral adjudicators. Also because different bodies will be policed in different ways. This, alongside a conception of non-violence that went beyond it being a tactical choice to being a morally superior one, reflected a failure to understand how violence functions in the context of the state and in the hands of the police.

I won't go into extended arguments around the state, policing and violence here because that might take away from the more important points i've been trying to make. Additionally, none of this is in opposition to the understanding that a tactical decision has been made by the Traditional Owners at DjabWurrung that our actions take the form of not being outwardly hostile or antagonistic even while attempting to block incursions by the state. I understand this choice to a large degree and, to the extent that I don't, I am able to respect it. Arguing against a liberal, state-centred delineation of violence/ non-violence is not equivalent to *always* arguing for 'violence'.

So, briefly... My main concern here isn't around tactics, it is around what ends up becoming a liberal ideological phantasm that the state generally presides

over and administers a neutral peace, while our infractions are the source of violence. This is wrongheaded. The state administers violence, often in banal forms, to ensure its totalising control. We take whatever necessary course of action to protect ourselves, look after each other and, hopefully, find a little peace. While I think that people at camp would generally recognise that, for example, state violence towards Aboriginal people is at the core of it's very existence (the need to eradicate Indigenous presence to assert its own sovereign possession of country), there remains a counter-intuitive tendency to hope that the state can be reformed to serve us and that individual police can be 'turned'. This is a misdirection. I'm willing to believe that most people at camp aren't running with this line for ideological reasons (although it certainly can be that), but rather because it is difficult to break from the comfort of what is known. But there is no way around having to step into the uncomfortable (and potentially dangerous) if we are interested in decolonisation.

I'll finish with a passage from white writer Natasha Lennard's essay 'Riots for Black Life' (from America, but relevant here):

> "Riotous protesters do not bring violence; the violence was there in the DNA of white supremacy and our world through which it permeates. Protester violence here is counter-violence in history's unbroken dialectic of violence and counter-violence. Even the rhetoric of police turning violent during a specific protest ignores that policing, as an institution in this country, functions as a force of consistent violence against black life".

*** With legal avenues exhausted, the threat of eviction at DjabWurrung is now ongoing. So far this has not eventuated, with the large numbers of people attending camp in solidarity a likely disincentive for the state. However, maintaining this presence will be crucial, so let's make plans to spend time there!

The Abyss Is Everywhere! There Is A Light!

Hope and dread from Christchurch to the end.

(Some thoughts and feels post-Christchurch on white supremacy, Islamophobia and eco-fascism after a few days of processing and conversations.)

Part 1

There is no good to come from this. There is no good to come from this. There is no good to come from this and there will be no 'but' as an appendage to that assertion. It's not like I needed to be thrown into an abyss. It's not like it took a white supremacist terrorist murdering 49 Muslims in a mosque in Christchurch to send me towards hopelessness about racism in this country. My nihilist tendencies already had me here and from here – with no real hope in things changing – I am content to foment my own little moments of resistance to this white supremacist, colonial state. But spare me the light that shines its harsh glare onto my futile, scrambling efforts.

And my Muslim friends! What do they expect you to believe? That it would take something like this to shake white Australia out of its incessant Islamophobia? Its white paranoia, white nationalism, white fragility, white, white, white... That this might be a sliver of hope to grasp *after* such events?

Like there hasn't been more than enough[1] in the last two decades (cut that, try again – last two centuries plus) for that shift to occur if it was going to. I am a person of colour, but my racial background means I haven't been on the pointy end of this country's racial hatred in the way you have (or in the way our Indigenous brothers and sisters have). But even still, I have enough experience and understanding of this place to know that whiteness won't disavow the power invested in its position simply on accord of its own 'good conscience'.

In the days since the terror attack I have admired the mix of stoicism and seething anger[2] I have seen from so many Muslim speakers and commentators. I've seen a new edge in how many of you put forth a challenge to white Australia – no longer will there be an asking for acceptance, no longer will there be an attempt to claim why you belong here, instead you (we) will just very much be

1. see Aamer Rahman, 'Ten Years Since Cronulla, Things Are Most Definitely Worse' from www.vice.com

2. see Faisal Al-Asaad, 'Today, We Mourn. Tomorrow, We Organise.', from overland.org.au and Randa Abdel-Fattah, 'We Told You the Threat is White Supremacy. You Ignored Us.' from www.alaraby.co.uk

here and will not sit back while white supremacists come at us, whether under the guise of 'everyday' racism or explosions of hate such as Christchurch. I've seen so many of you have the graciousness and insight to make the connections between this terror attack and, not just the last few decades of heightened Islamophobia, but the last few centuries of colonisation and white Australia.

I know that some of you still call for 'unity' and I understand why that is a necessity coming from a community that has been so under attack. But I won't so easily be able to accept hearing these calls for 'unity' out of the mouths of white people. From their position, unity can only mean a reversion to the comfortable normality that is the day-to-day white supremacy of this country – a normality that we (non-white migrants) are expected to assimilate to. They act like they gave us 'multiculturalism' out of their good nature, when it was nothing but a conjured narrative to cover the sins of their past. And now that we're confident enough to take the space we need – to be as we will be – their fragility is rising to the surface. They see us a threat in all spaces we occupy, and we know that when fragile whiteness feels threatened, it is us who will be endangered.

Many of you have indeed warned that this was coming. Many of us have felt that the next outburst of racist violence was imminent. It wasn't hard to read the signs[3]. This polarisation existed long before March 15th, 2019. It has been nurtured by white paranoia[4] not, as they will claim, by our incapacity to 'integrate'. Maybe a part of me misses the naive hope of 'unity', of a big umbrella that covers us all. But if so, that part of me is remaining extraordinarily silent these days. Instead, I accept the lines that have been drawn by white supremacy. But I will not call this the 'good' that comes from white terrorism, it is simply the state of things. Still, I'm glad that we're on the same side of this line. There'll even be a few white people join us – pushed out of the middling, complacent centre. Even on this side, we need not assume we'll be one easy, unified group. Instead we'll need to be able accept the discomfort that will be provoked by the differences and disagreements between us.

Part 2

I hope you are well.

I know that as March 15th, 2019 approached some of you had invested a sneaky portion of hope in a movement that would be taking to the streets[5]. After all these years we've spent searching for an opening that we might dive into, tunnelling in subterranean networks, hoping to undermine and topple this whole catastrophic edifice only to hit the next dead-end, it makes sense to find a bit of light and come up for air. I can see why schoolkids walking out of

3. https://slackbastard.anarchobase.com/?p=44339
4. https://www.ajds.org.au/2018/08/ajds-rejects-andrew-bolts-white-supremacist-attack/
5. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2019/mar/15/global-climate-strike-students-take-to-the-streets-in-pictures

class for a climate strike might seem like both a beacon and an oxygen mask. I couldn't be invested in the same way, but I'm a cynic and I'm running a bit too short on hope to be doling it out.

Still, I'm sorry that how this day turned out would so brutally shatter that hope. I mightn't have shared it with you, but I did share the despair and sorrow for the dead that you felt, as well as concern for the Muslim community who, it seems, will just not be allowed to get on with living as they wish, due to serving as the necessary scapegoat for fragile racists everywhere.

I have to admit that I also felt a little haunted about how some of us had, just 4 days earlier, in an open discussion about climate change, been talking about the danger of environmentalism and sustainability politics in this country finding common cause with anti-immigration and white nationalist sentiment. That so soon after this chat, the self-described eco-fascist would strike. Of course, despite its shortcomings, I do not believe that it was the environmental movement that spat forth the white supremacist terrorist. He was simply and entirely a product of the trajectory of Islamophobia, racism and white nationalism in this country.

What haunts me about that conversation isn't that it seems so prescient in hindsight, but how abstract it was. That it reflected more a sense of dread about possible futures, instead of what already exists. That, despite being able to genuinely say that what happened in Christchurch doesn't surprise me – echoing the sentiment of so many Muslims since – it still was shocking. Shocking because of its capacity to erupt time, to scatter the future into fragments that can't be grasped because of the overwhelming reality of the present.

So: hope and dread.

I'm stealing the words of a friend who, in the hours after the terrorist massacre, would aptly relate a sentiment of how in these times of crises and precarity, hope and dread seem to live alongside each other. I liked this framing, but it also presents a problem of time – that these are emotions that are all tangled up in a sense of how things will be in the future. And in this moment, there is no time for the future.

In this moment, maybe we will have to admit that there is some temporal distance in our causes? Fighting climate change seems to be about an affective investment in the future: dread at the potential coming catastrophe or hope about the possibility of unifying enough people to find an effective way to pull the brakes. Fighting racism, colonialism and white supremacy is a demand of the present. It makes no promises of a 'feelgood' unifying nature. It is often enough reactive, because pushing back is all we have, creating a bit of space to breathe.

That's not to say that there is no 'future' element to such struggles, of course they are potentially constitutive of a hoped for anti-racist and de-colonised society. However, we also know that it is a regular refrain to tell us that things

are changing and that we must wait. But we need only look at the struggles of Aboriginal folk to see that questions of racism and colonisation[6] cannot be subsumed by the promise of the future. We need only look at the normalisation of white supremacy[7] in the mainstream to see that we must be fighting back now. Or if we didn't see these things, if we only talked about abstract futures, Christchurch came hurtling through our door to knock us back into the present.

So, I'll keep at you my white friends (and everyone else), insisting that in all struggles that you partake, anti-racism, anti-colonisation and a rejection of all tenets of white supremacy need to be at the very core because up till now ALL politics in this country are defined foremostly by racism and white supremacy. These things can't be treated as some add-on in a list of oppressions. They can't be put off to some future day.

Because when climate activists tell us that their issue is more urgent than anything else and that we must put aside all other differences, we must tell them not that they are paving the road to fascism, but that their rhetoric in the immediate moment is fascistic. When they give space to the sort of sustainability politics that delve into over-population and anti-immigration ideas, we must tell them not that they risk forming alliances with racists and white nationalists, but that, in this country, they are right now propagating racism and white nationalism. And ultimately, we must recognise that all environmental politics in this country should be based in solidarity with Indigenous struggles for sovereignty and self-determination in the here and now.

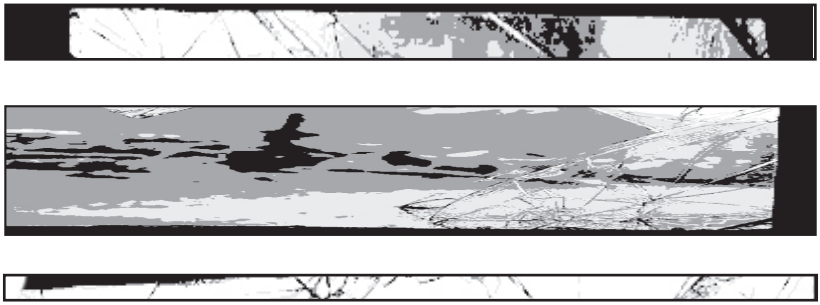
To finish, I'll return to the climate strike and some of the optimism that surrounded it, the space and type of exposure that it was given. Because another friend reminded me how the previous time there had been a high-school student strike was 15 years ago, around when the Iraq war was starting. Back then, a bunch of brown kids (many Muslims) from the suburbs had come to the city to protest the war and things got rowdy and the cops got hectic, as they tend to do with brown kids from the suburbs.

Those brown kids 15 years ago never had the option of falling back on a respectability politics that the climate strike could (and no, this isn't the fault of those kids participating in the climate strike). They weren't the hope of future generations, they were the immediate pain of racism and colonisation tearing through the streets, unconstrained. Most of the exposure around that moment was about the danger they posed, the violence that they would bring. And it is because of race. And it is because people of colour aren't expected or allowed to take up space and assert ourselves. Except that increasingly we are. In the present. And it feels dangerous to white society because we were always expected to simply, obediently wait for the future.

6. see 'Indigenous children's removal on the rise 21 years after Bringing Them Home' and 'Deaths Inside: Indigenous Australians deaths in custody' from www.theguardian.com/au
7. https://junkee.com/sky-news-blair-cottrell/170444

Settler / Migrant

reckoning with settler-hood as a brown migrant in a racist country.



The first time I heard a non-white migrant use the word 'settler' to describe all other non-white migrants in so-called Australia, I recoiled at this naming that felt so unfamiliar to my experience. I didn't associate with being a settler because that term seemed to place me within the same racialised group as white people – and I had my own familiarity facing their racist hostility.

In any case, the discomfort of that moment provoked some thinking on my part, as well as a few conversations with Aboriginal people, non-indigenous people of colour and white folk. After initially feeling that my position as a brown migrant bore no relation to white colonialism, it became apparent that for many Aboriginal people it most certainly did. Dispossession from country, loss of access to resources, and the struggle to hold onto cultural forms are all ongoing effects of an unceasing colonisation that remains in full swing. While racial power in this country is still specifically invested in whiteness, there are significant material benefits that non-indigenous people of colour have been able to access as an effect of colonisation.

There seems lately to have been a significant amount of writing and discussion by non-indigenous people of colour related to the complexity of this issue. Monica Tan's recent article in The Guardian[1] (which has been given – I assume not by her – one of those overly-long, righteous sloganeering Guardian headlines that I'm not going to bother typing out here) is a good example. It's an easy to read,

1. Okay so it's called 'No matter your skin colour, all non-Indigneous Australians are complicit in colonialism'.

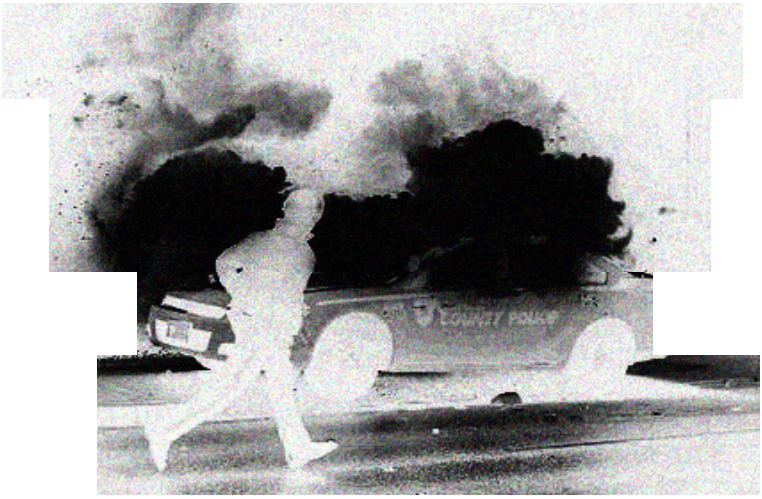
but cleverly nuanced article that places herself both outside White Australia, but still having benefitted from colonisation.

It's interesting that she starts with a confession about identity politics: that "as a Chinese Australian woman", she wouldn't have considered herself to be "a colonial oppressor". Amongst other things, my initial reaction to being called a 'settler' similarly reveals the problems of an individualised identity-based politics that shifts focus away from structural issues. My recoil was based so entirely in a personalised sense of something not being of my own experience that it shrouded the surrounding environment. It's not that identity politics entirely disavows all structural analysis, it's just that it tends to tip the balance too heavily towards individual experience as the site where oppression occurs and where change might be affected. This leads to a tendency to obscure a more radical politics of struggle and solidarity directed at multiple sources of power.

This is to say, the purpose of identifying different axis of power shouldn't simply lie in how we position ourselves in terms of privilege/guilt/oppression. While individual actions might be reflections of power, recognising its trajectory becomes infinitely less useful when frozen and only considered at the level of the individual. In this instance, the trajectory of colonial power is far from being favourable to migrants of colour, yet ultimately leaves us in a position where we also "benefit from the dispossession of Indigenous Australian lands". While in an obvious sense, our place here has long been determined by the White Australia policy – even in the decades after it being repealed, its residue effects how non-white people exist and take up space – it is also true that the migration(s) that have occurred have been administered within the parameters of the colonial state with no recourse to Aboriginal sovereignty.

As Tan travels around this country, she has encounters with Indigenous Australians where she is able to delight in "gestures of solidarity" that place her outside the colonial oppressors, but also moments where she is confronted with being part of a category of non-indigenous "colonial Australians trying to stuff their spiritual void with the richness of ancient Aboriginal culture". The contradiction of occupying seemingly conflicting positions might provoke some personal discomfort, but it is simply a result of the dislocations thrown up by colonisation. Until now, the economic and social requirements of Empire and capitalism enforce racial hierarchies and privileges that sometimes shift as conditions change.

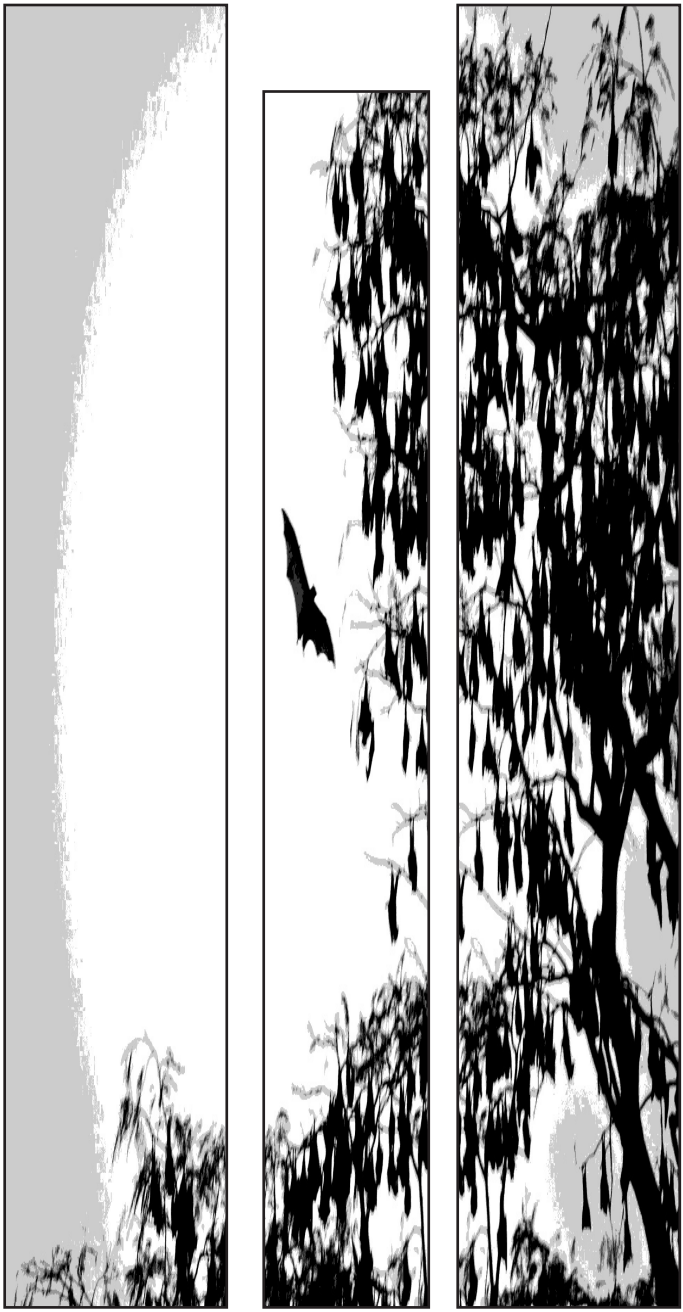
Tan explores this very thing as she comes across reminders of the long history of Chinese migration to outback Australia. From the late 1800's through to the early 1900's – even after White Australia was introduced – the labour of these migrants was necessary for the developing colonial, capitalist state in creating the infrastructure that would drive the economy. Yet these migrants were always outsiders, never part of the national narrative that was only invested in whiteness. While their struggles and resilience should be recognised and



celebrated, it also comes with the knowledge that the projects they worked on were part of the displacement of Aboriginal people from traditional country. And so it continues.

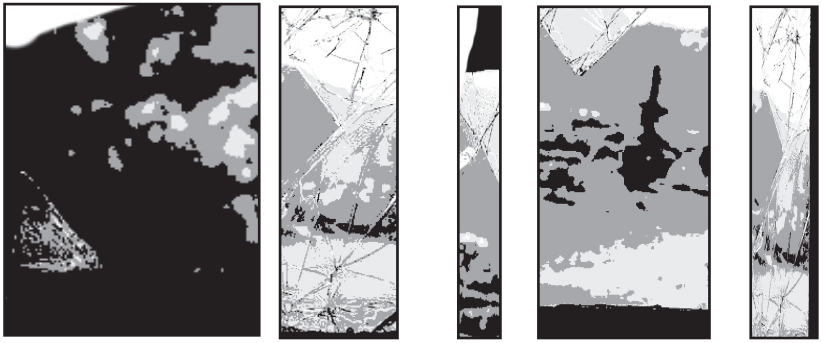
The world created by colonisation is complicated and has resulted in much geographical and cultural dislocation and displacement. This has negatively impacted many peoples, but especially Indigenous people of colonised countries. Still, we might locate some positive counter-force as we recognise points of intersection and commonality in our struggles. The history of so-called Australia ensures that whiteness exists as a nexus of social, cultural, economic and political power. This means, as Tan points out, that between Indigenous people and migrants of colour, "sometimes our experience of stereotyping, marginalisation and racism" overlap. These commonalities will be important in forging solidarity, but they will only be worthwhile if, as non-indigenous people of colour, we are able to become comfortable in acknowledging how our position here has benefitted from the process of colonisation.

To finish I'll return to the word 'settler' – which Tan does not use in her article. This word holds within it some of the contradictions I have tried to express here. I still do not think it sufficiently describes the relationship of migrants of colour to whiteness, nor does it convey our own histories of displacement due to colonisation in the countries we came from. However, situated in this country, it does very specifically – and uncomfortably – help name our relationship to the ongoing process of colonisation. The discomfort this might provoke, as I can attest, is a useful point of reflection. Recognising this position, does not undercut the potential of solidarity, it is a pre-condition of it.



Rootlessness and Dislocation

Finding resistant positions through diasporic untethered-ness



The suggestion that non-indigenous people living in this colonised land should seek out and connect with their own cultural roots and use this as a source of strength in acting with anti-colonial struggles here, is a common one in radical milieus. I understand how investigating 'cultural roots' is important for some people, that being able to trace lines of connection to ancestors who resisted colonisation in their time can be a great inspiration in the present. However, I have also found its abstract use to be both confusing and simplistically dismissive of the global consequences of capitalist colonisation and resultant migrations. I think that it is necessary to interrogate some of the problems that are contained within such an uncritical valorisation of historical identity and culture.

These issues recently arose again at a workshop I attended that was centred around issues of Aboriginal sovereignty and colonisation/ de-colonisation. One of the facilitators, a non-indigenous woman of colour, gave a spiel about the importance of locating cultural roots, of knowing the land where your 'bones are buried', and drawing strength from this heritage. While I don't believe that my personal experience should be taken as constitutive of a critique of this position, I will begin by laying out my subjective position just as a bit of background, but also because I'm pretty sure that I might not be alone in this.

The lands where the bones that mean most to me are buried, are not lands that I would claim roots in. One is this country, and the other is another colonised country where a couple of generations of my family settled. However, I also have no cultural connection to the other colonised land that is most recognisably my ethnic and ancestral heritage. And I don't feel any sense of loss at this. To recognise myself as a settler in this country means I do not hold a sense of

belonging to this land. Yet this does not manifest as a sense of lack that I seek to fill by finding attachments that are otherwise insincere. I will never have to face the shock, brutality and immediate colonising violence of being dispossessed from the land I belong to *while still inhabiting it*. My identity and being here are shaped by the historical dislocations of colonisation but I am many steps removed from the immediate vicinity of its consequences.

I think it is useful here to draw on some of Aileen Moreton-Robinson's work in her essay 'I Still Call Australia Home' (from her book *The White Possessive: Property, Power and Indigenous Sovereignty*). Moreton-Robinson is critical of a position that some theorists have taken where they overly-privilege this hybrid, multiplicity of identities created by displacement and migration as being indicative of the postcolonial subject. To simplify, and use my own words, Moreton-Robinson would say that Indigenous people in a settler-colonial society like Australia, remain too directly in the immediate path of the violence of colonisation to fall into this idealistic description of the post-colonial. I think it is necessary here to emphasise a distinction between the broader social conditions that have been shaped by colonisation and the lived, material immediacy of settler-colonialism as experienced by Indigenous people. In recognising this distinction, I would hope that what I'm writing does not seem to be overly-privileging the displaced migrant position.

Instead, I am simply suggesting that this position is *one* outcome of colonisation, that it *does not* need to be resolved by seeking out 'authentic' cultural roots, that it *does* result in some positive characteristics, but also that in no way is it comparative to the necessity of anti-colonial struggle as experienced by Indigenous people here. Moreton-Robinson still recognises that "experiences of dislocation disrupt the migrant's sense of belonging to a particular place and provide the conditions for multiple identities". This is pretty much in line with my main argument here, and she uses this as a base from which to relate how the Indigenous "ontological relation to land constitutes a subject position that we do not share, that cannot be shared, with the postcolonial subject, whose sense of belonging in this place is tied to migrancy".

I agree and would add that to recognise that belonging - for non-indigenous people of colour - is 'tied to migrancy' is to acknowledge that belonging and a sense of place are often ephemeral notions that shift constantly and whose meaning has very much been shaped by processes of colonisation. Maybe it is this feeling of untethered-ness that results in a desire to seek out cultural heritage, and certainly the process of holding onto some cultural traditions while adapting to the requirements of a new country are foundational to most migrant experiences. All this is to say that cultural dislocations and migrations are very much an outcome and lived reality for many people who participate in anti-colonial solidarity here. These dislocations do not simply represent weakness or something lost, they have also resulted in a resilience and adaptability that is a necessity of getting by in hostile places where whiteness is seen as defining

the right to belong. These are attributes that we can put towards solidarity with Aboriginal struggles.

Most concerning about the locating cultural roots imperative is the implication that the greatest strength is to be drawn from achieving some historical authenticity. Again, this fails to conceptualise anti-colonial struggle as being grounded in the material realities and a multiplicity of identity and entanglements that subsume us in the present day. For many of us there is no singular place where our cultural roots are located. For me, this means that my solidarity with Indigenous struggle comes from a series of connected positions that correlate to colonial histories: arriving in Australia as a young child of a migrant, single-parent; growing up brown in a country where power and belonging is invested in whiteness; being a settler in a violently settler-colonial society; etc. None of these relate in any way to a vision of decolonisation that implies winding back to some pure, frozen pre-colonial moment.

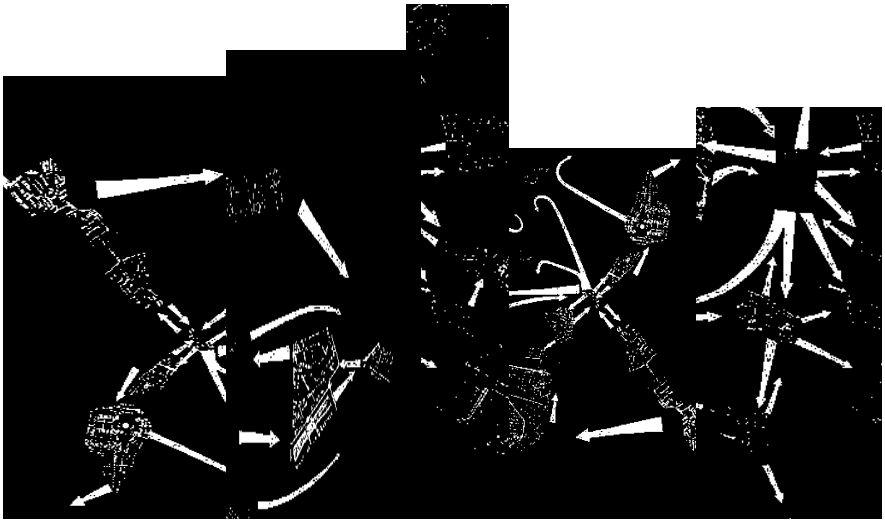
Additionally, the valorisation of cultural roots as a generalised strategy presents dangerous complications in a world where white supremacy and fascism is a growing threat. When finding authentic cultural roots is proclaimed as a source of strength to a room (including many white people) it is potentially opening the door to nativist fascism. This is the adaptation of fascism that predominates the western world. It is the one that allows racists to disingenuously claim support for de-colonial struggles in the global south as long as those brown people stay over there. It allows them to justify racist movements as simply protecting 'pure' European culture and identity. It is what has spawned the violent and reactionary theory of 'the great replacement'. In addition to the dangers of white supremacy, such claims to cultural heritage and authenticity can also easily become a path towards dangerous forms of third world nationalisms such as currently can be seen in India with Mohdi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

While I have attempted to put forward why seeking out an 'authentic' cultural heritage presents problems for non-Indigenous people of colour, it is also important to note that it presents problems for Aboriginal struggles too. At the workshop there was an excellent and timely intervention by an Indigenous woman who made the important point that visions of sovereignty for Aboriginal people in so-called Australia cannot be based in some idyllic pre-colonial visions. We can understand the significance of practising culture and keeping heritage alive for Aboriginal folk in this settler-colonial country – where the colonisers went all out to decimate their existence. However, to be Indigenous and struggle for sovereignty in so-called Australia very much involves knowing that hopes for de-colonisation must engage with present realities and the changes to Aboriginal culture and identity that have been wrought by almost 250 years of colonisation.

These aren't oblique considerations relevant only to perceived identity formation. Instead, they directly relate to struggles around land, sovereignty and decolonisation. In *Against Native Title*, white anthropologist Eve Vincent

explores the conflicts and complexities surrounding a specific native title claim in South Australia and relates how within the native title claims process "Aboriginal people are also held incarcerated within, or held captive to, a particular moment in time". That is, they are expected to substantiate their own self-understanding and connection to country through accounts that "are confirmed by, and are consistent with, outsiders' accounts of that frozen moment". The point being that, having displaced and dispossessed Indigenous people, the coloniser's law now unironically demands that they prove their belonging by demonstrating their uninterrupted connection to historical place and time. This is the unreal version of indigeneity that western liberalism seeks to foster, of a pure authentic 'native' who against all odds has managed to retain their sacred dignity.

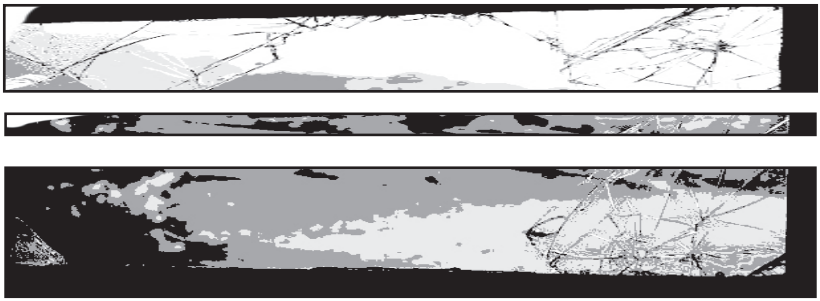
While the implications of exploring cultural roots are quite different for Aboriginal people and migrants – and in either case I am *not* arguing that it is always and only a negative – I do think the example of Native Title legislation underlines how cultural roots tied to ideas of historical authenticity can be a reactionary position that suits narratives of colonisation. These in effect downplay the realities of displacement and cultural dislocation. They also too easily dovetail into fascistic ideals of cultural purity and hegemony. Additionally, we should recognise that the rootlessness of migrants is, at the least, simply a function of the lived, material realities of a colonial world, but in a more positive light, has meant we have our own experiences of traversing some of the faultlines of racism and colonisation. From recognising this, it is possible to draw on experiences that can inform our capacity to act in solidarity with Indigenous anti-colonial struggles here.



Confrontational and Profoundly Uncomforable:

why anti-racism and decolonisation can be nothing less

(a reading of Houria Boutledja's polemical tract *Whites, Jews and Us*)



"We will be beggars so long as we accept as universal the political divisions that cut up the white world and through which they conceive of the social conflicts and struggles that these divisions will engender. We will be beggars so long as we remain prisoners of their philosophy, of their aesthetic and of their art. We will be beggars so long as we do not call into question their version of History. Lets accept rupture, discord, discordance. Lets ruin the landscape and announce a new era". - Houria Bouteldja

The uncivilised

A nice white person once asked of me "can't you be less antagonistic when challenging racism"? It was less a question, more a direction, imbued with all the faux-innocence and partitioning of 'civilised rationality' as a quality specific to whiteness, and therefore necessitating white people to preach the word. The imperative that justified colonisation as the bringing of civilisation to the barbarians, is now repeated by white liberals espousing 'rational' and 'civilised' debate in the face of racism and white supremacy.

But as Nazia Kazi asks in her essay ('On Impasse and Hypocrisy') reflecting on Houria Bouteldja's, *Whites, Jews and Us*, "what are civility, vulgarity and manners in a world shaped enduringly by the brutality of empire"? They exist as categories of behaviour determined in relation to the expectations of white people to not be confronted with the racialised 'other' in ways that are outside their comfort zone. These categories are frequently weaponised to restore white

comfort when any words, action or incursion of space call into question the pre-eminence of white behavioural norms or undermine its desired neutrality by revealing foundations of racism and colonisation. The nice 'progressive' who tried to pull me into line was not the one I had challenged about racism but was nevertheless providing a service in solidarity with white people everywhere by attempting to shame me into behaving more like a polite, white liberal.

While Bouteldja attempts to provide a path out of the swamp of racism and colonial relations through her conceptualisation of revolutionary love, the strength of her writing is initially based in being a radical, anti-colonial critique of white liberalism. In the preface, no less than Cornel West lays out the characteristic staging posts that outline the limits of this liberalism. He asks:

> "does not the end of imperial innocence entail the rejection of social democracy or neoliberal politics – with their attendant 'white good conscience', top-down feminism, bourgeois multiculturalism and a refusal to target a vicious Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and people".

None of these tendencies will evade Bouteldja's eviscerating critique as she lays down her vision for finding new paths towards creating a revolutionary, anti-colonial force.

A universal facade

Houria Bouteldja has been vehemently attacked, from the left and the right, because she dared to speak of a decolonisation that cannot countenance the discursive and material restrictions of liberalism. Her words are poetic, polemic, fiery and confrontational, but they also contain an offer – an offer of love. But before we even begin to approach being able to accept such an offer, we must accept the confrontation, the danger of all that makes us uncomfortable.

Amongst other things, Bouteldja is charged with homophobia. This is a result of a passage where she recounts the furore that occurs when Iran's president Ahmadinejad takes centre-stage at New York's prestigious leftist institution, Columbia University. Here, he makes the outrageous claim that "there are no homosexuals in Iran". Bouteldja recognises that "these words are painful" and that "they are violent and of exquisite bad faith". However, she's also delights as "good conscience disintegrates" in the face of Ahmadinejad's shameless lie. This delight is falsely accused of being something that it never was.

Why the delight? It might be the delight of seeing a façade pierced. That having laid claim to all the material, social, institutional privileges that result from centuries of colonisation, whiteness now mounts as its self-defence the *ethics* of progressivism and humanism. Under its umbrella lies all that is tolerant and accepting. As Bouteldja asserts (speaking to white people), "You all wear that face of Innocence. This is your ultimate victory. You succeeded in exonerating yourselves". She is no supporter of Ahmadinejad, but within this particular

context can't help but seeing "an arrogant indigenous man" entering the "kingdom of the innocents" and countering one known lie ("there is no torture in Abu Ghraib") with another.

I too, have felt delight in moments when that veil of innocence, that claim to transcendental humanism *after the fact,* has been ripped away by an unexpected confrontation or a contradictory set of positions. This occurred in Australia after the referendum on gay marriage when statistics were produced that indicated a number of migrant-heavy suburbs in Sydney voted 'No'. The hand-wringing consternation! The outrage! Scrawled in a bathroom stall in a vegan restaurant in the heart of liberal, progressive inner-Sydney is the ultimatum 'Vote yes or leave'.

Ah yes, we know this one, the insistent tantrum of innocence that reveals the coercive core of liberalism: you, the strange, exotic creature from somewhere else will be grateful for our welcome, you will behave in ways that we deem acceptable so that we can reassure ourselves of our own good nature and 'tolerance', you will not speak or refer to the underlying violence that assures the pre-eminence of our subject position. The same voice as the 'nice white person' that suggests I need be less antagonistic in confronting racism. Between the potentially homophobic (but most likely, just-couldn't-give-a-shit) migrant and the demanding, 'progressive', white innocent, I also choose to delight in any rupture in the façade.

Again, this relates to the presumption of superiority and universalism that comes attached to secular, liberal individualism. Bouteldja describes the development of this position, of how the subjective, "Cartesian 'I' lay the philosophical ground for whiteness" and became an assumed universal within the same historical moment of colonisation, slavery and genocide. The hypocrisy of this reverberates through the very critiques that are unwilling to face the provocation that Bouteldja presents. In her essay, 'Love In Dark Times', Joelle Marelli takes up this tension in a thoughtful defence of Bouteldja:

> "Any endeavour to think about race, religion, and gender in terms that vary from the prescribed institutional frameworks (unquestioned brands of universalism and secularism, as well as intrumentalized versions of feminism or opposition to antisemitism; and an antiracism that is opposed to any input from racialized people, indeed more and more refusing the very category of racialized people) is an opportunity for abuse."

Indigenous / migrant

While initially much of her critique is directed as a challenge to white people, Bouteldja also proceeds to address her indigenous brothers and sisters. She is Algerian, but lives in France and admits her own culpability from within the heart of empire, as "a wretched of the interior". She reclaims the French term

'indigene' – a colonialist pejorative – as a broad term for all peoples who have come from lands that have suffered the consequences of colonisation, even if geographically and generations removed. However, the English translation chooses to settle for 'indigenous', and while giving this broad meaning might be a political choice reflective of Fanon, it can't be used in such a way within settler-colonial societies like Australia, where it has a necessarily specific social, historical and political meaning.

There are significant degrees of complication that creep in when we move from 'the West' as Europe, to settler-colonial societies such as North America and Australia. When Bouteldja asserts that "we rule over a political territory that we have conquered through infraction", it is an undeniably great line in relation to the place of migrants in Europe. But it holds a different, less positively radical, resonance when applied to colonised lands such as Australia, where Aboriginal people are engaged in their own ongoing struggles for land, sovereignty and survival. Migrants can still take hold of the radical, political potential of our position here. However, this potential can only be truly anti-colonial if foregrounded in the struggles of Aboriginal people and how our position has been part of their dispossession from country. These are layers of complexity, but they needn't be seen as only a negative, rather the challenge of settler-colonial societies is another potential ground for finding anti-colonial solidarity and love.

In fact, the most shockingly problematic section of this essay is Bouteldja's dismissive comments about the lives and resistance of Aboriginal people here. She partakes in invisibilising Aboriginal presence, reducing them to "ghosts" who are incapable of resisting their situation. She claims that her common experience as 'indigenous' allows her to see them, whereas in what she has written, it is clear that she has failed to see much and has not attempted to connect with the rich politics of struggle and culture that Aboriginal people continue to assert in the face of ongoing colonisation. It is unclear why she would include such an insubstantial, throwaway couple of paragraphs, but it casts an unfortunate shadow on her political choice to use the term 'indigenous' in the broad sense.

Moving forward, there is still a lot of depth to engage with despite the contradictions and flaws. The section, 'We, Indigenous People', sees Bouteldja speaking to other migrants from colonised countries who now reside in the West. While much of this draws on her experiences as an Algerian in France, she presents a set of positions that are generally relatable in any Western country. For her, we cannot simply reject that we have become too much a part of the west, that "whiteness is not a genetic question, it is a matter of power", and as such, we now have a proximity to power that makes us somewhat complicit in the crimes being perpetrated upon the global South.

This issue of becoming hooked into the offerings and ideologies of whiteness is a challenge that Bouteldja poses throughout the essay. In the section where

she addresses "we, indigenous women", she compels her sisters to reject the offerings of liberal feminism. She asks, "what are the historical conditions that have enabled feminism?" – implicitly recognising a relationship to structures of slavery, colonisation and oppression, as well as a contemporary complicity with a politics of race that prescribes non-western cultures as particularly uncivilised and misogynist. Once again, the 'progressivism' of whiteness becomes infused with an assumed universality and atemporality after the fact of conquest. While she is scathing of non-white men, the "indigenous patriarchy", who are "ugly because they abdicate their power only to please white people... because we are subjected to their violence", she also identifies that the racism that upholds white innocence involves the constant positioning of brown/ black men as threatening and barbaric.

While speaking to the complexities of the double oppression that women of colour are faced with, Boutledja is determined to provoke a different path, something like a decolonial feminism (although she even expresses some discomfort at this term) into existence. She identifies how "white, racist patriarchy exacerbates gender relations in the indigenous milieu" and asserts that "a decolonial feminism must have as its imperative to radically refuse the discourses and practices that stigmatises our brothers and... exonerate white patriarchy". This will be a complicated manoeuvre that involves reflection, confrontation, discussion and action, and she draws on a fantastic exchange between Audrey Lorde and James Baldwin to illustrate some of these complexities.

There is a danger in polemical writing like this of posing binaries or generalisations that are too simplistic, assuming a position of either assimilated and complicit or hostile and scornful. The position of the migrant in the West is surveilled and regulated, yet also unbounded, an entangled mesh of historical, cultural and social locations that holds the potential to challenge and destabilise some of the power, and assumed universality, of whiteness and colonialism. But first we must reject the inane, non-transformative promises of liberalism. Bouteldja recognises this, as she seeks to bring "immigration to political existence. And this political existence questions the Republic itself, which is constructed through the negation of indigenous political existence". She understands no matter how much some of us assimilate to the expectations of the West, "that between white people and us, there is race".

Will we ever get of here alive

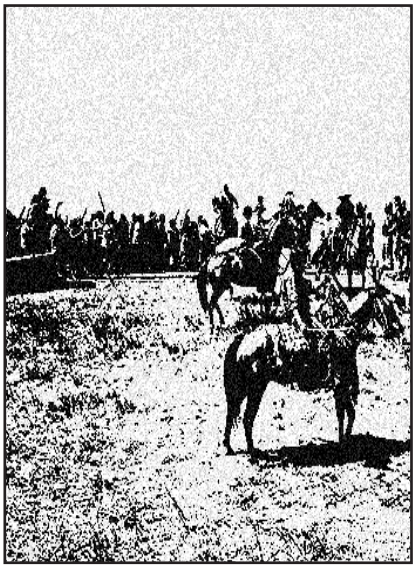
The other great controversy that this essay has produced, has resulted from the section titled 'You, the Jews', and, perhaps unsurprisingly, has led to accusations of anti-semitism. This is a reactive position borne of an unwillingness to face uncomfortable propositions or to view these propositions as an opening to finding common ground. To start with, Bouteldja is necessarily unsparing in

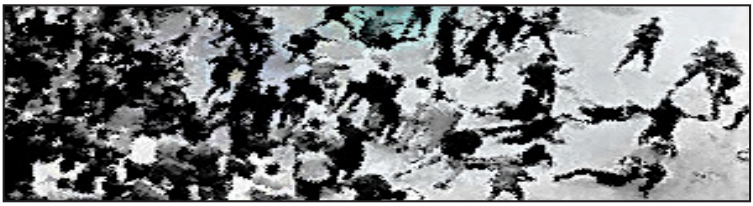
declaring the illegitimacy of Israel and the colonising violence it perpetuates on Palestinian peoples. She sees the gift of Israel as a trade-off that allowed white Europe to expunge anti-semitism as a long-standing scourge on its social and historical record, and instead re-cast it as a phenomenon associated with those brown people of the middle-east.

Bouteldja wants "to repatriate anti-semitism", as she asserts that of "the many conflicts between us... more often than not they are colonial". This involves a historical and social contextualisation of the Nazi genocide, in contrast to the common depiction of its exceptional singularity. Of course, this contextualisation directly involves understanding "the colonial genes of national socialism" and recognising that "if the techniques of mass massacre revealed all their efficiency in the concentration camps, it is because they had been tested on us" (indigenous, colonised peoples).

This point is in no way disputing the brutality that Nazism unleashed on Jewish populations, nor is it attempting to undermine "the respect you (Jews) owe your martyrs". However, it does 'call out' white Europe for how the commemoration of the exceptionalism of the Nazi genocide is now a "European civil religion" that has allowed both the historical and continuing violence of colonialism to be overshadowed. That is, no other violence can be so bad, because the Nazis.

Towards the end of his interesting essay ('I Know I Am, But What Are You') reflecting on Bouteldja's work, Joshua Duber presents a useful criticism of her engagement with Jewish people, arguing that she "plays up the facets of contemporary Judaism that she abhors". While to some degree, this essentialising is an effect of her polemical style and is constant throughout, it





nevertheless poses a problem in a world where anti-semitism is increasingly being revisited by white nationalists. There needs to be care taken to not simply ascribe binary positions that essentialise any group as 'the Other'.

At the same time, falsifying commonality is not a strategy that Bouteldja is interested in employing – she is entirely committed to applying herself within the realm of contradictions, to posing difficult questions or attending to the complexities of different positions. As such, I'm not sure that Duber is correct that Bouteldja has focused mainly on the negatives of contemporary Judaism. While she talks about the colonisation of Palestine with the strength of certainty that it deserves, when reflecting on the position of Jewish people in Europe, she is much more circumspect, recognising multifaceted forces that condition the precarious position of Judaism across that continent. She finds some familiarities, but also strangeness: "familiar because of your insoluble non-whiteness within anti-semitic whiteness, but strange because you are whitened, integrated into a superior echelon of the racial hierarchy".

Ultimately, this engagement with Jewish people is probably the most Euro-specific part of this essay. Despite this, there is much at stake in this chapter as it provides something of a map for how she intends to navigate a path of revolutionary love from these sites of interminable opposition. For, having resolutely laid out the sites of conflict, Bouteldja proceeds to write that "between us, everything is still possible" There are conditions on any such pact: that Jewish people rediscover their internationalism and cut ties from the offers of whiteness. Only in this way will "we potentially have a common political future", one that "could be the deconstruction of the racial and Republican pact that is at the heart of the French nation". Her intent is clear, whatever is uncomfortable and provocative lies in clear view and only from there lies the potential of revolutionary love and solidarity:

"You are losing your historical friends.

You are still in the ghetto,

Why don't we get out of there together?"

Herein lies the difficulty of the shifting racial hierarchies that have been shaped by ongoing processes of colonisation: we've all made certain pacts with whiteness and – even if not equally – we all have something to lose. But hopefully even more to gain.

A decolonial force / revolutionary love

And so, throughout all the insights and confrontations within this essay Bouteldja has threaded the potential of that offer: the promise of revolutionary love. While she attempts to give this some clarity in her closing section, it remains somewhat out-of-reach, a sketch that hints at possibilities to be grasped. Despite this ambiguity, we can begin to see within its form an answer to the problem a friend poses to me: have we lost sight of the conditions that may allow us to act together, in solidarity, and instead focus too much effort theorising the things that divide us?

But Bouteldja shatters any easy resolutions to such a question, instead determining that it is exactly at that point of division and conflict, a point which is completely unavoidable in any case, where we will find the conditions to act together. She lays down what is at stake directly, claiming that "the site of a real encounter can only happen at the crossroads of our mutual interests – the fear of civil war and chaos – the site where races could annihilate each other and where it is possible to imagine our equal dignity". At this site where we acknowledge our most immutable, uncomfortable difference everything becomes possible.

But here we must also understand that amongst the everything that is possible is the possibility of a surge in white nationalisms. Of course, this is already occurring. Boutledja refers to 'the great replacement' – that underlying theory of white racial paranoia – acutely aware of the faultiness that have been drawn in a way that is predictive of the sort of white nationalism we are seeing. She knows that any decolonising force that we assert will be, for the nationalists, "confirmation of their phantasms". She recognises that we will have white allies (preferably accomplices?), but also that there will be a large section of the white political field that "surfing on fear and the vivacious and ever-ready colonial imaginary", will seek to restrain any momentum and posit us as the equivalent danger as the nationalists. This is the liberal centre.

Ultimately, Bouteldja emphasises the need to cut entirely against the grain, to reject the comfort of white liberalism, who's 'anti-racism' was predicated on our (brown/ black people, migrants) integration into white modernity without offering any transformative change in racial power structures. Instead, she asks

"what if we took advantage of racism to invent new political horizons? What if we took advantage of 'the failure of integration'? Dare I say that we must even draw some satisfaction from it"? It becomes our role to turn the social and historical affinities that connect our place in the West, into a basis of political unity from which to overturn the racist and colonial structures from within.

The attachments we form will be forged as revolutionary love. They won't be easy, innocent. Rather they will be complex and difficult. We will learn to love ourselves initially and our own histories, but we must reject doing this as simply a claim on identity, instead taking it up as one step towards a greater act of political upheaval. For Bouteldja, revolutionary love sits in stark contrast to the hopelessness of liberal individualism. Indeed, the adjuncts of liberalism are a mausoleum for all that is radically anti-colonial and anti-racist, reifying our being into an imaginary that will be used to perpetuate the inherent progressivism and 'good-ness' of the West.

Her turn towards communalism against that individualism takes a challenging detour through religion. Although she rejects identifying herself as religious she posits the figure of God as a universal equaliser who puts all people in their (non-hierarchical) place "as only one element amongst all others" and in this way is a common force amongst many non-Western traditions. She lingers here as she draws towards her conclusion, but then moves away again, knowing that "groups seeking plenitude and absolute truth have this in common that they invent imaginary enemies for themselves". These absolute truths and imaginary enemies can only be impediments to conceiving of the complexity that pervades societal systems and inter-relations.

Finally, it is the figure of Malcom X who allows us a way towards somewhat grasping the scope of this ephemeral 'revolutionary love'. Malcolm X came to articulate that he did not hate white people because he loved his people too much to be reduced to that. But the flipside of this is not that he loved white people. Instead, Bouteldja posits: "Does he love white people? No, they don't deserve his love, but he creates the condition of its possibility... *He tried to lower everything that rises*". This is revolutionary love. It is not freely given, it bares no relation to the insipid 'love everyone' of liberal multiculturalism or new-age, hippie spirituality. It is a possibility, conditional on a great levelling, a tearing down. Bouteldja suggests that some white people might turn towards this because they too suffer within this destructive, individualistic society. But she emphasises that this love "will never be a politics of the heart", it is not romantic love, with its attendant intensities and attachments. Any expectation of such affective feeling will be left disappointed, because revolutionary love might only be a love of indifference, an offer of distant peace, a recognition of the other, an embodiment of "that moment 'right before hatred' to push it back as much as possible... This will be the We of revolutionary love".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DREAMING